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The Real Virtual World: Connectivity and Techno-mediation in the Lives of College Students

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the way in which techno-mediated communication technologies, such as social media, text messaging, and virtual communities are used to negotiate, establish and maintain interpersonal relationships among college students. Using in-depth interview and online participant observation, I explore the relationship between technological communication and social behavior, interpersonal relationships and social networks. I focus on three broad questions: how do developments and structures of technological communication allow for the emergence of new social expectations and behaviors in the realm of connectivity and social interaction? How do individuals experience social pressures for connectivity and how do such pressures shape relationships? How is technology implicated in the way in which participants experience intimacy, relationships and individual identity?

My findings suggest that there is a strong connection between the corporatizing discourse of rational labor practice that defines speed and efficiency as inherently valuable and the increased use of technology to provide a faster and more efficient form of interpersonal communication among participants. One unexpected consequence of this development has been the normalized hyper-connection between the students I studied. The incorporation of technological devices, such as smartphones, in interpersonal relationships combined with the high social value of speed is connected with the increased expectations about frequency of contact within friendships and sexual relationships. This desire for immediate contact, as well as increasing availability of information about potential relationship partners, contributes to a transformation of the experience of intimacy among participants.

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by

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For Jason
You have never let me down, and never let me fall.

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Table of Contents

Chapter One
Introduction: Finding a Place within the Real Virtual World

> Alecea -What do I need to understand if I want to study college student culture?
>
> Jake - When I look at history books, I see we are the technology generation. There was the industrial revolution and we are the technology revolution right now. Facebook completely changed my 4 years in college; I think those years are completely different now from pre-Facebook. How they interacted. Total differences. Or maybe not how we interact, but how we go about those interactions.

Jake is a 20-year-old college student who suggests that the contemporary technological revolution is comparable to the juggernaut of transformation we know as the industrial revolution. Yet, the industrial revolution fundamentally reshaped the course of human history. Virtually no aspect of human existence, from work to family, from birth to death, was untouched. For some, it led to undreamed of wealth and for others unspeakable degradation (Wyatt 2008). Are we indeed in the midst of such a time of transformation? Are we at a moment in history which will be looked back on by future generations as a time of "total differences" which will shape and reshape human interaction?

The question that Jake raises, of his generation's place in history, of the long-term impact of the technological revolution, may not be entirely answerable today, whatever meaning it might have tomorrow. However, it is possible to consider what implications the increasing prevalence of technology in social interaction might have in the present. What does the technological revolution, if indeed that is what we are currently experiencing, mean both to the course of history and to the individual? Jake also has some insight, reminding us that technology is about interaction. Further, technology can be about something so fundamentally human as social connectivity. In this project, I consider the contemporary role of technology in human interaction and interconnection, in the self and the social, and in the details of day-to-day life.

I situate this project around questions of connectivity. Specifically, I engage with the social and technological aspects of connectivity between individuals using technology and connections between individuals and technological devices. These connections exist within technological architectures, which I discuss in chapter three. Secondly in chapter four, I consider how technology is implicated in the practices and experiences of friendship and dating among college students in chapter four. Finally in chapter five, I discuss how these practices and experiences might cause us to rethink the definition of three key aspects of the social world, intimacy, privacy and the performance of the self.

Introduction to the Project

This project is an ethnographically based examination of the experiences of college students and the integration of technology into their daily lives. I specifically focus on the set of technological tools that participants most rely on: the social media site Facebook, Internet enabled smartphones, and text messaging. Together, these tools make up a technological framework, or architecture, that shapes the experience of the contemporary college student. This project specifically considers the emergence of this framework as it relates to the widespread acceptance of speed and efficiency as values that should be applied to intimate relationships. Further, this project examines contemporary transformations of social connectivity, defined as the communicative links between individuals within a society. I suggest that social connectivity is increasingly reliant on communication processes that are a hybrid of technological and face-to-face interactions.

Very early in the interviewing process I spoke with a young women named Sara who explained to me the importance of technological connectivity in her social world.

> It's everybody… kind of just looking to meet people and make friends. So that, I mean, Facebook was a big, big factor that I don't think that a lot of, like, like if you met somebody in class and you were interested in getting to know more and maybe you talked and then you Facebook Friended each other, sometimes that kind of, elevated things? And then you can move on to setting up a time to hang out. But also… keeping up with friends, I think, friends from home, that's a big thing. It's just staying in touch and getting – seeing what everybody's doing, and it's a lot easier than having to call people all the time, you have to have a wider array of people that you can keep in touch with.

Sara introduced me to the notion of technology as a means to get to know and stay in touch with others, specifically others who one knows offline. This idea, that technology is a way in which college students *supplement* rather than supplant social relationships, is central to the framework of this project. Thus, using technology is not a matter of replacing existing relationships, but rather acts as one component of the means by which contemporary college students establish and maintain relationship connections. Another student that I spoke with around the same time, Jake, also shared details about how technologies such as Facebook and texting were deeply embedded in not only his friendships, but increasingly in his romantic life as well. Sara and Jake both suggest that technology can be a tool and indicator of both social connectivity and of deep emotional intimacy. These initial discussions would go on to shape the framework of this project, leading me to focus on how technology is implicated in contemporary relationships, what impact that has had on relationships, and eventually how such transformations are reshaping core concepts of privacy, intimacy and performativity.

These ideas would become increasingly important to my work as I progressed, and, as a result, this work presents both narratives of technologically mediated connectivity and technologically mediated intimacy; interactions between individuals and groups, transformations and change situated within the life experiences of college students at a mid-sized private university. The participants in the study come from a wide variety of social locations, including

diverse race, gender, and sexual, religious and geographic identities. However, they also share a few characteristics. All participants are young adults between the ages of 18-24, they are all enrolled in a private university and all consider Internet technologies and devices an important part of their lives, for good or ill. Very few participants come from working class and poor families, which is reflective of the demographic of the private university that they attend. This limited diversity results in a group of participants who can speak, frequently but not always critically, about the ways in which technological communication and access is both a means and a manifestation of social privilege.

Yet even those very few students from working class and poor communities share one further characteristic with their peers, a lack of technological "introduction" stories. Only one participant, Jake, was able to discuss his introduction to technology, in the form of faded memories of the first time he used a dial up modem to log on to America Online as a young child. For the rest of my participants, there is no first time, no memories of learning to use a computer or learning about the Internet. Like learning to walk, for these participants memories of technological introduction are lost in time. Computers and the Internet are, in a very real way, just one more aspect of their lives that is inevitable and "normal." Yet computer-mediated communication is a relatively new phenomenon; and widespread use of the home computer and the Internet has emerged primarily in the last two decades.

As a result, today we have a generation of young adults in the US for whom computers, cell phones and computer-mediated communication are so familiar that they are unremarkable. This group is the first generation to have grown up primarily within the information revolution, and perhaps on the edges of a new network society (Castells 2004; Palfrey and Gasser 2008). It is this group that I elected to study in order to explore the ways in which their social world is

shaped by technology. I wanted to focus primarily on experience and the perceptions of young adults themselves. Therefore, I created a qualitative project to explore these issues. Using in depth interviewing, I spoke with 38 college students about their experiences using Internet technologies. This material was transcribed and coded. In addition, I conducted an extensive online participant observation over the course of four months. I collected roughly 350 pages of online material including field notes, posts, comments and images. The use of multi-model digital ethnography is an effective means to consider not only online or offline experiences, but to analyze the relationship between these two spheres of communication (Garcia et al. 2009).

This work considers the tensions that exist for participants who struggle to integrate their hybrid social existence and its complex manifestations of intimacy into a technologically dichotomous world. Making sense of their existence within a moment of social transition and transformation is a challenge that participants talk about overtly, but it also manifests itself in discussion of day-to-day activities. Participants work to successfully engage in techno-social behaviors normalized by their peers while navigating the expectations of broader society, which are rooted in the worldview of their elders. Consequently this research contributes to literatures in a variety of contexts. First, this work is situated within scholarship on the areas of relationship and cultural studies (Dimaggio et al 2001; Boase & Wellman 2006), and also contributes to work on the roles of technology in culture, identity, and adult socialization/transition to adulthood (Talamo & Ligorio 2001; Thomas 2007; Boellstorff 2008; Bogle 2008). I also highlight the relevance of the theoretical traditions of social psychology and symbolic interactionism to the study of new media forms and techno-social behaviors.

This project emerged from a fascination with the role of technology in the social world, and observations of a growing generational divide in attitudes about what that role should look

like. When I was first developing this project, I found myself faced with conflicting narratives. On one hand, popular and even scholarly conceptions of technological behavior among young people presented it as alternately irrelevant, socially destructive and occasionally pathological. Early mentions of the project drew comments such as “students don’t know how to communicate anymore” and “they will have to get over their obsession with texting/gaming/Facebook when they enter the real world.” However, I increasingly found myself dealing with students who seemed to communicate effectively with one another and considered their technologically mediated world a “real” one. I began to ask myself, and eventually my participants, if the changes that would occur when college students enter life after college would be in the behavior of the young, or in the world they will inhabit.

In order to begin to answer this important question I developed three research questions that helped to shape this project both in the data collection and analysis stages. I found myself particularly interested in the role and meaning of social structures, connectivity, intimacy and identity in the techno-social lives of my participants. I focus on three research questions that shape this project.

1) How do developments and structures of technological communication allow for the emergence of new social expectations and behaviors in the realm of connectivity and social interaction?

2) How do individuals experience social pressures for connectivity and how do such pressures shape relationships? Further, what implications does the demand for social connectivity and availability have on how participants understand their intimate relationships?

3) How is technology implicated in the way in which participants understand and navigate issues of intimacy, relationships and individual identity? How does this shape and reshape understandings of privacy, intimacy and the performance of the self within contemporary network society?

Contributions to Scholarly Work

In this chapter I discuss both the literatures and theoretical traditions that underpin this project. I cover background literature related to connectivity, intimacy and youth culture, techno-mediated communication practices and connections to social relationships. The first section explores the impact of communication technologies on connectivity and social behavior, by considering some of the historical work on how the structure and development of technology have shaped social behavior. I touch on the work of technological researchers from a broad array of methodological and ideological backgrounds. I next provide a broad overview of the theory and research on interpersonal social relationships. I also try to address the current literature on connectivity and relationships among college students. The third section explores the more specific research that brings together theories of intimacy and theories of techno-social behavior. My work is situated in this area though it also contributes to broader traditions of technology and relationship scholarship. Finally, I discuss how the applications of social psychological models of behavior and communication can help us better understand the changes technological communication practices have brought to contemporary college culture. These ideas are the foundation for key questions about the role of contemporary communication practices in shaping and maintaining relationships, and through the processes of social development, the self-knowledge of individuals.

Technology in the Social World

Broadly speaking, the focus of research on technologically mediated communication has been on the ways in which it differed from, rather than complemented, more traditional communication forms. Some of the earliest social researchers examined the impact of the Internet on select populations (Rhiengold 1994; Turkle 1995) in large part due to the limited nature of access. More recently, researchers have charted the impacts of technology on economics, commerce, information distribution, and communication patterns (Litan and Rivlin 2001; Huysman and Wulf 2004; Madden 2006). Other researchers have theorized the impact of Internet use on social and cultural practices (Anderson and Tracy 2001; Dimaggio et al 2001; Boase and Wellman 2006). Much of the existing work has focused on proving that some impact of technology does indeed exist and it is relevant to the wider population (Anderson and Tracey 2001; Cook 2004; Watts 2004). Research in this field touches on a variety of areas. Thus, it is necessary to focus more specifically on the work of researchers who are interested in the role of technology at a micro level, then further focus on specific technologies and social groups.

Online Social Behavior

Early research on technology focuses on its capacity to connect individuals and groups of individuals (Turkle 1995;Huysman and Wulf 2004). New means of connection and connectivity are made possible though the use of technology. For example, some theorists of relationships have found that contemporary friendships and romances, family relationships and other social connections are navigated through computer supported networks (Wellman et. al. 1996), where technological innovation can provide new and innovative means of social connectivity, allowing families and friends separated by distance to share activities (Yarosh et. al 2008) or virtual hugs (Mueller 2005). This allows families (Valentine 2006) and social networks (Wellman et. al.

1996) to maintain levels of connectivity and intimacy characteristic of offline social relationships.

Further, the structure of such technologies has led some researchers to suggest that online groups have the potential to allow individuals to be represented without the potential bias inherent in offline communication (Talamo and Ligorio 2001). Entirely fictitious identities can be created via webpages (Walker 2000) and online game spaces (Kendall 2002; Schapp 2002), or in discussion boards (Shoham 2004). Semi-fictitious or partial identities can be deployed either inadvertently or strategically (Kendall 2002). Furthermore, avatars (online visual or linguistic representations of users) allow users to explore alternative constructions of identity and interaction. For some individuals, the use of avatars has the potential to allow identity and individuality to be represented without the potential bias inherent in offline communication (Talamo & Ligorio 2001), due to socially embedded stereotypes of race or gender, for example. Some see it as a location for social activism and the development of individual freedoms in the face of social repression (Wheeler 2001). Other research has focused more on how the use of technology can create communities and social scripts through processes that are similar to offline community building.

An early and long-standing trend in Internet studies is the use of theories of social control to examine the role of formal and informal social sanctions, that emerge though social connection and networks, in guiding online behavior and activity (Meier 1982). Researchers have found that online behavior can best be understood as both a reflection of general social ideologies and as part of a new developing culture (Turkle 1995; Rodino 1997; Kendall 2002). Jonathan Paul Marshall provides an in depth discussion of the role that the online community culture of the listserv *Cybermind* played in the lives of participants. He finds that cultural

expectations and behavioral scripts function on *Cybermind* as a means to guide, and in some cases control and constrain, the behavior of community members. The creation of social scripts in online spaces allows for community members to build solidarity by conformity and through the sanctioning of rule breakers.

While a listserv such as *Cybermind* is largely textual, other online communities such as *SecondLife* may develop cultural artifacts beyond behaviors to include visual artifacts and object that act as part of the social environment. The technological architectures that support *SecondLife* allow total immersion into a cyber space, where a community and culture is built, romances and friendships are gained and lost, and social relationships are negotiated within a cyber-cultural framework (Boellstorff 2008). Thus, *SecondLife* is a community in which social things happen and social interactions occur. It becomes a place where the formation of culture occurs as an ongoing social process.

The structural aspects of technology - portability, instant access, virtual public space, perceptions of anonymity and so on - also shape patterns of social control and collective meaning in online spaces. For example, ongoing research has found that online users tended to express themselves with less restraint and inhibition than in face-to-face communication (Sproull and Kiesler 1991). Researcher Angela Thomas looks at the importance of cyber-technologies in the negotiation of power, identity construction, internalized imaginaries of a social self and social meaning among teens and preteens. Her work looks at teenagers who engage with online social groups, role-play gaming and other forms of online social play (Thomas 2007). Increasingly, she argues that the inter-textual and multi-model *structure* of the technology allows for specific social options such as near integration, instant access, centralization, continuous contact and shared imaginaries that foster sense of group solidarity among teens (Thomas 2007). The

structure of technology, as an integrated experience using text, image and symbols in a variety of contexts, results in a blurring of any kind of clear offline/online dichotomy in the lives of her research participants (Thomas 2007). Thus we can question the ways in which Internet technology has begun to function as a structure, which like other social structures, shapes the social world as well as individual biography. The focus on online only communities has allowed for a great deal of knowledge to be generated about the experience of the social world in technological venues, yet in other ways this focus limits the potential of researchers to better understand the blurred and fractured lines between online and offline space that is increasingly characteristic of the modern social world.

Beyond online/offline

Moving away from the notion of immersion into a separate technological world and toward the idea of a symbiotic relationship between technology and the social world "offline" allows for new directions in thinking and research. Pushing beyond research that focuses on the experience of online and offline as dichotomous, other researchers explore the more complex relationship between the social and the cyber. The Internet and its attendant technologies exist as structure to transmit information, and a force to shape social possibility. The transmission of information and content via the Internet is not limited to uni-direction or bi-directional communication like television; rather it is about the development of collective knowledge. Cyberspace can function as an external memory, a social collective in which knowledge and information are fragmented, disassembled and reassembled (Haraway 1997) by the forces of history and imagination. The possibility looms of a totalizing space, where forces of social control constrain and imaginaries of the "real" are internalized and externalized by media forces. It's also *simultaneously* a space where context and fragmentation are

experienced side by side (Lévy 2001). The Internet allows the individual to become "…armed with what appears to be almost random access to memories beyond belief and beyond limit" (Pfohl 1992:73).

Yet the hybrid form that Internet technologies take can be viewed as more than just a means of transmission or a storage space for data. The struggle to define what this new space, articulated by Haraway, Pfohl and others, actually *means* is also the focus of work by Manual Castells. Castells articulates the existence of a "network society" in which individuals and groups are linked by micro-electronic technological devices (Castells 2004). He articulates information technology as a defining characteristic of *network society*, fundamental to its nature. The implications of such a society and how it shapes and is shaped by the individuals that inhabit it is also of interest to Castells (2004). Yet, it is the work of an earlier thinker, Marshal McLuhan, that lays the groundwork for an analysis of the social implications of inhabiting a network society.

McLuhan articulates the relationship between techno-media and individual experience as one in which the technologies are essentially extensions of human senses and the social collective. "The new media and technologies by which we amplify and extend ourselves constitute a huge collective surgery carried out on the social body…" (McLuhan 1964:64). Digital media become the extension of our senses, the amplification of our voices, the repository for our external social and collective memory, all experienced with the sensations of seeing, hearing, knowing. This can be experienced via an ever-growing number of devices and technologies. The growth of the wireless device, the rise of the social networking site, the technological innovations in content delivery, all shape the means by which communication occurs.

Social theorist Donna Haraway further discusses the notion of a technological and social assemblage. The traditional vision of a cyborg is a human or animal body in which technological devices and objects are embedded, creating an amalgamation of flesh and technology (Haraway 1991). Haraway argues that the digital world is one in which technology and humanity function together, not only at the individual level, but also in the political and social arenas of contemporary popular culture (Haraway 1991). This results in a techno-social model of sociality, effectively a *network society* in which human interaction is managed through the use of technological devices. Today, the contemporary social world, particularly among young adults, has the character of a network society (Castells 2005). Within network society, the relationship between social structure, behavior, and meaning is mediated by information technologies (Castells et. al. 2004). Thus, not only structure, but also discourse and techno-social culture shape the experiences of individuals within contemporary network society.

Contemporary techno-social culture is a cyborg construction that includes both cultural discourse and technological development. This cultural form is characteristic of the emergence and development of a network society, which is a cyborg social environment. According to Castells network society is " the social structure resulting from the interaction between the new technological paradigm and social organization at large" (Castells 2005, 3). Castells builds his theory in conjunction with the work of other thinkers, such as Barry Wellman, who argues that societies are best understood as a *network of networks*. Focusing on the role and patterns of social ties, network analysis considers the ways in which social behavior is shaped by connections with other "nodes" which can be individuals or groups (Wellman 1988). The focus of this type of analysis is on the patterns that exist because people are part of social structures, rather than because of individual attributes or group memberships. The distinction between

groups and networks is complex and often the terms are used interchangeably. However, I suggest the following differentiation.

Groups are collections of individuals who share an identity or membership. Group members also interact with other group members more frequently than with individuals outside the group or share some kind of characteristic with other members of the group (Homans 1950, Freeman 2011). In contrast, networks focus on the interconnections and ties between individuals, regardless of shared identity or membership. Individuals may have connections to individuals who share membership with other groups. Networks are about webs of connection, rather than clusters of interaction. Thus, this kind of analysis examines social relations and networks, rather than individual attributes or bounded groups, as the primary means of understanding society (Marin and Wellman. 2011). Wellman also hints at the social psychological roots of this theory, acknowledging that behavior and action are influenced by the nature and experience of social "ties" (Wellman 1988). Both Wellman and Castells define society in terms of *interconnection* between individual persons.

For Castells, this network analysis is modified by the use of technology. In fact, he explains "a network society is a society whose social structure is made of networks powered by microelectronics-based information and communication technologies" (Castells 2004, 3). While earlier thinkers understand networking as a primarily social phenomenon, for Castells it is a cyborg social or *techno-social* phenomenon, which includes both social and technological elements. He further indicates that not only is networking a means of social organization, but also facilitates the emergence of a "network logic," the fundamental nature of the networked society. Network logic might be better understood as the techno social narrative that works to

explain and legitimate network society (Castells 2004). Such logics legitimate and idealize specific social actions rendered possible by technological developments.

New social possibilities are rendered viable, made possible by the miniaturization and transportability of communication devices, by the development of software based communities and the creation of virtual public space. For example, the widespread emergence of Internet enabled smartphones reshapes when and where people go online, allowing online activities to occur away from the desk. The development of Facebook encourages tech users to maintain an online presence using their legal name and photo, in contrast to early technologies that encouraged the development of anonymous identities. Technology provides the structures to allow the emergence of such social options (Lévy 2001) even as market forces shape the growth of the industry. The emergence of new social options, such as frequent access to social networks online and the virtual extension of the offline identity into the realm of interpersonal social interaction, may be even more transformative than those new social options in other areas.

Understanding Relationships

The vast body of research in a variety of disciplines that makes up the collective knowledge on "relationships" demonstrates the importance of relationships on the social world. Sociologically speaking, human relationships form the foundation of all other social processes (Simmel 1971) including those that function primarily within the psyche of the individual (Mead 1934). Therefore, the role and purpose of such relationships is an important area of research. Intimate relationships can provide emotional and practical support for people at all stages of social development (Bellotti 2008; Johnson et.al. 2009). However, a strong social network can be a buffer for stress and trauma, thus easing the difficulty of life changes. Individuals with strong social networks can rely on them for emotional, practical and even informational support

(Brissette et.al. 2002). For college students, who exist in a space of consistent transition, the need for intimate relationships and social supports can be particularly acute. In fact, research on the needs of college student has been surprisingly consistent in some ways (Friedlander 2007; Wise and King 2008; Parade 2010). Intimate relationships, particularly friendships, are essential to the success of college students. Both friends and family are relevant to the success of college students; however the perception of strong support from friends is more central than that from parents. In particular, the personal and emotional wellbeing of college students, at least in residential colleges, is closely tied to their own perceptions of support from friends and having a strong social network (Friedlander 2007). The research on the importance of intimate relationships among college students provides a solid basis for understanding the role of technology in the development and maintenance of such relationships.

Friendship and Peer Relationships

Generally, the focus of research on friendships has emphasized its relevance to children and adolescents. Some research exists on specific groups, such as retirees or the elderly. However research and theorizing on friendship among adults, even adults entering college, has been limited in comparison to that on young children (Hartup and Stevens 1997). Yet many researchers agree that emotional support is one key aspect of establishing the intimacy of friendships. In contrast to earlier theoretical expectations (Moss and Schwebel 1993) geographic distance isn't as relevant to the closeness or intimacy of friendships as it used to be (Johnson et.al. 2009). A second key aspect to friendships is the importance and relevance of practical support, which is sometimes shaped by geographic closeness.

Friendship, as defined by college age adults themselves, can be best understood as intimate by taking into account frequency of interaction, self-disclosure, trust and comfort.

Friendships function as pure relationships, which have an inherent fragility. These relationships can be terminated at will and only exist as long as the parties involved get substantial rewards (Giddens 1991). Formal cultural ties of commitment, such as family or legal obligations, do not hold a friendship together. This very informality provides the ability of friends to provide one another with key supports, without the formal obligations for support that come from more institutionalized relationships (Bellotti, 2008). This informality also contributes to the notion of friendship as a somewhat informal relationship (Allan 1998). The context in which friendships are developed shapes the nature and meaning of friendship as a relationship. Further, friendships can also play a significant role in the formation of identity on the individual level (Allan 1998). This has important implications for college students, since friendships and other interpersonal and intimate relationships that shape identity are formed within the context of college culture. Thus the rituals and expectations of behavior that are found in college culture impact the formation of the self and can result in long-term changes in individual and community behavior.

Sexual and Romantic Relationships

One recent transformation in social behavior and interpersonal relationships of interest to researchers occurs in the realm of sexual and dating behavior. Young single people, age 18-29, generally have fairly active sex lives, often with multiple partners. Taken together with research that claims that sexual relationships are central to college culture (Bogle 2008), this information suggests that sex and sexuality is an important part of understanding college student culture. Understanding the variation in meaning attached to sexuality both by individuals and by couples (Christopher 2000) demonstrates the limitations of attempting to universalize the cultural perceptions of love, sex, and relational intimacy. The complexity and diversity of meaning attached to this interdependent set of concepts helps to better understand the role of relationships,

both sexual and otherwise, in contemporary culture

The hookup, booty calls, casual sex, one-night stands. Whatever you call it, college students are doing it and researchers are interested in it. Casual sex and sexual exploration on college campuses is not a new phenomenon; but the explicit and public nature of the conversation around this topic is perhaps a bit more recent, and deeply controversial, even among researchers. Some researchers who focus on romantic relationships among college students note with alarm the growing trend toward casual hookups, or "friends with benefits" arrangements (Grello et.al. 2006). Research indicates that casual sex in a variety of forms, is common to college culture and may even be replacing more traditional "dating" arrangements as the primary means for the establishment of romantic relationships among college students. This is the case for both opposite sex (Bogle 2008) and same sex partners (Morgan and Thompson 2006); however, there are substantial differences based on gender. About half of all college students report "hooking-up," though this was less common with students of color (Owen et.al. 2010). Much of the research conducted on this topic defines hookup culture as a social problem that precludes the development of "healthy social relationships." Assumed by researchers to mean long-term committed dyads, which by failing to include members of the LGBT community in the research, seem to be heterosexual as well (Owen et.al. 2010, Grello et.al. 2006). It may be of more use to put aside the moral implications of changes in sexual norms, in order to consider how intimacy and romantic relationships are experienced within college student culture.

The hookup is not the only way in which relationships progress, simply one of the most common. Among certain subgroups other practices may occur, one of which is the "booty call" or "friends with benefits" model. In fact, the majority of casual sexual encounters experienced by

college students occurred between friends, both same sex (Morgan and Thompson 2006), and opposite sex partners (Jonason and Cason 2009). This form of relationship is simply a matter of casual occasional sex between friends within friend groups, which have little or no commitment on the part of either participant. Researchers estimate that about two-thirds of all casual sexual encounters between college students occur among friends (Grello et.al. 2006).

The "friends with benefits" model of romantic relationships is a compromise between the casual "hook-up" and the formal "dating" model of relationships. Individuals maintain friendships of varying emotional and practical closeness and occasionally request casual sexual encounters with friends. The likelihood of such relationships developing into committed long-term relationships is reasonably low, but not unheard of (Jonason and Cason 2009). The risks and benefits of such relationships are in some ways more complex than those provided by the dating or hook-up model. There is more likelihood of emotional entanglement, which can be both a risk and benefit, than in hook-up models.

The use of cell phones, texting and Facebook profiles as tools to organize and connect individuals for the purpose of sex is mentioned repeatedly in the research of sexual behavior scholars but has not been fully theorized. To me, one of the most interesting aspects of the "booty-call" model is its dependence on communication technologies to function. The use of cell phones, particularly texting, to arrange sexual encounters as well as engage in friendship work demonstrates the integration of technology into interpersonal relationships. Further, discussions surrounding casual sex and the symbolic legitimation of serious romantic relationships are common on Facebook. The body of literature that explores the idea of communication technologies as both aids and challenges to the work of intimate friendships and sexual relationships will be the focus of my contributions.

The Techno-mediation of Intimacy and Relationships

Academic work on intimacy and relationships provides this project with a foundation for understanding the role technology plays in the personal lives of college students. The concept of intimacy and its place and meaning in the social world appears in the work of a number of researchers and social theorists over the last century (Cooley 1908; Mead 1935; Simmel 1971; Moss and Schwebel 1993). The meaning of the concept of "intimacy" is itself up for debate; as well as the importance of social intimacy to the establishment of a relationship. Intimacy has been historically understood as a lack of distance or personal boundaries in interpersonal relationships. In the past intimacy was largely understood to be a matter of practicality, physicality and geography (Buhrmester and Wyndol 1987). Thus, intimacy was what developed between people who were physically proximate to one another in their daily lives. This is not to say that theories of intimacy lacked an emotional or cognitive element, since physical closeness let to shared experience and knowledge, and ultimately connection through exclusivity.

In more contemporary theory, the characteristics of what constitutes intimacy are in debate, yet they generally include commitment, affective closeness, cognitive closeness, physical closeness and mutuality (Moss and Schwebel 1993). For some intimacy is defined by its *function* in the social world, as a "…consensual validation of personal worth and creates the atmosphere in which mature sensitivity and caring," (Buhrmester and Wyndol 1987). More recently, the idea of intimacy has come to rely more on emotion and communication, becoming "… above all a matter of emotional communication, with others and with the self, in a context of interpersonal equality" (Giddens 1992:130). These redefinitions have had a substantial impact on the way in which some social processes are understood. Specifically, experience and definitions of privacy,

friendship and sexual relationships are transformed by the changes in how intimacy is understood and experienced.

Contemporary Forms of Intimacy

The social validation of romantic and family relationships has provided such relationships with a legitimate intimacy that sets them apart from "mere friendships" (Beck-Gernshiem 1998). Yet, changes in the social world in the last few decades have resulted in a reassessment of what constitutes an intimate relationship and resulted in the development of the idea of "pure relationships," which has emerged as a key idea within research on intimacy. Pure relationships are attached primarily to individual bodies and the intellectual self rather than being deeply embedded in social expectations and structures (Giddens 1991).

The fragility of the "pure relationship" as well as such changes in broader social trends has impacted the meaning and value attached to intimacy as a social construct. Yet, modern intimacy can be best understood by examining the relationships and social ties between the concepts of "self" and "social." Intimacy itself is grounded in the idea of a clear separation between the self, as well as those who are close to the self, emotionally, physically and/or psychically, and the "other" that is separated from the self by an imagined distance. The construction of a self/other dichotomy is deeply implicated in the meanings attached to intimacy, which is a perceived connectedness between the self and an "other" who is close to the self, at least imaginarily. Intimacy utilizes the language of proximity, such as the term "close," to describe the relation between the individual self and others. By tying the other closely to the self, in some ideological capacity, intimacy is achieved. This experience of intimacy requires not only an idea of an individual self, and a social other, but also an "imaginary of proximity" between the two concepts, by which the others can be categorized in relation to the self. Intimacy is part

of the interpersonal world for all age groups; however, it is particularly complex and difficult for those in early adulthood, as they struggle to redefine their relationships from childhood (Buhrmester and Wyndol 1987). College provides some of those in early adulthood with a very specific and influential context in which to work out those notions of intimacy and interpersonal relationships. My research will build upon this notion of intimacy as a qualitative condition that results not from geographic or physical connection but *interaction*, broadly defined.

Within the social world the importance of intimacy, of individual connection with the imagined other, through romance, through friendship, through kinship networks, is immense. Intimacy has generally been constructed as being about the private, informal social experience of small groups (Valentine 2006). The idea of technology as a tool to create intimacy or, conversely, as a potential threat to intimacy, is a common theme in studies of techno-mediated intimacy. It has been argued that the Internet is a place where individuals are separated from the natural world, isolated from the offline reality and from their real and more genuine relationships (Birkerts 1996, Winner 1996). Others have suggested the techno-mediated relationships, particularly romances and sexual relationships, can be understood as pathological. One strand of research focuses on Internet sex addictions where the use of pornography and/or cybersex in online relationships damage or replace "real" relationships (Griffiths 2001). These fantasies of a dangerous technological innovation are often countered by imaginaries of utopian relationships. The imaginary of a relationship free of social stigma in which participants can be more real with one another (Mckenna et. al. 2002) is central to this thinking. Fundamentally, the ideal of intimacy and relationship organization in contemporary society is rooted in social processes and reflexive constructions of the self. Within this construction, modern social forms have shaped and reshaped the social processes by which the self is constructed (Giddens 1991).

Techno-mediated connectivity does not function in isolation from social processes of power. Research on the role of power, social stratification and techno-mediated relationships has been of interest to some thinkers (Sharpe 1999, Mckenna et. al. 2002). Many of these research trajectories, however, use the idea of an online/offline dichotomy, which fails to fully describe the relevance of technology to interpersonal relationships. Thus, one important area in the examination of techno-mediated relationships focuses on the complex relationship between online and offline forms of communication and social interaction. One thinker explains his relationship with technology and social marginalization.

> I'm carrying trauma into cyberspace- violent gestures, a fractured soul, short fuses, dreams of revenge.... All of this confusion is accompanying me into cyberspace; every indignity and humiliation, every anger and suspicion" (Hemphill qtd in Sharpe 1999).

This rejection of a clear separation between online and offline experience is perhaps one of the most important areas of research in the analysis of computer mediated relationships. Yet, the focus of the majority of research in the field has been on online relationships as separate from, a threat to, or a replacement for, offline inactions. Thus a major gap in existing research surrounding Internet technology mediated relationships is the failure to examine the complex relationships that are mediated by Internet based communication technologies, yet do not exist exclusively online or offline. Such relationships exist between family members, friends and romantic partners, and are mediated through communication technologies including: Internet blogs, chats and social networking sites, accessed by smartphones, desktops and laptops. College students are one of the groups that have been most dramatically impacted by the rise of the techno-mediated devices as mediums for social interaction. Yet, only a small amount of such work exists and themes are still emerging in the literature.

Despite changes in the way in which college age adults use technology, face-to-face

communication is still the primary mode of communication among college students (Baym 2004) though for some people, in particular those with anxiety or social discomfort, technological mediation provides a sense of support and control in interpersonal relationships (Stevens 2007). Rather than replacing face-to-face communication in interpersonal relationships, technological connectivity acts as supplement to other forms of social interaction.

Perhaps it is the *why* of Internet behavior, that most vexes researchers. Beyond merely asking what technology does in relation to communication, the question of why provides a focus for research. The research on this topic is inconclusive. Certainly, it seems the maintaining extended social networks seems to plays a role (Ellison et.al. 2007). Further, the establishment and continuance of community among social groups functions as a means to encourage Internet users to go online (Boyd 2006, Marshall 2007). Additionally, the nature of relationships, and expectations of how relationships are conducted, seem to be relevant (Baym 2007). Issues of entertainment, status, participation and knowledge all seem to be relevant to the discussion on the "why' of techno-mediated relationships (Park et.al. 2009).

Bringing together our understanding of the role of technology in communication practices and our knowledge of interpersonal relationships among college aged adults, has the potential to provide a clearer understanding of contemporary social relationships. The nature and meanings that college students attach to the use of digital technologies for communication and techno-mediated relationships are still somewhat unclear. This project will contribute to the ongoing discussions on the lived experiences of college students, the role of techno-mediated communication in society, and the changing meanings of intimacy, privacy, the self and social tied to such issues. In order do this, it is necessary to discuss the theoretical framework that guides my questions and my interpretations of the data.

Theoretical Frames: Technology, Social Psychology and Communication

The theoretical framework of this project draws together classical sociological traditions of constructivism and the role of communication in establishing social structures and relations with the contemporary practices of techno-mediated communication. I also explore the conceptual apparatus surrounding the interrelated and networked concepts of self, identity and the social. The methodological work of George Herbert Mead is rooted in the constructivist and interpretive frameworks of sociology. He argues that human actions are shaped, controlled and negotiated by the meanings that individuals, who Mead refers to as actors, give to both actions themselves and to the context in which they occur. Mead suggests that these symbolic and ideological meanings are established by the social interactions between individual actors (Mead 1934). This idea provides both a theoretical and methodological framework for sociological analysis.

Mead uses a concept he called the "generalized other" to explain how interactions between actors result in the establishment of meaning. This concept is an elaboration of the "looking glass self" which is the theory that the self undergoes a process of fantasized judgment in relation to social identity (Cooley 1998). An individual imagines how he or she looks to others, imagines that others are making judgments about them, and then modifies his or her behavior based on this imagined judgment (Cooley 1998). Meads' "generalized other" extends this concept by theorizing a psychological construct that suggests the self-knowledge is based on feedback from others and more importantly from the "generalized other" which is the aggregation of feedback, real and fantasized, about the self. Symbolic interactionism is a social psychological tradition that embraces the concept of "…individual actors as reflexive, purposive creators of their own social reality" (Schwandt 1994:124). In symbolic interactionism, the self

and social are intertwined, a mutually constitutive and interdependent space where "… the individual is not separateable from the human whole, but a living member of it, deriving his life from the whole through social and hereditary transmission as truly as if men were literally one body" (Cooley 1998:131). Cooley presents a theory in which these concepts are not merely interconnected on some superficial level, but deeply and powerfully intimate, in what he calls an "organic relation" (1998:131)

Hubert Blumer, a student of Mead, expands upon and more clearly articulates a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of symbolic interactionism. Blumer sums up Mead's basic premise with three key concepts. First that "Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things" (Blumer 1969:3). Secondly that "The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others and the society." And finally that "These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters" (Blumer 1969:4). Thus, Blumer argues that people respond to each other's actions based on the meanings that each individual assigns to both their own actions, and the actions of others. These meanings are developed, generated, nuanced, and reinforced through those very same interactions that are mediated by symbolic meanings. These interactions are themselves shaped by the communicative processes of technology, image and symbol. Therefore, the self and social exist in a constant state of reflexivity, creating one another. This occurs, in part, because abstract ideas about what the self and the social are and how they function come from both social world and from the self (Giddens 1991). For Giddens, the self and social are abstractions that function somewhat independently but are also deeply rooted in processes of communication. Technologies of communication, including language and media, are spaces in

which self and social are embedded and negotiated. This notion of meanings is take up by communication researcher Marshal McLuhan.

McLuhan makes the explicit argument that the means of transmission, the very medium of communication that messages go through, transforms and reshapes the message received (McLuhan 1964). The messages we send shape the social world and the messages we receive and use to shape our self are in turned shaped by the means by which they are transmitted. In shaping the social world via micro-electronics and technologically based communication practices, the creation of a network society is possible. Network society is the result of human interaction via technological means and also the framework within which that interaction occurs (Castells 2004). Yet, the relationship between technology, the self and social for Castells and McLuhan is just as deeply interdependent as the relationship between the self and social is for Mead. The addition of technological intervention in the communication that occurs between the self and social shapes both the society and the individual. For Mead, the relationship between the self and the social is interdependent, with a sense of self that is shaped by messages sent by the social world and the social world, in turn, shaped by the individual selves of members of the society. For Castells and McLuhan, the interdependence of the self and the social is nuanced by the medium of communication through which these messages are sent. Still, the self is shaped by the social world and vice versa, however, now the nature of the messages are changed by the medium through which they are sent. The medium of technology sends an additional message in addition to the content of any given message (McLuhan 1964).

McLuhan addresses the issue of the technological social self. Rooted in the idea of a social prosthesis, communication technologies function as an extension of the senses (McLuhan 1964) to the point at which the dichotomy between the self and the other fractures. As noted

earlier in the discussion, Mead's "generalized other" and Cooley's "looking glass self" act as fantasy arbiters, who send and receive messages via mediums of technology, establishing social scripts to be acted out by the individual self. Such social scripts are shaped by the nature and structure of the technology itself. Internet technology is means of transmission, a social carrier of content delivered. Additional information is passed on as the message is shaped by the characteristics of the medium itself (McLuhan 1964).

Technology can send messages between individuals, and shape experience by transmitting both simple content and complex meaning associated with the means of transmission. For example, for participants in this study, the use of text messaged conversations throughout the day acted as means to reinforce relationship commitment even if the content of the message was not about commitment. Further, commitment was also communicated by linking two Facebook pages together using the "in a relationship" feature that I will discuss elsewhere in this work. Thus the structures of Internet technologies not only provide conditions from which social options can arise, such as frequent contact or public proclamations of relationship status but, in doing so, shape the way that options are communicated and structured. We see a challenge to the idea of a separation between social interaction and technologically mediated communication as they make "…thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines" (Haraway 1991: 152). Technology then functions as a partner for embodied physical communications, and a socially constructed assemblage of symbolic meanings.

McLuhan's argument, that the medium of the communication impacts the nature of the message, suggests that face-to-face communication and technology both function as symbolic

mediums through which communication flows. This notion is central to understanding network logic, in which technological developments and social expectations influence one another. In exploring the relationship between deeply interconnected mediums, I suggest that the mediums function together as a set of techno-social processes that have characteristics of both face-to-face and technologically mediated communication mediums as well as characteristics that are unique to the hybrid medium. Thus the relationships, which are connected by techno-social communication mediums, are shaped by the messages within the medium, and as such may potentially have characteristics that are unique to that medium. Thus, the relationships themselves and the "self" built on such relationships and communication processes also have unique characteristics. The goal of this work is to explore the relationships and self-perceptions built through processes of symbolic interactionism, using a techno-social medium that impacts the nature of communication and sociality. I will utilize McLuhan's notion that the nature of communication shapes the messages sent between the self and the social, thus impacting both aspects of social existence. Further, Castells argues that networked and Internet technologies share a unique character. This unique character is evidenced in the messages sent between individuals and society in a network society.

This work expands the existing research on interpersonal relationships and technology, as well as addresses the importance of techno-mediation in online and offline contexts. I do this by focusing my exploration on the experiences of college students, for whom Internet communication technologies are historically and institutionally supported. For this group technology is not "new" and there seems to be no clear ideological separation between online and offline identities or representations. Technological innovation, in the forms of Internet accessible wireless devices, has detached the experience of accessing the Internet from static

location. Wireless networks and cellular data transmission have made the Internet accessible from just about everywhere. What implication does this have for technology users and contemporary society?

In order to better understand this question, I first define Internet based communication technologies as those technologies that allow for connections to Internet based services such as email and social networking sites. Such devices might include laptop and desktop computers and web enabled wireless devices as a means to expand the possibilities for social interactions and relationships. This expansion is based on, and guided by, the structural components of the technologies. Access to the Internet as a tool and an environment is provided by devices, at first portals to the "net" or the "web" in the form of desktop computers, located in discrete physical spaces that exist separately from the body. Logging on and dialing up provide a metaphorical doorway through which individuals gained access to technology. Yet, as the structure of technology changed, becoming smaller and more portable as cellular technologies and wireless networks came into being, new experiences were born (Ballagas et.al. 2006; White 2010). No longer a portal to a new world set aside from daily life, Internet devices have become attached to the body, carried in pockets and bags, ready at any moment to extend their virtual eyes and ears into the bulk of human collective memory. These devices are always poised to amplify the virtual voice into the theatre of the network site, or the public/private conversation of the discussion board. Thus the processes of communication that are used as part of an embodied experience of communication are techno-organic, containing both technological components of the device and organic component of the user. Further, interpersonal relationships have the potential to be understood as *techno-social*, in that the communication mediums by which they are established and maintained are both social and technological. What roles these techno-social

processes have in establishing and understanding relationships and the self is a question I explore throughout this project.

Chapter Overviews

In order to explore these complex questions I cover a great deal of intellectual terrain in the following chapters. The breadth of this analysis is due, in part, to the diversity of experiences participants shared with me. However, I also engage in specific analysis of individual experience in order to effectively contextualize it within the emerging context of a techno-social world. The integration of technological and embodied forms of communication and interaction into a deeply interdependent nexus of experience is central to participants. This hybrid techno-social experience is a key element in understanding the methodological decisions I articulate in the following chapter. Chapter two includes an in-depth discussion of my methodological philosophy, my data collection methods and the ethical considerations of this project. I also articulate the need to use multi-modal forms of analysis to approach the multi-modal techno-social world participants inhabit and create. I examine some of the challenges and benefits of using the emerging method of online ethnography in conjunction with more "traditional" qualitative ethnographic research.

In Chapter three I focus on examining the nature and origin of contemporary technological architectures, or integrated systems of technology, in shaping society. Specifically by arguing that one of the characteristics of network society, as defined by Castells (2004), is the emergence of social interaction that is shaped by technological architectures. This research provides some analysis on the role that technology plays in contemporary social interaction among participants. I suggest that one characteristic of network society is the importance of

architectures of emerging technologies. I discuss how these technologies produce new ways of interacting in society, such as faster and more frequent contact with peers via text messaging and the maintenance of extensive social networks via social media. This emerging set of social expectations is increasingly accepted among college students. I then consider how these changing social expectations of network society embraced by many college age participants, can cause conflict with social groups who hold alternate ideals about appropriate technology use. For the participants in the project, such conflict is perceived as largely intergenerational. I wrap up with a discussion of how corporatized notions of speed and efficiency as social values, which are increasingly becoming a part of interpersonal relationships as well as professional, is both made more possible by technology and in turn drives technological development. I consider the construction of intimate social relationships between peers, as they are shaped by the discourse of rationality. This set of narratives emerges from the corporatization of social values emerging in tandem with the rise of network society.

In Chapter four I work to unpack one of the most persistent issues surrounding technology use among young adults, experiences of connectivity. Popular perception of technology use among this age group is that their use of technology separates them from society. Researchers and laypersons alike articulate a narrative of technology use that suggests technology is damaging to social skills and interpersonal relationships (Sanders et.al 2000; Reid 2005; Hampton et.al. 2009). I argue that rather than isolation, individuals in this study demonstrate hyper-connectivity. This hyper-connectivity is such that near constant access to communication with others is considered the norm. Participants contact others via text or by posting on Facebook dozens or even hundreds of times per day. This has resulted in a perception of near constant availability. Even among participants who only text or post a few times a day,

the idea that such contacts are always *possible*, and thus they are always potentially connected with others is central to their understanding of social convention. Being disconnected or going "offline" is met largely with fear and discomfort. This sense of being always available is central to social interactions, and it increasingly shapes social behavior. For example, the practice of doing background research via social media has become a normal part of relationships among participants. Furthermore, participants utilize social media as a tool to legitimate, manage and shape intimate sexual and romantic relationships. In this chapter, I challenge the notion that college student technology use is destructive to relationships, and suggest that the increased connectivity made possible by technology has shifted the very nature of relationships for this group.

Finally, in Chapter five, I discuss how changes in social behavior and expectations shaped by technological innovation transform the experience and meanings behind such concepts as intimacy and privacy. I argue that we are in the midst of a paradigmatic shift in the way in which public and private behavior are understood. Changes in information and communication technology use have transformed the meaning of intimacy as a social condition. Privacy is increasingly about the ability to manage information about the self, rather than existing primarily by limiting information about the self. This redefinition of privacy also shapes the nature of intimacy. Intimacy has historically been a closeness tied to special knowledge, geographic connections, physicality and commitment (Buhrmester and Wyndol 1987; Moss and Schwebel 1993). An emerging narrative of intimacy and privacy suggests that both concepts are taking on new characteristics and being redefined. This chapter goes on to consider one of the most controversial aspects of Internet technology in relation to issues of intimacy and privacy, that of

online “performance” of the self. Ideas about the body and intimacy shape the ways in which individuals define, access and manage information about themselves and others.

Based on the experiences and voices of participants in this study, themes of intimacy, connectivity, and techno-social expectation emerged as central to their experience. This work attempts to theorize the possible implications of a social and cultural shift, a paradigmatic watershed moment in the history of the information revolution, on the intimate relationships and daily lives of the first generation of digital natives (Palfrey and Gasser 2008) as they make the transition to adulthood. Among those implications, the issue of intimacy and connectivity arose again and again, as participants struggled to navigate, define, articulate and rearticulate the concepts. Connectivity and its meaning(s) and expressions are of central concern to participants and therefore to this project.

Chapter Two
Techno-social Immersion: Understanding Methods in a Hybrid Social Environment

During a recent to trip to a sociological conference, I found myself at a noodle bar sitting next to a fellow sociologist. As is often the case, talk turned to our respective research areas and I explained my project to him. After a moment of silence he said to me, "It's important, I get that, I see it in my classes, your work is exciting and interesting…but I couldn't do it. You can do it; because you are young and you get it…I just don't get it. I don't get it at all." I decided to begin this section on methods with this experience because I want to talk a bit about the challenges inherent in conducting research on emerging technologies, among them the degree to which one "gets" the nature of the research and the culture in which it exists.

While this issue of insider/outsider identity, and the immersion in culturally specific ideas that being an insider engenders, is key in any research, it takes on a very interesting dimension here. Even as researchers and laypeople alike profess not to "get" technology, they remain deeply confident in their ability to understand the meanings behind its use (Palfrey and Gasser 2008). One reason my conversation in the noodle bar was so memorable to me was that it was an acknowledgement of outsider status, which was not immediately followed by a discussion on the value and meaning of technology and youth culture. More often conversation around this research is similar to a workshop I attended, where the speaker informed me that while he did not use any social media technologies himself, or have any clear understanding of those who do, he was sure that it was resulting in the degradation of communication skills among young people. The presumption that we, as a society, 'get' the experience of youth culture and the meanings behind technology is similar to the way researchers can sometimes presume 'insider' knowledge without fully addressing social difference (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002). As a researcher, I

was forced to grapple with the question of how my own ability to "get it" functioned within the field.

The foundational perceptions of feminist and traditional qualitative methods required that I work through questions of difference and power as I research. In doing so, I was able to better acknowledge the difficulties in researching youth culture. While privileged in many ways, my participants were also often faced with a rejection of their status as adults. Many referred to themselves as "kids" and to others, including myself, as "adults." This child/adult dynamic forced me to acknowledge the power imbalance in my research. In order to address this issue, I worked hard to find methods of data collection and analysis that allowed for participants to describe and interpret their own experiences and social world (Mann and Stewart 2000). I rely heavily on interview data in this project, for precisely that reason. At times, my evaluation of observed behavior was in contrast to the lived experiences of my participants. Their interpretations of their own experience didn't match my interpretations of their behavior. Effectively, I was not "getting it." To address this issue, I turned to the work of feminist and qualitative methodologists who advise me to "go to the people" (Taylor and Bogdan 1998) or to rely on the subjective knowledge of participants. My research techniques reflect my commitment to such knowledge.

This section will discuss the specific research techniques used in my study of technology and college student culture at a large private university on the East Coast. I also analyze my engagement with dynamics of power in research contexts. I will outline my data collection methods and analysis techniques, and an overview of the settings in which research was conducted. My methods of data collection are rooted in philosophies where the ultimate goal is to "get it." Not exclusively through the process of analysis, but also the practice of *listening* and

allowing the participants to share their experiences. In order to effectively engage in this form of research it is very important to acknowledge and consider both ethical issues as my own situated identity within the project. Therefore, I also provide a discussion of ethical considerations and examine my own identity as a researcher within the context of this project. I will then wrap up this section by providing a brief chapter overview of findings of this work.

Qualitative Paradigms and "Getting It"

This question of how much I "get it" was also of some concern to participants. At several points during my interviews, participants paused for a moment in their discussion to "check" my knowledge, to confirm my understanding because, as one student, Ruth, notes, "older people don't always get it." Another participant, Jake, liked to check in and make sure of my understanding.

> You don't just do random friending. It's part of the whole friendship process but not just well random online friending I guess. Does that make sense?

Even as Jake is explaining the "how to" of friendship, he is also acutely conscious that I am an outsider in this situation, someone who may not get it. Another participant, Eric, was also concerned about my perceived lack of knowledge as he made a careful effort to check my knowledge throughout the interview, asking, "Do you know about…" and "do you get that" repeatedly. When I joked about the care he was taking in confirming my knowledge he explained that it was hard for "adults to understand things, sometimes." We discussed what it was adults found so hard to understand. What emerged from the conversation was a two-pronged issue. First, that the devices and new technologies used routinely by peers were often new and awkward in the hands of "older people," and, as a result, sometimes it was hard to know if they understood the basic functionality of devices. As I became more familiar with the technologies

college students used, I grew more confident in the language of technology and was over time able to demonstrate that I "got" the basics. Conducting research on the role of technology requires a specific set of skills, including the ability to engage directly in the digital spaces in which social life is conducted, and to understand or be willing to learn the language of technology. In this, I was supported by the qualitative practice of "first hand participation in some initially unfamiliar social world and the production of written accounts of that world by drawing upon such participation" (Emerson et.al 1995:1).

The second concern that Jake presented to me was a bit more complex. Essentially, it was that "older people" don't always get it because they don't understand the meanings and values that participants attach to technology, or as Eric explains, "they don't take it seriously, or see it as important." Encouraging participants to see me as someone who not only understood the technology, but also accepted its importance in their lives, was more of a challenge. In order to do this, I had to articulate to myself, and at times, to others, why I saw technology use as something important. I also had to do this without framing my interest in it as a primarily pathological behavior, which has been the contention of some researchers and laypeople alike (Kandell 1998; Young and Rogers 1998; Griffiths 2001; Nalwa and Anand 2003). I had to articulate, specifically to participants, that my research goal was not to identify their techno-social behaviors as abnormal, rude or disrespectful, but as *important*.

To support my own understanding of this importance, I turned to traditions of social psychology and interpretative methods in social research. Theoretically, social psychology works to explore the relationship between individual attitudes, feelings and actions and social expectations that are manifested by the presence, real or imagined, of others (Allport 1985). Within this framework of a relationship between the self, others and imagined others, I relied on

interpretative methods to explore the ways in which college students integrate technologically mediated communication into their interpersonal relationships and daily lives. Utilizing qualitative traditions provided me with an opportunity to actively participate in the construction and production of meaning via a reflexive participation in the social world (Schwandt 1994), thus providing a more comprehensive understanding of the social world.

I also worked to develop research questions that took into account the experiences and self-reflexive analysis of participants. I tried to focus on questions that were not only intellectually interesting and relevant to academic work in this area, but also to participants themselves. Further, while I had initially developed questions based on scholarly research, I began to rearticulate them after I entered the field and got a better understanding of participants' lives. Thus, this project focuses on how students integrate technological communication use into their social lives, and considers new possibilities for social interactions due to the use of such technology. I begin by considering not only what communication technology *means*, but also what the structure of communication technology makes *possible*.

Bringing it Together: Multi-modal Data Collection and Analysis

Internet research has largely been limited to the use of online methods in research design and data collection (Garcia et.al. 2009). While online only methods have been effective in many cases, my project is situated in the blurred and indistinct spaces between online and offline experiences. In order to explore this terrain, I needed to design a project that was different from both online only and offline only research models. Therefore, I selected a multi-modal ethnographic research design that provided access to information and narrative constructions in both online and offline contexts. Multi-modal ethnographies of the Internet incorporate multiple data collection techniques to observe phenomena that have both online and offline components

(Garcia et.al. 2009). The design of this project focused on gathering interview and observation data using ethnographic data collection techniques to gain information about everyday activities, opinions, experiences and expectations of participants. Specifically, I used traditional face-to-face interviews as the primary source of my data, then supplemented my data set with online participant observation data collection methods. This process allowed me to most effectively examine the attitudes, feelings, behavior and experiences of participants.

Interview

For me, interview is both a method and methodology; it is a means to collect data, yet it also conveys the philosophy and methodology of qualitative research. The methodology also makes clear that qualitative researchers value the knowledge that their participants hold. This tradition of valuing embedded knowledge is central to qualitative research offline and equally useful in the examination of new communication technologies. Based on these values, I employ research methods that acknowledge the expertise of my research participants, and reject a researcher/participant relationship that undermines the value of individual experiences. I use interview techniques that provide my participants the opportunity to engage in an exchange of knowledge, a conversation in which their own knowledge is valued and shared but not extracted.

Part of this process was encouraging participants to analyze their own experience, and provide insight and reflexive consideration of their own knowledges. Some participants were more interested in this than others…for example one participant Owen, assesses his own experience with technology as "schizophrenic," noting that on one hand;

> …it's a pair of eyes on my life, and how many eyes do I need? You know, how many people do I need to, like, scrutinize my every Internet action. I just don't need it….If they're scrutinizing my life, chance are, they're getting all the wrong messages. They're not actually getting the whole picture, because they're not around.

Yet on the other, online relationships in the right contexts can be:

> …incredibly satisfying and enlightening and actually two of the people are, actually, the only two Facebook friends I have that I've never met in real life; and I actually value them because I've worked with them for so long…and you can value those connections, personally, very, very much.

The ability to not only gather information about behavior, but to also gain insight through the meanings and analysis expressed by participants is a strength in qualitative work. If methodology is most appropriately defined as "…the way in which we approach problems and seek answers" (Taylor and Bogdan 1998:3), then it is a key component that makes research specifically qualitative.

For this project, my primary data source is semi-structured interviews with research participants. I was able to gain access to potential participants through a variety of recruitment efforts including social networks, public announcements in classrooms and email recruitments asking for volunteers. The data provided through interviews for this project forms the core of my findings and shapes my conclusions. I also collected demographic data for my participants, including age, college major, race, religion, sexual orientation and economic data through the use of a brief demographic survey (Appendix A). In addition to this data, I selected seven individuals from my sample who agreed to have me follow their "Wall" postings on Facebook over the course of several months. The ethnographic data I collected provides supplementary insight into the experiences of college students and technology. This research has provided me with the opportunity to discuss specific practices and experiences in order to better understand both what participants *do* and also what *meanings* they attach to their experiences. My use of interview techniques provided not only a sense of how relationships are conducted, but also how they are understood and valued by participants.

As noted above, much of my data is the result of informal semi-structured interviews, which allowed me to discuss experience, practice and feelings with participants. I had initially decided to focus on Internet based environments, such as social media and online communities. However, once I began my interviews I quickly discovered that I was unable to separate online and offline experiences, or as one participant, Jake, noted "you can't talk about college life without talking about texting and Facebook." So rather than focusing on online practices and behaviors, my interviews quickly became discussions about social life and the way technology mattered to college students. I began by trying to discuss topics such as: how relationships are established and maintained, how communication and connections are understood and imagined. Yet my participants quickly showed me what really mattered; how technology is experienced, interpreted and internalized by individuals and by peers. How relationships are reshaped and reformed through emerging experiences that integrate both face to face and online communication into a messy, deeply interconnected whole.

The interviews themselves were about 45 to 90 minutes long. I initially established contact with participants and conducted interviews primarily by making announcements of the project in classes from a variety of disciplines (See Appendix A). I next provided some basic information on the topic of the study and invited students to sign up with their email address for more information if they were interested. I then emailed the students relevant information, including a project description letter and a copy of the consent form (See Appendix B). Potential participants were given from a few days to a week to consider, then I emailed them again and if they agreed to participate, set up an interview time and date. Participants had considerable freedom in deciding both date and location of the interview, in order to minimize any discomfort. I collected both demographic information and signed consent forms before I began my

interviews. When I began my research I had an interview guide, which evolved throughout the project. By the end of the discussion, the guide acted more as a list of topics than a collection of specific questions, as participants often took the discussion in new and unexpected directions.

Participant Observation

However fruitful my interview research has been, it only tells part of the story. My own understanding of techno-social practices and the devices and mediums through which communication flows, was limited by my own age and experience. Therefore, it was essential for this project to observe participants in the settings in which techno-mediated communication occurred. For this population that means one primary location, Facebook. So in order to better understand the stories being told to me via interview, I engaged in online ethnographic participant observation. I began the process by asking participants for permission to access their online social activities. After getting permission both verbally and by being accepted as a friend to online profiles, or being "Friended," I was able to observe online interactions and behaviors, while maintaining a set of fieldnotes in order to gather data.

I followed seven participants online over the course of four months, generating several hundred pages of postings and fieldnotes. At the end of about half of my interviews I asked the interviewee for permission to follow them on Facebook. I explained the process of online observation and promised confidentiality. I decided to ask my participants based primarily on how comfortable they appeared to be during the interview. Several declined and a few more failed to respond to my Facebook friend request. For those who did participate, I maximize confidentiality by discussing online material only through the use of my fieldnotes, and thus no explicit quotations are used. I focused on observing online interactions and behaviors, while maintaining a set of fieldnotes in order to gather data and keep "notes" about both my

observations and experiences. Privacy protected sources require explicit permission for access from content providers; therefore they are not fully indexed by search engines and cannot be accessed via web browsers such as Google. However, for the purpose of this project, social network information is kept confidential. In order to maximize confidentiality, I only provide limited paraphrasing to minimize the chances of confidentiality breaches.

Sampling and Data Analysis

Ultimately, my participants are from a diverse set of race, gender, sexuality and religious backgrounds; specific information is noted in Appendix A. However, despite actively seeking out participants from different class backgrounds, participants from the poor and working class are underrepresented in comparison to the general public, though fairly similar to the representation in the private university where this study was conducted. I discuss this limitation in more detail in the final chapter of this work. When data collection was successfully completed I had conducted 34 semi-structured interviews that averaged just over one hour. A small subset of those thirty-three interviews was only partially transcribed, as due to ambient noise or, in one case, a technology failure making a recording unintelligible, though those participants are included in this study.

I began my data analysis with the intention of using predefined codes gleaned from the literature. I quickly discovered that the use of a preexisting "codebook" was too limiting, so I switched to a more general analytic approach (Bogdan and Taylor 1998). I revisited the handful of interviews that I had "coded" and tried an "open coding process" (Strauss and Corbin 1990). I simply did a close read and added brief tags or descriptors to ideas and concepts that I found interesting or important using the "comment" function in my word processor. I used the same method with both interviews and fieldnotes. When I completed a section, I went through and

made a list of comments for each interview. Once I completed my coding, I went back over my lists and generated general categories. Some of these categories were not fully developed and may be areas for further research. Other groupings became the foundation of sections within this dissertation.

Location: Online and Offline

When considering the setting of my research it is important to engage with it on two fronts. First, I will discuss the university environment that participants inhabit. I specifically touch on the demographics of Eastern University, a large private university in the eastern United States. Secondly, it is necessary to discuss the digital setting in which techno-social practices occur. I will address both the structural aspects of the technology and contemporary trends in the use of social media and mobile Internet technologies.

Eastern University

The university is situated in a mid-sized city with a population of about 150,000 (Eastern City Fact Sheet 2010). The University enrolls about 20,500 total students, about 13,500 of which are undergraduates (Eastern University Facts 2010-2011). Minority students represent a bit less than a quarter of all students at EU, including 7.3 percent African Americans; 7.6 percent Asian Americans; 6.5 percent Hispanics; 0.6 percent Native Americans; and 1.1 percent of two or more races[1] (Eastern University Facts 2010-2011).

Full-time tuition for undergraduate students is $34,970 per year with an estimated cost of attendance of $53,790 per year (Eastern University "Cost of Attendance" 2011-12). Eastern University doesn't indicate the average income or class background of students, though they do

[1] Eastern University does not report a racial breakdown for international students, but does note that they represent 10% of the student population. I was unable to locate information about the relationship between the racial breakdown provided above an international student populations.

acknowledge that about 80% of students get some form of financial aid, with a focus on "middle-income" family support. However, at EU cost of attendance is more than twice the national average (U.S. Department of Education 2011). The combination of the high cost of attendance and the need to provide support to middle income families suggests a high number of students from middle and upper class backgrounds, reflective of overall trends in private higher education (Astin 1998).

One consequence of this environment for this project, is that many students have economic privilege that allows them to quickly and frequently replace or update technological devices as needed. Thus pressures to engage with technology from peers generally fail to consider the economic realities of owning mobile devices. As a result, as one of the few students from a working class background I spoke with said, "it's necessary, you gotta make do, get what you need to be able to stay in touch, because without it you are just out of luck." The economic issues tied up in the use of Internet technology among college students are immense. One area for future study is to focus directly on their role in contemporary behavior. While this study focuses on other issues, future research will explore this issue in more depth. In this work, I will consider how those who are economically privileged use technologies to craft a social world that relies on technology. This work will explore the details of contemporary social worlds of technological privilege and consider how those who *have* technology shape and are shaped by the integration of that technology into everyday life.

Digital Settings

Perhaps the most socially transformative communication technology to emerge in the last few decades is the Internet. Yet, despite its widespread use, understanding exactly what the Internet is may be a difficult task. In attempting to define the nature of the Internet, thinkers

have employed a wide variety of frameworks. However, there are basically two key terms that are used by laypeople, social scientists and others interested in studying the online aspects of new communication technologies: the Internet and the World Wide Web. Though in general the terms are interchangeable, for those who are interested in Internet studies some degree of specificity is useful. At the most basic level, the *Internet* is "an almost global network connection to millions of computers. Using a number of agreed upon formats, users are able to transfer data from one computer to another" (Thurlow et. al 2004:28). Generally speaking, the term is used interchangeably with World Wide Web, however the WWW is more specifically the set of software programs that run on the hardware based Internet and provide access and structure for shared data. So, the Internet is the interconnection of hardware and the Web is the collection of software components that run it (Thurlow et. al 2004, Bakardjieva 2004). For the purpose of this project, I will use the term Internet, to refer to the combination of hardware and software.

According to extensive data collected by national research think tank, the Pew Institute for American Life, the Internet is accessible to about 28.7% of the world population and about 80% of U.S. adults (Miniwatts 2010, Pew 2011)[2]. According to a study conducted in 2010, the use of cellular phones is even more common with cell use rates at 76% worldwide and higher in the United States (International Telecommunications Union, 2010). Smartphones, or Internet enabled cellular phones are the most popular, with about almost half of US cell owners having a smartphone. Rates among young adults are nearly twice the national average (Smith 2011). However, income levels impact usage rates, as households below $30,000 per year have lower

[2] Data provided from the Pew Internet and American Life Project and the International Telecommunications Union are nationally or globally representative. Pew Internet provides both summative and raw data for national surveys in the form of databases, reports and updating charts. Please notes that some Pew data comes in the form of reports presented by Pew employees and are cited using authors names.

smartphone ownership rates, around 22% (Smith 2011). In part, this may be due to the high cost of smartphones. According to recent research from the technology insider journal C-Net, the cost of smartphones varies a great deal. The average cost of a monthly data plan in the US ranges from 59.99-79.99 /mo for a limited plan to 74.99-119.99 for an unlimited bundle (Lee 2011). The cost of the phones varies a great deal, generally falling between $19.99 to over $500.

Among college age adults in the US, usage of cellular phones is about 95% (ITU 2010, Pew 2011). Based on these numbers, it should come as no surprise that the use of the Internet and cellular phones are important components in the daily life of college students. These devices are tied to social and cultural developments that have had huge impacts on everything from politics to industry to interpersonal interactions. They have also allowed for the development of two of the most transformative communication practices to emerge in the last decade, social networking sites and text messaging. With nearly 80% of cell users also using text, and a global rate of about 200,000 texts per second, this phenomenon has become a national obsession (ITU 2010).

Additionally, the rise of social media sites that use "profiles" or "accounts" to allow users to connect to one another and communicate has allowed online social networking to become part of contemporary youth culture. Users can communicate directly through textual communication programs such as instant messaging or email. Or they may connect and communicate with others both by displaying information about or images of themselves on profile pages.[3] Today,

[3] Profile pages on Facebook generally include some combination of the following information: basic information such as current city, hometown, gender, birthday, educational level, profession, spoken languages and brief self-description. It may also include: photos, information about friends and family, romantic relationship status, current and past education and work, religion and political views, entertainment interests, sports, other activities and interests and contact information. Pages also include an area called the "Wall" where the profile user can post current comments about their life, and where friends can post direct comments. Also

Facebook is the most widely used social network site in the world and one of the largest websites in existence (Kirkpatrick 2010). In 2011, Facebook had about 600 million active users and allows those users to build profiles, connect with others, post images and videos, and more (Carlson 2011). Initially available only to college students, Facebook has been available for several years, yet is still widely used by college students (Kirkpatrick 2010).

In fact, technology use among my participants generally reflected the overall trends of college students. According to research conducted by Pew Internet in 2010, 98% of undergraduate students at four-year schools consider themselves "Internet users" (Pew 2010). All of the students who participated in my study claimed to use the Internet regularly. The use of the term "regular" is self-defined, but when pressed participants suggested they were referring to daily use. In addition, 86% of undergraduates, 78% of community college students and 88% of non-students age 18-24 use social networking sites such as Facebook (Smith et.al 2011). Among my participants only two stated they did not use social media at all, meaning that 94% of my participants used social media. I suspect that this discrepancy is likely due to three factors. First, I limited my participants to traditionally aged college students between 18-24, and the Pew study doesn't indicate an exclusion of non-traditionally aged colleges students in their methodology. Secondly, participants who volunteered to participate in my study are likely those most active online, creating a selection bias. Finally, this project is a small, local study that was not designed to be nationally representative, and as such it does cannot be expected to match nationally representative data on college students.

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included is a running ticker or "newsfeed" where Wall posts from all Facebook friends are displayed, as well as an in program private messaging service, and an advertising support area. (Please see Appendix C for details)

Early in my research, I began to use digital participant observation to collect data. I set up my own Facebook profile and began "friending" or connecting with participants. This excerpt from my early field notes demonstrates the wide variety of topics and issues that are posted on the Facebook "newsfeed" by users.

> Participants are posting about a variety of topics. Today, I have seen posts about: upcoming social plans, going shopping, the upcoming election, a fight with a boyfriend, an announcement that one of my participants' father has passed away, fears about one person's inability to get a job, pictures from a recent party, planning a vacation, and complaints about homework. Some of this is "everyday life" and some of it is intensely private. All but one of my posters has multiple posts, and many of the posts have dozens of responses for a single day.

My early experiences in observing online focused on understanding the technology itself, as well as learning relevant social expectations. Based on my time observing, I was able to identify two specific components of Facebook that are relevant to understanding interactional social process. First, the profile, which provides observers with information about an individual, can include likes and dislikes as well as other info (Appendix C). Each individual has a digital message board attached to his or her Facebook profile on which he or she can post messages, called the Wall (See Appendix C). The "Wall' is the primary vehicle by which Facebook users communicate. The Wall allows users to post messages, photos, links, and more. It's also a place where Facebook posts brief updates about recent activity on the site. Friends can also post information on the Wall, which is directed to the individual profile, but is visible to anyone who clicks on the Wall link within a profile to which they have access. Individuals can also post status updates on their own Wall. Status updates are public posts, which are sent automatically to an active newsfeed of everyone in a friend list. Facebook provides a space in which users communicate, each from the context of a profile that details personal information.

Profiles provide not only information, but a means of contact via social media as well. Most of the individuals I watched during my digital observations posted 1-2 times a day, most days of the week. However, friend lists ranged from about 150 to nearly 2000. Each time a person on the friend list made a status update, it appeared in the newsfeed of everyone that person was connected to via Facebook. For some participants, such as Anthony, who had over 1900 friends, this resulted in hundreds and sometimes thousands of Facebook posts per day via "feed." Activity directly on any one individual's Wall was less frequent but much more interactive, with dozens of comments being posted in response to posts and messages. Status updates via newsfeed allowed individuals to "keep track" of key social events, by providing the social equivalent of a stock ticker. Furthermore, specific events could be evaluated in more depth by simply clicking over to the Wall, to read related comments and see photos, etc. While my observations online helped me to understand how Facebook works, it initially did little to help me understand how individuals actually engaged with it.

During my interviews I found that for most participants, this massive amount of data is handled throughout the day with the use of smartphones. Smartphones are Internet enabled devices that allow users to get email, text messages and of course Facebook posts. Facebook posts are organized and structured via the use of Internet enabled smartphones and provide students with a handheld "newsfeed" or a near constant flow of data about Facebook friends. The exact nature of this feed depends on the type of smartphone the participant uses. The most popular smartphones the Apple iPhone and the Blackberry both include a "Facebook application" in which participants can quickly and easily access their Facebook feed using an allocated application (See Appendix D). Participants noted that Facebook applications, like web browsers and email programs, are easily available via their devices. Quickly glancing at this

feed allows participants to keep tabs on their peers and occasionally "check in" with peers as one participant Kacy, noted, "just to let everyone know I'm alive." This massive flow of data made it nearly impossible for me to keep up with everything so I simply monitored posts made directly to each participant's Wall; still an immense amount of data to go through.

Along with the difficulties related to the amount of data I was observing, I found myself struggling with methodological issues. Engaging in research online is generally a new field for social researchers, especially qualitative researchers. Entering the setting in which my work was conducted was similar to entering any new setting, in that I found myself slowly learning the rules and expectations and getting familiar with navigating the environment. However, this location also had unique challenges. Specifically, at no point was I able to inhabit the setting with a guide. Participants were willing to talk about their experiences online, and allow me to observe them, but were not interested in doing both activities at the same time, much to my frustration. In addition, working in a virtual setting means that my work is conducted in a liminal space between participant observation and content analysis. I often found myself considering Facebook as both an environment and a multi-textual document. Eventually, I came to understand that this hybridity is not a matter of methodological failure but rather a finding in and of itself. The hybrid nature of my experience was actually a characteristic of the setting. The character of my research setting and the way that participants engage with it became an important theme in my work. In part due to the nature of my location I also faced challenges surrounding issues of ethics.

Least Harm: Ethical Considerations and Respect for Participants

The amount of information that I, as an outsider, perceived as "personal" that was shared on Facebook was significant. As the study progressed, I was increasingly conflicted about how

that information should be presented in my work. Of course, participant recruitment, data collection and data management followed the ethical guidelines set by my universities Institutional Review Board. However, even more importantly, my own ethical identity as a feminist researcher shapes this project and guided complex decisions around ethical concerns. The core principles of autonomy, risk/benefit and representation shape this project from data collection through analysis and writing.

First of all, I acknowledge that participants are autonomous individuals who have the right to make their own decisions. This principle required that I provide clear information about the purpose of the research and my expectations for the outcome of the research. Further, all participation was voluntary and I made it clear that it could be ended at any time. I included informed consent documents and obtained written consent for interviews. In order to avoid perceptions of coercion by students who were introduced to my project through a course, I provided information in a manner that allowed participants to have the opportunity to decide if they wanted to participate outside the bounds of the classroom. Allowing potential participants to decide if they wish to participate away from classroom or peers helped to deal with this issue.

Secondly, I maintained complete confidentiality in the production, storage and write up of my research. All participants are referred to via a pseudonym and I avoided quotations from indexed and therefore searchable data sets. I made this decision after considering both sides of a current debate which centers on whether Internet posted data should be treated as written works to be cited (Bassett and O'Riordan 2002) or as participant observation (Mann and Stewart 2000, Marshall 2007), to maintain confidentiality. I considered this question in some depth and came to the conclusion that public vs. private spaces are culturally and contextually defined online, just as they are offline. After much debate, I decided that, like offline research, there are often cues

that researchers can learn to identify in order to conclude if a location is a private or public venue (Thomas 1996). Just as in offline communication, online researchers need to consider the meanings that participants give to specific cyber contexts. In some ways this is assisted by the technology itself. Increasingly blogs, info-share sites and social networking sites have explicit indications about privacy settings. If a site is f-locked (requires permission by the administrator) or has space for public ratings and evaluation the lines are clear. For the purpose of this project and in order to minimize researcher/researched power imbalances I made the decision to maintain confidentially for all online and offline observations and interviews.

Finally, I wish to address one more ethical principle of research. When I began this research I found myself asking how I, as a researcher, could represent the experiences of others without misrepresenting, misappropriating, or distorting their realities. This became increasingly important as the researcher/researched dynamic began to merge with the adult/child dynamic I addressed earlier. To some degree, any research project is itself an act of distortion in which experience is de-contextualized. Without the context and perceptions of participants there is a danger that research may become a misrepresentation of a group or individual. However, in order to minimize this, I worked to make both the project and myself accessible to participants. I engaged in reciprocal exchanges in the context of online participant observations, in which my information was available to my participants. The process of being a Facebook friend is reciprocal. Just as I was able to view participants' profiles and information they too were able to view my profile. Yet, reciprocity does not negate the power imbalance inherent in the research context, in part because I am not only an observer but also an *analyst*. Participants may be able to observe my own online identity and question me back during interviews if they so choose;

however the work I produce is a selection of words and experiences filtered through my own analytic lens.

To address this ethical issue of analysis I work to acknowledge my own location, biases and expectations, to give both the reader and participant a better sense of my analytic identity. Acknowledging my own subjectivity and social location, both to my participants and to my readers, may help to avoid the distortion inherent in claims of purely "objective" social research. Ultimately, it is a matter of allowing for multiple voices within the project, not only my own but that of my participants as well. For the true expression of the qualitative tradition "…it is not enough to honor, respect and allow for actors' points of view. One must also allow them to express it themselves" (Becker 2001:321). Yet the very nature of research and analysis sets up an artificial context, in which the power of an interviewer to shape the conversation is immense. Further, the process of analysis, of selecting segments of an interview for inclusion in this paper, is too an act of distortion. So what to do? There is no way in which my social research can completely eliminate the power imbalance of researcher and researched. Yet, acknowledging that the story I am telling here is partial, located and contextual allows this work to contribute to a greater narrative. This work is filled with the diverse voices of participants, in originally transcribed form. It provides one limited, socially located and fragmented contribution to the greater sociological and cultural discussion surrounding technology. While it may be impossible to avoid some distortion in the voices of participants, due to the nature of interview structure and analytic frameworks, it is possible to acknowledge the partiality of the data collected here. I do my best to preserve the integrity of the data I collected, but I acknowledge the impossibility of providing a "true" and complete representative of all of the voices in this project.

As part of this commitment to preserving the integrity and authenticity of participants' voices, I also work to acknowledge the diversity of views within the techno-mediated world. Like any interaction with technology, a diversity of digital experience is tied to diversity and difference in everyday life (Lévy 2001). Therefore, in order to acknowledge, though not fully capture the diversity of social experience among students, I worked to engage participants in this research who came from a wide variety of social, cultural and intellectual backgrounds. Yet, I make no claim that my research is representative regarding difference in race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, major, year in school or age.

As noted above and detailed in Appendix A, these participants are not statistically representative of the larger population at the university nor the general population. However, this diversity of identity allows students to bring in diverse insights, steeped in their own cultural traditions, or their contemporary experience. Rather than attempting to generate a generalizable sample, I worked to develop a mosaic of difference that allowed students to contribute to a variety of perspectives. Therefore, students from differing race, gender, and sexuality, religious and intellectual groups share their collective and individual experiences. Future research might allow for a more nuanced and complete discussion of how differences in social identities might shape techno-social experiences. Yet somewhat to my surprise, even those from very different backgrounds and experiences had some shared experiences and expectations. Therefore this project focuses on generating a set of concepts that begins to flesh out some of these shared experiences and expectations within a diverse mosaic of identities and backgrounds.

The Reflexive Researcher

My own perspective and experiences shape that which I consider to be knowledge and truth, as well as the relationship I have with technology. I am located, in several ways, at a

historic and sociological crossroads with regard to technological development. Unlike today's generation of 18-24 year old college students, many of whom were born and raised during the mass expansion of the Internet as a publicly available technology, my first interactions with it occurred in my late teens and early twenties. My class background as poor and rural also resulted in something of a late introduction to technology. However, I did encounter and incorporate technology into my own college and professional experiences. Thus my first consistent exposure to the Internet, as a technological force, occurred in college. For me, Internet technology is neither a totally "new" media, nor is it the nearly invisible and pervasive technology that seems to have arisen in the last decade. Rather, like many other researchers and industry thinkers both past and present, I still tend to view the technology as a portal into a new and fascinating online "cyber" world, where identity is fluid and filled with collective consensual hallucinations occurring with fantastic digital spaces (Pfohl 1992; Kendall 2002; Marshall 2007; Boellstorff 2008). Such spaces still exist online, as one participant, Owen, noted in describing Second Life, an online environment in which participants use virtual identities or avatars as a means to communicate.

> I mean it's essentially it's a glorified chat room with 3-D graphics. But you can… I think it's also the most crafted way of self-presentation available on the Internet. Because, as the name of the system suggests, it's a second life. It's not your first life. In fact, people fondly refer to their first life as something completely separate. SO it's not… it's not the real life person. It's a carefully crafted representation of a completely different or possibly similar person. In Second Life, you know, you can be anything. You don't even have to be human. You can be anything you want.

Second Life is, in some ways, the contemporary manifestation of my own teenage relationship with technology. The fantasy of going online to "be anything you want" is reflective of the logging on and plugging in model of Internet technology that permeated cyberpunk culture of the late 1990s (Hafner & Markoff 1995, Burrow 1997).

I was, and continue to be, one of those individuals whose fascination with new technologies rendered them deeply invested in and committed to the development and use of such technologies. As such, I am simultaneously deeply frightened by and strangely attracted to information technologies, both excited and terrified by their potential. As one older industry insider once said to me "….I just want more - better - faster - I am really waiting for the next big paradigm…Truthfully, I want the computer to plug in to a socket in my skull and have connection wires stick out under my fingernails." Horrified and excited by this image, I have a certain ambiguity of feeling, both fascinated and at times repulsed. Often this ambiguity seems to be at odds with the comfortable intimacy displayed by my college age research participants. However, I also teach and learn in a private research university, surrounded by young people, many of who, due to a combination of age and class privilege, have a lifelong relationship with Internet technology. The casual taken-for-granted, yet committed, relationship that some young people have with their Internet devices is different in some ways from my own passion. In part due to my own interest and my intellectual location I have a number of assumptions about technology that shape both this project and my own ability to engage with it.

First, that technology as a medium matters to the contemporary social world (Mcluhan 1969), and thus the means of message transmission matters within relationships and is relevant to the social fabric. This assumption provides me with a sense that the work I am conducting is valuable and matters in the social relationships I am exploring. Assuming that technology matters to social processes both justifies the research and allows me to be concerned with details that might be otherwise taken for granted as "natural" rather than as part of a social created techno-structure. Secondly, that technological development does not cause social change, however it makes certain options for social interaction possible, for example the increased

frequency of contact made available by the use of text enabled cell phones (Lévy 2001). This assumption results in a focus on not only processes but also on technological structures themselves. This assumption leads me to pay attention to the possibilities and limitation made available by technological development. Next, I believe that the processes of relationship negotiations and social connections reflexively interact with the meanings that social actors give those processes. This assumption leads the use of symbolic interaction as an analytic tool for this project. Finally, the social "real" is fragmented and artificial but impacts and is impacted by embodied experience. This final assumption shapes my method by encouraging me to pay attention to both what people do and how they feel about what they do. Further, finding any kind of "real" data that is unattached to social attitudes and expectation is unlikely, rather I am interested in the relationship between attitudes and experiences, between perceptions and embodiment. This provides one kind of social "truth" that is contextual and located in experience and sensation.

I am neither entirely comfortable nor entirely unattached to the technologies that I study. My late and limited introduction to technology provides a certain distance from the subject, allowing me to identify some of the taken for granted behaviors and ideals that are embraced, often unconsciously, by my participants. Yet, my familiarity with technological language and practices allows me to connect with my participants and share similar experiences and ideas. I find myself being something of an outsider in the college age community due both to my age as well as to my class status, yet my relative youth also allows me to share, in a limited way, the experiences of my participants. While my relationship with technology is different from my participants, certain experiences and types of knowledge are shared. This ambiguous status allows me to both gather data and analyze it while considering multiple perspectives.

Conclusion

The preceding sections have demonstrated the importance of acknowledging the power dynamic that is inherent in the research process. The goal of social research on technology is no different from other kinds of research; it is to ultimately "get it," to gain a better understanding of the social world. Within the context of this project, I also found myself engaging with multiple discussions about both the use of technology and about college students themselves. These questions, about how technology matters, how it shapes communication practices, and how it is experienced by college students will be taken up in more detail elsewhere in the project. Acknowledging that such questions exist and *matter* to research allows for a better understanding of the contributions that qualitative methods, in the form of both traditional interview and online observation, make to this research.

The ultimate goal of my research, online and offline, is to produce deep, situated and contextualized social knowledge. Understanding this goal means valuing the knowledge of participants as something that can be created through social interaction and awareness of the social world, rather than seeing it as something that exists outside social frameworks and can be captured by a researcher. Even as I struggle with issues of my own place and emerging methods surrounding online settings, I work hard to maintain a kind of research endeavor that allowed me to "get" what participants were saying. This desire to "get it" was rooted in the idea that in the world of technology use, as in so many other places where sociological research occurs, understanding is best achieved not by the mapping of the researcher's understanding, but by listening to and respecting the insights and experiences of those for whom the setting is home.

Chapter Three
Discourse and Design: Technological Architectures and the Corporatization of Connectivity

> I guess it's [technology] inevitable. I think it is such a part of our culture now. I am talking college student culture. I am not in the non-college student culture yet so I don't really know…how it affects that. But it is a complete part of our culture…. I mean some don't probably think about it. I probably think about it too much, about how it changes the social world. Some don't care or think about it. But you know at least most people know how it works, they know the rules. -Jake

Jake explains the interconnection between college student culture and technology. He claims a kind of inevitability and universality in his perception of college culture. He is discussing a culture that relies on both an understanding of "how it works," or the architectures of technology, and "the rules," or expectations and values that surround such architectures. Jake, and other participants in this study, make it clear that in order to understand the culture an experience of contemporary college students in relation to their technology use, it is essential to understand the structures of such technology and the ideological constructs that shape how and why the technology is used. Yet Jake also acknowledges, at least in passing, that college student culture may be distinct from other cultural constructions, leaving room for conflict between the cultural expectations of the college environment and those outside the college environment.

In order to understand the experience of college students within a techno-mediated social environment, it is first necessary to understand the ideas, expectations and possibilities of such an environment. The contemporary techno-mediated social environment that college students inhabit allows for and expects both technological and face-to-face interactions. I begin by focusing on how students experience the architecture of this environment, which includes both the devices and the options for social behavior that such devices make possible. I examine the role of technological architectures in establishing and transforming social structures that impact individuals within network society. Secondly, I consider how the social behavior students engage

in within a techno-social environment may come into conflict with the expectations and ideas of other social groups. Specifically, I observe the means by which the technologies of social media and texting as new avenues for relationships and intimacy are embraced and resisted by college students and their families. Finally, I consider how students understand the cultural logic of the techno-social world; what they value and how such ideas may be shaped by broader social changes. I specifically discuss the infiltration of corporatized narratives of rationality into interpersonal relationships, using social media use among college students as an example. Rationality and efficiency are discursive elements of contemporary society that are implicated in the transition from modernity to network society, because of their role in making networking a socially dominant behavior (Stalder 2006).

The term technological architecture is used primarily in the arenas of business and technology. In that context it refers to the technological infrastructure, or collection of devices and procedures that support an organization (Bonifacio et.al. 2003). In the context of this work, the term technological architecture refers to the interconnected system of technological devices and connections that support social interaction among individual users. These architectures includes technological devices such as computers and smartphones, environments such as websites like Facebook and Twitter, and connectivity platforms such as cell coverage and broadband networks. The components of these architectures are interconnected and integrated into a set of fluid but cohesive structures within which social interaction occurs. These architectures facilitate new ways of connectivity within the social world. This chapter will consider the nature and origins of contemporary technological architectures, as well as examine the tensions that emerge within contemporary society tied to transformations in social expectations due to the emergence of such architectures (Castells 2004; Stalder 2006). I am

considering the relationship between the social world and network society (Castells 2004), which includes both social and technological elements. I also consider the implications of the emergence of speed and efficiency as ideological values in contemporary culture on the acceptance and utilization of such architectures.

Even as participants navigate the complex social rules of college, the media, peers and internalized values demand that they be more efficient, which includes the ability to reach a desired outcome with less effort on the part of the individual. For example, the degree to which participants are able to stay in contact with and manage massive social networks is impressive. Participants often refer to texting or posting on Facebook as an "easier" way for them to meet necessary social obligations and maintain or even expand their social networks. By "easier" participants often suggest that they are able to contact a larger number of people with less overall effort, thus maintaining large social networks more efficiently and effectively than they would be able to do without technological assistance. Thus some technologically mediated communication practices may be replacing more traditional forms of communication, because of the characteristics of the technology. As Castells and Van Dijk note, technological devices provide network society with increases in distributive flexibility, integration and interconnection (Van Dijk 1999, Castells 2004). One consequence of these interconnected, integrated and flexible technological devices, for example smartphones, is the possibility of more frequent and faster communication between individuals and between individuals and groups. These changes in speed combined with the ability to contact more people with a single message increase the efficiency of managing large social networks.

My findings also suggest that techno architectures allow for the creation of emergent social practices that support the establishment and management of larger and more

comprehensive social networks. Resistance, such as the individual fears and intergenerational conflict around appropriate use, can hinder the normalization of such practices. However, other social factors, specifically the acceptance of speed and efficiency as social good identified by George Ritzer, and demonstrated by participants in this study, allows for widespread acceptance of such practices among participants in this study.

The Architecture of Technology

One strategy for understanding life in network society is working to understand the nature of the technologies themselves. The most popular and widely used social technologies among college students in this project were social media, in the form of Facebook and text messaging. For most students, management of social networks, including friendship groups, families and dating relationships, occurs at least partially using the framework of these two technologies. I will begin this section by considering the way in which two theorists attempt to describe the characteristics of these technologies and then move on to discuss how participants in this study utilize and experience the tools. By putting these ideas about the nature of technological architectures in conversation with the experience of individuals, it is possible to get a sense of how techno-social structures within networked society reshape the varieties of social interaction and practice possible in the contemporary world.

Manual Castells focuses on the technologies that shape network society. He understands techno-architectures as "self-expanding" regarding "volume, complexity and speed", and the ability to recombine communications (Castells 2004). Essentially, such architectures are in a constant state of redefinition, as users modify their use patterns and developers provide new technologies. For example, one theorist explains that the nature of the Internet is based on integration, interactivity, and digital code (Van Dijk 1999). While others understand the

technology as a creator of social possibility (Lévy 2001), or even as an immersive environment filled with complexity (Pfohl 1992). The constant state of fluidity in which technological architectures rest make it difficult to understand their nature. However, it is possible to better understand their impact on the social world by focusing on how users experience them, what social practices are made possible by technology and how that shapes or reshapes social interaction.

One example of this that I consider here is the emergence of the smartphone; a device that has reshaped the technological architecture of contemporary college life with regard to social interaction, by enhancing the ability of college students to manage larger social networks. Admittedly, technology doesn't create social interaction; rather technology is a creation of social organization. However, technology does allow for the possibility or creation of new social forms (Castells 2005, Lévy 2001). The inter-textual and multi-model *structure* of the technology allows for new ways of interaction and shared imaginaries that foster a sense of group solidarity among some social groups (Thomas 2007). Kate explains how this works in her experience.

> It's [the internet] becoming more and more important in society, I think. The fact that it becomes so… it develops… it could change completely, overnight, just by inventing or improving one specific thing that just becomes, like, everyone depends on it, now; or just the fact that people can't live without their cell phone. And everyone has a cell phone and even they're getting cell phones younger and… my kid sister wants a cell phone, and she's eleven, so it's like… you're not getting a cell phone. I didn't have a cell phone 'til I was seventeen, so what do you want a cell phone for? And the same thing with the Internet.

Network society, in part, owes the development of technological devices to the drive to produce ever more complex technological architectures that provide an environment for interpersonal and intimate social interaction.

While previous research has focused on exploring the nature of online experience (Rodino 1997; Turkle 1995; Kendall 2002), more recent work that focuses on issues of

community (Hampton 2004) explores both online and offline behavior, essentially a hybrid environment. This is an important shift in technological research because technology and experience in a network society are reflexive, they influence each other, and result in the formation of emerging social practices. Therefore, the nature of technological architectures outlined by Castells and Van Dijk may allow for the creation of new social options for communication, interaction and self-definition, yet they do not *cause* social change (Lévy 2001). The power of such technology is that it makes some social options, such as near integration, instant access, centralization and continuous contact, possible through the development of technological devices such as social media and text messaging.

For example, the cell phone, once a staple of college life, has transformed, becoming a multi-use tool as Arthur explains.

> I think that I could live without a phone on me, all the time. No problem, like, I'd almost kind of like it… freedom. Sometimes when the phone dies I don't really care, like. It's little nice to get away from it and… but, like, Internet – I absolutely, like, adore. I love playing games with friends, online. I love… I mean, I just read up stuff on the Internet all the time. I don't know the last time I picked up a paper, but I still read, like, New York Times articles, online and stuff. I get all my news from the Internet and such.

Along with the tremendous popularity of social media and texting, the widespread use of smartphones appears to have had an even more dramatic impact on social development and rituals. A smartphone is an Internet enabled cellular device that centralizes both Internet access and phone functions, including texting, into one handheld device. The Apple iPhone and the Blackberry are the most common smartphones among my participants, and they are very important tools for social interaction. Chloe explains her relationship with her iPhone.

> … It totally changed everything. It's not to say I was never big into the Internet. It's disgusting how much it [the iPhone] changed it. I'm so connected all the time, and I don't need to be. All I have to do is hit a button and my Facebook pops up. I don't even have to be connected to wi-fi. It's just right there. It turns it into an

> obsessive habit. I mean, sometimes I don't even think about it, and I'm writing an email, or reading my email, or I'm on Facebook, or I'm reading a gossip blog. It just made going on the Internet second nature to me, to not have to go home and sit down when I get off work and check my email. It's in my pocket… I couldn't leave it alone. Now, I'm obsessive-paranoid about my dog all the time, so I feel really guilty leaving the house for an entire day without my phone. I don't know, maybe that's my subconscious way to keep Facebook in my pocket.

Instant access to Internet and phone, and via those technologies, individuals' social network, is an important component of day-to-day life for my participants. As Chloe notes, she doesn't need wi-fi because she can rely on her cellular network to provide her with Internet access. Today, cellular network coverage is accessible to 90% of the global population and nearly all of the United States (ITU 2010). Chloe can go online virtually anywhere she goes in her day-to-day life. Furthermore, Chloe experiences her accessing of the technology as so deeply embedded in her life that she goes online without thought. Rather than making a conscious and deliberate choice to go online, as would be the case if she had to turn on a desktop computer, Chloe is able to go online almost unconsciously, using her smartphone almost as if it is a prosthetic of her own body, her own senses.

Smartphones and social media provide venues for the integration of smartphones into a user's physical space, by having them "in my pocket." This integration makes communication always available, which is both desirable and frightening. Chloe demonstrates this contrast as she expresses her ambivalence about this experience, by noting that she thinks her use might be "obsessive." Other participants are also concerned about issues of obsession, but distance themselves from the issue. Grace explains that while she has been a little bit concerned about her own technology use, she was recently reassured by a television show.

> I thought I had an obsession with my phone? She made me look like nothing. She carried her phone around; had her laptop; had her iTouch; texting, calling, Facebooking, Blackberry messaging to the point where she actually needed the help – like it was an addiction; like people have an addiction to drugs, this was

> actually an addiction to her phone. It kind of hit me the other day…an addiction is when you don't want to write your paper and instead you sit on Facebook for two hours and you look and you 're, "Oh my God, where did two hours go." That's, for me, I think the line… and just like, constantly looking at Facebook… Like, who's doing what, where is everyone, who's with who. In a second, everything can change. Find out my best friend is dating someone or someone is coming home for summer. You constantly have to know what's going on.

If the behaviors of Grace and Chloe are obsessive, then it is an obsession shared by many of their peers. Of my interviewees, roughly 2/3 had a smartphone and most of those who didn't have one wanted one. Most of those wanted the popular iPhone or a Blackberry. As Ava noted,

> On the iPhone it's like a whole different ball game, texting, because it's an ongoing conversation at your fingertips, and you can see the history of it, everything…These days it's been pretty to the point. "I'm going here," meet me there," but I've definitely had some full-on conversations via text…

Ava explains that smartphones effectively put interpersonal communication via Facebook posts and text messages "at your fingertips." Such technologies make access to information part of the physical space that a user inhabits, integrating the technology with the self. However, Ava also hits on a second point, that the use of smartphones also allows participants to centralize their communication activities into a single device that creates ambiguity in the separation of offline and online spaces.

As Grace notes, the technology also effectively centralizes social interaction. She explains,

> I think the biggest thing is being able to keep up with your friends. I was, in the beginning, when you said imagine that you had no texting, no iPod, no Facebook… people would actually have to get off of their butt and just walk form dorm to dorm. My friends, that lives in Smith, I can just text him to meet… want to meet for dinner? If I didn't have that, I'd have to walk all the way up and all the way back, so I think it's a fast way to get in touch with people. you can hold a conversation with someone and see what they said before you. You can text message, e-mail, you can send pictures, send video, go on Facebook. Go to pretty much anything you want.

The creation and widespread use of portable Internet enabled devices, like smartphones, has effectively shifted access from the desktop to the pocket. In doing so, technologically mediated communication has moved away from the experience of "entering" a portal by logging on or dialing up and toward a kind of continuous access. This continuous access allows for the development of practices and expectations that integrate technologies even further into everyday experiences. As Chloe notes above, this access can be so deeply embedded in social behavior that it can occur without deliberation or conscious decision-making. The social experiences and expectations made possible by the web-enabled devices such as the smartphone are intensely relevant to this group because they allow for instant access to information via the internet and potentially, to communication between friends and romantic partners. Chloe explains.

> For Facebook, you can have… like if someone writes on your wall, that you can have it sent to your phone, so you can see it, without even going on Facebook. Which, I have to admit, I do. It's been an obsession, but I know for me, but like… my phone does not leave my side. It constantly is there. I don't know what I would do if I didn't have it.

As Grace and Chloe explain, the use of technology has become an "obsession" among college students. Deeply dependent on their phones, many agree with Grace and feel that they would be confused and lost without them. The social pressure to get and maintain a technologically mediated presence is intense. Participants explain that the use of technology is "essential" to social interaction, because otherwise they would be "lost" or "left out." I will come back to this issue in a later chapter. However, for now I suggest that this is, in part, because the expectations about where, when and how much interaction are appropriate and necessary within a relationship is such that it is almost impossible to meet social expectations without technological help. I noted during my observation research that participants had hundreds and sometimes thousands of Facebook friends. Additionally, long periods of failure to post, generally more than a few days,

led to increasingly concerned messages on the wall asking “are you okay,” “what are you up to” and of course “text me.” Without technology, maintaining contacts with hundreds of Facebook friends and dozens of text message contacts on a daily basis would be impractical.

Thus, the technological developments tied to smartphone and texting have made frequent contact with social media and text networks more plausible. Frequent contact with a social network has become increasingly common, as Mia demonstrates.

> I probably… I can send and receive, like, upwards of a hundred a day, easily…. And I don’t even, like, realize it, like, I don’t think it intrudes on my time of other stuff, but it must, if I’m sending that many. I… like… no one… most people don’t understand how much I text…

Mia goes on to explain that for her texting is both faster and easier than phone calls, and furthermore, texting allows her to send the same message to several people, allowing her to connect with more people in less time than would be possible if she had to call them individually. Grace agrees explaining,

> … I must text at least 500 times a day. It’s actually bad. I wanted the Blackberry ’cause I like the full texting. I like having the full keyboard. I had a Razr phone before, and I didn’t like pushing each button just to get a letter. So, for me, it was speed and being able to text really fast. But now, the Blackberry… any Blackberry you get, you have to get the thirty dollar a month data plan. So that means you have to get the internet and all that stuff... My phone doesn’t leave my side, and I just got a new Blackberry, so, I didn’t have Internet on my old one, I have Internet now. And I Facebook… I do all that stuff. Without having that [stammers] I don’t know how I would communicate….

Grace feels that she wouldn’t know how to communicate without technology. Certainly, among my participants traditional phone calls are relegated to business and conversations with elderly relatives. Grace goes on to explain that she certainly knows how to hold a conversation with her mother, meet with a professor or hang out with friends. However, technological developments, like the move from her old phone to her new Internet enabled device, allow her to connect with more people, more easily and faster than would be possible without it.

Yet the nature of such practices is not accepted without reservation. Grace's comment "it's actually bad" is one example among many of participants who are in conflict about their technology use. Even as they explained their social world to me, participants often questioned the legitimacy of their expectations and norms. Faced with criticism about their practices and confusion about exactly what the expectations of their peers are, participants sometimes acknowledged their behavior as something that comes into conflict with more traditional expectations. Penny explains her ideas about Internet addiction and obsession.

> I mean some of my friends joke about my 'obsession' with Facebook. But it takes time to learn the rules… I have friends who say it's almost an addiction but you know…I'm not sure if you can be addicted to the 'internet' per se, however, you may be addicted to something that is offered on the internet like gambling, gossip, chatting with strangers, shopping etc…Even online games… google Korean online gamers sometime…the PC game craze there is something to be studied. I think one of the big offenders in terms of addiction is online pornography…but the truth is the computer is just the medium…For example, I procrastinate online, but if I didn't have the internet, I'd be cleaning, or doing some other kind of procrastination.

While not accepting their behavior as deviant per se, they acknowledge its difference from other forms of communication. For example, comments such as a joking, "I'm obsessed," demonstrate more than simply humor. As Ava explains, technological developments are not without a down side.

> So it's really intense, and really scary and bad, especially if you drink a lot, and you have to see everything that you've ever written, in the world (laughs) to someone, and it's not their business.

Participants are expressing their own sense of ambiguity in relation to techno-social behavior and acknowledging their vulnerability to criticism by an outsider, all the while struggling with the legitimacy of that criticism.

Nevertheless, keeping track of hundreds of friends via Facebook or contacting dozens of people via mass text message every day is made possible by those technological developments,

and would be impractical without the technologies. Increasingly technological architectures provide social options that participants perceive as the logical and reasonable choice when engaging in human interaction. For example, Katie expresses her frustration with a professor.

> I'm having an issue with one of them [classes] because the teacher doesn't communicate via e-mail. And he doesn't… he's just very, like, not… doesn't seem to be very tech-savvy. And it's, kind of, putting, like, a problem with the class... And, like, it's a mess. So, I was actually, before I met with you, I was about to e-mail him and, like, say, "You probably should send out e-mail to help."

The failure on the part of Kate's professor to conform to expectations with regard to technological use leaves her feeling frustrated and powerless. Kate goes on to express her anger with his unwillingness to follow what she deems as appropriate online behaviors. His resistance to technological expectations is inexplicable to Kate. She goes on to explain that in her opinion, the professor sending out an email is the only "real" way to deal with conflict in the class. Rather than the loss of social skills altogether it seems that young people have social skills, but they are skills that make sense of the social world they inhabit, a techno-mediated one. As Ellie notes,

> My parents… well, my dad is not computer savvy. The Internet is not a thing for him. My mother, however, she wants to use the Internet so that she can learn stuff online, or help her business. So, that's… I don't really contact her, but I help her with that.

As Kate and Ellie demonstrate, technology use has become normalized to the point that the technological options are considered the best ones. Social expectations about what options are appropriate in a given situation are shaped not only by technology but also by current social norms. Castells argues that a network society is one in which "The interplay between social structure, social behavior, and the construction of meaning, as mediated by the Internet, expresses the process of social transformation that results from the interactions between technology, culture and society" (Castells et.al. 2004). Thus, in order to understand the

experience of inhabiting network society, which is the conflation of networks, culture and technology, it is necessary to understand not simply structure and behavior, but the conflicts and tensions that arise between groups with different expectations and relationships with technology.

Discourse in Transition: intergenerational tension and emerging social expectations

Some current and historic research that makes up our knowledge on "relationships and intimacy" indicates that interpersonal relationships act as the foundation of the social world and that relationships form the foundation of all other social processes (Blumer 1962, Giddens 1991, Simmel 1971, Wise & King 2008). Thus in order to fully understand the experience of living within network society, it is necessary to better understand the cultural tensions that arise between individuals who have different expectations about the role of technology in their lives. Such differences can arise from a variety of places and identities, but one of the most profound areas of difference that participants in this study discussed, is age. Young people who have had a lifetime to internalize a network logic which legitimates and validates technological integration into intimate relationships may have a different set of expectations than those for whom technogically mediated communication is always *new* media.

The arrival of new forms of technology that provide contact between individuals in a social network, also allows for the development of a new set of rules to govern behavior. In part, this is due to the nature of network society, which increasingly functions as a social space in which "people fold the technology into their lives, link up virtual reality and real virtuality, they live in various technological forms of communication, articulating them as they need it" (Castells 2005, 11). If the expectation of network society is that people will integrate technology into their lives, it is unsurprising that this has begun to disrupt and restructure other social expectations about what constitutes appropriate behavior. Allen attempts to explain the logic behind what

some professors consider deviant behavior, texting in class, suggesting that for some students this behavior is all about attention.

> Students text during class because it is boring and it probably doesn't interest them as much as their friends do. They want something else to do than listen to the teacher give a lecture, or else they probably think they'll die of boredom. I admit I do it once in a while because some lectures are boring, but I'd rather pay attention to the lecture and get a good grade than text my friends.

Allen is not alone in his theory, as Grace notes that she uses her phone to "keep her focused" in class and Ellie explains that texting allows her to "stay awake" during boring classroom time. Aiden takes the idea further, explaining that texting can actually be a tool to help him pay attention.

> They don't really, particularly want to be there. And… for me, it used to be, that I would text people to keep myself awake. Which in some particular classes I… that was literally, exactly what did. I sat down and I started texting, even if I hadn't been texting all morning long. Just because I knew that I wasn't going to be able to pay attention, if I didn't. If I had the other… another activity that I'm trying to deal with at the same time, it's kind of… It helps me pay attention a little bit more, when I'm multitasking it really helps.

Texting as distraction or a means of focusing attention seems, on the surface, to be counterintuitive. Chloe strongly disagrees with the notion that multi-tasking makes people able to focus better, as her experience has been quite different.

> I'm never one of those people who has my laptop in class, because if my laptop's there, my brain is totally off to anything else. I hate it because I see people doing it in class, and like we need to be so over stimulated. People are texting people, they're on their laptops, they're IMing people, they're on Facebook, they're texting, they're in the class, they're like trying to participate. And I can't have a laptop in class. If I have my phone, especially because I have an iPhone, it's so easy to just get on the Internet. If I do that, I'm fucked for class, because my brain completely shuts off, to everything else around me. I don't religiously text in class.

The debate about multi-tasking as a means to stay focused aside, these participants are demonstrating the ways in which behavioral options that are the result of technological developments are reshaping the way in which students behave in class.

Furthermore social behavior can be tied to the expectations that peers have about what technologically mediated communication options should be used by relationship partners. As Anthony points out during a conversation on texting, not responding to texts, even during class, sends a clear message to his girlfriend, that he doesn't care enough about her to respond. This is not a message he wants to send, so he affirms his commitment to her by risking "getting busted" in class texting. Certainly, professors often find themselves frustrated by students insisting on texting in class. Yet the expectations that students hold about appropriate behavior are not the same as those held by others. As Emma shares,

> I pretty much live with Facebook, and my phone…we went to church Christmas Eve – my boy friend and I went with my family. You see people texting during Mass, like it's nothing. And, of course, I'm, like, one of them and checking Facebook 'cause I'm bored during the sermon, or whatever, so…. But twenty years ago you would never think to use your phone in church – you step outside. People are, like, Facebook chatting, like, sending text messages, BBMing, like…

Emma goes on to explain that texting and the use of Internet enabled devices in public is something she considers "natural" and normal. The notion of using such devices in church or in class is something that would have been unheard of in the past, but today is considered by Emma and her peers as not only not disrespectful, but also *unremarkable*. Grace agrees explaining that,

> …in between classes you see people… I mean, they'll talk to their parents… in between classes, but everyone is texting. My… we got to laughing because I got unlimited texting and we've got roll-over minutes – we have AT&T – so we have all these, like, talking minutes. Of course, like, my mom will talk – I just taught her how to text, but talking-wise? I never… I probably use ten minutes a month, just to talk to my mom on the phone. I never use it to call anyone. It's like… all my conversations are via text, or Facebook or anything like that.

For Grace and Emma the use of such devices in class or in social situations is not rude or disrespectful or even distracting. In some ways, it may replace other, less visible, forms of distraction in social situations, such as daydreaming or fantasizing. The social acceptance of multi-tasking in social situations is being transferred to more formal situations such as the classroom, as Olivia points out.

> If I'm just with my regular friends, like, no one minds, 'cause everyone is on their phone, like, we can have a conversation … everyone can still be texting on their phone, doin' whatever, and still carry on a conversation. So it's like… I guess. It's not a big deal, at all, like, none of my friends are really, like, ever said, "Stop texting."

For individuals who are embedded in a culture in which they text or go online in the presence of peers and even romantic partners regularly and without thought, the notion of such behavior being "rude" is simply foreign. That is not to say that others agree, as Grace struggles to explain with regard to her father.

> … sometimes I go home to see my boyfriend and stop to my house for dinner – texting at the dinner table, and I just, like, consider it part of my life and my parents are like, "Put your phone away." They're, like "That is so rude." And I'm like, "Mom, you don't understand. I have to…" … and my dad hears the phone… I have special ringtones for people and when I get a text message I have a ringtone, when I get a Facebook message, I get a Facebook wall post. When I get a Facebook so and so different ring tones … my dad's like, you need to stop. He's like, "That's obsessed"…But I don't consider it… but I just see it as normal because every single kid around me… look at… I mean… people just text… like everyone's texting on their phone…

The struggle that Grace faces in interacting with her parents and their perception of her technology use is not unique. In some ways, both Grace's parents and Grace are correct. Within the cultural and community practices of Grace's parents such behavior is excessive and perhaps rude. Yet Grace is also correct, within the social world of the contemporary college student, such behavior is normal and even expected. As an individual deeply immersed in the culture and behavioral expectations of network society, Grace inhabits a world shaped by technology in

terms of attitude, architecture and even behavior. If she were to reject the expectations of her peers, Grace would be in for a different set of risks. Not responding quickly enough to peers has serious consequences because it sends an important message about how individuals are valued, or are not valued. These consequences can range from angering a peer to missing out on important social activities, and either can result in damage to an otherwise solid relationship. This is a change in the way that the social world works, from the perspective of Grace's parents, and not necessarily a positive change at that.

In the conclusion of a recent book targeted at the parents of technologically savvy children, the authors make a dramatic claim.

> The way that many young people are using information technologies is changing the way the world works. We don't yet know the full impact of these changes, but we know that they are profound and will alter all manner of dynamics over the coming decades, if not centuries and beyond. (Palfrey and Gasser 2008, 287).

The way in which the social world will be changed in the future is a topic of speculation for researchers and lay people alike. That said, not only are the use of information technologies changing the world, they also change the experiences and knowledge of those who inhabit the world. For the young to believe that their cultural practices are different from of the past is not new. Yet, for this group, the fantastic speed at which information technology is changing results in a difference that is rooted firmly in the intimate social world, where today, technologies of communication and information hold sway.

The culture of network society becomes global through the use of communication technologies, and thus according to Castells it becomes representative of a multiplicity of cultures, which are fragmented rather than convergent (Castells 2004, 38-39). This multiplicity and fragmentation is the result of a culture that is "not made of content but of process" (Castells 2004, 39). For young people who embrace the culture of contemporary network society there is a

value to the process of communication or "communication for the sake of communication" (Castells 2004, 40). The idea is that communication itself is valued within a network society, regardless of what it actually communicates. Fundamental characteristics of this fragmented social model are flexible communication processes and glorification of constant connectivity (Stalder 2006).

The recent transformation in technological communication that Castells argues is necessary for the formation of a network society is something that impacts different groups differently. The groups that have different access and different levels of connectivity are divided based on race, class, gender, age, ability, nationality and more (Van Dijk 2005). Yet, for participants in this study, the greatest differences and greatest conflicts in social expectation that they engage with regularly are those along the line of age. In fact, the notion that older people or adults don't really understand their social world is a common theme, and the idea that they hold mistaken ideas about college culture is not entirely without merit. The meanings and experiences that participants describe at times contradict ideas that are popular in mainstream media and even in social research on the role of technology in contemporary society.

Most of the participants who describe the integration of face-to-face and technologically mediated modes of communication within interpersonal relationships also express a belief in their own difference from what they call "old-fashioned" social experiences. They acknowledge that the rituals and social customs to which they adhere are different from those that their parents and even older siblings embrace. As Ruth notes, she would never text message her parents.

> …they don't understand it, … both of my parents are very old, so they're very old fashioned, and she [mother] would find that very, very disrespectful. It's, like, I wouldn't even take out two minutes out of the day just to call her, that's all. I wouldn't do that.

Ruth goes on to explain that the problem is generational, that "old fashioned" people like professors and her parents just don't understand texting and Facebook, or more specifically, "they may know how to do it, but they don't get what it means." This notion of meaning goes beyond just understanding the customs of a group, beyond just understanding how they use the technology strategically in dating or friendship or even work. The meaning of difference here is one of internalized and embodied understanding. Again and again, students expressed the opinion that older adults "just didn't get it." Anthony explains that in his family the use of technology as a means to stay connected is tied to issues of generation.

> My parents are actually a little old school; they don't do the whole text messaging/Facebook thing. So, they're not on it, but I have cousins, my sisters… but we'll chat here and there, which is exactly like text messages on it, but. Some of it, like my cousins from Virginia, or something, I'll talk to them on Facebook, just 'cause it's so far away…. [but] My parents do not text. My dad might start comin' around to it, 'cause he's getting these text messages. Like, you get text messages, and stuff like that, it's… that's the thing. People don't like to do phone calls. My mom? No texting. Very… she's old fashioned, "You want to talk to me, you can call me." But my dad, I think , is startin' to go. He might get a Blackberry, now, to do e-mails, do text messaging, so… I think he's startin' to come around. My mom? She's just old fashioned. She's got a cellphone; she got the lowest plan you could possibly get. I think it's like, 200 minutes – no texting, no nothing. She's like, all you can do is make a call and hang up. That's all it'll let her do. All this text messaging and stuff? No, that's too advanced... My older sister texts me all the time; my second… my older sister – she's all about texting. We text back and forth all the time. I talk to her more…

As Ruth noted earlier, the issue is not that "older" people don't know how to use the technologies, or even to some degree follow expectations around technology use; it is her belief that they don't often display a real understanding of the experiences, values, and social meanings of the techno-social insider. In their 2008 book, Palfrey and Gasser coin the term Digital Native to refer to those individuals born in privileged nations in the final decades of the 20th century into a world where social technologies are common. According to the authors, Digital Natives display a familiarity and comfort with information and social technology from a young age (Palfrey and

Gasser 2008). What exactly technology *means* to college students varies, but it is closely tied with the expectations of their peers as well as their role as not simply Digital Natives, but natives of network society. The social world of a network society is equally built on connectivity between persons and the use of technology to control the flow of information (Castells 2004). It may be that for college students, understandings of such practices are the result of the near ubiquity of technology throughout their lives, something that is not and cannot be replicated by older adults.

One significant barrier to this understanding, as my participants perceive it, is that older people hold misconceptions and judgments about their experiences. At times parents may seem to understand the importance of technology but struggle to internalize the reality. As Emma explains, being in touch allows one to engage in important social events with peers in a meaningful way "My mom always says that they're like jungle drums. All it takes is one text message, and there are kids in the field with a keg. She's right. That's all it takes." Chloe goes on to explain that her mother finds this frustrating, and "just another thing that she has to protect me from" while for Chloe it is simply a basic truth about her social group. Rebecca agrees, explaining that email is an older means of communication most appropriate for use with her parents who do not text.

> E-mail? I definitely use the most with my parents. Just because they don't have texting, or… you know…and if I want to show them something or if I want to tell them… or they don't have time to talk on the phone, like my mom can read her e-mail at work and not have to talk on the phone and get in trouble. Or my dad can just quickly respond to e-mails. . So that's… but friends – my friends don't e-mail anymore…'cause they've all diverted to Facebook.

Moving beyond simply organizing social life, and even in the face of conflicting and deeply complex social expectations, technology continues to play a key role in the establishment and maintenance of relationships. Grace, Emma and others are faced with a social dilemma.

Increasingly they rely on technological assistance to manage their relationships and their interpersonal social networks. Yet they are often forced to do so in a larger social context that still embraces older social values and expectations about appropriate public behavior. The social expectations attached to peer interactions are deeply embedded in a techno-social environment. The importance of technological tools to college students is immense, in part because they are increasingly relevant to society as a whole (Castells 2005). The importance of such technologies to society is also complex, yet one aspect of this complexity lies in the way in which technologies allow for more efficient and faster communication. The notion that speed and efficiency in intimate relationships has become a desirable characteristic may be tied to broad social acceptance of speed and efficiency as a moral good.

McDonaldization and the Corporatization of Intimacy

The nature of a network society is such that it includes both social interconnection and the technological developments that enhance and transform such interconnections. Yet, historically the emergence and widespread use of communication technologies has coincided with the growth of global corporatization, each enabling the advancement of the other (Castells 2005, Ritzer 2004). This relationship between corporatization and technology is one aspect of the move toward network society that manifests itself as a communication structure. A network society is one that emerges from the interactions between new technologies and the social discourses and organization in which such technologies emerge. However, this definition cannot be allowed to drift into the realm of technological determinism. “We know that technology does not determine society: it is society. Society shapes technology according to the needs, values, and interests of people who use the technology” (Castells 2005, 3). Technological architectures have emerged in recent decades that allow individuals to engage in social behavior and manage

expansive social networks in ways that were not possible in the past. Such behaviors are controversial for some, and can cause conflict between the generations. Yet, they still persist. This may be because of changes in values that today include to notion that speed and efficiency are desirable within intimate relationships.

One of the transformations that has had a substantial impact on the development and use of technology has been, in fact, ideological. The increasing idealization of corporate values of rationality, outlined by social theorist George Ritzer, has shaped the development and use of technologies in an increasingly techno-social environment. Ritzer discusses the ways in which contemporary US culture is increasingly invested in a narrative of productivity and speed. This narrative of productivity, which he terms the "McDonaldization of Society" results in the integration of ideas from the fast food restaurant business model into the broader social world. These values include efficiency, speed and control through the increase of technological replacements for human action (Ritzer 2004). Ritzer begins with the idea that a set of contextual beliefs and practices can gain popularity to the point where they begin to shape the very fabric of a society. This model draws heavily from the work of Max Weber who claims a causal connection between the moral tenents of Calvinism and the need for hard-working self-disciplined workers to run the modern capitalist machine (Weber 2001).

Employing both Weber's theoretical model and his definition of rationality, Ritzer suggests that the ideological imperatives of the fast food industry have increasingly become incorporated into popular culture and mainstream society (Ritzer 2004). These cultural imperatives are deeply rooted in an ideological construct of rationality. According to Ritzer "…a society characterized by rationality is one which emphasizes efficiency, predictability, calculability, substitution of nonhuman for human technology and control over uncertainly"

(Ritzer 1983,101). The degree to which *rationality* as Ritzer defines it, has become a part of interpersonal and intimate lives might vary among individuals but some of the characteristics of the *rational* society that he describes are evident in contemporary interpersonal relationships.

For a few participants, the logical, rational and efficient nature of the Internet is clear, as Ellie explains her use of technology as a means to be productive and speedy.

> I like that it's fast – instant gratification when I have a question. So if I don't know how to make Japanese chicken, I can just go to allrecipes.com and find it. I don't know when I'm supposed to set my clock back for daylight savings, I can go online, or if there's a question on a homework assignment, and a teacher is referencing something, that's a reference from a book that I don't have access to, I can go online and can get either the online copy, the Kindle version or something and find my answers. It's right there for me – it's always available. It's like, a tragic occurrence when there's no Internet access on campus and I'm in dire need [of access].

Ellie demonstrates how the notion that efficiency and control are socially desirable, not only in the workforce but also in the interpersonal realm, shapes the expectations and practices of techno-social culture, both the structure of technological communication and the moral imperatives of the corporatization of sociality are evident in the practices and attitudes of my participants. In this section, I am going to discuss the skills participants use in techno-social communication and consider the role that the definition of efficiency and speed as values within intimate relationships plays in the lives of college students.

As Ritzer argues, the "McDonaldization model" has developed a reflexive relationship with technology and become a part of the network logic of network society, resulting in a corporatization of many aspects of contemporary social life. This is a manifestation of the corporate model of labor, which focuses on the value of efficiency, predictability and control in a variety of labor situations, especially in low wage work (Ehrenreich 2008). Yet, idealization of such values has increasingly been manifesting itself in other aspects of social life (Ritzer 2004).

Using this model, we can see how emerging technological architectures allow for increased speed and efficiency in interpersonal relationships. Eventually then, interpersonal relationships may come to *require* technological intervention.

One example was discussed earlier, the ability to manage large networks effectively. The desire to manage such networks both supports and is supported by the increasing value placed on speed and efficiency in communication. This had resulted in speculation that college students are "losing" their communication skills. However, rather than resulting in the loss of "social skills," texting and social networking are transforming the very nature of social relationships and how they are conducted. This is not a static process either as Jake explains.

> Okay, when Facebook first started people just friended other people like randomly, like whoever they saw. Now you really do wait, until you meet them offline then you friend them. You don't just do random friending.

Grace also discusses how changes in social expectations of communication have shaped her attitude:

> 200 years ago people walked and gave letters and put letters through the mail. Now you can send out a text and what you wanted to say in a letter, that would take three days to get there, you can say in two seconds. I think, somewhat, it's like what I said, it would… how would I talk to anyone? I think that's become our new way of talking is through text messaging. People, before it's a big deal to pick up the phone and call. Like, I remember, when I was younger, I thought it was cool to talk on the home phone? Now I just pick up my cell phone and just call someone or text them.

For Grace and others like her, the transition from phone calls and letters to newer forms of communication is made possible by the development of social and communication technologies. However, she also demonstrates an important aspect of the contemporary discourse surrounding technology as she points out that texting is so much faster than a letter, thus demonstrating the cultural importance of speed. Ruth agrees, noting the importance of technology in her experience and imagination.

> I can't even imagine doing my work, like… I know a lot of professors, when they went to school – really old professors – they didn't have much technology. They had to use typewriters, which probably… their papers probably took forever. Even… they had to read a… books, where, now we can, like, use the internet – type up anything, use Wikipedia, type up any word and it… you know. Whereas, before, they had to read, so… honestly, I think… oh, my God, life would be so much harder.

In fact, speed and effectiveness, as well as the importance of immediate response, are key aspects in analyzing how technology impacts interpersonal relationships. Abby notes how important Facebook is to her ability to efficiently and easily update herself on what's going on in her social circle noting " …and suddenly it's a couple of hours and you know everything about everyone." This ability to "know everything about everyone" is important in understanding how college students use technology to increase the efficiency of their social interactions. The definition of "everything" and "everyone" to which Abby refers are fairly non-specific, but she sees it as a means to increase her knowledge about the people and events in her social world. Not everyone agrees that social media and texting is an effective way to get to know people. Jessie[4], in contrast to Abby, is critical about how effective technology is in making connection.

> I mean, if I don't see you in real life, then that's not a connection that's really being made. That's a connection with the words you typed, that's not a connection with you. You are somewhere else, through all the Ethernet cable, I'll eventually find you, but that's a long search. Some of those cables go on for a really long time. I don't have that kind of patience.

There is a debate about how effective the Internet is in getting to know one another, but part of that debate is actually about what individuals are looking for in their pursuit of connectivity. Effectiveness depends on the actual "end" that the individual is looking for. Abby expresses a desire to find out what people have been "up to" and what general information she can find about their activities and interests. The "everything" that Abby is talking about seems to be a very

[4] Jessie is genderqueer and prefers to use gender-neutral pronouns. Thus ze is in place of he or she and hir in place of him or her.

different form of “knowing” than the connection that Jessie is discussing. Some of the ambiguity around the efficiency of information technology is tied to different conceptualizations about what it should do and what it should provide.

At times this ambiguity can manifest as not only a question on the nature of efficiency but also as a question about the purpose of social interaction. For some, as Grace noted above, technological interaction is about creating intimate connections. Yet, Jessie is critical of this idea, and suggests that making intimate connections via technology isn’t necessarily more efficient or more effective. For other participants, the goal of technology use isn’t intimacy but rather a matter of organization. The purpose of some people is not to establish “true” friendships, but rather to rely on a speedy, efficient, and mechanized way in which to keep track of informal social networks, both in their personal and professional lives. Eric explains that for him Facebook is about having the ability to contact someone easily.

> Alecea - So, anybody in your life that you think you would have lost contact with that you are in touch with on Facebook? That is a valid… is important
>
> Eric - No, but I have the ability to contact them.
>
> Alecea - So, you still have the choice.
>
> Eric - Yes, And it’s not so… and I… like I said, I’m not… like the best person at really, you know, staying in contact with people. But it gives me the ability to be able to contact people, and I kind of like that. I know, there was this girl at one of the places I’m at, She worked at the place, and I had saw her. I had no idea… any way. I can’t contact her. The easiest way to contact her, was just send her a Facebook message about, you know, asking her about the company over there. And that’s like something… that’s a way that I use it to my advantage.

Anthony explains that, for him, technology is all about managing extended social networks. This might include establishing friendships and “building” relationships but also includes simply having “connections” for other aspects of his life.

> We use it as, like, connections, [to] become friends. You see somebody on campus, you talk to them for a little bit, now you become Facebook friends; so, you just message each other, you know, start building relationships, building connections. Because in college, that's what I feel; it's all about connections. Once you leave the world, you've got all these connections. Jobs and different things. Networking. It's just a big network for me.

As Anthony explains, the purpose of social networks and texting is not only cultural but also fundamentally *practical* for most users. That they enjoy it or in some cases "are obsessed" by it is relevant to, but not the primary reason for, use. Technological devices in a network society can partially take the place of human labor, in this case the organization and maintenance of social networks is done primarily through the use of technological devices. While it requires work on the part of participants to click the "accept friend" button or to post a status update, the perception is that this is less effort than other methods. The use of technological tools such as Facebook is faster and requires less effort to maintain connections than face-to-face contact would. Maintaining a social network of connections, potentially for "jobs and different things" is achieved with less effort and more speed, more efficiently through the use of technological tools to replace face-to-face contact. Interaction and the sharing of information still take place; it's simply the way they are occurring that has changed. By using technology, valuable connections to other people within a network society can be maintained. Having 200 Facebook friends that you update about your life using a single post is much easier and more efficient than contacting all 200 people individually or even via mail.

The importance of speed and efficiency in the lives of contemporary college students is immense. Some of that efficiency is tied to the accessibility of information as Hallie explains.

> I find out all this information, so quick, and it's just, like, bizarre; and it, like, I can be… for instance, yesterday, I was at the mall with my roommate. And I was looking at a shirt and I wanted to find it, but they didn't have my size. So, I was, like, "Oh, well, let me go on the… and look online and see if they have it in my

> size. They had it; so, I ordered it, like, it's, just, I did that all, while I was just waiting in their store.

The value of speed goes beyond the logistical and into the realm of the interpersonal. As Jessie notes in hir discussion of techno-mediated communication, this obsession with speed and efficiency has far reaching consequences for users, specifically with regard to expectations about how they use technologies.

> …It's fast. Just like everything else that we've been raised to use… Speed is important in everything, these days, and it's not just the Internet. I mean, the Internet has taught us to value speed. With text messaging there is this thing that I hate. Where, there's an expectation that if you receive a text message, you need to reply to that immediately. Someone has texted you, and if you don't reply to them, that's like… that's like you not answering all their phone calls. … There's a five-minute window. If you don't respond to a text message within five minutes, you're ignoring them. That's what it's perceived as – you're ignoring them.

Jessie claims that the Internet has taught us to value speed. While not perhaps the only aspect of contemporary society to do so, the speed and efficiency of technological communication has resulted in speed and efficiency being increasingly *possible* in interpersonal communication. Jessie goes on to acknowledge dissatisfaction with this cultural expectation for speed and efficiency. In acknowledging both the existence of this social expectation and hir own unhappiness with this norm, Jessie demonstrates an important aspect of techno-social culture. Like the social logics and narratives that shape other types of social interaction, it is possible for an individual to understand the pressure to conform to expectations of technology use, but not necessarily embrace it. This helps to demonstrate the widespread and pervasive nature of the infiltration of rationalization into the intimate social world. Even among those who are not entirely happy with it, the notion of rationalization has been accepted as mostly necessary, if a necessary evil.

Others are more ambivalent, unsure about the value of the technologies they embrace, somewhat tentatively. Hallie shares her reservations but also shrugs off her concerns, suggesting that "it is what is it is."

> I Google everything. And it… sometimes it's a good thing and sometimes it's, like, this is a little drastic… So it's just something like… why? I don't… I don't know the answers, like, why can't they wait? I don't know why. The thing is just the way it's become, the thing is. So, everything is so immanent, and I don't know why…. I think it does have to do with how we've become, so, like, fast-paced…I don't know. I mean, some people think it's horrible, some think it's great. I mean, I think some of them have really helped business people, a lot, you know, you walk around New York City – everyone has their cell phones to their ear. But, I don't know if it's a bad thing, it's just, kind of… it is what it is.

In addition to ambivalence, Jessie demonstrates not only how speed is valued, but also the way in which this value is interconnected with the structure of technology. Text messaging in particular allows for speedy communication as Anna explains.

> [I text] a lot, whoever text messages me I always text them back or if I have to reach somebody real fast and I am in class or in an area where I can talk on the phone I shoot out a text, or when ever it is convenient.

However, certain aspects of technological use actually work against this desire for speed and efficiency in interpersonal relationships. Using technology takes time, even though it may allow a user to achieve some things more efficiently than in the past. This gives rise to ambiguity among some participants, who are concerned about the time they spend on Facebook. Grace shares her ambivalence about the potential danger of too much Facebook use.

> For me, it kind of hit me the other day; an addiction is when you don't want to write your paper and instead you sit on Facebook for two hours and you look and you 're, "Oh my God, where did two hours go."

The idea that one can lose time online is complex. For Grace, the lost time is a concern, a problem in which the technological practices are interfering with other more valuable work. This

kind of time lost plays against the narrative that technology increases efficiency. Yet the *perception* that technology increases speed and efficiency remains intact. As Anthony notes:

> It's [technology]just a better way to do what you want to get; 'cause, on cell phones, they get the internet, so … you cell phone, now you can go on the internet quicker, look up what you want to look up. Now it's got the whole GPS system on phones, it's… you 're traveling, now, you want better speed so you have up to date information for traveling. So it's all about speed, you know. Got computers – everybody's got computers and laptops and stuff. Everybody wants the fastest thing…

As Jessie, Grace, Hallie and Anthony demonstrate, even as the effectiveness of technological architectures of network society are limited, participants generally accept the narrative of speed and efficiency as valid if not ideal. As Grace explains this is due to a kind of normalization, a general acceptance of technology and speed in "today's society" as she says,

> In today's society, it's all about how fast you can send a text message. And the biggest thing with text messaging… people… I don't know if you've seen, like with me and my Blackberry, I can text so fast that it's ridiculous. My dad sits there and he's… "How do you do that?" They actually did study, and these people are getting arthritis in their thumbs from texting so much.

This is partially because for others time online is time well spent. As one participant, Mia, explains, the reality of time and technology use is more complex. She goes on to explain how she too can "get lost" online for a couple hours.

> And if you go on the news feed it's, like… that's kind of how I end up spending hours on there, when I do. Because you go on there and it has everyone's, kind of, status that they've been updating and the pictures they've been putting up; and so then you see that and you click on one and it gets you to someone's page; and then you find out they had a party and you start looking at those pictures; and it reminds you of this friend that you haven't seen in a while so then you go to their page…

For Mia, time online too is about "getting lost'" but she is less critical of the experience, noting that it allows her to gain knowledge of social events within her own social group. Either way, the focus is on speed and ease, something that is of serious concern to participants. Specifically, the

goal of technology use isn't to eliminate face-to-face communication practices, it's to transform the nature of communication itself in order to make it more effective and of course *faster*. Most participants agree that technology is at least a faster way to communicate. Rich explains,

> …it's fast. It's so convenient. In lieu of actually have… in lieu of actually making, like, a lunch date and spending an hour and a half with someone; you can just write, "What 'cha' up to?" on the Facebook Wall and walk away…

Ritzer's notion that efficiency has become a moral value in society begins to explain the uncritical way in which certain components of efficiency, such as speed, effectiveness and ease are defined as an important advantage of technology in establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships. While some participants reject or are at least critical of this narrative, they do not reject the technologies entirely. In order to better understand why, it is necessary to consider not only the means that college students use to interact with social networks but also the ultimate end goal they are seeking, either consciously or as a result of socialization. If the goal of the interaction is to produce and manage extended social networks, for the purpose of gaining social capital or just staying "in touch," then technological tools *are* demonstrably faster, more effective and easier than face-to-face interaction. Technological communication practices may act to make social networks easier and faster, however, the social narrative that defines "efficiency" as a social good is rooted in broader social and cultural realities of contemporary networked society. Yet beyond speed, architectures of technology also make new kinds of social interaction possible, even as narratives about the value of speed and effectiveness shape social behavior.

Conclusion

> A: How important is texting and social networking to college students?
>
> Chloe: It's everything. It's everything. It's how we know anything. It's terrible—we think we know so much about people, on the Internet, and we really have no

> idea. We read into things so much. I mean, that's how we kept tabs on everyone. And texting is just a really impersonal way that we all communicate with each other. It's easier. I mean, I don't know if it's actually easier than picking up the phone. I guess it is, but…it's more.

For Chloe the experience of technology is multifaceted. It is at once a means of knowledge transmission, a tool of interpersonal connection and tool of communication. Easier, impersonal, terrible and more…technology is for Chloe a social constant. It is everywhere and everything, ultimately something she can't quite articulate. As Chloe and others have suggested, contemporary technological experience within network society is filled with complexity and ambiguity, a cause of concern and an opportunity to connect. Yet, perhaps most compelling is the sense of inevitability and belief in the essential necessity of technology demonstrated by participants. This sense of inevitability exists in the face of conflict with parents and professors; it remains in spite of fears about obsession and "badness." Perhaps this sense of inevitability is tied to the ideological and structural factors such as the national and increasingly global obsession with efficiency and speed, the public world is reflected and integrated into the interpersonal relationships of college students. Certainly, the architectures and discourses of the social world beyond the lives of college students fundamentally shape the way in which they engage the world. As Emma acknowledges for her peer group technology is "everything." It functions as the primary means of communication, and is deeply embedded in day-to-day life. The architectures of technology and the narratives of rationality that are linked to network society are becoming so deeply embedded in college student culture that they are unremarkable to my participants. I want to emphasize here that while the way in which industrial standards of speed and efficiency are fundamentally different from the way such ideas are visible in contemporary culture, the idea that such standard are inherently valuable within both the work world and intimate social life are very similar.

As I have demonstrated, the architectures of techno-social interaction among college students shape the experience of college culture and expected social behavior. Such behaviors are not necessarily accepted outside the realm of college culture and can in fact result in conflict with parents and teachers. However, even as this form of intergenerational conflict occurs, these techno-logically mediated cultural expectations are legitimated by broader cultural constructions. I also consider how the acceptance or rejection of the social practices made possible by emerging technology can be influenced by the cultural acceptance of speed and efficiency as valuable within interpersonal relationships.

Understanding the social experiences that emerge from technological functionality and the narratives that surround it helps us to better understand the social practices that are made possible and made valuable in a network society. Thus our understanding of the role of technology in intimate relationships among this group is best expanded by understanding both the technologies they engage with and the way in which such technologies provide varied opportunities and limitations for specific forms of communication between individuals and their social network (Lévy 2001; Castells 2004). The architecture of the Internet, including social media and the web enabled mobile device, make possible social options and social practices such as texting, Facebook profiles and personalized “newsfeeds” which reflect information about friends and families, all of which were unheard of scant years ago. The increased availability of information, along with changes in the expectations surrounding what intimacy is and how it is achieved within relationships reshapes the experience of college students. This transformation exists in a reflexive relationship with the contemporary social narrative that glorifies the principles of corporatization, efficiency, speed and technology. The development of technology

is deeply embedded in the social desire for these principles, and renders manifestations of such principles to be available in more and more venues.

Yet, network society is more than a set of connections between individuals mediated by technology, though this forms the core of it. Rather the nature of network society is one that focuses on experience. For college students, increasingly the experience of intimacy and relationships within network society is one of technological connectivity. The importance of such connectivity manifests in social behavior and is perhaps connected to the widespread acceptance of the necessity and inevitability of technology use among participants. For Chloe and others, network society is truly a hybrid experience, where technology and sociality merge together, not to create a utopia or dystopia, just to create reality.

Chapter Four
Context and Hyper-connection: Being Present in College Relationships.

> A technology is produced within a culture, and a society is conditioned by its technologies. Conditioned not determined. The difference is critical (Lévy 2001, 7).

It may be very tempting to imagine that the existence of technological developments such as the Internet, mobile wireless devices and text messaging *caused* the social transformation of the recent decades, creating techno-social patterns within a networked society (Castells 2005). Yet it is a mistake to assume that technologies produce social change in a linear fashion. Rather, they make new possibilities available, creating new options about how the social world might function, and sometimes displacing existing patterns of interaction. Technology and humanity function together to create history, each influencing or "conditioning" the other (Lévy 2001). Ultimately, technology, for all its power to reshape experience, is itself a cultural artifact that represents and shapes the society in which it exists. This reciprocal relationship between technology and society lies at the root of science and technology studies. Yet, it is also increasingly relevant to sociological analysis of contemporary culture, specifically among college students.

The college students who participated in this study rely on complex communicative processes to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships. However, for this group, technological communication is also deeply relevant. Contemporary forms of technologically-mediated communication may include: text messages, Facebook profiles, IM chats, Tweets, wall posts, photo and message tagging, shared online photo albums, YouTube videos, gaming and other technologies. These technologies exist as more than mediums of communication; they function as an environment that is separate from the content of a given message and rooted in the

form and the logic of that techno-social environment. As one theorist explains, “The environment is the effect it has on its user. With message as effect differentiated from content but user identified with content, *the medium is the message* becomes totally uncontroversial. Would a hay fever sufferer dispute that the environment (pollen_ is) the effect (sneezing)?” (Gordon 2010, 154). Therefore, the integration of communication technology into daily life creates an environment that affects behavior of individuals (Lévy 2001). Within that environment the development of rules and expectations for behavior is inevitable (Lévy 2001, McLuhan 1964). Rules and expectations develop about possible behaviors and experiences through encouragement, discouragement, idealization, and sanctioning by peers, media, popular culture and other social agents.

This chapter specifically examines the characteristics, causes and consequences of connection, disconnection and *hyper-connection* among participants. Students articulate these issues of connection and disconnection in terms of their own presence and absence within social groups or networks. However, they also consider the presence and absence of others, primarily by considering others’ availability for contact, both real and imagined. The focus of this section is on the relationship between social expectations and individual experiences and behavior. My goal is to explore the way(s) in which techno-social practices have meaning and value to participants within interpersonal social interactions. First, I will consider presence and availability in the establishment of peer relationships in general, as well as what role technology plays. Next, I consider how technology is integrated into practices, expectations and behaviors that lead to the establishment and maintenance of friendship. Finally, I consider how certain behaviors and expectations around the use of technology shape romantic relationships among

those I spoke with. This section focuses on both *what* participants do, *why* they make the choices they do and also to what *outcomes* such choices lead.

Presence and Absence: Connectivity and the Social

Perhaps one of the most consistent ideas that surrounds the development of the Internet is a tale of isolation and endangerment. Recently, during a casual conversation with a fellow sociologist, the topic of my research came up. After I commented on the importance of social connection among contemporary tech users, he assured me that I was incorrect. Rather, he explained that the Internet functioned as a force for isolation that interfered with the development of "real" relationships. The notion that the Internet is an isolating technology that disrupts relationships and damages social skills is so commonly accepted among certain groups that it seems to go unquestioned (Sanders et.al 2000, Reid 2005, Hampton et.al. 2009). It seems a bit counter-intuitive to imagine that technology use is an isolating experience, but it remains a popular conception. It might be more useful to consider if those who are concerned about "isolation" are more accurately expressing concerns about the superficiality of contemporary communication. Some may view contemporary communication with its emphasis on speed and efficiency, a practice that encourages a lack of intimacy. This notion of intimacy will be discussed in more detail later, but for now may be understood as a concern held by some of those who discuss issues of isolation.

This narrative is partially the result of the limited accessibility of the technology in its inception. Largely confined, in the early years, to technology professionals and a limited selection of academics (Kendall 2002), the popular image of the Internet in the late 20th century was one of isolation and countercultural ideals (Hafner & Markoff 1995, Burrow 1997). It was a time when fear of technology, specifically the dangers of the Internet and its potentially harmful

effects to social relations, permeated the media (Birkets 1994). The cyberpunk subculture of the era, with its juxtaposition of the technological and social, the mechanical and biological, amplified this narrative of danger. The specter of the criminal hacker and digital outlaw haunted popular culture. At the same time, the hacker also took on the character of the anti-hero, a darkly romantic figure of rebellion (Haffner and Markoff 1995). The hacker, with a near magical ability to invade private systems, expose secrets and disrupt business, appeared regularly in fiction and on the news (Hafner and Markoff 1995).

One of the major cultural contributors to this narrative of speculative fiction author William Gibson, who is the acknowledged father of the cyberpunk genre of science fiction. He is also reputed to have been the first to coin the phrase "cyberspace" in his 1984 novel *Neuromancer*. In his book, Gibson presents a world that is at once a dystopia of human isolation and utopia of individual power. His main character is powerful and knowledgeable in his chosen venue, yet outside cyberspace, in the so-called "real" world, he is isolated and openly alienated from his own biological self (Gibson 1984). Reflections of this narrative image appear in popular fiction and casual conversation around the Internet. Yet is it true?

One author, who also discusses the dangers of the Internet, suggests that it is not and highlights a very different area of concern. In 1994, an article appeared in the *Harpers Magazine* in which literary critic and essayist Sven Birkets claimed, "We sacrifice the potential life of the solitary self by enlisting ourselves in the collective" (Birkets 1994, 17). Birkets goes on to express concern about the "collective," and the degree to which individuality was being subsumed into a social world that is shaped primarily by technological connection. Birkets predicted not social isolation but social integration would be the result of the emerging technologies; my research suggests that he is somewhat correct. My research indicates that the

narrative of isolation and the image of the "outlaw hacker" embraced by Gibson and the cyberpunks has been replaced by something much closer to the techno-social collective that Birkets imagined. Rather than technology resulting in isolation and disconnection, it has resulted in an experience of *hyper-connection* in which being connected, being available, functions not simply as *part* of social relationships, but forms their core.

Thus hyper-connectivity among participants is not only the result of emerging technology, but is the goal of emerging social actions and individual behavior. The notion of being connected is to be present and available to friends and family and thus strengthen interpersonal relationships and social ties. The importance of availability for intimacy and collective social experience is an idea that is shared by many of my participants. William is deeply involved in Greek culture on campus. He claims that the technological bonds that tie him to peers shape his social status.

> If I were to put my phone down and turn my phone off for a little bit… like… I could be missing out on so much. That's one of the reasons why I got the Blackberry, is because e-mails would go rapid fire from the list serve at the fraternity and I'd walk… let's say I'd come over to you, like, yo, did you see, like, the stuff going on the list serve, and he'd say, like, no, dude, I'm not by my computer, you know what I mean, so I hadn't seen it. But you know, already there would be this whole argument that would pan out over the e-mail list serve that I would just completely miss. So, now, I'm connected into that. I can see it.

The fear of being lost or left behind is a concern for individuals who are connected to friendship groups and social networks. Interconnected social relationships are shaped by, and connected by, near instant communication. As Olivia explains:

> …since I commute, like, people I'm taking classes with, like, I'll add them, especially the group projects – it's the easier way to communicate, 'cause some people will check their Facebook more than they actually e-mail. So, that's one of the good things about it.

Presence or what we might call "potential presence" is a foundational idea here. The social expectation that someone is available if needed functions as a kind of glue that holds groups of friends, and even extended social networks, together (Zhao 2003). Arthur explains that Facebook allows for the maintenance of relationships in his life that might otherwise be lost.

> I think almost everyone is on it. Just… I think it almost… initially, at least, for kids my age, because it started out as just the, like, college community and stuff. People were all about it because it was a great resource to keep in touch with… I mean, graduating from a class… who knows… I mean, I graduated from a class of three hundred, but, I mean there's high schools. They have a couple of thousand kids graduating every year. Sometimes the best way to keep in touch is through… was through Facebook.

Presence and the accessibility of the individual self works as a social imperative that is necessary to demonstrate belonging within peer groups and friendship networks. The above respondent goes on to explain the consequences of being without a technological device, of being literally disconnected from technology, and how that results in disconnection from social interaction. William explains.

> I can't call somebody and be like, "Hey, you know, I'm gonna be there in a little bit," or, "Where are you?" Or, let's say I'm going someplace to meet and I don't see them…. Like the old days, you just wait around and hope and then maybe go somewhere, and like, go to a phone and leave a message for them and say, "Hey, I missed you blah, blah, blah." Like, no, expectations like that are completely different. You can't do that."

While on the surface such problems may seem to be merely logistical, a deeper meaning emerges quickly. This is about availability, and perhaps more importantly, about the availability of individuals to be *present* in a social situation even if such "presence" takes the form of technological interactions. This collectivity and hyper-connectivity draws a sharp contrast not only to the stereotypes about technological use but also the preceding generation, which according to some authors is deeply isolated with regard to social interactions (Putnam 2000). This notion of disconnection is tied to the vision of the isolated cyberpunk or the technologically

dependent loner, but the social reality of this group is very different. For example, Ruth discusses the social risks that she runs by having a policy of delaying responses to texts in certain circumstances.

> I'm horrible…they texted me and I don't text back, right away. Like, I don't like texting in class. Like, a lot of people you see texting in class – I hate that – 'cause I know a lot of teachers, they find that simply disrespectful. So I'm late on text back right away, so a lot of people say that I'm rude … because, you know, people want a quick response.

The idea that disconnecting, and thus being absent from the flow of communication within a peer group has real social consequences, is a theme many respondents agree with. For many participants, not following rules about how quickly they should respond to text messages, how often they post on Facebook and how available they are via Internet enabled mobile devices such as Blackberry Messenger, are understood to be matters of respect. As one respondent, Tyler, suggests such delays are "being just you know…cold and …disrespectful to your friends." He goes on to explain that lack of response or lack of availability sends a very clear message to others.

The rules of politeness surrounding texting and response are not clear to everyone though. One participant, Hallie, is frustrated by what she perceives as rude behavior surrounding the relationship between texting and calling.

> So, I… what drives me the most insane is when someone texts me and then I call them and they don't answer… It happens all the time, and I'm, like…It's, like, then they put their phone down and say they're not there, and it's, like, what's the hell no, you're just texting, like, you're obviously… you 're obviously there!

The lack of accessibility, the lack of presence in the medium sends a message of rejection. Jessie outlines the consequences of not responding to text messages or not responding to Facebook messages.

> It means that you ’re ignoring them. I have… one of my roommates, he’s been having this little conflict with one of his friends because he doesn’t always answer her phone calls and he doesn’t always answer texts, because he’s busy. He’s in class. He’s in lab. He’s doing things. He’s running around all day. He does not have time for that, but she… she’ll post messages to his Facebook wall, later, saying, “Hey, how come you don’t respond to my text? Hey, how come you don’t respond to my phone calls? Hey, how come… you have a cell phone – like, use it” Respond to me; all the time, now, now, now, now, now.

Ze goes on to explain that messages being sent between hir roommate and his friend are clear and understood by all parties. It’s about commitment to the relationship, and about the friendship as a priority. The medium of technology sends a message beyond just the words present in the communication. The previous chapter discusses the notion that speed and efficiency have become social virtues. For Jessie and hir peers, the internalization of the value of speed manifests itself as an expectation for speedy communication in interpersonal relationships. The message being sent by a speedy response is that the friendship is valuable and important to both parties. A delayed response is an indication that the friendship is not valued by the “slower” respondent. This may be because speedy communication is a means of “being there” or establishing presence despite physical distance. As Kate notes, it makes communication possible.

> All over the world; at least all over the United States, you can text your friends all day long. I have friends that go to school in Connecticut. I have friends that go to school in Florida and California, and so it’s nice to be able to text them – it’s like they’re there without being there.

This notion of “being there without being there” is key in understanding the messages which technological use sends independently of the words themselves. By establishing presence in a social situation from which you are physically absent, technological communication allows a message about the value of the relationship to be sent. Hallie explains the importance of technology in her relationships.

> I use Skype a lot because my boyfriend lives on Long Island. So we’re pretty far apart. And he just graduated, so, I feel like technology… if we didn’t have technology, we probably wouldn’t stay together. So it would be… and me and my

> dad, pretty much, only communicate via e-mail. So we don't see each other very often, or anything.

The degree to which an individual is perceived to value a relationship with others is also an indicator of how invested he or she is in the relationship. By establishing one's presence online, and making oneself hyper-connected or always present, a social environment is formed. This environment has the effect of encouraging further investment in the idea of hyper-connection. This creates a reciprocal relationship between social behavior, such as availability via text, and group expectations, such as those about appropriate availability, within the techno-social environment.

The medium of technology, as theorist Marshall McLuhan notes, is about the extension of human senses. He argues technological mediums of communication carry inherent messages about their use, which are interpreted along with the message itself (McLuhan1964). The technologies of communication that are employed by my participants extend the senses across geographic space to encounter others, friends, family etc. In acknowledging or rejecting the importance of utilizing these virtual senses to render an individual self as present or, conversely, to acknowledge the presence of another, a message about the value of the other is being sent. Mia notes that her relationship with text messaging is rooted in acknowledging the importance of other people, through communication and "being there."

> I can keep a conversation going, for, like, two days straight, with, like, one person, and so that'll be back and forth, constantly, all day. And we don't really talk about anything important, it just kind of… I don't know…being there.

The relevance of simply being present and having access to the presence of others is reinforced not only by peers but also her own perception about what is "normal" in the techno-social world. This socially constructed need for co-presence is at the root of the hyper-connection of the social

world. One must not only be technologically present in order to provide social connection to others but there is also an expectation of reciprocity. The individual is never really alone.

The presumption of some kind of ability to extend the senses, to connect with the other, demonstrates a sense of connectivity. Allen explains that for him, the loss would be in access to friends and to his social network.

> I don't think that I would have as much friends as I do now. Because of the Internet, I can stay connected with my former classmates and my close friends. I think my life would also be more boring.

To lose the instrument of technological communication is to lose the intimate connection to one's community and to the self that is deeply rooted in that community. William claims that his connection with technology is so intense that he has complex feelings about even contemplating the loss of technologically mediated connections. When I asked him to tell me what it would be like if he lost his phone, he explained in terms of disconnection and fear.

> I've lost it, I've… you almost feel like… naked… I can't really be without my cell phone. Like when… if my phone dies… it's… it's… let's say my phone… my phone just died and shuts off? I do feel off., you can't contact people right away if I need to or anything. I can't get in contact with them. And it's almost like… I'm like, disconnected. Nobody can reach me, and people… I can't reach them, I mean, just think about this. It's the craziest thing for me, is like, OK, so my phone dies, right. I don't know what time it is. That's one of the things right there. I don't carry a watch. Nobody carries a watch…. I don't know what time it is. No access to e-mails, unless I go onto a computer, but I'm not always around a computer, so I can't get my e-mails, right away. Nobody can reach me. I can't reach them…. What am I supposed to do?

This question, "what am I supposed to do" lies at the heart of the presence/absence narrative. The techno-social world of my participants shapes behavior and individual perceptions of the self, through the real expressed and imagined expectations of other people. If the medium of communication "dies," it is no longer available to provide a connection with friends and the imagined other. Ruth agrees, becoming emotional at the thought of being disconnected.

> I wouldn't… I won't… I would have to communicate with people more personally. Um… like, face to face. Because, I use texts a lot. I don't text my mom, because she doesn't really… she doesn't speak English, so I would have to call her, but I… there's a lot of things I, like, I use text for. There's so many arguments that I've won over text. It's crazy. So, since I even wish Happy Birthday.

Without this means of accessing peers, the notion of feeling naked, disconnected, and detached from the world arises. When an individual becomes absent technologically he or she is unreachable, untouchable, the expanded senses have failed. Not only can William not "contact people right away" but also he himself becomes someone who "nobody can reach." Logistically, William is unable to contact his friends easily, to get information and support or even make plans about meetings and activities. However, socially he is also isolated, separated from his friends and peers in a way that engenders in him a sense of loss. Of particular note is that for William this loss is an imagined experience that causes an emotional response.

The loss of a technological means of communication, or even the contemplation of such an event, is imagined to result in both the truncation of the expanded senses, but also a resulting disconnection that occurs when the connection is cut off. Aiden agrees with this idea.

> Without a [internet enabled] cell phone I would not have a social life because my phone is my outlet and source into my social world! I would not be able to survive without my phone because I wouldn't be able to speak to my mother and I also wouldn't be able to speak to most of my friends plus then I'd have nothing to entertain me during class.

This is a frequent theme when respondents contemplate life without technology. Not only do respondents feel emotional discomfort at the idea, but also often express concern about their compliance to social expectations, and even their ability to conduct day-to-day activities. As William tries to explain, "it's a dependency, and it's like you're locked in. And if you're not in it, you're just out of the loop. " Like William, others have conflicted feelings about technology but even then, there is a clear sense about some kind of social imperative. One respondent notes both

conflicted feelings about the medium itself but also about the way in which it functions as a social imperative. Jessie mentions how ze will sometimes play hooky with hir phone.

> … I don't like to be tied to my phone. There are days, and if I have a day off, often times I'll chuck my phone, like, underneath, or like, behind my bed, or something. And I'll go sit out on the porch for half the day. I'm gonna enjoy the sunlight and the peace and quiet and the not ringing of my cell phone and the not vibrating of my cell phone, constantly demanding my attention. And my computer will stay off and I'll do… like, I'll read a book.

Yet, ze also notes that there are consequences to such behavior, as ze is likely to have dozens of text messages, Facebook messages and instant message contacts when ze does check hir phone. Furthermore, ze explains the increasingly frantic tones of such messages. Nevertheless, for hir, the momentary disconnection is worth it.

Jessie goes on to explain that the constant need to be immediately present via technology is at once draining and comforting. Anna too, occasionally attempts to disconnect but struggles to do so, as social pressures to remain connected are intense.

> [Sometimes] I turn off my Facebook. And much of it's hard, 'cause all my friends are messaging me through the Facebook. Like organizing things through it. I mean, so, then I'm forced to use it because that's what they're using. You know, that's how I can keep in contact with them.

Kacy agrees, explaining that she too feels a pressure to be present and in contact with her friends despite her own desires. Despite Kacy's dislike of texting she gives in to pressure

> if you want to text me… I sigh and just slump away, kind of., 'cause I just didn't want to do it. [but]I don't want to lose my friend, it's not that much of a hassle just to learn to do it. I did. And, now, I'm not an advanced user, like, I can't do it under the table without looking at the word, but I still use it sometimes.

The pressure to "be present" for others is via technology, for Jessie and Kacy at least, is sometimes overwhelming. Kacy remains resistant to the norms of text messaging and struggles to set boundaries around her technology use in social situations.

> It's like, with this particular friend in mind, she has unlimited minutes and unlimited text messaging, and I understand that she'll text in class, cause she's not going to sit there on the phone and have a conversation in front of her professor, but maybe she's in class and I'm in class, and I don't want text, 'cause I don't want to be rude. And then I'm ignoring her because I haven't answered her text message. So, I don't know. Should I just text her back and say, "I'm in class – can't talk right now." Or should I ignore it, cause if I text her back, then I'm being rude to my professor. Whereas, if I text her back and she's angry, or she needs me to talk to, for solace or something, then where do I go. Where if you call me, I can always ignore the phone call, but still then, she's not getting that communication that she needs. And I'm not getting the education that I'm in class for, or maybe I just don't want to help you, so what do I do?

Kacy discusses the challenge of finding an "etiquette" of technology use. For many of her peers, the use of text messaging in social situations is accepted, but for Kacy, the demand to be available to provide her friend with "that communication she needs" is frustrating and overwhelming. For her, there is no easy solution to balancing the needs and expectations of her friend with her own desire for distance.

In contrast, Jessie manages hir concerns about feeling too connected by taking some time off. Still, prolonged disconnection such as getting rid of hir phone or Facebook account is not perceived as desirable. While "disconnecting" for a few hours is ok, the prospect of total disconnection or "going offline" is something that evoked nervous laughter in Jessie. When I pressed for more details ze walked me through the experience of "going offline." Going offline, in its contemporary usage, is defined as the process of removing one's profiles, avatars and contact information from the Internet. Jessie explains what happens if ze were to go offline in this sense.

> The first thing that would happen is every… like, everyone that knows me personally, in person, will start demanding… like, "What happened to your Facebook?" "What happened to your Facebook?" "What happened…?" "What's going on?" "Did something terrible happen?" No, I just don't want to be on Facebook, anymore. It's ruling my life. I want to… I want to become free from it. But then, they become baffled; "But how am I going to send you messages?" "How am I gonna share You Tube videos with you?" "How am I gonna [I don't

> know] comment on all of your photos?" I don't even post photos. "How am I going to do all these things? How am I going to keep up with you in my life?"

Immediately social problems arise with friends, family and other members of social networks. Not only does Jessie imagine an immediate response in hir social network but also discusses the ways in which the very nature of that social network might shift.

My time observing online seems to support Jessie's assessment of the topic. At one point Becca, one of the participants I was observing, "dropped out," meaning she stopped posting regularly to her Facebook account, and her Wall was flooded with concerned posts asking if she was ok, and requests like "post something…I miss you." The depth of connectivity demonstrates the importance of being connected, not simply with technology, but also with other people, through the use of technology (Castells 2005). That notion, that technology connects and ties people together in relationships with other people brings a new conceptualization to the notion of getting and staying "connected." Thus the question of how to maintain relationships and connections becomes a central concern … yet apparently the problems don't end there, according to Jessie.

> Then, communication gets difficult at work, 'cause everyone at work is on Facebook, and often times work is done thought Facebook. I'm no longer able to keep track of what's going on around campus, because all events are pretty much orchestrated through Facebook, these days. Unless people walk up to me and say, "Hey, there's an event going on. Do you want to come?" I probably won't find out about it. And the same thing goes on the opposite end for my student organization, I can no longer advertise to my students, because they're all on Facebook. I can't advertise our general body meetings, I can't advertise the events that we're doing or anything like that. All that's gone. And then there's a generalized disconnect with the majority of the people that I know, mostly via the Internet and don't see on a regular day-to-day basis… Right! I am totally disconnected from every thing that goes on.

Though initially mostly logistical problems arise, if disconnection from Facebook is pushed to the next level, Jessie goes on to imagine what it might be like to be entirely disconnected from the Internet.

> If I disconnect myself from the Internet as a whole, the majority of my shopping is done online, so I cannot shop for things, 'cause I don't own a car, so I can't really go out to stores, anymore; unless I am willing to walk a particularly long distance or bum a ride from someone else. I am unable to pursue many of the things that give me momentary entertainment, so I'm sort of left with myself in a house and must pursue more long-term ways to entertain myself. I'm unable to manage my bank accounts. Because I don't balance my checkbook any more because it's done online, so, everything financial I am incapable of doing, unless I go to the bank and ask for a statement; 'cause I've also gone paperless. Since it's all online I've asked them to stop sending me letters I'm not going to open. So, all my financial stuff is gone. Let's see, what else do I manage on a daily basis? My access to the news, is also gone. I don't have a subscription to a newspaper service. I don't have cable television. I don't have news channels, I don't have newspapers. The only way I can get information… newsworthy…is by asking other people or purchasing newspapers on a daily basis.

While Jessie and a few others expressed fantasies of being disconnected or out of touch, all of them acknowledged that such behavior would have dramatic social consequences both for the individual and for their friends and family. To be offline is to be disconnected, not necessarily from technology, as Jessie enjoys the technology of language by reading a book on the porch. Rather, to be offline is to be disconnected from *other people*, as William notes above when he explains that if were offline he "…would not have a way to stay in contact with people, or for people to contact me." If as McLuhan argues, technology is the extension of senses beyond human capacity, then this disconnection is about being literally, out of touch, inaccessible, unable to engage in two-way communication with friends and romantic partners. Participants exist in a space that is about information and communication of information. Individuals access information and one another, and by establishing their presence, individuals also become information that is accessible to others; an accessibility that results in connectivity. The notion of presence and absence goes beyond the simple notion of having an "Internet presence" or a profile online. Rather the idea of presence and absence begs the question, to whom are we present or absent? To what people do we have access and to whom are we ourselves, accessible?

In order to begin answering this question, think about presence and absence as shaped and grounded in the technological accessibility of the individual to others. The rise of technological tools such as mobile Internet devices has implications, which are about the social experiences that are rendered possible by the development of the technology. As new means of communication are made possible by technological development, new sets of social expectations also arise…as William explains.

> You know, by getting off of Facebook, you're making it just as big of a deal as if you were like, an active user. It's one of those things… like, you've got to be on it. People have got to be able to find you these days if you want to be connected.

Some individuals discuss their introduction to information such as Facebook and texting as a consequence of social demands for their presence in online spaces, and thus their accessibility to friends, peers, romantic partners and others. These demands are often to be present and accessible in social situations that are techno-mediated. Jessie explains further.

> I'm not a huge fan of Facebook, but I'll use it. I was actually threatened via physical violence to join Facebook by a friend of mine. She legitimately made the account for me and when I didn't use it she punched me every day that I didn't use it, she would punch me. So now I use it every day. -

The pressure to incorporate some form of technological presence into the social relationships is intense. Other participants also noted that they joined Facebook because of pressure from friends or because they felt like they needed to, as Sara notes.

> I didn't join Facebook until my senior year [of high school] when I knew I was going to Syracuse and kind of wanted to start to, like, meet people…it's what you did to get ready for college. I friended my dorm roommate so we weren't like total strangers when we met. We had already gotten to know each other.

The social demands of compliance are intense, just as the rules of text messaging and even emailing require a degree of technological vigilance that sometimes people struggle with. Yet, such vigilance can be worth it for some participants.

Abby explains that for her the keeping in touch aspect of texting and Facebook allow her to connect is most important.

> I think that for certain people it has… you then have a better relationship with them, or, like, a more of a relationship that you would have had. So I know there's, like, girls on my team, and stuff that, I, like, have nothing in common with. Like we would, like, never really talk or anything. And I would never call them and be, like, "Hey, let's hang out," or whatever. But with texting, like, you can send a mass text and be, like, "Hey, party at my house," and it, like, goes to them. Whereas, if I didn't have texting – I'd never call them and invite them;

Abby acknowledges that for her, technologically mediated communication allows her to connect with people whom she otherwise wouldn't interact with outside formal environments of her sports team. It also acts as a quick and efficient way to use those connections to organize social events. For college students in general the need for such technological devices is not just a matter of "fitting in" in the way that name brand clothing or accessories can be. This may be because such technologies not only allow people to "fit in" but also provide access to information about what is going on with other people that the student interacts with, such as offline events.

In fact, during the time I spent observing participants on Facebook I noted that making announcements had become such a common event that the site designers added an event planner function that allowed individuals to email event details to their friend lists via the website. Event organization became very common as the following except from my fieldnotes demonstrates.

> Today I got 5 event invitations. Two party invites, an announcement of a meeting on LGBT issues, a request to join a Wal-Mart boycott, and an invitation to a baby shower. It looks like these invites were just sent to everyone on the list. I have the option of accepting, declining or saying maybe to each invite and can also post and read related comments. I can see who else is attending and not attending and in some cases why.

One participant, Jadon, noted that without Facebook and texting, it would be impossible for him to mobilize the student organizations he is involved with or "get the word out" about events.

While not everyone used every aspect of the technology most participants found something that enjoyed or valued.

For Lynn, part of the appeal of technology is its relative unobtrusiveness into the social world. This unobtrusiveness is due to both cultural and structural factors. It allows her to be present and available to her peers, but without the intensity that would be required if she maintained that presence through another method.

> It's the normal form of communication, for the most part. Rather than calling someone to ask them if they want to go do something… it's… you text them to make sure that they can do it. Or… I generally text because I don't know if I'm interrupting something; I really feel bad if it's like, "Oh, I was just in the middle of a conversation with somebody that I really haven't talked to in a long time. Oh, good, my friend M called, that's awesome. Thanks for interrupting, jerk." So I kind of text and say oh, you can get to it whenever you feel convenient. But it's normal around campus, to have your phone.

The ability to be present without being obtrusive is important for Lynn, because she relies heavily on her social circle for support, and help with decision making, as is the case for many of her peers (Bellotti 2008). Lynn goes on to explain that she needs to feel connected but doesn't want to come across as too needy, because that has the potential to damage relationships. Nevertheless, the normalcy of cell phone or smartphone use is a result of the social pressures that my participants feel to own and use such devices. Lynn notes that it keeps her connected and is unobtrusive, both important to her, but that these characteristics come from the technology's status as "normal." The widespread use of cell phones and smartphones have resulted in perceptions of their universality that has led to the development of social practices that incorporate them, make them even more socially relevant. For Lynn, texting is the "normal" method of communication and as such has given rise to expectations of courtesy and civility, including not "interrupting something" with a phone call. This perception of normality and the demand for presence within relationships has led to fundamental changes in how interpersonal

relationships are conducted. Perhaps nowhere is this demand for presence and access to communication with people in one's social group so intense as within friendships and romantic relationships.

"Doing Homework": Friendships, Connection and Information

> Today Alexander posted on his wall his feelings about the recent death of his father. There were many, many posts offering sympathy and support. His response might be summarized as a gentle thanks and an acknowledgement of his pain, followed by an "I couldn't do it without you all."

Alexander is one of the most candid posters that I observed in my time online. He comfortably discussed his experience as a transgendered person undergoing both hormonal and surgical transition. Detailing his experiences with medical personal as well as his own feelings. He also went on to discuss in detail his feelings and experiences about the death of his father. He discussed relationships with family members, romantic partners and close friendships. For me, the most extraordinary thing about being Alexander's Facebook friend is the degree to which he considers Facebook a place for intimate communication. The candidness of his Facebook posts is unlike what most of the participants demonstrated and what other researchers have observed (Walker 2000, Park 2009, Raynes-Goldie 2010). He regularly indicates his affection for individuals and for his Facebook community as a whole online, and in return, he is flooded with affection and support in turn. None of my other participants put so much of their lives on display, and no one else received the same level of positive reinforcement and support in return.

Some participants, like Anthony, claim to view Facebook as little more than a combination of a contact list and public relations tool. In general most seem to see it as a means for organizing their social lives and keeping in contact with friends and acquaintances. Whatever the role of Facebook in establishing and maintaining friends, those friendships are important in the lives of college students. This is because friends can act as a buffer for stress and trauma, and

in doing so help with the stresses of major life changes (Friendlander 2007). Yet friendship is also a much more fundamental aspect of social life that combines the practical importance of a social network, such as information gathering and referrals, with the intangible emotional benefits of human connection (Ellison et.al. 2007).

In addition, friends also provide college students with feedback about social behavior and what is socially acceptable in a volatile and uncertain social world. Solid social networks provide individuals with emotional, practical and even informational support (Ellison et.al 2007). During the college years, which for many are a time of substantial social transformation, intimate friendships and romantic relationships can be both emotionally intense and socially desirable. Intimate relationships, particularly friendship, are important to the success of college students (Friedlander 2007). Yet, the ability to make and keep friends in the midst of social changes and individual life upheaval is limited. For some students Facebook is a tool to do just that, as Erin illustrates.

> I definitely think that freshman year was, because you were meeting so many people, constantly, and, I mean you – got – jump in to this, kind of, pool of people that you‘ve never met before and nobody, everybody kind of just looking to meet people and make friends. So that, I mean, Facebook was a big, big factor that I don’t think that a lot of, like, like if you met somebody in class and you were interested in getting to know more and maybe you talked and then you Facebook Friended each other, sometimes that kind of, elevated things? And then you can move on to setting up a time to hang out. Keeping up with friends, I think, friends from home, that’s a big thing. It’s just staying in touch and getting – seeing what everybody’s doing, and it’s a lot easier than having to call people all the time, you have to have a wider array of people that you can keep in touch with.

Students are moving from high school to college, then from college to the workforce, and are also likely to move several times during their college years, among other changes. Fundamentally, college is a time of major change and transition for young adults, and relationships with peers and even parents can shift (Gitelson and McDermott 2006). Due to this

upheaval they may find it hard to establish and maintain friends. For contemporary college students that is made easier by the creation of Facebook.

For many users, Facebook is the primary way in which they keep track of extended social networks, with closer friends and family members contacted via text messaging. Facebook, despite its digital nature, is perceived by many participants as being more stable than other means of staying connected. As Olivia explains, Facebook supplies her with a consistent means to stay in touch.

> …because some people… you never know… things happen… people move and, just, things like that. But, like, with Facebook, it's just, like… if you move, you still have your Facebook. You don't have to actually delete it and take it down, whereas, … you may have to change your number or get a new phone… or you lose your contacts, like, anything can happen. But, like, with Facebook, I just feel like, it's just like one of those… it's like one of those set in stone, things.

For Olivia and others, Facebook is indeed set in stone, in the sense that they and their peers are not willing to disconnect themselves from it. This sense of permanence and consistency plays a role in how college students utilize Facebook. Lynn agrees, noting she keeps in contact with some people via Facebook because "There're some people, like… with Facebook, that's, like, one of the permanent things." The ability to keep track of friends and to get stable and consistent information about them is very important to participants. In fact, the ability to "keep track" or "keep in touch" with extended friend networks was the most often cited reason for having a Facebook account. Keeping in touch is one way in which individuals can affirm and reaffirm their presence within, and connection to, social groups (Blumer 1969). This is intensified within a techno-social environment due to the way in which Facebook and texting, which are both used by college students as part of the getting to know you process, have become central to making friends. Hallie explains the process by which a friendship functions in her social world.

> You meet someone, at a party, in class, whatever…then you get their name… next I think you would 'friend' someone. And then, they either accept your request or don't. I don't see why they wouldn't… accept. Usually people accept you as a friend request and then, you know, maybe they'll, like, say, write on your wall or something. Then, maybe you tag them in pictures. Then, you know, maybe you have a status that they comment on. But then it kind of fizzles out, if you don't really know them. But if you friend someone and you start hanging out with them outside of the online world, and you are… you become friends, then, you know – you write on each other's walls all the time, you tag each other in pictures all the time. Then you have your little inside jokes, like, then you're, sort of, like, more a part of each other's online lives as you become more a part of each other's, like… not online.

For Hallie building friendship is a deeply interactional process, which involves a complex series of events that take place both online and offline. The establishment of a new friendship almost always takes part at least partially on Facebook, through texting, meeting and hanging out all work together to lead to a friendship. The degree to which "Facebook friends" transition from social media networks into real, emotionally relevant friendships varies a great deal. Some of my participants agree with Hallie, noting that while all Facebook friends are not necessarily offline "real" friends, virtually all "true" friends are also Facebook friends. Hallie goes on to explain that even for relationships that begin offline or predate social media, becoming Facebook friends is important because it allows close friends to be "kept updated" on life events. However, it's even more important for new friendships. William also outlines the processes of meeting and getting to know someone using both face-to-face and technologically mediated experiences.

> You can actually look them up on Facebook. Find them. They say, oh, yeah cool, but if you want to talk to them, you talk to them – that's how people contact. It's more so… you don't have to have the constant streaming back and forth conversation. With that, you can just leave them a message. That's it. You can… you don't even have to ask them, even, what's going on in their life. You just look at pictures and kind of get a sense… but then are the same time, it's like… so, let's say I look at somebody's Facebook. I wouldn't go up to them and say, "Oh yeah, I saw pictures of that."

The integration of offline and online communication in establishing a solid knowledge base about "what's going on in their life" is essential for a relationship to progress among this peer group. This is due to a phenomenon that Hallie and William both refer to in passing, looking up Facebook profiles. The multi-media dimension of Facebook profiles allows for a kind of intimate knowledge of the individual. Not only is a wide variety of information available, but images and photos are also frequently available as well. Yet, as William notes, there is also a taboo about how much information one acknowledges having. William claims "everybody does it," however demonstrating too much knowledge about an individual from his or her Facebook page is taboo. The line between acceptable information and displaying too much knowledge is fine and something with which many students struggle.

At times referred to as "background checks" or, in the case of a slightly more comprehensive observational process, "creeping", this involves doing research on people you meet via their Facebook. William shares his experience and the logic behind these kinds of background checks.

> My friends are definitely looking at girls, trying to see, like, oh yeah, I met this one last night – let's see what she looks like oh, wa wa wa wa. Oh, she looks good here. But the same time, that also works against your favor, like my friend was saying how people get to preview you before they actually get to meet you… you can't hide anything, anymore. People see pictures now; things go up online, like that [snap]. People can get it fresh.

William explains that everyone involved expects that others will "preview" potential friends or romantic partners, as keeping updated and getting fresh information via Facebook is an important part of the establishment of relationships. Emma explains in more detail, this is a very common expectation and increasingly one that has become an unspoken assumption about social interactions.

> ’cause if you’re at a social event, and your best friend is like, “Oh, here… M, here’s my friend L.” I guarantee you every person goes back and checks Facebook five seconds later, so they can see what they’re all about. …you can, you know, create a profile. You can say how old you are, you know, what’s going on… you can just put your name on there. But I think, it’s what has become a thing, where people… it’s how people define someone; like they don’t even look at them. It’s like… “Oh, you look so different than on Facebook.”

Yet, this is complicated by the expectations of techno-social interaction in which the background check takes on a strange quality. As Emma describes above, there is a presumption that every person is conducting Facebook background checks…and thus the presumption is that everyone has a shared base of knowledge. However, this knowledge is in some ways unspoken.

The logic behind this process is clear, as far as Emma is concerned, social interactions are easier if everyone has “done their homework” in preparation of either face-to-face interactions or in the process of establishing interpersonal relationships. William agrees, though suggests that it is possible to nuance this process a bit.

> People have been, like, “Oh I just met this girl last night.” Then you check her out, and you see, oh dude, she did this kid, like fuck!... Background information. You are literally doing background checks on people….. It… it’s almost like you’re coming in to a test and you’ve studied. Yet, you can’t come out… you can’t go straight out say that you studied. It’s like you’re coming in prepared. It’s like kind of knowing a little bit, and everything. Like, oh I’ve seen this. I have an idea about this, you know. That’s what some people seem to do. You can tell who people’s friends are, you know what I mean, based on Facebook. If you look at pictures, Like, oh yeah, I saw that you must be… blah, blah, blah. I mean, even conversations sometimes, people are like, “Oh yeah, I saw pictures of it,” like you know, like spring break, it seemed like fun. You kind of have a little bit of an idea about the person.

William agrees that doing background checks is important, like studying for a test. Not only does having such information demonstrate interest, but it is also increasing the individual’s ability to make connections by discussing shared interests and attitudes with someone they want to impress and forge a relationship with (Raynes-Goldie 2010). Anthony explains:

> You can find out how a person is… who this person is through posts and stuff – what they post up, what they talk to friends about, who they hang out with. You can get a little feel of who this person is. Even before you meet 'em , if you've never met 'em before, 'cause you can see, on people's profiles. So you can get a feel of who this person is – are they a good person, bad person. What they do. What their interests are, all that stuff.

Yet, according to William friendships with people who have shared interests are often intensified, with people who have "done their homework" strategically guiding conversations in the direction of shared interests during face-to-face interaction. This must be done subtly to avoid being accused of creeping. Also, there is a sense that too much difference can be a "relationship killer," where some information ends a relationship before it can begin. For example as Jake explains his decision not to link profiles with his romantic partner on Facebook.

> Because we feel like if we had that, and if we do it completely changes how the opposite sex…well the opposite sex. Okay wait I am talking in like heterosexual relationships you know… there is no…any attempt to get you interested in them like romantically. But if you already have that… then that person isn't going to like approach you anymore. So even if it could become like a good regular friendship…

Jake goes on to explain that he is concerned that if he lists himself as "in a relationship" on Facebook, then potential friends will decide not to pursue a friendship with him after looking at his profile, considering him unavailable for new friendships, specifically with a women. The practice of doing background checks is something that Jake is concerned will limit his potential friendships.

In addition, there is a social taboo against admitting you have spent too much time online doing background checks. This leads to a negative perception of the individual, often that he or she is a "creeper" or has been "creeping." Creeping is a more intense form of background checking that involves silently following an individual on Facebook without posting or commenting, and doing expanded research on the person by following their Facebook friends

and family members online. While gaining permission from participants to observe online, several referenced "creeping." One participant even said, "Sure, creep on me if you want." Creeping functions as a slightly taboo act, but is not necessarily forbidden. The line between the socially expected but unacknowledged background checks and the slightly taboo creeping is unclear. One self-defined creeper explained the process:

> Grace- ...being a creeper… a lot of people talk about Facebook creeping, like, "Oh my God. I have a creeping, like obsession." Creeping is where, I would define it, you have like a half hour – you just sit on Facebook and for no reason you just stalk people, you look at everything…
>
> Alecea- Wow that's intense…
>
> Grace- Oh, I know! And serious, I will admit it, I Facebook creep. And you see what people are doing. You read posts from other people. You see what party they went to. The pictures… you see… the biggest thing… like on Facebook it will say, "So and so likes this group." So they may like, say, Adidas, or whatever, or Abercrombie and Fitch. But then, the big thing is, relationship status, like, has a heart. And everyone wants to see they go from 'single' to 'in a relationship' to 'it's complicated' to so and so, so that's like the biggest thing people are looking for and the comments posted after that.

Having a grasp of an individual's relationship status is an important part of the process of background checks because it has the potential to shape ongoing relationships between newcomers. In background checks and in creeping, knowing about relationships can give people a sense or power or, as one participant noted, being "in the know" about intimate relationships. Forging a deeper connection in the minds of the watchers, some theorists suggest this form of connection allows for a deeper *perception* of intimacy, in which watchers feel like they have special or intimate knowledge of others (Bondebjerg 2002). For some, the knowledge about the status of intimate romantic relationships make them feel "closer" to Facebook friends, as if that knowledge makes their relationships more intimate themselves (Bondebjerg 2002

For many participants the line between background checks, creeping and outright stalking is also a bit unclear. In fact, the possibility of stalking of individuals is commonly understood as being an acceptable risk for most of the participants, and creepers are often understood to be the fodder for jokes. During my time observing online, several references to creeping came up. One poster claimed that another was "creeping on" her because he never posted comments, only hit the "like[5]" button. This expands the notion of creeping to include a slightly more interactive behavior. However, the notion of viewing a profile without active engagement remains.

Grace goes on to explain that for her creeping is about two things, entertainment and power. Watching the "dramas" of college life for others gives her both a sense of belonging and a sense of superiority. Beyond its entertainment value Grace explains that sometimes she uses this comprehensive knowledge gathering in a way similar to the background check, as a means to be prepared for social interaction. She considers herself to be a bit of an "insecure person" who needs the "extra help" in social situations. Grace is not alone; Jake also touches on the power inherent in having knowledge in social situations.

> All this personal information, what they like and who they are, and the things that their friends have posted on their wall, which is pretty powerful…like the way you look at someone I feel like it's a powerful way to judge someone, you can see what their friends say and are like. And then you can click on their friends' profiles and see what they are into and what they like. What is their social group?

Even as Jake is explaining the "how to" of friendship he is also analyzing the meaning of his own behavior. He acknowledges the power and importance of having information about someone throughout the relationship. The power of having knowledge allows creepers to "judge

[5] The "Like" button is a virtual "thumbs up" that can be given to post on someone's Wall. The politics of the like button are complex and at times unclear. Additionally, "liking" something is a single click activity, with no additional though or interaction required. Generally, liking is an efficient and fast way to indicate presence and interaction without spending the time to write an actual comment.

someone" easily. Jake goes on to discuss how having this power, this special knowledge, helps guide him in social situations and even shapes choices he makes about who to associate with and who to avoid. All of this is possible without the "messiness" of face-to-face interaction. Another participant, Lisa, shares her creeping tendencies.

> For college kids, the only way I can describe Facebook – it's a way to, I guess, creep on people, or see what people are doing without them knowing. So, people I haven't talked to, or people I don't like – I can view everything they're doing – every conversation, every photo, every party they went to, and they will never know. And I think that's the greatest aspect for teenagers is being able to see what people are doing, and not having them know.

There are a number of ways in which this practice impacts social interaction. First, for many participants there is an accelerated sense of intimacy with individuals who meet your prescreened requirements and an artificial rejection of those who don't. This results in a narrowing of intimate relationships, as people are rejected out of hand based on profiles. Interests and opinions generally bind people closer or pull them apart in face-to-face interactions, yet the amount of effort that is necessary to identify such similarities or differences results in a median level of social intimacy (Boase and Wellman 2006). For this group, individuals are often identified, analyzed, and decided upon after a single meeting, or in the case of people who are investigated via shared contacts, no meeting at all.

Secondly, for those who do 'make the cut' the feeling of familiarity is intense. Having "studied" and having "come prepared," individuals are able to move quickly past the "getting to know you" stage of interpersonal interaction and into the stage where decisions about relationships are made. Relationships may develop into romances or become friendships, but either way, connections are forged quickly. Erin agrees as she talks through her own feelings about the increased speed of contemporary relationships explaining,

> … relationships are sped up, a lot, because you're constantly in contact with people. You're always texting and you're always, you know, talking to somebody, so you get to know them a lot quicker; and so, things you would have learned over time, with people, you know so much sooner, kind of…and. I think I learned that a lot by [my] own experiences. I had a relationship with a guy that was long distance, for while, so we, like, relied on Skype and, like, AIMing; mainly like Skype, AIMing and video chatting to keep in touch and get to know each other; and we got to know each other pretty quickly that way. Whereas if he was abroad and I was here, and I was talking to him any other way, maybe we would send a few e-mails here and there, but, I think it definitely speeds up – and like, people rely on it, also, when you first meet somebody it's a lot easier to check somebody – to talk to them through – that way, you know, rather than having to make that nerve wracking phone call, you just have to type a few words and hope that they text you back.

For Erin, the speed and frequent contact characteristic of contemporary relationships is the result, at least in part, of technological tools like Skype and texting. As Erin explains, the speed and knowledge made possible by technology allows for an intense and deeply connected form of relationship management. Furthermore, this kind of connectedness allows for a more controlled communication, in which individuals have extra knowledge about the other person. Further, the structure of technologies like text, are fast and easy to use, but don't require the same level of moment to moment thinking that a conversation does, which can be "nerve wracking" as Erin notes. As both Grace and Erin suggest, the role of techno-social interaction in the establishment of relationships goes well beyond friendship and into the realm of romantic relationships.

"Facebook Official": Technologies of Love and Romance

The degree to which techno-social communications are implicated in recent transformations in the social and romantic practices of college students is unclear. However, the process of establishing, maintaining and even ending romantic and sexual relationships are deeply techno-mediated among participants. This techno-mediation allows for an increased level of knowledge about intimate life that can further reinforce the sense of hyper-connectivity

experienced by participants. However, this is complicated since interpersonal relationships and, on particular, sexual/romantic relationships have changed in recent decades. For example, researcher Kathleen Bogle notes the degree to which "hook-up culture" has become a central component of college social life and sexual processes (Bogle 2008). One aspect of hook-up culture, as well as the 'friends with benefits' sexual model is the role that technology plays both in establishing the hook-up and in facilitating the practical aspects of such relationships (Grello et. al. 2006).

Chloe explains that for her, texting is about the pursuit of casual sex. She considers herself an independent woman for whom the traditional dating and romance aspects of college culture are uninteresting. Rejecting traditional gendered expectations of sexual behavior Chloe believes that technology allows her to be more sexually open and strategic about her pursuit of sex. As part of the growing number of women who consider casual sex during college as normal and desirable (Bogle 2008), Chloe is a proponent and participant in hook-up culture and her phone is her most effective tool the pursuit of casual sex.

> I like to think that I've perfected the art of the coy text message. It just makes everything so easy. Not to say that I still don't value talking on the phone to the people I'm getting with. It drives me fucking nuts when I'm hanging out with a guy and they won't call me, it's all text. Call me and ask me to hang out. But there's a lot of leading up to that stuff that I—I've used texting a lot. Actually, one of my go-to moves, was that when I was at a party, or wherever I was with someone, I would text the person from across the room and tell them that I wanted to make out with them (laughing.) It always worked!

Chloe goes on to explain that without her cell phone she would "never get laid." The use of such technologies in the pursuit of casual sex among my participants is substantial, particularly with regard to text messaging. Several male participants also discussed using texting as a means to hook-up, however neither they, nor Chloe, suggested that hooking-up using texting was more common among men than women, and they agreed that for the many men and women who

engage in college hook-up culture, the text message was the primary tool for organizing one's sex life. In rejecting the notion that sex itself should be limited to serious relationships, participants of both genders also felt that technology made casual sex easier. Among teenagers the use of "sexting" or sending erotic photos and texts to one another via cell phone has garnered media attention and a great deal of social disapproval (Lenhart 2009). When asked, my participants largely found the idea of sexting amusing, and something you do in high school, because it is "not serious, just kidding around." For the contemporary college student, cell phones and sex are all about the hook-up, or making arrangements for meeting up. As one participant Rich explains, for him the text message is about planning and organization when it comes to the hook-up.

> … it's important to look at the way people use it, to kind of interact with other people, obviously, but like, how do they, sort of, get what they want out of it. Like, it takes on many different uses. Like… for me I was using it to try… you know… I was using my phone to communicate to a female to try to get that shit going…

Rich and Chloe both use cell phones to make arrangements for hooking up, which may or may not include casual sex. However, for some of their peers, techno-mediation in intimate relationships is less about fun and/or sex and more about romance.

Technologies of texting and social networking also play a role in the establishment of a romantic relationship. Often the process of starting up a relationship plays out similarly to the establishment of a friendship. Utilizing both Facebook and texting to "get to know" an individual, the use of techno-mediated communication is central to the process. Misty walks us through the process, explaining step by step how you go from meeting someone to establishing a serious relationship.

> Well, it first starts when you first meet someone, or even just like a friend in general, like you'll friend request so and so. Oh, uh… and, a big thing, too, you have to say, like, you know, send a friend request. And they don't always have to

> accept you, so you can say friend request are waiting or pending. So it makes you think, "OK, well they don't want to be friends with me," or whatever, and people can reject you. But as far as the relationships end, it first starts off and you meet them, and they start commenting on pictures on Facebook. They start liking things; they write on your wall, they do things to get your attention. So, then, you'll do that back to them. Then you'll hang out or whatever, and then, I would say, typically, from what I've seen, it's 'Facebook Official' after three weeks.

Misty's description of the process by which she and her peers move into romantic relationships is interesting for several reasons. First, the speed at which the process moves from introduction to serious relationship is intense. Secondly, the potential for tensions or difficulties due to technological issues are substantial. Finally, I touch on the use of Facebook Official, a term that denotes a serious romantic relationship among this group, is important as well.

The speed at which romantic relationships move is closely tied to the intensity of relationships that are made possible by technological devices. Erin agrees with Misty regarding speed; as she shares her own theory and experience

> Relationships are sped up, a lot, because you're constantly in contact with people. You're always texting and you're always, you know, talking to somebody, so you get to know them a lot quicker; and so, things you would have learned over time, with people, you know so much sooner, kind of…and. I think I learned that a lot by [my] own experiences. I had a relationship with a guy that was long distance, for while, so we, like, relied on Skype and, like, AIMing; mainly like Skype, AIMing and video chatting to keep in touch and get to know each other; and we got to know each other pretty quickly that way. Whereas if he was abroad and I was here, and I was talking to him any other way, maybe we would send a few e-mails here and there, but, I think it definitely speeds up – and like, people rely on it, also, when you first meet somebody it's a lot easier to check somebody – to talk to them through – that way, you know, rather than having to make that nerve wracking phone call, you just have to type a few words and hope that they text you back – and stuff like that

The phenomena of background checks and creeping allow for relatively recent acquaintances to know a great deal about one another. After examining the Facebook profiles of my participants at the beginning of my digital observation I had the following basic information about most of my participants: hometown, high school, current major, age, birthday, sexual orientation,

relationship status, religious affiliation, favorite books, movies, tv shows, sports teams, games, activities and hobbies, quotations and inspirational people and links to all of their Facebook friends' profiles. Some profiles also include photographs and any blogs or Twitter feeds owned by the holder. The Wall, a location where the profile holder can post updates and have discussion with friends, generally covers current and past activities, details and discussions about classes, relationships, political views, and plans for upcoming social events. They may also include details about personal traumas or difficulties in classes, relationship and family life. This information is available as soon as an individual is "friended" or is accepted as a friend.

Once this connection has been made between potential romantic couples, the "getting to know you" stage takes on new dimensions. Couples will post back and forth and text message one another to make arrangements to meet up or just to keep in touch. As Ruth explains, the need for regular contact via text is also an important component in the relationship process.

> …if you are dating someone, you normally keep in contact over the phone. Like, say, like, "Oh, what time… are you out of class, now? OK, cool. I'm gonna go eat. You want to come and eat? Like, you know, small things like that… and texting is literally, like, talking with someone, so they'll text throughout the day.

The expectation of this constant contact is something that is deeply familiar to respondents. Like other relationships, the need to be present and the perception of being always available for interaction, plays an important role in the techno-social world. Keeping connected and for that matter, keeping in regular contact with a romantic partner or friend is made possible by the structural aspects of technology.

The phone is, in many ways, a third party in many romantic relationships. As such it should come as no surprise that problems and tensions can arise, based on technological issues. One example which Anthony shares, is about not being sure if your friend request would be accepted. William outlines another for us.

> …back in the day. A guy would call a girl or a girl call… it's like, "Should I call? Should I call her?" I don't know if [I should] call them… you know what I mean? It's changed now. I dropped her a text. You know, she didn't respond. She didn't read it or I see that she read it – she didn't respond. What did I say? Do I send her a text now? Or is that going to send the wrong message. You know what I mean? It's completely different. Yeah! Like, OK, how about this. You send somebody a text message at like, three o'clock – four o'clock; you know what I mean? A girl. Or a girl sends it to you. Most likely it's like you're trying to hook up. She's trying to hook up or… something like that. You're obviously trying…. You send it early in the day to try to see if they're going out, or whatever, like, I don't know, maybe it seems like you care too much…and you don't want to seem like you care to care too much, 'cause then you're losing control.

While not fundamentally new to interpersonal relationships, anxiety over social expectations for romance takes on new dimensions with the integration of technology into relationships. Part of that issue is about the visibility and permanence of such tensions. William explains how his Blackberry allows him to see if his recipient has read the text he sent her or not. He is also fully aware that if she has seen it and hasn't responded it may be because she has consulted her friends by showing them exactly what he said and getting advice on how to respond. Despite the changes in how romance is conducted, the fears and tensions associated with the experience are just as relevant as ever, in part because texting and Facebook make messages more widely visible and more permanent than oral communication. Nowhere is that quite so evident as with the experience of becoming "Facebook Official."

Facebook Official is a term participants use to refer to romantic relationships that are officially recorded on Facebook. When an individual changes his or her relationship status from "single" to "in a relationship" with a link connecting his/her Facebook page to another, a relationship is considered "Facebook Official." The majority of my participants consider this THE primary sign that a couple is serious. As Grace explains,

> …if it's not on Facebook, it doesn't exist, like… that's how you find out, like, oh, such and such is dating, this person. And I'm, like… it's really official… Facebook defines a relationship. Because people have these things… like, you'll

> hear, like, "Oh, did you hear so and so were … M and L are going out?" Like, No, no, you can't say that because it hasn't been on Facebook, yet; and everything relates back to Facebook It's so weird, 'cause nothing is official – she's like, "Naaah, it's not true until it's on Facebook."

Despite Grace's statement that "it's not true until it's on Facebook" the question here is not a matter of truth, but a matter of the legitimization. Rather than considering this a matter that is purely informational, it becomes an indicator of group legitimization. Facebook Official has become a ritual that provides group legitimization of an intimate relationship, or as Hallie clarifies " …if it's not on Facebook, and other people aren't seeing it, like, it doesn't exist." This public announcement provides relationship partners with a *symbol* of their commitment to one another. According to Jake, his romantic life is, at its foundation, techno-social.

> …when you are in the world at this point, at my particular age – twenty-two years old – what makes a dating relationship official? Your Facebook status. Your Facebook status makes it official. The day that you put yourself as in a relationship, that is the day that everyone else in the world recognizes you as dating someone else.

Jake claims that without the social sanctioning of their relationship, committed relationships among this group are less valid and less "official." Only when a couple becomes Facebook Official does "everyone else in the world" or, more accurately, members of a couples social group, acknowledge and recognize a relationship. This, however, is not without its risks. As Owen points out, one consequence of a public announcement at the start of a relationship is that there is also a public announcement of the relationship ending.

> You're not really broken up until you break it up on Facebook, because that's the day that everyone recognizes that you have broken up with someone. If someone's relationship status goes from 'in a relationship' to 'single' – drama abound.

Just as a relationship isn't official until it has a public announcement, a break-up is also a public event; as Owen goes on to explain,

> Everyone's gotta comment on that. Everyone. Everyone's gotta say, "Oh my God, I'm so sorry. I can't believe that person broke up with you," or vise versa. You know, "What happened?" "I need to know." "What happened in your life that all this happened? We should meet up. I need to make sure that you're OK." It goes on and on. Twenty-five, thirty, fifty comments, I've seen on a single relationship status change.

Romantic relationships have long been deeply embedded in and shaped by the public life. Since its inception, marriage has been a largely public event and one that was fundamentally focused on establishing one's position within society (Coontz 2006). The phenomena of Facebook Official romances are the latest in a long line of public displays of romantic intention between couples. Deeply symbolic, relationship status not only provides observers with information about an individual or couple, but also provides the couple with a tangible symbol of commitment.

Not everyone is convinced that the use of online tools in romantic relationships is such a good idea however. As Jessie explains, there is something missing for hir in such relationships.

> There's never been a way to make friendships and relationships easy, but it's like the EasyMac of relationship building. And that's creepy, because if you've ever had EasyMac, it's not the same as the box. It's not as yummy! In my opinion. It's just not as yummy. Put that in your book! It is the EasyMac of relationship building, and there's a lot left to be desired, there.

Jessie reminds us that relationships are indeed difficult, and require trust, effort and time to become meaningful (Berscheid 1994). For hir, the ease of relationship building using technology robs relationships of some of their meaning. Modern technological integration into friendships and romances is indeed different from the past. The perception of "realness" in relationships based significantly on technology may leave some participants wanting more. Or perhaps, as Jessie suggests, the loss is about effort. Even as culture among college students embraces the "faster is better" ideology discussed in the last chapter, some participants question if faster and easier relationship building lose something in their lack of effort. For Jessie, that difference renders the experience in some ways less satisfying and "there's a lot left to be desired there."

While not all participants agree with Jessie's assessment, many do find themselves struggling to engage with the fast moving and ever-changing techno-social practices of their world. When it comes to romance and friends as Jessie reminds us, it's never easy. Additionally, it is never static or universal. The logics and the techno-logics behind and within contemporary friendships and romances are complex and always subject to change.

Conclusions

Throughout this chapter, I have offered examples of the way individuals grapple with issues of connectivity and hyper connectivity. The desire for connection between individuals and between individuals and groups is central to understanding the experience of participants. Connection is experienced through the possibilities and social expectations that surround presence and absence. It is experienced through the proxy of knowledge, as participants "do homework" about one another so that they are knowledgeable about and thus connected to, others. Finally, the connection between the individual and social is manifested in the desire for public recognition and validation of relationships that is the phenomenon of Facebook Official.

A few participants chose to reject some or all of this pressure to get connected and stay connected. Yet, all acknowledged their existence and the tension that exists between those who live in the techno-social world and those who resist it, those who belong fully to network society and those who inhabit the fringes. For some, like Kacy, it is possible to reject the social pressures for conformity, and to simply accept the social consequences. Which in her case, means limited access to events and a small intimate social circle. For others, such as Jessie, a deep ambivalence exists; as ze fantasizes about disconnecting for a day to read a book ze also knows that ze is unwilling to fully accept the losses a permanent disconnection would result in. For many, such as

Abby, disconnection is not an option, and not desirable, as they consider themselves deeply embedded in the techno- social world and feel that they thrive there.

This embeddedness means embracing a set of social expectations that include consistent "presence" within the techno-social world. This means establishing and maintaining not simply an "online identity" but a consistent self-presentation of accessibility. The ideal is to be plugged in and logged on, not simply regularly, but *all the time*. This level of hyper-connectivity is impossible in practice and for most participants not entirely desirable. However, near constant availability for interaction is the ideal that my participants *perceive* to be the norm among their peers, even as they themselves may be an exception. Many explained that among their peers for relationships to be valid, for intimacy to be achieved, it is essential that one's virtual presence be maintained.

For those who engage deeply with the technologic of the techno-social world, it is viewed as a means of maintaining intimacy, nurturing friendships and enriching relationships. For those who take a more critical view, it is a necessary but ambiguous space in which risks and benefits shape individual experiences. Even as some participants fantasize about a disconnection that they believe they cannot implement, others struggle with a fear of disconnection that is talked about in terms of loss. Perhaps this ambivalence is the characteristic that is most evident among those who struggle to make meaning in the techno-social world. This ambivalence about the advantages and demands of the techno-social world may be linked to the nature of the technological architectures in which they exist. The nature of contemporary technology can lead to an ambiguity of experience, even as technological architectures, social forces and culture bring together the need to connect.

Chapter Five
Intimacy, Privacy and Performance: Redefinitions in the Techno-Social World

> The medium, or process, of our time - electric technology is reshaping and restructuring patterns of social interdependence and every aspect of our personal life. It is forcing us to reconsider and re-evaluate practically every thought, every action, and every institution formerly taken for granted. Everything is changing: you, your family, your education, your neighborhood, your job, your government, your relation to "the others." And they're changing dramatically (McLuhan and Fiore [1967] 2005, 8).

In 1967, Marshall McLuhan wrote about the transformations in interpersonal and intimate relationships that he believed would be derived from transformations in technology, particularly information and communication technologies. The natures of such transformations, such redefinitions, are still largely uncertain, yet changes are already in progress. In this chapter, I will consider how privacy, intimacy and performance of the self are being redefined in light of the emerging technological architectures and changes in social behavior discussed in previous chapters. The power of technology shapes the nature of privacy and the attendant perceptions and experiences of intimacy and performance among participants. I have discussed previously how technology use is shaped by culture, and how such practices shape and reshape interpersonal relationships. Now, I am going to explore how such practices, and the social transformations in privacy and intimacy that are occurring in relation to such expansions, shape the performance and strategic creation of the self.

First, communication within intimate relationships between individuals is not necessarily private, and private information and interaction don't necessarily denote intimacy. Privacy and technological interventions into "private life" are of concern to researchers, who are focused on the relationship between technological communication and intimate social life (Barnes 2006, Bradley 2003, Civin 2000). Privacy exists today, as it has in the past, as a site of conflict, where

power and privilege meet the desire for control over information about the self. Yet today, the very definition of privacy is undergoing a transition in meaning. These transitions not only redefine privacy, but also reshape the experience of participants. For some participants, privacy is taking on new forms that are made possible by transformations in information and communication technologies, such as texting, social media, and video chat. Such technologies facilitate communication across geographic distances and redefine how private information is shared. Such changes may reshape the social practices that characterize intimacy and they even remake social expectations about interactions between privacy, intimacy and the creation of identity via performance (Butler 1997).

Historically, intimacy has been defined as the result of practical need and physical closeness, largely a matter of geography (Buhrmester and Wyndol 1987, Moss and Schwebel 1993). Yet, today the degree to which such an intimacy can be achieved is made more complex by the view of technology as something that can bridge distances and render the need to be close in order to communicate unnecessary. Secondly, for participants in the study, the changes in emergent technologies have resulted in some ambiguity as to the nature of intimacy. Specifically, participants present the idea that technology is both distancing and intimate, at the same time. This is something that seems to be contradictory but came up often. Finally, I consider how both structural factors and narrative transformations in privacy and intimacy shape the public presentation of the self. The relationship between the individual self and the social world has been articulated as a matter of performance and audience (Goffman 1959).

Today, the fantasies and perceptions about what the social world looks like are being filtered through and expanded by techno-media. The consequences of these changes in behavior and perception provide some of the most powerful indicators of how technological innovation

changes the day-to-day experiences of college students. Therefore, this chapter examines the way(s) in which the concepts privacy, intimacy and performance are being tied to the ability to control and manage knowledge about the self.

Beyond Public and Private: From limitation to management of information

One participant, Eric notes that one of the major "problems" or at least one of the most contentious issues that surrounds the use of technology, is the issue of privacy. For social media and Internet users, privacy is a deeply complex concept that must consider issues not only of what information is available to the broader audience, but also how information that is collected and monitored by the institutions that control the structure of technologies (Gutwirth 2002, Raynes-Goldie 2010). The issue of privacy is one that permeates discussion of the Internet in popular culture and comes up often in conversation with participants in this study.

Yet the definition of privacy is a historically situated and often contested idea. Exactly what constitutes privacy and to what degree it ought to be respected and protected is a deeply contextual issue. In fact, the notion of dichotomous public and private spaces inhabited by certain bodies, ordered and based on notions of gender, race, morality, individuality, and collectivity, has a contentious history that is rooted in colonialism, gender stratification, and hegemonic power structures (McClintock 1995). Often privacy has been understood as the power to limit knowledge about the self, and intimacy something that is created when an individual shares limited knowledge (Rosen 2000). The notion of public and private space, as a deeply gendered and raced construction, is rooted firmly in the power to limit knowledge of the self, the body, and the environment which the body inhabits. Women, people of color, and the poor have historically been denied the right to limit knowledge about themselves as this ability has been in the hands of the powerful white, male elite (McClintock 1995). The ability to protect

individual privacy by limiting information about the self has historically been concentrated in the hands of the powerful, and denied to the marginalized, thus creating a link between power and privacy (McClintock 1995, Gutwirth 2002). The experiencing of being in control of information has most often manifested among elite classes, those with the power to utilize it in the pursuit of social and even economic advantage.

This model assumes that privacy is something that is experienced primarily by restricting information about the self. Some participants agree with this definition, yet for others, a sense of privacy occurs when the individual is in control of what information is displayed even if that information is highly personal. This suggests that the way privacy is experienced and understood is nuanced by technology within contemporary college culture. For some participants privacy may be possible, even if a large number of people have personal information about them, as long as they control what information is available and who sees it, at least to some degree. This somewhat more nuanced and ambiguous notion of privacy is about choice, about the individual's ability to decide who one is, what one does, and who knows about it (Gutwirth 2002). Yet, even this definition of privacy isn't quite what participants experience. Rather, their struggle to define privacy and to deal with public/private spaces is made increasingly difficult by rapidly changing technologies and social expectations.

This notion of privacy suggests that the ability to perform one's identity in public and maintain control of how this identity is displayed could still constitute a kind of privacy. While the notion of a liminal redefinition of public and private is not an entirely new experience, the use of technology gives it a character both like and unlike the ambivalences in other contexts. Contemporary college students know that they can control information about themselves, and thus make choices about how to do this. Yet the development of new technological options, for

control and expression of self-knowledge, means that the exact nature of privacy and the public/private dichotomy is deeply contested. Kacy outlines both her own concerns and the realities of technological intervention into privacy, but also touches on the issue of choice and control of information.

> There are the options to place your private information online on a site that you're a member of; or if you just want to blog. It's possible, I don't know exactly what it is. But you can blog and put personal and put personal information, maybe not listed – this is my name, this is my address, this is my phone number, you can call me up. Or maybe just end up talking about… you believe or reveal something about your personal self, and then people have access to it. Whereas, you can just be searching sites, you don't type in anything, you can be clicking on stuff, but someone just tracks your click. Even if you aren't on a private network, you click on someone else's web site and they can have a feature where they can track the number of clicks and when you click on it, your IP address is there and they can use your IP address to track your physical location where they can, where they can track your address. It's just… well, you opened an Internet browser, so you're kind of at fault if you want to blame anybody.

As Kacy explains, participants have a choice about some of the information they share, while other information is generated simply by Internet use. So technology users are faced with a choice, do they reject Internet use altogether, do they accept that some "private" information is going to be available or do they redefine privacy itself. Kacy notes that, in some ways, users have substantial control over what information they share online and via text messages, and at another level they have less. Ultimately however, they have only limited control over who *sees* that information. These contradictions surrounding privacy are an example of the issues with which participants struggle.

Certain aspects of technological communication exist in a liminal space where public and private are indistinct and can swiftly shift from one to another. The nature of the technology, as well as cultural expectations, can result in blurred expectations surrounding privacy. When Ruth

was asked to consider the public or private nature of technologically mediated communication, she noted,

> I guess it is in between. I think that texting … it really is informal. It's not you know public. … It's more about my friends, my group. …But, well, is my group a public? … It's not really private. But my friends, my group, we aren't public either. … I just … I think it is, like, there's no 'formalness' about it.

The indistinct nature of a public/private dichotomy is embedded in day-to-day activities. Historically "private" activities, such as sexual behavior, health, and emotional trauma, now become part of a conversation and performance that occurs in front of large groups. For example, one participant, Alexander, a transgendered man, utilized Facebook as a tool through which he gained social support during his medical transition. Alexander created an extensive video diary, which he shared with his Facebook community, in which he included intimate details about his medical decisions, as well as changes in his relationship with family and romantic partners. Alexander "friended" me and gave me full access to his Facebook profile, including the video he posted. During my time observing Alexander, he not only detailed deeply personal information about his transition, but he also detailed information about the death of his father.

During and after the death of Alexander's father, he shared personal discussions of his trauma with his Facebook community, all 345 "friends." Alexander shrugged off privacy concerns and stated,

> I decide what is private in my life, I…ah…decide what I want to post what I don't….if I want to have a private relationship with 300 people at the same time, on Facebook, well that's what I'll do.

Alexander's notion of having a private relationship with so many people demonstrates one of the key ideas presented by the participants. The contemporary notion of privacy is rooted in social and cultural processes of Western worship of the individual (Putnum 2000), as well as the ability to limit information about the self. Alexander suggests that his world is a much more

community-based environment, in which things that were considered "private" in the recent past, such as medical care and sex, are not automatically private. The degree to which Alexander can control the access that others have to information about him is more relevant to him than the limitations of information. He can decide what information he shares with his Facebook community or not. Further, that he can *choose* to reveal personal information to "300 people of Facebook" is an example of this evolving definition of privacy. For Alexander, the line between public and private is more complex than simply keeping things "secret" or limiting others' knowledge of him. Alexander goes on to note that he doesn't share his "private business" with the whole world, just with the people who support him "because, even if they don't know me, well, they *choose* to be on my Facebook account."

Yet, while Alexander suggests that he can limit his private business to people who support him, it may not be entirely possible to do so. The ability to control what information is available via technology may be fairly good, however the ability to control who looks at that information is another aspect; and one which students have less control over. As Tyler notes,

> … it's your personal page, right, yes, you're putting it… is it… it's public in the sense that a lot of people are seeing it. However, the people that are seeing it are your selected friends. So, it is a limited public space; however, you don't know who's on a laptop now, looking with that friend.

Deciding if a social circle is a public venue or a private collective is tied to the development and establishment of social rules. Yet, the rules of this techno-social space are in constant transition. Thus, the nature of the technologies as public or private is also in transition, or as Anthony clarifies,

> It depends. There's privacy things, such as, you'll, like, 'take away your pictures'; 'do not show you comments,' if you want to, or something. But, at the same time, it's Facebook – you want to have your friends, you know, connect with you and talk with you through Facebook, so… you don't want to make everything private; so it's a tight situation.

The ambiguity of the public/private nature of technological communication manifests itself in the complex ways in which participants make decisions about what to include and what not to include in the public profiles[6], as well as the degree to which they monitor both Facebook posts and text messages. Mia demonstrates the deep complexity and ambiguity of the concept as she struggles to discuss how important it is to be aware that:

> People have access to information about you… Just 'cause you're putting it up and you're assuming only your friends see it. But it's so easy for other people to get on your pages, or you know look at your friends' phone and stuff.

Still, ambiguity remains about the nature of what constitutes "privacy" itself and the degree to which such technology makes the concept increasingly nuanced. When asked if Facebook specifically functions as a public place, Mia goes on to express that very ambiguity as she struggles to work through her feelings about the question of its public or private nature.

> Well, like, it depends on, like, your settings and everything, 'cause you can make it so that only your friends can see your page or, there's, like, your friends can see your whole page, but the, then again, anyone that's in your network… And anyone on that network can see, like, parts of your page. But then there's, like, another setting where, like, friends of your friends can see your page… like, it's very, like… like, I don't even know what mine's set at, like, who knows who can see mine. I really… but I know, some people, like, God, that, like, I'm friends with them and I can't even see all their stuff. So, it really depends on the settings you put up, I guess. Because you can make it, like, pretty private, I think… not completely, obviously… it's on the Internet, like, it's not, but you can make it pretty private, I think….except well think about it as, like, a public space, for the most part…I am not sure.

In order to understand where Mia's confusion comes from, it is important to understand not only the role that technology plays in controlling information available to a social group, but also the way in which the rapidly changing structural elements of the technology are relevant[7].

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[6] Please see footnote 1 and Appendix C for more details.

[7] Facebook Privacy Settings allows any content to be designated as available to people in several tiers. " **Everyone:** Anyone, on or off, of *Facebook* can see it. **Friends and Networks:** People you have confirmed as friends and people in any school or work networks that you've joined can see it. **Friends of Friends:** Anyone

The ability to organize Facebook friends into stratified tiers, who have increasing levels of access to information, is one means by which increasing a sense of privacy is possible. This change occurred in 2009, and was added at the request of users, who wanted to be able to limit the accessibility of some friends (Okelola 2009). As one student points out, this demand for change was likely tied to the change of Facebook—from a college student-only website to one that was available. Anthony explains,

> Before, knowing it's just college people, you posted, whatever. Whatever you wanted. If it was curse words, somethin' nasty – whatever may be, just post it up. But now, since, like, your relatives, you got high school kids, you got people that idolize you and stuff. You've got to edit it in a way; can't be the same as before. You've got to edit it. So you don't look… be seen as a bad person… people taking it that way, so you just have to be careful what you put on it, now.

The addition of the privacy setting and the tiered lists allowed specific types of Facebook friends, for example, parents and high school kids, to be placed in a low access group and, thus, avoid potential conflict. William gives an example of one such conflict, when he shares an experience in which he felt that his ability to control his information was in danger.

> Somebody tagged me in a picture, recently, and I had to untag it, right away, because there was a bong literally in the room, right next to me. And I can't…have that, right? My mom's on Facebook and my little brother, and you know…employers, right?

For William and Anthony, the ability to control information about themselves, either by using technological limitations, such as privacy settings and 'untagging," or by limiting what they say online, is important to their sense of control over their own information. However, this doesn't mean that Facebook, as an institution, doesn't have access to information, thus making the question of what constitutes a "public" relevant here. Who belongs to public and private groups

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who is friends with a friend of yours can see it. **Friends:** Only people you have confirmed as friends can see it. **Custom:** Choose any friend or Friend List to include or exclude from seeing that piece of content (Okelola 2009).

or communities is something that is largely in transition among this group. Setting up privacy settings in this manner requires that participants make sweeping decisions about what degree of access to private information they want to share. Public and private is no longer a dichotomy, but rather a continuum. Rather than deciding *if* someone is an intimate who should have access to private information, participants are asked to decide *how much* information they want to share with each person and thus, where they fall along a technologically structured continuum of privacy. Other participants avoid making such decisions by ignoring the option to set up such tiers at all, maintaining a dichotomous sense of public and private.

One such is Anthony, for whom the decision is easy. He leaves his Facebook account public and accepts anyone who asks, and as a result, has over 1900 Facebook friends. He made the decision early on to treat Facebook as a publicity tool for his college sports career. For those individuals, all Facebook friends are treated equally. Another participant, Kacy, rejects Facebook entirely despite significant social pressures to conform. She explains, "I don't need to feel like I have a supportive studio audience to my life." For both Anthony and Kacy there is a sense of how "others" handle the privacy that is different from their own practices. It is possible to view these participants as an example of how even within the pressures of cultural conformity that currently surround social media use; some prefer to do things differently. Kacy, Anthony and, to some degree, Jessie as well, have made firm decisions about their technology use that resist pressures of cultural conformity.

Most participants, however, were more divided about how to navigate privacy concerns. When participants were asked if communications via text or Facebook with friends are public or private, contradictions arose as to whom and what constitutes a private communication. This ambiguity both arises from, and contributes to, the experiences of participants as they struggle to

make sense of expectations surrounding privacy. The medium of technology can and does send a message in and of itself. For example, while privacy settings on Facebook are understood to be necessary, too much unwillingness to share information sends a very clear message itself, as Anthony explains.

> Just… you always think in the back of your mind, "What is this person hiding?" in a way. Like if everything is so private, what are you hiding? Is it something that you don't want to be shown? Or he's just like, that closed, himself? Or you can take it a different way, like, you're looking for a job, your bosses and stuff are on *Facebook*. They're always checking, just to make… to see what type of person you are. When you keep everything private, 'cause you probably have some pictures from partying a little hard and… you're eyes are a little shut, or things are going crazy. So you don't want that to be shown, but… It's taken two different ways.

The social experiences rendered possible by the development of technological tools such as Facebook privacy settings and other forms of privacy protection systems such as password protected text message inboxes,[8] allow for perceptions of security to arise that can constitute "privacy" for some participants. For others, privacy is less about the ability of others to access your information and more about the individual's ability to control what information is presented. Jessie explains,

> See the thing is privacy…it's not really about not having people finding out about you…it's really about creating who you are…. Because online, on the Internet, a profile…it's a part of a person. It's nowhere near an entire person. My Facebook profile, I'm well aware, does not properly convey the entirety of me. And I have specifically chosen to do that. That's how it's private and it's public…at the same time.

For something to be both public and private, at the same time, it's necessary to embrace an understanding of the social world that rejects the binary notions of "separate spheres" of communication. It may be that communication in the contemporary world is an ever-present

[8] When a person receives a text message it is moved into that individual's "Inbox." An Inbox functions much like an email inbox, and keeps the message in memory until it is deleted or moved. In some phones, it is possible to create password protection, which requires that a password be entered into the system before text messages in the inbox can be read. This can sometimes require the purchase of specific software for the phone.

hum, a constant companion that is symbolically and practically represented by the social cyborg, the technological object that makes communication possible.

Eric struggles to articulate the sense in which communication is ever present for him and the implications of that reality, shaped by technological devices and social expectations. A reality in which privacy matters, but is only one in a long list of choices to be made and experiences to be negotiated.

> The world is digital, because there's so many different ways that you can now… can take the Internet; for stuff that's like, pretty much, internet technology. Text messaging is literally … it's not the internet – it's only between two people… only two people can see it, so it's more of a private way to communicate. But still it's like the same kind of thing, like, back and forth, back…, like that. And, you can consume media, now, on your phone, on your computer… there's now, iPods that can do it, you know, the iPad that's coming out – there's just so many different ways that you can just, now, intake media, and then communicate outwards – communicate to anybody. I can say something on Twitter, Facebook and if it's that interesting…Especially on Twitter, like, it might just get picked up on TV. People do that, now. You know what I mean, I can now reach different… what's different, you know, from twenty years ago, is the average person can now tell the world something. The only thing is there's a lot of clutter – and you just have to be able to separate… the clutter. If you … I can now communicate to the world. I want to; if I chose to.

If the smartphone is an object so intimately connected to the body that it is nearly omnipresent, which participants almost uniformly agree that it is, then it is also a nearly omnipresent tool used to manage the presentation of the self. It is a tool through which individuals can communicate on multiple levels, with individuals, with select social groups and even, as Eric articulates, with the world. Within this environment, privacy is about the *management* of information about the self, and it includes sharing that information, sometimes with many people, as a means to establish connections to the social world. Yet, is the control of information only about privacy or is something else also relevant? If privacy is about the control of information, it becomes detached from the concept of intimacy, to which it has long been tied. Historically, intimacy has been the

outcome of, rather than an attendant to, privacy (Simmel 1971, Buhrmester & Wyndol 1987). Thus the reconstruction of privacy has a substantial impact on intimacy and its meaning among participants. In order to effectively understand the significance of changing expectations around privacy in the social world, it is essential to better understand the changing nature of intimacy as well as privacy.

Intimacy and Personal Life: Making Sense of Changing Meanings

Among participants, there is a struggle to redefine the notion of privacy within the networked society. However, this struggle is not confined to issues of privacy, but also the related concept of intimacy as well. In the past, intimacy was considered to be a matter of practicality, physicality and geography (Buhrmester and Wyndol 1987, Moss and Schwebel 1993). For some theorists, intimacy is defined as being a condition of commitment, affective closeness, cognitive closeness, physical closeness, and mutuality (Moss and Schwebel 1993). Intimacy existed, in part, because of geographic closeness and day-to-day interaction.

Yet, the degree to which such an intimacy can be achieved is made more complex by the view of technology as a "distancing" technology. Some early Internet researchers found links between depression, isolation and Internet use, particularly among adolescents (Sanders et.al. 2000, Nie 2001). Some research has claimed that technology may interfere with intimacy, while others have suggested that technology use has the opposite effect for some groups (Bradley and Poppen 2003). More recent research suggests that the ways in which technology use impacts experience is based on the types of technologies involved, the emotional well-being of the individual, and a variety of other issues, calling into question the validity of a linear cause and effect theory (Gross 2002, Bargh and McKenna 2004). The experience of techno-social relationships and communications is complicated and, at times, contradictory. The notion that

technology is distancing and intimate, at the same time, seems to be contradictory, yet it is something that participants suggested repeatedly. William demonstrates,

> It's [Facebook friend lists] just there, and if something happens, I check it out if I want to do something, I'll check it out, but it's there. It's just when something that's there, at my disposal. But, at the same time, I say it's not really that big of a deal to be friends with somebody.

William goes on to explain how Facebook is intimate, because he knows a great deal of information about people; but, at the same time, it's not a "big deal" because the intimacy is not particularly selective. During the time that I observed participants, I was privy to a great deal of information that I perceived as personal or intimate. I learned about romantic relationships, sexual behavior, family relationships, emotional crisis, personal pain, physical health, and more. Yet, I rarely found myself feeling as if my relationship with the participants was intimate. So, I too experienced this confusion; I know intimate information, willingly shared with me, but haven't developed a sense of intimacy with participants. In order to make sense of this ambiguity it is necessary to better understand the nature of intimacy.

It has been argued that interpersonal interactions are controlled by a series of social expectations about behavior that imply formal rules of basic human interaction (Goffman 1959). Such rules might be the result of interactions between the self and social world in both public and private spaces (Mead 1934). In private settings, however, the rules of interaction can be more readily broken or take on new forms, in order to achieve intimacy. However, the techno-social world in which my participants exist results in ambiguity in the nature of public and private interactions, disrupting the patterns laid out by Goffman and others. There exists a strange juxtaposition of private/public in which redefining intimacy is one manifestation of blurred boundaries within this group. Intimacy and privacy don't function in a linear fashion, if they ever did; and thus, participants not only have an inability to, but also a disinterest in,

attempting to fit techno-social forms of interaction into traditional notions of intimate communication, as Ruth explains:

> Okay, text, is…less, it's less formal and it's less personal, like… right now, a girl in my class… let's say we have a group project. We'll give each other our numbers, and we'll text each other. We won't call each other, like, "Oh let's meet here." But we'll most likely text. It's kind of weird to talk. I feel like someone's voice becomes… becomes personal.

Techno-mediated relationships are "informal" but not "personal" while face-to-face discussions are both *more* formal and *more* personal. Certain modes of communication are understood to be both more formal, in that they convey higher levels of social respect, and more intimate, depending on the context of the interaction. This understanding of intimacy runs counter to those who argue that only the ability to engage in informal interactions that are socially exclusive is an indicator of intimacy (Goffman 1959, Buhrmester & Wyndol 1987).

The nature of respect and the social rules of formality, are closely tied to status hierarchies with regard to age and social status. With a few exceptions, participants note that they would not text a teacher or a boss because it might be seen as too informal and disrespectful. Ruthalso notes that she wouldn't text her parents because it would be seen as disrespectful. Anna agrees and notes,

> I would never text someone I've met professionally, to say thank you or to have another meeting with them, like, "Oh do you want to grab lunch?" I would never text them. . . . I would always call.

Despite the fact the Anna would "never text" a professional contact, she goes on to note that she texts close friends and casual acquaintances alike. Lisa shares Anna' feelings. She too outlines the relationship of text messaging to the nature of a relationship. She explains that she texts with people she is either very close too or barely knows. Explaining that texting is most appropriate,

> …for someone that I might have met over the summer; I worked at a camp and I have a lot of camp friends that are counselors there, which would be sort of

> awkward if I just, sort of, called them. So when I get back it's, "How are you?" you know like, really general conversations to have with them, just to say "Hi" and make sure that you guys still in touch with each other.

Eva also agrees, explaining that it is something that can indicate either closeness or distance, depending on the situation suggesting that the meaning of texting is contextual. The way participants perceive texting depends on the relationship between participants. In some cases, texting is a casual and easy way of contact, and she texts, " . . . usually new people, like, in college," after she meets them, rather than calling. However, texting is intimate, as well. Eva goes on to explain,

> If it's a person who you, like, normally would carry on a conversation with, that's a person who you would just text. I text one of my closest friends a lot. And then, I text my boyfriend a lot, as well. Like, those are, like, the main three people I text every single day.

For most, texting is the preferred mode of contact for peers, as telephone calls are seen as too intimate for casual associates and too formal to use for contact with those who are close, unless it's a special occasion. As Ruth points out, her use of the phone is limited to situations where she feels it's necessary because of contemporary convention, like with professors or her boss. Otherwise, talking is limited to very intimate relationships in "special" circumstance.

This is because, for Ruth, phone communication is understood to be intense and intimate. As she explains, " It's kind of weird to talk. I feel like someone's voice becomes… becomes personal." For Ruth, the voice is a personal aspect of her identity, and the privacy and intimacy of phone conversations is something that she is not comfortable with. Despite the expectation that she use the phone for communication with people in formal situations, Ruth acknowledges that it still feels "weird," and she prefers to use email, as a more formal and distant

communication style whenever possible[9]. For many participants, telephone use is deeply intimate, and while most participants suggest this is something that they want to avoid, not everyone agrees. Kacy explains that, for her, it is the very intimacy of the phone conversation that she most enjoys.

> If you're a friend, I contact you, I like to hear your voice. It's just that I'd rather do it in person, 'cause I don't have a lot of personal contact with people. It's just, like, their bodies [are] in my world during the daytime, so when I have the opportunity to actually interact with someone, in person, physically, in front of me, or talk to them, verbally, it's an opportunity for me to get to know them.

Kacy claims that she is unique among her friends in that regard. She feels that texting and Facebook are casual forms of communication that just allow for distant contact. Rather than frequent but shallow contact to build intimacy, Kacy prefers rare but intense communication. She goes on to acknowledge that for her this is partially because she dislikes casual communication in general, noting, "I really am not the type of person to ask, 'How was your week?' or 'What's new in your life?' Or, just to tell them some random anecdote about me." For her peers, Kacy explains, texting and Facebook are ways to easily maintain intimacy with friends and contact with acquaintances. This is something that she is personally uninterested in, because it is "too shallow, too casual." Despite her feelings of isolation, Kacy is not totally alone in her feelings, as Lisa too values the intense intimacy of voice communication.

> I like to be able to talk to them directly and occasionally there will be an awkward silence or you would put in a sarcastic comment, that you can't even tell that it's sarcastic, because it's over the internet, you can't hear the inflection of voices. You can't hear laughter, or something like that, so… it kind of stops the personal connection being made – you can't feel the emotion, you just get the words.

[9] The role and impact of email in social relationships has been an important area of social research in recent decades (Viégas, Golder and Donath 2006, Kim et.al. 2007, Boneva and Kraut 2008). However, for participants in this study it was generally of little interest, largely being considered a medium for professional communication. The construction and role of email communication among college students may be an appropriate avenue for future research.

The use of techno-mediated communication, in general, and text messaging, in particular, is effectively 'casual' both in the sense that it is not reflective of emotional intimacy and not formal. The establishment and maintenance of intimacy, through the use of such technologies, is possible, but the technology itself isn't understood as intimate. Thus intimacy has to be created through a deliberate and strategic effort on the part of the participants.

In order to achieve intimacy in relationships, individuals must go beyond technological communication and engage in multiple modalities. This strategy might include texting, Facebook and face-to-face meetings. Intimacy, within this context, requires deliberate action to be established and maintained, rather than resulting from proximity. Jessie goes on to explain the nature of such deliberate communications:

> It's a conscious act to put forth this message. And most people, I think, understand that when they type a message, that's all there is. So, if they want to express a certain subject, they have to type it in a specific way. And then, when they put it out there, they have chosen to represent themselves in that fashion.

This deliberate and partial representation of the self limits the use of technology as the exclusive means by which to conduct intimate relationships. However, for many of my participants to reject such technological tools in conducting relationships is also deeply problematic. Participants largely read being unwilling to engage in social interactions via techno-mediated processes as a rejection of intimacy. As Kacy explains, refusing to engage with others on Facebook sends a message about how they are valued.

> … people really take it personally, though, if you don't 'friend' them. Then they're like, "Oh, OK, so, we're not friends." So it's just really… yes, it definitely makes for a different kind of friendship, but it totally matters because some people…it really hurts.

In the techno-social world, refusal of technological contact sends a very strong message of rejection. Inaccessibility via texting or Facebook sends an even stronger message than

inaccessibility in face-to-face communications, which is often explained away as "being too busy." However, being busy doesn't excuse technological absence at all. Rejection of technological communication is seen as an *active* rejection of the individual or group and unwillingness to participate in the building of intimacy. This is something that Kacy faces due to her preference for non-technological forms of contact. Her rejection of texting and Facebook has led to conflict in the past, and even resulted in the end of relationships with peers, who were unable to accept her decision. She is not alone. As Abby notes, her previous relationship was damaged by her girlfriends' inability to engage in what Abby perceives as intimacy building activities, like texting.

> My last relationship, we didn't text at all. Like, I never… it was always phone calls. Which I hated 'cause I hated talking on the phone and I wanted… I was, like, "Can we please text?" And she was, like, "No, like, we're not. That's… absolutely not, like, I don't text." Which in that one was really frustrating for me, because I love texting and I hate talking on the phone. So…it didn't work out. But the, right now, my new girlfriend, we text, like, nonstop and that's just… it's about just, like, random stuff and really nothing in particular. But then, it's just, kind of, like, keeping in touch all day….then I feel, like, I'm always in contact with her, I guess. As opposed to… 'cause, again, we're both so busy, so it's, like, I can go a whole day without seeing her and then it's… but I'm still, like, you know, I know how… what she was doing all day … texting kind of just, keeps you in contact all the time.

The ability to stay in contact, to know what is going on without seeing someone, is one of the ways in which technological communication provides participants with a means of establishing intimacy. This establishment of a virtual presence not only results in the engagement of intimate relationships but reinforces the bonds in more casual interactions as well. Abby goes on to acknowledge that not only does having the availability of others via text matter in her romantic relationships, but it is also relevant in her close friendships.

> … everyone here I kind of keep in touch with texting and stuff if I need to talk to them…. I probably… I can send and receive, like, upwards of a hundred a day, easily…. I text and have, like, entire conversations with people. I really don't ever

> use the phone. So I think… especially, like, for friends, that's kind of, my way of having… I can keep a conversation going, for, like, two days straight, with, like, one person, and so that'll be back and forth, constantly, all day. And we don't really talk about anything important, it just kind of… I don't know, keeping in touch.

For most participants, techno-social mediums are just one part of the set of social practices that result in establishing and maintaining a sense of emotional intimacy. For participants, intimacy is developed through multiple forms of interpersonal communication, both techno-mediated and face-to-face. Ava explains the importance of Skype as a medium that extends the senses into distant spaces, thus facilitating interaction and allowing for the development and maintenance of intimacy.

> Skype is a huge thing, I know. That is used to maintain relationships … I know that when I'm talking to people who… 'cause when their – not their spouses, their girlfriends or boyfriends are abroad and they have to 'Skype date.' I have this friend, he was like, "Oh yeah, my girlfriend and I are going to make spaghetti tonight via Skype. And he would … yes, she was… she's in Italy and he's here. I was like, "How are you gonna manage that?" He's like, "That's OK. I just bring the computer in the kitchen and I start making spaghetti and then she makes spaghetti too, in her kitchen; and then we come to the table together. And then we, like, eat virtually!" They eat for real; but via the computer, they are eating together.

Despite geographic distances, it is possible to demonstrate emotional commitment in order to maintain intimacy. For individuals in circumstances that make it impossible to engage in physical closeness, intimate relationships and individual wellness may have been at risk in the past (Melamed and Cubic 2011). However, the emergence of technological architectures and complex redefinitions of "intimacy" have led to some changes. Today, physical closeness may be a minor issue when technologies extend the senses to allow for interaction at a distance. Hallie discusses her experience with the issue.

> … my boyfriend lives on Long Island. So we're pretty far apart. And he just graduated, so, I feel like technology… if we didn't have technology, we probably wouldn't stay together. So it would be… and me and my dad, pretty much, only

> communicate via e-mail. So we don't see each other very often, or anything. So, I feel like I would have a lot less communication with people, who I don't see, obviously.

As this participant notes, willingness and the ability to utilize technology to provide interaction in intimate relationships is an important aspect of the techno-social world. The ability to use technologies to create intimacy in circumstances when traditional forms of communication fail, is one of the most important characteristics of these technologies. Ava gives us another example of this.

> My best friend, my whole life, we were, like, best friends, until, like, seventh grade. But we were, like… had one of those, like, relationships where you just, like, stay really close to the person. She… her family moved around a lot; her dad's, like, casino executive. So, right now she goes to Purdue, but she moved away from south Jersey in the seventh grade. So, like, we've stayed close and we're still best friends, and now we're twenty-one years old, and we're still best friends. I feel like, if it wasn't for technology, we wouldn't be that way because we talk every day. We send each other pictures. We are still really close; even though, we see each other, maybe, once a year or twice a year.

For some participants, lack of technology would mean a lack of intimacy or even the loss of a relationship. Ava explains that technology allows her to engage in a relationship that would be impossible with technology, and she builds intimacy through the use of technology. Today, forms of intimacy are possible that did not exist in the past, due to technological intervention. That doesn't necessarily mean that the value people attach to intimacy is fundamentally different. Rather, it suggests that intimacy can be achieved in new ways and through new mediums. These transformations can and do affect the nature of relationships, but they can also transform the nature of the self, and how it is presented to the social world.

Privacy and the Self: Surveillance and Performance

The self and the social are deeply interdependent, existing in a relationship that plays out through the creation of interpersonal relationships and the individual sense of the self (Mead

1934). Thus, transformations in sociality, in general, and the ideas of privacy and intimacy, in particular, potentially impact the individual self. Therefore, like privacy and intimacy, the performance of the self is undergoing redefinition in light of emerging technological architectures and changes in social behavior discussed earlier. As Western culture, and global culture for that matter, becomes increasingly interconnected, the previous intimacy of small-scale face-to-face communities is starting to fade. Yet, at the same time, the potential for creating for oneself both an online community and a sort of cyber-fame increases. Images, writing, music, performance of all kinds are now simply a few clicks away from a waiting audience for anyone with a computer and some basic knowledge of the technology. This combination has led to an increasing relationship of performance and consumption of performance in online spaces (Kellner 2004).

The sensation of being *visible* to others and having them be *visible* to you is one of the ways in which technology has changed how individuals experience themselves as social beings. Contact via Facebook and texting is a matter of access to spectacle, both in the form of performance and observation. Yet, the relationship between performance and the consumption of performance online is deeply complex for participants. In fact, one key issue in understanding the experiences of young adults in a techno-social world is to consider the relationship between the concepts of exposure, surveillance, and performances.

Interpersonal relationships and intimacy among college students is deeply embedded in a culture of surveillance and performance. The roles that individuals play are multifaceted. They exist as creators of spectacle, as performers themselves, as consumers both in public and secretly and as arbiters of the real. Despite popular cultural notions that young adults are not aware of the

consequences of their online performances, individuals I spoke with are acutely conscious of the idea that they are under constant observation in online space, as Tyler discusses.

> You also don't know … I mean, you can put privacy settings and everything, but like, certain information, you know, everybody can see. But like … yet … you don't know … you don't know who's looking on that laptop. … It's your personal page, and there are certain things that are personal about it, but it also is… it is kind of public. But, you really don't know. I mean, it's weird. How do you describe it? Because you do select your friends, you do. But, I mean, you really don't know who's looking at it.

Like Tyler, most participants understood this constant state of observation to be a normal and inevitable part of a life. Lisa too, notes the reality of an incomplete knowledge about who is at the "other end" of their communication channel. She explains,

> Who knows, there could be four people on the other side. I have sat there and have talked to my sister or someone on Instant Messenger and then her friend would come up and start talking and it would be, like "Are you my sister or are you her friend?" I wouldn't know. So, for all I know I could be talking to eight people in the other room, instead of just one.

How they deal with the notion of being under surveillance varied from person to person. Some participants consider the matter largely irrelevant and focus on making decisions about how they perform online. Anthony demonstrates this as he claim that, "everybody is watching." Other participants try to limit the number and scope of online friends and text message recipients, as Jessie does. Jessie literally limits hir contacts, trying to have only about 150 Facebook friends at any one time. Others simply don't appear to care and consider the possible risks of over-exposure as simply part of life. Which is not to say that even those individuals don't find managing their online performances a challenge at some times. For example, one participant, William, shares a story about a personal crisis that was caused by technologically enabled surveillance.

> I had a girlfriend, freshman/sophomore year. And I went to a formal … I went to my formal. She couldn't go. She was a year younger; she was in high school, so

> she wouldn't … she couldn't go with me to formals. So I took my best friend in the world, and it's like somebody that I'd been close with since freshman year. And it was freshman year, but was my best friend at school. You know, she's not like a threat. You know what I mean. You could tell she wasn't a threat, and there was a Facebook picture, I guess, of us holding hands, posing for a picture, me and this girl; just like in a picture. And my girlfriend freaked out over it; and I was like, you're kidding me, something like that.

William goes on to explain that a friend had posted the image on his Facebook account and then tagged him in the photo. William found himself in conflict because of the public nature of Facebook, but also because of his own failure to "police" his online image.

As another participant, Allen, explained to me, at times it is necessary to "clean up" one's Facebook page. I, in fact, observed one of these clean-up processes, while conducting online observations. This excerpt from my fieldnotes details an example of this.

> Today, Jadon's page looks totally different. His "party" album is totally missing and many of his other photos have been removed. All that is left is his "vacation with mom" album and his "school spirit" album. It also looks like he isn't posting on Farmville[10] anymore. Somebody posted on his FB page, commenting that his page is "ready to get a job."

Keeping track of one's online presence is a part of contemporary social life. Having some degree of control over the way in which one is represented online is something participants are fully aware of. Mia discussed the way in which she will have to "clean up" a bit before she graduates and goes on the job market.

> I know, like, once I start getting a job, or applying, I'm gonna have to be careful with that. And even, just being on, like the hockey team, here, we have to be careful – the pictures we put up, 'cause … for hockey, girls hockey, it's not that big of a deal if someone sees us with a beer or something. But we're still a varsity sport and we're not supposed to be, so we have to be careful.

[10] Farmville is a popular farming simulation social network game played on Facebook. Players create an avatar that then engages in farm themed activities, such as planning virtual crops, harvesting them, or visiting neighboring farms belonging to Facebook friends. The player gains experience points to increase his or her place in the game. Updates are regularly posted to the player Wall, to indicate actions or changes in status within the game. http://www.farmville.com/

Like Mia, Allen outlines the way in which he has to "stay on top of" his profile, since he too, is searching for a job. He regularly goes though pictures and posts by his friends, in which he is referenced or "tagged" to remove questionable things. He gives the example of a photo from a party in which he is drinking a beer, and there is a bong sitting on the table in front of him. A friend "tagged" Allen or posted the photo online and then connected it to his Facebook profile. He untagged the picture and explained, "I don't need that image in my boss' face, when they Google me before a job interview." This participant is fully aware that he is likely to be Googled by any prospective employer, in part, because researching individuals online is an accepted practice in both personal and formal social relationships. Equally acceptable, is the practice of managing an individuals' online identity to selectively perform a role for a virtual audience. No longer are such practices in interpersonal relationships limited to face-to-face interactions, rather the power of performance is extended onto a virtual stage, with a much more expansive audience.

This power of performativity, the ability to strategically choose the person you present to the world, or to your own social group, is a heady ability indeed, if not a new one. Despite being a techno-social manifestation of a widely accepted social form, the question still arises; are the identities presented in Facebook real? This question brought laughter and confusion to my participants. Grace explains, "Of course they are real. … Just because you don't put up everything about yourself, doesn't mean it's not part of you." The authenticity of identity in something like a Facebook profile is real, if partial. One can investigate information about someone, though such information is understood to be partial. As Hallie clarifies,

> I feel, like, you would just, like, look at their, like, information, kind of browse their pictures that you can see, if you're friends with them. If you're not friends with them, you can just get an idea, like, are they a crazy party person. Do they not have a lot of pictures? So, does that mean, maybe they're getting an internship

> or a job or something, that they have a lot of things blocked? So, kind of, like, you can figure out a lot of things without actually being best friends with someone.

The degree to which an individual is able to manufacture his or her self-representation is much more limited than it initially appears. The partial nature of this kind of performance is no less than the partiality of the self, displayed in face-to-face interactions. Careful selection of appearance, language and even non-verbal communications act as part of the performance of a role in face-to-face interaction. Online, careful selections of what photos to display and what posts are visible to whom, create a partial identity. Chloe discusses this issue in some depth and considers her own feelings about performing an identity.

> I'm just obsessed with how people perceive me. And on the Internet it's really easy to change that perception, just because they don't have to see me in real life. Like, in real life I'm walking my dog in sweatpants, but in my photos, they're like these cool photos that make me look really hip (laughs.) And it's like, no, I'm at an AA meeting in sweatpants. It's not cool.

Yet what is unique about this level of performance is the degree to which individuals are conscious of the surveillance they are under. For that reason, one of the most potentially complex decision participants faced was whether or not to accept someone into your social media network. Making decisions about who is a member of an individual's social media network means having some, very limited, control over who is able to observe online behavior. Such surveillance of the self shapes not only online performance but also shapes and is shaped by the changing notions of privacy and intimacy discussed earlier in this chapter. As Rita notes, she is undecided about how to deal with Facebook friend requests from some individuals in her life.

> A lot of older people have it [Facebook]. And like, debating whether I want to accept their friend request. And that's something… I don't really know … what you looking at my page. There's a friend of the family. She's like an aunt, but she's like in her … sixty something. So like, she's really, like, protective and stuff. Then her and my mom talk and she's my friend on Facebook and my brother's friend. So it's like … at first… it's like mmm, do I want you on here?

> And like I was thinking about… like, giving my mom one, but then I was like, I don't know, so … I don't want her seeing what I do, either.

For Rita, allowing her mother or her family friend a window into her social world is a tough decision, not because she sees her relationship with them as public, but because the identity she displays on Facebook is different from the one her family knows. She goes on to explain, "I drink. I'm twenty-one; I'm allowed to. But it's just … like, my mom knows I do, but I don't want her to see me doing it … I want her to keep my image of me to be … good."

Image management is an important aspect of contemporary college culture, and the image participants present often depends on who the expected audience is. For some, doing a job search or having a boss on Facebook requires some careful management, as does the inclusion of certain family members. For others, the goal of Facebook is to present an identity to peers. That identity might be of a party person or a fun and interesting potential friend or romantic partner. However, for at least some of the participants, the ability to create an online persona, to effectively perform on a social stage provides a sense of power, as well as positive feelings about the self. This kind of "performance high" is about public performance and the positive feedback that performance, particularly, entertainment can bring.

> I feel like there's also a … you kind of feel good, like this spring break trip I just went on. And people have seen pictures of it – all these pictures – and people have said, "Yeah, I saw pictures. It looks like a lot of fun." And you kind of feel good about that. Because people are like, 'Wow, he seems to be having a lot of fun. Or he's used to being like… cool. Look at all this stuff he's doing." It's kind of like good and people almost get this image of you; that they might not necessarily have if they don't really know you.

As William notes above, performance is not only about controlling information for some specific means or even providing entertainment for others. Rather it is more directly about strategic constructions of the self. William works to provide a very specific persona; someone who is cool or fun. Online technologies, particularly social media, function as a means by which a self can be

represented that is not exactly artificial but, rather, strategically displayed. William can create an "image" of himself, as fun or cool or exciting, through the use of social media that is reflected in his offline self. Identities are often crafted carefully, to send a message of suitability to potential bosses, or fun and coolness to peers.

Yet, the strategic deployment of performance is not the only aspect of this experience. Performers become watchers and vice versa. Erin explains, with regard to her relationship with her friends via Facebook.

> I think it's important 'cause I can look and no one knows. So, I'm being honest, you can ask anyone. They'll say the same thing. It's knowing that you can know everything and not have anyone know.

Erin goes on to explain that while those who perform online and who she watches without their knowledge, know that someone is watching them, just not, specifically, that it is her. The secrecy is exciting and "fun" for both parties, according to Erin. As Jake notes, "It's all about how many [Facebook] friends you have"; Jake goes on to explain that having a lot of friends implies that you are interesting and worth knowing for many college students. Jake suggests that because most participants have so many Facebook friends, they are conscious that someone may be watching, which is why they "perform" by tagging or posting. However, Erin claims that not knowing exactly who is watching, at any giving moment, is powerful, for both performers and watchers.

For the viewer, there is a power to see within the hidden spaces of human intimacy and interaction. For the producer of spectacle, the ability to have a voice unmediated by others and the power to draw eyes to the self is the payment. Erin explains that for her, watching online drama, such as friends fighting or relationship breakups, provides her with a kind of "real reality TV" experience. The voyeuristic pleasure of observing others in intimate social circumstance is

particularly effective in making individuals feel close to those whom they observe. As Grace notes,

> It's how you find out about, like, what other people are doing. It's kind of like, some people say it's, like, a way to stalk people. But, I mean, it's kinda … your Facebook profile … It is what you want people to see, and what you want them to think of you, and that's really important in college. Because it's all about, like, building your self-image and, like, who you are and things like that.

The contemporary social world is, in some ways, more like the past than we might imagine. Increasingly, personal lives, traumas, and fantasies are fodder for discussion in the virtual village square. Information about peers, neighbors, and personal lives were central to social interaction in a time before television and telephone (Putnam 2001). Today, we are seeing a resurgence of this kind of intimate knowledge existing in the public world. However, it is shared not by word of mouth, but by the creation of persistent documentation, via virtual profiles. As William reminds us, "Your college life [in the past] isn't documented. Mine happens to be documented. I mean, sophomore year like practically is a documentary based on Facebook pictures."

Conclusions

> I think the problem is, is that we are using older standards of public and private and personal and private to apply to a completely new form of communication.

William suggests that we are dealing with fundamentally new forms of communication within a networked society, which has some unique characteristics. However, the importance of privacy and intimacy, as well as performance, is not new to the human experience. Within a technological framework, the ability to control information about the self, and to gain information about others, shapes core concepts of sociality.

Currently, privacy is being redefined as a matter of "strategic deployment," in which the focus is not on the limitation of information, but on making the right choices about what to share

with a public. Privacy may today be more like the carefully guarded world of the celebrity or the politician than the private citizen of the past. This expanded notion of privacy is reshaping the very experience of intimacy among college age students. Rather than intimacy being a condition that exists when an individual is given access to private information, it has taken on a subtly different character. Increasingly, intimacy is about connectivity, rather than the redefined notion of privacy. It is a condition that arises from many brief communicative "touches" between people, facilitated by frequent informal contacts via technology, such as texting, or deeper contact via Skype, along with face-to-face contact. The nature of intimate contact between individuals is no longer necessarily private, and private information and interaction don't necessarily denote intimacy. Rather, the power to make choices about what constitutes privacy or intimacy within particular circumstances is facilitated through the use of technology.

Further, intimacy, performance and privacy are being negotiated through a technological framework that not only allows new developments, but also guides those developments due to technological structures. These changes of structure provide expansions of the human senses and transformations in the way in which college students learn about one another. The strategic and thoughtful social performances of the self are not new aspects of sociality. However, technological intervention into the performance of the self allows for the emergence of an enhanced sense that performance and surveillance are normal parts of daily life. This relationship between the watcher and watched is shaped by and reshapes a changing conceptualization of the self and the social, as well as the private and the intimate.

The dissemination and control of knowledge and information about the self, and the extended accessibility of knowledge about the other, is enhanced by technological architectures. This interaction between the self and social has always been a product of knowledge. Symbolic

interactionism suggests that the self emerges from the interaction between an individual, and his or her perception of how others see this individual (Mead 1934, Blumer 1969). The perception of the other, or in this case the knowledge of how the other views the self, is dependent on the information and sensation available to the individual. Thus the power to control and manage information allows for an unprecedented power of the creation of the self through access to knowledge about the other and the perceptions an “other” might hold. Through this process, communication technologies provide a level of power over knowledge and information that shapes both the social expectations of the world in which we exist, but also the very nature of our selves.

Chapter Six

In Conclusion: Sociology of Connectivity and Technology

> Alecea - What risks would you run if you suddenly shut off Facebook, no more text messaging… what would happen?
>
> Owen - People presume that the reason I'm disabling my Facebook account has something to do with someone else, or a dramatic problem in my life, or…whatever. An interesting fact, going along with that, one of my roommates committed suicide, a year ago. The last thing he did in our house was disable his Facebook account.
>
> Alecea - Oh…
>
> Owen - If that carries any weight or meaning to you. I think it distinctly does. He disabled his Facebook account right before he walked out the door for the last time.
>
> Alecea - That's sending a powerful message.
>
> Owen - That's a message. I don't know what that means, but I think it's kind of profound that the last thing you do before you go out of the house to go jump off a bridge is you disable your Facebook account, like that's the last matter of business before you die.

Technology has increasingly become tied to matters of daily life, and even matters of death. While he does not fully understand the message sent by his deceased roommate, Owen believes that something, and something profound, is being said. In some ways, closing a Facebook account is an act of rejection. It is a rejection of social norms, a rejection of connection, ultimately a rejection of peer sociality. Like suicide, this rejection sends a powerful message, saying "I don't want to be a part of your world anymore" (Watson et al. 1995, Wenz 1979). The motivations of Owen's roommate will never be fully understood, however, for Owen there is a connection between rejecting virtual touching, technologizied interaction and rejecting all human connectivity. Perhaps it should be no surprise that Owen connects this small rejection with the final and most fundamental act of social alienation. As technology becomes more and more

embedded in our daily lives it becomes less and less visible. The ways in which technology shapes human behavior and human interaction is slowly moving from being an exception to being a normal way of being. Jake claims that we are in the midst of a technological revolution, akin to the industrial revolution of the past. Is he correct? The moment when the transformation becomes business as usual is perhaps the most powerful sign of a successful revolution. So how have technology and social media changed the social world?

Ultimately, what technology and social media have done for contemporary students is create a persistent means of viewing social networks and social interactions that allows them to establish and maintain connections including "weak ties" (Ganovetter 1983) more easily. It has enhanced the social collective, modified the experience of connectivity, and transformed the social network. Participants articulate the importance of such networks, such interconnections. Many see rejection of technology as a rejection of such social interconnections, a sign of alienation from the social world. Others see a social space in which life and death happen, as Olivia explains "before it even gets on the news… it's crazy how fast … whoever dies… it'll be on Facebook, and then, like, the majority of my friends all have it on their Facebook status, like, RIP, RIP." Strong or weak, the social ties that they maintain are important, though they may be unintelligible to outsiders. Yet, they are not so foreign to common experience. As students struggle with such issues of life and death, love and loss, they use the same means as their ancestors, communication.

Communication is a central part of living in a culture, of being a member of society, past and present. Communication is a tool that shapes the experience of society in ways that we are still learning about. Increasingly, we live in a world in which communication is enhanced, controlled and transformed by technologies that infiltrate the core of social interaction. As

ultrasound recordings of the fetal body week-by-week are posted on YouTube, and birth photos are posted on hospital websites, technology matters. Even for the dead, technology continues to speak, as the increasing presence of memorial Facebook pages shows. So, as grieving friends post messages on the Walls of active R.I.P. Facebook profiles maintained for the dead, technology matters.[11] Among participants in this study, technology has become a part of contemporary society, shaping and reshaping social interaction, experiences and individual understandings.

My goal in this chapter is to consider the previous three chapters as a snapshot of a moment in history; a moment in which transformations around technology and the meaning of connection in the social world are being re-imagined. I will also discuss the contributions of this work to existing literatures, college students and their families, sociologists of communication and relationships, as well social thinkers interested in the paradigmatic shift of the information revolution. I will close with some final thoughts on the issues I present and some possibilities for future research.

Rethinking Intimacy and Understanding Technology

The overall goal of this project is to better understand the experience of young adults who use technology within the context of an information revolution, which may mark the beginning of a network society. The foundation of such a society is that social organization and experience function within a hybrid environment, in which information technology and human experience are inextricably linked; a world in which disabling a Facebook account might be "the last matter of business before you die." Is the contemporary world we live in a true "network society," a

[11] Memorial Facebook pages are created when either a Facebook user dies and friends and families continue to post on their active profile, or when an individual creates a page on the behalf of a deceased person (Brubaker and Vertes 2010).

real hybrid environment? The answer to that question is still under debate. Like the industrial revolution, the impact and meaning of the information revolution will not be really understood except through the lens of history. Yet this work attempts, in some small way, to begin to examine the social transformations tied to the rise of network society, through the lens of those who are most intimately connected with it.

Specifically, I have shared the experiences of the current generation, born and raised within an era of rapid information and communication development. Today's traditional aged college students were born between roughly 1990-1994, and grew up alongside the rapid growth of the home computer, the point and click searchable browser. They moved into their teen years along with Internet enabled smartphones, and widespread text message capability. This is a cohort that does not remember the world before the Internet, and who have no interesting or amusing stories about the first time they went online, simply because they do not remember the first time. Their social world is, and for many, always has been, inextricably tied to digital technology and the flow of information and communication through a digital space.

In response to my initial research question I work to outline how developments and architectures of technological communication allow for the emergence of new social expectations and behaviors. In chapter three, I consider both technological architectures and the development of intellectual frameworks and also touch on how new development and emerging frameworks can come into conflict with existing social structures and expectations. I discuss the structure and discourse that surrounds the experience of a "network society" in which the ideological construction of values stemming from corporate rationality, and the architectures of technology, shape the expectations and experiences of participants. I go on to demonstrate a strong connection between the corporatizing narrative that defines speed and efficiency as

inherently valuable and the increased use of technology to provide a faster and more efficient form of interpersonal communication among participants. It is important to note that while industrial standards of speed and efficiency are fundamentally different from the way such ideas are visible in contemporary culture, the notion that such standards are inherently valuable within both the work world and intimate social life are very similar.

I also consider the role that conflict between social groups who fully embrace network culture and those who do not plays in the experience of college students. One unexpected consequence of this development has been the normalization of hyper-connection between the students I studied. Increasingly, the social expectations for intimate relationships incorporate both technologically mediated and face-to-face communication. The incorporation of technological devices, such as smartphones, in interpersonal relationships combined with the high social value of speed is connected with the increased expectations about frequency of contact within friendships and sexual relationships. This desire for immediate contact, as well as increasing availability of information about potential relationship partners, contributes to a new definition of intimacy among participants.

In response to my second research question, I consider how individuals experience social pressures for connectivity and how such pressures shape relationships. I focus on discussing the implications that demand for social connectivity, which I articulate as hyper-connectivity, has on how participants understand their intimate relationships. Specifically in chapter four, I consider the pressure that participants experience to be available, or at least potentially available via technology. This pressure to be available is increasingly understood in terms of access; access to people and access to information. Access and connectivity together shape the experience of college students. In fact, access to knowledge about others, strategically presented via social

media profiles, is deeply embedded into the norms of social interaction. Furthermore, this pressure to be available, to be accessible, is central to understanding the experiences of connection and disconnection among participants. Some participants discuss the fear that comes from being inaccessible, and unable to access others, from being disconnected. Eva explains her emotional reaction to a perceived loss of her phone.

> Eva- Well, actually, sometimes I'll be in my room, making my bed, and if you're not home you can't have anyone call your phone [to help find it], unless someone on your floor, but… I get a panic attack. Like, one time I had left it underneath my bed, and didn't know. It was, like, the worst thing – it was the worst feeling in the world…. I lost my phone.
>
> Alecea- What did it feel like?
>
> Eva- It felt like I had lost contact with everyone. I could not get a hold of anyone. Oh, my God, I'm missing out on text messages. Just seeing a text message is like – Oh my God, what does this person have to say?

The notion of losing one's phone is about more than just communication or even access to information. It is fundamentally about the shift from being present in a social world to being absent. Not only does absence send messages to others, many of them negative, but it is also about loss of the senses. The fear and panic that Eva expresses is, in part, a reflection of the sensation of being suddenly cut off from information provided by the extended senses (McLuhan 1964) of the technological process. As a result of this sudden limiting of the techno-expanded senses, a loss of social connection occurs. The individual is suddenly disconnected and is suddenly faced with an inability to access the social world.

Finally in chapter five, I address my final research question, considering how technology is implicated in how participants understand and navigate issues of intimacy, relationships and individual identity. I go on to examine how the use of technology shapes understandings of privacy, intimacy and the performance of the self within contemporary network society. I

specifically discuss how transformations in the contemporary social world reshape notions of public and private, redefining, or at least nuancing, the meanings of the concepts. Increasingly the line between public and private is about power, about the ability to manage information and strategically display it to the social world. This shift in the meaning of privacy, moving the ability to control information from the hands of the powerful into the hands of individuals, has profound impacts on intimacy. Intimacy has, in the past, had the character of exclusivity, but the use of technology, and integration of technological communication into intimate relationships, results in a redefinition of intimacy and privacy. Today, intimacy can occur in public or at least technologically accessible environments, while privacy is a matter of individual choice and informational control.

Intimacy is increasingly occurring in multiple communication environments; connection only online or only offline may not be enough to sustain a relationship. One participant explains that she texts her girlfriend "about just... random stuff and really nothing in particular. But then, it's just, keeping in touch all day….then I feel, like, I'm always in contact with her." These experiences of "just being in touch all day" form a new kind of intimacy, technologically driven, but still a necessary part of the relationship. Increasingly however, intimacy occurs not only between people, but also between individuals and technology. The physical proximity of the smartphone is perhaps the most dramatic evidence of this. The smartphone, as an Internet enabled device, is tied closely to the body, it becomes a prosthetic that is understood as "part of me." This allows participants to be always connected to information and social networks, eternally performing and watching the performances of others. This social surveillance and performance has become normalized among participants, creating a perpetual sense that both "everybody is watching" and also that everyone is at any moment visible to be observed.

Significance

This research is situated within the literatures on the role and impact of the Internet and related technological communication practices on social behavior and "everyday" life. To date, limited consideration has been paid to the relationship between online and offline behavior in understanding the overall individual and his or her interpersonal connections. Additionally, this project contributes to work on intimacy and the micro-sociology of interpersonal relationships. This extensive body of research discusses the meanings and expectations of intimacy as it relates to relationships, but in regards to technology, it has been limited primarily to online only relationships (Sproull & Kiesler 1991, Talamo & Ligorio 2001, Kendall 2002). This project is relevant to literatures on the interpersonal relationships and social practices of college students. While technology has been addressed in this body of work (Baym 2004, Boyd 2006, Wellman 2001), the emergent nature of technological innovation means that research must be ongoing. In addition, the widespread use of communication technologies among college students and increasingly the general population means that the implications of this work are important to a variety of groups both within sociology, and beyond. My findings are significant to sociologists interested in the changing expectations and norms in the areas of interpersonal relationship behavior, identity formation and the persistence of social stratification via social networks. College administrators and parents can also gain a better understanding of social media and communication practices among college students.

However, somewhat unexpectedly, the most important implications for my research lie not with its contributions to social scientific endeavors but for college students and young adults themselves. The core of this project is rooted in the exploration of a phenomenon that has begun to transform the social world of the college student and young professional. However, popular

culture has often hailed such transformations as a step toward utopianism or an imminent danger to the social skills of users. The view of technology as a transformative, for good or ill, is also common in the work of those who study and analyze the impact of the Internet on social processes. Yet, this new technology has become so closely woven into the fabric of college life, that for many, they cannot imagine life without it. In this project, I work to provide a view of technology use that rejects the good/bad dichotomy and instead presents an assessment of that ambiguous and complex role of technology in contemporary society. By discussing the social structures that young people inhabit and rejecting the technological determinism that permeates popular culture and makes inroads into academic thought, this work has the potential to encourage college students themselves to think carefully about both the new possibilities and new dangers which arise from network society.

Limitations and Future Research

My research provides some insight into the practices and experiences of techno-mediated connectivity among college students. Focusing primarily on practices made possible by technological innovation allows me to bring to light the deep and inextricable connections between technology, intimacy, connectivity and relationships in the contemporary moment. However, this project is not without its limitations. I offer several suggestions for future research on social media, technology use and college student culture. These suggestions come from key elements in my own work, areas where data was limited and could be examined in greater depth and the general limitations of this study.

First, Internet research is still an emerging field. Researchers and theory makers are still exploring the ways in which research can and should be conducted and what topics are important to better understanding technology as it is occurring. With the emergence of new and even more

complex trends in technology use occurring at a fantastic rate, emerging technologies such as the increasing use of Skype, the iPad, and the recent emergence of iCloud, as a cloud computing tool, generally postdate these discussions. The recent death of technology visionary Steve Jobs has shaped smartphone purchases and driven the popularity of the iPhone to even higher levels (Sutter and Gross 2011). In order to work toward a more comprehensive understanding of the role of technology in society, future research must examine the implications and transformations of technological developments as they occur, making this an ongoing process. Further, the experience of college students is likely very different today than it will be in the future. For example, today nearly 46% of all American adults own smartphones and rates are actually higher among 25-34 year olds, at 71%, than among college aged adults, at 67% (Smith 2012). This might suggests that smartphone use, if not social media use, is higher for working adults than college students. Future research using longitudinal methods may be the most effective tool to deal with this limitation, and would benefit immensely the study of technological development and interpersonal relationships.

Secondly, the Internet itself, despite its growing scope, is still most accessible to those who are most privileged in U.S. society. It is first and foremost a place of privilege, and access is limited to those who have or acquire the time, money, and skills to log on. Economic and class location play an important role in who has access and who does not. Very few participants in this study come from working class and poor families, which is reflective of the demographic of the private university that they attend. Overwhelmingly, participants in this study come from backgrounds where they had access to technology from a young age. This is reflective of the economic and educational levels of the US middle class. Significant differences in experience likely exist regarding technology use in non-college student populations and/or economically

disadvantaged groups. Among those who I spoke with, working and middle class students have some substantial differences in the nature of their interactions with technology. Generally, middle class students had used computers frequently and from a young age, while poor and working class had less access. Yet their attitudes about technology were surprisingly similar, both still viewing them as part of "normal" middle class existence, something accessible to those who can afford it and desirable to those who cannot. Class difference in technology use is an area where future researchers may be able to make some significant contributions to work on inequality. However, national data suggests that non-students of similar age group to traditional undergraduates use social media sites, at least, at higher rates than do students. Further, community college students, who tend to be from lower socioeconomic status that traditional liberal arts or university students have slightly lower rates than traditional college students, but are still near 80% (Smith et.al. 2011)

Still, while usage rates across college students from different socio-economic backgrounds may vary only moderately, the "digital divide," is still deeply relevant in other ways. First, while students attending colleges and universities generally have campus-based access to computers, those from poor and working class backgrounds tended to have had less educational access earlier in their education (Bell and Chapman 2003). In addition, the quality and functionality of contemporary access, specifically mobile devices, varies significantly based on class background (Falaki et.al. 2012). A generally class homogonous population is one of the elements of my research that is reflective of the environment in which it exists. Further research might expand on this work, to provide more comparative data and develop testable theories that might be generalizable to a national sample. It should be noted that due to the location of this

study, students from working class and low-income families were under-represented in this study and certain aspects of the this study may not represent their experiences, as noted in Chapter two.

Therefore, my next undertaking will be to extend my current research to consider the role technologically mediated social practices play among historically marginalized populations. Using online ethnographic observation and in depth interviewing, this upcoming work will focus on the mobilization of social networks via technological communication among both privileged and historically marginalized groups. I am particularly interested in the role that socio-economic class plays in the ability to access technologies that may enhance social resources. The project will continue to examine the ways in which social resources may be utilized via technology, including social media, but it will go much further than my current research and specifically provide comparative data between different groups. This will allow me to assess and theorize the role of communication technologies in the development of programs and policy that work to alleviate social inequalities.

Additionally, I spoke primarily with those who are most open about their online behavior. There are many behaviors, for example pornography use, criminal behavior and identity play around gender and sexuality that participants didn't want to discuss. Existing research suggests the importance of the Internet in providing accessibility, shared communication spaces and relative anonymity for non-traditional gender categories and non-heterosexual identity performance (Schaap, 2002). Research online and in youth culture groups that embraces a blended real/virtual world self-identification finds a number of individuals who adopt new or emerging identity categories. For example, the term boi describes a boyish gay male or a biological female with a male presentation; and "heteroflexible" refers to a straight person with a queer mind-set (Wilchins 2002). The implications of flexible identities and the use of

technology as a means to navigate emotionally charged issues and social taboos are immense. Research on this kind of identity play, and online/offline experiences of it in light of the more integrated and hyper-connected college culture outlined in this project, has the potential to make important contributions to understanding the nature of networked society.

Finally, this project cannot create an encompassing theory about the way(s) the Internet impacts the broader social world. This project is intended to be a small local study, with a limited sample. It is not intended to be generalizable and I hope to provide theoretical concepts and insights, rather than to make broadly generalizable claims about national or global experience. Internet use is too widespread and too diverse to allow for a comprehensive analysis of its role in contemporary society. Due to limitations in time and labor power, it is inevitable that some important aspects of participants' experiences are lost. One of the most significant areas where this occurred is in the discussion of addictions and obsession. Internet "addiction" has been of interest to academics, laypersons and doctors alike. Yet, the diagnostic criteria for such "pathological behavior" may be inadequate when applied to individuals within a hyper-connected network society. Participants occasionally discussed their own fears and concerns around issues of obsession and addiction with regard to technology use. Future research could focus on the question of "how much is too much?" by focusing on the perspectives of young people, for whom technology use is the result of peer expectations and cultural identities different from those used as diagnostic baselines.

Final Comments

Today, the Internet continues to make inroads into societies across the globe, in which a quarter of the global population has access and the numbers continue to rise (Miniwatts 2009). Current statistical research found that in the US, while only about 78% of the population use the

Internet as of 2011, 18-29 year olds and those with college education, have usage rates near 95% (Pew Internet 2011). The Net Gen, the millennials, children born into and raised as a part of the techno-mediated world, relationships and knowledge mediated by the screen, are deeply embedded in the cyber-cultural superstructure of the late 20th and early 21st century. The pervasiveness of this technology is only matched by its transformative power for human society. Yet, we still know so little about how this technology might impact our society in the long term.

The need for more study of the impact of technology increases with every new person who logs on. This new thing, that technology mediates our communications, mediates and techno-mediates our symbolisms, guides and forms our access, creates new social possibilities by its very structure, is still not fully understood. As long as sociology purports to explore the relationships between social structures and individuals, then the need to understand the medium and context in which those relationships are established, built and maintained is clear. The impact of earlier techno-communications, such as television, is accepted by academics and lay persons alike. Yet, the unidirectional nature of television, for example, is limited when compared to the multiplicities and multi-structural forms in which online communication takes place. We can only begin to imagine the possibilities such a potentially transformative technology could create.

Identities, groups and communities are socially constructed, and like any aspect of social construction, they are shaped through the process of interaction with others. We as social and cognitive beings have multi-faceted aspects to our identities that shape and reshape our world and are closely tied to our tools of social interconnection. With the meteoric rise of the Internet as a socio-cultural force in contemporary society, has come social science research that attempts to examine and analyze the social impact of the developing medium as a new or developing

environment. The research in the area of sociality and technology has blossomed in the last few years. As this research matures it becomes ever more difficult to argue that individuals are constructing identities and forming communities via technology that are not part of "real life".

Today, perhaps for the first time in human history, contact between widely separated individuals and groups is available, not certainly to everyone, but to many, and that number increases every day. This study attempts to contribute to knowledge about how the Internet has shaped, reshaped, and transformed the possibilities of the social world in unprecedented and theoretically complex ways. We, as social researchers, have a rare opportunity to explore the impact of a paradigm shift, as it occurs. We can track and study the changes in the social fabric and the personal imaginary, as they occur. If sociology is the study of the contact points between biography and history, between the social world and the individual experience, then it is essential to examine this historical moment in which a new means of communication and perhaps sociality arises to shape the lives of groups and individuals. What is happening? Who am I, who are you, what does the social world look like, when the medium of communication is changed, transformed? Will our world be reborn as a cyborg society, a consensual hallucination shared through bits and bytes? Are we simply in a moment of transformation, as we become increasingly techno-mediated? Are we in the midst of a true technological revolution or have we already become a networked society, and are only beginning to notice?

Appendix A: Demographic Information

Age	Year in school	Major	Religion	Race	Gender	Sexual Orientation	Class Identification
21	Senior	Accounting	NR	Black	F	Het	Working
20	Junior	Mech. Eng	Christian	Black	Male	Het	Lower Middle
20	Junior	Eng	Christian	Black	F	NR	NR
22	Senior	Marketing / Graphic design	Jewish	White	M	Het	Upper
21	Junior	Sociology	Atheist	White	F	Het	Working
21	Junior	Engineering	Catholic	White	F	Bisexual	Middle
22	Senior	Soc	NR	White	Genderqueer	Pansexual	Upper Middle
22	Senior	CFS	NR	Bi-racial	M	Straight	Upper middle
21	Senior	Soc	Spiritual	Bi-racial	F	H	Lowe Middle
19	Soph.	Biology	NR	White	F	NR	Upper middle
22	Senior	IR, Advert	Jewish	Hispanic, Bi-racial	F	NR	Middle
21	Junior	Soc	Baptist	Black/Hispanic	M	Gay	Upper middle
19	Soph.	CFS	Spiritual	Black	M	NR	NR
20	Senior	Soc	Catholic	Latina	F	Het	Working Poor
19	Junior	Info Sci.	Christian	Black/African	F	Het	Working
20	Senior	Psych	Atheist	White	F	Het	Wealthy - Upper
22	Senior	Rhetoric, Speech Comm.	Unitarian	White	F	Lesbian	Middle
22	Senior	Chem. Eng	Catholic	Caucasian	M	Het	Upper Middle
21	Senior	Education	Christian	Black	F	Het	
21	Senior	Anthro	Pagan	White	M	Queer	Working
18	Fresh	CFS		White	F	Lesbian	Middle

20	Junior	Writing	Christian	White	Male	Het	Upper
19	Junior	Marketing		White	Male	Het	Wealthy
19	Soph.	Physics	Islamic	Arabic	M	Het	Wealthy
18	Fresh	History	NR	Asian American	F	Het	Middle
20	Soph.	Exercise Sci.	Christian	Black	M	Het	Working
19	Soph.	Art	Atheist	W	F	Bi	Middle
20	Senior	Political Sci.	NR	Black	F	Het	Upper
22	Senior	Soc	Christian	White	M	Het	Middle
19	Fresh	Undecided	NR	Black	F		Middle
18	Fresh	Arch	Atheist	White	Trans-man	Queer	Upper middle
22	Senior	Statistics	NR	Asian	F	Het	Wealthy
19	Soph.	Journalism	Christian	White	F	Het	Middle
18	Fresh	Und	NR	White-Native	F	Het	Middle

NR = No Response

Appendix B: Project Documents

Project Information Letter

My name is Alecea Standlee, and I am a doctoral candidate at Syracuse University in the Department Sociology. I am conducting a study with college students about their online activates and experiences. This letter is to both inform you about my research and to invite you to participate in my study. The project is titled *The Real "Virtual World": Techno-mediated Relationships in the Lives of College Age Adults*.

Individuals eligible for participation in this study are college students who consider the Internet to be an important or relevant part of their daily lives either personally or professionally and who are over the age of 18. Participants will be asked to participate in a face-to-face, or computer mediated interview that will take approximately 45-60 minutes. All information will be kept confidential and private. There are no right or wrong answers, I'm just interested in learning as much as possible about your views, so if there are questions you don't want just tell me and we'll move on.

Additionally I may ask, at a later point if you would be willing to let me participate in some online social network sites with you, such as Facebook or LiveJournal communities. I would just observe the way you interact with others online and take some notes. However, all communication would be private and I would protect your confidentiality. I will protect your privacy by using fictitious names when describing your experience and by changing personal details that might identify you or anyone you speak about.

The benefit of this research is that participants will help in filling a gap in current research and increase the understanding of how current Internet technologies impact the daily lives of regular users. Also you may benefit by gaining a better understanding of how online experiences is relevant to your life. Additionally, it can be enjoyable to share your opinions about topics that interest you. There are a few risks, specifically some topics might make you feel angry or upset. Also you might choose to talk about activities, opinion, or feelings that make you uncomfortable, but do remember you can refuse to answer any question. Finally, sometimes, such as if you are a public figure, I may not be able to disguise your identity completely.

I am addressing this letter to you in the hopes that you would be willing to participate in my study. My contact information is given below, and attached are copies of the consent form. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have about this study or about participating in it. I may be reached by telephone at (315) 443-2346 or by email at aistandla@maxwell.syr.edu.

Thank you very much!

Alecea Standlee, PhD Candidate
Syracuse University

Interview Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my interview research study on the impact of Internet use on your daily life. The project is titled *The Real "Virtual World": Techno-mediated Relationships in the Lives of College Age Adults*. I'm interviewing computer users in order to learn about the ways in which the Internet is used and its importance. The purpose of this study is to understand better how technology impacts our lives and daily experiences.

The interview will take about an hour and will consist of an informal conversation about your internet use and your perceptions and experiences with Internet technology. There are no right or wrong answers, I'm just interested in learning as much as possible about your views. If there are questions you don't want to answer that's perfectly all right. You may refuse to answer questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty. You will receive a copy of this signed consent document for your own records as well.

____This interview will be tape-recorded. The tape will be used for making notes and then destroyed.
____The researcher may take notes but I do not wish to be tape-recorded.
____I still wish to participate, but the researcher may not take notes or tape record me.

I will protect your privacy by using fictitious names when describing your experience and by changing personal details that might identify you or anyone you speak about. Please be aware if you were to tell me about illegal activities, however, I might be forced to testify if subpoenaed. Possible risks of participating in this study include the following;

- Some topics might make you feel angry or upset.
- You might choose to talk about activities, opinion, or feelings that make you uncomfortable, but do remember you can refuse to answer any questions.
- Sometimes, such as if you are a public figure, I may not be able to disguise your identity completely.

I hope this study will provide a better understanding of the social impact of internet technology on the daily lives, and that you find this interview an interesting way to share you experiences. By signing this document, I state that all of my questions have been answered. I am at least 18 years of age, and I wish to participate in this study.

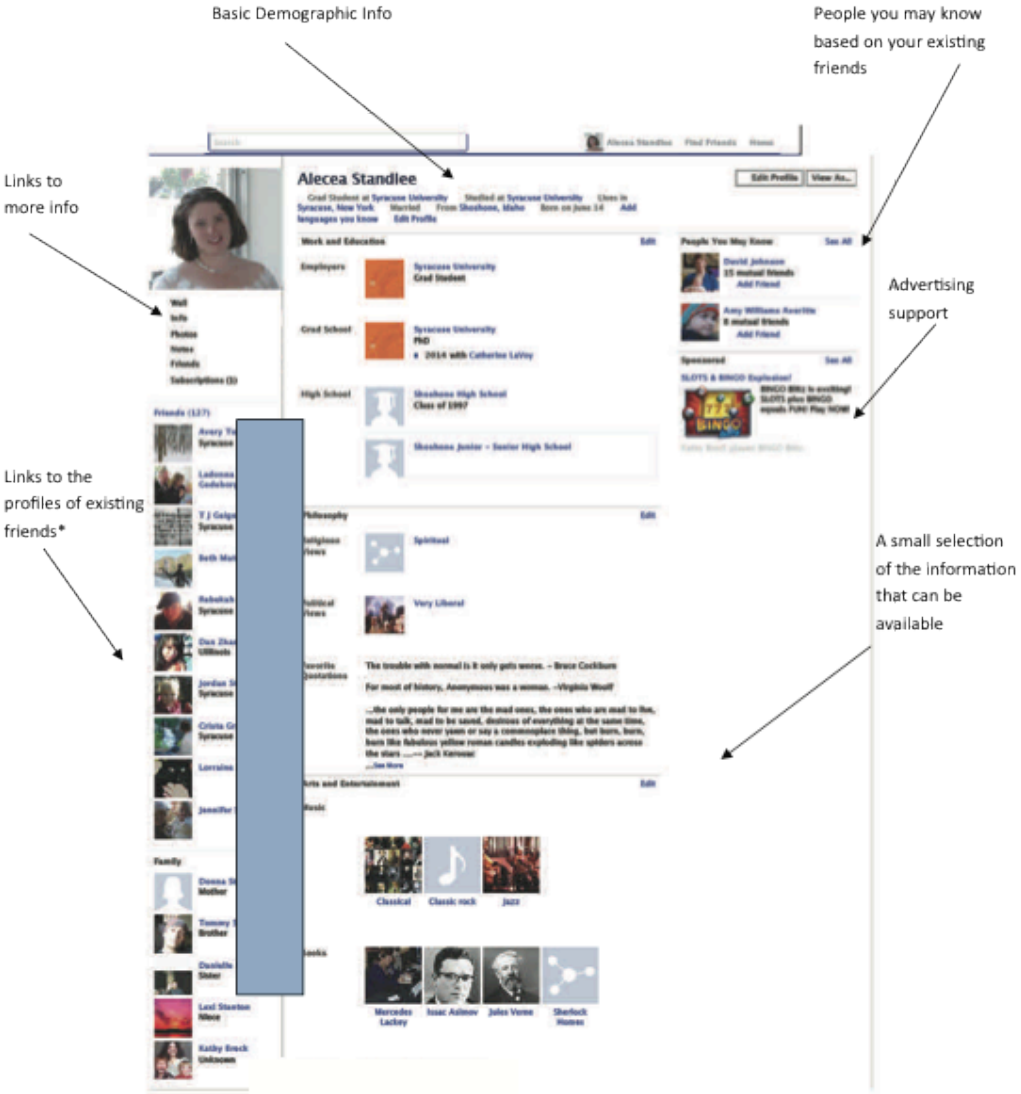
_____
Signature of Participant Date

_____
Printed Name of Participant Date

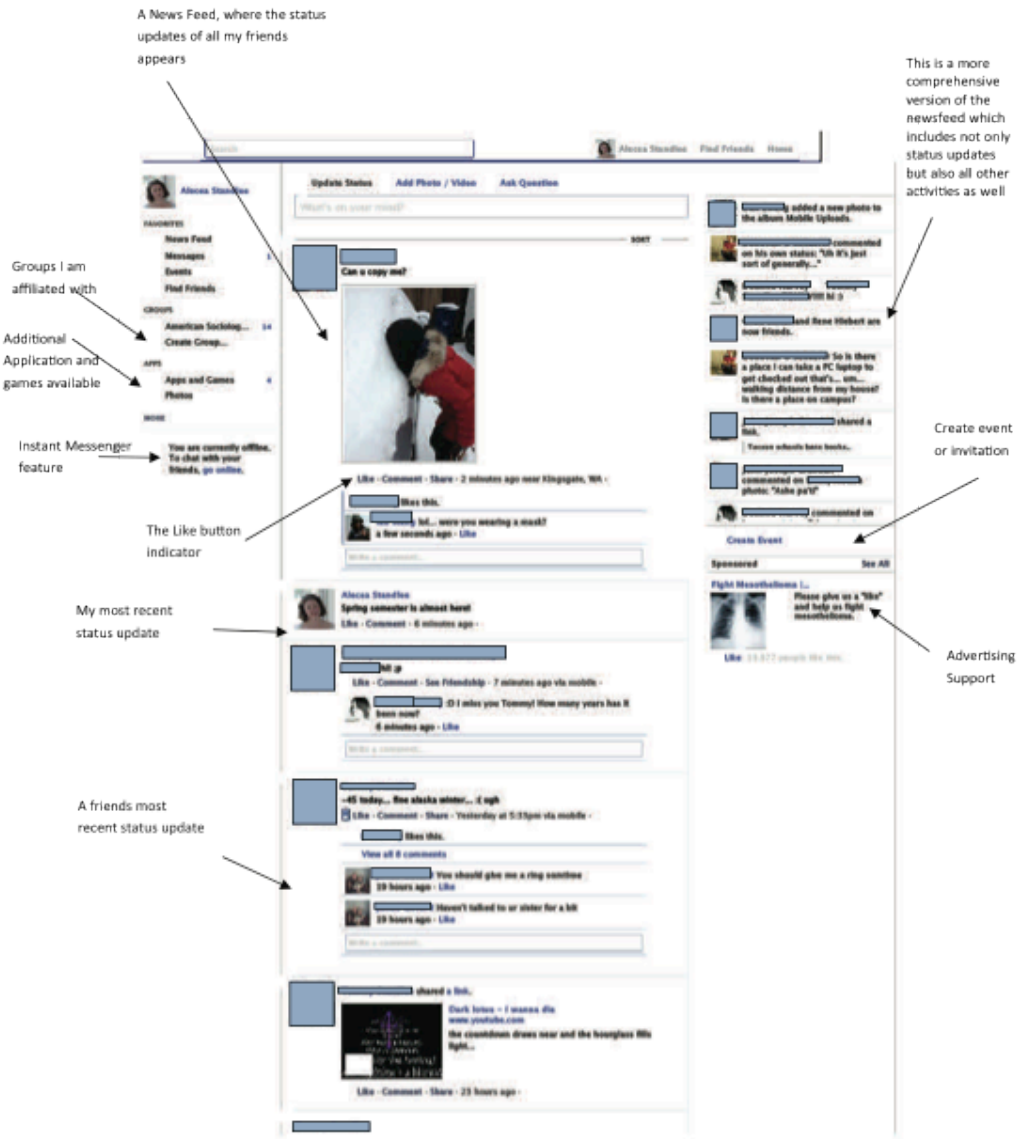
_____
Signature Name of Investigator Date

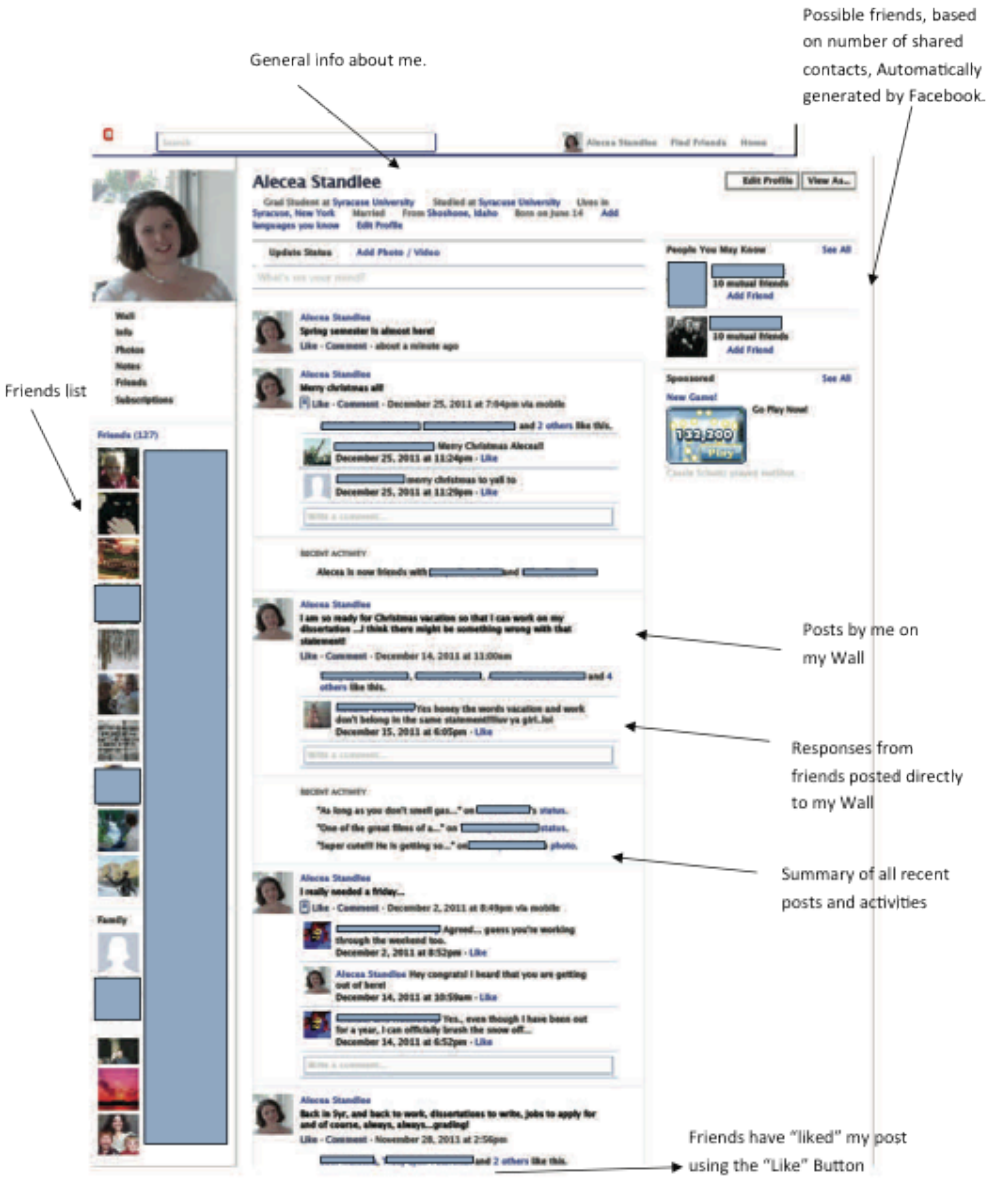
Thank you! If you have any questions or complaints you may address them to Alecea Standlee, Department of Sociology 443-2346 or to the Institutional Review Board at Syracuse University 315-443-3013.

Appendix C: Sample Facebook Page



*Names are hidden to protect privacy.


A News Feed, where the status updates of all my friends appears
This is a more comprehensive version of the newsfeed which includes not only status updates but also all other activities as well
Groups I am affiliated with
Additional Application and games available
Instant Messenger feature
The Like button indicator
Create event or invitation
Advertising Support
My most recent status update
A friends most recent status update


General info about me.
Possible friends, based on number of shared contacts, Automatically generated by Facebook.
Friends list
Alecea Standlee
Posts by me on my Wall
Responses from friends posted directly to my Wall
Summary of all recent posts and activities
Friends have "liked" my post using the "Like" Button

Appendix D: Image of an iPhone Facebook Application

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RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Dissertation Research, Dr. Jackie Orr (Chair), Syracuse University, 5/2008 - Ongoing.
I am examining the role of techno-mediated communication in the interpersonal lives of college age students. The research focuses on the ways in which social media, texting and other technologies are embedded in the daily practices and interconnecting lives of this group. I utilize in-depth interviewing and ethnographic observation to understand the practices and meanings of communication technologies to them.

Research Assistant, Dr. Margaret Usdansky, Syracuse University, 5/2010 - 8/2010.
Working with Dr. Usdansky, I conducted an extensive literature review for a mixed methods project that examines the educational and career outcomes of under-represented minorities in the STEM fields. The final project proposal was awarded an American Educational Research Association grant.

Research Assistant, Dr. Marjorie DeVault, Syracuse University, 1/2008 - 5/2008.
Collaborating with Dr. DeVault, I supervised undergraduate students in an ongoing team ethnographic project and compiled their qualitative data. The work focuses on the complex relationship between the private university population and the local community in Syracuse, NY.

Research Assistant, Dr. Madonna Harrington Meyer, Syracuse University, 5/2007 - 8/2007.
Under the supervision of Dr. Harrington Meyer, I conducted the initial analysis and produced descriptive statistics from survey data that summarized the long-term career outcomes of Gerontology Program alumni in the Center for Policy Research at Syracuse University.

High School Retention, Dr. Madonna Harrington Meyer, Syracuse University, 1/2007 - 5/2007.
Working with Dr. Harrington Meyer and other graduate students, we identified factors linked to the high rates of attrition at a local high school. I collected and analyzed survey data from freshman students about their transition from middle school to high school. The final data analysis was presented to the high school administration officials.

Women’s Studies Master’s Thesis, Dr. Michelle Gibson, University of Cincinnati, 3/2005 - 6/2005.
I conducted observation and language analysis of university online discussion board postings and classroom linguistic patterns. Under the supervision of Dr. Gibson, I examined how student perceptions about socio-economic status changed during the course of guided classroom exercises.

CONFERENCES PRESENTATIONS

"Monsters, Ghosts and Cyborgs: Techno-organic Systems and Cybercommunications." American Sociological Association Annual Meeting. Las Vegas, NV. August 22, 2011.

"Technologies of Relationships: Meaning Making and Interconnection in the Techno-Social World." Theorizing the Web 2011 sponsored by Maryland University. College Park, MD. April 9, 2011.

"The (ICT) Revolution continues… (& is still not televised)" with Dr. Julia Loughlin and Dr. Arthur Paris. Eastern Sociological Society Annual Meeting. Boston, MA. March 19, 2010.

"Living a Techno-organic Life: Interpersonal Relationships and Social Networking Technology Among College Students." Eastern Sociological Society Annual Meeting. Boston, MA. March 19, 2010.

"Real Research in the Undergraduate Classroom: Team Ethnography as an Introduction to Qualitative Methods" with Dr. Marjorie DeVault. Eastern Sociological Society Annual Meeting. Baltimore, MD. March 20, 2009.

"The Value of Hard Work: Low Wage Labor and the Construction of Work as a Moral Virtue." Society for the Study of Social Problems Annual Conference. Boston, MA. August 2, 2008.

"Shifting Spheres: Gender, Labor and the Construction of National Identity." American Sociological Association Annual Meeting. Boston, MA. August 1, 2008.

"Imperial Images: Gender, Panoptic Time and the Construction of the Nation State through World War II Propaganda." Binghamton Graduate Student Conference in Historical Sociology. Binghamton, NY. April 29, 2007.

"Worship of Work: The Discourse of Labor in America and Work as a Site of Vulnerability." North Central Sociological Association. Indianapolis, IN. March 28, 2006.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Department of Sociology Summer Award ($1,750), Syracuse University, 2011.
Graduate Student Organization Travel Award ($300), Syracuse University, 2011.
Outstanding TA Award, Syracuse University, 2010.
Roscoe Martin Foundation Dissertation Fellowship Award ($820), 2010.
Graduate School Teaching Mentor, Syracuse University, 2010.
Future Professoriate Program Teaching Associateship ($15,000), Syracuse University, 2009.
Graduate School Teaching Fellow, Syracuse University, 2009.
Maxwell School Summer Fellowship ($700), Syracuse University, 2009.
Maxwell School Summer Fellowship ($1,500), Syracuse University, 2007.
Women's Studies Graduate Student of the Year, University of Cincinnati, 2006.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

INSTRUCTOR
I developed the class syllabuses, conducted all classroom instruction and completed all grading.
SOC 101 Introduction to Sociology, Syracuse University, Fall 2010, Spring 2011.

SOC 102 Social Problems, Syracuse University, Summer 2009.
SOC 281 Sociology of the Family, Syracuse University, Spring 2009, Summer 2011.
SOC 305 Sociology of Sex and Gender, Syracuse University, Fall 2009.
SOC 319 Qualitative Methods, Syracuse University, Summer 2008, Spring 2010, Summer 2010.
WMST 241 Introduction to Women's Studies, University of Cincinnati, Winter 2004 - Spring 2006.

ONLINE INSTRUCTOR
HDV 283304 Family and Society, Empire State College, Spring 2010 - Fall 2011.
SOC 282124 Exploring Society, Empire State College, Spring 2010 - Fall 2011.

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY TEACHING ASSISTANT
SOC 101 Introduction to Sociology, Dr. Lorraine Herbst, Fall 2008.
SOC 281 Sociology of the Family, Dr. Margaret Usdansky, Spring 2007, Fall 2006.
SOC 319 Qualitative Research Methods, Dr. Marjorie DeVault, Fall 2007.

UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI TEACHING ASSISTANT
ENGL 262 American Childhoods in Literature, Dr. Michelle Gibson, Spring 2006.
WMST 241 Introduction to Women's Studies, Dr. Anne Sisson Runyan, Fall 2004.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American Sociological Association
Society for the Study of Social Problems
Eastern Sociological Society
Association of Internet Researchers
Imagining America: Publically Active Graduate Education
Cyborgology
National Women's Studies Association

ACADEMIC SERVICE

SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION
Peer Reviewer, *Emotion, Space and Society*, 2010 - 2011.
Peer Reviewer, *Maxwell Review*, 2009 - 2010.
Contributor, Association of Internet Researchers Online Qualitative Resource Collection, 2008 - Ongoing.

UNIVERSITY SERVICE
Editor, Graduate Student Newsletter, Syracuse University, 2010 - Ongoing.
Editor, Future Professoriate Program Newsletter, Syracuse University, 2010 - Ongoing.
Executive Planning Committee, Teaching Assistant Orientation Program, Syracuse University, 2010 - Ongoing.
Executive Planning Committee, Future Professoriate Program Annual Conference, Syracuse University, 2010 - Ongoing.
Advisory Council, Academic Integrity Student, Syracuse University, 2009 - Ongoing.
Panelist, Academic Integrity Hearing, Syracuse University, 2009 - Ongoing.
Presenter, "Navigating Cultural Difference in the Undergraduate Classroom," Future Professoriate Program Annual Conference, Hamilton, NY. May 19, 2011.

Presenter, “Navigating Student and Faculty Culture,” Future Professoriate Program Annual Conference, Hamilton, NY. May 20, 2011.
Teaching Assistant Orientation Program, Syracuse University, 2009 - 2010.
Panelist, Maxwell School Academic Integrity Hearing, Syracuse University, 2008 - 2010.

DEPARTMENT SERVICE
Undergraduate Student Mentor, Syracuse University, 2008 - Ongoing.
Sociology Career Development Panelist, “Conference Presentations as a Graduate Student.” Syracuse University, October 26, 2011.
Sociology Career Development Panelist, “Graduate Student Teaching,” Syracuse University, November 3, 2009.
Sociology Career Development Panelist, “Publishing while In Grad School,” Syracuse University, October 19, 2009.
Graduate Representative, Future Professoriate Program, Syracuse University, 2008 - 2010.
Department Chair Reappointment Committee, Women’s Studies, University of Cincinnati, 2006.
Undergraduate Curriculum Review Committee, University of Cincinnati, 2006.

REFERENCES

Dr. Jackie Orr, Associate Professor of Sociology, Syracuse University, jtorr@maxwell.syr.edu, (315) 443-5758.

Dr. Marjorie DeVault, Professor of Sociology, Syracuse University, mdevault@maxwell.syr.edu, (315) 443-4030.

Dr. Prema Kurien, Professor of Sociology, Syracuse University, pkurien@maxwell.syr.edu, (315) 443-1152.

Dr. Margaret Usdansky, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Syracuse University, mlusdans@maxwell.syr.edu, (315) 443-5765.