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WIRED FROSH



A Case Study of Electronic Community Building in a Freshman Dorm

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Portions of this study have been presented at:

[ED-MEDIA 99: World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia, & Telecommunications](#)

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[The 1999 ResNet Symposium](#)

[The 1998 Young Rhetoricians Conference](#)

[The 1997 Computers and Writing Conference](#)

[The 1997 ResNet Symposium](#)

See the formal paper ["Constructive 'Noise in the Channel': Effects of Controversial Forwarded E-mail in a College Residential and Virtual Community,"](#) ED-MEDIA 99 Conference Proceedings

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ABSTRACT

While "virtual communities" have been studied as separate entities, only recently have we had the chance to observe the social effects of new technologies in face-to-face (f2f) living groups. With increasing dependence on computer-mediated communication (CMC) in fully-wired college residences, critics fear that students are becoming more isolated. But CMC also has the potential to complement and extend f2f forms of interaction, to become a tool for building, rather than destroying, social relations. In a case study of a Stanford University dorm e-mail list, I will analyze how college students who live together use and perceive electronic discussion in the context of other community-building tools.

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INTRODUCTION

Must students who increasingly depend on electronic technologies such as e-mail become more isolated, as some have claimed and many fear? Or what is the potential for computer-mediated communication (CMC) to complement and extend other forms of interaction and become a tool for building, rather than destroying, social relations? How is CMC used similarly and differently when participants actually live together in a face-to-face (f2f) community, instead of only communicating at a distance? These questions are increasingly relevant beyond academia, as many employees combine electronic and f2f communication in their jobs and many communities based on physical proximity have established electronic networks with extensive online resources and discussion areas. See [01: Questions, claims, and assumptions about CMC, students, and community](#) for my specific research questions.

Background

Rinconada House (Wilbur Hall) at Stanford University is an

all-freshman residence of 94 students (89 frosh plus 5 upperclass staff members) where my wife and I served as faculty Resident Fellows (RFs) for seven years, from 1990-91 through 1996-97. Rinconada -- which also claims to have been the first college dorm in the world with a home page on the Web -- has maintained an active e-mail discussion list since 1993-94. Based on a study of that list for the academic year 1995-96, I will analyze how college students who lived together used and perceived this form of electronic discussion; I will emphasize constructive, community-building uses of CMC and higher-level uses of CMC I define as "critical dialogue."

Stanford was one of the first residential universities in the nation to achieve the "port per pillow" standard for network wiring, meaning that all or nearly all students have an individual ethernet connection in their room in addition to shared, networked dorm computer clusters. The student residences combine a well-developed technological infrastructure and technical support with a very active residential education system. The freshman dorms are composed, demographically, as multicultural microcosms of the entering class, and they generally form cohesive and enthusiastic communities. These communities are by no means conflict-free, however, and during 1995-96 Rinconada residents negotiated a number of challenging social, political, and personal issues, including pornography, free speech, a potential grape boycott on campus, a sexual harassment allegation within the house, and the sudden death of one of their dormmates. These and many other issues found both moving and controversial expression on the dorm e-mail list, along with the more accustomed and pedestrian (at least to e-mail veterans) assortment of announcements, chain letters, forwarded college humor, and occasional "flaming" or swapping of insults.

Methodology

The study is based on

- a complete archive of the 1995-96 e-mail list
- a survey filled out by 75 residents in May, 1996, exploring their perceptions about the usefulness of electronic media in the context of other communication forms used by the dorm community (see [02: Survey and responses](#))
- my anecdotal experience and judgment as a participant-observer of the list and the dorm community, leader of the residence staff, former composition teacher with extensive classroom-CMC experience, and current information resources specialist

Once I obtained support for the study from the Office of the Vice Provost for Student Affairs, Residential Education, and Residential Computing (see [20: Acknowledgments](#)), I followed the Stanford protocol for human-subject research and requested consent from all the participants to use (a) their e-mail postings to the dorm list, and (b) their survey data. I promised to keep their identities private and have used pseudonyms here and in all reporting of the study.

I obtained consent to use e-mail data from 85 of 89 of the (former) freshman residents and all five of the former upperclass student staff

members. With the able help of my student assistant Jason Herthel, I organized the e-mail and survey data into a FileMaker Pro database from which we obtained all the measures and averages reported in the study. The staff members' messages to the e-mail list (along with my wife's and mine) were eliminated from most of the statistical measures, insofar as it was part of our job to monitor and actively make announcements and other postings to the e-mail list.

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CONCLUSION

Despite prominent gender disparities in participation and the heavy proportion of discussion carried on by a small core group of participants -- on the list overall and for critical dialogue especially -- the dorm e-mail list was a very valuable medium for community-building. Residents found the list useful for a wide variety of social purposes, from housekeeping to negotiating group norms, discussing political issues, and grieving for a dead friend. Not just core group members, but lurkers and shy people as well benefitted from a substantial amount and impressive quality of critical dialogue (i.e., discussion of social, political, and dorm community issues). The e-mail list was very valuable for particular individuals who found ways to work out personal tensions, feelings, and growth partly through this medium, in turn becoming part of and benefitting the community as a whole.

Here are more specific conclusions in response to each of my research questions (see [01 Questions, claims and assumptions about CMC, students, and community](#)).

(1) Computer activities and community building are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, computer-mediated communication (CMC) can usefully complement the other, traditional community-building tools in a residential setting, such as small-group interaction, house meetings, telephone calls, and paper fliers. See [02](#), [03](#).

(2) The increasing use of computers on college campuses doesn't necessarily tend to isolate students or negatively affect social relations and sense of community. On the contrary, residents of Rinconada used the dorm e-mail list in highly social ways and, moreover, found the list more useful for most social purposes than many traditional, face-to-face media. See [02](#), [03](#).

(3) A dorm mailing list can be very useful for the kinds of critical dialogue encouraged in academic culture. Announcements, chain letters, forwarded jokes, etc. need not preclude higher-order uses of CMC. On the contrary, forwarded messages can provoke thoughtful, substantive discussion about social and political issues. See [04](#), [05](#), [06](#)

(4) Metadiscussion or "talk about talk" is not necessarily a distracting waste of time and bandwidth that disrupts community building. On the contrary, in a residential setting, metadiscussion

can be a valuable exercise in negotiating norms and conventions. See [07](#).

(5) In the residential setting as in other electronic and f2f conversational spaces, women and men tend to have different perceptions about the usefulness of CMC and these perceptions are reflected in their different uses of the medium. Men tend to dominate the electronic conversation spaces in the dorm setting (as in other settings previously studied), unlike in some classroom uses of CMC where participation may not be voluntary. See [08](#), [09](#), [11](#), [12](#), [13](#).

(6) In the residential setting, CMC can encourage participation by those who are more shy in f2f interaction. See [10](#), [11](#), [12](#).

(7) In the residential setting, while a small core group of active participants still may contribute the majority of messages, this core group is not identical with what might be called the f2f core group, i.e. the most active or gregarious members of the f2f community. Hence overall participation in the community can be widened with electronic tools. [11](#), [12](#), [13](#).

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01: Questions, claims and assumptions about CMC, students, and community

These were my research questions when I began the study, based on general public perceptions, media representations, and scholarly research about computer-mediated communication (CMC). See [CONCLUSION](#) for a summary of my responses to these questions.

General

1. (?) The zero-sum and either-or assumptions: Time spent on computers is time taken away from (presumably) more valuable face-to-face activities; computer activities and community building are mutually exclusive. See [02](#), [03](#).
2. (?) On college campuses specifically, the increasing use of computers tends to isolate students and negatively affect social relations/community building (e.g., [Gabriel 1996](#)). See [02](#), [03](#).

Higher-order dialogue & metadiscussion in CMC

3. (?) How useful can a dorm mailing list -- surely even more of a "protected conversational space very different from the traditional classroom" ([Colomb and Simutis 1996](#)) than classroom CMC spaces -- be for the kinds of critical dialogue encouraged in academic culture? To what extent will announcements, chain letters, forwarded jokes and "Top 10" lists, and pointless bantering or silliness preclude higher-order uses of CMC? See [04](#), [05](#), [06](#).
4. (?) The ["How many Internet mail list subscribers does it take to change a light bulb?"](#) assumption: Metadiscussion, or "noise in the channel that interrupts discourse" ([Korenman and Wyatt 1996](#)), is a distracting waste of time and bandwidth, disrupts community building. See [07](#).

Democratic potential of CMC for community building

5. (?) Women and men use/don't use CMC for different purposes; men dominate/don't dominate CMC conversational spaces as they do f2f conversational spaces (e.g., [Hall 1996](#); [Herring 1993](#), [1996b](#); [Selfe and Meyer 1991](#)). See [08](#), [09](#), [11](#), [12](#), [13](#).
6. (?) CMC encourages/doesn't encourage participation by those who are more shy in f2f interaction, potential to "give voice to students silenced in traditional classrooms" ([Colomb & Simutus 1996](#); also, e.g., [Batson 1988](#), [Cooper & Selfe 1990](#)) or dorm communities. See [10](#), [11](#), [12](#).
7. (?) CMC encourages widespread participation -- vs. the domination of a "small core group of regular participants" which "corresponds closely to the behavior of participants in face-to-face interaction"

([Korenman and Wyatt 1996](#)). See [11](#), [12](#), [13](#).

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02: Survey and responses

Seventy-five (75) residents of Rinconada completed this survey in May, 1996, near the end of an academic year's experience living together in a freshman dorm and using the dorm's e-mail list. The numerical averages are displayed below for each question.

The survey addresses residents' perceptions about their participation in the dorm community and e-mail list and their opinions about the usefulness of various communication media (one on one, house meetings, telephone, e-mail, etc.) for particular community-related purposes. I will refer to the survey frequently as I compare these perceptions with the actual uses that residents made of the dorm e-mail list. Looking only at the perceptions revealed in the survey, I would emphasize these results:

- Although residents rated themselves overall as only **lightly active writers** to the dorm e-mail list (1.19 average, question 4), they rated themselves as **very active readers** of the list (2.53 average, question 3). This result is important with regard to the issue of "lurking" addressed in [11](#), [12](#), and [13](#): how useful is this kind of electronic forum for those who don't participate actively in the discussions?
- Residents generally rated computer-mediated communication (CMC) -- the dorm e-mail list especially -- as very useful for a variety of purposes. **The e-mail list (column G) was the highest-rated medium for four out of eight activities (1, 2, 3, 8)**. The only comparable medium was in person, one-on-one (column A), which residents rated the highest for the remaining four activities (4, 5, 6, 7). Most significantly, residents found the e-mail list even more useful than face-to-face house meetings for discussing dorm community issues.
- Residents rated the telephone as the least useful medium for six out of eight activities (1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8).

Name_____	Student ID #_____
Gender M F	Self-described ethnicity_____

[results will be kept confidential; names & numbers will be used only for coding the data]

1. Overall how would you rate your participation in the Rinconada community this year (e.g., taking part in organized or informal activities, socializing with dormmates, etc.)? [3 = Participated extensively; 2 = Participated moderately; 1 = Participated lightly; 0 = Didn't participate]	2.29
2. Overall for activities that you participated in with dormmates this year, how often did you initiate activities? [3 = Frequently initiated activities; 2 = Sometimes initiated activities; 1 = Rarely initiated activities; 0 = Never initiated activities]	1.66

3. How active were you as a reader of the dorm e-mail list this year? [3 = Very active (read all or most postings; checked messages daily or almost daily); 2 = Moderately active (read many or most postings; checked messages several times a week); 1 = Lightly active (read some or few postings; checked messages weekly or infrequently); 0 = Not active or not subscribed]	2.53
4. How active were you as a writer to the dorm e-mail list this year? [3 = Very active (posted frequent messages to the list); 2 = Moderately active (often or sometimes posted messages); 1 = Lightly active (rarely posted messages); 0 = Not active (never posted or not subscribed)]	1.19
5A. How often did you exchange individual e-mail messages (not to the whole dorm mailing list) with dormmates this year, for any purpose? [3 = Very often (once or more weekly); 2 = Sometimes (a few times per month); 1 = Rarely (monthly or less frequently); 0 = Never]	1.88
5B. How would you describe the major purposes of your individual e-mail exchanges with dormmates, if you engaged in this activity? [List numbers (1-8) from activities below if relevant; describe other purposes here or on back]	----

For each of the activities (1-8) listed below, how useful have you found each means of communication listed across the top row (A-H)?

3 = <i>Very useful</i> ; 2 = <i>Moderately useful</i> ; 1 = <i>Slightly useful</i> ; 0 = <i>Not useful</i> . If you have no opinion or no experience, leave the space blank.	(A) In person, one-on-one	(B) In person, informal small group	(C) House Meeting or organized dorm program	(D) Paper fliers/ bulletin board/whiteboard	(E) Telephone	(F) Private e-mail	(G) Dorm e-mail list	(H) Other (please specify & give numerical rating)
1. Conducting "housekeeping" activities (lost & found, arranging meeting times, etc.)	1.69	1.79	2.22	1.97	0.74	1.50	2.47	---
2. Finding out about or publicizing dorm events, programs, & social activities	1.71	1.68	2.36	2.43	0.59	1.21	2.67	---
3. Finding out about or publicizing Stanford or community activities	1.45	1.52	2.30	2.38	0.61	1.27	2.45	---
4. Sharing outside interests with dormmates	2.52	2.24	1.61	1.14	0.72	1.65	1.66	---
5. Relieving stress (sharing humor, expressing anxiety, etc.)	2.82	2.74	1.18	0.57	1.26	2.07	1.47	---

6. Discussing academics (Chem, CIV, study groups, etc.)	2.62	2.59	0.44	0.51	0.78	1.18	0.93	---
7. Discussing social, political, or intellectual issues (grapes, elections, gender relations, censorship, national issues, etc.)	2.36	2.40	1.38	0.90	0.54	1.15	2.03	---
8. Discussing dorm community issues (shared experiences or adversity or controversy, behavior issues (e.g. noise), Rinc-a-Delt planning, etc.)	2.00	2.13	2.36	1.14	0.52	1.19	2.42	---

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03: Perceptions of Usefulness of Media and Actual E-mail Postings by Subject Category

[Discussion](#)

Subject Category	Opinion of Other Media (0 - 3)	Opinion of CMC Usefulness (0 - 3)	Number of Actual Messages	Percentage of All Messages
1. Conducting housekeeping activities	1.68	1.99	164	13.2%
2. Finding out / publicizing dorm activities	1.75	1.94	229	18.4%
3. Finding out / publicizing other activities	1.65	1.86	115	9.3%
4. Sharing outside interests with dormmates	1.65	1.66	143	11.5%
5. Relieving stress	1.71	1.77	150	12.0%
6. Discussing academics	1.39	1.06	13	1.0%
7. Discussing social, political, or intellectual issues	1.52	1.59	152	12.2%
8. Discussing dorm community issues	1.63	1.81	161	13.0%
9. Metadiscussion	---	---	47	3.8%

10. Miscellaneous	---	---	69	5.6%
AVERAGE / TOTAL	1.62	1.71	1243	100%

Discussion:

The students rated computer-mediated media (private e-mail and the dorm e-mail list, columns F and G in the [survey](#)) more useful than the average of all other (non-CMC) media (survey columns A through E) for every purpose except discussing academics (6). These results are displayed in the first two columns. For sharing outside interests (4), relieving stress (5), and discussing social, political or intellectual issues (7), the students rated CMC and non-CMC media about the same. The average for the traditional, non-CMC media was brought down by the low ratings given to telephone usage (survey column E).

Reflecting their perceptions about the usefulness of the dorm e-mail list, residents actually used list in diverse ways, for diverse purposes; these results are displayed in the last two columns. With the exception of discussing academics (6), all the activities asked about in the survey had a significant proportion of the actual messages. Finding out about or publicizing dorm activities had the most messages (229, 18.4%), followed by housekeeping (164, 13.2%), discussing dorm community issues (161, 13.0%), discussing social, political, or intellectual issues (152, 12.2%), and relieving stress (150, 12.0%).

I categorized 47 messages (3.8%) as primarily metadiscussion -- not a category offered by the survey, obviously -- and 69 messages (5.6%) as miscellaneous (those that didn't easily fall into any of the given categories).

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04: Social Purposes of Survey Categories

In order to focus on higher-order uses of electronic communication, I imposed three broader categories on the eight activities designated on the survey -- "housekeeping," "social dialogue," and "critical dialogue." While activities in all three categories are important to the social fabric of the dorm, critical dialogue is more the kind of higher-order, substantive, reasoned, constructive discussion that we encourage in academia. In the context of the student residence, critical dialogue is a give-and-take among peers about any issue -- local or global -- of mutual interest. Unlike in many of their classes, however, the students who participate in this critical dialogue are writing and responding to a very meaningful audience -- their fellow dorm residents. I included messages classified as metadiscussion -- where the primary content of a message was about the use or evolving conventions of the dorm e-mail list itself -- in the critical dialogue category.

Survey content category	Larger social purpose
1. Conducting housekeeping activities (lost & found, arranging meeting times, etc.)	HOUSEKEEPING
2. Finding out/publicizing dorm events, programs, & social activities	*
3. Finding out/publicizing Stanford, community activities	SOCIAL DIALOGUE
4. Sharing outside interests with dormmates	*
5. Relieving stress (sharing humor, expressing anxiety, etc.)	*
6. Discussing academics (Chem, CIV, study groups, etc.) *	
7. Discussing social, political, or intellectual issues (grapes, elections, gender relations,	CRITICAL DIALOGUE

**censorship, national
issues, etc.)**

**8. Discussing dorm
community issues
(shared experiences or
adversity or *
controversy, behavior
issues, Rinc-a-Delt
planning, etc.)**

9. Metadiscussion *

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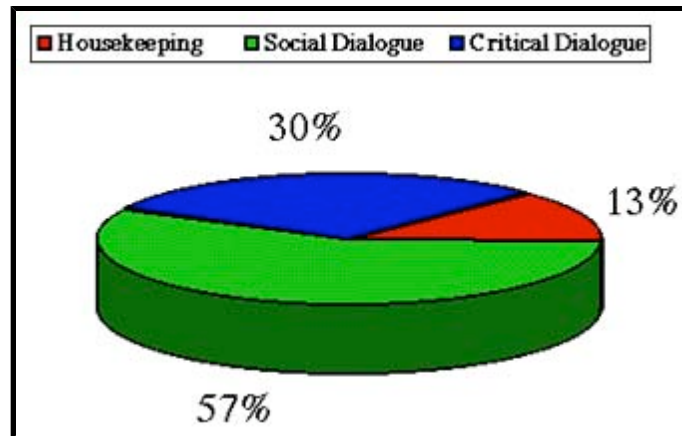
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05a: Perceived Usefulness of E-mail List vs. Other Media by Social Purpose (All Respondents)

[Discussion](#)

Social Purpose (0 = not useful; 3 = very useful)	OTHER MEDIA	E-MAIL LIST
HOUSEKEEPING	1.68	1.99
SOCIAL DIALOGUE	1.69	2.06
CRITICAL DIALOGUE	1.51	1.79

05b: Proportion of Actual Messages by Social Purpose



Discussion

In the table (05a) we see that, in the aggregate, residents rated the dorm e-mail list as more useful than the average of all other media ([survey](#) columns A through E) for all [three major social purposes \(04\)](#).

In the pie chart (05b) we see that, of the 1243 total messages posted to the list in 1995-96, an impressive 30% fell into the category of critical dialogue, 57% in the social dialogue category, and 13% in the housekeeping category. For a further breakdown of these categories, see [03](#).

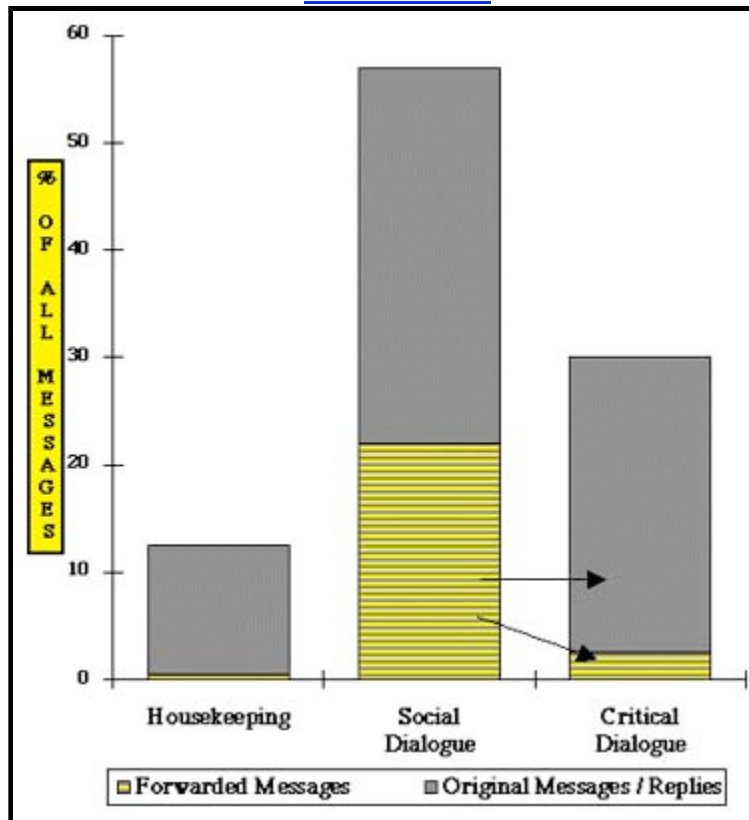
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06: Proportions of Forwarded Messages by Social Purpose

[Discussion](#)



Discussion

It has been widely believed among experienced Internet users that forwarded messages -- including electronic chain letters, urban legends, Top 10 lists and other jokes, etc. -- constitute a waste of time and bandwidth and, at the least, a distraction from higher-order uses of electronic communication (i.e., critical dialogue). With the widespread use of e-mail by college students, a whole genre of forwarded undergraduate e-mail humor seems to have developed, with titles such as "100 ways to torture your roommate" or "50 things to tell your professor when you turn in your exam." In five years of participating in dorm e-mail lists, I have seen some of the same forwarded messages (or variations on these themes) many times. Other routine forwards have more serious content and include inspirational stories (e.g., about developing friendships or love affairs in college), warnings about date rape or drugs, and political polemics or calls for action. Many messages explicitly advertise their forwarded

identity by exhorting the receiver to "send this to all your friends," by including headers from previous senders, or by listing all the colleges and universities where the message has been shared. I think it would be interesting to analyze these evolving genres or subgenres in more detail.

To test the notion that forwarded messages are wasteful distractions in the dorm community context, I classified all 1243 messages to the e-mail list as either forwarded messages or original messages/replies. (In the cases where a forwarded message was framed by the sender's own comments, I made a judgment about whether the primary content was the forwarded material or the original material.) As illustrated in the bar graph, I found that:

- **Indeed, a high proportion of the social dialogue category (38% of this category) consisted of forwarded messages.** Most of these messages were classified as "sharing outside interests" (activity number 4 from the [survey](#)) or "relieving stress" (activity number 5).
- **However, forwarded messages often led to substantive discussion about social or community issues** (indicated in the bar graph by the arrows leading from social dialogue to critical dialogue). Sometimes, a forwarded message about a particular issue (e.g., a political polemic about Republicans) would be "answered" by another forwarded message, perhaps with some framing content, taking a different viewpoint (e.g., a political polemic about Democrats) -- this phenomenon is illustrated in the graph by the lower arrow.
- **Most significantly, nearly all the sustained threads of critical dialogue that developed over the year began as reactions to a forwarded message.** For examples, see the [Rape and Gender thread \(15\)](#) and the [Neo-Nazis and Free Speech thread \(16\)](#). In addition, **forwarded messages frequently led to metadiscussion** about uses of the dorm e-mail list, another form of critical dialogue (see [07: Metadiscussion as Primary and Secondary Content of Messages](#)).

I think the usefulness of what has been pejoratively called "junk e-mail" -- and likewise the usefulness of [metadiscussion \(07\)](#) -- for stimulating critical dialogue has been overlooked by other researchers. Rather than wasting bandwidth and distracting people from serious issues, forwarded e-mail messages served as critical discussion prompts that engaged many residents in sustained, thoughtful argumentation.

Moreover, those discussion threads prompted by forwarded messages often spilled over into the face-to-face community. The Rape and Gender thread (15), for example -- along with other gender-related threads -- led our staff to organize additional programs and discussions in the dorm lounge. Those face-to-face discussions, in turn, fed the energy of the ongoing or recurring discussions on the e-mail list. This spiralling effect shows how electronic and traditional media need not be mutually exclusive or in competition but rather can complement each other in promoting community and critical thinking.

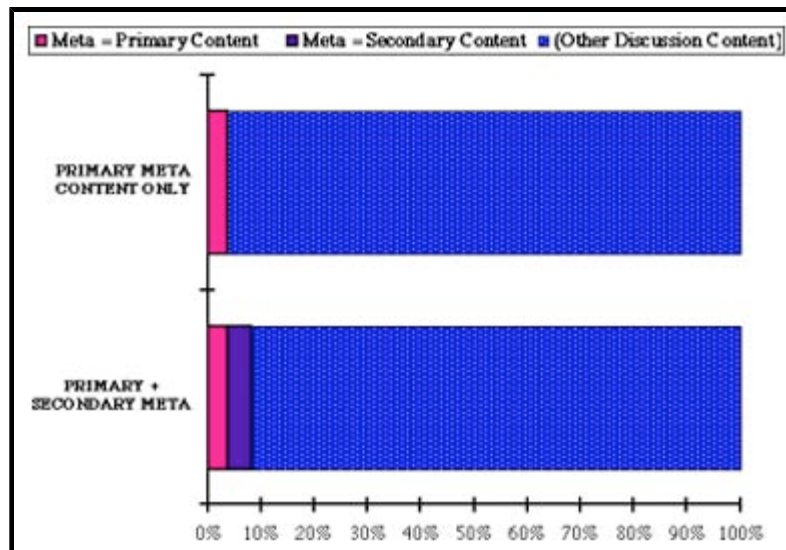
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07: Metadiscussion as Primary and Secondary Content of Messages

- [Discussion](#)
- [Metadiscussion as Secondary Content: Frequency or Length of Messages](#)
- [Metadiscussion as Primary Content: Identity of Sender and Appropriate Content](#)
- ["How many Internet mail list subscribers does it take to change a light bulb?"](#)



Discussion

Metadiscussion is discussion about the forum itself -- comments about other postings and their appropriateness, arguments about conventions, attempts to define the forum, and so on. Like electronic [chain letters and other forwarded e-mail \(06\)](#), metadiscussion has gotten a reputation on the Internet as "noise in the channel that interrupts discourse" ([Korenman and Wyatt 1996](#)), a distracting waste of time and bandwidth, a phenomenon that disrupts rather than promotes community building. A joke forwarded around the net, ["How many Internet mail list subscribers does it take to change a light bulb?"](#), pokes fun at distracting metadiscussion. The apparent chaos (of 1331 meta-posters) represented in the joke obviously is not a condition we wish to emulate in substantive discussions in the classrooms and residences of academia, and in fact many unmoderated Internet discussion forums have disintegrated as they lost their original focus and serious participants gave up their struggle with the "noise" of the rabble.

On the other hand, the metadiscussion generated by the "rabble" can be highly democratic, inclusive, energetic, and constructive. Everyone

potentially helps construct the (evolving) conventions and norms of the discourse community. In the controlled context of a college dorm or class mailing list in particular, I would argue that metadiscussion can be a very valuable part of the educational and community experience. In my writing classes at Stanford, I set up electronic discussions to be serious in purpose but rarely moderated them, preferring to let students work through the process of asserting conventions and ownership of these forums for themselves. Likewise with dorm mailing lists at Rinconada over the years, I have constrained my participation in metadiscussion as well as other discussion because I am inevitably seen as (and of course serve as to a large degree) a kind of authority figure despite my efforts to share authority as a fellow resident and member of the community. The process of asserting conventions and taking ownership of the e-mail list can go on for weeks or, intermittently, all year long. I have participated judiciously in these discussions, sometimes adding an academic or intellectual perspective to a debate about the value of electronic vs. face-to-face discussion, and once (in 1996-97, not during the study year) intervening explicitly as an authority figure to cool a flame war that was causing hurt feelings.

In 1995-96, I classified less than 4% of the messages as metadiscussion (primary content) and an additional 4.5% as having secondary metadiscussion content.

Most of the secondary metadiscussion content came in the form of brief apologies by the poster about the length or frequency of his/her postings, as in the [example](#). These kinds of apologies seem to carry assumptions and assert norms about how people use e-mail and the e-mail list (cf. [Korenman and Wyatt 1996](#)) -- for example, they don't want to read long messages in general or many short messages from the same person; many e-mail messages constitute "clutter" or a chore to read; people's time as well as electronic bandwidth should be respected; etc. These assumptions and norms would be interesting to analyze in further depth.

The most energetic metadiscussion (as the primary content of messages) was about the use of anonymity on the list and what constituted appropriate or inappropriate content. In the ["Mr. Peepers" incident](#), two residents figured out how to send an anonymous message to the dorm and used the opportunity to write what they intended as a satirical invitation to "the Gaynet adult pornography site" on the Web. Several people responded swiftly, either missing or intentionally overlooking puns such as the directions "to penetrate our site." [Betty](#) [all names are pseudonyms] objected to the content of Mr. Peepers' invitation and solicited immediate group action against what she construed as the promotion of pornography. [Charlie](#) objected not to the content but to the use of anonymity, asserting that "This is OUR list. These are your friends you are talking to. Isn't there a certain amount of respect (or at least courtesy) you should show them?" Seeing the earnestness of their dormmates' reactions and the extent to which their innocent (from their viewpoint) joke had misfired, [King and Daryl](#) quickly took responsibility for Mr. Peepers and issued an apology to the dorm.

The Mr. Peepers incident, which took place in the first weeks of the

year, helped set a tone and establish norms of mutual respect and responsibility on the Rinconada e-mail list that lasted all year long.

In early November, Phyllis forwarded to the list the infamous ["Top 75 reasons why women \(bitches\) should not have freedom of speech"](#) (excerpted in the quoted message) by "the four players of Cornell." This sophomoric and misogynist list (intended, like Mr. Peepers, to be funny) made [national headlines](#) and garnered thousands of reactions worldwide. The four young men, who were stupid enough to attach their names to their text, were flamed by both men and women, made apologies, and faced disciplinary action by university administrators. Within the dorm at Stanford, the "75 reasons" list generated numerous reactions and helped initiate a month-long series of discussion threads about gender issues (for example, [15: Rape and Gender](#)). A number of these reactions included metadiscussion, as in [Duncan's](#) plea to "think twice before passing this kind of thing on" and [Adelle's](#) appreciation of how "people expressed their ideas ... without becoming rude or over personal." Later, after weeks of gender-related discussion that included a forwarded [follow-up to the "75 reasons" list written by a group Cornell women](#), [Betty](#) offers her positive assessment of the quality of discussion.

Metadiscussion as Secondary Content: Frequency or Length of Messages

Date: 11/19/95
Subject: Dorm T-Shirts
From: Phillip

What's up Rinc!

Sorry about cluttering everyone's email again, but I just have a quick message....

[Information about dorm t-shirts follows]....

Phillip

Metadiscussion as Primary Content: Identity of Sender and Appropriate Content

Date: 10/25/95
Subject: [no subject]
From: Mr. Peepers

Dear Rinconada residents,

You have been selected to receive a complimentary membership to the Gaynet adult pornography site. You have been assigned a special login

name and password given below:

Login:Rincuser

Password:Rainbow

To penetrate our site, please use a condom and use any World Wide Web browser and access the site <http://www.gaynet.com>

Hope to see you soon!

Love and kisses,

Mr. Peepers

Date: 10/25/95

Subject: this is ridiculous, and revolting, and wrong

From: Betty

Dear Rinconadans,

I'm sure you all received the e-mail message from our friend "Mr. Peepers." I find pornography to be unhealthy, immoral, and disgusting -- and I want to do something about it. I am therefore inviting any of you (male or female) who are interested to join me in taking action against pornography, especially against mass distribution of information like this without consideration of whether or not the people who receive it will be offended by it. I will have a meeting sometime next week, either to start an organization or a petition or SOMETHING. This is important to me, and I hope it will be to some of you too. Please e-mail me if you have any interest in working with me.

Thank you, Betty

P.S. I also encourage any of you who were equally offended by Mr. Peeper's message to reply to it and tell him exactly how you feel.

Date: 10/27/95

Subject: Anonymity

From: Charlie

I just wanted to bring attention to another point that concerns me regarding the letter sent to the list yesterday under the name of "Mr. Peepers." This letter was mailed anonymously to the list. This sort of thing is not uncommon on the net. There are plenty of anonymous remailers or other ways of modifying message headers out there. But I was hoping that this would not become a problem on our list. This is OUR list. These are your friends you are talking to. Isn't there a certain amount of respect (or at least courtesy) you should show them? If you don't want to put your own name on what you are saying, you might want to consider whether you should be saying it at all.

I don't think any of us would like always having to wonder whether a

letter really comes from who it says it's from. Please think before sending letters to us in someone else's name.

Thanks :-)

Charlie

Date: 10/25/95
Subject: An Apology
From: Daryl

Dear fellow Rinconadans,

If you look at the header of this file, you will see a very unusual address listed for the sender of this message. Using a very complicated and esoteric procedure, we, Daryl and King, are able to manipulate the "from:" field of a message to make it look as if someone else has sent a message. If any of you thought that Mr. Peepers was a real person, let me assure you that he is not. We composed that message as a joke, however, in retrospect, that move was rather spurious and more of the behavior expected of a Berkeley student. Seriously though, we apologize for any offense taken from that message. Our intent, small-minded though it may have been, was to tickle the funny bone, not to bludgeon the conscience. Please accept our heartfelt apology and rest assured that we will NEVER send a message like that one again...

King & Daryl

Date: 11/9/95
Subject: I'm disgusted (fwd)
From: Phyllis

>>Top 75 reasons why women (bitches) should not have freedom of speech:

>>1. She doesn't need to talk to get me a beer.

2. If she's in the kitchen like she should be, no one can hear her anyway.

[.....]

11. If my dick's in her mouth, she can't talk anyway.

[.....]

27. Dikes (unless I can jump in the middle).

28. Where does speaking come into "barefoot and pregnant?"

[.....]

34. The life expectancy of the average male goes down with every bitchy word.

35. Female drunks are annoying unless they put out (for which they dont need to talk)

[.....]

38. If she can't speak, she can't cry rape.

[.....]

42. Honestly, do they really have anything useful to say?

43. Only one set of lips should be moving at a time.
[....]
47. Nothing should come out a womans mouth, SWALLOW BITCH!
48. The Mute button only works on the TV.
[....]
59. Silence and sex make a great combination.
60. N.O.W.? NO. NOW BITCH? YES.
61. Intelligent car conversation? Hell no. Her head should never be above the dashboard.
[....]
70. If I wanted your opinion, I'd ask for it.
71. Hell, if I wanted your opinion, I'd give it to you.
[....]
74. Unless the words are "Doctor, can you make these bigger?," shut the fuck up.
75. Big breasts should speak for themselves.
>>

>>Written by the four-players of CORNELL: Evan Camps, Brian Waldman, Rikus Linschoten, and the late-season acquisition, the Deion Sanders of sexism, Pat Sicher.

Date: 11/9/95
Subject: Re: perpetuating filth
From: Duncan

I agree with Gregory. I think there are serious issues for both men and women involved in this kind of message. A "list" like this serves on the one hand to reinforce stereotypes that some men might jokingly hold about women, and on the other hand to reinforce an inaccurate "all men are pigs" image by those who consciously or subconsciously project the views of four people on a larger group. On behalf of my gender I would like to emphasize that the majority of men do not think this way about women, that many find it sick that some people actually perpetrate such filth, and that the guys who wrote this in the first place are probably loving every angry response that they receive. In the future, please think twice before passing this kind of thing on; just because the person who sent it to you recommends it does not mean that you have to. Nothing against the person to send it to the list; I am just reacting to the issue.

Duncan

Date: 11/9/95
Subject: "filth" responses
From: Adelle

To all fellow Rincs,

Just a little note about the list sent out and the responses. It was nice that for once people expressed their ideas about e-mail without becoming rude or over personal. I guess people are starting to become

more considerate of others over the e-mail. What was so hard about doing this?

-Adelle

Date: 12/5/95
Subject: A forwarded message worth reading.
From: Betty

Not mine -- Carolyn's. I usually skip right through forwarded messages if they're long, but everyone should read the statistics in the e-mail from the Cornell women -- they're truly worth reading... and very very frightening. The dialogue in this dorm about sexual issues (rape, discrimination, pornography, etc.) has been really intelligent and eye-opening and I hope it continues.

Here's to equality and respect...

Betty

Anonymous forwarded e-mail joke

Q: How many Internet mail list subscribers does it take to change a light bulb?

A: 1,331:

- 1 to change the light bulb and to post to the mail list that the light bulb has been changed
- 14 to share similar experiences of changing light bulbs and how the light bulb could have been changed differently
- 7 to caution about the dangers of changing light bulbs
- 27 to point out spelling/grammar errors in posts about changing light bulbs
- 53 to flame the spell checkers
- 156 to write to the list administrator complaining about the light bulb discussion and its inappropriateness to this mail list
- 41 to correct spelling in the spelling/grammar flames
- 109 to post that this list is not about light bulbs and to please take this email exchange to alt.lite.bulb
- 203 to demand that cross posting to alt.grammar, alt.spelling and alt.punctuation about changing light bulbs be stopped
- 111 to defend the posting to this list saying that we all use light bulbs and therefore the posts *are* relevant to this mail list
- 306 to debate which method of changing light bulbs is superior, where to buy the best light bulbs, what brand of light bulbs work best for this technique, and what brands are faulty

- 27 to post URLs where one can see examples of different light bulbs
- 14 to post that the URLs were posted incorrectly, and to post corrected URLs
- 3 to post about links they found from the URLs that are relevant to this list, which makes light bulbs relevant to this list
- 33 to concatenate all posts to date, then quote them including all headers and footers, and then add "Me too"
- 12 to post to the list that they are unsubscribing because they cannot handle the light bulb controversy
- 19 to quote the "Me too's" to say, "Me three"
- 4 to suggest that posters request the light bulb FAQ
- 1 to propose new alt.change.lit.bulb newsgroup
- 47 to say this is just what alt.physics.cold_fusion was meant for, leave it there
- 143 votes for alt.lite.bulb

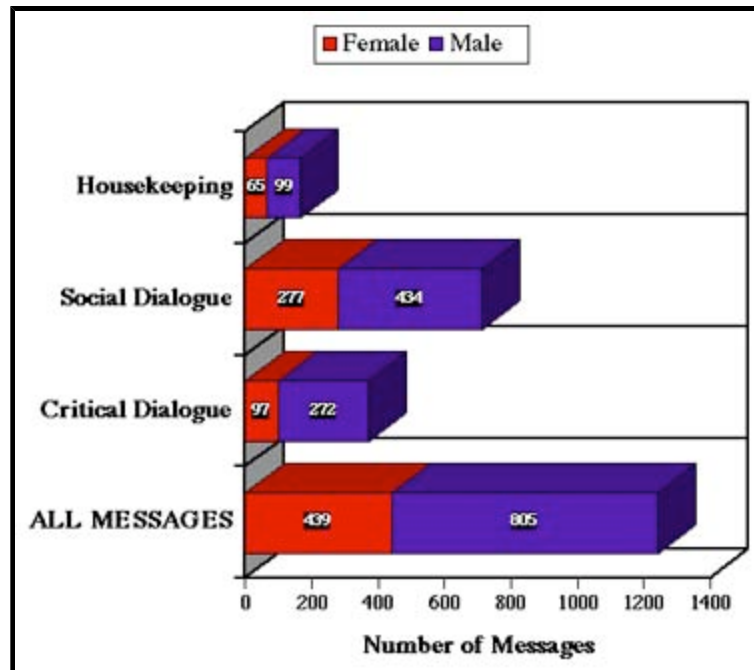
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08: Participation on E-mail List by Gender and Social Purpose

[Discussion](#)



Discussion

Overall, the gender breakdown of e-mail list participation corroborates previous studies showing male domination of both computer-mediated communication (CMC) and face-to-face (f2f) forums (e.g., [Hall 1996](#)). These results parallel those of electronic forums, like newsgroups or other mailing lists, where participation is strictly voluntary -- as opposed to classroom uses of CMC, where participation may be required as part of the coursework and gender participation is often much more egalitarian.

- Men posted 65% (805 of 1244) of all the messages for the year, despite the fact that 48 of 92 residents (over 50%) were women.
- Men dominated critical dialogue by an even higher margin, posting 74% (272 of 369) of the messages in this category while constituting 59% (29 of 51) of the participants in critical dialogue.

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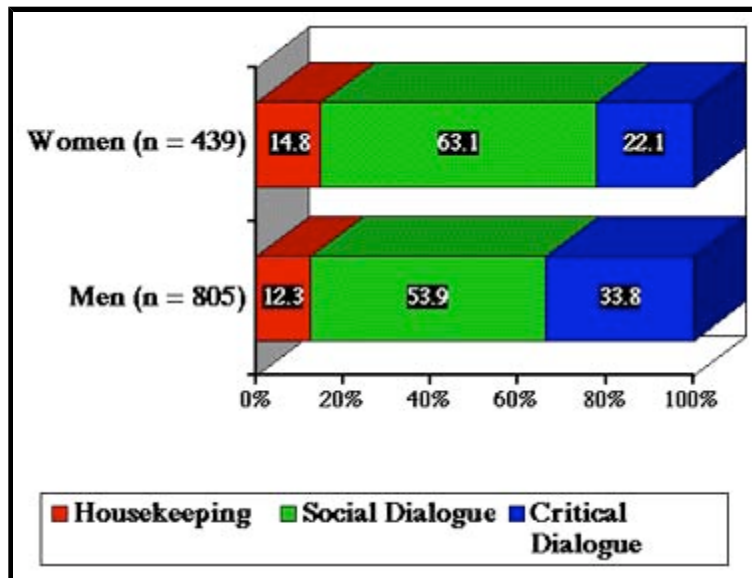
09a: Perceived Usefulness of E-mail List vs. Other Media by Social Purpose (By Gender)

[Discussion](#)

Social Purpose (scale = 0-3)	OTHER MEDIA		E-MAIL LIST	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
HOUSEKEEPING	1.66	1.72	2.49	2.39
SOCIAL DIALOGUE	1.74	1.70	2.30	2.04
CRITICAL DIALOGUE	1.57	1.67	1.75	2.30

09b: Actual Use of E-mail List by Women and Men According to Social Purpose

[Discussion](#)



DISCUSSION

Looking in more detail (than [08](#)) at participation by gender, and

looking at the actual participation in the context of men's and women's perceptions about the e-mail list, we can conclude the following:

- ([09a](#)) Women found the e-mail list more useful than men did for social dialogue (2.30 vs. 2.04), while men found the e-mail list significantly more useful than women did for critical dialogue (2.30 vs. 1.75). Women and men found the list about equally useful for housekeeping purposes (2.49, 2.39).
- ([09b](#)) Perhaps not surprisingly, these perceptions were mirrored in actual use of the e-mail list. Over 63% of women's messages were categorized as social dialogue and about 22% as critical dialogue, while 54% of men's messages were social dialogue and nearly 34% critical dialogue; about the same proportions (14.8% and 12.3%) of women's and men's messages were categorized as housekeeping.

These results somewhat corroborate studies claiming that women and men tend to use computer-mediated communication (CMC) and other communication for different purposes (such as studies cited by [Herring 1996b](#)), and also studies suggesting that women prefer a collaborative, supportive conversational style to the more competitive and combative "debate" style that often characterizes "critical dialogue" in academia and as I've defined it for this study.

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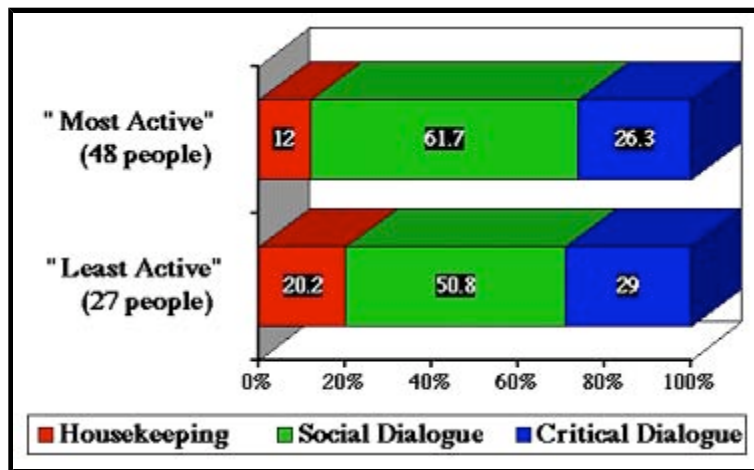
10a: Perceived Usefulness of E-mail List vs. Other Media by Social Purpose (By Self-Described F2f/Overall Participation)

[Discussion](#)

Social Purpose (scale = 0-3)	OTHER MEDIA		E-MAIL LIST	
	Most Active	Least Active	Most Active	Least Active
HOUSEKEEPING	1.71	1.65	2.43	2.60
SOCIAL DIALOGUE	1.75	1.69	2.18	1.99
CRITICAL DIALOGUE	1.57	1.51	1.83	1.81

10b: Actual Use of E-mail List by Self-Described "Most Active" and "Least Active" Community Members

[Discussion](#)



Discussion

I derived a crude measure of shyness from the [survey](#) questions 1

(Overall how would you rate your participation in the Rinconada community this year (e.g., taking part in organized or informal activities, socializing with dormmates, etc.?) and 2 (Overall for activities that you participated in with dormmates this year, how often did you initiate activities?). I averaged the responses to these two questions and then divided Rinconada residents into two categories, "most active" and "least active."

- ([10a](#)) Least active (more shy) residents rated the e-mail list as significantly more useful for housekeeping purposes than for social dialogue or critical dialogue (2.60 vs. 1.99 and 1.81, respectively).
- ([10b](#)) In actual messages to the e-mail list, least active residents posted a significantly higher proportion of housekeeping messages (over 20%) than did most active residents (12%).

These results might be taken as evidence that shy students may use computer-mediated communication (CMC) to avoid direct face-to-face (f2f) social contact. This could be explored further by studying how shy and less-shy students use private e-mail as well as e-mail lists (while I asked about private e-mail correspondence in the survey, I didn't study the responses in any systematic way). I know of no evidence that without CMC, those shy students would indeed go down the hall and interact f2f with their dormmates instead of posting an e-mail message that, for example, they'd lost their keys or left their chemistry textbook in the lounge. My experience tells me that instead of replacing the CMC housekeeping message with a f2f interaction, these students would simply have no interaction at all, and therefore CMC offers them a communication medium they previously didn't have. In any case I think this phenomenon should be studied further.

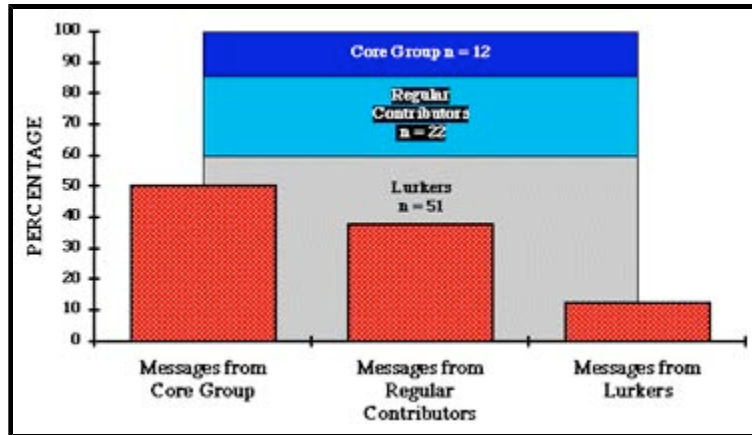
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11: "Core Group," "Regular," and "Lurker" Participation by Student Residents on E-mail List

[Discussion](#)



GROUP / Name	Number of Messages	Percent of All Messages	F2f Activity Quotient	Opinion of CMC (0 - 3)
12 MEMBERS OF CORE GROUP	31 - 74 each; 534 total	50%	4.61 avg (for 9)	2.29 avg
1. Hillary	74	6.9%	5	2.25
2. Ronald	55	5.2%	5	2.75
3. Marvin	53	5.0%	5	1.88
4. Gregory	52	4.9%	---	---
5. Buff	48	4.5%	5.5	2.25
6. Calvert	48	4.5%	4	2.88
7. Travis	37	3.5%	---	---
8. Bertha	35	3.3%	---	---
9. Zachary	35	3.3%	3	2.38
10. Lance	34	3.2%	6	2.75
11. Duncan	32	3.0%	3	2.25
12. Stan	31	2.9%	5	1.25
22 REGULAR CONTRIBUTORS	10 - 26 each; 400 total	37.5%	4.21 avg (for 19)	2.02 avg

51 LURKERS	0 - 9 each;134 total	12.5%	3.65 avg (for 39)	1.97 avg
TOTAL (n = 85)	1068	100%	3.94 avg (67)	2.03 avg

Discussion

The e-mail list easily divided into three levels of participation, with a clear gender pattern (for more about the gender pattern, see [13: Core Group Participation by Gender](#)):

- A core group of 12 heavy contributors posted over 50% of the total messages (3 - 8 messages per month on average); 10 of these 12 core group members were male. The single most active contributor to the e-mail list was a woman, Hillary. She posted 74 messages or nearly 7% of the total. The next most active contributor, Ronald, posted 55 messages or 5.2% of the total.
- 22 "regular contributors" (1 - 3 messages per month) posted an additional 38% of the total messages.
- 51 "lurkers" (0 - 1 messages per month) posted the remaining 12.5% of the total messages.

Initially we might say that the existence of the male-dominated core group corroborates conclusions such as [Korenman and Wyatt's \(1996\)](#) that "the pattern of a small core of regular participants corresponds closely to the behavior of participants in face-to-face interaction." This initial conclusion would not be optimistic about the potential for CMC to promote democratic, egalitarian discourse.

Precisely because Rinconada House was a face-to-face community as well as an electronic community, however -- and because we can compare residents' perceptions from the [survey](#) with their actual behavior -- we have a special opportunity here to extend that comparison between virtual and f2f interaction and reach some different conclusions about the democratic potential of CMC in a small community (see [table](#) above for details):

- When the regular contributors are considered together with the core group, we have 34 people -- fully 40% of the 85 residents studied -- participating regularly on the e-mail list. That's a far higher rate of regular participation than on most Internet forums.
- The lurkers as a group found the e-mail list to be moderately useful, and their opinion about CMC did not significantly differ from the other groups' (1.97 vs. 2.02 for regular contributors, only slightly lower than the core group's average of 2.29).
- We can recall in this context (from the [survey](#)) that, despite the large number of lurkers, the residents as a whole said they were very active as readers of the dorm e-mail list (2.53), while admitting they were much less active as writers to the list (1.19).
- These facts lead to the conclusion that the benefits of electronic discussion were widespread. Even low-participating or

non-participating lurkers found the list useful and read it regularly, enhancing its community-building effects. On this basis, I can disagree with researchers such as [Kollock and Smith \(1996\)](#) who speak of "free-riders" (i.e. lurkers) pejoratively. Surely many of us who have "participated" largely or even entirely as lurkers in other electronic forums have still felt we benefitted from the experience, in terms of being part of a community as well as gaining knowledge; more so the members of a residential community who are regularly reading thoughtful messages (critical dialogue constituted 30% of the postings; see [05b](#)) from their dormmates.

How did participation on the e-mail list compare to participation in the f2f dorm community? From the F2f Activity Quotient column (see the [Discussion in section 10](#) for how this measure was derived) in the [table above](#), we can observe that members of the core group generally rated themselves as active members of the dorm (5, 5.5, 6). However, there are significant exceptions: Gregory (who didn't fill out a survey), Zachary (3), and Duncan (3). Here are three of the heaviest e-mail participators who did not participate heavily in the f2f community.

Anecdotal evidence bolsters the conclusion that **the electronic core group and f2f core group of the dorm, while overlapping, were not identical**. Zachary, for example, began the year fairly shy and withdrawn, having even made a special request through the admissions office for a single room (which was granted). Zachary's active, thoughtful participation on the e-mail list helped him gain both respect from his peers and confidence in his own social abilities. Later in the year, Zachary became noticeably more active in f2f dorm activities including discussions, programs, and social events. Those of us who have used CMC tools in the classroom have observed many similar cases of shy students finding their voice initially through electronic discussions.

It seems clear that CMC -- while evidently not detracting from f2f participation (because of the large overlap between electronic and f2f core groups) -- can be extremely valuable for certain individuals (such as Gregory, Zachary, and Duncan), offering them an additional way to participate in a residential community and in turn offering that community the benefit of their participation.

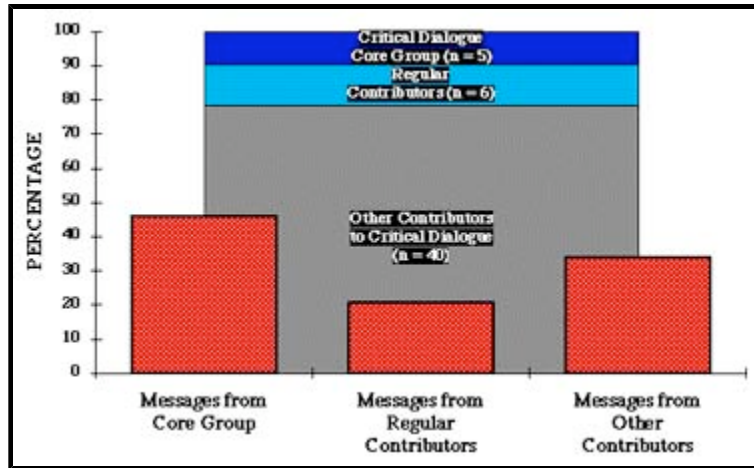
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12: "Critical Dialogue Core Group" Participation

Discussion



GROUP / Name	# Critical Dialogue Messages	% of Critical Dialogue	F2f Activity Quotient	Opinion of CMC for Critical Dialogue (0 - 3)
5 MEMBERS OF CRITICAL DIALOGUE CORE GROUP	24-40 each;156 total	45.7%	5.13 avg (for 4)	2.28 avg
1. Gregory	40	11.7%	---	---
2. Ronald	35	10.3%	5	2.75
3. Buff	31	9.0%	5.5	2.25
4. Marvin	26	7.6%	5	1.88
5. Hillary	24	7.0%	5	2.25
6 REGULAR CONTRIBUTORS TO CRITICAL DIALOGUE	10-13 each;70 total	20.5%	4.0 avg (for 5)	2.38 avg (for 5)
40 OTHER CONTRIBUTORS TO CRITICAL DIALOGUE	1-8 each;115 total	33.7%	3.82 avg (for 27)	1.97 avg (for 31)
TOTAL (n = 51)	341	100%	3.99 avg (for 36)	2.05 avg (for 40)

Discussion

Focusing just on messages categorized as critical dialogue (higher-order discussion primarily about social and political issues or dorm community issues) we find that, as with the e-mail list as a whole (see [11: "Core Group," "Regular," and "Lurker" Participation by Student Residents](#)), a small core group of heavy participators can be identified. In this case, only 5 people contributed 46% of the critical dialogue messages; 4 of the 5 were male (a similar gender pattern to the whole list -- see [13: Core Group Participation by Gender](#)). Gregory (40 messages or nearly 12%) and Ronald (35 messages or over 10%) were the leading contributors to critical dialogue. Hillary, the leading contributor to the e-mail list as whole, contributed the same proportion (7%) of messages to critical dialogue as she did to the list as a whole. Although the core group was responsible for a disproportionate amount of the critical dialogue, I would emphasize the following points in suggesting that the value of critical dialogue was more widespread for the community:

- A majority of critical dialogue (54%) came from residents other than members of the core group.
- The 6 regular contributors to critical dialogue, although on average more shy than members of the core group, had the highest opinion of the value of computer-mediated communication (CMC). (See last two columns in [table above](#); for details of the shyness measure, see the [Discussion in section 10](#).)
- An impressive 51 residents (60% of the 85 studied) participated at one time or another in critical dialogue on the e-mail list; overall these residents considered CMC to be at least moderately useful for critical dialogue. If we recall from the [survey](#) that residents as a whole said they were very active as readers of the dorm e-mail list (2.53) even if they weren't active as writers to the list (1.19) -- and that overall they held a moderately high opinion about CMC -- we can presume that many of the 40% of residents who didn't contribute to critical dialogue still benefitted from the discussion as lurkers/fellow residents.

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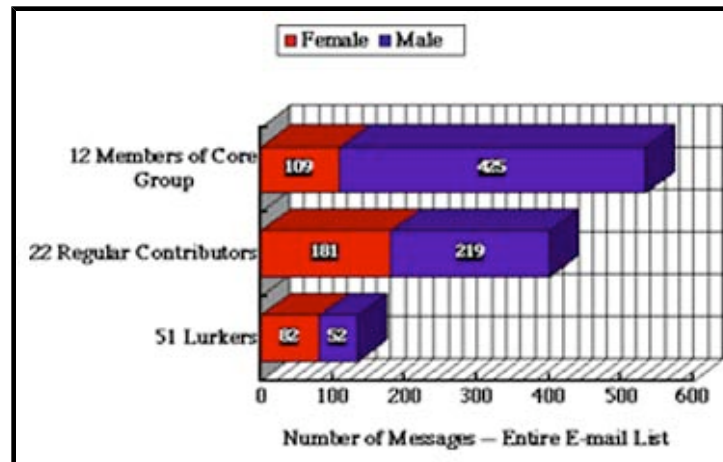
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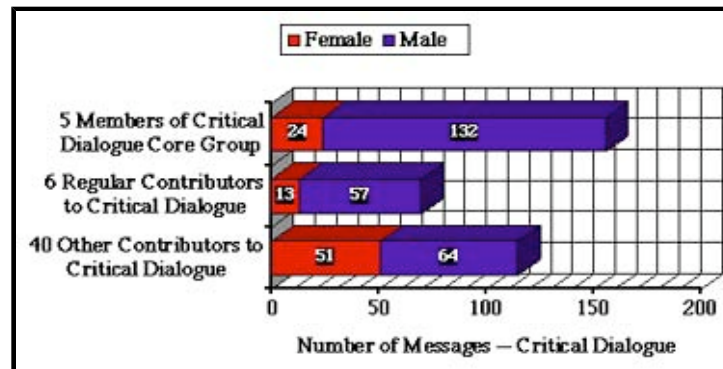
13: Core Group Participation by Gender

[Discussion](#)

13a: "Core Group," "Regular," and "Lurker" Participation on E-Mail List by Gender



13b: "Critical Dialogue Core Group" Participation by Gender



Discussion:

See also [11: "Core Group," "Regular," and "Lurker" Participation by Student Residents](#) and [12: "Critical Dialogue Core Group" Participation](#).

For the e-mail list as a whole ([13a](#)):

- A majority of messages posted by lurkers were from women (who composed a majority of the lurkers themselves).
- Almost as many (181 vs. 219) messages from regular contributors were posted by women as by men.
- A large majority of messages from the core group (425 out of 534

or about 80%) were from men. Since 10 of the 12 core group members were men, men's (80%) and women's (20%) contributions were approximately proportional to their numbers.

For critical dialogue discussion ([13b](#)):

- Women were close to men (51 vs. 64 messages) among the least-active "other contributors" to critical dialogue.
- A large majority of critical discussion messages were posted by men, roughly reflecting their proportion among the critical discussion participants. For example, among the core group, the one woman (Hillary) posted 24 messages or about 15% of the core group's total, while representing one-fifth of the membership (20%).

I find it troubling that both core groups, and critical dialogue in general, should be so dominated by men. I can speculate that, as some researchers have suggested, women and men prefer to use CMC for different purposes, as in face-to-face interaction women demonstrate different conversational styles than men (e.g., the work of Deborah Tannen). I have some evidence for this conclusion in [08](#) and [09](#), where women's and men's perceptions and actual behavior on the list are compared. We should be especially concerned, as feminist scholars have emphasized, about the extent to which the kinds of critical dialogue promoted in academia and the media that facilitate such dialogue tend to be male-centered. In the case of Rinconada, it seems that some women (Hillary, to be sure) were quite comfortable using the e-mail list and engaging in the stereotypically- or historically-male point-counterpoint style of argumentation, while many other women were not so comfortable doing so, including women who were otherwise (f2f) socially and politically active in the dorm. I fear that by using a traditional definition of critical dialogue, I may have to some degree guaranteed these gender disparities in my results. To measure the potential of CMC to overcome male domination of conversational spaces in academia more truly or thoughtfully, perhaps we should re-think those categories and redefine a critical dialogue based more on feminist principles.

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14: Critical Dialogue Sample Threads

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SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES

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DORM COMMUNITY ISSUES

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Introduction: Hillary and Ronald

The following discussion threads, some of which lasted several weeks, are presented as exemplary excerpts of what I've called critical dialogue (30% of the total messages; see [03](#), [04](#), [05](#)). I have added a summary narrative and/or brief analysis for all of the threads except [Neo-Nazis and Free Speech](#). I discuss the [Rape and Gender](#) and [Death and Birth](#) threads at somewhat greater length because I think these are the two most revealing discussions of the year with regard to electronic community-building in a residential community.

The keys to the amount and success of critical dialogue on the e-mail list, in my view, were the thoughtfulness of residents' messages and the reasonableness with which they engaged one another. At their best, the residents of Rinconada modeled an intellectual community in a new, fuller sense, because their intellectual interchange on the e-mail list was enhanced by their feelings for each other as individuals and as a group of fellow residents, and their friendships and group feeling was enhanced by their written exchanges. On the e-mail list, they almost never let their frequent political or intellectual disagreements become personal -- a difficult task in this text-only medium and strongly suggestive of how computer-mediated communication (CMC) may have different advantages for people who live together in a face-to-face community than for communities-at-a-distance.

The prototypical exchange would be started by Hillary and Ronald (see [Neo-Nazis and Free Speech](#) for an actual exchange involving these two; the prototype that follows is a synthesis and generalization based on several threads). Hillary was the most prolific participant on the

e-mail list (see [11](#)) and a large proportion of her postings were forwarded messages with political content, reflecting her liberal activist interests. Ronald's politics were conservative and he had frequent reactions to Hillary's political forwards about, for example, the plight of Asian-Pacific lesbians or the alleged exploitation of Burmese people by PepsiCo. But neither Hillary nor Ronald was an idealogue, and both responded with maturity and restraint to reasonable criticism of their messages and views.

Like most of their fellow residents, both also clearly cared about their social relations in the dorm, which no doubt tempered their responses. When the socially-active, popular, sincere Hillary would frame a forwarded message calling for a political boycott, in her inimitable fashion, with a warm "Hi everyone, sorry for another one of these, but please think about this issue! Rinc is great -- I love you guys!" -- how could Ronald or anyone else respond with venom? For her part, when Ronald -- who had often thought more deeply in the intellectual sense about the issues that Hillary raised -- posted a series of objections, Hillary sometimes backed off or admitted that the issue deserved fuller consideration. In some ways Hillary and Ronald represented our right-brain/left-brain stereotypes about female and male politics -- Hillary led with her feelings and her liberal passions, and Ronald played devil's advocate with objections based on reason and traditional forms of argumentation.

Continuing the prototypical exchange (and fuzzing the gender stereotypes just described), liberal men such as Gregory and Buff would often respond to Ronald's objections, and the discussion would really take off, with other participants of various political persuasions weighing in. (Hillary often dropped out at this point, so despite the abundance of her postings, she was more a discussion-starter than a core participant.) At its best, the discussion would reveal an issue's full complexity and a range of reasonable views about that complexity -- the goal of much intellectual discussion in academia. Along the way, the most electronically-active residents got to test their views, and their writing and persuasive skills, in the context of a diverse audience of intellectual peers who really cared about what they had to say (not just on the e-mail list but also over dinner, in the lounge, and in the hallways late at night). The less electronically-active residents could be edified or entertained while learning more about their dormmates -- in a thoughtful discussion they would not otherwise have "heard" -- and the community as a whole was enriched.

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15: CRITICAL DIALOGUE SAMPLE THREADS:

Social and Political Issues: Rape and Gender

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Discussion

Like nearly all the substantive threads, this one began with a forwarded message, in this case a self-described electronic "chain letter" from [Mona](#) ("Send one to the people you care about, or are afraid of. In any school, in any country. Please write the name of your school at the bottom..."). As Mona explains, she'd previously sent the message -- a narrative depicting a generic date rape, with a statement of its moral purpose -- only to the women in the dorm. Notice how Mona works, in her introduction, to engage men in the issue. She establishes her personal interest, cautions the men not to take it as an "attack," and closes with appeals to both dorm spirit ("Rinc Rules") and Stanford school spirit ("Weenies" is the pejorative term for students at the University of California, Berkeley, especially during Big Game week -- the annual football game between the two schools).

Gregory, Ronald, and others begin a series of reactions to the date rape narrative. As a writing teacher I'd highlight the reasonable, concession-and-rebuttal pattern in the thoughtful messages from [Gregory](#) and [Buff](#). Buff's posting (one of the longest of the year, excerpted here) uses this pattern repeatedly in making specific counter-arguments to Gregory's and Ronald's, e.g. (emphasis added):

"I commend Gregory's acknowledgement that clear, initial communication is both safe and considerate; I agree. **However**, I question his assertion that ... "

"I accept Ronald's assertion that men may also be raped, **however...**"

Buff announces explicitly at the beginning that he is attacking Gregory's and Ronald's arguments, not their character, and he integrates detailed evidence and well-developed reasoning into an impassioned mini-treatise on date rape. Interestingly, at first, the whole range of debate about date rape is being carried out by men.

Six days into the thread, [Betty](#) tries to get the discussion refocused on basic feelings and human communication; she feels the argument has gotten too analytical and "theoretical." No doubt this is partly a reaction to all the facts and figures cited by [Buff](#) (and disputes over those facts and figures that followed, especially from Ronald). It's interesting that Betty would resist Buff's method -- the traditional "male" style of argumentation -- even while (presumably) embracing his

arguments.

Betty is also reacting to Ronald's counter-arguments to Buff. [Ronald](#) -- rarely one to let someone else get the last word -- continues the reasonable tone of the whole discussion with a concession and clarification of his intentions: "I agree with you 100%. I just want to make sure that you understand [that] ..."

The whole gender and rape thread gets re-ignited in a major way in early December, when [Carolyn](#) (an upperclass member of the residence staff, the RCC or Residence Computer Coordinator), forwards to the list "75 Reasons Why Angry Cornell Women (Your Worst Nightmare) Are Exercising Their Freedom of Speech." As Carolyn explains, this is a direct response to the infamous "Top 75 reasons why women (bitches) should not have freedom of speech" from "the four-players of Cornell" that caused nationwide, and dorm-wide, controversy in early November. (See [excerpt from this inflammatory message](#), forwarded to the list by Phyllis, in [07: Metadiscussion as Primary and Secondary Content](#).)

Several men (such as [King](#)) react to the "angry Cornell women," disputing the message's statistics and objecting to what they consider the relentless portrayal of men as perpetrators of violence. [Ronald](#) quotes selected claims from the list and counters with his own statistics, complete with quotes and citations from journals. Women then offer strong rebuttals to the implication that the Cornell women's list should be construed as feminist propaganda. [Betty](#) again objects to the emphasis in the Rinconada debate on facts and figures (which she considers a diversion from the real issues) and writes, "This was not a feminist list that was presented -- it was a humanist list."

[Clarisse](#), too, tries to refocus the discussion away from statistics and back to human beings, and she constructs this effort explicitly in terms of gender (if we interpret "you guys" in this case as referring to men, in particular Ronald and King). In a brilliant touché that may have gone under-appreciated by the men, Clarisse connects the political discussion about gender directly to the face-to-face dorm community, objecting to RCC Carolyn being referred to as "The Computer Lady." Clarisse introduces her complaint as a "random thing," but of course it isn't random at all, because Carolyn is the one who posted the Cornell women's rebuttal to begin with.

Date: 11/20/95

Subject: (fwd) Re: Something Serious To Think About (fwd)

From: Mona

To all the women of the dorm, sorry for cluttering up your email with a repeated message, but I wanted to send this to the guys, and this was way easier. Guys, please don't take this as an attack on males, cuz it's not. I just thought it was an important message for the state of the world we live in, regardless of gender. Faith was great enough to send this to all the girls, and I thought there might be guys in the dorm who would appreciate it as well (for male/female friends, for themselves, or just as a reminder that you can't trust everyone in

this world, unfortunately). The fact that we cannot remain innocent and naive without running the risk of being harmed by fellow human beings has always disturbed me - but I guess education against horrors like rape (of males and females) is the only solution. TTFN! Ta ta for now!

Rinc Rules And Weenies Got Roasted!

Mona

>Rinc women,

>A friend sent this to me and I thought this was important for us all to think about. Will you pass it on?

>Faith

>>YOUR PARENTS WERE RIGHT ABOUT THIS ONE.

>>And if they didn't tell you, I will. There are people in this world who will hurt you. Sometimes very consciously, and sometimes without realizing. So wake up. You've lived in the same dorm with these people since September. That nice boy, Joe, wouldn't do anything >>to hurt you. He has animal posters on his wall, and a little sister he adores. Maybe you're right, maybe you're wrong. Why take the chance? Imagine the following scenario...

>>He knocks on the door. She doesn't really know him well, but her friends party with him often. So, she smiles and settles back onto her bed as he walks in. They chat. He is drunk and sometimes funny. Without thinking, she rubs her shoulders because they're tense and sore from the hours spent writing that paper last night. He notices and offers to give her a massage. "How sweet of him," she thinks as he stammers on about his high school. "He's a little drunk but entertaining." Her shoulders feel better, so she pulls away. He politely gets up and moves back to the desk chair as she leans against her pillows, knees pulled against her chest.

>>All so innocent. Such normal behavior in a dorm on this small campus. So what is it that made him get off the chair? Sit on the edge of her bed? Lean over and kiss her? Perhaps she kissed him back. "He was a nice guy, so why not?" And it was fine.

>>Then she tried to get up. Then she tried to get him off.

>>Maybe she screamed. Maybe she kicked. And punched and cried. Maybe she didn't. But he never got off. And quietly he whispered into her ear. Pressure. She stops struggling, and lies still. Head, empty. He moves with confidence, control. "There's a crack in my ceiling," she thinks. With a groan he rolls off her. Smiles. His eyes say, "There now. That wasn't so bad, was it?" Like a doctor after an injection. He leaves. She picks up her book, and watches the words as they float in her tears. And she is scared.

>>And I was scared as I listened. And a week later, it happens again.

Same guy. Same girl. Just another quiet night in the dorm.

>>She never SAID no. But he never asked. Because he didn't care.

>>This happens every day and every night, to people you know, by people you know. The guy may be sober, the girl may be drunk. But we all learned in kindergarten--ask before taking, and don't touch what isn't yours. And women--Yes is Yes, and No is NO. Please don't continue the legacy of mixed signals.

>>This is a chain letter. Send one to the people you care about, or are afraid of. In any school, in any country. Please write the name of your school at the bottom, and place an X beside it if someone you know has been a victim of assault or rape. And please, don't be afraid to say no, it's a start.

.... [a list of colleges and universities with X's follows]....

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Date: 11/20/95

Subject: what a simple situation.

From: Gregory

Dear Rincsters,

I couldn't agree more with the contents of the chain mail about rape, although the word was never mentioned. But this presents perhaps an all too simple version of things. I am not advocating rape, nor do I think that any man who has rolled off of a crying woman has any doubts about what he has done. I am also the last one to feel any compassion for rapists, for several of my friends have been sexually assaulted. I just want to challenge your assumptons for a moment. The stats say that 1 in 3 women are assaulted at Stanford. Correct me if I'm wrong but it is some large percentage like that. Where are the men? Statistically there should be a correlating population, right? So where are all of these men that are heartless, who just don't give a shit about another human being based on what is or is not between their legs? I'm not saying that these women are crying wolf or that they don't know when they have been violated, but perhaps these men aren't who we think they are. Maybe, as the letter suggests, she DIDN'T say anything. Maybe she didn't react as if anything were wrong. Maybe it wasn't the act itself but a horrible transference of a repressed memory, or another psychological problem. Perhaps there was no communication at all. It is possible that a man cannot see the severe emotional trauma that is happening inside a woman. Women don't either. Obviously this is a good warning for women in dorms, but I just don't see rape being such a clear cut issue anymore. Because a majority of rapes aren't violent strangers, the stats suggest this. Clear intentions are perhaps a better warning. Don't wait until the heat of the moment to decide when to say when. It might not be such a good limit later on when the enormity of the occurence comes crashing in on you. That is not just a statement to either sex, both are responsible for the prevention.

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Date: 11/20/95
Subject: Treatise: rape
From: Buff

To my friends and dormmates,

This is my response to the e-mails regarding rape. This is my rage, I do not apologize for it. Please know that I attack the arguments that Gregory and Ronald have presented, but I do not intend to attack their character. If any of my assertions seem to be lacking facts, see me, I have them in my Peer Counseling Reader.

This is long. It matters.

BASIC FACTS:

***Rape is not about sex. Rape is about control.

***The central issue in discussions of rape is "consent." Nonverbal consent has the potential to be ambiguous, but gaining clear, explicit consent is as easy as "May I?" -"Yes."

***In most states, rape is legally defined as, *Vaginal, oral, or anal penetration with a penis or other object, committed against the wishes of the victim by the use of force OR THE THREAT OF HARM.* Threat may be real or perceived; feeling threatened is subjective.

***Sex without explicit consent from both parties is grounds for a rape charge.

***If the woman consents while intoxicated, the consent is legally invalid. The woman has the right to press charges later if she wishes.

[...more facts are listed....]

***97% of rapes are *acquaintance rape;* only 3% of all rapes are committed by strangers. (With 97% of all rapes NOT taking place on the street or in dark alleys, what deserves more funding: street lights or rape-awareness classes?)

TO ADDRESS GREGORY'S E-Mail

-First, I would like to challenge Gregory's assumption that men must certainly realize that they have raped someone if indeed they have; as well his assumption that if 1 in 3 women have experienced sexual assault of some kind, that these monstrous men should be obvious around campus. *Anyone can rape, and the majority of men who's actions satisfy the legal definition of rape do not call their actions "rape." Rape is sex without consent; a rapist is someone who takes sex without consent.

-Men may not be able to determine whether their partner is clearly consenting; this ambiguity may lead to years of prolonged emotional trauma. Better for both parties that the man ask first, just to be sure.

-I commend Gregory's acknowledgement that clear, initial communication is both safe and considerate; I agree. However, I question his assertion that the issue should end before the heat of the moment. Even if someone gives consent initially, they may revoke consent at any stage, even in "the heat of the moment." Sex is for the pleasure of both parties; if one person is no longer enjoying themselves, they have the right at any time to say, clearly and unambiguously, "stop." "Don't put it in." "Take it out, I'm not enjoying it." "I don't want to keep going." etc.

-To revise his statement: both people would be WISE to communicate and prevent misunderstanding, but the final responsibility to obtain consent lies with the man. If a man has sex with a woman without obtaining clear consent, if she did not want it, then she has grounds to charge rape.

TO ADDRESS RONALD'S E-Mail

-I accept Ronald's assertion that men may also be raped; however, the number of female rapes of males, male rapes of other males, and female rapes of other females all combined PALE in comparison to the number of male rapes of females.

-To fill in some of the holes in the story that Ronald felt were so necessary, use both extremes, first one, then the other:

-Let us assume that: He walked in the room, Neither of them are drunk, She shrugs off his massage, She does not kiss him back, She does fight back and say "no." Rape seems to be the correct assertion in this case.

-NOW, Let us assume that: She let him in the room, He is drunk, and she is not, She accepts his massage, She does kiss him back, She does not fight back or say "no."

-With these points clarified, has she at anytime explicitly stated a desire to have sex? Does a kiss justify sex? Two kisses? One long kiss and groping? What aside clear, verbal expression of consent can be construed as unmistakable desire to have sex?

-Perhaps we should go SO far as to say that she was stupid to not see any of his actions as "clear" signals that he wants to have sex. Is it a crime to be stupid? Is stupidity punishable by rape? Are any of her actions, any of her misconceptions of the situation punishable by forced, unwanted sex?

***[....] BEING PASSIVE IS NOT PUNISHABLE BY RAPE.

-Lack of adequate mutual effort to communicate was not the cause for the "rape," the "rape" occurred when he had sex with her without first obtaining her clear consent. The woman is under no obligation to say "no." [....]

-Does being drunk relieve the man of some of his burden of responsibility? Is this responsibility now placed on the woman? What if she is drunk as well? Who is neglecting their responsibility? If a drunk woman is sitting on a park bench, and a drunk driver hits her, is she partially at fault for not moving? Did her not moving indicate that she desired to be hit? no. In a time when inequalities of power distasteful, we sometimes forget why a woman might be afraid of resisting a man.

-In our culture, women are socialized to be passive; women, especially women who are "nice" don't fight back, "A nice girl would never kick someone in the groin, no matter what." NO MATTER WHAT.

[....]

Thank you for taking the time to read this e-mail. Please respond to any and all e-mail that stir you like this issue has stirred me.

[....]

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Date: 11/26/95
Subject: The rape issue...
From: Betty

I just wanted to throw my opinion into the discussion. I think it's fine to analyze all the little points of the law and of ethics on a theoretical level, but it seems to me that the real issue here is a lot more broad. It's about respect and communication. You should respect yourself enough to both voice your desires or concerns and then respect your partner enough to ask about their feelings and listen to their response. If you can't talk about sex, you aren't ready to have it. Period.

Date: 11/26/95
Subject: Re: The rape issue...
From: Ronald

Betty-

I thank you for your response, I was hoping that it wouldn't turn out to be just Buff and myself typing it out on the internet.

I agree with you 100%.

I just want to make sure that you understand I am not advocating that you never talk about it. I just don't see it necessary to keep talking

about it before you do it every single time if you have already discussed it openly and other signals will suffice. Let's face it, no matter how much somebody talks about it with loved one, or girlfriend, or whatever (there isn't necessarily a difference between any of them) you probably aren't going to talk about it every single time. Even if it is just once that you ignore it.

Besides, not everyone that has sex is ready for it whether they talk about it or not. And rape isn't defined as two people who have sex that aren't ready for it. Consent is the key issue.

Ronald

"Mmmm... peanuts!"

-Homer

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Date: 12/5/95

Subject: 75 REASONS. PLEASE FORWARD. (fwd)

From: Carolyn

Thought you guys might want to see the response to that previous inflammatory e-mail.

---Carolyn [....]

> 75 Reasons Why Angry Cornell Women (Your Worst Nightmare) Are Exercising Their Freedom of Speech

> 1. 1 out of every 3 women will be the victim of sexual assault during her lifetime.

> 2. In the U.S. it is estimated that a woman is raped every 1.3 minutes.

> 3. In one survey 51% of college men said they would rape if they were certain they could get away with it.

.....

> 9. 79% of African-American children in female-headed households live below the poverty level.

.....

> 15.45% of underweight women think they are too fat.

.....

> 23. Women of color account for 73% of women with AIDS in this country.

> 24.Total public dollars spent for contraceptive services fell by > one-third between 1980 and 1990.

.....

> 27. & 28. Before Roe v. Wade, 10,000 women died each year in the U.S. from illegal abortions. 50% of these women were women of color.

.....

> 45. 85% of bias crimes against lesbians go unreported.

.....

> 54. & 55. Of 1,585 Cornell University professors 296 are women. And only 33 are women of color.

.....

> 74. Marital rape is legal in 2 states: North Carolina and Oklahoma.

> 75. 75% of rape victims know their attacker.

> statistics from:

> Women's Action Collective copyright 1992

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Date: 12/6/95

Subject: Re: A forwarded message worth reading.

From: King

I have to say that I agree totally with what Ronald said in his message. Men are often depicted as villains that suppress and abuse women. While I do feel that there is not yet true equality between the sexes, I also believe that men, in general, have been given an undeserved bad reputation. If you look at a myriad of stand-up comedy routines done by women today, you see a lot of anti-male jokes. Society accepts this with little complaint, yet if a man were to do something similar, it wouldn't be nearly as funny. Take as an example the email sent to us by Adelle concerning the Mermaid and IQ raising. When "The Executive" turned the joke around the other way, was it still funny? While whoever wrote as "The Executive" may have had poor taste in using the word "chick" in the story, I wonder what would have happened if that joke had graced the mailboxes of those "angry, Cornell women (your worst nightmare)."

Secondly, I want to question the validity of some of the statistics given in the message. I cannot believe that 51% of college men would rape if they could get away with it. That is simply ridiculous! Of course, they say in the message, "in one college survey." I wonder who they surveyed, college students just released from prison? One must realize that those surveyed are not always representative of the

entire population. I cannot go to the Castro district of San Francisco and conduct a survey and state "75% of the American population is homosexual," because the Castro district is certainly not representative of the rest of the U.S.

I don't mean to sound bitter in this message, I only want what Ronald wants. It is my hope that the horrible deeds done against women, by anyone, male or female, will be recognized and dealt with.

Thank you for reading this.... King

Date: 12/6/95

Subject: Read this, it is important

From: Ronald

I was disturbed with the list that was sent to our list. About half the statistics seemed to portray the male as the violent perpetrator of all things evil against women. This is just as sexist as the original list sent to us, it is just dressed up with statistics to sound impressive. I have statistics, too. I hope you read them for it matters.

> 5. Every 15 seconds a woman is battered in the U.S. Who is beating who?

"As in heterosexual relationships, violence is an issue in lesbians. More than a third of lesbians 22 to 52 years of age have experienced battery by a partner."

--The Western Journal of Medicine, May, 1995

>>>"One group that takes female violence seriously is the lesbian community, in which battery is a profoundly disturbing concern that is rarely discussed publicly... all the available evidence points to domestic violence in lesbian couples occurring "no more and no less often than in heterosexual couples."

[...quote from The New Republic, August 1, 1994 continues for four paragraphs....]

>>>"Do you know that there's just as much battery between lesbian couples as there are between men and women?" Crossfire, July 4, 1994

> 61. In one-third of governments worldwide, there are no women in the decision-making body of the country.

One third is a minority. This implies that the progress we have made is insignificant, or that we have made no progress at all. Our society is not static. "Mother is the name of God on the lips of children everywhere." (This is not exact, my memory fails me, but it comes from The Crow.) In other words, equal opportunity is great, but in redefining gender roles, why does a homemaker have to become scum of the earth? The women that have traditionally stayed at home and the men that have been open enough to do the same over the years should be

applauded because they have built this country by making us who we are.

>67. 75% of high schools violate Title IX, which bans sex discrimination in education.

Stanford was in violation of Title IX too. It taught a women's self-defense class, but would not teach men how to defend themselves. They would rather have women go defenseless than train the evil men to become stronger, more powerful, ever dominating. The course was eliminated because they did not conform to the established rules. I wonder what Stanford was thinking when it offered martial arts to everyone as a PE class.

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Date: 12/6/95

Subject: Could we just forget semantics for a minute?

From: Betty

Ronald--

I understand what you're trying to say. Reverse sexism is just as much a problem as sexism directed at females. But, come on, those facts stand as they do. You can pick them apart as much as you want -- but as a society, we cannot and must not downplay the tragedies of sexual abuse, of death by AIDS, of inequality and of discrimination just because we feel it necessary to debate the manner in which these facts are presented. I agree -- it is just as tragic when a man is abused or when a woman is abused by her lesbian lover as it is when a woman is abused in a heterosexual relationship -- the fact is that abuse of and by any person is horrible and must be stopped. This was not a feminist list that was presented -- it was a humanist list. It called to our attention the terrible things that happen to people, not only in our country, but in our communities. In this sheltered Stanford environment, it is easy to forget that many of our neighbors and fellow citizens are in a lot of pain. We're wasting time with petty arguments about wording and transmission of information, when we should be doing something about the facts that lie beneath the words. If you want to fight the stereotype that men don't care about women or problems like the ones in the e-mail, then show it with your actions. Start volunteering at a battered people's shelter. Volunteer with AIDS patients. Write to congressmen and demand more money and more attention paid to cancer research and programs to help people in abusive relationships. And most importantly, treat everyone around you with the respect you know we ALL deserve. Again, here's to equality and respect -- and this time to proaction and compassion too.

Betty

Date: 12/6/95

Subject: Re: Could we just forget semantics for a minute?

From: Clarisse

Regarding King's point that a double standard exists concerning genders making jokes about each other: There was a difference between Adelle's mermaid joke and The Executive's "poignant" words. The first joke had an individual name attached to it. It was a joke, and if somebody took offense, the sender was ready to take the responsibility. The latter was anonymously sent. True, all the toilet did was turn the joke around, but the anonymity created a kind of hostile undertone. If someone is going to circulate something in fun, then just put your name on it. No big deal. Hiding behind indoor plumbing does not achieve any additional humor...it renders the opposite effect. Take responsibility for your own words.

I agree that we should question and try to come up with a more intelligent interpretation of the statistics than just take them at face value. However, it is most important to not forget the battered people while we debate the anti-female, anti-male sentiments...which you guys don't seem to be doing.

Oh, and by the way...random thing. I thing the Rinc web page might be posted faster if Carolyn wasn't referred to as "The Computer Lady."

--Clarisse

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16: CRITICAL DIALOGUE SAMPLE THREADS:

Social and Political Issues: Neo-Nazis and Free Speech

For a general comment about this thread, see the critical dialogue sample threads [Introduction: Hillary and Ronald](#).

Date: 3/31/96
Subject: vote no (fwd)
From: Hillary

Hey guys, sorry to keep flooding your message boxes with more petitions. I don't know if I know enough about this issue, but if you are interested in making it harder for neo-nazis to communicate over e-mail read on.

>>A group of neo-nazis are trying to form a newsgroup on Usenet called rec.music.white-power, so that they can get their message of hate out to young people using the Internet. Newsgroups are public discussion areas on the Internet and their formation requires enough support from the Internet community.

>>EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU HAS ONE VOTE when it comes to creating a new Usenet group. I hope you will vote NO and thereby tell these Nazis you don't want their stuff on the net. Below is the procedure, please repost my plea and get the NO vote out. This is my personal opinion. If you want to see the official call for votes, you can read in news.group or ask me for a copy of the notice calling for votes.

>>Do not vote twice - that would constitute voting fraud.

>>HOW TO VOTE:

>>Send E-MAIL (posts to a newsgroup are invalid) to:
music-vote@sub-rosa.com

>>This is an impartial, third-party vote taker.

>>Do not REPLY to THIS message, if you are trying to vote. Please do not assume that just replying to this message will work. Check the address before you mail your vote. Your mail message should contain only one statement:

>>I vote NO on rec.music.white-power

>>I REALLY HOPE YOU VOTE NO!

>>Vote counting is automated. Failure to follow these directions may

mean that your vote does not get counted. If you do not receive an acknowledgment of your vote within three days contact the votetaker about the problem. It's your responsibility to make sure your vote is registered correctly.

>>Here's what Canada's George Burdi, of the neo-Nazi Heritage Front, had to say about this vote, on February 21, on his RESISTANCE mailing list:

>>"There is a call for votes coming on rec.music.white-power in the next week or so, and you will be notified in a special issue of RREN exactly what to do. FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS TO THE LETTER. Let me be perfectly blunt and state that we have more than enough "net-nazis" to win this thing hands-down. But every one of you must vote YES! And just voting yes means nothing unless you do it properly. So you have been forewarned. The instructions are coming to your email box soon, and they are not complicated. Just follow them as told, and we will have a WP music newsgroup finally!"

>>If Mr. Burdi's confidence disturbs you, please give this letter the widest possible distribution, and help us deliver the largest NO vote in the history of UseNet.

>>If you would like more detailed information on why you should vote no, check out <http://nizkor.almanac.bc.ca> - although it should be noted that the Nizkor Project has no connection to this personal plea."

>>Gary Romalis

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Date: 3/31/96
Subject: Re: vote no (fwd)
From: Dick

Because we don't hold the same views as them, we have the right to deny them freedom of expression. Prohibiting things we don't want to hear sounds like censorship....

Dick

Date: 3/31/96
Subject: Re: vote no (fwd)
From: Kurt

Hillary, Dick, and all,

I don't remember offhand who said it but there's a great quote that goes something like: "I may not agree with a single word you say, but will defend unto the death your right to say it." Its that whole ACLU thing again. The email that Hillary sent us was particularly disturbing in light of the recent communications bill signed by the

white house, yadda yadda yadda, you remember the debate on the list and I'm sure you had it elsewhere as well. The point is, a liberal should place the first ammendment above cougars, spotted owls, Burma and grapes when it comes to causes for which to fight. What am I talking liberals--as if we were the only ones interested in defending the various freedoms of expression. Anyway, don't vote or even vote yes--every lunatic, revolutionary, or racist (depending upon who you talk to) has a right to have a special interest newsgroup, even one with the prestigious rec.* name (don't kid yourself, there are already many alt.whatever.insecure.whitepower newsgroups out there. You're not stopping the spread of the evil empire by voting no). Just a few thoughts. Welcome back from Spring Break, and I hope y'all had as good a time as I did (ask Leann about a killer concert at Dartmouth and Ted about the Hard Rock Cafe in NYC.)

Sincerely, Kurt

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Date: 3/31/96

Subject: I smell an issue here....

From: Marvin

As I wrote this e-mail, I had started it with a ambivalent if not leaning towards anti-No vote response. But after I wrote it, it made so much damn sense that I made up my mind. Please read on and respond, I am interested in what people have to think about this.

Why is there a vote? Is a vote "no" taking away freedom of speech? I don't think so. Surely other newsgroups have been turned down, if you read the letter this vote thing sounds like a natural kinda deal. How many of you would, if, say, the newspaper (free speech in the newspaper, no?) was asked, demanded by a group of neo-nazis to get a vote from its subscribers as to whether or not to have a neo-nazi columnist in the editorials every week. Sure, you don't have to look at the page, and you don't have to read it, but how many of you would vote yes? I sure as hell wouldn't. I'd vote no, and not feel like I am denying anything. Is this kinda the same thing? I mean, we are all subscribers to the net, and the question is, do we want a white-power voice on the net, or not? Homepages for white power are not banned, neither is e-mail. I think that voting no would be sending a mesage of generalized, overall intolerance for the kind of crap that the neo-nazis support. It's not a censorship, it's an american NIMBY (not in my back yard) response to the Neo-nazis.

>>Newsgroups are public discussion areas on the Internet and their formation requires enough support from the Internet community.

Check that out! I have nothing against free speech, but will I give them support? No I will certainly not. Think about the newspaper analogy and see if you will vote no. I did.

--Marvin "first ammendment is good" X_____

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Date: 4/1/96
Subject: Re: vote no (fwd)
From: Hillary

Ronald and Dick, you made good points. It is everyone's right to believe what they want and be able to discuss it. I found the foward interesting and thought maybe others would too. I guess I didn't realize that by sending the foward, people would associate the message of it with me. When I first read the message, my first reaction was to email the list given and vote no. It really scares me, that it was so easy for me to want to deny those people the right to freedom of speech and belief, just because I really don't agree with them. Thank you for bringing it to my attention.

I missed you Rinc and hope you had a good break. (by the way I have copies of all those pictures I took at Screw your Roomate. If you remember being in a picture I took and want a copy please come by and get it.) Love you guys!

--Hillary

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Date: 4/2/96
Subject: nazi newsgroup
From: Bobby

Hey guys

I'm afraid I'm gonna have to disagree with Marvin on this one. As far as his newspaper analogy goes, I would probably not be opposed to a columnist who expounded views contrary to my own much in the same way that I am not opposed to the white-supremacist-newsgroup. Its been my experience that being exposed to people with different views than me has helped me clarify my own opinions. It helps define exactly what I _don't_ believe in. (This is why I often listen to Rush Limbaugh...)

Furthermore, it is censorship, like it or not. I do not own the Internet. Using Netscape I've probably not even viewed 99.9% of it, and I think that goes for most of us. We would have to go out of our way to find this newsgroup and be offended by it. It is not quite in our own "backyard." THE e-mail we received was not so much an egalitarian attempt at majority rule so much as it was a concerted effort to squash the rights of a few. Let them have their newsgroup, just so long as they're not burning crosses in our electronic backyard.

--thanx

Bobby "late for class" X_____

Date: 4/3/96
Subject: Re: criteria for white power group
From: Ronald

>>1. Is the "namespace" appropriate? I.e., Does the purpose of the proposed group fit within the purpose of the hierarchy to which it would be added?

The editorial states that the newsgroup is political and not music related because the venues explored to gain support.

1) if you were a Nazi, you probably would expect support from like-minded people and not much else

2) plenty of music is political.(REM's Ignore Land for one, Midnight Oil's Panganeenee, or whatever, is another example) If the music has a message it is still a type of music

>>2. Is there a need for the proposed new group?

Does anybody really need a newsgroup discussion area? If people want to talk about an issue/topic/hate plans/etc. and a forum for that doesn't exist where people know they can go to vent/explore/learn/relate then there is a NEED for one. Just because the discussions on other music forums were never dominated by white supremacist music lovers (THANK GOD) doesn't mean there aren't a minority out there that would like to express themselves on a certain issue. Perhaps they were never interested in those groups because of the different music types they encompassed, or they were not well recieved when they did post so they stopped.

Yannie

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Date: 4/4/96
Subject: more white power stuff.. read on, please
From: Marvin

Okay guys, to revisit the issue that I think is very important, not as itself, but as an example for something that I find extremely disturbing in our society at the moment: we are all so scared to act because of the first amendment! Now, realize that I am not saying the #1 is bad, it's just that we pretend that it is the source behind all these issues and sometimes it is NOT. Case in point, the nazi newsgroup issue.

If you spend more than five minutes looking at it, which I suspect most of you haven't, you will realize that it is purely a political issue, not a censorship one.

Further, Mr. Kleim could, at any time, without a vote, without discussion, create "alt.rock-n-roll.white-power." Neither Mr. Kleim, nor any of the other Nazis on the net, ever did this. If his sole

concern was the creation of a white-power music group, or if there was a legitimate need for such a group, then it could have been created, years ago.

Take a look! At any time, a discussion group can be made to talk about white power music WITHOUT a vote. so why do they want a rec.music group? For the very reason of the VOTE.

What they WANT is for there to be some possibility for us to shut them down, and have it not happen, so they can say to the young disgruntled teens: "Look! we have more supporters than dissenters, we're not as unpopular as you think... the net community (the only one that counts in this day and age) supports, as a whole, the idea of our music! c'mon and join!"

What I want is for a kid to be thinking about this kind of neo-nazi b.s. and then have someone point out to them (it sure as hell won't be the nazis) "Look, the net community voted Two hundred thousand to sixty (okay, exagerration, but you get my point) AGAINST their kind of crap. You will not gain friends by joining these people, even though it looks like you might."

I'm sorry if my adamant stand against spreading neo-naziism offends some of you, but I sure hope it doesn't. Guys, don't shove the first amendment where it doesn't belong, don't be afraid of acting now because you think it's going to be violated. This is a POLITICAL issue, one designed purely to create more propaganda for the white-power folks. Help me stop them, please.

--marvin "forgive, but never forget" x_____

(if you're wondering, my middle name today is the motto of the Holocaust Foundation)

--Happy Passover!!!!!!!

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17: CRITICAL DIALOGUE SAMPLE THREADS: Dorm Community Issues: "Screw Your Roommate"

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Discussion

This thread is interesting for how residents used the e-mail list as a complement to face-to-face communication to negotiate their social plans and also for the wide interest this seemingly-trivial topic (planning a party) attracted online.

The thread begins with a message categorized not as critical dialogue but as social dialogue (for the distinction, see [04: Social Purposes of Survey Categories](#)), specifically [survey](#) category 2 (finding out about or publicizing dorm activities). In the message from [Leslie](#), the dorm government social chairs are announcing the date of a party already discussed (f2f) at a house meeting and also publicizing a meeting intended to get wider participation in the party planning. "Screw Your Roommate" (which quickly becomes abbreviated online to SYR/syr) is the generic name for a dance party commonly held by frosh dorms at Stanford (and I assume at many other colleges and universities) where residents arrange dates for their roommates. The name is ironic because the intention is to be nice to your roommate, ideally by hooking him/her up with that heretofore inaccessible object of his/her affections (leaving the intentional sexual suggestiveness of the name adding to the event's tensions).

After the announcement from the social chairs, in ensuing messages the date is changed, several people make objections to holding SYR at this time and suggest delaying it until spring, and several other people make counter-objections and insist the dance should go forward more or less as planned. In a final twist, just a few days before the event, the social chairs argue for combining forces with Otero, a neighboring frosh dorm, which is planning a party for the same date.

A significantly wider variety of residents -- and in particular a much higher proportion of women -- participated in this thread (which is excerpted below) than in other extended critical dialogue threads. The [critical dialogue core group](#) did not participate heavily in this thread. We might speculate that

(a) some people, especially some women in the dorm, were more interested in discussing social events than political issues online; or

(b) some people, especially women, saw this kind of local community negotiation as a more constructive dialogue than the head-to-head of political debate, and hence an opportunity to join the dorm's electronic forum.

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Date: 2/27/96
Subject: screw your roomie!
From: Leslie

Hey, Rinc!

Screw Your Roomie is coming up very soon and we need your help planning it. There will be a meeting for whoever wants to help organize the dance (theme, decorations,DJ etc...) in the lounge at 9:30 on Tuesday, 2/27. Come and stop by with some ingenious ideas! Here's a quick update:

WHAT: Rinconada Screw Your Roomie Semi-Formal

WHEN: March 8, 1996

WHERE: Wilbur Dining Hall (We are very, very close to getting all the signatures needed for approval)

WHO: All Rinc citizens and whoever your roomie sets you up with; Remember, there are only about 2 more weeks so look in the picture book, talk to that hot guy/girl in your CIV section....whatever and start hooking up you roomie!

WHY:This is your last chance this quarter to have lots of fun before finals come around and pummel you to the ground. Don't miss this opportunity to meet new people and party hearty with your fellow Rincsters.

PLEASE COME TO THE MEETING!

Your faithful social chairs,

Joanna X _____

Leslie X _____

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Date: 2/29/96
Subject: screw your roomie update
From: Joanna

RINC SCREW YOUR ROOMMATE UPDATE:

WHAT:Screw Your Roommate Semi-Formal

WHEN: Saturday, March 9, 1996 10:00pm - 1:00 am

WHERE: Wilbur Dining Hall

Note the date has been changed from Friday, 3/8 to Saturday, 3/9! We are extremely sorry for the inconvenience [...details follow...]

Love,

Joanna X and Leslie

Date: 2/29/96
Subject: screw your roommate
From: Zelda

Hi Rinc. Well, Linda, Amy, Claudia and I were talking and it just seems that nobody is into our screw your roommate dance at all. Nobody has dates, many of the teams are travelling that weekend, and Otero has their dance on the same night, creating even more discord. What do you think about having the dance in the spring, and just having the progressive on Saturday, Mar 9th? I think everybody will be more enthusiastic in the spring; what do you all think?

Thanks,

Zelda, Linda, Amy, Claudia

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Date: 2/29/96
Subject: re: screw your roommate
From: Dick

I THINK YOU ALL SHOULD SPEAK FOR YOURSELVES ABOUT THE NO DATE DEAL...MY ROOMMATE AND I BOTH HAVE DATES. ANYHOW, I THINK THAT IT WOULD BE TO OUR DORMS ADVANTAGE TO MOVE THE DANCE TO SPRING.

Date: 2/29/96
Subject: re: screw your roommate
From: Ronald

The spring might be better, weather and all, but it seems like we try and do anything cool, it always gets postponed. [....]... no matter when we plan it, someone isn't going to make it... at least that is my opinion.

I don't think the date thing should be a consideration.[....] if it is just a date problem, I think that Rincsters should have no problem getting their roomies hooked up. Hell, we are the best dorm on campus!

Date: 2/15/96
Subject: Screw Your Roommate
From: Phyllis

Dear Rinc,

I understand that there are problems with the date but like Ronald I think that there will be conflicts with any date. My friends and I have been planning on the SYR dance for a while now and we are finally finalizing everything [.....]

Thanks,

Phyllis

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Date: 2/29/96
Subject: Re: screw your roommate
From: Linda

I just wanted to get my voice heard on this issue, that I too think that it would be better to move the date of the dance to the spring. First of all, we will all be a little less stressed in the beginning of spring quarter as opposed to the end of a quarter, when things get mighty hectic. Plus, this would give us more time to make this dance what we really want it to be. As Melvin so eloquently pointed out, "If we're going to do this, we might as well go all out and make it good." I wholeheartedly agree.

Thanks,

Linda "We've already changed the date so many times, what's one more going to do?" X_____

Date: 2/29/96
Subject: screw your roommate
From: Melvin

For all the reasons that everyone has already brought up, I think that postponing screw your roommate is the best thing to do.

Melvin

Date: 2/29/96
Subject: My syr opinion
From: Bertha

Feb 29

Everyone-

I will have to say that I agree whole heartedly with Ronald and Phyllis. I think that postponing it to the spring will have way to many hassles [.....] some of us have dutifully been seeking out those hot guys in our civ class and our friends from other dorms to go with our roomies. Just because you have been too lazy to find your

roomie a date, is no reason to postpone[....]. I think i speak for those who are really fired up for this dance to please not cancel it....[....] I promise, hell, I'll even set up the whole dorm so long as we don't cancel it! Bertha X.

Date: 2/29/96
Subject: screw your roommate
From: Marvin

Yeah, I know that the last thing anyone wants to hear is more crap on the screw your roomie dance, but here is something I don't think anyone has thought about yet.... One person, or even 7, do not a dorm make. If people want to postpone it, find people who do also and see if you can get a majority or anything, really. I mean, as of right now, we are having the dance. If a half dozen people don't like it, that's not enough. I cannot make the dance because of scheduling reasons, but that doesn't mean I want to cancel it. a lot of people are looking forward to this thing, even if they DO complain about no dates.

A rincster need not be to clever

To know that "later, please" means NEVER.

Okay that was trite but it has a point. Let's not be the postponing theme house!

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Date: 2/29/96
Subject: What else could it be?
From: Clarisse

Ok. Here's my \$0.02.

Everything's been set: the DJ [did you all forget about the fog machine?]

the place

the date

Joanna & Leslie have worked really hard this past week to pull things together...and they have...pretty successfully, I might add. For the sake of having any DJ at all, they were forced to change the date, but this was a minor detail.

If we decide to postpone SYR until the spring, chances are...it'll never happen. We're going to go into full gear for RAD '96 and..hey, we may be the greatest dorm, but there's only so much we can handle at once.

So let's show our support for our Social Chairs and all the people who

have dates and...Pat Buchanan.

ah, i don't know. scrounging for humor.

Clarisse

Date: 2/29/96
Subject: re: My syr opinion
From: Jack

Although I agree with those of you, like Bertha, that feel there will be as many excuses to postpone the dance in the Spring as there are now, I disagree with you that people should just find a new date if they were going with someone that can't (for some reason, I don't know what, maybe another dance) go on Saturday. Suppose they were really excited about going with this other person, and now you play it off like it is no big deal. How do you think that makes them feel. Not too happy I'll bet.

I don't want to postpone the dance to the Spring either, but changing the date at the last minute just is not a cool thing to do. I think the only logical thing we can do is postpone the dance to a time when we can set the date and then not have to change it multiple times.

Jack "lookin out for my boy on the first floor" X____ [....]

Date: 2/29/96
Subject: Re: screw your roommate
From: Ted

OK Rinc: Here's my angle on the postponing issue. For those who have already gone through the little embarassments and inconveniences to get their roomates dates, it would be unfair to change the date. Furthermore, think about it from the dates' perspective: You've committed to a dance, perhaps at some social risk and perhaps after canceling other social engagements. So now Rinc cancels. Are you going to commit AGAIN in the spring? No. Why? The dorm's unreliable, it might be embarrassing, etc.

And for those of you who complain that this is being "thrown together at the last minute": I don't think you appreciate the work Joanna, Daisy, and others have put into this- don't just dismiss it because

a) you're sour at not having a date, or

b) it's inconvenient for you, so the Social Chairs should bust their butts again in the spring while you don't do anything to help. In short, it's up to the dorm as a whole not to whine about the issue, but to actually DO something about it- help organize it, help decorate, and so on. I don't think it's out of our reach to be able to pull this off. There will always be conflicts. But it's up to the dorm as a whole to make it happen. If we don't care enough about it to so, then it's our fault. But don't blame the organizers.

Just a thought, Ted

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Date: 3/2/96
Subject: Screw Your Roomie
From: Leslie

Hey Rinc!

We have a small dilemma with our Screw Your Roommate dance. Okay, here's the deal: The other day, the Otero social chairs talked to Joanna and I about the dance. They mentioned the possibility of having a joint Rinc-Otero dance since we were having the dances on the same night. We said we'd consider it and talk to them later. However, they went ahead and took a dorm vote on it -- and voted that they'd like to have the dance with us. Anyway, this is just another option. We are in no way committed to having a joint dance. One reason we may want to have it with Otero is because of possible music/space problems (they'd be in their lounge and we're in the dining hall and the music might overlap). On the other hand, it may be nice to have a dance just to bond and spend time with Rinc people. Could you all please talk to Laura or me or email the Rinc government address ASAP with your opinions?!?!?

Thanks and hope to hear from ya soon, Leslie and Joanna

Date: 3/5/96
Subject: bannana
From: Beverly

Dear Rinc,

Well, It seems that the screwing of roommates is eminent, blah, blah, blah. We decided in House meeting (those of us who went) that we wanted to have a "pre-party" type of event. Because this thing is happening on Saturday, having a real proggressive party might be pushing it, but maybe not. However, if people are interested tell me NOW.

I also need money, just cause I write checks for some things doesn't mean that write checks for everything. So it will be pretty much like that Soto party thing. Money and requests. I need that by House Meeting.

The list of people that said that they were helping out mysteriously dissapeared (I think I lost it). So if those people are still interested... I'm not that creative of a person, so ideas of things to do, themes, people to help set up, clean up (Oh yeah, I wanna clean up that sounds like fun!!!) and any other things that I'm leaving out.

Okay, this is getting too long (I have a short attention span, especially for e-mail) so I'll end it. I also have to go to Band now.

Speaking of Band....Are you still deciding what classes to take next quarter????

Bev "My real middle name is Leilani-means heavenly princess, go figure" erly

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18: CRITICAL DIALOGUE SAMPLE THREADS:

Dorm Community Issues: Sexual Harassment

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Discussion

In early winter quarter, Pierre was moved (suddenly, from most residents' viewpoints) to another dorm, a decision made not by us but by University authorities. Under the current rules at Stanford, all details of judicial affairs cases are confidential, so the residence staff had our hands tied about what we could and couldn't communicate to the dorm, especially through any public medium such as house meetings or the dorm e-mail list. Indeed, the Resident Fellows (my wife Roni and I) had several drafts of proposed messages to the e-mail list (and proposed verbal explanations for house meetings), explaining the situation to residents, rejected by the University's lawyers who were consulting on the case. Residents were free to ask the principal parties about the situation (though they were advised not to expect details), however, and it became widely known that a female resident in the dorm (who did not participate in this study) had lodged a sexual harassment charge against Pierre. There was some considerable tension in the dorm over this affair and the lack of information surrounding it, and in particular there was a widespread feeling that Pierre had been effectively found guilty by being forced to leave without "due process."

These tensions first appeared on the e-mail list in a three-word anonymous posting from "[Dummy](#)" ("Where is Pierre.....") with the subject line "Fairness&Justice." [Pierre](#) himself, who remained on the Rinconada e-mail list throughout the year, replied that he appreciated the comment and that the "bad guy" was not the female resident by "the system." Several other residents -- including [Adelle](#), [Gregory](#), the anonymous "[Karina Luevano](#)," [Hillary](#), [Meg](#) -- responded to "Dummy's" prompt too. Gregory and Meg were the most articulate in expressing widespread frustrations:

Gregory: "I really don't think it is appropriate that it was done so clandestinely and that the basic facts of the issue weren't shared with the dorm.... This is not a good thing for an open learning community."

Meg: "As a dorm, we deserve to have been told that Pierre left and where he was going, if not the reasons that he left. Also, I agree with Hillary that this is something that should be discussed in person, as well as on email.... I think that its often easier to discuss big issues that you're somewhat distant from than to write about something happening right here."

This was a community that already, by the beginning of winter quarter, had developed tight bonds, widespread openness of communication, and a great deal of sophistication in using the dorm e-mail list to promote those bonds and that openness (e.g., Meg's urging her dormmates "to write about something happening right here"). For the residence staff, it was very frustrating not being able to respond to these reasonable desires and frustrations.

By this time, we finally got permission from University authorities to explain the situation in general terms to individual residents, though we still were proscribed from making any general announcements. We quickly had a number of one on one conversations with residents, clarifying the limitations of what we as the staff could do and suggesting what the University's rationale for removing Pierre might be (including the protection of his rights). Following these conversations, [Marvin's](#) e-mail helped calm the frustrations -- at least the yearning for an "official announcement." Pierre had been advised not to try his case on the e-mail list, and he wisely (I think) refrained from further online comments about it.

Date: 2/15/96
Subject: Fairness&Justice
From: Dummy

Where is Pierre.....

Date: 2/15/96
Subject: re: Fairness&Justice
From: Pierre

hi. it's me. just letting you know I appreciate your comment. I don't know who you are, but thanks.

I'm still on the rinclist.

but please don't let her feel like she is the bad guy. The system is. But only she can stop this system.

Date: 2/16/96
Subject: [no subject]
From: Adelle

Fellow Rinsters,

There have been some interesting e-mails the last few days. Of course AIDS is important, but there are some other issues that should maybe be discussed. Of course, you may all think that the Pierre issue is of little significance, or taboo. If any one cares to respond (with their name attached)...

-Adelle

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Date: 2/16/96
Subject: re: your mail
From: Gregory

I think the reason that no one speaks of Pierre's leaving us is because no one knows enough about the case. the facts as I know them are that he stands accused of harrasment. I'm not sure if it's sexual or not but the school policy is that he has to live under a different roof while the school investigates. I really don't think it is appropriate that it was done so clandestinely and that the basic facts of the issue weren't shared with the dorm. It has been a week and a half since he left and that is too long. I don't think that anyone involved had to say anything but some official announcement would have been fair. As it stands, we are unaware of the process and what we could possibly do if we feel strongly one way or another. I feel that when that type of mystery shrouds a topic that affects us all, the issue gains a "whisper in the hall" type of quality. This is not a good thing for an open learning community.

I don't really want to discuss the sexual harassment issue. I just think that the way it was handled leaves something to be desired.

Innocent until proven guilty,

Gregory

Date: 2/17/96
Subject: ???
From: "Karina Luevano"

Oh were oh were has our Pierre gone oh were oh were can he be?????

The poor guy's in B.F.E.

Date: 2/18/96
Subject: re: your mail
From: Hillary

Hey guys I agree with Adelle - this issue is significant and should be discussed. What do you think. Do people want to discuss over e-mail. I personally think we should meet as a dorm. Wadda ya think? -Hillary

On Fri, 16 Feb 1996, Adelle X_____ wrote:

[...Text of Adelle's message follows....]

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Date: 2/18/96
Subject: re: your mail
From: Meg

Fellow Rincsters,

I totally agree with Adelle's and Hillary's emails about Pierre leaving. I think that Pierre's leaving wasn't handled in the best way. There should have been some "official" announcement when Pierre left, so that his leaving wouldn't simply have been the subject of rumors and gossip. I feel that right now his leaving has been kind of covered up by everyone, and that many people aren't exactly sure what is happening. As a dorm, we deserve to have been told that Pierre left and where he was going, if not the reasons that he left. Also, I agree with Hillary that this is something that should be discussed in person, as well as on email.

I really respect Adelle, and whoever sent those fairness and justice emails for bringing this up on email; I think that its often easier to discuss big issues that you're somewhat distant from than to write about something happening right here.

-Meg

Date: 2/18/96
Subject: re: your mail
From: Marvin

Hey rincsters, there are some complications about the Pierre issue. It is not as simple as what is being conveyed. Also, it is not a thing that should be discussed over a group e-mail, for many reasons. We should not be complaining about a lack of "official response" before we know if it is even POSSIBLE for an official response to be made. There are rights involved that must be upheld.

We may have deserved, as a dorm, to have been told something about the entire deal, but that also may not have been legally possible.

Think about it.

(If anyone wants to talk to me about this, I would be glad to.)

--thanks.

--Marvin x.

::p.s. no offense to Meg, she is absolutely right. We do, as a dorm, deserve to know what is going on. but an "official announcement" may not be the way to find out.

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19: CRITICAL DIALOGUE SAMPLE THREADS:

Dorm Community Issues: Death and Birth

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Discussion

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[More logistics; another death](#)

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The most important event for the Rinconada 1995-96 community occurred on Easter Sunday night, when Yolanda collapsed and died in the dorm. No one, including the residence staff, suspected that she was in ill health. Yolanda led a full and active student and extracurricular life and had developed a small circle of very close friends in the dorm. Her roommate knew that she took some medication, but no one knew that she'd had several operations and had poor liver function. As is the case for most American 18-year-olds, very few Rinconada residents had experienced the death of someone they knew well. Yolanda's death was all the more disturbing because she collapsed in the shower while friends awaited her and emergency resuscitation efforts were performed in the dorm before she was taken to the hospital, where she was pronounced dead of heart failure (stemming from liver failure).

On the e-mail list, Yolanda had been a total lurker, posting zero messages. Most of her close friends were lurkers, too, and they made little use of the e-mail list in the aftermath of her death. But other residents used the list both for mourning and for planning dorm memorial logistics. The list was invaluable not only for these individuals but, because of their shared expression, for the whole community.

Initial reactions

[Raoul](#) posted a very moving eulogy the night of Yolanda's death. In sorting through his feelings ("A thousand thoughts are racing through my head"), Raoul articulated what many others felt too. This heartfelt posting was one of only five messages that Raoul sent to the list all year long, and the only one categorized as critical dialogue.

I ([Rich](#)) posted a message with some immediate logistics (confirming a house gathering) and mourning options. I referred to Raoul's message in reminding people that any expression of feelings, in all media, might be valuable at this time.

The house gathering on Monday night was extremely valuable for all of us. We talked about the basic facts of Yolanda's death, discussed

memorial service options, heard briefly from a few University counselors, then shared stories of Yolanda's life. Though Yolanda was not Jewish, Marvin (who came from the same small Midwestern town as Yolanda) led everyone in saying the Kaddish in transliterated Hebrew. The next day [Marvin](#) posted to the list a follow-up explanation of the group decision to wear ribbons in honor of Yolanda.

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More eulogies

[Ted](#), who wrote only four messages classified as critical dialogue all year, and [Zachary](#) were inspired by the house gathering to post their own eulogies. Zachary quoted a Buddhist parable and courageously tried to work out his feelings: "I don't think there's any way to escape pain," and he demonstrated some self-awareness of how useful the e-mail list had been for him in particular when he wrote, "I don't know if I've helped anyone, or even made sense, but I guess self expression is therapeutic" (cf. [brief discussion of Zachary](#) in 11: "Core Group," "Regular," and "Lurker" Participation.)

Yolanda's parents and sister (an upperclass Stanford student) worked closely with her friends in the dorm and our Residence Dean to plan a very successful, moving memorial service held in Memorial Church on the Stanford quad. A number of residents participated as speakers and singers. [Bing](#) (who sang at the service), like Zachary, explored via e-mail his feelings not only about Yolanda and death but also about electronic communication: "This has just been one of those inspired trains of thought that usually expresses itself only in private thought or conversation. I guess the dorm list is just as acceptable a medium; we are all going through many of the same thoughts and experiences, and I just wanted to share mine."

More logistics; another death

Other messages posted concerned the logistics of planting a memorial tree in Yolanda's honor (e.g., [Buff](#)) or combined logistical comments with further expressions of feeling (e.g., [Betty](#)). A number of people wrote their opinions about where to plant the tree or how to handle the plaque, tasks that offered a concrete way to express their feelings; negotiating these tasks via e-mail helped make more residents feel a part of the process.

A month later, coincidentally, another freshman student died in Junipero, one of our neighboring all-frosh dorms. [Buff](#) announced this death on the e-mail list, and that set off another round of group negotiations online (and of course offline as well) as the dorm tried to decide on a gift or gesture for the residents of Junipero (e.g., [Calvert](#), [Wanda](#), [Duncan](#), and [Calvert](#) again).

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Birth and revelation

[Marvin's](#) final message to the dorm, at the end of the school year, was

an amazing coda in many ways. Rinconada's spring quarter that opened with a sudden death ended with the equally-surprising announcement of a birth -- Marvin's son -- and Marvin tied these two themes together explicitly in his inspiring message.

Marvin, as previously mentioned, came from Yolanda's hometown and was friends with her. He was very active in the dorm both f2f and on the e-mail list (see [11](#) and [12](#); Marvin was the 3rd most-active contributor to the list overall and the 4th most-active contributor to critical dialogue). Despite his gregarious nature, however, Marvin had held tightly to some personal secrets all year long. Only the residence staff and eventually a few close friends were aware that Marvin had arrived for Orientation in the fall already an expectant father, that his son was born (back home) in February, and that he was diagnosed with a form of manic depression in the spring. That Marvin was inspired to share all this publicly on the e-mail list he associated explicitly with Yolanda's death: "Spring quarter and Yolanda brought down a whole new set of priority mixes. Then I truly felt like this year couldn't get any more insane. I had experienced the life cycle a little closer than I wished."

The shared trauma of Yolanda's death made a close group even closer than we imagined we could be. Most of us outside of Yolanda's small circle of close friends did not know her well, but through the process of grieving and memorializing her -- most of which, of course, occurred offline -- we felt we got to know this special person, and one another, very well. Marvin expressed and extended these widespread feelings in his message: "I sincerely feel pretty damn good about every one in this whole dorm. So, I am sharing something as a token of friendship" It was quite a gift he offered, and the fact that he chose the e-mail list for offering it captures some of the power this medium had in the Rinconada community of 1995-96.

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Date: 4/7/96
Subject: [no subject]
From: Raoul

Dear Rinconada,

Yolanda Yates. As I write this message, It's about 11pm on the night of her passing. A thousand thoughts are racing through my head. Why her? Why did it have to be her? Why so young? Why someone so beautiful, good, loving, and generous? Why the hell do these things happen. I mean, when she passed by me, all I saw was a gentle person, with that cute little smirk that only Yolanda could give. She was one of those people that you loved to death, that you just wanted to hug and say, "Thank God there are people like this in the world." I looked around her room, taking in her shoes, her posters, her tapes, her uneaten food, and I just felt that something was terribly wrong. Something was too empty. She was guileless. She was one of those people who seemed to overcome the odds, not with cunning and trickery, but rather with love and compassion. I think it is fitting that she

passed on an Easter Sunday -- fitting for a soul as great as hers. I am only too sorry that I didn't have the time to not only know more about her, but also to learn from her from what I can only describe as her beautiful humanity. Her passing was eerily similar to the passing of my aunt last year, a soul that was so remarkably similar to Yolanda's that I ask whoever it is that controls our lives how he can take away the most wonderful specimens of humanity, those who are supposed to remind us how life should be lived. For Yolanda Yates, I can only say this. She was a joy to have as a dormmate and a friend, and I, along with the rest of this dorm, will never forget the short time I had with her.

-Raoul X_____

Date: 4/8/96
Subject: the next few days
From: Rich

Everyone,

I think most people are aware we've scheduled a house gathering for 10 p.m. tonight (Mon.). At this time we can touch base about Yolanda's death, both the facts and our feelings about it. The Dean of the Chapel of Memorial Church, Robert Gregg, will be joining us, along with some counselors from Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), and our Residence Dean (RD), Andy Hernandez. Please feel free to ask these folks any questions. [....]

Thank you, Raoul, for your moving and eloquent posting to the e-mail list. I think that, in addition to the private grieving that we must all go through by ourselves, it's very important to keep expressing and sharing our feelings in conversation, writing, etc. as well as by hugs and just being together with friends.

Classes, registration, jobs, paper-writing, problem sets, exams, etc. don't feel very important right now. Anyone with or without imminent academic or other deadlines who needs some time right now, you will be fully supported by your RFs, your RD, and ResEd/Student Affairs. Let us know of any situations with professors, bosses, etc. where you could use some help.

--Rich

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Date: 4/9/96
Subject: the ribbons.
From: Marvin

There is one ribbon on each door for permanent basis. The other ribbons on your doors have safety pins with them and those are for around the campus. We decided that we should have the opportunity to have the symbol both on the door and the person.

later, guys.

--marvin

(by the way, thanks for tonight, it meant a lot to me and to a lot of other people in the world.)

"To sleep, perchance to dream..."

See you in dreams, Yolanda.

Date: 4/8/96

Subject: [no subject]

From: Zachary

I don't know if this will help anyone. This is my first direct experience with death, and I still can't imagine what Yolanda's family and friends who knew her better than I are going through. I have experienced great loss, though, and I've tried to read stuff like this and "think" my way out of the pain, and it hasn't worked, but on some level, it does give me some relief.

-----A woman goes to Buddha: her child is dead and she is crying and weeping, and she is a widow and she will never have another child, and the only child is dead, and that was all her love and all her attention....

But what did Buddha do? Buddha smiled and said to her, "You go into the town and just find a few mustard seeds from a house where nobody has ever died."

And the woman rushed into the town, and she went to each house. And wherever she went they said, "We can give you as many mustard seeds as you want, but the condition will not be fulfilled--because so many people have died in our house." Again and again it happened.

But she hoped, "Maybe...who knows? There may be some house somewhere that has not known death." And she went around and around the whole day. By the evening a great understanding had dawned on her: "Death is a part of life. It happens. It is not something personal, it is not a personal calamity that has happened to me." With that understanding, she went to Buddha.

He asked, "Where are the mustard seeds?"

And she smiled and she fell at his feet and she said, "Initiate me. I would like to know that which never dies. I don't ask for my child back, because even if he is given to me, he will die again. Teach me something so that I can know inside myself that which never dies."

-----Osho, The Wisdom of the Sands, Vol. 1 pp 103-10

The greatest loss has to be Yolanda's. But she also has within her "that which never dies." I think she's doing fine. Life, like energy

and matter, never goes away, it just transforms. I agree that she couldn't have passed on a more auspicious day. Everyone carries their own beliefs on this, but I think there's an analogue to the rebirth from death in every set of beliefs. However you choose to look at it, the warmth and loving energy of Yolanda has not left us.

All the universe had to arrange itself in just the way it is now, no other, for each moment to happen. Some beliefs would say that all is a unity, a whole, nothing could possibly be lacking or wrong because everything **is**. How else could everything be?

I, of course, am 19, and I can regurgitate all these nice things and think I believe them, and have faith, but they only seem to help my mind relax for a while before returning to the "reality" of my own losses and the horrible loss we've all seen here, the torment of wanting so badly to change irreversible things. I don't think there's any way to escape pain.

I don't know if I've helped anyone, or even made sense, but I guess self expression is therapeutic. Thanks.

love and light to everyone

zachary

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Date: 4/9/96
Subject: the fire of life
From: Ted

sometimes,

we whirl around compressed in goals and plans and stress and deadlines. and we miss a lot by bulldozing through time, because we bypass life itself. thank you, yolanda, for showing me. you never seemed to lose a sense of the preciousness of each moment. you were a human being, not a human doing. your irrepressible spunk, occasionally wicked grin, enthusiasm always overflowing... these are signs of a rich life, well-lived and well-appreciated. for me, these are lessons. i can't do it yet, weak-kneed novice that i am at living in the present. but i will listen to the birds as i bike to class. i will watch that squirrel coaxing open an acorn. i will look at the hills and the sky and the water, teeming with movement and vigor and life. i will, yolanda. thank you.

Date: 4/10/96
Subject: Re: Rinc memorial planting
From: Buff

I am worried that a tree planted in the dirt bed by the bike racks may become subject to damage in later years. I would ask that we consider other planting locations. Also, I am unclear on where the tree will be

planted; here outside the dorm, or elsewhere to provide a specific, visitable place for mourning and remembrance.

That's all.

Date: 4/11/96
Subject: Re: Rinc memorial planting
From: Betty

Just wanted to throw in my opinion about the tree... Even if it isn't by the bike racks, I feel really strongly that it be planted at Rinconada and not an arboretum because Yolanda shared our lives and was extremely happy HERE. At Rinc. We should be able to celebrate and remember her life where she lived, not some place she never visited. The tree is a living tribute to our angel -- it should be at her home, where future Rinconadans will know why Rinc is so special and where we can come back and remember Yolanda doing tae kwon do kicks in the hallways and sitting at dorm meetings in the lounge and filling these walls with her sunshine.

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Date: 4/12/96
Subject: life.
From: Bing

I don't really know why I'm writing. It's just that, since the service yesterday, I feel so much better about everything. The memories about Yolanda's life were beautiful, but I think the best tribute was just seeing how many lives Yolanda had touched, and knowing that there were many more who couldn't make it to Memorial Church.

Skeptical as I may be about religion, for some reason I have a feeling that Yolanda is somewhere good right now -- and although we all would like to have her back with us in Rinconada, wherever she is is a close second.

"Don't need no more of this world - I'll meet you in the next one, and don't be late..." -Jimi Hendrix

Although our times may come later than hers, I'm positive that Yolanda will remember us as long as we never forget her.

I'm starting to come to grips with the fact that someone I care about is gone, and that things in general that we take for granted as constants in our lives can change overnight, leaving us confused and angry. The world isn't fair, and it doesn't make sense. Man has always tried to apply the laws of reason to the chaos of nature, only to repeatedly find that nature defies our senses of justice and order. Nature's chaos is what gives it its beauty, though. What's rational about laughter, or emotion, or even the existence of life itself?

"Don't let the days go by..." -Bush

Yolanda knew what life was about better than most of us. She knew she didn't have time to waste. She did what she wanted to do, and enjoyed every moment of it. Life isn't about problem sets. It isn't about making money. It isn't about Democrats and Republicans. The way I see it, life is about realizing that all anyone really wants is happiness. We have to use our lives to make sure we and those around us enjoy our time here, however long it lasts. I know Yolanda has done that for me, and I am sure we did it for her as well.

Wow, this has turned out longer than I meant it to be. This has just been one of those inspired trains of thought that usually expresses itself only in private thought or conversation. I guess the dorm list is just as acceptable a medium; we are all going through many of the same thoughts and experiences, and I just wanted to share mine. All I originally meant to do with this message was relate the following closing lines from the Desiderata. If you don't know what it is, you can find a full copy on Betty's door or on a link on my home page. I think it sums up my view of life pretty well.

"You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.

Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be, and whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life keep peace with your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be careful. Strive to be happy."

-Max Ehrmann

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Date: 5/10/96

Subject: Junipero: a sister sadness

From: Buff

To my dorm,

It is my distinct displeasure to confirm that, as Zachary pointed out in his Buddha story, death is not a personal thing.

The point: William, a young man in Junipero, died Thursday; like Yolanda, he too will be dearly missed.

In the ways each of us can, let's be there for them. If you have a friend there, you know the drill. If you don't, but are feeling outgoing, consider paying a visit, as someone who can relate at whatever level; there is someone in their dorm who is experiencing much the same thing you were, whatever that was.

"Death Sucks Everywhere" -Zachary

Date: 5/10/96
Subject: No, It's not about Great America
From: Calvert

I hope everyone read Buff's e-mail about the unfortunate incident in Junipero. I think that we as a dorm is affected just as Junipero is.

Having said that, I am offering the following suggestion:

That we, as a dorm, gather one night and individually deliver flowers (or something) to each door in Junipero. This isn't to intrude upon their space, or to invade their dorm - it is solely for the purpose of letting Junipero know that we understand what they are going through, because we have been through it ourselves and we know how difficult it really is, and that Rinc is there for support if Junipero needs us for anything. (Run-on sentence, but bear with me. I'm almost finished).

I think that this will really bridge the differences and the rivalries that freshman dorms have for one another, and I think that Rinc will be very courageous in doing this. So e-mail me with your comments.

Respectfully,

Calvert X_____

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Date: 5/10/96
Subject: Re: Calvert's Idea
From: Wanda

hey guys-

i think one flower arrangement for the dorm and maybe one card we all signed would be sufficient... i feel like something for each individual might be a bit of an intrusion, and i also think junipero will want to do their own personal thing with their doors, just like we did ours.

wanda :)

>I wholly agree with Calvert, I'd like to do something for Junipero. I think that flowers for each door might be a little to cheery, maybe a bouquet of flowers for the dorm and something else for each individual. I was thinking perhaps a ribbon for each, but that brings up the issue of color, and that seemed to be a personal thing for our dorm; perhaps we could put a ribbon on each of their doors?

>Hmmm, I KNOW I like the idea of flowers, but I'm not sure at what point we might be intruding. Other people, your feelings and thoughts please.

>-Buff

Date: 5/11/96
Subject: Re: No, It's not about Great America
From: Duncan

I think the bouquet of flowers for the entire dorm is more appropriate in a situation like this, where a sentiment is being sent from our dorm to theirs. In terms of personal consolation, I think it is essential from close friends and people that can really support you, but I do not think that it is right for us to be going door to door. If you have close personal friends in Junipero that can use your support, this is definitely the time to go visit and talk with them, but I think it should be on an individual basis. I do definitely think that we should send a card and a bouquet of flowers, and I think that it would be quite touching and would say that we care, just as the flowers from Z's parents did when they were sent to us. That, however, seems more appropriate than a personal flower delivery.

In terms of offering support, we could mention on the card that anyone in Junipero is free to come talk to any of us and I think people would welcome them if they wanted to talk.

Duncan

Date: 5/12/96
Subject: [no subject]
From: Calvert

I have some extra input on the Flowers-for-Junipero idea. I spoke to a girl in Junipero, and she said that the dorm was not taking it that "bad." Supposedly, he had stopped out and had been gone from Stanford for a number of weeks, so some of the people did not know him very well. If this is the case, then perhaps just a bouquet and a card would be more appropriate.

Well, we're taking a vote anyway on the best approach to this matter. Vote for all the ideas you want by sending an e-mail to me with just the numbers of your choice:

1. card 2. bouquet 3. individual flowers

We want to do this ASAP - possibly by tomorrow. So the sooner you vote, the faster we can decide.

Calvert

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Date: 6/11/96
Subject: as promised....
From: Marvin

I have a little theory. Normally, what I am going to share I have not

volunteered except to my close friends, but since next year, or really any time, if i catch any of you on the flip side, I want to make sure you know that I sincerely feel pretty damn good about every one in this whole dorm. So, I am sharing something as a token of friendship--Rinc '96 will never leave me.

This has been one amazing year. I am not sure if you guys met the person who I thought I was going to show you. Let me explain. On the third day of Frosh Orientation (remember that?) I found out that my girlfriend at home was pregnant. It basically destroyed me. Anyway, fall quarter had a sort of tinge to it of extreme personal conflict that I don't necessarily like to remember, but really can't forget. Also, I am not sure if the disturbing phone calls to my parents and Millie (the mother of my child) are any worse than the pangs of guilt that seldom leave my thoughts.

Winter quarter, once again, was full of tough times. My first son, Tyler Chadwick Nelson, was born on February 11. (that's right, he'll be four months tomorrow.) This was really the end of the illusion. I was pushing for adoption as much as I could, but Millie would have no part of it. I do not blame her, I just felt it was the best choice for everyone, mostly Tyler, but I accepted and stand by her decision to keep him. I began the first child support payment of my life. Responsibilities that I never in my life would have imagined began to pile up.

However, I had made the heart-wrenching decision that I was not ready to be a father. I know I have let down the one person in the world (or, really, the two people) who need me the most. Let me tell you, that is the worst part. I am, and always will be, immensely proud of my son, but it'll be a miracle if those feelings are going to be reciprocal. I love him very much, but I also know that I am letting him down.

Spring quarter and Yolanda brought down a whole new set of priority mixes. Then I truly felt like this year couldn't get any more insane. I had experienced the life cycle a little closer than I had wished.

I am on good terms with Millie, I believe. Anyway, we talk and I try to help as much as I can, but I know that it will never be even close to enough. It's a depressing thing. Speaking of that, I believe most of you know this, but I was reminded of it when Betty commented that I have "too much energy for one human being." There is a good chance, and I think it's almost certain, that I have some form of Manic Depressive Disorder, passed on from my mother. It is not fully expressed nor is it terribly noticeable, except to me, but its effects certainly are felt. That's just a little plug to make sure that people know that the disorder, as well as clinical depression, are out there and we must be sure not to think that no one we know will ever have it. It is real, and it is a clinical syndrome. Well, perhaps this has gone on for more than your attention span, so I am sorry. I just wanted to share, and be sure that no one is surprised if news about my son shows up on the rinc summer newsletter [...]

One more thing--- practice safe sex. don't be stupid.

Thanks to everyone here who helped me including [...] ... later guys....

-marvin "wears a skirt to CIV finals" X_____

And, finally, I just wanna say to everyone, in the immortal words of James Taylor, You got a friend, Rinc.

*****Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player

*****That struts and frets his hour upon the stage

*****And then is heard no more. It is a tale

*****Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,

*****Signifying nothing.

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20: DEDICATION & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**THIS STUDY IS DEDICATED TO THE 1995-96 RESIDENTS AND STAFF OF
RINCONADA HOUSE**

This study was made possible by the generous support at Stanford
University of

Mary Edmonds

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Microsoft Graph on Apple Macintosh Computers.

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21: SELECTED QUOTES

[Barlow, J.P. \(1995\).](#)

"...a lot is still missing from the communities of cyberspace," including "the prana" or "breath and spirit," the physical aspects of face-to-face interaction, cultural diversity, "an absence of alternatives and a sense of genuine adversity, generally shared," and "the bond of joint suffering."

[Colomb, G.G. & Simutis, J.A. \(1996\).](#)

"One claim often made for CMC is that its new mechanics of discussion give voice to students silenced in traditional classrooms" (e.g., Batson 1988, Cooper & Selfe 1990).

[Gabriel, T. \(1996\).](#)

"Across the country, computer networks are cinching even tighter the already inward-looking communities typical of campuses, transforming the social and academic life of today's students."

"Some scholars say 'plug per pillow' campuses are undermining the ideal of a residential college as a melting pot where people from different social and regional backgrounds meet."

"Prof. James Banning, an environmental psychologist at Colorado State University who surveyed some 100 university housing officers last year, remarked: 'Universities are saying: "Oh, my God, they're in their rooms. How can we ever build a sense of community in this building if they don't come out?'"

Dartmouth student using campus "Blitzmail" "complained that it encouraged on-line electronic bantering while inhibiting meaningful communication."

[Grunwald, M. \(1995\).](#)

"A vulgar e-mail message listing the 'Top 75 reasons why women (bitches) should not have freedom of speech' is creating an electronic furor on the Internet. For not only does the list include reasons like, "No. 38. If she can't speak, she can't cry rape," it also includes the names of the four Cornell University freshmen who wrote it."

"The self-styled 'four-players of Cornell' ... expressed 'deep remorse' for their 'stupid actions.' They said they circulated the list as a joke among friends, never intending to offend anyone.... The apology has fallen flat online; the list is pretty nasty stuff.... In an interview with the Cornell Daily Sun, the authors said they have received hundreds of flames, including death threats. They also face university sanctions"

Hafner, K. (1997).

"[Stewart Brand] sensed that the most interesting possibility to arise from knitting electronic dialog into the fabric of everyday life would lie not in championing either the virtual or the human-contact model but rather in finding the place where they overlapped" (104).

Hall, K. (1996).

"Conversation dominance" of men. "The majority of linguistic studies on gender differentiation in computer-mediated communication have paralleled the results of early feminist studies on face-to-face conversation in mixed-sex groups" and "Similar gender differences have been noted by CMC researchers in a variety of disciplines."

Harris, L.D. & Wambeam, C.A. (1996).

"The more we view writing (and thinking) as a social, dialogic process, the more we will structure our classes to promote such dialogue among the students."

"Linking students 'from different historical and cultural situations,' as Bizzell [1982] put it, can lead to dialogue between disparate groups of people. Such a dialogue allows students to consider and perhaps accept others' viewpoints. Often this ability to see beyond one's initial reaction is central to successful communication; it is also central to complexity of thought."

"Students can become aware of the effect of their writing upon a community, understanding more fully teachers' claims that writing can be a powerful act -- a way to influence others' views and promote social change."

"Instead of creating distance between people (as those who are uncomfortable with computers sometimes complain), computer mediation bridges great distances, allowing students to confront the diversity of views present in this world."

Herring, S.C. (1996b).

"My results suggest that both women and men participate in discussions on electronic mailing lists to exchange opinions, beliefs, understandings, and judgments in social interaction with other human beings, with the pure exchange of information taking second place" (104).

Kollock, P. & Smith, M. (1996).

"Among the actions that are usually considered an inappropriate use of bandwidth are: posting extremely long articles, reproducing long sections of text from a previous post rather than summarizing or excerpting only the relevant passages, including long signatures full of comments and diagrams at the end of a post...."

"Whatever the goal of the newsgroup, its success depends on the active and ongoing contributions of those who choose to participate in it.... If the goal of the newsgroup is to discuss a

current event or social issue..., participants need to contribute to the discussion and encourage its development. Once again there is the temptation to free-ride: asking questions but not answering them; gathering information but not distributing it; or reading ongoing discussions without contributing to them (termed lurking)."

[Korenman, J. & Wyatt, N. \(1996\).](#)

"We find a remarkable consistency of regular participation by a small group of persons, who apparently serve as the 'core' of the discussion. This small core of regular posters contributes four times as often as the rest of the membership, who average one to two messages per month. Regular contributors to other e-mail discussions often exceed this average: Herring (1993) reports that the regular posters on LINGUIST post eight times as often as the remainder of the membership. Nonetheless, the pattern of a small core of regular participants corresponds closely to the behavior of participants in face-to-face interaction (see, e.g., Hare, Borgatta, and Bales 1965).

"... We note that men are represented among the consistent contributors [i.e. 'core'] in 1992 (1 of 8, or 12%) in almost exact proportion to their presence as subscribers. In this respect, their participation seems to diverge from the common pattern of male domination of communication interactions reported in previous studies...."

"Metacommunication is talk about talk. By looking at the ways in which participants discuss what is or is not appropriate on WMST-L, we can get an idea of what they think the norms are or should be. One way of identifying norms are [sic] to look at the metacommunication we generally label 'apologies' and 'complaints.'.... In written communication these messages constitute noise in the channel that interrupts discourse and irritates some readers" (238-239).

"WMST-L [the Women's Studies List] provides a safe place for the participants to discuss common interests and for them to receive encouragement and support from one another."

[Noble, J. \(1996\).](#)

"E-mail and Internet use have become 'almost ubiquitous on college campuses, and it's happened in just the last three or four years,' said John Dinkel, associate provost for computing and information services at Texas A&M University."

"Nearly a third of all college students have their own computer, according to a survey of about 3,500 colleges and universities by CCA Consulting, a higher education consulting firm in Wellesley, Mass."

"'Nobody has really gotten to the heart of how all this is used on campuses, I guess because the technology has moved in so fast,' said Kim Hoeritz, a representative for Peterson's, which publishes guides to colleges."

Russell, J.H. (1995).

"I sent a message to the list [about a proposed grape boycott on campus] and received five answers to it. Two were sent as e-mail, while the other three were conversations I had in the lounge with people who had read my message."

"I attribute the lack of a response to a pervasive tendency of my dormmates to simply 'lurk.' Rarely do people delete messages sent to the list before they have read them, yet they do not reply. [footnote:] Aside from personal experience in this area, my information comes from a survey I created and circulated in the dorm."

"The way we interacted [as a result of the extended rape and gender discussion thread] underwent a transformation and people noticed the difference."

Shulyakovskaya, N. (1996).

"Julie Jones, an 18-year-old freshman at the University of Missouri at Columbia, died suddenly Oct. 8 in her sleep in a dorm room. Julie was a gifted jazz pianist, writer and singer, a fan of Tori Amos, and a fun, caring person.... Her classmates and friends needed to talk about her death."

"The Web, some Internet dwellers say, revolutionizes the way people deal with death. What was once an intensely private experience now turns into an emotional electronic stream that people can share with thousands of others."

"In the past, when a person died up the street or down the hall, death was a shared memory for the community. The Web allows people to return to this shared experience of death"

Spellmeyer, K. (1994).

"...we could say that within every institution different communities form and re-form as each member tries to play a role in reshaping ostensibly stable conventions. Instead of arising from any prior like-mindedness, these communities are produced by the arguments over what counts as truly common and over how the commonalities ought to be respected."

Sproull, L. & Kiesler, S. (1991).

"...controlled studies of electronic talk suggest that such communication is relatively impersonal, yet paradoxically, it can make people feel more comfortable about talking. People are less shy and more playful in electronic discussions; they also express more opinions and ideas and vent more emotion."

"In some ways, electronic groups resemble nonelectronic social groups. They support sustained interactions, develop their own norms of behavior and generate peer pressure."

"Part of the explanation is that networks make the cost of responding extremely low in time and effort expended. Also,

open-access networks favor the free flow of information. Respondents seem to believe that sharing information enhances the overall electronic community and leads to a richer information environment. The result is a kind of electronic altruism quite different from the fears that networks would weaken the social fabric of organization."

"Employees who used electronic mail extensively reported more commitment to their jobs and to their co-workers than did those who rarely used the network."

[Stoll, C. \(1995\).](#)

"We're turning colleges into a cubicle-directed electronic experience and denying the importance of learning to work closely with other students and professors, and developing social adeptness."

[Ziv, O. \(1996\).](#)

"1. How do people work together differently when electronic forms of communication are made available? 2. How do such technologies interact with the social patterns of the workplace?"

"Popular claims of egalitarian effects of computer networking are often based on management hyperbole rather than research taking into account the perspectives of workers...."

"Reder and Schwab (1989) studied how the use of e-mail shaped task-oriented workgroup behavior among technical professionals within a high-tech firm. These researchers found that computer-mediated communication does not have a uniform set of interactive or functional characteristics, as some of the earlier, less empirical literature on e-mail has implied. Instead, they found that professionals often used computer-mediated communication along with other types of communication for related sequences of interaction, where interactants' choices of vehicle were made in relation to their personal set of communicative strategies and tactics. The authors suggest that users ascribe active social meanings and evaluations to the use of computer-mediated communications technologies."

"My basic data-gathering units were communicative events, which I sorted according to the communicative channel used by members of the group. These channels included face-to-face meetings, printed documents, and e-mail messages.... By contrasting the use of e-mail with the use of these other communicative channels, I sought to understand both when and how e-mail communication takes place, and the social context that surrounds it."

"Taxonomy of Communicative Purposes" in Table 2.

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