

Identity Online



Information Technology and Social Life

March 23, 2005



Identity Research

- Lisa Nakamura - Assistant Professor of Communication Arts & Visual Culture Studies - University of Wisconsin
- Sherry Turkle
 - Professor in Science, Technology, and Society at MIT and the founder (2001) and current director of the MIT Initiative on Technology and Self
 - Books - The Second Self, Life on the Screen
 - Studies the relational nature of objects
 - Appeared on cover of Wired 1996



Race In/For Cyberspace

- On the Internet, no one knows you are a dog
- Control self-representation - ability to represent yourself online in different genders, race, age, etc.
- MUD - multi-user domain (or dungeon); virtual environment for role playing
- LambdaMOO - <http://www.lambdamoo.info/>
- Pick gender (choose from 4) but not race
- Real life (rl) vs. virtual life
- Identity tourism - “ultimate mobility and perfect exchange. “
- Depiction of Asian characters
- Most participants are men; computer cross dressing
- Hate crimes vs. desire for cybersocial hygiene
- Class divisions in rl replicate online
- “Race Matters” and “Bodies Matter”

Stereotypes from media - Asian males

Fetishization of Asian female

Race as bug, that must be eradicated online or addressed



Who Am We?

- “Moving from a modernist culture of calculation toward a postmodernist culture of simulation.”
- Programming intelligence vs. expecting intelligence to emerge from interactions
- People take on several personas, to act out or play.
- If a program can think and have a “personality,” is it alive? Can they have intentions or ideas?
- Online, it is easy to establish oneself as a different gender, but hard to pull off over time
- Is TinySex cheating?
- Is the virtual world more seducing than the real world? What are the ramifications?

Programming no longer cut and dried

Children develop living and programmed concepts in parallel, don't seem to be conflicted