



# COMS 465:

## Computer Mediated Communication

# Plan

- ▶ Review
- ▶ Virtual Worlds & Bots
- ▶ Preview



# Review



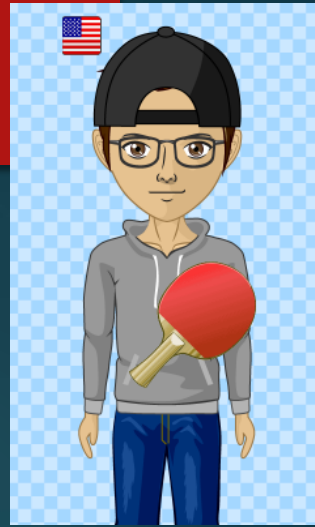
## Avatar

“At its core an avatar is a simple thing...It is an interactive, social representation of a user” (Meadows, 2008, p. 23).

## Identity

“For some players the avatar becomes a purposeful projection or idealization of their own identity, while for others, the avatar is an experiment with new identities.” (Nick Yee 2008).





# 1. Avatar vs. the Real



*a priori* access

# 1. Avatar vs. the Real



*a priori* access



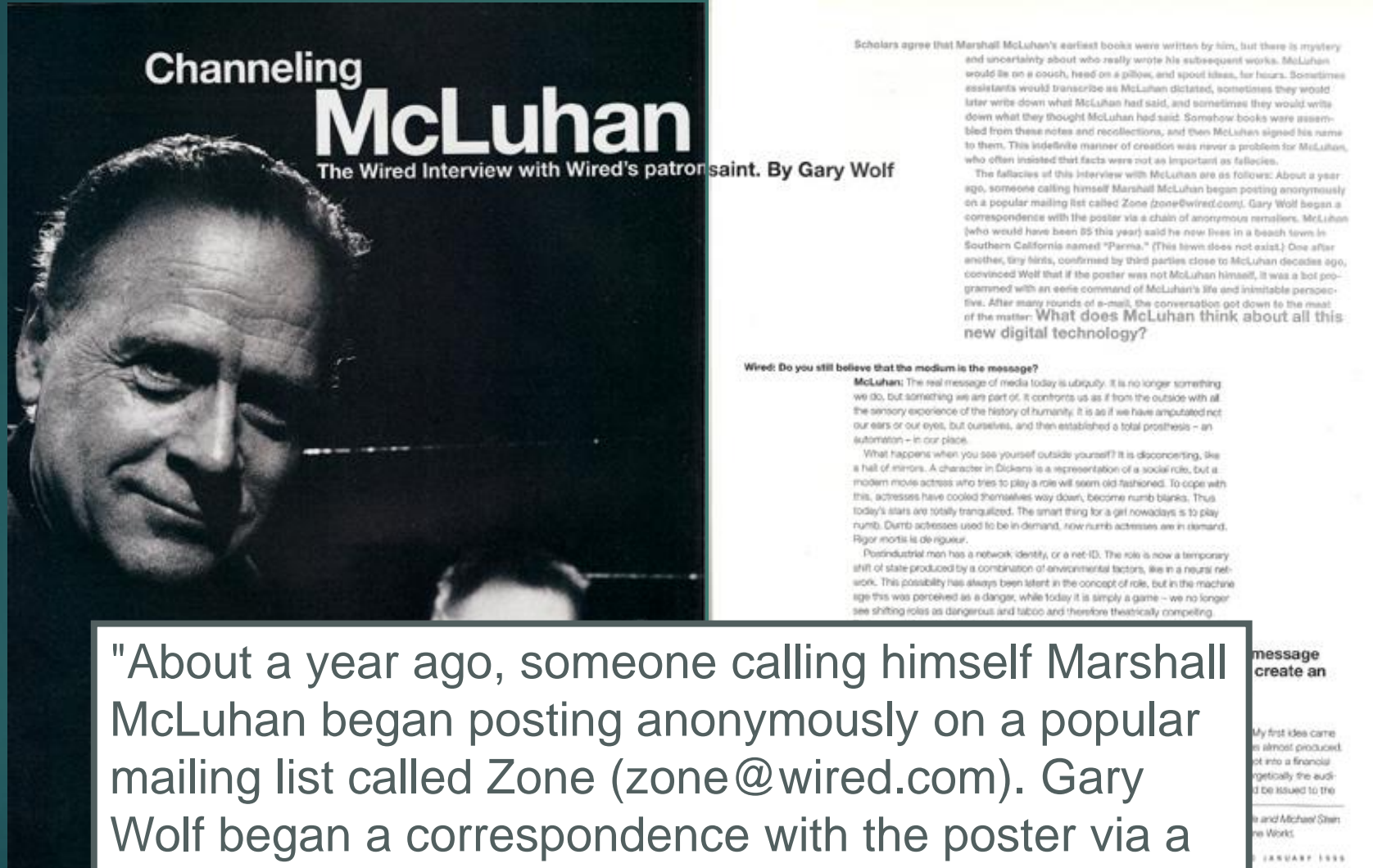
*a posteriori* access



# 1. Avatar vs. the Real



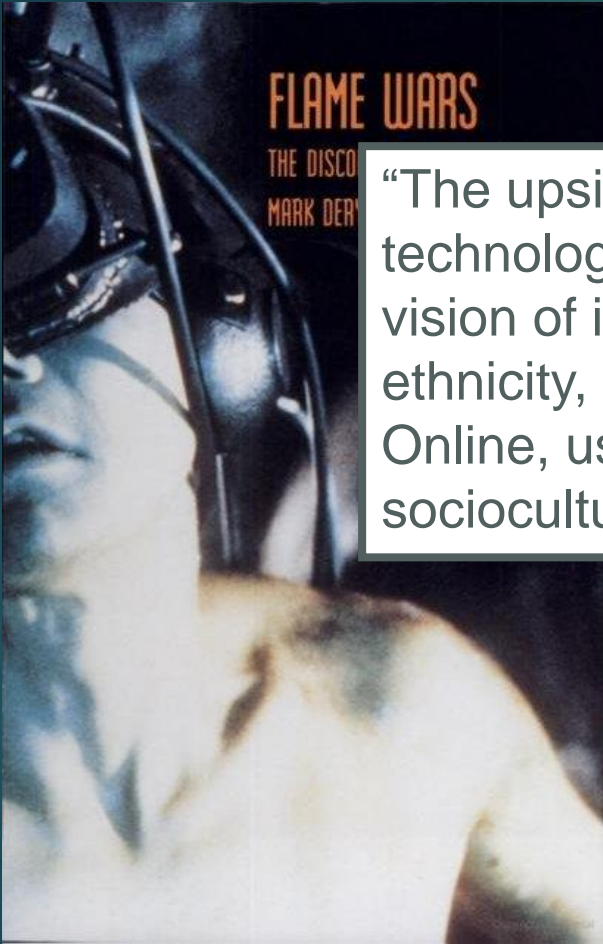
# 1. Avatar vs. the Real



"About a year ago, someone calling himself Marshall McLuhan began posting anonymously on a popular mailing list called Zone (zone@wired.com). Gary Wolf began a correspondence with the poster via a chain of anonymous remailers" (Wolf 1996, 129).



## 2. Opportunities/Challenges



“The upside of incorporeal interaction: a technologically enabled, postmulticultural vision of identity disengaged from gender, ethnicity, and other problematic constructions. Online, users can float free of biological and sociocultural determinants” (Dery, 1994, p. 3).

“By virtue of being physically disembodied from the creator, avatars in the theater of the game space may act in antisocial and even pathological ways—ways in which the 'real' person never would—shooting, maiming, and killing in brutal fashion” (Noveck, 2006, pp. 269-270).

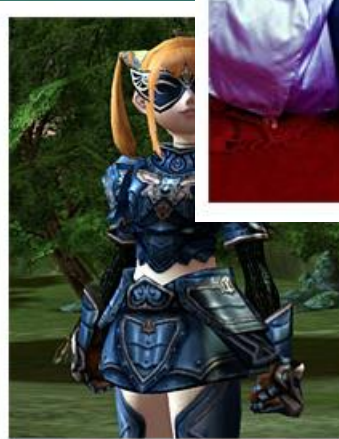


## 2. Opportunities/Challenges



Alter Ego  
Avatars and  
their creators

Robbie Cooper





## 2. Opportunities/Challenges

```
Trying 64.81.190.250...
Connected to lambda.moo.mud.org.
Escape character is '^]'.

*****
*   Welcome to LambdaMOO!   *
*****

Running Version 1.8.3+47 of LambdaMOO
```

### A Rape in Cyberspace

An avatar, named Mr. Bungle, took advantage of and sexually abused other avatars in the textbased virtual world of LambdaMOO. Hidden behind the mask of the avatars, users feel free to engage in antisocial and violent behavior.

```
, where thousands of people voluntarily
. What these people say or do may not
iting any international city, it is wise
and what you say.
rovided the materials for the buildings of
le for what is said or done in them. In
ility if you permit minors or others to
ies. The statements and viewpoints
ose of the wizards, Pavel Curtis,
lain any responsibility for them.
```

```
S:
hat you ask for permission from all
direct participants before quoting any material collected here.
```

```
For assistance either now or later, type `help'.
The lag is low; there are 51 connected.
co guest
```

```
Guests at LambdaMOO are warned that they are accountable for
their actions here. In particular, Guests are warned that any
```



# Review



“There is a gap between virtual and actual self...and a broadly shared cultural assumption that virtual selfhood is not identical to actual selfhood” (Boellstorff, p. 119).

# Today

## ► Virtual Worlds

- Castronova - Virtual Worlds
- Gaming the System - ch. 3

## ► Bots & Other Things

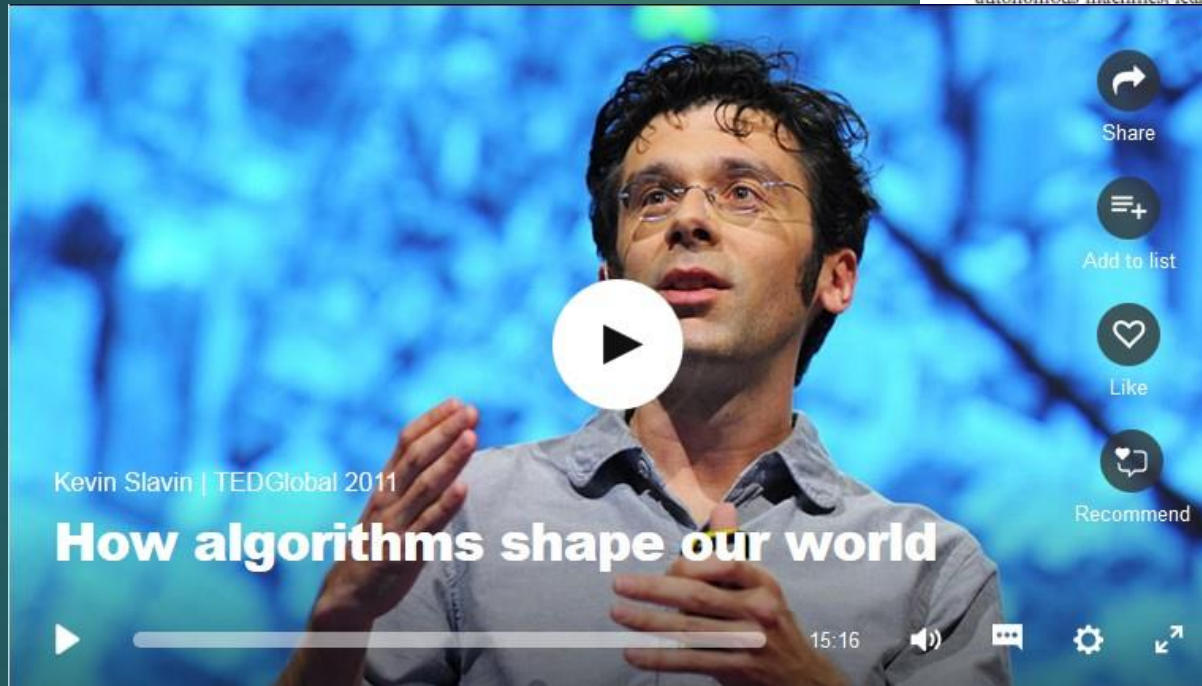
- Gaming the System - ch. 4
- Epstein - From Russia with Love





# Preview

## ► Artificial Intelligence



### Artificial Intelligence

DAVID J. GUNKEL  
Northern Illinois University, USA

Whether we acknowledge it or not, communication and artificial intelligence (AI) are closely related. On the one hand, communication has been instrumental to both the theory and practice of AI. In particular, it is communication that provides the science of AI with its defining test case and experimental evidence. This is immediately apparent in the agenda-setting paper that is credited with (re)defining machine intelligence, Alan Turing's "Computing Machinery and Intelligence." Likewise the recent development of autonomous machines, learning algorithms, and smart systems introduces new challenges for communication studies. Dealing with these innovations require a significant recompiling of the discipline and its focus, instrumentalist theory of technology, and modern



Share



Add to list



Like



Recommend

al intelligence" is a product of an academic conference at Dartmouth College in 1956, it is Alan Turing's 1950 "Computing Machinery and Intelligence," or what is now routinely called "the Turing test," the field. Although Turing begins his essay by proposing "Can machines think?" he immediately recognizes difficulty for this reason, he proposes to pursue an alternative line of inquiry. He describes it, he "expressed in relatively unambiguous

can be described in terms of a game which we call the "imitation game," a man (A), a woman (B), and an interrogator (C) who may be in a room apart from the other two. The object of the game for the interrogator is to determine which of the other two is the man and which is the woman. (Turing,

made on the basis of simple questions and answers. The interrogator asks a series of questions, and on the basis of their responses to the questions, the interrogator must decide whether the respondent is a man or a woman. "In order to help the interrogator," Turing further stipulates, "the questions must be asked in a way which is better still, typewritten. The ideal arrangement is to have a teleprinter communicating between the two rooms" (Turning, 1999, pp. 37-38). In this way, the initial arrangement of the "game of imitation" is, as Turing describes it,

*The International Encyclopedia of Communication Theory and Philosophy.*  
Klaus Bruhn Jensen and Robert T. Craig (Editors-in-Chief), Jefferson D. Pooley and Eric W. Rothenbuhler (Associate Editors).  
© 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Published 2016 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.  
DOI: 10.1002/9781118766804.whic076