

## Chapter 4

**Women and Children First: Gender and the Settling of the Electronic Frontier**

Reading an article about women being shunned online is like reading something from some sort of alternate world where the Nazis won World War II and the Russians beat us to the moon. Now that the internet has become a center for socialization not just for nerdy computer types, but for real human beings as well, women not only are interested in the internet as a tool to socialize, but are welcomed with open arms the same way they would be welcomed to a party to keep it from being a sausage fest. The internet is feeling less and less like a lawless old west, and more like a strange suburban block party.

**We're Teen, We're Queer, and We've got E-mail**

A fine title! There are so many ways for different groups to empower themselves as a community online, and it's good to see it providing resources for people who need them. As much as the article touts John's abilities online, he doesn't seem to have nearly the strength in real life (though he can hardly be blamed for a lack of accomplishments at 17). I think this is best summed up by the article's last line of "if he was online, I could tell him how I feel."

**Race In/For Cyberspace: Identity Tourism and Racial Passing on the Internet**

At its heart, this is an article about the strange paradigm shift in identity that's made possible with the nature of anonymity found on the internet. Worth noting as an aside, however, is the fact the author uses a solid page explaining the joke of a comic she saw that had a talking dog using a computer, and used words like "paradigm," "element of difference," and actually pulled "i.e." back from the grave it was buried in during the second Matrix movie.

The phenomenon of "passing" (as the author calls it) of an identity is far from anything like tourism, as it has been embraced so fully by individuals as an escape from a real identity to have widespread communities built around it. The most popular and easily recognized of these is the furry community, a group of people who insist on presenting themselves as animals of various degrees of anthropomorphisation. Many people who participate in this act insist full-heartedly that their alternate personas are the true them, trapped in the form given to them by birth. They're also nuts, but I'm sure I'll get a whole paper out of them before finals are over.

**Who Am We?**

I really liked this article, the author seemed to know what she was writing about on a personal level rather than an intellectual one, and she seemed very self-aware and willing to admit to the absurdity of some of what she was writing.

This article feeds into what I was talking about in my writeup of the previous one, as to how people adopt their persona to a point where they insist upon that persona being the "real" them. I've always thought a lot of this comes from a simple preference to be something impressive or something you see as desirable than something real and human, which leaves much more room for flaws and things you don't like about yourself.

## Questions:

1. Is there a reversal of this trend of women being shunned online? If so, what is the cause?
2. Do less noble organizations like the KKK or Nambla have the potential to gain momentum online as well? Can something be done to prevent that? Should it?
3. What makes people so willing to accept others online when they know the other person isn't being

true to who they are?

4. What sort of systems did the MUDs featured in this article lead to?