Women's experiences of privacy, publicness and place in mediated space

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WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF PRIVACY, PUBLICNESS AND PLACE IN MEDIATED SPACE

by

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Abstract

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This mixed-method study explored the experiences and understandings of the notions of privacy, publicness and place in mediated space among women who use the internet daily. Mediated space is experienced at the intersection of mass media, including the internet, and the physical environment. In this two-phased study, fourteen women were interviewed and sixty-one completed an online survey. Participants were asked about the physical places they preferred and the activities they undertook, whether for paid work, domestic work or entertainment, such as sending e-mails and gathering information, posting or reading posts on social network sites, shopping, banking, web browsing, watching TV shows and playing games.

Women in this study used the locational flexibility afforded by the internet to remain mostly anchored to a preferred location and to create portable private territories in public spaces when necessary. They also maintained a strong awareness of body and physical place, noting that they generally did not see their virtual identity as separate from their physical one, and remained connected to their immediate physical environment, including their location, ambient conditions and changes, and the presence of others. They also found the boundaries between private and public ambiguous, particularly because the privacy or publicness of their physical experience while on the internet was often at odds with their virtual experience.

Participants also highlighted the challenge of managing attention and anonymity in mediated space. Whenever possible, participants paired less demanding physical environments with more challenging internet tasks and vice versa. Anonymity was viewed as protective but questionable on the internet. Tied to affective connections, previous experiences and identifiability, privacy and anonymity
were described as internal and personal notions rather than tangible or fixed aspects of a location or situation. Finally, participants experienced privacy and publicness as a continuum with multiple levels. Whether in a virtual or physical location, these levels were defined by the type and amount of personal information revealed, and by the relationship maintained with those to whom the information was disclosed.
Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband Douglas and my daughter Juliana

who bring me so much joy every day
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How are the notions of privacy, publicness and place experienced and understood by women engaged in internet-mediated activities? The experience of social interaction using computer-mediated telecommunications technologies is often discussed using two widely used dichotomies: the virtual versus physical experiences of space, and the notions of private versus public. Their intersection is the focus of exploration of this study.

Experiences that separate the corporeal and material from the mental and social, such as reading a book or talking on the phone, can all be said to be partly virtual because they engage the mind, the imagination or the social exchange at a distance away from some of the physical components of the interaction: the characters and locations in the book or at the other end of the line. The extensive and rapid proliferation of mass media and internet usage has increased the opportunities for these types of interactions, which are commonly referred to as virtual, though they encompass both virtual and physical experiences. The reciprocal influence of the virtual and the physical cannot be overlooked. Information, places and things often alter each other (Gumpert & Drucker, 2012; Meyrowitz, 1985, 2009, 2010; Latour, 1991). Media interact closely with the cultural, social and physical environments of which they are part (Hepp, Hjarvard, & Lundby, 2010).

The spatial thinking around telecommunications has impacted our conceptualization of internet-mediated activities as occurring in a space, either a distinct and separate one from the material world as in the notion of “cyberspace”, a term coined by novelist William Gibson in 1984 (Graham, 2013), or in a space that straddles both the virtual and physical realms, as in the notion of mediated space, described by Meyrowitz (1985). This notion highlights the interaction between mass media and space (Meyrowitz, 1985). Since broadcasting or mass media now merge with other telecommunications media, this study uses the term mediated space to refer to the space experienced at the intersection of print, electronic and digital media, including the internet, and the physical environment.

Spatial experiences are problematized in mediated space, not only because they sever the historical relationship between behavior and location (Meyrowitz, 1985, 2005; Thompson, 2011) but also because they merge meanings, connections and experiences that may have generated within, or may be
more closely attached, to either the virtual or physical realm, yet affect and are affected to varying degrees by both.

Many other spatial metaphors were widely used in relationship to online interaction in the early days of internet use: cyberspace, chat rooms, sites, information superhighway, global village, electronic neighborhood (Graham, 1998). The repeated use of spatial metaphors in relationship to internet-mediated telecommunications has also brought attention to other issues of relevance in the discussions of physical space, in particular the notions of privacy and publicness, and of private and public space.

The increased use of telecommunications technologies or new media, such as the cell phone and the internet, has weakened the distinction between private and public space and activities to some extent, and many have suggested that it needs to be re-conceptualized (Austin, 2003; Ford, 2011; Pateman, 1990; Sheller & Urry, 2003; Thompson, 2011). The notions of private and public have become more fluid with the influx of current technologies (Sheller & Urry, 2003; Thompson, 2011). Information that was once regarded as public is now accessible from home, while private information may be more vulnerable to public access (Meyrowitz, 1985; Sheller & Urry, 2003; Thompson, 2011). When private and public activities are no longer clearly marked by their connections to specific locations and times, what constitutes private and public space becomes more difficult to identify. Given the apparent decoupling of place and information and the increased merging of private and public activities through the use of new media, earlier notions of privacy and publicness may need to be revised. New media make visible information previously inaccessible to some audiences, exposing children to potentially dangerous interactions and information targeted to particular adult audiences (boyd & Marwich, 2009). The notion of publicness is challenged by new media, blurring the boundaries between different audiences and publics (Baym & boyd, 2012). With the ever increasing use of the internet, and the relatively easy access to information flowing through it, activities and information that might have been easier to categorize and treat as either public or private in the past, or which may have been traditionally considered as clearly belonging to one realm or the other, may no longer fall within a strict definition of the private or the public sphere when they are accomplished on the internet, whether the focus falls strictly on the virtual interaction, the physical space within which it takes place, or on both.
While print and electronic media have had an important role in this softening of the boundaries between the notions of private and public, new media, such as the mobile phone and the internet, have accelerated this process, particularly as their use becomes so widespread. According to a 2012 Internet & American Life survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, 81% of U.S. adults use the internet and 87% of U.S. adults own a cell phone, 45% of whom own Smartphones (Pew Research Center, 2012). The center’s data also show that ownership of mobile devices like cell phones, laptops and tablets has increased while desktop computer ownership has decreased since 2006, suggesting an increased preference for locational flexibility when using these devices.

The Pew Research Center data also find that men and women use the internet in roughly equal numbers (Pew Research Center, 2012). However, men and women use the internet in different ways and for different purposes (Bimber, 2000; Dholakia, 2006; Helsper, 2010; Jackson et al. 2001; Kimbrough, 2013; Kwan, 2007; Muscanell, 2012; Sánchez-Franco, 2006: Singh, 2001; Thelwall, 2011). This reflects a divide separating the activities and roles of men and women that persists, particularly in relationship to domestic labor and childcare, and that has traditionally been reinforced by the dichotomized notions of the public and the private, consumption and production, and home and work, aligning women with the side of these pairings that is culturally regarded as less important (Kwan, 2003). This divide also reflects social structural conditions that impact the socio-economic status of men and women differently (Bimber, 2000). Since historically technology has been aligned with men, men’s perspectives have been more frequently highlighted in technological discourses and their experiences more widely represented in the literature (Oldenziel, 1999; Wajcman, 2004). Given this historical and socio-cultural alignment of men and women with opposing sides of these binaries, this study focuses on the experience of women in mediated space to expand our understanding of their particular perspective.

1.1 Purpose of the study and research questions

This study aims to expand our knowledge of the way women who engage actively and on a daily basis in work and non-work activities on the internet understand and experience the notions of privacy, publicness and place in mediated space. Mediated space is the space that is generated where print, electronic and digital media, and physical space come together, and can be said to be experienced at the
juncture of physical and virtual environments. With the use of the internet and the cellular phone, traditional and new media are merging. This study focuses on the experience of mediated space among women in relationship to internet use.

The issue of how we define place and the private and public has become problematized with the use of the telecommunications devices, and on a daily basis new boundaries are challenged as we become more mobile and more interconnected through the use of such tools. While the private/public and the home/work dichotomies continue to have a strong cultural validity, one may argue that the use of telecommunications has fragmented these oppositional binaries, softening the boundaries that have traditionally separated them by location and schedule. Historically, the private/public dichotomy has supported and has been supported by other oppositional binaries such as consumption/production, and home/work (Kwan, 2003). There has also been a historical gender-based alignment linking men and women with opposing sides of these binaries (Kwan, 2003). This study focuses on the experience of women in mediated space to expand our understanding of this particular perspective.

The following research questions are addressed by this study:

1. How are the notions of privacy and publicness in mediated space understood and experienced by women who engage in internet-mediated activities and interactions on a daily basis?

2. How is the notion of place in mediated space understood and experienced by women who engage in internet-mediated activities and interactions on a daily basis?


2 Literature Review

2.1 Overview

This study focuses on the intersection of two conceptual pairings: virtual/physical and privacy/publicness in relationship to place and this chapter discusses concepts and theories that have been explored in the literature across various disciplines that relate to these pairings.

The experience of using the internet has often been discussed in spatial terms (Graham, 1998), most notably as cyberspace, though this notion of existing in a separate space while on the internet has lost much of its metaphorical appeal, as internet use becomes so prevalent that it becomes difficult to conceptualize it as a separate realm of activity (McCullogh. 2004). The virtual and the physical are woven in daily experience, and notions such as mediated space reflect this understanding. Mediated space highlights the interaction between print, electronic and digital media, and physical space (Meyrowitz, 1985, 2009).

Most activities that are not mediated by traditional and new communications media may better harness our attention to our immediate physical environment. Historically, the relationship between place and activity has been strong (Meyrowitz, 1985, 2009; Rybczynski, 1980; Thompson, 2011; Weintraub, 1997). But when attention is channeled to a so-called virtual realm, whether through reading a book, watching television or exchanging emails on the internet, one’s relationship to that physical space is altered. The notions of place, placelessness and non-place provide different means of examining this connection between attention, affect and physical location. These notions are important in developing an understanding of the experiences at the juncture of the physical and virtual, which this study aims to explore.

Additionally, because the notions of privacy and publicness, and private and public space are dependent not only on the physical characteristics or uses of a physical location, but on the complex interaction of cultural and personal constructs and social and individual experiences, the literatures that address the processes of producing and experiencing private and public spaces, by setting, marking and maintaining boundaries are also discussed.
2.2 Cyberspace

The term cyberspace, used to describe internet use, was popularized by Gibson with the publication of his novel Neuromancer in 1984 and has endured as an influential metaphor in popular, political and scholarly discourses (Graham, 2013). It conceptualizes the experience of using the internet as occurring in a separate realm, supporting a dichotomized view of the virtual versus physical, of online versus offline. Cyberspace is often described as a place people go to, as if human consciousness could be liberated from the body to pursue its own life in a virtual world (McCullough, 2004). Yet consciousness depends on the existence of the body, and all experience remains connected to the physical world (Cohen, 2007; Madge & O’Connor, 2005; Grosz, 2001; Moores, 2012).

Mobile telecommunication devices have increased the number of locations from which we can gather and exchange information, develop relationships and engage in a variety of activities, including work. The pervasive availability of such devices may alter the frequency and quality of face-to-face interactions. Many physical spaces have traditionally been designed to facilitate and nurture such social exchanges, and to separate activities that require either sociability or solitude. When imagined primarily as a separate social space limited to internet-mediated interactions, cyberspace is then only one element of the hybrid spaces that encompass physical and virtual places, engaging consciousness and attention more intensely, but not exclusively (Cohen, 2007; De Souza e Silva, 2006).

Cyberspace was at one time imagined as a coherent place that one could inhabit virtually (McCullogh, 2004). Though this conceptualization of cyberspace is a useful tool in exploring various aspects of the internet and virtual reality technologies, this "consensual hallucination" may no longer be as prevalent as it once was (McCullogh, 2004). Cyberspace is also now understood as a set of mediated situations and relationships that are summoned to various physical locations, as opposed to being thought of as a virtual place where people can congregate electronically. Walter Benjamin’s remark that “architecture is experienced habitually, in a state of distraction”, may now be applicable to information technology as well, as it becomes ubiquitous (McCullough, 2004).

Others have envisioned cyberspace as a simulation or even a replacement of physical space. Johnson (1997) explores the spatial dimensions of cyberspace, noting that software designers have been interested in the relationship of digital space and physical space, often using physical metaphors in
interface design. Bill Gates’ Bob software, which used the metaphor of the living room, and General Magic’s Magic Cap, which used that of the office, attempted to replicate physical space on the computer screen, supporting the notion that digital space needed to simulate physical space as it was bound to replace it. Yet for others the appeal of digital space has been that it can provide different experiences than those lived in physical space (Johnson, 1997).

More recently software designers have questioned the strong reliance on skeumorphic design, that is, design that references other artifacts or, in the case of software, interface design that references physical objects, such as folders, tabs, yellow-pads and other icons, as people become more familiar with these technologies and understand their various functions. Released in the fall of 2013, iOS7, a mobile operating system designed by Apple Inc., softens some of these commonly used references to the physical world (Grossman, 2013; Strochlic, 2013). For example, shadows on buttons that represent three-dimensionality have been removed. Yet since primary human experience is bound to the corporeal and the material, such references, however subtle, are likely to remain.

Many metaphors used in relationship to cyberspace conceptualize it either as an exceptional, utopian, separate space or as an isotopian space that patterns itself after existing physical places, such as the marketplace, library or public square (Cohen, 2007). Both notions disregard the role of embodied space, the physicality of the spaces and people who activate electronic networks. There is a need for an understanding of cyberspace that includes such physicality, and is cognizant of the ways in which virtual experience interacts with geographical space and functions as both extension and evolution of everyday spatial practice (Cohen, 2007).

Another way of conceptualizing cyberspace can be found in Foucault’s notion of heterotopia. In his essay, “Of other spaces”, Foucault (1986) discusses the existence of spaces that relate to and contradict all other sites. These are utopias and heterotopias. There are five characteristics or principles that distinguish heterotopias, and which may be applicable to cyberspace. All cultures produce heterotopias. Heterotopias may play quite distinct roles in different contexts and are capable of juxtaposing multiple apparently incompatible places in one site. They also relate to time in its extremes, by either being oriented toward the eternal, as in the museum, or the fleeting, as in the festival. Heterotopias may falsely appear to be non-exclusionary. Lastly, heterotopias function by contrast to all
other spaces, either by creating a space of illusion that exposes other real spaces, as in the brothel, or by creating a space of compensation that is as perfectly homogeneous and organized as other spaces are not, such as the colony (Foucault, 1986). According to Cohen (2007), the brothel and the colony represent opposite modes of ordering. The colony exemplifies an imposed, rigid, single, uniform code of ordering, while the brothel denotes a multiplicity of spontaneous orderings arising from the negotiated transactions of the parties involved. Arguably, cyberspace as heterotopia changes depending on context and how it is used, juxtaposes contrasting sites, both supports the long-lasting and the ephemeral, falsely appears non-exclusionary, and seems to foster the multiple messy orderings of the brothel.

Foucault (1986) also describes another space, a mixed utopian-heterotopian space, that of the mirror, which provides another way of thinking about cyberspace, as a space that exists in both the virtual and physical worlds, the mental and corporeal realms. Both the mirror and cyberspace straddle these domains. The reflection in the mirror might both represent a utopia, and a heterotopia, because the mirror itself is in the material world while opening up a window into a virtual realm that stands in contrast to the material one, causing the viewer to intermittently perceive itself at once here, at once there (Foucault, 1986). Like the image in the mirror, cyberspace can be seen as propelling us into a virtual space, while we materially remain, with the mirror and the computer, anchored to a physical space.

Cyberspace has also been equated to information (Benedikt, 1993; Castells, 2000). While Castells (2000) discusses how the flows of electronic information impact the organization and relationship of cities across the globe, Benedikt (1993) claims that all space, whether physical or virtual, is inseparable from information, so that space and information are one and the same. Information technology and electronic media promise to fill every aspect of the physical environment with information; the notion of ubiquitous or pervasive computing has inspired many futuristic visions of architecture, such as MIT’s House_N project (Hart, 2002), a multi-disciplinary project that investigates how digital technologies and design strategies may work together to create dynamic, responsive environments. From this perspective, cyberspace and physical space are not very different from each other, fully infused with information and very real.
Others see technology as affecting primarily social situations and interactions. Castells observes that information flows evolve and increase, minimally impacting the existing pattern of cities and suburbs (Castells, 2000).

Leach (2002) and McCullough (2004) both highlight the importance of the design of digital spaces and computer interfaces, ascribing a background role to the design of the built environment. Others (Cohen, 2007; van Manen, 1990, 2009) point out that all experiences occur in a physical location and that to fully understand the former it is necessary to know about the latter.

In order to support experience in both physical and virtual realms the built environment and cyberspace have also been seen as fused (Chaplin, 1997). Often, when the experience of information exchange on the internet is discussed, the focus is primarily on the mental activity as if it could be considered separate from the sensory, corporeal experience of the subjects engaged in such exchange (Ward, 2000; Kabisch, 2008). As with any other activity that requires mental concentration, it is possible that the digital experience obscures the embodied one, as long as a basic comfort level is maintained. But the fact that they are interconnected and cannot be separated remains.

Prevalent metaphors used to describe the internet can influence the way people understand and experience it (Graham, 2013). Imagining the internet as a separate space might promote a fragmented experience, in which virtual selves and activities are perceived as having minimal or no consequence in the physical world, whereas a more integrated view might be more cognizant of the interconnection between the virtual and the physical, and influence the way internet use is seen and approached.

2.3 Mediated space

The notion of mediated space addresses the interaction of media and the physical environment. Print, electronic and digital media alter social environments not only by the power and pervasiveness of their messages, but reorganizing social settings and interactions and diminishing the connections between social behavior and physical place (Meyerowitz, 1985, 2005). These media have distanced social information access and flow, which greatly influence social interaction patterns, from their historical link to fixed physical settings (Meyerowitz, 1985).
Like the telephone (Kern, 1983), electronic media break down barriers horizontally across the land and vertically across social strata, revealing knowledge and experiences meant to be available only to a select group, to those previously excluded. Television increases the permeability of the boundaries that have traditionally shielded information about one group from another (Meyrowitz, 1985) Backstage behavior may seep into the frontstage, as in the case of parental strategizing and private adult behavior witnessed by children on TV, or information about the historically male-dominated public sphere historically concealed from women (Meyrowitz, 1985). This process has been accelerated and widened by the use of digital or new media, primarily the internet, with which traditional media are merging. New media differ from traditional or old media in that they can provide interactivity and virtuality, on-demand and real-time access, and as well as facilitate the creation, distribution, and consumption of content by many (Baym et al., 2012).

While print, electronic and digital media cannot replace physical presence and direct sensory contact as primary forms of experience, they provide an additional interactional environment that is less dependent on the constraints of space, challenging the traditional relationship between physical setting and social situation (Meyrowitz, 1985). Informational settings do not take place face-to-face in set times and places, allowing social situations to be modified without altering physical space or changing regulations concerning access to places.

Moores (2012) finds that Meyrowitz’s notion of mediated space implies a marginalization of physical place and discusses the experience of interacting with media as a doubling or pluralizing of place, heightening both the physical and virtual experience. Yet, the separation of information and place that sets the background for the development of the notion of mediated space, does not in itself give greater value to information or media, rather it highlights the different relationships that are established between information and place with the use of traditional and new media.

Foucault (1986) has pointed out that our era is particularly concerned with space, and that oppositions define much of our spatial notions: private versus public space, family and social space, cultural and useful space, the space of leisure and of work. Different sets of people, activities and information are connected to each space and stand in contrast to their opposite. Information has historically been tied to specific locales and groups, and we still assume that such boundaries will be
respected to a certain degree. Different social and informational exchanges are expected at a doctor’s office, at a party, at work or at home, even when the sources of such information may be present or accessible at any of those locations. As Meyrowitz noted in his discussion of television, such expectation are vanishing as the link between locations and the access to particular information weakens (Meyrowitz, 1985). Similarly, spaces that have been traditionally defined as either private or public, and in which specific behaviors and information have been considered appropriate, have become less restrictive as the use of telecommunications devices has increased the permeability of their boundaries by allowing individuals to cross spheres and participate in public activities in private spaces and vice versa.

2.4 Privacy and Publicness

Not only are the private/public boundaries permeable, but the degree to which a place, activity or experience may be considered private or public is variable. Several states of privacy have been identified (Altman, 1975; Margulis, 2003, 2011; Westin, 1967). Westin (1967) notes four states of privacy: solitude, intimacy, anonymity and reserve. Solitude refers to being physically separate from others, unobservable. An individual in solitude is not perfectly isolated; he or she might be disturbed or distracted by other stimuli, be it mental or physical: noise, smells, vibrations, heat, cold, pain. Westin lists solitude as the first state of privacy, the most complete level of privacy that can be achieved. Intimacy, the second state of privacy, limits access to a small group of people, as in the case of a couple, a family, a group of friends or coworkers. Anonymity points to that state in which one is free from identification or surveillance by others in a public setting. This state permits individuals to openly present their ideas in a public forum, without revealing their identity. Westin (1967) refers to anonymity also as “public privacy”. The fourth state of privacy, reserve, selectively restricts access to one’s personal information to others, even in a close relationship. Although Westin’s categories of privacy were formulated before internet use, it is worthwhile to consider them in discussions about privacy.

Altman’s (1976) definition of privacy as the “selective control of access to the self or to one’s group” considers the possible interrelationship of a variety of social units, such as individual to individual and individual to group, and suggests that privacy is a boundary regulation process that is interactive, active and dynamic. Altman sees privacy as a continuum, and notes that it is a changing process that
finds moments of varying “ideal” privacy levels for a given situation and instance (Altman, 1976; Margulis, 2003). Altman’s privacy theory is foundational, and while his view of privacy as a dynamic and relational process seems pertinent to the experience of privacy in contexts in which communications media are involved, his analysis is focused on interpersonal interactions in physical space (Palen & Dourish, 2003). Many elements affect the experience of privacy, including not only local physical environment, audience, social status, task or objective, motivation, intention but also the information technologies used (Palen & Dourish, 2003). The mechanisms for managing privacy needs in physical space whether physical, psychological or social, such as closing a door or whispering, for example, are altered with the use of information and communications technologies. The dissemination of information is harder to control with their use, especially since it can be recorded and distributed easily. Also, the use of these technologies can link multiple physical and virtual spaces, each with their own privacy and behavioral requirements, complicating efforts to manage privacy needs (Palen & Dourish, 2003).

It is also likely that what people consider appropriate for a desired level of privacy or publicness varies not only over time and in connection to an individual’s changing needs, but is equally affected by cultural and personal understandings of what constitutes an appropriate level of privacy or sociability vis-à-vis a particular relationship, activity or location.

While the definition of privacy has always been complex and changing, some have argued that the growing prevalence of internet usage and other media have intensified the concern and confusion about what constitutes the private (Austin, 2003; Ford, 2011; Paine, Reips, Stieger, Joinson & Buchanan, 2007; Sheller and Urry, 2003; Wischermann, 2004). Yet some researchers have noted that most people have a clear notion of what they consider private (Lohan, 2000). The home is described by most as a private space, though individuals perceive within it varying layers of privacy, distinguishing between areas that afford less or more personal privacy (Lohan, 2000). Paine et al. (2007) favor a multidimensional view of privacy that includes the capacity to control physical, interactional, psychological and informational access to oneself and one’s group. Altman (1977) views privacy as a dynamic, dialectic, nonmonotonic process, in which people either open or close themselves to others, depending on the circumstances and in which more privacy is not always desired.
When the notion of privacy is brought up in the context of internet usage, some of the primary concerns revolve around surveillance of internet activity and information disclosure without consent (Zhao & Elesh, 2008). In reference to the corporate or home office, the notion of privacy is often connected to unwanted disclosure of visual and acoustical information, and, particularly in the work-at-home environment, the undesired crossing over of activities from one realm to another (Mirchandani, 1998; Felstead and Jewson, 2000). The focus on informational privacy, brought about primarily by increased concerns regarding involuntary information disclosure on the internet, overshadows the spatial dimension of privacy (Cohen, 2007). Individuals don't participate as disembodied entities in cyberspace, and the choices they make when they engage in internet-mediated interactions, are regulated by a myriad of decisions, including perceptions of privacy regarding both physical and digital locations. These perceptions are affected by the experience of surveillance in digital just as in physical spaces, altering behavior (Cohen, 2007). A caller initiating a phone call on a mobile phone often assesses the concordance of the privacy level required by the call and that one afforded by the caller’s location, in a sense magnifying the role of physical space (Lohan, 2000). Privacy in this sense, hinges primarily on control over the flow of information, whether abstract or sensory. The internet and internet-mediated technologies appear to increase the possibility of unwanted information disclosure, heightening the concern for greater protection of personal information.

For some, the private/public distinction and the protection of information seem to hinge on the accessibility restrictions either imposed or desired by an individual (Zhao & Elesh, 2008). In online interactions, password protection or membership requirements, by restricting access to a social network, denote a move to a more private online location from a public one (Zhao & Elesh, 2008). Though the use of password and other technologies, such as encryption, can make it more difficult to access particular virtual locations or information, information is always vulnerable to exposure. Information is routinely collected by social networking sites like Facebook, commercial sites like Amazon and search engines like Google, for various marketing purposes (Christiansen 2011, Sengupta 2013). Information is collected for other purposes by government agencies as well (Greenwald & MacAskill, 2013).

The public/private dichotomy has also played an important role in feminist discourse, which has looked closely at the use of such construct as a political tool (Wischerman, 2004). This dichotomy is
commonly used to establish a link between genders and spheres, equating male with the public and female with the private and ordering them hierarchically, undervaluing women’s lives, experiences and work and rendering them invisible and beyond the realm of the political public sphere (Wischerman, 2004). Binary or dichotomous thinking, which has been pervasive in Western culture, defines people, things and ideas primarily in terms of their differences and through oppositional and imbalanced pairs (Hill-Collins, 2000). Dichotomous thinking usually privileges one of the polarized concepts, suppressing and subordinating the other (Grosz, 1994). For these reasons, some feminist perspectives have proposed either the dissolution of the private/public dichotomy or its reinterpretation (Ford, 2011).

Additionally, technology and technical competence have historically been connected to men (Wajcman, 2002). Though men and women use the internet in equal numbers (Pew Research Center, 2012), they do so in different ways and for different purposes (Bimber, 2000; Dholakia, 2006; Helsper, 2010; Jackson et al. 2001; Kimbrough, 2013; Kwan, 2007; Muscanell, 2012; Sánchez-Franco, 2006; Singh, 2001; Thelwall, 2011). This digital divide is defined now by use rather than access, reinforcing the traditional gender role-based dichotomies (Kwan, 2003).

Conceptualizations of the public and private spheres fail to acknowledge the ways in which these notions have been challenged by current technologies, becoming more interrelated and fluid (Thompson, 2011). While the car has mobilized private space onto public roads, telecommunications have brought access to public information into the private realm and made private information vulnerable to public access (Sheller & Urry, 2003). Private and public are intermingled even in the once considered interior private places of the home and self (Sheller & Urry, 2003).

2.5 Private and Public Space

Access to information has historically led to access to space. With the spread of print in Western Europe, there came an increased separation of classes, sexes, ages and activities into distinct rooms and places (Meyrowitz, 1985). The availability of printed material, by making information accessible to a wider audience, appears to have encouraged the practice of limiting access to spaces where information was held and shared by members of a select group, thereby increasing the specialization of spaces. Rooms became more specialized among the middle class and nobility, who were also the first to become the
most literate. (Meyrowitz, 1985). An increased concern with privacy has also been linked to the
development of the bourgeoisie and industrialization (Rybczynski, 1980; Weintraub, 1997). Before these
developments, work was carried out from home, rooms were multifunctional with the exception of the
kitchen, and masters and servants slept in and ate in the same rooms. If privacy was not a major concern
in pre-industrialized societies, it has become highly valued over time, in some ways even diminishing the
role of public life (Gumpert & Drucker, 1998). Increasingly, and particularly in the twentieth century, the
notion of privacy became closely associated to the home, women and the family (Ford, 2011; Kent, 1991;
Rybczynski, 1986; Rawlings, 1996; Shapiro, 1998; Weintraub & Kumar, 1997).

More recently, social needs and services previously shared with the public realm, such as
entertainment and transportation have been satisfied at home (Kumar, 1997). Western industrialized
societies are developing a “self-service” or “do-it-yourself” economy, and retreating to the private sphere
(Kumar, 1997). The perceived retreat to the private realm has also sparked a debate on the importance of
public space to community. Such apparent retreat into private space contrasts with other behaviors that
are also becoming increasingly common and that bring activities traditionally reserved to the private
sphere into public space, such as carrying on personal telephone conversations using mobile phones in
public locations or exposing private details on reality TV or social networking sites (Kumar & Makarova,
2008). It has been suggested that if the internet satisfies people’s desire to connect to communities of
interest at the global level, the need to engage with others in close proximity at the local level may be
intensified (Walmsley, 2000).

Others have argued that the “liberated” or place-less community and the community of interest
have supplanted the community of propinquity (Talen 1999, 2001; Brain 2002), suggesting that the public
realm might be more the result of social processes rather than physical locations. Many social networks
are established and remain strong without regard for physical proximity. Though some studies have
found a connection between sprawl, automobile dominance and a diminished level of social ties
(Freeman 2001), other research has shown that social networks flourish in homogeneous conventional
suburban developments (Talen 1999).

In many communities people are more likely to drive themselves rather than take public
transportation, watch TV or movies at home more often than going out to a movie theater and buy ready-
to-serve meals more often than going out to restaurants (Kumar, 1997). It is unclear to what extent these behaviors are instigated by a lack of options in the public realm or to actual preferences. The availability of internet-based services and a greater access to the internet facilitate teleworking, telebanking and teleshopping, further intensifying such trends.

This steady retreat into the private home together with suburban planning and the extensive use of telecommunications and mass media technologies typical of modern life in the US, tend to diminish the importance of third places or places that nurture informal social interaction among strangers (Oldenburg, 1991). Suburbs and towns provide minimal opportunity for public life, and the impulse that brings people into the public sphere is directed into different channels, primarily consumption (Oldenburg 1991). Given the popularity of social networking internet sites, it appears that the need for reaching out to others remains strong, and that some of the interactions that take place in physical public spaces, have shifted into the virtual sphere. Whereas in physical public places, the streets, the cafes, the squares and parks, informal interactions may occur among strangers, simply because of their physical proximity and shared temporal experience in situations such as waiting on line, for example, virtual public sites, while also present opportunities to interact casually with strangers, are more likely to connect those who share similar interests (Morley, 2003; Meyrowitz 2005).

Historically there has been a strong and clear relationship between activities and location (Meyrowitz, 2005). Specific behaviors, information and even physical presence are considered culturally appropriate in particular locations. Analyses of situational behavior rely on this relationship (Shapiro, 1998). Spatial segmentation relates closely to conceptual and cultural boundaries relevant to a particular community (Kent, 1990). Such segmentation is also congruent with greater social and political organizational boundaries and is often expressed in the physical organization of the home. Physical space, by expressing these boundaries, serves as a mnemonic device. In the case of Euroamericans, domestic space is often divided based on gender, age or activity function (Kent, 1990).

In contrast to this relationship between activities and location, the notion that a defined territory might be unattached to a physical place and instead define itself around an interaction is proposed by Goffman’s “line of talk” territories, which Brown calls interactional or portable (Brown, 1987). Interactional territories often define varying levels of privacy in public spaces, and may be signaled not only by the
physical presence of the interacting individuals, but also by that of an individual with a cell phone, a laptop and other telecommunication devices. These devices are used to delineate personal territories in public areas, referred to by some as personal "techno-spheres" or "tele-cocoons" (Habuchi, 2006; Morley, 2003; Sharma, 2009; Varnelis & Friedberg, 2008). Perhaps identifiable public and private places are serving less their functions as such, while portable territories with their fluid public/private boundaries are better suited to interactions in mediated space. The ascendance of portable, interactional territories may weaken the role of physical and material markers and boundaries traditionally used to define private and public spaces, requiring a physical environment that can better respond to the needs of fluid and changing territories.

2.6 Work and Non-work

While the private has historically been aligned with the home, the term work is commonly used to refer to paid employment, and is usually defined by payment, location and schedule, meaning that work is paid, performed at a specific site away from home, and within a set schedule. This view is challenged by mobile work or telework, that is, paid work that can be accomplished in different locations, sometimes within a flexible schedule through the use of telecommunications technologies. Knowledge mobile work or telework, work that involves the production, manipulation and dissemination of information that can be largely supported by the use of telecommunication technologies, often stresses productivity and results and is less dependent on a fixed location and schedule. In a study conducted by Mirchandani, teleworkers in professional or managerial salaried positions referred to this notion of work as "real work", work that is primarily measured by output, not by number of hours worked, and that can be best executed away from the distractions of the office (Mirchandani 1998).

Research on teleworking highlights the problematic of bringing together two spheres of activity that, at least in recent Western history, have been considered to be distinct and best kept separate: one is the sphere of work, the other of home and family (Ammons & Markham, 2004; Ahrentzen, 1990; Duxbury, Higgins & Neufeld, 1998; Ford, 2011; Gurstein, 2001; Rybczynski, 1986; Weintraub, 1997). The first is often equated with the public realm, the second, with the private realm. Though the validity of such a cultural construct has been questioned by some (Ahrentzen, 1987; Hayden, 1980; Robertson, 1991;
Saegert, 1980; Wright, 1983; Wischermann & Mueller, 2004), it has been generally accepted. This commonly used equation: home and family equal private while work and larger community equal public, has had a powerful role in Western culture, and ideas related to the culturally appropriate role of women, men, children and work, as well as the shape and organization of homes and cities have been influenced by it (Weintraub, 1997). Among other cultural developments, the ever-increasing presence of telecommunications technologies, the popularity of cyberspace and the growing interest in teleworking further question the traditional definitions of privacy and publicness.

The work versus home debate has centered on the opposition of the work and home spheres, noting their separation in time and space. With the use of telecommunications technologies, such temporal and spatial restrictions are challenged, allowing the same physical locations and communication tools to be used for both spheres, as well as for a myriad of activities that might be categorized as either work, such as formal and informal study and unpaid domestic work and childcare, or non-work, often meaning any pleasurable, voluntary unpaid activities. Strictly referring to one sphere or the other, as if what categorizes work or non-work could be unequivocally defined, fails to recognize activities that might relate to both spheres, such as social networking, or that might fall somewhere in between categories, such as informal or formal learning, and that can be more easily interspersed temporally and spatially with the use of telecommunications technologies in mediated space.

2.7 Place and Non-place

Virtual space has had an impact on distance, challenging the role of proximity in developing community and sustaining social interaction, but not the role and concept of place (Walmsley, 2000). Webber’s (1963) notion of community without propinquity has become more relevant with technologies that facilitate social interaction without physical proximity, potentially weakening the role of place (Walmsley 2000). But since bodies exist in particular locations, the notion of place remains strong and for that reason, physical proximity and locality continue to be relevant to communities (Meyerowitz, 2005; Walmsley, 2000).

Sense of place as a concept in the literature often has a positive connotation. Geographical locations or “spaces” are transformed in a positive way by experience and emotion and imbued with
meaning to become “places”. This transformation is sparked by social activity and interaction (Lefebvre, 1992). Physical locations, cultural constructs and lived experience are important to the production of space (Lefebvre, 1992). The production of space is a complex dynamic process that involves the reciprocal influence of the physical, the mental and the social. Yet much research on place emphasizes the social, intangible aspect only, whereas the physical location of the interaction is, if not ignored, not given as much attention (Stedman, 2003). Yet when we think of bodies, we think of located bodies, bodies in place (Casey, 1993).

The experience of place involves the physical and the social (Shumai, 2009). Place has multiple dimensions, such as location, landscape and personal involvement (Relph, 1976). These notions of place have developed in some cases in contrast to the idea of space, often understood as a geographical location devoid of the attributes that identify place, such as personal involvement, social relevance or cultural significance. The terms non-place and placelessness have been used to describe emotional and social disengagement experienced in relationship to a physical location. In 1964, Webber, an urban planner and theorist, used the term non-place in relationship to the development of communities of interest, no longer connected to physical proximity (Arefi, 1999; Hall, 1996). For Relph, a geographer, placelessness stood in contrast to the direct and unmediated experience of the unique quality of places, which evoked feelings of belonging and insidedness (Relph, 1976; Seamon & Sowers, 2008). For Oldenburg (1999), non-places discourage individuality and uniqueness. Non-places have also been described as non-relational, non-historical or not concerned with identity (Augé, 1995). They are seen as temporary locations that promote solitary individuality and are meant for transience and mobility, environments which are understood through explicit texts rather than implicit understandings, such as way-finding instructions and other signage. Individuals are often briefly identified, usually upon entering or leaving a non-place, through the use of tickets, passports, identification or credit cards. These means of establishing temporary identity also serve to remind individuals that they have a contractual agreement with a non-place (Augé, 1995). Meaning, memory, social, cultural and emotional connections are less relevant in non-places; whereas places demand one’s attention, non-places direct it to somewhere or something else. Whereas place might strengthen identity, the notion of non-place supports uniformity and anonymity. Given these characterizations, mediated experiences and the notion of cyberspace have
been also connected by some to the idea of non-place (Arefi, 1999; Moores, 2012). Though different views on the interaction of media and place have been put forward, many have suggested that the experience of place has been altered by the use of traditional and new media (Augé, 1995; Castells, 2000; Drucker & Gumpert, 2012; Meyerowitz, 1985, 2009; Mitchell, 1995; Moores, 2012; Urry, 2007) The concepts of cyberspace, mediated space, non-place, placelessness and doubled or pluralized space (Moores, 2012) present different perspectives regarding how and to what extent materiality and temporality relate to this experience.

There generally has been a greater interest and a more positive view of the static as opposed to the mobile, of face-to-face interactions and rootedness in contrast to remote interactions and mobility in social science research (Urry, 2007). But in a society where more and more individuals engage in both types of interactions and locational experiences intermittently, such preferential view might not represent the reality of contemporary experience. Notions and spatial strategies that are pertinent to face-to-face social interaction and physical environments might be equally important to their counterparts in mediated space. Social networks, interactions and activities must be regarded equally regardless of where and how they take place, whether face-to-face or remotely (Urry, 2007).

People sometimes use their phones and other “privatizing” technologies to retreat into their own personal territories in public space, restricting their social interactions with those in their virtually-linked personal network, and insulating themselves from contact with those in physical proximity. Physical global mobility is exercised and experienced by a relatively small percentage of the general population and the role of choice, often tied to socio-economic class, is central to understanding the various experiences of mobility, be it as a tourist, vagabond or migrant (Morley, 2001). However, anyone who uses the internet or the phone and is virtually present in a distant location can be said to be virtually mobile. Yet the internet, usually described in terms of openness and exploration, is, according to Morley, more often used as a link to closed known networks and communities of the “like-minded” rather than widening and opening up the social reach of individuals (Morley, 2001). Mobility in the physical realm is also gendered, women being more likely to travel within more circumscribed areas than men, usually to allow them to remain closer to home (Kwan, 1999, 2000; Morley, 2001).
Time also plays a role in the development of place (Massey in Bird et. al, 1993). Boundaries are often not as important as the linkages between places; places are often linked, and such linkages might explain much about the specificity and character of places (Massey in Bird et al., 1993). The notion of place as process helps explain the evolution of places and allows us to integrate change and mobility as part of the idea of place. While a discussion of physical places might highlight the static and durable, the notion of place as process underlines the deep connection between the cultural, the social and the physical aspects of place, and the role of habitus (Bourdieu, 1997), that is, of rituals and daily interactions between people and places.

2.8 Locating Private and Public Space: Setting Boundaries

Individuals classify and demarcate activities, people, objects and places, in an effort to make sense of the world and their relationship to it. Setting boundaries appears to be an important element in the process of defining and differentiating the spaces and times that define such activities (Altman, 1975; Graham, 2009; Nippert-Eng, 1996, 2010; Mirchandani, 1998). These boundaries need not be visible and may not be even be noticeable unless challenged. But even when these boundaries are defined mostly in people’s minds, through concepts or beliefs, they often get expressed in temporal, behavioral or physical terms (Nippert-Eng, 2010). An item of clothing draped over a library chair may serve to symbolize the temporal occupation of that space, and more often than not is understood as such by others (Brown, 2009; Altman, 1976). Privacy can be seen as an interpersonal relational and collaborative boundary regulation process (Altman, 1976; Nippert-Eng 2010).

This boundary regulation process is often used to classify the conceptual worlds of work and home and different views of how these realms relate to one another tend to either emphasize or blur the boundaries between them (Nippert-Eng, 1996). People with a more segmented approach will maintain stricter, more clearly demarcated boundaries between behaviors and things that represent those concepts. At the other extreme, integrators will favor overlapping realms (Nippert-Eng, 1996). These conceptual organizational frameworks guide individuals in shaping their lives, schedules, identities, activities, homes and workplaces.
Cultural constructs often shape personal ones. Such cultural constructs need to resonate with, and be interpreted through an individual’s experience in order to be cognitively accepted (Nippert-Eng, 1996). For example, the culturally promoted view of a strict separation of home and work may be more difficult to incorporate in the life of people in certain professions, such as professors or artists, or in alternative work arrangements, such as those who work at home. Maintaining clear mental, temporal and physical boundaries between the concepts of work and home, might be more difficult under these circumstances, complicating the task of role transitions or boundary work, meaning the process of boundary placement and crossing (Nippert-Eng, 1996).

These cultural and personal territories and boundaries find expression in the physical realm, which in turn reinforces the personal and cultural constructs that give it shape. Boundary theory looks at how individuals manage this distinction, with and without the external reinforcement of objects and locations (Csikszentmihályi, 1981; Felstead & Jewson, 2000; Mirchandani 1998, Sturges, 2012) and finds that boundaries are either reinforced or minimized by those who work at home, according to their own view of the compatibility of home and work. People who work from home struggle to varying degrees with these notions of work and home, and often develop strategies to better manage these spheres when they share one physical location, what Felstead and Jewson (2000) have called “technologies of the self”(Felstead and Jewson, 2000; Mahmoud, 2007).

The boundary theory continuum approach, while working within a dichotomous paradigm, exposes the permeability, malleability and elasticity of the boundaries between public and private. The notions of public and private can be understood as part of a fluid and changing continuum rather than as static concepts (Pateman, 1989) Embracing this perspective, privacy and publicness may be understood as processes by means of which private and public spaces are assembled and dismantled as needed through a series of repeated rituals, refrains and markings. What might sometimes not be expressed in assertions of what privacy or publicness means to an individual, these personal “technologies of the self” (Felstead and Jewson, 2000), the attitudes, practices and feelings surrounding these concepts may clarify better how privacy and publicness are experienced and enacted in everyday life.
2.9 **Materializing Public and Private Space: Marking Boundaries**

People tend to engage in an interpretative effort that assigns meaning to objects in support of personal world views and sets of goals. Objects play a major role in the development of self-identity, and they reinforce a preferred order and boundaries in relationship to the self, particularly of the self at home (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Felstead & Jewson, 2000; Silver, 1996). This interactive process serves to reinforce belief systems and organizes constructs through material production and possession.

Even the most utilitarian objects in the home might serve to express and support cultural and personal beliefs, making it difficult to distinguish between their functional role and their symbolical significance (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). Similarly, objects may serve to mark, characterize and give meaning to other spaces and to define them, even if only temporarily, as either private or public.

Objects can also play an important role in shaping behavior (Latour, 1991). New technologies may be influential in altering social behavior, sometimes more effectively than other modes of influence, be it societal proscriptions, traditions or social interaction. The analysis from this perspective focuses on the chains of relations between human and non-human actants. For example, Latour (1991) notes that at one point hotel guests in Europe were asked to return their keys every time they left their room, but guests only began to do this on a regular basis with the help of a physical reminder: a heavy object attached to the key. The keychain in itself seemed to have a greater role in modifying guests' behavior than a verbal request.

Objects and new technologies play an important role in social phenomena; while there is a reciprocal impact, the role of physical things is often overlooked (Silver, 1996). Boundaries are marked in multiple ways to define activities, spaces, events and experiences as either public or private, using spatial, temporal, behavioral and physical means.

2.10 **Recreating Public and Private Space: Maintaining Boundaries**

While habits and rituals may serve to recreate territories, it is important to remember that such habits are socially informed and connected to the body; the habitus is embodied social knowledge.
This knowledge is crystallized in the physical environment; tools and artifacts reflect the embodied knowledge of the societies that produce them (Latour, 1991; Sterne, 2003).

The notion of habitus highlights the role of acculturation and the body in repeated actions (Bourdieu, 1977). Body and technology are intimately intertwined. Embodied knowledge and experience are part of the form, use and function of technology, so that technologies cannot be separated from the bodily practices to which they are related, which in turn connect technologies and bodies to the cultural knowledge that informs those practices (Sterne, 2003). Envisioning cyberspace as a separate realm, removed from embodied experience, the physical environment and the social and cultural web that it is part of, obscures its complexity.

The activities performed, habits and rituals repeated and daily experiences lived in a place may have a powerful role in defining and affirming its relevance to an individual or a group (Casey, 2001; Brown, 1987). Wise’s (1997) understanding of milieu, Heidegger’s (1971) concept of dwelling and Tuan’s description of topophilia (2001) relate to this idea of building spaces through interaction and activity with and within an environment. Imagination, emotion, memory and habits are tools that individuals use to define and redefine territories (Janz, 2002). Home is built and recreated by a myriad of repeated and repeatable actions. Its core remains fluid and portable (Janz, 2002). Making a mark may be the first action in the process of creating a territory, a mode of organizing and creating connections, giving meaning, making sense (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Marking and other modes of expression are appropriative. Repeating an action, invoking a refrain recreates the territory over and over again, at once different and familiar (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). This perspective sees territory formation in constant flux, needing to be reasserted as it is continually challenged, de-territorialized and re-territorialized.

Individuals and societies create and dissolve territories through habits, refrains and marks (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Exploring such fluid process provides an alternative way of understanding territories and their boundaries. This approach might be helpful in understanding how affective and meaningful connections to places develop through daily virtual and physical interactions as well as in conceptualizing privacy and publicness not as static opposites but as elements of a dynamic process. It may be that the boundaries that separate the public from the private, whether they appear permeable and
fleeting or fixed and unquestionable, are largely fortified and persist through the daily reenactment of rituals that define them.

2.11 Women and Mediated Space

Research has shown that there are some differences between men and women in the use of the internet and other communications media (Bimber, 2000; Dholakia, 2006; Helsper, 2010; Jackson, Ervin, Garder & Shmitt, 2001; Kimbrough, 2013; Kwan, 2007; Muscanell & Guadagno, 2012; Sánchez-Franco, 2006; Singh, 2001; Thelwall, 2011) though these differences may be diminishing. Gender disparities in education, income and employment have changed as well, and continue to do so, and these differences are reflected on the patterns and extent of internet use of women and men (Bimber, 2000; Dholakia, 2006; Helsper, 2010; Jackson et al., 2001). There seems to be a stronger relationship between internet and print media and socioeconomic status, compared to television and radio (Bimber, 2000). There are also other cultural factors beyond socioeconomic status that may explain these differences (Bimber, 2000; 7, 2003; Sánchez-Franco, 2006; Singh, 2001). Societies in which gender inequalities are strongly supported by cultural traditions might present greater differences in the patterns of internet use between men and women (Sánchez-Franco, 2006). Traditionally, computer technologies have been considered more closely aligned with men than with women (Gersch, 1998; Jackson et al. 2001; Singh, 2001).

The types of activities that individuals engage in on the internet, seem to differ between men and women (Colley and Maltby, 2007; Dholakia, 2006; Jackson et al., 2001; Joiner et al. 2012; Kwan, 2003; Singh, 2001), though time and computer location also impact the type of activity undertaken. While men appear to spend more time than women “surfing for fun”, this is more likely to occur from a computer located at home rather than from one located at the office, for instance (Dholakia, 2006), though more time is spent on personal non-work activities during paid work hours, than the opposite (Wajcman, Rose, Brown & Bittman, 2010). Marketed as a tool to facilitate the double work shift of women, the home computer has been presented as a way to center all of women’s work, paid and unpaid, in the home, potentially distancing women from the traditionally public sphere of work (Cassidy, 2001). Women appear to use the internet at home more as a useful tool than something to play with or master, and are therefore more likely to engage in activities related to work, study, personal communication, seeking information,
helping children with homework and buying and selling goods and services, and rarely in activities connected to playing, fixing or mastering the technology (Ahrens, 2013; Singh, 2001). Other research has found that women tend to generally be involved more in activities related to communication and men with those related to entertainment (Dholakia, 2008; Helsper, 2010). It is possible that since women still do most of the domestic work (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013; Harryson, Strandh & Hammarström, 2012; Kwan, 2000; Osnowitz, 2005) even when they also work full-time for pay, time constraints at home might limit the time available for leisure activities on the internet (Dholakia, 2006). Kwan (2003) has noted that these internet use differences between men and women reinforce existing gender roles. Mothers generally use computer-mediated communications technologies to continue to fulfill and juggle their traditional roles as caregivers and to nurture relationships among friends and family, deepening a gender role-based digital divide defined by use rather than access (Kwan, 2003). This situation reinforces the private/public, consumption/production, home/work and entertainment/information dualities, connecting women to the realm of these binaries that is often viewed as less important (Kwan, 2003). The same socio-cultural forces that act upon material and physical space also shape mediated space.

Physical space is influenced by gender (Cassidy, 2001; Massey, 1994; Spain, 1992). The still powerful cultural dichotomy that distances the notions of home and work, and that contrasts domestic and paid labor in an uneven opposition, colors the experiences of men and women differently in relationship to physical, virtual and mediated space. While these dichotomies have been and continue to be challenged and to erode, culturally and historically there have been and still are discourses and practices that have aligned women with the notions of home and the private (Kwan, 2003). The present study explores the experience of privacy, publicness and place among women in mediated space to better understand this particular experience.
3 METHODS

3.1 Overview

This study used a mixed-method exploratory sequential design (Creswell & Clark, 2011) which included two phases. Themes developed from Phase I, which consisted of 14 semi-structured qualitative interviews were used to develop the online questionnaire used for Phase II, which was completed by 61 participants. The emphasis on this mixed method approach is on exploration, using both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis in two sequential phases. The initial phase explored the research questions qualitatively. Qualitative research is particularly useful in delving into subjective experience and may be said to be a hypothesis-generating process, compared to quantitative research, which tests hypothesis (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Qualitative research methods rely on study participants to gather knowledge about a particular issue or question, “grounding” their research on the participants’ input (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Creswell & Clark, 2011). Qualitative research focuses on understanding the lived experience in all its complexity, whereas physical science, experimental or hypothesis-testing research, which uses primarily quantitative methods, best examines discrete aspects of a phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990). Grounded theory research participants generally have experienced the phenomenon being studied and can provide detailed information about it (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Creswell & Clark, 2011). Quantitative and qualitative research approaches use different knowledge claims, modes of inquiry and data collection and analysis methods (Creswell, 2003). Understanding of an issue evolves during the qualitative inquiry process, from data collection through analysis; qualitative research is emergent, iterative and multifaceted (Creswell, 2003). Theory is generated as codes are initially established, themes are identified and integrated into a broad interpretation (Creswell, 2003).

The qualitative data gathered from the first phase informed the second quantitative phase. In a sequential mixed methods approach, themes obtained from a qualitative phase may be used to develop more targeted questions or as items in scales to produce a survey instrument that is developed from the participants’ input (Creswell & Clark, 2011). An online questionnaire was developed and posted online to be completed by the second phase participants.
3.2 Data collection and analysis procedures

The first phase consisted of fourteen qualitative semi-structured interviews, thirteen of which were conducted on the phone, and one face-to-face, by request of the participant. Two pilot interviews were conducted first to test the clarity of the questions. The interview guide was informed by the existing literature (see Appendix G). Interview participants were recruited using a chain or snowball sampling method through e-mail participation requests posted on networking e-mail lists (see Appendix B). The networking lists where these participation requests were posted serve primarily college graduates who are interested in discussing issues related to computer-related work, parenting, changing careers and women’s issues. The snowball method is a purposive or theoretical sampling method (Patton, 1990; Teddlie & Yu, 2007; Warren, 2002) that allows for the selection of participants who have knowledge or experience pertinent to the research topic being investigated.

Purposive sampling is particularly suitable to gather more in-depth data from a smaller number of cases (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). For the purposes of this study, women were recruited who participate in internet-mediated activities for a minimum of 2 hours per day to satisfy varied realms of activity, including paid work, whether freelance, full or part-time, or formal study, full or part-time, domestic/personal/family work, social networking and/or leisure. The criteria for participation were clearly stated during recruitment for both phases.

Participants who expressed interest in being interviewed were then contacted by the researcher by either e-mail or phone to set up a time for the interview. A consent form and a short introduction to the research study was e-mailed to the participants prior to the interview (see Appendices D and E). A short demographic form was also be included and returned by e-mail (see Appendix F). At the time of the interview, the participants consent to participate was confirmed verbally. The interview protocol was then reviewed before proceeding with the interview, which was audio taped with the participant’s permission. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes to one hour, and were transcribed by the principal investigator.

Questions for both the interview guide and survey centered around the connection between internet use and spatial experience; the categorization of internet-mediated activities as either work, non-work or other, and the relationship of this categorization to the idea of private and/or public space: and the notions of privacy and publicness in relationship to mediated space.
Thematic codes were generated from the transcripts of the audio taped Phase I interviews. Codes are words or phrases that “symbolically assign a summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldaña, 2009). These themes together with the existing literature were used to develop questions for the Phase II internet survey (see Appendix H).

Survey participants for Phase II were recruited using both direct e-mail requests posted on e-mail networking lists and a chain or snowball sampling method, since those who received a direct request for participation e-mail were encouraged to forward it to others they thought would fit the criteria and might be interested in participating. The request for participation e-mail included a link to the survey (see Appendix C). Those who chose to participate connected through this link to the first page of the online survey. The first page consisted of the consent form and a short introduction to the survey with instructions on how to complete it. To proceed to the survey, participants expressed their consent to participate by clicking on the appropriate (I agree) bubble (see Appendix H), which then directed them to the page of questions.

Questions for the survey were informed by the ongoing analysis of the first phase, and included 17 questions. The online survey was generated using SurveyMonkey’s software and posted on the SurveyMonkey.com website, only accessible through an link provided in a request for participation e-mail. This survey was kept short to encourage participation and was open for a month, from August 30th to September 30th 2012, after which it was closed. The survey settings allowed participants to edit their responses before the survey was submitted, but participants were not permitted to reenter the survey once it was submitted.

Creswell (2011) has noted that because the second phase of sequential exploratory research designs rely on the ongoing analysis of the first phase, Institutional Review Board (IRB) applications for both phases usually cannot be submitted at one time. For this reason, prior to the posting of the survey, an amendment to the IRB application was submitted.

3.2.1 Internet surveys as a data collection method

Concerns about online research studies have changed overtime (Hine, 2005). The internet is now understood as a cultural context in which social research may be carried out. Research on internet-
based surveys and interviewing has shown more similarities than differences from paper-and-pencil surveys, phone and face-to-face interviewing. Internet-based research methods appear to slightly increase candid responses for example, though it is not clear why (Gosling & Johnson, 2010; Hine, 2005).

While in the past, researchers had concerns about the diversity of internet survey respondents, access and use of the internet is rapidly growing and, while research is inconclusive in this respect, it appears that internet-based research is generally not a deterrent for participation among various populations (Murthy, 2008; Granello & Wheaton, 2004; Hewson & Yule, 2002). Though research has shown that online questionnaires can have lower response rates than paper-and-pencil questionnaires, participants tend to respond more quickly and provide “richer” answers to open-ended questions in online surveys. E-mail reminders can increase response rates (Hewson & Yule, 2002; Hine, 2005; Granello & Wheaton, 2004; Murthy, 2008). Hewson & Yule (2002) note that while internet-based methods provide faster delivery and response rates and access to a larger and more diverse population of potential participants across a wider geographical area, minimizing time and location constraints, sampling bias might be increased and researcher control reduced in internet-based research as compared to other methods. Johnson (in Hine, 2005) also notes that the context in which the methodologies are conducted might impact responses. While the researcher might lose access to visual cues and information as well as some control in low disclosure methods, such as in internet-based methods, face-to-face and telephone interviews reinforce the social presence of the researcher and reveal the researcher’s reaction to the participant’s answers, increasing self-protection motivation and possibly diminishing candor (Johnson, in Hine, 2005).

Gosling, Vazire, Srivasta & John (2004) examined several preconceptions about internet questionnaires as a research tool and found they were not supported by the literature. Such preconceptions included the concern that participants recruited via the internet would not be a diverse group and would represent a select group with particular personality traits, motivation to participate would be generally low, the anonymity of participants would compromise the data and internet research findings would be different from those obtained by other methods (Gosling et al., 2004)
Some researchers have suggested that since it is possible there might be slight response difference in low and high disclosure methods, a mixed methods approach might benefit from both the increased candor facilitated by web-based research methods and the additional visual and aural information gathered in face-to-face and telephone interviews (Murthy, 2008; Johnson in Hine, 2005).

Internet survey methods might be particularly helpful when studying internet-related topics, when purposive or convenience sampling methods are employed and when reaching a population that has easily available access to the internet (Tuten, T. in Gosling et al, 2010). Due to the nature of the topic being investigated and the criteria for participation, participants recruited for this study were necessarily comfortable with online interaction and had easy access to telecommunications devices, so the use of an online methodology was appropriate and useful for this investigation. Phone interviews from the first phase were used in conjunction with the internet survey used in the second phase, taking advantage of the strengths of each mode of research interaction as outlined above.

3.3 Preliminary Research

A preliminary study was conducted to explore the work-at-home experience and environment from the perspective of knowledge teleworkers. Knowledge teleworkers mainly create, manipulate and disseminate information that can be largely supported by the use of telecommunication technologies. Fifteen professionals, entrepreneurs and management level teleworkers, recruited through e-mail lists requests and the snowball method, participated in qualitative semi-structured phone interviews. Participants highlighted the critical impact certain aspects of the home workspace had on their work performance and personal lives. Proximity to family and home, acoustical privacy, natural sunlight and control of the physical arrangement of the workspace were noted as advantages of the work-at-home model. The importance of managing physical, temporal, mental and virtual boundaries between home and work spheres was also noted. Social networks and communities of interest appeared to effectively replace in many instances the function of work- and neighborhood-based social networks, yet the lack of opportunity for informal interaction, and a need for places to meet locally with clients, colleagues or fellow teleworkers were also mentioned.
The preliminary study findings centered around a few key issues: the relevance of an adequate environmental fit for workers, the need for supportive environments for "real work", the importance of finding congruence among virtual, mental, temporal and physical boundaries between home and work, and a connection between a high self-identification with work and work satisfaction.

In this preliminary study, participants expressed a strong dislike of and discomfort with the traditional corporate environment, from the physical arrangement of contemporary offices to management styles and socialization patterns at work. The cubicle-packed open office plan was criticized for being too uniform and sterile, lacking natural light and privacy, and highly conducive to interruptions and distractions. The panopticon evoking setup of the typical office was also perceived as fostering management styles based on lack of trust and constant surveillance, rather than performance and results. Socialization patterns at work, seen as relying largely on intermittent small talk and gossip, were described as antithetical to high work performance and output.

Corroborating Mirchandani’s findings (1998) in their assessment of what they considered “real work”, participants stressed that the work-at-home environment was supportive of work that is self-directed and highly productive. The lack of acoustical privacy as the primary deterrent to "real work” productivity and effective team work was noted. Though cubicles are supposed to increase idea sharing between workers, a concern with privacy and lack of control of communication exchanges may actually hamper communication (Bencivenga 1998). Visual privacy also was pointed out as a particular benefit of the work-at-home environment and supportive of initiative, creativity and self-directed work.

Those who expressed the greatest satisfaction with the work-at-home setup, generally fell on the integrated end of the continuum discussed by Nippert-Eng (1996) and Felstead & Jewson (2000). Most struggled to varying degrees with controlling the level of permeability of virtual, mental, temporal and physical boundaries between work and home. For those who preferred to blur the boundaries between home and work, working at home posed fewer challenges.

On the opposite end, for those who favored segmentation of spheres, defining boundaries between work and home was perceived to be more difficult when both coexisted in the same physical space. Some also referred to the complexity of managing the virtual boundaries defined by computer.
usage. Most used their computers extensively for both work and home-related activities, and found that the virtual boundaries between spheres were highly permeable.

In contrast with the corporate open office, participants found that the work-at-home model provided them with the necessary degree of control and choice, from selecting their most productive hours to work to finding the most suitable workspace arrangement and work equipment for their specific needs. In particular they felt that customization of their workspaces and control of their schedules and task organization was highly conducive to work satisfaction.

In accordance with Talen’s (1999) and Brain’s (2002) comments on contemporary community building, participants’ experiences supported the idea that the liberated or place-less community and the community of interest may have replaced the community of propinquity. Most felt that their social networks were established and remained strong without regard for physical proximity, and were supported by the use of the telephone, e-mail and the car.

This preliminary study found that the work-at-home model may be a supportive alternative for those for whom the social and physical arrangement of the traditional office environment conflicts with a particular set of needs, goals and aspirations. Though many found ways to adapt to less than ideal circumstances, such as smaller-than-needed workspaces, lack of high-end equipment and clerical staff, unstable workflow or lack of social interaction, many felt they had successfully adjusted their environments to their benefit. This study suggested that achieving a better fit between home-based worker and workspace may not require a high level of customization of physical space or a substantial modification of family and social relationships. Some aspects of the work-at-home environment may be minimally but strategically modified to maximize the sense of satisfaction with both home and work life among knowledge teleworkers whose work and family life preferences are at odds with the traditional model of work.

This study focused on a particular subset of teleworkers: those in managerial, technical and professional positions, engaged in knowledge work and findings reflect the experiences of this subset only. While helpful in allowing long in-depth qualitative interviews, the sample size was small. Participants were enthusiastic about telework, mostly working at home voluntarily and willing to share their experiences for that reason; negative experiences were underrepresented.
Additionally, the discussion of technology and work during the interviews seemed to easily gravitate towards the specificity of tools and tasks, though the focus of this study was on the experience and the environment of knowledge teleworkers who worked from home. More open ended, less structured questions and fewer references to specific tools and devices might have led to richer responses and a fuller and more diverse exploration of the teleworking experience and environment.

Though there has been interest in the practical needs of the work at home model, such as telecommunications technology; its potential economic and environmental consequences, such as reduced corporate overhead and reduced pollution from eliminated commutes, and some of its social aspects, such child care and domestic work interference for women and worker isolation and overwork, less attention has been paid to the role of individual notions of work and home and the public and the private, and to how these perceptions relate to the physical/virtual environment in which they take place.
4 ANALYSIS – PHASE I INTERVIEWS

4.1 Overview

Phase I consisted of fourteen qualitative semi-structured interviews. The interview guide, which was informed by the existing literature, consisted of a short introduction and nineteen questions grouped into five sections of related questions (see Appendix G). The first set of questions, dealt with the daily experience of mediated space in relationship to place, such as daily routines and spatial preferences while using the internet, followed by questions regarding the organization and categorization of work, non-work and other activities in connection to such routines and spatial preferences. The next two sections asked about the role of place while using the internet in relationship to the notions and experiences of privacy and publicness. Finally, participants were asked if they wished to put forward any issues on the topic that had not been addressed during the interview and to provide some demographic data. Participants often connected issues from different sections in their answers, so this chapter is organized by themes brought up during the length of the interview rather than by order of the interview guide sections.

4.1.1 Interview participants’ demographic information

Of the fourteen participants who agreed to be interviewed, 4 (29%) were 36-45 years old, 4 (29%) were 26-35, 3 (21%) were 46-65. 2 (14%) were 18-25) and 1 (7%) was 56-65. Twelve had paid employment and of those, five worked from home, four worked in an office away from home and three could work from different locations. Occupations varied, and of the two participants who did not work for pay, one was a looking for work and the other was retired. Seven lived in the suburbs, six in an urban location and one in a rural area.
**Phase I -- Age**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<td>18-25</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56-65</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Interview participants’ demographic information: Age.

**Phase I -- Paid work location**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HOME</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFFICE</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLEXIBLE</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTAPP</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Interview participants’ demographic information: Paid work location.
4.2 Conceptualizing the internet: internet as place, portal and tool

The notion of the internet as a place, often called cyberspace, has been very widespread, and place metaphors are common in discussing internet-related experiences. Many participants in this study used place-related terminology when describing their internet activities, with phrases such as “there are
people there that…” for example, but few described the internet as a place when asked directly to describe the internet from their own perspective. “The internet is a tool definitively, it’s not a place, it’s a means to an end” (P1). “I would say that the internet is a source of free information that is local and universal to everyone, everyone could use it if they have access to it.” (P13)

When seen as place, a few thought of it as a library or repository of information:

The internet is a source of information, it’s kind of hard to describe it, because it’s an abstract, virtual place, but I kind of consider it to be a place, in the regard that you use the computer to go and retrieve and access information…I envision it as a single place. (P3)

I consider the internet an immense library in which it is easy to find what you’re looking for…I think of it more as a thing, like an entity… I consider it more like a library… there’s a lot of bringing people together in a library, like a great big coffee shop. (P10)

A few referred to the internet as a threshold or portal that you use to enter into the virtual sphere of the internet.

I just see the device as a portal and it doesn’t really matter where I am that much…it’s so portable now, you can connect from so many places, everyone can connect from so many places. (P12)

The internet was described as a tool by most participants: as a tool for communications, for information searching, for social networking and community building, for shopping, and lastly, for entertainment. Most participants made a clear distinction between the internet as an information tool and the internet as a communication medium. “It’s like a television in one way, and a telephone.” (P01)

Some used the term internet to refer only to its informational and entertainment aspects, and e-mail to refer to its communication uses.

The most important part is e-mail, because is a fast way of communicating…it keeps me in touch with family and friends…and I can get things done for work without having to go anywhere… It’s like pigeon mail without the pigeon. (P05)

A few implied that e-mail use as a communications tool was somewhat more respectable than internet use for other purposes, such as web-surfing or browsing, noting that busy working people like themselves, engaged only in necessary tasks and would not have time to spend time on the internet in this way.
Some participants did mention the recreational or entertainment aspect of the internet, used primarily to view TV shows, and to a lesser degree to play games.

The internet is like the phone, TV and books…it’s like a phone to communicate…it’s like TV because it’s visual and has a screen, and like a book because you can find information and you can read the news (P02).

But the notion of what constitutes necessary activities, described as those that involve family, socially-oriented or work-related uses, as opposed to unnecessary activities, such as those engaged in purely for fun, was difficult to define for many. Shopping was also counted as a common useful activity, conveniently accomplished through the internet.

It’s a virtual image of the world…it is a shopping mall and an encyclopedia that you can access any time from any place…you can browse the whole world without leaving the kitchen…(P04)

The relational opportunities afforded by the internet were perceived as being very useful and important for building and participating in communities of interest and for maintaining and strengthening family and friendship ties. “I think [the internet] is a place that is kind of connecting…it has to do with connections and information, is has to do with expression, there’s a lot of ways that you can express yourself”(P06) “It’s a library, it’s more than a newspaper, it’s a marketplace…in many ways, it’s a community.” (P11)

While the internet as information resource, communication medium and community building or social networking tool were the definitions shared by most, these multiple uses varied in importance, intensity and frequency of use for each participant. “[The internet] is defined more by its use and its user…maybe in my own use…it would be a book…and a communication device.” (P06) “It’s a vehicle to manage my way around the world, in terms of getting a lot of the information that I need…it’s a place where I get lost many times but it’s a means to the end that I want…” (P07) “It’s like a giant data warehouse…you could be limited or not by your own knowledge going into it…what resources actually exist for each use…”(P09)

While most felt that the internet had become a pervasive and necessary tool in the fabric of daily life, the view of the internet as a parallel world or a mirror image of the physical world was brought up by a
few participants. But even those who conceived of the internet in this way, talked about this parallel world being integrated to the physical one.

I would say that the internet...allows you to create, to ingest content in various forms, any form of content for any purpose...almost anything that you can experience in the physical world, there's some form of that or some adaptation of that on the internet. (P09)

A few participants stressed the view of the internet not only as a research resource, but also as an easily accessible repository where one could deposit or store information that could be shared.

I'd call the internet a multimedia communication channel...the internet is a place where you can put things...you can post reviews of restaurants, and you can share those with other people...you can but you don't have to be talking in real time or talking at all, there's all sorts of different communication media, video, photos, long documents, short chats, pretty much any format in which you wish to communicate...I download my brain to the internet.(P14).

The difficulty of managing and coordinating this parallel production and storage of information in electronic and paper formats simultaneously was also noted by one participant.

4.3 Conceptualizing privacy: control and visibility

Privacy was generally described as the ability to control and particularly to restrict access to personal information, whether in the physical or virtual realm or both. “It means not sharing information...whether you know information shouldn’t be shared or if someone has told you specifically not to share the information.” (P01) “Privacy means my business remains my business, and I divulge what I want when I want to whom I want...”(P04)

Protecting personal details from someone...who I might not want to have personal details about me...security, privacy is having only people that I want to know about things, know about things. Privacy is information about yourself, personal information, that you don’t want other people to know or see publicly, it should be your choice to not share that with them.”(P13)

Many noted that the depth or closeness of a relationship is often marked by the type of personal information that is exchanged between those involved in it. Personal information shared between close friends is different than that shared between colleagues, acquaintances or strangers. Being in charge of determining what information is accessible to which set of people based on this relationship structure was
highlighted as being pivotal to a sense of privacy. “Privacy is making sure that the right information is going to the right audience.” (P14)

Given this desire to distribute information in a targeted way, one participant expressed her fear losing her ability to ascertain these relationship distinctions if information about her was distributed randomly to others on the internet. “I don’t want people to talk to me and appear that they know me when they don’t.” (P07)

Most participants talked about privacy as a positive state, connected with feelings of being in charge, protected and safe.

It means security to feel comfortable, whether it’s, you know, emotional, physical, it could be…privacy could be very potentially tangible or very abstract… it could be a feeling…a sense of security or comfort. (P03)

Many felt it was dangerous for others to have access to their personal information.

Privacy is fundamentally about safeguarding your information so that people can’t steal from you… I feel if I’m not careful about my privacy…or that I might be naïve about sharing my information…it will be to my detriment. (P07)

To varying degrees, having personal information distributed indiscriminately on the internet was considered a breach of privacy and was a concern for all participants. While most thought of the indiscriminate distribution of textual information as a privacy issue in relationship to the internet, several also extended this notion to the physical environment, emphasizing being seen and being heard without their agreement as a primary concern.

Privacy is is having a space of your own that you can define the borders around…that you have some control of who comes in…you can make a place private, by closing the door…the concept of privacy is easier to imagine in a physical space, than on the internet. (P06)

Inside my apartment is private and everywhere else is a public place…if I go into Starbucks to use the restroom, and lock the door…a public bathroom, that is a private place, unless someone has set up a camera. I consider my car to be private…if I start thinking about it…though nowhere is really private…because I think of privacy in terms of avoiding someone doing something bad. If someone wanted to do something bad they could break into my apartment and put a camera, a microphone, whatever.(P07)

Any information shared on the internet was perceived as being potentially accessible to anyone, so most participants made an effort to curtail the type of information they passed along on the internet.
Most said they would only use the internet to transmit information about themselves that they would not regret having shared if it was made public.

Once you’re outside your home…you’re trackable, when you are out in your car, you’re trackable… being out in public space….my neighbors are watching…if I step out my front door, I pretty much know I’d better have my pants on…and I feel pretty much the same way about the internet, if I’m going to post information or send out information on the internet, I’d better have pants on.(P12)

The home was noted by everyone as being the only clearly private space, where an individual has the most control of what and how personal information is distributed. This feeling extended to internet usage from the home; many participants expressed a feeling of enhanced privacy when using the internet from home, since internet connections were considered to be more protected and was no apparent risk of other people in their immediate surroundings finding out about their internet usage by looking at their screens or hearing sounds from their computers. “Privacy means that I can protect what I want you to know about me or my family…My home is private…I can have privacy…I don’t think you have privacy when you leave your home.” (P10)

4.4 Mediated space and identity

In the early literature on the internet, the notion of place was often tied to the notion of identity and more specifically, to the potential for altering one’s identity in a separate virtual place (Turkle, 1995). While most participants in this study felt they maintained their identity on the internet, a few pointed out that they had different versions of their selves: self as professional, as worker, as daughter and as friend, for example, and that these versions could be just as distinct in the real world as they were on the internet, in the form, for example, of Facebook profiles with different pages and types of information. “Social interactions, your experience, activities… don’t really change, whether you are in person or online.” (P09)

I’m aware that some people think of it as a place where you can be somebody else, but no matter where I am, I’m always myself…I’m pretty honest…I’m always going to be me so it’s not really someplace to hide, I’m always going to be truthful…(P01)

I can’t control how people read things and how they react to things… I try to be myself. I know that other people have e-mail voices or Facebook voices. Facebook is notorious for people trying to act like their lives are sunshine and rainbows…that’s not me, I’m very
honest about it...I try to be real; I try to be me...I think I am the same way on the phone as I am there. (P12)

If you think you’re speaking to a particular audience then you’re only speaking to that audience. that’s internet privacy, because you are trying to communicate to other people, you’re just trying to communicate the right message to the right people...Because you do say different things to your close friends or people with whom you share an interest than you do with business colleagues. (P14)

This role-taking and playing to particular audiences occurs both in and out of the internet, but the internet, because of its widespread reach, increases the opportunities to create communities that share a common interest, and where an individual might define a self that centers around that interest only. One participant noted that some communities of interest, e-mail lists or online discussion boards, are so tightly focused that in order to participate you have to become well versed on a very specific set of behaviors and language, narrowly targeted to that particular community.

The way in which I do think of it as a place is in the sense of community...there are places on the internet that have their own culture and almost their own sets of acceptable or normal modes of behavior, and they're not always the same as the larger society...people separate themselves into niches, they have places where they prefer to go more often. You hear Facebook called a community very often that’s mirroring the real world, there are places that don’t mirror the real world, because they’re focused around an interest or a set of interests, and if you don’t have that interest you almost won’t understand the pages you’re reading, because people have their own jargon and their acronyms. (P14).

From this perspective, the self as a member of a tightly focused community of interest only presents the relevant aspects that suit that community, leaving much of its complexity unrevealed, especially on the internet, where another part of the self, its physical attributes, are also obscured.

4.5 Mediated space, non-place and attention

Attention, the ability to focus on an activity, was mentioned in one way or another by most participants in relationship to the experience of mediated space. The relationship between place and the internet seemed to hinge on how attention was managed by the individual. Many participants felt that physical place had a minimal impact in their internet usage, since they were able to harness their attention to the internet activity without interference from the physical environment. Some searched for physical places that held little interest for them, where they could feel disconnected from their physical
location: public places where they felt anonymous, such as a coffee shop, or where distractions were minimized, such as a library. Such places were selected because their low attentional demands improved the internet experience. “A relative sense of peace, or a place in which I can feel like I can cut myself off from what’s going on around me, emotionally, so I can focus.” (P10)

I take my laptop to work, to one of the desks in the lab…that’s one space, the environment is sterile…all the walls are white…there’s computers…it’s a sterile work environment, so I can concentrate well in there. (P13)

I don’t really think about place…I think about the tasks I need to complete…I don’t think of the space that I’m in when I’m using the television…I don’t think of the space that I’m in when I’m using the internet…unless something really great happens or something really bad happens, which doesn’t usually happen. (P01)

Several participants described their internet experience as being a solitary activity, whether or not it involved active virtual social interactions. “I look for a quiet space, a library, where I can be off on my own…it’s a solitary activity for me.” (P02) “I need more solitary space for work-related things…I’m more efficient” (P02)

Others felt they needed to be connected to the physical environment around them and wanted to be aware of the passage of time or enjoyed the physical presence of strangers. For them, this awareness was helpful or pleasant, rather than distracting.

I would never want to be in a space where I had no connection to the outside world and was only looking at my computer screen as if the internet was my only world for that period of time, I never want to get so lost in the internet that I don’t realize there is a physical world out there and I’m not constantly reminded of it. (P02)

The ability of controlling these environmental stimuli seemed to play a role in defining them as either distracting or pleasant. Some participants found, for example, that they were not bothered by music, radio or TV programs that they could control, but were distracted by other sounds or other people’s conversations. “I like my internet experience to be quiet. I like my sounds to come from a different source…the radio or TV…” (P02)

The attentional demand of the activity at hand had a clear influence on whether the physical environment was perceived as interfering with the internet activity. Many felt that when an activity required greater concentration, they preferred a quieter and uninteresting physical environment, while
others noted that when they were very interested in the activity, regardless of the level of difficulty needed to accomplish it, environmental stimuli had little impact on their ability to focus.

I think…sometimes when I am seeking a different level of like, quietness, like sometimes I’m on the internet, I am multitasking, and there’s all kinds of stuff going on in the room and that doesn’t matter…but sometimes when you want to focus…and maybe you’re just trying to do something that requires more thought process or you’re really engaged with it you might want it to be quiet and I might relocate myself based on the other activity that is going on in the house. I can tune out noise levels…but if I’m not invested…then I need it to be quiet…so I could invest myself. (P03)

I like to go to Starbucks if I’m doing something more creative or something like where I’m reading… I’m writing or blogging or journaling…I like to have that social component around me…even if I have headphones on…I’m not fully engaging in my environment… and it’s there…I like the vibe…But if I’m doing something research-based on the internet or if I’m in a situation where I’m stressed out and I have to be on the internet, then I want to be in very quiet environment where I’m not bothered…I don’t want people to be talking at all when I’m at the office…it’s distracting…I don’t want to show that I’m stressed out at work because I’d rather people not talk, so I remove myself from that situation to avoid that…I don’t like people to talk to me if I’m stressed out doing something time-sensitive. (P09)

I do much better at separating the planning and the work stages…so if I do the planning before I leave, I’m more likely to work in a focused manner even if there are more people in the space and distractions, that makes it kind of a nice atmosphere instead of something that would be distracting if I didn’t know what I set out to do. (P14)

While the degree to which participants felt they could become engrossed in an internet activity varied widely, most felt they were always aware of their physical location and surroundings, though they also felt they could lose track of time, especially at home and at night, when they had fewer distractions and time limitations. "I’d say that my brain registers being engaged in something deeply and I don’t lose track of my surroundings, I lose track of time." (P11)

In reference to losing track of time, several participants referred to the structure of information on the internet, noting that its linking capabilities made it particularly tempting to wander from website to website, following the various informational paths set up for them to follow. One participant made a point of only completing more unstructured tasks at home for this reason. “Planning is open-ended and imaginative, I find it easy to get derailed into something else…[so it's easier to do it at home]…"( P14)

Home as a place for internet use was perceived as being different from other places, whether very open public places like coffee shops or places with more restricted access, like offices. For some, home was seen as being more distracting for most internet use, especially if not related to home-related
tasks, because of housework and family demands, primarily during the daytime. Others saw the home as less distracting, because of a sense of security, privacy and the ability to control the environment, but only in the absence of children and other members of the household. Only a few didn’t make a distinction between using the internet inside and outside the home.

Usually when I have a specific task that I’m having trouble starting…[I prefer to work outside] Something about leaving the house, OK…time to start…you can’t come back until you finished it, I used to do that also when I was a student…it helped me set aside time…because once you leave the house, your time is pretty much automatically set aside…you can’t do anything else…I like looking up and seeing movement, that’s distracting enough to remind me that I have something to do…I like a low level of fairly uninteresting activity around me. (P14)

4.6 Mediated communications, places and relationships

Two primary views of the internet as tool were emphasized: the internet as a tool for communication and social interaction, and the internet as a tool for information gathering. As a communication tool, participants stressed the difference between e-mail and social networking sites, like Facebook, in different ways. E-mail was described as being more targeted, more formal and somewhat more controllable and restricted. Social networking sites were generally perceived as being more informal and very public regardless of privacy settings or other tools to restrict access. Many noted on the potential for misunderstandings when using e-mail, due to the lack of non-verbal cues.

I definitely prefer phone or in person interaction…whatever you type can be misconstrued, because tone of voice can tell you so much, and also if you’re sending e-mail…sometimes when you’re having a conversation or something, it sparks…like I think about this other thing, or I need this other piece of information while I’m here, I think that, and this leads to creating ideas and creating personal relationships. (P01)

In contrast, the immediacy of a cell phone call was problematic for some participants. Its ringing was perceived as interruptive and annoying and a demand for an instant response, giving the receiver no time for a carefully considered response, in comparison to e-mail, which could be written and read at the convenience of the sender and receiver.

I’m not as cell phone oriented as I am e-mail oriented – I think I feel more self-conscious on the telephone, that I’m interrupting someone, if I have a friendship conversation it would have to be in their presence, I like to write and be thoughtful in my answers. (P11)

On the other hand, one participant felt the level of opacity afforded by an e-mail message was actually well-suited for more impersonal or professional exchanges.
For people that I don’t know well or haven’t even seen, and it’s professional communication, I prefer e-mail, if you don’t know someone, e-mail is definitively less threatening in a way, because you can’t hear what their voice sounds like, you can’t see them, so there’s room for interpretation in their tone, with an e-mail, but on the phone or in person, there’s so many other communication cues, and body language and behaviors that it definitively gets more complicated. (P13)

Certain modes of communication were considered more appropriate to particular social situations over others. A face-to-face conversation was generally perceived as being the most personal and private mode of communication and most appropriate for discussing sensitive information. A phone call was generally seen as being more personal and more private than e-mail, and appropriate for closer relationships. E-mail was considered to be more formal by many, like writing a letter, targeted and intentional, though its degree of privacy was generally questioned. Social-networking sites and web forums or chat boards were regarded as the least private, and appropriate for informal interactions and for sharing information with a wide range of people.

It’s evident when you get an e-mail from me, that I have an intention of communicating with you and that most of my action is visible and understandable, like it was delivered on my part to send it to you, and it is delivered on your part to read it and it’s agreed between the two people who agreed to do something…I expect my interactions with people who are not yet part of my community to first be in the form of an e-mail and then be in the form of a phone call.” (P11)

Email is my formal communication mode…it’s for things that are communications on some sort of professional level, like with my professional society or recruiters, all that stuff that requires an electronic but still somewhat formal medium goes on e-mail; that’s not to say I don’t e-mail friends, but it’s in a formal style of communication: I’m writing them a letter.(P14)

All participants agreed that different modes of communication needed to be used for different situations and places, based on the type of information being shared and the type of relationship of those involved, but the use of telecommunications devices was assessed for its social appropriateness in different ways. Some felt their use had become acceptable anywhere, in any place or social situation. Others said that the use of phones and other devices for voice or text message exchanges were not appropriate when socializing face-to-face with others, or in other situations, such as when attending a lecture or presentation. “So many people are on their phones, that there is not a more socially acceptable place than another. I try not to use it in restaurants, especially if I’m with people, because it’s rude.” (P12)
If I’m with someone physically I have no interest in being on the internet… it really bothers me when you’re in a conversation with someone and they pick up their phone or check their e-mail… it could be worthwhile if you need to access the information, but I’d rather be with someone physically or be on the internet in a solitary way. (P02)

Texting, on the other hand, does serve a purpose, if you’re in an environment where you can’t talk on the phone, texting seems appropriate to me, but overall with people I know well or who are close to me, I prefer face to face or voice calls. (P13)

The pervasive use of telecommunications devices and the widespread expectation to be quickly and easily accessible through them caused conflict for some of the participants in this study. Some disliked and fought the pressure of living up to the expectation of constant availability. “I won’t allow to treat e-mail as an IV drip…. I don’t think it’s healthy… we need time to be separated from another peoples’ agendas.” (P10)

I want to be in charge, of when I answer that e-mail or the phone… I have considered them modern-day handcuffs. With e-mail I’m in charge… I can let the e-mail sit there… I have a certain power… how quickly I respond to it. (P05)

Being more or less active on the internet was also described as a potential cause for conflict, if those with whom one wants to relate have a different level of internet involvement. One participant talked about the difficulty of relating to someone who disliked the use of the internet for social interaction or entertainment and used it only to complete paid work tasks.

[He’s] pretty intolerant of somebody who is totally focused on a screen, totally in their own world… who’s down in the Alice in Wonderland rabbit hole away from physical reality, so I close the laptop when [he] comes into the kitchen to make a cup of tea, and take my earpiece off, no matter what it is, engaging or engrossing… I have many other friends, who… could comfortably sit across the kitchen table with somebody, and you’d be on your devices… and there wouldn’t be any interpersonal impact of that… When he’s in the physical space of our home… he expects to be engaged with me over and above anything I’m doing online. (P11)

Another participant talked about her concern that she would lose touch with people who did not use the internet as much as she did since they would not access the social networking sites she now uses very actively to maintain her social connections.

This is actually something that bothers me. We’re becoming so dependent on the services we use to keep in touch. People who opt out or are not online… people who are not using the service or are not on the internet you lose touch with. I don’t want to lose touch with anyone. (P14)
The pervasiveness of internet-mediated communications was also seen as sometimes oddly overused and inappropriate for more intimate situations or closer relationships.

I try to communicate face to face if possible or on the phone, and I don’t do instant messaging a lot on the internet, because that feels strange to me, especially because I do it with people I know well, so I think why don’t we just have a phone conversation instead of this instant messaging thing? (P13)

In contrast, a participant noted that journaling sites or blogs sometimes are more casual and open than a face-to-face conversation, since people often use them to relate the most trivial daily occurrences.

I do use Twitter, I get a lot of announcements, I guess, people who tell you what happened at work…or on their commute, and you can kind of learn what somebody’s life is like that way, which is kind of interesting, because if you met up for lunch, people tend to frame their experience more in person, in a conversation, than on Twitter, where’s it’s more like I’m commenting on this at the moment because it’s interesting in the moment.(P14)

I’m not a fan of having big conversations over the phone or over Facebook…I try to have my serious conversation or emotional conversations over the phone or in person…I’d rather them be in person, that’s not always doable, I’d rather have inflection and tone coming from my phone and not from my writing, if it’s something big…I’d rather have like real time reactions to things…I’m not a fan of e-mails if it’s something big.(P12)

4.7 Privacy and location

Many participants expressed discomfort with the notion of tracking, especially locational tracking and stated a serious concern with this increasingly common practice. While some felt that tracking of preferences or habits, such as is done by vendors like Amazon or search engines like Google, impinged in their sense of privacy, a few felt that this kind of tracking was mostly innocuous and occasionally useful, since it actually assisted them in finding products of information that were usually of interest to them.

I expect information to be held private by the companies, credit cards. I suppose there’s the obvious privacy of information…credit card, social security, personal information, you expect to be held private by the companies to whom you give that information, I get irritated by cookies; they can tell where you’ve been…I don’t get too irked, but it would be nice…not to have that sense of being tracked.(P04)

But most were concerned with locational tracking, such as can be done by some phone applications, for example. Having their current location disclosed knowingly or unknowingly was perceived as dangerous and intrusive.
I think the biggest thing that would bother me would be people knowing more about my location, not just where I am in public, but I wouldn’t want to put my home address where people could contact me or find me or something, but [it doesn’t bother me if they] know what I look like. You shouldn’t let people know where you are…it’s an issue of safety and security…I know the people who I feel comfortable knowing where I’m located know where I’m located, and those are the people who need that information and those are the people who should have it. (P03)

Privacy was considered to be violated when one’s actions, activities and movements were tracked, and worse yet, recorded without consent. “I don’t think anybody needs to know…I consider shopping online private, but not in the real world…it doesn’t get recorded anyway.” (P04)

4.8 Privacy and identifiability

The relationship between privacy and anonymity was brought up by many participants when talking about their experience of privacy in mediated space. Visibility for example, was experienced as a threat to privacy only when there was a relationship, an emotional connection to others. Being seen by strangers, that is, being seen but not identified, was not considered problematic. But being seen and identified was a different matter. If information, whether textual, visual or auditory was publicly disclosed, in an internet site or physical place, participants felt their privacy was only compromised if they believed they could be somehow identified. The reason most participants expressed a general sense of privacy when using a medium they considered largely public, was the vastness of information and participation on the internet: they felt there were too many people and too much information on the internet for anyone to be easily identifiable. While most admitted they knew that it was possible to do, they felt the amount of work involved would discourage others from doing so.

I am a speck in a giant internet ocean, and who is really going to care to search through my e-mail to find my password to some other random website… I’ve also never been in a situation where somebody has stolen my identity online and is pretending that they’re me, and I think if that happened, I would probably go crawl into a hole someplace, and never use the internet again. (P08)

If it’s a personal issue, again there is such a vast amount of traffic on the internet, which gives you certain anonymity… you are safer by the vast amount of information…unless someone has just targeted you; what are they going to do with that information? (P05)

For those who felt strongly that the vast amount of participation and information on the internet hindered the task of identifying an individual, there was an increased sense of privacy while on the
internet. While most talked about restricted access to a particular website as a sign of increased privacy and safeguarding of personal information, a few felt the opposite: that in setting up passwords or accounts to limit access to a website, more personal information had to be shared with those running the website, and therefore, some degree of privacy was lost, since that information was now shared and vulnerable to unapproved disclosure. A few participants expressed concern with leaving traces of their internet activities; they made a point of minimizing any use that would require them to type in searches or sign up to websites, regularly removed cookies, and tried to investigate ways to impede or deter tracking of their internet use. One participant equated privacy with anonymity and described anonymity as a state that precluded consequences. From this perspective, privacy was minimized with an increase in the reciprocity of informational exchanges, so that while reading a text on the web afforded a great amount of privacy, exchanging e-mails or participating in a password-protected forum did not.

On the internet there’s a greater sense of anonymity so I expect more privacy on the internet, actually. Privacy also means information that you share and having no consequences…on the internet, you can share more information, most things on the internet, that require giving out information, there’s a greater sense of privacy and being anonymous, and my interactions and actions with people don’t really have a consequence. It depends on what you do, but if you go and search on YouTube for a video, there’s so much privacy with that because no one is looking, there’s no overall monitoring body of your behavior on the internet unless you’re doing something that is really out there. It’s interesting being able to communicate with people, or reading information without having any type of privacy being violated, or knowing that you’re interacting with that person by reading about them, there’s no result to it, there’s basically your presence and accessing that information, it’s completely insignificant…Privacy for me is a difficult concept…’I’m not clear or consistent when I’m talking about it, for me it’s a concept that varies a lot… Sites that don’t involve any of my information at all, like going on Wikipedia, you don’t have a username or anything like that, you just go on there, or Google searching…whenever a username or password comes up, that’s when a level of privacy is kind of taken away, because if someone does see information related to your username or password, then some information about you is revealed, but if you don’t, if you’re not required to do that, if you’re doing a Google search or Wikipedia, I would say that makes me feel the most anonymous… I would actually equate feeling anonymous with privacy when it comes to the internet.(P13)

If you’re e-mailing someone in particular, it’s not just you reading about them, but there is a communication exchange…asking you for additional personal information…that has the least amount of privacy…pretty much the more direct the level of communication with someone, that has reciprocity to it, that it’s not one-sided, then I would say the least amount of privacy there is. (P13)

4.9 Privacy and affect

Affect was pivotal in describing the sense of being anonymous, which was always described in this context as a positive state, protective of privacy. Some noted that it was this general sense of
anonymity that made people alter their behavior in the public realm, making them less likely to be empathetic or attentive in their social interactions. "People are more brutal and plain spoken, because of the anonymity of the internet." (P04) “

When I e-mail someone, if I don’t know them, I don’t worry as much about their feelings or anything like that, but I would say that the more direct contact I have with someone, the more I do concentrate more on the details of that interaction, and when it comes to people I know like friends or people that I know well.(P14)

A few noted that as the level of familiarity and affect increased, the level of privacy decreased: the better others knew or could identify a particular person, the lower that person’s sense of privacy.

Relationships with others in a particular location defined to what extent such location was considered private or public.

In terms of absolute privacy, I would say my home. Outside of your home, you’re interacting with people, so you share information, in regards to what people know about you, there’s less privacy in places where people know you, like work, as opposed to a bank…in terms of what you want to keep private…in terms of nobody talking to you or surprising you with anything, that would be my home. (P13)

One participant described being somewhat uneasy with the potential confluence of the public realm and the personal or private realm on the internet, where one might find oneself in an online social situation expecting to interact with strangers and being anonymous, yet encountering familiar others and possibly being identified.

It seems like a strange form of communication, if I’m communicating directly with someone, like in instant message, or I’m on a social networking site and I see individuals that I know, that actually seems weirder to me than accessing information about people and things that I don’t know about or haven’t seen. For me the feeling uncomfortable comes with seeing things and people that I’m familiar with in such a public medium.(P13)

4.10 Privacy and trust

In general, the internet was viewed as a public space, yet the fact that a good portion of its structure and the information flowing through it is privately owned was pointed out by several participants, particularly regarding the role of trust in connection to privacy. They highlighted the relational aspect of informational privacy: when people share personal information with one another or with a business or institution a trust relationship is established. Many noted that they shared personal information with others and with organizations they trusted and expected them to use this information in the manner and for the purposes they’d agreed on.
The person who owns the information they would expect their information to be private, though that’s not usually the case, but the person who owns the space has a duty to keep that information private if they are expected to do so. The individual has to trust the organization they are involved with. I could ensure my privacy by not going on the internet at all. I don’t think it’s something an individual can determine…if you’re using the internet, it’s not up to me…I can adhere to whatever policies are in place, to their rules, but if their rules don’t have weight…(P01)

When you’re on the internet and if you’re in a place where no one else can see you, you can have a seemingly private interaction with someone and it’s supposedly an e-mail one-on-one…but what the other person does with that information it’s basically up to them. As far as I know, there’s no way from stopping someone from forwarding something.(P02)

A few participants stated that while the fear of misuse or disclosure of personal information seemed to center on organizations, individuals were just as likely be at fault.

If something is passed along in a physical conversation you have to rely on memory to pass on that information. There’s a chance that that information is changed a little bit in the translation, but if someone writes something on a computer…you could forward an e-mail…but there’s no guarantee that that information is not changed either. (P02)

Given the easy accessibility of information on the internet, some participants observed that there was the possibility not only of having their personal information disclosed unwillingly but also about finding information about others, and wondered when it was unacceptable to use it and for what reasons. Again, the notion of privacy as tied to a trust relationship was emphasized. If the information was disclosed within the context of a friendship, for example, and there was an expectation of privacy, many felt that such expectation would and should be respected.

At what point is it OK to use information that you find online…when is it not OK to use that information… I wouldn’t use information that I have access to because of friendship or through an alumni network, because they are sharing that information because of who I am not because of who I am as an employee of a certain corporation”(P01)

Everybody has a different understanding of privacy, and sometimes those different understandings don’t match…If someone told me something at a function, a donor…I would use the information, if I overheard it on the subway, I don’t think that I would use it, though it would depend it what it was…f it was about a crime, I would use it.(P01)

The concern about trust focused primarily on being able to trust organizations with personal information and their ability to protect that information from hackers. “You can’t trust a company with your
information, period…Facebook is a company…it’s a clash of priorities.” (P09). “If someone hacks into their system…I’m trusting that those institutions have control over their system.” (P10)

Still, a few participants pointed out that a trust relationship was often violated by people, often those one is close to, even sometimes by those who appear to be the most trustworthy.

People are always going to be the weakest link in terms of privacy…people are so much less reliable that the computer systems. The difference between doing that on the internet and in real life…in real life it’s pretty darn hard to talk to someone you didn’t realize you’re talking to, with the internet that’s easy…I think one of the biggest issues actually is not so much the security of the websites, but the security of your actual friends. (P14)

4.11 Boundaries and the structure of life’s activities

Many participants struggled with defining their time and activities distinctly as either work or non-work and many had flexible work arrangements, whether they worked for an organization, worked for themselves or as freelancers. A few made a very clear effort to separate work from other activities, and felt that they wouldn’t or couldn’t function effectively otherwise: “I have a clear definition of how many hours I work per week…I am very clear: this is work-time, this is work-space…” (P01)

There could be other places for work that are more convenient and pleasant, but I don’t think I would work if not in my office, so…I need that…these are …my work hours, this is my workplace…I don’t work outside of the office…if I were at home I would never work…there would always be something that I wanted to do…like I’ll make myself some coffee or the rabbits want to play, I would never ever work…I couldn’t work in something that was my own space, like in my home or somewhere where I knew a lot of people, because I would be distracted…I work 9 to 5.”(P01)

Another separated work activities by limiting her availability:

It’s selective availability but I try to be responsible and responsive to people who are trying to get a hold of me, but I won’t turn my world upside down to do it. It’s expanded the work day terrifically and increasingly when you have meetings going on all day. And I’m not alone. Most people keep weekends as sacred…but late nights are fair game.(P04)

Paid employment tasks were seen as encroaching into other realms more readily than the opposite. “When I’m at work I don’t mix activities, because I don’t have a lot of time to mix stuff up at work. Work infringes on daytime stuff at home, versus the other direction.” (P06)
Most participants talked about weaving together tasks from different realms throughout the day and felt that a day strictly structured into work versus non-work time and places would be at odds with the flow of their daily tasks.

I’ll throw in a load of laundry I’ll write an e-mail, I’ll empty the dishwasher. I’m a multi-tasker, unless it’s something, where I have to stay with it and can’t do the running around, but a lot of times I like to step back before I hit the send button, and I do other things around the house. (P05)

I’m always trying to fend off the next thing that comes at me right now. I think it’s because my days are pretty unstructured, so my internet use is not very structured. I’m comfortable with it, because that is how I function. (P05)

Most internet activities were viewed as necessary, be it to complete work tasks, communicating with others, socializing or shopping. Participants generally found it difficult to list any internet activities they regularly participated in that they considered to be purely for entertainment or fun, and several noted that they wouldn’t be comfortable engaging in an activity that they could classify that way, because they felt they shouldn’t have any time to devote to such activities. “I don’t use it for entertainment. Researching something is entertaining to me.” (P05)

There’s no way to categorize a game as anything but fun free time, it’s clearly in that category of: ‘I have some free time, I’ll do something that is entertaining’. I don’t watch a lot of television either. They both are so far in the fun side that I don’t feel I deserve to do them, unless I feel like I have everything else I need to do, done. Communicating with people feels like a basic need and being aware of what’s going on in the world. It’s a hybrid, I do it because I enjoy it, but I also do it because it’s useful for things I want to learn in a personal development or professional level. If I a civil engineering friend of mine posted something about bridges, that I’m interested in, is that work or play? I don’t know if that’s work or play. It should theoretically make me a better engineer, but it’s also social and fun and something that I want to do. People read for pleasure, so it’s hard for me to draw that line, as someone who likes to learn.”(P14)

The use of the internet confounds the boundaries of the private and the public, especially since it’s possible to be involved very actively in social interactions and public activities while being physically alone. While participants described the internet as primarily public and home as the primordial private space, only a few expressed feeling conflicted due to this merging of spheres. “Sometimes…I don’t want to be on the internet, I walk away from it for a while, while I’m at home, trying to maintain the peace and the sanity in my home and not bring that energy to my home or my kids.” (P12)

The most public places feel to me like locations that aren’t close to nature, that have a lot of people, or have a lot of services or resources, that seems public to me, but if you’re
closer to nature or in a tight community that you know, that seems less public to me. To be on a communication medium that has…endless information and access to so many…different people and resources, and then physically be by yourself, in your home…When I first starting using the internet, it was bothersome, I questioned more that dichotomy, but now using it so habitually, it’s such a regular activity. (P13)

4.12 The privacy publicness continuum in mediated space

The notions of privacy and the public appeared to be understood similarly, with participants struggling more with the definition of the opposite of privacy. Not being identified was central to anonymity, a state of opaque, protected social presence, described as the most private state, mostly in positive terms, at one end of the spectrum. Next varying degrees of sociability were identified, from the more intimate and more private, to the more public, as more information was willingly disclosed to create bonds of friendship and community membership.

I think sociability related to the internet is pretty important, because it ties into the way I use it. I use it with my friends, to keep in touch with a lot of my family. It's kind of social in that aspect for me. Sociability is tied to people that you want to interact with, that you actively seek out, keep in touch with…I think of publicity as being a little less…publicity is more broad and less controlled. (P03)

The state at the other end of the spectrum, was described as complete disclosure, sometimes negatively, when such disclosure was assumed to be without consent, and sometimes positively, when disclosing information was done to promote social or commercial exposure with a particular purpose, whether to increase sales, contacts, share information or advance a cause. Whereas sociability was perceived as having a reciprocal component, so that those engaged in the social interaction shared personal information with one another, publicity was seen as lacking in reciprocity, as in an advertisement. “Sociability is your ability to maintain social contact, to know people. Publicity has more of a one way aspect…almost like an advertisement.” (P04)

Anonymity was not desired or expected in places and situations where and when affective bonds with others existed. But on the internet, considered generally as the public realm, it was deemed highly desirable. Some regarded any information available on the internet to be public, regardless of how it got there. “The internet feels to me like a public space, because anyone can access it that has a computer or internet. it's a democratic source of information. It's a public space.” (P03)

On one hand, if it's online, it's fair game. If you're stupid enough to put it online…On the other hand there are leaks. I found social security numbers online. Everything is fair
game unless it should really not be on there. The internet is public. It belongs to everyone. (P01)

Others felt that when access was restricted by the use of passwords or account requirements, a degree of privacy was achieved. “[On the internet] there is not a private versus not private. There is something in between that is a protected space, where people are linked in these little communities… run by corporations.” (P06)

With internet activities that involved no direct social interactions, some described experiencing privacy.

I could have a private experience …if I was looking at something…a webpage that was basic information…something that just I wanted just look at…something I didn’t think…that I would want to share with other people… But if I’m looking at something that I feel that I’m not going to share with other people, that is just information…for me…then it’s kind of a private space situation. (P03)

Accessibility for some was key in defining whether the information should be deemed public. “If you need a username and a password to use it, it becomes private, but if the information is free, it becomes public.” (P01)

For others, these username accounts and password restrictions were seen as only limiting access to some, leaving information vulnerable to unapproved disclosure by others, to others. “I think that I don’t know if anything is totally private on the internet, that I don’t…it’s not my e-mail account…somebody can see these e-mails… anyone can pass an e-mail to somebody else.” (P06)

I don’t think about it too frequently. I have a kind of this sense that big brother is watching kind of idea…even if it’s me not sharing with other people. I’m sure it’s not private information. I don’t worry about it because I feel like it’s something that I can’t control. (P03)

I’m not afraid of that information leaking out, if I had something to share that was confidential, I wouldn’t do it on the internet…If it’s free and open, it’s public, if you need a key to enter, then it’s private…Personal interactions are private…a dinner conversation I would consider private even though it’s in a public space. (P01)
5 **ANALYSIS – PHASE II INTERNET SURVEY**

5.1 **Overview**

Phase II consisted of an online survey developed from the thematic analysis of Phase I. The online survey was generated using SurveyMonkey’s software and posted on the SurveyMonkey.com website. A web link was generated and included in the body of the request for participation e-mail. Clicking the web link directed the potential participants to the first survey page, which included a short introduction and the consent page (see Appendix D). The survey was open for a month, from August 30th to September 30th 2012, after which it was closed.

The total number of participants who completed the survey was 61 (59.8% of those who started it). A total of 102 participants opened the link to the survey and answered yes to the consent form. Survey responses of those who answered yes on the consent form were recorded. Participants were given the option to skip any questions and exit the survey at any time. A survey was considered complete when participants clicked “Done” on the last page of the survey, regardless of number of questions answered. The responses of those who completed the survey, by clicking “Done” are included in the analysis that follows. The discussion chapter reviews the combined findings from both phases.

5.1.1 **Survey participants’ demographic information.**

Over half the participants were under 35 (38.3%, 18-25 and 23.3% 26-35), living alone or with other adults (30% and 36.7%) in an urban or suburban environment primarily. Work locations were primarily urban (53.4%), and some of those who chose to elaborate on their answer (17.2%), noted that they either were retired, students or stay-at-home mothers.
Figure 5. Survey participants’ demographic information: Age.

Figure 6. Survey participants’ demographic information: Home location.
5.2 Time spent daily using the internet (Q2)

The request for participation script specified that participants should be women who use the internet for at least 2 hours per day for any type of activity, whether for paid work or non-paid-work related. The first question on the survey asked participants how much time they spent daily on the internet, disregarding breaks. More participants used the internet 4-6 hours (37.7%) and 2-4 hours (29.5%), with fewer using it for longer than 6 hours (19.7% 6-8 hours, 13.1% more than 8 hours).
This question asked participants to select their preferred physical surroundings when using the internet, allowing them to select multiple choices and elaborate on their responses. Participants preferred to be engaged in internet activities when they were physically by themselves (59%), and perhaps for that reason most also identified home as a preferred location for internet activities (95.1%). The role of attention may be important in this respect. Being alone in places that have little activity or change (37.7%), that have restricted access (19.7%) and are familiar (27.9%) requires minimal attention since there is little new information about the physical environment to be processed. Familiar places, such as home, that are known and perceived as safe, have lower attentional demands than unknown and stimulating locations, and could provide a distraction-free background for communications technology-mediated interactions, when domestic work and childcare needs are not pressing. Attention and how it is
or can be directed appears to have an important role in the use of communication media, and its relationship to the physical. Some explained their choices, as this question provided that option. “I don’t like to use the internet when I’m in interesting or public places because I feel my attention should be on my surroundings, not a screen…My workplace is the best - it's boring and surfing the internet is the best use of my time.” (A6)

In contrast, about a third of participants preferred places that would presumably demand a greater amount of attention from the physical environment and the presence of others, choosing to be at an office away from home (32.8%) and that are pleasant or interesting (35%). For a smaller group, any location was acceptable (18%). “Depending on where I am and what my needs are, I use the internet in different places.” (A19)

Many of those who chose to explain their choices noted that their preferences were primarily influenced by the type of internet activity they were engaged in as well as their own personal preferences and needs. They noted that their physical surroundings needed to fit the requirements of the activity. Some activities were seen as requiring greater concentration (usually work-related tasks) or greater privacy (when personal information might be disclosed, for example).

“I can concentrate more effectively and I enjoy myself more when my surroundings feel ‘right’ to me. I have spaces at home and at work that I’ve furnished for my comfort, and I also use the computer or my phone for internet activities in public spaces, but only if they're spaces I'm comfortable in.” (A8)
5.4 Preferred locations for specific internet activities (Q4).

With the exception of work-related e-mail and research, home was the preferred location for all other internet activities listed. Home was selected by most for banking and shopping (91.8% and 88.5%), possibly because these are activities generally perceived as being more vulnerable to identity or information theft by onlookers, while the internet connection at home might be generally expected to be better protected than the connection options outside the home.

Busy places and open access public places were generally disliked as places to engage in work related activities by this group, but preferred as locations for social and personal activities, such as social networking, non-work-related information gathering and web browsing. The issue of attention probably plays a role in this pairing of non-work activities with public places that are busy and open, since such
locations might provide more distractions. Quiet public places were preferred primarily for information gathering/research.

![Pie chart showing preferred location for all internet activities.]

**Figure 10. Preferred location for all internet activities.**

5.5 **Describing the internet (Q5).**

Most participants described the internet as a resource (93.8%), a communication medium (90%) or information gathering tool (90%), from the options presented in this question. However, many participants view the internet also spatially, describing the internet as a virtual library (71.3%) as a threshold or portal connecting the virtual and physical (42.5%), a separate virtual world (30%) and a place (23.8%). The categories listed in the survey were generated from the first phase interviews and survey respondents could check more than one category for this question.
5.6 Time spent daily using the internet for a specific activity (Q6).

Participants spent more time on activities that may be more likely to have undefined time restrictions, like reading or researching, as opposed to those that may be more delimited, like e-mailing, posting, banking and shopping. Most participants are engaged in any of the internet activities listed in this question for less than one hour (56%) or one to two hours (33%). For the few who spend more than 4 hours on an activity, it is most likely for the completion of work tasks.
Figure 12. Time spent on a specific internet activity.

Figure 13. Internet activities on which participants spent less than 1 hour.
5.7 **Meanings of privacy (Q7)**

The main ideas expressed in answers to this open-ended question revolved around privacy as control of personal information, as freedom from surveillance, and as solitude, safety, opacity, anonymity, invisibility or unidentifiability. The notion of personal information control was brought up by many as a core component of privacy, whether that control was described as being wielded by the individual or as being guaranteed by someone else, be it “others” in a general sense, the government or corporations. “In the context of the internet, privacy means: the government is not allowed to trace my web browsing.” (A05) “Privacy means being able to reveal or not reveal things about myself and my activities according to my own choice.” (A39)

Many respondents referred to personal information on the internet in particular, as opposed to personal information in a physical location, though some connected solitude to the idea of privacy. “Being alone, where no one knows where you are or what you’re doing.” (A1)

Words and notions relating to visibility were used frequently. “Something being seen by my eyes, and my eyes alone.” (A29) “…my life is not an open book for everyone to view…”(A41) “Privacy means that no one can see or know what I do…”(A47)
Many connected the idea of privacy to a state in which an individual cannot be traced, identified or under surveillance. "Privacy means that I can browse the internet without having to leave cookies everywhere." (A59).

Privacy means that my information might be seen by someone, but they either don't know its significance in my life or they don't know me as a person. I've accepted that much of my browsing is or can be collected, and I don't really mind that as long as the person or agency analyzing the information doesn't know me personally. (A41)

From this perspective, the notion of identity is crucial in defining privacy. As long as information is not connected to an identifiable individual or an individual with whom a personal relationship has been established, that individual's privacy is perceived as being intact. As long as the information is disconnected from a particular, identifiable individual, its unregulated distribution is generally perceived as harmless.

For a few participants, privacy is connected to a feeling of safety; a protective, solitary, worry-free state. "Privacy means having a safe and open space to do activities of my choosing, where other uninvited guests do not enter and have access to my activities." (A37). Privacy is "being free from worry of invasion or bother" (A46).

5.8 Defining public places, situations and activities (Q8)

Most of the same notions expressed in question 7 (What does privacy mean to you?) were reiterated in this open-ended question. Public situations, activities and information were described as the opposite of those that provide a sense of privacy, and there was a particular emphasis on the presence of strangers and their uncontrolled access to another's personal information. Several participants noted the lack of control of personal information as being a central characteristic of public situations. The presence of others, in general, was also linked to public experiences, but the presence of strangers in particular, and their access to one’s personal information, seemed to define a public situation for some. “What makes a place, situation, activity or information public is pretty much anything involving people outside my family or very close friends.” (A5) One participant noted that she would consider a setting public depending on “the number of people I actually know in the setting”. (A10)

About a third of participants noted that an experience, situation or information would be considered public if it had the potential to be shared by unknown others, such as any activity undertaken
in a location, whether physical or on the internet, to which access is unrestricted, while others remarked that the only location where privacy could be expected was the home. A public place was often described as "anywhere outside of your home". (A12)

5.9 Differentiating public and private activities (Q9)

In this questions, participants were asked to categorize various activities as either private, somewhat private, somewhat public, public or not applicable. Most respondents (86.9%) considered banking as a private activity and posting in social networking sites as a public one (42.6%). Activities related to work were generally considered more public than non-work activities, whether e-mail or internet-based research. Activities related to information exchanges perceived as being directed or limited to a selected individual, group or corporation, such as e-mail, shopping and banking, were more likely to be considered private or somewhat private activities by most. On the other hand, posting on social networks, a communicative activity where the ability to limit the audience may be sometimes questionable, was generally perceived as public. Activities that are generally experienced as one-sided or solitary, in the sense that they are not focused on directly interacting with other people, such as reading posts on a social networking site and researching information on the web, fell somewhere in the middle. Playing games was considered "not applicable" for most respondents, possibly because they do not play games on the internet, and those who did considered this activity to be somewhere between private and public (somewhat private, 23.0% and somewhat public 21.3%).
### Figure 15. Internet activities considered as either private or public.

#### 5.10 Meanings of private and public in relationship to specific internet activities (Q10).

A little over half of respondents answered yes to this question (55.9%). Many answered that their perception of the internet as a private or public medium depended on the activity itself, and whether they considered the activity or the information related to the activity to be a private or public one.

I will watch TV shows or music videos in public, depending on what they are. I will do non-academic information gathering/research in public, depending on what it is. I will do web browsing in public depending on what it is. When it comes to financial matters or more taboo-related matters though (i.e. human sexuality), this is where I grow more private. (A08)

Some felt that their sense of an internet activity as private or public depended on the number of people they expected to interact with; the most private activity, for example, would not involve any direct interaction, like reading a page from Wikipedia. Sending a message to one individual through e-mail would be considered as a private internet activity as well, as opposed to posting a message on a website or signing up to play a game with others. “If you are checking your email, I think that's private and when you are playing games online with a group it isn't, because you can play with anyone.” (A33) “If I am not interacting with another person, there is a somewhat greater expectation that my activity will remain private; e.g., reading a Wikipedia entry is, in my view, more ‘private’ than sending someone an email.” (A17)
A few participants noted that the internet is a public medium and that no internet activity could be deemed private.

5.11 Describing public and private space (Q11)

Safety (73.3%), control (68.3%), trust (60%), a sense of belonging (55%) and permanence (52.5%), were generally selected as characteristics of private space. Public places were described as transitory by over half of respondents (55%). Paradoxically, many participants selected both “A place where others know me” (61%) and “A place where I am anonymous” (46.7 %) to describe public places. The presence or absence of others, as well the emotional closeness or distance to those co-present in a space or situation, whether physical or virtual, were underlined as important in determining the degree of privacy perceived by interview participants in Phase I, and this understanding was also apparent in the responses to this survey question. The presence of others was important in both descriptions, that is, others have to be there in order for one to be known by them as well as for one to be anonymous, but the relationships implied would appear to lie at different ends of the spectrum; if one is known, one cannot be anonymous. Many participants noted that anonymity provides a sense of privacy in the presence of others, and that anonymity is often connected to attention or interest, that is, one can be anonymous among a group of people if those people have no interest in one’s identity, regardless of whether information about one’s identity is easily accessible or not. For this reason, anonymity seems to be perceived as a temporary, changing status that cannot be guaranteed, especially on the internet. Participants varied greatly in their impressions of how likely they were to become a source of interest to others and lose their anonymous status in a particular location or situation.

Public spaces are basically places where I feel comfortable enough in them and around people I know to make what I am doing public, or not have to worry that it is somewhat public. Even if the person can't see exactly what I am working on, I feel more comfortable knowing that what I am working on is acceptable to them. Meanwhile, private spaces are where whatever I'm working on is either unseen or goes unnoticed because people who don't know me won't care, notice, or remember what I'm working on, especially if they are coming and going.(A5)

While some participants made clear connections between specific physical locations or internet activities and a sense of privacy or publicness, many noted that for them, the experience of privacy is
very personal and interior. “I think privacy has to do with how at home you feel with something. You can feel ‘at home’ in both a place that is more formally considered public or private.” (A1)

I feel that I can carry my own private space with me into public spaces like offices, classrooms where I am a student, classrooms where I am a teacher, even shopping. I can feel at home in places where I have a long association or in places where there are many people where I feel comfortable. My private places like at home are not necessarily permanent, unlike public places where I have worked. (A3)

One participant described privacy as such a personal experience that it could not be associated with anything outside oneself.

The only privacy is what remains in your mind. Once it is written down or verbalized, it becomes public because it becomes discoverable. Thus, if a particular spot evokes certain feelings, those feelings are private, but the spot is not. (A16)

In this statement, privacy can only exist when information cannot be discovered by others, safely encased in one’s mind. A few other participants connected privacy with the notion of secrecy, generally in a negative way.

Feelings about the physical environment may make it personally meaningful; that is, a place might be deemed private, permanent or safe depending on past and present personal experiences. This perspective focuses on the individual experience, though such experiences may be shared as a group, as in the case of a culturally significant location, like a place of worship, or similarly experienced by other individuals at different times, as in the case of the hotel room which is generally perceived as a private place by the individual who occupies it, as noted by a few participants.

For example, I may feel safe and in control in a place that is presumably permanent, such as a university campus, and I may feel the same in a transitory space, such as a hotel room -- how one defines any of the two places I have mentioned depends on the circumstances. A public park may be both a place where one is anonymous and one where others know one. (A28)

To me, private spaces are about access, not control, ie a private stall within a public restroom is still private to me. Public places are also about access. Safety, control, trust etc--these words can interface with either private or public in my opinion. (A8)

5.12 Restricting access to personal information (Q12)

In general, participants protect the information listed to some extent. In answer to this question, for all types of information listed, 76.6% selected important/somewhat important, whereas 23.4% selected not very important/not important. A greater number of participants chose one’s address (75%), location at a given time (60%) and likeness (45%) as the information they would find very important to restrict
access to; no participant marked either of these three as “Not important”. Among the pieces of personal information that that raised the least concern in terms of access, name, and work and professional history were selected more often.

In the open-ended portion of this question, these differences were explained by some participants. One noted that easy access and wide distribution of one’s work and professional information might be desirable and useful in order to increase professional visibility and job opportunities.

On the one hand, I do not want to endanger my life by allowing strangers to know where I am and potentially stalk me (either in person, or to steal my identity/fraud related banking reasons). On the other hand, I want to do well in Google’s search engine as I move forward in my career, as it’s a sign of success and power to do well in searches to a certain extent, and a good way to do SEO [search engine optimization] is to display one’s work and some amount of personal info. (A6)

Another also noted the potential for widely accessible personal information to affect one’s work life. “Also concerning the case of job employment, I have to be very careful about what photos/pictures I post online.” (A7)

Safety and identity theft risk were mentioned by most participants as the reason for their concerns regarding access to personal information. “Obviously we live in an era that poses high risk of identity theft. In addition, if my personal information were not restricted appropriately, I would feel a threat to my personal safety and well being.” (A9)

Concerning the cases of stalking, burglary, identity theft and even ruthless news media, it can become very dangerous if a stranger gained information about my name, my address, my past or present whereabouts, my peers, my personal history and/or my work/professional/educational history. (A7)

Another pointed out that preventing malicious others from using one’s information is critical since the process of disclosure may be irreversible. “I believe it is important to restrict certain information because you never know how people are going to use or abuse that information and once something is public there is no taking it back.” (A38)

While most participants expressed a desire to control the distribution of their personal information, one remarked that such control might be very hard to attain.

I feel that it important for me to maintain control over my personal information. Yet I recognize that a lot of it is pretty public, like my address, my location, my shopping, because they are all easily traceable through my credit card usage. So I guess I like to live in the delusion that I have control over maintaining my privacy even though I know
intellectually that I don't: When I deal with the IRS or with a department of labor, they have a lot of personal and work information quickly and easily accessible. (A4)

Another felt that no personal information is private.

I don't feel terribly strongly about restricting access to this information. I guess there could be a stalker or someone who could use it to find out other information which could harm me if disclosed, but this information in and of itself isn't particularly private to me. (A19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q12 Very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My location at a given time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My likeness (photos or pictures)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My personal history (where I was born, where...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My shopping preferences and history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My connections to others (family, friends, ...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My work/professional history (my training and ...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My interests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 16. Personal information considered very important to restrict access to.
5.13 Describing the experience of using the internet (Q13).

Being on the internet appears to interfere more with a sense of time than with a connection to the immediate environment. Commonly recurring experiences shared by survey participants while on the internet included often being aware of what’s going on around them (45.9%) and enjoying background activities or noise (44.3%), yet losing track of time (45.9%) and getting sidetracked from the task at hand (46.7%). This sense of awareness of the immediate physical environment is also reinforced by the number of participants who, while on the internet, feel they rarely or never forget where they are (39.3% and 50.8% respectively), and who rarely or never feel like they need to cut themselves off from what’s going on around them (49.2% and 18%). Participants also can focus on their task more easily while on the internet (70% often/sometimes) though they like to mix work and non-work activities (73.8% often/sometimes).

Most participants answered that while on the internet they often or sometimes felt like they were in a public space (32.8% often and 47.5% sometimes), in which they could have private interactions under certain conditions (32.8% often and 49.2% sometimes) and felt they knew how to protect their personal information (27.9% often and 57.4% sometimes). Experiences were more divided regarding
anonymity, with a little over half of participants feeling rarely or never anonymous while on the internet (50.8% rarely or never) or protected by that anonymity (55.8% rarely or never).

While approximately half need to be physically alone (49.2% often or sometimes), participants also generally answered that they felt more connected to others while on the internet (77% often/sometimes) and expressed themselves (68.8% often/sometimes) and related to others differently than in person (60.7% often/sometimes). Tending to face-to-face and technology-mediated social interactions simultaneously might be undesirable not only because of the difficulty of dividing one’s attention in this way, but also perhaps because of these differences in modes of expressing oneself and relating to others depending on whether the interaction happens on the internet or in person.

Q13 Comparison Set 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Often/Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely/Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I lose track of time.</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am aware of what’s going on around me.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I express myself differently than when I talk to someone in person.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need to cut myself off from what's going on around me.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need to be alone.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy some background activities or noise (like people talking, TV or music).</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 18. Statements related to the experience of using the internet. Comparison set 1.
Figure 19. Statements related to the experience of using the internet. Comparison set 2.

Figure 20. Statements related to the experience of using the internet. Comparison set 3.

5.14 Understandings of place in relationship to the internet (Q14).

More than half of respondents (59.3%) answered that the using the internet had changed the way they thought about and the way they used places. Explanations revolved primarily around participants'
perception that places were transformed by internet access, either by making certain places seem more acceptable or desirable to occupy, or through participation in a particular type of internet activity, transforming home or coffee shop into workplace or public space into private. “Kitchen table has become my computer space…If I am going out for a coffee or lunch alone, I will always choose a place that has wifi access.” (A8) “There is a whole class of establishments (coffee shops, libraries, even my laundromat) which I patronize, or patronize more often, at least partially because they have internet access.” (A24)

Absolutely. I use the internet for almost everything I do - pleasure, school work and workplace duties. So any space I use is connected to the internet and explicitly changes the way I use those different spaces. In fact, because of their shared internet connection, my roles often bleed from one place to the next - I often find myself doing work at home and vice versa. (A27)

Also, many participants felt that the internet changed their daily place experience by serving as a mode of self-extension, bringing them virtually to places and people they would otherwise go to and meet in person. “I feel like it is easier to get any information I need wherever I am.” (A6) “I have more access to the outside world. This was especially important more than a decade ago when I was home alone with small children.” (A13)

Several participants noted how virtual access to people and information has altered the way they use places, by making them feel more comfortable venturing to unfamiliar locations as long as they provide internet access, so that they can be connected to information and friends, for example. “Constant connectivity- has changed experience of friendship, motherhood and intimacy.” (A28) “I am more willing to be by myself in public spaces (restaurants, coffee shops) because I know I have internet access on my phone.” (A14) “I like having information at my fingertips….if someone asks a question, I can look it up in an instant and give them the answer, if I'm lost or need to find a particular place/address, I can get it immediately, I didn't have that before the Internet.” (A2)

5.15 Changing notions of private and public places due to internet use (Q15).

A little over half of respondents answered yes to this question (55%). Most noted that the internet has made them more aware of the issue of privacy, and in many cases, altered their understanding of what is private and what is public. For one, internet use emphasized the distinction between private and public. “It has more sharply defined the boundaries between public and private for me.” (A6) But for most,
the distinction was actually blurred or reversed, not only because with the internet it is possible to engage in private activities in public places and vice versa, but also because it is often more difficult to discern the parties involved in a computer mediated interaction, partly because the physical experience may be somewhat at odds with the virtual one. A person typing an e-mail, banking or shopping online may physically have a sense of complete privacy, alone in a trusted location, focused on a very narrow exchange with another person or database, and may feel and behave as if that same degree of privacy were secured on the internet.

Yes- some activities that were very public - like shopping at a shopping mall, can now happen totally privately. Sure, that was available through catalogue purchases, but now the experience is absolutely detached from interacting with human beings. (A24)

I am aware that anything I do on the internet that relates to other people is likely public to some degree. A conversation with a friend in the physical world is likely private, but any email exchange is easy to make public - or may likely already be, given the email provider being used, etc. (A12)

Yes because while the internet may sometimes feel private, it is entirely public. Someone somewhere in the world could access my information and history if necessary, even just in small bits.” (A23)

5.16 Changing locational preferences due to internet use (Q16).

Answers were about equally divided for this question (51.7% answered No). Among this group, while mobility was noted as a welcome option brought about by the internet, the ability to stay in one preferred place, whether home or a coffee shop, was more often mentioned as a consequence of internet access. “Now that I have a smart phone, I can access my clients anywhere I am.”(A6) "I eventually began working full-time from home. This would not have been possible without the internet. Now I home school my kids and again, this wouldn't have been possible for me pre-internet.”(A9)

Though several commented on the positive aspect of being able to stay physically in one place and extend their virtual presence to others, more felt that they spent too much time alone, physically inactive and in a fixed location for too long.

Using the internet opens up a world of opportunity to learn and share and communicate, but it also closes off the world in which we currently live; I spend much more time alone now that the internet has become an integral part of my educational experience than I did previously. (A1)

I spend a LOT more time on the computer than I would if the internet did not exist. I do it when my kids go to bed or are at school so they don't know of a difference, but I do (A8)
Because internet access can increase the appeal of particular locations, several participants noted that they tend to spend more time where there is access to a wireless network, influencing their degree of mobility and their choice of location. “I like to feel connected and prefer places where I get good reception and/or wifi, in case I need to look something up or check email.” (A18) “I might not spend as much time visiting someone if they don't have internet connectivity in their house.” (A25) “I move around freely, but tend to stay near my laptop and in places where I can get internet access.” (A29)
6 Discussion

6.1 Overview

This study germinated from an interest in the interaction between the physical and the virtual, as well as an interest in the socio-cultural role of the public-private dichotomy and its relationship to physical space. Preliminary research consisted of a set of interviews, focused on the telework or work-at-home model, which brings together the sphere of paid and domestic work, traditionally paired with the public and the private realms. Participants in the preliminary study expressed dissatisfaction with the traditional model of work, particularly the lack of choice on location, work environment and schedule, and the difficulty with managing boundaries between home and work.

This study explored the notions of privacy and publicness as they are understood and experienced by women who use the internet on a daily basis, as well as their experiences and understanding of the notion of place in mediated space, the space experienced at the intersection of mass media, including the internet, and the physical environment. Themes that surfaced in the interview phase of this study were then further investigated in a second phase through an internet survey. The main findings revolved broadly around the following issues: mobility, focusing on the use of the locational flexibility afforded by the internet; materiality/physicality, underlining a strong and persistent connection to body and place, the challenge of managing attentional demands from the virtual and physical spheres, and the ambiguity of the public/private boundaries while on the internet; identity, highlighting the targeted self-presentation of a single identity as well as the importance of identifiability and anonymity in mediated space; and the very personal and nuanced experiences and understandings of privacy and publicness as a continuum in mediated space. These themes are discussed in this chapter and listed below.

Mobility:
- Anchored Mobility
- Portable Privacy

Materiality/physicality:
• Strong awareness of body and place
• Ambiguous public/private boundaries
• Managing attention

Identity:
• Affect, memory and identifiability
• Modulated identity
• Anonymity and location

The privacy and publicness continuum:
• Understandings and experiences of privacy and publicness as a continuum

6.2 Mobility

6.2.1 Anchored mobility

The flexibility afforded by the internet to engage in tasks remotely from anywhere was used primarily by women in this study to remain anchored to one or two preferred locations rather than by changing locations throughout the day. Home was the primary preferred location for most activities.

To varying degrees, people and places have been physically distanced and virtually linked by telecommunication technologies. For this reason, internet mediated experience has often been discussed in relationship to mobility, whether physical or virtual (Urry, 2007). With a cell phone, or any internet-enabled device, individuals have the capacity to connect remotely to people and places, whether this experience is conceptualized as launching or projecting one’s presence out into distant locations or cyberspace, or bringing information and interactions to one’s physical location. Using internet-enabled devices, individuals also may have greater flexibility in their choice of location to engage in a myriad of activities and interactions that have been traditionally tied to particular places and can now be accomplished remotely, from the train, the car, the coffee shop, the airport, almost anywhere. Yet Wilken (2005, 2008) and Morley (2003) have noted that though mobile communications technologies offer the opportunity for connecting globally, they are more often used to exchange information and coordinate activities with others locally, sometimes with others in in close proximity, as in the case of employees in
adjacent offices or teenagers in the same classroom who send e-mails or texts to one another, while Kwan (1999, 2000) points out that gender colors the experience of mobility, with women generally traveling within a more circumscribed area. However, most people who use internet-enabled devices experience virtual mobility, by exchanging information to locations where they are not physically present. It is this type of mobility that is most commonly experienced by internet users, moderated by degrees of interpersonal rather than geographical, closeness and distance.

In this study, the choice to engage in tasks remotely by phone or through the internet was more often exercised by choosing of one or a few preferred locations to stay rather than by moving from place to place. Home was the primary preferred location for most activities among this group of women, almost equally distributed in urban and suburban neighborhoods. For many, home was selected because it made it easier to manage the concurrent daily demands of domestic and childcare-related work, mostly centered in or close to home, and paid work, which many participants in this study were able to choose to complete from home.

You can browse the whole world without leaving the kitchen. I’ll throw in a load of laundry, I’ll write an e-mail, I’ll empty the dishwasher…I’m a multi-tasker…unless it’s something … where I have to stay with it and can’t do the running around, but a lot of times I like to step back before I hit the send button…and I do other things around the house.(P05)

For mothers in particular, the option of centering most of their activities in or near the home was important to enable them to be available to care for their children when necessary. For others, home was often described as a preferred place because it was considered the safest or the most private. “My home is a private space - I know everyone who enters, and I am safe there.”(A14,Q1) Home was described by some as the only private place, where they felt in control, and considered any other place outside the home to be public, reflecting the historical increase of the connection between home and the notion of privacy (Kumar, 1997; Meyrowitz, 1985; Rybczynski, 1986; Shapiro, 1998). “In terms of absolute privacy, I would say my home. In terms of what you want to keep private, in terms of nobody talking to you or surprising you with anything, that would be my home.”(P13)

The ability to choose a preferred or convenient location was often pointed out as the principal benefit of internet use by participants, though the option to access the internet from various locations was also used, primarily in combination with other tasks for which participants needed to leave their preferred
location, such as during travel to meetings or appointments, whether for paid or unpaid work. Several respondents noted that their multiple responsibilities as mothers, wives, workers, students, volunteers and other roles, required their physical presence in various locations throughout the day, and that in such instances, being able to stay connected through the phone and the internet while on the move, was useful and convenient. Such responses echo the observations made by Kwan (2003, 2007), Ren & Kwan (2009) and Cassidy (2001), regarding the use of information and communication technologies as tools that help women juggle their domestic and paid work tasks, reinforcing existing gender roles.

Cassidy (2001) points out that the option to work from home, facilitated by the use of telecommunications devices for some occupations, may further distance women from the public sphere, by concentrating all activities, whether for paid, unpaid work or non-work, around the private sphere of the home. The use of the internet to support the culturally prevalent gender role-based division of labor noted in this study confirms the general tendency of men and women to use the internet in different ways and for different purposes (Bimber, 2000; Dholakia, 2006; Helsper, 2010; Jackson et al. 2001; Kimbrough, 2013; Kwan, 2007; Muscanell, 2012; Sánchez-Franco, 2006: Singh, 2001; Thelwall, 2011). Studies have found that women often use the internet at home as a helpful tool rather than as something to play with or master (Ahrens, 2013; Singh, 2001), and are more likely to use the internet for communication-oriented activities rather than entertainment (Dholakia, 2008; Helsper, 2010).

Other research has found that women continue to carry the larger load of domestic and childcare work (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013; Harryson, Strandh & Hammarström, 2012; Kwan, 2000; Osnowitz, 2005), and that women’s more restricted travel patterns and use of public space reflect this imbalance (Kwan, 1999). Sullivan & Lewis (2001) note that the literature tends to highlight two major perspectives on women’s experiences of teleworking from home: the new opportunities for flexibility model and the exploitation model. Both models see the choice to telework from home as a way to manage women’s double workload of paid and domestic labor (Sullivan & Lewis, 2001). From the flexibility model perspective telework presents a way of balancing work and family, especially for women, whereas the exploitation model sees telework as perpetuating or even exacerbating the exploitation of women in both the paid and domestic work realms (Sullivan & Lewis, 2001). A model of work based on the separation of spheres and the gender role-based division of labor, penalizes women who attempt to
straddle both realms, driving some, particularly women in managerial and professional positions, to search for alternatives, from arranging flexible schedules to switching careers to leaving the workforce for a period of time (Stone & Hernandez, 2013). This division of labor based on gender roles was apparent also in this study and several participants stated that they welcomed the mobility of internet-enabled devices to be present in or near the domestic labor locus to tend to their multiple unpaid and paid work responsibilities.

For women who have the resources and opportunities to choose flexible paid work options, such as working part time, on their own, remotely or freelancing, or who are not employed, this chosen locational fixity appears to be perceived as more of a benefit rather than a restriction, given that the mobility afforded by the internet is not only physical, but also virtual. For women with these options and for whom staying physically close to home is useful or necessary to balance their multiple responsibilities, internet use often provides a way to extend their presence virtually beyond the domestic sphere, facilitating their participation in paid work or other activities.

6.2.2 Portable privacy

Privacy was often described by participants in this study as a personal feeling about a place or situation or an agreement or understanding between people and groups. For this reason, many felt they could create portable private territories in public spaces, by demarcating an area by either engaging in an activity considered private or through the use of a cell phone or an internet-enabled device. The same place may be deemed as private or public by different people at different times, as is the case of places that are occupied by what may be described as personal portable private territories, such as a person demarcating a table at a restaurant with personal property and a cell phone, making it seem suitable for a private conversation temporarily. Brown (1987) and Altman (1975) have discussed this strategy for creating private territories in public locations. Habuchi (2006), Morley (2003) and Varnelis & Freedberg (2008) have also described this private territory demarcation in public spaces through the use of mobile devices as “cocooning” or “tele-cocooning”. Mobile devices are often used by individuals to connect with personal networks, withdrawing into known and circumscribed circles of established relationships and communities of interest, while distancing themselves from the surrounding physical
environment and face-to-face social interactions in public space (Drucker & Gumpert, 2012; Gumpert & Drucker, 1998; Morley, 2003).

The home has historically been the predominant place generally associated with privacy, women and the family (Kent, 1991; Rybczynski, 1986; Rawlings, 1996; Shapiro, 1998; Weintraub & Kumar, 1997), though other locations have been perceived as providing different levels of privacy as well (Meyrowitz, 1985), but the prevalence of mass media and the widespread use of photographic, video or audio recording devices may intensify the feeling that privacy is threatened in any location, outside and even inside the home.

The sense of privacy was described by some in this study not only as portable and related to people as much as to places, but also as intensely personal and internal, informed by past experience and emotional associations.

The only privacy is what remains in your mind. Once it is written down or verbalized, it becomes public because it becomes discoverable. Thus, if a particular spot evokes certain feelings, those feelings are private, but the spot is not. (A16,Q11)

I think privacy has to do with how at home you feel with something. You can feel ‘at home’ in both a place that is more formally considered public or private. (A01,Q11)

Yet, while past experience influences privacy expectations in new situations, these expectations need to be reinforced by the agreement and behavior of others, as many noted that privacy relies heavily on trust and reciprocity, supporting Joinson, Relps, Buchanan & Schofield’s (2010) observations that trust plays an important role in people’s perception of privacy and willingness to disclose information.

Privacy means someone or an entity or something respecting my wishes, my boundaries, not violating my trust. No hidden surprises. But you can’t trust a company with your information, period. Facebook is a company. It’s a clash of priorities.(P09)

6.3 Materiality/Physicality

6.3.1 Strong awareness of body and place

The notion of disembodiment has been brought up repeatedly in the literature in reference to internet use, since interactions occur remotely (McCullough, 2004). More recently, the role of the body in virtual experience has been discussed (Brophy, 2010; Cohen, 2007; Madge & O’Connor, 2005; Grosz,
Daniels (2009) has pointed out that while some scholars and activists find that the internet can be used as a tool to disguise one’s identity to minimize prejudices tied to physical attributes, often women use the internet to reinforce their physical identity by connecting to support or interest groups within which they can discuss shared concerns or experiences, such as health-related issues.

Participants in this study generally felt very aware not only of their mind-body integrity, noting that they generally did not see their virtual identity as separate from their physical one, but also that they felt very aware of and connected to their immediate physical environment, including their location, ambient conditions and changes, and the presence of others. Participants often selected the type of internet activity based on certain characteristic of their physical surroundings, more often choosing either quiet environments for paid and focused work, but lively environments for virtual social interactions and simple e-mail exchanges, since distractions were more disrupting in the first case. For more personal interactions on the internet, participants preferred to be surrounded by strangers rather than by acquaintances or family, since participants expected strangers to be less interested in their personal matters. Similar to the “strangers on the train” situation in which people feel comfortable disclosing personal information when they expect to remain anonymous and not meet again (Bareket-Bojmel & Shahar, 2011), this sense of increased privacy while surrounded by strangers may be related to the perception, expressed by many women in this study, that information is only meaningful when it can be connected to a known person. While there have always been techniques to disassociate people from their personal information, in physical or digital space, by using pseudonyms, disguises, encrypted communications, etc., recent practices and technological developments, particularly on the internet, make it extremely hard, and perhaps even impossible to establish or maintain anonymity or controlling who has access to one’s personal information (Christiansen 2011, Donovan, 2013; Greenwald & MacAskill, 2013; Sengupta 2013; Stein, 2011).

Most participants stated that their awareness of their immediate surroundings while on the internet was very strong and that they generally remained cognizant of where they were while on the internet, even when totally focused on a task or activity. They described the environmental characteristics that they searched for depending on the type of internet task, such as quiet for more
focused or time-consuming work. In contrast, they noted that their sense of time was generally weakened during internet activities, and that they needed external reminders to notice the passage of time.

I lose track of time, that’s why sometimes I go to the coffee shop, because there is that organic process of people, there’s more connection to the outside. At home, it’s not the same as when you are in a coffee shop; all those cues that let you know in a subtle level that time is moving forward, at home I don’t get those time cues. (P14)

Losing track of time while involved in an engrossing computer-mediated task is a common experience among workers (Ladner, 2009). The internet advertising workers in Ladner’s study relied primarily on the digital clocks on their screens to keep track of time elapsed. Ladner (2009) notes it may be difficult to keep accurate track of abstract time while working and that people more easily relate to temporal rhythms marked by environmental and local event cues, such as those revolving around mealtimes and rest, for example. Women in Ganito’s study (2012) of cell phone use also highlighted the conflict caused by the disparity between abstract, industrial or clock time and cyclical or lived time. The notion of cognitive absorption or flow has also been discussed in relationship to this lowered awareness of time when attention is captured by an engaging task (Agarwal, 2000; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Trevino & Webster, 1992).

It is also possible that it may be more difficult to disengage oneself from sensorial input from the immediate environment, like noise, movement, smell or sound than registering the passage of time indoors under artificial lighting. Additionally, being oblivious to one’s surroundings may be perceived as potentially dangerous, especially in a public place, whereas losing track of time, once settled in a place considered safe, such as at home in the evening, may appear to carry limited risk.

6.3.2 Ambiguous public/private boundaries

The degree of privacy or publicness of an interaction or activity on the internet was often described as difficult to assess by many participants, particularly because the privacy or publicness of their physical experience while on the internet was often at odds with their virtual experience, and because they also weren’t clear about the ownership of internet sites and services and the information that is shared on them.

Several participants stressed the difficulty in assessing whether the internet is a public or private experience for many reasons. For one, the issue of ownership appeared perplexing to them. The notion
of property is closely tied with that of privacy (Moore, 2008; Richardson, 2011). While in physical space it is generally apparent whether an activity is taking place in a privately or publicly owned space, ownership of the internet and the information that is shared on it, is somewhat unclear for many people. Several participants in this study seemed well informed of the degree to which data entered on the internet is accessible to others and to corporations, but others were less aware of the extent to which information is vulnerable, and a few were minimally interested or concerned.

I consider that while my activity online is readily available as data, that I own that data…I should always assume anything placed online is public unless I have taken appropriate measures to ensure that it has a decent probability of being secure. (A18,Q9)

The expectation that personal data on the internet will not be accessed or that it can be safely shielded from others is unrealistic (Gumpert & Drucker, 1998). While some data collected on the internet is provided voluntarily by internet users, it can also be collected without their permission or knowledge. Social networking sites like Facebook, or commercial sites like Amazon routinely collect information to target ads, for example (Christiansen 2011, Sengupta 2013). Search engines like Google also gather information for the same purpose. Data collected from the internet is used in other ways as well (Donovan, 2013). Some companies collect the information and sell it to third parties (Stein, 2011). Companies like Staples, Office Depot and others use the information they collect to target prices based on location or other information they know about particular online shoppers (Valentino-Devries, Singer-Vine & Soltani, 2013). Personal information and internet activity is tracked in many different ways. Christiansen (2011) lists a variety of methods for the involuntary collection of data from internet users: web browser text files, known as cookies, deep packet inspection, history sniffing, scraping and digital device fingerprinting. Websites use web browser text files, known as cookies, to track files and internet viewing histories. Deep packet inspection tracks all internet activity of a particular user, through the reading and analysis of packets of information traveling across the internet. History sniffing entails running a code on the web browser to collect information on sites visited. Scraping allows the retrieval of personal information shared on forum discussions and social media sites. Digital device fingerprinting monitors all internet activities of an electronic device in use to build profiles (Christiansen, 2011). Data mining practices are widespread on the internet not only by corporations but by the government as well.
Information online can be and is gathered and sold and sometimes stolen and misused.

There are multiple understandings of privacy, generally related to access or control of the self or information about the self (Altman, 1976; Margulis, 2003; 2011; Moore, 2008; Westin, 1967). Open or restricted access often serves to mark whether a place or activity is private or public in physical space, but on the internet, many participants felt that limited access, even with password requirements, did not fully clarify the privacy level of a website, since they felt those restrictions could be easily violated.

The notion of privacy is also often connected to property and ownership (Moore, 2008). While on the one hand, much if not all of the internet appears private in the sense of ownership and funding, since search engines, site hosting services and e-mail services are owned and run by private corporations, in theory, outside of password-protected sites, most of the internet is open to anyone who uses a computer with an internet connection and appears, therefore, public. “Public space everyone has access to; it’s not a privately owned space. If you step out of your front door you’re in a public space.” (P04)

Some participants also noted that the physical experience while on the internet often was at odds with the virtual experience. Most participants in this study preferred being physically alone, often at home, while on the internet, and noted that they believed they could engage in a private interaction on the internet, because they felt physically in a private space, while their online interaction might be taking place in much more public environment.

I look for a quiet space, a library, where I can be off on my own…it’s a solitary activity for me…It’s my home office, it’s my space…I have a bulletin board full of photographs of my family in front of the computer, I have photographs of my own all over the room, so I feel like I’m at home in my personal space, while I’m using the internet. (P02)

Several participants preferred using the internet in quiet, personalized, demarcated areas or rooms in the home. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) have underlined this process of marking boundaries and expressing cultural and personal beliefs through the use of objects in the home. Similarly, personal communications devices, such as cell phones, are used to mark personal territories in public areas (Habuchi, 2006; Morley, 2003; Varnelis & Freedberg, 2008). Paradoxically, cell phones and internet-enabled devices may be perceived at once as private, because they serve to keep people connected to their personal networks, and public, because they also provide access to public arenas,
sometimes even involuntarily, as in the case of internet search engine or cell phone location tracking. Meyrowitz (1985, 2009) and others (Gumpert & Drucker, 1998) have noted this ambiguity in connection with mass media in the home that broadcast information from the public sphere while occupying the domestic private world.

In contrast, some participants noted that they often found themselves in a very public physical space, engaged in what they considered private interactions on the internet, certain that they had demarcated a private area that would be respected, yet later realizing that they might have been putting themselves sometimes at risk of unwillingly disclosing information to others physically present around them.

In physical space, a private conversation can occur in a public space with the assumption that it will remain private. “Personal interactions are private…a dinner conversation I would consider private even though it’s in a public space.” (P01) But these expectations of privacy under the cloak of anonymity in a public physical space are more vulnerable on the internet. A person might feel safe having a personal conversation in a restaurant, walking on the street or sitting on a park bench, believing that the distribution of the content of such conversation will be limited to one or a few trusted others and of no interest to strangers, and such person might feel that the same exchange on the internet would somewhat parallel this experience. This sense of being irrelevant to strangers might then encourage individuals to feel safe and freely reveal personal information, assuming they will remain anonymous (Bareket-Bojmel & Shahar, 2011). But on the internet, the anonymity cloak is much more vulnerable, since the information is recorded and archived by internet service providers, and not only under their control, but accessible and distributable by many others (Christiansen 2011, Sengupta 2013).

Just being on the internet is public, but you don’t really think that when you’re on the internet, because you aren’t directly interacting with people, the relationships are so contained or restrained, that I don’t usually think of the internet as being entirely public, it seems like a really personal activity.(P13)

Participants also affirmed that they always were very aware of their physical surroundings, so that they were quite clear whether they considered a particular location private or public, but noted that when they felt safe to engage in private exchanges on the internet because they were physically located in a private space, they felt somewhat deceived and at risk.
Because the level of privacy of a situation or place appears to be based often on personal assessments and feelings, privacy concerns sometimes contradict privacy protection behaviors. Norberg Horne & Horne (2007) have found a “privacy paradox” in that even people who affirm that their privacy concerns are high, often carelessly provide personal data, possibly influenced by contextual, social and cognitive factors, such as the physical setting, the relationship between the individual and the person or institution requesting the information and the assessment of the level of risk in of a particular situation.

6.3.3 Managing attention

Managing and directing attention appropriately were highlighted as important skills when using the internet. Whenever possible, participants paired less demanding physical environments with more challenging internet tasks and vice versa.

Participants described being sensitive to their physical surroundings when using the internet, and they managed carefully the attentional demands from the virtual and physical spheres. The process of multi-tasking, or engaging in multiple activities at the same time, whether simultaneously or sequentially, has generated much interest, particularly with the increased use of telecommunications and mass media (Offer & Schneider, 2011). According to van Manen, it is very difficult to fully focus attention at once and equally to both the virtual and the physical realms; attention is best directed first to one then the other, in a repetitive and sequential process (van Manen & Adams, 2006; 2009). Others have found that some people can tend to multiple activities at the same time and that this is a choice influenced by personal preferences (Stephens, Cho & Ballard, 2012). While some activities can be accomplished concurrently with ease, like listening to music while typing a short e-mail or text for example, it would seem that the activity that demands greater effort or an immediate action or response at a given time will make greater demands on an individual’s attention. These competing demands have been noted with cell phone use while driving (Haddington & Rauniomaa, 2011; Strayer & Drews, 2007; Misra & Stokols, 2012), riding a bicycle (Terzano, 2013) and even walking (Stravinos, Byington & Schwebel, 2011). Similarly, studies have shown that distracting noise can interfere with the completion of cognitive tasks (Jahnke, Hygge, Halin, Green & Dimberg, 2011; Smith-Jackson & Klein, 2009) and that such interference may cause stress (Evans & Johnson, 2000). It is possible that if the attentional requirements of an activity and its location compete, the experience may be distressing. Many participants noted this tension between the
attentional requirements of the physical environment and the virtual activity, when using the internet. A place that demands much attention, whether by the interest it generates, the emotional bonds it evokes or houses through things, memories or the presence of others, or because it is perceived as dangerous or uncomfortable, may be better paired with an internet activity that requires little emotional and intellectual effort, like a quick e-mail response or playing a simple game, whereas a place that demands little attention, because it is known, safe and comfortable, is likely to be considered best for an activity that requires focus and effort, like answering a more involved e-mail, completing a work-related task or researching a topic on the internet.

6.4 Identity

6.4.1 Affect, memory and identifiability

In this study, the experience of privacy in a particular place or situation was often related to affective connections, to previous experiences and identifiability, suggesting a sense of privacy that is more internal and personal rather than a tangible or fixed part of a physical location or situation.

The perception of place, as known, safe, comfortable, meaningful or private appeared to be closely tied to personal experience. This notion of the meaningfulness of places is also related to the conceptualization of non-places as discussed by Augé (1995). Whereas places are relational and concerned with memory and identity, non-places are not. Augé’s notion is relevant here because these aspects of place versus non-place are reflected in remarks made by participants in this study in relationship to the experience of privacy and private places. The level of privacy sensed in a particular location or situation hinged on emotional connection to people and places (the relational aspect), to previous experience (the historical or memory-related concern) and with the degree of identifiability. From this perspective, the experience of a non-place or of anonymity is often temporary and very personal. One may experience anonymity in a particular situation or location, or may experience a particular location as a non-place, but such conditions might be unstable, changing if circumstances change. O’Beirne (2010) has noted that while non-places are meant to be transitory, their description as non-relational, non-historical and not concerned with identity, implies a particular experience or point of view, that of the onlooker or outsider, rather than the inhabitant, for example. Ramoneda and Sánchez
(2012) in their investigation of the Atocha train station, a non-place devoted to transit made similar observations regarding the role of familiarity and extent of involvement and the perception of the train station as a meaningful place.

Being known or sharing an emotional bond with others in a place impacted the sense of privacy for many participants. While at home, a strong feeling of privacy was achieved within an intimate circle of family and other loved ones. Paradoxically, at the opposite extreme, being unknown and unrelated to others in a public setting also brought a greater sense of individual privacy, behind the veil of anonymity. In public places and particularly in the places of transit and commerce described by Augé as non-places, communications technology might enhance this retreat into an anonymous personal bubble, what Sharma refers to as the “personal techno-sphere”, and others as a “tele-cocoon” (Habuchi, 2006; Morley, 2003; Sharma, 2009; Varnelis & Freedberg, 2008).

Several participants also observed that a place could feel private or public depending on their own personal experiences, regardless of how it might be assessed by others.

It is more so the specific place and feeling evoked from that place which determines how I feel in that place. Even if a place is outside in the open with a lot of people it may be a private space for me, or it may be a very vulnerable public space. (A35,Q11)

Ramoneda and Sánchez (2012) and Sharma (2009) make this point as well, noting that places like an airport, which a casual traveler may experience as a non-place would probably be seen in a different light by someone who spends extended periods of time there, or who connects the location with a personally significant event.

6.4.2 Modulated identity

Identity in mediated space was described as multi-faceted and targeted to the audience addressed by respondents in this study. Different modes of communication, face-to-face, phone, e-mail or texting, were considered differently suited to some interactions and situations, and altered the way participants expressed themselves.

Participants noted that they communicate differently face-to-face, on the phone and on the internet, even when they feel strongly that they remain true to a single identity. Turkle (1995) observed
that people sometimes develop and adopt multiple virtual identities while on the internet. This use of the internet to experiment with different identities might be more prevalent among youth since identity exploration is particularly important during this period (Valkenburgh, Schouten & Peter, 2005). More recently others have proposed that given the current practices of data collection, tracking and linking by various internet companies, keeping separate identities on the internet may not be possible (Fowler, 2012; Kirkpatrick, 2010). Van Zoonen (2013) has also pointed out that not only corporations but also governments have an interest in developing strategies to link and merge online and offline information about individuals in order to more easily identify them. In this study, women described their experience as one of a single identity revealing only a limited view of itself depending on the audience addressed, not for the purpose of deception, but in order to present the appropriate and necessary information intended for that particular audience and best represent an accepted or desired role in a particular context.

Participants noted that in a face-to-face encounter they would choose to present themselves and act as the role they either want to or were expected to play in a given interaction: mother to one’s children, sister to a sibling, professional to a colleague, patient to a doctor, for example, and that they would use the same strategies when interacting with others through the phone or the internet. Yet they also pointed out that while they would do this equally in both face-to-face and virtual situations, some felt that they expressed themselves differently depending on the mode of communication used, be it a conversation face-to-face, a phone call, an e-mail or text message, or a public internet forum chat for example.

For people that I don’t know well or haven’t even seen, and it’s professional communication, I prefer e-mail, if you don’t know someone, e-mail is definitively less threatening in a way, because you can’t hear what their voice sounds like, you can’t see them, so there’s room for interpretation in their tone, with an e-mail, but on the phone or in person, there’s so many other communication cues, and body language and behaviors that it definitively gets more complicated...when I e-mail someone, if I don’t know them, I don’t worry as much about their feeling or anything like that, but I would say that the more direct contact I have with someone, the more I do concentrate more on the details of that interaction, and when it comes to people I know like friends or people that I know well, I try to communicate face to face if possible or on the phone, and I don’t do instant messaging a lot on the internet, because that feels strange to me, especially because I do so with people I know well. So I think: why don’t we just have a phone conversation instead of this instant messaging thing? Texting, on the other hand, does serve a purpose, if you’re in an environment where you can’t talk on the phone, texting seems appropriate to me, but overall with people I know well or who are close to me, I prefer face to face or voice calls.(P13)

I try to be myself. I know that other people have e-mail voices or Facebook voice. Facebook is notorious for people trying to act like their lives are sunshine and rainbows.
That’s not me. I try to be real, I try to be me. I try to have my serious conversations or emotional conversations over the phone or in person. I’d rather them be in person, that’s not always doable, I’d rather have inflection and tone coming from my phone and not from my writing, if it’s something big, I’d rather have like real time reactions to things. I’m not a fan of e-mails if it’s something big. (P12)

Some described the difficulty often posed when discussing a sensitive matter by textual exchanges lacking the physical gestures or tone of voice available in a face-to-face conversation. For these reasons, participants tried to match the content and tone of the interaction with the type of communication mode used. Some said that when more professionalism or emotional distance was required, e-mail might be a preferable choice, followed by a phone call and a face-to-face conversation for more sensitive and personal conversations. These various observations relate to the assertions of medium theory (Meyrowitz, 2009, 2010), which claim that changes in modes of communication usually influence interaction through the potentialities and constraints of the medium used. Some studies have found that there are differences in the way people communicate in face-to-face compared to computer-mediated interactions (Jiang, Bazarova & Hancock, 2013; Okdie et. al, 2011). Others have also found that different modes of communication are preferred for different social purposes (Petrič, Petrovčič, A & Vehovar, 2011; Baym, Zhang & Lin, 2004).

It seems like a strange form of communication. If I'm communicating directly with someone, like in instant message, or I'm on a social networking site and I see individuals that I know, that actually seems weirder to me than accessing information about people and things that I don’t know about or haven’t seen. For me, feeling uncomfortable comes with seeing things and people that I'm familiar with in such a public medium.(P13)

Even as the boundaries between privacy and publicness become more malleable and permeable, for some participants, there were differences between what communications media, relationships and situations they considered more or less public or private, and they felt more at ease when the level of privacy or publicness they attributed to a communications medium matched the one they attributed to the context in which they used it.

6.4.3 Anonymity and location

Identifiability was key in giving significance to private information and anonymity was viewed as protective and enhancing a sense of privacy but questionable on the internet. Information regarding
physical location at a given time was considered by most respondents to be the most sensitive private information.

Many participants pointed out that that personal information was meaningless if it was not attached to an identifiable individual. While some felt that as long as the information was not easily linked to a particular person its distribution was harmless, several were certain that links could be always found if there was enough interest. So while some felt protected by anonymity, many doubted its actual existence or durability on the internet. This is understandable, given the widespread practices of data mining by corporations and institutions (Christiansen 2011; Sengupta 2013). Some assumed they could envelop themselves in an anonymity veil on the internet if they failed to provide enough data about themselves, while others felt that the vastness of information on the internet alone assured their anonymity. Most participants were uncomfortable about sharing information regarding their physical location at a given time.

On the internet there’s a greater sense of anonymity so I expect more privacy on the internet, actually. It depends on what you do, but if you go and search on YouTube for a video, there’s so much privacy with that because no one is looking, there’s no overall monitoring body of your behavior on the internet unless you’re doing something that is really, really out there. Whenever a username or password comes up, that’s when a level of privacy is kind of taken away, because if someone does see information related to your username or password, then some information about you is revealed, but if you don’t, if you’re not required to do that, if you’re doing a Google search or Wikipedia, I would say that makes me feel the most anonymous. I would actually equate feeling anonymous with privacy when it comes to the internet. (P13)

I think the biggest thing that would bother me would be people knowing more about my location, not just where I am in public but I wouldn’t want to put my home address where people could contact me or find me or something, but they already know what I look like… I know the people who I feel comfortable knowing where I’m located, know where I’m located and those are the people who need that information and those are the people who should have it. (P03)

To varying degrees, anonymity was equated with privacy by several participants in this study. Westin (1967) has also referred to anonymity as “public privacy”. Complete anonymity in most situations and particularly on the internet, is difficult if not impossible to achieve, but there are multiple pieces of information regarding one’s identity that a person may choose to conceal in an attempt to maintain a certain level of anonymity (Guegan & Michinov, 2011; Marx, 1999). Yet, as several participants in this study noted, once a piece of information is revealed, even just a pseudonym or a password in a protected
site, other identifying information may be vulnerable. Marx (1999) finds seven types of personal information or identity knowledge that influence various degrees of anonymity, including locatability. The others are legal name, pseudonyms that can be linked to name and locatability (pseudo-anonymity), pseudonyms that can’t be linked to other forms of identity knowledge (real anonymity), pattern knowledge, social categorization and symbols of eligibility/noneligibility. Some of these pieces of personal information might be perceived as being more closely connected to the physical reality of an individual, to her body, and therefore more likely to increase the risk of physical harm if disclosed. Concern with safety and anonymity on the internet, particularly the potential involuntary disclosure of one’s location, appears to be greater among women as compared to men (Christopherson, 2007; Flanagan, 2002). This could explain why many participants in this study felt they would protect information regarding their address and location at a given time more that other kinds of personal information.

6.5 The privacy-publicness continuum

6.5.1 Understandings and experiences of privacy and publicness as a continuum

While the notions of private and public were generally understood as opposites by most participants in this study, their experience of privacy and publicness was more nuanced, with multiple levels defined by the type and amount of personal information revealed and by the type of relationships maintained with those to whom such personal information was disclosed whether in a virtual or physical location.

Most participants had a clear idea of what privacy meant to them, yet defining its opposite was difficult for many. The issue of privacy was often understood in connection to the disclosure or protection of any kind of personal information, though for many participants there appeared to be many levels of privacy, often congruent with Westin’s privacy states (Westin, 1967), as well as varying levels of publicness. While most respondents were more likely to define privacy and publicness as distinct opposites, the private/public dichotomy was more often experienced as a continuum. At one end, the highest level of privacy occurs when an individual is physically alone and no personal information is disclosed to anyone; at the other, all information is revealed to everyone.
It’s more of a continuum than black and white; the whole point is to communicate with other people. If things were private, like to yourself, then it wouldn’t be relevant to the internet, then you would just keep it in a private cabinet in your office. If you think you’re speaking to a particular audience then you’re only speaking to that audience, that’s internet privacy, because you are trying to communicate to other people, you’re just trying to communicate the right message to the right people. Because you do say different things to your close friends or people with whom you share an interest, than you do with business colleagues. (P14)

Different types of information are shared with family, close friends, co-workers, acquaintances and strangers, and people expect and want such segmentation to be respected. In most situations, these audiences are differentiated by the type or relationship that connects them to a particular individual, and by their size. More private information is distributed to a small group of close family members, less to a larger group composed of friends, and so on. In some instances the information is limited to a particular type of interaction and meant to be shared only with a particular person, group or organization, like a physician or a bank. Participants were generally concerned that this segmentation, which they found useful and desirable, was difficult to manage while on the internet, since the boundaries that separate these different audiences can often be breached and the ability to do so can be attained by unknown others. “Companies are obliged to keep your information private, but if someone is determined to hack that information…on some level nothing is private, information is vulnerable.” (P04) Not only is this information vulnerable to unlawful access, but corporate privacy policies often cover only a limited amount of data for a limited time, and their terms may be changed or updated frequently.

6.6 Significance, Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The notions of private and public have been woven with many aspects of daily life and interpreted and reinterpreted in different cultures and times (Meyrowitz, 1985, 2009; Rybczynski, 1986). These concepts have been influential in shaping social interactions and physical space, and have in turn been shaped by changing physical and social environments (Meyrowitz, 1985, 2009; Rybczynski, 1986). With the rapidly increasing popularity of the internet, these notions have been problematized, as the boundaries separating them as well as the dualities they’ve traditionally buttressed, such as home vs. work, have been weakened by the internet and by changes to work relations and global corporate
practices (Greenbaum, 2004) and are being re-evaluated (Felstead & Jewson, 2000; Mirchandani, 1998; Nippert-Eng, 1996). While much of the discussion of privacy and publicness in connection to internet use focuses closely on the sharing of information online, this study underlined the interaction of the physical and the virtual, their reciprocal impact and their joint experience in mediated space, the space at the intersection of mass media, including the internet, and the physical environment.

Cultures are crystallized in the physical environment; tools and artifacts reflect the embodied knowledge of the societies that produce them (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Latour, 1991; Sterne, 2003). One could now consider the internet as a tool and artifact of embodied knowledge through which our environment may be analyzed (Greenbaum, 2004). Csikszentmihalyi (1981) notes that people often relate to objects emotionally through repeated interaction with them, and imbue objects with meaning, affecting how they are perceived and used. Morley (2003) has also noted the symbolic use of things to represent status or other qualities the owner wishes to be associated with. Latour (1991) notes that an object can encourage or discourage an action when a written or spoken request or command fails, and in turn its success in doing so can engender a process through which the behavior of people and the shape of things alter one another. Internet-enabled devices may expand and influence the choice of locations for many activities, as in the case of the participants in this study who sometimes chose locations based on the availability of internet connectivity or limited their travel by connecting remotely instead. In turn, participants used this internet-enabled mobility to redefine schedules and task locations to fit their needs.

This study focused on women, and findings reflect this particular perspective. Other research has shown that the use of physical space is influenced by gender (Cassidy, 2001; Kwan, 1999, 2000; Massey, 1994; Morley, 2001; Spain, 1992) and that women use the internet differently than men (Bimber, 2000; Dholakia, 2006; Helsper, 2010; Jackson et al. 2001; Kimbrough, 2013; Kwan, 2007; Muscanell, 2012; Sánchez-Franco, 2006: Singh, 2001; Thelwall, 2011), Women are more likely to use the internet for activities related to work, study, personal communication (Dholakia, 2008: Helsper 2010), seeking information, helping children with homework and buying and selling goods and services (Ahrens, 2013; Singh, 2001). The choice of these activities is influenced by the fact that women still do most of the

While this exploration benefited from using two modes of data collection, qualitative interviews and an internet survey, the number of participants was small (14 interviews and 61 survey participants), and self-selected, since participants chose to be interviewed or complete the survey by either directly responding to an e-mail request sent to a small number of networking e-mail lists or to a request from someone they knew who had participated or knew about the study (snowball method). Also a larger number of younger women, ages 18-35, completed the survey (61%) possibly because internet use appears to be slightly greater among this age group (Pew internet Research, 2013), e-mail requests using the snowball method might have been forwarded to people within this age range, and younger people might be more likely to volunteer to participate in surveys. Age distribution was uneven in both interview and survey respondents. Again this might reflect the age groups of the various networks that were tapped not only in the initial request for participation sent by the researcher but also by the personal networks of those who received it and who then forwarded it to others. Additionally, the requests were directed to women who use the internet at least two hours a day and therefore, the findings reflect this group’s perspective specifically.

Though it is clear that internet interactions and activities are now an integral part of many women’s lives the impact of this fusion warrants further study. Future research could investigate how attention is managed under competing demands from both virtual and physical environments, and whether and how different characteristics of these environments separately or jointly facilitate or impede focused attention. Also, because technology is constantly changing, another avenue of exploration could look into these ongoing changes, particularly in relationship to interactions with the social and physical environment in public space, as people grow accustomed to media-suffused and computer-mediated responsive environments, while at the same time, the habit of retreating into one’s private techno-sphere or cocoon becomes commonplace. Additionally, the social uses and perceived appropriateness of face-to-face and technology-mediated interpersonal communications in relationship to the notions of privacy could also be further explored. More research into social media with a focus on
privacy of information online, using broader samples and varied research methods (participatory and ethnographic methods, for instance) is also warranted.

6.7 Summary

Mass media and communications technologies are constantly changing and innovations are quickly appropriated to serve the needs and interests of those who use them. As these technologies become more pervasive, the notions and metaphors related to them also evolve. The idea of cyberspace as a place, for example, becomes less compelling as internet use becomes so neatly woven into daily life that it becomes difficult to consider it as a separate realm of activity. Also, the accelerated use of technologies that track and link information about individual users, hinder the ability of maintaining multiple, disconnected or anonymous virtual identities, weakening the idea of disembodiment and accentuating the connection between the virtual and physical spheres. Moreover, the possibility of being free from physical restraints, whether the body or a fixed location, through the virtuality and mobility afforded by the internet appears to be tempered in everyday experience by a strong connection to corporeal experience and the allure of trusted, preferred locations, like home.

An interest in the reciprocal impact between virtual and physical experience has been central to the development of this research. This study adds to the ongoing reconsideration of privacy and publicness in relationship to the use of telecommunications media among women, highlighting issues related to mobility, materiality/physicality, identity and the experience and understanding of privacy and publicness as a continuum. This study found that many women remain embodied and emplaced while using the internet for work and non-work activities, including e-mailing, banking, shopping, social networking and research, and that they enthusiastically embrace the use of new communications technologies both for paid and unpaid work and to build and nurture social connections.

Notions of private and public, once defined or reinforced by their connections to physical places, are being reconfigured as these links fade. In the context of the internet, anonymity and passive participation, also known as “lurking”, can provide a sense of privacy, even though complete anonymity may not be achieved. Active participation on the internet, however, can render a sense of publicness, at one end perceived as the positive feeling of being connected to family, friends and chosen communities of interest, and at the other, as uncontrolled exposure to unknown, possibly malicious strangers and
greedy or unethical corporations or institutions. These perspectives shift as our understanding of the role of the internet and of its use and monitoring by governments, corporations and others change as well. Our daily use of and interactions with and on the internet, rapidly and continually shape and re-shape not only the internet and the technologies and policies surrounding it, but also our experiences and understandings of the notions of privacy, publicness and place in mediated space, at the intersection of the virtual and the physical.
7 APPENDICES

A. Phase I: Interview participants demographic information table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Work Status</th>
<th>Work Location</th>
<th>Household Composition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P01</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Non-Profit Fundraising/Prospect Researcher</td>
<td>FT</td>
<td>AW</td>
<td>Partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P02</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Photographer</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>AH</td>
<td>Married, 1 child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P03</td>
<td>Urban, Work: Rural</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Arts Administration</td>
<td>FT</td>
<td>AW</td>
<td>Boyfriend &amp; Relative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P04</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Business Project Manager</td>
<td>FT</td>
<td>FX</td>
<td>Married, 2 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P05</td>
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<td>48</td>
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<td>AH</td>
<td>Married, 1 child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P06</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>Professor of Education/Dept. Chair</td>
<td>FT</td>
<td>FX</td>
<td>Married, 2 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P07</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Retired/Volunteer</td>
<td>RE</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P08</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Small Business Owner/SAHM</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>AH</td>
<td>Married, 2 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P09</td>
<td>Urban edge</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Business/Development &amp; Marketing</td>
<td>FT</td>
<td>FX</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>Small city in Rural Area</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Business Development/Training/Sales</td>
<td>FT</td>
<td>FX</td>
<td>Married, empty nester</td>
</tr>
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<td>SE</td>
<td>AH</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>FR</td>
<td>AH</td>
<td>Married, 3 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P13</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>PT</td>
<td>AW</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P14</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Engineer/Job Searching</td>
<td>LW</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Boyfriend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AW: Away from home, AT: At home, FX: Flexible Location, NA: Not applicable (No paid employment)
B. **Interview participation request**

My name is Nélida Quintero and I am student in the Environmental Psychology Ph.D. Program at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Principal Investigator of this project, entitled “Women’s Experiences of Privacy, Sociability and Place in Mediated Space”. This research project explores the way women understand and experience place, privacy and sociability when they are using the internet.

For this part of my research project, I am looking for participants to interview on the phone for about forty-five minutes, and I would like to ask you if you’d be willing to participate. The time and date of the interview will be set up at your convenience. Data gathered will only be used in the aggregate, meaning that individuals will not be identified. Taking part in this research is voluntary and responses will remain confidential.
C. **E-mail Survey Participation Request**

My name is Nélida Quintero and I am student in the Environmental Psychology Ph.D. Program at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Principal Investigator of the project entitled “Women’s Experiences of Privacy, Sociability and Place in Mediated Space”. This research project the way women who use the internet daily understand and experience the notions of privacy and sociability/publicity in relationship to virtual and/or physical places and activities. “Mediated space” refers to the interplay of the physical and the virtual when people are using the internet.

For this part of my research project, I am looking for women who use the internet at least 2 hours day to complete a short survey online and I would like to ask you if you’d be willing to participate. Completing the survey should take approximately twenty minutes, and you can do so at your convenience. Data gathered will only be used in the aggregate, meaning that individuals will not be identified. Taking part in this research is voluntary and your responses will remain confidential. Your participation will help advance our knowledge of how women understand and experience place, privacy and sociability/publicity when using the internet.

I’m attaching a link to the survey site, where you will find further instructions and information. Thank you.

Please follow this link to participate in the survey:

[ surveymonkey.com link to survey]
D. Pre-interview introduction to the research topic

This study focuses on how women experience privacy, sociability and place when they are using the internet. The survey questions revolve around your own experiences. When you are using the internet you are experiencing two environments at once: the virtual environment of the internet, and the physical environment around your body. This study focuses on the moments and places when and where you experience the virtual and the physical together: when and where you are at once engaged in physical and virtual interactions while located in physical and virtual spaces, that is, when and where you are in “mediated space”.

In preparation for the interview, please think about your daily internet-mediated activities: think about what you usually do on the internet and for what purpose as well as what activities you engage in that are related to your paid or domestic work, or to other spheres in your life. Maybe you could take some notes as you go about your daily internet-mediated activities, jotting down where you are (on the internet and in physical space) and what you’re doing. During the interview, we will also talk about your understanding of the notions of privacy and sociability/publicity in relationship to mediated space, the space you occupy when you are at once engaged in virtual and physical space.

Please fill the demographic data form attached and e-mail it back to me at: nqr@juno.com.

Thank you.
E. Consent form for phone interview

CONSENT FORM

My name is Nélida Quintero and I am student in the Environmental Psychology Ph.D. Program at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Principal Investigator of this project, entitled “Women’s Experiences of Privacy, Sociability and Place in Mediated Space”. This research project explores the way women who engage in internet-mediated activities actively and on a daily basis understand and experience the notions of privacy and sociability/publicity in relationship to the places they occupy, in virtual and/or physical space.

I would like permission to interview you about your experience.

This interview will take about 45 minutes. With your permission, I would like to audio-record this interview so I can register the details accurately. Only my advisor and I will hear the recordings. For this part of my research, I will interview 10 participants. All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential, and will be stored in a secure file cabinet and computer file, to which only I, and my advisor, will have access. At any time you can refuse to answer any questions or end this interview.

Your participation will help advance our knowledge of women’s understandings and experiences of place, privacy and sociability/publicity in mediated space. I may publish results of the study, but names of people, or any identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at (917) 837-3569 or nqr@juno.com, or my advisor Susan Saegert at (212) 817-1886 or ssaegert@gc.cuny.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Kay Powell, IRB Administrator, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, (212) 817-7525, kpowell@gc.cuny.edu.
Thank you for your participation in the study.

I agree to be interviewed and have this interview audio-recorded:

Yes           No

-----------------------------------------------
-----------------------------------------------
Participant's name       Date

-----------------------------------------------
-----------------------------------------------
Principal Investigator's signature       Date
F. **Demographic data form for phone interview participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occupation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household composition:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>home location: rural, suburban, urban:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work location (if different than home):</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
G. Interview guide

My research project focuses on how women experience privacy, sociability and place when they are using the internet. I will be asking you about your own experiences. When you are using the internet you are experiencing two environments at once: the virtual environment of the internet, and the physical environment around your body. I am interested in the moments and places when and where you experience the virtual and the physical together: when and where you are at once engaged in physical and virtual interactions while located in physical and virtual spaces, what I will refer to as “mediated space”. Feel free to bring up any issues related to this experience even if I don’t ask you directly about them. You can refuse to answer any question without consequence. You can choose to stop the interview at any time.

Experiencing mediated space:
Connection between internet-mediated activities and spatial experience
(Prompts and follow-ups are indented)

Could you walk me through your use of the internet on a usual day?

Based on response -- For Activity 1A, 1B, 1C. etc.:

What do you use to connect to the internet for this activity (what type of device: stationary pc, laptop, blackberry, etc.)? Why do you choose this particular device for this activity?

Where are you on the internet during this activity? Prompt for detail: one site or multiple sites, specific sites.

Where are you physically located when you are using the internet for this activity? Prompt for detail: i.e. At home, what room. Is this your choice? Why or why not? If not, what would be your choice?

How do you think of place, if you do, during each of these activities (listed in Question 1)?

How does place matter to you, if it does, during activity 1A, 1B, 1C, etc.?
What do you notice most about place during each of these activities?

Prompt for:

Awareness of ambient characteristics: sunlight, ventilation, noise, etc.

Awareness of social environment: presence of and interaction with people in physical and virtual space

Do you ever find that you are more aware of the internet environment you are interacting in than to the physical environment around you? Please give me some examples.

Do you ever find that you forget what time it is while you are on the internet, or where you are physically? Please give me some examples.

If there have been instances when place played an important role in making your activities on the internet easier or more difficult, could you tell me about them?

Consider the role of ambient characteristics of the physical environment (light, ventilation, temperature, noise) and their relationship to your software/hardware internet devices, for example.

Consider the role of people and things in both the physical and virtual environment and your interactions with them while you are on the internet.

To what extent do you feel you are available for internet interaction?

About how many hours a day are you on the internet?

How frequently do you check for text or e-mail messages?

How long on average are the periods you are off the internet (in-between internet sessions)?

Do you choose to be available to this extent? Why or why not?

How is your experience of being available on the internet different than being available face-to-face or on the phone? What role do place and time play in experiencing this difference, if any?

Organizing activities in mediated space:

Categorizing internet mediated activities as work, non-work or other
How do you use the internet for work?

Are there any work tasks you do exclusively using the internet? Is this by choice?

Why do you make that choice?

Are there any work-related internet tasks that you prefer to do from particular physical places? Could you explain your choices?

How do you think of place in relationship to work?

Do you think of particular places as more or less appropriate for work, for example? If so, why?

How do you use the internet for activities that are not work-related?

Tell me about internet activities that you do simply for fun, and that are not work-related.

For activities mentioned:

When do you usually do activity 6A, 6B, etc.? Is this by choice? Why do you make that choice?

Are there any of these activities that you prefer to do from particular places?

Could you explain your choices?

How do you think of place when you are using the internet for these activities (listed in question 6)?

How does place matter to you, if it does, during activity 6A, 6B, 6C, etc.?

How do you organize these different types of internet activities (both work and non-work) in time and space, by schedule and/or location, if you do?

Do you prefer to keep these activities separate or intermingled in time and space? Why? Which ones do you prefer to keep separate?

How do you attempt to separate or intermingle activities?

Do you experience conflict in attaining this level of separation or intermingling?

When and where?

To what extent?

Could you give me some examples?
Experiencing Privacy in Mediated Space:

Notions of privacy in relationship to mediated space

What does privacy mean to you?

What does privacy mean to you when you are on the internet (in mediated space)?

What makes a place private for you when you are using the internet (in mediated space)?

How do you make sure you are in a private place on the internet? What do you look for?

How do you make sure you are in a private place in the physical world? What do you look for?

How do you bring these strategies together when you are in mediated space?

What internet activities and places do you consider private? Why?

Could you tell me of instances when privacy when you are on the internet is very important to you?

How do particular places provide privacy for you when you are using the internet (in mediated space), if they do?

Please give me some examples.

Experiencing Sociability/Publicity in Mediated Space:

Notions of sociability/publicity in relationship to mediated space

What does sociability/publicity (as opposed to privacy) mean to you?

What does it mean to you when you are on the internet (in mediated space)?

What makes a place public for you when you are on the internet (in mediated space)?

How do you make sure you are in a public place on the internet? What do you look for?

How do you make sure you are in a public place in the physical world? What do you look for?

How do you bring these strategies together when you are in mediated space?

What internet activities and places do you consider public? Why?

Could you tell me of instances when sociability in virtual and/or physical space is important to you?
How do particular places provide sociability/publicity for you when you are on the internet (in mediated space), if they do? Please give me examples.

Other and demographics

Are there any other issues related to your experience of internet use in relationship to place that you would like to bring up?

(If not answered in the pre-interview form) What is your age
occupation
household composition
home location: rural, suburban, urban
work location (if different than home)
H. Internet survey

Women’s Understandings and Experiences of Privacy, Sociability and Place

Welcome to “Women’s Understandings and Experiences of Privacy, Sociability and Place in Mediated Space”, a study that explores the way women who use the internet daily understand and experience the notions of privacy and sociability/publicness in relationship to virtual and/or physical places and activities. “Mediated space” refers to the interplay of the physical and the virtual when people are using the internet.

Your participation will help advance our knowledge of how women understand and experience place, privacy and sociability/publicness when using the internet.

The survey contains 16 questions and will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. You can start, stop, go back and change your answers at any time before you submit the survey. You won’t be able to change your answers once you’ve submitted it.

Please read the Consent Form below. If you understand the statements and freely consent to participate in this study, please click on the appropriate button at the end of the Consent Form and then continue to the questions. The completion and submission of this survey constitutes your agreement to participate.
Women’s Understandings and Experiences of Privacy, Sociability and Place

1. CONSENT FORM

Thank you for your interest in this study. My name is Nélida Quintero and I am a student in the Environmental Psychology Ph.D. Program at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Principal Investigator of this project, entitled “Women’s Experiences of Privacy, Sociability and Place in Mediated Space”. This research project explores the way women who engage in internet-mediated activities actively and on a daily basis understand and experience the notions of privacy and sociability/publicity in relationship to the places they occupy in virtual and/or physical space.

Completing this survey will take about twenty minutes. All responses are treated as confidential, and in no case will responses from individual participants be identified. I may publish results of the study, but names of people, or any identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications.

The risks anticipated in this research are not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. Your participation will help advance our knowledge of women’s understandings and experiences of place, privacy and sociability/publicity in mediated space.

Participation is voluntary and you can stop and exit the survey at any time.

If you would like a copy of the completed study, please send me an e-mail with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at (917) 837-3569 or quintero@alumni.princeton.edu, or my advisor Susan Saegert at (212) 817-1886 or ssaegert@gc.cuny.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Kay Powell, IRB Administrator, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, (212) 817-7525, kpowell@gc.cuny.edu.

Thank you for your participation in the study.

☐ I agree.
☐ I don’t agree.
How do we understand and experience private and public places and activities? The notions of private and public have been traditionally considered separate, if not opposite, concepts. The use of the internet, not only makes it easier to cross the boundaries between the private and the public, but it also makes it possible to separate private and public activities from the places and schedules to which they have been typically connected.

In answering the questions think of your own experience, feelings and ideas about public and private places and activities when using the internet, and on how the interplay of the physical and the virtual relates to that experience.

2. About how much time do you spend on the internet each day? Consider all the time you spend throughout the day, disregarding breaks.
   - Between 2 and 4 hours
   - Between 4 and 6 hours
   - Between 8 and 8 hours
   - More than 8 hours

3. When you are using the internet, what kind of physical surroundings do you prefer? You can choose as many as are appropriate.
   - Home
   - Office away from home
   - Places where I can be by myself
   - Places where I am known/familiar places
   - Places where access is restricted and granted by others (like a coffee shop, a club, a business office)
   - Places with lots of activity or change (like a coffee shop, a restaurant, an airport, a park)
   - Places with little activity or change (like a library)
   - Places that are interesting or pleasant to me
   - Places that are not distracting, not interesting to me
   - Places where I feel anonymous
   - Any place
   - Other (please identify in comment box below)

Please explain briefly why you would describe the internet this way.
4. Where do you prefer to be when you're involved in these internet activities? For each activity, you can choose as many locations as are appropriate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Office away from home</th>
<th>Busy public places like a coffee shop</th>
<th>Quiet public places like a Library</th>
<th>Open access public places, like a park or a mall</th>
<th>It doesn't matter to me</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email – Work related</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Email – Not work related</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information Gathering/Research – Work related</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information Gathering/Research – Not work related</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passive Social Networking (Reading)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Active Social Networking (Posting)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching TV shows/music videos</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Playing Games</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web surfing/browsing</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other1 (Please identify in comment box)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other2 (Please identify in comment box)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please add activities not listed: Other1 and Other2.

5. How would you describe the internet? Check all that apply.

- The internet is a resource or tool
- The internet is a place
- The internet is a virtual library
- The internet is a communication medium
- The internet is an information gathering tool
- The internet is a threshold or portal that connects the virtual and the physical worlds.
- The internet is a virtual mirror image of the physical world
- The internet is a virtual world different and separate from the physical world
- Other (please identify in the box below)

Please explain briefly why you would describe the internet this way.
6. About how much time, if any, do you spend on these internet activities on average each day?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Less than 1 h</th>
<th>1-2 h</th>
<th>3-4 h</th>
<th>More than 4h</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email — Work related</td>
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<tr>
<td>Email — Not work related</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information Gathering/Research — Work related</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information Gathering/Research — Not work related</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watching TV shows</td>
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<tr>
<td>Banking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Playing Games</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web surfing/browsing</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other1: Please identify in comment box</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other2: Please identify in comment box</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please add activities not listed: Other1 and Other2

7. What does privacy mean to you?

8. What makes a place, situation, activity or information public to you?
9. To what extent do you consider these internet activities private or public?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Somewhat private</th>
<th>Somewhat public</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email – Work related</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email – Not work related</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information gathering/research – Work related</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information gathering/research – Not work related</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive social networking (Reading)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active social networking (Posting)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watching TV shows/music videos</td>
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<tr>
<td>Banking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Playing games</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web surfing/browsing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other1: Please identify in comment box</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other2: Please identify in comment box</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please explain briefly the choices that best exemplify your experience of a private or public activity: what is it about this activities that makes you consider them private or public?
10. Do the meanings of private and public change depending on the internet activity you are involved in?

☐ Yes
☐ No

If yes, please explain:

---

11. Do any of these descriptions fit your ideas and feelings about public and private space? You can choose as many as are appropriate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Neither</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A place that has particular meaning to me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A place where I feel safe.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A place where I am in control.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A place where I feel I belong.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A place where others know me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A place where I am anonymous.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A place that is not meaningful to me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A place that feels permanent.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A place that feels transitory.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A place where I can trust others.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why do these descriptions fit your notions of private and public space? Please explain briefly one or two statements that most closely fit your ideas or feelings about public spaces, and one or two statements that most closely fit your ideas or feelings about private spaces.

---
12. How important is it for you to be able to restrict access to each of the following personal information?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Not Very Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My name</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My likeness (photos or pictures)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My address</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My location at a given time</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My connections to others (family, friends, coworkers)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My interests</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My shopping preferences and history</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My work/professional history (my training and education, positions held, etc.)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My personal history (where I was born, where I grew up, where I've lived, etc.)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why do you feel it is important to be able to restrict access to this personal information? Please explain briefly.
**Women’s Understandings and Experiences of Privacy, Sociability and Place**

**13. Do these statements reflect your understanding or experience of using the internet?**

*When I’m using the internet...*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I lose track of time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am aware of what’s going on around me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I express myself differently than when I talk to someone in person.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I need to cut myself off from what’s going on around me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I need to be alone.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I enjoy some background activities or noise (like people talking, TV or music).</td>
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<tr>
<td>I relate to others differently than I do in person.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I forget where I am.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can get sidetracked from my task.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel like I’m constantly being watched.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel that I know how to protect my personal information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can focus on my task more easily.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel like I’m anonymous most of the time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel like I’m in a public space.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel I can express myself more openly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel protected by my anonymity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I like to mix work and non-work activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel more connected to others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel I can have private interactions under certain conditions.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
14. Do you feel that using the internet has changed the way you think about and the way you use the places in your daily experience (places such as your home, your workplace, public and commercial places you like to spend time in?)

- Yes
- No

If yes, please explain:

15. Do you feel that using the internet has changed the way you think about which information, activities and places are private and which ones are public?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please explain:

16. Do you find that your internet use has had an impact on where you spend your time? (For example, by either making you more likely to spend time in different places throughout the day or to stay in one preferred location most of the time?)

- Yes
- No

If yes, please explain:
17. Please complete the demographic information requested.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Information</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Type of Location (Home)</th>
<th>Type of Location (Work)</th>
<th>Household Composition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

For Type of location (Home) and Type of location (Work): Other (please specify)
Thank you for your participation in this survey.
8 REFERENCES


Hart, S. (2002). The house of the future has arrived; researchers at MIT are revolutionizing house design and construction so that aging baby boomers can grow old at home. Architectural Record, 190(7), 149-158.


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