Virtual and Non-Place Communities

Changing what is community
4 Key Concepts

- Virtual Communities are groups of people who communicate with each other via electronic media.
- Old definitions of community that are based on geographical locations are becoming outdated.
- Virtual Communities can connect people that would otherwise never meet.
- Non-Place Communities are based on characteristics such as profession, religion, interests, race, age, and gender.

Sources cited (Romm, Pliskin, Clarke 1998)
Critical Questions

• Do Virtual Communities prevent “real” communities from meeting the needs of its residents?
• Who is helped by Virtual Communities? Who is harmed?
• Can we refuse association from a Non-Place Community, or does society dictate our “citizenship”?

Sources Cited (Wellman 1999)
Response to Questions

• In some ways Virtual Communities have taken the place of “real” communities, by allowing people to form bonds and maintain friendships without physical contact, but without meeting face to face there is an amount of intimacy lost.
• People who don’t have access to the outside world can be greatly helped, people who are vulnerable such as children can be harmed.
• Non-place communities are “communities of the mind” so in this sense individuals have the ultimate power to accept or decline “citizenship.

Sources Cited (Jones 1997)
Potential Ethical/ Value Conflicts Dilemmas

• Not everyone has access to computers
• Not everyone believes in technology
• Non-place Communities can be used to oppress or control people ie. KKK
• Virtual Communities can promote loosing touch with reality

Sources Cited (Bagozzi, Dholakia, 2002)
Sources Cited


Wellman B. (1999) Communities in cyperspace. *Journal of Interactive Marketing* 17(3)
Areas of Challenge

- I’m biased towards “real” relationships, not “virtual” ones
- Never thought about non-place community before as a valid form of community