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Trends. Cyberpsychology and Self-Identity

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Many journalists, scholars, analysts, and other world citizens assert that the spread of the Internet will effect individual, group, and organizational liberalization, leading to a nurturing of representative democracy and free markets. For example, Mazrui & Mazrui as cited in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* assert that the Internet will help foster a transnational universalism and abolish gender discrimination and other inequities among the genders in Islamic cultures.

However, research in cyberpsychology seems to suggest very different possibilities. Fisher & Barak (2000) have identified sex-oriented sites on the Internet that may induce asocial consequences including the depersonalization of sex objects. Griffiths (2000) has identified addictive aspects of Internet use that could encourage narcissism and solipsism and retard any sort of universalism. Lemke (2001) has identified the nature of articulating communities and the problems of their members in becoming part of a globe-spanning Internet community. McKenna & Bargh (1998) have identified how stigmatized and marginalized self-identities can be reinforced via the Internet, as well as self-presentation skills to hide these self-identities. They also note (2000) that assertions about the effects of the Internet may be premature without exploring variables seemingly intrinsic to Internet use such as greater anonymity, reduced importance of physical appearance and physical distance, and greater control over the time and pace on interactions.

In conclusion, assertions of a Brave New Psychological World via the Internet may be more diagnostic of the asserters than the future. (See a glance at the spring Issue of the *Harvard International Review: Will cyberspace pave the way for an Islamic reformation?* (April 26, 2001). *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, <http://chronicle.com>; Fisher, W., & Barak, A. (2000). Online sex shops: Phenomenological, psychological, and ideological perspectives on Internet sexuality. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior*, 3, 575-589; Griffiths, M. (2000). Excessive Internet use: Implications for sexual behavior. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior*, 3, 537-552; Huntington, S. (1996). *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order*. NY: Simon & Schuster; Lemke, J.L. (2001). Articulating communities: Sociocultural perspectives on science education. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 38, 296-316; McKenna, K.Y.A., & Bargh, J.A. (2000). Plan 9 from cyberspace: The implication of the Internet for personality and social psychology. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 4, 57-75.) (Keywords: Cyberpsychology, Identity, Internet.)