

MAS 961 • Designing Sociable Media

Lec # 2 • The culture of text-based conversation

readings

- Saville-Troike, Muriel. 1982. *The Ethnography of Communication. 2nd Edition.* New York, NY: Basil Blackwell. chapters 2& 5
- Whittaker, S., Terveen, L., Hill, W., and Cherny, L. 1998. [The dynamics of mass communication](#). In *The Proceedings of CSCW '98*.

assignment

1. Please **read** all the papers.
2. **Write** a short (~2 page) analysis of the interactions in a newsgroup. Some questions to think about include:
 - What constitutes a "conversation"? How do threads emerge, mutate, disappear?
 - What is the social structure of the group: do the participants seem to know each other? are there distinct subgroups? are there problematic participants? If so, how do the other members deal with them?
 - How is identity established by a writer - and how do participants indicate the impression they have of each other?
 - How do the participants use the medium to convey social information (e.g. turn-taking, agreement/disagreement, etc.)? Are there discernable gradations of communicative competence within the group?
3. What does this conversation "look" like? **Illustrate** your analysis with sketches of its structure, of the participants, etc.

Please submit the URL of your critique and sketch online by Monday evening.

Copies of the readings are available outside the classroom