1023-55-529 **H A Dye*** (`hdye@ttocs.org`), MADN-MATH, US Military Academy, 646 Swift Road, West Point, NY 10996, and **Louis H Kauffman** (`kauffman@uic.edu`), Dept. of MSCS, University of Illinois at Chicago, 851 S. Morgan St., Chicago, IL 60607. *Virtual Homotopy.* Preliminary report.

We introduce virtual and welded link homotopy. Two virtual (respectively welded) link diagrams are homotopic if one may be transformed into the other by a sequence of extended Reidemeister moves, classical Reidemeister moves, and self crossing changes. Using this definition, we note several differences between the virtual, welded, and classical cases. We extend Milnor's μ and $\bar{\mu}$ invariants to welded and virtual links and demonstrate that in certain cases the μ invariant distinguishes whether or not a virtual (welded) link is homotopic to a classical link. We conclude with the $\bar{\mu}$ invariant of several two and three component virtual link diagrams. (Received September 16, 2006)