



The title should summarize the paper's main idea and identify the variables under discussion and the relationship between them.

The title should be centered on the page, typed in 12-point Times New Roman Font. It should not be bolded, underlined, or italicized.

Green text boxes contain explanations of APA style guidelines.

Blue boxes contain directions for writing and citing in APA style.



Varying Definitions of Online Communication and Their Effects on Relationship Research



Elizabeth L. Angeli
State University

The author's name and institution should be double-spaced and centered.

Author Note

Elizabeth L. Angeli, Department of Psychology, State University.

Elizabeth Angeli is now at Department of English, Purdue University.

This research was supported in part by a grant from the Sample Grant Program.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Elizabeth Angeli, Department of English, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 55555.

Contact: author@boiler.edu

The running head is a shortened version of the paper's full title, and it is used to help readers identify the titles for published articles (even if your paper is not intended for publication, your paper should still have a running head).

The running head cannot exceed 50 characters, including spaces and punctuation. The running head's title should be in capital letters. The running head should be flush left, and page numbers should be flush right. On the title page, the running head should include the words "Running head." For pages following the title page, repeat the running head in all caps without "Running head."

The author note should appear on printed articles and identifies each author's department and institution affiliation and any changes in affiliation, contains acknowledgements and any financial support received, and provides contact information. For more information, see the APA manual, 2.03, page 24-25. Note: An author note is optional for students writing class papers, theses, and dissertations..

An author note should appear as follows:
 First paragraph: Complete departmental and institutional affiliation
 Second paragraph: Changes in affiliation (if any)
 Third paragraph: Acknowledgments, funding sources, special circumstances
 Fourth paragraph: Contact information (mailing address and e-mail)

VARYING DEFINITIONS OF ONLINE COMMUNICATION

2

Abstract



The abstract is a brief summary of the paper, allowing readers to quickly review the main points and purpose of the paper.

The abstract should be between 150-250 words. Abbreviations and acronyms used in the paper should be defined in the abstract.

This paper explores four published articles that report on results from research conducted on online (Internet) and offline (non-Internet) relationships and their relationship to computer-mediated communication (CMC). The articles, however, vary in their definitions and uses of CMC. Butler and Kraut (2002) suggest that face-to-face (FtF) interactions are more effective than CMC, defined and used as “email,” in creating feelings of closeness or intimacy. Other articles define CMC differently and, therefore, offer different results. This paper examines Cummings, Butler, and Kraut’s (2002) research in relation to three other research articles to suggest that all forms of CMC should be studied in order to fully understand how CMC influences online and offline relationships.

Keywords: computer-mediated communication, face-to-face communication

The word “Abstract” should be centered and typed in 12 point Times New Roman. Do not indent the first line of the abstract paragraph. All other paragraphs in the paper should be indented.

Varying Definitions of Online Communication and

Their Effects on Relationship Research

Numerous studies have been conducted on various facets of Internet relationships, focusing on the levels of intimacy, closeness, different communication modalities, and the frequency of use of computer-mediated communication (CMC). However, contradictory results are suggested within this research because only certain aspects of CMC are investigated, for example, email only. Cummings, Butler, and Kraut (2002) suggest that face-to-face (FtF) interactions are more effective than CMC (read: email) in creating feelings of closeness or intimacy, while other studies suggest the opposite. To understand how both online (Internet) and offline (non-Internet) relationships are affected by CMC, all forms of CMC should be studied. This paper examines Cummings et al.'s research against other CMC research to propose that additional research be conducted to better understand how online communication affects relationships.

In Cummings et al.'s (2002) summary article reviewing three empirical studies on online social relationships, it was found that CMC, especially email, was less effective than FtF contact in creating and maintaining close social relationships. Two of the three reviewed studies focusing on communication in non-Internet and Internet relationships mediated by FtF, phone, or email modalities found that the frequency of each modality's use was significantly linked to the strength of the particular relationship (Cummings et al., 2002). The strength of the relationship was predicted best by FtF and phone communication, as participants rated email as an inferior means of maintaining personal relationships as compared to FtF and phone contacts (Cummings et al., 2002).



The title should be centered on the page, typed in 12-point Times New Roman Font. It should not be bolded, underlined, or italicized.

The title of the paper is centered and not bolded.

The introduction presents the problem that the paper addresses. See the OWL resources on introductions: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/724/01/>

If an article has three to five authors, write out all of the authors' names the first time they appear. Then use the first author's last name followed by "et al."

In-text citations that are direct quotes should include the author's/ authors' name/s, the publication year, and page number/s. If you are paraphrasing a source, APA encourages you to include page numbers: (Smith, 2009, p. 76).

APA requires you to include the publication year because APA users are concerned with the date of the article (the more current the better).

Cummings et al. (2002) reviewed an additional study conducted in 1999 by the HomeNet project. In this project, Kraut, Mukhopadhyay, Szczypula, Kiesler, and Scherlis (1999) compared the value of using CMC and non-CMC to maintain relationships with partners. They found that participants corresponded less frequently with their Internet partner (5.2 times per month) than with their non-Internet partner (7.2 times per month) (as cited in Cummings et al., 2002). This difference does not seem significant, as it is only two times less per month. However, in additional self-report surveys, participants responded feeling more distant, or less intimate, towards their Internet partner than their non-Internet partner. This finding may be attributed to participants' beliefs that email is an inferior mode of personal relationship communication.

Intimacy is necessary in the creation and maintenance of relationships, as it is defined as the sharing of a person's innermost being with another person, i.e., self-disclosure (Hu, Wood, Smith, & Westbrook, 2004). Relationships are facilitated by the reciprocal self-disclosing between partners, regardless of non-CMC or CMC. Cummings et al.'s (2002) reviewed results contradict other studies that research the connection between intimacy and relationships through CMC.

Hu et al. (2004) studied the relationship between the frequency of Instant Messenger (IM) use and the degree of perceived intimacy among friends. The use of IM instead of email as a CMC modality was studied because IM supports a non-professional environment favoring intimate exchanges (Hu et al., 2004). Their results suggest that a positive relationship exists between the frequency of IM use and intimacy, demonstrating



To aid readability in manuscript drafts, APA suggests using two spaces after a period throughout your paper.

that participants feel closer to their Internet partner as time progresses through this CMC modality.

Similarly, Underwood and Findlay (2004) studied the effect of Internet relationships on primary, specifically non-Internet relationships and the perceived intimacy of both. In this study, self-disclosure, or intimacy, was measured in terms of shared secrets through the discussion of personal problems. Participants reported a significantly higher level of self-disclosure in their Internet relationship as compared to their primary relationship. In contrast, the participants' primary relationships were reported as highly self-disclosed in the past, but the current level of disclosure was perceived to be lower (Underwood & Findlay, 2004). This result suggests participants turned to the Internet in order to fulfill the need for intimacy in their lives.

In further support of this finding, Tidwell and Walther (2002) hypothesized CMC participants employ deeper self-disclosures than FtF participants in order to overcome the limitations of CMC, e.g., the reliance on nonverbal cues. It was found that CMC partners engaged in more frequent intimate questions and disclosures than FtF partners in order to overcome the barriers of CMC. In their 2002 study, Tidwell and Walther measured the perception of a relationship's intimacy by the partner of each participant in both the CMC and FtF conditions. The researchers found that the participants' partners stated their CMC partner was more effective in employing more intimate exchanges than their FtF partner, and both participants and their partners rated their CMC relationship as more intimate than their FtF relationship.

Discussion

In 2002, Cummings et al. stated that the evidence from their research conflicted with other data examining the effectiveness of online social relationships. This statement is supported by the aforementioned discussion of other research. There may be a few possible theoretical explanations for these discrepancies. First, one reviewed study by Cummings et al. (2002) examined only email correspondence for their CMC modality. Therefore, the study is limited to only one mode of communication among other alternatives, e.g., IM as studied by Hu et al. (2004). Because of its many personalized features, IM provides more personal CMC. For example, it is in real time without delay, voice-chat and video features are available for many IM programs, and text boxes can be personalized with the user's picture, favorite colors and text, and a wide variety of emoticons, e.g., :). These options allow for both an increase in self-expression and the ability to overcompensate for the barriers of CMC through customizable features, as stated in Tidwell and Walther (2002). Self-disclosure and intimacy may result from IM's individualized features, which are not as personalized in email correspondence.

In addition to the limitations of email, Cummings et al. (2002) reviewed studies that focused on international bank employees and college students. It is possible the participants' CMC through email was used primarily for business, professional, and school matters and not for relationship creation or maintenance. In this case, personal self-disclosure and intimacy levels are expected to be lower for non-relationship interactions, as this communication is primarily between boss and employee or student

A Level 1 heading should be centered and bolded. If you use more than two levels of headings, consult section 3.02 of the APA manual (6th ed.) or the OWL resource on APA headings: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/16/>

Because all research has its limitations, it is important to discuss the limitations of articles under examination.

and professor. Intimacy is not required, or even desired, for these professional relationships.

Instead of professional correspondence, however, Cummings et al.'s (2002) review of the HomeNet project focused on already established relationships and CMC's effect on relationship maintenance. The HomeNet researchers' sole dependence on email communication as CMC may have contributed to the lower levels of intimacy and closeness among Internet relationships as compared to non-Internet relationships (as cited in Cummings et al., 2002). The barriers of non-personal communication in email could be a factor in this project, and this could lead to less intimacy among these Internet partners. If alternate modalities of CMC were studied in both already established and professional relationships, perhaps these results would have resembled those of the previously mentioned research.

In order to gain a complete understanding of CMC's true effect on both online and offline relationships, it is necessary to conduct a study that examines all aspects of CMC. This includes, but is not limited to, email, IM, voice-chat, video-chat, online journals and diaries, online social groups with message boards, and chat rooms. The effects on relationships of each modality may be different, and this is demonstrated by the discrepancies in intimacy between email and IM correspondence. As each mode of communication becomes more prevalent in individuals' lives, it is important to examine the impact of all modes of CMC on online and offline relationship formation, maintenance, and even termination.

The conclusion restates the problem the paper addresses and can offer areas for further research. See the OWL resource on conclusions: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/724/04/>

References

- Cummings, J. N., Butler, B., & Kraut, R. (2002). The quality of online social relationships. *Communications of the ACM*, 45(7), 103-108.
- Hu, Y., Wood, J. F., Smith, V., & Westbrook, N. (2004). Friendships through IM: Examining the relationship between instant messaging and intimacy. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 10(1), 38-48.
- Tidwell, L. C., & Walther, J. B. (2002). Computer-mediated communication effects on disclosure, impressions, and interpersonal evaluations: Getting to know one another a bit at a time. *Human Communication Research*, 28(3), 317-348.
- Underwood, H., & Findlay, B. (2004). Internet relationships and their impact on primary relationships. *Behaviour Change*, 21(2), 127-140.

Start the reference list on a new page, center the title "References," and alphabetize the entries. Do not underline or italicize the title. Double-space all entries. Every source mentioned in the paper should have an entry.