Pilot Project – Use of Communication Technologies by College Students

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Project Rationale

 My pilot project focuses upon the modes of communication technology that college students use in their creation and maintenance of friendships and relationships. In this modern day, there are a variety of communicative methods from which students may choose from in communicating with others, both within and outside of their college communities. With the rapid growth and expansion of the Internet, and social networking sites stemming from this growth, students are now utilizing these new modes of communication in developing and perpetuating relationships with friends, family, romantic partners, etc. This project focuses upon the extent to which students are now using Internet technologies in maintaining relationships, which of these communicative devices are becoming most popular, and whether or not these types of technologies have served to surpass other forms of communication, such as mail and telephones.

 In this new technological age, the Internet is now arguably the most popular form of communication employed by students in maintaining relationships. Modes of communication involving the Internet include social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, e-mail, instant messaging, and video messaging. These types of Internet communication devices are grouped into a category known as CMC’s, or “computer-mediated communication,” (Miczo, Mariani & Donahue, 2011, p. 12). The emergence of CMC’s has certainly served to revolutionize communication within the relationships of individuals. It comes as no surprise that CMC’s are readily available to college students, as “college students have greater access to the Internet because [Internet] access is free on most college campuses. Therefore, college students use the Internet more than the general public,” (Johnson, Haigh, Becker, Craig & Wigley, 2008, p. 383).

 In this respect, college students serve as an excellent population from which to gain valuable insight into how CMC’s are beginning to dominate the overall maintenance of personal relationships. Moreover, certain types of Internet communication have come to dominate others. Specifically, text-based systems, which include “email, instant messaging, text messaging, chat rooms, [and] social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace,” are more popular than “voice, video, and photographic displays,” (Johnson, et al., 2008, p. 383).

 Communication technologies are employed by students to communicate with other students, as well as with friends and family from home. As there is a strong pattern of CMC use by younger generations, it seems natural that college students use these technologies to develop and maintain both long-distance and geographically close friendships with peers. The marked innovations and complexities of many CMC’s are strengthening the ties that students create and foster over the Internet. It is easy for students to maintain relationships in this manner, as “friendship maintenance activities include self-disclosure, sharing activities, having positive interactions, and mutual supportiveness. Many of these behaviors can be as easily conducted via computer as face-to-face,” (Miczo, et al., 2011, p. 13).

 Currently, there are a variety of interesting studies regarding the use of CMC’s in maintaining relationships. Several of these studies turn to Media Niche Theory (MNT) as a means of explaining this new phenomenon. This is a relatively new theory of communication, and developed as a means of describing how new media contribute to communication in general. The theory actually stems from Niche Theory, as used by ecologists in order to explain “how populations compete and coexist on limited resources in an ecological community,” (Dimmick & Rothenbuhler, 1984, p.105). However, John Dimmick adapted the theory in order to study mediated forms of communication. He argues that each media form retains its own niche amongst the consuming population. He uses the term “niche breadth” to describe the extent of the niche each medium occupies, and “niche overlap,” to describe how these roles can overlap in their functions,” (Dimmick & Rothenbuhler, 1984, p. 111). As such, when new mediums arise, they can serve as new forms of competition for older mediums, and eventually gain greater popularity and status over these older forms. While the initial development of the theory focused upon news media, Dimmick now applies the theory to mediated forms of communication used by individuals in maintaining relationships.

Current studies of MNT are generally focused upon the idea that users of mediated communication will choose their forms of media based on their convenience in regard to the specific message they wish to convey. Essentially, niche theory is useful for explaining how new mediums will affect communication. It predicts that new mediated forms of communication will serve as competition for older forms of mediated communication. According to this idea, then, when new media are introduced, displacement may occur. Displacement is a phenomenon in which the newer medium will resume the role of the older medium, forcing it to become somewhat obsolete, (Dimmick, Chen & Li, 2004, p. 22). This is applicable to my current topic, as I seek to discover how new mediated forms of communication, especially with regard to CMC’s, are becoming more popular than older forms.

 MNT studies also place special emphasis upon how the media is used to maintain long-distance relationships. This concept is of special importance concerning college students, as many students attend schools out-of-state, and need to find ways to maintain contact with their friends and family from home. In this respect, college students serve as a great population from which to apply MNT to the use of CMC’s and other forms of communication. Many studies have used college students to study communication using various mediated communication devices. However, most such studies did not yield conclusive results. Therefore, I feel that my topic for this project is of interest and importance, as new research is needed in order to understand and explain the new trends in college students’ use of mediated forms of communication.

Methods Section and Related Materials

*Hypotheses*

 Based on my findings from the literature review, I propose two hypotheses for testing in my pilot project, as follows:

1. College students will report the use of CMC’s in maintaining relationships more so than other forms of mediated communication.
2. College students will indicate that certain forms of CMC’s are more popular and used more often than others.

I decided to present my first hypothesis as an indication of how, as certain research on this matter currently indicates, CMC’s are becoming increasingly popular in terms of their use a primary means of communication and relational maintenance. I decided to make this a directional hypothesis, or one that indicates the exact orientation of the relationship between the variables, as I believe that CMC’s could potentially surpass other current forms of mediated communication in terms of popularity.

 I also decided to add a second hypothesis based upon my curiosity as to which CMC’s are more commonly used over others. Certain of the research I read during the literature review indicates that individuals will have a preference as to which CMC’s they choose to employ in communicating with others based on the specific features and benefits associated with each one. However, I do not have a concrete idea as to which CMC’s will actually be the most popular among my population of interest. Therefore, I decided to make this hypothesis non-directional, or one that does not state the actual direction of the differences between the variables (or CMC’s).

 While conducting the literature review, I was unsure as to whether or not I would actually apply a theory of communication to this study. There are several theories of mediated communication, however many of them do not seem to be able to be sensibly applied to my topic. When I started reading about Media Niche Theory (MNT), however, I felt that it could be applicable to my research questions and hypotheses. While this theory of communication is somewhat new to the field, and therefore does not present a wide variety of research relating to it, it can still serve as an underlying basis for this study. MNT suggests that users of mediated communication will make choices as to which forms of media they will employ on the basis of their convenience and their ability to convey a certain message. MNT also serves as an explanation as to how new mediated forms of communication often replace others in terms of the specific function, or “niche,” that they provide for communicators. When new technologies arise, they often serve as a more advanced alternative to older technologies, and displace these older forms in terms of popularity.

This idea coincides nicely with my goals for this study, as it provides a framework for potentially understanding why my participants will indicate which forms of mediated communication and CMC’s they most prefer. I believe that if my first hypothesis proves true, that this theory might help to explain how the features and functions of CMC’s make them more prevalent in maintaining modern relationships than other forms of mediated communication. Moreover, this theory could help to specifically explain why certain CMC’s are preferred over others, based upon the unique features of each, and the way in which these features can be employed in communicating and relaying messages. As my study focuses upon how CMC’s, as newer forms of mediated communication, are becoming increasingly popular, it fits nicely within the framework of MNT.

*Methods*

**Variables**

For this study, it is necessary to identify several variables, or specific elements indicated within my hypotheses. Obviously, this is not a traditionally scientific experiment in which the independent variable is manipulated by the researcher to cause a certain change or outcome in the dependent variable. Instead, this study is typical of descriptive research designs, in which the independent variable is better known as the predictor variable. In studies using predictor variables, researchers rely on the common variation of these variables as a means of producing varying effects on the dependent variables. That being said, when using the term “independent variable” in the context of this study, I will be conveying the definition of a “predictor variable,” which fits more closely within the context of descriptive research. Moreover, my dependent variables should also be associated with the term “outcome variable,” also used within descriptive research. The dependent variable is influenced and changed through variations or differences in the measures or classifications of the independent variable.

 For my first hypothesis, “College students will report the use of CMC’s in maintaining relationships more so than other forms of mediated communication,” the independent variables are the specific forms of mediated communication indicated on the survey. In terms of operationalization, the term “mediated communication” refers to the process during which a message is conveyed through a specific medium or form. In other words, mediated communication is not conducted face-to-face, but rather through some form of channel or mechanism. In this respect, mediated forms of communication refer to the actual instruments through which the communication is conducted. In the survey, I will identify the specific types of mediated forms of communication I wish to gauge opinions about, and also leave the option for participants to identify other channels not already stated on the survey. In the context of the first hypothesis, the dependent variables are the participants’ opinions and reported uses of these mediated forms of communication. These opinions will be gauged through a variety of questions pertaining to their uses of certain communication technologies, and their personal preferences as to which technologies are most useful and convenient. As this first hypothesis is directional and indicates the nature of the relationship between these variables, if proven true, the participants’ preferences will favor the use of CMC’s over other mediated forms of communication.

For my second hypothesis, “College students will indicate that certain forms of CMC’s are more popular and used more often than others,” the independent variables are the specific forms of CMC’s indicated on the survey. Within the context of this study, CMC refers to computer-mediated communication. This a process of communication that occurs between computers. This traditional sense of the term allows me to indicate CMC’s as the specific types of formats through which communication occurs between computers. In my survey, I will list a variety of popular CMC’s for participants to indicate opinions and preferences on, as well as leave the option for participants to write in other CMC’s they may employ the use of. The dependent variables in this case are their opinions and preferences for certain CMC’s, as indicated by the individual participants. These attitudes and inclinations will be assessed using a variety of survey questions pertaining to their frequency of use, and their personal likeness for certain CMC’s over others. While this hypothesis is non-directional, I hope to discover some sort of pattern in how the participants’ preferences differ based upon the specific CMC’s discussed.

**Sample**

 For this study, my population of interest is college students. I think that college students will serve as an excellent population when discussing the topic of CMC’s and mediated communication, as they are avid users of these methods of communication. As the literature indicated, college students have ready access to the internet, and are of the age where they often engage in the newest forms of mediated communication methods. Moreover, college students often attend school away from their home states or cities, and therefore must employ the use of varying forms of mediated communication in order to maintain relationships with those back home.

 Obviously, I do not have the adequate resources necessary to conduct a full-blown study of college students’ interest in certain forms of mediated communication. As a student of Clemson University, I most easily have access to Clemson students. Therefore, while my population of interest is all college students, my sample of this population will consist of students who attend Clemson University. Moreover, I will only have the resources to survey students with whom I have direct contact. Therefore, my sampling frame will consist of 25 of my friends here at Clemson.

 This type of sampling is considered convenience sampling, a form of nonprobability sampling in which the researcher chooses participants who are readily accessible to them. Obviously, it is not feasible for me, due to my lack of stature and resources, to conduct a proper random sampling of all college students, or even all Clemson students. Therefore, I will instead survey a sampling of my friends, as those are the people who I have the greatest ability to engage in the project. I will not choose a specific method for recruiting my friends. Instead, I will distribute my survey to my sorority sisters, with who I live in an on-campus dorm, as well as other friends that happen to come by during the time when I am distributing surveys. Hopefully, the population will not be too skewed in terms of commonalities between the participants. I anticipate that there will be more females taking this survey than males, but hope to administer to survey to a good variety of my Clemson friends and peers.

**Procedures**

 I will personally administer the survey. I plan on simply going around my hall and asking people to fill out the survey. I will also probably ask whatever outside friends come by my room to complete the survey for me. The survey does not take longer than 5 or 10 minutes, so I will simply wait while the participants fill it out, and then collect it upon completion. I anticipate that some people may be too busy to fill out the survey as soon as I ask them to, and therefore will simply request that they bring it by my room when they get the chance to fill it out. As previously mentioned, I made sure that the survey is short and concise enough for the participants to have no trouble in finding the time to complete it. When I personally filled out the survey, as a test to ensure its clarity and accuracy, I only needed about 5 minutes to complete it. Therefore, sufficient time should not be an issue for conducting this study.

 I do not think that it will be entirely necessary to protect the anonymity or confidentiality of my participants, as the topic of interest is not one that should be personally sensitive. However, I will not require participants to write their names on the survey, and therefore will not have a concrete way of identifying my participants after collecting their surveys. Hopefully, this will be sufficient to uphold participant anonymity, or not allowing personal information to be attached to the data. The only personal information I will be asking of participants is gender, age, year in school, and whether or not they are out-of-state. I do not think any of these variables are too invasive, or will be indicative of the participants’ identity. However, I will be asking out-of-state students to include their primary state of residence on a separate line. I wish to include this, as it might prove interesting in seeing whether or not distance plays a factor in which types of mediated communication participants prefer. While I will probably know which states most of my participants reside in, I do not think that this should be enough of an identifier to link them to the specific data. Moreover, I will uphold confidentiality in not releasing any of the actual surveys to outsiders. Instead, I will simply quantify the data, and present it in such a way as to not violate the privacy of my participants.

 I do not anticipate many problems concerning ethics within the context of this study. As previously mentioned, computer-mediated communication is not a topic with which many ethical issues might arise. There are three basic ethical principles that should be adhered to by researchers. The first concerns accuracy of the data. In this respect, data should be presented accurately and completely, without alterations by the researcher in order to better support the research goals. I do not anticipate encountering issues of accuracy, as I plan on documenting the entire research process and will not manipulate any of my data. Secondly, researchers must avoid plagiarism and protect intellectual property rights. For this study, the only outside research I will be citing is within my literature review and rationale. I have already properly cited my outside sources, and included them on a reference page. Therefore, I do not think this study will violate any issues relating to the protection of intellectual rights. Finally, as I have already discussed, research should protect the identities of the participants. I will not be asking participants to put their names on the surveys, and will not be releasing any personal information about them. Therefore, I do not think this study poses any ethical issues relating to anonymity and confidentiality.

 To conclude, I expect my survey procedure to go fairly smoothly. As this is my first survey project, I do not have much experience with this type of research. However, I plan on simply using the people around me as a resource for securing participants, and do not anticipate many problems regarding the actual administration of the survey. Moreover, I do not foresee any ethical issues arising regarding my topic, and plan to adhere to all of the ethical principals that I have learned are important in communication research.

Appendix 1 – Survey

**Use of Communication Technologies by College Students:**

Directions: Please circle, check, or fill-in-the-blank on the provided questions.

Sex: Male Female

Age: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Year: Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

Are You: In-State Out-of-State

If out-of-state, please indicate your state or primary residence: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Indicate whether or not you agree with the following statement: “I use computer-mediated communication methods in maintaining relationships more so than other methods (such as cellular phones and the mail system).” Yes No

Do you have regular access to the Internet? Yes No

Please indicate how frequently you use each of the following methods of communication while at college:

1. Mail: Very Often Fairly Often Occasionally Rarely Never
2. Telephone Calls: Very Often Fairly Often Occasionally Rarely Never
3. Text Messaging: Very Often Fairly Often Occasionally Rarely Never
4. E-mail: Very Often Fairly Often Occasionally Rarely Never
5. Social Networking Sites (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) Very Often Fairly Often Occasionally Rarely Never
6. Instant Messaging: Very Often Fairly Often Occasionally Rarely Never
7. Video Chatting (Ex. Skype): Very Often Fairly Often Occasionally Rarely Never

Please circle which of the following websites you currently have an account on:

Facebook MySpace Twitter Skype Flickr

Tumblr StumbleUpon BlogSpot Foursquare Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How many hours a day do you spend using the Internet for social purposes?

 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 5+

Please indicate rate the following methods of communication in order of your preference (1-4):

\_\_\_\_\_ Telephone

\_\_\_\_\_ Mail

\_\_\_\_\_ Internet (e-mail, social networking sites, instant messaging, video chatting, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)

Please rate the following Internet communication methods in order of your preference (1-5):

\_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Instant Messaging \_\_\_\_\_ Video Chatting

\_\_\_\_\_ Social Networking sites \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)

Please rate the following social networking sites in order of your preference (1-6):

\_\_\_\_\_ Facebook \_\_\_\_\_ Twitter \_\_\_\_\_\_Skype \_\_\_\_\_ StumbleUpon \_\_\_\_\_ BlogSpot \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify)

Appendix 2 – Consent Form & IRB Application (Attached Separately)

Results and Implications

*Frequency Tables:*

**Table 1 – Frequency of Types of Mediated Communication Used:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Very Often | Fairly Often | Occasionally | Rarely | Never |
| Mail | 4 | 0 | 6 | 13 | 2 |
| Telephone Calls | 18 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Text Messaging | 25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| E-mail | 18 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Social Networking Sites | 19 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Instant Messaging | 1 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 10 |
| Video Chatting | 2 | 8 | 7 | 5 | 3 |

**Table 2 – How Many Participants Have Accounts on Specific Social Networking Sites:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Social Network | Frequency | % |
| Facebook | 24 | 96% |
| MySpace | 0 | 0% |
| Twitter | 19 | 76% |
| Skype | 23 | 92% |
| Flickr | 0 | 0% |
| Tumblr | 0 | 0% |
| StumbleUpon | 14 | 56% |
| BlogSpot | 2 | 8% |
| Foursquare | 0 | 0% |
| Other | 0 | 0% |

**Table 3 – Amount of Time Spent Daily on the Internet for Social Purposes:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Time | Frequency |
| 0-1 hrs. | 2 |
| 1-2 hrs. | 6 |
| 2-3 hrs. | 6 |
| 3-4 hrs. | 8 |
| 4-5 hrs. | 3 |
| 5+ hrs. | 0 |

**Table 4 – Rating of Communication Methods in Order of Preference (1-4):**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | First | Second | Third | Fourth |
| Telephone | 18 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| Mail | 0 | 0 | 23 | 2 |
| Internet | 6 | 18 | 1 | 0 |
| Other | 1 | 0 | 1 | 23 |

**Table 5 – Rating of CMC’s in Order of Preference (1-5):**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | First | Second | Third | Fourth | Fifth |
| E-mail | 6 | 7 | 11 | 1 | 0 |
| Instant Messaging | 4 | 2 | 5 | 14 | 0 |
| Video Chatting | 1 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 0 |
| Social Networking Sites | 14 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 25 |

**Table 6 – Rating of Social Networking Sites in Order of Preference (1-6):**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | First | Second | Third | Fourth | Fifth | Sixth |
| Facebook | 18 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Twitter | 7 | 4 | 3 | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| Skype | 0 | 10 | 10 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| StumbleUpon | 0 | 4 | 10 | 8 | 3 | 0 |
| BlogSpot | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 22 | 2 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 23 |

*Narrative Description*

 The results of my survey provided me with an ample amount of data to analyze and decipher. In my survey, I included 4 questions of descriptive statistics in order to gain some insight into my population of interest. After calculating my data, I found that 16% of my participants were male, while 84% were female. Obviously, this is an imbalance of participants. If this study were to go into greater detail, I might research how gender differences could impact the use of mediated forms of communication. However, for the purposes of this pilot project, I had more access to female participants, and therefore did not have the opportunity to survey a more balanced group in terms of gender. I also found that 36% of my participants were 19 years old, 60% were 20 years old, and 4% were 21 years old. These ages are consistent within the typical age of college students, and thus seem to fit well into my study. My participants consisted of 8% freshmen, 88% sophomores, and 4% juniors. While there is an obviously overwhelming majority of sophomores surveyed, I did not think this would really make a difference in terms of my results. Finally, 63% of my participants were from South Carolina, while 38% were from other states. This number did not surprise me, as the majority of students at Clemson are from in state, however I was glad to survey at least 1/3 of out of state students in order to create more diversity in my participants. Following the descriptive statistics, I also asked participants to indicate whether or not they had ready access to the Internet. This was important, as I needed to ensure that all of my participants had Internet access because this would be necessary for them to commonly use CMC’s. 100% of my participants indicated having ready Internet access, so this was not an issue.

Regarding my first hypothesis, college students will report the use of CMC’s in maintaining relationships more so than other forms of mediated communication, I decided to directly ask my participants whether or not they agree with the following statement: I use computer-mediated communication methods in maintaining relationships more so than other methods (such as cellular phones and the mail system). My results indicate that 64% of my participants agree with this statement. While this is not an overwhelming majority, it does lend credit to my initial hypothesis. Perhaps in the future, if there is more research conducted on this topic, a greater number of participants could be asked their opinions on this statement in order to add to the reliability of my findings.

I also provided participants with a list of a variety of mediated forms of communication from which they should indicate their frequency of use, as depicted in Table 1. The most popular forms of mediated communication seem to be text messaging, social networking sites, telephone calls, and e-mail, while the least popular are mail, instant messaging, and video chatting. Unsurprisingly, 100% of my participants indicated using text messaging “very often.” These results indicate that telephones are still as popular, or more popular, than CMC’s in terms of frequency of use. Table 4 also discusses this phenomenon, as, when I asked participants to rank certain forms of mediated communication in order of preference, 72% of the participants chose “telephone” as their most preferred form. These results seem somewhat inconsistent with the previous question, and therefore might require further research. Also, after issuing the survey, I received many questions as to what “instant messaging,” is defined as. I was asked this because many people thought that this included “Facebook chat.” I did not mean to include “Facebook chat” in this category, as I wanted that to fall under “social networking sites.” Therefore, in the future, I might need to make this distinction more clear if I were to continue this research.

In terms of my second hypothesis, college students will indicate that certain forms of CMC’s are more popular and used more often than others, I included a number of different survey questions pertaining to the variation in popularity for certain CMC’s. First off, I was curious as to how often my participants use CMC’s for social purposes. As shown in Table 3, there is a somewhat wide variation in how many hours a day participants use the Internet for social purposes. As indicated, 8% of my participants use the Internet for social purposes 0-1 hours per day, 24% for 1-2 hour per day, 24% for 2-3 hours per day, 32% for 3-4 hours per day, and 12% for 4-5 hours per day. This variation is evident of how some college students use CMC’s more often than others for socialization and relational maintenance. In order to gauge which forms of CMC’s are more popular than others, I asked participants to rank them in order of their preference, as indicated in Table 5. These results indicate that social networking sites are the most popular, followed by e-mail, video chatting, and instant messaging. This is consistent with how I expected the results to flow, and leads into my questions about which specific social networking sites are the most popular.

As indicated in Table 2, I was curious as to which social networking sites were more popular than others. I asked participants to indicate which sites they currently have accounts on. I found the most popular site to be Facebook, followed by Skype, Twitter, StumbleUpon, and BlogSpot. All but one participant indicated holding a Facebook account, seemingly making Facebook appear to be the most popular of the social networking sites. Table 6 also supports this notion, as it shows that 72% of participants selected Facebook as their most preferred social networking site. Skype was a close second, with 23 out of the 25 participants holding accounts., and 80% of participants selecting it as their first or second most preferred social networking site. Twitter and StumbleUpon also seem to be quite popular, as 15 participants hold Twitter accounts and 14 participants hold StumbleUpon accounts. Moreover, 28% of participants selected Twitter as their favorite social networking site, and 56% of participants selected StumbleUpon as their second or third most preferred social networking site. BlogSpot was not nearly as popular, with only 2 participants holding accounts. These results are consistent with my second hypothesis, and indicate that certain notable social networking sites are more popularly used over others.

 Overall, I am pleased with the results of my study. While there may not be much evidence indicating CMC’s as the most popular form of mediated communication, it seems that there could be future research conducted relating to this idea. As media niche theory suggests, certain mediated forms of communication may come to displace others in terms of their function for society. Obviously, CMC’s have not been in existence as long as the use of the telephone. Therefore, in the future, it may be possible that CMC’s will come to displace the telephone regarding its use for relational maintenance.

 MNT also suggests that individuals will choose their preferred methods of mediated communication based upon their features and functions with regard to the specific message they wish to convey. This relates to the results of my second hypothesis, as certain CMC’s and social networking sites seem to be preferred over others. If this study were to be furthered in the future, this theory might apply in discovering why individuals choose certain forms of mediated communication over others, and the specific features of the forms that influence them to have these preferences. I hope to be able to continue researching this topic in the future, and think that my first survey project relating to it has proved successful.

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