

Mom Just Facebooked Me and Dad Knows How to Text: The Influences of Computer-Mediated Communication on Inter- personal Communication and Differences Through Generations

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Abstract

This research paper examines computer-mediated communication and its effects on interpersonal communication and the differences between the Baby Boom Generation and Generation Y. Through a 223-person survey and 10 in-depth interviews, research found that the two generations are affected by computer-mediated communication differently due to the theory of uses and gratifications. Both generations felt there was an increase in quantity of interpersonal communications due to convenience of new technologies; however, Generation Y is experiencing a decrease in quality of interpersonal communication. This decrease is due to Generation Y's use of text messaging and email that simultaneously compress descriptive and insightful conversations into lean and direct messages that make ambiguities more prevalent.

I. Introduction

“In type that scrolls up the screen like the preface for Star Wars, a YouTube video reads, ‘For years, parents could not text message. They could not figure out how to record a voice mail. They could not even connect to the Internet without using AOL.’ This was a warning that parents are adapting to technological gadgets; it flips to a short clip of a man learning to use the video capabilities on his cell phone. ‘Watch with caution,’ it closes, ‘and pray that your own parents do not gain these powers’” (Bloom, 2009).

Today the world is consumed with the idea of the Internet and the advancement of technology. Everywhere one looks the Internet and the communication tools associated with new technologies, play a major role in education, politics, and the economy. With new advancements made everyday, individuals must constantly be keeping up with new trends while simultaneously making decisions on what communication medium is most beneficial for fulfilling their particular want and need. The Baby Boomer Generation, born fol-

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lowing the end of World War II, did not grow up with this recent phenomenon and so their grasp of the digital world is slower, apprehensive and less accepting to the changes that are taking place. Generation Y, the offspring to the Baby Boomers, grew up in the fast-paced digital world; learning from an early age to communicate through mediated computerized channels. Increasing number of Baby Boomers are becoming part of Internet constituents, following the trends of their children and changing their traditional modes of communication, which untimely changes their quality of interpersonal communication.

This study examines how computer-mediated communication, such as emailing, text messaging, instant messaging, and the use of social media sites, have affected the way in which the Baby Boomer Generation and Generation Y communicate interpersonally. The method that they use to communicate most frequently and the effects that decision has on their interpersonal relationships will also be investigated.

II. Literature Review

Since the invention of the Internet in 1957, as a military strategy during the Cold War, never could the world imagine the scope of its impact. In 2008, 71.4% of the United States was using the Internet, as well as 21.9% of the world (Brenner, 2008). Along with this rapidly growing phenomenon, changes have occurred not just in the way that people find information, but also in the way that people communicate with one another. Different generations use the Internet in different ways and because of this difference, generation gaps have become more apparent. However, as more individuals learn about the capabilities of the Internet the interpersonal differences seen through generations will perhaps diminish.

Over the years the definition of interpersonal communication has shifted and changed, but the basic concept that communication is a fundamental aspect of our lives and an integral part of our needs as human beings, has held consistent. We communicate to satisfy our physical needs, identity needs, social needs and practical needs. People who fail to communicate report negative life satisfaction, early death, lack of identity, negative relationships, and an elevated high school dropout rate, just to name a few. (Adler, Rosenfeld, and Proctor 2010) Interpersonal communication has several definitions, one quantitative and the other a qualitative approach. The quantitative approach looks at interpersonal communication as any type of interaction between two people. These two people who interact are a dyad and they can be anyone from friend and friend, to salesperson and buyer, however one person to a group would not be considered interpersonal. When looking at interpersonal communication qualitatively, this definition describes communication when people treat others as sole individuals, no matter where or between whom. This definition believes that the most important qualities of the qualitative approach are uniqueness and irreplaceably, in other words the person you are communicating with must have some impact on your life. (Adler, et al. 2010)

In recent years, much of the communication that occurs face-to-face has moved to computer-mediated communication. Some studies show that this type of communication is just as important, with a majority of Internet users relying on email to communicate daily (Adler, et al. 2010). Although email is known as the most popular form of computer-mediated communication, social networking, text messaging, and instant messaging, are all methods that family, friends, acquaintances, or unfamiliar persons can all use to communicate (Lenhart, Madden, Caccigill, and Smith 2007).

Computer-mediated communication has had and continues to have an effect on all people around the globe and its effects on interpersonal communication have many benefits as well as many drawbacks. Many studies in the past have proven that without tone, postures, gestures, or facial expressions, the richness of communication is depleted. In previous years, most research agreed that people who spend a majority of time on the Internet in turn spend less time talking in person and on the phone (Bower, 1998). In addition others found computer-mediated communication to be impersonal, task oriented and hostile (Walther, 1995). Some even have proved that it can lead to loneliness and isolation (Adler, et al. 2010).

Due to the lack of non-verbal cues that help clarify a verbal message, computer-mediated communication loses "richness" and in essence the message that comes across is seen as "leaner". These lean messages become harder to interpret with confidence. Things such as irony or humor can easily be taken the wrong way and because of this, these messages are extremely ambiguous. Communication that takes place online also has the ability to be managed by the people communicating. Without face-to-face communication, online communicators can create the idealized version of themselves. Due to these factors participants

become less inhibited, discussing personal topics that would never come up during in person conversations. (Adler, et al. 2010)

By contrast, others feel the exact opposite. Lee Rainie, John Horrigan, Barry Wellman, Jeffrey Boase, who are part of the Pew Internet and American Life Project, have discovered that the traditional human orientation around neighborhoods or villages has shifted to communities based around social networks in geographic regions all over the globe. "People communicate and maneuver in these networks rather than being bound up in one solitary community. Yet people's networks continue to have substantial numbers of relatives and neighbors — the traditional bases of community — as well as friends and workmates." Many Americans use the Internet to strengthen community relations, such as planning church meeting or finding new group organizations (Horrigan et al. 2006).

In addition to the quantity of time spent using computer-mediated communication, the quality is extremely significant as well. Fifty-five percent of Internet users have said that e-mail has improved their communication with family, and 66 percent have said their contact with friends has also improved (Horrigan, 2001). Computer-mediated communication has increased interpersonal communication by making it easier. Since face-to-face communication is not always feasible, using the Internet helps connect those who are not able to physically. Computer-mediated communication also is known to increase the levels of self-disclosure, with many people saying things through the Internet that they wouldn't normally say in person (Adler, et al. 2010). Computer-mediated communication can also make it easier for quiet people to strike up a relationship such as with the use of online dating services. "Studies also show that relational intimacy may develop more quickly through CMC than in face-to-face communications as well as enhancing verbal, emotional, and social intimacy in friendships." (Ellison, Heino, and Gibbs, 2006) (Adler, et al. 2010) On the Internet people are able to decide aspects of their communication such as their levels or clarity, humor, or logic. These options exemplify that CMC serves as a method for managing identity; the communication strategies people use to influence how others view them (Suler, 2002). Managing identity can also be achieved by the use of blogging, or profiles on social networks. "The words, images, and sounds that Web designers choose make a statement about who they are or at least how they want to be regarded by others"(Adler, et al. 2010).

When thinking of the Internet usage, most people associate social networks and instant messaging with the younger generations, mostly Generation Y. In reality, that's not always the case because over half of the adult Internet population are between the ages of 18 and 44, and larger percentages of older generation are doing more activities online according to surveys taken from 2006 to 2008 (Jones, Fox, 2009). Although Generation Y is seen as the 'Net Generation,' both Generation X and the Baby Boomers dominate Internet use in other areas. Instant messaging, social networking, and blogging have gained ground as communications tools, but email remains the most popular online activity, particularly among older Internet users. Simultaneously however, email has lost some ground among teens. Whereas 89% of teens claimed to use email in 2004, just 73% currently say they use email. Teens and Generation Y are also the most likely groups to use the Internet for entertainment and for communicating with friends and family. Internet users ages 12-32 are more likely than older users to read other people's blogs and to write their own; they are also considerably more likely than older generations to use social networking sites and to create profiles on those sites. Teen and Generation Y users are also significantly more likely than older generations to send instant messages to friends (Jones, Fox, 2009).

When looking into the reasons why different generations use the Internet in these clearly different ways, the communication theory of uses and gratifications becomes apparent. This theory came about early in the history of communications research to study the gratifications that draw and capture audiences to the types of media and the kinds of content that satisfy their social and psychological needs (Ruggiero, 2000). This theory published in 1974 by Blumler and Katz suggests that media users play an active role in choosing and using the media. Users take an active part in the communication process and are goal oriented in their media use. The theorists say that a media user seeks out a media source that best fulfills the needs of the user. Uses and gratifications assume that the user has alternate choices to satisfy their need (Blumler J.G. & Katz, E., 1974).

Today, this theory holds true with different generations using the new technologies that are available to them to satisfy their individual wants. Members of the Baby Boom Generation have different wants individually as well as collectively than members of Generations Y. Although the effects of computer-mediated communication will most likely be different for every person, it is quite possible that the influences will generally be consistent within the same generation.

The use of the Internet is broad and complex, however its use in computer-mediated communication is obviously extremely important. While in the past some argued that computer-mediated communication diminished relationships and led to lonely or hostile environments, others believe that computer-mediated communication has enhanced communication for the better; increasing social groups, speaking more openly, and enhancing verbal, emotional, and social intimacy in friendships. Generation gaps change the way people use and communicate online, and because of these differences the interpersonal skills of different generations change as well. With younger generations mostly dominating the social aspect of the Internet, more and more older generations have caught onto the trend, opening up communication platforms from one generation to another.

This research will look into the gap between the Baby Boom Generation and Generation Y in their belief about how their interpersonal communication skills and habits have been affected by computer-mediated communications. Although there is a lot of research already on how the different generations use new communication tools to interact, this study will answer the following three questions:

- RQ1: What modes of communication do Generation Y and the Baby Boomer Generation use the most to communicate interpersonally and why do they use these modes?
- RQ2: What do members of Generation Y and the Baby Boom Generation believe are the benefits and disadvantages of computer-mediated communication?
- RQ3: Does computer-mediated communication affect the amount and quality of interpersonal communication differently in different Generations?

III. Method

In order to determine how computer-mediated communication has influenced interpersonal communication and explore the differences in its influences through generations, various methods of research were conducted in order to gain a complete and thorough analysis.

The first type of research was an anonymous survey that consisted of 13 multiple-choice questions, where the survey recipients could add their own response if they chose to do so, and one open-ended question (see Appendix A). These questions looked into the different habits, uses, and opinions of both members of Generation Y and the Baby Boom Generation in relation to their relationship with computer-mediated communication and interpersonal relationships. The two surveys are identical, except for question 9, which was fine-tuned to align with the proper age group. The survey was created through SurveyMonkey.com and the two links were distributed via email and facebook.com to members of the different generations using convenience sampling and volunteer sampling. One hundred and eleven responses were received from Generation Y and 112 were received from the Baby Boom Generation.

In addition to the surveys, 10 in-depth interviews were conducted to gain a deeper insight into the motives, feelings, and reasons why people use a particular medium when interpersonally communicating and to obtain a clearer understanding of exactly what participants mean by their answers (Gubrium, & Holstein, 2002). (See Appendix B.) These participants were chosen based on their age and gender characteristics. Five interviews were conducted with Generation Y members and five were with Baby Boomers, including a total of four males and six females. Eight of the interviews were in person, enabling an intimate connection between the interviewer and the interviewee that allowed for an open and honest conversation. The other two were conducted via telephone due to the inability to meet face-to-face. The interview questions were based upon the survey questions, but they were more general in nature, changing and adapting to the situation and the interviewees, allowing them to freely discuss their feeling without constraints of options or having the questions sway their feelings. A tape recorder was used with the permission of the individuals and then important aspects of the conversation were used to further the research. The responses helped to fill in some of the blanks left out of quantitative research through the survey questions. Greater accuracy was obtained due to multiple viewpoints (Jick, 1987).

IV. Findings/Results

Findings from RQ1

The way in which people communicate is situational and different people use different modes to satisfy their particular need. In general however, the situations that both generations find themselves in are consistent throughout that particular generation. Both generations believe that face-to-face interaction is the best way to communicate interpersonally, but due to everyday activities, having interpersonal conversations face-to-face is difficult. This type of communication involves planning and a large time commitment and has become increasingly more difficult, although this is ideal for both generations to talk to those they care about. Face-to-face communication occurs for both generations over food and drinks or on the weekends. It is the type of communication that is rich and full of verbal and nonverbal cues and lends itself to what the participants believe is a more open communication level.

Members of Generation Y use text messaging as their most frequent mode of communication on a daily basis. They use this method because it is quick, easy, and to the point. During their daily lives they don't have time to devote to a phone call, which can take a long time to find a simple answer. Instead, they can talk to multiple people at the same time, moving back and forth from one conversation to the next. Generation Y doesn't like to have to "play phone tag," but they want answers to questions quickly. When making plans, texting is their best option (personal communication, November 10, 2009). Text messaging is also extremely convenient when individuals are at work or in class because they can discretely talk to others without having a computer in front of them. Texting also allows senders to see if their message was received so there are less communication interferences or mishaps. Texting is also a way that members of Generation Y make new interpersonal relationships. If they don't know someone well but want to form a bond, either romantically or platonically, they will text the other person, instead of making a phone call. It is a more informal way to start or reinforce a budding relationship.

Generation Y uses the phone to communicate interpersonally less than text messaging. In the online survey of 100 Generation Y participants, only 30% would pick up the phone when making plans with friends or family. Generation Y makes a phone call when they have time to spare or if the message is too complicated to write. They mostly call their parents, relatives, or friends from home when they haven't spoken to them in a long time and want to catch up. Generation Y will call members of the Baby Boom Generation because they don't think they all can text and email regularly. Phone calls are a more in-depth way to communicate interpersonally with the addition of vocal cues to help give depth to the conversation, however they are not used as often as text messages.

Email is currently what Generation Y refers to as "ancient" (personal communication, November 1, 2009). Most Generation Y individuals will only use email for purposes of doing school-related activities or sending one message out to a large group of people. Most Generation Y members would not use email to talk to a friend because they can't know if someone received, looked at, or read the email. Multiple male participants stated that email is a great way to keep in touch with their mothers since phone calls take too long and they can answer an email on their own terms. One interviewee stated:

I never really spoke to my mom because I just didn't remember to call her back. She knows I have to check my email for class and I usually have my computer in class, so if I have time or whatever I email her. It's great cause I can write to her when it's convenient for me and I don't have to sit and talk to her on the phone for 10 hours. (Personal communication, November 15, 2009)

Members of the Baby Boom Generation have all the same communication tools at their fingertips, but they use these tools in different ways. The most frequent means of communication for this generation is the phone. The phone is and has been the best way for Baby Boomers to communicate with others whom they can't see everyday or want to catch up with. Boomers have moved from landline home phones to now mostly only cell phones. Having cell phones has increased their amount of interpersonal communication because they can talk when they are out of the house or taking a lunch break. Baby Boomers believe phone calls are the most reliable form of communication because when they call someone they believe that almost always they will receive a call back. This tool is beneficial by adding competence and understanding through vocal cues and tones to the depth of interpersonal communication.

Emailing has become the Baby Boomers' new favorite tool. Although many Boomers use email for

work, only recently have many started using it to communicate with friends or family. Most often they will use this mode when they want to catch up with a friend that they haven't spoken to in a couple years, or to make plans with a large group. Email allows Boomers to write long in-depth meaningful "letters" to those they care about. They have time to think of what to say and they can be thoughtful and deliberate with their messages. Parents use Email as a tool to communicate with their children since they know that Generation Y uses email everyday; they can track down their children with an email leading to a relationship with a greater communication level.

Text messaging for the Baby Boom Generation is a recently up and coming phenomenon. Most Boomers began texting to contact their children because they believed it was a way they were most likely guaranteed some type of response. Some Boomers will text their friends but it seems to be very uncommon and if they do text it is always very small fragmented sentences.

Findings from RQ2

Although both generations use digital communication in different ways, they both have the same feelings on the advantages and disadvantages of computer-mediated communication. Both generations believe that convenience is the main advantage that has emerged through computer-mediated communication. In two surveys of 100 participants each, 73% of members from Generation Y as well as 65% of members of the Baby Boom Generation, believe this to be true. Both generations feel as though computer-mediated communication has allowed them to communicate when it is the right time for them. They can answer an email when they have a free moment; they can send a friend a text if they are bored in class; they can do things on their own terms.

Computer-mediated communication has also enhanced individuals' ability to communicate with more people. A person can reignite an old friendship or talk to a new friend just because computer-mediated communication has made it so easy and convenient to do so. Both parents and children alike have admitted that they communicate more since using computer-mediated communication. Phone calling for Generation Y, especially when away at school, seemed to be inconsistent in the eyes of their parents. Multiple parents have stated they talk more with their children with the addition of text messages, instant messages, and email in their lives.

On the other hand, the disadvantages that individuals have found detract from the positives that were previously stated. The absence of face-to-face communication is a concern that was raised by the members of both generations. Baby Boomers and Generation Y members believed that the absence leads to their missing out on many aspects of interpersonal communication, which enhances their life and wellbeing. Concurring with some who showed concerns for communication in future, a member of the Baby Boom Generation stated:

I fear my grandchildren aren't going to be able to function at a normal level. Are they going to have to email me to say hello because they won't make the time to see me? It scares me what is going to happen to kids in the future. I can talk to a tree but I fear they won't be able to talk to their friends without their cell phones in between them. (Personal communication, November 20, 2009)

Some concern was also for the ambiguity of computer-mediated communication and the effects of communicating without nonverbal cues, but not all generation members felt this way. This concern was mostly for the members of Generation Y, with the Baby Boom Generation not taking this too much into account when discussing their computer-mediated communication habits. Generation Y expressed their distress with problems in not knowing the tone of messages delivered by computer-mediated communication and having issues deciphering between sarcasm and sincerity. Many individuals also mentioned having to ask for clarification while others admitted not asking and just guessing what the person was trying to say. Out of 100 respondents 75% of Generation Y individuals admitted to not understanding the tone (whether it was happy, sad, sarcastic, etc.) of what someone was saying during a computer-mediated conversation within the last month, compared to 40% of Baby Boomers.

Baby Boomers and Generation Y members also mentioned the disadvantage of limited confidence in Baby Boomer digital communication response rate and usage rate. Both generations felt as though not all members of the Baby Boom generation check their email regularly or respond to text messages they receive. Boomers revealed that this leads to a vicious cycle. With Boomers not sending emails because they don't think their friend will answer, their friends in turn don't have the opportunity to use CMC.

Findings from RQ3

It is apparent that both generations are affected by computer-mediated communication differently because they use digital communication in different ways to fulfill their specific needs. Although both generations use computer-mediated communication in order to communicate, with whom they are communicating with and the intended purpose of the communication changes both the quality and quantity of interpersonal communication. In general, while computer mediated communication has enhanced the quantity of interpersonal communication for both the Baby Boom Generation and Generation Y; the quality of interpersonal communication has not been as consistent. Members of the Baby Boom Generation feel as though they have enhanced the depth of conversations, using email as a tool to write letters to old friends or as a way to bring up issue that should be addressed if it was too sensitive to discuss during a face-to-face conversation. Baby Boomers capitalize on the desirable aspect of email that allows people to ponder what to communicate and structure an email to convey an exactly intended message.

Members of Generation Y, on the other hand, have fallen into the world of abbreviations and text messaging. When speaking to one another, messages are short and to the point with limited fillers and gaps. Generation Y members agree with the negative effect it is having on their interpersonal relationships at times. Generation Y members know that their interpersonal relationship is somewhat negatively affected by the lack of depth in conversations, but due to their needs it is the most convenient way to talk to others.

V. Discussion

The findings have proven that computer-mediated communication has influenced interpersonal relationships differently in the Baby Boom Generation and Generation Y. These differences arise from the fact that the two generations use computer-mediated communication to fit their specific needs, which is supported by the uses and gratification theory. The two generations have different social and psychological needs, so the method and the medium that they choose to communicate with are different as well. Both generations feel that face-to-face communication is the ideal mode of communication, but agree that it's sometimes impossible in hectic everyday life. Although face-to-face communication, a "rich" way to communicate, is filled with non-verbal cues, all previous research suggested that people are more inhibited when speaking in person. The research suggested that the computer gives individuals the opportunities to speak more openly, however when asked directly in this research if they speak more openly most individuals denied their change in inhibition. The tendency to transmit messages without considering consequences or volunteer personal information mistakenly is greater in online communication where people don't see or hear the target of the remarks (Adler, et al. 2010). This idea leads to the conclusion that people in both generations do not realize or want to admit that they are less inhibited and speak more openly and more freely via computer-mediated communication.

Less inhibition comes from text messaging, the preferred method of Generation Y communication. The text messages that Generation Y uses to communicate are mostly shortened versions of a deeper conversation and because of this method of communication, Generation Y is missing out on their conversation quality. Nonverbal cues that help clarify meanings of another's words and offer hints about their feelings are stripped. (Surinder & Cooper, 2003) The ability to decipher what another is saying is an important concept in perceiving others. Failing to understand another can leave people feeling isolated and frustrated, despairing that our words don't seem able to convey the depth and complexity of what we think and feel (Adler, et al. 2010).

The ambiguity of computer-mediated communication is an issue that many Generation Y members raised throughout the research. Baby Boomers write how they feel in long emails and through phone calls and so there isn't much room for error when interpreting what they are trying to say. Generation Y members sometimes read a message and due to the ambiguity will interpret it the wrong way leading to difficulties in relationships. If a person doesn't receive the response they are looking for, or the support they need, it can lead to many conflicts that could have been avoided if the intended message had been clearer.

Many participants of the survey and the interviews believed that the best way to communicate interpersonally in the future will be through the use of video chats, such as Skype and iChat. These modes of communication give users the "best of both worlds" (personal communication, November 10, 2009). These modes will allow people to communicate thorough a mediated channel with convenience and ease and allows

for the facial gestures, vocal tones, and hand movements that are important components for interpersonal communication to come through.

One additional component to the findings is the idea that the gap between generations is diminishing. Not too many years ago, Generation Y dominated all web 2.0 components, but today people of all ages use the Internet and communicate via mediated channels. Although the Baby Boomers have not caught up entirely with the tech savvy Generation Y, who grew up learning, communicating, and discovering through the computer and the Internet, they are an upcoming force in the world of computer-mediated communication. With a decreased generation gap, there are better interpersonal relationships because there is a better understanding of other generations. Better generational relationships will lead to healthier communication habits avoiding unnecessary dysfunctional conflict, which has a damaging effect on the relationship.

VI. Conclusions

This study found that computer-mediated communication influences interpersonal relationships differently in the Baby Boom Generation and Generation Y. Computer-mediated communication enhances the amount that all generation members communicate interpersonally due to the increase in convenience, ease and availability of the person with whom one is communicating with. Due to the fact that Baby Boomers statistically use computer-mediated communication less, they in turn are less likely to communicate with the large amount of people that Generation Y members do. On the contrary, Baby Boomers have used computer-mediated communication to their advantage, increasing their quality of interpersonal relationships with long emails to their friends and family. Generation Y members, on the other hand, have decreased their quality of interpersonal relationships, making things quick and to the point, losing out on communication depth, which leads to ambiguities and possibly interpersonal conflict due to misunderstandings.

The conclusions to this research were drawn through qualitative and quantitative research methods, and both of these methods had some limitations. Both the survey and the interviews were conducted with a convenience sample of participants, a non-probabilistic sample. All the participants were familiar people or friends of familiar people, so the research cannot be generalized to the general population. The research was also skewed with more females participating in both the survey and the interview than males.

Further research can be done to monitor the progression that Baby Boomers would make in their use of computer-mediated communication in the future, for example, in 10 years. In addition, a study on what different impact the lack of non-verbal cues will have on the interpersonal skills of Generation Y and Baby Boomers can be conducted, too.

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Appendix

Survey (Baby Boom Generation)

1. How many days out of the week do you use digital communication (Instant messages, social media sites, emails, text messages, etc.) to speak with others?

- a. 0
- b. 1-2
- c. 3-4
- d. 5-6
- e. 7

2. Please fill in the blank:

When making plans with friends or family, I most often _____.

- a. Call
- b. Text message
- c. Email
- d. Write on his/her Facebook or MySpace wall
- e. Stop by his/her home or office

3. Please fill in the blank:

The Internet enables me to communicate _____ with others.

- a. More
- b. Less
- c. The same amount

4. Please fill in the blank:

When using the Internet, I spend most of my time _____.

- a. Speaking to others
- b. Surfing the Internet for enjoyment
- c. Researching and learning new information
- d. Shopping
- e. Paying bills/managing accounts
- f. Other

5. Please fill in the blank:

When trying to keep in touch with friends or family, I most often _____.

- a. Call
- b. Text message
- c. Email
- d. Write on his/her Facebook or MySpace wall
- e. Stop by his/her home or office

6. When speaking to others online or through text messages there are misunderstandings between what I am saying and what I really mean.

- a. Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Sometimes
- d. Often
- e. Always
- f. I don't know

7. True or False:

I have met a friend or a significant other via the Internet

- a. True
- b. False

8. Please fill in the blank:

I speak more openly and more freely when I communicate with others via_____.

- a. Internet
- b. Text messages
- c. Phone
- d. Face-to face
- e. I speak with the same amount of disclosure either way

9. Please fill in the blank:

I believe my generation uses the Internet to communicate _____ than members of Generation Y (ages 15-30).

- a. More
- b. Less
- c. Same amount

10. True or False:

In the past month I have not understood the tone (whether it was a joke, serious statement, sarcastic statement, etc.) of someone I was communicating with via computerized channels.

- a. True
- b. False

11. True or False:

In the past year, digital communication (Instant messages, social media, emails, text messages, etc.) has allowed me to reach out to an old friend.

- a. True
- b. False

12. What do you believe is the major advantage of email?

- a. Increased Convenience
- b. Increase of Privacy
- c. More Control
- d. Immediacy
- e. Absence of face-to-face interaction
- f. Other

13. What do you believe is the major disadvantage of email?

- a. Lack of Privacy
- b. Absence of face-to-face interaction
- c. Impersonal nature
- d. Permanence
- e. Possibility of being ignored

14. What is your ideal mode of communicating with friends?

15. Are you male or female?

- a. Male
 - b. Female
-

Appendix B

Basic Interview Questions

1. Would you describe yourself as an active user of digital communication, such as instant messaging, emailing, texting, or using social media sites?
 2. Why do you use computer-mediated communication?
 3. Who would you say is the person with whom you communicate the most via mediated channels?
 4. If you wanted to make plans with a friend, how would you most likely get in touch with them?
 - a. Why?
 5. When you use the Internet what are you most likely doing?
 6. Would you say in the past month, you didn't understand what a person was trying to communicate because you weren't face-to-face with them?
 - a. If so, did you do anything to better understand him or her?
 7. Through what medium would you say you feel most comfortable saying exactly what you mean without any hesitation?
 - a. Why?
 8. Has the use of the Internet or social networking sites allowed you to communicate with someone you haven't spoken to in a long time?
 9. What do you believe is the major disadvantage of computer-mediated communication?
 10. If you could choose anything, what would be your ideal mode of communicating interpersonally?
 - a. Why?
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