



College Students Technologically-Mediated Communication with Close Other Partners and Influences on Relationship Quality



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Introduction

- Technology has become very prevalent in today's society and is often used in everyday activities, such as collecting information and communicating with others (Sisman, Yoruk & Eleren, 2012).
- Technology can also be utilized to maintain social bonds between emerging adults and their close other relationship partners while the emerging adults are away from home (Miller-Ott, et al., 2014) while they are becoming more autonomous (Arnett, 2000).
- Two major types of communication forms, synchronous and asynchronous, are used frequently between emerging adults and their relationship partners (Rabby & Walther, 2013).
- Past research found that relationship satisfaction during emerging adulthood can be an impactful influence on an emerging adults' life (Chow, Hart, Ellis & Tan, 2017).
- Constant technological communication has been shown to increase the relationship quality between emerging adults' and their close relationship partners, especially with parents (Schon, 2014) and siblings (Lindell, Campione-Barr & Killoren, 2015).
- The present study explores how emerging adults' communication with mothers, fathers, siblings, friends, and romantic partners differed from each other and how this communication affects overall relationship quality.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: We predicted that communication between emerging adults and their family members will be less frequent overall.

- Hypothesis 1A:** Emerging adults will communicate using face-to-face communication methods with friends/romantic partners more frequently than with family members.
- Hypothesis 1B:** Female emerging adults will communicate more with close others' than males will.
- Hypothesis 1C:** Emerging adults' communication with their friends and romantic partners will increase over the course of three years.

Hypothesis 2: Emerging adults will communicate more frequently over the course of 3 years.

- Hypothesis 2A:** Emerging adults will have an increase in texting and phone calls to communicate over the course of three years.
- Hypothesis 2B:** Emerging adults will communicate less frequently with family members over the course of three years.
- Hypothesis 2C:** Female emerging adults will communicate more frequently over the course of three years than male emerging adults.

Hypothesis 3: Emerging adults' relationship quality with their close others will increase overall.

- Hypothesis 3A:** Synchronous communication methods will have a positive effect on emerging adults' relationship quality with close others.
- Hypothesis 3B:** Emerging adults' relationship quality with close others will increase over time.
- Hypothesis 3C:** Female emerging adults will communicate more frequently with close others than male emerging adults.

Method

Participants	258 participants
Mean age	18.52 (SD=0.87)
Ethnicity	EA: 87.2% AA: 5.8% Other: 5.8%
Marital Status	Married: 72.8%
Mean Family Income	85,000-\$99,999
Distance from family	More than 30 minutes away: 85.7%

Communication Methods: Participants rated how often they communicated with their mothers, fathers, siblings, best friends and romantic partners via 8 methods on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = Less often than once per month, and 5 = Multiple times per day (Lindell, Campione-Barr, & Killoren, 2015).

Eight Methods of Communication:

- Checking their close others' Facebook or Twitter page
- Actively posting on their close others' Facebook wall
- Sending a private message on Facebook
- Email
- Texting
- Calling on a cellphone or with a landline telephone
- Video chatting (Skype, FaceTime)
- Talking to each other in person

Relationship Quality: Participants rated their view of relationship satisfaction with their close others by 24 items from 8 sub scales that represented the positivity/support aspects of the relationship (Adams & Laursen, 2007) on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being "little or none" and 5 being "the most". We examine these results using the Network of Relationships Inventory (Furman & Buhrmester, 1984).

Procedure: The data in this study was collected through an online questionnaire that the participants received through an email and could complete on their own time. The data was also examined at two different points in time, the second time being after 3 years (Time 1 and Time 2).

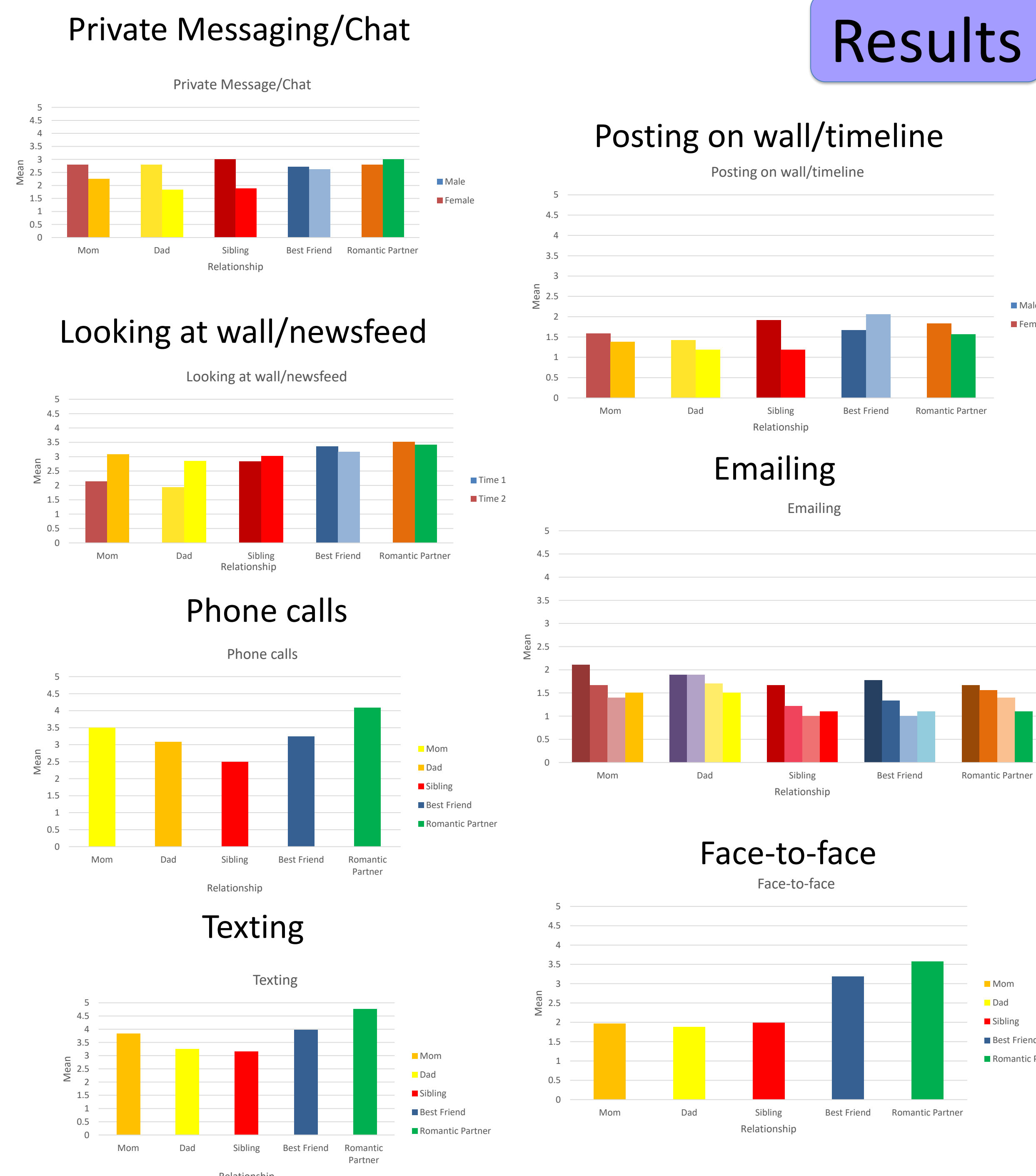
Discussion

- Hypothesis 1 – Partially Supported:** Emerging adults communicated more frequently with friends and romantic partners in person, but there was no significance in difference of gender or time.
- Hypothesis 2 – Partially Supported:** Emerging adults communicate less frequently with family members from Time 1 to Time 2.
- Hypothesis 3 – Partially Supported:** Emerging adults' use of synchronous communication methods increased their overall relationship quality with romantic partners.
- Conclusion:** Overall, results indicate that emerging adults communicate less frequently with family members than friends or romantic partners over the course of three years, but this is not affected by gender.
- Implications:** Communication resources could be made available to college students to aid with mental health.
- Limitations/ Future Directions:** The present study examined predominantly White, middle class sample. Future studies should examine more diverse populations to increase generalizability of these findings.

References

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Results



Differences in Frequency of Communication

- Private messaging or chat:** significant main effect of Relationship ($F(4, 68) = 2.98, p < .05$) qualified by a significant Relationship X Gender interaction ($F(4, 68) = 4.69, p < .01$).
- Posting on wall or timeline:** significant main effect of Relationship ($F(4, 48) = 4.00, p < .01$) qualified by a significant Relationship X Gender interaction ($F(4, 48) = 3.50, p < .05$).
- Looking at wall/newsfeed updates:** significant main effect of Relationship ($F(4, 48) = 9.47, p < .01$) qualified by a significant Relationship X Time interaction ($F(4, 48) = 6.22, p < .01$).
- Phone calls:** significant main effect of Relationship ($F(4, 128) = 25.38, p < .01$).
- Texting:** significant main effect of Relationship ($F(4, 128) = 22.33, p < .01$).
- Emailing:** main effect of Relationship ($F(4, 68) = 6.54, p < .01$) qualified by a significant Relationship X Time X Gender interaction ($F(4, 68) = 2.87, p < .05$).
- Video chat:** no significant interactions
- Face-to-face:** significant main effect of Relationship ($F(4, 124) = 23.65, p < .01$).

Relationship Quality

- Relationship quality positively predicted by synchronous communication for emerging adults and romantic partners ($\beta = -2.93, p < .10$).