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Responses to intimate partners' attempts to change health behavior: The role of readiness

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Does Disruption in Online Communication with Dating Partners Affect
Relationship Satisfaction and Feelings of Closeness?

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Refraining from Online Communication: Effect on Dating Partners' Relationships

Advancements in technology in the past two decades have led to significant and far-reaching changes in how people meet and communicate with intimate partners (Hall & Baym, 2011), particularly among digital natives (McMillan & Morrison, 2006). Email, text messaging, Skype, Facebook, Snap Chat, Instagram, and other methods are being used to convey information, make plans, disclose personal thoughts and feelings, and maintain closeness and connection in intimate relationships. Yet, very little is known about whether and how this type of communication affects intimate relationships.

Intimate relationships are important and affect many essential aspects of our lives. To give just a few examples, the quality of our intimate relationships is strongly related to life satisfaction (Gustavson, Røysamb, Borren, Torvik, & Karevold, 2016), mental health (Whitton & Whisman, 2010), and physical health (Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010). Given the importance of intimate relationships and the ubiquity of online communication, whether and how these new forms of communication affect intimate relationship functioning is a critical question.

We know of no studies that specifically address online communication and intimate relationships. There are studies, however, that focus on relationship variables, such as closeness and satisfaction, in social relationships more generally; these studies focus primarily on Facebook.

udies examining the effect of social media on relationship focus primarily of the effects of Facebook specifically and on social relationships generally.

1. Aron, Mashek, & Aron, 2004 FB affects relationship closeness In this study, we conceptualize closeness as a subjective experience of intimacy, emotional affinity, and psychological bonding with another person (see)

2. Papp 2012 Facebook profile choices played a role in the overall functioning of the relationship, with males' indications of a partnered status linked with higher levels of their own and their partners' (marginal) relationship satisfaction, and females' displays of their partner in their profile picture linked with higher levels of their own and their partners' relationship satisfaction. Finally, male and female reports of having had disagreements over the Facebook relationship status was associated with lower level of females' but not males' relationship satisfaction, after accounting for global verbal conflict. Thus, the findings point to the unique contribution of Facebook disagreements to intimate relationship functioning.

Next, how dating partners portrayed their relationships held importance for relationship functioning, with both males' displays of a partnered status and females' inclusion of their partner in the profile picture linked to greater relationship satisfaction

3. Ledbetter 2011: will use below, but can cite here that online communication (via FB) affects rel. closeness

trait-like attitudes toward online communication predict Facebook and offline communication, with these constructs then predicting relational closeness.

4. Przybylski & Weinstein, 2013. Presence of mobile devices shape relationship quality – kind of far afield, as it examines live relationship quality but might use to cite that online communication is bad. Mere presence of a device (not owned by either person) affected the development of intimacy and closeness in dyads (not known to each other before)

Recent advancements in communication technology have enabled billions of people to connect over great distances using mobile phones, yet little is known about how the frequent presence of these devices in social settings influences face-to-face interactions. In two experiments, we evaluated the extent to which the mere presence of mobile communication devices shape relationship quality in dyadic settings. In both, we found evidence they can have negative effects on closeness, connection, and conversation quality. These results demonstrate that the presence of mobile phones can interfere with human relationships, an effect that is most clear when individuals are discussing personally meaningful topics.

5. Hall & Baym, 2011 – use of mobile phones good and bad for relationships

Results suggest that increased mobile phone use for the purpose of relational maintenance has contradictory consequences for close friendships. Using mobile phones in close relationships increased expectations of relationship maintenance through mobile phones. Increased mobile maintenance expectations positively predicted dependence, which increased satisfaction, and positively predicted overdependence, which decreased satisfaction. Additionally, entrapment, the guilt and pressure to respond to mobile phone contact, uniquely predicted dissatisfaction.

6. Baym 2007

However, the proportion of face-to-face, telephone and internet communication in a relationship did not predict relational quality. This suggests that mediation neither improves nor detracts from relational satisfaction and closeness

7. Sheldon 2011 – another mixed finding

more frequent Facebook usage paradoxically correlates with more relatedness satisfaction (connection) and more relatedness dissatisfaction (disconnection)

8. Goodman Deane 2016

Results indicate that richer communication methods, which include non-verbal cues, were positively associated with both overall satisfaction with life and satisfaction with relationships. These methods included face-to-face communication, and phone and video calls. Conversely, more restricted methods, such as text messaging and instant messaging, were negatively associated with both variables. Social networking was negatively associated with overall satisfaction, but not with satisfaction with relationships.

The study found that richer communication methods, which include non-verbal cues, are associated with greater life and relationship satisfaction. These include face-to-face communication, video calls and phone calls. Conversely, more restricted methods, such as text messaging and instant messaging were associated with decreased satisfaction. M

Useful?

Xiaomeng 2017: Facebooking was positively associated with users' psychological well-being through online social relationship satisfaction, and simultaneously negatively linked to users' psychological well-being through offline social relationship satisfaction

Dainton 2013: (individuals/romantic relationships) Facebook positivity was moderately, positively correlated with relationship satisfaction, and Facebook assurances demonstrated a slight, positive correlation with relationship satisfaction. When controlling for more general maintenance behavior, Facebook positivity was the sole online behavior to predict satisfaction, contributing only three percent of the variance of relational satisfaction.

Use and outcomes are affected by attitudes about online communication

Following recent empirical evidence and theoretical development (Kelly & Keaten, 2007; Scott & Timmerman, 2005; Spitzberg, 2006), we argue that trait-like attitudes toward online communication influence the valence of relational outcomes from Facebook use.

Based on these findings, three theories about how online communication may affect intimate relationships:

1. Multimodal – Makes partners feel closer and more satisfied (ledbetter 2016 uses mediamultiplexity)

Ledbetter 2014: media multiplexity theory's claim that multimodality predicts tie strength has garnered impressive empirical support (Baym and Ledbetter, 2009; Hall and Baym, 2012; Ledbetter and Kuznekoff, 2012; Miczo et al., 2011)

2. Detrimental – Makes partners feel less close and less satisfied (called displacement theory on Goodman-Deane 2016)

3. Null – doesn't affect feelings of closeness or relationship satisfaction – no effect in initiating relationships or “events that signify a relationship” (Rappleyea et al 2014)

Mixed: Hall & Maym, 2012: Using mobile phones in close relationships increased expectations of relationship maintenance through mobile phones. Increased mobile maintenance expectations positively predicted dependence, which increased satisfaction, and positively predicted overdependence, which decreased satisfaction. Additionally, entrapment, the guilt and pressure to respond to mobile phone contact, uniquely predicted dissatisfaction.

May be interactions: online attitudes, enjoyment (Ledbetter 2016), personality (Xaiobeng 2017), attachment (Morey et al 2013)

Morey et al 2013: Attachment avoidance was related to less frequent phone use and texting, and greater email usage. Electronic communication channels (phone and texting) were related to positive relationship qualities, however, once accounting for attachment, only moderated effects were found. Interactions indicated texting was linked to more positive relationships for highly avoidant (but not less avoidant) participants. Additionally, email use was linked to more conflict for highly avoidant (but not less avoidant) participants. Finally, greater use of a SNS was positively associated with intimacy/support for those higher (but not lower) on attachment anxiety. This study illustrates how attachment can help to explain why the use of specific technology-based communication channels within romantic relationships may mean different things to different people, and that certain channels may be especially relevant in meeting insecurely attached individuals' needs.

Ledbetter 2014 - Facebook communication significantly interacted with OSD and OSC to predict interdependence. It is worth noting that the interaction effect for OSC approached statistical significance ($p < .06$) and therefore should be interpreted with some caution; yet, it is also worth remembering that interaction effects are more difficult to detect than main effects (Cohen et al., 2003) and thus a more liberal standard of statistical significance may be warranted. Decomposition of the interaction effect revealed that Facebook communication was positively associated with interdependence only when OSD or OSC were high. In other words, Facebook communication predicted greater tie strength when the participant held positive attitudes about the relational value of online communication. This pattern of effects suggests media multiplexity theory offers an incomplete account as long as it does not incorporate the cognitions of the communicator (Haythornthwaite, 2005). In the remainder of this discussion, we will tentatively outline an extension of the theory that is consistent with the obtained

Ledbetter 2011? Generally, early online communication research claims that the very nature of mediated communication (i.e., as a medium impoverished in nonverbal cues) serves to weaken online interpersonal ties (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976; Sproull & Kiesler, 1986). However, subsequent theoretical development (e.g., Walther & Burgoon, 1992) challenges this conclusion, arguing that the human capacity for creativity fosters use of online communication that can equal, or even exceed, the quality of face-to-face communication (Walther, 1996).

As Baym and Ledbetter (2009) report that SNS communication explains variance in relational development beyond that explained by other communication media, we expect that Facebook communication will

function similarly: Hypothesis 6: Offline communication positively predicts relational closeness (with specific Facebook Friends). Hypothesis 7: Facebook communication positively predicts relational closeness (with specific Facebook Friends). A

a robust research tradition examines trait-like orientations toward technology at a more abstract level, identifying constructs such as online communication apprehension (Scott & Timmerman, 2005), generalized problematic Internet use (Caplan, 2003), and information reception apprehension from technology sources (Wheeless, Eddleman-Spears, Magness, & Preiss, 2005) that significantly predict technology use and related outcomes

maintaining existing social connections (i.e., OSC) is a relationally healthier motivation for using online communication. Ledbetter (2009b) reports that both OSC and OSD exhibit similar patterns of association with online communication behavior, yet differ in their association with generalized communication competence: Though OSD is inversely associated with communication competence, OSC yields a positive association of nearly equivalent magnitude. This may suggest that communicatively competent people do not seek online communication because they wish to avoid discomfort attendant with face-to-face communication, but rather because they perceive online communication as a useful method for sustaining preexisting weak and strong social ties (Haythornthwaite, 2005).

To figure this out we asked college students in dating relationships to refrain from online communication to see whether it affected their sense of closeness compared to folks who didn't refrain from online communication. Based on Sheldon 2011; asked to refrain from FB use for 48 hours (Study 3 examines the effects of depriving participants of Facebook use for 48 hr. Further supporting the 2-process view, connection decreased, but disconnection was unaffected during the deprivation period; however, those who became more disconnected during the deprivation period engaged in more Facebook use during a 2nd, unconstrained 48-hr period, whereas changes in connection did not predict later use)

Baym et al 2007 measured relational closeness and satisfaction – yay!

If those who refrained reported feeling closer during the days they refrained, that would support the multimodal theory. If they felt less close . . . etc.

Need to justify just looking at relationship closeness (or add in rel satisfaction and report null results?)

Relationship Closeness – 7 items **Revealing Family Secrets: The Influence of Topic, Function, and Relationships**. Vangelisti, A. L., Caughlin, John P
Journal of Social and Personal Relationships. 14(5). 1997. p. 679

In this study, we conceptualize closeness as a subjective experience of intimacy, emotional affinity, and psychological bonding with another person (see Aron, Mashek, & Aron, 2004) – Ledbetter 2011

I feel close to my partner

I feel I can trust my partner
I feel connected to my partner
I feel emotionally intimate with my partner
I feel my partner understands me
I wish my partner and I were closer
I am satisfied with how close my partner and I are

Need to justify just using these dimensions from online attitudes scale.

Dimension 2: Apprehension

8. I feel awkward when communicating online.
9. I feel apprehensive about communicating online.
10. I cannot think clearly when I communicate online.
11. The lack of nonverbal cues (such as eye contact, facial expressions, etc.) in e-mail makes me feel uncomfortable.
12. I feel tense and nervous when communicating online.
13. It bothers me that I cannot see people when communicating online.
14. My words become confused and jumbled when I try to communicate online.
15. I am afraid to voice my opinions when interacting with others on the computer.

Dimension 4: Social Connection

21. Losing Internet access would not change my social life at all.a
22. If I lost Internet access, I think I would probably lose contact with many of my friends.
23. Without the Internet, my social life would be drastically different.
24. Online communication is not an important part of my social life.a
25. If I couldn't communicate online, I would feel "out of the loop" with my friends.
26. I would communicate less with my friends if I couldn't talk with them online.

Ledbetter 2011

Ease item

Dimension 5: Ease

27. I like that some forms of online communication do not require both people to be online at the same time.
28. When life gets busy, the Internet is a great way to communicate efficiently.
29. One thing I like about online communication is that I can still send someone a message when they aren't available to talk on the phone.
30. I enjoy communicating online.
31. Online communication is convenient.

"The fifth and final factor, Ease, represents appreciation of the convenience and enjoyment afforded by online communication. Those scoring high on this factor are more likely to be longtime users of online communication, less likely to possess informational reception apprehension from technology sources, and report higher communication competence. Among the other MOCA factors, Ease is positively and

significantly associated with all factors except Apprehension (which, unsurprisingly, obtained a significant inverse association). **Thus, when viewed as a whole, Ease seems to be a central factor in the cluster of dimensions characterizing online communication attitude.** As increased convenience and efficiency motivate the development and adoption of new communication technology (Carey, 1995) and media choice in specific communicative contexts (Daft & Lengel, 1986), it would seem that Ease is a construct of central importance when considering the theoretical structure of online communication attitude (480-481)

Five items loaded on the fifth factor, explaining 4.45% of the pooled item variance. Four of these items were on the convenience scale, with the one remaining item from the enjoyment scale. Taken as a whole, this factor represents the perceived Ease of online communication. High scores on this factor indicate perception of online communication as a convenient, efficient, and enjoyable form of communication (472).

Thus, one might expect that those who have a longer history of online communication usage would score higher on the Ease dimension of the MOCA instrument and perhaps other dimensions as well (475)

Thus, those who have used online communication for a longer period of time are more likely to appreciate the convenience, enjoyment, and social connectedness offered by the medium (478)

Second, it is worth considering the nature of the relationships among the dimensions of online communication attitude, with the aim of developing a theoretical model that articulates the structural associations among the five attitudinal components. In light of the results obtained in this series of studies, I will briefly speculate about such a possible theoretical model here. As the desire for increased convenience and efficiency are driving forces behind the development and adoption of new communication technology (Carey, 1995), as well as an underlying motivation in several media choice theories (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Straub & Karahanna, 1998), it stands to reason that Ease is the core dimension of online communication attitude. In other words, and as demonstrated in the results of Study 3, the extent to which an individual perceives online communication as efficient and enjoyable is significantly associated with the other four dimensions of online communication attitude (480-481)

Purpose: To test the relationship between online communication and relationship evaluations in dating partners. Specifically, to assess whether disruptions on online communication will lead to changes in relationship satisfaction and closeness, and whether attitudes about online communication influence any effects of disruption on relationship outcomes.

Family members use phones to show affection Leung and Wei (2000) *Journalism and Mass communication quarterly* (cited by Przybylski and Weinstein – which you have)

Method

Participants

Students enrolled in general psychology classes in a private university on the west coast were recruited via a psychology department participation pool ($n = XX$). Students who indicated that (recruiting criteria) on a prescreening questionnaire were eligible for the study. XXX of the participants failed to complete the questionnaire fully (failed to come to follow-up), yielding a final sample size of 77. Of these, XX% were women and XX% were men. This gender distribution is consistent with the gender make-up of the general psychology classes. Participants received course credit for participation. Participation in the pool was not mandatory; an alternate assignment was available for students who did not wish to participate.

Procedure

Before beginning the study, IRB approval was obtained. All students in general psychology classes were invited to log onto a participation pool website and filled out a series of eligibility questions. Based on these responses, eligible students were (scheduled for two lab sessions, 48 hours apart). At the first lab session, participants read an informed consent form that explained all aspects of the experiment, including the possibility they may be asked to refrain from online communication with their dating partner for the next 48 hours and that they could withdraw from the study at any time and/or skip any questions and still receive course credit for participating. Students then filled out online questionnaires, which began with a consent form. These points were reiterated verbally by the researcher who encouraged participants who may have been unwilling to refrain from online communication with their dating partner for 48 hours to withdraw from the study and receive credit at that time. No participants withdrew from the study. Participants filled out a series of online questionnaires assessing demographics,

attitudes toward online communication, and relationship satisfaction and closeness.

Participants included X men and X women, OTHER DEMOGRAPHICS HERE.

While participants completed the questionnaires, experimenters randomly assigned them to conditions by pulling a number from an envelope containing all numbers between 1 and 85; the numbers were not replaced after being pulled. Odd numbers indicating the experimental condition and even numbers the control condition. Participants assigned to the experimental condition were met by a research assistant on the way out and given instructions about the next 48 hours. They were verbally instructed to refrain from using texting or online messaging in any form, emailing, or using apps like Snapchat and Instagram with their dating partner. They were also asked to refrain from using Facebook for any reason, including checking notifications, messages or posting pictures, status updates, etc. Facebook was restricted entirely to prevent participants from inadvertently being exposed to information about their partners. Participants were told they were permitted to speak with their partner on the phone or in person and to send letters written on paper. Skype was also permitted as long as the audio feature was enabled. Participants were given the same instructions in writing on a card for reference. Participants in the control condition were told they should continue to communicate per usual with the dating partner. All participants were reminded to return in 48 hours to complete a follow-up set of questionnaires. At Time 2, all participants filled out

Questionnaires

Relationship satisfaction .96

Relationship closeness. Relationship closeness was assessed using the 7-item

relationships closeness questionnaire used by Ledbetter (2011) and developed by Vangelisti and Caughlin (1997). Examples of items are “I feel close to my partner” and “I feel connected to my partner”. Participants responded to each item on a scale of X-X. Coefficient alpha for this scale was .89

Attitudes about Online Communication. The importance of online communication, ease with online communication, and apprehension about online communication were assessed by adapting the Online Attitudes Questionnaire (OAQ) developed by Ledbetter (201X) to refer to specifically to dating partners. Importance of online communication with a dating partner was assessed by adapting the social connection scale of the OAQ. Examples of items are: “If I couldn’t communicate online, I would feel ‘out of the loop’ with my dating partner” and “I would communicate less with my dating partner if I couldn’t talk with him/her online.” Reliability for this scale was excellent, X

Apprehension was assessed using the apprehension subscale of the (OAQ). Examples of adapted items are “I feel apprehensive about communicating online with my partner” and “The lack of nonverbal cues (such as eye contact, facial expressions, etc.) in e-mail makes me feel uncomfortable communicating online with my partner.” Reliability for this scale was excellent, X

Ease of Communication

Qualitative data

Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics for all variables can be seen in Table 1 along with independent-samples t-tests evaluating whether there were any initial between-group

differences in relationship ratings and attitudes about online communication. There were no significant differences in any of the measures between the experimental and treatment groups at Time 1. At Time 2, the manipulation was checked by asking participants in the experimental group how often they used online communication with their dating partner in the past two days on a scale of 1 (a lot less than usual) to 5 (a lot more than usual). Thirty-seven participants in the experimental condition ($n = 39$) reported that they used online communication somewhat less than usual or a lot less than usual; twenty-nine reported that they used online communication a lot less than usual. COMPARE TO CONTROL CONDITION?

Results

Correlations among all variables can be seen in Table 2. As expected, relationship measures are significantly and positively correlated with one another across Time 1 and Time 2. Relationship satisfaction and closeness were negatively related to the importance of online communication; that is, the higher participants rated the importance of online communication for staying in touch with their partner, the lower they rated their relationship satisfaction and closeness (SET THIS UP IN INTRO). Among the attitudes about online communication, importance of online communication was positively related to ease with online communication. There were no other significant correlations among measures on attitudes about online communication.

Repeated measures analysis of variance were used to determine whether relationship satisfaction and closeness changed in response to refraining from online communication, compared to the control group. No significant effects were found for relationship satisfaction ($F = .13, ns$) or closeness ($F = .07, ns$). To test whether the

effect of refraining from online communication differed based on participants attitudes toward online communication (i.e., three-way interaction effects), six additional repeated measures ANOVAs were run (group x 2 relationship variables x 3 online attitude scales). Online attitudes variables were transformed into categorical variables by median split. A significant three-way interaction was found for ease with online communication and changes in relationship satisfaction ($F = 5.05$, $p < .05$) as well as a marginally significant interaction for ease with online communication and changes in closeness ($F = 2.96$, $p = .09$; see Figures 1 & 2) such that, for those who find it easy and enjoyable to communicate with their partners online, ceasing online communication led to steeper declines in satisfaction and feelings of closeness, compared to controls. In contrast, for those who were less at ease with online communication, the decline in satisfaction and closeness from Time 1 to Time 2 was less steep, compared to participants in the control condition. That is, when people are at ease about online communication, refraining from online communication appears to have a negative effect on relationships, but for people who feel relatively uneasy about talking to their partner online, refraining seems to affect relationships very little.

Conclusions

Address correlations between importance of online communication and relationship outcome variables

Address lack of difference in outcome variables between groups

Address 3-way interaction

There is some support for the Multimodal Theory; participants who refrained from one mode of communication (i.e., online) reported lower relationship certainty

Gustavson, K., Røysamb, E., Borren, I., Torvik, F A., & Karevold, E. (2016). Life satisfaction in close relationships: Findings from a longitudinal study, *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 17, 1293-1311.

Holt-Lunstad, J., Smith, T. B., & Layton, J. B. (2010). Social relationships and mortality risk: A meta-analytic review. *PLoS Medicine*, 7(7), e1000316.

Mcmillan, S. J., & Morrison, M. (2006). Coming of age with the internet: A qualitative exploration of how the internet has become an integral part of young people's lives. *New Media and Society*, 8, 73–95. doi: 10.1177/1461444806059871

Whitton, S.J. & Whisman, M.A. (2010). Relationship Satisfaction Instability and Depression. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 24, 791–794. doi: 10.1037/a0021734

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Between-groups t Tests for Time 1 and Time 2

| Variable | Time 1 | | | Time 2 | | |
|------------------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>t</i> |
| Relationship Satisfaction | | | 0.96 | | | 0.22 |
| Control Group | 19.79 | 4.11 | | 14.44 | 4.77 | |
| Experimental Group | 19.87 | 4.24 | | 14.12 | 5.70 | |
| Feelings of Closeness | | | 0.87 | | | 0.22 |
| Control Group | 24.32 | 2.83 | | 13.33 | 3.64 | |
| Experimental Group | 23.76 | 2.79 | | 13.57 | 4.60 | |
| Online Communication Apprehension | | | 0.24 | | | n/a |
| Control Group | 22.60 | 9.20 | | | | |
| Experimental Group | 19.00 | 8.87 | | | | |
| Importance of Online Communication | | | 1.72 | | | n/a |
| Control Group | 17.30 | 8.36 | | | | |
| Experimental Group | 11.77 | 9.39 | | | | |
| Online Communication Ease | | | 1.66 | | | n/a |
| Control Group | 23.60 | 7.10 | | | | |
| Experimental Group | 20.80 | 7.14 | | | | |

Table 2

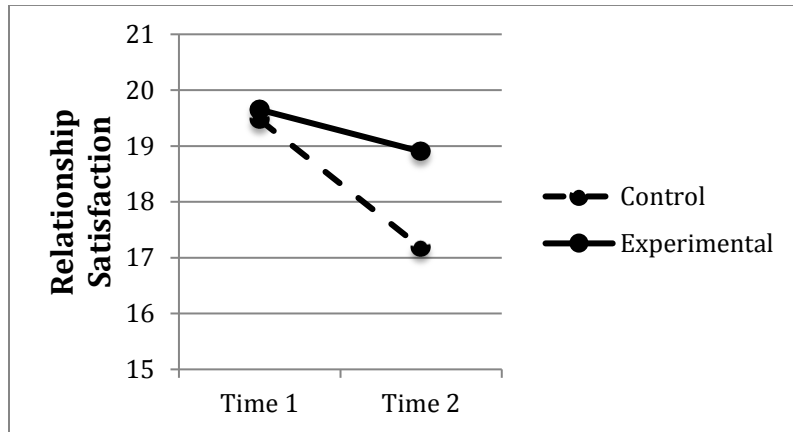
Pearson Product-moment Correlations Among All Variables

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---------------------------------|---------|--------|---------|------|------|--------|------|
| 1. T1 Relationship Satisfaction | 1.00 | | | | | | |
| 2. T1 Closeness | .56 ** | 1.00 | | | | | |
| 3. Online Importance | -.32 ** | -.24 * | 1.00 | | | | |
| 4. Online Anxiety | -.15 | -.06 | .09 | 1.00 | | | |
| 5. Online Ease | .06 | .15 | .54 ** | .07 | 1.00 | | |
| 6. T2 Relationship Satisfaction | .60 ** | .39 ** | -.39 ** | -.17 | .01 | 1.00 | |
| 7. T2 Closeness | .55 ** | .39 ** | -.37 ** | .06 | .04 | .85 ** | 1.00 |

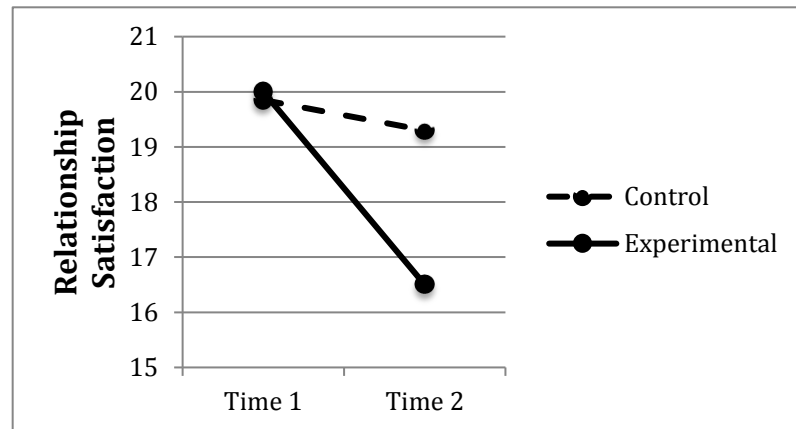
* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$

Figure 1

Effect of Refraining from Online Communication on Relationship Satisfaction based on Ease with Online Communication



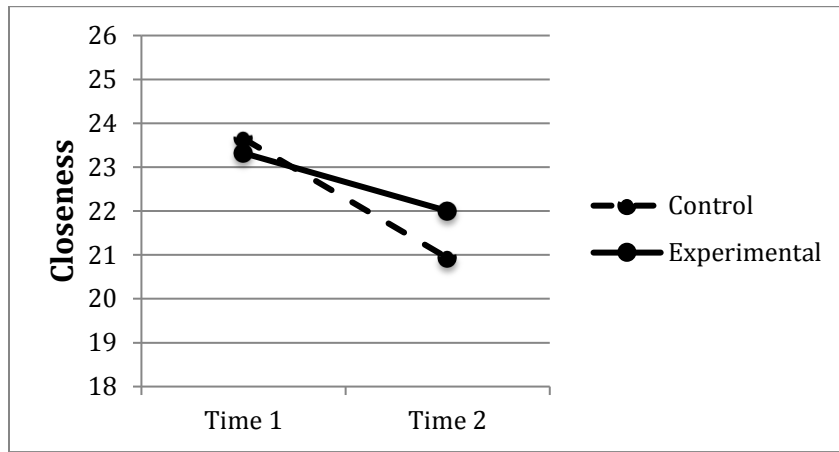
Low Ease



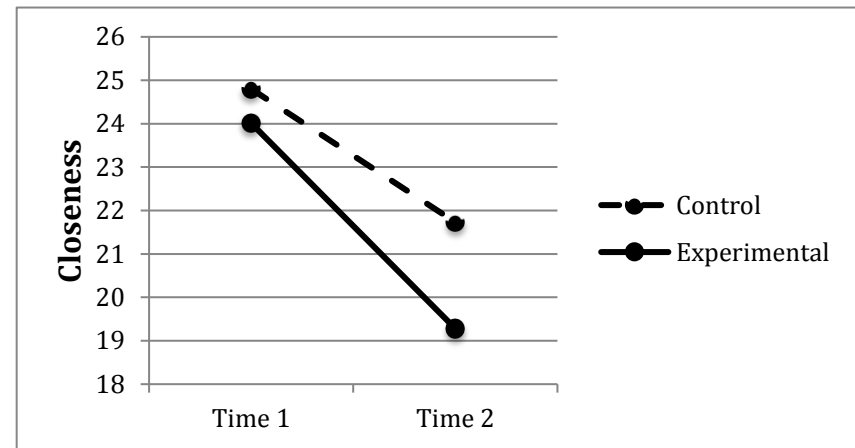
High Ease

Figure 2

Effect of Refraining from Online Communication on Closeness based on Ease with Online Communication



Low Ease



High Ease