



Title - 'I'll just text you – Is face to face social contact declining in a mediated world?'

Authors:

Dr Roger Patulny, University of Wollongong,

Web – <http://lha.uow.edu.au/hsi/contacts/UOW125675.html>

Email - rpatulny@uow.edu.au

Ms Claire Seaman, University of Wollongong,

Email - cseaman@uow.edu.au

Abstract

The last decade has seen a great increase in mediated communication, in terms of email, text and social media usage. Much has been made about the transformative impact of the rise in the network society (Castells 1996), and there has been speculation that such a transition will lead to a decline in face to face contact as people substitute away from such contact into more mediated forms (Nie, Hillybus & Erbring) or will form a complement for face to face activity (Wang and Wellman 2010). This paper examines the changing trends in social contact and the use of mediated forms of communication such as phone, text and email in an Australian context, using the aggregated 2002, 2006 and 2010 waves of Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) General Social Survey. Results show that, an aggregated general level, most Australians are less likely in 2006 to be socializing face-to-face at least weekly than they were in 2002 (with the exception of younger people aged 18-34), and are more likely in 2010 than in 2006 to be using mediated forms of communication to socialize (with the exception of older people aged 55+). Despite this seeming substitution, however, regressions show that at the individual level, mediated contact is clearly a complement and not a substitute for face-to-face contact, with strong and consistent associations between the two across and within all demographics.