Informal Conversation in the Remote Workplace

Research Proposal

Directed Study

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We used to socialize and communicate with our co-workers face to face, but with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we've had to transition our entire work lives online. How has this changed the way we socialize and communicate with our colleagues?

> *Approximately 4.7 million Canadians who do not usually work from home did so during the week of March 22 to 28.*

- Statistics Canada, 2020

Review of Literature

Key Argument #1

Informal conversation is essential to teamwork.

(Gilson et al., 2015; Kraut et al.,1990; Whittaker, et al.,1994; Charalampous et al., 2019; Collins et al., 2016)

Key Argument #2

Current telecommunication platforms are limited.

(McEwan & Greenburg, 2005; Venolia et al., 2010; Dena, 2018; Bodker, 2016; Kuzuoka et al., 2018)

Key Argument #3

Emerging technologies are shifting to a new reality.

(Foster, 2019; Shen & Kelly, 2020; Dena, 2018; Bodker, 2016; Kuzuoka et al., 2018; Microsoft, n.d.)

Summary of Literature Review

01 Remote workers miss informal conversation

02 Current technologies are limited

03 Emerging technologies are shifting

PURPOSE OF STUDY

Our research aims to explore how knowledge workers use telecommunication platforms to facilitate informal conversation. It also aims to explore the goals and values they attach to these conversations in the new context of remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

01

What values do knowledge workers attach to informal conversations?

02

How do they use communication technology to facilitate these conversations?

03

To what extent do they find this important?

HYPOTHESIS

Remote workers are struggling to feel connected with their coworkers during the COVID-19 pandemic because the communication platforms they use have not been built to support the frequency and richness of social interactions that occur with face-to-face conversation.

Mixed Method Research: Concurrent

PART 1: QUANTITATIVE

Surveys

PART 2: QUALITATIVE

Interviews

POPULATION

Knowledge workers that live and work in North America

SAMPLE

Full time knowledge workers who have:
Transitioned to remote work due to COVID-19
Work in team-based environments
Use computer mediated communication

Purpose of Survey

01 To see what communication platforms knowledge workers are currently using.

02 To gauge their satisfaction with these platforms as channels for informal conversation.

HYPOTHESIS

With the exception of longtime employees, remote workers struggle to clearly express their thoughts through their companies' internal communication platforms and would prefer to return to in-person work.

QUESTIONS

Majority are closed-ended questions, a couple open-ended questions

MEDIUM

Google Forms

LENGTH

5 minute survey

Purpose of Interview

01 To understand how remote workers engage in informal conversations

02 To explore why or why not workers consider informal conversation to be important in remote work

HYPOTHESIS

Knowledge workers believe that establishing a good rapport with their teammates leads to more effective collaboration, but recently they have found it more challenging to maintain these connections through emails, messages, and videoconferencing alone.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

7–9

RECRUITMENT METHODS

Social media posts, word of mouth, email, survey respondants

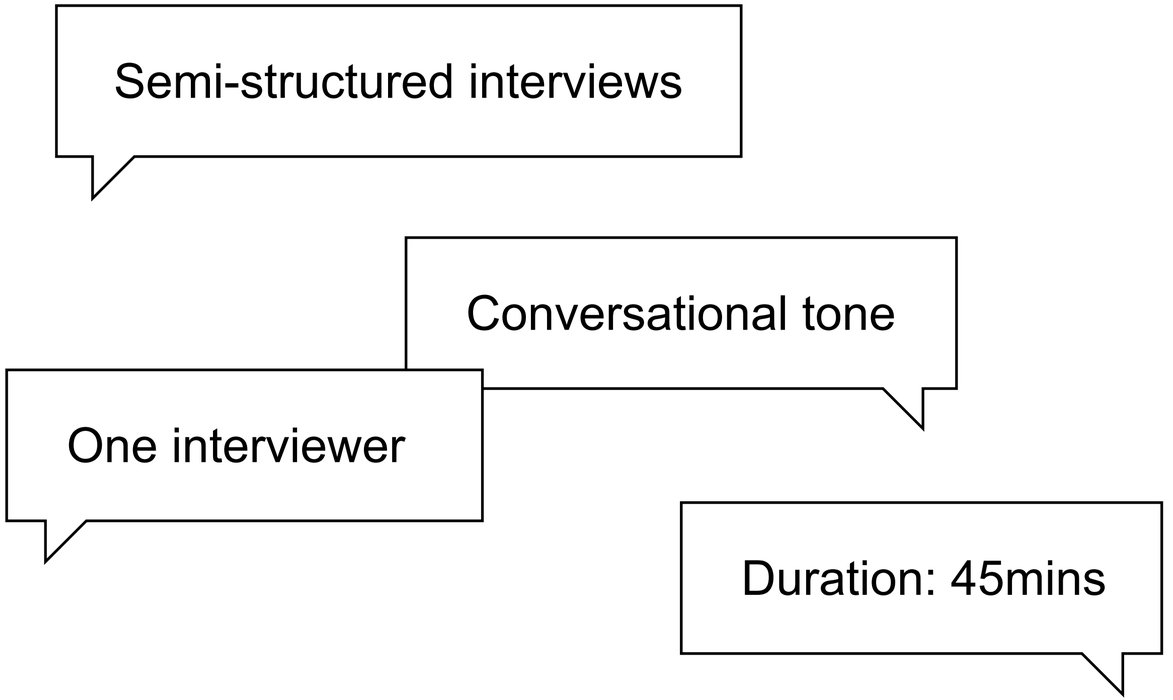
TYPES OF CONTACTS

Personal connections and SIAT graduate students

SAMPLING METHOD

Snowball Sampling

Interview Format



DATA ANALYSIS

Each interview will be audio recorded using Open Broadcasting Software (OBS) or phone recording, and they will be transcribed into written documents.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY?

To identify the challenges facing organizations and knowledge workers adapting to remote work and how communication technologies can better support their need for social connection during COVID-19.

01

Full-time Knowledge Workers

Individuals that are considering remote work or are currently working remotely

02

HCI Scholars

Those who have existing knowledge of computer mediated technology

03

Interaction Designers

Creators of telecommunication platforms

Consideration of Ethics

01

A written description and consent form will be provided for each research participant

02

Participants will be informed that their data will be stored on US servers and subject to the Patriot Act

03

Survey respondents will be granted anonymity and interview participants will be granted confidentiality

Data Storage & Security

01

Psedonyms

Will be used when transcribing recordings and labelling data for storage

02

Recordings and Data Deleted

Recordings from interviews and data from surveys will be destroyed in 2 years

03

Storing Information

Data will be stored on Google Drive only with consent

SEPT 24TH	OCT 1ST	OCT 8TH	DEC 24TH, 2022
Release survey and begin contacting potential interviewees	Close the survey and confirm interview dates	Last day of interviews	 Santa destroys the data

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