UNDERSTANDING USER INTERACTION PATTERNS IN HEALTH SOCIAL MEDIA

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Acknowledgements



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 - o Dr. Christopher C. Yang (chair)
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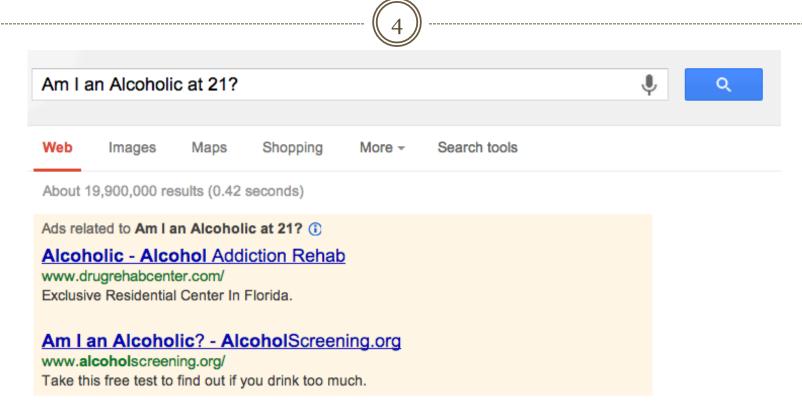
Pensieve

"One simply siphons the excess thoughts from one's mind, pours them into the basin, and examines them at one's leisure. It becomes easier to spot patterns and links, you understand, when they are in this form."

 Albus Dumbledore to Harry Potter (4th book of series, Chapter 30)



Imagine you search for this...



Am I an Alcoholic at 21? - Alcoholism - MedHelp

www.medhelp.org/posts/Alcoholism/Am-l-an-Alcoholic-at-21/.../176933... ▼

Jul 11, 2012 - 6 posts - 5 authors

Hi everyone! I am 21 years old and yesterday I experienced my first alcohol withdrawal (irritability, tremors, nightmares, hallucinations, and ...

And you click on the first result...



- Hmm.. Megan has the same question as me.
- 5 replies...
 - Personal stories given
 - Book recommendations

Possible Reaction to the UI

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"I wonder if that advice would apply to me..."

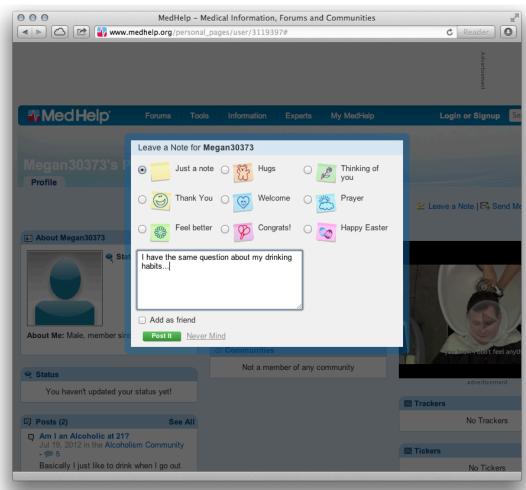
"Gosh, I don't feel comfortable responding to the whole group..."

• There are different facets of communication (Farnham and Churchill, 2011)

A possibility...

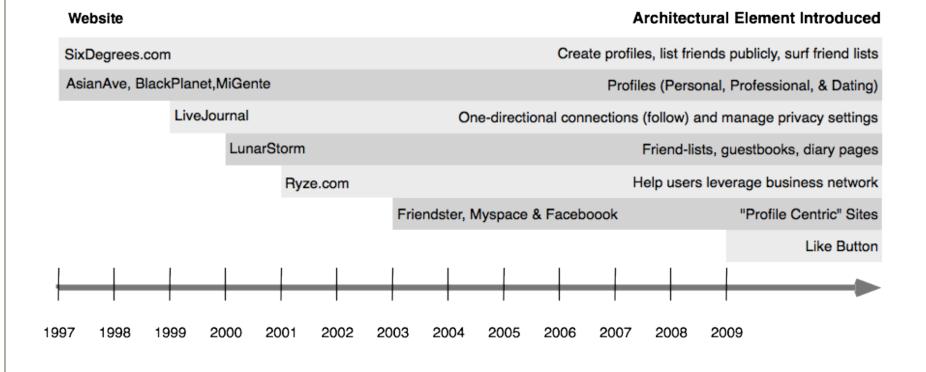
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A possibility to stay in contact with less exposure.



Social Networking Features Available





Online Health Social Networking

"e-patients are looking for a sense of community" -Wright & Bell, 2003

"e-patients are looking for 'just-in-time someonelike-me' health information"

- Boase et al, 2006; Fox & Jones, 2009

41% read patient blog, health newsgroup, or health website

39% used social networking site

12% shared updates or viewed updates

**E-patient*: internet user that is looking for health information

Significance of Study



- Previous research has different perspectives:
 - Issues that concern Health Professionals
 - Issues that concern E-Patients
 - Issues that concern Health Records
- Expand scholarly literature
 - Compared CMC formats within one online community.
 - Use mixed techniques for samples.
- Fill limitations in previous work
 - There are still gaps in understanding the technology.

Filling Gaps Found in Related Research

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Previous Studies

This Study





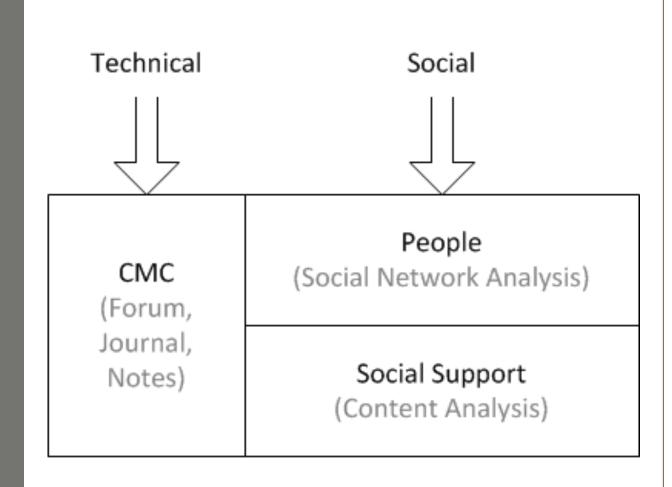


Theoretical Framework = Technical and Social factors

Online communities are a combination of technical and social factors (Latour, 1992; Preece, 2000).

Members communicate through text-based computer mediated communication (CMC) formats.

Support communities are composed of people who are building relationships and exchanging social support.



Research Themes

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• Observations:

- Some users are more active, others lurk
- Some are new to community
- o Social roles (i.e. alcoholic, friend of alcoholic)...

CMC formats have different features

➤ Who can write? read? Where is the message saved?

Research Method Part 1



- Reveal interaction patterns in user content
- Social media is used by health consumers to ...
 - Communicate health information
 - Share social support
 - Build friendships with each other
- Significance of studying e-patient interactions
 - Reports show that internet use for health information is growing (Kielstra, 2009; PEW Research Ctr, 2006, 2009, 2010)

Medhelp.org

"connects people with the leading medical experts and others who have similar experiences"

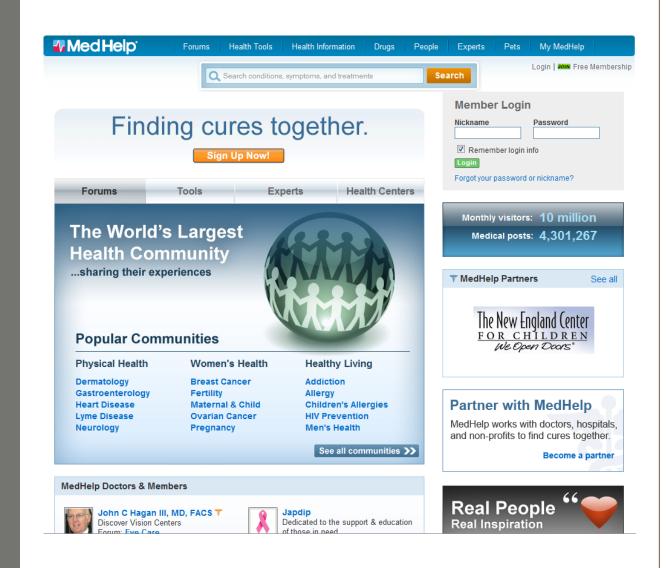
"helping patients find answers to their questions"

"helping patients actively manage their health"

Founded in 1994

Oldest online community
Pioneer of online health
communities

10 mil monthly visitors



Profile Page contains...

• Forum: Public Q&A

Journals: Diary Style

• **Notes:** Profile Posts

Forum

Journal



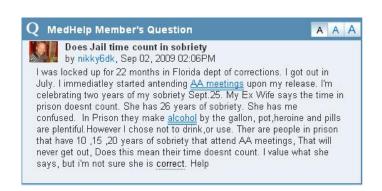
Related studies only focus on one CMC

Author	Data	Туре
Preece (1999)	Torn Knee Ligament	Email List
Braithwaite et al (1999)	"Support Network"	Email List
Bambina (2007)	Support OnLine Cancer Forum	Email List (stored online)
Meier et al (2007)	10 cancer mailing lists	Mailing lists
Pfiel & Zaphiris (2007)	Depression/Seniors	Bulletin Board
Cunningham et al (2008)	Alcoholism	Bulletin Board
Eichhorn (2008)	Eating Disorder msg boards	Yahoo Discussion Groups
Coursaris & Liu (2009)	HIV/Aids	Bulletin Board
McCormack (2010)	Anorexia Bulletin Board	Bulletin Board
Selby et al (2010)	Smoking cessation	Web assisted tobacco intervention, bulletin board

Objective



- Understand prevalence and characteristics of different support types that peers exchange.
 - Categories come from literature review on social support
 - Categorize messages into support types
 - **×** Dimensions:
 - o Offered vs requested
 - Post vs comments





Research Theme 1



Research Question • RQ1: What social support patterns exist in messages exchanged by members of an online health community?

Objective

• Study the patterns of social support exchanges of 3 CMC formats: Forums, Journals, Notes

Approach

- Descriptive Content Analysis
 - Coding: social support types for each message

Medhelp Alcoholism Community



3 Months June-Sept 2009



Forums (n = 493)

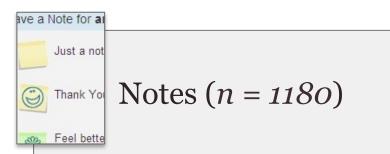
- [FP] 81 posts
- [FC] 412 comments



Journals (n = 423)

Sort By: Da • [JP] 88 posts

- [JC] 335 comments



-Both support

Approach



- Data source = MedHelp.org Alcoholism
- 2. Data collection = crawler
- 3. Unit of analysis = each message
- 4. Convert text files to Excel spreadsheets
- 5. Time Frame:
 - 1. 9th June 2009 9th September 2009

Informational Support

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Support	Definition	Example	
Advice	Offers ideas and suggests actions to deal with situation (Cutrona & Suhr, 1992).	"Campral works betterask u r doc about it!"	
Referral	Refers the recipient to some other source of help.	"Im gonna send you a link that might help."	
Fact	reassesses the situation and presents facts.	"Drinking too much alcohol daily can be a high risk to your health, you might fall into alcohol addiction."	
Personal experience	stories about person's experiences.	"I have been going though something like that with an addict using in our bathroom and"	
Feedback / Opinion	a view or judgment formed about something, not necessarily based on fact or knowledge.	"From what have you posted, it seems that you are in the stage where you have been looking to drink everyday and it is a clear sign of alcohol addiction."	

Nurturant Support

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Support	Definition	Example
Esteem	posts providing positive comments to praise support seekers abilities or to alleviate feelings of guilt.	"Congratulations on your sobriety!"
Network	posts providing messages to broaden support seekers social network so they don't feel alone.	"Just reach out and I will be there ok?"
Emotional	posts providing understanding of situation, express sorrow, provide with hope and confidence.	"You're going through a rough time" or "Hang in there hon"

1. Text files

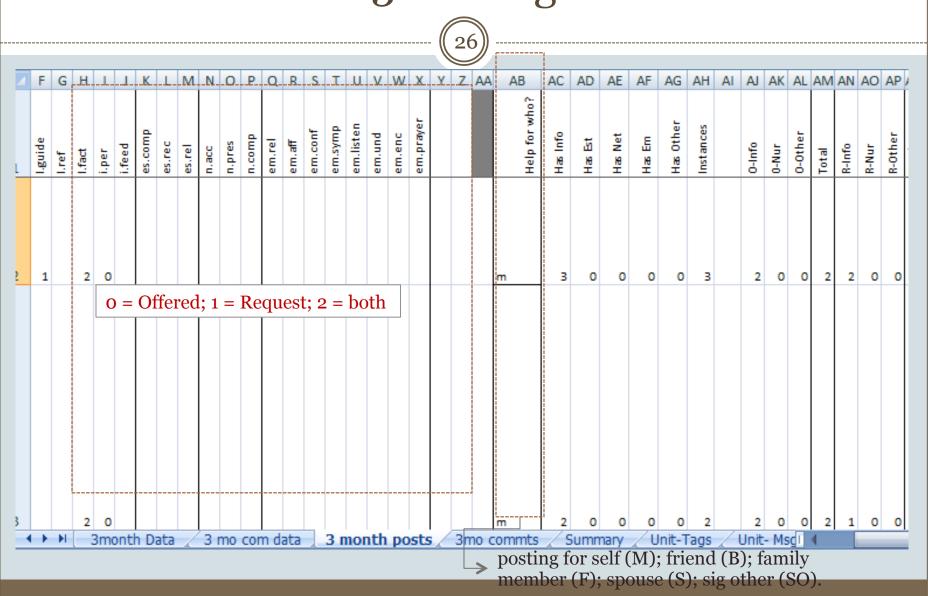


2. Excel file

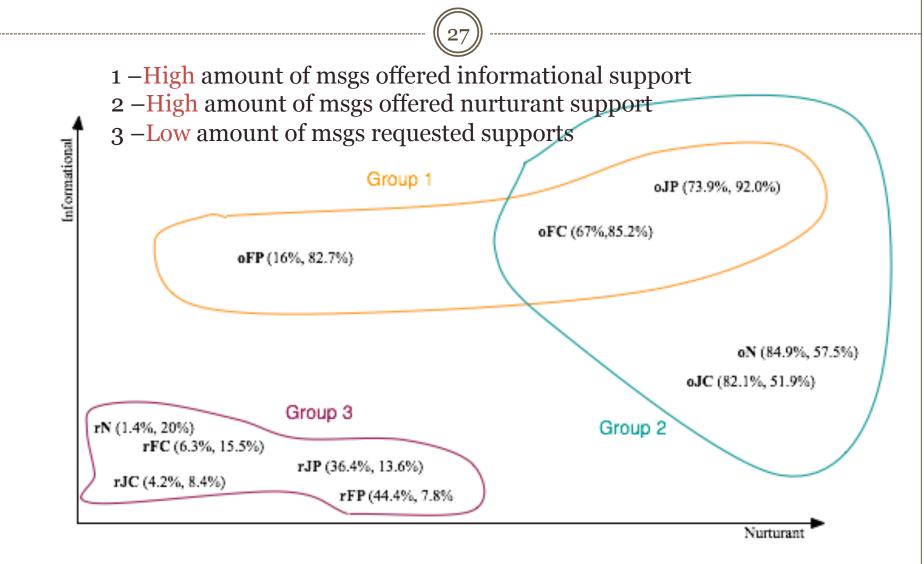


	Α	В	С	D	E	F
1		title	publisher	timestamp	content	l.guide
2	1	Does Jail time count in sobriety	nikky6dk(1 025924)	Sep 02, 2009 02:06PM	I was locked up for 22 months in Florida dept of corrections. I got out in July. I immediatley started antending AA meetings upon my release. I'm celebrating two years of my sobriety Sept.25. My Ex Wife says the time in prison doesnt count. She has 26 years of sobriety. She has me confused. In Prison they make alcohol by the gallon, pot, heroine and pills are plentiful. However I chose not to drink, or use. Ther are people in prison that have 10,15,20 years of sobriety that attend AA meetings, That will never get out, Does this mean their time doesnt count. I value what she says, but i'm not sure she is correct. Help	
		Fever, shivering, hypnagogia , diarrhea, tachycardia	Huperion9	Sep 09.	Sometimes when I drink a little too much for my size (- without being 'drunk' as in passing out or not being able to walk straight) I have serious physical problems about 7-8 hours later. I have very disturbed sleep, which is normal, I wake up about 4 hours into the night and feel dehydrated so i drink a bottle of water, then usually I can't sleep after this so I do some work on my computer. I eat something sugary to try and help recover some sugar into my blood stream. Then i go back to sleep and the last this happened, I had been working on my computer so i put is on the floor by my bed. well in my 'dream' there were computers multiplying around me. I thought I was awake - I might have been? But I was thrashing about and I knew that I didnt have like 4 computers around me, but i couldnt remember which was the real one. Because i thought I had put it on the floor, but I looked on the floor and it wasn't there. I kept having false awakenings, and I went from falling asleep very hot to feeling cold and clammy. My heart was beating very fast and hard, and I started having arrhythmia's. I got a zapping kind of feeling in my 'brain' -well somewhere in my head. I found that I wasnt very aware of what my body was doing, i thought i might have been shaking uncontrollably but that might have been imagined. I tried so hard to cry out because i seriously though my heart was going to go, somehow I	

3. Coding

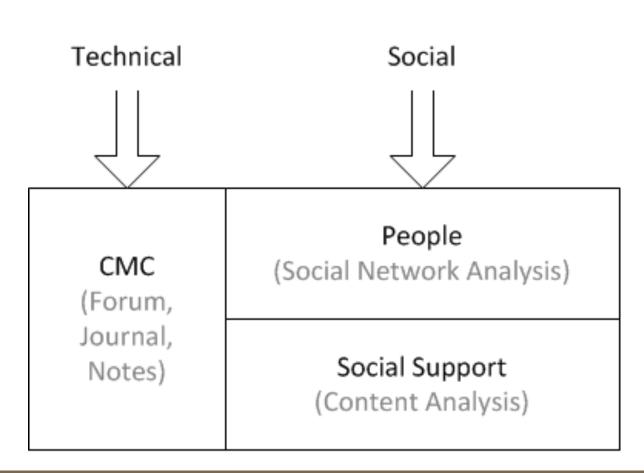


What patterns of social support exchanged emerge?



Research Framework





People want to stay in touch



"Friending enables users to form and maintain connections"

- Ahn et al, 2007



"Private and public messaging allow for interpersonal communication" - Thellwall & WIlkinson, 2010

"SNS users expect to gratify their social-emotional needs" - Rau et al, 2008

"Positive comments are observed between MySpace friends"
-Thelwall & Wilkinson, 2010

Health Social Networking



- Health Context...
 - Hundreds of support communities
 - ▼ Cancer, pregnancy, mental health, substance abuse, etc.
 - More features than old software:
 - ➤ Bulletin Boards (BB), email lists, discussion boards, blogs, etc.
 - ➤ 'Friending' and status updates, notes

Research Theme 2

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Research Question • RQ2: What social network structure patterns emerge in messages exchanged by members of an online health community?

Objective

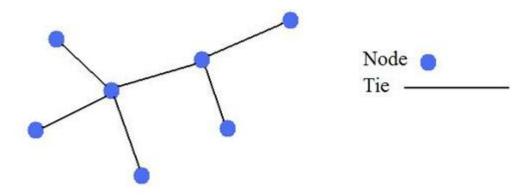
• Study the patterns of social support exchanges of 3 CMC formats: Forums, Journals, Notes

Approach

- Social Network Analysis
 - Metrics: structural and positional

Social Graph Representations





	User1	User2	 Target
User1		1	
User2	3		
Sender			

Part 2: Social Network Analysis



Structural Metrics

- Centrality Measures: gives a rough indication of a person's "connectedness" the network.
 - ▼ In Degree: the number of people that talk to him/her
 - ➤ Out Degree: the number of people he/she talks to
- Geodesic Distance = shortest distance between two specific nodes
- Density = number of edges / number of nodes
- Positional Metric
 - o id different roles of a group setting
- Positional analysis to Know range of roles and characteristics to make recommendations for designing a social support system that is suitable for users

Centrality



- Betweenness = the number of people who a person is indirectly connected (i.e. controls flow of information)
- Eigenvector = influence of a node
- Closeness = based on shortest paths; measures distance to spread information from a node x to all other nodes sequentially

Some Insights



• Forum:

- User reach out to a wider group of people and hold group conversations.
- They tend to be on receiving end.

• Journal:

Tend to be writing messages and to a smaller audience

• Notes:

Less overlapping connections, one to one conversations

Procedure



Image Matrix

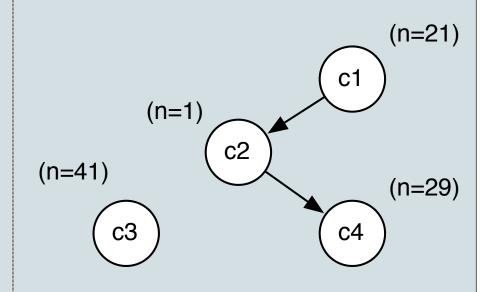
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2 0 0 0 1

3 0 0 0 0

. 0 0 0

Reduced Graph



Social Positions



- Isolates: nodes with neither indegree nor outdegree
- Transmitters: nodes with only outdegree
- Receivers: nodes with only indegree
- Carriers: nodes with both indegree and outdegree.

Network	Total	Isolates	Transmit	Receiver	Carriers
Forum, Informational	102	29 (c3)	21 (c1)	51 (c4)	1 (c2)
Journal, Informational	62	47 (c4)	4 (c1)	6 (c3)	5 (c2)
Notes, Informational	40	24 (c2, c4)	2 (c3)	14 (c1)	0
Forum, Nurturant	77	44 (c4)	21 (c3)	9 (c1)	3 (c2)
Journal, Nurturant	102	75 (c4)	10 (c1)	13 (c2)	4 (c3)
Notes, Nurturant	52	32 (c4)	18 (c1, c2)	3 (c3)	0

Configurations of Ties between Social Positions

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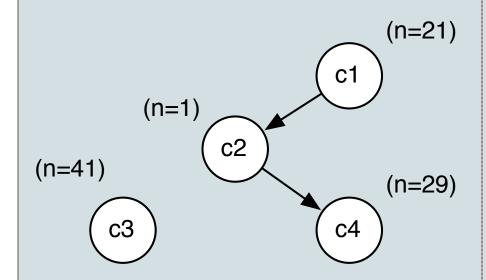
Tie	Meaning
Self loop	A single cohesive subgroup and an isolated position
One tie between positions	Transmitting end is providing support
	Receiving end is requesting support
Self loop for each position	Two subgroups
Two ties from node: self loop and regular tie	Distinguishes between an "active" position and a "passive position"
Two ties to node: self loop and regular tie	Resembles a core-periphery system. The position of more indegrees has been around longer than the other position.

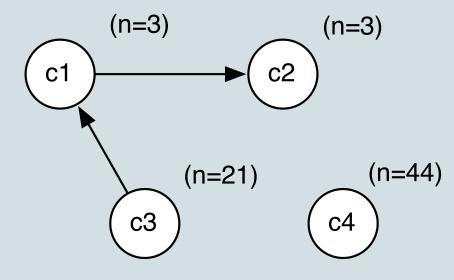
Forum



Informational

Nurturant



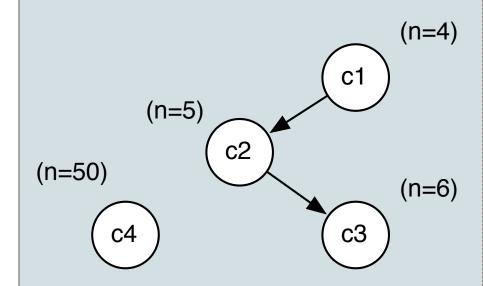


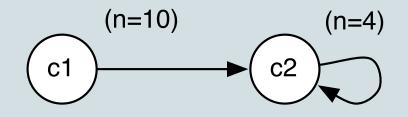
Journal



Informational

Nurturant





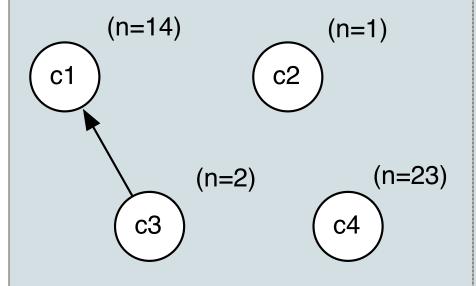


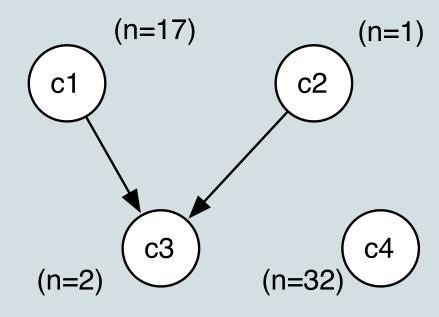
Notes



Informational

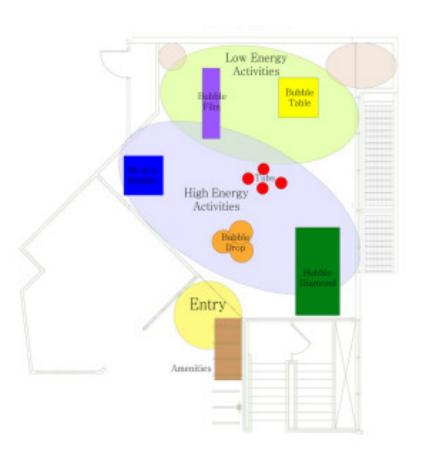
Nurturant





Summary





Selected Publications



- K. Chuang and C. C. Yang, "Interaction Patterns of Nurturant Support Exchanged in Online Health Social Networking" Journal of Medical Internet Research 2012; 14(3):e54. URL: http://www.jmir.org/2012/3/e54/
- K. Chuang and C. C. Yang, "Informational Support Exchanges on Different Computer-mediated Communication Formats in a Social Media Community of Alcoholism" Journal of American Society for Information Science & Technology (forthcoming)
- K. Chuang and C. C. Yang, "How Do E-Patients Connect Online? A Study of Social Support Roles in Health Social Networking." Conference for Social Computing, Behavioral Modeling and Prediction (SBP 2013), Washington, DC. volume 7812. p:193-200. doi: 10.1007/978-3-642-37210-0_21

Contributions



- Recommendations to design online intervention program
 - Assists efforts to promote healthy behaviors
 - Identifying these users would be useful for targeting messages to segmented groups
- Show that people still behave in a way parallel to offline world
- Multiple techniques to find new patterns in use of CMC formats
 - Compares multiple CMC formats within an online community (rather than across communities)

Discussion: Participation



- Participation influenced by social-psychological reasons...
 - o information needs, desire to be altruistic, stigmas
 - Social Roles (i.e. caretaker, patient, nurse, friend, etc)
- The more time people spend in an online group, the larger their online social network and the higher the satisfaction with the received support.

Discussion: New Media



Early Web 2.0

• Elements:

- Post a group message
- Shared community
- Examples: Discussion boards, Email lists, Q&A

Social Network Sites

Elements

Profile + Declare people as friends + Write Public comments

- Ego-centric community
- Examples: twitter, facebook, myspace

Discussion: Technology Design



- SNS software design emphasizes relationships
- SNS give users a sense of egocentric community
- Inherent design differences relationship structure, communication properties
- SNS can be used for healthcare needs to stimulate relationships between users.
- Some formats such as Journal/Notes lead to greater levels of intimacy and stronger social support
- Virtual support complements real-life social relationships with fewer stigmas

Limitations



- Cannot generalize alcoholism community to other health conditions.
- Content analysis technique can be made stronger
 - i.e. use Key Phrases for content analysis to have reproducible results

The End.



THANK YOU.

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