

Coordinated Management of Meaning: Do Established Rules Aid in Chat Room Experiences?

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Keywords: Coordinated Management of Meaning, Regulated Chat Rooms, Social/Psychological Well-being Online

Research suggests using the Internet as a communications tool causes declines in social/psychological well-being. This decline could be associated with lack of rules and norms for online behavior. Our study examined the influence of rules on chat room behavior and on users' overall satisfaction with online experiences. Qualitative and Quantitative findings suggest the ruled chat led to more thoughtful and meaningful discussion and more positive overall experience. Non-ruled chat members, however, were more at ease and more likely to value communication that took place. Thus, rules imposed – designed to help provide a framework for managing the discussion – may have harmed social/psychological well-being of members. This indicates that unstructured online environments may be the key to better Coordinated Management of Meaning.

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An earlier version of this manuscript was presented as a full paper in the Communication and Technology division at the 2007 International Communication Association conference in San Francisco, CA. The current document has been substantially revised based on reviewer comments though the majority of the analyses remain the same.

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Interpersonal communication is currently the foremost use of the Internet with e-mail, listservs, and chat rooms as the most popular forms of computer-mediated communication (Bower, 1998; Condon & Cech, 1996; Jones, 1998; Levy, 2001; Qvortrup, 2003; Wood & Smith, 2001). Computer-mediated communication allows contact with others who have the same interests, those who are great distances away, and those who are complete strangers. Research efforts regarding computer-mediated communication directly link some social and psychological issues to Internet use. Perceptions of the Internet and online communication as persuading individuals to participate in objectionable relationships, conversations, and actions abound (Baym, 1998; Jones, 1998; Kolko & Reed, 1998; Qvortrup, 2003; Wood & Smith, 2001).

Expectations of computer-mediated communication adding to free expression were initially high. According to Lipshultz (2000) “in free-expression terms, we would expect individuals to exercise a greater degree of latitude in cyberspace than in their neighborhoods, workplaces, and communities” (p.16). The startling reality though is that the Internet is a constrained and sometimes censored form of communication. Online social groups tend to limit speech, set up rules for joining or communicating in the group, and sometimes expel those individuals who make statements that counter group beliefs. Some research suggests computer-mediated communication causes declines in social/psychological well-being (Bower, 1998; Kraut et al., 1998). This decline could be associated with lack value placed on online communication.

This purpose of this study is to examine the influence of rules on chat room behavior and on users’ overall satisfaction. We used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to study the actions and beliefs of those involved in this type of computer-mediated communication.

Computer-mediated Communication

One of the prevalent generalizations about computer-mediated communication is that people are more able to express themselves online. Whether utilizing the dimension of anonymity inside a chat room or listserv, or even the lack of face-to-face contact of traditional interpersonal communication, most individuals have a propensity for more overt expression while online. This tendency toward free expression was noted in Kollock and Smith’s (1996) study and in practically every subsequent examination of computer-mediated communication behavior since. However, few have agreed about why this occurs or about the factors that account for it (Baym, 1998; Jones, 1998; Kolko & Reed, 1998; Korenman & Wyatt, 1996; Levy, 2001; Qvortrup, 2003).

Since the inception of the Internet, chat rooms have emerged as online “communities” where individuals not only shared information, but thoughts, feelings, and entire belief systems (Baym, 1998; Levy, 2001). Most chat rooms are based on shared interests, opinions, and ideas and developed online norms or “netiquette” for those in the community. An important element of

online chat room communication is that “with certain exceptions, freedom of speech is encouraged, and users are uniformly opposed to any form of censorship” (Levy, 2001, p. 109). However, most chat rooms use norms to control member communication, with those who diverge from the norm being expelled from the social group (Lipshultz, 2000).

Thus, the stress resulting from “cognitive isolation” (Levy, 2001) has led some to examine the conflict, fragmentation, and disconnection emerging from computer-mediated communication (Bower, 1998; Kolko & Reed, 1998; Kollock & Smith, 1996). Current research examines computer-mediated communication from a group process perspective that suggests online communication experiences are multi-level, group dependent, and socially more rewarding and structured than individual/interpersonal communication (Greenberg & Folger, 1983; Harkins & Petty, 1983; Hartley, 1993; Kaplan & Miller, 1983; Kormita & Kravitz, 1983; Seta & Seta, 1983). This research indicates “communities” formed online become a social assemblage of “like” individuals. Removal from a community indicates that an individual is not similar and has been rejected for his/her differences (Baym, 1998; Bower, 1998).

The psychological well-being of the expelled individual becomes significant as an individual’s membership or removal from a social group can affect dissonance (Cooper & Stone, 2000). The self-concept of individuals is greatly affected by group membership as groups help to form social identity (Manstead, 1979; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1985). However, influence on self-concept depends on the level of participation in the online community (Doise & Sinclair, 1973). Consequently, research on group communication suggests that computer-mediated communication and resulting online communities influence not only self-concept, but cognitive dissonance. That is, self-concept can be strengthened and dissonance can be reduced through group membership. The group may serve as a means of avoiding personal displeasure by reducing responsibility to that of the group. Cooper and Stone (2000) suggest that first individuals attribute behaviors to the group, and second individuals can distribute responsibility and consequences among the entire group.

Coordinated Management of Meaning Theory

Coordinated Management of Meaning Theory (CMM) explains how members of groups make sense out of group conversations (Pearce, 1989; Philipsen, 1995). Messages are influenced by a number of factors including personal ethics, available resources, and cultural expectations. Each member of the group approaches conversation with individual perspectives based on these factors. They must coordinate personal, individualized perspectives of meaning with every other person’s perspectives - which also are highly personal and individualized. The role of rules within a group of such disparate members is to provide members with a framework for discussion and meaning-building (Pearce, 1989; Pearce & Cronen, 1980; Cushman & Whiting, 1972). Rules provide more than just a standard for behavior; in effect, they provide a mechanism for understanding a given social situation and choosing a course for behavior based on that information. Pearce & Cronen (1980) offer two kinds of rules: constitutive and regulative. Constitutive rules explain what behaviors mean in given contexts; regulative rules act as prescriptions for acceptable behavior.

The concern in this study is regulative rules. Specifically, we examine how online communication freedoms or constraints influence both actions and cognitions. Taken together,

CMM suggests that rules help provide prescriptions for acceptable communication. If everyone acts according to norms/rules they are accepted members of the group, thereby lessening dissonance. Likewise, studies of self-concept suggest that group identification helps lessen dissonance. To date, almost all dissonance research describes the individual as acting on their own, seldom, as pointed out by Cooper and Stone (2000) “had the person experiencing dissonance been conceived of as a member of a group” (p. 227). This distinction is germane to the current research as chat room communication is intrinsically linked to group discussion and debate and is thus subject to the control and norms of the group. The idea of being part of a “group” may cause those communicating to adhere to or create acceptable behaviors for the chat room.

The current study proposes that rules will lead to better chat room experiences based on the presumption that they lead to better group dynamics and coordination of meaning within online discussions. Specifically, participants who take part in a regulated chat will be happy with the experience and have no reason to change their: self-concept, attitude regarding free expression, attitude toward chat rooms, attitude toward the topic, or attitude regarding ease of expression. Thus, the following research questions and hypotheses were formed regarding communication in two different types of chat rooms (regulated and unregulated) discussing the U.S. war with Iraq:

RQ1: Is there a difference in communication regarding the topic of the war with Iraq between the regulated and unregulated chat rooms?

RQ2: If a difference exists, how does it manifest?

H1: Rules in the regulated chat room will lead individuals to solidify their attitudes regarding free expression.

H2: Rules in the regulated chat room will lead individuals to solidify their self-concept.

H3: Rules in the regulated chat room will lead individuals to express positive attitudes toward chat rooms.

H4: Rules in the regulated chat room will lead individuals to express positive attitudes toward the chat topic.

H5: Rules in the regulated chat room will lead individuals to express positive attitudes regarding ease of expression regarding the topic.

Method

. Two methods were used in this study: an experiment and textual analysis. The first step included surveying participants prior to the experiment. The second step included engaging participants in a chat experience. Following the chat, participants answered a questionnaire similar to the pre-experiment survey to see if any attitude or belief changes occurred.

Open-ended questions on the post-test questionnaire and transcripts of the chats were examined using textual analysis. For the experiment, a 2 X 2 pre/post experimental design was used with one variable (group) between subjects and the other variable (time) within subjects.

Participants

A total of 47 participants from journalism and mass communication courses at two Midwestern universities took part in the study. Participants earned extra credit for their

participation. Participants were mostly Caucasian with only one participant being part of a minority. The majority were women (N=33), and over half of the participants were juniors (53 %) most between the ages of 20 and 22 (94 %). Of these, 36 reported that they had participated in a chat room prior to the experiment.

Participant identities were protected during each portion of the study by using a code name on the survey, chat room, and questionnaire. Participants created their own code name that did not contain identifiers such as initials or student ID numbers. This allowed for the chat room data collected to be matched with the initial survey and follow-up questionnaire. In addition, this confidentiality measure prevented subjects from identifying one another in the chat rooms.

Procedure

One week prior to the experiment, participants went online and completed a survey. The survey asked them the same attitudinal questions presented in the post-experiment questionnaire, but had three topics for discussion for them to choose. They had to rate the strength of their attitude regarding the topics of: conceal and carry laws, the U.S. war with Iraq, and affirmative action for college admission as well as indicate which topic they would most like to discuss. The topic of the U.S. war with Iraq received the strongest attitudes, and was most chosen for discussion.

Participants were then randomly assigned to participate in one of four ruled or un-ruled chats. Resulting groups consisted of 6 to 14 participants each. During the experiment, participants read a brief synopsis of recent Iraqi war updates and told to chat about the topic for 20 minutes. Participants in the unregulated chat were instructed to discuss the topic as freely and as openly as they wished,¹ while those in the regulated chat were given “rules” prior to the chat. Following the chat, participants were directed to an online questionnaire. The entire experimental process took approximately 45 minutes for subjects to complete.

Measurement

(See Appendix A for pre and post-test measures).

Valuing Free Expression. How much each individual valued free expression was measured using portions of the assertiveness, aggressiveness, and complaining behavior scale (Fornell & Westbrook, 1979) as well as some statements developed for this study. The free expression scale contained 11 statements that addressed how willing the person was to speak openly, or how much they valued free speech. Participants rated the statements on a five-point scale (1=extremely uncharacteristic, 5=extremely characteristic). The free expression measure consisted of: forming opinions, avoiding opinions, being critical of others’ beliefs, speaking up in a discussion, beginning a conversation, expressing oneself, stating ones views, expressing oneself according to social norms, remaining neutral about issues, personal involvement with issues, and withdrawing from uncomfortable discussions and had a Cronbach’s alpha of .82.

¹ The introduction for the unregulated chat was as follows: This chat room is based on freedom of expression, thus there are no rules for this chat room. You should feel free to discuss the following topic in any way you wish. Tonight’s topic is the U.S. war with Iraq. Does anyone wish to start?

Online Chat Rooms. Attitudes toward online chat rooms were measured using a modified version of the attitude toward the business scale (Homer, 1995). The semantic differential scale used for this study contained five items on a nine-point scale. The attitude toward online chat rooms consisted of: negative/positive, unpleasant/pleasant, unfavorable/favorable, dislike a lot/ like a lot, and useless/useful and had a Cronbach's alpha of .91.

Self-Concept. Perception of self was measured using portions of the self-monitoring of expressive behavior (Snyder, 1974; Lennox & Wolfe, 1984) and the self-concept clarity scales (Campbell, et al., 1996). The self-concept measure contained 7 statements that addressed how the individual acted in social situations or behaved in groups. Participants rated the statements on a five-point scale (1=always false, 5=always true). The self-concept measure consisted of: paying attention to others' reactions, changing how they act when encountering disapproval, fitting into the group they are in, changing behavior to suit different situation, sometimes acting like a different person, not being the person they appear as, and behaving as others expect and had a Cronbach's alpha of .78.

Topic of Chat. Attitudes about the chat room topic were measured using portions of the situational involvement scale (Zaichowsky, 1985). The semantic differential scale used for this study contained six items on a seven-point scale. Attitude toward the chat topic was measured by: unimportant/important, of no concern/of concern, irrelevant/relevant, means nothing/means a lot doesn't matter/matters, and unexciting/exciting and had a Cronbach's alpha of .78.

Ease of Expression. Feelings about ease of expression were measured using portions of the anxiety with social issues scale (Sego & Stout, 1994). The scale used for this study contained only 5 items measured on a five-point scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). The ease of expression scale consisted of: the issue making them uncomfortable, issue making them irritable or tense, getting over-excited when talking about the issue, feeling anxious about the issue, and not being able to rationally discuss the issue and had a Cronbach's alpha of .75.

Rationalizing or Belief Changes. At the end of the questionnaire, a number of open-response questions asked participants about their experience in their respective chat room. Questions included expectations for the chat; if they felt constricted during the chat; if the rules were what they had expected; and if they had considered leaving the chat. In addition, participants gave their overall opinions, attitudes, and feelings about the chat experience

Independent Variable

Two separate chat rooms took place: a regulated ($n=24$), and an unregulated ($n=23$). The unregulated experimental group chatted without any restrictions. The regulated experimental group was given the following rules prior to the chat: 1) Do not harass, abuse, or threaten other members, 2) Avoid using derogatory names or profanity, 3) Limit your responses to 50 words, 4) Stay on topic, 5) Adult-oriented content is not permitted, and 6) The content of this chat room is not edited, however we do reserve the right to remove members who do not adhere to these rules.²

Experimental Results

² These rules were taken directly from Yahoo! chat guidelines.

A series of 2 (rule group) X 2 (time) ANOVAs with repeated measures on time (pre/post) was performed for each dependent variable. A significance criterion of $p = .05$ (two-tailed) was adopted for each hypothesis in order to rule out Type I error. With this criterion, the total number of subjects in each experimental group was such that the experiment had sufficient power (.80) to detect a large effect size (Cohen, 1992).

Tests of Hypotheses

The first hypothesis stating that a regulated chat room would lead individuals to solidify their attitudes regarding free expression was supported as there was a significant main effect of rule group, $F(1,45)=1.05$, $p<.05$, $n^2_p=.02$. Participants in the ruled group put significantly more value on freedom of expression than those in the non-ruled group. The multivariate test indicated that there was a significant main effect of time, $F(1,1)=4.80$, $p<.05$, $n^2_p=.10$. Post hoc tests using the Bonferroni adjustment indicated that participants in the non-ruled group felt they had greater freedom of expression before the experiment. This effect was independent as there was no significant interaction between rule group and time, $F(1,1)=.91$, $p=.34$, $n^2_p=.02$. Table 1 shows the repeated measures Analysis of Variance, Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations.

Table 1 – Value Freedom of Expression

Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance for Rule Group by Value Freedom of Expression

Source	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Partial eta Squared	<i>p</i>
Between						
Group	83.78	1	83.78	1.05	.02	>.05
Error	3572.92	45	79.40			
Within						
Freedom	73.66	1 ^a	73.66	4.80	.10	<.05
Freedom*Group	13.96	1 ^a	13.96	.91	.02	>.05
Error	689.98	45 ^a	15.33			

Note. ^a Greenhouse-Geisser adjusted degrees of freedom were used to calculate within-subjects *F* tests.

Table 2 – Value Freedom of Expression

Means and Standard Deviations for the Two Treatment Groups at each Time Point (n = 23 in each group 1 and n=24 in group 2)

Treatment Group	Measurement Time		
	Time 1 Pre-test	Time 2 Post-test	Combined
Rules			
M	36.83	35.83	36.33
SD	7.43	6.60	6.64
No Rules			
M	35.71 _b	33.17 _b	34.44
SD	8.18	4.89	5.96
Combined			
M	36.25	34.47	35.36
SD	7.76	5.88	6.82

Means in the same row sharing the same letter subscript differ at $p < .05$.

* Note that higher numbers indicate greater value for freedom of expression.

The second hypothesis stating that a regulated chat room would lead individuals to solidify their self-concept was not supported as there was no significant main effect of rule group, $F(1,45)=1.62, p=.21, n^2_p=.03$. The multivariate test indicated that there was a significant main effect of time, $F(1,45)=11.41, p<.05, n^2_p=.20$. Post hoc tests using the Bonferroni adjustment indicated that participants' self-concept in both groups were significantly more positive at the beginning of the experiment than afterward. However, this effect was independent as there was no significant interaction between rule group and time, $F(1,45)=.001, p=.99, n^2_p=.001$. Table 3 shows the repeated measures Analysis of Variance, Table 4 shows the means and standard deviations.

Table 3 – Self-Concept

Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance for Rule Group by Self-Concept

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Partial eta Squared	p
Between						
Group	36.07	1	36.07	1.62	.03	>.05
Error	1000.87	45	22.24			
Within						
Self	166.13	1 ^a	166.13	11.41	.20	<.05
Self * Group	.001	1 ^a	.001	.001	.001	>.05
Error	655.27	45 ^a	14.56			

Note. ^a Greenhouse-Geisser adjusted degrees of freedom were used to calculate within-subjects F tests.

Table 4 – Self-Concept

Means and Standard Deviations for the Two Treatment Groups at each Time Point (n = 23 in each group 1 and n=24 in group 2)

	Measurement Time	
	Time 1	Time 2

Treatment Group	Pre-test	Post-test	Combined
Rules			
M	23.56 _b	20.91 _b	22.24
SD	4.43	3.91	3.17
No Rules			
M	22.33 _b	19.67 _b	21.00
SD	4.22	4.56	3.49
Combined			
M	22.94	20.28	21.61
SD	4.32	4.26	4.29

Means in the same row sharing the same letter subscript differ at $p < .05$.

* Note that higher numbers indicate greater self-concept.

The third hypothesis stating that a regulated chat room would lead individuals to express positive attitudes toward chat rooms was not supported as there was no significant main effect of rule group, $F(1,45)=.70, p=.41, n^2_p=.01$. The multivariate test indicated that there was no significant main effect of time, $F(1,45)=2.63, p=.11, n^2_p=.06$ and no significant interaction between rule group and time, $F(1,45)=.06, p=.81, n^2_p=.001$. Table 5 shows the repeated measures Analysis of Variance, Table 6 shows the means and standard deviations.

Table 5 – Attitudes Toward Online Chat Rooms
Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance for Rule Group by Attitudes Toward Online Chat Rooms

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Partial eta Squared	p
Between						
Group	70.53	1	70.53	.70	.01	>.05
Error	4550.13	45	101.11			
Within						
Attitude	53.94	1 ^a	53.94	2.63	.05	>.05
Attitude*Group	1.18	1 ^a	1.18	.06	.001	>.05
Error	921.70	45 ^a	20.48			

Note. ^a Greenhouse-Geisser adjusted degrees of freedom were used to calculate within-subjects F tests.

Table 6 – Attitudes Toward Online Chat Rooms
Means and Standard Deviations for the Two Treatment Groups at each Time Point (n = 23 in each group 1 and n=24 in group 2)

	Measurement Time	
	Time 1	Time 2

Treatment Group	Pre-test	Post-test	Combined
Rules			
M	21.22	22.96	22.09
SD	5.85	6.70	5.34
No Rules			
M	19.71	21.00	20.35
SD	6.97	10.66	8.46
Combined			
M	20.45	21.96	21.20
SD	6.43	8.90	7.66

* Note that higher numbers indicate more positive attitudes toward online chat rooms.

The fourth hypothesis stating that rules a regulated chat room would lead individuals to express positive attitudes toward the chat topic was supported as there was a significant main effect of rule group, $F(1,45)=6.81, p<.05, \eta^2_p=.13$. Participants in the ruled group noted significantly more positive attitudes than those in the non-ruled group. The multivariate test indicated that there was a significant main effect of time, $F(1,1)=19.63, p<.05, \eta^2_p=.30$. Post hoc tests using the Bonferroni adjustment indicated that participants' attitudes toward the topic in the non-ruled group were significantly more negative in post-testing, while there was no significant effect in the ruled group. Both main effects are dependent upon one another, as indicated by the multivariate test for the interaction between rule group and time, $F(1,1)=.91, p=.34, \eta^2_p=.02$. Post hoc tests using the Bonferroni adjustment indicated that attitude toward the topic of the U.S. war with Iraq decreased significantly over time for the participants in the non-regulated chat room, but remained constant for the participants in the regulated chat room. Table 7 shows the repeated measures Analysis of Variance, Table 8 shows the means and standard deviations.

Table 7 – Attitude Toward Chat Topic
Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance for Rule Group by Attitude Toward Chat Topic

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Partial eta Squared	p
Between						
Group	801.77	1	801.77	6.81	.13	<.05
Error	5298.08	45	117.73			
Within						
Topic	577.91	1 ^a	577.91	19.63	.001	<.05
Topic* Group	82.42	1 ^a	82.42	2.80	.03	>.05
Error	1324.58	45 ^a	29.43			

Note. ^a Greenhouse-Geisser adjusted degrees of freedom were used to calculate within-subjects F tests.

Table 8 – Attitude Toward Chat Topic
Means and Standard Deviations for the Two Treatment Groups at each Time Point (n = 23 in each group 1 and n=24 in group 2)

Measurement Time

Treatment Group	Time 1	Time 2	Combined
	Pre-test	Post-test	
Rules			
M	30.26 _a	27.17 _a	28.72
SD	5.96	7.57	5.63
No Rules			
M	26.29 _{ab}	19.46 _{ab}	22.87
SD	11.07	8.75	9.21
Combined			
M	28.23	23.23	25.73
SD	9.07	8.99	9.03

Means in the same column sharing the same letter subscript differ at $p < .05$.

Means in the same row sharing the same letter subscript differ at $p < .05$.

* Note that higher numbers indicate more positive attitudes toward chat topic.

The fifth hypothesis stating that a regulated chat room would lead individuals to express positive attitudes regarding ease of expression regarding the topic was not supported though there was a significant main effect of rule group, $F(1,45)=4.22, p<.05, n^2_p=.09$. Opposite of what was hypothesized; participants in the ruled group noted significantly less ease of expression than those in the non-ruled group. The multivariate test indicated that there was no significant main effect of time, $F(1,45)=.03, p=.87, n^2_p=.001$ and no significant interaction between rule group and time, $F(1,45)=1.23, p=.27, n^2_p=.03$. Table 9 shows the repeated measures Analysis of Variance, Table 10 shows the means and standard deviations.

Table 9 – Ease of Expression

Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance for Rule Group by Ease of Expression

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Partial eta Squared	p
Between						
Group	35.91	1	35.91	4.22	.09	<.05
Error	382.92	45	8.51			
Within						
Ease	.06	1 ^a	.06	.03	.001	>.05
Ease * Group	2.74	1 ^a	2.74	1.23	.03	>.05
Error	100.22	45 ^a	2.23			

Note. ^a Greenhouse-Geisser adjusted degrees of freedom were used to calculate within-subjects F tests.

Table 10 – Ease of Expression

Means and Standard Deviations for the Two Treatment Groups at each Time Point (n = 23 in each group 1 and n=24 in group 2)

Measurement Time

Treatment Group	Time 1	Time 2	Combined
	Pre-test	Post-test	
Rules			
M	10.87 _a	10.48 _a	10.67
SD	2.65	2.35	2.17
No Rules			
M	9.29 _a	9.58 _a	9.44
SD	2.56	1.56	1.95
Combined			
M	10.06	10.02	10.04
SD	2.70	2.02	2.06

Means in the same column sharing the same letter subscript differ at $p < .05$.

* Note that higher numbers indicate greater discomfort in expressing oneself.

Textual Analysis Findings

Textual analysis of the chat transcripts and open-ended questions are important as a method of “making sense” through interpretation of how people in different situations acted and interacted (Altheide, 1996; Feldman, 1995; McKee, 2003). In examining texts it is important to view not only the themes which emerge from these actions, but also to examine them in the context of the particular social setting in which they are placed – in this case group discussions of an intense topic. Thus, textual analysis helped to provide information regarding how chat room participants interacted with one another as well as identified actions that may have altered members’ initial thoughts or feelings about the topics of study. In effect, clues as to whether the communication in the regulated chat was more structured, constrained, or independently censured than the unregulated chat were examined by making comparisons between the two chat types under study.

During the Chat. The tone of the unregulated chat room was immediately set by participants using foul language and stating, “Bush is a terrorist.” The chat became heated as participants on both sides of the debate discussed Christian values of starting/fighting a war. Violence was part of the discussion as one participant said that, “assassinating Bush would be one of the best things anyone of my generation could do with their lives”, while another one suggested that the U.S. should “nuke Iraq.” In addition, participants called one another “dumb” and “stinkin’ idiots”.

The regulated chat also targeted Bush, who was referred to as a “gunslinger” and “a war-monger”. In addition he was “not very smart”, a “trigger-happy idiot”, said to be “trying to cover his rear”, and was also referred to as behaving like a “bully in kindergarten”. Instead of religious discussion, comparisons of the Iraq war to Vietnam emerged as participants stated that the war was “a terrible lie” and this too “seemed like years of pointless occupation and death.” However, no threats of violence took place and no name-calling was directed toward other participants.

After the Chat. Following the chat, those in the un-ruled chat stated that they thought it was interesting to see how others would react to comments made, while some found the chat to be not very engaging and said they often felt like leaving. Some aggressiveness carried into the questions as one participant spouted about “jackass comments made” and another stated that the people in the chat “didn’t know what the hell they were talking about.” One participant said that

he felt like afterwards he didn't "care as much about the topic." Because of the views presented, participants stated that they were glad to have anonymity as "nobody knows who you are so they can't judge you or think any less of you for the things you say." One participant went so far as to state, "It was a comfort to know that no one knew who I was." On the other hand, even with anonymity some participants still did not feel comfortable. "Even though I was anonymous, I didn't feel comfortable talking at all," said one participant, "I felt like people in the chat room were just here to stir up trouble and not to talk constructively...they were just spouting out random ideas and insults." Another added that they thought anonymity "drove people to be more overtly rude when faced with a difference of opinion."

Overall, those in the ruled chat thought it was enlightening and exciting and none expressed a desire to leave. One participant said it was "interesting to hear the opinions of other students". The rules seemed to help the discussion as participants noted that they felt compelled to follow them. "I felt they [the rules] were integral because without the rules established it leaves room for unwanted deviance." Said one participant, "I wanted to throw in a few words from time to time that I held back on". However, some felt like the only ones talking were people who agreed with one another. "It seemed as though the only people that would keep on talking would be the ones that shared the same opinions," stated one participant. "The chat just gave them a place to defend their ideas and hear how right they are by others like them." Anonymity was praised as participants noted that they felt like they could "say what they wanted to", and even "felt liberated".

Discussion

This research proposed that participants in a regulated/restricted chat room would have a more positive experience than those in a non-regulated chat. Specifically, that ruled chat room participants would feel more like a part of a group and therefore be more at ease, express more positive attitudes, and have a higher self-concept than individuals forced to create their own norms in an unregulated chat. This was based on findings regarding social/psychological effects of group communication and CMM, which posited that rules/norms would increase meaningful discussion, increase positive experience, and inevitably lessen dissonance.

Findings regarding our hypotheses were mixed. Participants in the ruled chat had significantly more positive attitudes toward free expression and the chat topic than those in the non-ruled chat. However, participants in the ruled chat did not express more positive self-concept, attitudes toward chat rooms, or attitudes regarding ease of expression than those in the non-ruled chat. The first finding is ironic considering the ruled chat did not express themselves as freely as those in the non-ruled chat. In addition, pre to post test, the non-ruled group dropped significantly in terms of valuing free expression. This may indicate the helpfulness of communication rules in free expression as noted previously - most people are only able to communicate freely when they can identify with group norms. It is possible that those in the regulated chat felt that the "constraints" imposed by the chat rules helped everyone express themselves freely and equally within the group, and that those in the non-ruled chat were somehow affected by disruptive communication and "bullying" that went un-reprimanded.

Changes also occurred in individual self-concepts from time 1 to time 2 as both groups (ruled and non-ruled) experienced significant negative changes in self-concept. As noted earlier,

removal from or displeasure with the group one connects or identifies with can result in cognitive dissonance and be detrimental to an individual's concept of self. Since self-concept was measured by indicating that one tries to change to fit into the group they are with, it could be that individuals in both chat rooms tried to fit their opinions with those of others in the group. Therefore, afterwards they felt they had acted how they thought others wanted them to behave instead of like themselves, and reduced their self-concept accordingly. While it was thought that only the self-concept of those participants in the non-regulated chat would be affected, it appeared as that was not the case. Could it be that simply taking part in online communication leads to a decline in social/psychological well-being as noted earlier by Kraut and colleagues (1998) and Bower (1998)? This is a rational assumption as it is unlikely that something else took place during the week between the pre and post-test to interfere with the self-concepts of both groups.

In addition, an interaction between the groups and time occurred in only one instance – attitude toward the chat topic. Findings indicated that not only was the ruled group more positive than the non-ruled group regarding the chat topic, but the non-ruled group became significantly more negative following the chat. This could imply that subjects either received additional information between the time of the pre-experiment survey and the chat room experience that changed their opinions, or that the information presented in the chat room did so. Opinions expressed in the non-ruled chat seemed to be more overtly antagonistic and insensitive than those in the ruled chat. This may have led some in the non-ruled group to change their attitude about how important the topic was to them.

Finally, there were between-group differences regarding how easy it was to express oneself online. Those in the non-ruled group expressed greater ease of expression following the chat. This may be because individuals in the regulated chat were unable to discuss the topic as freely as they wished.

Caveats and Future Research

The first limitation of the study was the small sample size. We assumed that there would be a large effect of the rule manipulation on chat conversations. However, the manipulation was not as powerful as expected. Thus, if a small effect size of the manipulation is the case, then a larger sample size necessary for future studies.

The second limitation was that participants chatted together in groups (independence of observations). Future research should create a simulated chat for each individual with the same script provided by research assistants so that the individuals do not chat in groups or interact with one another, thereby guaranteeing independence of observations as well as providing more control over what exactly is said in the chat. In addition, evidence of the manipulations being used in the chat should be added (i.e. someone getting kicked out of the ruled chat for swearing) to show participants that the rules are enforced.

Finally, for the most chat participants simply built upon what others had said with little “opposing” discussion. While this may have been because those with contrasting opinions were afraid to talk, it may have also been because few contrasting opinions existed between college-

level participants. Thus, this study is considered exploratory and in need of replication with non-student sample.

Implications

Findings presented here are important in terms of understanding the effects of rules on chat rooms. As noted earlier, most individuals have a propensity for more overt expression while online. However, many chat rooms use rules as controls for member communication. Regarding the chat communication, which took place, textual analysis findings indicated that the ruled chat was less aggressive and openly hostile - with no participant name-calling or mentions of violence. However, rationalization about attitude changes that took place was present as though most individuals enjoyed the experience and the debate that took place – many stated that it seemed like the only people talking were ones who agreed with one another. This may have been due to a group norm being established early on about what was acceptable to talk about. As noted earlier, the idea of being part of a “group” may cause those communicating to try to control others’ efforts.

In contrast, the unregulated chat was overtly hostile and aggressive with name-calling and threats against the President. In addition, participants in the un-ruled chat room were quick to express displeasure with the tone of the communication following the chat and noted that they thought of leaving. Moreover, some participants noted that anonymity simply caused people to be offensive and rude. This may have affected self-concept, which is greatly influenced by group membership (as groups help to form social identity). If one felt like part of the group that was being rude or offensive, then they may have lowered their self-concept. On the other hand, individuals could have attributed poor behaviors to the group, thus distributing responsibility and consequences among the entire group and lowering their self-concept because they did not feel included.

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Appendix A Survey and Questionnaire

Pre-Experiment Survey

Part 1. Please create an I.D. for yourself. This will be kept anonymous and should not consist of your student I.D. number or your initials. Please limit it to 10 characters (letters and numbers). Remember this I.D. as this will be your chat room name also.

Part 2: The following statements regarding different aspects of freedom of expression. Please mark the number which most closely corresponds to how you feel.

1= Extremely uncharacteristic

2= Somewhat uncharacteristic

3= Uncertain

4= Somewhat characteristic

5= Extremely characteristic

A. I form opinions about everything.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

B. I prefer to avoid taking extreme opinions.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

C. It is very important to me to hold strong opinions.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

D. I often avoid people or situations for fear of embarrassment.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

E. I am openly critical of others' ideas, opinions, and behavior.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

F. When a person is highly unfair, I call it to his/her attention.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

G. I feel comfortable expressing myself online.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

H. I am reluctant to speak up in a discussion or a debate.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

I. I dislike arguing with people.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

J. I am usually the first to begin a conversation.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

K. I prefer to state my views anonymously.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

L. I often feel the need to express myself freely.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

M. I often express myself according to the norms of those around me.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

N. I often prefer to remain neutral about complex issues.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

O. If something does not affect me, I do not usually determine if it is good or bad.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

P. It bothers me to remain neutral.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

Q. I like to have strong opinions even when I am not personally involved.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

R. I have many more opinions than the average person.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

S. I withdraw from situations or topics that are uncomfortable to me.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

T. I value free speech and expression.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

U. I often feel constrained or censored by those around me.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

V. I feel that I can express myself more freely online than in person.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

W. I like to decide that new things are really good or bad.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

X. I am pretty much indifferent to many important issues.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

Part 3: Please express your attitudes toward online chat rooms.

Negative :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ : Positive
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Unpleasant :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ : Pleasant
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Unfavorable :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ : Favorable
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Dislike a lot :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ : Like a lot
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Useless :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ : Useful
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Do you currently participate in online chat rooms?

- Yes
- No

Have you participated in online chat rooms in the past?

- Yes
- No

If you answered yes to either of these questions, how often do/did you participate?

- Once to a few times a year.
- Once to a few times a month.
- Once to a few times a week.
- Once to a few times a day.

Part 4: Please mark which number most closely corresponds to how you feel about yourself.

- 1= always false*
- 2= sometimes false*
- 3= uncertain*
- 4= sometimes true*
- 5= always true*

A. It is my feeling that if everyone else in a group is behaving in a certain manner, this must be the proper way to behave.

Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

- B. I find it hard to imitate the behavior of others.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*
- C. When I am uncertain how to act in a social situation, I look to the behavior of others for clues.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*
- D. My behavior is usually and expression of my true inner feelings, attitudes, and beliefs.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*
- E. I only argue for ideas which I already believe.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*
- F. At parties and social gatherings, I do not attempt to do or say things that others will like.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*
- G. I try to pay attention to the reactions of others to my behavior in order to avoid being out of place.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*
- H. The slightest disapproval by the person whom I am interacting with is enough to make me change my approach.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*
- I. It's important to me to fit into the group I'm with.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*
- J. I guess I put on a show to impress or entertain people.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*
- K. I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*
- L. I may deceive people by being friendly when I really dislike them.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*
- M. I sometimes appear to be experiencing deeper emotions than I am.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*
- N. In a group of people, I am rarely the center of attention.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*
- O. In different situations with different people, I often act like a different person.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

- P. I am not always the person I appear to be.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

- Q. I would not change my opinions in order to please someone else or to win their favor.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

- R. In order to get along and be liked, I tend to be what people expect me to be rather than myself.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

- S. My behavior often depends on how I feel others wish me to behave.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

- T. When I am in a social situation, I tend not to follow the crowd, but instead to behave in a manner that suits my particular mood at the time.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

Part 5: Attitudes toward chat room topic

Topic A: Affirmative action in collegiate admissions policies.

A case that was currently being reviewed by the Supreme Court questioned whether or not affirmative action should be used for college admissions. At present, many colleges and universities award “points” to prospective students for being part of a minority. These points are given simply based on color, not based on income, level of achievement, test scores, or grade point averages. The colleges claim that giving points to minority students promotes diversity on campus by insuring that people of color get to attend college. However, some argue that giving special treatment to minority groups is reverse discrimination.

This topic is:

Unimportant to me :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :Important to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Of no concern to me :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :Of concern to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Irrelevant to me :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :Relevant to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Means nothing to me :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :Means a lot to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Doesn't matter to me :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :Matters to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Unexciting to me : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : Exciting to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

For the following questions use this scale to mark the number which most closely corresponds to how you feel about the topic of affirmative action:

- 1= *strongly disagree*
- 2= *somewhat disagree*
- 3= *neutral*
- 4= *somewhat agree*
- 5= *strongly agree*

A. The situation surrounding this issue makes me uncomfortable.
Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

B. Discussing or thinking about this issue makes me irritable or tense.
Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

C. I get over-excited or “rattled” when I talk to others about this issue.
Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

D. I often feel anxious about this issue.
Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

E. I am able to think about problems associated with this issue in a rational manner.
Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

F. I am usually steady and relaxed when I think about or discuss this issue.
Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

Topic B: Conceal and carry laws applying to the University of Minnesota campus.

A recent article stated that students at the University of Minnesota are concerned about their safety since the new conceal and carry law makes it legal for Minnesotans to carry handguns. The University does not have a policy prohibiting faculty, staff, and visitors from bringing guns on campus – only students and some facilities management employees. In addition, the University has not taken visible action such as posting signs notifying people that the campus is a gun-free zone.

This topic is:

Unimportant to me : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : Important to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Of no concern to me : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : Of concern to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Irrelevant to me : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : Relevant to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Means nothing to me : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : Means a lot to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Doesn't matter to me : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : Matters to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Unexciting to me : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : Exciting to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

For the following questions use this scale to mark the number which most closely corresponds to how you feel about the topic of conceal and carry on campus:

1= *strongly disagree*

2= *somewhat disagree*

3= *neutral*

4= *somewhat agree*

5= *strongly agree*

G. The situation surrounding this issue makes me uncomfortable.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

H. Discussing or thinking about this issue makes me irritable or tense.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

I. I get over-excited or "rattled" when I talk to others about this issue.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

J. I often feel anxious about this issue.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

K. I am able to think about problems associated with this issue in a rational manner.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

L. I am usually steady and relaxed when I think about or discuss this issue.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

Topic C: U.S. war with Iraq.

To build the case for war with Iraq, the Bush administration claimed that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. However, to date no weapons of mass destruction have been found in Iraq. Some claim that the weapons were probably destroyed before or during the war. Others state that the “weapons” were just an excuse for the U.S. to go to war with Iraq following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist strikes.

This topic is:

Unimportant to me :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :Important to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Of no concern to me :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :Of concern to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Irrelevant to me :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :Relevant to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Means nothing to me :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :Means a lot to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Doesn't matter to me :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :Matters to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Unexciting to me :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :Exciting to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

For the following questions use this scale to mark the number which most closely corresponds to how you feel about the topic of U.S. war with Iraq:

1= *strongly disagree*

2= *somewhat disagree*

3= *neutral*

4= *somewhat agree*

5= *strongly agree*

M. The situation surrounding this issue makes me uncomfortable.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

N. Discussing or thinking about this issue makes me irritable or tense.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

O. I get over-excited or “rattled” when I talk to others about this issue.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

P. I often feel anxious about this issue.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

Q. I am able to think about problems associated with this issue in a rational manner.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

R. I am usually steady and relaxed when I think about or discuss this issue.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

Part 6: Rate the topics

Of the three topics, circle the letter of the *one* you would most like to see in the chat room.

- A. Affirmative action.
- B. Conceal and carry.
- C. War with Iraq.

Part 7: Demographics

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

What is your age group?

- 17-19
- 20-22
- 23-25
- 26-28
- 29 +

What is your last year of education completed?

- High School Graduate
- Vocational/Trade School
- First year college
- Second year college
- Third year college
- Fourth year college
- Other _____(please explain).

What is your race?

- White/Anglo/Caucasian
- Spanish/Hispanic/Latino
- Black/African American
- Asian/Pacific Islander

- American Indian
- Other _____(please specify).

Post-Experiment Questionnaire

Please put the same I.D. you created for yourself for the survey and chat room here:

Part 1: The following statements regard different aspects of freedom of expression. Please mark the number which most closely corresponds to how you feel.

1= *Extremely uncharacteristic*

2= *Somewhat uncharacteristic*

3= *Uncertain*

4= *Somewhat characteristic*

5= *Extremely characteristic*

Y. I form opinions about everything.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

Z. I prefer to avoid taking extreme opinions.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

AA. It is very important to me to hold strong opinions.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

BB. I often avoid people or situations for fear of embarrassment.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

CC. I am openly critical of others' ideas, opinions, and behavior.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

DD. When a person is highly unfair, I call it to his/her attention.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

EE. I feel comfortable expressing myself online.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

FF. I am reluctant to speak up in a discussion or a debate.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

GG. I dislike arguing with people.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

HH. I am usually the first to begin a conversation.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

II. I prefer to state my views anonymously.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

JJ. I often feel the need to express myself freely.

Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

KK. I often express myself according to the norms of those around me.
 Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

LL. I often prefer to remain neutral about complex issues.
 Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

MM. If something does not affect me, I do not usually determine if it is good or bad.
 Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

NN. It bothers me to remain neutral.
 Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

OO. I like to have strong opinions even when I am not personally involved.
 Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

PP. I have many more opinions than the average person.
 Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

QQ. I withdraw from situations or topics that are uncomfortable to me.
 Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

RR. I value free speech and expression.
 Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

SS. I often feel constrained or censored by those around me.
 Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

TT. I feel that I can express myself more freely online than in person.
 Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

UU. I like to decide that new things are really good or bad.
 Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

VV. I am pretty much indifferent to many important issues.
 Extremely Uncharacteristic 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Characteristic

Part 2: Please express your attitudes toward online chat rooms.

Negative : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : Positive
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Unpleasant : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : Pleasant
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Unfavorable : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : Favorable
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Dislike a lot :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ : _____: Like a lot
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Useless :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ : _____: Useful
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Part 3: Please mark which number corresponds to your attitudes about yourself.

- 1= *always false*
- 2= *sometimes false*
- 3= *uncertain*
- 4= *sometimes true*
- 5= *always true*

U. It is my feeling that if everyone else in a group is behaving in a certain manner, this must be the proper way to behave.

Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

V. I find it hard to imitate the behavior of others.

Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

W. When I am uncertain how to act in a social situation, I look to the behavior of others for clues.

Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

X. My behavior is usually and expression of my true inner feelings, attitudes, and beliefs.

Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

Y. I only argue for ideas which I already believe.

Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

Z. At parties and social gatherings, I do not attempt to do or say things that others will like.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

AA. I try to pay attention to the reactions of others to my behavior in order to avoid being out of place.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

BB. The slightest disapproval by the person whom I am interacting with is enough to make me change my approach.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

CC. It's important to me to fit into the group I'm with.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

DD. I guess I put on a show to impress or entertain people.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

EE. I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

FF. I may deceive people by being friendly when I really dislike them.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

GG. I sometimes appear to be experiencing deeper emotions than I am.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

HH. In a group of people, I am rarely the center of attention.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

II. In different situations with different people, I often act like a different person.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

JJ. I am not always the person I appear to be.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

KK. I would not change my opinions in order to please someone else or to win their favor.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

LL. In order to get along and be liked, I tend to be what people expect me to be rather than myself.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

MM. My behavior often depends on how I feel others wish me to behave.
Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

NN. When I am in a social situation, I tend not to follow the crowd, but instead to behave in a manner that suits my particular mood at the time.

Always false 1 2 3 4 5 *Always True*

Part 4: Attitudes toward chat room topic

Unimportant to me :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :Important to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Of no concern to me :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :Of concern to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Irrelevant to me :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :Relevant to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Means nothing to me :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :Means a lot to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Doesn't matter to me :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :Matters to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Unexciting to me :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :_____ :Exciting to me
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

For the following questions use this scale to mark the number which most closely corresponds to how you feel about the topic of affirmative action:

1= strongly disagree

2= somewhat disagree

3= neutral

4= somewhat agree

5= strongly agree

A. The situation surrounding this issue makes me uncomfortable.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

B. Discussing or thinking about this issue makes me irritable or tense.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

C. C. I get over-excited or "rattled" when I talk to others about this issue.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

D. I often feel anxious about this issue.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

E. I am usually steady and relaxed when I think about or discuss this issue.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

Part 5: The chat room experience.

A. Was this chat room experience what you expected it to be?

B. Did you feel constricted at any time during the chat?

C. Were the rules you encountered during this chat experience expected or similar to ones you have encountered before?

D. Did you consider leaving the chat room at any time?

E. Please share any opinions, attitudes, or feelings you may have about this chat room experience.
