

June 28, 2022

Dear Dr. Ellison and the Editorial Board,

I am writing on behalf of myself and my colleagues Aaron Shaw, Associate Professor of Communication Studies at Northwestern University, and Benjamin Mako Hill, Assistant Professor of Communication at the University of Washington. We are submitting the attached manuscript, "Communication networks do not explain the productivity or longevity of early-stage online communities" to be considered for publication in the *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*.

This manuscript engages with three areas of interest to communication scholars: communication networks, organization formation, and online communities. Communication and management scholars have a long history of studying the role of communication network structure in work groups and teams. Online communities, in which self-organized volunteers engage in computer-mediated communication and collaboration, provide an important context for extending this inquiry.

Prior work on group formation and computer-mediated communication suggest that groups require coordination and social integration and that nascent online groups should require dense, integrated communication networks in order to be productive and long-lasting. We ask whether communities succeed when they are dense and integrative like theory suggests or whether there is something different about online contexts that allows sparse communication networks to be effective.

We use a dataset of 1,002 online wikis to test the relationship between communication network structure and a community's productivity and survival. We find no evidence that the structure of a group's communication network relates to its outcomes when relevant controls are included. We develop a number of theoretical explanations about the specific affordances of online communities that provide possible explanations for these unexpected findings. This work contributes to communication scholars' understanding of how group processes and group communication differ across different contexts and provides surprising empirical results for future researchers to explore.

We have listed a number of individuals, none of whom have read the paper, who we believe could serve as reviewers for the manuscript in the Manuscript Central online system. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any additional questions.

Regards,



Jeremy Foote
Assistant Professor of Communication

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