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Disembodiment in Online Social Interaction:
Impact of Online Chat on Social Support and Psychosocial Well-Being

Running Head: Disembodiment in Online Social Interaction

Seok Kang, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor

Department of Speech, Theatre, & Journalism

Arkansas Tech University

Russellville, AR 72801, USA

Tel: (479) 498-6000

Fax: (479) 964-0899

Email address: skang@atu.edu

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Abstract

This study explores the role of disembodiment—telepresence in cyberspace—in online chat use and its effects on social psychosocial well-being. Specifically, this study examines the influence of disembodiment along with demographics and online chat use on social support, loneliness, and depression. The results suggest that disembodiment in online interaction is a compelling contributor to increased loneliness and depression and decreased social support. However, the amount of online chat use is a positive indicator of several variables of social psychological well-being. These contrasting results show that online interaction is a social technology used for offline connection, but interactants' preference for disembodiment is associated with declines in social support and psychosocial well-being. Experience with online interaction, various motives for online social interaction including disembodiment, or advances in communication technologies may help to explain the discrepancy across studies of online social interaction.