

# A Relational Scaffolding Model of Hybrid Communication

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## Abstract

In this empirical paper, we explore the recursive relationship of computer-mediated communication (CMC) and social relations in organizations, guided by two questions: Which typical patterns of relating occur in organizational contexts in hybrid communication? How are organizations as communities of relational practice affected in these contexts? Scholars so far have mainly explored the social dimension of CMC by comparing it to face-to-face interaction, whereas the opposite view of a relational perspective on CMC appears remains underresearched. Building on the concept of conversational scaffolding, we propose a model of relational scaffolding as a guiding frame for observation. The empirical findings stem from problem-centered interviews in four organizations to depict the participants' narratives of their daily CMC experiences at the workplace. We present our results as patterns and understandings regarding hybrid communication in organizations. Thus, our study explores specific organizational practices in which the recursive interrelation between CMC and relationships is considered. By means of the 'relational scaffolding model of CMC', this research contributes to our understanding of community processes that emerge in hybrid communication settings. We conclude by critically reflecting our methodology and pointing towards directions of future research.

*Key words: Hybrid communication, relationship concepts, relational scaffolding*