

How the use of texting abbreviations affects impression management



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Abstract

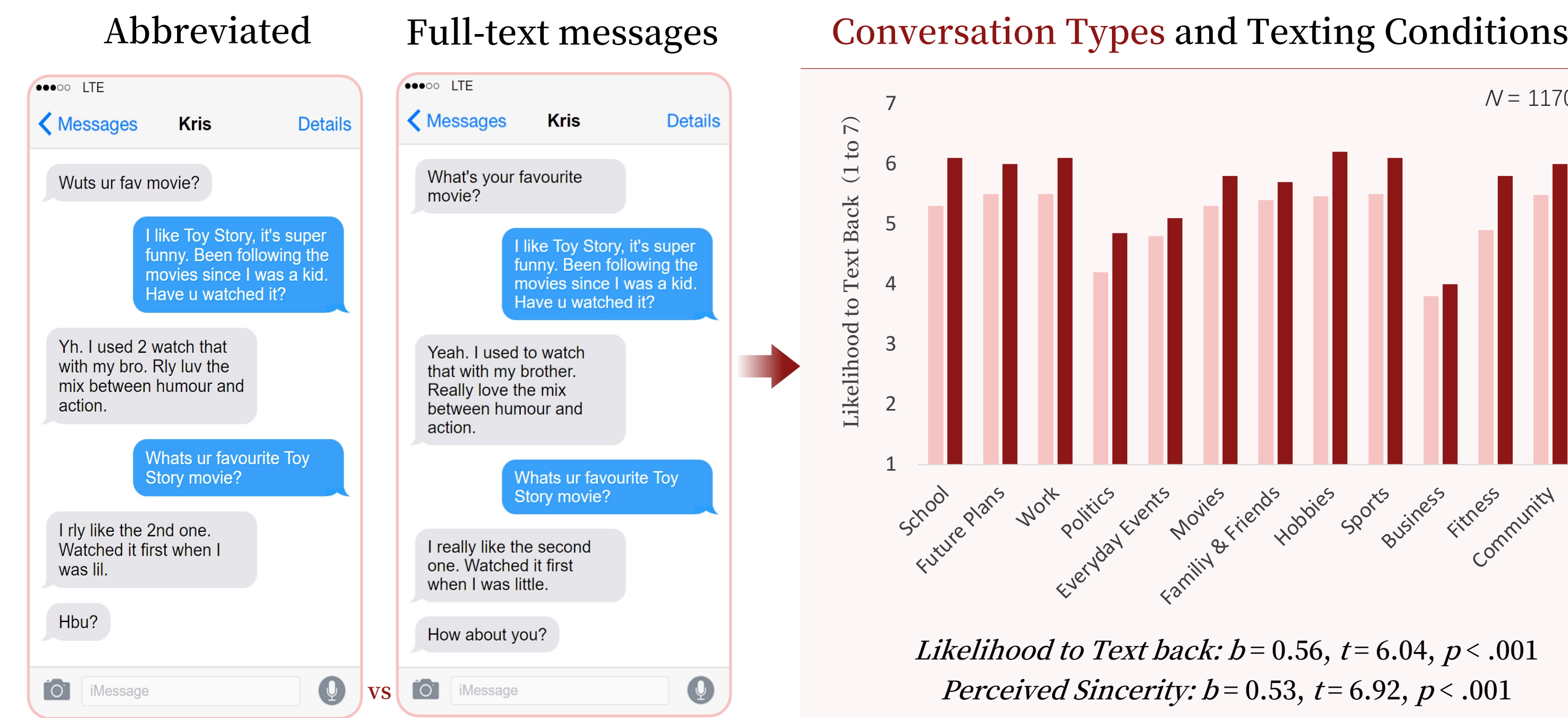
- 99.3% of texters use at least some abbreviations in their texts.
- We explore how texting abbreviations affect perceived sender sincerity and the subsequent likelihood that recipients respond.

How are you = Hru

Great = Gr8

- Eight preregistered studies using mixed methods found that **abbreviations make senders seem less sincere and recipients less likely to write back.**
- 84.2% of the participants failed to intuit the negative effects of texting abbreviation usage.

Study 1. High Powered Lab Experiment



Note: Participants were told that messages displayed in grey were sent by the other texting party, while messages in blue were sent by the participant.

Note: We controlled variables such as age, readability, understandability, typicality, and formality.

Study 4. Discord Field Experiment

- Test response rates to six types of abbreviations in a field experiment.
- Members of a popular Discord channel were messaged, with response rates recorded.

Why Discord

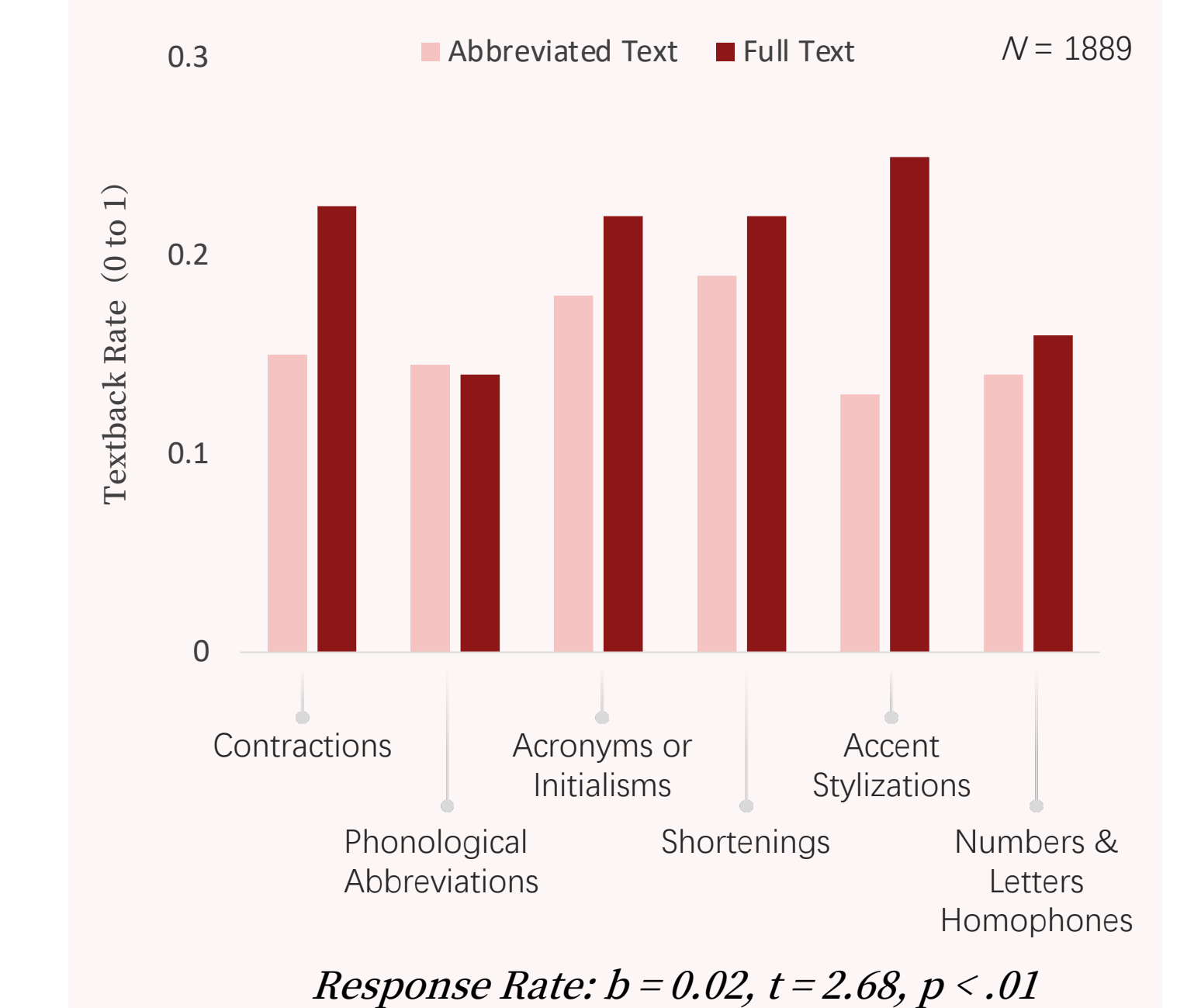
- Adept internet users
- Young adults, heaviest texters
- Socializing on the platform is normative.

Shortening

Hi, I'm new to anime and hav (have) been tryin (trying) to find info (information) bout (about) new shows to watch. I see that ur (you are) a memb (member) at Chill Heaven! What' s a recent anime you watched that you really liked? Any recs (recommendations) would be fab (fabulous), thx (thanks)!

Notes: Content inside parentheses is the full-text equivalent message.

Abbreviation Types and Texting Conditions

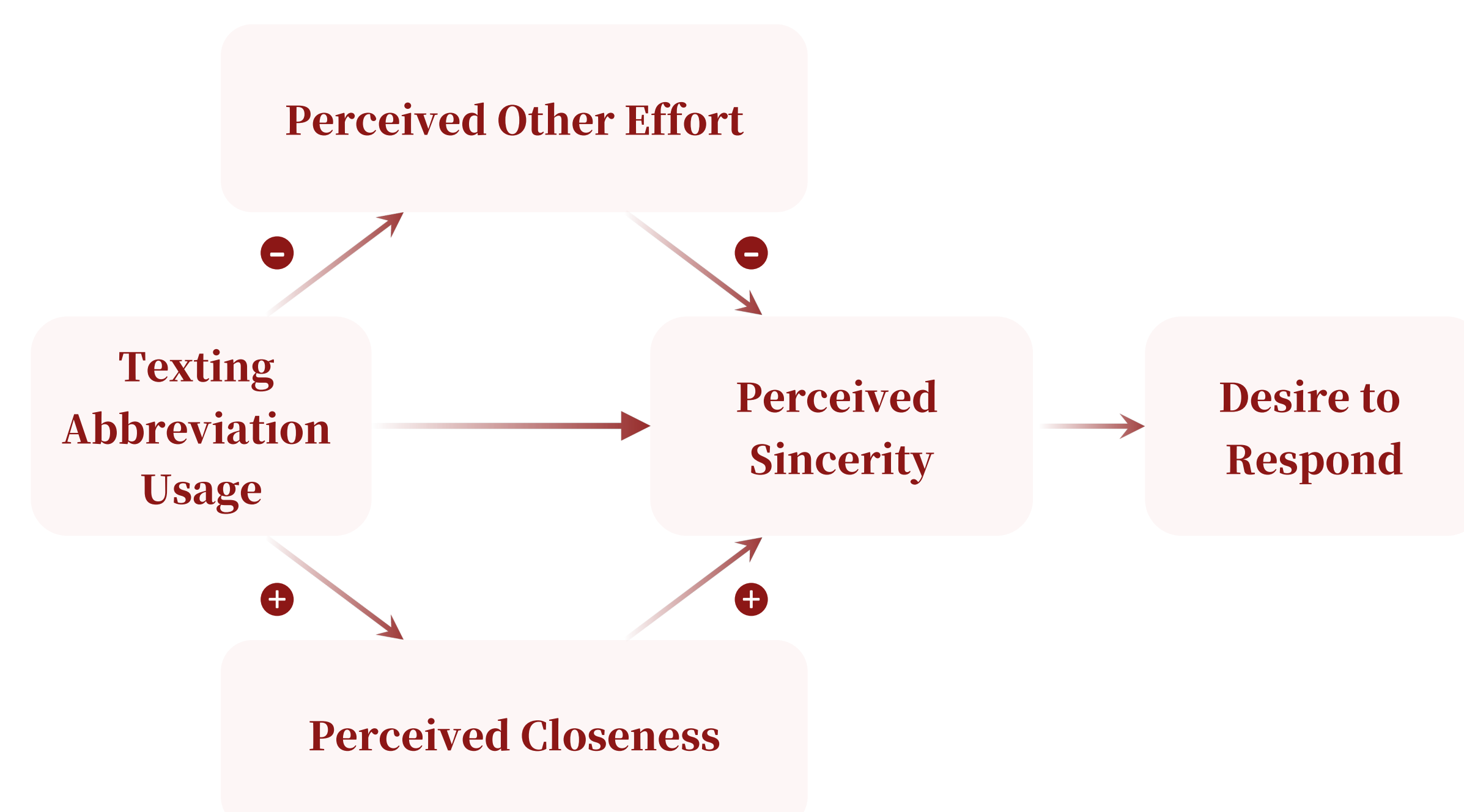


Hypotheses

Competing Hypothesis #1

Texting Abbreviations as Reductions of Effort

- Communicators tend to intuit text length to ascertain levels of committed effort (Pan & Zhang, 2011).
- Lower length can indicate lack of commitment and disinterest in the conversation (Dik & Aarts, 2007; Eastwood et al., 2012).



Competing Hypothesis #2

Texting Abbreviations as Facilitators of Closeness

- Abbreviations foster a sense of casualness between communicators (Battestini et al., 2010).
- Casualness increases perceived levels of closeness and intimacy (Hays, 1985).

Texting abbreviations seem insincere and not worth answering

Overview of Studies

Study	Platform	Task	N	Main Effect	Mediation	Moderation	Field
1	Prolific	Rate Text Conversations	1170	▪	▪		
2	Prolific	Discourse Completion	240	▪	▪		
3	Prolific	Participants Inputted Own Text Conversations	200	▪	▪		
4	Discord	Replying to a Message	1889	▪		▪	▪
5	Prolific	Rate Text Conversations	481	▪	▪	▪	
6	Prolific		444	▪	▪	▪	
7	Interactive SmartIQS		196	▪	▪		▪
8	Archival Field Data	Tinder Data	686	▪			▪

Study 8. Tinder Field Data

- We analyzed 202,154 Tinder conversations from 686 users in 37 countries to explore the relationship between abbreviation use and conversation length using LIWC.

	Abbreviation Usage & Tinder Outcomes		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Net speak	-0.076** (0.030)	-0.074** (0.031)	-0.073** (0.030)
Gender	-0.044 (0.077)	-0.043 (0.079)	0.103 (0.078)
Education	-0.03 (0.070)	-0.016 (0.071)	-0.025 (0.066)
Instagram True	-0.071 (0.067)	-0.047 (0.068)	-0.053 (0.064)
Words per Sentence	0.001*** (0.0003)	0.001*** (0.0003)	0.001*** (0.0003)

Note: Abbreviation usage was characterized using a modified Net Speak variable. Model 1 includes covariates like user profile characteristics (e.g., gender, education, Instagram verification) and LIWC metrics (e.g., WFS, filler, word count, big words, pronouns), as well as 10 Latent Dirichlet Allocation topic models. Model 2 adds country-level covariates, and Model 3 adds 20 additional LIWC metrics (e.g., prosocial, polite).

Summary & Implications

- Abbreviations negatively impact perceptions of sincerity & likelihood to text back. This effect is explained by abbreviations eliciting a decrease in perceived other effort.
- Type of abbreviation (Study 4), Length of text exchange (Study 5), Relationship closeness (Study 6), and Participants' age (Study 1-8) did not moderate the effects.
- Theoretical implications. 1) extend the literature around the social psychology of relational communication and language use, and 2) contribute to the literature on computer-mediated communication.
- Practical implications. It helps individuals make better language choices, which benefits relationships, education, and work.

References

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