

# Social Networking with Web 2.0: A Comparative Study of On-Campus and Online Students



Barbara A. Frey  
Lorna Kearns



University of Pittsburgh



Center for Instructional Development  
& Distance Education

# What is your role in distance education?

- a) Faculty
- b) Instructional designer
- c) Instructional technologist
- d) Administrator
- e) Other

# Agenda

- Our study
  - Theoretical orientation
  - Methods
  - Results
- Case studies
- Discussion
- Recommendations

Do your online students  
communicate outside of class?

a) Yes

b) No

c) Unsure

# Web 2.0

- Second phase of World Wide Web enabling greater social and participatory use (Anderson, 2007)
- Sometimes used interchangeably with the term “social software”
- Web 2.0 directory  
<http://www.go2web20.net/>

# Social Learning

- Social constructivism (Huang, 2002)
  - Knowledge is constructed by learners as they interact with one another (Dewey, 1916; Vygotsky, 1978)
- Communities of practice
  - “...collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor” (Wenger, 2004)

# Online Learning Communities

- Community of Inquiry (Garrison, Anderson, and Archer, 2000)
- Social presence (Richardson & Swan, 2003)
- Online group development (Carabajal, LaPointe, and Gunawardena, 2003)
- *Building Online Learning Communities* (Palloff and Pratt, 2007)

# Back Channel Communication

- Communication channel outside of course structure
- Useful for:
  - Communicating about content (direct)
  - Developing social bonds (indirect)



# Research Design

- Population
  - MLIS students
  - Campus and online students
- Survey
  - Sent to 336 students
  - 118 responses (35%)
  - August 2008

# Demographics

- Age
- Gender
- Level of education
- Self-rated computer skills
- Previous experience with online learning
- Campus vs. online program
- Number of courses taken

# Back Channel Communication Technologies

1. Talking on land line telephone
2. Talking on cell phone
3. Text messaging on cell phone
4. Talking on Skype
5. Instant messaging on Skype
6. Other instant messaging
7. E-mail
8. Social bookmarking (e.g., del.icio.us)
9. Calendaring (e.g., Google Calendar)
10. Image sharing (e.g., Flickr)
11. Collaborative authoring (e.g., Wikispaces)
12. Collaborative editing (e.g., Google Docs)
13. Video sharing (e.g., YouTube)
14. Social networking (e.g., Facebook)
15. Blogging (e.g., blogger.com)
16. Social gaming (e.g., Second Life)
17. RSS feed readers (e.g., Google Reader)

# Back Channel Communication Purposes

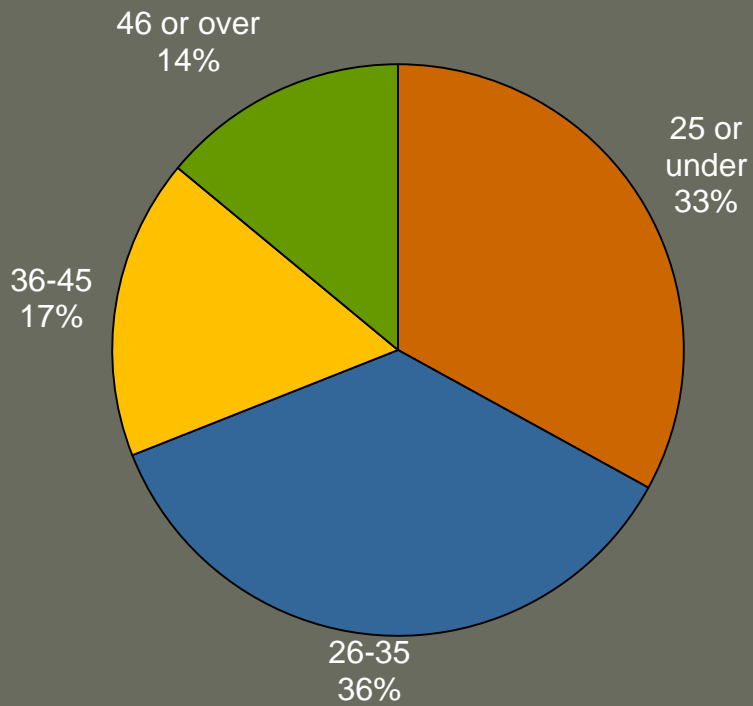
1. Collaborate on assignments
2. Clarify assignment or program requirements
3. Seek or provide help with technology tools
4. Socialize
5. Seek or provide emotional support

# Open-ended Questions

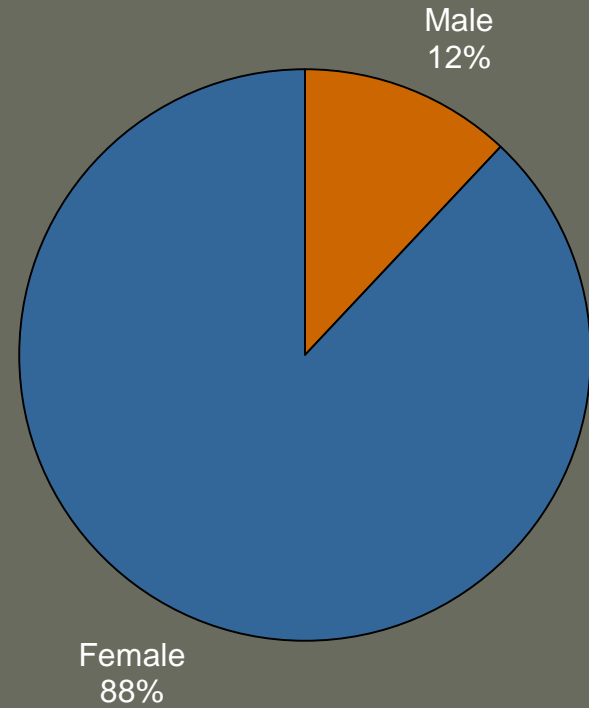
- Are there other purposes for which you have used these technologies to communicate with classmates? If so, what are they?
- Do you believe that your use of these technologies to communicate with your classmates has contributed to your learning? If so, can you describe how?

# Demographics

## Age

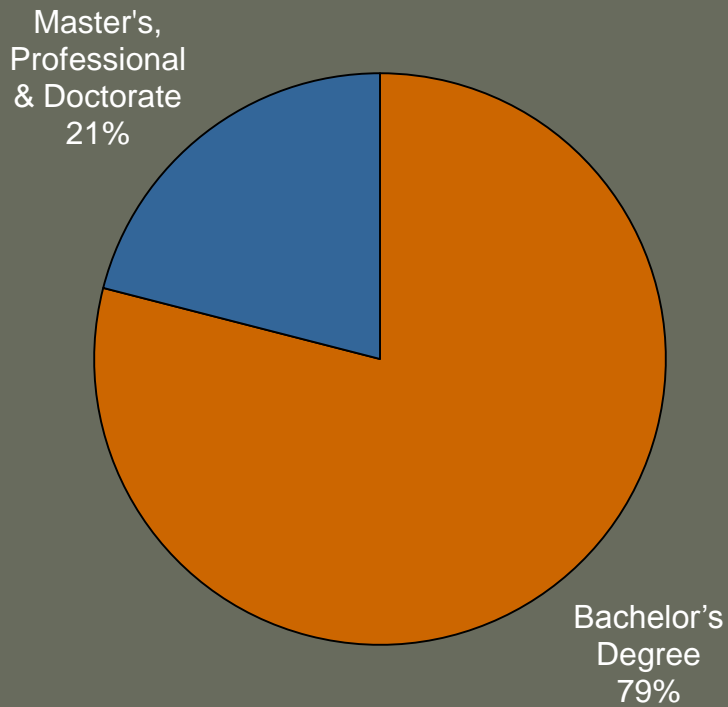


## Gender

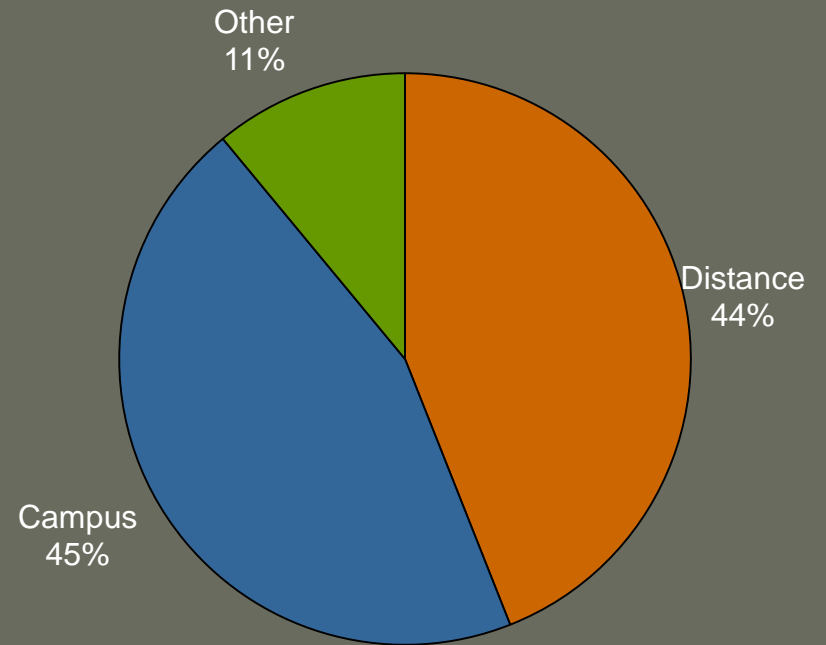


# Demographics

## Education Level



## Program



# What Students Said

The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in white lowercase letters on a blue rectangular background.

“I was trying to set up a roommate for the campus weekend ... so I used the Facebook wall to post messages.”

“Wow! Pictures of people, so amazing!”

“...it’s just a place to procrastinate time.”



# What Students Said



“There were some people who took syllabi and organized them into Google Calendar and it’s been really, really helpful and I know a lot of people are using it.”

“I actually made an error that caused me to start using Google Calendar avidly, religiously and I have alerts sent to me and things popping up when things are due...”

# What Students Said

“I’m one of the older folks and I had a couple of meltdown moments when I just needed to hear a human voice.”



“I personally don’t like talking on the phone.”

# What Students Said

“I have Google Reader up for updates all day long and it refreshes automatically.”

“You can get a feed into your reader when someone updates the wiki.”

“...if you keep people’s blogs in your reader, you get updates about them and you have more awareness of some of the things they’re going through.”



# What Students Said

“The idea of the wiki is that everything goes to a central place instead of all this information being in a circle of emails. It all goes to a central hub that everyone can view and access.”



“It’s free!”

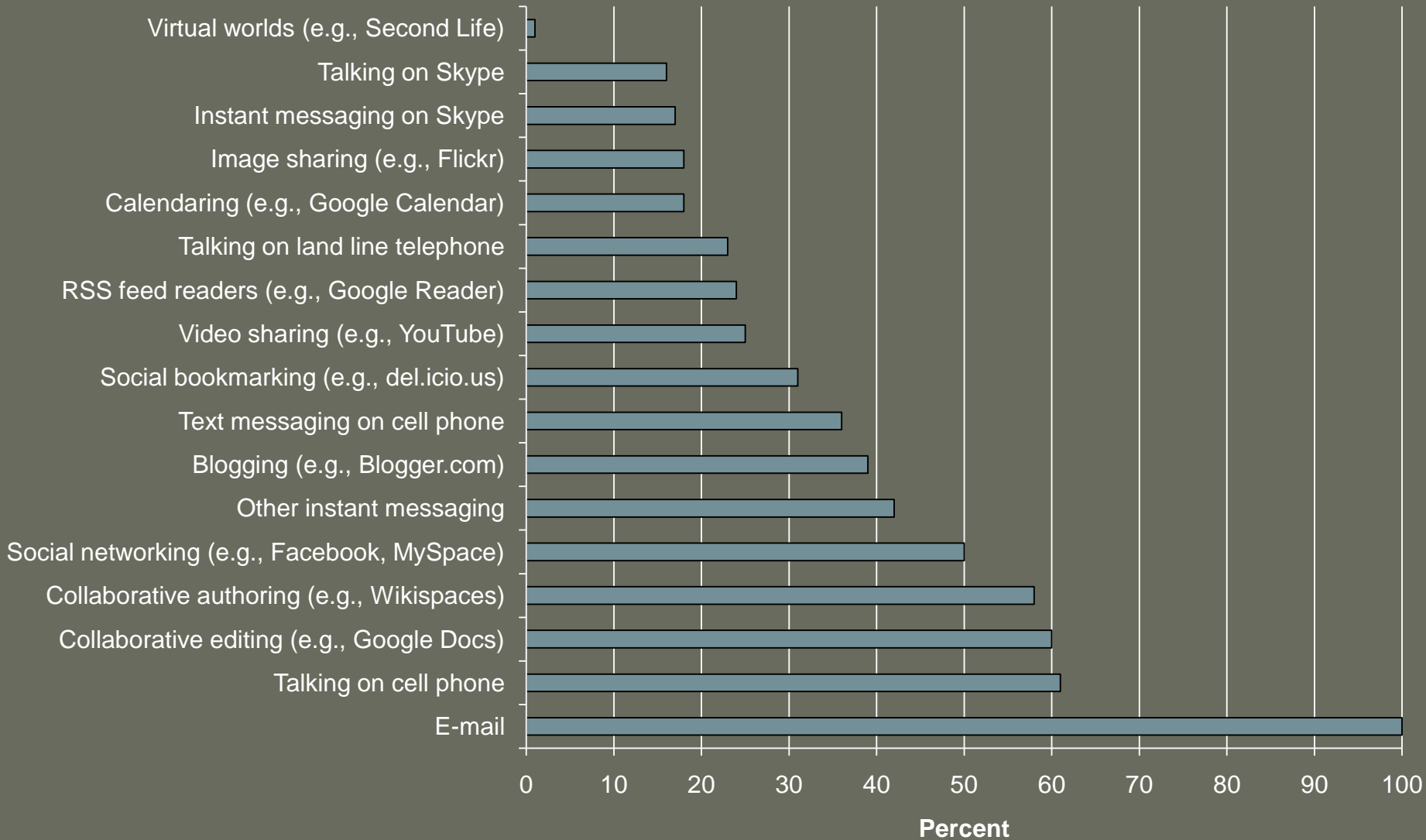
“...you know what’s going on in the wiki.”

Have you used a wiki to collaborate with colleagues?

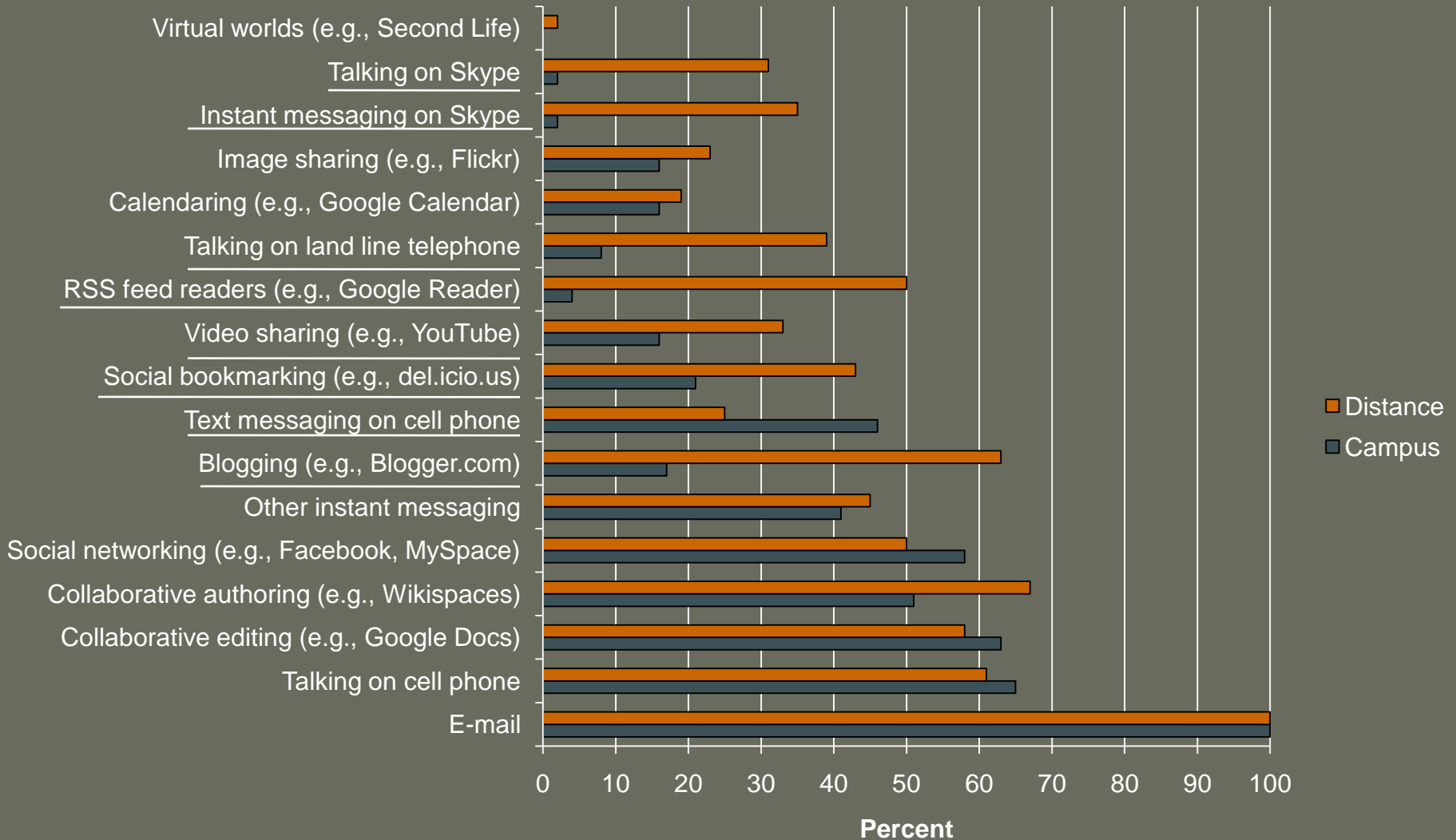
a) Yes

b) No

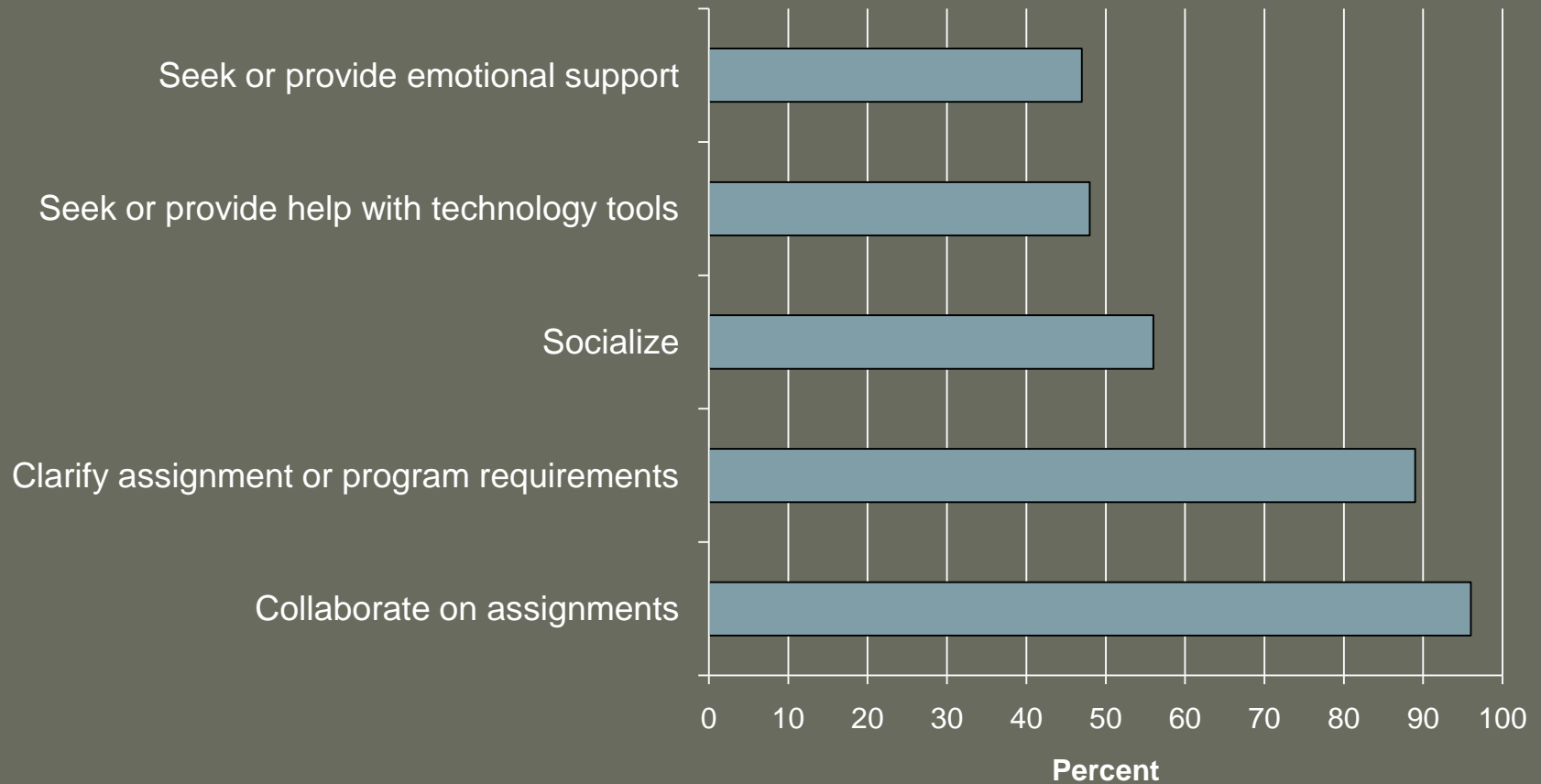
# Technologies



# Technology Use by Program

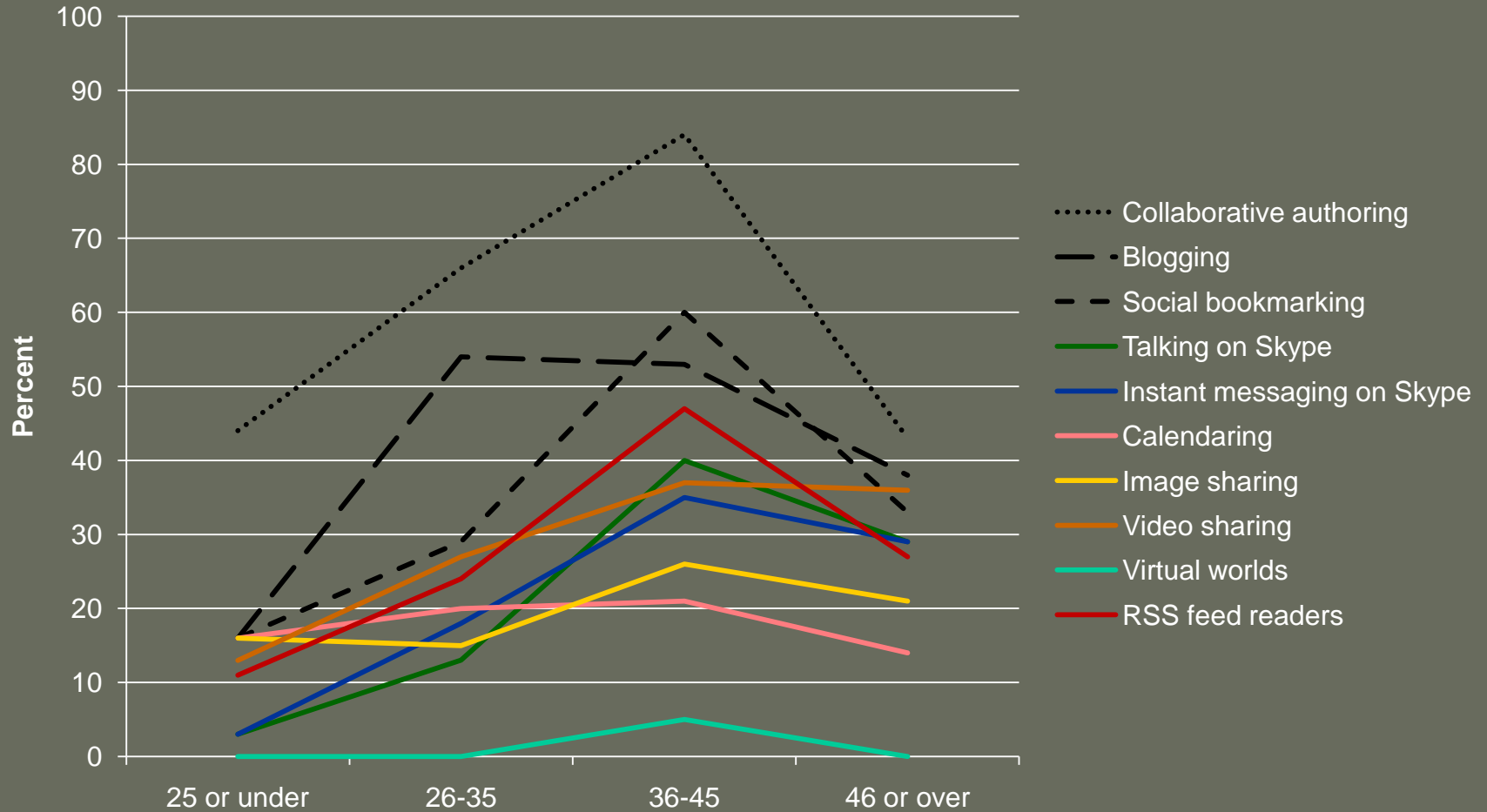


# Communication Purposes

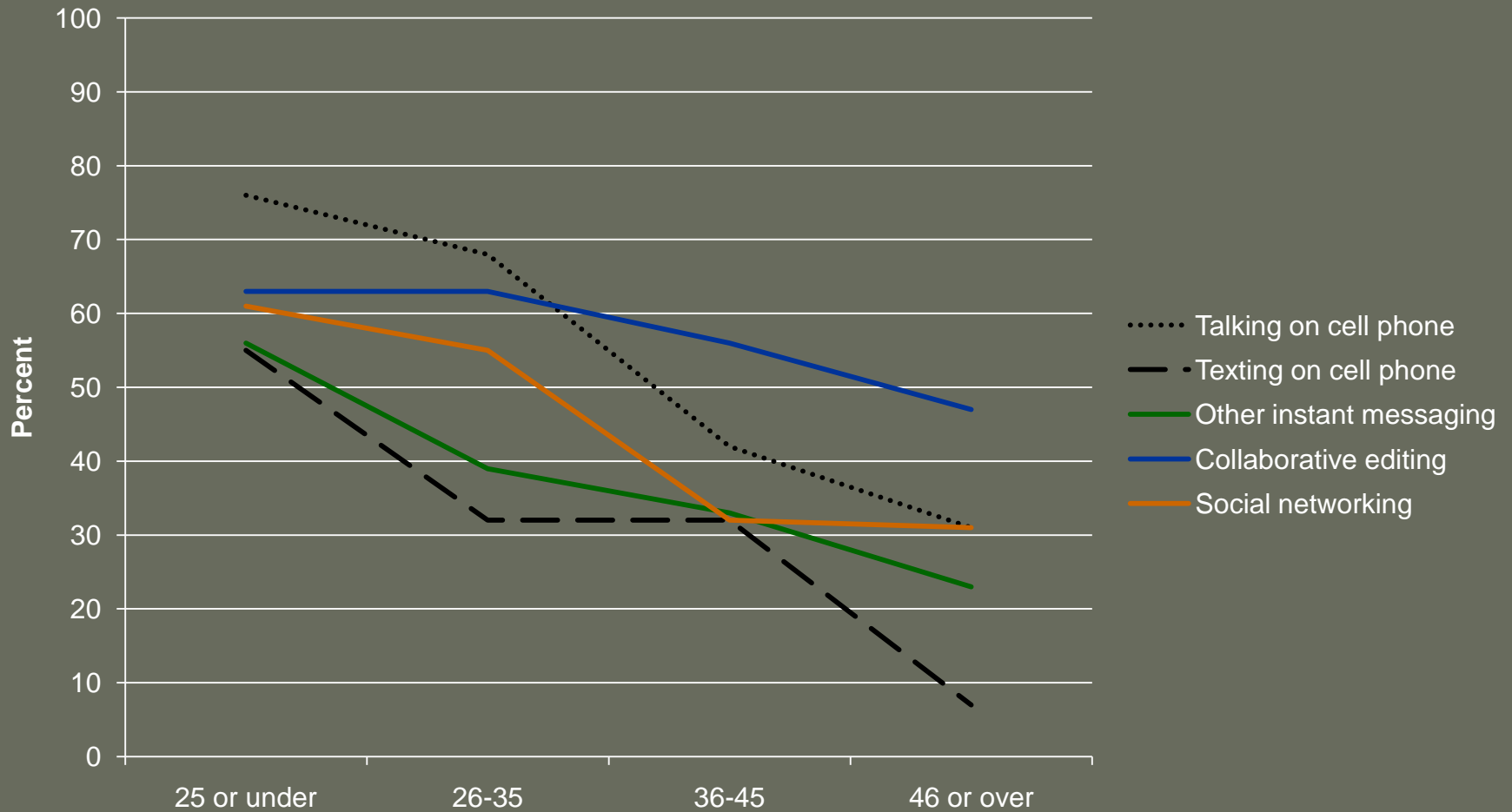




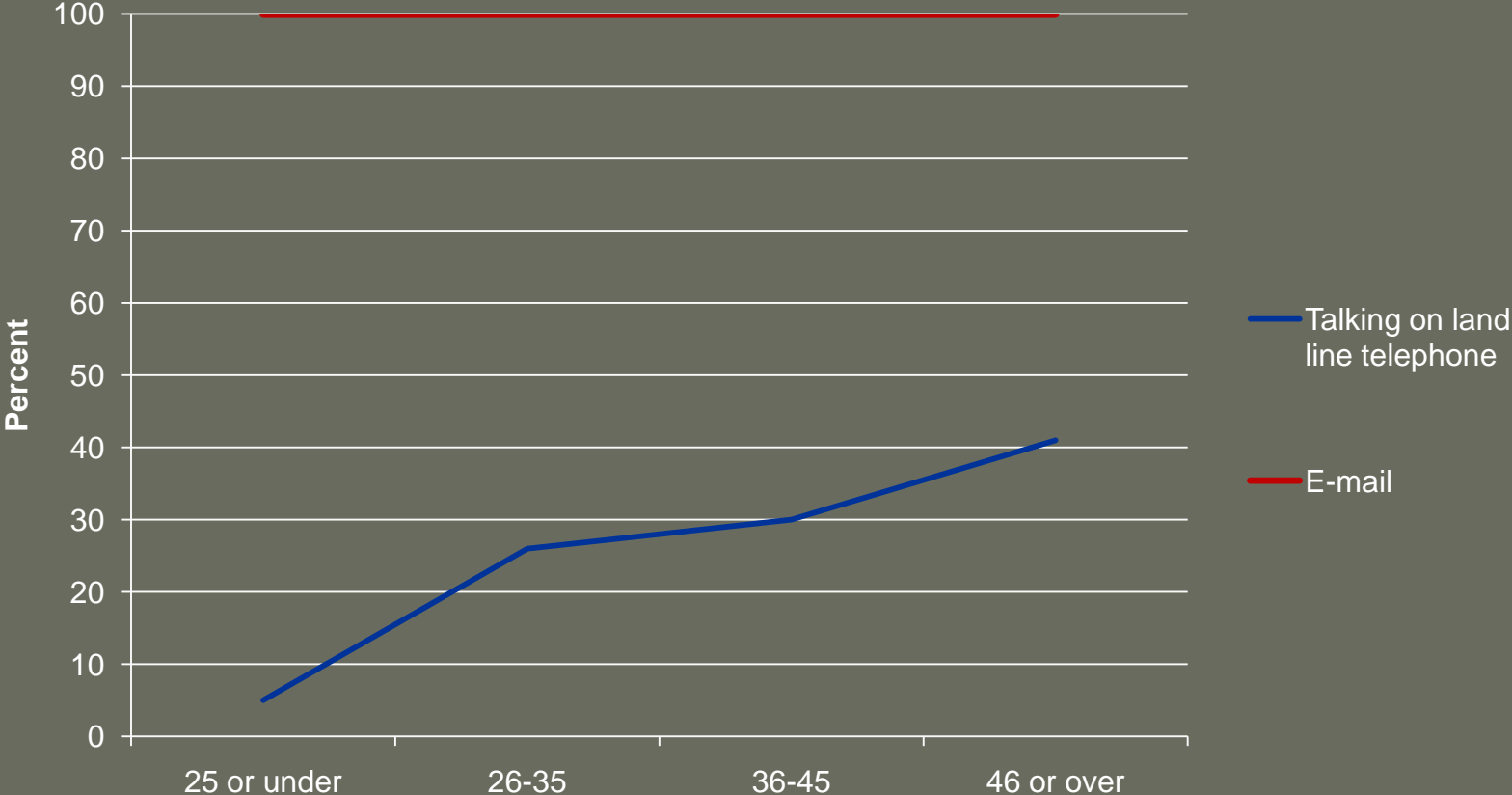
# Primary Trend by Age



# Secondary Trend by Age



# Leftovers



# Value of Back Channel

How has your use of these technologies contributed to your learning?

“I could not have made it through this program without the support system provided by the technology I use.”

“It has created a constant communication link between our cohort members. I never feel alone.”

“It's the moral support, which helps a lot in learning and understanding new things.”

# Recommendations

- Encourage students to communicate outside of class, to reach out to one another
- Learn about Web 2.0 technologies to see what they have to offer
- Make recommendations to students on Web 2.0 technologies according to their goals for communication

# References

- Anderson, P. (2007). What is Web 2.0? Ideas, technologies and implications for education. Joint Information Systems Committee Technology and Standards Watch Report. Retrieved December 19, 2008 from <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/techwatch/tsw0701b.pdf>
- Carabajal, K., LaPointe, D., & Gunawardena, C. N. (2003). Group development in online learning communities. In M. G. Moore & W. G. Anderson (Eds.) *Handbook of distance education* (pp. 217-234). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Garrison, D. R., Anderson, T., & Archer, W. (2000). Critical thinking in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education. *Internet and Higher Education*, 2(2-3), 87-105.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education*. New York: The Macmillan Company. Retrieved December 23, 2008 from [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Democracy\\_and\\_Education](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Democracy_and_Education)

# References

- Haythornthwaite, C. (2001). Exploring multiplexity: Social network structures in a computer-supported distance learning class. *The Information Society*, 17, 211-226.
- Huang, H. (2002). Toward constructivism for adult learners in online learning environments. *British Journal of Educational Technology* (33)1.
- Palloff, R. M. and Pratt, K. (2007). *Building online learning communities: Effective strategies for the virtual classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Richardson, J. C. & Swan, K. (2003). Examining social presence in online courses in relation to students' perceived learning and satisfaction. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 7(1).
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *L. S. Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wenger, E. (2004). *Communities of practice: A brief introduction*. Retrieved December 23, 2008 from Etienne Wenger's Web site at <http://www.ewenger.com/theory/index.htm>

Questions?



Thank you!

Barbara A. Frey: [bafrey@pitt.edu](mailto:bafrey@pitt.edu)

Lorna Kearns: [lrkearns@pitt.edu](mailto:lrkearns@pitt.edu)