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ABSTRACT

The availability and affordability of mobile phones has increased dramatically in the last decade and continues to increase. Short-message service (texting), a popular feature of the mobile phone, has become a widely accepted phenomenon in today's society, and is beginning to dominate the landscape of interpersonal communication, used as a primary medium in romantic and sexual correspondence. There is minimal academic research focusing on the effects of texting on communication and social behavior within romantic relationships; research is lacking with regard to how mobile phone communication changes throughout the romantic relationships. The current study explores how texting practices are related to committed romantic relationships. Individuals in committed romantic relationships (N =73) were recruited through snowball sampling and completed an online survey about their texting use as it relates to their romantic relationship. Results suggest that text messaging influences social behavior within romantic relationships; there are both positive and negative aspects of texting use within committed romantic partnerships. Results confirm there are gender differences in texting uses and preferences, while the use of texting to manage anxiety within relationships varies with respect to age and commitment level of the relationship.

THE IMPACT OF TEXTING ON COMMITTED ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

A project based upon an independent investigation, submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2013

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The ubiquitous use of mobile phones affects human relationships in a myriad of ways. Originally intended for voice-based communication, mobile phones now include text messaging capabilities, facilitating new forms of social interaction. Researchers from the Pew Institute report that ninety-one (91%) of U.S. adults own a mobile phone, seventy-nine percent (79%) of whom use their mobile phone for text messaging. Fifty percent (50%) of mobile phone owners have a smart phone, which allows mobile internet access, enabling email, web surfing, and other mobile applications. Studies have been conducted out of curiosity and concern about the normalcy of owning smart phones, as having the internet accessible at any time and any place is a substantial change in our lives (Brenner, 2013). The internet is one of the most frequently used means by which people keep in touch, and texting has become a preferred method of communication for many. This reality made me curious about how texting technology affects intimate relationships, and the ways this phenomenon either helps or harms these romantic relationships. Recent research has demonstrated that the use of mobile phones for communication between couples may be linked to higher feelings of intimacy and commitment. There has been, however, a gap in the amount of research conducted to determine the potential issues that arise from mobile phone use (Servies, 2012).

Importance of Romantic Relationships

Intimate relationships can offer a sense of belonging and boost one's sense of "mattering" (Mak & Marshall, 2004). These relationships can improve one's emotional wellbeing as "they provide a valued social identity, increase feelings of self worth, and are a source of social integration during the transition to adulthood" (Simon & Barrett, 2010, p. 77). Moreover, college students in relationships may show fewer mental health issues, risky behaviors, and health problems compared to their single peers (Brown & Bobkowski, 2011).

Erikson & Erikson (1997) state that during the adolescent stage of exploration, identity continues to form with regard to an individual's capacity to attain intimacy with another. Erik Erikson's theory of development is helpful in understanding the mobile phone's role in intimate relationships, as being in an intimate relationship is considered a psychosocial task of adult development. According to Erikson & Erikson (1997), people between the ages of eighteen and forty are grappling with the question, "Can I love?" He believed that young adults need to form intimate, loving relationships with other people, noting that success in doing so leads to strong relationships, while failure results in loneliness and isolation. Historically, the development of intimate relationships was carried out via in-person encounters, letters, or phone calls. Mobile phone text messaging has become yet another facilitator of romantic relationships.

The Rise of Texting

When Short Message Service (SMS) became a feature on mobile phones, wireless companies did not anticipate the frequent use or popularity of this feature (Rettie, 2007). In 1999, the wireless industry foresaw the disappearance of SMS by 2002. Instead SMS grew rapidly at a rate of thirty percent (30%) from 2002-2007. SMS, also referred to as "text messaging" or "texting," has truly changed social norms and the options for interpersonal

communication. SMS allows mobile users to send and receive short messages directly from handheld digital cellular phones, giving nearly instant access to intended recipients (Horstmanshof & Power, 2005). Such messages are fewer than 160 characters and have become a common way for mobile users to communicate (Horstmanshof & Power, 2005).

Texting is a unique social phenomenon as it was not created for the functions it is now mostly used for (Horstmanshof & Power, 2005). According to Drouin & Landgraff (2011), texting is beginning to dominate the forum of interpersonal communication. The polls from the Pew Research Center found that ninety-one percent (91%) of adults in the US own a mobile phone, and place an average of twelve calls a day. Seventy-nine (79%) of mobile phone owners say they use text messaging on their mobiles. Sixty-seven (67%) of mobile phone owners find themselves checking their phone for messages, alerts, or calls — even when they don't notice their phone ringing or vibrating. Forty-four (44%) of mobile owners have slept with their phone next to their bed because they wanted to make sure they didn't miss any calls, text messages, or other updates during the night and 29% of mobile owners describe their mobile phone as something they cannot imagine living without (Brenner, 2013).

The Pew Institute provides results from a nationally representative phone survey of 2,277 adults in 2011, including 755 mobile phone interviews. The survey indicated that about one in three Americans send text messages, and of those who do, 31% prefer texting to talking. The survey indicated that on a typical day, the average mobile phone owner makes 12 calls a day on their phones and sends or receives about 42 messages; younger people between the ages of 18 and 24 send or receive an average of 109 texts daily. Survey results suggested that fifty-three percent (53%) of mobile phone users preferred phone calls, thirty-one percent (31%) preferred texting, and fourteen percent (14%) reported that it depends on the situation (Brenner, 2013).

Additionally, it was found that heavy text users are more likely to prefer texting to talking, with nearly 55% of the sample exchanging more than 50 texts a day, reporting that they would prefer getting a text to a voice call. Further, the study found that people with lower annual income text more frequently than those with a greater annual income (Smith, 2011b). Due to the growing use of texting, researchers have begun to wonder about the psychological and social effects of this method of communication (Reid & Reid, 2004).

The Pew Institute is the most up to date on statistics of mobile phone use. In addition to mobile phones being used for speedy information retrieval and emergency situations, their research has found that 42% of mobile phone users use their device for entertainment when bored, while 13% of mobile owners pretend to use their phone to prevent unwanted personal interactions in order to avoid interacting with others around them. Three quarters of mobile phone owners use their phones for texting or picture taking, and one third of American adults own a smart phone of some kind, which allows for downloading apps, watching videos, accessing social networking sites or posting multimedia content online (Smith, 2011b).

By the end of 2008, the number of mobile phone subscriptions in the world reached over four billion (Lasen, 2011). Mobile telephony is the most rapidly adopted communication technology in the world. While it took twenty years to reach one billion users, it took merely forty months for the next billion, and twenty-four months for the third (Lasen, 2011). Researching the social implications of their widespread use and presence is justified by this fast growing adoption of mobile phones. In developed countries, mobile phone ownership and uses have overcome gender, ages, and class barriers (Lasen, 2011). Text messaging, specifically, seems to be a type of communication that cuts across race, class, and gender. This area of research is important because in couple and family therapy, issues stemming from the use of

technology arise and are becoming more common. While work with couples has a middle class bias at times, issues stemming from communication technology are likely to be relevant to those in marginalized populations, as well. For young adults in particular, texting is a common mode of communication. In 2008, the average teen sent or received more than 35,000 texts per year, which equates to one message per fifteen minutes every day (McDonald, 2010).

Text messaging is a popular way by which to communicate with friends, family and significant others. In fact, young people are more likely to engage in texting than talking on the telephone (Skog, 2002; Drouin & Landgraff, 2011). The use of this form of computer-mediated communication is becoming a vital part of how people start and maintain relationships. Computer-mediated communication is the use of electronic messages to create meaning and any communication interaction using technology as the primary channel (Konijn, 2008); it now dominates the social landscape, especially in terms of texting and social networking (Drouin, Vogel, Surbey, & Stills, 2013). As a relationship progresses, partners share increased amounts of information about themselves in the form of self-disclosure. Communicating positive self-disclosure messages enhances the level of intimacy one feels in a relationship, particularly within dating relationships which are differentiated by their marked levels of self-disclosure. I would further contend that the ways in which many people use their mobile phone is some form of self-extension; personality styles, age, and gender would seem to contribute towards the ways in which couples communicate. Nowadays it seems as though many are uncomfortable without their mobile phone, feeling disconnected to others. Sherry Turkle argued that if people do not learn to be alone, they will consequently feel lonely (NPR, 2012).

Mobiles and Emotional Attachment

Vincent (2006) argues that the mobile phone has become something that not only enables one's social and emotional life, but also embodies it. She explains that mobile phones engender intimacy as well as the feeling of being constantly bound to others. Vincent (2006) states that the emotional attachment to the mobile phone is a result of the investment people have made in their devices and she recognizes that the phone has become "an icon of 'me, my mobile, and my identity'" (p. 41). People appear to be using the mobile phone to achieve emotional goals and report a range of emotions and related concerns about their mobile phone use. Vincent (2006) states six emotions are reported most frequently: panic (triggered from the absence of or being separated from the device), strangeness (between those who do and don't have a mobile phone), being cool (desire not to be left out of one's social group and in tune with mobile phone culture), irrational behavior (when one cannot control heart over mind, hence texting and driving), thrill (related to multi-tasking, novelty, or the intimacy of a text received in a public space), and anxiety (related to fear and desire to know about others). The desire for constant connection and reassurance can potentially result in a value contradiction if one finds his/her phone too valuable to lose. The multiple roles of mobile phones have added complexity to human relationships but constant and increasing emotional attachment underlies their functional purpose (Vincent, 2006).

Harrison & Gilmore (2012) explored college students' text messaging patterns in various social situations and reported that the participants in their study placed a high degree of importance on texting, and use the function frequently for keeping in touch with family, friends, and romantic partners. In fact, a significant amount of participants in their study reported texting in seemingly inopportune situations, such as while at work, during religious services, while in the shower, or even during sex. These findings might suggest that younger individuals have

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trouble separating from their phones, even during times that were once considered to be exceptions to one's availability.

To Text or Not to Text

I am curious about those who only text with their mobile devices rather than partake in verbal communication. I wonder if that might reflect or accelerate a decline in social skills. Perhaps it is something that has just become normal and socially acceptable. Reid & Reid (2004) made the distinction between two types of mobile users: *Texters*, who are uncomfortable on the phone and/or prefer to send text messages, and *Talkers*, who prefer to make calls and use text messages as an in-between.

Texting often replaces mobile phone calls between romantic partners. Though it may seem instantly gratifying, it could be unhealthy to some relationships as it is brief and lacks emotional nuance. That is, it could potentially cause the receiver to misinterpret the message or be confused by abbreviated words. The breakdown in communication as well as miscommunications between couples can begin with a simple text message. On the other hand, there are many functions of texting that can enhance a relationship in positive ways. The purpose of my research is to get a more accurate understanding of the importance of mobile technology and texting in couple dynamics.

I have been intrigued by the ways mobile phone technology has facilitated the stages of relationships among couples I have known and also in my own dating experiences. Navigating another's communication style proves to be even more complicated with such a plethora of portals by which to communicate through. As clinical social workers, part of the process in therapy is the reactivation of the attachment system; we often work with clients to mend or rewire early relational fears. The therapist has the opportunity to contribute by adding new

energy, warmth, compassion, care, stability, and safety to a client's interpersonal system (Badencoch, 2008).

I wonder about the correlation between mobile devices and feelings of insecurity in a relationship in light of the fact that many people are uncomfortable being without their mobile devices or being inaccessible to others. While out to dinner, noticing the overwhelming number of fellow diners looking down at their mobile phones is a bit alarming because it might imply that the company of those present are of less importance or not interesting enough to put the phone away for the course of the dinner. Although seemingly an acceptable societal norm, I cannot help but feel somewhat disheartened by the non-verbal messages being sent to those sitting across from the one texting. In my own experience, when among a group dining experience for a coworker's birthday, I was struck by the number of individuals at the table who were texting throughout the entire meal. This type of behavior seems to be becoming more normalized and I am concerned about what this indicates about the shift in appreciation for being in the moment and in the physical company of others.

For the generation of college students today, there was not a time in which communication technology did not exist. Ling (2010) discusses texting as a life phase phenomenon, noting that patterns of teen texting is different from those of older users. The internet is now available on most mobile phones, and text messaging entire conversations rather than calling someone directly is a not considered abnormal. Although older generations did not grow up with such modern conveniences, they are becoming more familiar with the expectations and assumptions that are associated with engaging in the fast-paced, constantly-connected reality of today's youth. According to McDonald (2010), four out of five teenagers own a mobile

phone, and the devices are looked at as status symbols; there is pressure to have the newest and coolest phone.

An article in TIME magazine (Stein, 2013) about the millennial generation pointed out that through mobile phones young people are interacting all day, primarily though a screen. The article noted Pew's statistics, in that young people send and receive an average of 88 texts a day, with 70% checking their phones every hour, often anxious about missing out on something, and doing so to reduce their anxiety. As this generation begins negotiating dating norms and communication expectations, texting is likely to have a great impact on how young people experience and navigate boundaries in their romantic relationships. Communication technology has provided remarkable advances in the ability to maintain connections with loved ones separated by great distance; however, I wonder about the potential negative effects that easy access to modern conveniences can have on relationships. This study intends to address themes worthy of consideration in gaining a better understanding of the marvel of mobile text messaging technology and its relevance to couple dynamics.

Implications for Social Work

Social workers have historically been mindful about understanding communication styles within interpersonal relationships. Considering the social work perspective of person-in-environment, the person in context of a society that has come to normalize the presence of mobile phones proves to have relevancy in the realities of our clients. With ninety-one percent (91%) of American adults owning a mobile phone (Pew, 2011), it behooves social workers to think carefully about the implications. Social workers have a role in providing both mandated and non-mandated couples therapy in a variety of settings. Most often, couples therapy involves issues in communication. Whether it is miscommunication, lack of communication, or non-

communication, clients come to therapy seeking new skills to become more effective

communicators in their relationships. When a couple disagrees about what having a

conversation means in terms of voice contact or text message, it can further contribute to

unsuccessful communication. During a recent therapy session with a heterosexual couple in their

early thirties, the issue of texting came up as a source of disagreement. While the husband

preferred to text because he did not like talking on the phone and considered texting to be

equivalent, the wife did not consider texting to be a discussion. Additionally, the husband

reported texting felt safer.

Social workers should assess the extent of the impact of technology on couples and

families, completing a thorough assessment of the technology use by each person in the family.

They should be well versed in various ways to use technology to communicate with others and

be prepared to speak knowledgably about them in session. Accessibility, affordability, and

anonymity contribute to developing problematic online behavior. By understanding the breadth

of the client's use of technology, the therapist will gain greater insight into the scope of the

problem (Hertlein & Webster, 2008). In addition, Hertlein & Webster (2008) suggest that it is

imperative for marriage and family therapists to develop strategies to help couples come to a

description of terms used regarding technology that will be adopted by both parties, as there can

be disagreement. Couples therapy is important for improving communication and understanding

within a romantic relationship. Therapists will need to have a clear understanding of couples'

communication styles and patterns in order to assist in facilitating a therapeutic intervention.

Recent research underscores the importance of technology for clinical social workers. In

one study, access to the internet was found to be positively associated with a decline in

meaningful communication among household family members (Drussell, 2012). In this context,

meaningful communication is defined as having useful quality and purpose. Researchers have found people who use communication technology extensively have fewer people in immediate social circles and experience an increase of depression and loneliness (Angster, Frank, & Lester, 2010). This research topic has a high degree of relevance to clinical social work practice because the profession values connection with others and recognizes the importance of clear communication in healthy interpersonal relationships. There is limited research investigating how texting impacts couples and it is needed as texting is likely to come up as an issue in therapy.

Lasen (2011) suggests that use of a mobile phone involves sharing one's sense of agency with it. Interpersonal relationships are shaped by mobile phone use through shared agency. Mobile phones are culturally, socially, and personally shaped because its possibilities intersect with a user's needs and particularities. These devices also contribute to the formation of social understanding about emotional management, gender relationships, linguistic skills, personal creativity, technological use, and etiquette rules. Because of the increase in mobile phones users, interpersonal communication becomes progressively more mediated by the available technology. Thus, social workers must be cognizant of the impact mobile technology has on their clients.

Social workers will need to increasingly take a leadership role in helping people to understand digital literacy and digital citizenship. Those social workers who grew up with digital immigrant status also need to become more familiar from a digital native status. Among many, technophobia is common. However, due to the growing social presence of technology, some aspect of it will likely arise at some point in a therapeutic setting. Because technology advances so quickly, it can be hard to keep up with the ever-changing new means by which people are interacting. In fact, the National Association of Social Work (NASW)'s last

published "Standards of Technology and Social Work" in 2005, meaning official policies are already obsolete. Two of the core competencies of a social worker include: responding to contexts which shape practice, and applying knowledge of human behavior and social environment. Thus, social workers should understand the extent to which mobile phones play a role in the lives of their clients.

Texting and Relationships

Because the nature of technological development is so rapid, things that were researched three years ago are already irrelevant. People's conceptions of technology five years ago are not the same as it is today. Global mobile outreach is spreading at rapid rates; the number of active mobile phones is predicted to reach 7.3 billion by 2014 (Pramis, 2013). Mobile communication has clearly enabled people to become plugged in at all times, and has become significant part of couple relationships, the most intimate form of interpersonal relationships (Dietmar, 2005).

Attempting to encapsulate the range of experiences communication technology brings to relationships is difficult. The impact of technology in relationships can be positive or negative. Previous research has explored the relationship between the amount of text messages sent daily to one's dating partner and the feeling of social presence (Reid 2004; Reid 2007; Jin & Park 2010); the development of relationships through text messages (Solis, 2006); the relationship between relationship stage and self-disclosure through text messages (Byrne 2004; Rettie 2007; Alter & Oppenheimer 2009; Lasen 2011); and whether the amount of text messages sent daily to a dating partner and received daily from one's dating partner facilitates intimacy (Jin & Pena, 2010; Duran et al., 2011). Current research is limited and clearly lacks information regarding problematic aspects of text messaging for couples. This study focuses on the use SMS and the way in which this phenomenon has impacted couples both positively and negatively. This

exploratory study is warranted because it will increase knowledge regarding technology use and relationships that is relevant to help-seeking couples and associated therapeutic interventions. This research is limited to dyadic romantic relationships but is intended to explore both heterosexual and homosexual relationships in varying in demographics. For purposes of this research, focus is on committed partnerships, varying in perceptions of commitment.

Duran, Kelly, & Rotaru (2011) report, "mobile telephony enables 'perpetual contact' between partners that, on the one hand, may facilitate relationship maintenance, but on the other may create a potential strain on the relational dialectic of autonomy versus connection" (p. 20). Mobile phones enable more opportunities for communication than previously afforded by landlines and have changed the expectations within couple relations, as to how often partners communicate throughout the day. Mobile phone text messaging (texting) has been a continuing trend and phenomenon that presents a new set of challenges in understanding the interpersonal communication within relationships. This research is intended to address the influence of text messaging on forming and maintaining dyadic romantic relationships, the advantages and disadvantages of texting within the couple dynamic, and the ways texting either enhance or decrease the quality of romantic relationships.

This thesis proceeds as follows. First, I review the literature related to technology, intimate communication, and especially texting. Second, I describe the methods by which I located and sampled participants and conducted the research. This study then reports findings from the questionnaire. I conclude with a discussion of the most salient findings as they related to the existing literature.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to explore the effect that texting has on romantic dyadic relationships. Thus, this chapter will review the literature relevant to this topic. This chapter is comprised of three major sections bounded by an introduction and a summary. First, I will review the literature on technology and its effects on relationships in terms of (a) how texting is changing the nature of communication and (b) how texting is changing the nature of relationships. I will follow with the theoretical literature that informed this study including attachment theory, object relations, social exchange theory, relational theory, and needs/uses theories. Last, I will look at the limited research specifically on the role of texting in relationships in terms of (a) the role of texting in facilitating relationship development, (b) perceptions of texting in relationships, (c) challenges to relationships based on texting, and (d) abuse in relationships and the role of texting.

Technology and its Effects on Relationships

The increased use of computers as a mode of communication changes how people relate to one another. For some, the use of technology can facilitate a relationship. For others, it can complicate aspects of a relationship. Computer users tend to display more uninhibited behavior than in face-to-face communications (Hertlein & Webster, 2008). Alter and Oppenheimer (2009) report that people are more inclined to divulge information using email, on-line instant messaging, or blogging than when they communicate face-to-face. This shows that people are

willing to self-disclose in potentially dangerous settings that contain many viewers whose motives are unclear. Lasen (2011) states, "The broad diffusion of this technology, its personal character, and the way it can afford permanent connectivity not only facilitates its global presence, but have also made possible important transformations in many aspects of everyday life, fostering what can be called a mobile culture" (p. 85).

Some problems that result from relationships online include financial issues due to the cost of internet use, relational problems, everyday tasks not getting done, internet abuse problems, a drop in sexual intimacy with the primary partner, and employment-related problems. Therapists are seeing more and more clients who are presenting with internet-related concerns. Internet infidelity is one issue among couples. Online relationships have a potential for harming primary relationships when one partner goes outside of the primary relationship to find intimacy. Those who do not use the internet for sexual information or entertainment report higher satisfaction in their offline lives (Hertlein & Webster, 2008). In a study reported by Hertlein & Webster (2008), participants were equally emotionally hurt by a partner's online affair as compared with an offline affair, both being perceived as a betrayal.

Professionals in social work and related disciplines have a growing understanding of the problematic aspects of technology for individuals and couples with terms such as internet addiction and internet infidelity commonly used. Less known, however, are the problematic aspects of texting and instant messaging which are the newest frontiers where relationships and technology intersect.

The Role of Mobile Phone Technology in Changing the Nature of Communication

Around the world, more than a billion texts are sent every day through mobile phones (Bargh & McKenna, 2004). Strasburger, Wilson, & Jordan (2009) report an ever-shrinking gap

in the last decade between higher and lower socio-economic groups in terms of access to new

technology and media. The majority of Americans have an endless array of communication

possibilities and outlets within their grasp (Bachen, 2007). Coyne, Stockdale, Busby, Iverson, &

Grant (2011) stress the importance of understanding how media influences the creation, shape,

trajectory, and overall strength or weakness of a relationship, as media technologies continue to

grow in scope and reach.

Researchers have also noted that young adults spend more time use using online

communication and are more comfortable doing so as compared to older generations (Raacke &

Bonds-Raacke, 2010). While older people in general have been very reluctant to adopt texting

(Ling, Bertel, & Sundsoy, 2011), texting is quickly becoming a necessity for young adults in the

millennial generation, and they tend to use the function more often than telephone service in an

attempt to maintain their social relationships (Rheingold, 2002). Among teens, texting is used

for a variety of purposes, and the function has landed a central position in the youth culture (Ling

et al., 2011). Thurlow (2003) reports that this "net generation" is assumed to be naturally media

literate and play a major role in reinventing traditional communicative and linguistic customs.

Adults have more often been found to use texting for instrumental purposes such as coordinating

child pick up times or grocery reminders (Ling et al., 2011).

According to Angster, Frank, & Lester (2010) a study of 128 (85 female, 43 male)

college students with an average age of 20 from a liberal arts college in New Jersey showed that

both men and women sent an average of 112 text messages a day, demonstrating the increased

reliance on mobile phones as a mode of communication.   Angster et al. (2010) conducted a

survey which revealed college students had a mean of 128 contact numbers in their mobile

phones. The study found that mobile phones are frequently used for texting and the more texts

sent per day, the less fulfilling participants found the text conversations. Participants in the study reported that they sent texts to immediate family members an average of 11 times per week and forty-nine (49%) of them felt that texting had a positive impact on their family relationships. The study found no gender difference in the use of mobile phones for texting, however male use appeared to have a more noticeable intrusion on social activities. The participants in this study were 67% Caucasian, lacking diversity in the sample, and the study does not include people out of college.

Rettie (2007) conducted a study which focused on the interactional experience of mobile phone calls and text messages. The research classifies two groups of text messages, instrumental and phatic; the type of message is reliant on the motive. Achieving an objective outside the communication is the motive for instrumental texts, while the social interaction of the communication itself is the purpose of a phatic text. Rettie (2007) found that 70% of texters' messages were phatic in nature, signifying that their texts have a social function. Rettie's study consisted of qualitative interviews of 32 mobile phone users, equally divided between gender and age groups (21-34 years and over 35 years). The sample was limited to those in the UK and participants were asked to complete diaries of non face-to-face communication (including saving text messages) the day prior to the interview, which may have primed them to rationalize, reflect, or construct communication use, thereby biasing the results. A small sample size in one country does not make the results of their findings universally applicable. Yet, phone aversion was shown to be related to difficulties in the presentation of self. For those who are phone averse, texting can provide the remote social connection that they cannot get from phone calls. Indeed, researchers agree that for many users, sending a text may be more essential for developing and sustaining social relationships than for coordinating practical arrangements (Ling & Yttri, 2002).

Reid & Reid (2004) reported on a four-year study investigating the psychological and social aspects of text messaging. The authors conducted research by means of an online questionnaire, with 982 participants (676 female, 395 male), ranging in age from 12 to 67 years old, with the majority of respondents from Britain and the USA. The study did not report any other demographics, so it is difficult to know who was underrepresented. The research found that text messaging was shown to facilitate the expression of one's real-self. This confirmed previous research by McKenna, Green and Gleason (2002) which found that texters may feel more comfortable being their real-self through texting, thus reducing the consequences that could take place in a telephone or face-to-face encounter. Reid & Reid (2004) report that as compared to talkers, texters were found to be more likely to disclose their real-self through text as compared with voice calls or face-to-face interactions; additionally, texters were shown to be more socially anxious and lonely than talkers. The results of this study suggest that there is something about texting that allows some users to render their social anxiety or loneliness into productive relationships, while not being true for other mobile users.

Reid & Reid (2004) reported that as compared with talkers, texters were found to be more socially anxious, lonely, and more likely to disclose their real-self via texting as opposed to voice call exchanges or face-to-face interactions. Not surprisingly, texters primarily use their phones for texting (Reid & Reid, 2004). Additionally, texters reported the medium helped them to develop new relationships and contribute positively to their existing relationships. The authors concluded that there is something distinctive about text messaging that allows people to convert their social anxiety and/or loneliness into beneficial relationships, while for others, it does not have the same effect. Because some prefer to text over talk implies they get something from texting that cannot be gained from talking (Reid & Reid, 2004).

Reid & Reid (2007) conducted further research on whether social anxiety and loneliness lead to varying preferences among mobile users towards texting and talking. By means of an online questionnaire, they surveyed 158 participants (127 female, 31 male) between the ages of 16 and 55 years who owned a mobile phone. The results indicated that anxious participants preferred texting and were more likely to rank it highly for expressive and intimate contact, whereas lonely participants preferred making phone calls and ranked texting as less intimate medium for contact. The authors reported that worry, apprehension, and fear related to the anticipation of inability to make a positive impression on others and contributed to an individual's experience of social anxiety. They also suggest that anxiety is linked with cognitive overload preempted by preoccupation with another's perspective on the self. Texting may assist anxious people by making social contact without the fear of rejection or immediate disapproval, allowing focus on the composition of messages meeting self-presentation goals rather than on the observer's perspective (Reid & Reid, 2007). Participants in this study were residents of the United Kingdom (51%) and the United States (21%). Other countries and ethnicities were not accounted for, and the results cannot be generalized to a larger population.

Reid & Reid (2007) also researched whether social anxiety and loneliness among mobile phone users lead to differing beliefs and preferences about talking or texting on their devices. Results from their study showed that anxious participants preferred to text and rated it a superior platform for intimate and expressive contact. Lonely participants, however, preferred making phone calls and rated texting as a less intimate way of communicating. The results of Reid & Reid (2007) indicated support for their three hypotheses: social anxiety and loneliness are differentially associated with generalized preferences either for texting or talking on the mobile phone; preferences are linked to contrasting beliefs concerning the social functionality of the

SMS; and divergent beliefs mediate the effects of social anxiety and loneliness on mobile phone users' generalized preferences for texting or talking.

According to Reid & Reid (2010), it is difficult to glean from existing research why text messaging has become the preferred medium of communication for some but not all mobile phone users. In a study, Reid & Reid (2010) also investigated the expressive and conversational affordances of texting. Their sample consisted of 635 participants (421 female, 214 males), ages 15 to 55 years including 89% United Kingdom residents. Fifty-six percent were unattached, and 44% were in long term relationships or living with their partners. Results from their internet questionnaire suggest that young, single, and socially anxious mobile users may be more inclined to take advantage of the social use of texting to cultivate their interpersonal relationships. Researchers reported that only about one-third of college students' text messages accomplished functional or practical goals—the remainder fulfilled a combination of phatic, friendship-maintenance, romantic, and affiliative functions associated with highly intimate relational concerns. They report that texting can be valued as a chance to articulate parts of oneself which may be too fragile for expression in embodied interactions. Reid & Reid (2010) further point out that managing the pace of message exchange can become a self-presentational issue: leaving a text message unanswered is usually interpreted as rudeness, while replying too quickly to a new acquaintance may make one seem excessively eager. Selection biases with regard to age and gender in this study's sample undermines the generality of the findings. The sample was dominated by participants of 'net generation' age, who are more likely to be comfortable with using communication technology for social contact.

Jin & Park (2010) examined how mobile phone use is related to interpersonal motives for using the devices, face-to-face communication, and loneliness. Researchers conducted an online

survey of 232 college students (171 female, 59 male, 2 unreported) who owned a mobile phone. The study examined the extent to which mobile phones satisfied the interpersonal motives of inclusion, control, affection, pleasure, escape, and relaxation. The researchers went further to explore the extent to which people have each of these six motives for texting through mobile phones. The findings indicated that one's mobile phone use is strongly linked with the extent to which s/he is motivated by interpersonal motives, such as seeking inclusion or affection. Not only are mobile phones believed to make one look good, but they eliminate the need for a landline phone and provide immediate access to others, regardless of time or location (Jin & Park, 2010). This study did not consider the perspective of any African Americans; with 65% of their participants being Caucasian, 21% being Asian, 9% being Hispanic, and 5% were unreported.   Their sample was not a representative population. Because the study included a self-report method of frequency use, information provided may be less accurate and frequency may not represent quantity of mobile use.

Several researchers have drawn from Goffman's concept of presentation of self, in which people present various roles, adapting their behavior and appearance to differentiate each role, as a helpful way to conceptualize role conflict in mobile phone interaction (Goffman, 1959). Reid & Reid (2007) discuss the notion of a brave SMS self which is contrary to one's more reserved, actual personality. Lasen (2011) states that personalization is a reciprocal activity and notes that people personalize their mobile phones and are personalized by them. Presentation of self through texting is different because they are more controlled expressions. Rettie (2007) found that texters have greater difficulty in presentation of self through phone calls; typically, they have an aversion to call structure norms and feel uncomfortable on the phone, particularly during a prolonged experience.

Lacking from the aforementioned research is any real exploration of differences in texting use among ethnicities, age groups and other demographic variables. While most agree that texting cuts across class; research has not advanced to include a thorough investigation of differences among groups. There is little investigation as to the reasons behind the reluctant adaption of this method by older generations or the over-acceptance of texting technology by younger generations.

The Role of Mobile Phone Technology in Changing the Nature of Relationships

Psychologist and author Sherry Turkle, has studied technologies of mobile communication for fifteen years, and researches how technology is shaping our modern relationships with ourselves and others. Turkle talks about how devices are redefining human connection, and encourages thinking about the kind of relationships we want to have. Recently on NPR, she shared her thoughts on why people text:

It used to be that people had a way of dealing with the world that was basically, 'I have a feeling, I want to make a call.' Now I would capture a way of dealing with the world, which is: 'I want to have a feeling, I need to send a text.' That is, with this immediate ability to connect and almost pressure to ... because you're holding your phone, you're constantly with your phone, it's almost like you don't know your thoughts and feelings until you connect. And that again is something that I really didn't see until texting. You know, kids are sending out texts all the time. First it was every few minutes, now it's many times a minute (NPR, October 2012).

According to Turkle, what is so seductive about texting among those young and old is the desire to want to know who wants you. Keeping one's phone on all the time allows for open availability, as has only become a normalcy in the last decade. Turkle went on to describe

"phone phobia" and "conversation phobia," believing that the problem with conversation is that one can't control what s/he is going to say and s/he doesn't know how it's going to take or where it could go. Turkle later implied that people feel they do not have time for conversation and people do not want to make space for the emotional aspect; She is concerned about what people lose without face to face interaction, adding that people do not make time to converse because they feel they don't have time to do so. As a result, Turkle argues, people are losing the skills that are acquired from talking to each other face to face, including skills of negotiation, reading each others' emotion, having to face the complexity of confrontation, and dealing with complex emotion and conversation. She states, "it's the difference between apologizing and typing 'I'm sorry' and hitting send" (NPR, October 2012).

It might seem that by substituting connection for the conversation, we may be short changing ourselves or forgetting the difference. Turkle notes the importance for a capacity for solitude, stating, "if don't have it, you'll always be lonely" (NPR, October 2012). She feels if children are not taught to be alone, they will only know how to be lonely. Turkle is not alone in her concern that if young people are growing up uncomfortable with conversation and being more comfortable with texting because it's safer. This phenomena began five years ago, starting with Facebook and texting. Turkle suggests the immediate ability to connect and the (almost) pressure to do so, because one constantly has his/her phone readily available, may indicate that people don't know their thoughts and feelings until they connect. Since constant texting has become a way of life, it's like thoughts are constantly in formation. It seems that many people are unable to tolerate being alone. If being alone has become a problem that needs solving, technology presents itself as a solution. The capacity for solitude is an important human skill.

This idea of being constantly available to one's partner may have similar implications in the romantic relationship and perhaps could create dependency.

During an NPR interview in February 2013, Turkle asserted that people have come to expect more from technology and less from each other. Turkle believes this to be because technology appeals to us when we are most vulnerable. She suggests that all people are lonely, but afraid of intimacy, so we turn to technology to help us feel connected in ways we can control. However, she notes that designing technologies that give us the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship does not leave us feeling comfortable or in control. In Turkle's interviews, she has found that mobile devices not only change what we do, but also who we are. Things that might have seemed strange a few years ago, such as texting while at work or school, have instead become familiar. Turkle uses the example of people texting at funerals to demonstrate how people remove themselves from grief and seek comfort in our phones. She suggests that society is setting itself up for trouble in how we relate to each other and ourselves. She noted, "People want to be with each other but also elsewhere, connected to all the different places they want to be" (NPR, 2013).

Laura Pappano (2001) wrote about her concern about the formation of relationships in modern society in her book, *The Connection Gap.* She argues that because of today's technological advancements, the image of connection replaces real relationships. She notes this is due to our tendency to approach life in a rushed and unrelaxed manner. Pappano (2001) writes that the impulse for speed and the compulsion to feel connected allow for the potential to create and foster virtual and superficial relationships. She suggests that real and experienced intimacy has been replaced by managing relationships.

Hoflich (2005) asserts that people talking on mobile phones seem unaware of their surroundings to a certain degree. Contrary to Turkle's points, Hoflich (2005) points out that mobile phones have a tendency to make people feel as if they are alone, even if surrounded by others in a public setting. "Absent presence" was termed to explain the situation people find themselves in when they are both here and not here at the same time (Hoflich, 2005).

An article from CNN online suggested that texting is the new love letter. According to sex and relationship expert Dr. Laura Berman, mobile phones and social media have become the new romantic norm (Patterson, 2012). In fact, Dr. Berman attributes the high instances of first-date sex to technology because when people meet via online dating sites or by texting, they often flirt and engage in pre-date sexual banter. This banter creates sexual tension or expectation, which sets the stage for a first date. Dr. Berman reports that texting has transformed the world of sex, dating, and relationships and indicates concern that millenials have not gotten enough training and experience about how to be verbally, emotionally and romantically intimate in person because much of the communication is via typing. Dr. Berman states that millenials are at a higher risk for miscommunication, conflict, and divorce, because without social and emotional intimacy, couples lack marriage bonding tools that are crucial to getting through difficult times. Dr. Berman suggested that intimacy from eye-to-eye contact is important to mating and courtship rituals, which are ingrained in our DNA (Patterson, 2012).

Berman (2013b) referenced a study conducted at the Universtity of Essex, which indicated that mobile phones can detract from intimacy and empathy in relationships. Researchers studied a group of over 70 students as they sat and talked in pairs at a restaurant; half of the couples had mobile phone on the table and half did not. The researchers found that when a mobile phone was present, relationship quality decreased as did partner trust.

Additionally, participants reported feeling less intimacy and openness with their date, and they were less likely to engage in a meaningful conversation, even if the phone did not ring during dinner. Berman (2013b) suggested that perhaps the mere presence of a mobile phone indicated that the other person wasn't completely attuned to their partner's words. The mobile phone may have suggested disinterest, disrespect, disengagement or distraction from their partner, as though the mobile could be turned to for support if they got bored in the present conversation.

Berman (2013a) reported on a study from the University of Rhode Island's Department of Human Development and Family Studies, which revealed that two thirds of college students surveyed admitted to sexting (sending sexually explicit or suggestive photographs via text message), while 78% had received sexually suggestive messages, and 56% reported receiving sexually suggestive images. Additionally, according to the survey, 10% of sexts were forwarded to friends without the consent of the person who originally sent the message. Berman (2013a) also addresses drunken texting communications, stating that they are often damaging to relationships and one's own self esteem. Berman (2013a) states that TUI (texting under the influence) can lead to morning-after regret, and warns to avoid texting during peak drinking hours. As it is common for young adults to navigate their social relationships via texting, they are similarly using sexting to navigate their sexual relationships (Drouin & Landgraff, 2011), which has major implications for the development of healthy and satisfying committed romantic relationships.

Theoretical Perspectives

There is no consensus on why couples may use texting and what it may mean for their relationships. The following section discusses varied theoretical ways to explain mobile phone usage, from across different disciplines. Two of the theories described are from the field of psychology and suggest ways that we may view texting within relationships as a behavior that is connected to early relationships with caregivers and constructions of self. The following two theories come from the social sciences and can assist us in viewing texting behaviors from a utilitarian perspective. It is my opinion that the reason for multiple perspectives used to understand mobile phone usage is because the research on couples and texting is so limited. Additionally, marketing and cultural norms have been a strong influence on the ways in which people go about facilitating communications with one another in their intimate lives.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory is a theory of development that has been applied to difficulties in interpersonal relationships (Berzoff, Hertz, & Flanagan, 2008). Attachment theory began with John Bowlby's work and was later developed by Mary Ainsworth. Bowlby and Ainsworth proposed that the earliest attachment styles become the basis of internal working models of attachment (ISMs), defined as the internal schema of interactions which define the expectations of young children (Berzoff et al., 2008). Bowlby recognized there are individual differences in the way children assess the accessibility of the attachment figure and how they regulate their behavior in response to stress (Fraley, 2010). ISMs are organized around the accessibility and responsiveness of an infant's caregiver, and an infant's organization is determined by his/her experience of his/her proximity seeking behaviors (Berzoff et al., 2008). Later in adolescence

and adulthood, ISMs determine interpersonal expectations and behavior in their romantic

relationships (Berzoff et al., 2008).

Relationships between adult romantic partners mimic those between infants and

caregivers. If the primary attachment figure is nearby, attentive, and accessible to the child, s/he

will likely experience feeling loved, secure, and confident, thus developing a secure

organization. If the child perceives that the attachment figure is not available to his/her needs,

the child will likely experience anxiety. Often these children have difficulty being soothed

(Fraley, 2010). Both types of relationships share the features of feeling safe when the other is

nearby and responsive; engaging in close, intimate, bodily contact; feeling insecure when the

other is inaccessible; sharing discoveries with one another; playing with one another's facial

features and mutual fascination and preoccupation with one another; and engaging in "baby talk"

(Fraley, 2010). Hazan and Shaver (1987) confirm that adult attachment is guided by the

assumptions that the same motivational system responsible for emotional bonds with between

infant and caregiver is responsible for the bond that develops between individuals in emotionally

intimate relationships.

Exploring the past attachments with early caregivers can lend valuable information in

understanding relational patterns in intimate relationships. Human brains are genetically hard-

wired for attachment, in search of interpersonal nourishment needed to structure the brain for

personal well-being and healthy relationships; the brain's attachment system directs a child to

seek physical closeness and communication with the primary caretaker (Badenoch, 2008). A

couple relationship is influenced by the nature of attachment between partners, which is a result

of the attachment style of each person. Hazan and Shaver (1987) state that individuals with

different attachment styles experience romantic relationships differently; they believed romantic

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love to be an attachment process, in which an individual becomes emotionally bonded to a romantic partner in the same way an infant becomes attached to primary caregivers. Different kinds of attachment shape the mind and create a subjective experience (Badenoch, 2008).

Dietmar (2005) distinguishes between the four adult attachment styles: secure, fearful, possessive, and dismissing. A person with a secure attachment style has a positive self-image as well as a positive image of the partner so that a stable and trustful relationship can ensue. The other three attachment styles can be characterized as insecure types, in which the degree of insecurity reaches different magnitudes. A fearfully attached person for instance has both a negative self-image and a negative image of the partner, so that the relationship is plagued by constant insecurity. The possessive type is distinguished by a negative self-image but a positive image of the partner, leading to a great fear of loss. A dismissing type on the other hand has a positive self-image and a negative image of the partner, leading to great emphasis on independence and distance. Adults can be insecure in their relationships and may be anxious-resistant, meaning they are easily frustrated and angry when their attachment needs are not met. Adults who were secure in their romantic relationships were more likely to recall their childhood relationships with parents as being affectionate, caring, and accepting (Fraley, 2010).

Lasen (2011) suggests that because of the pervasiveness of the mobile phone, its role in shaping the self is more powerful as compared with other technologies. Further, she points out that the mobile phone can be seen as an attachment device because many feel lost or anxious without it.   Research also suggests that mobile phone calls and text messages can nurture social bonds (Rettie, 2007). The type of attachment between two partners significantly influences a couple's relationship (Dietmar, 2005). Varying attachment styles give rise to different relationships strategies. Within the context of romantic relationships, those who exhibit anxious

attachment demonstrate both an intense desire for closeness and an intense fear of abandonment

or separation (Drouin & Landgraff, 2011). For those with this style of attachment, texting a

partner via mobile phone would seem to meet certain relationship needs. For those who exhibit

avoidant attachment and fear dependence, self-disclosure and intimacy, texting may be more or

less appealing depending on the individual's use of the function.

The influence of attachment style can be associated with all parts of a relationship and

bears on communication between partners. Attachment style can also be understood to influence

a couple's mobile communication, because varying styles determine will how partners relate to

each other. In attachment situations such as lack of proximity, long separation, stress, and fear,

adults exhibit attachment behavior which manifests in seeking support and intimacy (Dietmar,

2005). Dietmar (2005) found from a questionnaire-based survey that securely attached people

telephone more frequently and are more content with their SMS and telephone communication as

compared with insecure attachment types. Additionally, it was found that possessive attachment

types use communication media over other types out of jealousy or in order to monitor one's

partner.

Different types of attachment shape the mind and create a specific type of subjective

experience (Badenoch, 2008). As attachment theory helps to understand the role of early

interactions as they relate to adult romantic relationships, I would hypothesize that one's

attachment style contributes to the ways in which he/she is comfortable with communication by

means of technological devices.

Object Relations Theory

Object relations theory emphasizes one's inner world and examines the dual process of

people experiencing themselves as separate and independent from others, while also feeling an

attachment to others (Berzoff, Melano Flanagan, & Hertz, 2008). According to this theory, people have an internal, often unconscious world of relationships that are different, and in many ways more influential than what exists in their external world of social relationships; focus is placed on interactions between individuals, the ways interactions are internalized, and the central role these internalized object relations play in psychological life (Berzoff et al., 2008). Object relations includes both relationships with others and internalized representations of the self and others, placing attention on how needs are or are not met in relationships. Since a person's external needs are to be met by other people, the relationship is placed at the center of the experience. These needs include being viewed and valued by others as an individual, to be accepted for both positive and negative qualities, and to be given love, care, and protection (Berzoff et al., 2008).

Donald Winnicott developed the term transitional object to describe the way children hold on to the internal presentations of others and observed it to be a crucial aspect of infants developing the sense of being an individual who is both separate from yet connected with others (Berzoff et al., 2008). The motivation to integrate internal and external reality is an aspect of creating transitional space and experiences continue to be crucial throughout the lifespan to maintain a secure sense of self (Winnicott, 1967). According to Turkle (1984), the term transitional object can be used to characterize aspects of technology. This is particularly interesting to think about in terms of a mobile phone acting as a transitional object for adults in the absence of one's romantic partner; the mobile phone could be used to bridge the gap between separateness and internal representations of one's partner. In this case, the mobile helps to settle the internal conflicts of attachment and individualism.

Text message communication has the capacity to facilitate a virtual world of

relationships, allowing users to internalize mental representations of the people in their social

network. Because texting does not involve face-to-face interaction, people must rely on their

imagination and internal constructions to incorporate meaning from relationships within their

network. Should issues in communication or conflict arise, users must resolve what is presented

in reality with their internal definitions and meanings of relationships. Logically, poor

communication or the inability to resolve conflicts may impair not only the real status of the

relationship, but also internal representation of a user (Drussell, 2012).

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory is derived from basic principles of economics and compares

human behavior to that of transactions in a market place environment (Emerson, 1976). The

theory assumes that human social behavior is based upon the drive to maximize benefits while

minimizing costs. Simply put, one must give in order to receive. For maximum satisfaction, the

level of perceived rewards need to be greater than the amount of the perceived costs expended

during the interaction process. In social exchange theory, six rewards exist, including: love,

money, status, goods, information, and services; the identified costs are time and energy

(Drussell, 2012)). Within this theory, relationships are evaluated using a cost-benefit analysis,

with an expectation that social relations will be established and continued based on being

mutually gainful (Zafirovski, 2001). Recent social exchange theorists have emphasized the role

that social, economic, political, and historical contexts play in social exchanges (Hutchinson,

2008).

The issue of power is a premise within social exchange theory, and those with greater

resources often hold more power over others during social exchanges (Hutchinson, 2008). This

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power can relate not only to control of potential rewards and punishments, but also the ability to influence the thoughts and behaviors of others within social exchanges. The basis for this control exists when one person is dependent on another for his or her own sense of rewards (Drussell, 2012). When applying social exchange theory to the phenomenon of text messaging, it might be understood that the technological exchanges between individuals capture a mutual cost-benefit arrangement. The time and energy one devotes to texting one's partner may relate to perceived responses or rewards, differing from conventional face-to-face interactions in which perhaps more thought or effort is necessary for mutually beneficial social exchanges. According to exchange theory, "a relationship is more stable the greater the benefit is relative to the costs incurred, and the less attractive alternative partners are" (Dietmar, 2005, p. 2). Since the theory assumes that partners in a dyadic relationship pursue a balance in benefit, application to the use of mobile phones in couple relationships must first consider the balance of the exchange of texts and contacts, and how the balance takes place. There remain questions as to the effects of perceived unbalanced technological exchange (Dietmar, 2005).

Needs and Uses Perspectives

Abraham Maslow introduced his concept of a hierarchy of needs in his 1943 paper, *A Theory of Human Motivation.* According to Maslow, people are motivated to fulfill basic needs before moving on to other, more advanced needs (Huit, 2007). Maslow believed that needs are similar to instincts and play a major role in motivating behavior. Deficiency needs are needs are due to deprivation, while growth needs arise from a desire to grow as a person. Maslow coined five levels in his hierarchy of needs: physiological (basic needs vital to survival), security (need for safety), social (need for belonging, love, and affection), esteem (need for personal worth and social recognition), and self-actualization (need for personal growth).

Maslow stated that belonging is a fundamental human need and everyone needs social relations (Jin & Park, 2010). Baumeister & Leary (1995) explained the need to belong as a desire to form interpersonal attachments and thought it to be the basic motive which resulted in impacts on social functioning. Jin & Park (2010) attest that people have an innate desire to relate to other people and mobile phones have an influence in satisfying our need to belong, which requires social interaction. According to Schutz (1966), people communicate three basic needs with others for the purpose of feeling cared for and important: affection (the need to achieve or maintain relationships centered around love, devotion, and mutual support); inclusion (the need to acknowledge one another and interact well); and control (the need to initiate or sustain power and influence over others). People communicate with others to feel cared about, important to others, and included (Jin & Park, 2010). The experience of loneliness arises from the absence of social relationships adept to satisfying the needs for belonging and attachment (Reid & Reid, 2007). Text messaging by means of the mobile phone helps to meet social and esteem needs outlined by Maslow.

Uses and gratifications theory (UGT) informs understanding of how and why people actively seek out particular media sources to satisfy particular needs (West & Turner, 2004). UGT focuses on what people do with media. The theory assumes that people are not passive consumers of media, but instead have the power over their media consumption, taking an active role in understanding and incorporating media into their lives. UGT asserts that people are responsible for choosing media to meet their wants and needs in order to gain gratification (West & Turner, 2004).

Solis (2006) reports that a study on the uses and gratifications of the mobile phone showed the most salient motivations for use are immediate access, mobility, and instrumentality.

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One's method of contact will depend on the goals and expectations of the individual (Reid & Reid, 2007). Reid & Reid (2007) describe developments in the uses and gratifications models of internet use as paralleling mobile phone users' attitudes regarding texting. They argue that anxious mobile phone users are motivated by intimacy, social contact, and self-preservation, all rewards of basic SMS activity. Lonely users are expected to believe that texting is a means to an end or a substandard replacement for voice calls. Studies taking the uses and gratifications perspective attempt to explain why people use mobile phones and the kinds of expectations or gratification people would find in using such devices (Jin & Park, 2010). Typically there was found to be two categories of motives/gratifications, intrinsic and instrumental. Intrinsic refers to social motives which involve communication with others through the telephone for purposes of companionship. Instrumental refers to task-oriented motives use the phone for utility. Traditional uses and gratifications models assume that users seek out media in a goal-directed fashion in order to gratify a range of needs; however the almost boundless functionality of new media makes active learning and exploration essential for their proficient use, and it is at this point that users' insights into their own abilities and needs become important (Reid & Reid, 2010).

Empirical Perspectives on Texting and Couple Relationships

The following section discusses various studies related to: the role of texting in facilitating relationship development; perceptions of texting in relationships; challenges to relationships based on texting; and abuse in relationships and the role of texting. Concepts related to gender differences, dating rituals, relationship development, communication patterns, and the influence of mobile phone technology are discussed. The section concludes with discussion of limitations in the empirical research.

Role of Texting in Facilitating Relationship Development

Pettigrew (2009) conducted interviews to investigate how text messaging through mobile phones relates to feeling of connectedness within strong-tie, dyadic relationships. Pettigrew recruited through snowball sampling, conducting 19 pair interviews and sampling 38 people (18 male, 20 female), ranging in age from 18 to 54 years old. The sample consisted of fraternal relationships as well as same-sex, platonic friendships, heterosexual dating couples, engaged couples, and cohabiting partners. Family pairs included sisters, married couples, and one father–son relationship. All except one dyad were between the ages of 18 and 22, so results cannot be understood for those older than age 22. Ethnic backgrounds were not considered in the results of this study. Additionally, this study was not limited to romantic partnerships so it is difficult to better understand how text messaging impacts this specific dyad. Three themes relating to texting behaviors or perceptions about texting emerged from the interviews, including: texting allowed for perpetual contact, texting allowed for private and direct communication, and texting facilitates interpersonal connectedness and autonomy.

Solis (2006) found that romantic relationships initiated and maintained through the text message function are capable and possible of developing into greater levels of intimacy. They identified characteristics of the mobile phone which contributed to this development including: anonymity and autonomy (which made initiation of the relationship easier), affordability, accessibility, immediacy, and privacy (enabled development and maintenance of relationship). Additionally, convenience, regularity, and redundancy contribute to the development of intimacy. They did not find that gender differences correlated with various texting behaviors.

Telecommunication companies have reported that texting is a popular means by which to flirt and initiate dates (Byrne & Finlay, 2004). Byrne & Finlay (2004) conducted a study to

investigate sex differences in the initiation of dating and relationships using text messaging and

telephone calls. Participants in the study were 266 Australian residents (159 female, 107 male),

with a mean age of 28, who were either single (74%) or in an exclusive romantic relationship for

less than 12 months (26%), who completed a self-report questionnaire that assessed initiating

behaviors. Researchers found that traditional gender role expectations and preference for

telephone communication are common in date initiation, despite the influence of texting in

initiating the first romantic moves. Females in the study were more likely to initiate moves using

texting over calls, while males had no preference. Males were found to be more likely to call

over text for a first date, while females were reluctant regardless of the communication channel.

There was not found to be any gender difference when initiating text messages. The findings

suggested that texting influenced the way first moves were made, however did not appear to

affect the initiation of dates after a face-to-face encounter. The study's sample was limited to

those identifying as heterosexual, who resided in Australia. Communication preference and

gender-prescribed behavior are rooted in Australian culture.

      Coyne, Stockdale, Busby, Iverson, & Grant (2011) surveyed individuals within romantic

relationships to find out more about how communication technologies are used to communicate

with one another, frequency of use, and association with positive or negative communication.

Researchers surveyed 1,039 (641 female, 428 male) people in relationships. Results from their

study indicated that the majority of individuals used mobile phones and text messaging to

communicate with their partner. "Expressing affection" was noted as being the most common

reason for contact. Younger participants were also found to be more frequent users. Coyne et al.

(2011) found that 25% of the sample used texting to discuss serious issues or to talk about

confrontational issues. 3% of the sample used texting to send mean messages or hurt their

partner. Overall, depending on its intent, texting can have both a positive and negative effect on relationships. Coyne et al. (2011) expect that texting will remain common and might be the primary way many couples stay in touch with each other in the near future. Further, the authors suggest that long-term effects need to be studied, especially as texting may be prone to miscommunication because of the missing nonverbal channels. Their research was limited those in serious, committed, heterosexual relationships, and 82% were Caucasian.

The mobile phone inscribes diverse aspects of a couples' relationship (Lasen, 2011). From dating to falling in love to declaring official couple status, the evolution of modern couple relations can be written and read by means of the mobile phone. The progress of the relationship can be tracked by changes in either voice or text modalities, as well as by the content of the mobile exchanges or conversations. Mobiles can epitomize a soothing presence of a significant other through loving message but there is also potential for a clash. Lasen (2011) explores how the presence, ownership, and different uses of mobile phones play a role in shaping and transforming intimate relationships. Lasen (2011) defines the dual nature of social cohesion as the achievement of trust, sharing, solidarity, and identity in an interdependent relationship which involves both the establishment of a network of mutual obligations, negotiations, and latent and explicit conflicts, as well as control and power relationships.

Lasen (2011) discusses past research taking place in Madrid in 2006 and 2008, through a series of interviews with couples (ranging in age) about their mobile use and their relationship. Lasen (2011) reported that mobile phones are used to strengthen cohesion in couples, the affective bonds, and the coordination of the partners. Depending on the intentions and interest of the mobile users and their partners, some features of the mobile phone were developed and strengthened, while others were downplayed. Lasen (2011) argued that agency can be a result of

an interchange between people and devices, while able to be either collaborative or conflictual depending on subjection, resistance, or infighting. A couples' mobile use and communication demonstrates an example of shared agency between people and mobile phones. Mobile phones have changed social rituals of interaction and blurred connections and boundaries between personal realms (Lasen, 2011). Texting often plays a part in relationships and text messages are often present from first contact to breakup between couples. It is not uncommon for texting to play a role in flirting, courtship, adultery, and erotic games (Lasen, 2011).

Mobile phones also have an impact on the ways in which people establish trust and new reciprocal obligations. They help to retain closeness and distance; also playing a role in new etiquette rules, power, and control in couple communication (Lasen, 2011). According to Green (2001), mobile phones help in creating and sustaining bonds. Additionally, they monitor and control significant others. Mobile communication contributes to the economy of affect and emotion management (Picard, 1997). Qui (2007) refers to this as the "wireless leash," contributing to a couple's communication patterns and the way intimacy is formed and shaped, thus redefining intimacy. Because a text message can be received at any time or place, people can multitask, replying discreetly and secretly. Therefore, text messaging is more likely to contribute to the feeling of perpetual contact than voice calls. Lasen (2011) discussed the "emerging entity of 'me and my mobile'" as illustrating a person's accessibility and availability to their partners and the rest of the world (p. 88).

Mobile phones allow for varying degrees of self-control, exposure, or emotion to be communicated and require people to constantly be responsive within a reason of virtual presence, perpetual contact and connected presence (Lasen, 2011). The role of communication through text messaging may produce a unique outcome for the self-disclosure message interactions and

the relationship between self-disclosure and the use of text messages is unclear. Self-disclosure fosters interpersonal trust, dampens anxiety following trauma, enhances the quality of social relationships, and improves negotiation outcomes (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009). McKenna, Green & Gleason (2002) write that texting may promote an open information exchange, but often restricts how much one learns about another who is doing the disclosing. Research has shown that people do not have stable disclosure strategies and base their decisions to disclose on short-term environmental cues (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009).

Mobile communication can contribute towards a couple's effective communication (Deitmar, 2005). Dietmar (2005) provides a theoretical examination of mobile communication in couple relationships, identifying the interrelations between the dyadic nature of the couple relationship, the mobile phone, each individual's characteristics, and demands of everyday lives placed on the partners. Key elements of satisfaction with and success of mobile communication were investigated. The article presents initial quantitative and qualitative results based on how forms of mobile communication are used in these dyadic relationships. The participants in this study were 460 students at the Ilmenau Technical University in Germany. Both partners of the couple were interviewed, ranging in age, gender, educational level and living situation. Results from the study indicated that mobility processes in daily routines, cost considerations, and communication technology preferences were the most important factors when deciding how to communicate with partners. Additionally, it was found that media-based messages and contact can be seen as resources exchanged between partners, with the majority of participants considering exchanges "pleasant" and "not bothersome." Finally, attachment styles of partners were confirmed to be reflected in the communication within their romantic relationship.

Perceptions of Texting in Relationships

Mobile phones give romantic partners the ability to contact one another any time of the day. Duran, Kelly and Rotaru (2011) noted the impact of perpetual contact on romantic partners' interactions. Duran et al (2011) conducted a study among 210 college students who were currently involved in a romantic relationship (145 female, 65 male), with an average age of 21, who completed a survey assessing participants' rules concerning mobile phone use with their partners, satisfaction with that use, perceptions of autonomy versus connection in the relationship, and possible conflicts with mobile phone use. Duran et al. (2011) found that, "lower levels of satisfaction with the use of cell phones in romantic relationships and higher availability expectations were significantly associated with less satisfaction with amount of time with partner, with feelings of restricted freedom, and with more desire to control the partner" (p. 32). Additionally, they found that higher levels of dialectical tension were related to more conflict over mobile phone interaction with the opposite sex and over insufficient calling or texting (Duran et al., 2011).

While for some couples conflict arises from lack of calling or texting, for others, it is the excessive texting or expectations that create such conflict. Some conflicts lead to jealousy, which can be detrimental to a romantic relationship. The results presented by Duran et al. (2011) suggest that mobile phones are used extensively, causing conflict, initiating rules, and influencing perceptions of autonomy and connectedness in the context of the romantic relationship. Duran et al. (2011) found that participants who were dissatisfied with their mobile phone use in their relationship were more likely to be dissatisfied with the time spent with their partner. The results also showed the significant impact that young adults' reliance on mobile phones can have on their romantic relationships. Duran and his colleagues found that feelings of

jealously arose when one partner used his/her mobile phone to converse with a member of the opposite gender. Given the prevalence and popularity of this technology, Duran et al. (2011) predict that the potential strain of the autonomy versus connection on relationships will only increase. Since mobile phones are increasingly ubiquitous, they likely play a role in the dialectical tension of autonomy versus connection inherent in interpersonal relationships (Duran et al., 2011).

There are several different reasons why and how couples in romantic relationships use mobile phones; the ways in which individuals perceive the use of their mobile phones with regard to their relationships is important. Miller-Ott, Kelly, & Duran (2012) conducted a survey among 277 people (173 female, 54 male) involved in romantic relationships to find how the use of mobiles phones impacted their relationship. Their findings indicated that mobile phones are an integral facet of communication within romantic relationships. Mobile phones were found to be strongly and positively associated with relational satisfaction. Predictors of satisfaction with mobile phones included: rules about limiting calls and texts to others when the couple is together, rules restricting partners from starting relational arguments via phone, rules about acceptability of calling or texting a second time after a non-response, and rules regarding acceptability of checking the other partner's text messages or call logs. Respondents who reported feeling like their freedom was restricted by their partner indicated less satisfaction with mobile use. Additionally, results showed that partners were more satisfied if they were in constant communication with one another. Rules romantic couples established concerning how they use mobile phones to communicate had a strong effect on their relationships. Overall, those most satisfied did not have rules or restrictions about their mobile use. With the exception of rules about arguing via mobile phone, the participants in this study seemed to reject boundaries

about mobile usage, even with regard to their privacy. The researchers found the more satisfied a person was using their mobile phone to communicate within a romantic relationship, the more satisfaction they gained from their relationship. Miller-Ott, Kelly, & Duran (2012) noted gender differences in that women tended to view mobiles as enabling connection, whereas men tended to view mobiles as restricting because they were always expected to be available. Because the majority of participants in this study were women, the desire for fewer boundaries may be biased in that women may have more issues with trust in their relationships.

Solis (2006) conducted an explorational study in the Philippines about the development of romantic relationships through texting. Solis (2006) found that romantic relationships initiated and maintained through texting are possible and capable of developing into higher levels of intimacy. The survey of 73 respondents (gender not specified) who initiated or maintained romantic relationships through texting, found that the unique features of the texting functions are possible and capable of developing into higher levels of intimacy. Follow up interviews were conducted with 43 participants, although specific demographics were not reported. Data analysis from this study indicated the typical individual engaging in romantic relationships through texting was 23 years old, single, and more likely female. Additionally, it was found that men and younger participants were more adventurous than their respective partners in exploring their relationships. There was not found to be correlation between gender and texting behaviors; respondents' text exchanges with their partners ranged from 1 to 100 messages per day.

The mobile phone's capacity for immediacy, accessibility, privacy, anonymity, autonomy, regularity, convenience, affordability, and redundancy accounted for the possibility for romantic relationships to exist through texting. Autonomy and anonymity were the aspects

of texting technology that made initiation of romantic relationships easier, as participants noted it gave them the courage to say what they may not normally say aloud.   Immediacy, accessibility, privacy, and affordability were identified as texting characteristics which enabled partners to maintain their romantic relationships. Solis (2006) explains that texting has become essential and inherent in dynamics of romantic relationships because mobile phones have become an extension of the body. Solis (2006) notes that a pattern in relationships and texting may be considered a means of 'technological foreplay.' The results of this study were based on a small sample in the Phillipines and cultural norms may play into results.

Challenges to Relationships Based on Texting

Horstmanshof & Power (2005) provide a report about how texting affects young adults' pattern of communication and social behavior. Using focus groups to collect data about the role of texting in young people's lives and allowing participants' open ended responses, themes that arose from the discussion represent group ideas. The authors report the appeal of texting being that it is cheap, quick, convenient, and efficient. Additionally, it was noted that participants felt that texting helped to control communication. A general consensus among the group was that text messages should be responded to immediately or it is presumed as rudeness. In fact, because of this rule, many use the excuse that their phone was low on battery which inhibited their ability to respond. Because texting is assumed to be answered as soon as possible, users reported checking their phones constantly. Another rule seemed to emerge that required saying good night or good morning to a significant other via text. Some participants indicated resentment about the constant demands that go along with having a mobile phone, in particular among men in the groups. There seemed to be an awareness among the group in the generation growing up with computer access, that they are accustomed to interacting with numerous

electronic devices at once and have been socialized to multitask. The study was lacking in gender differences in mobile phone use.

Sansone & Sansone (2013) discuss the psychosocial risks of mobile phones. The authors identify that stress and/or sleep disturbance can be a risk which appears to be related to feeling compelled to promptly respond to mobile-phone activity in order to maintain spontaneity and access with others. The authors site a study conducted in the United Kingdom in which mobile phone technology was associated with increased personal stress, which was attributed to participants getting caught up in compulsively checking for new messages, alerts, and updates. Sansone & Sansone (2013) found another study by means of telephone interviews of 1,367 people in upstate New York which focused on mobile use and potential boundary effects between work and home. Persistent communication by mobile phone was associated with increased personal distress, decreased family satisfaction, and blurred boundaries between work and family environments in a negative way.

In addition to the expectations, unspoken rules, and stress that can come from texting, navigating dating scenarios would seem to complicate this matter. During dating periods couples often feel a great degree of uncertainty. Research suggests that this uncertainty is reduced through self-disclosure messages and often results in a higher level of intimacy (Knobloch & Solomon, 2004). Yet variations in individual comfort level with texting may present couples with the dilemma of knowing what level of self disclosure is appropriate, especially via text. Researchers indicate that relational uncertainty (the degree of confidence people have in their perceptions of involvement within interpersonal relationships) is a fundamental component of close relationships that shapes communication behaviors between partners (Jin & Pena, 2010). Reduction of relational uncertainty is valuable to partners because it can promote closeness and

commitment. The extent to which texting affects relational uncertainty has value because it could contribute to either ruptures in the relationship or moments of healing.

Jin & Pena (2010) suggest that text messaging might be preferred in the initial stage of the relationships. They conducted a study related to couples' mobile phone use, in which they explored associations between mobile use of college students in romantic relationships and its associations with relational (e.g., uncertainty, love and commitment) and individual characteristics (e.g., avoidant and anxious attachment styles). The authors surveyed 197 college students (137 female, 60 male), ranging in age from 18 to 34, and found that greater use of mobile calls with a romantic partner was associated with lower relational uncertainty and more love and commitment. The online survey asked questions relating to time spent using mobile phones and the frequency by which mobile phones were used to communicate with their romantic partners. The study found that couples who spent more time on the phone reported higher levels of relationship commitment. Additionally, it was noted that participants' attachment styles were significantly associated with voice call use.

Jin & Pena (2010) found that more frequent mobile and face-to-face contact was significantly associated with less perceived loneliness, and individuals in romantic relationships used mobile phones more frequently than those not in romantic relationships. The results of their study suggest that participants reporting greater frequency or duration of time using voice calls showed less relationship uncertainty and more love commitment. Those who were uncomfortable with closeness and who scored high in avoidance, tended to use voice calls less than those with lower avoidance scores; the more often participants spent calling their significant others, the less relational uncertainty they felt. Researchers also found that participants who used their mobile phones more often with their partners reported greater love and commitment in their

relationships than those who did not use their mobile phones as often. At the same time, no

significant correlations were found between positive relationship variables and text messaging.

Text messaging was negatively associated to relationship length, showing that the longer

participants were involved in the relationships, the less they used texting messaging with their

partner. The study only captured users in a small age demographic range and did not address the

experience of people in the early stages of romantic relationship in terms of the effect that texting

has on relationship development. The lack of clarity about how often to text or how much time

should lapse between texts can contribute to anxiety and uncertainty in regard to the

communication. What is lacking in the literature is the impact that distractions by mobile phones

have on couple's feelings of connectedness.

Abuse in Relationships and the Role of Texting

Although power and control is suggested by several authors conceptualizing the role of

texting in relationships, few have looked at the actual relationship between texting and abuse in

relationships. It is not surprising that the ability to be in perpetual contact can foster unhealthy

boundaries. One recent report focused on teenagers, explains the role of texting in emotional

abuse and teen dating violence.

Sexting as defined by McDonald (2010) is "sending sexually explicit photos by mobile

phone" (p. 19). It has become one of the newest issues in communication technology and is

widespread among teenagers in the US. Drouin & Landgraff (2013) report that texting and

sexting are common practices in young adult romantic relationships, while Drouin, Vogul,

Surbey, & Stills (2013) add that it is common across all types of romantic relationships

(committed, casual sex, and cheating). McDonald (2010) reports that twenty percent (20%) of

thirteen to nineteen-year-olds admitted to sending or receiving "sexts," while twenty percent

(20%) of young women ages fourteen to eighteen reported experiencing sexual or physical abuse from an intimate partner. Twenty-five percent (25%) of teens report being put down or harassed by a partner through mobile phones and texting, while twenty percent (20%) have been asked to engage in unwanted sex through such means. Teens often follow rigid gender stereotypes and many young men feel entitled to control their girlfriend's behavior by any means available (McDonald, 2010). Mobile phones have enabled teenagers to have contact with one another at any time of the day or night. Having the ability to communicate constantly, without limits or adult intrusion, can open the door for teenagers to harass, manipulate, and abuse romantic partners by means of mobile phones. Additionally, users may threaten harm if texts are not answered immediately (McDonald, 2010). Teen dating violence and abuse typically mimic abuse patterns in adult relationships, often involving emotional abuse. High school is a critical time for teens' social and emotional development, and opinions and behaviors learned during these years often develop into lifelong patterns (McDonald, 2010).

Dating violence is prominent across race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation. Because victims often have enduring self-esteem issues and challenges developing healthy and meaningful relationships in life, this further highlights the importance of social workers' understanding of the roots of such issues that will likely present in the therapeutic setting. Emotional abuse is often the most detrimental and hidden form of abuse (McDonald, 2010). A common trend of retaliation for being broken up with is to disseminate explicit sexts to others who were not intended to see such content (McDonald, 2010). Sixty-one percent (61%) of teens who reported sexting were pressured to do so at least once. These findings do not take into account non-heterosexual relationships. McDonald (2010) notes that because technology changes at such a rapid pace, it is hard to address problems that arise from new communication

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technology, particularly when it comes to the law. In conventional domestic violence, technology can enable victim stalking.

Benotsch, Snipes, Martin, and Bull (2012) note that sexting may result in embarrassment, mental health problems, public dissemination of sexual photos, or even legal consequences if a minor is involved. The researchers reported that sexting is associated with high-risk sexual behavior. They conducted a study via online questionnaire, with 763 (258 male, 505 female) college students between the ages of 18-25 years. Half of participants were Caucasian, and no one was older than 25, however, 44% of participants reported sexting. The researchers found that those who engaged in sexting were more likely to report recent substance use (such as alcohol, marijuana, ecstasy, and cocaine) and high risk sexual behavior, including unprotected sex and sex with multiple partners. The study relied on self-reported behavior, so participants may have over or underreported sexting, substance abuse, or sexual risk behaviors.   While recently the media has been more interested in sexting, few empirical studies have examined sexting behaviors in adults or the psychological or social characteristics of those who do.

Limitations of Research

To better understand research on mobile phone usage, this section reviewed studies related to the role of texting in facilitating relationship development, perceptions of texting in relationships, and challenges to relationships based on texting. The literature clearly shows that with the widespread use of technology in communication, relationships are affected. Literature on the effect of texting on a relationship is considerably sparser, despite the growing use of this mode of communication, and there is a gap in the literature about potential problems with mobile phone use based on the interplay with forming, maintaining, and quality of intimate relationships.

The limitations of the studies discussed include a lack of diversity in the sampled populations; the majority of participants were classified as young, Caucasian, heterosexual college students, primarily female. Differences in sexual orientation, age, racial/ethnic background are sorely needed. Additionally, most research has primarily focused on the function of mobile phones in platonic relationships and studies involving romantic relationships are missing from the literature. Most research explores usage and behaviors rather than addressing issues of power, abuse, or problems that may be associated with this form of communication.

Since this is a relatively new field, there are limited studies that discuss texting and couple relationships. Because it is not clear how mobile phone texting influences romantic relationships, additional research looking at texting and its role in relationships is warranted. My study seeks to contribute to knowledge about this phenomenon by sampling participants who use texting as mode of communication in their primary romantic relationships. The primary research question I used to construct my questionnaire was: "What are the effects of mobile telephone text message communication on dyadic romantic relationships?" which will help expand our knowledge about the role text messaging plays in the dynamics of romantic partnerships. The participants in this study answered questions that revealed the extent of their texting in their romantic relationships and their perceptions of the positive and negative aspects of this mode of communication. What follows in the next chapters are an overview of the study's methodology and implementation and the findings from this study.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The focus of my research is related to the implications of text messaging on partnered romantic relationships; this study focuses on the ways in which this phenomenon has impacted these couple relationships. Texting has been a continuing trend and phenomenon that presents a new set of challenges in understanding the interpersonal communication within romantic relationships. Texting has increased the options by which to communicate by means of mobile telephones and has changed how people engage with one another. For some, the use of texting can facilitate a relationship and for others, it can complicate aspects of a relationship. My research is geared towards determining the particular ways in which text messaging via mobile telephones either enhance or impair couple relations; the purpose of my research is to get a more accurate understanding as to the importance of texting in couple dynamics.

This research is designed to address the question "What are the effects of mobile telephone text message communication on dyadic romantic relationships?" and to deepen our understanding of the relationship between text messaging and couples. Questions addressed by the survey related to how texting has improved, worsened (often through miscommunications), or maintained romantic relations between partners. Some of the Likert-scale statements linked to previous literature included: texting is my primary method of communication, texting is my preferred method of communication, texting has helped to manage my anxiety around my relationship, I have texting things to my partner that I would not be willing to say over the phone or in person, It is rude to text others while in the company of a significant other, I have engaged

in sexting with my partner, and I have used text messaging to begin, end, or spice up a romantic relationship. In this chapter, I will describe my research design, recruitment, samples, and data.

Research Design

My intent was to investigate the influence of technology on couple relations using the online program, *SurveyMonkey*. My research was an exploration by means of a mixed methods approach. Using a Likert scale for rating participants' responses, I produced a 38 question survey. Participants were asked to rate their agreement with statements related to their use of text messaging with their partners and its impact on their romantic relationship. Participants were able to choose one of the following responses: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree. A sample statement read, "Texting with my partner has led to a miscommunication, disagreement, or argument." In addition to the scale, there was a comment box provided at the bottom of each question for explanation of the participant's rating or elaboration. The instructions included a sentence stating, "If you are willing, please use this comment box below each statement to elaborate, explain, or give an example to show why you chose your rating."

An internet survey was appropriate for this study since my intent was to look at technology users who engaged in text messaging. Therefore, surveying by means of computer technology and the internet was particularly appropriate for your study. A mixed methods design was chosen because it allowed for summary statistics through the scaling questions and the text boxes allowed for more detailed findings. There is a need for more studies that help define the phenomenon of texting as it impacts romantic relationships because limited research has been conducted in this area. An internet survey is useful because it allows for a larger sample size and a more diverse population sample. One of the things I did to ensure that my

measure made sense was to performed an informal pilot test to assure that the survey instrument was comprehendible and flowed, as well as the question logic was performing properly.

Sample

I chose a non-random, purposive sampling methodology because I wanted a tech-saavy population who were likely familiar with text messaging. Participants in this study were English speaking adults and had to have access to the internet to complete this on-line survey. Participants had to identify as being in a romantic relationship with one partner and they self reported their level of commitment and length of relationship. I wanted people in a current relationship because I wanted to explore their communication patterns within these relationships, and I screened for this status by using a Survey Monkey filter (see Appendix B). The desired sample size for the survey is at least 50 people and 75 people completed the survey. I was hopeful to have a sample diverse in age, gender, race, sexual preference, and socio-economic status, because previous research has not compared text message use across demographics. Diversity cannot be guaranteed, however, due to the limits of my sampling methodology. Participants were screened through the first question of the survey. They were asked to respond yes or no to the question "Are you between the ages of 18 and 70 and in a romantic relationship with one partner?" If the answer was no, the survey's question logic was set up to thank them and let them know that unfortunately, they did not meet the qualifications for the survey (see Appendix D). Those who answered yes continued to the survey. If a participant answered yes and proceeded to the informed consent, s/he needed to agree to the terms of the consent in order to continue with the survey (see Appendix E). The next questions included a self report from the participant as to how committed participants consider their relationship to be, followed by a question asking the duration of the relationship.

Recruitment

Participants were identified through snowball sampling from those known to my associates (friends, family members and fellow students). These individuals were emailed with the criteria for taking the survey and then given the link to the survey (see Appendix F). Recruitment and data collection began on March 6, 2013 and the survey was closed on April 11, 2013. The email encouraged all who received it to forward the message to as many people as possible in order to achieve a group with the largest range of diversity. I also posted a message on my Facebook wall asking all Facebook friends to repost it to their walls or forward the survey link to those they know who might be willing to take a thirty minute survey (see Appendix A). The posting included participant criteria. Due to the wide geographic area of my associates, I expected participants in the survey to be from different parts of the United States. I was hopeful that through the help of my social work network, I would have a greater likelihood of obtaining diversity in the sample. Because I used technology to recruit for my study, there is a potential for my sample to be biased to those who are familiar and comfortable with using a computer.

Ethics and Safeguards

The thesis proposal was approved by the Human Subjects Review (HSR) board at Smith School for Social Work on January 22, 2013 to ensure all possible efforts to maintain anonymity and confidentiality (see Appendix G). The HSR certified that all efforts were taken to consider and minimize the risks of participating in the research. The informed consent submitted outlined the study, including the potential risks and benefits of participation, the ethical standards and measures to protect anonymity and confidentiality and the researcher's contact information for questions and comments (see Appendix E). All participants agreed to the Informed Consent in order to be included in the analysis.

Participation in this study was completely voluntary, and participants were able to withdraw at any time until they submitted the survey; they also had the choice to refuse to answer any single question without leaving the survey as a whole. Participants in the online survey had to option to exit the survey at any time; however, due to the anonymity of the survey, participants were informed that it would not be possible to remove data from individual participants' responses after they pressed submit.

Participants were told in the email they received that participation was voluntary and they were free to end their participation at any time until they submit their survey. The first page of the online survey explained the process of informed consent for the survey and the anonymity of their survey responses offered by the internet survey providers' encryption of identifying information and risks and benefits of the process for the participant. Participants were asked to agree to take the survey or to disagree. If they agreed, they were forwarded to the survey. If they disagreed with the conditions of the survey, they were thanked for their time and were not permitted access to the questions asked. Participants were encouraged to print a copy of the informed consent for their records, as they were instructed that it contained the researcher's contact information and resources for support. The survey was completely anonymous and as a result did not have identifying information unless the participants choose to provide potentially identifying information in the comment boxes in the survey or contact the researcher, which no one did.

The survey was administered through *SurveyMonkey* with settings configured such that data can be gathered without revealing the email or IP addresses of participants. *SurveyMonkey* designated a code number automatically for all participants' responses.   The researcher reviewed all open-ended responses and found no identifying information such as names and place names.

As I am a student, my research advisor had access to the raw data after all identifying information had been removed in order to assist me with analysis and writing the thesis report. During dissemination of the research, all identifying data was removed or changed, and most data will be presented in terms of groups of people rather than individuals.

Although not my intention of the research, there was a possibility that responding to survey questions may be emotionally distressing or activating for some. It was possible that participants may recall an uncomfortable situation or unpleasant memory through the process. Participation in the study included a risk of eliciting feelings of upset or discomfort. Presumably, risks were minimal because there was a chance participants are already conscious of the effects texting has on their interpersonal relationships. For the internet survey, anonymity was guaranteed and all personal information from participants in the survey questions only was encrypted by *SurveyMonkey* and not made available to researchers. A list of referral sources was added to the informed consent form on the online survey. Since the survey is voluntary, the participant should not have felt obligated or coerced to participate.

Participants may have benefited from sharing their experiences as well as knowing their experiences and opinions have been heard. They may also have benefited from knowing that their participation was contributing to an area of research that has not yet been fully explored and their contributions were valuable to knowledge and practice regarding couples and couple therapy. Participants in this survey and interview had the chance to heighten their awareness of the ways they use communication technology and were given an opportunity to reflect on both positive and negative impacts of texting in their lives. By getting couples to think about their texting habits, it may have been part of their pre-contemplation/contemplation stages of change. For others' participation, there could be an aspect which resonated in a positive manner after the

survey is complete. For practicing clinicians who participated in the study, the research may

have inspired them to use an opportunity to engage with clients about the impacts of texting on

their personal relationships. There is a possibility clinicians will feel in a better position to offer

suggestions to clients upon their own reflections after the survey. There was no tangible benefit

for partaking in this research aside from a "thank you."

Only myself, a statistical consultant and the research advisor had access to data. During

the course of the study the data was password protected. Upon completion of the study, data was

deleted from my computer hard drive and from *SurveyMonkey*. Data files will be stored in a

secure electronic location for three years as required by federal guidelines for research and will

be destroyed at that time if no longer needed for future research. If still needed, all data will

continue to be kept in a secure locked location. All electronic files have been encrypted and

stored to protect them.

<p align="center">**Data Collection**</p>

Interested participants had access to the survey from March 6, 2013-April 11, 2013. The

data for this research study was collected through the use of a mixed method survey that was

created by the researcher. An anonymous, online version of the survey was constructed and

managed using the *SurveyMonkey* online program. The questionnaire consisted of 38 multiple

choice and likert scale questions, with an option to add additional comments to any question.

Participation in the survey was an estimated 30 minutes.

The type of data I used in my study included demographic, qualitative, and quantitative

data. As noted above, participants were first be asked a screening question that ascertained if

they are adults in a committed romantic relationship with one partner. If they did not meet this

criterion, they were thanked for their time (see Appendix D). The first page of the survey was

the informed consent information. All potential participants had to read and check a box that stated they agreed to participate in the survey prior to advancing to the survey instrument. If participants agreed, they were then prompted to self report their level of commitment to their partners. Participants were also asked to indicate the length of their current romantic relationship. They were then instructed to read 29 sentences and rank his/her agreement with the statement on a 5-point Likert Scale. Comment boxes at the bottom of each statement provided an opportunity for participants to expand on their thoughts if desired. In the final section of the survey, I requested six areas of demographic information including: age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual identity, income, and employment/student status. The final question asked about additional information/thoughts not included in the survey with a comment box provided. At the end of the survey, participants were invited to contact me if they have any questions about the study. A copy of the survey is provided in Appendix F. Participants who completed the entire survey were thanked for their participation (see Appendix C). The responses were recorded through the internet.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the mixed-method survey consisted of descriptive statistics for all demographic and Likert scale questions, qualitative analysis of open ended responses, and inferential statistics that looked at relationships between demographic characteristics and Likert responses. Further, simple counting was used as an integrative analytic tool between the quantitative and qualitative data to show which quantitative questions elicited the most responses and for which demographic groups.

The demographic data was analyzed by coding using nominal measurements. Age was entered using the actual number, while gender and relationship type can be coded into 1 and 2 or

more. Numerical representations were assigned to ethnicity, which was a category at the nominal level of measurement; length of relationship was at the interval/ratio level. The other quantitative data to be analyzed was the degree to which people agreed with each statement, and was at the ordinal level of measurement. Strongly agree was be coded "1," agree was coded "2," neutral was coded "3," disagree was coded "4," and strongly disagree was coded "5." In analysis, I used descriptive statistics for demographics and frequencies of responses. I correlated patterns of responding with some demographic variables using inferential statistics.

The qualitative data analyzed were the written and verbal comments that participants disclosed associated with each statement. Using content analysis, these responses were collapsed into categories, assigning the same code to responses that seem to belong together. After examining the extent of written responses, it was determined to analyze all written responses by question. The written comments were placed in a separate text file and were read. After an initial reading, using the constant comparison method, each piece of text was assigned a category. Each subsequent piece of text was compared if it belonged in an established category or a new category needed to be created. Once the narrative data was transformed into qualitative codes, the data was entered into the computer.

I am not sure if there are socially desirable responses in regard to what is acceptable/normal today in terms of means by which to communicate, whether it be using written computer text as opposed to interpersonal, live person interaction. Perhaps this could be true of older participants. I don't think that those born after 1980 would necessarily feel that communication by means of a device other than telephone would be considered less that socially desirable.

Possible ways biases or omissions might affect my study could be that participants do not represent the general population because they needed to be somewhat internet savvy in order to participate in my survey. Additionally, I recruited participants via my Facebook and email networks. I hoped that these recipients would forward my request on, and many did. However, my sample was not particularly diverse in race, gender and sexual orientation; they were mostly heterosexual females.

I note that my own biases include the facts that I believe young people (under age 30) are more likely to use texting as a key component of communication and that men are more likely than women to believe that texting suffices for intimate exchanges. I tried to minimize the effects of any biases in my questionnaire through my literature review and a thorough consideration of both positive and negative impacts of texting on romantic relationships. In the next chapter, I will report the detailed findings from this questionnaire.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to investigate the influence of mobile telephone text messaging technology on dyadic romantic relationships. Participants completed a survey that asked 29 questions about their use of mobile text messaging within their romantic relationship and 8 questions about their demographic information. This chapter will present the major findings from this study beginning with the demographics of the sample. The section that follows will present descriptive, frequency statistics that detail the respondents' quantitative answers for each Likert-scale question. Next, findings from the survey's qualitative data will be presented, including only the questions which generated the most open-ended responses in the comment boxes. Included in this section is a description of themes that emerged from participants' responses. The final section includes statistical analyses that examine whether different groups responded differently to the survey questions and relationships among variables.

Demographics

The data from seventy-five respondents was used for this study, however, because participants had the option to skip questions, several individuals that consented to the survey did not complete the entire survey. The valid percent is reported for each question because that number excludes missing values. Therefore, the percents represent the breakdown of those who answered the question. Of the sixty-nine people who reported their gender, 11.6% were men and 88.4% were women; of the sixty-eight people who reported their commitment level, 7% reported

being in a somewhat committed relationship, 16.9% reported being in a committed relationship, and 76.1% reported being in a very committed relationship. The mean relationship length among participants was 7.5 years (89.9 months) with a Standard deviation of 8.9 years (107.9 months), relationship length ranged from 2 months to 43.7 years (524 months). The sample is biased towards women who are in very committed relationships.

The sample of respondents was diverse in age but less diverse in ethnicity or sexual orientation when compared to national statistics. Ninety-one percent (91.4%) of the respondents identified themselves as White/Caucasian, 4.3% were Black/African American, 2.9% were Hispanic/Latina, 1.4% were Asian. The sexual orientation of the sample was 81.3% heterosexual, 2.7 % homosexual, 1.3% bisexual, 4% queer, 1.3% questioning, and 1.3% pansexual. The ages of the respondents showed a more even distribution with 39.1% being 18-29 years old, 43.4% being 30-40 years old and 17.3% being 40-70 years old. The economic status of the respondents also showed a wide range. The breakdown of respondents' annual household income is as follows: 29.4% of the respondents reported $30,000 or less, 44.1% reported $30,000-60,000 while 26.5% reported $60,000 or more. Fifty-nine percent (58.8%) described themselves of working fulltime, 8.8% working part-time, 25% full-time students, 1.5% unemployed, 2.9% on disability and 2.9% retired. There are limitations in the demographics, as the majority of the participants were White/Caucasian females between the ages of 18 and 35. These demographics are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

_____

Gender (n= 69)
  Female 88.4% (61)
  Male 11.6% (8)
Relationship Status (n=68)
  Somewhat Committed 7% (5)
  Committed 16.9% (12)
  Very Committed 76.1% (54)
Age (n=71)
  18-29 38.8% (27)
  30-35 32% (21)
  35-40 20.2% (14)
  40-60 9.3% (7)
Sexual Orientation (n=69)
  Heterosexual 88.4% (61)
  Homosexual 2.9% (2)
  Bisexual 1.4% (1)
  Queer 4.3% (3)
  Questioning 1.4% (1)
  Pansexual 1.4% (1)
Race/Ethnicity (n=70)
  White/Caucasian 91.4% (64)
  Black/African American 4.3% (3)
  Hispanic/Latina 2.9% (2)
  Asian 1.4% (1)
Annual Household Income (n=68)
  Less than 30,000 29.4% (20)
  30-60,000 29.4% (30)
  60,000+ 26.5% (18)
Employment Status (n=68)
  Working full-time 58.8% (40)
  Working part-time 8.8% (6)
  Student full-time 25% (17)
  Unemployed 1.5% (1)
  On disability 2.9% (2)
  Retired 2.9% (2)
Relationship Length (in months)
  Mean 89.92
  Median 63
  SD   107.9
_____

Responses to Likert Scale Questions Addressing Texting and Romantic Relationships

Since this was an exploratory study, participants were asked to respond to 29 Likert scale questions, which measured their perceptions of how text messaging plays a role in their romantic relationship. Each item was measured on a 5-point scale (1, strongly agree, to 5, strongly disagree). The twenty nine questions fell into the following researcher created categories: positive aspects of texting, negative aspects of texting, uses in relationship, issues related to trust or fidelity, and general opinions about texting in relationships. In the following section, the most pertinent findings in each category are highlighted in the text, followed by tables to report results for each question contained within the category.

Positive Aspects of Texting

Five of the Likert scale survey questions related to perceived benefits of texting. The majority of the sample reported using text messaging at work or school, and agreed that texting helps to maintain relationships when couples are geographically separated. As illustrated in table 2, eighty percent (N=56) of respondents either strongly agreed (N=19 or 27.1%) or agreed (N= 37 or 52.9%) with the statement, "texting helps to maintain my relationship when I am geographically separated from my partner." Eighty percent (N=69) of respondents either strongly agreed (N=18 or 26.1%) or agreed (N= 37 or 53.6%) with the statement, "I text my partner during school classes or work hours because it is discreet."

Whereas these practical aspects of texting were considered positive aspects, respondents were less united on their opinions regarding the positive aspects of texting for improving their relationships or commitment level of their relationship. Nearly an equal percentage of respondents agreed (N=17 or 23.6%) and disagreed (N=16 or 22.2%) with the statement, "the availability of texting has improved the commitment level of my relationship," with a large

portion being neutral (N=39 or 54.2%). Nearly an equal percentage of respondents agreed

(N=25 or 35.7%) and disagreed (N=24 or 34.3%) with the statement, "texting has improved my

relationship/communication with my partner," with a large portion being neutral (N=21 or 30%).

Table 2

Positive Aspects of Texting

	N	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The availability of texting has improved the commitment level of my relationship.	72	4.2% (3)	19.4% (14)	54.2% (39)	19.4% (14)	2.8% (2)
Texting has improved my relationship/communication with my partner.	70	1.4% (1)	34.3% (24)	30.0% (21)	24.3% (17)	10% (7)
Texting has helped to manage my anxiety around my relationship.	69	2.9% (2)	21.7% (15)	26.1% (18)	36.2% (25)	13.0% (9)
Texting helps to maintain my relationship when I am geographically separated from my partner.	70	27.1% (19)	52.9% (37)	10.0% (7)	8.6% (6)	1.4% (1)
I text my partner during school classes or work hours because it is discreet.	69	26.1% (18)	53.6% (37)	5.8% (4)	11.6% (8)	2.9% (2)

Negative Aspects of Texting

Eight of the questions related to perceived risks of texting. Nearly half of the sample

reported that texting with one's partner has led to miscommunication, disagreement, or

argument. As illustrated in table 3, forty-seven percent (n=34) of respondents either strongly

agreed (N= 8 or 11.1%) or agreed (N= 26 or 36.1%) with this statement. The majority of the

sample reported that the lack of tone in texting has caused miscommunication in relationship;

fifty-seven percent (N=39) of respondents either strongly agreed (N=15 or 21.7%) or agreed (N=24 or 34.8%) with the statement, "miscommunications with my partner via text message occur based on a lack of tone which causes confusion about the meaning behind the intended words." Nearly half of the sample agreed that miscommunications with partners happen due to words taken out of context; forty-seven percent (N=32) of respondents either strongly agreed (N=9 or 12.7%) or agreed (N=23 or 32.4%) with this statement About half of the sample (N= or 49.3%) disagreed with the statement, "technical difficulties with mobile phone service have contributed to misinterpreted communication in my relationship," while 36.2% (N=25) agreed and 14.5% (N=10) remained neutral.

Roughly 7% (N=5) agreed with the statement, "I have been harassed or verbally abused by my partner via text message," and approximately 9% (N=6) agreed with the statement, "I have felt pressure from my partner to sext." Seventy-three percent (N=51) either strongly disagreed (N=17 or 24.3%) or disagreed (N= 34 or 48.6%) with the statement, "texting has worsened my relationship/communication with my partner." The majority of the sample either strongly disagreed (N=24 or 34.8%) or disagreed (N=30 or 43.5%) with the statement, "I have texted something to my partner while under the influence of a substance that I have later regretted."

Table 3

Negative Aspects of Texting

	N	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Texting with my partner has led to miscommunication, disagreement, or argument.	72	11.1% (8)	36.1% (26)	12.5% (9)	27.8% (20)	12.5% (9)
Miscommunications with my partner via text message result from words taken out of context.	71	12.7% (9)	32.4% (23)	26.8% (19)	18.3% (13)	9.9% (7)
Miscommunications with my partner via text message occur based on a lack of tone which causes confusion about the meaning behind the intended words.	69	21.7% (15)	34.8% (24)	24.6% (17)	10.1% (7)	8.7% (6)
Texting has worsened my relationship/communication with my partner.	70	2.9% (2)	7.1% (5)	17.1% (12)	48.6% (34)	24.3% (17)
I have texted something to my partner while under the influence of a substance that I have later regretted.	69	2.9% (2)	10.1% (7)	8.7% (6)	43.5% (30)	34.8% (24)
Technical difficulties with mobile phone service have contributed to misinterpreted communication in my relationship.	69	7.2% (5)	29% (20)	14.5% (10)	31.9% (22)	17.4% (12)
I have felt pressure from my partner to "sext."	69	1.4% (1)	7.2% (5)	5.8% (4)	40.6% (28)	44.9% (31)
I have been harassed or verbally abused by my partner via text message.	69	1.4% (1)	5.8% (4)	1.4% (1)	27.5% (19)	63.8% (44)

Uses in Relationships

Five of the Likert scale questions related to uses of texting in relationships. The majority of the sample reported that they have used text messaging to begin, end, or spice up a relationship. As illustrated in table 4, sixty-five percent (N=45) of respondents either strongly agreed (N=4 or 5.8%) or agreed (N=41 or 59.4%) with the statement, "I have used text messaging to begin, end, or spice up a romantic relationship." The majority of the sample reported using "smileys" in their text messaging to their partners. Eighty-seven percent (N=59) of respondents either strongly agreed (N=24 or 35.3%) or agreed (N=35 or 51.5%) with the statement, "I have incorporated "smileys" into my text messages to emphasize feeling or tone."

The majority of the sample disagree, however, that they primarily communicate with their partner using text messaging (N=55 or 78.9%), would break up with their partner via text message (N=67 or 97.1%), or would use texting to say things they wouldn't be willing to say over the telephone or in person (N=58 or 82.9%).

Table 4

Uses in Relationships

	N	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I primarily communicate with my partner using text messaging.	70	4.3% (3)	10% (7)	7.1% (5)	50% (35)	28.6% (20)
If I wanted/needed to break up with my partner, I would do so via text message.	69	1.4% (1)	1.4% (1)	0	7.2% (5)	89.9% (62)
I have texted things to my partner that I would not be willing to say over the telephone or in person.	70	5.7% (4)	8.6% (6)	2.9% (2)	44.3% (31)	38.6% (27)
I have used text messaging to begin, end, or spice up a romantic relationship.	69	5.8% (4)	59.4% (41)	7.2% (5)	15.9% (11)	11.6% (8)
I have incorporated "smileys" into my text messages to emphasize feeling or tone.	68	35.3% (24)	51.5% (35)	4.4% (3)	4.4% (3)	4.4% (3)

Issues of Trust and Fidelity

Six of the Likert scale questions related to perceived issues of trust and fidelity regarding

texting. The majority of the sample reported that they are aware of the people their partners

communicate with via texting As illustrated in table 5, sixty-one percent (N=42) of respondents

either strongly agreed (N= 5 or 7.1%) or agreed (N=38 or 54.3%) with the statement, "I am

aware of the people my partner communicates with via text." Half of the sample reported that

they would read through partner's texts if there was suspicion of infidelity; fifty-one percent

(N=42) of respondents either strongly agreed (N= 8 or 11.6%) or agreed (N=27 or 39.1%) with

this statement. As illustrated in table 5, thirty percent (N=21) of respondents either strongly

agreed (N= 3 or 4.3%) or agreed (N=18 or 26.1%) with the statement, "I have deleted text messages so that my partner does not look at my phone and read them."

Fifteen percent of the sample (N=10) agreed that they have used text messaging to flirt with other individuals who are not their partner. The majority of the sample (N=45 or 65.2%) disagreed that a delayed response from their partner leads them to be suspicious or angry, while 15.9% (N=11) agreed and 18.8% (N=13) remained neutral. Nearly half of the sample (N=34 or 49.3%) disagreed that they would consider their partner unfaithful if s/he communicated regularly with another individual via text, while 29% (N=20) reported feeling neutral, and 21.7% (N=15) agreed.

Table 5

Issues of Trust and Fidelity

	N	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am aware of the people my partner communicates with via text.	70	7.1% (5)	54.3% (38)	14.3% (10)	24.3% (17)	0
I would consider my partner unfaithful if s/he communicated regularly with another individual via text.	69	1.4% (1)	20.3% (14)	29% (20)	34.8% (24)	14.5% (10)
If I suspected my partner of being unfaithful, I would go through his/her phone to read text messages.	69	11.6% (8)	39.1% (27)	10.1% (7)	18.8% (13)	20.3% (14)
I have deleted text messages so that my partner does not look at my phone and read them.	69	4.3% (3)	26.1% (18)	2.9% (2)	30.4% (21)	36.2% (25)
I have used text messaging to flirt with other individuals who are not my partner.	69	0	14.5% (10)	4.3% (3)	33.3% (23)	47.8% (33)
A delayed response from my partner leads me to be suspicious or angry.	69	1.4% (1)	14.5% (10)	18.8% (13)	52.2% (36)	13% (9)

General Opinions about Texting in Relationships

Five of the Likert scale questions related to general opinions and feeling about texting in

relationships. The majority of the sample reported that they expect a timely response from their

partner and that they try to avoid texting about emotional issues. As illustrated in table 6, sixty-

seven percent (N=46) of respondents either strongly agreed (N=19 or 27.5%) or agreed (N=27 or

39.1%) with the statement "I try to avoid texting when I have an emotional issue to discuss with

my partner." As illustrated in table 5, sixty-five percent (N=44) of respondents either strongly

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agreed (N=8 or 11.8.%) or agreed (N=36 or 52.9%) with the statement, "I expect my partner to

respond to a text in a timely manner." Thirty-three percent (N=23) of participants either strongly

agreed (N=5 or 7.1%) or agreed (N=18 or 25.7%) with this statement "it is rude to text other

people while in the company of a significant other."

As indicated in Table 6, 67.2% (N=47) disagreed with the statement, "texting is my

preferred method of communication," while 15.7% (N=11) agreed and 17.1% (N=12) remained

neutral. The majority of the sample (N=50 or 72.5%) disagreed with the statement, "it is easier

to write things to my partner via text, in order to avoid confrontation," while 14.4% (N=10)

agreed and 13% (N=9) remained neutral.

Table 6

General Opinions about Texting in Relationships

	N	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Texting is my preferred method of communication.	70	4.3% (3)	11.4% (8)	17.1% (12)	42.9% (30)	24.3% (17)
It is rude to text other people while in the company of a significant other.	70	7.1% (5)	25.7% (18)	18.6% (13)	45.7% (32)	2.9% (2)
It is easier to write things to my partner via text, in order to avoid confrontation.	69	1.4% (1)	13% (9)	13% (9)	43.5% (30)	29% (20)
I try to avoid texting when I have an emotional issue to discuss with my partner.	69	27.5% (19)	39.1% (27)	18.8% (13)	11.6% (8)	2.9% (2)
I expect my partner to respond to a text in a timely manner.	68	11.8% (8)	52.9% (36)	20.6% (14)	14.7% (10)	0

In the entire survey, the majority of participants agreed on some level to the statements:

I expect my partner to respond to a text in a timely manner; texting helps to maintain my

relationship when I am geographically separated from my partner; I text my partner during

school classes or work hours because it is discreet; miscommunications with my partner via text

message occur based on a lack of tone which causes confusion about the meaning behind the

intended words; I have used text messaging to begin, end, or spice up a romantic relationship; I

have incorporated "smileys" into my text messages to emphasize feeling or tone; I am aware of

the people my partner communicates with via text; I try to avoid texting when I have an

emotional issue to discuss with my partner; and I expect my partner to respond to a text in a

timely manner.

Throughout the survey, the majority of participants disagreed on some level to the statements: texting is my preferred method of communication; it is easier to write things to my partner via text, in order to avoid confrontation; I have deleted text messages so that my partner does not look at my phone and read them; I have used text messaging to flirt with other individuals who are not my partner; a delayed response from my partner leads me to be suspicious or angry; I primarily communicate with my partner using text messaging; if I wanted/needed to break up with my partner, I would do so via text message; I have texted things to my partner that I would not be willing to say over the telephone or in person; I have felt pressure from my partner to "sext"; I have been harassed or verbally abused by my partner via text message; texting has worsened my relationship/communication with my partner; and I have texted something to my partner while under the influence of a substance that I have later regretted.

Statements that were split in agreement included: texting with my partner has led to miscommunication, disagreement, or argument; miscommunications with my partner via text message result from words taken out of context; it is rude to text other people while in the company of a significant other; I would consider my partner unfaithful if s/he communicated regularly with another individual via text; and if I suspected my partner of being unfaithful, I would go through his/her phone to read text messages.

Survey Comments

Eleven Likert questions from the survey generated twelve or more comments from participants. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, it is hypothesized that the questions receiving the most comments indicate areas of interest for participants. The following were the questions which received the most comments: the availability of texting has improved the

commitment level of my relationship; texting has improved my relationship/communication with my partner; texting helps to maintain my relationship when I am geographically separated from my partner; texting has helped to manage my anxiety around my relationship; texting with my partner has led to miscommunication, disagreement, or argument; I primarily communicate with my partner using text messaging; it is rude to text other people while in the company of a significant other; I would consider my partner unfaithful if s/he communicated regularly with another individual via text; if I suspected my partner of being unfaithful; I would go through his/her phone to read text messages; I have used text messaging to begin, end, or spice up a romantic relationship; and a delayed response from my partner leads me to be suspicious or angry. Appendix H contains a full list of comments. Table 7 reports themes in the comments for each question in order from greatest to least comments per question.

Comments served two purposes; first, they helped individuals elaborate upon their responses and secondly, they provided conditions for which they agreed or disagreed. These latter comments suggest the complex rules or situational conditions that are established around texting. For instance, a delayed response from a partner may not be an issue unless it follows an argument.

Table 7

Themes Generated from Survey Comments

	N	Positive	Negative	Other
The availability of texting has improved the commitment level of my relationship.	26	-things are easier to say via text -helps with logistics -makes communicating quicker	-impersonal	-used for check-ins
Texting with my partner has led to miscommunication, disagreement, or argument.	22	-lacks tone -improper punctuation is confusing		
I would consider my partner unfaithful if s/he communicated regularly with another individual via text	20	-if someone s/he was interested in		-depends on who or nature of texts(15)
A delayed response from my partner leads me to be suspicious or angry.	18	-if there has been an argument prior	-assume lost cell service	-worried -annoyed
Texting has improved my relationship/communication with my partner	16	-easy to let person know thinking of them -diffuses tense issues		
It is rude to text other people while in the company of a significant other.	15		-it is unavoidable	-depends (8)
If I suspected my partner of being unfaithful, I would go through his/her phone to read text messages	14	-if anxious -curious	-disrespectful	

I have used text messaging to begin, end, or spice up a romantic relationship	13	-spice(13)		
Texting has helped to manage my anxiety around my relationship.	13	-such as "home safe" -when apart		-manages anxiety and increases it
I primarily communicate with my partner using text messaging.	12	-quick and easy	-for quick communication	
Texting helps to maintain my relationship when I am geographically separated from my partner.	12	-use to check in -helps with military families during deployment -helpful for living 2 + hours apart		-use logistically, not personally (estimated time home or dinner details)

Differences in Groups and Inferential Statistics

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, multiple statistical analyses were performed to look at differences among groups with regards to texting behaviors and also to look at relationships (correlations) between demographic variables and responses to the survey. Eight questions were formulated to assess differences among groups of respondents and seven questions were formulated to assess relationships. Differences between groups are presented first. Each paragraph begins with the question analyzed, then states the hypotheses for each question, followed by the results from the statistical analyses.

Differences between Groups

Statistical tests were conducted to examine if there a difference in texting preference/overall use of texting based on income, age, gender or race. It was hypothesized that males will report higher preference for texting as well as younger participants. Other demographics will not make a difference. Responses to two Likert questions were used for this

analysis: "text messaging is my preferred method of communication" and "I primarily communicate with my partner using text messaging."

A t-test was run to determine if there was a difference in use of texting as a primary form of communication by gender and a significant difference was found (t(67)=9.734, p=.000, two-tailed). Males had a lower mean (m=1.63) than females (m=4.16). A t-test was run to determine if there was a difference in texting preference by gender and a significant difference was found (t(67)=7.885, p=.000, two-tailed. males had a lower mean (m=1.63) than females (m=3.97).

A oneway Anova was run to determine if there is a difference in text messaging preference by income. A significant difference was found (F(2,65)=133.97, p=.000). A Tamhane post hoc test showed the significant differences were between all the groups (i.e., each group was significantly different from the other two groups). Those earning <$30K had a mean of 2.3, $30-$60K had a mean of 3.9 and $60K+ had a mean of 4.83. A oneway Anova was also run to determine if there was a difference in text messaging used as the primary form of communication by income. A significant difference was found (F(2,65)=87.08, p=.000). A Tamhane post hoc test showed the significant differences were between all the groups (i.e., each group was significantly different from the other two groups). Those earning <$30K had a mean of 2.6, $30-$60K had a mean of 4.00 and $60K+ had a mean of 5.00.

A oneway Anova was run to determine if there is a difference in those who used texting as a primary form of communication by age and a significant difference was found (F(2,67)=47.320, p=.000). A Tamhane post hoc test showed the significant differences were between all the groups (i.e., each group was significantly different from the other two groups). Those between 18 and 29 had a mean of 2.96, 30-34 had a mean of 4.00 and 35+ had a mean of 4.91.

A oneway Anova was run to determine if there is a difference in those who preferred text message communication by age and a significant difference was found $(F(2,67)=80.597, p=.000)$. A Tamhane post hoc test showed the significant differences were between all the groups (i.e., each group was significantly different from the other two groups). Those between 18 and 29 had a mean of 2.63, 30-34 had a mean of 4.00 and 35+ had a mean of 4.77.

The hypothesis appeared to be true in that males mean score (1.63) indicated agreement that they used texting as a primary form of communication, while the mean score of females (4.16) indicated disagreement. Men also had a lower mean score (1.63) of texting preference, indicating greater preference than females mean score (3.97). The hypotheses appeared to be false in that income did show a difference in texting preference and primary use, with those earning less than 30K having a lower mean score than those in higher income brackets, indicating higher agreement among those with less income. The hypothesis that younger people would indicate higher preference for texting was true, with those 18-29 having a mean score of 2.63, indicating agreement. Participants 30-34 had a mean of 4 and those over 35 had a mean score of 4.77 indicating disagreement. Similarly in regard to texting being used as a primary form of communication, younger participants had a lower mean score than older participants, indicating that younger participants were more likely to report agreement. The results are summarized in table 8.

Table 8

Texting Preference and Primary Usage by Gender, Age, and Income

Variable	Preference			Primary		
	Mean	*t*	*p*	Mean	*t*	*p*
Gender						
Male	1.63	7.885**	.000	1.63	9.734**	.000
Female	3.97			4.16		
Age						
18-29	2.63	80.597**	.000	2.96	47.320**	.000
30-34	4.0			4.0		
35+	4.77			4.9		
Income						
<$30K	2.3	133.97**	.000	2.6	87.08**	.000
$30-60K	3.9			4.0		
$60K+	4.83			5.0		

**Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The next questions posed were: Does income, age, gender, commitment level, or race make a difference in people's attitudes towards texting? Is there a difference in overall attitude toward texting & relationships based on income, age, gender, or race? It was hypothesized that income and race will not make a difference. Age, commitment level, and gender will make a difference. It was also hypothesized that younger people will report improved communications with their partner as a result of texting. Income and race will not make a difference. Crosstabs were used to look at descriptive statistics but due to a lack of numbers in each cell, no analysis or conclusions could be made about the relationship between demographic factors and attitudes about the advantages and disadvantages of texting. Although hypotheses were not confirmed or disconfirmed, the results of participants' reporting is described below. Due to lack of diversity among participants, race was omitted from the report. Looking at the descriptive statistics, a relationship seems to appear confirming the usefulness of these questions.

Another question posed examined if there is a difference in those who use texting to manage their anxiety by commitment level. It was hypothesized that those who report greater

commitment will report using texting to manage anxiety less often. A oneway anova was run to determine if there was a difference in anxiety by commitment level and a significant difference was found (F(2,66)=60.705, p=.000). A Tamhane Post hoc test showed the significant difference was between the committed (m=2.0) and the very committed groups (m=3.83) and between the somewhat (m=1.6) and very committed group (m=3.83). There was no significant difference between the somewhat and committed groups. A higher mean indicates more disagreement with this statement indicating the very committed group disagreed most that they use texting to manage anxiety compared to the committed and somewhat committed groups as hypothesized. Table 9 illustrates these results.

Table 9

Text Messages used to Manage Anxiety by Commitment Level

Variable	Mean	*t*	*p*
Relationship Status			
Somewhat committed	1.6	60.705**	.000
Committed	2.0		
Very Committed	3.83		

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Next, the analysis examined if there is a difference in those who report feeling angry/suspicious from a delayed text reply and expecting a timely response from their partner by gender. It was hypothesized that females will report greater expectation for a timely response from their partner and more anger/suspicion from a delayed text reply. A t-test was run to determine if there was a difference in anger/suspicion caused by a delayed response by gender and a significant difference was found (t(67)=7.405, p=.000, two-tailed. males had a lower mean (m=1.88) than females (m=3.84). A t-test was run to determine if there was a difference in expectations about a timely response by gender and a significant difference was found (t(59)=15.816, p=.000, two-tailed. males had a lower mean (m=1.00) than females (m=2.57).

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The hypothesis was false, with males being more likely to report anger/suspicion from a delayed response from their partners, as well as being more likely to expect a timely response from their partners. The results are illustrated in table 10.

Table 10

Anger/Suspicion caused by Delayed Response and Timely Expectations by Gender

Variable	Angry			Time		
	Mean	*t*	*p*	Mean	*t*	*p*
Gender						
Male	1.88	7.405**	.000	1.0	15.816**	.000
Female	3.84			2.57		

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Another question examined if there is a difference in those who text things they would not be willing to say by commitment level. It was hypothesized that those who report greater commitment levels would be less likely to report texting things they would not be willing say to their partner. A oneway Anova was run to determine if there is a difference in those who would text something they would not be willing to say by commitment level and a significant difference was found (F(2,67)=90.475, p=.000). A Tamhane post hoc test showed the significant differences were between all the groups (i.e., each group was significantly different from the other two groups). Somewhat committed group had mean of 1.2, committed had m=3.0 and very committed had m=4.5. The hypothesis was true, with participants in very committed relationships reporting that they would be less likely to text something they would not be willing to say to their partner. Results are illustrated in table 11.

Table 11

Willingness to Text Something Not Willing to Say by Commitment Level

Variable	Mean	t	p
Relationship Status			
Somewhat committed	1.2	90.475**	.000
Committed	3.0		
Very Committed	4.83		

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Another question looked at if there was a difference in those who use texting to flirt with others who are not their partner by commitment level. Again, it was hypothesized that those who report greater commitment would be less likely to use texting to flirt with another person. A oneway Anova was run to determine if there is a difference in those who have used texting to flirt with another person who is not their partner by commitment level and a significant difference was found (F(2,66)=84.29, p=.000). A Tamhane post hoc test showed the significant differences were between all the groups (i.e., each group was significantly different from the other two groups). Somewhat committed group had mean of 2.0, committed had m=2.92 and very committed had m=4.63. The hypothesis was true, indicating that participants in more committed relationships are less likely to use texting to flirt with others who are not their partner.

Table 12

Would use Texting to Flirt with Another by Commitment Level

Variable	Mean	t	p
Relationship Status			
Somewhat committed	2.0	84.29**	.000
Committed	2.94		
Very Committed	4.63		

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Finally, the analysis sought to examine if there was a difference in problems experienced with texting by gender. It was hypothesized that men would be more likely to begin relationships via text. Women would be more likely to be suspicious or angry from delayed responses, more likely to read through their partners' texts, and more likely to use texting to manage their relationship anxiety. T-tests were run to see whether there were differences in the mean response related to texting use to help manage anxiety in relationships (ANX), texting use to help with geographic distance in relationships (GEO), texting use at work or during school because of discreetness (WORK), texting being used to write things unwilling to say in person (SHY), texting leading to miscommunication based on lack of tone (TONE), texting leading to miscommunication based on words taken out of context (CONTEXT), texting leading to miscommunication or argument (NEG), technical difficulties contributing to misinterpretations (TECH), delayed responses leading to suspicion or anger (ANGRY), texting while under the influence of a substance (OUI), texting use to avoid confrontation (CONF), texting use to begin, end, or spice up a relationship (SPICE), texting use to flirt with others (FLIRT), avoiding texting when emotional issue to discuss (EMO), incorporating "smileys" to emphasize tone (SMILE), using text to break up (BREAK), considering texting in company to be rude (RUDE), awareness of partner's texting (AWARE), consideration of texting to be cheating (UNFAIT), willingness to read partner's texts if suspicious (READ), tendency to delete messages so partner won't see (DELETE), and expectations of timely response (TIME) by gender . All t-tests were significant, with females having higher mean responses than males. Detailed results are presented in table 13. The hypothesis was true in that men reported higher agreement that they would use texting to begin a relationship, but false in that men also reported higher agreement that they use texting to manage their anxiety in their relationship, reported

higher agreement about getting suspicious/angry from delayed texts, and would be more likely to

read through partners' texts if suspicious of infidelity.

Table 13

Results of T-tests by Gender

	T	Df	P	Gender/Mean(1=strongly agree 5=strongly disagree)
ANX	-8.955	15.692	.000**	Male=1.75; Female=3.56
GEO	-10.694	60.000	.000**	Male=1.00; Female=2.13
WORK	-9.875	60.000	.000**	Male=1.00; Female=2.26
SHY	-10.978	67	.000**	Male=1.50; Female=4.33
TONE	-11.635	60.000	.000**	Male=1.00; Female=2.69
CONTEXT	-15.373	60.000	.000**	Male=1.00;Female= 2.97
NEG	-15.237	60.000	.000**	Male=1.00; Female=3.10
TECH	-9.082	17.149	.000**	Male=1.38; Female=3.48
ANGRY	-7.405	67	.000**	Male=1.88; Female=3.84
OUI	-9.775	67	.000**	Male=1.75; Female=4.26
CONF	-8.008	67	.000**	Male=1.88; Female=4.11
SPICE	-5.590	17.188	.000**	Male=1.50; Female=2.84
FLIRT	-25.583	60.000	.000**	Male=2.00; Female=4.43
EMO	-10.492	60.000	.000**	Male=1.00; Female=2.39
SMILE	-8.078	59.000	.000**	Male=1.00; Female=2.03
BREAK	-3.240	7.000	.014**	Male=3.50; Female=5.00
RUDE	-9.049	12.894	.000**	Male=1.38; Female=3.31
AWARE	-6.138	12.894	.000**	Male=1.38; Female=2.69
UNFAIT	-10.187	22.077	.000**	Male=1.88; Female=3.61
READ	-14.003	60.000	.000**	Male=1.00; Female=3.23
DELETE	-5.635	67	.000**	Male=1.63; Female=3.95
TIME	-15.816	59.000	.000**	Male=1.00; Female=2.57

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Relationships among Variables

Another analysis question examined if there is there a relationship between age/commitment level and problems experienced with texting. It was hypothesized that younger people will be more likely use texting to manage relationship anxiety, and less committed people will be more likely to text things they would not be willing to say aloud; older people will experience more problems because uncertain of texting rules; and older people will use texting more for logistics. Another question addressed if there is a relationship between helpful aspects of texting and age/commitment level. It was hypothesized that younger people will use texting more to sext and flirt, and more commitment will lead to less flirting with others by this means. Another question examined if there is there a relationship between age/commitment level and reported texting uses in a relationship. It was hypothesized that younger people use texting for all facets, while older people keep personal conversations for face-to face encounters.

Spearman rho correlations were run to determine if there were associations between age and use of texting to manage anxiety in relationship (ANX), texting use to help with geographic distance in relationships (GEO), texting use at work or during school because of discreetness (WORK), texting being used to write things unwilling to say in person (SHY), texting leading to miscommunication based on lack of tone (TONE), texting leading to miscommunication based on words taken out of context (CONTEXT), texting leading to miscommunication or argument (NEG), technical difficulties contributing to misinterpretations (TECH), delayed responses leading to suspicion or anger (ANGRY), texting while under the influence of a substance (OUI), texting use to avoid confrontation (CONF), texting use to begin, end, or spice up a relationship (SPICE), texting use to flirt with others (FLIRT), avoiding texting when emotional issue to discuss (EMO), incorporating "smileys" to emphasize tone (SMILE), using text to break up

(BREAK), considering texting in company to be rude (RUDE), awareness of partner's texting

(AWARE), consideration of texting to be cheating (UNFAIT), willingness to read partner's texts

if suspicious (READ), tendency to delete messages so partner won't see (DELETE), and

expectations of timely response (TIME). There were significant positive correlations between

age and all these variables. Detailed results are presented in table 14.

Table 14

Results of Spearman Rho Correlations by Age

ANX (n= 69)	Correlation Coefficient	.905**
GEO (n= 69)	Correlation Coefficient	.863**
WORK (n= 69)	Correlation Coefficient	.860**
SHY (n= 69)	Correlation Coefficient	.856**
TONE (n= 69)	Correlation Coefficient	.901**
CONTEXT (n= 69)	Correlation Coefficient	.930**
NEG (n= 69)	Correlation Coefficient	.905**
TECH (n= 69)	Correlation Coefficient	.948**
ANGRY (n= 69)	Correlation Coefficient	.890**
OUI (n= 69)	Correlation Coefficient	.874**
CONF (n= 69)	Correlation Coefficient	.903**
SPICE (n= 69)	Correlation Coefficient	.879**
FLIRT (n= 69)	Correlation Coefficient	.842**
EMO (n= 69)	Correlation Coefficient	.916**
SMILE (n= 68)	Correlation Coefficient	.898**
BREAK (n= 69)	Correlation Coefficient	.446**
RUDE (n= 69)	Correlation Coefficient	.887**
AWARE (n= 69)	Correlation Coefficient	.873**
UNFAIT (n= 69)	Correlation Coefficient	.902**
READ (n= 69)	Correlation Coefficient	.908**
DELETE (n= 69)	Correlation Coefficient	.918**
TIME (n= 68)	Correlation Coefficient	.869**

**. Correlation is significant for all categories at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Spearman rho correlations were run to determine if there were associations between level of commitment and use of texting to manage anxiety in relationship (ANX), texting use to help with geographic distance in relationships (GEO), texting use at work or during school because of discreetness (WORK), texting being used to write things unwilling to say in person (SHY), texting leading to miscommunication based on lack of tone (TONE), texting leading to miscommunication based on words taken out of context (CONTEXT), texting leading to miscommunication or argument (NEG), technical difficulties contributing to misinterpretations (TECH), delayed responses leading to suspicion or anger (ANGRY), texting while under the influence of a substance (OUI), texting use to avoid confrontation (CONF), texting use to begin, end, or spice up a relationship(SPICE), texting use to flirt with others (FLIRT), avoiding texting when emotional issue to discuss(EMO), incorporating "smileys" to emphasize tone (SMILE), using text to break up (BREAK), considering texting in company to be rude (RUDE), awareness of partner's texting (AWARE), consideration of texting to be cheating (UNFAIT), willingness to read partner's texts if suspicious (READ), tendency to delete messages so partner won't see (DELETE), and expectations of timely response (TIME). There were significant positive correlations between level of commitment and all these variables. Detailed results are presented in table 15.

Table 15

Results of Spearman Rho Correlations by Commitment Level

NEG (n=71)	Correlation Coefficient	.654[**]
CONTEXT (n=71)	Correlation Coefficient	.673[**]
TONE (n=69)	Correlation Coefficient	.734[**]
ANX (n=69)	Correlation Coefficient	.776[**]
GEO (n=70)	Correlation Coefficient	.778[**]
BREAK (n=69)	Correlation Coefficient	.664[**]
SHY (n=70)	Correlation Coefficient	.702[**]
RUDE (n=70)	Correlation Coefficient	.740[**]
AWARE (n=70)	Correlation Coefficient	.564[**]
UNFAIT (n=69)	Correlation Coefficient	.746[**]
READ (n=69)	Correlation Coefficient	.649[**]
DELETE (n=69)	Correlation Coefficient	.738[**]
FLIRT (n=69)	Correlation Coefficient	.746[**]
SPICE (n=69)	Correlation Coefficient	.521[**]
OUI (n=69)	Correlation Coefficient	.756[**]
CONF (n=69)	Correlation Coefficient	.782[**]
EMO (n=69)	Correlation Coefficient	.746[**]
TIME (n=68)	Correlation Coefficient	.612[**]
ANGRY (n=69)	Correlation Coefficient	.777[**]
TECH (n=69)	Correlation Coefficient	.701[**]
WORK (n=69)	Correlation Coefficient	.799[**]
SMILE (n=68)	Correlation Coefficient	.709[**]

**. Correlation is significant for all categories at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

I also examined if there is there a relationship between those who sext and those who have been harassed/abused via texting. It was hypothesized that there will be a positive correlation between those who sext and those who report abuse/harassment via text. (Those who sext are more likely to report feeling harassed or abused through text messaging). A spearman rho was run to determine if there was an association between those who sext and those who have been harassed via text message and a significant positive strong correlation was found (rho=.772,

p=-.000, two tailed). A spearman rho was run to determine if there was an association between those who sext and those who have felt pressure from their partner to sext and a significant positive very strong correlation was found (rho=.933, p=-.000, two tailed). The hypothesis was confirmed; those who participate in sexting are more likely to report feeling harassed or abused through text messaging.

Another question inquired if is there a relationship between age and attitudes about texting in front of one's partner. The hypothesis stated was there will be positive correlation between age and presumed rudeness. A spearman rho was run to determine if there was an association between those who find it rude to text in front of one's partner and age and a significant positive very strong correlation was found (rho=.887, p=-.000, two tailed). The hypothesis was confirmed; an increase in age is related to perceptions about rudeness with regard to texting.

Another question asked if there is there a relationship between those who would consider a partner unfaithful if texting another and those who would read through their partner's text messages if suspicious of infidelity. It was hypothesized that there will be a positive correlation between those who consider texting another to be unfaithful and those who would read through partner's texts. A spearman rho was run to determine if there was an association between those who would consider their partner unfaithful if texting with another regularly and those who would read their partners text if suspicious of infidelity and a significant positive very strong correlation was found (rho=.938, p=-.000, two tailed).   The hypothesis was confirmed; those with equate texting another to infidelity are more likely to would read text messages on partner's phone.

The next question asked if there is there a relationship between those who delete text messages so their partner would not see them and those would consider his/her partner unfaithful if texting with another. The hypothesis stated that there will be a positive correlation between those who delete texts and those who would consider their partners unfaithful for texting another. A spearman rho was run to determine if there was an association between those who would consider their partner unfaithful if texting with another regularly and those who have deleted text messages so that their partner does not read them and a significant positive very strong correlation was found (rho=.886, p=-.000, two tailed). The hypothesis was confirmed; those who equate texting another to infidelity are more likely to delete text messages on their own phone.

Finally, the analysis examined if there is there a relationship in reported text message anxiety management and age. It was hypothesized that there will be a negative correlation between use of texting to manage anxiety and age. A spearman rho was run to determine if there was an association between texting used to manage relationship anxiety and age and a significant positive very strong correlation was found (rho=.905, p=-.000, two tailed). The hypothesis was confirmed; younger people use texting more often to manage their anxiety. These findings will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter and will also be related to the literature reviewed in Chapter II.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

The purpose of my research was to investigate the interplay between romantic relationships and texting. The ways in which the use of mobile telephone text message technology has facilitated the initiation and maintenance of romantic relationships is a phenomenon which has fascinated me in terms of its contribution to new social norms. No longer do we live in a in a reality in which a traditional courtship rituals might entail one pursuing a prospective romantic interest by means of letters or telephone calls in which the only option to a call unanswered, is to leave a message on an answering machine. Texting is changing the nature of relationship-building and relationship maintenance among couples.

Navigating the world of dating has become more complicated, and at times can feel overwhelming, due to the vast options of communication technology outlets through which communication is possible. Relationships initiated through online dating sites often begin through computer-mediated correspondence, which may later develop through continued text message exchanges via mobile telephone. Yet, sometimes text messages can leave too much room for interpretation. Because texting is relatively new, there are not guidelines for interactions, which may run the risk of causing conflict or disappointment in romantic relationships. The texting phenomenon lacks established etiquette for acceptable message length, response time, or frequency of interaction, therefore leaving users to interpret texting etiquette based on past experience and social cues, which varies among individuals.

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This research intended to explore the influence of mobile text message communication on dyadic romantic relationships by investigating how text messaging facilitates forming and maintaining couple relationships, the advantages and disadvantages of texting within the couple dynamic, and the ways texting either enhance or decrease the quality of these relationships. Research questions for this study related to (1) positive and negative aspects of texting, (2) the uses of texting, (3) issues of trust and fidelity related to texting, and (4) general opinions about texting within the context of the dyadic romantic relationship. Overall, the findings of this study confirmed that there are mixed feelings about the uses of texting within dyadic romantic relationships. Texting can have both positive and negative effects on relationships. This chapter will compare and contrast this study's findings with the previous literature. First, findings will be discussed, followed by limitations and biases, and then application of theory. Next, implications for social work practice will be presented, followed by implications for future research and a summary.

Findings as Compared with the Literature

Most of the literature reviewed for this study, although on the subject of technology's effects on relationships, did not specifically deal with texting. Thus, at times I was able to consider my study findings in light of other literature on texting, but more often on literature about technology in general. Coyne, et. al. (2011) made the prediction that texting might be the primary way couples keep in touch in the future, which prompted the inquiry about texting being participants' primary mode of communication. Although only 14% of the sample indicated agreement with this, there would seem to be room for growth around this percentage if a more representative sample was provided.

The literature indicated that texting might lead to increased uninhibited behaviors among users (Hertlein & Webster, 2008), but this did not seem to be notable in the responses of my participants. This may have been due to a social desirability bias, as it may not be something people feel comfortable admitting to or perhaps it may not be considered a mature habit to hide behind a screen. Additionally, none of the literature addressed behaviors via text message initiated by inebriation. While a small percentage of respondents admitted that they have texted something they regretted while under the influence of a substance, my experience among peers and clients have indicated otherwise, in that it is not an uncommon experience. As college drinking has continued to be a challenge for schools across the country, such social norms make young folks more susceptible to inebriated decision making. Although some literature has addressed issues of the "hook up culture" in terms of one night stands and casual sex, what is missing is research about how text messaging plays a role in these new social norms.

Roughly 8% of survey participants agreed they had been abused or pressured to sext. This is important because we expect this number to be low because of social desirability bias, but it suggests that almost 1 in 10 are experiencing these hazards associated with texting. Notable in my results was that 73% of participants disagreed that texting has worsened their communication and/or relationship with their partner (while 10% agreed). On the other hand, 35% of participants agreed that texting has improved their communication and/or relationship (34% disagreed). There appears to be some discrepancy in this feedback in terms of consistency of answers, however it may also be noted that disagreeing that texting worsened communication does not mean that it therefore improved communication. This may suggest that texting is neither really helpful nor hurtful for most relationships, which makes me wonder why are people texting? Additionally, the majority of women reported that they would not be angry or

suspicious if they got a delayed response from their partner, yet, they expressed an expectation for a timely response. I wonder about the communication breakdown there and if expectations for timely responses are not met, what feelings are left? This may imply that people do not have a clear understanding of their texting use.

Overall, the results of the current study seemed to align with the literature in terms of showing that people like texting for multi-tasking purposes (Vincent, 2006), as 80% of the sample reported taking advantage of the discreetness of texting and used the function during school or work hours. This has serious implications about current social norms, and it would appear that the 14% who do not text in these circumstances are in the minority. This helps to put the idea of the wireless leash into perspective, because it would seem that times where people would typically be out of reach no longer exists unless they are making an active choice to abstain from use. It also makes sense why some may experience phantom vibration syndrome, the phenomenon that people think their phone is vibrating and it is not, further implicating digital encroachment in society.

The results of my study confirmed literature (Ling & Yttri, 2002; Drouin & Landgraff, 2011) which reported texting helps in sustaining close, committed bonds. Additionally, the results confirmed previous research in terms of identifying texting as a means of flirting, spicing up relationships, and sending sexually explicit picture messages. Although there did appear to be gender differences in terms of levels of comfort initiating relationships via text, the sample size was lacking in male participants. Nearly all of studies reported in previous research similarly had a disproportionate number of female to male participants. While there is enormous diversity within each gender group in terms of communication style and practices, generally speaking, the genders vary in their view of the purposes for conversation. Research on psychological gender

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differences has shown that while females use communication as a tool to enhance social connections and create relationships, men use language to exert dominance and achieve tangible outcomes (Merchant, 2012). Female participants may be more likely to respond to recruitment related to communication research because there are noted gendered differences between the sexes, and preference for talking about communication styles may be more appealing to females.

The literature noted sex differences in initiating relationships (Byrne & Finlay, 2004), which appeared to be the case in the results of this study, despite the small percentage of male participants. The results also confirmed that texting can both contribute to couple's effective communication as well as cause conflict and influence perceptions of autonomy and connectedness. The literature noted that relationships started via text are possible of developing into higher levels of intimacy (Solis, 2006), but the current exploration did not survey how romantic relationships began. However, the current investigation showed that the more committed a relationship, the less the couple relied on texting to facilitate it. The literature did not address the implications based on lack of tone with text messaging. The participants in this study did note lack of tone as being a disadvantage of the technology. Lack of tone was also attributed as being the cause of miscommunication between partners for more than half of respondents.

Previous literature indicated that those with lower income text more frequently (Smith, 2011b). This was confirmed by the current study; the results indicated a significant difference in both texting preference and primary use among income brackets. In terms of texting as a preferred method of communication, those making less than $30K indicated more agreement than those making between $30-$60K, who similarly indicated more agreement than those making over $60K. The same pattern occurred with regard to texting being used as a primary

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mode of communication, with those making less than $30K indicating the most agreement and those making more than $60K indicating the least agreement.

Previous literature has reported that young adults use text messaging more than phone calls (Smith, 2011; Drouin & Landgaff, 2011) and suggests that young people are more likely to use their mobile phones for functions other than phone calls (Pew Research, 2011). The results from my study did confirm a significant difference in primary communication form by age. Results indicated that participants between 18 and 29 showed the most agreement with the survey question, while those older than 35 indicated the least agreement that texting serves as a primary form of communication. Results from the preferred method of communication question indicated showed a significant difference with regard to age; those older than 35 indicated the least agreement that texting is a preferred method of communication, while those under 30 reported more agreement.

Limitations and Biases

The current study is biased because the majority of participants were Cauacasian females in heterosexual, committed relationships, between the ages of 18 and 35. The findings of this study cannot be assumed to hold true for individuals of other age, ethnic groups, or sexual orientation. Future studies using a variety of subject populations in diverse settings are needed. In addition, the collected data in this study was done so in less than two months. A greater time frame would have allotted for more participants. Using Survey Monkey, I was able to see the demographics of my sample, and was aware that it lacked diversity throughout the participation period. However, had I posted a special "shout out" on Facebook for people of color or non-heterosexual people to complete the survey, I would not have been able to see who gravitated towards the topic. Another limitation was that I did not address how varying living

situations might have an impact on the ways in which texting technology was used in intimate relationships. It would have been interesting to inquire whether participants shared a house with their partner, lived in the same city as their partner, lived apart, and so on.

There were a few survey questions unusable due to the confusing nature of the statements, thereby influencing participants level of agreement. They are as follows: I have used text messaging to begin, end, or spice up a romantic relationship; I would consider my partner unfaithful if s/he communicated regularly with another individual via text; and is rude to text other people while in the presence of a significant other. The first question was essentially asking three different questions, and while most of the comments indicated texting was used to spice up relationships, there is no way to have an accurate understanding to what the ratings were referring to. The next questions lacked clarity and specificity. Most respondents indicated that it would depend on the scenario or circumstances of texts. One limitation of using a Likert tool of measure is that participants are limited in how they can answer. I attempted to alleviate this by adding comment boxes, however the vast majority of respondents did not choose to comment.

The current study dealt with solely the issue of text messaging through the use of mobile phones. While it was confirmed that texting is a popular feature of the mobile phone, the current study did not consider that all of the other possibilities that mobile smart phones have to offer. Because "no contract" or "prepaid" mobile phone providers offer affordable plans which appeal to people in all income brackets, it is now easier than ever to become part of the mobile revolution, with access to the internet and countless mobile applications such as Facebook, Instagram, and various other new forums of social media. Even issues of privacy and fear of leaked texts or sexts are being bypassed though mobile applications such as Snapchat, in which users can take photos or record videos and send them through a controlled list of recipients.

These snaps are only viewable by recipients for a limited time (1 to 10 seconds), after which time they will be hidden from the recipient's device and deleted from the application's server. This adds a whole new dimension to the sexting phenomenon, and may allow for even further risk taking and uninhibited communications with regard to mobile messages.

My personal biases are based on observation, as the fifth born of six children. My younger brother and I are considered to be among the millennial generation, yet my communication technology habits seem to mimic the example demonstrated by my older siblings; I have not adopted the same mobile phone norms as many in my peer group. My personal biases have led me to find the ever-presence of mobile phones in today's society to be off-putting and strange. I find the constant reliance on and compulsion to check one's phone to be impolite to others around, as well as an indication of insecurity to some level. In my own observations, it appears as though many people text when they appear to be uncomfortable in a given situation. Despite my initial thoughts, I was mindful to word my statements so that they did not convey judgment. Several colleagues reviewed my survey to monitor for persuasive language in an effort to keep objectivity in the design and analysis of my research.

Application of Theory

Previous literature has shown that there are not good models of communication for text messaging. Because this is a relatively new phenomenon and constantly developing, more theory needs to be developed in this area. Perhaps the most salient information that arose out of the data was related to object relations and attachment theories. The mobile phone seems to have become a transitional object for adults in today's society in a similar way to how a child might use a teddy bear, to seek comfort and belonging, and bridging the gap between separateness and internal representations. The Pew Institute's (2010) findings which report that more than 80% of

those in the Millennial Generation sleep next to their mobile phones, similarly presents an image

of a security blanket. Eighty-percent of respondents in the current study agreed that texting with

their partners helps when they are geographically separated.

The findings suggest that mobile phones could be viewed as an attachment device, as

people often feel lost or anxious without their mobiles. Twenty-five percent (25%) of

participants surveyed in the current study admitted that texting helps to manage their anxiety

around their relationship; eighty percent (80%) continue to text while being expected to be

focused at school or work. Most of the comments generated from the survey in regard to using

texting to manage anxiety indicated that texting helps when people are away from their partner.

At the same time, it was noted that texting also contributes to increased anxiety. Although not

specified, I would guess that increased anxiety comes from the sense of obligation to be available

at any time, or perhaps from a prolonged delay in a text response from one's partner. The results

from this study indicated that the less commitment in a romantic relationship or the younger an

individual, the more reliance on using text messages to manage anxiety. Additionally, the results

of this survey indicated a strong correlation between those who consider texting another person

to be unfaithful and those who would read their partner's text messages if suspicious of

infidelity. Reading a partner's texts also appears to be a way of managing anxiety for suspicious

partners.

Attachment theory explains how an infant needs to develop a relationship with at least

one primary caregiver for normal social and emotional development, and the relationship with

the caregiver influences development. The mobile phone appears to be have a similar influence

on development, redefining terms of normal social and emotional development; those who have

grown up with this technology don't remember a time without it. Attachment theory understands

people by the attachments made in their early childhood; patterns from one's past are informative in understanding one's present, including their intimate interpersonal relationships and communication styles. Results from the present study seem to confirm that a culture of texting impacts romantic relationships.

Implications for Social Work Practice

While this is a relatively new area of research, the literature and current results indicate a strong prevalence of text messaging among today's couples. Because it is clearly a medium by which couples are communicating regularly, social workers need to be asking about texting use in order to get a clear picture of what types of couple norms, challenges, or complications are involved in a couple's relationship. Couple and family therapists ought to be inquiring about technology and texting use during assessment, as part of a social history, in order to get a complete and accurate picture of the communication styles and patterns within the relationship. Due to the generation divide among social work clinicians, some older clinicians may be less informed about current trends and norms with regard to texting and its role in romantic relationships.

In terms of trust and fidelity issues, which are ever present in couple therapy, the results from my survey indicated that 22% of survey participants agreed that they would consider their partner unfaithful if regularly communicating with another individual via text. Fifty-one (51%) of the sample agreed that they would go through their partner's mobile phone if they had suspicions about their partner's fidelity, and 30% admitted that they have deleted text messages so that their partner does not read them. These numbers may suggest that text messages are not necessarily understood to be private, and has implications worth exploring in therapy surrounding boundaries in relationships. The results also indicated that males in this sample

were more likely to experience suspicion or anger from a delayed text response, as well as have greater expectations for timely responses. These are also important concepts to be discussed in therapy surrounding boundaries.

The results from the current study also highlighted that those in less committed relationships are more likely to report texting things that they would not say to their partner. This is an important idea for to therapists to note in their work with those in new relationships, as it relates to the importance of clear and direct communication for successful relationships. All t-tests by gender indicated significant differences between men and women in terms of their attitudes of all facets of text messaging communication. Addressing these gender differences in therapy would be beneficial to clarifying individual perceptions that contribute to the romantic relationship.

In my own work with couples under age 35, mobile phones and texting have seemed ever-present in the dynamics of their relationship, yet clear boundaries or rules about texting have ceased to exist. As a social worker who deals primarily with variations of anxiety, adjustment, and depression issues, it is important to explore all areas and domains that could play a role in the development of such issues. Being knowledgeable about the effects of technology and texting on romantic relationships will likely serve as a valuable asset for clinical social workers to be familiar with, in order to determine the best way to normalize and validate a couple's experience. In a field that is largely based on effective communication, it is necessary to determine the ways texting is being used between the couple, if it is allowing for greater aversion of issues, or it is contributing to complications within the relationship. Therapists need to develop a level of competency around texting and the various ways in which it affects couple

interactions. Because clients may not have a clear understanding of their texting use, it is the clinician's responsibility to help them understand this aspect of their behavior.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research in the area of text message communication and couple relationships should seek a more diverse sample population by recruiting for men, people across various racial/ethnic backgrounds, as well as those in non-heterosexual relationships, in order to make more accurate observations of differences in texting use across all demographics. Future longitudinal research should explore the use of various mobile applications (in addition to texting) on developing romantic relationships, as well as trace the developmental process of dating and relationships over time. It would be valuable to investigate how texting differs in the dating stages of the relationships to stages of deeper intimate and emotional commitment, and interview folks about how they relate to their partner differently with each stage. Further, interviews would be helpful in understanding the perspective of those who abstain from texting and reasons for doing so.

Summary

Research is lacking in regard to texting use that is not based on public opinion columns in pop culture magazines. Because of the exploratory nature of this research, generalizations are not able to be made. Additionally, given that 88% of the sample was female, my sample was skewed, therefore making gender comparisons not possible. The current study is able to report on how women use text messaging technology (1) to form intimate relationships, (2) to maintain intimate relationships, and (3) to impact the quality of intimate relationships (based on pros and cons reported).

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Appendix A

Recruitment Email and Facebook Post

This email was sent to friends, family, and colleagues:

Dear Friends and Family,

I am hope this email finds you well. I am writing to request your help in finding participants for me for my master of social work thesis survey. I am researching the implications of mobile telephone text messaging on couple relations. I am looking for participants between the ages of 18 and 70 who are in a romantic relationship with one partner (dating, union, married). I am hoping to get as much diversity in my sample as possible in terms of age, gender, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation, so please forward this link along to anyone you think may be interested in responding to a survey that will require 30 minutes of his/her time. Potential participants must have access to the internet to complete this on-line survey.

The link to the survey is: _____
I appreciate your time and thank you kindly for your help.

My best,

Danielle
MSW Student
Smith College School for Social Work

This "post" appeared on my personal Facebook account page:

Friends, Family, and Colleagues-
I need your help! I am conducting research for my master of social work thesis. My research study explores the ways in which mobile telephone text messaging influence couple relationships. I'm looking for participants between the ages of 18 and 70 who are in a romantic relationship with one partner (dating, union, married). I'm hoping to get a diverse sample in terms of age, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, so please "repost" this status and link to your wall or anyone's you think may be interested in responding to a survey that will require 30 minutes of his/her time. Potential participants must have access to the internet to complete this on-line survey.
The link to the survey is: _____
I appreciate your time and thank you for your support!

Appendix B

Screening Question

Thank you for your interest in this research project.
In order to participate in the study, you must be able to answer "Yes" to the following question:

1. **Are you between the ages of 18 and 70 and in a romantic relationship with one partner?**
●Yes
●No

Appendix C

Thank You Page

Thank you again for taking the time to participate in this research project. Your contribution is appreciated.

Sincerely-
Danielle Maurer

Appendix D

Disqualification Page

Thank you for your desire to participate in this research project. Though you do not meet the participation criteria, I appreciate your time and interest.

Sincerely-
Danielle Maurer

Appendix E

Informed Consent

Dear Participant,

My name is Danielle Maurer. I am a second year Master's degree student at Smith College School for Social Work. I am conducting a study about the effects of texting on couple relationships. The research I gather in this study will be used as a part of my MSW thesis and in possible future professional or public presentations and publications.
If you are between the ages of 18-70 years old in a romantic relationship with one person, I would like you to take part in a 40 question internet survey about your opinions regarding text messaging and your relationship. This survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

It is my hope that you will be able to benefit from this study by gaining the opportunity to think about how your own use of communication technology impacts your relationship. It is possible that through this process, you may recall a situation that was uncomfortable or an unpleasant memory. If you become emotionally distressed or activated, I urge you to utilize the resources you have for support and talk with someone. I have also listed some resources at the end of this consent form. I am not able to offer compensation for your participation in the study beyond thanks for your time and willingness to help supply information for consideration in this study. If you agree to participate you will be asked to complete an on-line survey which is completely anonymous. I have used a method of settings on this survey which does not track names, emails, or collect IP addresses (the unique string of numbers separated by periods that identifies each computer attached to the Internet). I will have no way of knowing who you are and I will remove any names and places from your written comments on the survey. My research advisor and a statistical consultant from Smith College will have access to the data collected, but only after I have reviewed it and removed any identifying names. During the course of the study all data will be password protected. All data collected through this study will be saved for a period of at least three years in a secure location as required by federal guidelines. Electronic data will be encrypted and stored. All information will be destroyed after three years, or if needed beyond three years, retained in its secure location.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to withdraw from the study at any point, and you may refuse to answer any of the questions. Information may be changed or deleted until you submit the survey. Due to the nature of the online survey, it is not possible to remove your answers from the data after you have entered it into the survey, as I will have no way of knowing which responses belong to a particular participant. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about your rights or any aspect of this study, please contact me at dmaurer@smith.edu or Dr. Burton, the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee, at (413) 585 – 7974.

Resources for finding a mental health professional:
http://www.find-a-therapist.com/
http://www.helpstartshere.org/find-a-social-worker
http://www.goodtherapy.org/find-therapist.html

http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/getting-help-locate-services/index.shtml
http://www.amhca.org/public_resources/find_counselor.aspx
http://therapists.psychologytoday.com/rms/?gclid=CMyNyaz15bQCFUid4AodCVsARA
http://www.networktherapy.com/directory/find_therapist.asp?gclid=CKiE-
5z15bQCFcef4AodFksAeg

FOR ONLINE SURVEY PARTICIPANTS, YOUR ENTRY INTO AND COMPLETION OF
THE SURVEY DOCUMENTS THAT YOU HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE PURPOSES OF
THE STUDY AND YOUR RIGHTS AS A PARTICIPANT, AND THAT YOU AGREE TO
PARTICIPATE.

Please print a copy of this consent for your records. Thank you for your participation in this
study.

Sincerely,

Danielle Maurer

By selecting "I Agree" below, you indicate that you have read and understand the preceding
information; have had an opportunity to ask questions about the study, your participation, and
your rights; and that you agree to participate in the study.
- ●I Agree
- ●I Disagree

Appendix F

Survey

1. Please self report your level of commitment in your romantic relationship.
      ■ Committed
      ■ Somewhat Committed
      ■ Very Committed

2. How many months have you been with your partner?
      (*Text box*)

Please read the following statements and rate your level of agreement. If you are willing, please use the comment box below each statement to elaborate, explain, or give an example to show why you chose your rating.

3. The availability of texting has improved the commitment level of my relationship.
      ●Strongly Agree
      ●Agree
      ●Neutral
      ●Disagree
      ●Strongly disagree
      (*Comment text box*)

4. Texting with my partner has led to miscommunication, disagreement, or argument.
      ●Strongly Agree
      ●Agree
      ●Neutral
      ●Disagree
      ●Strongly disagree
      (*Comment text box*)

5. Miscommunications with my partner via text message result from words taken out of context.
      ●Strongly Agree
      ●Agree
      ●Neutral
      ●Disagree
      ●Strongly disagree
      (*Comment text box*)

6. Miscommunications with my partner via text message occur based on a lack of tone which causes confusion about the meaning behind the intended words.
      ●Strongly Agree
      ●Agree
      ●Neutral
      ●Disagree

●Strongly disagree
(Comment text box)

7. I primarily communicate with my partner using text messaging.
- ●Strongly Agree
- ●Agree
- ●Neutral
- ●Disagree
- ●Strongly disagree

(Comment text box)

8. Texting is my preferred method of communication.
- ●Strongly Agree
- ●Agree
- ●Neutral
- ●Disagree
- ●Strongly disagree

(Comment text box)

9. Texting has improved my relationship/communication with my partner.
- ●Strongly Agree
- ●Agree
- ●Neutral
- ●Disagree
- ●Strongly disagree

(Comment text box)

10. Texting has worsened my relationship/communication with my partner.
- ●Strongly Agree
- ●Agree
- ●Neutral
- ●Disagree
- ●Strongly disagree

(Comment text box)

11. Texting has helped to manage my anxiety around my relationship.
- ●Strongly Agree
- ●Agree
- ●Neutral
- ●Disagree
- ●Strongly disagree

(Comment text box)

12. Texting helps to maintain my relationship when I am geographically separated from my partner.
- ●Strongly Agree

●Agree
●Neutral
●Disagree
●Strongly disagree
(Comment text box)

13. If I wanted/needed to break up with my partner, I would do so via text message.
　　　●Strongly Agree
　　　●Agree
　　　●Neutral
　　　●Disagree
　　　●Strongly disagree
　　　(Comment text box)

14. I have texted things to my partner that I would not be willing to say over the telephone or in person.
　　　●Strongly Agree
　　　●Agree
　　　●Neutral
　　　●Disagree
　　　●Strongly disagree
　　　(Comment text box)

15. It is rude to text other people while in the company of a significant other.
　　　●Strongly Agree
　　　●Agree
　　　●Neutral
　　　●Disagree
　　　●Strongly disagree
　　　(Comment text box)

16. I am aware of the people my partner communicates with via text.
　　　●Strongly Agree
　　　●Agree
　　　●Neutral
　　　●Disagree
　　　●Strongly disagree
　　　(Comment text box)

17. I would consider my partner unfaithful if s/he communicated regularly with another individual via text.
　　　●Strongly Agree
　　　●Agree
　　　●Neutral
　　　●Disagree
　　　●Strongly disagree

(Comment text box)

18. If I suspected my partner of being unfaithful, I would go through his/her phone to read text messages.

- ●Strongly Agree
- ●Agree
- ●Neutral
- ●Disagree
- ●Strongly disagree
(Comment text box)

19. I have deleted text messages so that my partner does not look at my phone and read them.
- ●Strongly Agree
- ●Agree
- ●Neutral
- ●Disagree
- ●Strongly disagree
(Comment text box)

20. I have used text messaging to flirt with other individuals who are not my partner.
- ●Strongly Agree
- ●Agree
- ●Neutral
- ●Disagree
- ●Strongly disagree
(Comment text box)

21. I have used text messaging to begin, end, or spice up a romantic relationship.
- ●Strongly Agree
- ●Agree
- ●Neutral
- ●Disagree
- ●Strongly disagree
- ●*Specify/Comment (text box)*

22. I have texted something to my partner while under the influence of a substance that I have later regretted.
- ●Strongly Agree
- ●Agree
- ●Neutral
- ●Disagree
- ●Strongly disagree
(Comment text box)

23. It is easier to write things to my partner via text, in order to avoid confrontation.

   ●Strongly Agree
   ●Agree
   ●Neutral
   ●Disagree
   ●Strongly disagree
   (Comment text box)

24. I try to avoid texting when I have an emotional issue to discuss with my partner.

   ●Strongly Agree
   ●Agree
   ●Neutral
   ●Disagree
   ●Strongly disagree
   (Comment text box)

25. I expect my partner to respond to a text in a timely manner.
   ●Strongly Agree
   ●Agree
   ●Neutral
   ●Disagree
   ●Strongly disagree
   ● Specify time/Comment (*text box*)

26. A delayed response from my partner leads me to be suspicious or angry.
   ●Strongly Agree
   ●Agree
   ●Neutral
   ●Disagree
   ●Strongly disagree
   (Comment text box)

27. Technical difficulties with mobile phone service have contributed to misinterpreted communication in my relationship.

   ●Strongly Agree
   ●Agree
   ●Neutral
   ●Disagree
   ●Strongly disagree
   (Comment text box)

28. I text my partner during school classes or work hours because it is discrete.
   ●Strongly Agree

●Agree
●Neutral
●Disagree
●Strongly disagree
(Comment text box)

29. I have engaged in "sexting" with my partner.
●Strongly Agree
●Agree
●Neutral
●Disagree
●Strongly disagree
(Comment text box)

30. I have felt pressure from my partner to "sext."

●Strongly Agree
●Agree
●Neutral
●Disagree
●Strongly disagree
(Comment text box)

31. I have been harassed or verbally abused by my partner via text message.
●Strongly Agree
●Agree
●Neutral
●Disagree
●Strongly disagree
(Comment text box)

32. I have incorporated "smileys" into my text messages to emphasize feeling or tone.
●Strongly Agree
●Agree
●Neutral
●Disagree
●Strongly disagree
(Comment text box)

If you are willing, please offer the following demographic information about yourself so that I may describe the diversity of my sample accurately. This information will be presented about the group as a whole and your identity never revealed.

33. What is your age?
●18-23
●24-29

●30-34
●35-39
●40s
●50s
●60s
●70s

34. Which of the following best describes your gender identification?
   ●Transgender
   ●Female
   ●Male
   ●Other *(text box)*

35. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?
   ●Heterosexual
   ●Homosexual
   ●Bisexual
   ●Queer
   ●Questioning
   ●Pansexual
   ●Other *(text box)*

36. Which of the following best describes your racial/ethnic identity?
   ●White or Caucasian
   ●Hispanic or Latino
   ●Black or African American
   ●Native American or American Indian
   ●Asian
   ●Pacific Islander
   ●Other *(text box)*

37. What is your annual income?
   ●<$10,000
   ●<$20,000
   ●<$30,000
   ●<$40,000
   ●<$50,000
   ●<$60,000
   ●<$70,000
   ●<$80,000
   ●$80,000+

38. Do you consider yourself:
   ●Working Part-time
   ●Working Full-time
   ●Student Full-time

- ●Student Part-time
- ●Unemployed
- ●On disability
- ●Retired

39. Is there anything you would like to add about technology's impact on your current or past relationships with an intimate partner? Is there anything I have not asked that you believe would be useful or important for me to know about your experiences or beliefs about the effects of communication technology or your relationship or others you know?
(Text box)

Thank you again for your time and participation. If you have questions or comments about this study, you may contact me via email at dmaurer@smith.edu

Appendix G

HSR Approval Letter

SMITH COLLEGE

School for Social Work
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950   F (413) 585-7994

February 26, 2013

Danielle Maurer

Dear Danielle,

Thank you for making all the requested changes to your Human Subjects Review application. Your project is now approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck with your project.

Sincerely,

Marsha Kline Pruett, M.S., Ph.D., M.S.L.
Acting Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Kate Didden, Research Advisor