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The Pursuit of Happiness: Texting and Romantic Relationships

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The Pursuit of Happiness: Texting and Romantic Relationships



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Sydney Fenton
HCOM 475: Senior Capstone
Journalism and Media Studies
Research Essay
Professor Debian Marty
Division of Humanities and Communication
Spring 2017

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Texting and Romantic Relationships**

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**HCOM 475: SENIOR CAPSTONE
PROJECT PROPOSAL
ESSAY OPTION**

1. Provide your name and identify your area of concentration

Sydney Fenton. Journalism and Media Studies.

2. Focus: Identify the *specific* issue, problem, or question addressed in your essay. Be sure to frame as a question. Briefly explain why you chose this focus area.

The specific question that I will be addressing throughout my essay is, “How does text messaging affect the quality of happiness in our romantic relationships?” There are both pros and cons to texting your significant other. Some pros to texting in a romantic relationship are that it is a quick and easy way to send someone a text if you are busy, especially if you are in a long distance relationship and it has been said that women who text often report a higher feeling of connection with their **partners**. For example, women tend to text to apologize or to mention an issue that will be brought up later in person. Some of the cons to texting in a romantic relationship are that messages cannot portray tone which can cause your significant other to misinterpret the message and when your partner is not texting back within a time that you feel comfortable with, then it can cause a problem. I chose to study this topic because I have had personal experience and have witnessed my friends having problems with texting in their romantic relationships. I have observed that some problems are caused by a lack of texting and communicating with your significant other, especially if you are in a long distance relationship. I believe that effective communication plays a big role for happiness in a romantic relationship.

3. Alignment with Common Theme: Provide a *concise overview* of your project’s *direct alignment* with this semester’s shared theme of inquiry.

My project is in direct alignment with the theme of “Leadership.” Text messaging is a form of communication and sometimes we depend on it too much, especially in a romantic relationship. I believe that this ties in with community building because I want to be able to help other people who are in romantic relationships to understand that text messaging, if not done effectively or used appropriately, can create a negative impact on the relationship.

4. Purpose: What is your project’s primary purpose? What do you hope to accomplish through this project?

The primary purpose of my project is to help people and their significant others to build a healthy and happy relationship. I hope to conduct enough effective research to show the negative and positive impacts with text messaging and how it affects happiness in a romantic relationship.

5. Capstone Title: What is your project's working title?

The Pursuit of Happiness: Texting and Romantic Relationships

6. Working Summary: Provide a one-paragraph working summary of your project...

The beauty of texting is that it can be used to send a quick, "thinking of you!" message to your significant other when you're too busy to call. However, when it is used as a main form of communication throughout the day, it can take a toll on our relationships. Since effective communication is one of the main outlets to happiness between significant others, texting isn't always ideal. So, does text-messaging affect our quality of happiness within our romantic relationships? I will be evaluating whether or not the cons of texting outweigh the pros and how it affects happiness within a romantic relationship. I will apply Keltner's theory of power and see how that factors into happiness and if there is a way that we can communicate by text without it having detrimental effects on our happiness.

7. Sources: Address each of the following:

➤ In order to complete your project, what additional knowledge, insights, skills, understanding, and/or other resources and tools do you anticipate needing?

In order to complete my project, I will need to define "happiness" and what makes up a happy relationship. I will need to consider other points of views about how text messaging can have a positive impact on happiness in a relationship and/or if text messaging is even a factor in happiness in today's world.

➤ **Describe** the kinds of primary and/or secondary sources you intend to use for your inquiry.

This could include collecting original oral histories, analyzing government statistics, consulting scholarly peer-reviewed articles, books, and websites, among others. If you have consulted sources to get started, list them here.

Sources I will be using:

- Sherry Turkle's TED talk: “Connected, but alone?”
- Other Sherry Turkle articles
- Dialogue and Deliberation
- The Power Paradox by Dacher Keltner (Theoretical Framework)
- Analyzing statistics about text messaging and romantic relationships
- The Gottman Institute Research

8. Next Steps: What steps will you need to take to meet your project’s expectations, including preparation of all required deliverables? (Be as specific as possible)

I will need to do all of my research and reading of articles first. I will take all of my research and determine how it relates to my theoretical framework (Dacher Keltner). As I find reliable and useful sources, I will start on my annotated bibliography so that I will not have to worry about it later and go back to every source I used to write a summary. Once I know my angle and how to relate it to my theoretical framework, I will start by stating my topic and opinions in my paper, After, I will use my sources to back up my opinions and my theoretical framework as well as including opposing views throughout.

9. Timeline: Provide a detailed (and realistic) timeline for completion of each step required to meet the project’s expectations.

- Finish all research by second week of March (3/10)
- Project Title and Abstract due March 15
- Start essay draft March 20
- Complete essay draft by April 3
- Complete Resume/CV (if required) by April 3
- Review feedback and work on final essay throughout April
- Finish final essay and turn in by April 30
- Turn in final portfolio by May 10

Abstract

In this paper, I will be discussing how texting is a flawed medium when acting as a main form of communication in a romantic relationship. This paper is based on the theoretical framework of Dacher Keltner's second principle of power and James A. Mackin Jr.'s takes on communication ethics. To understand the effectiveness and ethics behind these frameworks, I utilized scholarly articles and conducted a survey of over 100 participants to support my findings. These findings were categorized into strengths and limitations as they pertained to the overall happiness impacted from texting in romantic relationships. The strengths and limitations listed in this paper include: texts of affirmation, consideration and informative texts, interpretation of tone, conflict resolution, and accessibility between partners. After further analysis of these categories, I have concluded that texting in romantic relationships should be utilized with caution due to the complexity of romantic relationships. While living in a technologically advanced society, it is easy to overlook the potential harms that texting has in our romantic relationships. The sensitivity that exists between texting and romantic relationships has led me to conclude that texting provides ethical concerns when discussing the promotion of happiness in a romantic relationship.

Introduction

The beauty of texting is that it can be used to send a quick, “thinking of you!” message to your significant other when you are too busy to call. However, when it is used as a main form of communication throughout the day, it can take a toll on our relationships. It is difficult to understand the full meaning of a text-message because it is hard to discern someone’s tone when they text and because nonverbal communication (emoticons notwithstanding) is not available. Most of our understanding in interpersonal communication is created through nonverbal (body language, proxemics—physical distance—eye contact, etc.) Texting, therefore, is a flawed medium for communication because it cannot convey nonverbal communication. Emoticons help! But even they are of limited use in conflict.

Through research, I have learned that effective communication is one of the main outlets for happiness in a healthy relationship. Happiness depends on fulfilling the need to connect in romantic relationships. Texting’s strengths and limitations revolve around its ability to foster intimate, truthful, and trustworthy connection. In the case that text-messaging connects people through “I love you” messages, “be there soon” consideration messages, and “how many will be at the party” informational messages, texting is great. Texting is not so great for conveying complex emotions, nuanced messages, and conflict resolution. I will be following Dacher Keltner’s theory of power, conducting a survey, and looking into other professional resources in order to find out some ways that are ethical and effective uses of text-messaging to promote happiness in a romantic relationship. All in the name of love.

Happiness and What it Means

Although the U. S. Declaration of Independence establishes “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” inalienable rights, happiness may be understood in a variety of ways. For this

research project, I rely upon positive psychology researcher, Sonja Lyubomirsky. She defines happiness as “the experience of joy, contentment, or positive well-being, combined with a sense that one’s life is good, meaningful, and worthwhile” (Lyubomirsky, “Happiness Definition”). This definition goes beyond momentary pleasures to connect happiness with a meaningful life. I believe this definition of happiness extends to “good, meaningful, and worthwhile” relationships.

The Greater Good Science Center concurs. In a recent report they documented the ways that happiness improves different aspect of our lives. The studies revealed, “Happiness is good for our relationships: Happy people are more likely to get married and have fulfilling marriages, and they have more friends” (“What Is Happiness?”). This shows that happiness is a virtue that can help strengthen our interpersonal relationships, especially with our significant others. After all, happiness is what keeps our relationships strong with others, whether it is a romantic relationship or not.

The Role of Communication in Creating a Happy Romance

Having established a definitive view of happiness, I now want to focus on the role of communication in producing happiness in romantic relationships. What brings happiness to someone in a romantic relationship? Angela R. Wiley, Ph.D. is a family life specialist at the University of Illinois Extension and is also an associate professor for human and community development at the University of Illinois. For one of her research projects, *Connecting as a couple: Communication skills for healthy relationships*, she concludes, “Communication is fundamental to human interaction and intimate couple relationships, in part because communication is a tool for knowing or emotionally connecting with one another” (Wiley). Communication is the key element to happiness within romantic relationships. When we communicate with one another, it is a form of intimacy because we are connecting with our

partner and getting to know them more.

Communication in romantic relationships, when used ethically and effectively, can be a major form of intimacy and can create a stronger bond between you and your significant other. Dr. John M. Gottman is a psychologist who is well known for his work within marital and relationship stability. He did a study on married couples when they argued to see which ones would last and which ones would end up in a divorce. He concluded that there are four red flags that indicated whether or not someone would end up divorced. Dr. Gottman calls these red flags, The Four Horsemen. The Four Horsemen theory includes, criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling. Dr. Gottman concluded that if you or your significant other do any of these things while arguing, then you will most likely end up separating.

Dr. Gottman argues that criticism is different than a complaint or suggesting that they do something a different way. Gottman states, “The latter two are about specific issues, whereas the former is an ad hominem attack: it is an attack on your partner at the core. In effect, you are dismantling his or her whole being when you criticize” (Gottman). He suggests that criticism is not an ethical way to voice your feelings to your partner because instead you are solely attacking him/her on their character. Criticism can be detrimental in a romantic relationship because it can be emotionally abusive and it is not a proper way to voice how you feel.

The next horseman is contempt, which is when you or your partner disrespects the other because someone feels like they have more power. Contempt is another form of emotional abuse and therefore is not an ethical way to communicate with your significant other.

Ellie Lisitsa from The Gottman Institute reported:

In his research, Dr. Gottman found that couples that are contemptuous of each other are more likely to suffer from infectious illness (colds, the flu, etc.) than others, as their immune systems weaken! Contempt is fueled by long-simmering negative thoughts about the partner – which come to a head in the perpetrator attacking the accused from a

position of relative superiority. Contempt is the single greatest predictor of divorce according to Dr. Gottman's work. It must be eliminated!

Dr. Gottman suggests that contempt is one of the worst ways to communicate with your significant other.

Defensiveness is another horseman that Dr. Gottman found is toxic in our communication within our romantic relationships.

The study suggests:

We've all been defensive. This horseman is nearly omnipresent when relationships are on the rocks. When we feel accused unjustly, we fish for excuses so that our partner will back off. Unfortunately, this strategy is almost never successful. Our excuses just tell our partner that we don't take them seriously, trying to get them to buy something that they don't believe, that we are blowing them off.

Dr. Gottman states that when we defend our actions, we tend to turn the tables around to blame it on our significant others. When communicating in this way, we can harm our significant others because it can be conveyed in a way that suggests that the person does not care about what needs to be done or what is being said.

Lastly, stonewalling, possibly the worst horsemen out of all four. Stonewalling is when someone extracts themselves from the conversation and ignores the person talking. When you stonewall someone, it makes them feel unwanted, unimportant, and unloved. Dr. Gottman states, "It takes time for the negativity created by the first three horsemen to become overwhelming enough that stonewalling becomes an understandable "out," but when it does, it frequently becomes a habit" (Gottman). Stonewalling is the least ethical way to deal with a difficult situation. This can cause a break in trust in the relationship. The Four Horsemen are hazardous in our romantic relationships because effective and ethical communication is key to a happy and healthy relationship.

The Impact of Texting on Romantic Communication

Text-messaging is a form of digital communication used in majority of romantic relationships. However, when you use texting as your *main* form of communication with your significant other, it can negatively affect your happiness. There are pros and cons to texting in a romantic relationship. Some negative aspects to texting that can impact happiness and romantic communication are that it creates endless accessibility between partners, complex emotions can be difficult to convey, nuanced messages will be taken out of context, and conflict resolution is not ideal. Some positive aspects to texting that can impact happiness and romantic communication are texts of affirmations (I love you, thinking of you, etc.), consideration texts (be there in 10 min, I picked up the kids, etc.), and informative texts (How many people will be at the party? When should I pick you up? etc.).

Sherry Turkle, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has done studies over the past few decades concerning the relationship between people and technology. In her TEDtalk, “Connected, but alone?” she points out how technology has played a role in ruining our interpersonal relationships.

Sherry Turkle states:

Over the past fifteen years, I’ve studied technologies of mobile communication and I’ve interviewed hundreds and hundreds of people, young and old, about their plugged in lives. And what I’ve found is that our little devices, those little devices in our pockets, are so powerful that they don’t only change what we do, they change who we are. Some of the things we do now with our devices are things that, only a few years ago, we would have found odd or disturbing, but they’ve quickly come to seem familiar..

Turkle is making the point that our technological devices alone have major control over our everyday interactions. She continues with examples of how she has witnessed people texting during important board meetings and sometimes funerals. She even jokes about how people have mastered a skill of texting while making eye contact with the person in front of them.

Sherry Turkle starts off her TEDtalk explaining how her daughter sent her a text-message wishing her good-luck. Turkle continues by saying how texts like these make her happy, but when we start to use our technological devices too much, it starts to take a toll on our ways of interaction. She adds, “We are letting technology take us to places that we don’t want to go” (Turkle). Sherry Turkle makes a number a valid points throughout her speech. She mentions that technology is causing us to become occupied by hiding behind our devices to dodge uncomfortable situations and confrontation. She then explains how this is ruining our relationships with other people because although we are around each other, we are still using our phones or tablets to seek other connections online.

Text-messaging takes away from our face-to-face interactions, however many people these days do not want in-person conversations because it is happening in real time and you cannot plan out what you want to say.

Sherry Turkle questions this behavior:

When I ask people “what’s wrong with having a conversation?” people say, “I’ll tell you what’s wrong with having a conversation. It takes place in real time and you can’t control what you’re going to say.” So that’s the bottom line. Texting, email, posting, all of these things let us present the self as we want to be. We get to edit, and that means we get to delete, and that means we get to retouch, the face, the voice, the flesh, the body—not too little, not too much, just right.

The fact that we can deceive our potential partners of how we are actually feeling, is a major downfall in our relationships. We are avoiding real life situations and issues that should be worked out in person. When we alter our communication, our happiness within our romantic relationships suffer.

I believe that texting our significant others gives us too much accessibility to our partners. It is always great to get ahold of someone instantly, however it can cause too much of an expectation. This is when texting negatively affects our romantic relationships. Although we

have more access to one another, we are reconstructing the way that we build relationships and how others perceive us. We become in complete control of our conversations from a distance. Sherry Turkle states, "...I believe it's because technology appeals to us when we are most vulnerable...we're designing technologies that give us the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship. We turn to technology to help us feel connected in ways we can comfortably control" (Turkle). Texting has become an outlet for couples to connect to one another when the other is away, however, most of the time we take this for granted.

Trying to write our true emotions in a digital message is difficult to do. Trying to portray someone else's emotions in a message is even more difficult. Two researchers from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Katherine M. Hertlein and Katrina Ancheta ran studies to determine the advantages and disadvantages of technology in relationships. They conducted a survey in which participants would share their opinions within their own romantic relationships. Hertlein and Ancheta found that texting often caused problems between romantic partners and interfered with intimacy. In their survey, one of their respondents claimed, "sometimes texting leads to misunderstandings because you can't see facial expressions or body language" (Hertlein and Ancheta, "Technology in Relationships"). When trying to express your emotions, it is best to call the person to make sure that they can fully understand what you are feeling. Their results proved that you have to be careful when texting your romantic partner about your emotions because things can be taken out of context.

Misinterpretation of tone leads into the fact that texting should never be used as a form of communication involving conflict resolution. In the same study with Hertlein and Ancheta, their respondents stated that trying to solve conflicts over text can lead to more issues. They expressed, "many arguments can be taken out of context when just emailing or texting." Part of

the issue seems to rest in the fact that when the message itself is not clear, the emotions behind the message are also unclear. One participant exemplified this by stating ‘Sometimes feelings or emotions are not really expressed correctly and get lost in translation so people ‘mistake what people say and it can cause confusion’” (Hertlein and Ancheta, “Technology and Relationships”). Just as Sherry Turkle mentions in her TEDtalk, people these days seem to hide behind their devices to avoid confrontation and “real time” conversations. This is causing problems in our personal relationships.

Texts of affirmations are known to benefit a romantic relationship and create more happiness between partners. Jonathan Pettigrew is an assistant professor at Arizona State University who did research on text-messaging and connectedness. In his research article, *Text Messaging and Connectedness within Close Interpersonal Relationships*, he mentions a study that he found on romantic partners and their habits of texting each other. Pettigrew found that romantic partners “were interested in more than simply being conscious of their partner's’ activities. Consistently, romantic partners—whether married, engaged, cohabitating or simply dating—used text messaging to promote feelings of being emotionally and relationally connected” (Pettigrew, “Text Messaging and Connectedness”). Texts of affirmations are not needed in every text that you send to your significant other, however sending an unexpected “I love you” text can help strengthen the passion in the relationship.

Pettigrew found that many of his respondents in his research stated that texts of affirmations made them happier in the relationship. He verifies, “The data indicated that text messages created a sense of emotional and relational connection between romantically involved dyads” (Pettigrew, “Text Messaging and Connectedness”). Sending out “I love you” or “thinking of you” text messages are positive ways to help create a healthy and happy relationship.

Consideration texts such as “be there in 10 minutes” or “I picked up the kids” can positively impact a romantic relationship. Informative texts (how many people will be at the party?, when should I pick you up?, etc.) are other examples of ethical and effective forms of texting your significant other. As we can conclude from the research findings above, text-messaging with deep context is not ideal in a romantic relationship. Texts of affirmation, consideration texts, and informative texts all have one thing in common, they are short, sweet, and to the point. These effective and ethical messages deeply strengthen relationships because it makes your partner happy. As I said before, texting should never be an option as a main form of communication. Once we eliminate texting as our only option for chatting with our significant other all day, we become happier and healthier in our relationships. When we send out these short messages, we are utilizing text-messaging in the way that it was always intended to be used.

Survey Results and Recommendations for Effective and Ethical Communication via Text

In addition to my research, I wanted to reach out to the community to validate my findings, therefore I conducted a survey via Google Forms (“Does Text-Messaging Affect the Quality of Happiness in Romantic Relationships?”). The first section of the survey asked for their gender (male, female, or other), age group (under 18 years old, 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, or 45+), and their ethnicity (White, Hispanic or Latino, Black or African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American or American Indian, or other) and I made it optional for people to disclose this information.

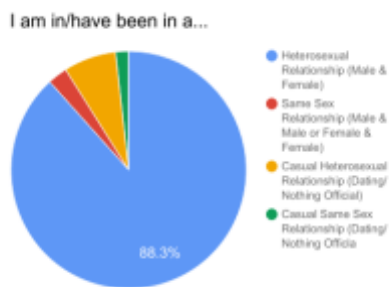
Out of 111 responses, 91% were identified as female (101 respondents) and 9% identified as male (10 respondents). Majority of the people who took this survey fell into the age groups of 18-24 years-old (58.6%-65 respondents) and 25-34 years-old (22.5%- 25 respondents). The next

age groups were 45+ years-old (9%- 10 respondents), 35-44 years-old (8.1%- 9 respondents), and under 18 years-old (1.8%- 2 respondents). For these results, I had a feeling that majority of the people taking my survey would be women, however I was hoping that more men would participate to gain better insight on the topic.

As for ethnicity, the largest group of people identified as White (66.7%- 74 respondents) and Hispanic or Latino (18%- 20 respondents). The next ethnicity group results were Black or African American (6.3%- 7 respondents), Asian/Pacific Islander (5.4%- 6 respondents), Other (3.6%- 4 respondents), and there were no results for people who took this survey that identified as Native American or American Indian.

The second section of my survey included questions regarding relationships and their style of communication. I started off my survey with asking the question, “Are you or have you ever been involved in a romantic relationship?” For this question, as I expected, 100% of the results stated “Yes.” As for the type of relationship that the respondents were in, majority were in a heterosexual relationship, while the minority were in a casual same sex relationship (see fig. 1.)

Fig. 1.



I felt like knowing this information may have been important because every relationship has a different dynamic. I wanted to know if different types of couples and relationships had different opinions on this topic.

The next question I asked was, “What is the main form of communication between you and your significant other?” Over half of the respondents claimed that face to face was their main form of communication, while only 39% stated that texting was. (see fig. 2.)

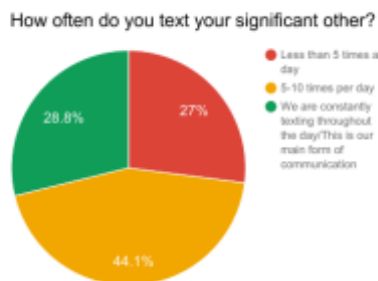
Fig. 2.



I also added the categories, “Written Letters” and “Other,” however there were no results for those answers. I expected a higher result for text-messaging being a main form of communication between significant others.

As far as how often my respondents texted their significant others each day, it was more likely that couples texted each other five to ten times a day than it was for them to be constantly texting each other throughout the day (see fig. 3.)

Fig. 3

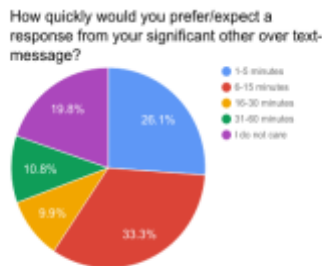


I was somewhat happy with these results. According to my research and personal experiences, texting your significant other should not be your main form of communication. When we text as a main form of communication, it can cause miscommunication which usually results in conflict. Before you press “Send,” ask yourself whether or not that message can wait until you have time to talk on the phone or in person.

Face to face communication is ideal when talking to your significant other, especially about sensitive topics or issues. As the research has stated earlier on in this essay, text-messaging should not be a main form of communication in your romantic relationships. Try calling or chatting face to face with your significant other every night before bed to talk about how each other’s day went. If you feel the urge to talk to your significant other, send a text of affirmation like, “I love you!” or “I can’t wait to see you later.” This way we do not run into any miscommunication problems and we cannot misinterpret a person’s tone.

When sending a text-message, others might have a different expectation of how long the person should respond. Realistically, if you wanted a quick response you would call someone on the phone, however sometimes the environment or situation we are in does not always permit for calling someone. Text-messaging is a great way to communicate when we are not able to pick up the phone and call. However, we should not expect a quick response. The results from my survey proves that everyone has a different preference on response times (see fig. 4.)

Fig. 4.



These results prove shocking that majority of the results expect or prefer a response to a text-message between one to fifteen minutes. Texting has become a form of communication where people expect a fast response. So why do we expect this when we can pick up the phone and call someone for a faster result? This brings us back to Sherry Turkle’s theory that text-messaging has become a defense mechanism. It is sometimes a preferred form of communication because we have time to think about what to say next. When we are talking on the phone or talking to someone in person, you have to respond in “real time.”

What happens when you text your significant other and they have not responding to you in over an hour? According to my survey, there were various feelings that people felt about this situation. Although majority did not care or were neutral about it, others felt worried or unwanted (see fig. 5.)

Fig. 5.



These results were shocking because almost half of the respondents felt unwanted/not a priority or worried when their significant other has not responded in over an hour. This proves my research to be true about how text-messaging can cause intimacy issues and therefore affect the quality of happiness in romantic relationships. We often too much rely on texting as a way to communicate with our significant others and do not realize the amount of harm that it can cause.

A way to approach this situation is to simply understand that text-messaging was created

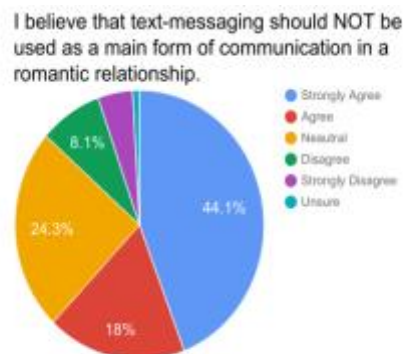
after phone calls. Texting was never intended to be a quicker way to get a response. When you send a text, make sure it is not something that you need to know right away. If your surrounding environment does not permit you to call your significant other on the phone (e.g. you are at work or at school) then let them know in the message that you prefer a quick response if possible. This way you are effectively letting them know that their response is urgent, however you are not able to pick up the phone and call them.

When arguing over text or dealing with something, it is difficult to portray someone's tone. When we are angry, this tends to affect our ways of thinking and could lead to misinterpretations of the message sent to us. In my survey, I stated, "I have gotten into an argument with my significant other over text-message" and had my respondents choose, "True" or "False." Out of 111 responses, 64% of people responded, "True." Next I asked for people to type in an example of arguments that they have gotten into over text (not required). Most of the examples that I had received were related to miscommunication and misinterpreting their significant other's tone while others had stated that they got into an argument because their significant other was not responding to their message fast enough.

According to the research that I have found, it was known that trying to resolve an issue over text would be problematic. When I read about this, I started to relate it to my own experience. I have personally tried to resolve an issue over text, however it never ends the way I want it to. Almost 80% of the people who took my survey stated that they have also tried to resolve an issue over text and 13.5% stated that they have both broken up or have been broken up with their significant other over text-message. These facts also relate back to Sherry Turkle's TEDtalk, *Connected, but alone?* When she states that we tend to hide behind our devices. This is why text-messaging should not be your main form of communication in a romantic relationship

and the respondents from my survey also agree with this statement (see fig. 6.)

Fig. 6.



As you can see, more than half of the respondents agreed that text-messaging should not be the main form of communication in a romantic relationship.

After this question, they were asked why they answered the way that they did (not required). Here are some of the following responses:

“Face to face interactions are natural and can build stronger relationships. Texting should only be used for quick messaging here and there, and phone calls should be used for when you would like more time to speak to your significant other, but cannot go directly to them.”

“I believe that relationships should be mainly face to face rather than through a device. Face to face communication is more personal and intimate as opposed to over text message.”

“I believe it shouldn't be the main form of communication because it takes away the real in the moment feeling like talking on the phone does, it isn't as intimate which leads to misunderstanding if something is read differently than the way it was intended.”

I appreciated the responses that I received from my survey and connecting it back to my research

verifies that texting should not be a main form of communication. However, although many people may agree, we tend to go back on that and remain using text-message as a main form of communication with our significant others.

Theoretical Application

For this research project, I have applied Dacher Keltner's power theory to the research that I have found and my survey that I conducted. In Keltner's book, *The Power Paradox*, I found that his power principle #2 (Power is part of every relationship and interaction) is most relevant to my findings.

In the first chapter to Keltner's book, he states that he started his study of power twenty years ago and that often power is usually linked to coercion and dominance. Keltner concurs with this statement and reminds us that a lot of significant changes in history, such as women's suffrage) were not caused by coercive force. Keltner argues, "People resort to coercive force when their power is slipping" (Keltner 21). Keltner's theory of power is about how we gain power from other people around us and we endure it by contributing to the common good. When we use coercive power, we actually become powerless.

I chose Keltner because I believe that we need to practice this theory in order to maintain better relationships. His power principle #2, *Power is part of every relationship and interaction*, speaks volumes for this project. When we are texting, we are actively trying to engage in our relationships and interact with our significant others. Keltner verifies the fact that power is in every relationship by stating, "Yes, in certain relationships power is more salient and explicit...But upon closer study, all relationships prove to be defined by mutual influence" (29). Keltner is describing how in every successful and happy relationship, the power is shared between both romantic partners. He continues, "The love that partners feel toward each other is

colored by the balance of power between them” (30). When you are happy in your relationship, you tend to take your partner’s opinions more seriously and take in their influences for consideration.

I will also be applying James A. Mackin Jr.’s thesis from *Community over Chaos: An Ecological Perspective on Communication Ethics*. His thesis was paraphrased and used as the foundation for the book, *Dialogue and Deliberation* by Josina M. Makau and Debian L. Marty. Mackin Jr.’s thesis summarizes, “The quality of communication affects the quality of the community and our ability to act together in common purpose” (Makau and Marty, “Dialogue and Deliberation”). I agree with James A. Mackin Jr. because like I have found in my research, communication is the key to happiness in every relationship. When we communicate with each other ethically and effectively, we strengthen our relationships and live a healthier life with our romantic partners.

Breaking down Mackin Jr.’s paraphrased thesis, I will start with “the quality of communication affects the quality of the community...” The quality of communication is important in any relationship, whether it be romantic, professional, or friendly. When you are communicating with someone effectively, it positively affects the quality and therefore your conversation will have a better outcome. The quality of communication is important because it helps you understand other viewpoints as well as better communicating your own side.

Next is, “...and our ability to act together in common purpose.” While arguing in a romantic relationship, we sometimes forget that we are on the same “team” as our significant other. It is important to remember that we should be actively trying to solve the problem to achieve the common purpose, to work things out and stay together. Instead, we tend to get wrapped up in our emotions and let pride blind our common path. Romantic partners in a

relationship both want the same end result, whether it is marriage or living together forever.

When we communicate ethically and effectively, our quality of our communication helps out the community (romantic partners) and helps us to achieve our common purpose (happily ever after).

Conclusion

All in all, I have determined that in this generation (and for many more to come) technology will always play a big role in our lives. How we use it will determine our current and future relationships. Text-messaging is the most common form of digital communication and it has become very beneficial in our daily lives. While it would be impractical to suggest getting rid of texting in romantic relationships all together, it is important that we acknowledge the possible flaws in the way that we utilize it. Communication is important in every relationship and sometimes we have limited options in doing so. While text-messaging can be harmful, we must remember that it is also useful and beneficial in our technologically advanced society. Before you send that text, make sure you know the potential risks that the message could have.

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