Texting Etiquette and its Effects on 
Our Perceptions of Intimate Relationships

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Abstract

This study seeks to understand the association between texting habits and characteristics and partner perceptions of intimate relationships. This study investigates multiple aspects of texting such as: temporality, participants’ perceived satisfaction with their significant other, length of text messages, frequency of communication, among others. It is hypothesized that texting etiquette and its various sub-components will be influential in how participants will rate their level of satisfaction (closeness, intimacy, emotional support, and effort) with their significant other. Ten in-depth interviews were conducted with college-aged participants. They were asked questions regarding the texting etiquette of their significant other as well as their own texting etiquette. While no distinctive associations were discovered between my research variables, multiple theories of communication will be used in order to help explain and provide support for the data that was collected and analyzed.
Introduction

Millenials are too often faced with the miscommunication that results through text messaging. Many aspects of this form of computer-mediated communication have implications for individuals’ perceptions of their interpersonal relationships.

Text messaging is no longer a simple form of exchanging textual information in quick and convenient manner. Now that smart phones are equipped with emojis, read receipts, and general expectations of how we should conduct our texting, miscommunication is a common stress reported by college-aged students. In this study I will focus on various aspects of texting “etiquette” and how it relates to participants’ notions of their intimate relationships.

Variables such as length of time between text messages, length of text message itself, use of emojis, use of punctuation, and frequency of text conversations will all be analyzed in the duration of my report in comparison to participants’ self-reported levels of closeness, intimacy, emotional support and effort received from their significant other. As this is a qualitative research study, I will not have explicit numerical data, but rather will analyze patterns and themes identified through the data collection process.

While technology is progressing and advancing every day, I would like to understand how and why we choose particular channels of communication over others, especially when more desirable options are available. Based upon the research presented here, I hope to provide insight into how the Communication Studies discipline may be useful in application to daily life. I hope this study will enlighten not only millennial readers, but also anyone who had had or will have experience with texting in intimate relational settings.
Literature Review

In order to provide a rationale and theoretical perspective for my study, I have chosen to focus on four theories of communication. Uncertainty Reduction Theory, Social Exchange Theory, Social Penetration Theory, and Expectancy Violations Theory are applied to this study to better understand how and why I received the results that I did and to come to a conclusion upon completing my analysis. Kenneth Gergen, a psychologist and professor had declared, “the process of creating relationships is now accelerated and intimacy is hurried because today’s technologies make it possible for partners to sustain constant connection” (Solis, 2006). These theories will assist in determining associations or patterns about participant texting etiquette and their perception of intimacy.

Uncertainty Reduction Theory

This theory argues that people go through different stages of processing information in order to reduce uncertainty in a relationship to decide if they are liked or disliked by another person. By reducing uncertainty, people acquire heightened predictability in verbal and nonverbal situations. According to critics, “because people need to manage uncertainty and develop rapport, they will adapt the textual cues to meet their needs when the channel available does not carry visual or aural cues” (Walther, 1992, 1993; Walther, Anderson, & Park, 1994; Walther & Burgoon, 1992). While this theory may be universal to a large portion of communicators, it is used differently depending on the relationship and culture. Uncertainty avoidance is a common effort taken by people in all types of relationships. “The desire to resolve uncertainty seems to be a trait shared by people around the world” (Berger, 1988; Gibbs et al. 2011). While the idea of
uncertainty avoidance, or reduction in this instance, may be universally shared; it is often managed differently depending on factors such as culture and gender.

In order to avoid uncertainty, information-seeking behaviors (active and passive) take place. Such behaviors include: talking with people, asking questions, evaluating what was said, predicting outcomes, and re-checking information that was provided. “Uncertainty leads to information-seeking behavior, as individuals are motivated to monitor other people’s behavior in social situations and engage in a variety of strategies to find out more about others, such as covert observation, asking questions, or communicating to encourage others to reveal more about themselves” (Berger, 1979; Gibbs et al. 2011). In my study, I predict that information-seeking behaviors in text messaging will include: shorter amounts of time between text messages, longer text messages, using emojis and using punctuation. Upon completion of his 2006 study, Jay C. Solis reports, “how the individuals in the text-based relationships managed uncertainty and created understanding by using smileys and other unique ways of constructing the messages indicate the appropriation of the technology not to increase the “image” of connection, but to enhance real intimacy” (Solis, 3).

For use in my project, uncertainty reduction theory will help explain how and why individuals in heterosexual relationships communicate in order to reduce or avoid uncertainty by means of their texting etiquette. “Communication plays a key role in this process as it is through communication that uncertainty is reduced. As such, interpersonal relationships develop among strangers as interactants communicate to reduce their uncertainty and get to know each other by gaining greater knowledge and mutual understanding” (Berger, 1979; Gibbs et al. 2011).

By using this theory, I will be able to apply the research and knowledge to my results in order to determine if a correlation exits between my variables and if such information-seeking
behaviors are uncovered. Such behavior could include the use of punctuation, emojis, and how much time they leave between each text message.

**Social Exchange Theory**

This theory explains how and why people disclose certain information to others. The information they provide can initiate, grow, or even hinder a relationship. In essence, it helps guide how we decide to start, continue and even end a relationship. “Our decisions are based upon our projections of the rewards and costs of a particular course of action” (Stafford, 2008; Ribarsky 2013). Depending on the perspective that a person is using, certain information may be seen as a reward where another person may not see that same point of view. According to this theory, our relationships are built and maintained on the notion that we must maximize our rewards and minimize our costs.

However, social exchange theory is more complex than a simple cost-rewards diagram. Three factors of this theory help us determine how we feel (positively or negatively) about our relationships. These factors include: cost-benefit analysis, comparison level, and comparison level of alternatives. Cost-benefit analysis is most pertinent to this study and will be focused on more in the discussion section of this paper. Cost-benefit analysis is when we decide what is a reward and what is a cost for us. Potential costs (negative) could include: bad habits, emotional instability, or lack of fiscal responsibility. Benefits (positive) could include: desirable personality traits or attractiveness. If the benefits outweigh the costs, then the relationship could be a potential success as it develops over time and each individual feels they are receiving more than they are giving up.
In an activity presented by Elizabeth Ribarsky in 2013, participants were given three scenarios relating to three different romantic candidates. They were read a brief description of each candidate and then asked whom they would prefer to go on a date with. After collecting her results, she went through the debriefing process where she asked her participants why they chose the romantic candidate they did. Some of her questions included: “What were the greatest benefits you imagine you would receive from your date selection?” “What do you believe would be the greatest cost/risk of being in a relationship with your date selection?”

The activity demonstrated how decisions about romantic partners might very well be a combination of active and passive thought. “Even within our romantic relationships, we often make choices and behave in a manner that we believe will reap the most rewards” (Ribarsky, 2013). Ribarksy also mentions that Social Exchange Theory “addresses issues such as gender, age, and individuals’ standpoints and their respective impact on cost/reward analysis”. In order to understand how and why my participants decided to disclose certain information to myself and to their significant others, might have depended upon the variables discussed in the project. In essence, Social Exchange Theory is a choice or decision-making theory that takes personal, social, and economic factors into account.

Decisions must be made in order to figure out which communication platform is most appropriate, beneficial, or preferred to use. Communicators must be aware that there are other factors in the relationship (desirable personality traits, attractiveness, intimacy, closeness, etc.) that outweigh their desire to communicate FtF. In essence, they are content with less FtF contact if their partner has a great personality, provides them with certain levels of closeness and intimacy, and is physically attractive.
**Social Penetration Theory**

This theory describes the different levels of interpersonal relationships and what each level provides to the communication of that relationship. As relationships form and develop, the nature of the information disclosed moves from surface-level discussion to more intimate ones. Social Penetration Theory helps provide a rationale as to how that happens. Self-disclosure and closeness are crucial components to the formation of the theory, two variables I investigate in the current study.

Altman and Taylor (1973) explain that “relational development is both linear and sequential and that it unfolds through different stages-orientation, exploratory affective exchange, affective exchange, and stable exchange-as self-disclosure increases in breadth and depth (Altman and Taylor, 4)”. This theory is useful in understanding relational development and will assist the analysis of my study to understand when my participants disclose information and what that information actually is. Listed below are the steps of Social Penetration Theory:

- **Stage 1- Orientation**: “small talk”, light-hearted and surface-level conversation that complies with social norms and appropriateness. May identify as “acquaintances”.

- **Stage 2- Exploratory Affective Exchange**: begin to express personal feelings and attitudes towards moderately sensitive issues like politics and education. May identify as “friends”.

- **Stage 3- Affective Exchange**: begin to express personal and private information. Can include criticisms, opinions, and values. Small amounts of intimacy may be present such as hugging and kissing (if a romantic relationship). May be identified as “casually dating”.

- **Stage 4- Stable Exchange**: the relationship is now stable and constant. Members of the relationship can begin to predict future behavior and reactions about the other. Larger
amounts of intimacy may be present (if a romantic relationship). May be identified as “boyfriend/girlfriend/husband/wife”.

“When students’ preexisting ideas are acknowledged, their curiosity is activated” (Presseisen, 1995). During my interview process, participants were asked certain questions that challenged their pre-conceived notions about their intimate relationships. I intend to utilize Social Penetration theory to uncover a correlation between self-disclosure and amount of time participants have been dating their significant other.

**Expectancy Violations Theory (EVT)**

This theory explains how communicators have certain expectations for relationships/situations/etc. and when those expectations are not met or they are violated, we make assumptions about the relationship/situation in either a positive or negative way. Many times, individuals in a romantic relationship experience tension when they cannot identify certain aspects of the other person. Are they upset? Did they like that? What does he/she want from me? are some of the questions that might be present in a dialectical exchange. We are not mind readers, yet often enough, we get caught having expectations about another person that are not fully supported by our preconceived notions.

“Expectations can facilitate relational quality when they promote positive relational behaviors that can be realistically enacted” (Roloff and Wright, 2015). Participants in my study may expect their partners to text them back as soon as they receive a text from them. However, if their partner does not act with such a sense of urgency, expectations may have just been violated. To provide another example, if Jane just got a promotion at work and invites her boyfriend John over to celebrate, Jane would expect her boyfriend to be happy for her. If John comes over to
Jane’s house and he is less than enthusiastic for her, Jane might question their relational communication. However, if John reacted according to Jane’s expectations and was excited for Jane, this would provide further amounts of relational quality to their relationship. Expectancy Violations Theory assumes that individuals form expectations for how individuals, including themselves, should act and that these expectations shape and guide interaction, remaining relatively stable once activated (Burgoon, 1993).

Expectancies can be tied to specific features of the other person with whom one is interacting, the relationship between the other person and the perceiver, and the context. When individuals notice that another’s behavior significantly deviates from expectancies, they become aroused and cognitively appraise the action (Burgoon, 1993). This social-scientific theory will allow me to analyze my data with respect to how often a participant feels their expectations were not met during a phone call or a text message conversation. With this in mind, I will be able to see if there is a correlation as to if they felt more positively or negatively about their partners’ behavior.

Additionally, if a participant in my study reports to having a low level of intimacy with their partner but a high level of closeness, the expectations might be muffled or unclear. We would typically expect these two things (closeness and intimacy) to be a package deal. However, it is not always the case and EVT will help to uncover the reasons why we expect certain things in relationships.
Rationale and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to determine if texting etiquette has an effect on our perceptions of intimate relationships and if so, what that effect is. Based on Uncertainty Reduction Theory, Social Exchange Theory, Social Penetration Theory, and Expectancy Violations Theory, I have grounds to make the claim that interpersonal and intimate relationships rely immensely upon communication exchanges and informational processing.

Based upon personal experience and previous research, I hypothesize that texting etiquette does have an effect on how people view their intimate connections with their significant others. As for a positive or negative outcome, I hypothesize that poor texting etiquette will have a slightly negative effect based on participant responses.

With this project, I hope to educate others about how understanding a communication environment is significant in our overall satisfaction with that communication exchange. I predict that all participants will report having some level of dissatisfaction within their relationship because of a factor relating to texting. I hope to highlight that any form of communication (in-person or digital) comes with a form of etiquette that may or may not be followed.

According to the communication theories listed above and expanded upon in the literature review, this study aims to identify the associations between texting etiquette and perceptions of intimate relationships. Based upon the given rationale, I have formulated the following overarching research question:

**Overarching Research Question:** How might texting etiquette affect our perceptions and comprehension of the nature of our intimate relationships?
Research Question 1A: Does the length of time between text messages have an effect on perceived level of closeness, intimacy, emotional support, and effort?

Research Question 1B: Does the length of the text message itself have an effect on perceived level of closeness, intimacy, emotional support, and effort?

Research Question 1C: Does the use of emojis have an effect on perceived level of closeness, intimacy, emotional support, and effort?

Research Question 1D: Does the use of punctuation have an effect on perceived level of closeness, intimacy, emotional support, and effort?
Methodology

Participants (N=10) were gathered from Cal Poly Facebook pages on a voluntary basis to assist me with the completion of my senior project. All participants are female students attending Cal Poly and are in a current heterosexual relationship. 3 participants reported being in a long-distance relationship and all 10 participants hold boyfriend/girlfriend relationship status with their partners. After 10 participants were contacted, I conducted individual interviews with each participant in Kennedy Library over the course of two weeks. The in-depth interviews lasted approximately 20-30 minutes depending on the complexity of participant responses. Interview questions were separated by category: “demographics”, “relation to significant other” and “texting variables”.

Demographic questions included the participants’ age, gender, major and their self-reported identity of “introvert” or “extrovert”. Questions pertaining to “relation to significant other” include how long the participant has known their S.O. (significant other), where they met their S.O., what the top 3 reasons they argue with their S.O, as well as a few belief-oriented questions.

For the belief-oriented questions, I asked participants to first report their own definition of a term, followed by my definition of the terms “closeness”, “intimacy”, “emotional support”, and “effort”, and then allowed them to rate “high, medium, or low” based upon my definition. I wanted participants to answer autonomously before I interjected with my own definitions as it has allowed me to compare and contrast how participants define particular terms for my project.

Questions regarding “texting variables” include the temporality of text messages, length of text messages, use of emoticons, use of punctuation, and frequency of that communication.
**Independent Variables (IVs)**

My independent variables consisted of: length of time between texts, length of the text itself, use of emojis, use of different punctuation marks, frequency of phone calls vs. text messages, and the duration of phone calls vs. text message conversations. (Refer to appendix).

**Dependent Variables (DVs)**

My dependent variables consist of: reported level of closeness received, [(closeness: how close someone feels with that other person based on their level of self-disclosure (high, moderate, low) in comparison to the nature of what is disclosed (religion, family, personal life, etc.))], reported level of intimacy received (intimacy: high, moderate, or low level of intimacy in forms of: touching, kissing, consensual sexual contact), reported level of emotional support received (how much the person feels their significant other (S.O.) is emotionally available and supportive as well as being a good listener), and reported level of effort given to relationship (how much effort does the person feel their S.O. puts in to their relationship?) (Refer to appendix).

**Interview Questions Dealing with Dependent and Independent Variables**

**Dependent Variables (Measured on a scale of High to Low)**

**Closeness**: How close do you feel towards your S.O.?

- 10/10 reported “High”

**Intimacy**: How much intimacy do you feel you receive from your S.O.?

- 7/10 reported “High”
- 3/10 reported “Medium”
  - 2 out of these 3 are in a LDR
Emotional Support: How much emotional support do you feel you receive from your S.O.?

- 9/10 reported “High”
- 1/10 reported “Medium” (also reported “Medium” on Intimacy)

Effort: How much effort do you feel your S.O. provides to the well being of your relationship?

- 8/10 reported “High”
- 2/10 reported “Medium” (1 of these 2 also reported “Medium” for both Intimacy & Emotional Support)

No participant reported “Low” on any of the given dependent variables. Every participant maintains a relationship status of “Boyfriend/Girlfriend” and all participants fall under the range of 4 months to 3 years with respect to how long they have been dating their S.O.

Most Common Channel of Communication

- 6/10 reported a non-FtF (Face-to-Face) channel (texting, phone call, FaceTime, Skype)

Most Preferred Channel of Communication

- 10/10 reported in favor of a FtF means of communication
- While all participants reported that FtF communication was their most *preferred* means of communication, this was not reflected in what they reported to be their most *common* means of communication.

Days/Week They Talk Via Phone Call

- 7/10 reported between 1-5 times per week
Days/week They Talk Via Text Message

- 9/10 reported to text every single day with their S.O
- 1/10 reported to text 4 days a week with their S.O.

Sample

Participants (N=10) were gathered from Facebook after I posted on multiple pages seeking volunteers for my senior project. Participants are all female Cal Poly students within the age range of 19-21 years old. Although this topic of study is relevant to many communities, for the purpose of convenience, I have focused only on heterosexual individuals who report being in a committed relationship.

Population (N=10) female Cal Poly undergrad students

- Ages 19-21
- 4 from the College of Liberal Arts
- 3 from the College of Engineering
- 2 from the College of Science and Mathematics
- 1 from the College of Architecture and Environmental Design

Personality

- 5 self-reported extroverts
- 5 self-reported introverts

Long-Distance Relationship

- 3 individuals reported to being in a long-distance relationship (LDR)
Procedure

The in-depth interview questions were formulated with assistance from the communication theories in my literature, Dr. Julia K. Woolley, as well as from my own curiosity about the topic. I met participants in various Fishbowls at Cal Poly’s Kennedy Library where I was able to conduct the interviews. I sat across from participants and allowed them to review and sign the informed consent document before beginning my questions.

I began my interview process by allotting time for small talk to help make the participants feel more comfortable with me, and the aim of my study. By creating a welcoming atmosphere, participants were more likely to honestly respond to my questions. I transcribed all interviews on printed interview guides unique to each participant’s number (1-10).

Interviews lasted approximately 20-30 minutes and I hypothesized that I would generate similar responses from each participant that would reflect a generally negative view of their intimacy levels. In the results section below, I will provide additional context as to what this outcome really was.
Results

The first research question sought to identify a correlation between the length of time between text messages and its effect on perceived level of closeness, intimacy, emotional support, and effort. All participants reported that once they receive a text message from their S.O., they typically respond immediately. When asked if their partners typically respond immediately to a text message from them, responses varied slightly. Some participants said their S.O. will respond right away and some said their partner would take between 5-20 minutes to respond, as they don’t check their phone very often. Participants said that by responding to a text message with immediacy, they are able to maintain a more conversational form of communication with their partner.

Since text messaging is not a form of FtF communication, responding with a sense of urgency allows couples to interact in a manner more akin to FtF interaction where they are sending and receiving messages back and forth without much time in between. Participants who reported leaving very little time between text messages reported to having high to medium levels of closeness, intimacy, emotional support and overall effort received from their significant other.

The second research question sought to seek a connection between the length of the text message itself and its effect on perceived level of closeness, intimacy, emotional support, and effort. This question did not seem to have a large effect on the participant’s perceived levels of intimacy. Most participants reported that the text messages they send and receive are between 1-3 lines. Participants said that they did not feel the need to write text messages any longer than that since most of their conversations were “small talk”, “making plans”, or “checking-in”. More personal and private topics of discussion are held in FtF communication channels in which all
participants reported engaging in. Overall, length of the text message alone did not have a significant effect over participants’ reported levels of closeness, intimacy, emotional support, and effort.

The third research question was to notice a trend between the *use of emojis* and its effect on perceived level of closeness, intimacy, emotional support, and effort. Participants that reported to using emojis in their daily text messaging etiquette said that emojis do, in fact, affect the overall intention or tone of a text message. Participants who use emojis but do *not* have partners who use emojis reported that they often question if their partner is “upset”, “what they meant”, or “question the overall tone of the message”. Participants and their partners that *both* use emojis said that it helps alleviate the questions of intention, tone, and meaning of a text message. Using emojis like smiling, sad, or angry faces can relay an emotion to the person on the other end of the text message since there is no verbal communication in place. However, throughout my research and analysis, emoji use alone did not have a significant effect on participants’ perceived level of closeness, intimacy, emotional support, and effort.

The fourth research question aimed to understand the *use of punctuation* and its effect on perceived level of closeness, intimacy, emotional support, and effort. Question marks and exclamation points were the two forms of punctuation focused on in this question. Punctuation, like the use of emojis, was reported by participants as a way to clarify intention and tone of a message. Most participants agreed that mimicry is the most preferred way to use punctuation and most of the miscommunication that occurs in their relationships typically happens through text messaging “blurs” like intentionality and tone.

Participants who reported to using these punctuation forms in addition to their S.O. using them said that text messages are more understandable and less confusion takes place. Participants
who said they use punctuation but their partners did not said that they often question
their partner’s intent, tone, and overall meaning.

In general, if both participants engage in similar texting etiquette, less miscommunication
occurs and the message does not get lost in translation. “Consistency” and “congruency” were
common terms brought up by participants when they spoke about how miscommunication
through text can be overcome. But again, the use of punctuation alone did not have a significant
effect on participants’ perceived level of closeness, intimacy, emotional support, and effort.

An additional question asked of participants was “What are the top 3 reasons you and your
S.O argue if/when you do argue?” I asked this question in the interviews because I was curious to
find out if texting or any type of media use contributed to relationship tension or dissatisfaction.

Participant responses include:

• “Miscommunication, not following through, opposing views”
• “Have to provoke boyfriend to get him to show emotion, plans, money”
• “Indecisiveness, politics, defensive behavior/attitude”
• “Different opinions”
• “Tech use in public vs. private areas, lack of communication, going out & doing things
  more”
• “Cancelling/changing plans, unsolicited advice about her life, miscommunication/misunderstanding”
• “Small things (dishes, leaving stuff on floor), not celebrating things (different
  backgrounds/views), not going out more on adventures”

While I expected texting or technology to have a bigger presence in the responses I
would receive, “miscommunication” or “lack of communication” could very well be
connected to texting or technology use. To clarify further, the last interview question
asked was simply “Have
you ever experienced miscommunication through text?” To this, I had 9 out of 10 participants reply with “Yes”. Some of their responses included:

- “Boyfriend won’t read the message fully and will clarify multiple times. It’s frustrating. It feels similar to the “you’re not listening to me” except via text”
- “Misinterpreting intentions of the message”
- “Can’t identify his tone”
- “Hard to make plans and communicate well via text”
- “Confusion of tone/intention/meaning”

Once I explicitly inquired about texting alone, participants were very quick to reply with a response. When I did not inquire directly, they did not voluntarily provide a response of “yes I have had miscommunication with texting”.
Discussion

I discovered that generally, shorter texts and shorter amounts of time between those texts resulted in a higher level of effective communication. Congruency in use of emojis and punctuation also contributed to participants’ overall level of communication satisfaction. While all participants reported to having miscommunication via text message—practicing congruency and maintaining a sense of urgency was found to be the best solution to the common issues of tone, intention, and meaning.

In this section, I will begin to discuss factors and limitations that may have contributed to the outcomes of my research study. Such limitations and factors include: population characteristics, homogenous responses, very high reports of relationship satisfaction, and insufficient sample size.

One population characteristic that may have contributed to a non-conclusive study could be the presence of a female response bias. In my study, all participants were female. When collecting participants for my interviews, I did not specify a gender I was looking to research. Yet, I had all females contact me to take part in the study. If there had been a male perspective provided, I could have compared and contrasted gender responses and perhaps noted differences on a more critical level.

Another population characteristic that could have affected the results of my study is the variance of academic majors that were interviewed. Participants had a range of majors and represented 4 of the 5 colleges at Cal Poly. Since there was a range of academic disciplines, responses may have reflected their learned patterns of thinking (i.e. engineers tend to have a very logical, “black and white” approach to analysis where communication studies students tend to dig
deeper into situations by critiquing, analyzing, seeking possibilities). If all the participants had been Communication Studies students, I feel that my results may have been more closely matched with my original hypotheses. For instance, in Coms 317: Technology & Human Communication with Dr. Blau, our class engaged in a discussion about how certain aspects of technology can affect our interpersonal relationships. Almost all students in that class are Communication Studies students and their insight and input to the class discussion perfectly aligned with how I expected participants in my interviews to answer. I did not want to limit my project to people in my major. I wanted to open it up to all majors, as I did not want to get any response bias.

After being in this class and interviewing my participants, I asked myself, “why didn’t my participants answer the questions like the students in my major did/would?” I attribute this to the range of majors that are included in my study. Each academic department trains and teaches their students to think and process information differently, so it is possible that communication studies students are taught how to dissect a situation on a more micro and critical scope than an engineer would- or at least in terms of interpersonal communication.

An additional factor my project faced was finding a very homogenous response pattern from participants. Many participants responded “yes or no” to the same questions across the board. There was a lack of response variance in my study as all participants reported similar answers no matter their difference in demographic characteristics. There were not outlying or extreme responses to any of the questions. The responses were very generalized and standard from participant to participant.
I also noted that all participants had a very high level of perceived relationship satisfaction. While my sample size was small, each participant reported to having “high” levels of satisfaction for 2-3 of the 4 dependent variables. This could very well be an example of social desirability in those participants wished to appear happier in their relationship than they truly were. This could stem from social pressure, like an interview setting with a stranger where participants only want to report the positive attributes of their relationship to feel better about their current situation (whether it be good or bad). Before we began the interview process, I did not discuss my topic of research in too much detail as I wanted to avoid compliant answers, however participants may have answered questions in ways that they thought I wanted them to answer.

Having a small sample size is another factor or limitation that my project faced. Due to the fact that I only interviewed 10 people, my results may have been very limited. I decided to interview 10 participants as I felt it was a manageable amount of people and I could provide more of an in-depth analysis of their responses. If I had a sample size of 50 or more, I suspect that my results would have been more conclusive. With time being of the essence, 50 participants was not a feasible number of interviews to conduct and analyze in 12 weeks.

Finally, I have provided a list of recommendations for future research should I, or any other scholar, return to this topic again. For future research: I could have asked different questions/more questions surrounding the notion of the text messaging culture and what exactly “texting etiquette” entails (while there is still no defined answer). I also could have narrowed the research questions even further and restricted my study to one particular factor of texting rather than multiple. In addition, I could have administered a survey while also conducting interviews. Perhaps this would have provided me with a greater sample size and
a greater opportunity to gather large amounts of information in a relatively quick and convenient manner.

Another way I could have conducted research would include interviewing couples rather than individuals. With this, I might have seen a shift in responses (whether positive or negative) as well as noticing the nonverbal interactions between the couples. Lastly, I could have started the research sooner and given myself a larger sample size. I began my interviews the third week of school. If I had begun interviews during fall or winter quarter, I may have had more time to collect additional data and find a more conclusive outcome.

By taking these recommendations into account, I feel that future research on this topic will prove a more conclusive and significant correlation between texting etiquette and our perceptions of our intimate relationships.
References


Appendix

In-Depth Interview Procedure

In order to collect data for support for my senior project, I will be conducting in-depth interviews with 10-20 Cal Poly students. Each interview should take approximately 20-30 minutes. Their year in school, major, and gender do not have a large effect on the analysis of my project but will be collected for demographic and organizational purposes. To attain my participants, I will reach out to the Cal Poly student communities on Facebook and ask for assistance in my senior project. Should they reach out to me, I will then provide them with the specifics of the process: date, time, location, etc.

Attached is the list of interview questions. The questions are separated by category: “Demographics”, “Relation to Significant Other”, and “Texting Variables”. The participants will not read the questions themselves, as I will be conducting the interview verbally. Should I need the support of a voice recorder to adequately recall direct quotations, one may be used and is noted in the informed consent form that participants will sign prior to my questioning.

I have chosen to conduct in-depth interviews as my methodology because the qualitative nature of participant’s responses will allow my analysis to be more substantive rather than conducting an online survey. As a student-researcher, I want to apply the “learn by doing” philosophy and be hands-on in the process of my senior project.

Demographics

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Major
4. Are you an introvert or extrovert?
5. Is your S.O. an introvert or extrovert?
6. Are you in a long-distance relationship?

Relation to Significant Other

1. How long have you known this person?
2. Have long have you dated this person?
3. Where did you meet this person?
4. What is your relationship status with this person? (i.e. “boyfriend”, “girlfriend”, “partner”, etc.)
5. How close do you feel towards this person?
   a. Provide your own definition of what “close” means to you
   b. (I provide my definition)
   c. High, medium, low
6. How much intimacy do you feel you receive from this person?
   a. Provide your own definition of what “intimacy” means to you
   b. (I provide my definition)
   c. High, medium, low
7. How much emotional support do you feel you receive from this person?
   a. High, medium, low
8. How much effort do you feel this person provides to the well being of your relationship?
   a. High, medium, low
9. What are the top 3 reasons you and your S.O. argue?
   a.
   b.
   c.
10. What is the most common channel of communication you use to contact this person?
11. What is your preferred channel of communication to use with this person?
12. How many days a week do you talk to your S.O. via phone call?
13. How many days a week do you talk to your S.O. via text message?
14. What are the text messages generally like? (i.e. the nature of the messages)

Texting Variables

1. Length of time between texts
   a. How long do you typically wait to reply to a text message from your S.O?
   b. How long does your S.O typically wait to reply to a text message from you?
      i. Why do you think this time differential occurs?
   c. When you are upset with this person, do you purposely not reply or wait a longer time to reply to their text?
      i. If yes, why do you think this happens?

2. Length of text itself
   a. Generally, how long in length are the messages you send to this person?
   b. Generally, how long in length are the messages you receive from this person?

3. Use of emoticons/emojis
   a. Do the text messages that you send to this person typically include the use of emojis?
   b. Do the text messages that you receive from this person typically include the use of emojis?
   c. Do you think that using emojis helps understand the nature or tone of the text message?
   d. When there is no use of emojis in your texting conversations, do you question how your S.O. is interpreting your messages?

4. Use of punctuation
   a. Do you use punctuation such as question marks & exclamation points?
   b. Does your S.O. use punctuation such question marks & exclamation marks?
   c. When you do not use certain punctuation (as listed above), what is a common response from your S.O. regarding the nature of your text message?
   d. When your S.O person does not use certain punctuation, what is a common response from you regarding the nature of your text message?
5. Frequency of phone calls vs. text messaging
   a. Do you talk over the phone or over text messages more often?
      i. If text, why?
      ii. If phone, why?
   b. What percent, would you say, is the amount of your communication with this person via cellular device?

6. Duration of phone calls vs. text message conversations
   a. If and when you speak over the phone, how long do your conversations generally last?
      i. What is the nature of those conversations?
   b. If and when you text this person, how long do your conversations generally last?
      i. What is the nature of those conversations?

7. Have you ever experienced miscommunication or other issues through text with your S.O.?
   a. If yes, what?
   b. Why?

8. On a scale of 1-10 (10 being most effective) how would you rate the communication in your relationship?

9. If you could change anything about the communication within your relationship, what would it be and why?
### DEMOGRAPHICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Introvert (I) / Extrovert (E)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Biological Sciences</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Child Development</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Child Development</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Software Engineering</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Graphic Design</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Industrial Engineering</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Mechanical Engineering</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Architectural Engineering</td>
<td>I</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How long they've dated</th>
<th>Where they met</th>
<th>Relationship status</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Mutual friend</td>
<td>BF/GF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Freshmen year dorms</td>
<td>BF/GF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Freshmen year dorms</td>
<td>BF/GF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 months</td>
<td>WOW orientation</td>
<td>BF/GF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Club meeting</td>
<td>BF/GF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>Tinder</td>
<td>BF/GF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>BF/GF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 months</td>
<td>Greek life on campus</td>
<td>BF/GF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>Set-up at a party</td>
<td>BF/GF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Cal Poly</td>
<td>BF/GF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### S.O. Introvert (I) / Extrovert (E) / LDR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.O. Introvert (I) / Extrovert (E)</th>
<th>LDR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
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<td>I</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>I</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>No</td>
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### RELATION TO SIGNIFICANT OTHER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>How long they've known S.O.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>7 month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1 year/3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>5 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Closeness Level</th>
<th>Intimacy level</th>
<th>Emotional Support</th>
<th>Effort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
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<td>High</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Most common communication channel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TXT / CALL</th>
<th>F2F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>F2F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TXT</td>
<td>F2F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>F2F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Most preferred communication channel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TXT / SNAPCHAT</th>
<th>F2F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>F2F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FB messenger</th>
<th>F2F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F2F</td>
<td>F2F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phone Call</th>
<th>F2F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TXT</td>
<td>F2F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### How many days/wk talk via phone call vs. text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many days/wk talk via phone call</th>
<th>How many days/wk talk via text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-7 days/week</td>
<td>everyday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when they are long-distance (over breaks)</td>
<td>everyday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>during summer</td>
<td>everyday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>once (maybe)</td>
<td>everyday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zero</td>
<td>everyday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times/week</td>
<td>everyday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3x/week Skype</td>
<td>everyday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maybe 1 time/week</td>
<td>everyday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>everyday</td>
<td>4 days/week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 days/week</td>
<td>everyday</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Nature of those text messages

- small talk, discussing plans, funny things, meeting up
- small talk, discussing plans, funny things, meeting up
- small talk, discussing plans, funny things, meeting up
- small talk, discussing plans, funny things, meeting up
- small talk, discussing plans, funny things, meeting up, feelings (sometimes deeper stuff)
- small talk, discussing plans, funny things, meeting up, feelings (sometimes deeper stuff)
- small talk, discussing plans, funny things, meeting up
- small talk, discussing plans, funny things, meeting up, feelings (sometimes deeper stuff)
- small talk, discussing plans, funny things, things that need immediate response
- small talk, discussing plans, funny things, meeting up

### Top 3 reasons they argue

- Miscommunication, not following through, opposing views
- Provoked BF to get him to show emotion, plans, money
- Indecisiveness, politics, defensive behavior/attitude
  - Miscommunication
  - different opinions
- Petty problems (dishes), money
- Semantics (their definitions of certain things), maturity levels
  - Tech use in public/private areas b/c of her introvert ways, lack of communication, going out & doing things more
  - cancelling/changing plans, unsolicited advice about her life, miscommunication/misunderstanding
  - things (dishes, leaving stuff on floor), not celebrating things (different backgrounds/views), not going out more on adver
If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me at taclarke@calpoly.edu

Thank you