

MOBILE ROMANCE: AN EXPLORATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH TEXTING

Randy Jay C. Solis

/ Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines

Abstract

The continuing trend of the mobile phone text messaging (“texting”) phenomenon presents yet another set of new challenges in the understanding of interpersonal communication and relationships, both virtual and real. This study has conducted a novel systematic examination for validating the conflicting perspectives of the technology’s implications to mobile romance. This research has also proposed a framework for theorizing the occurrence of relationships through and within mediated communications based on three main factors: (1) the characteristics of the participants and the nature of their romantic relationships, (2) the level of intimacy that is achieved through the mediated communication, and (3) the distinct contribution of the technology to the formation of these relationships. The study’s primary finding is that romantic relationships initiated and maintained through the unique attributes of the texting function is indeed possible and capable of developing into higher levels of intimacy. Data analysis indicated that the typical individual who engaged in romantic relationships through texting is 23 years old, more likely female than male, and single. Texters actually initiated their relationships through the search of a textmate that could later provide for a potential romantic partner. Data analysis also revealed that men and the younger set of respondents were more adventurous than their respective counterparts in exploring their relationships. However, gender did not indicate any correlation with texting behaviors suggesting that texting is a result of a simple experience rather than of gender roles. It was the cellphone’s characteristics of immediacy, accessibility, privacy, anonymity, autonomy, regularity, convenience, affordability, and redundancy that made relationships develop into a high level of intimacy. Autonomy and anonymity were the attributes of the texting technology that made initiation of romantic relationships easier while accessibility, immediacy, affordability and privacy were the characteristics that enabled partners to maintain and develop their romance into a highly intimate relationship.

INTRODUCTION

The mobile phone found its way to the Philippines when the first generation of Global Systems for Mobile Communication or GSM handsets was introduced in the country in 1994. During this time the Short Message Service or SMS was being offered as a free feature for mobile phone subscribers. A service similar to pager systems, SMS (also known as text-messaging or “texting”) allows for the transferring of short text-based communication between two mobile phones and is performed by composing messages on a mobile phone’s alphanumeric keypad and receiving messages on the unit’s display.

It was shortly after the introduction of the analog mobile phones and the first SMS systems that the GSM protocol introduced a faster and more efficient means of storing, manipulating, and transmitting data by allowing data to be translated into a series of ones and zeroes. Digital technology furthered the mobile phone’s potentials from being a mere “talking device on the move” (Leung and Wei, 1999) to a more dynamic participation in the over-all digitalization of media content, allowing such services as chatting, voice-mail, news updates, e-mailing, Internet browsing, and even the dissemination of image and audio files.

Apart from the allure of the possibilities of digital communication, the mobile phone was also welcomed in the Philippines because of convenience and economic reasons. It provided the country, especially the rural areas where telephones are unavailable or inaccessible, with a modern means of communication (Pertierra et al., 2002). The dissemination of this electronic communication in the country has also provided a more affordable mode of connection. A voice call placed through the mobile phone would typically cost around six to seven pesos per minute while a text message costs a peso per message. Today, enhanced by schemes such as prepaid subscriptions and electronic loading schemes, there are now 35 million mobile phone owners in the country (Lallana, 2004) sending an average of ten messages daily, contributing to a daily traffic of over 200 million text messages daily (Newsbreak, 2004). This has led to the popular notion of the Philippines as the “texting capital of the world” (Pertierra et al., 2002)

Because of the popularity of texting, various content and value-added service providers have extended the convergent qualities of the technology to provide more exciting and profitable services for the Filipino user. One of these services is the establishment of the interactive Text TV channels in early 2001. Texters interact onscreen while they send their messages via SMS. Even a cursory glance at the exchanges on Text TV reveals the presence of personal relationships among participants through this seemingly impersonal medium.

These relationships vary from friendships, to “clanmates” (texters organize circles of friends and acquaintances that occasionally meet face-to-face in public venues), text girlfriends and boyfriends, and even sex buddies. In *Text-ing Selves* (Pertierra et al., 2002), a recent study that examines the use of mobile phones in the country, researchers argue that texting has made it possible to create new un surveilled and unconventional human relationships (Pertierra et al., 2002).

NEW MEDIA AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Two conflicting paradigms surface in the scholarly discourses on new media and personal relationship development. It has been argued that new technologies have “dual lives” of positive and negative consequences (Pool, 1983) and are implicated in the “duality of technology and structure” (Orlikowski, 1992; Rice & Gattiker, 1999). On one end, on-line relationships are viewed as shallow and impersonal and that these relationships are merely an illusion of community as created in cyberspace (Beninger, 1987; Berry, 1993; Heim, 1992; Stoll, 1995). On the other end, there are those who argue that computer-mediated communication (CMC) frees interpersonal relationships from the confines of physical locality and creates avenues for new personal relationships and communities (Pool, 1983; Rheingold, 1993).

Most of the early researches on computer-mediated communications generally emphasize the social disadvantages of CMC. According to both social presence theory (Rice, 1987; Rice & Love, 1987; Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976) and social context cues theory (Sproull & Kiesler, 1991), the differences in relational development in CMC and face-to-face communication (FtF) are greatly due to the reduction in contextual, visual and aural cues in the electronic medium. For example, in a study of the social impact of electronic mail in organizations (Garton & Wellman, 1995), it was discovered that highly developed and positive personal relationships occur infrequently in on-line settings. In studies of decision-making in organizations, computer-mediated groups found it more difficult to come up with common views or solutions to structural problems (Rice, 1987; Kiesler & Sproull, 1992). Because physical proximity, expressions, gestures, tone, volume and verbal meanings are filtered out in on-line settings, interaction was discovered to be more impersonal and less adaptive.

These claims that CMC is portrayed as impersonal and nonsocial, however, have been disputed constantly. 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 and aural cues (Walther, 1992, 1993; Walther, Anderson, & Park, 1994; Walther & Burgoon, 1992). In one study, for example, expressive combinations of keyboard characters or “smileys” are used by embedding emotion and meaning to text (Wilkins, 1991). Another way people have overcome the technical limitations of on-line communication is by supplementing CMC with other modes of communication.

These studies report that mail, telephone, and FtF contact serve as extensions to CMC (Ogan, 1993; Reid, 1991). Other studies have found that participants in on-line groups also organize social events so that they might meet in person (Bruckman, 1992; Rheingold, 1993). Users are found to socialize, maintain relationships and even receive emotional support via CMC (Feldman, 1987; Finholt & Sproull, 1990; Haythornthwaite, Wellman, & Mantei, 1994; McCormick & McCormick, 1992; Rice & Love, 1987). Other on-line friendships are also reported to have developed in Multi-User Dungeons or Dimensions (MUDs) (Bruckman, 1992), and even in a computer network for church workers (Wilkins, 1991).

A related study on the uses and gratifications of the mobile phone in Hong Kong (Leung & Wei, 2000) reveals that the strongest motivations of using mobile phones are mobility, immediate access, and instrumentality. Categorizing the medium as an interactive tool that transcends the boundaries of time and space, factors such as sociability and affection (such as the desire to improve family relationships) are also found to be intrinsic in mobile phone use. Moreover, this also indicates the tendency to go beyond familial bonds into “caring for others.” The researchers also argue that gender differences relating to

interpersonal relationships do emerge in mobile phone use, and that male users tend to use the medium for business purposes while females make longer social calls while on the go.

Making Friends in Cyberspace (1996) is a new media study that uses the theoretical discussions and measures of the relationship development process (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Huston & Burgess, 1979; Kelly et al., 1983; Parks & Adelman, 1983; Parks, 1997) in examining the personal relationships being created through Internet discussion groups (newsgroups). The study particularly delves into the level of relationships formed through Internet discussion groups and the personalities involved in this computer-mediated interaction. In this study, Internet discussion group users report moderate to high levels of breadth and depth in their cyberspace relationships. Although they evolve ways of communicating such as personal idioms, most of them do not develop highly specialized communication patterns. Most of the subjects, however, report that the predictability and understanding in their relationships was in the upper half of the scale range. They also suggest moderate levels of commitment as a whole. And finally, network convergence is not extensive in most of the personal relationships examined. Ultimately, newsgroups users report that they have developed personal relationships on-line.

EXPLORING MOBILE ROMANCE

According to Kenneth Gergen (1991), in his essay entitled “Social Saturation and the Populated Self,” technologies in contemporary life have re-defined how we understand ourselves and our capacity for relationships.

He states that we are presently reaching a phase of social saturation because electronic innovations have eliminated the relational barriers of time and space and multiplied the number and variety of relationships, their frequency, intensity and endurance of contact. 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. New patterns of relationship also emerge as relationships move from the face-to-face to the virtual mode. And because it becomes easier to intensify emotions more fully in an ever-increasing number of relationships, superficiality is sensed to be a considerable outcome of these modern relationships. Laura Pappano (2001) expresses the same concern about the formation of relationships in modern society. In her book *The Connection Gap*, a discourse on the benefits and drawbacks of a technological society, she mentions that because of the rushed and unrelaxed approach to life at present brought about by technological advancements, the “image” of connection becomes a substitute to real relationships. She suggests that this compulsion to feel connected, coupled with the impulse for speed, makes it possible for us to create and foster virtual and shallow relationships. “Managing relationships” have replaced the practice of real and experienced intimacy.

Reflecting on the role of new media and their diverse approaches and results in interpersonal relationships, it seems imminent that the formation of relationships in a technological society may require a new approach to understanding these novel forms—on its own terms, cognizant of its unique and complex nature. What is therefore needed is a systematic research effort to describe the intricacies and possible implications of such curious virtual relationships and interpersonal communication patterns. An exploratory study, the focus of this research is to examine the development of romantic relationships in

particular in the context of the various attributes of the texting technology and the wireless environment.

This study will explore three main research questions:

- 1) Who form these romantic relationships and what are the circumstances of these relationships initiated and maintained primarily through SMS messaging?
- 2) What are the levels of intimacy among these individuals?
- 3) What are the characteristics and qualities of the cellular technology that facilitate these relationships?

Theorists like Gergen and Pappano view the advancements in electronic technology as a major factor in the formation of “depthless” and superficial relationships. It is in this light that this study will explore further, and validate within the Philippine context, the technological implications of texting to the number, variety, and quality of relationships in the modern age.

The adoption of text messaging in the country and its vast potentials for interconnectivity also raise concerns about the yet unseen consequences of the technology to culture such as gender and age roles, identity and sexuality.

CONCEPTUAL AND OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

This research proposes a new way of understanding relational development through computer-mediated communication. An exploration of the development of intimacy of romantic relationships through texting, the framework of this study includes three components that address each of the three research questions of this study. The conceptual framework of the first two components was adopted from a study conducted by Malcolm Parks and Kory Floyd on the creation of relationships through Internet discussion groups or newsgroups. The third component involves the exploration of the technological contribution of a messaging medium in the development of the relationships.

A. participants and romantic relationships

Personal Background and Texting Ownership and Behavior

This study investigates the characteristics of the participants in the romantic relationships based on the operationalization done by Parks and Floyd on the study of the creation of relationships through newsgroups. This is done by identifying the demographic of the individuals (age, marital status, and gender) as well as their sexual preferences (opposite-sex or same-sex relationships). Mobile phone ownership and frequency of texting are also assessed to identify the users in terms of their access and actual use of the technology.

Initiation and Maintenance

One of the purposes of this study is to assess romantic relationships that are specially initiated and maintained primarily through texting. In Malcolm Park’s essay entitled “Communication Networks

and Relationship Life Cycles” in the *Handbook of Personal Relationships* (2nd ed., 1997), Initiation is defined to be the initial phase of the relational life cycle: initiation, maintenance, deterioration. For this study, initiation involves mainly the structure and context of communication wherein text messaging presents as the initial and primary communication contact between probable partners who use the medium as a transition to romantic intimacy. Maintenance on the other hand, is the structure in the communication of a romantic relationship when the individuals in the relationship establish contact more through texting rather than face-to-face encounter in their effort to sustain their romantic intimacy.

Romantic Relationships

Rawlins (1982) published the first theoretical discussions on cross-sex friendship, which describes the dynamics of romance, sexuality, and sex role socialization by offering categories to define relationships. Categorizing romance further for the purposes of this research, based on the insights gained from related literature and observations of Text TV interactions, the researcher adopts Rawlin’s friendship-love, physical love and romantic love as a typology of a romantic relationship. Friendship-love is manifested through instances when two individuals try to get to know each other more intimately and may even have a mutual understanding or regard for each other in transition to a potential romantic relationship. Physical love is more popularly known as “sex buddies” and open relationships. Open relationships differ from sex-buddy arrangements such that the former involves at least a nominal romantic commitment between partners while the latter has no forms of emotional attachment at all. Romantic love is known in the vernacular as girlfriend/boyfriend relationships.

B. LEVEL OF INTIMACY

The second component in the understanding of relationship development through texting examines the level of romantic intimacy using Malcolm Parks’ theory of relationship life cycle and network. In his proposal, interpersonal relationships of all types are usually conceptualized as developing from the impersonal to the personal along a series of relatively specific dimensions: interdependence, breadth and depth of interaction, predictability and understanding, communicative code change, commitment, and network convergence.

Interdependence refers to mutual influence that develops when each person’s overt actions and utterances depend on the other’s. Breadth and depth of interaction involves the variety of topics, activities, and communication channels used in a relationship and the process of expressing important and personal information. Commitment is the expectation that a relationship will continue into the future, based on one’s belief and desire for the relationship to continue. Predictability and understanding in a relationship refers to the participants’ agreement about what behaviors are desirable, what responses each is likely to have, and how each person’s actions fit into their relational sequence. Communicative code change refers to a developing relationship’s tendency to create its own linguistic forms and cultural codes. Finally, network convergence occurs as the participants introduce one another to each other’s friends and family and develop a common social circle.

C. ATTRIBUTES OF THE TEXTING TECHNOLOGY

According to Parks (1997), relationships move within the constructive character of communication that involves the interaction of the structure and content of communication between the participants. This study also explores the structure that allows for these participants to engage in a romantic relationship. The researcher would like to identify the relationship between the level of intimacy and the texting technology.

In his book *Cellphone: The Story of the World's Most Mobile Medium and How It Has Transformed Everything!* (2004), Paul Levinson outlines the various characteristics of texting that makes it a great romancing gadget. These qualities include instantaneous, immediate and direct delivery of messages. The mobile phone enables couples to always stay connected with one another to communicate good and romantic feelings and thoughts by impulse or when one cannot wait long enough before expressing them. Texting also provides more precision and endurance, that allows senders to discern about the content of their messages more carefully than in voice calls. Levinson also identified texting as a means to communicate with anyone, anytime, and anywhere without the boundaries on the amount, variety, and depth of information needed and chosen. Finally, Levinson highlights silence as the biggest advantage among these qualities. Texting allows for receivers to view their messages in private as opposed to having others in the environment hear and know about their particular communication or simply even just the fact that they are communicating.

The book *Txt-ing Selves: Cellphones and Philippine Modernity* (Pertierra et al., 2002) also enumerated various qualities of texting that made the mobile phone the most popular gadget in the Philippines. One characteristic is that texting combines the informality of speech and reflectiveness of writing. Texting provides for a more convenient way of expression than communicating through speech. It also provides for a more controlled and contrived communication. It allows users to carefully compose and edit their message to facilitate their purposes. Communication through texting has also successfully melded meaning, intention, and expressions allowing texters to say what is normally unsayable. Corollary, it is also a way to avoid confrontation. Finally, texting also permits users to explore new topics, even those considered taboo and opportunities for fun and deception.

Methodology

A. Research Design

In assessing the three main questions of this research, the researcher obtained data in two stages of triangulation, requiring the combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

The quantitative method involved a survey that was administered to specifically address the first two research questions of this study: (1) Who form these romantic relationships and what are the circumstances of these relationships initiated primarily and maintained through SMS messaging? and (2) What are the levels of intimacy among these individuals? The qualitative method involved an in-depth interview that was designed to obtain exploratory data to answer the third research question: What are the characteristics and qualities of the cellular technology that facilitate these relationships?

B. Sampling

The researcher selected a total of 73 respondents for the survey and 43 respondents for the follow-up in-depth interview, through purposive sampling. Respondents were selected based on their qualification as individuals who have initiated and maintained romantic relationships through texting. The survey was conducted through person-administered method, and largely, through electronic mail. The researcher administered surveys in active e-groups of various text channels and electronic message boards.

For the second stage of the data-gathering process, the sample was cut down to 43. The in-depth interview was conducted to respondents who were willing to undergo the follow-up interview. Due to the personal and sensitive nature of the study, majority of the respondents, were hesitant in agreeing to a face-to-face in-depth interview. Thus, interview questionnaire and follow-up questions were also administered through the e-mail and the telephone.

C. Research Instrument

There were two main instruments used to gather data for this study. The first instrument was a survey-interview questionnaire adapted from the instrument used by Malcolm Parks and Kory Floyd (1996) in the study of relationship development through newsgroups. The second instrument was an in-depth interview questionnaire designed to derive qualitative data on the attributes of the texting technology.

The survey was divided into two parts. The first set of questions was used to identify the characteristics of the individuals who initiate and maintain romantic relationships through the texting technology and the circumstances surrounding the nature of their relationships. The second part of the survey assessed the level of intimacy of the individuals in romantic relationships. The stages of relationship development discussed by Malcolm Parks served as the categories of intimacy through the texting technology. These indicators were measured through a five-point Likert scale. The second instrument was an in-depth interview questionnaire designed to derive exploratory data about the attributes of the texting technology and how these qualities allow for the creation and maintenance of romantic relationships.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Data analysis indicated that the typical individual who initiated and maintained romantic relationships through texting is 23 years old, more likely female than male, and single. Most of the relationship fell under the girlfriend/boyfriend commitment, followed by a relationship that was still in the getting-to-know-you stage, and still significantly some were in a relationship that involved partners in a mutual understanding, as a transition to a romantic relationship. Data also revealed that most of the respondents still engage in a heterosexual affair and that there were minimal indications of same-sex relationships.

The representative length of mobile phone ownership was 6 years ($M = 5.64$, $SD = 1.935$). Respondents exchange a range of 1 to 100 text messages with their respective partners daily. The typical daily traffic was computed at 20 messages daily ($M = 19.90$, $SD = 22.259$). This figure is attributed as one of the reasons why the respondents reached a mean length of one and a half years into the relationship ($M = 17.76$ [in months], $SD = 16.084$). This is further corroborated by the data that indicated texting as the primary maintenance communication means for the couples. 31% of the respondents interacted with their partners regularly through face-to-face encounters and a more significant 59% used texting as their major means of romantic connection. Out of those who used texting as their main communication means, 8% existed in a purely virtual environment.

Texters actually initiated their relationships through the search of a textmate that could later provide for a potential romantic partner. There were four usual ways how these individuals started their connections with their partners. The first one would involve a set-up or a blind date generally arranged by a common friend. Another way would start off from virtual environment where participants could exchange their mobile phone numbers. Respondents started connecting with their partners through chatrooms on the Internet or through the Chat TVs. The third method initiated relationships through accidental incidences such as a misdialled call or a missent text where the recipients decided to reply. Lastly, other minor instances included the sending of a random message to another by experimenting with number combinations to come up with an unfamiliar mobile phone number.

Data analysis also revealed that men and the younger set of respondents were more adventurous than their respective counterparts in exploring their relationships. More men and younger respondents were open to exploring same-sex relationships as well as unconventional types of romantic relationships like sex-buddy arrangements. Further implications to this findings expose that females are more likely to develop longer-lasting relationships than males because of the latter's tendency to engage in relationships that by nature, are not expected to last long. However, gender did not indicate any correlation with texting behaviors.

This suggests that texting is more of a result of a simple experience rather than of gender roles.

In the assessment of the level of intimacy of the romantic relationships, all six dimensions garnered a representative rating that significantly indicated a high level of intimacy. Sixty-six percent of the respondents expressed a high level of intimacy, 18% showed a moderate level, and only 16% scored a low level of romantic intimacy.

The seven items that measured interdependence yielded an overall mean of 3.63 that fell above the theoretic median of the scale. This indicated that as texting relationships developed, its participants came to depend on each other more deeply and in more complex ways. The results also showed a high level of intimacy, in depth and breadth, in texting relationships (breadth $M = 4.01$, depth $M = 4.10$). These data indicated that partners in a romantic relationship revealed more personal, intimate and important topics and feelings through a variety of communication channels in addition to texting. Also, the respondents illustrated a high level of communicative change by obtaining a mean score of 3.64 for the six-item scale. This indicated that participants in a texting relationship use specialized terms and idioms in expressing themselves through texting. Findings also showed that respondents managed predictability and understanding very well in their relationships ($M = 3.93$) that made themselves experts of one another. Commitment scored a mean of 3.68 while network convergence garnered a mean score of 3.45. Although

higher than the theoretic median, these figures might suggest that more convergence and stronger support for commitment occur in a face-to-face environment rather than through texting.

It was the mobile phone's characteristics of immediacy, accessibility, privacy, anonymity, autonomy, regularity, convenience, affordability, and redundancy that made it possible for romantic relationships to exist through texting.

Autonomy and anonymity were the attributes of the texting technology that made initiation of romantic relationships easier for relationships of both high and low levels of intimacy. The autonomous and anonymous nature of exchanges emboldened individuals to say what is usually unsayable especially in an endeavor to pursue a non-traditional context of personal relationship (Perterra et al., 2002). Specifically, individuals who have expressed low levels of intimacy capitalized on these features to be able to initiate connection with prospective partners without having to assure maintenance of the relationship. Relationships such as sex-buddy arrangements, open relationships and even mutual understanding and getting-to-know you relationships utilized this nature of texting to spark connections but not to maintain and develop them into more interdependent, personal, and committed relationships.

On the other hand, accessibility, immediacy, affordability and privacy were the characteristics of the texting technology that enabled partners to maintain their romance and develop them into a highly intimate relationship. Because of its accessibility and immediacy, texting has become innate and essential in the dynamics of the relationship that it has "transformed into an extension of the human body" (Perterra, et al., 2002), relating the pair in a pseudo-carnal experience anytime and anywhere. Its power for connectivity at an affordable price even sustains romantic relationships that exist in a purely virtual environment. The privacy between romantic partners actualizes the "presence" that is vital in the existence of the relationship. Thus, texting one another translates into the desire to continue in the relationship that ceasing to do so strongly indicates less commitment. Thus texting becomes the message itself particularly in the relationships that manifested a high level of intimacy.

IMPLICATIONS

The fact that romantic relationships formed through texting demonstrated a high level of intimacy goes to show that this new pattern in relationships is an existing and expanding reality that theorists may face with considerable optimism. The author believes that existing theories have largely ignored communication settings that do not involve face-to-face interaction and overlooked the vast potentials of new media in aiding relationship development. The immediacy and frequency of contact do not necessarily diminish the relationship into a rushed and superficial intimacy; rather, it provides the opportunity for increased self-revelation, which is an indication of the desire for emotional connection and human closeness. How the individuals in the text-based relationships managed uncertainty and created understanding using the 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.

Moreover, texting, in the context of romantic relationships may be considered as a means for "technological foreplay" (Nadarajan, personal communication, 2004). Almost all of those who have

formed romantic relationships through texting indicated the choice to expand to other modes of communication because of the limitations in visual and aural information. With the continuing advances of the digital capability of the mobile phone, for example the incorporation of services that allow the exchanging of pictures, sound, and video, this reduction of contextual cues in the new medium is challenged. But although relationships set in a purely virtual environment actually exist, the findings that these relationships rarely stay virtual point to the idea that the virtual setting of texting becomes simply just another place to meet, only to be further “consummated” perhaps by a face-to-face contact. Much like meeting friends and strangers in different parts of the metro, individuals use texting as a virtual space to socialize and form intimacies that may naturally extend to other venues beyond the original locale. Thus, future theorizing must reconsider the viewing of relationships formed through texting, or new media in general, as shallow and superficial.

This new way of understanding the communication technology and its implications to interpersonal romantic relationships presents a wider dimension of social communications in the Philippines. According to an article in the *Handbook of Personal Relationships* (2 ed., 1997) entitled “Evolutionary Approaches to Relationships,” the primary function of romantic relationships are sexual reproduction and bonding for the care of the offspring (Kenrick & Trost, 1987; Mellen, 1981; Morris, 1972). This goes to show that the family is the end-goal and ultimate value in the development of romantic relationships. A study of this kind provides a technological perspective into the preservation of the fundamental unit of society in the midst of modernity. Global trends like the exportation of human resources as Overseas Filipino Workers would entail romantic relationships that necessitate tools to sustain long-distance relationships. In a more local scenario of metropolitanism, partners from rural provinces that are separated by the desire to pursue better economic opportunities in the metro might also be supported by the knowledge that romance can be facilitated by an affordable and intimate communication device. Other special populations like those involving isolated individuals and even persons with physical disabilities may also find new opportunities to socialize beyond the difficulties of a face-to-face interaction.

This study also contributes to the understanding of sexuality and its further repercussions to media education. The convenience of searching for avenues for sexuality and the creation of romantic encounters, especially in the establishment of various mass media channels like the Text TV, might be a point of concern for regulation and media education institutions in the country.

Findings in this study might also prove significant for policy makers in the telecommunications industry especially in the discourse of taxation and regulation of the cell phone services. This study further suggests that texting is not merely a device for economics and governance but more fundamentally as a tool for sociality and personal relations.

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Randy SOLIS is a research instructor at the Ateneo de Manila University.

He is a member of the Philippine Association for Media Education and the Philippine ICT Research Network, a Research Associate of the Institute for Philippine Culture and a Communication Consultant for UNICEF-Philippines. His research interests include new media, media education, and strategic communication.