

THE EXPERIENCES OF TEEN TEXT MESSAGING IN THE CONTEXT OF
FAMILY COMMUNICATION, RELATEDNESS, AND CONNECTION: A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University

December, 2010

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Submitted to the
Faculty of Liberty University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Jackie Thayer Craft

© December 2010

Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia

December 2010

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ABSTRACT

THE EXPERIENCES OF TEEN TEXT MESSAGING IN THE CONTEXT OF FAMILY COMMUNICATION, RELATEDNESS, AND CONNECTION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY

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This study is a phenomenological inquiry of teenagers' text messaging in the context of family communication, relatedness, and connection. Interviews with teenagers and parent are conducted to investigate the experience of text messaging within the family context. Journal entries are also used as sources of data for this study. Transcripts of the audio recordings for the interviews are analyzed for thematic data. Additionally, the participants and two reviewers evaluated the transcripts and interpretations for accuracy. The data for the teenage interviewees is examined next to the data of the parent interviewees for comparative purposes.

ANOWLEDGEMENTS

The pursuit and completion of this degree was made possible only by the guiding hand of God. So I thank Him first for the journey and how he held my hand through the hills and valleys that I faced with each step. Through Him I am truly blessed.

I also want to recognize my family who have been so supportive and who have been my cheerleaders along the way, especially my husband Chad who attended to our three young children during my many ventures to Liberty University and who went above and beyond when I needed time at home to work on this dissertation. Chad has always been an encourager and celebrated with me as each chapter was completed and each milestone met. My children Coy, Bailey, and Shelby ask almost daily if I am finished. Not that they are in a hurry, but they recognize the time and energy I have put into the process and they sense the end is drawing near. I thank them for their curiosity and how they seek to grasp the concept of the dissertation process with their questions, and how they innocently explain it to others, so sweet. I pray that I have been a good role model for them and anticipate that they, too, will become lovers of knowledge.

There have been some many other encouragers that have blessed me along the way. I thank my church family and my coworkers who always seemed to know what to say at the right time. I appreciate their interest in what I was doing and often taking the time to ask questions or listen to me talk about my research.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Today's teenagers are growing up in a different world than their parents. Those involved in the lives of teenagers recognize the magnitude of the current digital culture and feel the effect of being second-rate to the cell phone, computer or other digital gadgets (Osit, 2008). News groups, web based organizations, and research companies are all busy trying to discover how to market products to these "digital natives" (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008), and yet at the same time satisfy and appreciate parents' desire to maintain a sense of control and a need to cultivate healthy relationships during adolescence (Devitt & Roker, 2009; Mesch, 2006; Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008; Wajcman, Bittman, & Brown, 2008; Weisskirch, 2009; Wireless, 2006). Teenagers live their lives and relate to people around them through social digital technologies and it has transformed their experience of human relationships (Baron, 2009; Boase & Kobayashi, 2008; Bryant, Sanders-Jackson, & Smallwood, 2006; Cadena, 2007; Devitt & Roker, 2009; Horstmanshof & Power, 2005; Kennedy, Smith, Wells, & Wellman, 2008; Nielsen, 2009; Osit, 2008; Reid & Reid, 2004).

Social-digital technologies influence many tasks of adolescence development including identity formation (Valkenburg, Schouten, & Peter, 2005), social skill acquisition (Bryant, Sanders-Jackson, & Smallwood, 2006), formal communication proficiencies (Thurlow & McKay, 2003), and linguistic maturity (Ling & Baron, 2007). Text messaging also influences the way families relate during this period of adolescence.

Teenagers are finding autonomy and freedom from parents through text messaging (Boase & Kobayashi, 2008; Ishii, 2006); however, families are also using text messaging as a tool to improve communication between parents and teenage (Devitt & Roker, 2009) and to create a new sense of connection (Kennedy, Smith, Wells, & Wellman, 2008). The influences of technology are immense and can be studied from numerous points of view. In this study, the focus is on the experiences of text messaging in the context of family communication, relatedness, and connection.

Background of the Problem

Cell phones are the key feature of contemporary communication within families (Devitt & Roker, 2009). In a recent study by Pew Internet and American Life Project titled "Networked Families," surveys indicated that 89% of married-with-children households own multiple cell phones (Kennedy, Smith, Wells, & Wellman, 2008). The Nielsen Company recently released first quarter data for 2009 in a report titled "How Teens Use Media" and states that "of all the mobile behaviors of teens, text messaging is the most talked about" (p. 8). The 2009 report also indicates that 77% of teens (age 13-17) in the United States have cell phones and 89% of these teenage-cell phone users utilize text messaging. The average teenager sends and receives 96 text messages every day and averages 2899 text sent and received each month. In the last two years, the average number of text messages sent and received has increased by 566% among the teenage population (Nielsen, 2009). We are experiencing the most rapid period of technological transform ever, when it comes to information (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008).

Text messaging is the leading trend in mobile media for teenagers (Nielsen, 2009). The inundation of cell phones and text messaging has happened so quickly in the United States that there is limited qualitative research that focuses on the role of cell phones in family relationships and communication (Campbell, 2006; Devitt & Roker, 2009; Wajcman, Bittman, & Brown, 2008; Weisskirch, 2009). Initial interest in text messaging within the family context has focused on how text messaging creates a lifeline and a sense of freedom from parents; curiosity of how text messaging fosters teenagers' desire to gain independence from parents is also at the forefront of current research (Boase & Kobayashi, 2008; Devitt & Roker, 2009; Ishii K. , 2006; Oksman & Turtiainen, 2004; Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008; Tutt, 2005). Studies also suggest that teens and parents find that text messaging helps them coordinate family activities and creates a feeling of safety and connection between them (Campbell, 2006; Devitt & Roker, 2009; Kennedy, Smith, Wells, & Wellman, 2008; Tutt, 2005; Weisskirch, 2009; Wireless, 2006). There is limited information on how families are using text messaging to communicate; also missing from the current body of literature is an understanding of how text messaging influences how teenagers and parents relate and connect to one another (Devitt & Roker, 2009).

Text messaging has penetrated communication in the family context (Wajcman, Bittman, & Brown, 2008). We are beginning to learn about how text messaging influences family communication and relationships (Devitt & Roker, 2009; Weisskirch, 2009). The limited knowledge about the phenomenon creates a timely opportunity to understand the

experiences of teenagers and parents in relation to text messaging and family communication, relatedness and connection.

Purpose of the Study

Parents and adolescents are using text messaging as a daily source of sharing, informing, and involving each other in daily family life (Campbell, 2006; Devitt & Roker, 2009; Hughs & Hans, 2001; Kennedy, Smith, Wells, & Wellman, 2008; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; Wajcman, Bittman, & Brown, 2008; Weisskirch, 2009; Williams, Adolescents' Relationships with Parents, 2003; Wireless, 2006). This period of progressive mobile technology has fascinated our adolescent culture while concurrently transforming the traditional ways family members relate and communicate with one another (Baron, 2009; Brier, 2004; Faulkner & Culwin, 2005; Grinter & Eldridge, 2003; Horstmanshof & Power, 2005; Ishii, 2006; Kornblum, 2008; Nielsen, 2009; Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). The purpose of this study is to understand teenagers' and parents' experiences of text messaging in the context of family communication, relatedness and connection. This study illuminates the in-family experiences of how text messaging has woven its way into the family environment.

Research Questions

Phenomenological research allows the researcher to:

Borrow other people's experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or

significance of an aspect of human experience, in the context of the whole of human experience” (Manen, 1990, p. 62).

Using a heuristic method of inquiry, participants’ experiences are gathered and then reflected upon, as a dual function in this type of phenomenological inquiry (Moustakas, 1994). The language and reflective expressions create meaning and construct interpretations of lived experiences (Manen, 1990).

The research questions seek to reveal the ontology, the essential nature of the phenomenon as meaningfully experienced by the participants (Manen, 1990). The research questions not only illuminate the lived experiences of the participants but are also personally significant to the researcher (Moustakas, 1994). Questions framed in phenomenological inquiry seek to capture the essence of the human perspective when living out the experience of focus in the inquiry. Comprehensive descriptions of experiences that are vivid and accurately portrayed provide rich descriptive data and validate the study (Rudenstam & Newton, 2001).

The research questions for this study seek to explicate the experience of text messaging in the context of family. Specific anecdotes of using text messaging to communicate, relate and connect are the foundational interest in this study. Both teenagers and parents communicate their personal experiences of text messaging to communicate, relate and connect in the context of their family. The research questions that guide this study are listed below:

1. What are the experiences of text messaging to communicate, relate, and connect within the context of family?
2. How do the experiences of text messaging compare between teenagers and parents in addressing family communication, relatedness, and connection?

Definition of Terms

Terminology used in research studies is operationalized to ensure consistent understanding between the research, participants and the readers (Rudenstam & Newton, 2001). Below are specific definitions of terms used in this study:

Communication: The imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing or signs (Webster's Universal College Dictionary, 2001).

Digital native: Individuals born into a digital era who have not experienced a world without cell phones or computers. Typically viewed as individuals born after 1989, similar to the title Millennial (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008).

Family Communication: The mechanisms families utilize to effectively problem solve, facilitate healthy levels of family cohesion, and emotional bonding (Schrodt, 2005), express feeling, and articulate their physical and emotion needs (Barnes & Olson, 1985).

Family connection: Family connection is a figurative term that represents a pattern of active engagement between parents and children in an effort to maintain a sense of emotional closeness (Barnes & Olson, 1985; Schrodt, 2005).

Family Relatedness: Family relatedness is a reciprocated effort between teenager and parent to understand the cognitive and behavioral actions of one another and endeavor to appreciate commonalities and differences (Kruse & Walper, 2008).

Interaction: Characterized by or allowing immediate two-way communication between a source of information and a user or between two users. Users can initiate or respond to inquiries (Webster's Universal College Dictionary, 2001).

Mobile gadget: An ingenious electronic contrivance that is small and can be readily moved (Webster's Universal College Dictionary, 2001) with other individuals through public and private means. Content is user-generated and produced to support networking with friends and unfamiliar guests (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008).

Text Messaging: A means of communication between two cell phones using words, numbers and symbols. Also referred to as short message service, or SMS, because such communication is limited to 160 characters (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; Kornblum, 2008; Reidy, 2004).

Locating the Researcher

Experiences from the intimate family context

“Night, mom” were two words that fueled my curiosity about text messaging and how texting is infiltrating the way families relate and communicate. Alone in a hotel room in Lynchburg, Virginia, I got an unexpected two-worded message “night mom,” knowing that I was in the thoughts of my eleven year old son. He was three hours away and he had the choice to send that message without prompting from anyone else. While

alone in his bedroom, he chose to say goodnight to me in his own way. I had already made the family phone call to them earlier that evening during which each of my three children handed off the land-line phone to one another so that they could tell me about their day and ask about mine. My son had only had his own cell phone for about a month, and text messaging, at that time, was not part of my daily life, nor had I really considered it as a communication source between him and me. It was a brief exchange of words, but a conversation that would have never taken place without our cell phones and text messaging capabilities.

This simple message “night mom” felt like a gift wrapped in a white box with a big purple bow. It was freely given to me and had more meaning and significance than the sender realized, I am sure. I felt “tucked in” for the evening; kids love being tucked in feeling a sense of security and closeness. I felt a closeness and a connection to Coy that night, like he had just stepped into my hotel room and said “night mom.” I sensed the tone of his voice and a calmness that told me he had had a good day and was ready for bed; therefore, it was okay for me to settle down and sleep well too.

In the last year, text messaging has become a significant source of communication within my family and among friends. Adoption of text messaging occurred not because of my own desire to use texting as a mode of communication, but because my son was using it. He was entering middle school and was given his first cell phone and an unlimited text messaging plan. It was a milestone moment for him and occurred concurrently with the typical entry into puberty and the adolescent quest for independence. Not only was he looking for autonomy from us, the parents, we had just

given him a powerful tool to do just that. I felt like instead of walking him into adolescence, we catapulted into it. I contribute this feeling of acceleration to the eclectic way that he adopted mobile technology as a vessel of independence. He used it as an unaccompanied entry point into the world of communication and information, and as a way to express himself to us and to whom ever might be on the other end of a sent text message or phone call. It threatened my control as a parent, until I learned to use it as a bargaining chip to exercising my own sense of power.

We, the parents, can choose to slow him down or disengage him from text messaging when we see how captivating it is for him. We do, at times, require a reprieve from texting when we grow tired of talking to the top of his head, because he is looking down at his mobile phone, or when we sense his focus on something important is waning because of texting or anticipating a returned text message. However, we choose to allow him to text. We know we are in control; we own the phone, we pay for the texting plan and we stand aside and allow him to feel in control and empowered by having perpetual access to the world outside of our family. In my mind, it is gift from us to him. At varying times he senses that.

We also use the phone as a *bargaining chip*, as a source of expressing our parental power. I have coined a phrase “Coy is pissy” in response to the unpredictable down swing in attitude and mood of an adolescent boy. When he first started exhibiting a negative attitude at unassuming circumstances, I was shocked and didn’t have words to describe it or explain the “why” to his younger brother (Bailey) or sister (Shelby). They would just look at me as if saying, “Mom, what is going on here?” Since the word

“pissy” was not a typical word in our family vocabulary, it works well as a definingly unique word to describe Coy’s temporary adolescent moments of unwarranted hostility. His impatience with us and his siblings when we ask simple questions, his mounting assumptions that he is the smartest person in the house, and the intolerable moments when absolutely nothing can please him can quickly be defused by the simple statement, “If you continue to act this way, I will take your phone.” The ultimate *bargaining chip* is the phone. It really isn’t the phone but the access to his friends. It’s the threat of being cut off from the world of perpetual contact that exists between him and a select number of friends that text one another throughout the day. As a parent, I have the power to cut him off. I can curtail his lifeline to the outside world. I am in control. In essence, it is a way of relating to him in a way that expresses our relationship as child and parent. I have the authority in the relationship and I can make that known to him when he fails to remember that fact. Using the phone as a bargaining chip also relates to him that I understand the significance, on his part, of being perpetually connected to his friends. Why use this as a bargaining chip if it didn’t have such powerful meaning to his existence?

Coy too has his own bargaining chips. The balance of power would be different if he didn’t. Coy is a straight A student, he is a gifted athlete, and he participates in church functions and youth group outings. His social skills are adept and he senses from us when he needs to cut back on text messaging or put his phone down during certain circumstances. He reads us and knows his boundaries. Essentially, he relates to us by understanding the balance of authority in our relationship and gives us what we need

from him to maintain a sense of balance. As long as his behavior, involvement, attention and achievement are acceptable to us, he gets the benefit of freedom and expression through text messaging.

If we did not perceive Coy as having good balance in other areas of his life, we would limit his texting and other participation in social networking (such as Facebook, IChat, etc.). Not as punishment but more as an act of pushing him towards giving attention to significant areas of life like school grades, athletic performances, face-to-face communication with people and participation in typical youth activities. Again, the access and ability to text message is a reward or gift from us. It is a bargaining chip because it has such a great value to him. It is one of the most significant things in his young social life. We understand the displeasure he experiences from the threat of losing his phone. We know we can alter his behavior or cause him to pause and consider his actions by using it as a bargaining tool.

Another meaningful experience as a mother of a texting teen is the experience of feeling connected, or not connected, to him in eccentric ways due in part to text messaging. When I am physically present with Coy is when I sometimes feel the furthest away because he is busy texting his friends who are many miles away. Home, to me, should be the one place where we feel connected to other family members with no penetration from the outside world. We live on a rural 25 acre farm and I have always experienced our home as a retreat where the five of us can escape the busy and mundane world. I often visualize our farm as having a huge bubble covering its expanses; a protection from the outside world. There has always been a rich feeling of

connectiveness with my family when we are home. As Coy has entered adolescence, the protection of home has predictably lost some of its strength. In this era of technology, Coy casts a lifeline to the “outside” world often, instantaneously, and discretely. Text messaging gives him a tool to drill a small hole through the protective cover that we have built around him for the last twelve years. He has perpetual connection to his friends no matter what the physical distance. His preference for being physically present, but mentally distant, in another place with other people, loosens my feeling of connection with him. All achieved, on his part, through text messaging.

The lifeline that Coy casts away from me through text messaging is one that I cast towards him when he is physically apart from me. When he is physically absent from me, a text message to him frequently yields an immediate response. I can sense that he is okay and can sometimes get answers to small inquiries about his activities, his well being and schedule. Text messaging, on my initiated part, has opened up a line of communication to him that connects us through physical distance.

Through unspoken words, I am able to relate to my adolescent child in a way that is familiar and engaging to him. Text messaging is a communication source that I experience as “owned” by the adolescent world. If I text message, then I am entering his territory. I seek to relate to his way of thinking, to his way of existing. He appreciates the reality that I, and his father, can text and use it to communicate with him and others. We have intentionally reached out, with cell phone in hand, to understand and relate to him on his territory. It has allowed us to move towards him during a time in his life when he seeks to move away from us. He seeks autonomy from us and uses text messaging as

a tool of communication that creates distance from us. I see it has a boomerang effect where he throws his communication life line out and away from us; we are able to make it return by using text messaging to communicate with him.

We can have a complete conversation without speaking a word. An allure of text messaging is the benefit of privacy (Bumpus & Hill, 2008; Weisskirch, 2009). From a parent's perspective, I can offer Coy a private conversation with me while he is among his friends. They hear no words and therefore we can have mother to son conversation without embarrassment. He likes the privacy from my watchful eye when he texts his friends. I watch him text, see his nonverbal expressions, and have to wonder what is being said. It makes me very curious. I have learned to recognize a particular smile that means he is texting a special girl in his life; I notice the annoyed frown when someone is texting him that he doesn't particular want to be engaged in conversation with at that time; I know the laughter that comes when a good friend has sent him something amusing. His mood and demeanor is often in sync with the disposition of the conversations taking place through text messaging. As a parent I have learned to sense his nonverbal behavior knowing that I will not be privileged to any information about whom he is texting or what is being communicated. Occasionally my curiosity heightens to the point that I ask him questions about whom he is texting and ask for highlights of the conversation. I get small doses of information that help me continue to recognize the subtle nonverbal cues that I can observe from a distance.

Experiences from the Community Perspective

My understanding of text messaging, in the daily lives of families, comes from my own daily use, my observations, and from conversations about text messaging. In the previous section I gave a personal account of my intimate experience, as a mother, exploring how text messaging influences the way I communicate, relate, and connect with my son, and he with me. My experience of this phenomenon is lived out in three settings. First are my personal experiences of communicating, relating, and connecting with Coy in the intimacy of our family. Secondly, from talking about this topic with others who live in relation to an adolescent and find that text messaging has woven its self into the fabric of their family's context. Thirdly, from observing this phenomenon played out in the lives of families that I have the privilege of being warmly engaged with on a daily basis.

In this section, I have turned my eyes outward to examine this phenomenon as it unfolds around me outside of my own family's experience. As a mother who recognizes that text messaging has significant influence on the way I relate to my adolescent child, I am eager to know if other family's are feeling and experiencing this phenomenon as I am. We do that as parents; if our family is going through transitions, changes and challenges, we find comfort in knowing that we are not alone or too unique. We hope that other families that look like ours have similar experiences and we inquire about those experiences in our daily connection and communication with other parents, teens and educators.

My life consists of perpetual contact with adolescents, young adults, and other families. I experience the daily inundation of cell phones and use text messaging. From the community college classroom, to the movie theater, to the church parking lot, and to the grassy fields of soccer games, teenagers are using text messaging as a venue for communicating and socializing with their network of friends and family.

I remember during the midnight premier of the movie *Twilight*, as we sat in the theater three hours waiting in anticipation of this new feature, the darkness of the theater was filled with the glow of cell phone LCDs. Not many words were being spoken but I sat in fascination as the college students I was with, and the 100 other teens, and twenty-somethings texted faster than I could imagine. I was curious about who they were texting and what the content of their messages might be. It was late at night and I assumed that some of the younger adults were communicating with their parents. I tried to relate to what their parents might be feeling and felt like knowing the location and arrival of my child to his destination would have been a positive aspect of text messaging and child-to-parent communication. I would feel connected to him because I would know where he was in the late hours of the night.

Being a parent of a child on a competitive-traveling soccer team provides an environment where text messaging is perpetually present. Parents talk about texting on the side lines, and the players use text messaging as a favorite pastime between games. It is almost comical to me to ask some of the players to hit the code on their phone that gives a verbal account of how many text messages have been sent and received during the billing cycle. One young man had a report of over 14,000 text messages sent and

received over the last 30 days. Another had texted over 2,000 times and yet another about 7,000 texts sent and received. The boys just laugh about it and continue their leisurely texting. It left me wondering: Who are they texting? What is all the chatting about? And most interesting to me, how do their mother's feel about this?

Parents groan about their teen's cell phones and the attention and focus on text messaging that has become a part of the life experience of their families. A mother of one of my son's female friends was sitting beside me at a soccer game and asked, out of nowhere, "Tell me, how many texts does Coy have every month?" I told her he had had as many as 7,000 but typically it was between 2,000 and 3,000. She seemed surprised at my tolerance and calm nature in this fact. She had recently taken her daughter's phone away because of "over texting" one month when her daughter had texted over 9,000 times in a month. She hadn't defined why she took her phone other than the simple fact that 9000 texts sent and received in one month seemed like too much.

Assumptions from Experience

The researcher has pre-understandings and assumptions that predispose her to the interpretive nature of the phenomenon. In making assumptions explicit it allows the research to hold these assumptions at bay and allows the researcher to focus on subjectivity of the participants' experiences (Manen, 1990). Meaning and understanding are derived from the descriptions of experiences portrayed by the participants as the researcher reflects back on the accounts and allows the natural essences of the participants' language to mold the interpretation of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

I experience text messaging in the context of my own family with an array of emotion and consideration. I feel like it is still an unfolding phenomenon that we have only just begun to conceptualize. The developmental period of adolescence requires me, as a parent, to be informed and active in cultivating continued ways to communicate, relate and connect with my child. Text messaging is a means of autonomy, privacy, and control for adolescents. As a parent, I don't run from the unfamiliarity and complexity of technology and the way my son uses it; instead, I engage him using his own tools as a means of connecting and relating to him.

Parents understand that text messaging is static to this young culture and are trying to discover ways to use text messaging to communicate and relate to their teenager. Parents often have an ambivalent attitude regarding text messaging behaviors of their teenager. Through this study, parents are asked to explore their experiences of text messaging within the context of family communication, relatedness and connection. It is anticipated that focusing on the family context, a looking within approach, will help define parent's understanding of this phenomenon.

I anticipate that when comparing the interviews of parents and teenagers, common threads of understanding that have not been well conceptualized, regarding the impact of text messaging on family relatedness and connectivity, will emerge. Qualitative research in the area of technology and family relationships is limited (Devitt & Roker, 2009). This study will advance our understanding of this phenomenon and create opportunities for further study.

Significance of the Study

It is important that a study has distinct qualities from past studies and adequately contributes to the body of knowledge that exists for the topic of interest (Creswell, 2003). The proposed study generates an exclusive inquiry of how teenage text messaging is experienced by both teenagers and parents and how their experiences influence family communication, relatedness, and connection. The body of knowledge surrounding social networking and mobile gadgetry is growing exponentially but very little research has focused on how these technologies influence family relationships (Devitt & Roker, 2009; Weisskirch, 2009). The majority of current literature related to this topic has investigated identity development and adolescent use of social networking sites like MySpace, Facebook and Myyearbook (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). When excluding social networking from the body of literature and focusing on text messaging, the current base of literature addresses linguistic acquisition (Ling & Baron, 2007), formal communication proficiencies (Thurlow & McKay, 2003), social effects of SMS (Reid & Reid, 2004), and the current push for laws that prohibit text messaging while driving (Carney, 2009).

The majority of research investigating adolescent use of text messaging has been done in countries other than the United States. The commercialization of text messaging to teenagers was most popular in Europe, Finland, Norwegian, Japan and Asia as early as 1991 (Ling & Baron, 2007). Wireless communication companies contribute masses of quantitative data that demonstrate the increasing use of SMS, the amount of text messages being sent and received, highlight what parts of the country use this service the

most and other statistical data (Lenhart A. , Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007; Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, Teens and Technology, 2005).

Text messaging assists in relationship maintenance and communication with friends at the expense of communication with parents (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). However, this concept is never investigated further; it is merely suggested. This study seeks to clarify the experiences of text messaging and the influence on family communication, relatedness, and connection (Devitt & Roker, 2009; Kornblum, 2008; Lenhart A. , Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007 Weisskirch, 2009).

Organization of Remaining Chapters

Chapter one lays the foundation for the study. It introduces the critical components, terms, and processes that bind this study. The remaining chapters give further detail and clarify the development of the study. Chapter two is a comprehensive review of the literature addressing teenagers' text messaging behaviors in order to glean a foundational understanding about how it is woven into the context of family communication, relatedness and connection. Chapter three provides the methods that are used for this phenomenological inquiry: Details about participant selection, the interview process, the role of the research, and the procedures used to collect and organize the data. Chapter four is a narrative based on the interviews conducted and interpretation of the data and results of the study are presented. Chapter five is the culmination of the study and provides conclusions, recommendations for future research, and implications for applying the findings to practice.

Summary

Chapter one introduced the focus of study, teenage text messaging in the context of family communication, relatedness, and connection. Highlights from literature provided the background of the problem and staged the purpose for the study. The two research questions were stated and terminology terms specific and meaningful for this study were operationalized. A section that located the researcher within the context of the phenomenon was detailed from the perspective of the intimate family context and from the experiences in community perspective. Assumptions adopted from the researcher's experiences were also clarified and, finally the significance of the study was explained.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter two stages this study amongst previous research addressing the topics of teenage text messaging and family relationships. Research examining the influence of technology on family relationships is sparse (Devitt & Roker, 2009; Horstmanshof & Power, 2005; Weisskirch, 2009). Through the review of literature, insight into teenage text messaging and the influence on family communication, relatedness, and connection is gleaned. Although no previous studies address this specific topic, numerous studies and reports provide pieces of information that help pull this study together. This chapter first addresses the recent growth of text messaging in the United States; specific information about the popularity of text messaging among young adults and teenagers is examined. Literature that addresses issues about teens and texting provides rich context to this phenomenon. The developmental tasks of adolescence including identity formation, individuation and autonomy as well as family communication are tied in to provide meta-construct that is foundational for this study. Lastly, what has been studied and learned about the intersection between text messaging and family relationships is detailed and is the final staging grounds for this phenomenological study.

Text Messaging's Recent Growth in the United States

In the last five years, there has been an increased interest in studies focusing on text messaging (e.g. Bryant, Sanders-Jackson, & Smallwood, 2006; Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, 2005; Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007; Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Most research on text messaging is quantitative data collected by phone companies and marketing strategists to determine who is texting, when they are texting, where they are texting and other aggregate data for advertising and sales purposes (e.g. Kennedy, Smith, Wells, & Wellman, 2008; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; Reidy, 2004; The Short Code Marketing Opportunity, 2008).

Text messaging is among the preferred communication sources for teenagers. Text messaging is still relatively new in the United States; there is inadequate data to demonstrate the scope of significance that text messaging has among teenager populations (Bryant, Sanders-Jackson, & Smallwood, 2006; Faulkner & Culwin, 2005). Text messaging was originally developed as a means for mobile phone companies to alert their customers about things such as network problems. It was not intended as a customer to customer venue of communication. However, this gap in intention and outcome occurs when “a machine meets culture and often produces meaning” which was not anticipated (Thompson & Cupples, 2008). An article from 2003 titled “No text please, we’re American” almost comically confirms the novelty of text messaging in the United States. Just six years ago, mobile phone companies did not market text messaging packages like other countries (Economist, 2003). Statistics that are dated two to three

years cannot capture the most current trends in the use of text messaging (Horstmanshof & Power, 2005; Ling & Baron, 2007).

Recent statistics suggest that mobile phone users are sending more text messages than they are making phone calls. In a third quarter report from Nielsen Company, of the 263 million U.S. wireless subscribers, 203 million paid for text messaging plans. Estimates from penetration and usage data reveal that 57% of all mobile subscribers age 13 and older use text messaging on a regular basis. In the second quarter of 2008, mobile phone users made an average of 204 calls and sent 357 text messages. Table 1 demonstrates the rapid increasing in text messaging use of more than 350% in the last two years. Interestingly, the number of calls placed by mobile phone users has remained steady over the last two years (The Short Code Marketing Opportunity, 2008).

Table 1

Average Number of Monthly Calls vs. Text Messages Among U.S. Wireless Subscribers

	Calls	Texts
Q1 2006	198	65
Q2 2006	216	79
Q3 2006	221	85
Q4 2006	213	108
Q1 2007	208	129
Q2 2007	228	172
Q3 2007	226	193
Q4 2007	213	218
Q1 2008	207	288
Q2 2008	204	357

Note: From *The Short Code Marketing Opportunity, 2008*, p.3. Copyright 2008 by The Nelsen Company. Reprinted with permission.

Demographically, text messaging is more popular than calling among populations from age 44 and younger. Table 2 reflects the data from the second quarter report of Nielsen Company. Mobile phone subscribers age 55 and older are the only groups who continue to make more phone calls than sending text messages on a monthly basis. Teenagers ages 13-17 send an average of 1,742 texts each month compared to just 231 mobile phone calls (The Short Code Marketing Opportunity, 2008).

Table 2

*Average Number of Monthly Calls vs. Text Messaging Among U.S. Wireless Subscribers
by Age (Q2 2008)*

	Calls	Texts
All Subscribers	204	357
12 & Under	137	428
Age 13-17	231	1742
Age 18-24	265	790
Age 25-44	239	331
Age 35-44	223	236
Age 45-54	193	128
Age 55-64	145	38
Age 65+	99	14

Note: From *The Short Code Marketing Opportunity*, 2008, p.3. Copyright 2008 by The Nelsen Company. Reprinted with permission.

The growing trends in text messaging are significant to the culture of families who use mobile phones to communicate with each other and with friends and colleagues (Devitt & Roker, 2009; Kennedy, Smith, Wells, & Wellman, 2008). With more cell phone users communicating through text messaging, it is important to understand the impact on families and appreciate how this phenomenon is changing the communication dynamics between teenagers and parents.

Developmental Tasks of Adolescence

Adolescence is characterized by rapid physical growth and changes in various developmental domains (Kruse & Walper, 2008). Traditionally, adolescence is a time for expanding social relationships, development of a sexual identity (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2007), increased capacity for abstract reasoning, improved language skills, and a greater ability to take others' perspectives (Hazen, Schlozman, & Beresin, 2008). Two tasks, identity formation (Hill, 1993) and individuation and autonomy (Kruse & Walper, 2008), are particularly relevant to this study because of their strong association with other secondary tasks such as an increased desire for privacy (Bumpus & Hill, 2008), independent decision making (Barnes & Olson, 1985), separation from parents, the influence of parenting styles (Hillaker, Brophy-Herb, Villarruel, & Haas, 2008), and the balance between family cohesiveness and self exploration (Williams, 2003). It is important to explore these concepts as contextual components that have merit when investigating adolescents' experiences of living and relating to the world around them.

Identity

During the period of adolescence, one of the greatest developmental tasks is identity development. Eric Erikson defines identity as “a coherent conception of the self, made up of goals, values and beliefs to which the person is solidly committed” (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2007, p.437). During the period of adolescence, the focus on identity development heightens and is a part of a health, vital process, that builds on trust and autonomy, the foundation for coping with the challenges of adult life (Dekovic & Buist, 2005).

Eric Erikson states that the chief task of adolescence is confronting the crisis of identity versus role confusion (Hill, 1993). Individuals proceed through a period of exploring alternatives in values, actions, interests, and sexual identity in order to make commitments to new psychological structures. Adolescents seek to develop a coherent sense of self, including the role he or she will play in society (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2007).

Marcia (1980), describes four stages of identity status within the context of identity development. The status describes the individual’s relation to the identity crisis; crisis is conceptualized as a period of conscious decision making related to identity formulation. The identity status of achievement is characterized by a commitment to choices made following a crisis, a period of exploring alternatives. The identity status of foreclosure represents a stage wherein an individual has not spent time considering alternatives but is committed to other people’s plans for his or her life. The status of moratorium is described as a period where one is considering alternatives, in crisis, and is

heading for a commitment. And fourthly, diffusion is characterized by a lack of serious consideration for alternatives coupled with an absence of commitment (Marcia, 1980). These identity statuses are ubiquitous during the period of adolescent development and influence patterns of communication and connection within the family context.

Individuation

Individuation in relation to the father and mother is a key developmental task of adolescence. Individuation is conceptualized as the process of gaining autonomy while maintaining relatedness to parents (Kruse & Walper, 2008). Adolescence provides an opportunity for increased independent decision making and self regulation in the context of social demands and relationships (Hill, 1993).

During adolescence, it is important for individuals to achieve a balance between autonomy and a sense of connectedness to their parents (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2007). Family disruptions due to internal and external stressors can interfere with the individuation process triggering premature detachment from parents or maladaptive attachment patterns with parents (Kruse & Walper, 2008). Parental support through authoritative parenting, flexibility, monitoring and democracy allows adolescents the opportunity to negotiate and successfully move through this period of exploration and individuation (Baumrind, 2005).

The Influence of Parent Relations and Communication

During the period of adolescence, individuals seek to define self, expand their social and romantic relationships, become more independent, and consider the thoughts and feelings of others (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2007). These processes of growth and development are important to the individual but are interconnected and dependent on the dynamics of adolescent and parent communication and the quality of the parent-child relationship (Dekovic & Buist, 2005). Communication within the context of family affects adolescent identity formation, role taking abilities, and the ability to develop higher levels of moral reasoning (Barnes & Olson, 1985).

Relationships between adolescent children and parents that are adaptable, flexible and warm and loving, facilitate appropriate adjustment during the period of adolescence (Spring, Rosen, & Matheson, 2002). Authoritative-reciprocal parenting styles are associated with positive emotional, behavioral, and cognitive outcomes for adolescents (Williams, 2003). Parents who incorporate a mix of authority and democracy, who explain and justify decision making processes, and who have a low level of power assertion optimize adolescent adjustment (Holmbeck, Paikoff, & Brooks-Gunn, 1995).

Families continuously adapt to changes in power structure, role relationships and rule negotiation (Hillaker, Brophy-Herb, Villarruel, & Haas, 2008). The parenting styles and characteristics of attachment between parents and adolescents have ongoing and lasting influence on the adaptability of the individual through developmental phases (Buist, Reitz, & Dekovic, 2008). Parents and adolescents seek to maintain bonds of attachment while negotiating autonomy. The best environment for development of social

skills and psychological and social health is when parents encourage autonomy within the context of affective support and connectedness (Noom, Dekovic, & Meeus, 1999).

Adolescents' desire to move away, physically and emotionally, from parents complicates the delicate task of maintaining family cohesiveness and support while simultaneously providing space and opportunity for individuation and autonomy (Hillaker, Brophy-Herb, Villarruel, & Haas, 2008). Communication behaviors affect the sustainability of family relationships and a sense of connection (Saphir & Chaffee, 2002). Adolescents' typically become more private and guarded about the information they share with parents. Parental knowledge about their child's daily activities and experiences is a critical component of parenting and facilitates adequate parent-child communication patterns (Williams, 2003). Adolescents who self-disclose information to their parents, decrease personal boundary invasions and the intensity in which parents solicit information (Bumpus & Hill, 2008). When parents and child reciprocate information, share experiences, facilitate open discussion, and create opportunity to express opposing opinions and views, communication is optimized and further supports appropriate adolescent adjustment to increased roles and responsibilities (Schrodt, 2005).

Positive family relationships pave the way for families to move through developmental stages and create a stronger sense of family cohesion. The Circumplex Model of family systems proposes that family cohesion and adaptability operate on a curvilinear basis (Barnes & Olson, 1985; Henry, Robinson, Neal, & Huey, 2006; Maynard & Olson, 1987; Perosa & Perosa, 2001). It is important for a balance of separateness and connectedness to be achieved. Cohesion is conceptualized as an

emotional bond between family members; adaptability is conceptualized as the ability of the family to reorganize in response to situational and developmental stress (Maynard & Olson, 1987). Optimal family functioning is characterized by a balance on both cohesion and adaptability. Families that represent this balance are able to change levels of cohesion and adaptability in response to needs and desires of the family system. Families who function at extreme levels of cohesion and adaptability have limited potential to reorganize and utilize resources with which to cope with the challenges of family life (Barnes & Olson, 1985). Ultimately, family communication is the contributing dynamic that aids or hinders the movement of families on the two dimensions of cohesion and adaptability (Perosa & Perosa, 2001).

Text messaging contributes to the way that families communicate and relate to each other (Devitt & Roker, 2009). Teenagers, specifically use text messaging within the family context and also for advancing social relationships outside of the family system (Kornblum, 2008). There is increased curiosity and interest in the intersection of text messaging and family relationships. Literature tying in these components of text messaging coupled with the contextual characteristics of adolescent development are detailed in the following sections.

What We Know About Teenagers Who Use Text Messaging

Few studies have addressed teenagers' proclivity for text messaging or addressed issues directly related to teenagers and text messaging; most of the research interested in the intersection of text messaging and teenage behavior has taken place in countries other

than the United States (Boase & Kobayashi, 2008; Ehrenberg, Juckes, White, & Walsh, 2008; Faulkner & Culwin, 2005; Horstmanshof & Power, 2005; Ishii, 2006; Ling & Helmersen, 2000; Madell & Muncer, 2007; Mesch, 2006; Oksman & Turtiainen, 2004; Reid & Reid, 2004; Thompson & Cupples, 2008; Tutt, 2005). The United States is ranked eleventh among text message usage in the world. Countries like Russia, Sweden, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, China, France, India, Germany and Brail have used text messaging services longer and more frequently than the United States (The Short Code Marketing Opportunity, 2008). Thus, international research data cannot always be generalized to populations in the United States (Grinter & Eldridge, 2003).

There are social and non-social factors that are universal among adolescents in different countries. There is evidence that the use of cell phones by adolescents is an emergent phenomenon across the world. Teenagers are integrating technology into their common social dynamics of distance, power, status and identity. Teenagers in varying countries use cell phones in similar ways because of their common situations and interest during the adolescent period (Boase & Kobayashi, 2008). The most common uses of text messaging universal to all adolescent groups is chatting, coordinating, and planning future face to face activities (Grinter & Eldridge, 2003)

During adolescence, teenagers seek to establish and maintain close bonds with their peers (Oksman & Turtiainen, 2004). Teenagers who text message their closest friends believe that texting helps them maintain intimate relationships with established friends (Reid & Reid, 2004). They also use text messaging to develop new relationships with individuals that they have casually met face-to-face at school or during social events

(Boase & Kobayashi, 2008). It is universal for teenagers to exchange contact information as a social convention and use text messaging to further a relationship once the opportunity for face-to-face contact is no longer available (Grinter & Eldridge, 2003).

It is a common trend that teenagers create their own subcultures where they use text messaging as the predominate means of communication among a circle of friends (Ishii, 2006). Among this circle of texting friends, they share an interconnection and maintain a regular, continuous, exchange of messages. Research suggests that texting circles are a new social ecology that has a unique characteristic of perpetual contact that cannot be replicated by other social network technologies (Ehrenberg, Juckes, White, & Walsh, 2008). Text messaging connects teenagers with an immediacy that creates an integrated culture of friends that remains in contact and aware of each other's movement, regardless of physical distance (Reid & Reid, 2004). The barriers of time and space are dissolved and an ever presence of others abounds. It is a new mean of being simultaneously present with others while physically absent (Horstmanshof & Power, 2005).

The dynamics of text messaging allows teenagers to converse with friends through a diverse spectrum of time. Text messaging is used immediately to create a fluid sense of communication; text messaging also provides a venue for time-shifting within conversation where an individual can delay response or use text messaging at non-traditional times (Bryant, Sanders-Jackson, & Smallwood, 2006). The immediacy of text messaging provides synchronous exchanges in communication that are rapid and instantaneous (Madell & Muncer, 2007). The mobility and perpetual access of text

messaging allow for conversations that somewhat resemble the availability of face-to-face exchanges and on-line chatting interactions. Teenagers often choose to text message one another even when in close proximity to the individual they are engaged in the texting conversation (Reid & Reid, 2004).

Text messaging can be asynchronous as well, which affords individuals more time in between exchanges where thought and deliberation can take place before responding (Bryant, Sanders-Jackson, & Smallwood, 2006). It also allows individuals to have a sense of constant availability to their peers even if conversations are not immediate (Boase & Kobayashi, 2008). Teenagers use text messaging asynchronously to express their opinion adeptly when exchanges have emotional value (Madell & Muncer, 2007). Time is available for composition and reflection of a response; it also gives the individual the opportunity to manage the way they represent themselves through their text messages (Reid & Reid, 2004).

Factors that influence the popularity of text messaging among teenagers are the benefits of being quick, cheap, and convenient to use. Individuals have unlimited text messaging plans typically for twenty dollars per month; this provides the immediate gratification young adults are accustomed to and can be done from virtually anywhere (Horstmanshof & Power, 2005). Additionally, many teenagers who text message have the luxury of owning their own mobile phone and have it with them at all times (Thompson & Cupples, 2008). This perpetual connection to friends, and family, is a strong allure for this technically suave population.

Text messaging allows individuals to have private conversations from locations that are either public or private (Faulkner & Culwin, 2005). Without words, private conversations can occur in public places as easily and as privately as in one's own home. Whether walking down the street, on the bus, or in the middle of a stadium crowd at a college football game, text messaging creates a veil of privacy that no other means of communication can provide (Thompson & Cupples, 2008).

Teenagers text message friends from the privacy of their own home or bedroom. Media reports suggest that some text message friends throughout the night, unbeknownst to their parents, and are experiencing an epidemic of sleep deprivation. It is estimated that a third of teenagers in relationships call or text 10 to 30 times an hour between 10:00 p.m. and midnight (Dunnewind, 2007). The relative quietness of text messaging allows teenagers to text under the radar of parental awareness (George, 2009).

Two recent media interests in text messaging among teenagers are text messaging while driving and sexting. Currently nine states have adopted laws prohibiting the use of text messaging while driving (Association, 2009). A recent survey by AAA Marketing Research suggests that 32 % of young adults admit to sending text messages while driving and 43% admit to reading text messages while driving (South, 2009). Text messaging and driving creates a distraction that takes an individual's eyes off the road and hands off the steering wheel. There have been a number of teenage driving accidents related to text messaging and many states are targeting this age group in legislation to ban text messaging while driving. Teenagers try to text message while driving and create dangerous situations for themselves and for other drivers (Carney, 2009).

The act of sending, receiving, or forwarding nude photographs via mobile phone is called sexting (Lithwick, 2009). In July of 2008, Jesse Logan committed suicide in response to an ex-boyfriend sending nude pictures of her to multiple people using his mobile phone (Celizic, 2009). In a recent survey by the National Campaign to Support Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 20% of teenagers with mobile phones admit to participating in sexting (Teens, 2009).

Not only are there social consequences of sexting, there are legal consequences too. Teenagers who take nude photographs of themselves and/or friends and send them to others via cell phone are being charged with manufacturing and distributing of child pornography. Teenagers who receive these photographs are being charged with possession of child pornography. Those charged with this felony are serving jail time and required to register as sex offenders (Lithwick, 2009).

The laws that govern child pornography are dated and had the original intent of protecting children from adults who preyed on children as unsuspecting sexual objects (Lithwick, 2009). Some experts contend that punishing minors, who are sexting, by using current child pornography laws is too harsh. Most media sources recognize sexting as just one of the many cultural trends that accompany the volatile combination of teenagers and mobile technology. Legislators need to consider new legislation that appropriately addresses this social trend among modern teenagers (Teens, 2009).

Focus of the media and research interests in teenage text messaging is growing exponentially as texting continues to weave its way into the everyday culture of American teens (Devitt & Roker, 2009). The quantitative data available on the text

messaging habits of teenagers transforms with each passing day, demonstrating rapid increases in use and innovation (Nielsen, 2009). Text messaging has many social benefits while at the same time it has created concern due to the way it is used, or abused, the obsessive use of text messaging by young populations (George, 2009), and novelty of the features it presents to the way we communicate and relate to one another (Thompson & Cupples, 2008).

The Intersection of Text Messaging and Family Relationships

The juncture between family relationships, specifically relationships between parents and teenagers, and the prolific trends in text messaging are a relatively new phenomenon in the United States and have not been studied extensively (Nielsen, 2009). Ethnographic investigations and focus group studies suggest that family relationships are being both positively and negatively influenced by the inundation of social network technologies (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). There is limited existing data into the scope and breadth of the influence that, specifically, text messaging has on family relationships (Kennedy, Smith, Wells, & Wellman, 2008).

Text messaging is just one of the functions of mobility. Not only teenagers, but family units are becoming more and more mobile, wireless, and networked (Weisskirch, 2009). Families have multiple mobile phones on their wireless calling plan which affords the opportunity for parents and children both to call and text message with no imposition of time or physical space (Kennedy, Smith, Wells, & Wellman, 2008).

Families live within broad boundaries when it comes to the availability and potential of mobile technologies. Parents use mobile phones and text messaging to monitor the location and movement of teenagers (Campbell, 2006). In turn, teenagers can notify parents about their schedule changes, their arrival time home, and other relevant information that ensures favorable relations with their parents while keeping them at a virtual distance (Reidy, 2004; Weisskirch, 2009).

Survey data from Samsung Telecommunications America suggests that 68% of American parents communicate with their children by text messaging. Both parents and children believe that text messaging has improved their relationship. More than half of parents and children believe that text messaging enhances their communication (Mobile, 2008).

Text messaging blurs the traditional lines of communication within families. In a 2008 study by Pew Internet and American Life Project, 25% of parents felt like the internet and mobile phones allow their family to be closer than their family was when they were children. Family relatedness and closeness are influenced by technology (Weisskirch, 2009); parents are acclimating to new forms of communication realizing that it affords innovative ways of feeling close to their children (Kennedy, Smith, Wells, & Wellman, 2008).

Mobile phones have become a parenting-resource that provides instant communication with teenagers, a tool that parents recognize and seek to maximize its value (Kennedy, Smith, Wells, & Wellman, 2008). Cingular Wireless recognizes the importance of text messaging as a resource for improved parent-child communication and

worked with a clinical psychologist and parenting expert, Dr. Ruth Peters, to create a texting tutorial for parents. The communication guidelines for using text messaging, that were created through a partnership with Cingular Wireless and Dr. Ruth Peters, suggest that parents who text message their child strengthen parent-child bonds, and text messaging lets their child know that their parent is thinking about them. Text messaging is a trendy way for parents to communicate with their children; text messaging gives the child space while allowing parents to keep in touch and gives parents time to compose and edit messages before sending them. Through text messaging, parents' tone of voice is removed and they often get quicker responses from their children (Wireless, 2006).

Teenagers and parents often have differing views about the benefits and shortcomings of technology. One of the benefits that teenagers find in text messaging is the perpetual connection to their peers. Whether in public spaces or at home, contact with friends is only a few key strokes away. Teenagers appreciate the privacy that text messaging provides especially guarding them from the watchful eyes and ears of parents (Tutt, 2005). They can text whomever, whenever and with a minimum effort to be inconspicuous, parents know very little about any aspect of the texting exchange. Teenagers have short codes that indicate to the recipient of the text message that parents are watching PAW, or that mom is over shoulder MOS (Olsen, 2006).

Another benefit text messaging provides to teenagers is unassuming communication with parents while they are with their peers. Parents appreciate the instant access to their teen that mobile phones provide (Oksman & Turtiainen, 2004). However, teenagers particularly value avoiding the social awkwardness of being called

by parents at inconvenient times (Ling & Helmersen, 2000). Text messaging allows parents to communicate with teenagers without drawing attention to the parent-child exchange.

Virtual distance between parent and teenager creates situations where teenagers can be deceptive about whom they are with and about their location (Boase & Kobayashi, 2008). Without the benefit of caller ID that landlines provide, teenagers are cordial to parents by text messaging them when they reach their destination, but that destination could be anywhere (Brier, 2004). Likewise, parents assume that their teenager is with a particular friend, or group of friends, but communication through text messaging allows parents to be misled about the company their child is keeping (Campbell, 2006).

Parents and educators have their own concerns about text messaging. There is apprehension about the effect that using text messaging short code and abbreviations will have on teenagers' ability to accurately use the formal English language. Will the ability to spell properly and formulate complete sentences be affected by the prolific use of text messaging in everyday communication (Ream, 2008)? Educators are finding that students are using short code texting language in their academic writing (Baron, 2009). Additionally, teenagers use their thumbs to text message from the key pad of a cell phone. Formal typing protocol requires all fingers to be used but teenagers are more dexterous with thumb typing because of the text messaging phenomenon. The phrase, "thumb tribe" or "thumb generation" have been used to describe the generation of text messaging youth (Learning from the thumb tribe, 2002).

There is also concern about the mere time and attention that teenagers give to text messaging. Parents have evidence of the rate that their child is text messaging through access of mobile phone records provided by their wireless phone company (Kornblum, 2003). Often, these records reveal hundreds if not thousands of text messages sent and received within a month's time. Parents can be baffled by the mere pace of their teenager's text messaging behaviors (George, 2009).

Parents recognize that the cell phone has become an extension of a teenager's self (Horstmanshof & Power, 2005). There is concern that text messaging impedes the expression of emotion and therefore might affect their psychological health. Some parents work diligently to limit or ban text messaging from their teenager but fail to understand the importance that text messaging plays in social development in today's youth culture (Cadena, 2007).

Many teenagers carry their cell phones at all times and even sleep with it beside them at night (Horstmanshof & Power, 2005). Observant parents recognize the inconspicuous text messaging that can be done so rapidly and discretely that it takes a concerted effort to recognize its proclivity (Brier, 2004). Teenagers deliberately exercise discretion from the watchful parent and down play the extent of text messaging. Parents are perplexed by the phenomenon of text messaging but still are unsure about their verdict of its effect on their teenager (George, 2009).

The media landscape of today's teenager is very different than their parents' was when they were growing up (Oksman & Turtiainen, 2004). Today, teenagers exist in digital societies where technology isn't just a tool but part of the culture and an

expression of self (Tucker, 2009). There is a generation gap regarding technology's significance to the everyday experience of young adults. Adults do not fully recognize the social formation taking place that centers on digital and mobile technology (Thompson & Cupples, 2008).

Conclusion

The current literature sets the stage nicely for further investigation of the intersection between teenagers' text messaging behaviors and family communication, relatedness and connection. There is quantitative data that illuminates the increasing use of text messaging among all populations (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008); there is also ethnographic and other qualitative data that establishes an understanding of the intricate aspects of text messagings' integration into today's digital and mobile culture (Ishii, 2006). Text messaging continues to be a focal point in media sources. There are sufficient anecdotal stories that continue to peak readers' attention and further feed our culture's curiosity about its influence on the young digital generation (Kornblum, 2003).

The phenomenon of text messaging is still in its infancy for the American culture (Nielsen, 2009). The current data suggests that it will continue to grow in popularity and become even more enmeshed in the daily lives of teenagers and the parents who choose to use it as a tool to communicate and relate to their children (Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007). The intersection of text messaging, typical adolescent developmental tasks and family communication create an interesting yet complicated phenomenon that provide a rich context for this study.

The rapid adoption of mobile and virtual communication is a puzzle in the making. It is an image unfolding but not yet complete. Its presence is obvious and greatly felt but its culmination is still to be revealed. This study will provide one piece of the puzzle that specifically focuses on text messaging and will advance our understanding of the experience of text messaging in the lives of teenagers and parents who live with it each day.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Introduction

Text messaging is an emerging phenomenon that has instantly become a cornerstone in how teenagers communicate with peers and with family (Nielsen, 2009; Weisskirch, 2009). Research examining the effect of technology on relationships is sparse (Horstmanshof & Power, 2005; Kornblum, 2008); more specifically, research that investigates text messaging in adolescent populations is limited and most has taken place outside of the United States. In the United States there is quantitative data collected by wireless phone companies and research groups contracted to study technology trends in adolescent and family groups (Nielsen, 2009; The Short Code Marketing Opportunity, 2008). Text messaging has received a significant amount of attention from media groups who publish numerous stories about text messaging and its effect on American lifestyles (Kornblum, 2008). Research findings that are dated even two years do not capture the current essence of text messaging's influence on American family.

In this chapter, the essential components used to conduct this phenomenological inquiry are detailed. The procedures for selecting participants demonstrate the inclusionary and exclusionary criteria used to select teenage and parent participants needed for this investigation (Kazdin, 2003). The section on data collection details the cumulative methods for collecting data including personal journals and individual interviews (Creswell, 2003). The research procedures provide the elements necessary for

conducting the research and are detailed in a manner that makes replication possible for future studies (Rudestam & Newton, 2001). The final section demonstrates the plan to process and analyze the data using transcripts (Manen, 1990), and qualitative research software (QRS International, 2009).

Phenomenological Methods

The broad scope of this study is guided by a heuristic phenomenological method that seeks to uncover rich descriptions and details of individual experiences (Manen, 1990). Participants are purposefully selected based on their experience of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). An interview process is based in a natural and non-threatening environment for the participants. It is informal and utilizes open-ended questions (Rudestam & Newton, 2001). The researcher embeds herself in the context and through the perceptions of participants, uses deep attentiveness to explicitly interpret the characteristics of the experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology

Phenomenology seeks to make sense of certain aspect of human existence that deeply interests the researcher. It provides rich descriptions of lived experiences by mining the embodied mean and essence of its nature. In gathering experiential narratives from participants, reflection and interpretation are rooted in the discovery process (Manen, 1990). Phenomenology is committed to keeping the experiences of the participants alive and accentuating underlying meaning by incorporating thought, feeling,

action, senses, impressions, images and aesthetic properties vividly portrayed within the participant's narrative. Phenomenology does not seek to explain or analyze lived experience but seeks to retain the original qualities and properties of the participants' stories. The researcher concurrently embeds herself in the intersubjective nature of the phenomenological process (Moustakas, 1994).

The phenomenon of interest for this study represents a juncture between a component of technology, text messaging, the natural course of family communication and relatedness, and the nuances of adolescent development. This phenomenon is lived out in the everyday routines of families (Manen, 1990). The significance of this phenomenon stems from a passionate personal interest in how text messaging has unveiled an instantaneous way of communicating within the family context. Text messaging has assimilated itself into the teenage culture at a momentous pace and families are living out this phenomenon in the ways they communicate, relate and connect (Kennedy, Smith, Wells, & Wellman, 2008; Nielsen, 2009; Weisskirch, 2009).

The Role of the Researcher

An important feature of the phenomenological inquiry is the role of the researcher. The researcher "cultivates a mind-set conducive to an authentic inquiry" (Piantanida & Garman, 1999, p. 147). The researcher is expected to be engaged in the process and take a subjective position, making her perceptions explicit (Manen, 1990). The researcher's introspection and acknowledgement of values, interests and biases will be an intrinsic concept of heuristic phenomenological inquiry (Moustakas, 1994)

In this study, the researcher will serve as the interviewer and establishes herself in a natural setting with the participants. The researcher will engage the participants and becomes part of the fabric of the study. The researcher recognizes her own assumptions about the phenomenon (Creswell, 2003); she is conscious about allowing participants to unfold and develop their own perceptions along side of her, while bracketing her own assumptions and conceptualizations (Manen, 1990).

The Interview Process

The interview process in this study is used to explore and gather narrative data for the purpose of developing a deeper understanding of human phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The interview allows the researcher to engage in a conversational relationship with the participants in order to formulate a richer appreciation for their experience (Manen, 1990). The interview questions are “tools to draw out the participant to reflect on the experience and its implications in his or her life” (Rudenstam & Newton, 2001, p. 109).

The interview questions are loosely structured but have the intent of capturing the essence of the experience that is the interest of this study (Creswell, 2003). See Appendix C and D for a list of interview questions. It is important that the interview process has purpose and that the interviewer is grounded and familiar with the intent of the interview questions as not to flounder in irrelevant descriptive narratives. Participants are asked to tell about specific events in order to gain concrete, vivid descriptions of relevant experiences (Manen, 1990).

The narratives of the participants are first gathered in their authentic voice from verbatim accounts of their experiences and perceptions (Moustakas, 1994). The process of looking for emergent themes and interpretation and to make cogent points is done in the reflection and reviewing of narrative data. Anecdotal records are trimmed of extraneous aspects in order to rigorously and deconstructively understand the essence of the experience that is most relevant to the focus of the study (Manen, 1990).

A component of this study will be a comparison of thematic data between the teenagers' and parents' interviews. This study seeks to expand the information that already exists on this phenomenon and provide new information about the experience of text messaging in the context of family communication, relatedness, and connect. It will also create opportunities for future research by illuminating a rich context of narratives from the voice of both parents and teenagers (Devitt & Roker, 2009).

Selection of Participants

It is important that participants have experienced the phenomenon and are interested in understanding its nature and meaning (Moustakas, 1994). A criterion sampling method is used to ensure that participants meet inclusionary and exclusionary criteria of the study (Rudestam & Newton, 2001). Participants for this study have common characteristics that create homogeneity within the participant group. One of the characteristics desired is an interest in the topic of study and being willing to communicate sufficiently about text messaging within the context of family. Since this study is investigating family communication, it requires that both teenage and adult

participants freely articulate their experiences. It is probable that parents and teenagers who are willing to participate in the study come from families that exhibit high levels of cohesion and adaptability according to the circumplex model of family systems (Maynard & Olson, 1987; Perosa & Perosa, 2001; Schrodt, 2005). Families who volunteer to engage in a lengthy research interview about a personal topic related to their communication patterns more than likely possess a healthier level of family functioning and supportive relationships than families that would not be comfortable volunteering for such a study (Dekovic & Kirsten, 2005). This is a possible inherent bias to the structure and interest of the study.

A homogenous sample of ten participants per group (teenage participants and parent participants) is adequate for a phenomenological research study (Rudenstam & Newton, 2001). One goal of an interview process is to reach a point where the researcher is no longer gaining new information with each interview. Repetition in participants' responses is expected while, simultaneously, there is an unfolding of new information (Krueger & Casey, 2009). At some point, it is anticipated that the interview process ceases to contribute new information. The design of the study provides an appropriate number of participants that the process yields a saturation point (Moustakas, 1994). The selection processes detailed below make certain that participants meet the selection criteria based on their text messaging use and other criteria relevant to this study.

Acquiring Participants

Criterion sampling is essential to this study because phenomenological inquiry requires that the participants have experienced the phenomenon of interest (Manen, 1990; Moustakas, 1994). Additionally, the inclusionary and exclusionary criterion of the participants are detailed in the following section and are considered in the sampling process of the study (Rudenstam & Newton, 2001). Portney and Watkins (2000) define purposive sampling, which is very similar to criterion sampling, as the practice of hand selecting participants based on specific criteria and who have the appropriate knowledge and can be a good informant for the study. Because the criteria for the study is easily generalized to typical family populations, it is anticipated that adequate participant-pairs will be obtained. The researcher will promote the study by word of mouth and provide adequate information to possible participants so that they can make an informed decision about involvement in the study. The methods of criterion and purposive sampling will be utilized in the recruitment and final selection of participants (Creswell, 2003).

Participants of Study

This study is interested in two different groups who experience the phenomenon of teenage text messaging in the context of family and who are interested in further understanding the experiences of text messaging in the context of family communication, relatedness, and connection. The first group of interest for this study is teenagers, age thirteen through sixteen. The second group is parents. It is critical to this study that

participants selected are recruited in pairs; meaning participants are recruited as a teenage-parent pair. For this study, five teenagers and five parents are interviewed.

Criteria of Teenage Participants

The selection criteria for teenage participants are listed below. The criteria ensure that the five selected teenage participants have homogenous characteristics that are important to the study. The guiding criteria for teenage participation in the study include:

1. Between the ages of thirteen and sixteen.
2. Lives with one or both parents.
3. At least one parent willing to participant in this study.
4. Having their own cell phone and a monthly text messaging plan.
5. Using text messaging as a mode of communication on a daily basis.
6. Sending and receiving over 650 text messages in a one month period.
7. Being interested in exploring their experience of text messaging in the context of family communication, relatedness, and connection.

The participants for this study will be both male and female and are between the age of thirteen and sixteen. Teenagers who are sixteen years of age and driving will not be considered for this study. Older teenagers gain independence from their family when they start driving which creates a new variable that will influence the study's results. Investigating younger teenagers will focus the study on those individuals that do not have the option of being physically independent from their parents and might rely on the use of text messaging and other social networking media to escape parental observation.

Younger teenagers will capture the rich essence of adolescent identity formation, individuation, and components of family cohesion and connectedness. The second criterion for selection in the study is that the participant resides with one or both parents. Paired selection is an important variable in this study in order to explore the experiences of both the teenager and his or her parent. Individuals who live with grandparents or non-related adults are not considered for this study. The unique dynamic between parent(s) and children is a significant variable and is therefore considered in the participant selection process. The third criterion ensures that there is commitment from at least one parent to participate in the study.

The fourth, fifth and sixth criteria ensure that text messaging is a significant part of the teenage participants' daily lives. Teenagers who do not own their own phone or who don't have a text messaging plan cannot adequately experience the phenomena of interest for this study. The survey by Neilson Company projects that individuals age thirteen through seventeen send an average of over 1300 text messages per month (The Short Code Marketing Opportunity, 2008). For this study, teenagers who send at least 650 text messages a month, half the average of the Neilson study, will be considered as participants. The Neilson Company provides national averages and it is important to recognize that teenagers from rural southwest Virginia and east Tennessee might not text as frequently as teenagers in other localities. Using half of the national average of text messages sent per month as the baseline, this study anticipates capturing an active group of text messaging teenage participants.

Teenage participants need to have an interest in exploring their experiences of text messaging in the context of family communication, relatedness, and connection. Information provided on the website allows participants to make an informed decision about their interest in the study. If individuals who apply for the study are being considered as a participant, the researcher will follow up with a screening interview that further assesses the participant's interest and appropriateness for the study.

Criteria for Parent Participants

The selection criteria of parent participants mirror the criteria for teenage participants. Parent participants:

1. Have a child between the ages of thirteen and sixteen who lives in their home, who has his or her own mobile phone, and a monthly text messaging plan.
2. Have a teenager, age thirteen and fifteen, who is willing to participate in an interview exploring his or her experience of text messaging in the context of family communication, relatedness and connect.
3. Recognize that their teenager uses text messaging as a mode of communication on a daily basis.
4. Recognize that their teenager's text messaging behaviors have influenced the way they communicate and relate to their teenager.
5. Are interested in exploring how teenage text messaging influences communication and relationships with other family members.

The principle criterion for both teenage and parent participants are based on the age range of the teenager within the pair, and the experience of the phenomenon, teenage text messaging. Participants demonstrate a desire to explore the experiences of text messaging in the context of family communication, relatedness, and connection. These criteria give a foundational base for selecting participants that can provide rich descriptions of their experiences needed for this study.

Informing Participants

The recruiting structure is designed to adequately inform possible participant-pairs of the opportunity to participate in the study. The participant selection process is designed to capture a homogenous group of participant-pairs with common characteristics relevant to the study (Creswell, 2003). Criterion sampling and purposive sampling processes will provide adequate opportunity to locate and obtain pair-participants that meet the inclusionary criteria (Portney & Watkins, 2000).

Once participants are identified, the researcher will make follow-up phone calls to the participant pairs that are in the final selection for the study. The follow-up phone calls ensure that potential participants are truly interested in the study and can commit the time needed for the interview and data collection process (Moustakas, 1994); follow-up also ensures that there is a vested interest from both the teenager and the participating parent to the research study.

When the researcher asks the individual to take part in the study, each participant will be given a consent form that details the nature of the study. The consent form can be

found in Appendix E. Participants will be informed about the expectations of the research participants. The voluntarily nature of the inquiry will be clarified and information about removing themselves from the study is provided. For teenage participants, the consent form includes a section that requires parental permission. Because the nature of the study requires a teenage-parent pair, it is anticipated that parental permission will be easily obtained.

Data Collection Process

There will be two data sources for the study. Participant journals will provide written accounts of experiences prior to the interviews. The journal writings will allow participants an opportunity to reflect on significant past and present aspects of the phenomenon (Manen, 1990). Interview narratives provide rich contextual understanding into the lived experiences of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). Using multiple sources of data strengthens the study by demonstrating consistency and will capture the breadth of the participants' experiences (Rudenstam & Newton, 2001).

Participant Journals

A source of information collected prior to the interview process will be participants' journals: "Writing forces the person into a reflective attitude" (Manen, 1990, p. 64). This activity will purposely require participants to examine their daily experiences of text messaging in the context of family communicates, relates and connects. Both teenage participants and parent participants will be asked to write a

journal entry at least once a day, for one week, noting experiences or reflection on how text messaging is woven into the context of their family relationships. If any significant experience, regarding text messaging behaviors, had occurred recently or during the time participants are journaling, participants will be asked to write in detail about those experiences. For instance, if a teenage participant and a parent participant have an argument over a text messaging related occurrence, then both teenager and parent details the event in the journal. If text messaging proved to be a useful means of communication during a difficult family situation, then the participants are asked to write about the event in their journal. Directions for journal entries will be provided to each participant and can be found in Appendix B. Journal entries will be returned to the researcher three days prior to the interview in order to allow the researcher to review the content of the journals. Information from the journals could direct some of the interview questions if significant content or themes are evident in the journal entries. The data collected from the journals will be used to validate themes that are developed in the data analysis procedures. Journal entries and interview responses might provide consistent evidence of themes or might provide conflicting data (Manen, 1990; Moustakas, 1994). Such findings will be provided in the conclusion section (Kazdin, 2003).

Interview Guide

The interview guides are designed to prompt conversation and responses about essential experiences of text messaging that are of interest in this study. Each question is a piece of a larger picture and work together to illuminate the full essence of the

phenomenon. The interview guide for the teenage participants is listed in Appendix C.

The interview guide for the parent participants is listed in Appendix D.

The first question asks both teenage and parent participants to describe how text messaging became a significant part of their life. The selection criteria of the participants ensure that text messaging is significantly used on a daily basis with the teenage participants. This question initiates the dialogue and engages participants in telling about how this phenomenon unfolded in their own lives. It asks participants to reflect back to the inception of texting messaging which provides a historical perspective of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

The second question asks both teenage and parent participants to describe the daily use of text messaging in the life of the teenage participant. This question will provide comparative narratives between the teenager and parent regarding the frequency of teenager's text messaging, perceptions about who they are texting, when they are texting and why teenagers' text. Teenage participants will provide their experience and awareness of their typical patterns of texting. The parents are asked to describe their experiences regarding the text messaging behaviors of their teenager.

The third question asks both teenager and parent participants to describe their experiences of using text messaging to communicate with each other (teenage to parent; parent to teenager). This question aids in the initial formation of the experience of text messaging within the family context. The journaling exercise, prior to the interview, will help heighten both teenager's and parent's awareness of their experiences of text messaging communication in the family context (Mansen,1990).

Question four, for both teenage and parent participants, ask about the negative experiences associated with text messaging. From the review of literature, there is discrepancy in parents' reaction to the teenagers' adoption of text messaging (Devitt & Roker, 2009; Wajcman, Bittman, & Brown, 2008; Weisskirch, 2009). Responses to this question might clarify the nature of parents' negativity, confirming or disconfirming it. This question also provides teenage participants an opportunity to investigate their interpretation of conflicts, if any, with their parents regarding text messaging.

Question five asks both teenage and parent participants to consider the positive experiences associated with text messaging and the benefits it might bring to their relationship (Campbell, 2006; Devitt & Roker, 2009). The researcher anticipates that this question will clarify parents' reaction to teenagers' adoption of text messaging and will provide insight into the positive aspects of text messaging as a source of communication, relatedness, and connectivity between parent and teenage participants.

Question six asks teenage participants to describe how text messaging provides independence from parents. An essential component of adolescent development is autonomy and individuation from parents (Kruse & Walper, 2008). Teenagers describe how text messaging is a part of that differentiating process and provides rich descriptive narrative that aids in the unfolding this phenomenon. Two secondary questions are used if participants do not address privacy and secrecy in their initial descriptions. The role of privacy and secrecy are important features of the phenomenon of text messaging within the adolescent population (Bumpus & Hill, 2008).

Question seven asks the teenager and parent participants to tell about a time when they felt like text messaging played a role in how they related to each other and detail the experience. Family relatedness is operationalized as a reciprocated effort between teenager and parent to understand the cognitive and behavioral actions of one another and endeavor to appreciate commonalities and differences (Kruse & Walper, 2008). This question will prompt the participants to verbalize the concept of relatedness. How are teenagers perceiving that parent's attempt, or non- attempt, to use text messaging as a tool to relate to them? Are the teenagers experiencing text messaging as a way they can relate to their parents? Are parents experiencing text messaging as a way to relate to their teenager and how is that experience played out?

The eighth question asks teenage participants to talk about the times when text messaging helps them feel connected to or disconnected from their parent. Family connectiveness is operationalized as a figurative term that represents a pattern of active engagement between parents and children and an effort to maintain a sense of emotional closeness (Barnes & Olson, 1985). In question five, participants give a narrative account of how they are using text messaging to relate to one another. Participants' experiences of relatedness will tie in with their experiences of collectiveness giving a vivid image of how text messaging contributes to these two family dynamics.

Data Recording

Recording equipment will be used during the interview to capture an audio recording of the responses. Using audio recordings will make it possible to get accurate

transcriptions. The researcher will also take field notes during the interview to record any significant observations (Rudenstam & Newton, 2001).

There are eight questions on the interview guide. It is anticipated that each interview will take between sixty and ninety minutes to complete. The questions steer the study but there is opportunity for participants to provide unanticipated information and the direction of the interview is fluid and flexible according to the participants' responses to the questions (Creswell, 2003).

Data Analysis

At the completion of the interviews, the data from the audio recordings will be transcribed by a hired transcriptionist. The researcher will review the transcription of the audio recording and will ask the participants to review the transcript of their interview (member-checking) (Creswell, 2003). Once the transcription is approved, the text will be loaded into qualitative research software NVIVO to conduct thematic data analysis (QRS International, 2009). NVIVO allows the researcher to organize a large quantity of raw qualitative data into orderly and manageable collections of information. Creating a structure referred to as nodes and tree nodes, the researcher can pin point select words and phrases from each participant transcript and organize relevant information into collective themes. The software will provide multiple ways of categorizing data and reviewing data as a means of expanding the analysis process. The researcher will use a dual process of theme analysis using both NVIVO and individual evaluation of transcripts to improve the validity of the findings (QRS International, 2009).

The researcher will analyze themes for each interview and construct a thematic analysis of the transcriptions. Opposing responses and unique responses will be investigated and included in the result section. The themes across the teenager interviews and across the parent interviews will be compared and reported in the results section. Two outside reviewers will evaluate the data and provide interpretations and feedback to the researcher.

The interview guide for the parent participants mirrors that of the teenage participants. This will allow for a comparison between the teenage and parent responses. The researcher will scrutinize the thematic data and report findings from the comparative analysis between teenage and parent data. Additionally, data from the journal entries will be evaluated to determine if the information from this source adds value to the interview data.

The thematic data will be detailed in the results section. It is anticipated that the teenage interviews and parent interviews will provide a rich contextual image of their experiences of text messaging in the context of family communication, relatedness, and connection. Additionally, a comparison between teenage and parent themes will add a unique understanding about the similarities and differences in experiences between these two groups when considering how text messaging is woven within family relationships.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of a qualitative study is strengthened through strategies that ensure that processes of inquiry are sound and dependable and that the data sources are accurately reflected as indicated by the participants, the research and reviewers (Rudestam & Newton, 2001). The validating processes of qualitative research carry a different connotation when compared to quantitative research. In naturalist inquiry, focus is given to the authenticity and credibility of the narratives and the process used to confirm the findings (Creswell, 2003). Various procedures are used to address the trustworthiness of this study and are detailed in the following paragraphs.

In qualitative research, it is important for the researcher to clarify biases that might influence the study. This self-reflection is detailed in the *locating the researcher* section of this paper in chapter one, starting on page seven. Clarifying biases creates an open and honest narrative that resonates with readers influencing the confidence and dependability of the study (Creswell, 2003).

The participant criterion selection process is purposively conducted as a means of strengthening the adequacy and appropriateness of the study. The adequacy of the study is achieved when “you have obtained enough data so that the previously collected data are confirmed (saturated) and understood” (Rudenstam & Newton, 2001, p.114). The appropriateness of the data lies in purposeful selection of participants who have experienced the phenomenon and can provide detailed narratives that will offer needed information to construct themes and models of understading (Manen, 1990).

Using different sources of data allows the researcher to cross-check and corroborate evidence and construct consistent themes and interpretations; utilizing multiple sources of data provides confirmation and saturation of merging models (Rudenstam & Newton, 2001). This concept is known as triangulation and strengthens the validity of qualitative inquiries (Creswell, 2003). When different ways of examining a phenomenon converge in the information they yield, the capacity to justify themes and explanations of the phenomenon are intensified (internal validity) (Kazdin, 2003).

Member checking involves providing participants with the written transcript from the interview (Creswell, 2003). This process confirms the factual accuracy of the narrative accounts reported by the researcher (descriptive validity) (Kazdin, 2003). Not only are participants asked to confirm the written transcripts, but participants also examine the thematic data and interpretive data (Rudenstam & Newton, 2001) to ensure that it accurately represents the narrative accounts and confirms that the research has adequately understood the descriptive experiences of the participants (interpretive validity) (Kazdin, 2003). In addition to member checking, two peer reviewers also evaluate the transcripts, thematic data, and interpretations to confirm accuracy and stability during the data analysis process. The peer reviewers engage the researcher throughout the research process and continually ask difficult questions and hold the researcher accountable to her interpretations (Creswell, 2003; Rudenstam & Newton, 2001).

According to Manen (1990), “phenomenology always addresses any phenomenon as a possible human experience. It is in this sense that phenomenological descriptions have a universal (intersubjective) character” (p. 58). The rich, thick description conveyed in the findings can create a sense of a shared experience with the reader (Creswell, 2003). The descriptions are sufficiently detailed to strengthen the transferability of the findings (external validity) (Kazdin, 2003). Generalizations to other settings and other participants are modest and mindful in the context of individual’s lived experiences. In qualitative research, “generalization is the task of the reader rather than the author of qualitative studies” (Rudestam & Newton, 2001, p. 113).

Summary

Chapter three details the methods used to conduct this phenomenological study. The role of the researcher, the interview process, and details about the criterion for participants set the stage for the study and develop the essence of the inquiry. The section on data collection processes provides details about the participant journals, the interview questions, and how data is recorded and analyzed. The validity of the study is reflected through the trustworthiness of the interview accounts validated by the research participants and outside reviewers.

The crux of the investigation is capturing the lived experiences of both teenagers and parent participants; as text messaging infiltrates the daily communication processes of the family environment, the concepts of relatedness and connection are illuminated through a semi-structured interview process with these two groups of participants

(Creswell, 2003). It is anticipated that this study will contribute to the current body of literature that seeks to bridge our understanding of how current mobile technology and family communication and relationships intersect in a way that transforms our human interactions.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This study examined the experiences of text messaging within the context of a family environment. Ten parent and ten teenage participants were interviewed to investigate both parents' and teenagers' experiences of using text messaging to communicate, connect, and relate to each other. The focus of the study was to answer two research questions:

3. What are the experiences of text messaging to communicate, relate, and connect within the context of family?
4. How do the experiences of text messaging compare between teenagers and parents in addressing family communication, relatedness, and connection?

This chapter introduces the participants and provides demographic information that portrays the participant pairs. Themes from the data analysis are detailed and include using text messaging to communicate to introduce new conversation, inform each other, or ask for something. Another theme addresses how parents and teenagers relate through text messaging and how they maintain constant connection. A co-morbid relationship between parental worry and time threshold is discussed from both the parents' and teenagers' perspectives. Lastly, elements of parental control are detailed.

General Characteristics of Participants

Ten participant pairs included ten parents between the ages of 37 - 48 and ten teenagers between the ages of 13-16. The location of the study was southwestern Virginia and eastern Tennessee. Four of the pairs lived in an urban area, and six pairs lived in rural areas around small towns of southwestern Virginia. Nine of the participant pairs were Caucasian, and one pair was African-American, which is representative of this geographical area (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).

The paired participants represented four parent-child dynamics. Of the ten parent participants, seven were mothers, and three were fathers. Representing the teenage participants were five daughters and five sons. The pairing schemes for the participant pairs included three mother-son pairs, three mother-daughter pairs, two father-daughter pairs, and two father-son pairs.

All of the families involved had a married mother and father. Two participant pairs were from blended families. Nine of the families had more than one child. Nine of the participant pairs represented families with two working parents; one represented families with a stay-at-home mother and a working father.

Portraits of the Participant Pairs

Rebecca and Tommy

Rebecca is 37 years old, married, and works in law enforcement and education fields. Tommy is 14 years old and is the older of her two children; he is an active 14-year-old teenage boy involved in multiple school sports and enjoys farming with his

father. They represent a Caucasian family and live in a rural area of the region. They use texting on a daily basis to coordinate family schedules and keep each other informed of activities and changes in afterschool plans. Tommy states, “Texting for me has just been awesome. I can get my point across to mom without saying a word.” He values having continuous access to communication with his parents without having to stop what he is doing and call.

Rebecca appreciates the immediacy that texting provides in connecting with Tommy. She recalls a particular occasion when texting was valuable in connecting with Tommy when timing was an important element of the conversation.

He was on the bus, coming back from a basketball game, and it had been a particularly exciting game. It was really nice of him to treat me to all the details through text messaging. The nice thing about it was that when we were together afterwards, we were able to continue our conversation about the game. In all likelihood, if we had not been texting, when I picked him up all the excitement would have worn off, and when I asked about the game, he would have probably responded with a pat answer like “it was alright.”

Rebecca and Tommy’s experiences demonstrated how text messaging often cuts across time and space to create a conversation that might not have happened otherwise.

Jessica and Heather

Jessica is 38 years old, married, and a college professor at a local community college. Heather is 15 years old and is the oldest of Jessica's three children. This family represents a Caucasian family and lives in an urban area of this region. Heather states that her parents "automatically assume I am a technology addict and that I always have my phone in hand." Texting is the primary way that Jessica and Heather communicate to manage their family schedules, activities, and responsibilities. Heather finds that texting her mom is the best way to make requests for an orthodontist appointment to be made, for requesting things from the store, and for finding out what her responsibilities are after school with her younger siblings. They often text each other even when in the same room to avoid the verbal tone, cynicism, and sarcasm that they feel currently hampers their face-to-face communication.

Jessica describes herself as over-protective and a rather controlling parent. Jessica states, "Texting allows me to mother my child in an overbearing manner without being judged by her peers. Her friends don't know how protective I am." Jessica worries about Heather's well-being when she is away from her, and texting gives her a venue to be in perpetual contact with her. Jessica feels like texting is providing a way to connect to Heather during this difficult adolescent period of development; texting is such a significant part of their relationship that Jessica does not use Heather's cell phone as a bargaining chip when it comes to behavior and expectations; rather she grounds her from leaving the house or participating in activities with her friends.

Cathy and Mike

Cathy is 45 years old, married, and works in the accounting field. Mike is 15 years old and is the older of Cathy's two children. Mike attends a private school and enjoys the Christian atmosphere and small classroom setting. They represent an African American family and live in an urban area of this region. Mike and Cathy have a relaxed relationship with trust and cooperation. Mike states that "mom texts me mostly to find out where I am and what I am up to." He appreciates the freedom that texting gives him to communicate with his friends and says, "I normally text my friends from as soon as I get out of school until I go to bed."

Cathy considers cell phones to be a privilege and a luxury for teenagers and states, "It is a privilege that I have given to you because I respect what you are doing; you're a good kid. So it's like you've gotten it because you do well. If you are gonna act bad, you're not gonna get rewarded for being bad. I can take it!" Cathy is cognizant of keeping an open line of communication with Mike and still prefers to have face-to-face conversations about important life issues. Cathy believes she and Mike have a close bond and says, "I trust Mike, he tells me everything. Things that most kids don't tell their parents, he'll talk to me about. So I don't want to infringe on him where he thinks he has to hide something from me." Texting has provided another means for her to keep the lines of communication open during adolescence.

Renee and Barbie

Renee is 39 years old, married, and is the co-owner of a bricking company.

Barbie is 16 years old and is an only-child. They represent a Caucasian family and live in a rural area of the region. They use texting daily to communicate about schedules, afterschool activities, and even use texting to speak about more significant parent and child topics including relationship issues, problems at school, and difficulty with friends. Barbie states, "There is some stuff that I would rather say over a text message than face to face." When she and her mother disagree or argue she states, "I think it is easier. I mean, I really don't like to argue face to face. I think it's just much easier through text." She likes how texting allows non-verbal cues to be removed and how she does not have to hear the tone of her mother's voice when they are disagreeing.

Renee sees that texting gives Barbie a venue to be more open in her communication and stated, "If she is texting someone, she seems more comfortable. She is so shy, and it is easier for her to text somebody than to actually be with them." Texting gives Barbie the opportunity to be more open with her friends and provides an avenue for Renee to be in continuous contact with her. Renee states, "I think we are closer now than we were before we started texting. Because she wouldn't talk to me a whole lot before, but she tells me about everything." Renee and Barbie describe their relationship as close and enjoy continuously texting each other throughout the day. Renee states that Barbie texts her as much as she texts Barbie just to see where she is, and what she is doing. Renee states, "She wants to know where I am at all times. And I want to know where she is at all times."

Ann and Tanner

Ann is 42 years old, married, and works as a business development manager with a large utility company. Tanner is 14 years old and is the older of Ann's two children. They represent a Caucasian family and live in an urban area of this region. Tanner uses his cell phone to stay in continuous contact with his friends and with his parents. Tanner texts both his mom and his father on a daily basis to inform them of his location during afterschool activities and has found texting to be a useful way to break-the-ice on topics that might be uncomfortable in a face-to-face setting. Tanner describes:

I remember one time in particular. I had a very hard Spanish quiz and I knew I had failed it, like ridiculously failed it and I just texted my mom. And she was like, really? Did you really fail it? And I said, yeah. And that way I didn't know if she was upset at me or anything, but she ended up calling me afterwards to just make sure, but I guess it took some of the sting off of it, and when she called me it was a little easier to talk to her about it.

Ann is concerned about the consequences that text messaging might have on the communication skills of young adults. She uses text messaging daily with Tanner and also said that she uses it with friends and with her husband frequently. However, she perceives that teenagers are "glued to them [cell phones] are constantly texting." Working in the business industry, Ann is apprehensive about the effects of texting's short-hand language on the ability for teenagers to speak confidently and write appropriately in employment situations. Ann says, "I worry that the texting has encouraged the lack of communication verbally; if you listen to kids communicate with

adults they have a hard time talking with them or expressing themselves because they are so used to short blocks of words.” Although Ann uses texting daily, she sees social outcomes that could negatively affect her teenager’s ability to communicate.

Tammy and Cindy

Tammy is 42 years old, married, and works in the car manufacturing industry. Cindy is Tammy’s adopted daughter, and she is 14 years old. She is the fourth of five children. They represent a Caucasian blended-family and live in a rural area of the region. Cindy is a social butterfly but prefers texting her friends more than calling them. Her parents worry about letting her do things independent of them because of some previous circumstances; Cindy finds that because her parents have constant access to her, she gains independence from them. “I constantly want to go to games [high school football games]. Just to get outta the house and away. They don’t trust me, ummm, as an independent person.” She finds that because her mom can text her at any time, and expects a response back within minutes, it has given her a freedom to be away from them that would not be possible without having her cell phone in hand.

Tammy often thinks that texting creates “an electronic leash” around her neck. Although she uses texting daily to communicate with Cindy and her other four children, she finds that giving them perpetual contact with her causes them to assume she is constantly available to attend to their desires and requests. She recalls a time when her children were out of school due to the snow, and Cindy sent her 17 text messages within an hour stating things like “I’m hungry, there is nothing here to eat,” “I’m bored, when

will you be home?” and “Do you think we will have school tomorrow?” Tammy reflects on this experience, saying, “This is when it gets to be annoying, and I’d like to go back to how well we all survived and most likely had better verbal communication skills before this texting phenomenon grabbed hold of our kids.” There is an appreciation for texting, but Tammy sees that there are frustrating consequences to always being available to your teenage children through texting.

Scott and Danny

Scott is 38 years old, married, and works in the car manufacturing business. Danny is 14 years old and is the third child in this blended family. They represent a Caucasian blended-family and live in a rural area of the region. Danny finds that texting has its benefits when you have a disease like diabetes. He says, “When I first got my phone, I always texted them because I could communicate with them about my diabetes problem.” Danny uses texting to communicate throughout the day with his parents about his blood sugar levels. Danny says, “I’m checking it and sending it to them.” It gives his parents the opportunity to help Danny monitor his insulin needs and monitor his bolus requirements when he is away from them.

Scott uses texting to communicate with his family throughout the day. Scott doesn’t mind mixing home and work, so to speak. He states, “It is really nice to be able to keep in constant communication with my kids even when I am at work. I have no issues letting home follow me to work. If I need to text or even call my kids while I am at work, it doesn’t matter what I am doing at the moment.”

Scott is also playful with his son by using texting in combination with picture mail. He recalls a time when the kids were out of school for snow, and he had assigned them the task of cleaning the house: “I told them to take pictures of all the things they were supposed to clean and text them to me when they got done, and I would let them know if there was anything else they needed to do. First time I had ever done that and found it to be very useful.” He also discussed how he liked sending silly messages to Danny via texting, saying, “It gives me something else to work with to make him laugh.” Scott uses texting for many different reasons with his children and appreciates the flexibility texting provides in communicating with them.

Joe and Allen

Joe is 45 years old, married, and is an administrator at a local college. Allen is 16 years old and the older of two children. They represent a Caucasian family and live in an urban area of the region. Allen attends a private high school and notes that the school collects all the students’ cell phones at the beginning of the day and returns them at the end of the day to prevent students from using cell phones in school. Allen finds that texting his parents helps him introduce negative situations with the benefit of nonverbal tone and emotions being absent from such conversations. He talks about an experience of forgetting homework assignments and texting his mom about this situation. He states:

We were going back and forth, talking by texting, because she was mad, and I was trying to explain to her what was going on...when I am face to face, I can see their expression and see how they’re actually acting and whereas text messaging,

I don't actually hear them, and I can't actually see them so I don't know how they are reacting about the subject. I see that as helpful.

He says that this method of breaking the ice helps ease the following face-to-face discussion once they get home: "When we get home, she'll talk to me about it for, like 30 minutes!"

Joe finds that texting "has improved our family's communication. We texts both his sons daily, and his wife is sometimes irritated by how much the three of them text and have their cell phones constantly in front of them. Joe's experiences with texting include continuous contact with Allen about school performance, after school activities, scores of sporting events, links to music, videos and other entertainment and requests from Allen about attending social events or desiring merchandise. He is concerned about a teenager's communication skills and his level of comfort in carrying on face-to-face conversations. He sees that texting has a possible hindrance to some of these developmental tasks of adolescence.

Chris and Rosa

Chris is 42 years old, married, and works in the law enforcement field. Rosa is 14 years old and is the older of Chris's two daughters. They represent a Caucasian family and live in a rural area of the region. Rosa is an active teenager involved in multiple afterschool activities. She uses texting daily to communicate with her parents about her schedule, location, and changes in her plans. Rosa explains about the texting limits that her parents set for her saying, "they check my messages every time before I delete them.

Like, I can't delete them without letting them read them. And then, I have to turn off my phone at 9:00 p.m. because they can check on the Internet and see what time I've been sending them." Rosa has gotten used to her parents checking her text messages and has learned to accept it. At first she felt like it was an invasion of privacy but now views it as a way of them protecting her and ensuring that she is not involved in any inappropriate language or sending inappropriate pictures.

Chris admits that he likes having access to Rosa through texting to know where she is and what she is doing perpetually throughout the day. He is a protective father and finds that texting is a tool for expressing that to her when she is away from him. He states, "I can always ask, Are you ok? Are you on your way home? If I know Rosa is out with somebody, I text her just as a reminder that I'm always there. You know. No matter how far you are away from me, you're still connected." The worry and concern for his daughter's well being is the purpose for the majority of his texts, and he appreciates feeling connected to her and says about texting, "It does make me feel more of a part of her, especially when I know my name will pop up on her phone if it's text or if it rings, and it says dad."

Sally and Angie

Sally is 44 years old, married, and is a stay at home mother. Angie is 15 years old and is the older of Sally's two daughters. They represent a Caucasian family and live in a rural area of the region. Angie uses texting to communicate with her parents and with her friends. She is soft spoken and introverted and finds that at times texting is easier for her

than face to face conversation. She stays in perpetual contact with her mother through texting, whether while in their home or when her mother is miles away. Angie talks about being in her bedroom:

I'll be lying on my bed or whatever, and I wanted to ask her to either get me something or if I can go somewhere. Instead of either yelling through the house actually getting up and going to ask her, I'll lay there and like text mom and ask her. And then if she's like text dad and ask him. It's like ok. So I'll text dad and wait for him to reply (laughter).

Angie has also experienced using texting to communicate with her mother while her parents were on a business trip: "When mom and dad went to New Orleans, I could text her. Where the time is different, it's hard to pick up the phone and call her when it's convenient, so I just text her and she'll reply."

Sally uses texting to communicate with Angie daily about afterschool activities, changes in schedule, and transportation to soccer practice. She states, "Texting is a whole new form of communication beyond our home, us and our regular telephone." In exploring Sally's experiences of taking Angie's phone to view her text messages, Sally states, "I don't access her phone. I've always told her I have to trust you until you give me reason that I can't. I think that's just, it's a matter of privacy. If I get wind of anything (inappropriate messages), she is done! I'll take it (Angie's cell phone) out in the driveway, and I'll run over it, and she won't have it!" Sally strives to balance the task of trusting her teenager with the task of monitoring her teenager. It is a continuous parental undertaking, and texting gives her a tool to communicate and relate to Angie.

Table 3

Brief Descriptions of the Participant Pairs

Parent	Teenager	Pair Description
Rebecca	Tommy	Rebecca is 37 years old, and Tommy is 14 years old. Rebecca works in education and law enforcement. Tommy is a student-athlete in multiple sports at his school. They represent a Caucasian family and live in a rural area of the region.
Jessica	Heather	Jessica is 38 years old, and Heather is 15 years old. Jessica teaches biology at a local community college. Heather is a straight A student and helps her parents care for her younger siblings. They represent a Caucasian family and live in a rural area of the region.
Cathy	Mike	Cathy is 45 years old, and Mike is 15 years old. Cathy works in the accounting field. Mike attends a private school and prefers the small classroom setting. They represent an African American family and live in an urban area of the region.
Renee	Barbie	Renee is 39 years old, and Barbie is 16 years old. Renee is the co-owner of the family's bricking company, and Barbie is a quiet young lady who enjoys hanging out with her friends. They represent a Caucasian family and live in a rural area of the region.
Ann	Tanner	Ann is 42 years old, and Tanner is 14 years old. Ann is a business development manager and Tanner is a student athlete. They represent a Caucasian family and live in an urban area of the region.
Tammy	Beth	Tammy is 42 years old, and Beth is 14 years old. Tammy works in the car manufacturing industry, and Beth is known as a social butterfly. They represent a Caucasian family and live in a rural area of the region.

Scott	Danny	Scott is 38 years old, and Danny is 14 years old. Scott works in the car manufacturing industry and Danny has juvenile diabetes and uses texting to update his parents about his sugar levels while at school. They represent a Caucasian blended-family and live in a rural area of the region
Joe	Allen	Joe is 45 years old, and Allen is 16 years old. Joe is a college administrator and Allen attends a private high school and is active in school sports. They represent a Caucasian family and live in an urban area of the region.
Chris	Rosa	Chris is 42 years old, and Rosa is 14 years old. Chris works in the law enforcement field, and Rosa is a talented soccer goalie for her high school and club team. They represent a Caucasian family and live in a rural area of the region.
Sally	Angie	Sally is 44 years old, and Angie is 15 years old. Sally is a stay at home mother, and Angie is an academically talented student. They represent a Caucasian family and live in a rural area of the region

Themes from the Experiences

Ten parents and ten teenagers with varying experiences used text messaging to communicate, connect and relate to each other. Each narrative was unique yet with threads of commonality that tied these narratives together. The experiences of parents had similar tones representing the desire to stay perpetually connected and available to their teenagers while allowing them to explore their own independent world apart from them. Parents' desired communication with their teenagers and found texting provided

yet another venue for trying to stay connected during adolescence. The families represented in this study stepped into the world of texting together, and parents and teenagers had a sense of relatedness because of the common phenomenon.

Teenagers appreciated the immediacy that texting provided in communicating with their parent. They recognized benefits of texting but also expressed the cost associated with being perpetually connected to their parents. They used texting to introduce difficult topics to their parents so that the element of surprise was worn off when communicating with them face to face. They knew that parents worried about their well being and appeased them by connecting through texts, just enough to satisfy their parents' curiosity about where they were, what they were doing, and who they were with at the time.

Three areas of focus for the study were communication, connection, and relatedness through text messaging within the context of family. The following sections detail teenagers' and parents' experiences contained in the themes that give experiential merit to the phenomenon. An outline of the themes is provided:

I. Themes from the Experiences

A. Communication

1. Introducing conversation to avoid emotional responses
2. Informing each other
 - a. Location
 - b. Schedule updates

c. Well being

3. Asking for Something

B. Relating through text messaging

C. Perpetual connection through texting

D. Elements of parental worry and time threshold

E. Teenagers' perceptions of time threshold and parent worry

F. Parental Controls

1. Cell phones as a bargaining chip

2. Reading teenager's text messages

Communication

The purpose of communicating through text messages between teenagers and parents centers on three subthemes. The first theme was *Introducing Conversation to Avoid Emotional Responses*. This theme involved texting about topics that were uncomfortable or that had the potential to be emotional between parent and teenage participants. Texting allowed a difficult topic to be introduced in a non-threatening context in order to defuse the emotional response typically experienced in a face-to-face conversation. A second theme was *Informing Each Other*. Parent and teenage participants used texting to perpetually inform each other about activities, changes to schedules, location, and other pieces of information that help families communicate and stay connected. The third theme was *Asking for Something*. Texting allowed family

members to ask each other for things that are either needed or desired and eliminates barriers of time and space.

Introducing conversation to avoid emotional responses.

“It gave me two hours to plot my strategy,” Chris commented when discussing how his daughter Rosa texted him about a negative experience that had happened in band that day at school. He could tell from the detail of her text message that she was upset about the incident and was glad now to have time to plot his strategy in supporting and encouraging her when they were face to face that evening. He also shared what he thought her perspective was in communicating with him and his wife through texting, stating, “Thinking back to my own experiences, it’s always easier to write down what you did... you don’t have to stand there and look at their face and look at the disappointment or surprise.”

Ann also shared experiences of Tanner texting his father to avoid seeing an emotional response from him. She spoke about how she preferred face to face conversation with Tanner because she could see his nonverbal reaction. She responded to the researcher’s question about Tanner using texting to breaking the ice about some uncomfortable situations, stating, “He would do that more with his father than with me. They are very, very close. I think he doesn’t want to disappoint his dad... He is more emotional with me than he is with his dad, much more emotional.” She experienced Tanner using texting to avoid the nonverbal expression of his father being disappointed with his behavior or performance.

Sally found out that her daughter Angie had had a breakup with a boyfriend, so she decided to use texting to initiate a conversation about an emotional circumstance and stated:

That was the key because it allowed me to open the door without her feeling that I was going to jump on her back I knew it was one of those things that was near and dear to her heart and by not putting pressure on her eye to eye, I opened it up with a text... being able to open the door and talk back and forth like we were, then it got to where it could be eye to eye, face to face.

Texting eliminated the awkwardness associated with a parent initiating conversation about a teenage relationship and allowed the conversation to happen more comfortably after the topic was introduced.

When asked about the type of conversations Joe has had with his son through texting, Joe recalled an experience when Allen began a discussion with him about a missing homework assignment, and Joe stated, “He was able to kinda break the ice or dip his toe in, and maybe that’s his way of saying ok, this is a non-threatening way of getting into this or not, in a non-scary way.” Scott also found that his teenagers establish conversations with him by texting in order to defuse his emotional responses that his kids are accustomed to. He said, “With text messaging, they figure dad already knows, his tone doesn’t sound too bad over text messaging, we don’t have to worry about him exploding when he gets in the door.” Similar to Scott’s experiences, Tammy found that texting opened up the door to introduce conversation about daily events with her

daughter, Cindy. She appreciated having time to inquire through texting and followed up with a face to face conversation at home. Tammy recalled a typical daily experience, saying, “She’ll text me things about her day, and I have time to digest it all and think about what I want to talk to her about when I get home. It definitely gives you a starting point, and you’re more in tune with where their mind is.”

Jessica suggested that teenagers are often difficult to talk to and appreciated how texting eliminated the nonverbal tones of communicating with her teenager. She said, “When Heather texts me, I don’t hear her attitude. It is so nice... some days we only text, no talking.” The strain of adolescence created barriers to communication. Texting provided a source of contact that removed nonverbal cues while keeping the lines of communication open with reluctant teenagers.

Teenagers also experienced texting as a means of avoiding the emotional responses of their parents. It gave them time to introduce a topic before having to have a conversation in person. Danny found that it was sometimes easier to text parents than it was to talk to them. He said, “If they are in a bad mood, then I’ll usually text them because if they’re mad, then I really don’t want to hear their voice. But if they are in a happy mood, then I’ll talk to them.” Judging by his parent’s disposition, he decided whether to text them or talk to them; texting was optimal in avoiding the negative tone of a parent’s voice. Allen also saw benefits in circumventing a parent’s tone of voice through texting by recalling:

When I am face to face, I can see their expression and see how they’re actually acting and whereas text messaging I don’t actually hear them and I can’t actually

see them, so I don't know how they are reacting about the subject... I see that as helpful.

Cindy found it preferable to communicate with her parents through texting, saying, "I can honestly say I like texting better because I can't hear their voices... if mom is really upset with me, like, I can't hear voices in the text messages. I can't hear her yell at me. I can only read it. Like, she can't hear me be being attitudinal." Heather appreciated how texting removed the tone of her attitude and gave her time to consider what she was saying [through words] to her parents. She stated, "She can't hear my attitude with texting, which is a good thing for me. With texting I can think before I say it, or I can cancel a message before it gets to her [mom] if I decide that's not a good idea."

Teenagers saw it as an advantage, in some circumstances, that it was difficult to experience or express emotion through texting. Tanner illustrated this saying, "You can't really tell if they're mad or not yet, so I don't get the full emotion from it, I just get the letters, I see that as an advantage." Barbie had similar perceptions and shared her opinion, saying, "Me personally, I'd rather argue [with her mother] over a text message than face to face. I think it is easier. I mean, I just really don't like to argue face to face." She found the experience of not being face to face created a safer way to disagree with her mom and often preferred communicating through text as opposed to face to face.

Texting provided opportunity for conversations between a parent and teenager while avoiding the emotional response of other family members in close proximity of the

conversation. Cathy shared an experience when Mike used text messaging as a means of opening a conversation with her in the presence of his father and sister, saying:

When he gets upset with his dad or when his sister has made him mad, he'll text me instead of talking to me about it because he don't want them to hear that he's pissed...it gives me a little comfort that he will entrust me enough to discuss things with me [through texts].

Teenagers introduced contentious topics through texting to avoid the reaction of other family members. Renee recalled a time when she and her daughter, Barbie, conversed through texting to avoid the listening ear of Barbie's father, stating:

We text each other about stuff when her dad is in the room or when he is home and he can hear us, because he listens to our conversations. And if its personal stuff, that she don't want him to know, then she'll just text me.

Sally also experienced the benefit of texting her daughter in the presence of a listening father, saying:

When we are traveling in the car, she may want to go somewhere, and he's already said no; I can text back and forth with her explaining the logic and reason out of his earshot so he's not raising the volume level in the car fussing about why we're not doing those things... it opens the doors for your kids to convey their feelings and emotions and frustrations one on one, with one parent rather than the other parent, and be in the same immediate space.

Rebecca recalled an experience when Tom used texting to let her know that his sister was home sick when they were away from home with their grandparents. He

wanted to let his mother know of this situation without upsetting his grandparents. She stated:

He was communicating with me, telling me that Kim was upset because he was afraid it would hurt their [grandparents] feelings. Throughout the evening, he gave me updates and relayed messages between Kim and me without my parents knowing... I commended Tom for taking care of his sister without making my parents feel that they couldn't handle the situation adequately.

Tom circumvented the possibility of upsetting his grandparents by relying on texting to communicate the situation to his mom and collaborating with her to care for his sister's needs.

The experiences of texting allowed both parents and teenagers to introduce topics of conversation that had the potential to evoke unwanted emotional responses.

Establishing dialogue through texting provided a safe way of initiating conversation between teenagers and parents. It permitted the topic to be discussed through texting or established discourse that could be followed up with face to face communication.

Teenagers and parents used texting collaboratively to elude involving third persons that are in close proximity, in conversations that had the potential to evoke emotional responses.

Informing each other.

Parents and teenagers stayed in constant communication by texting throughout the day. Experiences from both teenagers and parents revealed that the majority of texting communication was to inform about location, schedule updates, personal well-being and wanting something. The following sections detail the accounts of parents and teenagers and how they used texting to inform each other of these circumstances.

Location.

Parents shared their experiences of staying informed of their teenager's *location*. Cathy stated, "I like to have access to him. When he is going to stay with somebody... just the fact that he can text me about whatever he is doing while I am at work." For Joe it was a daily routine for Allen to text him about his location; Joe said, "I said [to Allen] 'text me when you get to school, make sure you do that every morning.'" I think he's texted me every morning since then." Tammy received texts on a daily basis from Cindy about her location. She stated "She will generally text on the way to school so that I know that they are almost there." Rebecca reflected on her experiences of texting messaging, saying, "I guess the most positive thing about it [texting] has actually been just knowing where he is and who he is with."

Most texting about location happened between parents and teenagers after school. Renee stated, "I want to keep in contact with her when she's at school... when she goes out with her friends she can tell me where she is, when she gets there, and when she is on her way home." Tammy and Cindy texted daily about where Cindy was after school.

Tammy said, “At the end of the school day, she’ll text me and say we’re practicing here, because they practice in different locations.” Ann shared a similar experience, speaking of Tanner, “When he gets home from the bus, usually he’ll text me and tell me he’s home.” She also said that when Tanner went out with friends at night, she used texting to be nonintrusive about his location. She shared this experiencing saying, “I knew it was about time for him to be at the party, so I texted him ‘Are you at the party and are you having a good time?’ He texted me back and said ‘Umm mom, its fine.’” She added, “I think having the phone makes me more comfortable knowing where he is.”

Sally found text messaging to be a useful tool to track Angie’s location afterschool when she was car pooling to soccer practice, saying, “I need to make sure she got where she was going, if she’s transporting with another family, that she arrived there.” Chris also spoke about using texting to keep up with his daughter since she entered high school this past year. He stated, “Our intent [with purchasing her a phone] was to always be able to find her... so she can always send a message and say here I am. Or come and get me, practice is cancelled, or we’ve moved [practice locations].”

Teenagers informed their parents of their *location* through texting. Allen typically texted his parents after school and his parents liked to know where he was: “I text my parents in the morning to tell them when I get to school... I text them when I’m leaving school and when I get home.” Heather commented on the topic of informing parents, saying, “On weekends when I’m out with friends, she wants to know where I am... she wants to know what I’m doing and where I am going.” Text messaging

provided a way for her to continuously inform her mother of her location when she is out with friends:

Before I go out, I'll text her where we're going, and usually I'll text her when we get there and tell her I'm here. And then I'll tell her when we're leaving and where we're going after that. And then I'll text her when I get there and when I'm on my way home.

Angie let her parents know about her location afterschool and reflected on initiating contact with them saying, "I let them know when I leave soccer practice... they know I'm leaving, when I'm leaving and when they need to leave [to pick her up]."

Mike found texting to be useful when he was on a school trip to New York City. He could continuously send his mother texts without having to interrupt his schedule. He stated, "When I went on my New York trip with my school, I texted her during the day to let her know where we were going and what we were doing."

Danny used texting to inquire about his father's location when he was out, saying "If he's home late or something, then I'll text him saying 'Where you at?'" He is usually at the store or something." Tom used texting to find out where his mother was when they were in the same store saying "Say we are in Wal-Mart and we get separated, I call her and say 'Where are you?'" and get back together with her. It helps out a lot with the communication factor."

Schedule updates.

Texting allowed families to update each other about daily schedules and inform each other of any changes that occurred. It helped parents manage the complex schedules of adolescents who were involved in extracurricular activities or who spent time away from their parents; texting allowed teenagers and parents to experience a discourse that cuts across time and space.

Rebecca discussed her daily routine of inquiring about Tom's schedule; she conversed with her son at night, saying, "What's your schedule like tomorrow? Who's taking you where? It is notorious, it (his schedule) will always change during the day. So he'll send me a text saying something changed." Sally also found that texting assists in managing hectic family schedules saying "I will say [through text] I'm running late. Or your practice has been canceled... we don't have any time to waste. I mean if something has changed or there are modifications in her schedule, it affects all of ours." Cathy expected her son Mike to text her if his schedule changed; she stated "In the evening if he has to stay after school, he'll text me. If he's late getting to school, and he didn't have to go get a tardy, he'll text me and say, 'I made it!'"

Scott used texting to notify his teenager of changes in their schedule. He stated, "I'll text him and say, hey, get your cleats and your ball together, we're gonna try to practice, be ready at 5:00 because we gotta go." Joe also used texting to manage his family's schedule and found that it was a good way to organize his teenage boys: "We were in different parts of the hotel... and we were talking [through text] back and forth. This was nice, because you kinda know where everybody is... If you need to get them

back together, you can do it in a hurry.” Texting was a convenient way to coordinate family activities. Tammy described how she texted her daughter prompting her to prepare for their evening activities when she got off work: “I’ll be there in 15 minutes, be ready! Have your coat on, have your shoes on, have it all ready and when we get there, be ready to walk out the door.”

Teenagers also used texting to update their parents about daily schedules. Cindy shared an experience of when she realized that a dentist appointment was going to interfere with softball practice, so she texted her mom to try to resolve the scheduling issues. She stated, “So, I’m trying to get mom to reschedule that (the dentist appointment)... I can’t afford to miss (softball practice).” Tom also told of using texting during the school day to let his mom know the details of afterschool activities, saying, “If it is during school, it’s usually (texting) to tell them that I have something important to do after school. I gotta stay or need to be picked up, or something got cancelled.” Rosa texted her parents to help manage her busy scheduling:

I text mom right after school so I can tell her what time soccer ends or where we are at. And then I text my dad sometimes, like, on my way home, on the way to Fusion, to tell him what time I’ll be getting back and what time he needs to come meet the car pool.

Young teenagers relied on their parents to take them and pick them up from social outings and found texting helped managing their social schedules. Angie stated:

If I go somewhere with my friends... I have to let him know exactly, like, if I go to the movies, I have to let him know when the movie is over so he knows when he has to leave, and where he's gonna pick me up.

Barbie tried to arrange a ride home with her mother from a social outing, saying, "I wanted to do something with my friends and she was gone somewhere and she wasn't able to come and get me." Heather preferred to ask about going places with her friends through texting as opposed to calling because she typically gets a quick, direct answer. She stated, "A lot of time I'll text her instead of calling her asking if I can go places... if she is busy she'll be annoyed, and she'll say no when she answers. If I'm texting she'll say yeah, be careful."

Well-being.

Parents appreciated the opportunity to use texting to inquire about the well-being and safety of their teenager. Using texting to inform parents that they were "ok" provided young teenagers with the opportunity to venture away from parents, while keeping in regular contact with them. Parents expected that when they inquired about their child's well-being, that teenagers had the courtesy to respond back. Cell phones were viewed as a privilege, and a caveat to that privilege was letting parents know that they were safe.

Rebecca shared a typical experience of her trying to text her son Tom after a golf game and couldn't get him to respond. She stated:

Just tons of things go through my mind...it's just I'm worried about something happening to him. He does get a bit aggravated sometimes because, well, you know mom, I couldn't text you back right then because we were in the middle of a golf game.

She went on to explain her response to him, "I expect you to answer, unless I know you are into something that you can't." Sally also expected to hear from her daughter, Angie, to ensure her safety when involved in after school activities. She said:

I want to know, you know, I need this information, make sure you got where you were going, if she is transporting with another family... I get antsy and anxious... because I want to know! I have to know that she's ok. She's outside of my care... I've got to know, it's that peace of mind.

Joe reflected on his continuous contact with his son Allen and described how he expected him to keep him informed. Joe stated, "I'm trying to give him some freedom and at the same time there's kind of a mutual understanding that I can give you some freedom, you kinda give me a head's up on what's going on and we'll coexist happily." Chris also wanted the security of knowing that his daughter was okay and reminded her that he was always available to her and that he had expectations of her; Chris said:

I'm more comfortable with that contact with my children because I can always say, "Are you ok?" ... I text her just as reminder that I'm always there. No matter how far you are away from me, you're still connected... I expect you to use your

head. And I expect you to be on your best behavior. And I expect you not to get into any situations that I need to come bail you out of.

Ann took an interesting approach to ensuring Tanner's well-being by having a code that he could text her if he found himself in a dangerous or uncomfortable situation. She knew if she got the code in a text from him, she needed to go to him. She told about an experience letting him go to a party and stated:

We weren't sure that we should let him go, but we did. We had gone through the dos and don'ts. We talk about if something happens and you are with a bunch of friends and you don't want to be uncool, we have a code for either texting or calling.

Scott used the cell phone to ensure Danny's safety when he was away from him. Danny has diabetes, and Scott expected him to keep his phone available so he knew he was okay when he was home alone. Scott said:

I told him, when we go out, we're gonna check on ya. If you don't answer, you're gonna fail the test, and you won't stay at home by yourself no more. I'm probably stricter with Danny because of he is a diabetic... God forbid, something could happen with his sugar. He could pass out or couldn't get us, or something like that.

Teenagers shared their insight of parents wanting to know that they were safe and doing okay when not with them. Throughout their experiences were expressions of reassuring parents that things were going well on their behalf. Heather piquantly stated, "She just wants to know if I'm okay, and I've been alive for 15 years, so I think I can

manage...they [parents] want to know where I am and who I'm with...so they send short little questions all the time." Tanner also shared his experience of dealing with parents' desires to know that he was okay and shared an example of when he ignored a text from his parents, saying:

If I'm at a football game with my friends, or any sport, or just anything out with my friends, "hey, how are you guys doing?" I won't text back... "Hey Tanner! You there? Hey! You gonna text?" And then they'll call me. They'll be like, "hey, you didn't text me back, I thought something was wrong." Or when I'm home after school, they'll text me and be like, "hey!", anytime they try to communicate with me on the phone, they expect me, whatever it is, whatever is going on, to just drop that and so they know I'm ok, I guess.

Other teenage participants mentioned that their parents text them to check on their well-being or safety. When asking Angie if her mom texted her when they were apart, she responded "[She texts] enough to make sure I'm doing okay, but not so much that it's like...too much." She appreciated the balance her mom has in not being too protective but enough so that she knows she is concerned about her well-being. Allen gives his parents frequent updates about his well-being, saying, "They text me to ask me if I forgot to [text them after school] or something, they'll usually text me to make sure I'm ok and everything." Cindy shared about how her dad called continuously to check on her, saying, "Dad texts me a lot. He's just always saying 'what's up?' Or 'Thinking about my baby girl!' Or just, he is very nosey with me. He's always wanting to know what I'm doing... He'll call me in the middle of nothing."

Barbie knew that texting gave her mom a sense of safety. When asked, “Do you think it’s cool that your mom texts you?” she stated, “Yeah, I mean it’s safe. I think if I let her know if I’m away from her, what I’m doing at what time, so she’ll know that I’m safe and ok.” Then when asked, “Is it safe for you or it gives her a sense of safety?” she responded “It gives *her* a sense of safety.”

Rosa reached out to her dad through a text when she had a sports injury because she wanted him to know it had happened and wanted his guidance. She stated:

At soccer the other night, I got, like, kicked up in the face, and everything and stomped on the head, it was ridiculous. So, I told [through a text message] dad because he usually tells me what to do, like, make sure you come home and ice it.

Danny also kept his parents informed daily of his sugar levels due to his diabetes. He initiated a text to his parents:

I’ll call or text mom right when I get home to tell her how my day went and what my sugar is when I get home... sometimes when I have bad sugar I’ll text back and forth. But sometimes it doesn’t turn out well because my sugar is high. And it’s usually that I’ve missed something. I don’t argue, but they kinda get upset at me... I’ll just be like, ok, ok, because I don’t want them to get aggravated anymore at me.

Parents and teenagers stayed in perpetual contact with each other about issues of safety, health, and general well-being. Texting was a collaborative communication pattern that cut across time and space. It gave parents peace of mind in knowing that their child was okay when not in their immediate presence.

Asking for something

Parents experienced texting as a means of their teenage children making requests of them or asking for something specific. Tammy's experience of being "leashed" to her children captured the essence of this experience:

That's kinda the part of the electronic leash that I was talking about. They'll text me, "I'm hungry! Go here, get this!" Or if I go to the grocery store, I'll get a series of 10 texts saying, "I want milk, I want this kind of cereal." And then I'll get another text that says "No, no, not that kind of cereal. Get this one!" And "Hey, on your way home will you stop at Wal-Mart because I need band-aids." Or "Hey, can we get a new movie?" Or "Will you go rent a movie?"

Renee also found that her daughter, Barbie, made ongoing requests for food or items from the store, saying, "She'll text me and tell me when I'm getting her something to eat to get her boyfriend something to eat...or that she needs something from the grocery store, or that she wants to go somewhere because she is bored." When asked what a typical day of texting looks like between her and her daughter, Jessica stated, "Before I wake up, she texts me a message telling me what I have to do during the day... if I have to get her an orthodontist appointment, if she needs shampoo, or something like that she will text me."

Cathy recalled an experience during church when her son had a headache saying "I do hear it sometimes [her phone ringing], and he wasn't feeling good one day, and he

texted me asking if I had some aspirin or something so he could come up and get it. So that was kind of a convenient way without disturbing everyone else.” Ann also shared her experience of being asked for something, stating, “He usually texts me when he wants something, like ‘Can Evan and Daniel come over?’ Friends of his...he’ll be down stairs in the basement; if he needs something, he’ll text me.” Texting provided endless communication between parents and teenagers; teenagers experienced this as a favorable approach to asking for things they desire or need. Chris detailed his experience of being at the beck-and-call of his daughter, saying:

She’ll leave something at home that she needs. ‘Dad, can you bring me this?’ Or “Mom said when you’re at the store, do this or that.” But to be honest, I hate to feel my phone ring at 8:00 a.m. in the morning [laughing] because somebody’s forgotten something... We’ve left our art project at home and we’ve got to have it before 9:30, you know. How does that effect my day? Nobody really cares! [laughing] We just gotta have our art project by 9:30!

Another way that teenagers asked for things was by sending parents links to information about things they want. Joe recalled, “He occasionally uses it [texting] saying ‘Dad, check out this link!’ It’s usually something you buy. ‘Wouldn’t this be great? Have you ever heard of a concert outside called Bonaroo? And wouldn’t it be cool? All your favorite people are there. You know, they have a payment plan for tickets!’”

Teenagers experienced texting as a good way to make requests to parents about going places, asking for merchandise, or expressing themselves about something they wanted. Heather shared her experience saying:

A lot of times I'll text her instead of calling her asking if I can go places. I know if she's busy and she doesn't want to answer the phone. She'll be annoyed and she'll say no when she answers. Or she'll give me what I can and can't do there.

Blah blah blah. If I'm texting, she'll say "Yeah, be careful." A short response like that [laughs]. And it makes me happy with her.

Tom recalled an experience of asking to get out of school one day saying, "We weren't really doing anything... and I say [texted] 'Dad, why don't you come get me?'... so I got to come home with him and I was pretty happy."

Tanner shared his daily experience of making requests to his mom and stated, "I usually call my mom at the end of the day, when I get home, just to tell her something I need for the next day at school or something like that." When asked what she texted her parents mostly about, Angie said, "Either reminders or if I forgot something or need something, like, if I forgot my soccer cleats." Cindy used texting on a daily basis to make requests of her mom; she stated, "I'm constantly asking for stuff. Always...I constantly ask mom to get me Red Bull."

Teenagers used texting to ask their parents to go places and to bring them food or merchandise. This type of communication was part of the culture of texting within the context of the family. Teenagers found that they often got a more favorable response

through texting than with a face-to-face conversation with parents because it eliminated explanation and justifications that parents often felt they needed to offer their children.

Relating Through Text Messaging

The context of relating in this study focused on parents using text messaging to bridge a generational gap and join teenagers in the use of this fairly new technology. There were varying experiences of relating through the use of text messaging as a source of communication. The following examples offer perspectives from both teenagers' and parents' viewpoints.

Teenager participants were asked, "Do you think that text messaging helps your parents relate to you?" Angie responded, "I guess; it makes my parents seem a little more modern I guess. And more, like, up to date. So it makes them more similar to me and not 'Oh, they're old. They don't know how to text. I have to call them.'" Rosa also shared an experience of watching her parents text saying "It's really funny to watch them, so I just tell them how to do it (text), because I get a kick out of it because, you know, it just cracks me up to see adults texting because it's not what I'm used to." She also commented, "I'm glad that they (parents) now have the texting, and I have brought them into this technical world."

Teenagers observed how parents tried to use and understand texting acronyms to relate to them through texting. Heather stated:

Sometimes she [her mother] tries to use, like, she won't spell out words or something. And I think it's funny...and I think she just assumes it will be cooler

that way so I kinda laugh at her...I just think it's kinda funny because it's out of character for her.

Cindy also talked about her mother using texting acronyms, saying, "Mom uses lol. It was funny the first time I read a message with it. And I called her, I was like 'You just texted me lol!' and I was like, 'Mommy, do you understand what that means?'"

Some teenagers experienced texting as a typical way of communicating with parents. Tanner said, "When my dad first got the keyboard phone, he texted me a lot more than. It was pretty cool." He stated that when they first started texting each other, his dad used it as a way to relate to him; but now it is just a means of communication, not a method for his parents to relate to him. Danny found that both his mom and dad use their cell phone for work and communicating with many more people than just him; he stated, "They have to have a phone to go to work. My dad gets thousands and thousands of emails and stuff, he has a Blackberry and he has to have that for work, just to get pictures and see what people are doing around the plant." Allen's experience was that his father would probably use texting whether he did or not, but he had helped introduce his mother to texting. He added, "My dad might use it (texting), but my mom wouldn't use text messaging at all if I didn't text her and try to get her to text back."

Parents shared their experiences of using texting to relate to their teenager. Chris stated, "You know, it makes me feel more, more a part of the culture that she's growing up in. Although now we limit that culture. But it makes me feel part of her time."

Tammy also commented on relating to her teenager, saying, "I know to communicate with the teenagers, you have to talk like they talk...get on their level. So it [texting] has

helped us relate to one another. Cindy told me one time that it was cool to text her because not a lot of her friends' parents text." When asked, "Do you think that texting gives you a way to relate to teenagers, since texting is really their generation's thing?" Joe added, "Absolutely! It really does. I mean, it communicates with them where they are, you know, and they are comfortable with it." Jessica shared her perspective on relating to her teenager during adolescence, saying, "It (texting) keeps us being closer, I think it keeps us from totally drifting apart...I think it is keeping us together."

Families with young teenagers have learned to text together and use it daily as a source of communication and connection. Sally shared her insight saying, "We all stepped into it (texting) together. So I think in their eyes it's just natural that we're all, you know, we are all doing it." Ann added:

I think he does (feel like she relates to him), to a certain degree; where I've gone from a phone that didn't have a keyboard to this phone that has a keyboard, even though I can't use it completely, he helps me with it, and he gives me a hard time because I'm not as fast as him.

Scott found it natural to join his children in using this technology as it reflected the way he has always tried to relate to them by taking an interest in what they are interested in doing. He stated, "Text messaging probably fits in, so to speak, with our relationship because we are so in tuned to our kids...It's just another toy to some degree for us to communicate and play with our kids."

Parents used texting to relate to their teenager. Whether they used it intentionally as a tool to communicate with their child or if texting had natural become a part of the

culture of the family, texting provided a common thread between parents and teenagers. Teenagers appreciated that parents used texting as a means of communication because it was a part of their social culture, and they sensed that they contributed to their parent's modernization.

Perpetual Connection through Texting

The experiences of teenagers and parents revealed a perpetual connection through texting. Teenagers desired to have contact with their parents, and parents craved the access to their teenagers that texting provided. Ongoing text messages were exchanged between teenagers and their parents informing each other of schedule changes, location, asking questions, and checking on each other's well being. This type of communication created a culture of connectiveness within families that cut across time and space. There was an immediacy provided through texting that was pleasing to both teenagers and parents, allowing them to have the freedom to communicate under countless circumstances. The experiences of teenagers and parents illustrated the continuous connection that exists on a daily basis within these families.

Teenagers experienced a sense of connection with their parents through texting. They recognized that parents appreciate the immediate access to them. Rosa shared her perception of being connected through texting, saying:

I always feel like they're watching me no matter what I do... so, I mean, yeah, texting helps because they don't have to, like, walk with me everywhere I go, I

mean it gives you that bridge... So I guess it helps them feel like they can get in touch with me easier.

Teenagers shared their experiences of being connected to their parents on a daily basis through texting. Tom stated, "I think it [texting] really just helps us be connected and stuff, because we can talk without actually being together. It helps out a lot." Barbie added, "It lets me talk to her all of the time instead of talking to her on the phone all day." Heather knew that her mom worried and wanted ongoing contact with her; she said, "It (texting) has made me close to my mom, because she always calls, she worries a lot, so she always calls and so texting is just more of that... she probably feels closer because she knows what I'm doing." Tanner shared his experience of connecting with his parents saying, "I know as long as I have my phone, no matter what happens, I can always get in touch with my parents." Danny could access his parents through texting at any given time or location about his sugar levels; he said, "I always text because I can communicate with them about my diabetes problem."

Texting also created a sense of connection for parents. They shared their experiences and perceptions of using texting as a means of establishing ongoing contact with their teenager. Rebecca reflected on her experiences of texting, saying, "I look back and I think, how in the world did we ever manage without the text messaging because you can't call all the time...so we do stay a whole lot more connected through the text messaging, when he is away from us." Chris also liked using texting to stay connected and shared a vivid illustration of his experience, saying, "I see the phone as a way to keep a claw dug in. You know, as a way to keep an anchor with them [his children]. You

know, you never want to be out-technoed [sic] by your kids.” Joe reflected on his family’s busy schedule and appreciates that texting keeps him connected in the chaos, saying:

I start and end the day with a text from Allen. He said, ‘Hey dad, I made it to school ok. Have a good day’ ... And I do feel connected because it’s usually chaos from the time the alarm clock goes off, everybody runs out...it’s easy to get outta there without saying, hey, have a good day.

Instant access to their teenagers was important to parents. Sally shared her experience of using texting to maintain that connection with her daughter, saying:

I think it’s huge (being able to text her teenagers)... in today’s society, where there’s too many evils out there, for lack of a better word. We want to be able to maintain that constant contact, know that somebody is always there, you know, no matter where you are, what you’re doing, anytime, anywhere, anyhow. You have that, you have it. As long as we have a signal, we have it.

Texting was a conduit for teenagers and parents to stay connected. Teenagers perceived that their parents felt connected having immediate access to them through texting. Teenagers, in turn, valued texting’s immediacy in reaching their parents at most times and locations. Phone calls were not advantageous in some circumstances because of the interruption they caused; however, texting was unobtrusive and was done with little or no recognition by the individuals around the person receiving or sending the text. This provided an unparalleled means of connectiveness for teenagers and parents. Speaking

with no audible words, yet informing and relating to one another in a perpetual loop; this created an intimate sense of connection between teenagers and parents.

Elements of Parental Worry and Time Threshold

Analysis of the data from the parental interviews revealed a co-morbid relationship pertaining to their expectation of the time it should take their teenager to respond to a text and the eruption of feelings of worry and concern. Early in the interview process, it was evident that parents consistently had a time threshold that they expected their teenager to respond to a text message. On average, parents expected their teenager to text them within fifteen minutes. As that time threshold approached or passed, parents increasingly felt worried about the well being of their teenager. Parents assumed that their teenager had their cell phone available and could respond quickly to any text sent by the parent. Time threshold and feelings of worry were concomitant throughout the experiences of research participants.

The first few interviews with parent participants brought to the researcher's attention the element of time and the feelings of worry in the context of family's use of text messaging to connect. The researcher then intentionally explored this co-morbid relationship during interviews with both parent and teenage participants. Parents were asked about the time frame in which they expected their teenager to respond back to a text. All ten of the parents had experienced worry and concern paired with the elapsing time it took for their teenager to respond to their text message.

When asked about her expectation of how quickly her son should respond to her text message, Cathy said, “If I don’t hear back from him within 10 minutes, then I’m gonna text again. And then I’m gonna figure out why he’s not answering me. Because I know the phone is on.” Then Cathy was asked about what happens or what her thinking was if he had taken longer time than what was comfortable for her. She gave optional reasons like he left his phone somewhere or that he let someone else use his phone. Then she said, “Or something has happened. A negative thing has happened where he couldn’t get hold of me or he couldn’t answer the phone.” She went on to add, “After ten/fifteen minutes and I’m not getting an answer, then I’m concerned why he is not answering, because, basically, he does answer me pretty often.”

Rebecca also shared her experiences of worry related to time of response. She responded to the question about time, saying, “Probably about 10 minutes.” Then she shared about her response if she doesn’t hear from him in 10 minutes, saying, “What’s happened? Why hasn’t he texted me back? Is he in a dead spot...I mean, just tons of things go through my mind. So, it’s not that I really worry about him doing something wrong, it’s just I’m worried about something happening to him.”

Jessica shared that she expected her daughter Heather to respond “within five minutes.” She verbalized her experience of worry, saying, “If I text her, and she didn’t text me back immediately, I trust her, and she is fine, I don’t have to worry. I am a worry wart, so she knows if she doesn’t text me; she knows that if I text her she has to immediately text me back, so I don’t have to worry.” When asked to share an experience where she worried, Jessica talked about a time when she did not get an immediate

response from Heather when she was on a church trip, saying, “I was worried, because I didn’t know...It made me worry. And I had anxiety. Usually if she texts I don’t have to worry about her.”

Ann expected her son, Tanner, to respond within the range of “five or ten minutes...depending on where he is.” She also stated, “Knowing that he has that phone glued to him, my expectation is that he should [text back quickly].” She shared about an experience when she didn’t hear from him within her expected time threshold. He was home alone after school, and she could not reach him on his cell phone. She said, “He was actually at home, and I had texted him, and he didn’t answer...it really worried me. I was actually getting ready to go, because I just work 5 minutes away from the house...but it worried me, knowing that he should have been there.”

According to Sally, she expected “to hear back from her within 15 minutes.” She went on to say, “If not, I pick up the phone, and I start dialing...because I want to know, I need this information.” When asked how she responded if she didn’t hear from her daughter, she stated, “Oh my gosh! I’m getting really antsy and anxious...because I want to know! I have to know that she’s ok. She’s outside of my care.”

Chris had a time threshold for his daughter to respond of “about 10 minutes.” He discussed how he responded if he didn’t hear from her saying:

If nothing comes back from her, I’ll text again. And I’ll keep texting. And if it goes two or three [text messages] and I don’t get anything I’ll call her...I’m a worst-case scenario guy. I think it’s easier to mitigate if I think of the worst-case scenario happening, I can mitigate through it. I don’t want to be surprised...I’m

going to start ringing her phone until she answers, because you never know. You never know these days what can happen. You know, car wrecks and the fact that she's a girl.

Scott had different time expectations depending on which of the four of his teenagers he was referring to. Traditionally for his son Danny, he expected to hear from him in "15 minutes, maybe [laughing]." Because Danny has diabetes, Scott was stricter about getting a response from him when Danny was home alone. Scott said, "The reason why I'm probably stricter with Danny is because he's diabetic. And his sugar could drop, you know, God forbid, something could happen with his sugar. Pass out. Can't get to us." He shared an experience of letting Danny stay at home by himself and wanted to evade the concern he knew he would have in letting Danny be home alone. His account of Danny asking to stay home is reflected:

And Tonia [Scott's wife] was like, are you gonna let him [stay home alone]? And I said "Where is your phone?" And I would let him stay, but I wanted him to have his phone with him. Is it charged? Yeah. Is it on vibrate, or is it on ringer? It's on ringer. Ok. Lock the door behind ya, all right? So we went out. And I told him, when we go out, we're gonna call and check on ya.

Scott followed up saying that he was probably stricter on Danny "just because he has that special need. But I'm, I'm pretty controlling, and it's pretty important to me to be able to get hold of them and know where they're at."

Tammy talked about her mommy-alarm sounding when she could not get her daughter, Cindy, to respond to her. Her time threshold with her daughter was “15 minutes.” She went on to say:

If I haven't heard, I'll text her again...I try calling because my mind starts worrying...then the mom-alarm starts going off and I wonder, is she ok... I always worry has Cindy fallen? Can she not get to her phone? I am paranoid about her being a girl. That somebody will take her, and she won't have her phone. So it really worries me when she doesn't answer.

For the parent participants, worry consistently followed when their expected time threshold was violated. Parents stay connected to their teenagers through text messaging and desired immediacy in their teenager's response. Lack of immediacy was paired with the eruption of worry, concern, and, sometimes, agitation, triggering parents to send multiple text messages, call their teenager, or obsess about their well being.

Teenagers Perceptions of Time Threshold and Parent Worry

The teenage participants consistently perceived that their parents expected them to respond to their texts within a given amount of time. They also perceived that parents experienced an emotional response when that time threshold was violated. Interestingly, when the scenario was reversed, teenagers have no control of how quickly their parents responded to their texts but got annoyed that immediacy was not always reciprocated.

Heather discussed her mother's reaction when she took too long to text her back. She said, "She has the image that I'm always talking to people. So she thinks that's what I'm always doing, so when I don't reply fast, or I don't reply for about an hour or so, she gets upset." Heather went on to talk about how she was expected to text her mom back, but her mom did not reciprocate her text messages. She stated:

The thing is worry (if Heather doesn't text back). And so I'd rather she not worry because she gets in a bad mood when she worries. So it's like a one way kind of thing. She doesn't have to text me back, but I do have to reply to her (laughing). It's very annoying sometimes, because I'll ask if I can go somewhere and she just won't reply. But if she asks where I am, I have to tell her. And it's not the "oh, I didn't have my phone"; that's not an excuse! Because I always have my phone apparently!

Rosa knew that her parents expected a quick response, but no official time limit had been set; she stated, "Fifteen minutes is probably my limit." She talked about her parents response if she didn't text them back quickly enough, saying, "If I still didn't text back, they'd send it again or whatever. If I still didn't text it back after the second time, they'd probably call me...mom would probably send it once and then just call me because she would be the one to kind of get worried faster." She reflected on her experience of not getting a response from her parents when she texted, saying:

That bothers me when they don't text me back fast enough, if it's something I really need to know. I guess that makes me feel disconnected. Just like when

they'll text me, and then I'll call them because it's something really important and they don't answer the phone. And I'm, like, you just texted me! I mean if they don't text me back, I feel kind of left out if they're with everybody else in the family and then there's me. And I can't even talk to them.

Danny said that his parents expected him to text back "within, like 10-15 minutes." When asked what would happen if he didn't text back in that time period, he stated, "My dad would be worried, because he's worried about all of us. I think my mom would be worried, too." Danny's parents expected a quick response, especially when they were inquiring about his sugar levels for the day since he has diabetes. Typically his parents responded to him within 10-15 minutes, too, but he knew because of work they sometimes could not get back to him immediately.

Five of the teenage participants disclosed that they texted their parents back immediately. Because of their compliance, they hadn't had the experience of their parent worrying because of not receiving a text back from them. Barbie discussed her strategies for responding to her mother's text while in school. She said, "I text her right back when she texts me." During school she will "ask to go to the restroom [laughs]" when her mom texts her so that she can respond. Cindy also responded back immediately to her parents, especially her father. She shared about an experience of her father calling during the school day:

Dad wants an immediate [response] especially if he asks what I'm doing. If I don't answer him right away, he resends it. Constantly. I mean, it can get annoying...in school the other day he texted me and Rick [her brother]. We have

this class together...and like our phones went off...and Rick's wasn't on vibrate.

Mine is constantly on vibrate...wanting to know an exact answer right then.

Tanner said that he responded to his parents "probably 20-30 seconds, but then they'll give that extra two or three minutes, then they'll send another. Then another minute or two, and then, the whole time in between that, and the phone call will be five or six minutes, I guess." When asked if he expected them to respond immediately to his text messages, he hastily said, "No" and explained, "My dad and mom are in meetings constantly, and I know sometimes they won't be able to send it back in time...they're not too speedy with that [texting]."

The culture of the research participants reflected an element of time in responding to text messages sent by parents to teenagers. When the expectation of acceptable time was violated, feelings of worry and concern erupted. Teenagers sensed that their parents wanted an immediate response and that there was an assumption that the teenager always had his or her phone in hand and was not inconvenienced in texting back. Immediacy in responding to text messages was not reciprocated by parents, mostly contributed to busy work schedules or difficulty in navigating texting protocol.

Parental Controls

The experiences of parents and teenagers reflected a cooperative rhythm in the way they were perpetually connected through text messaging. There was mutual participation in continuous texting communication regarding schedules and updates, informing each other of daily events, changes, needs and desires; parents inquired about

their teenager's well being and asked questions and requested information so that they had a sense of connection when they were apart. Teenagers sought a parent's advice about decision making and could get guidance for relationship issues or academic problems. Parents and teenagers shared information, communicated freely, and used text messaging as a significant part of the culture of family communication.

Experiences reflected in this study revealed conditions that disrupted the cooperative exchange between parents and teenagers through text messaging. During the interviews with parents, ongoing themes of parental control over cell phone use and disclosure of text messages sent and received were evident. Parents used a teenager's cell phone as a bargaining chip to encourage positive behavior, motivate compliance, or suspend the use of the cell phone as a form of punishment. Some parents required their teenager to allow them to review the text messages that they had sent and received with the goal of monitoring appropriateness, instilling an element of safety, and encouraging discussion of any questionable content.

Cell phones as a bargaining chip.

Parents detailed their perception and reasons for using their teenager's cell phone as a bargaining chip. Parents provided a vivid description about using this as a parenting strategy. Teenagers did not talk in detail about this element of parental control. This had been a practice since the family adopted cell phones as a form of communication. It was embedded in the teenagers' culture of cell phone use but conceptualizing it as behavior control was not a significant part of the teenagers' experiences. Teenagers also had little

or no control over this element of their cell phone use and typically tried to comply with parents' requests in order to avoid confrontation or disagreement.

Parents' conceptualization of using their teenager's cell phone as a parental control is detailed in the following section. This was not a direct question in the interview guide but was reflected in the discussions within other questions. Once the researcher noted that this was a common theme, more direct inquiry into this experience was introduced.

Rebecca expressed the essence of parents' experience of using the teenager's cell phone as a bargaining chip, saying:

I don't feel like we are overly controlling him with the monitoring. We explained to him that first and foremost, those are our phones, and we are letting him use that phone. And if he does anything inappropriate, and we catch him or find out about it, then the phone is gone. That's a privilege. That's not something he is entitled to.

Chris talked about his experience of having a carrot in front of the mule so to speak, knowing that having a cell phone motivated his daughter to keep her grades up. He stated:

She knows that freedom [with her phone] is conditional...the phone is the first thing that goes. I don't mind giving them [his daughters] toys. Because the more stuff they have, the more stuff I can take away and I take away what they love first...because that's the biggest carrot in front of the mule...she's real cognizant

of her grades, she's cognizant of keeping them up. And she knows we'll take it [cell phone].

When asked about negative experiences that she had had with texting, Cathy spoke of taking her son Mike's phone away to get his attention or to motivate good behavior. She stated:

He probably gets an attitude as far as you taking it away [phone], but I'm the kinda person if I say I'm gonna take it, I'm gonna take it...you gotta use what's closest to their heart at the time...so if you're misbehaving, then that's still a luxury to you and so it's something you don't have to have to make it. That's a luxury that I'm providing for you, and I can take it away...it's a privilege that I'm giving to you because I respect what you're doing, you're a good kid. So it's like you've gotten it because you do well. And if you're gonna act bad, you're not gonna get rewarded for being bad. So, I can take it [laughs].

Ann recently took Tanner's phone away from him for being disrespectful to her and his father. She commented:

He was having a 14 year old moment and being very disrespectful, and he lost his phone. And he lost it for a week. And it killed him and he was a totally different child. That's the first thing that I'll take away if he disobeys. Because I know it bothers him.

Reflecting on this situation she also shared how taking his phone away was an inconvenience for her, saying:

It did make it inconvenient because at home, I would have to call the home phone...if he's downstairs...he can't hear the phone...if he was somewhere like at soccer practice, it does make it inconvenient...it just makes it a little bit more difficult to communicate.

Other parent participants also verbalized experiences of using their teenager's cell phone as a bargaining chip. Scott shared about a time when his son ignored text messages from him, saying, "If you're not gonna use it, then you're gonna lose it. And you can go back to having a regular phone that doesn't have text messaging. So I think that kinda got his attention." Tammy also shared about a similar experience, saying:

If you don't start answering, you will lose your phone...so I'll tell him I looked [online at phone records] and he was texting other people during this time and we pay for the phone. So if you're not going to use it to communicate with us, we will take it away.

Sally shared about how private her daughter was with her phone. She recognized that relating to her friends was an important component of her teenage experience. She trusted her daughter because she hadn't given her any reason not to trust her. Then she stated, "But, if I get wind of anything they've done (her daughters), I'll take them (cell phones) out in the driveway and I'll run over them, and they won't have them." In investigating this further, Sally shared:

It's my primary [bargaining chip], especially with my oldest, because I know how possessive she is with it. I mean, it's important to her to have that access to

whomever...the circle of who she wants to talk to and spend more time with in texting has gotten bigger.

One parent participant shared a unique perspective addressing parental control and her teenager's cell phone. Jessica's daughter had been on a trip in Florida and for eleven hours ignored Jessica's text messages. Instead of taking her phone away, because taking it away would cut off her access to her daughter, she used a different approach. Jessica shared about this experience and the repercussions saying:

We were texting. I texted her and she didn't answer me for 11 hours...I liked to check on her a couple of times a day. She didn't text me back for the entire day...by the time she got home, I was ill. I was furious, I was screaming, I was yelling and she was grounded for the entire summer. She was not allowed to go to any friends' house. or the entire summer! The entire time she was ignoring me, she was texting her friends; all eleven hours on the trip back from Florida, she was ignoring my messages...I was angry that she was trying to take control. Taking control away from me, I suppose. can trust her, she is a good kid, not like I was. I really do trust her but to make me feel better, I just wanted to know where she was. She got severe punishment and maybe that is why she texts me back within five minutes always.

Parents appreciated the convenience that cell phones provided in staying readily connected to their teenagers. Taking them away as a form of punishment placed an inconvenience on the parent. Alternate methods of discipline or punishment in relation to the privilege of having a cell phone were a notable trend.

Parents used the privilege of having a cell phone to encourage obedience, compliance and response from their teenagers. The experiences of parents reflected a vivid illustration of how this dynamic is played out in family's lives. Parents used teenagers' cell phones' as bargaining chips, when exerting parental control to instill a sense of obligation and conformity in their teenagers.

Reading teenager's text messages.

Six of the ten parent participants read their teenager's text messages as a form of parental control. The practice of reading teenager's text messages was conceptualized as a form of protection, ensuring that conversations, shared information, and pictures were appropriate. Discussion about the content of a teenager's text messages often followed after parents performed routine reads. Parents realized that this practice violated some trust and privacy issues but felt like it was justified since they owned the phones and paid the monthly bills. The four parents who did not read their teenager's text messages kept the option open to read them but wanted to give their teenager privacy until they had reasons that merited reading their text messages.

The parents that read their teenager's text messaging spoke in detail about this practice of parent control. Chris detailed his experience, saying, "There's no doubt that she knows we check her phone. She's not allowed to erase messages unless we read them." His daughter, Rosa, initiated this type of process by saying, "It's full" meaning that her inbox was full so she needs her dad to read them so she could empty the messages to make room for more. He stated, "She's gotta do it [ask him to read her

messages] because I don't hunt her down [to check her messages]. But none better leave there, because she knows the phone will go away." He also added, "It's worked, and it's enabled us, and I don't call it snooping, because I am paying for it. It's also enabled us to know what's going on in her life through text messaging because we can see both sides of them [the messages]." Chris experienced this as a parenting technique to understand his daughter's life in a more intimate way by seeing her messages and the corresponding messages of her friends.

Rebecca routinely and openly checked her son's text messages either through online text messaging logs available through the phone company or by asking to see his phone and reading his text messages. She shared her experience, saying:

We monitor the usage...we will take it occasionally and check the messages...we've not enforced it as strictly as we probably should have. He knows that every month I will, or anytime, I can pull up his usages on the Internet and see who he is texting and who he is receiving texts from, but then he never knows when I'll come in and take the phone and start checking the messages...There have been a couples of times where he's gotten a little bit aggravated at me for checking the text messages, but you know, I've told him it's my phone. If you don't want me to check your messages, then I'll be happy to take it back. I mean, he usually doesn't say anything to me if I ask to see his phone, he'll just hand it over. But he knows that if I catch him doing anything that is inappropriate, for instance, the pictures...he knows that he's not to delete any of the pictures without me knowing about it...we used to have the thing

where he would have to, where his text box would get full, then he would have to show me before he could delete anything. But I mean, you give him an hour, and it's full...I'll spot check here and there, but I haven't caught him doing anything inappropriate, so I've kinda given him a little more freedom.

Similarly, Tammy randomly checked her daughter's text messages. She wanted her daughter to understand how serious inappropriate conversations can be. She stated, "We might go for two or three weeks...she is right in the middle of a text, and one of us will just go take her phone and scroll through it, and she never knows when it is. It's very random. But she knows we will check it." Tammy went on to discuss the lesson her daughter has learned, saying:

I think until she learned how serious we were and how we weren't going to tolerate some things on the phone...she's either real careful with what she texts or she's real quick to delete what she texts. You can normally tell by her reaction, when you take the phone, if she's gonna be guilty or not.

Scott knew that his teenagers anticipated that he might check their phone at any time. He said regarding his son, "I don't think Danny text messages anything that he feels like he needs to keep private. It's just not his character." However, regarding his daughter he stated:

I'll be like give me your phone. I'll do that, that way it doesn't give her an opportunity to delete off of her phone, because she is a deleter...you have to catch her in the act, if you want to catch her...we have had times where it's been uncomfortable for her.

Renee also knew that her daughter deleted messages that she didn't want her mom to see. She reflected on this experience, saying, "If she's talking about something that she doesn't want me to know about, she'll delete the text or she won't let me read her text messages."

Lastly, Ann shared about her perceptions of reading her son's text messages as a form of parent control. She stated:

He never knows when we're gonna check it, but he knows that we pay for the phone. Yes, it is his, but we pay for it and so its property that we can look at and we don't do it very often. But we do tell him that we check it...I've explained to Tanner when you are texting you try to put emotion in there, but there's really not. Or, things can be misread or assumed, and so we do check it...We just want to see what he's saying. Control it.

Ann went on to explain that she had tried to teach Tanner how other individuals can misread what your intention is in your text message. She also cautioned him about the possibility of a parent, on the other end, reading what he had written and making assumptions about his character from his words.

Two parenting controls, using the cell phone as a bargaining chip and reading teenager's text messages, were used by parents to manage their teenager's cell phone use and ensure appropriateness and an element of safety. Violations of teenagers' trust and privacy were part of this practice but were justified by parents because of their ownership of the phone and monthly payment plans.

Summary

This chapter introduced the research participants as parent-teenager participant pairs. Portraits of the participant pairs set the stage of the study by establishing the breadth of their experiences. Text messaging provided families with areas of conversational content including the introduction of conversations and avoiding emotional response, informing each other of locations, schedule updates, and well being and asking for something from each other. Illustrations of how parents and teenagers used text messaging to relate to one other were provided. The perpetual connection that families had through text messaging was detailed, shedding light on a co-morbid relationship between elements of time and worry. Lastly, two concepts of parental control, which were using teenagers' phones as bargaining chips and reading teenagers' text messages were specified as ways in which the cooperative nature of text messaging between parents and teenagers are disrupted by these violations of trust and privacy. The subsequent and final chapter will provide conclusions, locating the research in reference to this study, implications for counseling, and recommendations for further research based on the findings of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Overview

This study examined the experiences of teen text messaging in the context of family communication, relatedness, and connection. Interviews with ten teenagers and ten parents were conducted. Outcomes of this investigation revealed three areas of communication content within text messages between parents and teenage participants. Topics of conversation were introduced using text messaging in order to avoid emotional responses; parents and teenagers used text message to inform one another of their location, update one another about schedule changes, and to inquire about the teenagers' safety and well being. They also used text messaging to ask for something from the other family member.

The findings of this study captured the essences of the shared experience, relating through text messaging, and how teenagers take credit for some of the text messaging capacities of their parents. It also illustrated the incessant connection experienced by parents and teenagers who use text messaging to maintain an ongoing sense of closeness with one another. The concept of connection demonstrated a co-morbid relationship between the time it took a teenager to respond to their parent and the worry invoked by waiting for that response.

Lastly, two parental controls related to teenage text messages were conceptualized by the parent participants. Parents used their teenager's cell phone as a bargaining chip to promote satisfactory behavior and compliance or as a form of punishment by removing the cell phone from their belonging; many of the parents liberally check their teenager's cell phone and read their text messages for inappropriate conversations and for safety purposes.

This chapter provided the final conclusions of the study and demonstrated how the conclusions contributed to the current body of literature. It also suggested implications for counseling and future research on this topic. Finally, the researcher located herself in reference to the findings of this investigation.

Conclusions

The conclusions of this study drew from the experiences of teenager and parent participants to illuminate the essence of text messaging's existence and influence on family communication, relatedness, and connection. The conclusions contribute to the current body of literature focusing on family communication and the integration of text messaging as a means of connection between family members. From these conclusions, opportunities for further research are proposed, and implications for counseling suggested.

Text Messaging Provides Families with Flexible Spatial and Temporal Mobility

The content of text messaging communication found in this study indicated that families use text messaging to inform each other of location or schedule changes. Text messaging gave families the essential information needed to respond to spatial and temporal changes; it eliminated ambiguity and waiting for information about unanticipated modifications to daily family events. Previous studies supported this finding and suggested that using cell phones “blurs the boundaries between absence and presence” (Wajcman, Bittman & Brown, 2008). Families used text messaging to micro coordinate schedules or inform each other of changes in plan (Weisskirch, 2008). For active families, it was imperative to have an organizational mechanism that allowed for quick coordination and rearranging schedules during a relatively short amount of time and while family members were in multiple places at one time (Horstmanshof & Power, 2005; Ling & Helmersenn, 2000). Text messaging allowed families to integrate different dimensions of everyday life (Wajcman, Bittman & Brown, 2008).

Text messaging was a unique feature of mobile technology that allowed for asynchronous communication, meaning that both parties were not required to be present for contact to occur (Ishii, 2006). This added an element of flexibility to spatial and temporal mobility that families experienced (Devitt & Roker, 2009; Madell & Muncer, 2007). The participants in this study sent and received text messages and responded when it was convenient. Not only were families communicating about spatial and temporal changes, the way they responded also illustrated a flexible and fluid way of communicating. Most texting transactions were done in a short amount of time, but the

nature of text messaging communication allowed for pause or delays in exchanges between two parties.

Text Messaging is Changing the Face of Family Communication

Literature concerning adolescent development emphasized the importance of communication and positive verbal interactions between parents and teenagers (Baumrind, 2005; Kruse & Walper, 2008; Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2007; Perosa & Perosa, 2001; Saphir & Chaffee, 2002). Adolescence is a period when children start pulling away physically and emotionally from parents, and keeping open and positive lines of communication can be difficult. It was the desire of parents to stay connected to their teenager while offering the opportunity to journey through the many challenges adolescent children faced, like individualization, identity formation, and autonomy (Hazen & Scholzman, 2009; Hillaker, Brophy-Herb, Villarruel, & Haas, 2008; Papalia, Olds & Feldman, 2007).

The experiences of the research participants reflected a contemporary effort by both parents and teenagers to use text messaging as an extensive venue of communication within the family context. Not only did this research show that text messaging was the preferred source of communication among teenagers, but the current body of literature also supports that trend as well (Devitt & Roker, 2009; Nielsen, 2009, Palfrey & Gasser, 2008). Parents knew that text messaging was a part of their teenager's cultural existence whether they, the parents, chose to use it or not. This study focused on parents that

selected to use texting as means of communication, recognized it as an essential element of their teenager's life, and desired to cooperatively become a part of that culture.

Parents and teenagers found that text messaging amplified and strengthened their communication with one another. Parents believed that text messaging opened up more opportunities for them to communicate and connect to their teenager. Some conversations through text messaging would have never taken place face to face because of the sensitivity of the topic introduced or because text messaging enabled the conversation to be more timely. Text messaging has woven into the fabric of family communication and is becoming an essential dynamic in the way parents and teenagers stay perpetually connected.

The value of text messaging was equalized by the challenges of this integrated technology in family communication. One of the most significant challenges reflected in the experience of the participants was the absence of nonverbal cues during conversation. Tone of voice, posture, eye contact, and body language were eliminated and conceptualizing these types of indicators in a text message created misinterpretation and false impressions. Another challenge was the brief and casual nature of text messaging. These features were often appropriate for peer to peer conversations but could undermine the efforts of more formal parent to child conversation. Sarcasm, humor, word abbreviations, and the use acronyms that were part of the text messaging culture, were not conducive to the respect and reverence needed in some family exchanges.

This type of relating and communicating was not available to parents and teenagers even ten years ago. It is a new opportunity that both parents and teenagers are

taking advantage of in an epic proportion. It has the capacity to impact the way parents and teenagers navigate through adolescence by introducing both contemporary benefits and challenges to the family experience.

Text Messaging Impacts the Concept of Adolescent Independence

The initial literature on mobile technology indicated that there is a new independence afforded to teenagers because of cell phones (Campbell, 2006; Kennedy, Smith, Wells & Wellman, 2008; Reidy, 2004; Thurlow & McKay, 2003; Weisskirch, 2009). Teenagers move physically away from their parents and physical distance creates a sense of independence. Before cell phones integrated into family culture, the concept of independence was heavily associated with physical distance because it required teenagers to make decisions on their own, figure out difficult circumstances autonomously, navigate sensitive issues with their own developmental capacities, and verbally ask for help or guidance from an adult, other than their parent, if they needed it.

With cell phone in hand and the immediacy of text messaging, teenagers were tethered to their parents. Their freedom was in physical mobility and being away from the presence of parents. While their physical distance looked like the face of independency, there was a newly created reliance on the constant availability of parents.

For the most part, both parent and teenager participants expressed that the steady access to each other was a positive contribution of text messaging. Young teenagers were just starting to have opportunities to experience physical independency from parents in social environments. This generation of teenagers has limited experiences of being

completely disconnected from their parents, meaning that contact with their parent is not available for an extended amount of time, even during a single day. Cell phones have been a constant part of their adolescent culture, and they have no experience living without them in which to compare their current experiences.

The immediacy of text messaging had also been an invariable part of their adolescence. Teenagers could discreetly communicate with their parents at most any given time or location; it was a common part of their adolescent experience to send parents text messages before, during, and after school, and at times during social activities. In turn, parents expected this type of communication and appreciated continuous contact with their teenager.

The experiences of the participants in this study confirmed that parents used text messaging to help their teenager make decisions about things that were going on while they were physically apart from them; they also could calm the feelings of their teenager during emotional times and help their teenager navigate through complex circumstance using text messaging as the means of communication. Typical adolescent decision-making opportunities and autonomy in managing the complexities of life were circumvented by the ever expanding access to the willfully participatory parent. There was no malice intended, but the opportunity now exists to have a constant touch. Parents could advise, guide, protect, and lead teenagers who are physically absent from the presence. These opportunities appeared irresistible and were readily being seized.

Text Messaging as an Electronic Leash

One of the research participants, Tammy, vividly portrayed her experiences using text messaging in the context of her family as an electronic leash. The concept of an electronic leash resonated through the stories of all the participants in vivid, personal descriptions but with common elements of control and attachment undergirding the shared experiences of teenage and parent participants. The endless connection that is afforded through text messaging created an invisible union between parents and teenagers. As a social stage, there were no words spoken, no words seen, and the exchange was nearly indiscernible to others.

Inclusive of the adolescent development process is the concept of parents allowing young teenagers to explore the world with autonomy and with their own discretion to navigate through decision making processes and cope with personal circumstances during typical life experiences (Eccles, 1991; Hazen & Scholozman, 2009; Henry, Robinson, Neal & Huey, 2006; Hillaker, Brophy-Herb, Villarruel, & Hass, 2008). In turn, teenagers sense that independence and take the initiative to make decisions, confront personal issues, deal with disappointment and discomfort, and face consequences of their choices on their own.

Text messaging leashed parents and teenagers together in a way that threatened the traditional experiences of teenagers and how they piloted through their independent world without the influence or guidance of their parent. This new accessibility between parents and teenagers is redefining family relationships and affects the control and power of individual players in the context of family (Oksman & Turitainen, 2004). Parents

made themselves readily available through text messaging to advise, guide, and direct the thoughts and actions of their teenagers. In turn, teenagers were obliging parents by hesitating to make choices and decisions until they consulted with them, through text messaging, about what should be done in specific situations. This type of exchange was fundamental and done without much thought to the impact on the teenagers' development of independent thinking and decisions making abilities.

The stories in this study of the perpetual connection experienced by participants were cooperative in nature and generated a rhythmic exchange between parents and teenagers. When the connection, or leashing, between parents and teenagers was threatened by noncompliance or malicious disregard by the teenager, the essence of a collaborative connection changed, and parents induced more control. The leash tightened, so to speak, and conditions were placed on the teenager's ability to move freely. There were punitive consequences to not using this technology in the way that the parents conceptualized that it should be used. Some of the consequences were that teenagers had their phone taken away and lost access to it for a given amount of time. Parents frequently reserved the right to review their teenager's text messages and set limits on deleting messages or emptying one's inbox.

Text messaging accentuated the concept of an electronic leash when considering how technology integrated into the context of family communication. This phenomenon is a contemporary factor in the lives of family. As a society, we are only beginning to see, to explore, and understand its impact on family dynamics. It is critical to consider if this type of communication will threaten normal development process during

adolescence. The consequences and benefits need to be explored further in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of families being incessantly yoked by this element technology.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further examination of the findings and conclusions of this study will deepen our understanding of the influence of text messaging on the phenomenon of family communication, connection and relatedness. Areas of potential study are suggested below and conceived from the shared experiences of the participants of this study.

This study revealed a paradigm shift in the way teenagers experience independence because of the perpetual connection to parents. Examining further the dependence or connection teenagers have to parents versus their experience of independence will broaden the understanding of how modern technology impacts family development. It challenges traditional concepts of adolescent development in relation to decision making, autonomy, and individualization.

Parent-child dyads were the interest of this study. It would be advantageous to examine parent-parent dyads and explore how parents are collaboratively using text messaging to build alliances regarding family issues and to manage the busy family schedules. It would be valuable to understand their experiences of communicating and relating through text messaging and the ability to strengthen or develop new parental partnerships.

An interesting finding in this study was the immediacy expected by parents in the time it took their teenager to respond to a text message. When that time threshold approached or was threatened, feelings of worry and concern were invoked. Isolating this experience either quantitatively or qualitatively, would capture the essence of this distinctive phenomenon and give further understanding of text messages' influence on family communication.

Another suggested area of study is to examine the experiences of teenagers who lose access to their phones. This happened frequently when teenagers inadvertently break their phone, physically lose their phone, something mechanical goes wrong and their phone does not work properly or their parents take their phone as a form of punishment. Their experience of being disconnected from their world is a unique feature of mobile technology's integration into typical everyday life. In this study, teenagers talked about feeling isolated when they lost their phone because they didn't have their friends' phone numbers memorized because the numbers were stored in their cell phone contact list. Teenagers were reluctant to use land lines or even make phone calls using someone else's phone; there was experiential evidence that suggested that teenagers who use text messaging as the main method of communication with their peers have difficulty adapting to alternative means of communication.

One family in this study had a teenage son with diabetes. They used text messaging to frequently communicate about his sugar levels and advised him about bolus (an extra amount of insulin taken to cover an expected rise in blood glucose, often related to a meal or snack) needs according to his food intake and recorded sugar levels

(<http://www.diabetes.org>). It would be valuable to examine how families with children who have health issues use text messaging to communicate. The availability of text messaging allows children with health problems more flexibility in being physically independent from parents. It also gives parents a means to correspond with their child in a nonintrusive manner that does not disrupt the child's normal routine. It provides a unique venue for this type of circumstance within the context of family.

Text messaging has the capacity to be a powerful parenting tool. How it is used and its impact on parent and child communication is a notable area of interest. The concept of over-parenting or helicopter parenting and the use of text messaging to facilitate oversight of a teenager's activities would further our understanding of this phenomenon. Issues of parental control, rigid expectations and violations of privacy are concepts that are worth exploring.

Another element of interest in further studies would be to investigate parenting styles of individuals that regularly use text messaging to communicate with their teenager. This could be examined quantitatively by identifying participants' parenting styles while measuring other specific variables of the text messages including frequency of text messages sent to their teenager, the length of the messages sent, or the content of the messages. Understanding how parenting styles interact with these variables would further illuminate the dynamics of family communication using text messaging.

This study did not consider the length or depth of the language involved in the text messages between teenagers and parents. Investigation of the content of text messages between teenagers and parents would be insightful. Some families use text

messaging as a means of organizing and updating family members about schedule changes. However, some families used it more as a mentoring and counseling tool; some used it as a multi-purpose tool depending on the situation or accessibility of family members. Investigating these attributes of text messaging communication would further clarify this phenomenon.

Lastly, parents and adult mentors are using text messaging to attend to the physical, emotional and spiritual need of teenagers. Text messaging allows teenagers to have instant access to the adults in their life without interruption. Text messaging has the potential to be an extremely useful guidance tool for individuals interested in maintaining an open line of communication with young adults. Investigating how parents or youth pastors are using text messaging to pray for, or encourage teenagers would be beneficial to the current knowledge base. Varying components text messaging communication used as a means of promoting adolescent spiritual development could be investigated through qualitative or quantitative methods.

Implications for Counseling Families

Technology is an integrated part of the contemporary family. It is important for the counseling profession to recognize the inundation of technology on the daily experiences of families, especially those with teenagers. Its influence on families cannot be avoided or discounted in the counseling process with parents and teenagers. This study did not address any clinical issues or reveal problematic relationships in the experiences of the participants. However, this study does provide an illustration of how

text messaging exists within the dynamic of family and how it can impact, both positively and negatively, communication and connection between parents and teenagers.

Some teenagers are less verbal and expressive than others. Some teenagers and parents in this study indicated that text messaging helped individuals that are shy, or that have social anxiety, communicate more readily with peers and parents. Parents with shy teenagers find that their teenager is more willing to converse with them through text messaging than participating in face to face exchanges. Additionally, some teenagers get exceptionally emotional or are hyper-sensitive to their parent's tone of voice; text messaging may help bridge this source of contention during adolescence. Because text messaging eliminates non verbal cues, it is a potentially useful communication tool for families that may have difficulty communicating with teenagers face to face.

Many families have multiple cell phones and parents often pay for the accounts and own the phones. This gives them control over the use, and they regularly feel justified in monitoring calls and text messages. Parents also use teenagers' cell phones as bargaining chips and as a source of control over behavior and expectations. There is also an expectation of how cell phones are used and what is acceptable and unacceptable. Teenagers can be very attached, physically and emotionally, to their phones and to the immediate access to friends and peers. A teenager's phone is an essential part of their existence. The direction and flow of power between parents and teenagers can create contentious and problematic family experiences. Issues of over-parenting could manifest through such a dynamic; teenagers may perhaps feel like their privacy or autonomy is violated and that they have very little control over their ownership, possession, and use of

their cell phone. Such experiences have the potential to surface in a counseling environment. Although parents may not see it as a significant issue and can justify their controlling nature, teenagers may view it very differently based on their own experiences.

There are many ways technology is used by families to stay perpetually connected. Text messaging, social networks, and cell phones with global positioning devices give parents instant access to their child's private and public existence. The boundaries between parents and children are being redefined by the inundation of technology used to track and monitor private conversations, cell phone use, and scrutinize online friends and public discourse. Exploring the parental boundaries and nature of monitoring and oversight that parents place on a teenager's use of social technologies will provide counselors with a tool to understand trends that are relevant to contemporary family development.

Technology's integration into the way families function will become more and more relevant to the counseling profession. Pew Internet and American Life Project, and Nielsen Wire focus on trends in teenagers, young adults, and families. They continue to provide insight through research data that vividly portrays the rapid influx of mobile technology on the American family and the nuances associated with the concept of networked families. It is valuable for counselors to have a foundational understanding of the breadth and gravity of technology's influence on family life and how to explore these concepts in counseling relationships.

Locating the Researcher in Reference to the Study

I faced this research project with joyful anticipation of learning more about the experiences of families using text messaging in their daily lives. I came with little expectation of what I would find because text messaging was something new, yet very exciting, for me and my family. Just three years ago, our young family looked and acted very differently than today. Text messaging and other social technologies have now become a common and welcome part of our lives.

Throughout the journey of interviewing research participants, analyzing the data, and writing about the findings and conclusions of this study, a concept that resonated with me, on both a personal and professional level, was the notion of the omnipotent parent. Parents have a great deal of control, insight, and access to what their children say and do, and where they go, thanks to technology. For the most part, our kids know nothing different. It is part of their childhood existence, and they do not conceptualize the intrusion. If they understood the invasion of privacy [compared to privacy afforded teenagers 10 years ago due to lack of technological resources], I think they would feel extremely violated. I try to put myself in their shoes and think about how I would have felt about my parents reading my high school love letters, or eavesdropping on my land-line phone calls, or knowing that I didn't go to the location I told them I was going, but ended up somewhere else, even though everything turned out okay. Those things were my social and personal stage for testing out language, behavior, and relationships. It gave me opportunities to form a moral self by practicing deception and honesty and deciding independently how important integrity and character was for me. Those

experiences, out of the direct knowledge of my parents, are intrinsically part of who I am today. This study heightened my concern over knowing *too much* and intruding *too much* on the casual things my children do and say because of available technology. It is something I will continue to reflect on and seek to gain balance between keeping them safe and appropriately monitoring what they do with the opportunities for them to have privacy and practice important life skills on their own social stage outside of my view.

Entrenching myself in the literature of this topic and participating in the interviews with ten different families left me feeling overwhelmed by the magnitude of technology's influence on us individually, on us as families, and on us as a culture. I am besieged by the evaporation of the barriers of time and space. Everything and everyone is moving so fast. Patience and longsuffering are getting more and more difficult to model and teach.

Being apart from your loved ones has taken on a new meaning, and we are never really too absent from one another. I reflected on the concept of time and space recently when my thirteen year old son traveled to Mexico without us. Again, I thought back to what I was doing when I was thirteen and felt lucky to get to go to the movies at the nearest theater in Bristol, Virginia, that was 20 miles away. But now, here I was as a mommy feeling comfortable with my son being thousands of miles away from me. I didn't feel that far away from him. His phone worked, and he called and texted us every day. His coach sent emails and updated parents on their location and schedule, and I knew if something went dreadfully wrong, I could get to him within a twenty-four hour

period. Technology truly dissolved time and space barriers. I keep asking myself what will be next, how much more wired and networked can we get?

Another concept that is overwhelming is trying to keep up with technology and with my children's pace in using and understanding it. This feeling was also verbalized by parents in this study. We don't want to feel old or act *too* old in our children's eyes. I want to keep up with them. I want to know and do what they do with their cell phone and ipods. I want to network with my friends on Facebook. I want my kids to keep asking me for advice or guidance in how to do things on the computer or with the settings on their phone. I know that my relationship with my children will change in the near future, when they start understanding and using technology in a greater capacity than I can use it. But for right now, I want to stay a step ahead of them, and it gets more challenging by the day.

Lastly, I find myself appreciating a double life. I am a working mother who values technology, and I truly enjoy using it and learning new things every day. Working with college students also motivates me to understand technology's influence on personal, professional, academic, and social stages. I also like coming home and using Facebook to keep up with old friends, watching Youtube videos with my children, or helping them shop for new shoes on-line. On the other hand, I am blessed to live in a rural community where I can sit on my front porch and watch a summer storm roll across White Top Mountain and teach my kids to smell for rain. We watch the little red fox get water out of the horse trough in the front field and are in awe of its presence on our farm. We go for nature walks and are pleased when we find an unusual looking rock or

entertain the idea of finding an arrow head. At night there is complete darkness and silence when we go out to chase lightening bugs or gaze at the star lit sky. I do appreciate technology and the opportunity and complexity it brings. I equally value things that might seem a little old fashion and plain old simple.

Summary

This chapter introduced conclusions of this study based on the findings from the interviews with teenage and parent participants. Recommendations for further research were suggested as well as implications for counseling with families. A section on locating the researcher in reference to the study concluded this chapter.

Final Summary

This study investigated how families use text messaging to communicate, relate and connect. In chapter one the purpose of the study, the research questions, definitions of terms, introduction to the researcher, and assumptions about the study were provided. Chapter two detailed current literature and findings that were relevant to the foundation of the study. Chapter three explicated phenomenological methods of research, provided the selection process for research participants, and described the data collection and data analysis processes. Chapter four illustrated the characteristics and demographic features of the research participants and presented the themes from the data analysis. Chapter five provided the final conclusions, recommendations for further research, and implications

for counseling. Lastly a section on the researcher in reference to the study concluded the study.

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ADDENDIX A

Application for participation in the study

Name: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____ Email address: _____

If you are a teenager interested in participating in the study, please list the first and last name of the parent that will be participating in this study with you _____.

If you are a parent interested in participating in this study, please list the first and last name of the teenager that will be participating in this study with you _____.

*Please note that individuals considered for this study are those that have both a teenager and a parent (paired participants) that are willing to participate in the study.

Questions for teenagers only:

How many text messages do you send and receive per month? _____

Do you use text messaging on a daily basis? Yes No

Do you have your own mobile phone? Yes No

Do you have a monthly text messaging plan? Yes No

Questions for parents only:

Does your teenager use text messaging on a daily basis? Yes No

Estimate how many text messages that your teenager sends and receives per month? _____.

Do you use text messaging to communicate with your teenager? Yes No

APPENDIX B

Directions for Journal Entries

1. Each day, for a period of one week, consider the ways text messaging influences the way you communicate, relate and connect with your family. Here are the ways we will define these terms for this study.

Family Communication: The mechanism families utilize to effectively problem solve, facilitate healthy levels of family cohesion, and emotional bonding (Schrodt, 2005), express feeling, and articulate their physical and emotion needs (Barnes & Olson, 1985).

Family connection: Family connection is a figurative term that represents a pattern of active engagement between parents and children in an effort to maintain a sense of emotional closeness (Barnes & Olson, 1985; Schrodt, 2005).

Family Relatedness: Family relatedness is a reciprocated effort between teenager and parent to understand the cognitive and behavior actions of one another and endeavor to appreciate commonalities and differences (Kruse & Walper, 2008).

2. During the time that you are keeping this journal, detail any experiences, past or present, of text messaging and its influence on your family communication, relatedness or connection. For example, if your parents take your phone away or limit you using your phone, write down how you experienced this situation. If you used text messaging to communicate with your parents in an important way

(like you needed them to help you with something) then write in detail about how you experienced this situation. Journal about texting experiences that help you and your family relate to one another. Also consider experiences that affect the way you feel connected, or disconnect to your family through text messaging. Consider both positive and negative experiences of using text messaging to communicate with your parents and describe those in your journal.

3. Parents, please follow the same directions as above. Your experiences are in relation to your teenager of focus in this study, and the influence of his/her text messaging on family communication, relatedness and connection. Write each day in the journal considering how text messaging influences your family's relationships. Also detail any significant experiences, past or present, related to text messaging and the way your family communicates, relates and connects.

APPENDIX C

Interview guide for teenage participants

1. Think back about the time when text messaging became a significant part of your life... how did it happen?
2. Describe your experiences of text messaging. What might a typical day look like?
3. Describe your experiences of using text messaging to communicate with your parents?
4. Describe a time when text messaging was negatively experienced by you because of tension or disagreement between you and your parents
5. Describe a time when text messaging was positively experienced by you because it provided a positive benefit or positive relations between you and your parents.
6. How has text messaging given you more independence from your parents? Give me an example of an experience using text messaging that made you feel like you had freedom from your parent's.
 - a. How is your privacy through texting, experienced?
 - b. How do you experience the secrecy that texting provides?
7. Tell me about a time when you felt like text messaging played a role in how you related to your parent; describe your experience?
8. Talk about your experiences of text messaging and describe to me a time when it helped you feel connected to your parents, or how it made you feel disconnected from your parents.

APPENDIX D

Interview guide for parent participants

1. Think back about the time when text messaging became a significant part of your family's life... how did it happen?
2. Tell me what you think a typical day might look like as far as your teen's text messaging patterns go.
3. Describe your experiences of using text messaging to communicate with your teenager?
4. How has text messaging given your teenager more independence from you? Give me an example of an experience using text messaging that made you feel like your teenager was autonomous?
 - a. How do you experience your teenager's desire for privacy in relation to text messaging?
 - b. How do you experience your teenager's secrecy about text messaging?
5. Tell me about a time when you felt like text messaging played a role in how you related to your teenager; describe your experience.
6. Tell me about a time when text messaging helped you feel connected to your teenager or how it made you feel disconnected from your teenager.
7. Describe a time when text messaging was negatively experienced by you because of tension or disagreement between you and your teenager.
8. Describe a time when text messaging was positively experienced by you because it provided a positive benefit or positive relations between you and your teenager.

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title: *Teenage text messaging and effects on family relationships*

Jackie Craft, M.Ed, Doctoral Candidate
John C. Thomas, Ph.D., Ph.D. Faculty Advisor
Liberty University

I, _____, agree to be interviewed as a participant in a research project entitled: *Teenage text messaging and effects on family relationships* being conducted by Jackie Craft as an authorized part of the doctoral program of Liberty University.

Purpose: I understand that the purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of teenagers and their parent on the effect text messaging has on relationships within the family.

Procedure: I understand that I will keep a texting log and a journal for the period of one week prior to the focus group. Directions are provided for each activity. The researcher will facilitate a one hour (maximum of 90 minutes) focus group session that I will participate in and engage in group discussion with my peers. The focus group sessions will be audio and video recorded. I also understand that a transcriber will be used to transcribe the tapes and that I may need to participate in a follow-up interview of no more than 20 minutes. I understand that the researcher may ask me to review the transcript for accuracy.

Privacy/Confidentiality Consent: I understand that neither my name nor any other personally identification will be attached to any of my data (the audio and video recordings of the focus group). Any information with my personal identification will be confidential and housed in a protected location. The researcher, two reviewers, and the dissertation committee members are the only individuals that will have access to the tapes.

I understand that participating in this research study is voluntary. I understand that there is no risk to my physical or mental health beyond those encountered in everyday life, and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time without consequence.

I understand that I can decline to answer any specific questions posed to the focus group. I understand that I do not have to answer each question but may engage other focus group participants in conversation about the topic of discussion

I understand that the researcher may contact me before, during, or after the study to remind me of activities or relevant information about the study. She may contact me by email, text messaging or phone. I understand that no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via electronic source but that the research will take all necessary precautions to ensure privacy.

Questions: I understand the information provided above and either understand it to my satisfaction or the researcher has answered my questions to my satisfaction at this time.

If I have additional questions about the research project I can contact the researcher, Jackie Craft at 276-944-5194 or by email at jcraft@liberty.edu. I can also contact the doctoral committee chairman, John C. Thomas, Ph.D, Ph.D, at 434-582-2000, or by email at jcthomas2@liberty.edu.

I also understand that should I have any questions regarding my rights as a participant in this research, I may contact Fernando Garzon, Ph.D., of the Liberty University Office for Research Protection at (434) 592-4054.

By signing this form below I certify that I fully understand and agree with what I have read.

Please check one of the following:

I give my permission to be audio and video taped.

I do not give my permission to be audio and video taped.

Participant Signature

Date

Parental Permission:

For teenage participants, a parent must also sign here signifying that they give permission for the identified child to participate in this study.

Parent Signature

Date

Researcher: I certify that the informed consent procedure has been followed and that I have answered any questions from the participant as completely as possible.

Researcher Signature

Date

Revocation from Study:

Due to personal reasons, I withdraw my participation in this study.

Participant Signature

Date