

Mobile Communication Technologies, Romantic Attachment and Relationship Quality: An Exploration of Partner Attunement

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Abstract : Mobile technologies have emerged as tools to create and sustain social and romantic relationships. The integration of technologies in close relationships has been of particular research interest with findings supporting the positive role of mobile phones in nurturing feelings of closeness and connection. More recently, the use of text messaging to manage conflict has become a focus of research attention. Four hundred and eleven adults in committed romantic relationships completed a series of questionnaires measuring attachment orientation, relationship quality, texting frequencies, attitudes, and response expectations. Attachment orientation, relationship length, texting for connection and disconnection were significant predictors of relationship quality, specifically relationship intimacy. Text frequency varied as a function of attachment orientation, with high attachment anxiety associated with high texting frequencies and with low relationship quality. Sending text messages of love and support was related to higher intimacy and relationship satisfaction scores, while sending critical or impersonal texts was associated with significantly lower intimacy and relationship satisfaction scores. The use of texting to manage relational conflict was a stronger negative predictor of relationship satisfaction than was the use of texting to express love and affection. Consistent with research on face-to-face communication in couples, the expression of negative sentiments via text were related to lower relationship quality, and these negative sentiments had a stronger and more enduring impact on relationship quality than did the expression of positive sentiments. Attachment orientation, relationship length and relationship status emerged as variables of interest in understanding the use of mobile technologies in romantic relationships.

Keywords : attachment, destructive conflict, intimacy, mobile communication, relationship quality, relationship satisfaction, texting

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