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Humans are creatures that rely heavily on all types of communication, creating languages and alphabets to exchange information and ideas. Since the rise of the age of technology, humans have strived to maximize the channels of socialization, producing more and more communications technologies, making it possible to locate a person anytime, anywhere, with just a few pushes of a button. Cellular phones opened up a new world of possibilities, making it more easy than ever to connect with friends and family. With the invention of the internet came chat rooms, instant messaging and electronic mail, or email. Humans then produced new technologies that would seamlessly integrate the best of both technological worlds, thus entering the world of short message service (SMS), better known as text messaging.

There is no denying that user-friendly phone and wireless capabilities have proven to be beneficial in many ways, including a more interconnected social network, more ways to maintain familial relations, and well as expanded businesses, and business opportunities, in unforeseen ways. However, could the constant need to rely on a third party form a communication, which essentially serves as both a physical and virtual barrier, be detrimental to not only relationships, but also social skills? In our efforts to optimize methods of communication, we've compromised the quality and social skills necessary for face-to-face communication, and the more these technologies are overused, the more absurd their use becomes.

I. Communication technologies: then and now

A. The Internet

1. Email
2. Instant messaging
3. Chat rooms

B. Mobile Telephones

1. Cell phone: uses, functions, etc.
2. Smart phone: uses, functions, etc.
3. The Internet has influenced the growth and development of the mobile phone through the creation of certain behaviors and patterns of use.

C. Both mobile phones and Internet lead to an increase in asynchronous communication; people become accustomed to having conversations or exchanging information with a delay.

II. Text messaging, the history (wikipedia)

A. Short message service (SMS) is a communications protocol allowing the interchange of short text messages between mobile telephone devices--facilitating the development and growth of text messaging. SMS is simply the underlying technology that enabled text messaging to be possible

B. SMS has actually been available since 1987, however it was not until mobile phones became not only popular, but accessible that the younger generations adopted this form of communication.

III. Basic statistics

A. From CTIA (Cellular Telecommunications & Internet Association)

1. There are more than 2.3 billion mobile subscribers worldwide
2. There are more than 229 million wireless subscribers in America
3. 99% of Americans are now living in counties in which next generation wireless services are available, and 94% live in counties with four or more wireless service providers. In the first 6 months of 2006, the wireless industry added approximately 63,000 new subscribers per day.

4. In America, more than 857 billion wireless minutes were used in the first half of 2006, where individual customers in the U.S. use five times the number of minutes as the average European subscriber

5. More than 12.5 billion text messages were sent in June 2006, up 70% from June 2005

B. More than one in three college-aged students send messages from wireless devices, according to Wireless World Forum (this is an old statistic, unfortunately the website is currently being fixed, found in an article from byu.edu)

C. 45% of Americans ages 12-19 have a cell phone, and 37% of teen cell users also use text messaging, according to Teenage Research Unlimited (I found this in the 2003 study as quoted in an article, and in order to get the most recent information I need a subscription).

D. 72% of teens claim that text messaging is the most useful feature on their phone, and 54% of 13-34 year olds use text messaging in particular for social networking (mobile youth).

E. 90% of teenagers claimed to text more than they talk on their phones (Reid & Reid).

IV. What do the stats mean?

A. The teen demographic is the largest population of text message users among all cell phone users.

1. This may be dangerous because many teens are turning to these devices as substitutes for face-to-face communication, causing potential social and psychological issues.

a) "Research has shown that if a person feels his or her likelihood of being rejected for a date is high, there is a better chance he or she will ask through a text rather than a higher risk way, such as over the phone or in person." (byu.edu)

b) people may be physically present, but they're increasingly psychologically absent, the "ghosting of America," (James Katz, usa today)

2. How is this affecting linguistics? Teens are now using text messaging language in their written homework, i.e. putting a U, instead of Y-O-U (usa today). Mainstream commercial use as way of connecting to a younger generation.

B. Students at University of Maryland use text messaging to cheat on exams (usa today)

V. The social and psychological effects of text messaging (Reid & Reid)

A. Little is known about the psychological impact of texting on social interaction amongst regular users, nor on the long-term consequences of texting on the development and maintenance of these relationships.

B. There are two types of teenage phone users: Talkers and Texters (approx. half and half)

1. For a significant number of users, sending a text message may be more important for building and maintaining social relationships than for coordinating practical arrangements

2. The combination of the sociability of the chat room, coupled with the psychological distance of electronic mail, lends texting a special, but paradoxical, appeal to a significant number of users.

a) Improved the lives of some users, particularly those who experienced difficulties with face-to-face communication

b) Lack of personal information such as appearance would allow greater freedom of self-expression, and nurture relationships that may not otherwise have happened.

c) Lonely and socially anxious people were better able to express themselves and create or get close to a version of the "real self." (typically character traits of Texters)

C. Text messaging provides an opportunity for intimate personal contact whilst at the same time offering the detachment necessary to manage self presentation and involvement. The Texters who capitalized on the social environment created by texting to form and manage close personal relationships.

D. In terms of real-self expression, the majority of Talkers and Texters preferred face-to-face communication. Essentially, the Texters preferred to use text messaging as a way of forming

and maintaining relationships, but chose to do so because of their own awkward social tendencies and lack of certain social skills.

VI. Although it is great that text messaging provides teens an outlet to express themselves without having to face the terrors of rejection or the possible humiliation that may come along with face-to-face communication, they are doing themselves a great disservice.

- A. Necessary reasons for gaining and building certain social skills
- B. Making mistakes is how individuals grow both emotionally and psychologically
- C. If, and how will this change the way future generations communicate?

VII. Reflection and Wrap-up

A. Children and teens use technology as a way of avoiding face-to-face communication for various reasons, such as fear of rejection or discomfort in social settings. By allowing these damaging social behaviors to exist, society is reinforcing destructive psychological and societal norms that may be harmful to the ways in which humans form and maintain relationships.

B. I believe that a decreasing amount of face-to-face, one-on-one, human-to-human contact will have a negative impact on the quality of life for future generations.

Resource List so far (not in MLA style or alphabetical order)

1. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMS>
2. 100 wireless facts, <http://www.ctia.org/content/index.cfm/AID/10377>, Cellular Telecommunications & Internet Association (CTIA)
3. Kasallis, Theresa, Text Messaging Affects Student Relationships, <http://newsnet.byu.edu/story.cfm/60307>, July 5, 2006
4. Kornblum, Janet, Tapping Into Text Messaging, http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/2003-06-02-text-me-main_x.htm, June 2, 2003
5. Linguists Mixed on Effects of Text Messaging, http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/2003-02-14-messaging-linguists_x.htm, February 14, 2003
6. Reid, Donna & Fraser Reid, Insights into the Social and Psychological Effects of SMS Text Messaging, <http://www.160characters.org/documents/SocialEffectsOfTextMessaging.pdf>, University of Plymouth, February 2004