

Cell Phone Decision Making: Adolescents' Perceptions of How and Why They Make the Choice to Text or Call

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Blair, B. L., Fletcher, A. C. & Gaskin, E. (2013). Cell Phone Decision Making: Adolescents' Perceptions of How and Why They Make the Choice to Text or Call. *Youth & Society*. doi: 10.1177/0044118X13499594

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Abstract:

The primary aim of this study was to examine how and why adolescents make decisions regarding whether to conduct their communication via texting versus calling features of cellular telephones. Individual semistructured qualitative interviews were conducted with 41 adolescents aged 14 to 18 focusing on their use of calling and texting when communicating with friends, parents, and romantic partners. Through grounded theory analysis, a conceptual decision-tree emerged depicting a process of decision making based on communication content, communication partner, and situational limitations. Further analysis indicated that the adolescents consistently perceived texting as easier than calling in ways that were meaningful to their everyday lives. Findings reflect the complex interweaving of logic, personal preference, and concession to social constraints that goes into adolescents' choices to call versus text.

Keywords: adolescent development | cellular phones | communication | decision making | peer relations

Article:

Communication with peers and parents is an essential part of adolescent life. Adolescents need to engage in communication with peers because processes related to the psychosocial tasks of identity formation and social development result in increased needs for self-disclosure, mutual validation, and relationship building (Buhrmester & Prager, 1995). In addition, communication with parents is critical due to needs for logistic arrangements, parental monitoring, and relational maintenance (Kerr, Stattin, & Trost, 1999; Ling, 2000). Decision making is an inherent component of communication. One of the communication-related decisions that modern adolescents must make repeatedly throughout a given day involves the medium through which they will engage in communication. Advances in technology have created far more options for communication mediums than ever before, complicating this decision-making process.

Currently, cell phones represent the most common medium for adolescent communication, particularly communication with peers, with both texting and calling features frequently used by this age group. Cell phone communication is even more common as a socialization outlet than face-to-face communication for many adolescents (Lenhart, 2012). This is meaningful due to cell phones' capacity to alter the ways in which adolescents communicate with and relate to significant individuals in their lives by offering instantaneous and continuous access, text-based communication options, and multitasking capabilities (Ling, 2004). The current study explores adolescents' self-perceived experiences with making decisions between texting and calling.

Adolescents' Preferences for Texting

When adolescents are faced with choosing between texting and calling, the choice is resoundingly clear: They choose texting. Recent reports from the Pew Institute indicate that 75% of all American adolescents text and 63% text on at least a daily basis. Among American adolescents, texting is now the most common way of socializing with others; it is more common than calling, in-person activities (outside of school), instant messaging, or use of social networking websites. In 2011, the mean number of texts sent or received by girls ages 14 to 17 was 187 per day and for boys it was 176. On the other hand, only 26% of adolescents report making or receiving calls to communicate with their friends by cell phone on a daily basis (Lenhart, 2012). The Nielson Company (2011) recently estimated that adolescents exchange an average of seven texts per waking hour. Together, these studies indicate that adolescents prefer texting.

A number of hypotheses regarding adolescents' inclination toward texting have been proposed, some of which have been empirically validated. These hypotheses focus on issues of convenience (cost and availability; Conti-Ramsden, Durkin, & Simkin, 2010), autonomy (the ability to maintain privacy in communication; Ling, 2010; Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008), or self-disclosure (lowered inhibitions that may arise as the result of lack of nonverbal cues and increased control over communication pacing; Tidwell & Walther, 2002). Many of these hypotheses borrow from theoretical frameworks developed to explain decision making and motives regarding internet communication. Although there are tenets of internet communication theories that apply nicely to cell phone use, there are also problems with this approach. For instance, some of the critical features of internet communication either do not apply to or are relatively rare in cell phone communication, such as the possibility of anonymity or opportunities for self-presentation to a peer group (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). In addition, applying previously developed theories to changing technology brings the risk of limiting empirical interpretation when considering the dynamic nature of new technology. This approach can cause researchers to fail to acknowledge the historic and social contexts of technology development and use as well as overemphasize particular characteristics of the technology that are consistent with previous technologies or with popular perceptions of the technology (Woolgar, 2005). In the case of cell phone research, this includes the risk of overemphasizing the potential deleterious effects of texting that the popular media has subscribed to (e.g., Hafner, 2009) or

overcompensating for this popular perception by emphasizing only the benefits of texting. Thus, the current study utilizes a grounded theory approach to allow adolescent participants to articulate in their own words how and why they choose to text or call.

Adolescent Decision Making

There is growing interest in how and why adolescents make the decisions they do (see Albert & Steinberg, 2011, for a recent review). Based on this growing empirical and theoretical work, we know there are critical features of adolescent decision-making processes that likely guide adolescents' choices regarding cell phone use. First, contrary to popular opinion, adolescents are quite capable of rational decision making and are not simply slaves to impulse. This is important to recognize because it clears the way to examining adolescents' cell phone choices as processes that include reasoned decisions. Another important consideration is that adolescents' decisions are often guided by social constraints beyond their control. Regarding cell phone use, adolescents may be constrained by rules imposed by parents and schools concerning how and when cell phones can be utilized as well as by social norms of appropriate cell phone etiquette. In addition, there are likely constraints related to their communication partners' expectations and technological abilities (Ito, 2005). Therefore, there is a potential labyrinth of constraints that adolescents must negotiate every time they choose between texting and calling.

The Current Study

This study contributes to the fields of adolescent communication, technology use, and decision making by examining adolescents' decisions regarding calling or texting when communicating with their peers and parents. Despite the growing body of work on adolescent decision making, surprisingly little is known about how adolescents themselves perceive their decision-making processes. We also know exceedingly little about decision making related to technology use. Our qualitative approach extends previous research by utilizing adolescents' own words to guide the emergence of a theoretical process by which adolescents negotiate their needs for communication via cell phone as well as their perceptions of the reasons underlying this process. We focus on (a) how adolescents make the decision to text or call, particularly with reference to the questions they ask themselves when making that decision, as well as (b) why they make the decisions that they do, particularly focusing on the reasons for adolescents' proclivity to text.

Methods

Participants

Participants consisted of 41 adolescents. One adolescent chose not to provide any demographic information; therefore, the following descriptive statistics are based on a sample of 40, although data from all 41 participants were retained in all other analyses. The sample was ethnically diverse: 16 White, 14 Black, 5 multiracial, and 5 adolescents from other ethnic backgrounds. The sample was 85% female ($n = 34$) and 15% male ($n = 6$). Participants were fairly evenly divided

among all grades of high school from 9th to 12th grades, and ranged in age from 14 to 18, with a mean age of 16 years and 4 months. Mothers' educational levels ranged from 1 mother who did not receive a high school diploma to 10 who had received their graduate degrees with a modal level of some college. Fathers' educational levels ranged from one father who had not completed high school to two who had received graduate degrees with a modal level of some college education. Sixty percent of participants lived in homes with both biological parents present, 25% lived in homes with single mothers. Participants were recruited from schools, church youth groups, and by means of a snowball sampling strategy. Pseudonyms were assigned to all participants for the purposes of this article.

Procedures

Participants completed individual qualitative interviews and descriptive quantitative surveys during the 2010 to 2011 school year. Interviews were conducted in a location of the participant's choosing, most often at the participant's home, at a library, or at the community center where the participant was recruited. Interviews averaged 30 minutes. Adolescents were entered into a drawing for a gift card to a local store of their choosing.

In the individual interviews, adolescents responded to a series of open-ended questions regarding facets of social technology use within the context of salient relationships in their lives. The current study focused on participants' responses to the following questions: "When communicating with your [friends/parents/boyfriend or girlfriend] using your cell phone, do you tend to call them more or text them more? Why do you think this is? Can you give some examples of how you make that choice?" and "When communicating with your [friends/parents/boyfriend or girlfriend] using your cell phone, what do you tend to contact them about? Can you give me some examples of when you used your cell phone to communicate about [previously mentioned topic]?" Each of these questions was probed for specifics of when, how, why, and with whom the participants communicated.

Data Analysis

A grounded theory approach was utilized to identify themes and codes emerging from the interviews (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Interviews were transcribed verbatim and then a coding strategy was implemented that began with repeated readings of the 41 interviews and open coding. Initial readings focused on establishing a broad sense for how adolescents utilized their cell phones, with whom, and how they perceived their cell phone use. Throughout these readings, researchers met regularly and discussed impressions of the data and emerging themes. After agreeing that the data were framed by the theme of decision making regarding calling and texting, we began a process of open coding that yielded codes focused on perceptions of cell phone communication features (calling and texting), communication partners (parents and peers), expressed reasons for utilizing a particular cell phone feature (as well as the salience of these reasons), and the content of communications.

Then, through an iterative process that involved multiple readings of transcripts by all authors and discussions regarding transcript and code content, we refined the codes, identified indicators of each code, and developed subcodes as needed.

When a comprehensive list of codes was agreed on, two authors independently utilized the list to apply an axial coding strategy to a subsample of the transcripts. During independent coding, the authors maintained memos noting any problems encountered as well as thoughts regarding the utility of each code. After initial coding was completed, all coding decisions and memos were compared and discussed. Through this process, potential problems with the coding scheme were discovered and rectified, and then the coding scheme was applied to the full data set, with 94% agreement across coders. All discrepancies were discussed and resolved through consensus.

Atlas.ti software was used to manage data and was also utilized to organize and condense the data. We grouped data by code and read the grouped codes for patterns. Next, we analyzed grouped sections of code in an iterative process, resulting in a conceptual framework of decision making regarding when to call versus text. The content and organization of this framework was developed by first formulating a conceptual map based on impressions gained from reading all transcripts, then going through each transcript individually, and refining the diagram with each successive transcript, resulting in a composite decision-tree (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Next, we went back to the data in a cross-case analysis in an effort to further explicate the reasons for the decisions adolescents' made about cell phone use. Our crosscase analysis revealed three specific ways in which adolescents perceived texting to be easier than calling. Finally, we reanalyzed a subset of transcripts with a negative-case analysis to verify the applicability of the findings to individual participants.

Results

Making the Choice

All adolescents in the sample expressed a strong preference for texting over calling features of cell phones, but there were patterns regarding how they chose between the two. A hierarchical series of characteristics regarding the circumstances of communication choices emerged that explained the decision-making process. We developed a conceptual model representing the questions adolescents consider when deciding whether to call versus text (see Figure 1). The order in which these questions appear in the model was determined by analysis of the logic behind the questions rather than representing a time-ordered sequence. In fact, it is likely that adolescents consider many of these questions simultaneously when making real-world decisions regarding communication. Our analysis evaluated the sequential logic of these questions based on (a) adolescents' statements regarding prioritization of certain circumstances in their decision making as well as (b) the order in which questions or circumstances were mentioned in their responses. We then utilized this analysis to sketch out a conceptual map of how this order of

logic might be displayed and arrived at a decision-tree as a representation of the decision-making process.

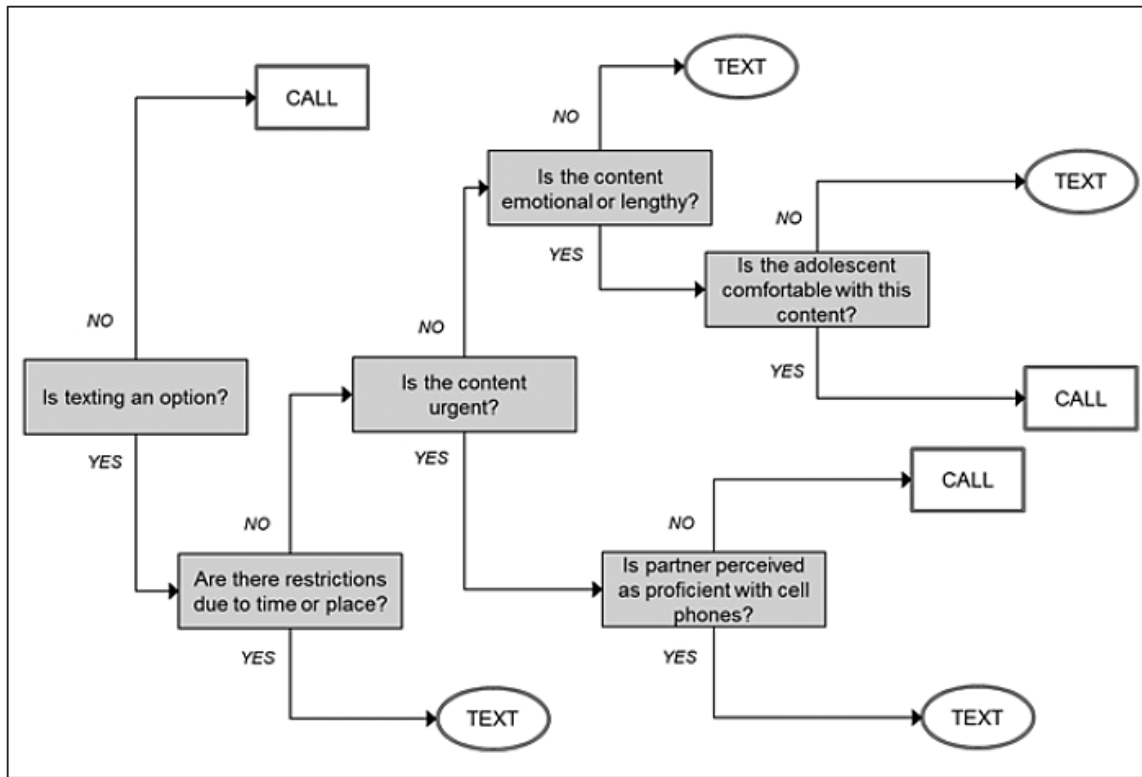


Figure 1. Conceptual decision-tree of adolescents’ decision-making process regarding texting or calling.

The first question in the framework was whether texting was even an option. It was rare for participants to consider texting impossible, although they did report this occasionally. The most common situation in which texting was not an option was when the communication partner, most often a parent, did not have texting capability or skill. “My mom can’t receive texts. . . and my dad never looks at his texts” (Brittany). When participants mentioned this barrier, it was clear that it “trumped” all other questions in the decision-making process. Participants did not mention any circumstances under which calling might not be an option.

The next question of the decision-tree involved the time or place in which the adolescent wanted to communicate. If the location was restricted in some way, adolescents nearly always chose to text rather than call. Adolescents described texting as less disruptive and more immediate than calling and therefore it could be utilized under virtually any circumstance. The most common restricted situation was when adolescents were communicating with parents while at school.

If I’m in school and my parents need something, they’ll text me. And I’ll text them if I need something ‘cause I cannot call when I’m in school. I’m not even supposed to have my phone in school, but if we’re not doing anything, hey. (Kendall)

Texting during school allowed adolescents to bypass school rules, which would not have been possible with calling. As Anna stated, “I’ve texted my mom during school before because you can’t, ya know, pop out your phone and talk to her.” There were other locations in which adolescents’ communications were limited by either social norms, such as a movie theater, or characteristics of the location itself, such as: “The other night I was at a concert and just texted her because you can’t really call someone from a concert (*laughs*)” (Jessica). Adolescents also considered texting preferable while socializing with others. “I don’t know, you can be hanging out with a group of people and be texting at the same time. But you can’t be, like, on the phone talking because then you miss out on what you’re doing” (Anna). Other adolescents explained that calling early in the morning or late at night might be considered problematic, so texting was the better option at those times.

I mean I text all day and night anyway, but as far as nighttime, if I decide to call, I will just text them first because I usually have this thing I don’t like calling people late. So I text them at night and ask them, “Are you up or you busy? Because if you’re not, I have to call you and tell you something about something.” (Kamia)

The third question represented the point at which adolescents began to consider the content of their communication. If they perceived the communication as urgent and viewed their communication partner as adept with texting, then the adolescent would text.

Because like, I mean, when you text it’s kinda like, you know, an immediate response. Whereas if you call, you have to wait for it to ring and if they don’t answer then it’s the voice mail and then you have to go through that. (Kamia)

However, if the content was urgent but the adolescent perceived his or her communication partner as lacking proficiency with texting (almost always a parent in these cases), then the adolescent would choose to call. Mariah explained her decision process this way,

If I’m in class or in school, I’ll text my mom, but if it’s like, I’m outside of school and I just need to get in contact with her real quick or something, I’ll call her if it’s, like, something immediate.

After all, as Natasha noted regarding her mother: “I just, like, abbreviate and she’ll type out the whole word, and I’m like, ‘oh I have to sit here and read the whole thing?!’”

Assuming the content was not urgent, adolescents would also consider whether they anticipated the communication would be lengthy or emotional in some way. If it was not—and most examples provided by participants fell into this category—then nearly all adolescents chose to text. In these situations, which were generally devoid of limitations or complications, adolescents considered texting their default option. “I usually text them most of the time” (Jessica). “I just

like texting more” (Carmina). Under these conditions, it did not seem to matter if the communication partner was adept with texting. Patrice explained that when she needed to touch base with her mother about something simple that was not time-sensitive, she would often text despite her mother’s texting limitations. “Yeah, if I text her, all I said was ‘Can I stay after school?’ ‘Cause you know, that’s simple ‘cause she can be like ‘Yes’ or ‘No’.”

Finally, if adolescents judged the content of their communication to be potentially lengthy or emotional, then the decision seemed to rest on personal levels of comfort with this type of conversation. Those adolescents who had no qualms about lengthy or emotional communication generally chose to call for this type of conversation. “If it’s like a big deal and I know I have a lot to say, Im’ma call” (Kamia). A few adolescents seemed to relish the excitement of sharing gossip or frustrations via a call rather than a text, such as Stephanie,

Especially like when I have, like a problem, especially with a boy. Like there’s one that keeps bugging me and he has a crush on me and I don’t like him like that and I called [my friends] to like update them and just complain.

But those adolescents who were uncomfortable with the thought of having this type of conversation chose to text. “If you were talking about something really emotional, you might wanna text, because you can, like (*pause*), you can more easily, like, not really lie, but like dry it from your emotions. Keep it away from your emotions” (Brittany). As Courtney said frankly, “If I have something personal to say, it’s easier to say by text message than actually saying it to the person.”

Negative-case analysis on a subset of transcriptions indicated that the decision-tree that emerged from our analysis accounted for all adolescents’ examples of their decisions to text or call.

Perceiving Ease in Texting

After establishing *how* adolescents made the choice between texting and calling, we continued our analysis by considering *why* they made the choices they did. We were particularly focused on why, in the absence of specific barriers or limitations, adolescents almost universally expressed preference for texting over calling. Adolescents repeatedly used words such as “easier,” “faster,” and “more convenient” to describe texting in comparison with calling. As Brad explained regarding communication with his mother, “it’s like every time she calls, it’s like, ‘Could you just text me?’ ‘Cause it takes like one-eighth of the time.” Despite the overwhelming description of texting as “easy,” it became clear that it was not necessarily that texting was always easier in a quantifiable sense. When probed for specifics of why texting was easier, adolescents found it difficult to articulate their reasons for this perception. “Texting is like so much easier, or I wouldn’t say it’s easier, it’s just . . . I don’t know I guess it’s like more convenient” (Natalie). “It’s quicker, I mean, it’s not quicker exactly. Um (*pause*), I don’t know, it’s just, I don’t, I really don’t know. I can’t think of a reason why I don’t call them” (Brittany). We determined that although texting may not be discernibly easier, adolescents perceived it as easier. Three specific

ways in which adolescents perceived texting to be easier than calling emerged through our cross-case analysis.

Maximizing multitasking. Adolescents expressed that the ability to communicate while engaging in other activities was a highly desirable characteristic of texting. “Texting is easier. You can do other stuff while you’re texting, but when you’re calling somebody it’s gotta be, like, all your focus” (Anna). Participants reported that they frequently texted while working on homework, “It’s easier to do homework and text because neither one really distracts the other” (Courtney), while spending time with friends, and even engaging in texting conversations with multiple partners simultaneously, “you can hold multiple conversations at once, with several people” (Brad).

I have unlimited texting just for fact of me, like, going over. Because people like to talk to me, so I like to respond, and I don’t like to talk on the phone aloud ‘cause I’m too ADD for that (laughs). I like to do other things while I have conversations. (Kendall)

Minimizing forethought. Many participants noted that their preferences for texting stemmed from the fact that they did not feel the need to stop and consider what they intended to say before initiating the conversation, the way they felt they needed to do with calling. “Cause when I talk on the phone usually I always run out of things to say after about five minutes. Yeah, you got time to think about what you’re gonna say” (Ryan). The casual tone of texting, as well as the time lag in responses, allowed adolescents to approach texting in a far more relaxed manner than they did with calling. “When you text, you can like text what you gotta say, leave it alone, and then when you think of something, come back and start again” (Raven).

Accommodating peers. For many adolescents in the sample, texting was their default primarily because they recognized that their peers preferred it to calling and this social norm created a situation in which it was easier to text than call. Adolescents indicated that most of their peers chose to text exclusively rather than call. “I think it’s because they are too lazy to talk to me. They just never call me” (Tiffany). When asked whether she preferred to talk or text when communicating with friends, Mariah admitted, “Usually people text me first, ‘cause I’m lazy.” When the conversation began as a text, adolescents simply followed through with this type of communication. Adolescents also noted that it was useful that their communication partners could respond whenever it was convenient for them, rather than stopping whatever activity they were currently engaged in to pick up a phone call. “People text multiple people, so like, if you call them, they can’t receive a text from somebody else. So, you might as well text them, cause they’re probably gonna get it quicker that way” (Kevin).

Discussion

Consistent with previous research, adolescents in this study reported that they nearly always chose to text rather than call if they were free of restrictions. They generally relied on calling only when they were required to accommodate specific circumstances such as parents’ lack of

texting proficiency or the anticipated content of communication. Participants spoke about texting as easier than calling, even when they acknowledged that texting was not always faster or more convenient. Analysis of adolescents' reflections concerning use of texting suggested it was the perception of ease that was appealing about texting rather than a quantitative reality of ease.

Rational Versus Default Decision Making

Similar to previous studies, we found that adolescents' decisions were based on a combination of cognitive and social factors as well as a combination of rational and default reasoning (Wolff & Crockett, 2011). The decision-tree that emerged from our analyses provides an explanatory model of the series of questions adolescents ask themselves when making rational, reasoned decisions regarding texting or talking. The emergence of this model suggests that adolescents do give this issue purposeful thought and come to conclusions based on answers to context-specific questions. However, the emergence of the theme of perceived ease suggests that there is also a component of this decision-making process that is less methodical, but rather is an automatic default to what is believed to be the easiest available option—in this case, texting. Together these findings provide a glimpse into the complex decision-making processes occurring in adolescents' daily communication choices.

Constraints on Cell Phone Use

The social constraints imposed by location and time that guided adolescents' decisions were evident in our findings. The constraints of school rules and norms were commonly cited as reasons adolescents chose to text rather than call due to the ability to text surreptitiously. However, many of the constraints adolescents perceived were less obvious. One of the primary constraints evidenced in how and why adolescents decide whether to call or text involved the characteristics and preferences of their communication partners. For instance, there was a clear pattern of adolescents distinguishing between parents and peers when deciding whether to call or text. Adolescents perceived that their peers had strong preferences for texting, and thus they claimed to make the choice to text in consideration of this social norm.

Regarding communication with parents, previous research has found that adolescents as well as their parents perceive adolescents to be more proficient with communication technology than adults (Blair & Fletcher, 2011). Research indicating that adolescents utilize texting options at rates that far exceed those of adults supports this perception. Therefore, researchers have attributed adolescents' likelihood to call their parents to the fact that adults lack the technological abilities of their adolescent children (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, & Purcell, 2010). The results of this study support this conclusion by demonstrating that adolescents do indeed think about their parents' lack of texting skill when choosing to call instead of text. In the few cases in which they mentioned peers who were not able or willing to text, participants explained very similar processes in their decision making for communicating with these peers. This suggests it is not something about the parent-child relationship or parent characteristics that drives adolescents'

decisions to call parents, but rather that lack of texting proficiency on the part of parents serves as a constraint on adolescents' choices.

Another pattern of constraints that emerged in this study was related to communication content. Previous research has indicated that adolescents are likely to call peers only when their anticipated conversations are lengthy or personal (Madell & Muncer, 2007). The results of our study suggest that this pattern may be qualified by whether adolescents themselves are comfortable with the possibility of a lengthy or personal conversation. The finding that adolescents who were uncomfortable with the possibility of a long or intimate conversation chose texting for these types of conversations is consistent with studies indicating that individuals who are high in social anxiety report utilizing texting as a means of maintaining intimacy in their relationships (Reid & Reid, 2007). Therefore, adolescents' own characteristics and preferences imposed constraints on their cell phone options.

Adolescents' need to negotiate these constraints fits well with previously examined hypotheses of convenience as a motive for adolescent texting (Conti-Ramsden et al., 2010). However, rather than cost or availability as the primary mechanisms of convenience, participants in this study valued the discrete and nonintrusive qualities of texting as convenient for adapting to social norms, school rules, and balancing personal preferences with social needs.

Rewards of Calling and Texting

Many researchers argue that adolescent decision making is highly motivated by reward and a body of recent experimental research supports this argument. Immediate rewards have proven to be particularly motivating for adolescents (Cauffman et al., 2010; O'Brien, Albert, Chein, & Steinberg, 2011) and texting is inherently immediate. The moment the thought of communicating with someone occurs to adolescents, they can send a message, and are likely to receive a response just as rapidly (assuming their communication partners are sufficiently proficient in texting). With texting, there is no need to wait for the phone to ring, wait for someone to answer, and go through the usual preliminary small talk all before ever asking your question or making your comment, and there is certainly no risk of waiting on a voicemail system and leaving a message. In addition, our results indicate that texting generally does not require the prior preparation that making a call can necessitate. Adolescents do not need to think about where their communication partner is or what they might be interrupting, they do not need to think through what they are going to say and how their partner might respond, they do not even need to stop whatever activities they are engaged in themselves. Thus, texting provides immediate rewards that calling does not. It may be that our participants used words such as "easy" to describe texting, but in fact were referring to the feeling of instant gratification that texting provided and either did not have the vocabulary to express this or were not consciously aware of how the drive for immediate reward was motivating their choices.

Conclusions

Inherent in communication technology research is the awareness that findings may be rendered obsolete as technology advances. Specific to the study of cell phones, advances currently are underway regarding the growing use of internet-based communication via cell phone as well as advances in voice-command texting. We must be aware that these advances could alter the applicability of our findings to future cell phone use. However, as Ling (2010) stated, even though communication technology is moving forward, “In all likelihood, there will be a strong need for texting or at least mobile, asynchronous, point-to-point, text based mediation” (p. 289). In other words, even if texting takes a somewhat different form in the future, we can expect that it will transform into a type of communication with many of the same essential characteristics, which will likely require many of the same types of decision-making mechanisms as outlined in the current study.

Future research should consider whether the findings of this study are generalizable. Although the sample size of the current study was appropriate for the type of in-depth analysis that we conducted, we are also aware that it included a relatively small number of adolescents. We did analyze our results for differences by race, parent education, and gender, and found that our findings were equally applicable regardless of these factors. It should be noted that our sample had a gender imbalance in which more girls than boys participated. Although this is a limitation, we do not believe it to be a fatal flaw due to emerging evidence that there are relatively few differences in the ways that boys and girls utilize cell phones. Some studies have found girls use their cell phones more often than boys (Lenhart, 2012), although this is not a consistent finding (Underwood, Rosen, More, Ehrenreich, & Gentsch, 2012), and aside from frequency, relatively few gender differences have emerged (Colley, Todd, White, & Turner-Moore, 2010; Lenhart, 2012). Nevertheless, the results of this study should not be viewed as representative of all adolescents, but rather as reflecting the perceptions of this sample.

The current study demonstrates that adolescents engage in a rational decision-making process when choosing between texting and calling for their communication needs. Adolescents assess the situation logically, taking into account their environment, the content of their communication, the skill and preference of their communication partner, and their own preferences. However, when adolescents feel that their communication is free of such limitations, they default to texting with very little conscious thought about that choice; instead, it is a choice based on perceptions of ease and habit. These results add to our growing understanding of how and why adolescents make everyday communication decisions, adolescents’ perceptions of their communication processes, and the degree to which they consider specific constraints in their lives as barriers to their communication needs.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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