Desire and Loathing in the Cyber Philippines

Bella Ellwood-Clayton, 2005.

Part 1

Ping-Ping & Albert

> *Another text!*
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> *Ping-Ping is sure that it's a woman who has been texting her husband (asawa) Albert. She's noticed that when Albert receives texts, his body language becomes awkward and his eyes avoid hers. And, he's been receiving texts late into the evening.*
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> *The nagging feeling that something is not right has made Ping-Ping wonder how she could, and whether she should, get her hands on his cell phone. If able to do so, Ping-Ping would be able to read Albert's inbox (the collection of messages he had received and chosen to save), scroll through the calls he most recently placed and received, and determine the degree of cyber faithfulness that he had. If unable to discern traces of infidelity, Ping-Ping could also scroll through his address book with a keen eye for a female name Ping-Ping herself does not know—or perhaps she knows all too well.*
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> *All this is possible since besides a short password, which an intimate could easily observe and recall, no identification is needed to access one's cellular information. Manufacturing more sophisticated technology of this sort would certainly have a strong market, were rates of cyber (if not physical) adultery in the Philippines considered.*

An easy way to catch a cheating partner is to pay close attention to whom they text and to read their *inbox* when they are unaware. Yet, paradoxically, since texting is essentially silent—the sound of an incoming text can simply be deactivated—and often a solitary practice, texting also enables cheaters to transmit quick messages and confirm adulterous rendezvous.

The new type of communication that SMS provides its users is producing conditions whereby friends' expectations of each others' accessibility increases and in which lovers attempt to monitor one another. Linked to this are themes related to *perpetual contact* (Katz 2002) and *absent presence* (Gergen 2002). This chapter pays special

heed to the ways in which these fields of experiences—these increasing obligations to 'the other'—are conceptualised by texters in the Philippines. It highlights how texters respond to increased social pressures to be accessible to one another—whether through embracement or rejection of these new demands.

Copious numbers of text how-to books are sold in the bookstores of the Philippines— "Text to Text," "Ring Tones and Grafix," "The Lord is my Textmate." However, none provide tutorship about (the scholarly underrepresented yet highly active) group of texters engaged in text combat. "How To Deeply Wound Others By Text and Nasty Ring Tones," is not found in the commercial market. Let me speak to the adage, that *all's fair in love and war*—if this is not true, analysis of the texting phenomenon in the Philippines certainly highlights users' fallible human preoccupations with both. I have discussed elsewhere the ways in which texting is uprooting traditional courtship, and providing young Filipinas with a new site in which they can experiment with romantic agency and potentially subvert traditional gender ideologies in the domain of young love.[1] Indeed, texting was found to be a particularly provocative way to seduce, develop intimacy, and fall in love. In contrast, in this work, besides discussing the overall characteristics of texting in the Filipino setting, I treat the dark side of SMS: hostilities in cyberspace among intimates.

Specifically, in this chapter I examine texting as a medium that supports the identity exploration of social actors and acts to intensify and alter both virtual and lived relationships. By presenting empirical vignettes and the voiced experiences of Filipino texters, I illuminate intersecting dimensions of conflict in wireless cyberspace. I highlight themes relating to misinterpretation, anger, jealousy, gossip, issues concerning fidelity and deception, the termination of text and/or lived relationships by text, and text stalkers.

I will demonstrate the double-edged nature of texting in the Philippines. Locally appropriated by its users, texting is employed as a strategy to express the taboos of desire and loathing, and thus is utilized both as a romantic tool and a vindictive weapon. Unlike other researchers who posit that texting essentially acts to circumvent potential conflict (e.g. in the Philippines, see Pertierra 2002: 91; and in a comparative study of text exchange in France and Japan (see chapter 6; and in Japan chapter 7), my research indicates that although texting may indeed *sometimes* ward off conflict, it too has insidious, far-reaching effects which are played out among intimates in the social arena. Research findings indicate that texting in the Filipino context is often a form of artillery in personal combats and can, in fact, propel and increase peril among social actors, at times manifesting in different forms of trouble and/or (symbolic) violence.

In discussing the texting phenomena, readers will note my frequent reference to SMS communication as occurring in a site that is cyber. Cyberspace is derived from the Greek lexical item, *kyber*, which means 'to navigate,' and can be understood as a conceptual space within information communication technologies (ICTs) (Dodge and

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[1]See: Ellwood-Clayton, Bella, "Virtual Strangers: Young Love and Texting in the Filipino Archipelago of Cyberspace", in Kristof Nyiri (ed.) *Mobile Democracy: Essays on Society, Self and Politics*, Vienna: Passager Verlag, 2003. pp. 225-239.

Kitchin 2001:1). Hayles (1999)[2] characterizes cyberspace as a distinctive realm of electronic connection that has resulted in the creation of new public arenas. She describes spaces such as these as essentially being a "continually evolving environment which provides an opportunity to meet and interact with others in that environment (p. x). Moreover, the new types of communication made possible through ICTs are "radically restructuring the materiality and spatiality of space and the relationship between people and place" (Dodge and Kitchin 2001: ix), and are thereby extending social action and interaction through new medias (ibid.).

Data in this article derives from ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Kalibo (from 2001-2003) on youth, sexual and reproductive health, and social change. Kalibo is situated in the central Philippines and has a population of 63,000 people, 90 % of whom are Catholic denomination.[3] Data-gathering techniques included standard anthropological methods: in-depth interviewing (with 60 respondents), survey, focus group discussions and participant observation, as well as analysis of popular culture. Through immersion in the everyday lives of my participants, I aimed to illicit contextualised and non-judgemental understandings of young women's lives in terms of their socio-cultural, economic, and historic surroundings and lived experiences.

Research respondents consisted mostly of young women (aged 15-29), although women from older age categories, (young) men, community players, and local health personal also contributed to the research endeavour. I was able to interview women from lower, middle and higher socio-economic brackets, and diverse educational standings.

Due to the ongoing nature of fieldwork, I also observed texters in Manila and in (holiday-destination) Boracay. In addition, by living in the local community, and by being in an age category that was similar to my participants, many of the "research subjects" became my close friends. The nature of our friendships allowed for easy sharing of mutual intimate narratives regarding (text) relationships.

Throughout this work, I employ fictional characters (e.g. Ping-Ping and Albert), based on the précis of accumulative research findings, in order to illustrate typical text-scripts. I borrow the notion of *script* from Gagnon's and Simon's (1986)[4] work on sexual-scripts. Described as "a metaphor for conceptualising the production of behaviour within social life", scripts offer guidance to social actors, such as how operating syntax relates to language (ibid.).

Lexical Moonshine

The ways in which language is "contaminated" in geographical space due to the popularity of text lexicon is being publicly criticized throughout the national forum. Analysis of popular Filipino culture (e.g. newspaper articles, talk shows, radio) and personal anecdotes revealed numerous stories about students handing in essay assignments in text format. (A cultural informant who worked as a high school

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[2] See Hayles, Katherine, "The Condition of Virtuality," in Lunefeld, Peter (ed.) *The Digital Dialectic: New Essays on New Media.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1999.

[3] www.census.gov.ph.

[4] W Simon and J.H Gagnon, "Sexual Scripts: Performance and Change", *Archives of Sexual Behaviour* 15 (1986) pp. 97-120.

teacher in Kalibo verified this as occurring in her classroom). Debates about whether texting, rife with incorrect grammar and misspelling, will result in the bastardization of language are a strong presence in the local media.

Unlike those engaged in Internet dialogue, texter's range of expression is restricted by length, and debatably because of this, is considered limited in emotional substance. However, as I shall demonstrate, texting as a medium of communication is often far from superficial communiqué. The unique brand of shorthand often relied upon by texters can be conceptualised as a form of postmodern lexicon, which I would like to apply as something of a *lexical moonshine*. This term hints to that which is: (stylistically) mixed, illegal (illicit) activities, to moonlight (and thus clandestine meetings), the working of two jobs (or having perhaps a double identity) and potential drunkenness (lack of inhibitions); as does it suggest notions of substance-change or transformation through the distillation process. The concept of lexical moonshine demonstrates how information communication and technologies (ICTs) are providing new forms of communication that blend together written and oral styles to produce new linguistic registers and create new rules of language (see Reid 1994; Cherry 1995). In doing so, they act to challenge modernist forms of communication (Dodge and Kitchin 2001: 21).

Like cell phones themselves (see chapter 2), the linguistic typographies that texters choose to employ are highly individualized. This is especially apparent among youth (e.g. users' choice of full spelling or abbreviation, capitalization decisions, image-making, line spacing, and so on). By reinventing codes and concocting new vocabulary, young texters become co-producers of new styles of communication. Moreover, through the standardisation of their constructions, we can see how young users are agents in reconfiguring language. In many cases, they also exclude others (e.g. parents) who are unaware of these new styles and codes.

Whether a spontaneous or crafted endeavour, many SMS users enjoy the playful elements of text communication. During fieldwork I found that Filipinos send two types of messages to one another, what I have termed 'hallmark' (forwarded) and personal (self-composed) texts. Hallmark texts are often maudlin and corny, but there seems to be no stigma or irony involved in sending or receiving them. These syrupy clichés pertaining to love, God and friendship are sent like chain letters throughout the archipelago (Ellwood-Clayton 2003). Personalized text messages could include: invitations to parties, comments about a mutual friend, questions about a meeting time, or more intimate dialogue.

Riviere and Licoppe (this volume) note how texters in France "take pleasure in playing with words, shaping language, [and] creating ambiguity" (p. 111). I posit that the literary freedom which SMS communication provides its young users, and the inventive way that they, in turn, play with language, is somewhat akin to the work of e.e. cummings. Describing cumming's literary style, poet critic Randall Jarrell stated:

> *cummings is a very great expert in all these, so to speak, illegal syntactical devices: his misuse of parts of speech, his use of negative prefixes, his word-coining, his systematic relation of words that grammar and syntax don't permit us to relate—all this makes him a magical bootlegger or moonshiner of language, one*

> *who intoxicates us on a clear liquor no government has legalized with its stamp.[5]*

Texters too reject convention and propriety in their linguistic expression and thus create a bootlegged or moonshine form of language, which is sometimes used for good, and other times, as this article will testify, different degrees malevolence.

The Philippines—the Text Capital of the World

Before presenting empirical vignettes about hostility in cyberspace, let me first familiarize the reader with the general characteristics of the texting phenomena in the Philippines. I will briefly discuss economic rationale for such high rates of text exchange, explain who texters are, how users acquire cell phones and choose among payment options, and explore the sentiments of those who cannot afford a cell phone. I will then look at how cell phone discourse has infiltrated social life, and the locally perceived benefits of text exchange as likened to specific cultural values and social conditions.

The Philippines is heralded as the texting capital of the world, with one hundred million texts being sent around the archipelago daily (Pertierra 2002).[6] Although there are less cell-phone owners in the Philippines than in other countries, reports confirm that the number of text messages sent by SMS users is double the world average (ibid.). Locally, many users are referred to as "generation texters". They are usually urban or semi-urban citizens, from lower-middle economic brackets and up, and are often students (fieldwork 2001-2003).

A main dominator in why texting has been so readily adopted by Filipinos is due to the inadequate infrastructure and notorious unreliability of traditional landlines (see Strom's 2002)[7]. The popularity of texting correlates directly to its low-cost. To send one text costs a mere Peso (approximately U.S $ 0.02) versus the relatively expensive rates of telephone calls made directly from cell phones. Despite the low-cost of texting, students (especially) use a large percentage of their spending money (given to them by their parents or relatives) on prepaid calling cards, resulting in many parents and/or elders/authority figures/community members, casting disapproving eyes.

Cell phone owners in the Philippines have the option to choose from competing networks (either SMART or GLOBE), and to decide which payment plan they prefer: either 'pay as you go' or a contract with monthly bills. Most Kalibonhons opt for the former as it grants them more flexibility over their spending. Prepaid calling cards can be bought ubiquitously (e.g. *sari sari* [corner] stores, supermarkets) and are offered in varying amounts (e.g. in 200 or 500 Peso quantities). Currently, 30 Peso

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[5] As accessed on the Internet on October 19th, 2003, at site:
http://www.empirezine.com/spotlight/cummings/cummings/com/html.

[6] As reported in Raul Pertierra, Eduardo F. Ugarte, Alicia Pingol, Joel Hermandez and Nikos Lexis Decanay, (2002) *Txting Selves: Cellphone and Philippine Modernity,* Manila: De La Salle University Press.

[7] George Strom, (2002) "The Telephone comes to a Filipino Village", in James E. Katz and Mark Aakhus (eds.), pp. 274-283.

"load" (credit) is now available in the Philippines; the credit however expires within a three-day period.

Exploring the streets of Kalibo, an observer would notice an abundance of young teenagers and impoverished people texting on cell phones. How do the young, and how do the poor, acquire relatively costly cell phones? Questions such as these, concerning the process of obtaining a cell phone, and issues surrounding prioritising a cell phone over other purchases in "third world" or impoverished settings, deserves more academic attention. For example, as in the situation of my neighbours while in the field, would a family that ran a *sari-sari* (corner) store invest in one shared family cell phone, or put their small income towards their son's schooling? My neighbours opted for the highly visual, social status item: the cell phone. However, they would be able to utilize their cell phone as a business tool, for example, by being able to ensure supplies. In addition, by using a cell phone, my neighbours would have more direct control and awareness over their personal spending (versus relying on less regulated landline companies). Thus, their decision to purchase a cell phone can be viewed as a decision to actively embrace entrepreneurial agency.[8]

In terms of acquisition, it is common practice for young people to receive their cell phones as a gift from their parents or an elder sibling (as also reported as occurring among young people in Seoul, South Korea, see Yoon, this volume), or occasionally from a boyfriend, the latter being the ultimate romantic gift within the Filipino context due to the relationship between texting and romance. Besides the common practice of buying oneself a new cell phone from a retail outlet, or less commonly, the black market, other forms of acquisition included purchasing a second hand cell phone, or acquiring a phone through *pamilia* (family) networks (see also Yoon, this volume). In addition, it is common for people to purchase their cell phone through remittances from family members living overseas.

A strong example of how cell discourse has infiltrated social life as a powerful, far-reaching communication device is testified by its instrumental use in the overthrowing of Philippine president Joseph Estrada in January 2001 (for further discussion see Pertierra, 2002 and Paragas, 2003). Texting has become incorporated into local sensibilities, with many users dependent on this type of communication. Increasingly, many respondents—especially young users—consider their cell phone to be a necessity. Numerous humorous stories are told concerning *balik-bayans* (those who leave the country in seek of better employment opportunities—for example as a *yaya* [nanny] in Saudi Arabia) undergoing "text-sickness" as well as homesickness, when divorced from the text-friendly universe of the Philippines. In addition, popular culture analysis (of newspapers, magazines, talk shows, radio) found frequent reference to the onset of mild depression when one's cell phone is either lost or *snatched*. Cell phone snatching is an extremely common occurrence in the Philippines, particularly in highly urbanized areas. Cell phone owners are expected to have acute awareness at all times of the position of their phones and are highly aware of their vulnerability to theft.

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[8] For related discussions regarding the relationship between mobile phone use and small enterprises in the Rwanda setting, see: Donner, Jonathan, (2003) "What Mobile Phones Mean to Rwandan Entrepreneurs" pp 393-411 in Kristof Nyiri (ed.) *Mobile Democracy: Essays on Society, Self and Politics*, Vienna: Passager Verlag.

Users' cell phones are often highly individualized. Personalizing a cell phone is created by adopting new "casing" (the outer plastic which houses the cell phone) which can be bought in a plethora of colours and patterns (zebra, camouflage, cartoons); the use of waterproof protectors (sensible, considering the climate); different coloured screen lights (blue, orange) can be purchased; and phone jewellery may be incorporated (colourful straps, antenna caps, flashing and anti-radiation stickers). The cell phone as a fashion accessory has been reported in numerous cross-cultural settings (e.g. see in Italy, Fortunati 2002: 42-63). To further personalize one's cell phone, special interchangeable ring-tones and logos are commonly adopted. The symbolic values of cell phones vary among cell phone owners, with many young women particularly treating their cell phones with reverence. For example, it is not uncommon for young women to sleep with their cell phones on their pillow, and "dress" them in different looks, and thus attributing them with doll-like or pet qualities. It is interesting to compare this phenomenon to that of "virtual pets" in Japan.[9]

Many Filipinos do not own a cell phone. In general, they are from the eldest and poorest sub-groups of the population. These cyber have-nots are severed from the excitement, enjoyment and convenience of the wireless world, as well as the associated social status of being a cell owner. Almost all of my research respondents who did not own a cell phone expressed some degree of discontent about this. Some cyber have-nots conceptualised texting as a "fad" or "trend".

A small number of cell owners did not consider texting very important. Although they still noted the convenience of the cell phone (in communicating with friends or in terms of business interactions), for some, texting was not considered especially meaningful, e.g. "I just use it for work" said Karen (age 28, manicurist). Others considered the cost for a prepaid card disadvantageous. For example, Brenty (age 23, Mormon[10] high school student) commented that texting is "just important for communication, but not all the time, because I'm saving my load. I prefer to use my money in buying a dress than the cell card". Yet, in the majority of cases, texting has momentous importance in (young) people's social worlds and enhances users' quality of life.

Txt 2 txt

> *Q: Is having a cell phone important?*

> *A: Yeah, that's my best friend (laughs). I can't live without my cell phone.*

What makes texting so enticing, and why has it become omnipresent in the Filipino setting? The following section explores the locally proclaimed benefits associated with SMS. Texting as a medium of communication is perceived to be: a superior form of communication due to mobility and practicality; an enjoyable form of recreation; a vehicle of "connection" which prevails over geographic space; a social support

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[9]Site http://www.virtualpet.com/vp/research/research.htm (as accessed on November 15th, 2003, has an excellent collection of virtual pet research, accompanied with an annotated bibliography.
[10] Unless otherwise stated, all respondents should be presumed to be of Catholic denomination.

resource; means of gaining and nurturing friendships (and boyfriends) and; to "express what you cannot say" or, because it enables emotional bravery. Below, each of these chief attributes is discussed.

Texting: A superior form of communication: mobility and practicality

The use of the cell phone for young mobile youth whose daily life may often involve several venues ensures continuity of contact at all times. SMS users found texting to be a superior form of communication due to attributes associated with mobility and practicality. In particular, texting was viewed as a medium that offers social assistance and cohesion to desired communicators. Not only was texting cited as "great for emergencies", it was especially favoured for its speed: "through text you can say it right away". Speaking about the convenience of SMS, one respondent said: "Unlike before, you have to call on the phone and you cannot reach them if they're not at home or [at the] office; at least now you can reach them anywhere". Accordingly, a chief benefit of SMS was being able to track/have access to (or leave a message for) the person one desires to communicate with.

In addition, text communication was found to be "easy" at an operational level and inexpensive. For those in the formal labour industry, SMS was commonly cited as improving business relationships and making work-related interactions swifter. Thus, youth are concerned with removing spatial boundaries and cell phones allow for control over other people's movements, which is particularly important for business partnership. These combined benefits further SMS into local status as a superior communication device.

Texting: An enjoyable form of recreation

A pastime oftentimes acts as a pleasurable diversion away from the concerns of everyday life; it relaxes and amuses. Respondents perceived texting as a pastime that was "fun" and entertaining. It was also conceptualised as an activity that acts to alleviate boredom (as also reported by respondents in Yoon's 2003 study, this volume). Describing this, Arwen, a twenty-three year old college student, explains:

> *It's just a pastime when you're bored. You text so you can have communications [sic]. Like when I'm alone, my uncle goes out, I don't have anything to do, [so] I text.*

In addition, fieldwork supports that in Kalibo, office and government workers, as well as many young professionals and those in the service industry, are positioned in relaxed atmospheres and allotted with generous 'free time.' This situation allows for dense amounts of discreet text exchange during working hours. For example, one of my research respondents working as a lawyer receives up to 6-10 texts from her boss *before* her lunchtime break, on a daily basis.

Here we can see the enjoyment associated with the repetitive nature of SMS-ing versus other forms of enjoyment, which require different degrees of imagination and skill (e.g. reading) or interpersonal skills (face-to-face communication).

Texting: SMS connection prevailing over geographical space

Keeping in touch with a loved one (family member or friend) and being able to "communicate even if you're far apart" was expressed as a major advantage of text communication. In a national economic situation of high relocation and migration overseas,[11] participants found texting to be an affordable, fast and endearing way to keep in touch, "so I feel like they're here with me". Said by one respondent: "keeping in touch with someone far away, you text *ok na yon* [that would be ok], even if you can't hear his voice", even if a loved one is far away, it "feels like he is just nearby". Texting supports the maintenance of social relationships despite crossing regional boundaries. SMS provides a financially solvent and particularly rewarding form of adhesion in maintaining familial and social relationships—a domain almost rhetorically important (Tan 2002) in the Filipino setting.

Texting: A social support resource

> *Sometimes the messages my friends send me are inspirational and they make me feel better when I'm down. Sometimes it's coincidental they send me messages that I need to hear. (Melinda, age 29, married mother, housewife).*

Many respondents articulated the emotional support associated with text exchange. If, for example, a person is feeling sad or lonesome, she can find solace in receiving an unexpected kind text message or she can communicate her predicament to a *textpal* (a close platonic text friend). As one respondent explained, "it uplift[s] you when you are sad. Then you can talk to someone, so it helps". Or another: "Picture messages and some messages are quite significant in your daily life. It's good to have someone reminding you how wonderful life is!" Certainly, texting can operate as a celebrator of life, friendship and love. For example, receiving a text such as the following in the morning could instil pleasurable feelings: "SACRED HEART of JESUS CHRIST shower d person readn dis wid ur blesngs 2day & always."[12] (Here we can see how the symbolic value of text messages whereby they do not need to be individualized—as the meaning is attached to the shared values incorporated into messages.)

Even if the said person is not feeling particularly "blue," text messages are found to provide inspiration to those who send and receive them. Texting can often be perceived as social 'pick-you-ups.' The exchanges act as reminders of faith, love and friendship, and reinforce cultural values of enjoying the good that life has to offer despite numerous external hardships. A joke received during a "brown-out" (loss of electricity), or a poem about friendship, charge texters with a sense of being cared for and remembered. Texting then acts as a form social or emotional hospitality—hospitality being a highly honoured Filipino (e.g. Agoncillo and Guerrero, 1977[13])—

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[11] For example see, "Government debate rages over foreign workers", *The Post,* Jan 16 – Feb 12, 2003, p. 6.
[12] Due to space limitations, I will not further discuss dissemination of religious ideas through the vehicle of SMS. However, I am currently working on an article that responds to these themes
[13] Agoncillo, Teodoro and Guerrero, Milagros,(1977) *History of the Filipino People.* R.P Garcia: Quezon City.

and certainly Kalibonhon (Reyes-Tinagan, 2001[14]) trait. Thus, inspirational text messages can be understood as goodwill enacted on a micro level through cyber means, and enacting goodwill, vis-à-vis text communication, only takes minutes—or even seconds.

This notion of goodwill can be likened to Mauss's (1924) conceptions of gift giving and reciprocity (a belief shared by Taylor and Harper, 2002; Kasesniemi and Rautianen, 2002; Pertierra; and Yoon 2003). In *The Gift*, Mauss argues that reciprocity is not only situated through economic exchange, but is found to operate in social systems. Mauss argues that parties are obligated to exchange goods *appropriately* and this is dependent on the specific cultural context. Texting can be viewed as a somewhat balanced form of reciprocity, where like is exchanged for like (text for text). In addition, although there is no time set for "text repayment," differing assumptions regarding *appropriate* SMS communication is cause for strife among social actors, as I discuss later.

Texting: Gaining and nurturing friendships (and boyfriends)

Texting has a strong presence in the enriching of social relationships. As reported as occurring in other settings (e.g. see Ling and Yttri, 2002: 160; Yoon, this volume), in the Philippines the mobile phone operates to assist the development of newly acquired friendships. Young people, in particular, spoke of SMS as a means to gain new friends: "you get to know different people and you get new acquaintances". Texting is also said to support friendship, by way of "thoughtfulness", and was perceived as a tool to nurture close relationships. Texting was also reported to be a key method in finding, experimenting and nurturing amorous relationships (see Ellwood-Clayton 2003).

People form various types of text-relationships in numerous ways, resulting in diverse outcomes. Two areas are central to understanding the configurations of text relationships—the degree of prior knowledge of the texter and textee, and the overall type of exchange in terms of emotional intention. The chief formulae in understanding text relationships is whether the parties stem from existing or new acquaintanceship, whether their central relationship is cyber or embodied, and whether the exchange is platonic, possibly amorous (in many cases, this is quite difficult to determine)—or clearly amorous.

In terms of existing acquaintanceship, people text acquaintances, friends, family members, and/or work colleagues. Through exchange of texts, these relationships are often fostered and in some cases, altered. In addition, people text existing amorous relations, i.e. possible suitors, suitors, boyfriends and husbands, thereby also (often fostering) and changing relationships. People also text as a method to make *new* acquaintances, friends and romantic relations.

The process of turning a stranger into an acquaintance, an acquaintance into a friend, and to convert friends and acquaintances into romantic partners, is heightened through text communication. Anonymous texters act as the wild card in the formation of text

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[14] See for example, Reyes-Tinagan, Marcella. (2001) *Viva! Kay Senor Santo Nino. Viva!* National Commission for Culture and the Arts: Manila.

relationships. Appearing mysteriously from the abyss of the cyber universe, high rates of "anonymous texters" are found across the Filipino archipelago. In most cases, mutual friends aid anonymous texters by giving them the cell phone numbers that are so desired. Another common means to locate a person desiring a "textmate" (close text friend) is through personal ads in the back of comic and music magazines, as well as in text how-to books. The following example comes from "Text Friends (Text me Forever 5): The Texter's Latest Guide on Friendship, Dating, Romance and Real Love."[15]

`Hey watz up? Txt me if ur doin' nothing…c")`
 	
`Kid/ 20/ f`
`09182489784`
	`I luv sweet msgs. But I love most… sweet people!`
	
	`Rose/ 23/ f`
	`O9195680530`

After initial preliminary questions—usually finding out the gender, age and availability of a textee—or almost immediately, the anonymous texter will ask: "`can I b ur txtm8?`" (can I be your textmate?). It is not unusual for virtual strangers (anonymous texters and receiving textees) to later form (varying degrees of intimate) relationships.

Texting: As enabling emotional bravery

> *Well, you know sometimes you cannot express [yourself]*
> *personally, so you can resolve it through texting (Inday, age 33,*
> *young professional).*

Finally, texting was frequently conceptualised as a medium where respondents felt comfortable communicating otherwise difficult information. Users' acknowledgment of SMS as a medium to express what they would not feel comfortable communicating in person, manifests itself richly when analysing the expression of desire and loathing. Texting was found to instil personal bravery among its users (as findings from studies conducted by Kasesniemi and Yttri, 2002, and Pertierra, 2002, concur). Key in terms of romance and conflict, texting can be conceptualised as enabling emotional bravery, sometimes offering its users a medium of personal liberation from perceived restraints of traditional communication.

In summary, we can see how the use and appreciated advantages of SMS relate to specific social conditions (e.g. poor telecommunications infrastructure, notions of alienation in the modern world due to urbanization, relocation) which ultimately lead to fragmented communication, of which SMS is one way of combating that isolation. The conflicting nature of texting, which is itself, fragmented, but also serves to overcome fragmentation of an individual, is also linked to cultural values (e.g. the importance of maintaining familial relations).

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[15] King, David. 2001. Wordlink Books: Manila.

Moreover, texting provides a vehicle in which to communicate privately in a setting of general governmental and religious conservatism (CPA 1999: 42, Law 2000). Interestingly, this conservative climate is juxtaposed to strong operating romantic discourses (Tan 2001: 82). During fieldwork, respondents described the "Filipino" disposition as being "emotional", "loving", and "romantic": a "sentimental" people. Indeed, ideas of romantic love are pervasive and central in the social scripts involving dating, courtship and marriage in the Filipino setting (Tan 2001: 82).

Thus, the relationship between technologies, and the ways in which different groups use these technologies, benefit from anthropological analysis. As Penley and Ross (1991) have so aptly stated:

> *Technologies are not repressively foisted onto passive populations...*
> *they are developed at any one time and place in accord with a*
> *complex set of existing rules or rational procedures, and... popular*
> *desires.*

Technologies are incorporated in relation to users' desires. As addressed by Riviere and Licoppe, this volume, although the ways in which texting is appropriated is culturally and historically specific, within a wider historical framework, localized findings can generate overall insights about the direction of interpersonal communications.

Part 2

Albert & Raquel

> *Three months ago, Albert texted Raquel for the first time and, in doing so, turned Raquel's life upside down.*
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> *She'd been hanging out at a new fast-food restaurant that had opened in Kalibo, enjoying halo-halo (a cool dessert) and the air-conditioned relief from the outside heat when she received a text from an unknown number. It read:* "`helo Raquel, havn a gud day?`"
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> *She immediately texted back:* "`who s dis?`"
>
> "`a special frend… I hope???`"
>
> "`who gave u my name n numbr?`" *she then texted.*
>
> "`I hav d best connectns n town ☺!`"
>
> *Raquel let the cell phone sit in her lap, took a spoonful of ice cream, mused about her response for a moment and then sent:* "`wel, atleast uv got gud taste, huh?`"

> *At that moment, Ping-Ping started back towards the car. Seeing*
> *her, Albert quickly slid his cell phone into his pocket and turned to*
> *help his wife with her shopping bags.*

Equipped with a cell phone and linked to disembodied cyberspace, texters experience a release from geographical constraints, as well as freedom from context-based interpersonal communication. Other researchers such as Pertierra (2002: 91) maintain that texting generally aids in *avoiding* possible confrontations and conflict in the Philippine setting. Riviere and Licoppe (this volume) also assert that SMS acts in a similar way in France, i.e. "mobile messaging becomes more and more seen as a resource to avoid that potential violence and minimize vulnerability in actual interactions" (p 121). I argue, however, that particularly for young people who have less experience expressing "embarrassing feelings" within a culture that seeks to avoid interpersonal conflict (see e.g. Tan 2002), that feelings of both affection *and* odium are expressed with less restraint through mobile communication.

Indeed, users rely on texting to coordinate meeting times and for other trivial social detailing. Yet, it is also used to voice, to give life, to passions. This section of the chapter examines symbolic violence as experienced through texting. As Rapport & Overing (2000: 382-384) state, violence can only be understood anthropologically as a meaningfully experienced within the context of socio-cultural interactions.

Fighting among friends and lovers: 2 txt or nt 2 txt?

Fighting by text among friends and/or boyfriends was reported to be a common occurrence. Many of the respondents spoke freely of how easily they found it to "tell someone off" by way of text. This idea can be linked to Internet "flaming:" characterised by foul language and the abusive/disruptive posting of personal attacks and/or insulting, argumentative, or chastising messages. The palpable expression of anger through this medium was first brought to my attention during a focus group discussion with 15-year-old high school students (as the following excerpt demonstrates):

> ***Hershy:*** *There are many people who deceive through text. There*
> *are those bastos [rude people]. If you're angry at a person, you*
> *just text him and he won't even know it's you texting him. You*
> *can text gago [crazy/stupid things], and whatever bad terms you*
> *want to say, that you can't say in person, you just text.*

> ***Bella:*** *So you do that? You quarrel with someone through text?*

> ***Group:*** *"Yeah". "Sometimes". "Grabe" (so bad)!*

When Hershey states that "he won't even know that it's you", she is referring to deceiving a textee by either contacting him whilst using a different SIM card—owning multiple SIM cards is becoming increasingly common—and thus becoming unidentifiable by cellular number, or using someone else's phone who the receiving textee would not have filed in their address book. Here too, the overt expressing of

anger/dislike provides a solid example of how cyberspace 'permits' identity exploration (see Turkle 1995), especially with what is associated with the taboo. Following this theme, Gloria (age 27, young professional) explains:

> *…because in texting, you can say anything you want to. Example,*
> *if you don't have the courage to say it face-to-face, then you can*
> *text him, say, I don't know, you don't like him, or you don't like the*
> *way he acts or she acts, whatever.*

Texting boosts users to communicate in ways they would not in person. One responded commented: "For instance, I'm really mad at this person and I can't tell it [sic] to his face…[she texts him] I really swear at him! I say to myself, okay, I swore at him, so what?!" Respondents articulated a changeover of character, made possible through the technology of SMS: "I'm not a sarcastic person, but when it comes to texting, it's easy for me to be harsh with someone", said one respondent. By assuming a different identity, texters embody the role of actors.

Specifically, perceived *bastos* (rude) text messages/"jokes" (some accompanied with "lewd" graphic images) served as a catalyst for the onslaught of text-conflict. During fieldwork, for example, one of my *bakla* (homosexual) friends forwarded to me the following message, of which many of a similar calibre are passed around the archipelago:

```
d polic hav found a badly decomposd body o a
womn w no recognizble featrs xcpt a rily BIG
VAGINA. So, m jst chekn- r u alryt? Pls
reply.16
```

A large number of interview respondents reported being upset by *bastos* "jokes" such as these—"usually, the green jokes which I really hate. Sometimes it's below the belt, right"? In turn, many retaliated with text combat. For example, Cherry recalls: "There was a boy who texted me some rude words, so I text him back. I told him if he wanted to text anybody just show some respect". Examples such as this demonstrate how social norms of face-to-face communication are not necessarily adhered to when texting. Social boundaries are crossed in terms of age, gender and social class, as well as in terms of the content of communication.

Rivierer and Licoppe (this volume) highlight Japanese texters' use of pictograms to relay "serious, non-anecdotal feelings." Specifically, when angry, respondents spoke of using images such as a fist or tiger to convey their antagonism. The authors argued that in Japan SMS and pictograms are becoming favoured ways to express strong feelings, versus their findings in France, whereby SMS is often used to downplay conflict. We have been speaking about symbolic violence; however, in terms of physical violence texting too acts as a medium to intimidate. For example, according to the Edinburgh News, SMS accounts for more than half of the threats of violence and/or intimidation in The Lothians area in Scotland.[17]

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[16]This translates as: The police have found a badly decomposed body of a woman with no recognizable features except a really big vagina. So, I'm just checking—are you all right? Please reply.

[17] See Mitchell, Simone, (2003) "RU IN2 SMS, THE GR8 NU WAY 4WARD," in City Careers, November 27th, p 9, Melbourne, Australia.

Albert & Raquel

> *After determining that Raquel's acquaintance had been the one who gave Albert her cell number, the two settled into regular correspondence. Over the months of June, July and August, Raquel received texts from Albert on almost a daily basis. He would text her in the morning to wish her a good day, again, in the evening to make sure she had eaten. He filled her hours with small text surprises: jokes, sweet quotes, compliments and flirty banter, which she grew to treasure more than any exchanges she had with people in her physical life. At night she dreamt of Albert and in the morning she woke thinking of him.*
>
> *By September she knew what she was feeling for Albert was love. Unable to suppress it any longer, she texted:* `"I thnk we shud meet"`.
>
> *Albert didn't reply for two whole days, and when he finally did, Raquel was at a loss to understand his message:*
>
> `"o o (yes), lets meet… pero (but) it cn nvr wrk btwn us, I have a secreto (secret). Dnt b disapntd n m, sige (okay?)."`[18]

Generally the domain of flirting too is a site of cyber contention. Text communication is often ambiguous (for example, is his `"gud nyt, sweet dreams"` text platonic or amorous?) and thus rife for misunderstandings and possible offence. That texting provides a space whereby communication is perceived to be less significant than a telephone call in terms of dating scripts, or face-to-face encounters, allows users to send messages which could be interpreted in many ways, to transmit double entendres and feel out the response of a given textee. An example of this may be a man sending his girlfriend's female friend the following SMS:[19]

HELLO	GooD Morning aND	S W E ET DAY	t A K E	C A R E AND	G O D	B L E S S	U U UU U U	e --,) e	((--,) ((

How would the young woman respond to this text? What if more kept being sent, of an increasing romantic nature? For example: "*Everyone wants 2 b the sun dat lights up your life. But id rather b ur moon, so I can shine on u during your darkest hour when your sun isn't around.*" What if the man's girlfriend found out about these texts exchanges? Although flirting by text can create discord, issues related to notions of

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[18] This translates as: Yes, let's meet, but it can never work out between us, I have a secret. Don't be disappointed in me, okay?

[19] This text was found in King's (2001: 58-61) text how-to book.

perpetual contact were heralded as one of the most significant causes of strife among mobile users.

Shunning notions of perpetual contact

> *On a tram in Melbourne in the late spring of 2003, I overheard the beginnings of an argument between a young couple two seats behind me.*
>
> *"Well, why didn't you answer it?" the man accused.*
>
> *"My hands were wet," she tried to explain, speaking quickly. "The phone was in my bag."*

In Katz's 2002 work, *Perpetual Contact*, he writes about ownership of a mobile phone as creating "the internal psychological feeling of being accessible or having access". As a consequence, social relationships are changing due to new pressures and obligations (p. xxi). Gergen (2002) specifically discusses this in terms of the notion of "absent presence" whereby "one is physically present but absorbed by a technologically mediated world of elsewhere" (p. 227).

Interview respondents reported quarrelling among their same-sex friends due to perceived obligations related to connectivity, e.g. "We usually end up fighting when I don't reply as soon as they [my friends] want me to". Certainly, evaluating the time lag between sending and receiving a text message serves a common cyber bone of contention when messages are not immediate returned. The time of text response provides a tidy way to judge the nature of one's relationship. Moreover, *not* responding to a text sends a larger message than any written form of communication could. A non-response creates not only the feeling of absent presence, but more so, the sentiment of *present* absence presence: the recognition that one's gesture has been regarded as insignificant.[20] Texters, aware of their obligation to respond, have adopted routine comebacks in order to justify their unaccountability. Whether true or not, `"low bat"`, `"no signal"`, or `"no load"`, all work.

We can see how strife originates directly from this new sense of accountability. This plays out in terms of romance too, whereby perpetual contact and accountability uproot individual's privacy within romantic couplings. Amplifying the agony of the "waiting by the phone" scenario, mobile communication intensifies psychological levels of anxiety among romantic intimates. Rather than leaving a message on a lover's answering machine and resigning oneself to wait until the desired party is home (which is impossible to determine), texters have the ability for *constant* access, and are thus "waiting by the phone" in all locations all day and all night.

Fieldwork indicated that many couples fight by way of text. Below Lorna speaks to this:

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[20] I would like to thank Mark Poster for pointing this out to me during a shared happenstance flight across continental Europe in spring, 2003.

> *Yes, I guess one example is my boyfriend before [previous boyfriend], 'coz I can't always keep track of him, he always turns off the cell phone—especially when he goes out with his barkadas (group of male friends) —maybe [there are] other girls around* (age 24, service industry).

Lorna's comment highlights some interesting themes. Lorna states clearly that she relied on cell phone discourse to "keep track of her boyfriend"—not dissimilar to the desire of parents to monitor children though cellular communication. Here, we could argue that the cell phone was being used in attempts to monitor, and therefore potentially control a lover's actions. Lorna's boyfriend, aware of this, was able to counter her attempt to control his behaviour by simply turning off his cyber gate: denying her access and thereby disavowing her perpetual contact. Lorna further speculates that her boyfriend may have shut his phone off because "other girls" were "around".

The story of another young couple I knew in Kalibo can be juxtaposed neatly to Lorna's account. Maria, a young middle class high school student, and her older *noybo* (boyfriend) Joni, demonstrated their unimpeachably to one another by forming a cyber pact. The couple decided to switch cell phones for "an entire week". By allowing each other privy to their personal cyber universes, they were able to prove that nothing romantically untoward was occurring, and possibly alleviate fears and solidify trust in their relationship.

While in the field I had a young friend (age 25) named Honey. Her boyfriend was so jealous that she would be castigated if she did not answer his telephone call when out in the evenings. His jealousy became extreme. For example, after asking her at which establishment she would be patronizing, he would later text, asking: `wat color dres r u wern?`[21] Discerning that Honey's dress was pink, he would call the establishment and ask a staff member if a woman wearing a pink dress with Honey's height and hair length was indeed there, and then further question the employee about her companions. Sometimes, if, disliking the information, he would call Honey's best friend—who was usually by her side—and interrogate her about Honey's activities. Then, when Honey found herself next with her boyfriend, he would often reveal the different ways he monitored her behaviour and question her about the omissions she made by text about her activities.

Although the narrative of Honey's boyfriend reveals an instance of an excessively jealous man (rather than an instance of general behaviour, although certainly jealousy plays a strong role in both men's and women's sexualities in the local context), this brief anecdote points to the far reaching effects advanced technologies have in terms of surveillance of the romantic other. It sheds light on issues associated with controlling behaviour, and highlights how new forms act to restrict women and men in their social activities. It takes little imagination to envisage how picture and video messaging services too will contribute—or reek havoc—upon couples in romantic unions, in terms of monitoring each other. (As would it not be difficult to imagine how these same services could promote sexual exploration and heighten long-distance love affairs.)

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[21] This translates as: what colour dress are you wearing?

Perpetual contact, or rather, perpetual access to the other, is made possible merely by having the cell phone number of another party. Even if one desires to discontinue communication, mobile telephony means one does not necessarily choose whom they receive messages from.

The *text* stalker

Frequently, amorous feelings are not felt both parties, and young romances turn sour. In the wireless Philippines, cases such as these commonly result in text stalking; there are no names given to this widespread text-type within the local vernacular. This term denotes the receiving of drunken and/or angry and/or love-filled texts or phone calls from admirers, ex-boyfriends, or anonymous texters. Occasionally exchanges such as these turn hostile and result in women desiring a new SIM card—the only way to ensure discontinued communication.

This also relates to the dangers of the spontaneous text—watch out for drinking, tantrums and text declarations. Here we see users initiating crimes, or rather, texts of passion. "Missed calls" and "oops texts" (pretending one didn't mean to text or call the person) are also strategies to track unavailable heart-throbs, all different methods in the game of love and war (by text). There is no legal precedent to establish text-stalking as harassment in the Philippines.

Another serious, far-reaching effect of SMS is increased access to the commercial sex industry. For example, through texting, clients can easily arrange underground meetings with commercial sex workers, at sites that may situate them as vulnerable. Or, as found in the classifieds of the Australian Herald Sun[22], women advertising commercial sexual relations through SMS can also increase their risks.

Symbolic violence: Gossiping by text

Gossip is an extremely popular activity in the Kalibonhon, and arguably Filipino landscape (e.g. see Rodell 2002: 196-199); in fact, it is so widespread, that many refer to it as the national pastime (with SMS texting running a close second). Texting offers a way to increase the speed of disseminating gossip, rumour and/or slander and thus acts to escalate symbolic violence.

In Kalibo, public presentations of the self are highly gendered, and the potential cost of damaging one's reputation acts to both restrict and define women's public actions and the expression of their desires. Women are aware that their public actions, if at all inadmissible, will likely surface vis-à-vis word of mouth. Thus, in order to counter potential damage to one's reputation, young women's desires are often met through surreptitious means (with texting undoubtedly aiding the process, e.g. the arrangement of clandestine meetings). However, research findings indicated that the chief threat in the management of young women's social reputations was *tsismis* (gossip). Moreover, gossiping by way of text was reported to occur frequently among both men and women. It is not difficult to imagine how widespread access to an instantaneous communication device within enhanced social networks will heighten the ability to

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[22] Herald Sun, Saturday, January 3rd, 2004, p. 74.

spread rumour and have insidious affects for people attempting to pursue private pleasures and or activities. Discussing the relationship between gossip and power, Manderson and Allotey (2003: 16) have written:

> *Embedded within gossip is the ability to control. Conventionally, gossip controls individual behaviour and mortality, including sexuality, because the stories of which it consists operate as moral tales for both the tellers and the listeners: either might be the next subject of rumour.*

Thus, *tsismis* in Kalibo can be conceived as sometimes operating as symbolic violence, with a high cost ratio (as affecting women's reputation and thus future prospects). Texting provides a neat avenue to destroy another's reputation speedily—an instantaneous way to disseminate fact *or fiction.*

Fidelity, adultery & something in between

> *On a ferry in the Visayas (the central Philippines), I began speaking to a young Catholic priest in his mid-thirties. Although he provided service in Manila, he was here visiting his sick nanay (mother). Settling comfortably in our seats, by a wide window that housed cerulean waves, we talked about our lives. After learning that my project centred on sexuality, and that I was becoming increasingly interested in how texting was affecting romantic relationships, the Priest shook his head.*
>
> *"So many times in confession," he told me, "men speak about cheating on their wives. That they found new girlfriends by texting."*

Raquel's Dilemma

> *Raquel was in love. So in love. Albert was funny, and sweet, and when she had a problem, he's the one she turned to. They met last month, in person for the first time. Met, during a festival in the poblacion (town centre), so that it was crowed and no one would report to her family that they saw her with an unknown man. He looked as she had imagined he would, not really gwapo (handsome), but strong-looking and kind. And she could tell from his eyes that he felt the same way about her.*
>
> *Sometimes he called on the landline now too. Their talks had become more serious. He eventually confided in her about his secreto (secret)—he had a child, a little girl who was six already. But he hadn't explained where the mother of the baby was or whether they had married or not…..*

Since in virtual relationships there are no non-verbal cues to go by, dishonesty and miscommunication abound. Texters can own different SIM cards and thus numbers, and potentially, identities. Locally, people are aware of the probability of deception,

e.g.: "You know that a single person can own so many numbers because of the SIM, *di ba* [right]? You have to be very careful" (Novie, age 24, service industry).

When texting the opposite sex (as in Internet communication), traditional lines of faithful/or not so are blurry. To physically flirt with someone standing beside you is something—there is some form of commitment in the act, as it is seen, dually experienced, tangible. But, when the entirety of the crime is the typing of generally unimpeachable prose: who can contend? The fact of the matter is, this subtle, safe boy-girl texting is as perilous as can be, for the movement from friend *lang* (only) into something 'in between' is as swift as the transmitting of the message itself.

Texting is a handy tool for the cheater and cheatee. During fieldwork, numerous people informed me that married men often pretend they are single and woo women by text. (No such cases of married women were thus reported; however married women do flirt with single men, although their intentions are rarely to consummate this in an embodied way.) By the time the texting parties have met, usually the duped woman is already 'in love' with the married man, making future physical transgressions more probable.

Breaking up in cyberspace: rituals to forget

> *Raquel turned to me, "I erased his number".*
>
> *'You didn't'! I cried. Poor Raquel, this was serious.*
>
> *Albert had come clean. He was in a loveless marriage, only*
> *marrying the woman when she became e pregnant. It was Raquel*
> *who he desired, to cherish, to be close with. His feelings were real.*
> *Raquel knew this to be true. Knew he was a good man, who she*
> *had grown to love, but a man who was someone else's husband.*
> *When Ping-Ping had texted her three nights before, avenging her*
> *to never text her husband again, Raquel knew she must stop, and*
> *trusted in God that someone more suitable would come along to*
> *love her.*

As the research indicated, many modern relationships in the Philippines either originate or are nurtured through text discourse, and so too, texting plays a vital role in 'breaking up.' Both virtual and embodied couples were found to use texting as a stratagem to terminate romantic relations. For example, as found especially within the younger cohort, once a woman finds herself unhappy in a virtual or lived relationship, it would be common for her to simply text the (young) man "don't text me anymore", signifying her desire to terminate future communication. Sometimes this wish was expressed in person, or through the telephone, as Gloria described below:

> *Last April I had a textmate. He asked me if we can see each other in*
> *person. Then, I kept on replying to him. He was so annoying. So, I*
> *got mad at him. I called him up and told him not to text me anymore*
> *(age 17, high school student).*

At this juncture, it would be common for the woman to *erase* her former partner's number from her cell directory—symbolizing the act of forgetting, a significant ritual of lovers breaking up or not being textmates any longer. (Friends too use this ritual of erasing a contact's name from their cyber address book if they have been hurt and aim to discontinue the friendship.) In both platonic and romantic relationships then, if the former friend or lover does text again, since their names have been removed from the said cell directory, the textee would most likely reply, "`who s dis?`"[23] an insult and overt cultural indicator that the former person has already been "erased" them from the other party's cell phone, and thus vanished from their ordered world of importance. Here we can se the concept of *virtual exclusion* at play, whereby mobile communication acts to severe rather than enhance communication among social actors.

Although the act itself takes only a few seconds, when the techno-savy youth of the Philippines neatly "erase" a person's cyber identification from their cell directory, the emotions involved range in intensity and can cause great suffering. If the relationship had solely been a cyber exchange, often both texters would mourn the end of their cyber time together but perhaps contain some hope, as they knew there were numerous other texters to find in the unknown world of cyber exchange. If the relationship was, however, an embodied affair (although some couples end their relationships amicably), most avoid their ex like the plague.

Conclusion

In summary, we can see how the use and appreciated advantages of SMS relates to specific social conditions (e.g. poor telecommunications infrastructure, notions of alienation in the modern world due to urbanization, relocation) and are linked to cultural values (e.g. the importance of maintaining familial relations, as enabling emotional bravery, within the context of strong discourses of romantic love and of general governmental and religious conservatism). Texting provides a vehicle to express desire and loathing, and is done so in abundance in the Filipino setting. Misinterpretation, fighting, jealousy, the monitoring of romantic couples (leading to interpersonal surveillance), texting as a device to ascertain whether a lover is up to no good, gossiping and slander, repetitive inappropriate text communication (leading to possible harassment), increased access to the commercial sex industry, and adultery are all increased through widespread mobile use. The relationship between advanced technology and intimate relationships, for example, Princess Dianna using number recall to determine Charles's last call was placed to Camilla, a wife's discovery of gay porn on her husband's PC, or a girlfriend's reading a love-text he sent someone else, all illuminate the ways in which technology is and will alter intimate relationships. Mobile communication raises questions about this, as well as issues associated with appropriate contact, privacy invasion, and issues relating to social control.

I will conclude this paper by rescripting my views about contemporary urban legends in the Philippines. I had argued that:

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[23] Only a few respondents had older cell phone models that were not capable of storing names as well as telephone numbers. In such cases, respondents often memorized the numbers (particularly the last few digits) of more intimate contacts.

texting in the Philippines is transforming conventional fairytales. Not unlike a Cinderella-themed narrative: the ballroom can be conceived as cyberspace, where instead of dancing, Cinderella and the Prince text one another. The fit of the glass slipper can be compared to text skill. The fairy godmother can be envisioned as technology; the evil stepsisters: a stolen phone, a faulty SIM card, and no signal (Ellwood-Clayton 2003: 235).

However, taking into account ethnographic findings presented in this article, we could see how easy it would be for one sister to sabotage Cinderella's chance with the Prince, (by perhaps stealing his cell phone and telling the prince she no longer loved him and to not text again). Or perhaps the Prince, after winning his sweet Cinderella, would get bored and begin initiating anonymous text relationships with other women.

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