Non-Instructional Student Texting in the Classroom: Self-Control and Individual Differences

Terry F. Pettijohn II
Coastal Carolina University

Joel R. Knowles
Myrtle Beach, SC

Terry F. Pettijohn
The Ohio State University
Marion

Abstract

College students (N=221) responded to a series of questions regarding their texting behavior and individual differences. Students who text in class scored lower on measures of self-control, scored higher on friendliness, closeness, and compulsive communication measures, and had lower grade-point-averages than classroom non-texters. Implications for classroom learning are discussed.

Introduction

Previous research has found that texting during class both inhibits the cognitive learning of texters and interferes with the learning environment by serving as a distraction to other students as well as to teachers (Junco & Cotton, 2012; Wei, Wang, & Klausner, 2012; Williams et al., 2011). The present research is intended to broaden understanding of the factors which motivate or otherwise contribute to in-class texting behavior. Classroom texts were predicted to score lower on trait self-control, lower on self-regulated learning, have lower grade-point-averages, and score higher on friendliness and communication compulsiveness than non-texters. Correlations between classroom texts and these measures were expected to follow the same pattern.

Method

Participants

Two hundred and twenty-one college students participated in the current research in exchange for credit towards a research participation requirement in an Introductory Psychology or extra credit in an upper-level Psychology course. The average age of participants was 19.62 (SD=2.62). Sixty-one percent were women and 70.1% were Caucasian. 20% were African-American, 12% were Hispanic, 14% American Indian, 1.4% Asian, 1.4% Pacific Islander, and 3.6% indicated other race. Class rank included 31.7% freshman, 40.7% sophomores, 17.2% juniors, 7.7% seniors, and 1.8% other.

Materials & Procedure

Participants completed 1) the Self-Control Scale (Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004); 2) the Self-Regulation subscale of the Motivational Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990); 3) the Talkaholic Scale (McCroskey & Richmond, 1993); 4) the Friendliness Closeness Inventory (Polimons, Hardie, & Buzwell, 2002); 5) the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (Rentsfrow, Gosling, & Swann, 2003); and 6) questions measuring in-class texting behavior, beliefs regarding whether texting in-class affects learning, general texting habits, and demographic questions.

Results

How many text messages do you, on average, READ in class?
7.10 (SD = 10.33)

How many text messages do you, on average, WRITE in class?
6.64 (SD = 10.46)

How often do you text during class?

Sex Differences

Females reported sending and receiving more texts in class than males, but these differences were not statistically significant (p=.18 and .16, respectively).

Selected References


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Contact Information

Terry F. Pettijohn II, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology
Coastal Carolina University
P.O. Box 23943
Campion, South Carolina
29518-0454
Phone: 843-394-6647
Email: pettijohn@coastal.edu

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