

# So Close: Measuring Social Distance in Virtual Relationships

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*The objective of the study is to create a measure for social distance in virtual relationships developed through online interaction. The researchers patterned their scale from the Bogardus Social Distance Scale, incorporating the recommendations of Michael Heraghty (2002). The researchers used quantitative and qualitative methods in determining the concepts and variables that could be included in their social distance scale for virtual relationships. Selection of informants and respondents was done using the purposive method of non-probability sampling. Focus group discussions and online interviews were first conducted to determine the important variables and appropriate arrangement of items in the social distance scale. Subsequently, social distances toward different kinds of people and the validity and reliability of the variables in the scale were examined through surveys, the primary quantitative research method of this study. Generally, survey results showed that respondents were most likely to interact with females, people within their age bracket, and people residing within their city or municipality. In contrast, they were unlikely to pursue any interaction with gays and lesbians. Survey findings also showed that online interactions start with including a person in someone's messenger account; conversations – even those about non-personal topics – can only take place after the respondents have added a person in their messenger list.*

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## Introduction

Technological advancement has brought about tremendous effects on the way people live. Changes are apparent even in the way they communicate and as Marshall McLuhan puts it,

“nothing remains untouched by communication technology” (Griffin, 2003: 344). Today, with the development of computer-mediated communication (CMC), people can easily build relationships even when separated by time and space, thus the term “virtual relationship.” The number of those engaged in this kind of relationship is continuously growing simply because more and more people now have access to the Internet. The researchers’ objective is to find out the different ways by which people reckon their virtual relationships through measuring social distances.

Social distance is defined as the distance between different groups of society, and as the body space or comfort zone (Social distance, n.d.; Social distance, 2006). Obviously, this definition only applies in a physical setting, thus the researchers are motivated to know whether or not it is possible to measure social distances in virtual relationships. Social distance is an important concept in communication because when people are closer, they can communicate effectively with each other (Social distance, n.d.).

Measuring social distances is possible through the use of a social distance scale. Social distance scales measure people’s willingness to interact with others in situations indicating varying degrees of closeness/intimacy. Social distance scaling is done to estimate where a person stands on evaluated participation without going through the painstaking process of establishing such participation through direct observation. The first of this kind, the Bogardus Social Distance Scale, was constructed by Emory Bogardus and was intended to empirically measure real-time or physical relationships.

Conversely, through incorporating the recommendations of Heraghty (2002), the researchers aimed to develop a social distance scale that would be suitable in the context of the Filipino youth’s virtual relationships developed through online interaction. The researchers first needed to come up with items and/or categories and their appropriate arrangement in the virtual relationships’ social distance scale using qualitative methods – i.e.,

focus group discussions and online interviews. The constructed social distance scale was tested by conducting a pilot survey that assessed the validity of the scale.

## **Review of Related Literature**

According to Verderber, “we study communication because it fulfils several very important functions” (1984: 11). Through communication, the exchange of information, expression of feelings and emotions, and development of relationships are all possible. In this study, the researchers focused on the social function of communication. According to Wilson, Robick, and Michael, the lack of social interaction causes “most people to hallucinate, lose their motor coordination, and become generally maladjusted” (in Verderber, 1984: 11). Hence, communication and social interaction are as necessary as eating and drinking.

Through CMC, various researches on virtual communication and relationships have been conducted. Through CMC, people are offered various opportunities to get in touch and build relationships. Since the number of people who engage in virtual relationships is continuously increasing, it is necessary to examine the various social distances they would have towards different kinds of people in a virtual community. The researchers would like to find out the criteria, if there are any, that people consider in accepting or rejecting other people from being part of their virtual community.

Social distance plays a significant part in communication and in the development of relationships, whether physical or virtual. The concept of social distance was originally constructed by Georg Simmel. Simmel conceptualized social distance as “a complex interpretation of sociality as forms of distance in both a geometric and a metaphoric sense.” Robert Park and Bogardus reformulated this Simmelian concept of social distance, focusing on its metaphorical sense (Ethington, 1997).

Table 1. Social Distance Scales

Bogardus, 1925 "Would willingly admit members of each race..."		Bogardus, 1933-66
1	To close kinship by marriage	Would marry
2	To my club as personal chums	Would have as regular friends
3	To my street as neighbors	Would work beside in an office
4	To employment in my occupation in my country	Would have several families in my neighborhood
5	To citizenship in my country	Would have merely as speaking acquaintances
6	As visitors only in my country	Would have live outside my neighborhood
7	Would exclude from my country	Would have live outside my country

Source: Ethington, 1997

Park (1924) defined social distance as the measure of grades and degrees of understanding and intimacy which characterize personal and social relations. He said that the degree of intimacy “measures the influence which each has over the other” (339) and its existence leads to the idea that we may be able to measure social distance like how we measure intelligence, although knowing all the factors that determine intelligence or intimacy is quite unworkable. Park further explained that “people have a sense of distance toward individuals with whom [they] come into contact and also have much [the] same feeling with regard to classes and races.” Race and class consciousness “describe a state of mind in which we become conscious of the distances that separate us from other classes and races.” Both factors interfere with, modify, and qualify personal relations that might become intimate (Park, 1924: 340).

Bogardus' research on social distance was entirely focused on race relations. He made a set of seven questions intended to "reduce rationalizing" (Bogardus, 1959 in Ethington, 1997). The Bogardus Social Distance Scale in its original and 1933 revision are shown in Table 1.

In 1954, Dodd and Nehnevasja revised some of the response items in the Bogardus Social Distance Scale and converted distances into numerical figures, therefore showing the geometrical sense (Ethington, 1997).

Table 2. Modified Social Distance Scale  
(Dodd & Nehnevasja, 1954)

Response item	Meters/Km
Would marry	100 0 m
Would have as guest in household	101 10 m
Would have as next door neighbor	102 100 m
Would have in neighborhood	103 1 km
Would keep in same town	104 10 km
Would keep out of my town	105 100 km
Would exile	106 1000 km
Would kill	107 10,000 km

This paper aims to develop a scale that would measure social distance in virtual relationships, patterned from the Bogardus Social Distance Scale. The latter has been modified, developed, and revised to fit other researchers' studies on social distance. However, since it was created to "empirically measure people's willingness to participate in social contacts of varying degrees of closeness with members of diverse social groups, such as other racial and ethnic groups, sex offenders, and homosexuals", it is

obviously not suitable for measuring social distance in virtual relationships (Bogardus Social Distance Scale, n.d.). Also, it seems that no research has been done so far that deals with the revision of the Bogardus Social Distance Scale into something that could measure social distance in a virtual setting. Some preliminary ideas were proposed by Heraghty (2002) who updated the statements in the Bogardus Social Distance Scale to make it suitable both for online and mobile messaging.

Table 3. Updated Version of the Bogardus Social Distance Scale (Heraghty, 2002)

I would be happy to have a fan/believer/follower of movie/ ideology/brand X:	
A	included in my address book
B	in the list of people to whom I mass-send joke emails
C	as someone I text-message once a week
D	as someone I would allow in my chatgroup
E	as someone who could visit and post comments on my website
F	as a visitor only to my website
G	I would block all incoming calls, instant messages and bar his or her IP address from accessing my website

Following what Heraghty did, but using a research-based approach, the researchers endeavored to modify the Bogardus social distance scale to a scale which could measure social distances in virtual communities and relationships.

### Theoretical Inputs

The theories used in this study were Self-Disclosure Theory, Uncertainty Reduction Theory, Accommodation Theory, and Social

Penetration Theory. These theories helped the researchers identify and understand the important factors in constructing a social distance scale which can be applied in virtual relationships.

In a virtual community where physical bond is not considered, self-disclosure is the most important basis for developing a virtual relationship, whether the information disclosed is true or not. Self-disclosure is not just giving information to others. Self-disclosure has risks and makes the person sharing the information vulnerable (Borchers, 1999). Simply put, it is a way of gaining information about another person and a way of learning about how other people think and feel. It is very crucial for researchers to study the way people disclose information in a virtual setting because only with self-disclosure can they measure social distance.

Similarly, another theory which deals with the *process* of how we gain knowledge about other people is used in this paper – the Theory of Uncertainty Reduction. Littlejohn (2004: 244) writes:

When we encounter a stranger, we may have a strong desire to reduce uncertainty about this person. Berger proposes that people have a difficult time with uncertainty, that they are therefore motivated to seek information about others. This kind of uncertainty reduction is one of the primary dimensions of a developing relationship.

Under this theory, interrogation and self-disclosure are said to be the forms of interactive strategies which rely directly on communication with the other person. Littlejohn (2004: 245) adds, “Self-disclosure is a significant strategy for actively obtaining information because if you disclose something about yourself, the other person is likely to disclose in return.”

As self-disclosure happens and as uncertainty reduction through seeking more information about another person in a virtual community takes place, conversation will not end until a certain

degree of relationship is developed. However, there would be chances that not all people in a virtual community would want to talk to others. That is what the next theory tries to explain.

Accommodation Theory explains, in part, the importance of accommodation in communication. It can either lead to social identity and bonding or disapproval and distancing. Littlejohn (2004: 97) notes:

Convergence often happens in situations in which you seek the approval of others. This can occur in groups that are already alike in certain ways because such groups consist of similar individuals who can coordinate their actions. The result of convergence can be increased attractiveness, predictability, intelligibility, and mutual involvement.

This theory is most applicable in situations where the communicators associate themselves with other people online who have similar interests through creating virtual relationships and/or communities. This theory explains that there is apparently a screening process as to whom one would initially entertain and converse with every time he or she enters a virtual community.

The Social Penetration Theory was also used in this paper. According to Littlejohn (2004), the theory aims to identify the process of increasing disclosure and intimacy within a relationship and represents a formative theory in the intellectual history of relationship theory (250). This theory was helpful in investigating the extent to which online communicators would willingly share information about themselves.

## **Methodology**

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in determining the concepts and variables included in the social distance scale for virtual relationships.



Selection of informants and respondents was done using the purposive method of non-probability sampling. Focus group discussions (FGD) and online interviews were first conducted to determine the important variables and appropriate arrangement of items in the social distance scale. Social distances toward different kinds of people and the validity and reliability of the variables in the scale were examined through a survey.

The FGD informants satisfied all of the following qualifications: they must have (1) entered a public chat room, (2) one or more active email accounts, (3) one or more active messenger accounts, and (4) one or more online social networking accounts. These qualifications are based on the four identified online venues – email, messenger, chat room, and online social networks. Further, the goal of achieving substantial information is largely attainable since qualified informants are those who actively participate in online interactions. Informants must also be Filipino citizens between 13 and 25 years old to satisfy the target group of this study – the Filipino youth.

After two FGDs with 13 and 8 informants respectively, the researchers conducted online interviews. Self-administered interview questionnaires were sent to chosen respondents with similar qualifications to that of an FGD informant. Online interviews were employed to get additional information, to validate gathered information from the FGDs, and to know whether or not there were serious inconsistencies in the answers of the FGD informants.

Three hundred respondents were asked to answer the survey instrument. Because it was not a self-administered questionnaire, the researchers explained the scale to the respondents who then provided their answers.

## Results and Discussion

This section is divided into three sections, with each one focusing on a stage of the development of the instrument.

### *Stage 1 – Formulating the Instrument*

Equipped with theoretical inputs, the researchers conducted FGDs and online interviews to come up with items and/or categories and the appropriate arrangement in the social distance scale for measuring virtual relationships. Table 4 shows the initial version of the scale.

After analyzing the findings of the FGDs and online interviews, the researchers came up with items for the social distance scale for virtual relationships (see Table 4).

The statements in the first column assume that a person has already gained the communicator's attention and has attempted to start an interaction through disclosing some of the basic information about himself or herself – i.e., name, age, sex, and location (NASL).

Items in this scale were meticulously arranged and constructed based on the study framework and the findings of the FGDs and online interviews. The scale (and therefore, the interaction) starts from item 7 (“Will ignore attempt for interaction”), which represents the greatest social distance between online communication participants. The Theory of Uncertainty Reduction asserts that when people meet a stranger, they might be interested in knowing more about that person. To reduce uncertainty, they would be more likely to seek information about the stranger. Interrogation and self-disclosure, as forms of interactive strategies, would follow. Obtaining basic information about a stranger would make a person decide if he or she would ignore the attempt for more interaction or to continue a conversation.

Table 4. Initial Social Distance Scale for Virtual Relationships

	Age			Location		Sexual Orientation			
	Younger	Same	Older	Within the city/ municipality	Outside the city/ municipality	Hetero- sexual Female	Hetero- sexual Male	Homo- sexual Male	Homo- sexual Female
1. Will meet offline (EB)									
2. Will give my contact numbers									
3. Will share personal beliefs, needs, fears, values, etc.									
4. Will include in my social networking account									
5. Will include in my messenger list									
6. Will talk about non-personal topics									
7. Will ignore attempt for interaction									

Upon formulating the scale, the researchers came up with two alike but different level situations as shown in item 3 (“Will share personal beliefs...”) and item 6 (“Will talk about non-personal topics”). These two situations are similar but are in different levels since the former entails a higher level of intimacy than the latter. These are part of Altman and Taylor’s Categories of Depth of Utterances (in Tidwell & Walther, 2002), in which the former is called the core layer (personal beliefs, needs, fears, and values) while the latter is called the intermedial layer (attitudes and opinions). Moreover, Social Penetration Theory explains that:

You get to know another person by penetrating his or her sphere. The sphere contains both breadth and depth. One could learn many different kinds of things about another person (breadth), or he could learn increasingly detailed information about one or two things (depth). As the relationship between two individuals develop, the partners share more aspects of the self, adding both depth and breadth to what they know about one another (Littlejohn, 2004: 250).

Furthermore, findings of the FGDs showed that people would willingly disclose their names (real name/code name), age, sex, and location online. This means that they are willing to present their actual self, which is one level of self presentation, disclosure, and extension to an offline correspondence. The process starts with the decision to present one’s *actual self*, *true self*, or *alternate self*. The first one constitutes nominal information such as name, age, sex/gender, location (or NASL for cyber chatting jargon). This self is usually kept private and disclosed only under a certain level of ease and security that the communicator feels he or she and the other party has achieved. Moreover, the true self refers to the attitudes, habits, and behavior that the communicator has. It is apparently much easier to disclose online because of the absence of the gating mechanisms that a face-to-face relationship has. Presenting one’s true self is reflected in items 3 and 6 of the scale.

Lastly, the alternate self can either be a totally different identity or the same identity with some information being changed (McKenna, 2002).

Accommodation Theory explains item 4 (“Will include in my social networking account”) and item 5 (“Will include in my messenger list”). In an initial interaction, acceptance and accommodation will transpire only when someone seems to be interesting, attractive, and/or possessing similar interests that a communicator has. The researchers had difficulty deciding on which venue is more personal: the messenger or the online social networks? Discussants from the second FGD and online interviewees chose the former because of the speed of interaction and the level of security and anonymity it can provide. Conversely, the first FGD brought up a more important point. Nowadays, most people use their online networking accounts not only to expand their connections and gain more friends. People now are more sensitive in deciding on whom to include in their social networking accounts. A reason mentioned was that they would rather be seen only by people they know since in creating a social networking account, one could add personal details like their profile, pictures, videos, and even a link to their blogs.

Item 6 (“Will talk about non-personal topics”) is placed before item 5 (“Will include in my messenger list”) because findings of the FGDs and online interviews showed that one considers the messenger as a personal online venue wherein only the people with whom they have interacted are included. This indicates that there were already conversations – even if these covered non-personal topics – prior to acceptance in one’s messenger list.

An online relationship is not a mere imitation or mimicry of a face-to-face relationship. In fact, it has practically all elements of the latter except, of course, for the physical aspect. This type of relationship can be and is usually extended to a face-to-face relationship (shift from online to offline) but this is another decision that the communicator would have to make. This was the basis of the researchers in constructing item 2 (“Will give my contact

numbers”) and item 1 (“Will meet offline”). Disclosing contact numbers naturally comes before meeting offline since it is obviously easier to communicate using telephones or cellular phones than in the different venues on the Internet.

The next three columns – “younger,” “same,” and “older” – refer to age categories. FGD and online interview findings showed that most informants considered age as the most important among the three factors (the other two being sex and location) in deciding whom to interact with. Most of them stated that they would probably interact with someone older (for advice, to learn, etc.) and those within their age bracket.

The fifth and sixth columns – “within the city/municipality” and “outside the city/municipality” – are location classifications. Physical location is considered even in an online relationship because most of the informants do not favor meetings offline (or eyeballs). Some prefer people from faraway places to avoid the possibility of meeting offline. On the other hand, informants who are not against meeting offline may consider people from nearby areas, especially if they feel they already know this online friend well.

The last four columns refer to sexual orientation. This was the least considered among the three factors because although informants are interested in knowing one’s gender, they would continue interaction with people regardless of their sexual orientation.

Apart from age, location, and sexual orientation, the FGDs brought up a fourth factor – nationality. According to the informants, unpleasant online experiences with foreigners have made nationality an important factor in accepting or rejecting friend invites. Almost all of informants preferred interacting with Filipinos, but since they realized that it was unfair to specify nationality, the researchers decided not to include it as a factor in the scale.

### *Stage 2 – Implementing the Instrument*

A survey was conducted to assess the soundness of the social distance scale formulated. At the same time, the survey gave a glimpse into how people reckon social distances in an online setting.

Table 5 shows the results of the survey. In the rows are the indicators while in the columns are the categories showing who should be nearer or farther. The figure under each group category represent the percentage of respondents who answered YES to each indicator, i.e., who said that the indicator applies to them.

Item 1 (“Will ignore attempt for interaction”) logically got the lowest percentage of YES responses, since the latter represent the number of respondents who will completely reject any form of interaction with the groups identified in the scale. However, it was noticeable that among the nine categories, homosexual women and men got the highest percentage (27% and 34%, respectively) of YES responses. This means that homosexual women and men are more likely than other groups to be ignored in an attempt for online interaction. This goes against the initial findings of the researchers that in an online interaction, sexual orientation matters the least in deciding who would be accepted or rejected.

Initial findings likewise showed that age matters in online interactions. However, whereas the FGDs showed that informants prefer older people, the survey results showed that among the three age groups, the older people (17%) are more likely to be ignored than the younger ones and people within the same age (16% and 29%, respectively).

Under the location category, the survey results showed that among the 300 respondents, 17% will ignore people outside their city/municipality, while only 13% will ignore people within their city/ municipality. This only affirms that location is not given much consideration in online relationships.

Item 2 (“Will talk about non-personal topics”) was originally ranked second among items 2 to 7 of the scale. The survey results

Table 5. Survey Results and Item Analysis

	Percentage Distribution of Survey Results (N=300)											Item Analysis	
	Age			Location		Sexual Orientation				Average Percentage	Rank		
	Younger	Same	Older	Within the city/ municipality	Outside the city/ municipality	Hetero- sexual Female	Hetero- sexual Male	Homo- sexual Male	Homo- sexual Female				
1. Will meet offline (EB)	16	10	17	13	17	9	17	27	34	18	0		
2. Will give my contact numbers	73	84	71	78	70	83	73	58	48	71	2		
3. Will share personal beliefs, needs, fears, values, etc.	70	88	65	83	74	86	75	55	45	71	1		
4. Will include in my social networking account	59	73	54	70	57	77	60	47	37	59	3		
5. Will include in my messenger list	44	63	48	57	50	66	43	36	21	47	4		
6. Will talk about non-personal topics	32	52	28	48	35	48	32	20	13	34	5		
7. Will ignore attempt for interaction	17	25	22	35	19	25	24	17	18	22	6		



on this item (see Table 5) showed that it must come after item 3 (“Will include in my messenger account”), since it has fewer YES responses than the latter. Findings show that homosexual women and men, and people outside one’s city/municipality are the ones the respondents were least likely to talk to about personal topics (58%, 48%, and 70%, respectively).

Based on the findings of the FGDs and online interviews, item 3 (“Will include in my messenger list”) was placed ahead of item 2 (“Will talk about non-personal topics”) in the initial scale. However, as mentioned above, more survey respondents said YES to this item than to item 2. Thus, in the revised scale, items 2 and 3 will be interchanged. Results for this item show that people of the same age, females, and people within one’s city/municipality are favored for inclusion in one’s messenger list rather than homosexual women and men, and older people.

Responses for item 4 (“Will include in my social networking account”) across the various groups confirm that it should be placed after item 3. This item would certainly have fewer YES responses than item 3 since online social networking accounts are considered more personal than messenger accounts. Again, homosexual men and women, as well as older people, ranked lowest in terms of being included in a person’s social networking account.

Survey results for item 5 (“Will share personal beliefs, needs, fears, values, etc.”) show that comparatively, the percentage of respondents approving this item was consistently lower than that for item 4. This confirms that it is a higher-level (i.e., closer or more intimate) item than the previous one. Looking at the data, respondents seemed to not like the idea of sharing their personal beliefs, needs, etc. with homosexual men and women, and heterosexual men. They appear to be most open to sharing personal views and concerns with women.

The results confirm that item 6 (“Will give my contact numbers”) is closer or more intimate than all the items that preceded it. The percentage of people agreeing to this item is lower than those for items 2 to 5. Also, it was found that the

respondents were more likely to give their contact numbers to people of the same age, females, and people living within the city/municipality. They were less likely to share these details with homosexual women and men, and older people.

Finally, the survey results are within expectations that item 7 (“Will meet offline”) is the highest in the degree of closeness that could be achieved in online interactions. It can be seen in Table 5 that at most, 35 % of the respondents were willing to meet offline, but only with people of the same age, females, and/or those who live within their city/municipality. Conversely, respondents would rather stay at home than meet offline with homosexual women and men, and people living outside their city/municipality.

### *Stage 3 – Revising the Instrument*

Summing up the survey results, only items 2 (“Will talk about non-personal topics”) and 3 (“Will include in my messenger list”) deviated from the researchers’ construction of the indicators in the social distance scale and had to be interchanged. This may be due to the current practice of including as many friends as possible in someone’s messenger list. Also, on the more reasonable and practical side, it is easier to talk to someone who is already in one’s messenger list even if the conversation is just about non-personal topics.

However, survey results on the identified categories – age, location, and sexual orientation – deviated from the original construction of the scale. It was initially assumed that age would be a more important consideration in reckoning social distance than sexual orientation. Survey results indicate that sexual orientation matters a lot in deciding the extent of one’s online interaction with others. Many people would rather interact with a heterosexual than with a homosexual. Age appears to be the second most important factor considered in online interactions. Specifically, interaction is greater when the participants are of the

same age than when they belong to different age groups. With regard to location, its importance may vary depending on the intention of online communication participants to meet personally. Those who wanted to meet offline preferred someone who was within their city/municipality, while those who avoided meeting offline would prefer interacting with someone living outside their city/municipality.

After analyzing the survey results, the scale must be revised, therefore entailing a re-arrangement of items. This revised Social Distance Scale (see Table 6) differs from the original only with the arrangement of some items in both rows and columns. From the original scale where row 5 states “Will include in my messenger list”, the revised scale has it in the sixth row. The original row 6 “Will talk about non-personal topics” is now placed in the fifth row. Also, the subdivided columns – age, location, and gender of the original scale is rearranged with the gender category as the first group of columns, followed by age and location categories.

## **Summary, Implications, and Recommendations**

From a methodological standpoint, this paper was able to show the feasibility of constructing an instrument for measuring social distance in online relationships. Clearly, however, more studies using the scale need to be conducted to further assess its reliability and applicability to the wider population of online communities.

Survey results showed that respondents would most likely interact with females, people within their age bracket, and people residing within their city/municipality. In contrast, they will most probably not pursue any interaction with gays and lesbians. Also, survey findings showed that including a person in someone’s messenger account precedes all other forms of online interaction. This contradicted the researchers’ initial assumptions – based on theoretical arguments and the FGD findings – that preliminary conversation has to take place before a person can decide whether or not to include someone in his or her messenger account. The

Table 6. Revised Social Distance Scale for Virtual Relationships

	Sexual Orientation				Age			Location	
	Hetero- sexual Female	Hetero- sexual Male	Homo- sexual Male	Homo- sexual Female	Younger	Same	Older	Within the city/ municipality	Outside the city/ municipality
1. Will meet offline (EB)									
2. Will give my contact numbers									
3. Will share personal beliefs, needs, fears, values, etc.									
4. Will include in my social networking account									
5. Will talk about non-personal topics									
6. Will include in my messenger list									
7. Will ignore attempt for interaction									

researchers recognize, however, that this finding may be unique to the sample that they used for this study, i.e., the youth. Again, further researches will help establish whether the same case applies for other types of online communication participants.

From the survey results, the researchers noted that people would more likely communicate with homosexual men than with homosexual women. The respondents showed less willingness to interact with lesbians than with gays. Hence, further research could explore the reasons behind this. Are gays more socially accepted than lesbians? If yes, do the media play an important role in increasing awareness and acceptance toward homosexuals, especially toward gays? With the spotlight focused on homosexual men, are homosexual women being disadvantaged?

Moreover, a more comprehensive study focusing on other online venues may be conducted. For instance, other researchers may want to explore social distances in the context text messaging. Since the Philippines has already been dubbed as the world's texting capital, it would be interesting to delve into the varying social distances Filipinos have vis-à-vis different kinds of 'texters'.

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