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GROUP PROJECT:

Abby Eligon
Gabrielle Ferdinand
Andrea Sorzano
Faviola Whitter

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A Study of the Impact of Text Messaging on the Development of Romantic Relationships among Students of the St. Augustine Campus of The University of The West Indies

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A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF TEXT MESSAGING ON THE
DEVELOPMENT OF ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS AMONG
STUDENTS OF THE ST. AUGUSTINE CAMPUS OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies

of

The University of the West Indies

by

Abby Eligon – ID# 05720007

Gabrielle Ferdinand – ID# 05719583

Andrea Sorzano – ID# 05724251

Faviola Whittier – ID# 05725262

Lecturer – Dr. Godfrey Steele

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Department of Liberal Arts

Faculty of Humanities and Education

St. Augustine Campus

THE IMPACT OF TEXT MESSAGING ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF
HETEROSEXUAL ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS.

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Abby Eligon	05720007
Gabrielle Ferdinand	05719583
Andrea Sorzano	05724251
Faviola Whittier	05725262

**A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF TEXT MESSAGING
ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ROMANTIC
RELATIONSHIPS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

Abstract

The Impact of text messaging on the development of heterosexual romantic relationships.

Abby Eligon

Andrea Sorzano

Gabrielle Ferdinand

Faviola Whittier

This thesis examines text messaging within heterosexual romantic relationships and its influence on the language used and the expression of affect between couples. The growing popularity of this medium has allowed it to influence the communication behaviour of romantic partners. Specific characteristics of the language are analyzed and communication trends are identified revealing the extent to which text messaging assists in the development of the relationship.

In this study the questionnaire survey research method is employed whereby 151 questionnaires were distributed among students of the University of The West Indies. Sixty-eight percent of respondents were female and thirty-two percent were males, so as to allow an accurate representation of the university population. The analysis of the results includes an examination of

responses in close relation to the role of text messaging in relationships and the manner in which it affects language use. This thesis suggests that, as a mediated type of communication, text messaging enables couples to reaffirm their intimacy and surpass traditional boundaries. As such it facilitates the fulfilment of both the instrumental and relational communication needs of persons involved in a romantic relationship. Also it encourages partners to develop personalized codes.

Key words: Text Messaging, Computer Mediated Communication, Language, Intimacy, Relationships.

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List of Key Terms and Abbreviations

CMC: Short for computer-mediated communication (see below)

Computer-mediated Communication: refers to any human symbolic text-based interaction conducted or facilitated through digitally-based technologies (Spitzberg); human communication via computer systems and includes many different forms of synchronous, asynchronous or real-time interaction that humans have with each other using computer systems as tools to exchange text, images, audio and video. It includes e-mail, instant messaging, text messaging, Internet forums, USENET, newsgroups, and videoconferencing, among others.

FtF: Face-to-face communication

Intimacy: a state achieved by intellectual, emotional and/or physical closeness, as well as shared activities (Adler, 380); also, the “warm” or “affectionate” aspect of love (Guerrero, 123) the depth of exchange both verbally and/or non-verbally, between two persons and which implies a deep form of acceptance of the other as well as a commitment to the relationship (Gilbert, 221).

Romantic relationship: a strong, frequent and diverse interdependence that lasts over a considerable period of time which contains the key components of intimacy, passion and commitment (Griffin, 114; Guerrero, 123).

SMS: the Short Message Service, a basic mobile service allowing the exchange of short text messages between subscribers (Le Bodic, 47)

Text Message: a message containing a limited amount of text characters (usually 120-160) that is created on a mobile device and transmitted via mobile networks (Le Bodic, 48)

Text Messaging: this is usually a person-to-person activity. One subscriber composes a message using the man-machine interface of the mobile device, then enters the recipient’s phone number and sends it to the serving network. The message is then transported over one or more networks before reaching the recipient device. The recipient is then notified that a new message has arrived. (Le Bodic, 48)

Txt language: the trademark shortened form of language used in text messages

Introduction

Communication can be essentially defined as the transmission of a message. According to Shannon and Weaver's Mathematical theory of communication, basic communication involves a source, a transmitter, a receiver and a final destination (refer to appendix A). This linear model of communication highlights the basic components necessary for the effective transference of a message to occur. Without the presence of these essential components, communication and the subsequent facilitation of interpersonal relationships would prove impossible. According to psychologist Abraham Maslow interpersonal relationships are essential to human wellbeing as they satisfy the individual's needs for interaction, love and a sense of belongingness. Within the realm of interpersonal communication, a notable facet is dyadic communication, which refers to communicative interaction between two individuals. The intent of this thesis is to investigate the impact of technology (specifically text messaging) on dyadic communication within a romantic relationship.

The process of communication – encoding, transmission and decoding of messages – is heavily influenced by the medium through which it occurs. Initially, Shannon and Weaver's linear model gained popularity due to its ability to measure the capacity of any medium or channel to carry information. Every medium differs in its innate ability to transmit a message. Recent advances in technology have produced new and exciting media

through which individuals can communicate. In the 1990's, mobile phone companies introduced an innovative communication medium, which soon evolved into a mass phenomenon known as 'short message service' or text messaging. Text messaging essentially involves sending a typed note (usually comprising under 160 character symbols), via a mobile phone. By December of the year 2000, fifteen (15) billion text messages had been sent worldwide (Crystal 229).

SMS texts sent to and from cellular phones, are considered by some scholars to be a sub-group of CMC (Spitzberg, 2006). There is substantial literature (Thompson (1995) qtd. in Raiti par.6) that purports that computer mediated communication (CMC) is markedly different from that which occurs face-to-face. Consequently interpersonal relationships that develop via CMC differ from those that develop solely under direct contact. It does not require the physical presence of the communication partners or the synchronized exchange of messages and responses. On the other hand, because handsets are portable, the communication partner is almost always accessible. Text messaging also seems to facilitate greater variations in the language used between communication partners. The unique nature of text messaging as a communication medium leads the authors to wonder how text messaging impacts the development of interpersonal relationships.

RATIONALE

The impact of text messaging on communication practices is of

extreme importance given the ubiquitous nature of text messaging. The penetration rate, (or the number of mobile telephone subscriptions as a percentage of the population), increased from 10.9% in 2000 to 126.3% in 2006 (Telecommunication Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, 2007). Liberalization of the local market facilitated this increase by lowering the prices of handsets and rates. The cellular phone is no longer a status symbol of the elite but rather an accessible and valuable communication tool for the general public.

Moreover, this form of communication has disabled previous boundaries, allowing individuals to communicate while mobile. Contextual restrictions have been drastically reduced as individuals can communicate anywhere without even opening their mouths. Furthermore, this phenomenon has been able to cross all age brackets with two-thirds of 14-16 yr olds having their own cell-phones and the fastest growing market for cell-users being 10 to 11 year olds (Crystal, pg 229 2006).

It is also important to note the impact of text messaging on relationships, as eighty-one percent (81 %) of cellular phone users co-ordinate their social lives, engage in language play and flirt via text messaging. In fact, research has indicated that thirty- seven percent (37 %) of text –message users have used this medium to tell a significant other that they loved them (Crystal, pg 229 2006). It is evident that text messaging has a significant role to

play in relationship development, and understanding such an integral component can only enhance dyadic communication.

SIGNIFICANCE

The effect of text messages on relationship development should be investigated for several reasons. Firstly, this research would add to the current pool of academic work on communication. Much research has been conducted on the impact of technology on communication. However, this research has rarely been singularly focused on text messaging as the technological medium. Moreover, this nature of research has never been conducted in the Caribbean region and within this specific cultural context. As such, this research can hopefully fill a void in the academic community.

Additionally, understanding how adopting cellular telephones and text messages into the popular communication repertoire allows for a greater understanding of how communication changes as technology develops. Text messaging, as well as its effect, needs to be analyzed as a unique technology. With a medium possessing such an amount of power to affect relationships, failure to evaluate its positive and negative attributes would be somewhat irresponsible of the academic society. Also, understanding this form of communication technology will allow for related generalizations to be made about future technological advances.

Furthermore, analysis of variations from our conventional understanding of relationships development as they occur in this medium affords us a more holistic view of the process of relationship development. Also, within the humanities subset of academia, the most fundamental advantage of conducting research is the possibility of effecting positive social change. As such the availability of research such as this can possibly lead to the significant enhancement of heterosexual romantic relationships.

PURPOSE / AIM

By conducting research into the impact of text messaging on the development of interpersonal relationships the authors hope to gain deeper insight into the wireless generation to which we belong. We also hope to address a gap in existing research by analyzing both the communication and linguistic aspects of text messaging and its impact. Review of past research has shown that the linguistic element of 'txt language' has not been critically examined. The sociolinguistic and stylistic elements of 'txt language' are highly unique, and essentially dissimilar to that already known in traditional writing. As such, 'txt language' should be singularly studied and explored

In essence, this research is intended to discover exactly how communication behaviour and intimacy is affected by text message use. Furthermore, it aims to examine how language use within a text message affects the development of a relationship. Both of these issues will be investigated solely within the context of a heterosexual romantic relationship.

Research Questions

General Research Question:

What is the impact of Text Messaging Use on the development of romantic relationships?

Research Question 1(a)

How is communication behaviour affected by Text Message Use?

Research Question 1(b)

How is intimacy impacted by Text Message Use?

Research Question 2(a)

How does Language Use in Text Messaging affect the development of romantic relationships?

Research Question 2(b)

How does Language Use in Text Messaging impact intimacy?

Literature Review

The researchers examined relevant scholarly literature to gain insight into how the use of technology affects language and communication with a concentration on its impact on heterosexual romantic relationships. Little research was found that focused specifically on the influence of text messaging on the development of romantic relationships. There are, however, significant studies of related issues such as the development of interpersonal relationships; technology and communication; and technology and language.

Development of interpersonal relationships

Persons create and advance relationships through communication, and most literature on the topic has looked at one specific category of communication in particular – self disclosure, the revealing of personal information to another individual (Guerrero 90). From this viewpoint, relationships develop when persons proceed in a “gradual and orderly fashion from superficial to intimate levels of exchange as a function of both immediate and forecast outcomes”(Altman and Taylor, qtd. in Griffin 133). Throughout the abundant theories on self-disclosure, however, a major limitation for the researchers was the vagueness of the described levels of interpersonal bonding that could be used to gauge the progress of a relationship.

The conceptualisation of relationship development as a progression of stages provided authors with a better understanding of how to address the subject. Murray Davis (qtd. in De Vito 182) suggests a six-stage model, moving from contact to involvement to intimacy, followed by deterioration which may lead either to repair or to dissolution. This outline, however, was also quite ambiguous in its description of the stages for investigative purposes.

Knapp and Vangelisti (qtd. in Adler 206), postulate a model of the “coming together” of interpersonal relationships, clearly outlining the proposed steps by describing the respective communication traits of each stage. Five steps of the development process are identified and duly explained: initiating, experimenting, intensifying, integrating, and bonding¹. These stages, and the behaviours associated with them, can be used as a metre to assess the development of any interpersonal relationship in a myriad of contexts.

Jonathan Pettigrew is one of the few researchers who examined the connection between text messaging and interpersonal relationships directly. He reveals in the article Mobile Text Messaging and Connectedness Within Close Interpersonal Relationships that the medium allows for greater connectedness by providing near constant availability for relational partners while at the same time allowing for a degree of autonomy (25). He determined that there is an overall positive effect on the connectedness between partners.

¹ See Appendix B.

Interpersonal Communication and Technology

Aside from relationship models, there are many works pertaining to technology's impact on human communication. The *Social Construction of Technology* theory put forward by Pinch and Bijker (qtd. in Klein and Kleinman 29) postulates that human interaction is not determined by technology but rather that human interaction shapes technology. In conjunction with this theory, it can be ascertained that Text Messaging is not changing the way in which communication occurs. Rather, it suggests that people are changing the rules that govern interpersonal communication and are merely using Text Messaging to facilitate these changes.

The *Media Richness* theory, developed by Daft and Lengel (qtd. in Griffin 142), suggests that the amount of information communicated varies depending on the capacity of the medium. Text Messages are considered a lean medium as they utilize only the visual cue, suggesting that with its increased use in society, the more equivocal or ambiguous the amount of information that we communicate interpersonally becomes. This theory provides implications for this study as regards the restrictions placed on language use.

Another less optimistic view of the impact of modern technology on interpersonal relationships is the Values in Design theory, postulated by Flanagan, Howe and Nissenbaum (1). This theory questions how we ensure a place for value alongside the advantageous qualities of media. In other words,

this theory poses the question: how is technology undercutting or eroding the traditional values and practices associated with interpersonal communication? This theoretical construct serves as a central premise for the examination of the impact text messaging has on interpersonal heterosexual romantic relationship development.

Angel Lin of the Chinese University of Hong Kong investigates the impact of Text Messaging among Hong Kong college students. Lin quotes communication researcher Raymond Williams' theory which suggests that technologies facilitate 'mobile- privatized social relations'. Williams believes that communication technologies are in fact causing individuals to shrink their social groups and interactions. Related to this, Lin postulates the idea of people adopting a demeanour of 'detached presence', as they no longer talk to those around them, choosing rather to isolate themselves and interact with increasingly smaller groups e.g. via text messaging. From this study it can be hypothesised that text messaging affects the initial development of heterosexual romantic relationships because there is more interaction with the romantic partner than with other members of the communication or social network.

In Wozniak's article "Digital Divorce", text messaging is shown to be a worldwide information transferral system that is utilized and accepted as valid communication. This was observed in the case of Shamsudin Latif and Azida Fazlena Abdul Latif where a text message divorce was approved in an

Islamic court². The result of such proceedings continue to outline the role and its effects on interpersonal relations as persons use such mediums in efforts to avoid face to face conflict. This finding is useful in proving the legitimacy of text messaging as a legitimate form of communication, and validating the significance of our thesis research.

Kenichi Ishii offers relevant insight in his article 'Implications of Mobility: the uses of personal communication media in everyday life' referring to the increased usage of cellular phones as the youth's 'creation of their own unique subcultures', in which they communicate predominantly through text messaging (346). The primary assertion of Ishii's research is that cellular phone technologies allow the individual spatial, temporal and contextual mobility (348). He postulates that these different types of mobility are the motivational forces behind the individual's desire to use cellular phones to mediate interpersonal communication. Ishii declares, however, that text messaging is used only in the maintenance of existing relationships and networks, not in the creation of new relationships (360).

Communication investigators Erich R. Merkle and Rhonda Richardson furthered knowledge on the impact of computer-mediated communication on romantic relationships. In the piece "Digital Dating and Virtual Relating: Conceptualizing, Computer mediated Romantic Relationships", they compare face-to- face communication and mediated communication. It was found that both face-to-face and mediated communications rely on the social

² According to the Islamic practice *talaq*, a husband may divorce his wife by simply saying "I divorce you" three times (Ibrahim B. Syed)

psychological theories of Social Exchange and Equity (188). However, their research also supports that communication technology use lessens the need for spatial proximity, as well as the importance of physical appeal, two factors which play integral roles in unmediated interpersonal communication. It was also found that mediated communication allows the individual a certain level of anonymity or the ability to distance themselves from their discourse, thereby reducing the apprehension normally associated with self-disclosure, a finding of great relevance to the investigation of developing interpersonal relationships. Moreover, the article suggests that mediated communication appears to develop and reinforce the avoidance and escape conflict management styles. This article provides extremely pertinent research with respect to the impact of technology on the development of romantic relationships.

Language and Technology

This paper is also concerned with the extent to which language use in text messages affects the development of romantic relationships. Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure pioneered the field of structural linguistics and was responsible for spurning the expansion of linguistics as a discipline. Linguistics is essentially the systematic study of language. Linguists consider language as a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced systems. This

abstract, cognitive system is extremely unique, allowing for meaningful communication between individuals.

The aspects of language which are particularly relevant to this study are the areas of sociolinguistics and stylistics. Sociolinguistics is a relatively new linguistics concept (a blend of sociology and linguistics) which surrounds the study of language in relation to society. This domain of linguistics critically considers how language is constructed by and in turn helps to construct society. From a sociolinguistic perspective, text messaging should be investigated as to exactly how it is being used by society, the purposes it serves and the impact it has had on social relations.

Stylistics refers to the area of language which looks at the concept of style in language. When using language, individuals ultimately adopt a style of language. This is applicable to research surrounding text messaging as the linguistic phenomenon known as 'txt language' has evolved in recent times. 'Txt language' refers to the trademark shortened language used by individuals in text messaging. According to David Crystal, author of "Language and the Internet", the limited character space has motivated the evolution of an even more abbreviated language than that which had emerged in chat groups. He mentions that multi-word sentences and sequences of responses can be reduced to a simple series of letters (229). This and other stylistic changes in language construction, qualify text messaging to be investigated under the genre of stylistics.

Renowned linguist Charles Hockett (qtd. in Tserdanelis 24-25) was responsible for the establishment of the design features of a language. In order for text messaging to be considered a language, it must adhere to nine basic principles. It must serve as a mode of communication and be able to produce original messages. A language must also have a pragmatic function and be interchangeable in nature, so that an individual could both send and receive messages. Languages must also exhibit semanticity, with the signals within the code carrying meaning. Arbitrariness is another characteristic of language, which refers to the lack of a logical link between a word and its meaning. Moreover languages must exhibit the properties of discreteness and displacement. The former allows for complex messages to be constructed out of smaller linguistic units, and the latter refers to the ability to discuss things that are not present in space or time. Additionally, all aspects of languages must be rooted in culture and learnt through interaction with others. As 'txt language' adheres to all these principles, one can be justified in referring to it as a valid language. Therefore, as researchers, it is only natural to explore the impact of 'txt language' on romantic relationships.

Researcher Victoria Carrington explored the affect of technology on language. Carrington's paper, "Txting, the end of civilization again?" refers to an incident where a young child submitted an essay to her teacher in what is referred to as 'txt' language. Her paper is a response to the article published by the British Broadcasting Corporation titled "Texting troubles teachers", which reveals the concern that extensive use of 'txt' language will decrease

the ability of the individual to shift effortlessly among the appropriate text types as dictated by the social contexts. She manages to question and discredit the contemporary view of txt language as a “spoiled version of legitimate text and language use” (170). Carrington’s work is applicable to this topic, as it directly examines language use within text messaging, albeit from a solely linguistic perspective.

Review of these scholarly materials suggests that the effects of text messaging on interpersonal communication are unclear. Some sources suggest a positive impact, as this medium facilitates more communication and connection within the relationship. Conversely, the linguistic limitations imposed by the medium imply that there exists fewer opportunities to move past phatic communication and into the realm of a meaningful relationship. Furthermore, text messaging affects not only the quality of interpersonal relationships but also the linguistic structures used. It is also apparent that there needs to be an evaluation of these variables within a West Indian context, since all of the cited studies were undertaken in very distinct regions of the globe.

Methodology

The intent of this investigation is to determine the significance of text messaging in heterosexual romantic relationships and its correlations with intimacy and language use. The survey questionnaire research design was deemed the most suitable since the strengths of this methodology corresponded with the purpose of the study: to describe communication characteristics of a population and assess the relationships between communication and other variables, allowing researchers to deduce generalizable conclusions based on the findings (Reinard, 225).

Survey questionnaires facilitate the gathering of explicit information about sensitive topics because of its unthreatening nature. Respondents are usually more willing to disclose personal information in a questionnaire rather than reveal delicate data in the presence of an interviewer (Frey, 102). This is particularly valuable in cases where researchers seek information about behaviours and feelings usually kept private, such as those regarding developing romances. Furthermore, questionnaires permit the use of validity-maximising devices such as subtle redundancies, a significant benefit in the study of topics not often addressed, prone to inconsistencies in the data collected (Reinard 228).

The method also has a relatively simple distribution and collection process, permitting a large and more accurate sample to be drawn from the population, a substantial aid in the quest for external validity.

Most importantly, the survey questionnaire design best enabled the authors to address the research questions posed because it allowed the researchers to gather data about the medium's use and related communication behaviour in the selected population, thereby providing contemporary evidence of the link between romantic relationship development and text message use.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Sampling Frame

The sampling frame for this study was composed of current students of The University of the West Indies. These students were chosen primarily because they are both creators and consumers of youth telecommunications culture, whose data would enable us to understand and generalise about present trends in computer-mediated communication. The students at the St. Augustine, Trinidad campus were selected for reasons of accessibility, in terms of time and financial cost factors.

In order to meet the needs of the present study, participants had to meet two (2) requirements to be eligible for participation. Participants needed to identify themselves as current students at the university. In addition, the potential respondents needed to be currently involved in heterosexual

romantic relationships, so that reports of behaviour and feelings would not be subject to memory flaws due to the passage of time.

Additionally, only heterosexual couples were used since the inclusion of homosexual dyads would have added confounding variables to the study, jumbling the data about the behaviour of two very different groups of SMS users (Woodland). While the study of text messaging use among homosexual partners would have been a worthwhile endeavour, the willingness of persons to identify themselves by their sexual preference to researchers as well as to answer intimate questions about their socially unaccepted romantic relationships entailed a significant problem.

The sample was further stratified according to gender to reflect the university campus population in which sixty-eight percent (68%) of the students are female with a lesser percentage of thirty-two percent (32%) being male.

The Measurement Device

The questionnaire was developed so as to maximise effectiveness. Firstly, it included both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Closed-ended questions allowed the researchers to extract the specific objective data which was required, while open-ended questions allowed the participants to fully express their opinions without the limitations imposed by pre-determined

responses. As such, the questionnaire was able to generate data that was both quantitative and qualitative in nature.

The inverted funnel format was selected due to the delicacy of the subject matter under investigation. This layout involves asking the less personal, closed-ended questions first then gradually introducing more probing open-ended questions. Thus, it allows respondents to become acclimatized with the topic and encourages disclosure of increasingly personal information as their comfort level increases (Frey, 101).

Researchers also included reliability control questions in the survey device. Questions were rephrased in efforts to maintain internal validity and aided in the identification of inconsistent response patterns among participants, enabling researchers to detect conflicting answers given on a particular questionnaire. (See Appendix C- questions 17 and 20).

Data Collection

Within the methodology, the three activities carried out were:

1. Interviews
2. Pilot test
3. Distribution of Questionnaires

The Interviews

This interview had two participants. The interviewees were allowed to converse with minor guidance and probing by the mediators. The mediators sought to acquire information about personal sentiments towards text messaging and respondents' comfort levels with regard to the medium, in addition to the topics they reserved either for text messaging or face to face conversations. There was no restricted timeframe and so the interviewees (who were in varying stages of their respective relationships) progressively grew comfortable enough to reveal personal information about their communication habits and the usefulness of this medium in establishing and maintaining contact with their romantic partners. The data obtained from these interviews was then used to structure and design the questionnaire.

The Pilot Test

A pilot questionnaire was designed and distributed to twenty (20) persons. These respondents consisted of members of the target population, as the main purpose was to assess the suitability of the questionnaire's structure and success at gaining the required data from the intended audience. The researchers paid special attention to the feedback concerning the wording of the questions and the comprehensibility of the questionnaire's instructions.

The Distribution of Questionnaires

The final version of the questionnaire was then composed and distributed. One hundred and fifty-one (151) questionnaires were randomly dispensed among students in different faculties of the campus. As aforementioned, researchers allocated the questionnaires based on previously established quotas to ensure that the sample reflected the gender ratio of the St. Augustine campus of sixty-eight (68%) percent female and thirty two (32%) percent male.

Participation in the study was voluntary and participants' confidentiality was guaranteed, since no identification or contact information was solicited. These measures were both aimed at facilitating an ethical investigation as well as encouraging the respondents to be more candid.

The methodology employed in this research was carefully designed and systematically applied in order to maximise both the internal and external validity of the data generated. Consequently, the results will be utilized for the creation of generalizations associated with the impact of text messaging on the development of heterosexual romantic relationships.

Results

This chapter is a review of the data extracted from the interviews and questionnaires. The mass amount of data has been synthesized and is portrayed through the use of bar charts. In order to firmly place the data within the context of this research paper, the results are presented in conjunction with the research questions.

General Research Question: What is the impact of Text Messaging Use on the development of romantic relationships?

RQ1(a) How is communication behaviour affected by Text Message Use?

The graph below shows the level of preference for text messaging vis-à-vis other forms of mediated communication, as indicated by persons who affirmed that they were comfortable using the medium.

Seven percent (7%) ranked text messaging as their first choice of media when interacting with their partner, whereas sixty-one percent (61%) ranked it as second and seventeen percent (17%) ranked it as third.

Respondents indicated that the other media used were electronic mail, voice [telephone] calls (mobile or landline), instant messaging, multimedia messaging and social networking sites. Text messaging was generally ranked second after voice calls.

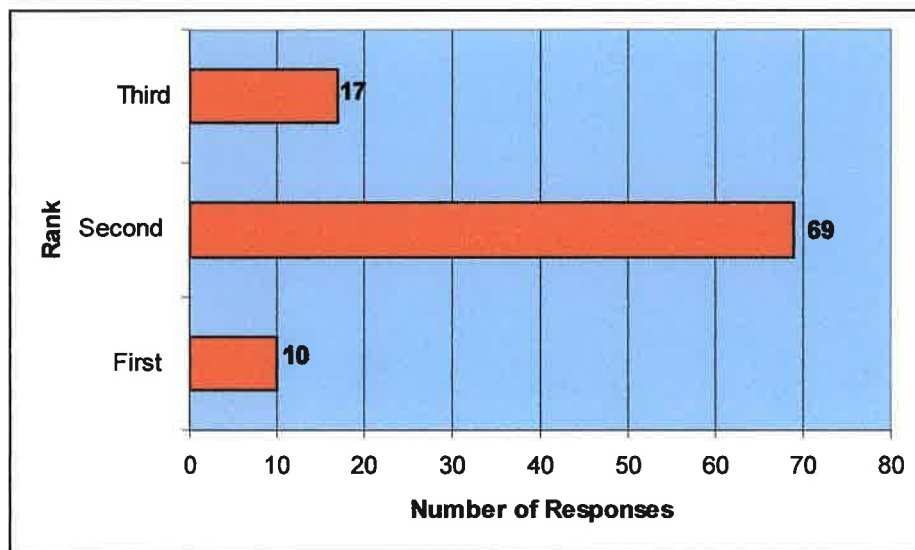


Figure 1. Graph shows the rank of text messaging among other forms of mediated personal communication.

Figure 2 depicts the average number of text messages sent daily by the respondents. The data is separated by sex, with males being represented by a blue bar and females represented by a red bar.

In stage³ one of the relationship, males sent an average of ten text messages daily while females only sent approximately five messages. In stage two, both sexes reported an increase, with males sending an average of eleven texts, and females sending eight messages to their partners.

A change in trend was noted in stage three, as women sent only six text messages while men sent three. This reduction continued in stage four when women reported sending an average of three messages, while men only sent two. In stage five, however, males sent an average of four messages daily, while their female counterparts sent only three text messages.

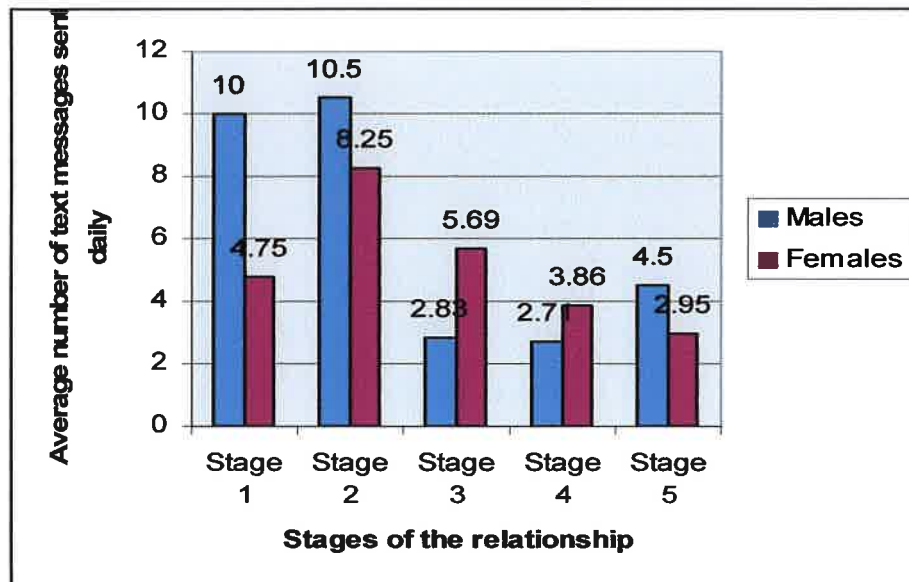


Figure 2. Graph shows the average number of text messages sent to partner per relationship stage.

³ Refer to Appendix B.

RQ 1(b) How is intimacy affected by Text Message Use?

In Figure 3, the respondents' intimacy as a result of messaging with their partners is compared with their indicated relationship stages.

In stages one and two, the majority of participants stated that communicating via SMS makes them feel closer to their partner, with sixty-seven (67%) and sixty-three (63%) percent respectively. However, there seems to be a downward trend, as only thirty per cent (30%) of participants affirmed the same feeling in stage three, followed by twenty-four per cent (24%) in stage four, with a minor rise in stage five to thirty-one per cent (31%).

There was a parallel negative trend as could be expected – the respondents who disagreed that text messaging was a key means of drawing closer to their partners tended to increase as the relationship progressed, from eleven percent (11%) in stage one, to thirty-five percent (35%) in stage three, to forty-five percent (45%) in stage five.

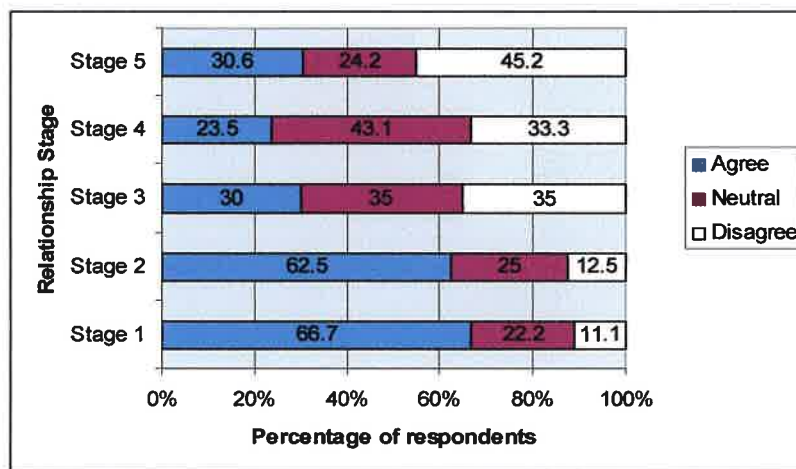


Figure 3. Chart shows responses to the statement “*Sending and/or receiving text messages makes me feel closer to my partner*”.

RQ 2(a): How does Language Use in Text Messaging affect the development of romantic relationships?

This next bar chart portrays the results of respondents who were asked to categorise the purposes of their text messages, separated by type of message, with the green bar representing affective-oriented⁴ messages while the blue bar portrays instrumental-type⁵ messages.

Nineteen percent (19 %) of messages sent by male respondents were affect-oriented as compared to forty- five percent (45%) of females.

Men stated that sixty percent (60%) of their communication was instrumental in nature, while women judged only forty-seven percent of their text messages as being used for the same purpose. Females evidently showed little preference for one type of message orientation whereas males demonstrated a clear inclination towards instrumental communication.

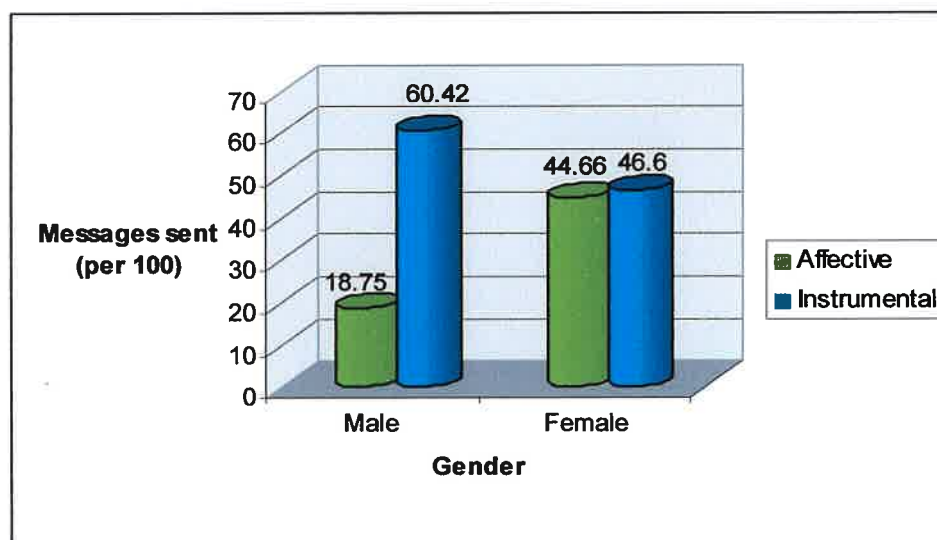


Figure 4. Graph shows the types of messages sent divided by gender.

⁴ Affective-oriented messages are relational in nature and serve to convey the emotions of the sender (Peterson & Green)

⁵ Instrumental messages are those which factual in nature (Peterson & Green).

Figure 5 depicts the participants' responses to the question that attempts to investigate if romantic partners had to adjust to each other's language use in text messages. The data is divided by sex, with males represented by blue and females by red.

Respondents generally tended to negate having had to adjust to their partner, represented by fifty-two percent (52%) of females and fifty percent (50%) of males.

However, the second highest number of respondents regardless of gender actually agreed with the statement, with thirty-five percent (35%) of males and twenty-four percent (24%) of females choosing this response.

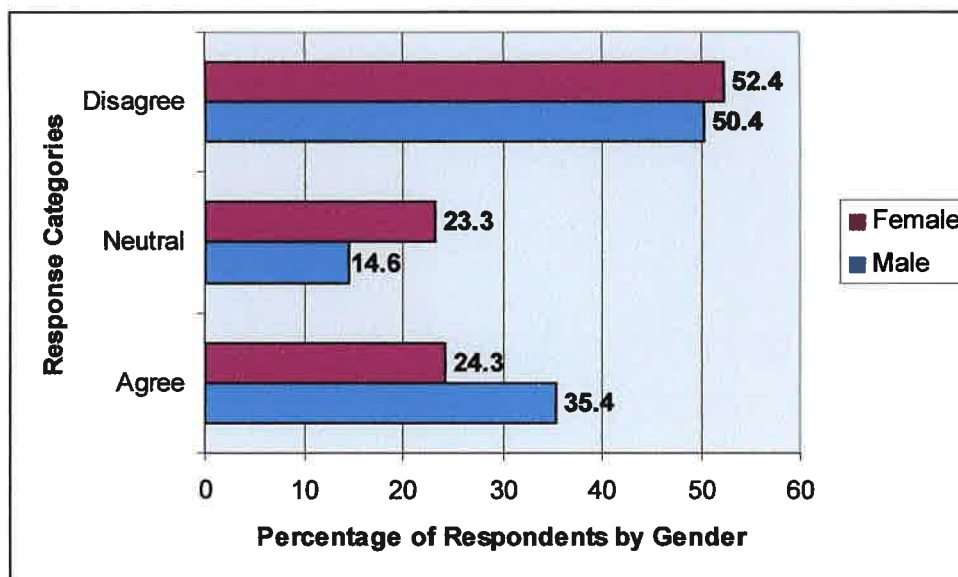


Figure 5. Chart shows responses to the statement "I had to get used to the way my partner expresses him/herself in text messages".

The following figure shows the responses to the statement “*Did the language used by your partner in text messages affect your decision to pursue a relationship with him/her?*” Again, the responses are divided by sex.

Here, the majority of respondents (sixty-eight percent of females and approximately sixty-nine percent of males) denied taking the language of their partner into account for their decision.

There was little difference in the response patterns for those who agreed (about twelve percent (12%) of females and fifteen percent (15%) of males) and those who remained neutral (seventeen percent female (17%) and fifteen percent (15%) male).

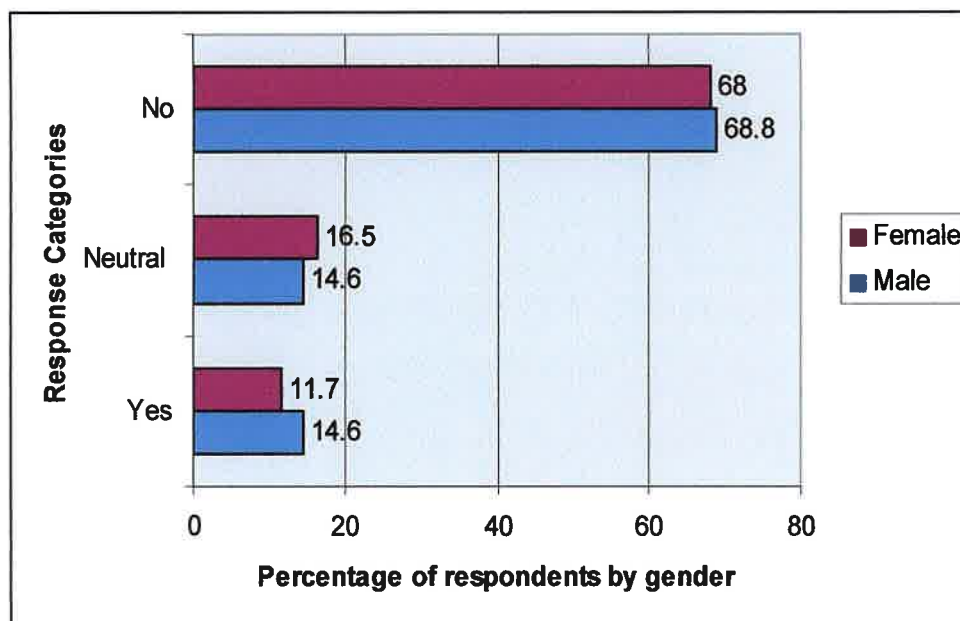


Figure 6. Chart shows responses to the question “Did the language used by your partner in text messages affect your decision to pursue a relationship with him/her?”

RQ 2(b) How does Language Use in Text Messaging affect intimacy?

The majority of respondents reported that they do not feel closer to their partner through the use of abbreviations in text messaging. Both female and male participants were more likely to disagree with the statement, with sixty one percent (61%) of females choosing this option and fifty-eight per cent (58%) of men.

Only twenty-nine percent (29%) of women and thirty-one percent (31%) of men stated that they were neutral to the statement.

A meagre nine percent (9%) of females and ten percent (10%) of males agreed with the statement.

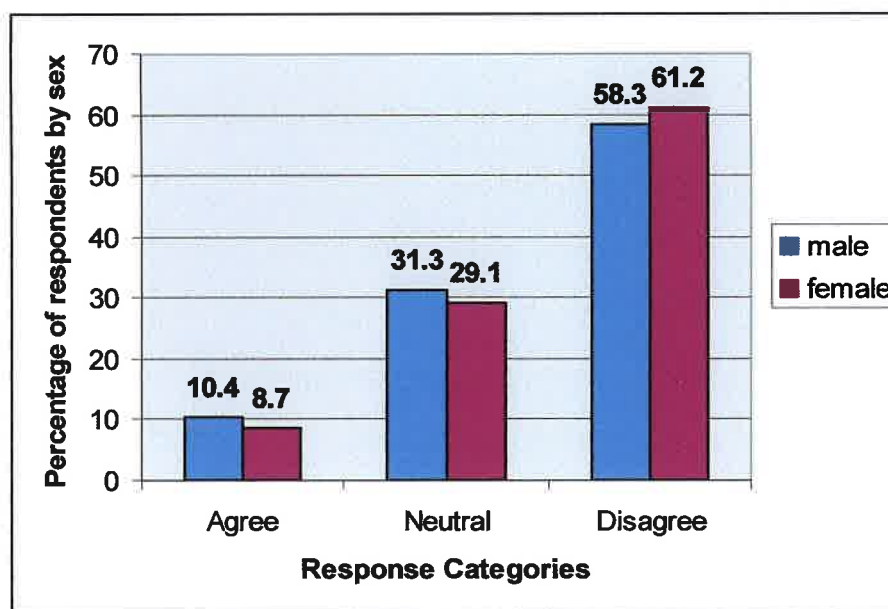


Figure 7. Chart shows responses to the statement *“I feel closer to my partner when we use abbreviations”*.

The following graph (Figure 8) depicts responses to the statement “*I feel closer to my partner when we use unique words/terms*”. The data is divided by sex, with males represented by blue bars and females by red bars.

The greater part of respondents agreed with the statement - males tended to agree slightly more (63%) than females (55%).

Males and females disagreed with the statement with little difference – twenty-five percent of males (25%) and twenty percent (20%) of females chose this response.

Lastly, the neutral category registered a mere thirty percent (30%) of males and twenty-three (23%) percent of females.

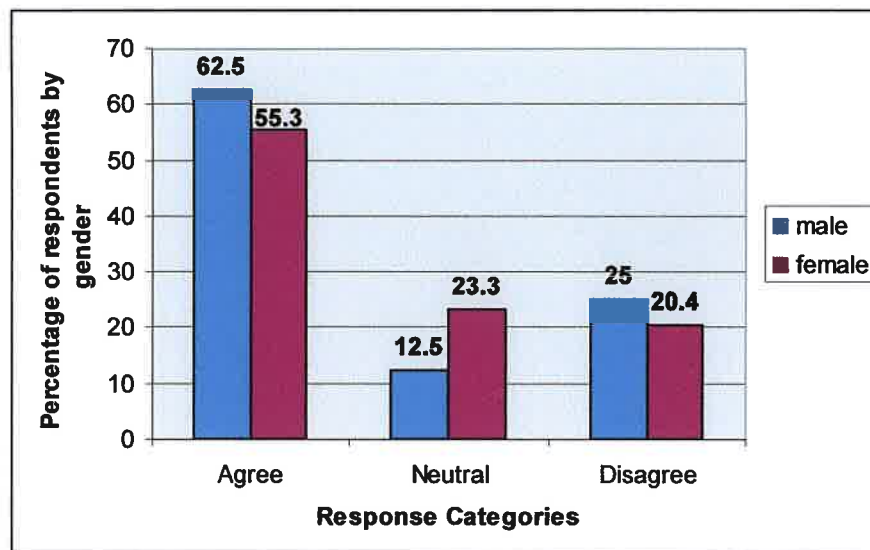


Figure 8. Chart showing responses to the statement “*I feel closer to my partner when we use unique words/terms.*”

Discussion

This study investigated the use and impact of text messaging in the context of heterosexual romantic relationships. In particular, it sought to determine the medium's significance in the attachment process as well as its correlations with intimacy and language in developing relationships. As a starting point, communication behaviour via text messaging during the different stages of relationship development was investigated. Then the respondents' perceptions of the impact of text messaging on the intimacy of their relationships were surveyed. The influence of language on text messages on the process of bonding was explored as well. Finally, the relationship between language and intimacy was investigated.

RQ1a: How is communication behaviour affected by text message use?

The first step in establishing the impact of text messaging was to determine its use and popularity relative to other media. Among respondents, text messaging was second only to face to face messaging as the preferred medium for interaction with the romantic partner. Compared to other technology based media such as social networking sites or internet chat, text messaging was the most often used (refer to Appendix D), despite the professed greater comfort with other technology. It is surmised that the popularity of text messaging is due to the prevalence of mobile phones in this

country as opposed to that of the internet which the other forms of communication depended on. There is more than one mobile phone per person in Trinidad and Tobago whereas only six percent of households have internet access. As such, text messaging is the most commonly used mediating technology because it is the most widely available.

The popularity of text messaging is also supported by the frequency with which it is used. Respondents in the earlier stages (one and two) of relationship development sent more messages than those in later stages (four and five), averaging nine and three messages per day respectively. The average number of messages that respondents sent to their partners as well decrease in the messages sent as relationships develop suggest that use of the medium has been integrated into the communication behaviour of relationship development. In the early stages, the respondents may have been motivated to send so many messages by a desire to reduce uncertainty about their as yet unfamiliar partner (Berger, quoted in Griffin 113). Furthermore, technologically mediated communication tends to filter out non-verbal cues, which leads communication partners to increase their interaction in order to better understand one another (Walther 198). The high frequency of messages in the early stages of a relationship seems to be a method of overcoming the limitations of the channel.

The decrease in the number of text messages as relationships progress, consequently, may be caused by successfully reducing uncertainty about their partner and not needing to continue information seeking behaviour. Also, as

the results indicate, many respondents preferred other media to text messaging (refer to appendix D).

Another aspect of text-messaging behaviour explored was gender based differences. It was found that males sent more text messages than females in the early stages but females sent more in the later stages (refer to appendix D). This difference may be explained by Henley and Freeman's theory ⁶that males hold more social power and that movements towards greater intimacy are a male prerogative. Therefore males tend to initiate and continue communication more than females. In the middle stages (three and four), however, females tend to fulfil maintaining roles within the couple (Maltz and Borker, quoted in Ferris 83) and tend to text more often than males.

Ritual formation was also explored since the review of relevant literature and preliminary research suggested that this was an important aspect of text message use. However only a minority of respondents reported ritualised use of text messaging (refer to appendix D). This suggests that although text messaging is an important form of communication for some couples it is not an essential activity that the majority of couples must engage in for a satisfying relationship.

Additionally, communication behaviour in developing relationships seems to have integrated text messaging, rather than having been influenced or shaped by the new medium. Respondents still follow the stages and

⁶ Nancy Henley and Jo Freeman The Sexual Politics of Interpersonal Behaviour
<<http://www.jofreeman.com/womensociety/personal.htm>>

development patterns suggested by previous research. They also use text messages for some specific needs and abandon it for more appropriate media as the need arises. This supports Pinch and Bijker's theory that individuals do not adjust their behaviour to suit new technology (qtd. in Klein and Kleinman 29), but rather that technology is used to re-establish the communicator's pre-existing communicative pattern.

RQ1b: How is intimacy impacted by Text Message Use?

In this question, researchers explored how intimacy is impacted by the use of text messaging. Results indicated that the majority of respondents, regardless of relationship stage and gender, specified that communicating through text messages heightened their feelings of closeness to their partner. This finding is consistent with Berger's Uncertainty Reduction Theory (qtd. in Griffin 130), which states that increased exchanges of messages and interpersonal information augments liking and attraction.

It should however be noted, that most respondents disagreed with the statement "the greater the amount of text messages I send to or receive from my partner, the closer I perceive us to be." This implies that many respondents do not believe that an increase in the number of text messages relayed with their partner has an affect on their intimacy level. This supports the hypothesis proposed by Kuwabara, Watanabe, Ohguro, Itoh and Maeda that "a small amount of data is sufficient if that data induces a sense of

connectedness in the mind of the receiver” (quoted in Pettigrew 3). However, the responses received cast doubt on the validity of this assertion, as many of respondents who stated that they send more messages in their present Stage than in previous Stages, indicated the reason was an increased feeling of intimacy (see Appendix D). Although this outcome was expected, based on Berger’s Uncertainty Reduction Theory (qtd. in Griffin 130), that increased exchanges of messages and interpersonal information increases liking and attraction, it contradicts the findings of another item on the survey. Results show that respondents in stage five text their partners much less frequently than do those in stages one and two. This contradiction may be explained by the leanness of the text message as a medium for interpersonal relationship compared to the type and content of messages. According to Knapp and Vangelisti (qtd. in Adler 206), communication in the later stages of a relationship are characterised by intense self-disclosure that cannot be accommodated by text messages.

Self-disclosure was used as an alternative measure of intimacy within the survey. When asked if they reveal sensitive or personal information through text messages, the results reflected an equal split between the sexes (Refer to Appendix D). For some respondents the high level of intimacy within the relationship facilitated their self-disclosure via text messaging. Approximately eight percent of respondents stated a concern for privacy (suspicion of the service provider or lack of control over access to the device’s

message records) which was a major handicap, preventing them from using the medium for disclosing private information.

When asked to reveal the topics that they felt uncomfortable discussing via SMS, the majority of those who responded said that there was no subject that was too sensitive. This seems plausible as a review of relevant literature suggests that text messaging facilitates self-disclosure as it constitutes 'detached interaction' and results in a reduction of social inhibitions and apprehension. However, it must be noted that some respondents felt that issues surrounding their romantic relationship, safety and their social networks were too sensitive to be discussed via text messaging.

With regard to sensitive situations, most respondents said that they do not feel uncomfortable using text messages under any circumstances. However, a large percentage (twenty-one percent) said that they would not use text messages while engaged in conflict with their partners. This finding challenges the accepted idea that technologically mediated communication encourages anonymity and the development of avoidance and escape styles of conflict management. Furthermore, the responses of several participants indicated that although text messages allow for, "spatial, temporal and contextual mobility," there are still limitations regarding whether it is seen as an appropriate medium for certain types of communication.

RQ2a: How does Language Use in Text Messaging affect the development of romantic relationships?

The impact of language use in text messaging on the development of romantic relationships was investigated. Respondents were asked to classify their most recent messages. The results showed that, similar to non-CMC contexts, men tended to use more task-oriented messages (Aries, 133). However, women, showed no preference for affective messages, contrary to the accepted theory of gendered language. Since other areas of the investigation strongly suggest that text messages can accommodate affect, it is suspected that perhaps this contradiction is due to cultural differences between the groups studied previously and the population used for this study, rather than gender differences in text message use.

The survey conducted also explicitly asked participants if their partner's language in text messages had affected their decision to pursue a relationship. The majority of males and a substantial portion of females, seventy and thirty three percent respectively, claimed that language had not affected their decision. Although this data suggests that language is not an issue, one must consider the concept of transparency. Is it merely that participants did not consciously recognize the influence of language within their relationship? This issue constitutes a limitation of the study as a different methodological approach could have been used to extract a more reliable response.

Additionally, the majority of respondents denied having to consciously adjust to the manner in which their partners communicated via text messaging. If linked to the high comfort level of respondents with the technology, this data supports the theory that “seasoned communicators” in CMC become skilled at interpreting the signs and codes of new partners, and thus do so unconsciously (Lea and Spears, 24).

RQ2b: How does Language Use in Text Messaging impact affect?

The authors also explored the perceived effects of language use on intimacy. The majority of the persons negated that the use of Standard English affects the intimacy in the relationship. Hence, the assumption that this register is less affective than the native Trinidadian Creole was not supported. These results also indicate register is chosen based on functional capabilities (e.g. space limitations and speed), rather than on its ability to communicate affect (Sproull & Kiesler, qtd. in Bieber et al 51).

Within this study, the majority of the research respondents disagreed that the use of abbreviations in text messages affects their intimacy. This response corroborates with previous research which suggests, that text-only CMC has become such an integral part of youth culture, that the functional use of abbreviations is too common to affect the relational dimension of the message (Crystal 129).

Moreover, the bulk of our respondents indicated that they felt closer to their partner when they used personally coined terms. This serves as an indicator that the need to overcome the leanness of the medium by the creation of an idiolect helps draw the couple even closer (Daft & Lengel qtd. in Griffin 142). Furthermore, the highest percentages of persons who used coined terms were in stages four (4) and five (5), listing between five and ten abbreviations which they commonly use with their partner. (Refer to Appendix D). This shows that the development of a unique subculture is positively related to relationship advancement (Ishii 346)

Limitations

Within this research study, as with all investigative endeavours, many limitations arose. Firstly, it must be noted the sample frame of the respondents also constitutes a significant shortcoming in this study. As the sampling frame was enrolled students at the University of the West Indies, the extent to which the results obtained can be applied to other contexts is limited to some degree. As university students represent a small sub-section of the Trinidadian population, it proves to be a somewhat unrepresentative group. Consequently, this small sampling frame limits the external validity of this research and thus affects the researcher's subsequent ability to make predictions and generalizations about the wider population.

Additionally, in this study, the majority of data analysed was extracted from the survey. This sole reliance on one data collection method means that the faults of the survey research method are not compensated for by the use of any other form of data collection. This limits not only the type of data that is obtained, but the researcher's ability to verify and cross-reference this data. As such the internal validity of the research is marginally reduced.

Furthermore, the nature of the survey measurement device is that it allows for a large quantity of information to be gathered; however the breadth and depth of this data is usually compromised. The survey distributed in this study does not allow for probing questions or the extraction of in-depth data. As such, this measurement device can only retrieve surface data, and thus the research is founded upon fairly superficial information.

Conclusion

The use of text messaging has spawned a new communicative phenomenon. Text messaging has evolved into a necessary tool for mass everyday-use for millions worldwide. With this medium allowing for an increase in interpersonal communication, it has undoubtedly affected the relationships of heterosexual romantic couples. As such, this research thesis endeavoured to investigate the nature of the impact that this modern trend has had on couples. It is our hope that this research piece has contributed to the international academic bank of knowledge on this topic.

The findings suggest that text message has had an impact on some aspects or relationship development. It is used in the early stages of a relationship to connect with a potential partner and reduce uncertainty. In later stages it is used to maintain the relationship. Text messages are also used for both instrumental and relational messages. As such they encourage self-disclosure despite the concerns about privacy and, occasionally, concerns about the context and theme of the interaction.

Completion of this piece has spurred quite a few recommendations for future research. One such suggestion is that a larger sample size be obtained. Given the nature of qualitative research, a small sample size can result in the misrepresentation of the condition under study. This also affects the researcher's ability to produce valid generalizations. Additionally, it is also recommended that more qualitative research be undertaken in the Caribbean in the future. Given the cultural context of our research, a lot of the qualitative

research has proven inapplicable, given the critical cultural differences between the Caribbean population and the North American, European and Asian populations. In order for researchers to truly uncover the foundation of this topic, in-depth qualitative research must be conducted within a local context.

Moreover, in conducting our research, one of our questions remained unanswered by approximately seventy-five percent (75%) of respondents (refer to Appendix C, question 25b). It seems apparent that this question was unanswered, as it proved difficult for the participants to comprehend. Therefore, we wish to advise future researchers to exercise caution when translating technical terms into concepts, so as to ensure that the participants can fully understand the questions asked.

Furthermore, it is also recommended that potential researchers use a more indirect approach to retrieve information from participants. The self-report method utilized in this research was only able to discern information which was a part of the participants' conscious awareness. Thus as such, it was not evident if all relevant information was gathered or only the data which participants remembered. In the future if longitudinal research is conducted using a naturalistic approach (such as ethnography), it may be possible to extract more authentic data about the development of the participant's romantic relationship. If all this, and all the aforementioned recommendations are taken into account, it will undoubtedly increase the internal and external validity of future research.

It can be noted that the issue of text messaging and its effects on the development of heterosexual romantic relationships is far from exhaustion. Several facets of the topic are yet to be investigated and much more in-depth research is required in previously explored areas. As the use of this medium continues to grow, the more imperative it becomes that investigative work be conducted. Without such endeavours, the true power of such a ubiquitous medium will remain uncharted and uncontrolled. Our research has proven that the impact of this medium on interpersonal relationships is far-reaching, and undoubtedly due to amplify significantly in the future.

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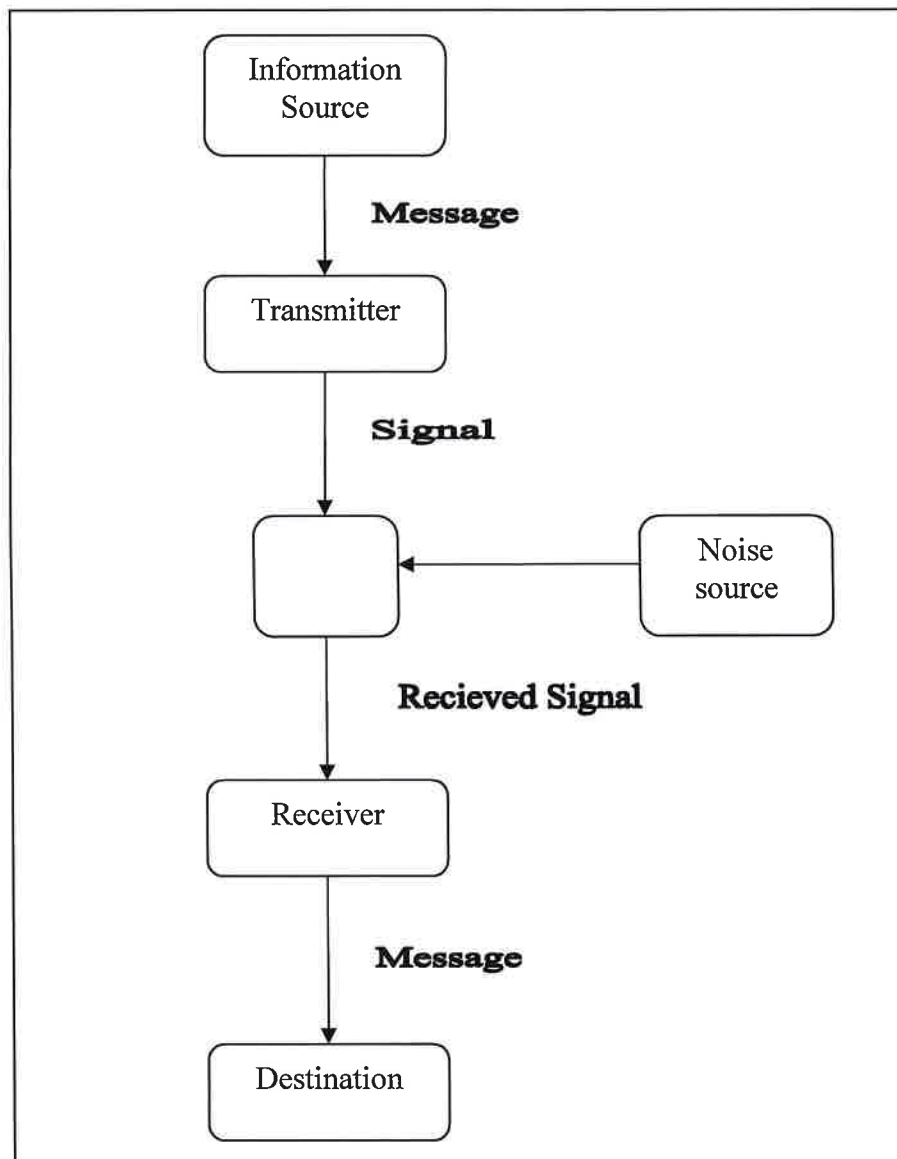
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Appendix A

Model of Communication

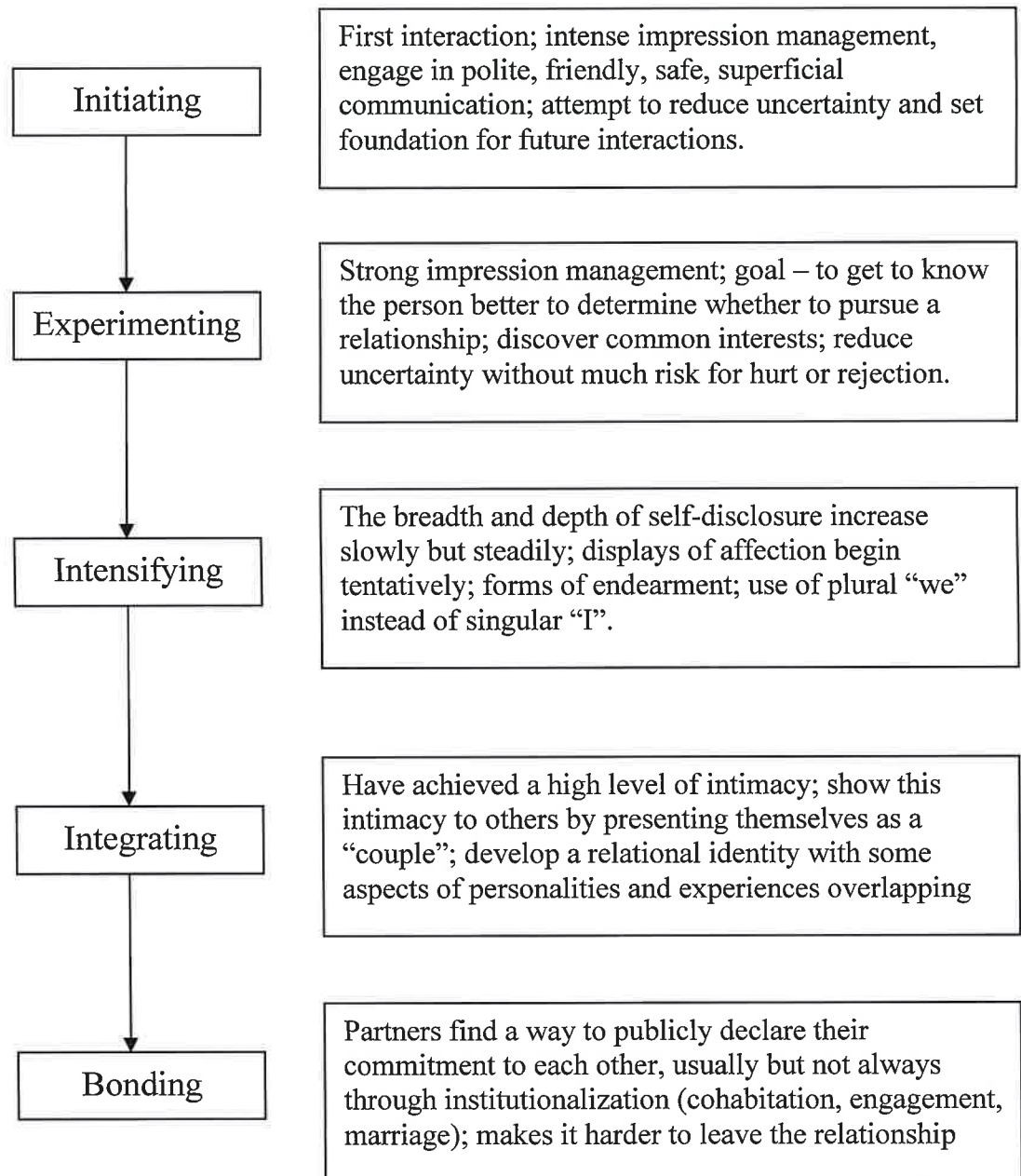
(Adapted from Shannon and Weaver, The Mathematical Theory of Communication, 1949)



Appendix B

The “Coming Together” Stages of Relationship Development

(Adapted from Knapp & Vangelisti (1995))



Appendix C

QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for contributing your time and energy to our research project. We ask that you fully complete the questionnaire or indicate to the researcher why you could not do so, as this will be a key factor in overall validity. This survey is anonymous, but please indicate to the researcher if you would like to be contacted with regard to the uses of your information and/or results of this study.

NB: You MUST be currently involved in a heterosexual romantic relationship to be eligible for this study.

SECTION ONE

1. How old are you? _____ years
 2. What is your sex? Male ☐ Female ☐
 3. In which faculty are you registered?
 Hum/Ed ☐ Soc.Sci. ☐ Sci/Agri ☐ Eng ☐ MedSci ☐ Law ☐
 4. On average how many text messages (SMS) do you send to your partner per day?
 5. How long have you been romantically involved with your current partner?
 6. The following is a description of 5 theorized stages through which a couple progresses. Please tick the stage number that best describes the current state of your relationship.
- ☐ **STAGE ONE**
 First contact, introduction, attraction, assessment for further interaction, superficial communication
- ☐ **STAGE TWO**
 Discovering common interests, discussing many different topics
- ☐ **STAGE THREE**
 Talking about personal topics, discussing the (changing) nature of the relationship
- ☐ **STAGE FOUR**
 Perceived as a couple by selves and others, share intimate information and secrets
- ☐ **STAGE FIVE**
 Public commitment, high level of empathy, trust and intimacy
-

7. I feel comfortable when using text messaging technology.

Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐

8. Sending and/or receiving text messages make me feel closer to my partner.

Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐

9. The greater the number of text messages I send to or receive from my partner, the closer I perceive us to be.

Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐

10. My partner and I have a tendency to text each other at particular times each day.

Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐

11. If I don't get a text message at the expected time, I become worried.

Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐

12. I had to get used to the way my partner expresses him-/herself in text messages.

Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐

13. I feel less close to my partner when we use Standard English.

Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐

14. I feel closer to my partner when we use abbreviations.

Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐

15. I feel closer to my partner when we use unique words/terms.

Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐

16. Sending and/or receiving text messages shows that we care about each other.

Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐

17. I use text messaging for the same purposes now as I previously did.

Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐

18. Please rank the three (3) media you use most to interact with your partner (1st, 2nd, 3rd).

	Email		Text Messaging
	Voice Calls (mobile or landline)		Multimedia Messaging (MMS)
	Instant Messaging (ICQ, MSN Messenger, etc)		Social Networking Sites (Hi5, Facebook, etc)

For question 19 ONLY: Please check your cellular 'phone's text message outbox. Consider the last 5 unrelated messages that you sent to your partner (i.e. they must not be parts of a single conversation).

19a. How many of the 5 text messages were used to request or reveal emotional expressions? /5

19b. How many of the 5 text messages were used to request or reveal general information? /5

19c. How many expressed both? /5

20a. What are the 3 major purposes for which you text message your partner now? Please number them 1-3 in order of importance.

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____

20b. Please list the previous purposes if there is a difference between how you use text messaging now and how you used it previously, placing them in order of importance.

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____

21a. How frequently do you use text messaging now, as compared to earlier in your relationship?

I use text messaging more often now



No difference in how often I use text messaging



I use text messaging less often now



21b. If there is any difference in how frequently you use text messaging, what are the reason(s) for the change?

22a. Do you use text messaging to share personal or sensitive information with your partner?

Yes ☐

No ☐

22b. Give three reasons why you do or do not disclose such information.

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____

23. Are there certain topics which you are uncomfortable communicating by text messages? If yes, which topics?

24. Are there certain circumstances when you are uncomfortable discussing via text messages? If yes, in which circumstances?

25a. Did the language used by your partner in text messages affect your decision to pursue a relationship with him/her?

Yes ☐ Neutral ☐ No ☐

25b. Answer ONLY if you answered Yes to question 24a: In what way did the language used by your partner affect your decision to pursue a relationship with him/her?

26. Are there any unique abbreviations or terms that you and your partner use only with each other? If so, how many and give a few examples along with their meanings?

Appendix D

Additional Results of Survey Questionnaire Investigation

a. Table showing the average time (in months) taken to reach each relationship stage

Stage	Mean	N	Standard Deviation	Median	Range	Minimum	Maximum
Stage 1	7.722	9	7.6039	6.000	23.5	.5	24.0
Stage 2	19.438	8	32.9582	5.000	94.5	1.5	96.0
Stage 3	13.000	19	12.6623	8.000	48.0	.0	48.0
Stage 4	15.431	51	15.9035	10.000	77.5	.5	78.0
Stage 5	30.947	62	28.1903	24.000	178.8	1.2	180.0
N/A	3.000	1		3.000	.0	3.0	3.0
Total	21.205	150	23.5919	13.000	180.0	.0	180.0

The researchers collected this data in order to determine if it was possible to measure the progression of a romantic relationship according to the time that it had been in existence. Clearly, however, each case is different, as can be evidenced by the high figures of standard deviation especially in stages three (thirty-three months) and five (twenty-eight months).

b. Table showing the average number of text messages sent broken down by stage for each gender

Gender	Stage	Mean	N	Standard Deviation
Male	Stage 1	10.00	1	.
	Stage 2	10.50	4	10.661
	Stage 3	2.83	6	2.137
	Stage 4	2.71	14	2.614
	Stage 5	4.50	22	4.798
	Total	4.38	47	5.046
Female	Stage 1	4.75	8	3.536
	Stage 2	8.25	4	7.932
	Stage 3	5.69	13	7.262
	Stage 4	3.86	37	8.145
	Stage 5	2.95	40	3.948
	Total	3.97	103	6.313
Total	Stage 1	5.33	9	3.742
	Stage 2	9.38	8	8.782
	Stage 3	4.79	19	6.188
	Stage 4	3.55	51	7.058
	Stage 5	3.50	62	4.295
	Total	4.10	148	5.931

While most of the data in this table is reported in the Results section of the main text (see Figure 2), an examination of the reported standard deviation from the mean is quite revealing. For instance, while the average male in stage two sent eleven (10.50) messages daily to his partner, the standard deviation indicates that some sent less than one, while others sent more than twenty.

c. Table showing changes in the frequency of text message use per relationship stage

			Stage						Total
			stage 1	stage 2	stage 3	stage 4	stage 5	N/A	
Frequency	More frequent	Count	5	3	5	13	12	0	38
		% within Frequency	13.2%	7.9%	13.2%	34.2%	31.6%	.0%	100.0%
		% within Stage	55.6%	37.5%	25.0%	25.5%	19.4%	.0%	25.2%
	No difference	Count	0	2	10	21	18	1	52
		% within Frequency	.0%	3.8%	19.2%	40.4%	34.6%	1.9%	100.0%
		% within Stage	.0%	25.0%	50.0%	41.2%	29.0%	100.0%	34.4%
	Less frequent	Count	4	3	5	16	32	0	60
		% within Frequency	6.7%	5.0%	8.3%	26.7%	53.3%	.0%	100.0%
		% within Stage	44.4%	37.5%	25.0%	31.4%	51.6%	.0%	39.7%
	N/A	Count	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
		% within Frequency	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
		% within Stage	.0%	.0%	.0%	2.0%	.0%	.0%	.7%
Total		Count	9	8	20	51	62	1	151
		% within Frequency	6.0%	5.3%	13.2%	33.8%	41.1%	.7%	100.0%
		% within Stage	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

As could be expected, most participants who identified their relationship as in stage one reported an increased use of text messaging (fifty-six percent). Interestingly, those in stage two were equally divided between sending more messages and sending fewer (thirty-eight percent each). Persons in stages three and four tended to see no changes in the frequency of text messaging, while those in stage five reported an overall tendency to send fewer text messages. The reported reasons for these changes are reported in the following table.

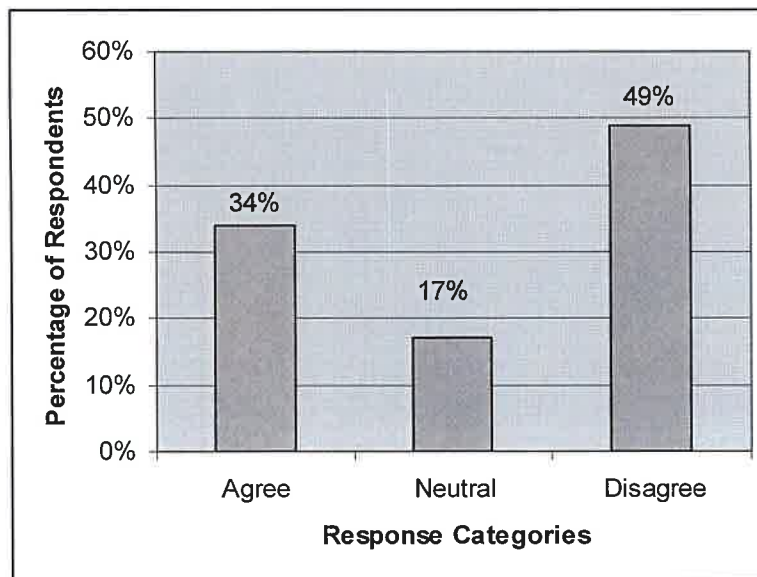
d. Table showing the reasons for the reported changes in the frequency of text messaging to one's romantic partner

		Reason						Total
Frequency		Increased Intimacy	Preference for other technology	Economic factors	Appropriateness	Other	N/A	
More frequent	Count	13	4	4	4	1	12	38
	% within Frequency	34.2%	10.5%	10.5%	10.5%	2.6%	31.6%	100.0%
	% within Reason	39.4%	12.9%	26.7%	80.0%	25.0%	19.0%	25.2%
No difference	Count	2	1	1	0	0	48	52
	% within Frequency	3.8%	1.9%	1.9%	.0%	.0%	92.3%	100.0%
	% within Reason	6.1%	3.2%	6.7%	.0%	.0%	76.2%	34.4%
Less frequent	Count	18	26	10	1	3	2	60
	% within Frequency	30.0%	43.3%	16.7%	1.7%	5.0%	3.3%	100.0%
	% within Reason	54.5%	83.9%	66.7%	20.0%	75.0%	3.2%	39.7%
N/A	Count	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	% within Frequency	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% within Reason	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	1.6%	.7%
Total	Count	33	31	15	5	4	63	151
	% within Frequency	21.9%	20.5%	9.9%	3.3%	2.6%	41.7%	100.0%
	% within Reason	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The researchers attempted to account for the changes in text messaging frequency as the relationship progressed. While most respondents indicated that they now send text messages less frequently than in prior stages (40%), most gave the reason as a preference for other means of communication (43.3%). In contrast, for those who used SMS more often (25.2%), their behaviour was driven mostly by increased feelings of intimacy with their partners (34.2%). It is clear that economic concerns (the financial cost of the service, the time necessary to input characters into the mobile device, a change in subscription to mobile service providers, etc) played a role in discouraging the use of the medium (66.7%), while the flexibility of the medium made it suitable for a variety of topics and situations (80.0%).

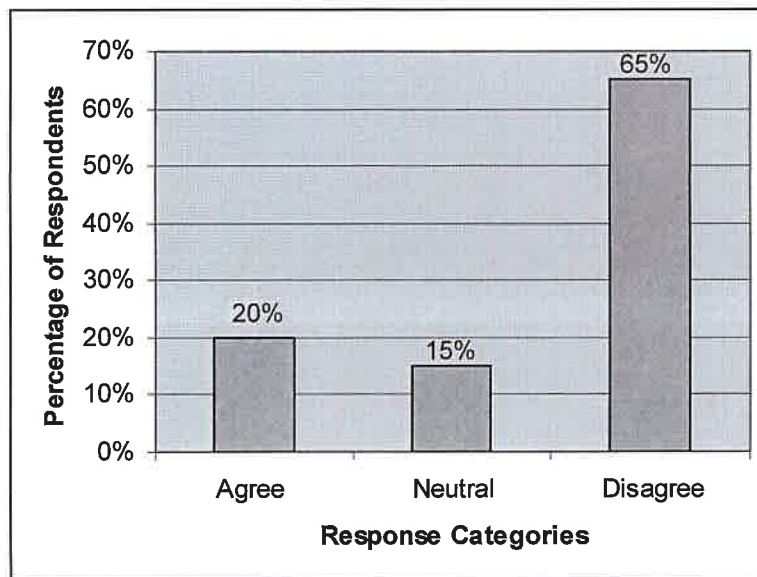
This table shows the reasons most likely to influence changes in text messaging frequency per relationship stage. Respondents in stage one were motivated mostly by an increase in feelings of closeness (44.4%), whereas those in the second stage were driven to change their behaviour by economic factors (25.0%). Stage three participants were reportedly equally affected by the aforementioned factors (20%). Those in the fourth stage of the relationship were also equally divided in their reasons behind using the medium differently: 20% said it was due to economic factors while another 20% said it was due to increased intimacy. Finally, those in stage five were most influenced by their preference for other means of communication.

f. Graph showing the responses to the statement: “My partner and I have a tendency to text each other at particular times each day.”



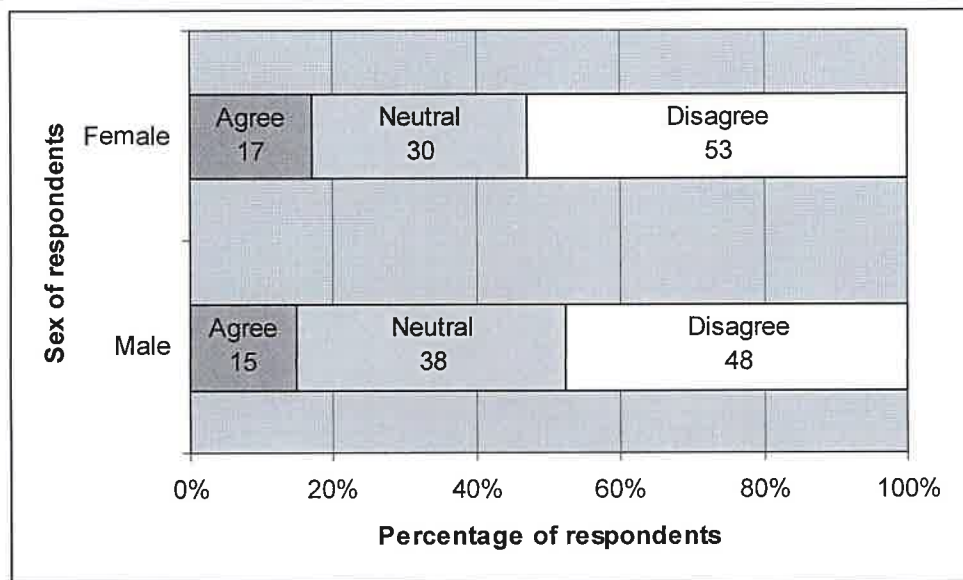
Participants were asked to report whether they and their partner had developed a ritual of messaging each other at particular times in order to assess if the medium had gained a place of importance in the relationship. Thirty-four percent (34%) of participants agreed that they do text message their partner at pre-determined times. Conversely, most (49 %) stated that they did not engage in any such text message rituals. Seventeen percent (17%) of respondents reported neutral attitudes towards this question.

g. Graph showing the responses of participants to the statement:
“If I don’t get a text message at the expected time, I become worried.”



This graph shows the responses of participants when asked if they would feel anxious when an established communication ritual was violated. Twenty percent (20%) of respondents reported that they become anxious when they do not receive a text message at a particular time. Sixty-five percent (65%) disagreed and stated that they do not worry if they do not receive a text message at the appointed time. Fifteen percent (15%) of participants remained neutral about this statement.

h. Graph showing response pattern to the statement: “The greater the number of text messages I send to or receive from my partner, the closer I perceive us to be.”



This figure depicts the participants' responses to the question which aimed to investigate if partners feel more intimate the greater the number of messages they send or receive. However, most respondents said that their intimacy level was not based on the number of messages sent or received. Interestingly, as seen in table (d), the reverse seems to be true – that the more intimate one feels towards one's partner, the more text messages one sends him or her.

i. Table showing respondents' response to the statement: “I feel comfortable when using text messaging technology.”

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
Comfort	Agree	Count	31	77	108
		% within Gender	64.6%	74.8%	71.5%
	Neutral	Count	14	18	32
		% within Gender	29.2%	17.5%	21.2%
	Disagree	Count	3	8	11
		% within Gender	6.3%	7.8%	7.3%
	Total	Count	48	103	151
		% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

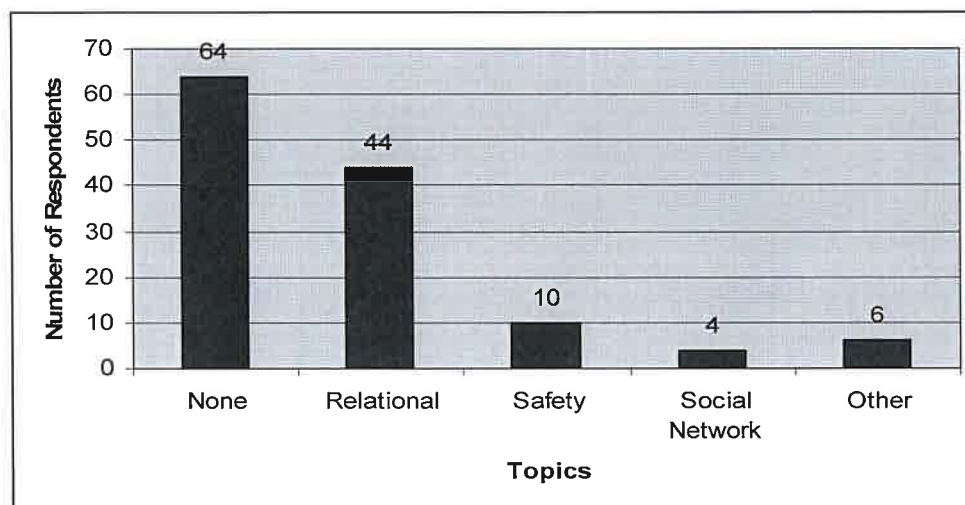
According to the responses, both sexes have a high comfort level with the communication medium. However, more females tended to report being comfortable with the medium, with 74.8% of them agreeing with the statement versus only 64.6% of the males indicating the same level of comfort.

j. Table showing the comfort level of participants compared with the stage of their relationship

			Stage						Total
			Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	N/A	
Comfort	Agree	Count	7	7	13	38	43	0	108
		% within Stage	77.8 %	87.5%	65.0%	74.5%	69.4%	.0%	71.5%
	Neutral	Count	0	0	5	10	16	1	32
		% within Stage	.0%	.0%	25.0%	19.6%	25.8%	100.0%	21.2%
	Disagree	Count	2	1	2	3	3	0	11
		% within Stage	22.2 %	12.5%	10.0%	5.9%	4.8%	.0%	7.3%
Total	Count	9	8	20	51	62	1	151	
	% within Stage	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0%	100.0 %	

An attempt was made to see if comfort levels with the medium of text messaging greatly affected response patterns according to relationship stage. It is evident, however, that if there was an impact, it was not substantial.

k. Graph showing the topics which respondents reported they feel uncomfortable discussing by text messaging

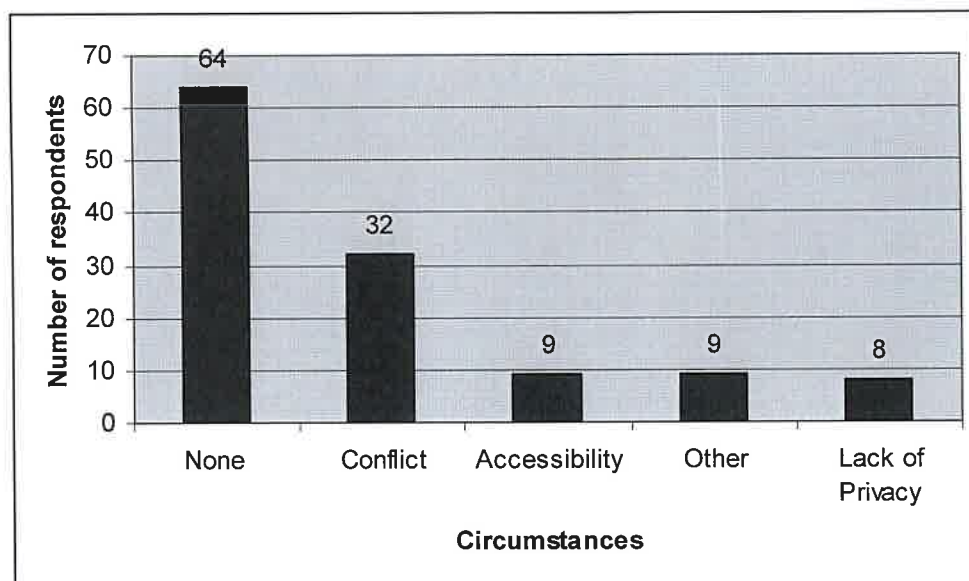


Most respondents (sixty-four of them) indicated that there are no topics that they feel awkward talking about through text messages. The second least-liked subject was relational issues, meaning that they felt uncomfortable talking explicitly about the relationship and its changing nature via text messages. Third in rank is safety information, which includes information such as passwords and P.I.N. numbers, pointed out by ten people. Following was other miscellaneous issues and subjects touching on one's social networks (friends and family).

As could be expected, most participants in stage five (54.8%) felt that there was no topic that they could not discuss openly via text messaging. Interestingly, however, 44.4% of persons in stage one also indicated the same sentiment. Nevertheless, it could be inferred that the respondents in these two stages mean different things: possibly that text messaging helps persons in stage one to reduce anxiety or save face in discussing potentially sensitive topics while getting to know each other, whereas the medium simply facilitates the communication norm between the partners in stage five.

Also noteworthy in this table is the topic most unpopular with stages two and three: explicit discussions about the relationship and its changing nature. These stages are pivotal in a romantic relationship, as it is when the persons involved decide to commit or not. As such, it is remarkable that persons seem to be uncomfortable communicating about this subject through text messaging.

m. Graph showing the circumstances when respondents report feeling uncomfortable interacting via text messaging



Most respondents (sixty-four of them) said that there are no situations when they feel awkward talking through SMS. However, conflict and/or relationship dissolution situations were sometimes uncomfortable, as thirty-two persons mentioned. Accessibility, or the lack thereof, also seems to be a delicate situation. Other miscellaneous circumstances and the lack of privacy reportedly affect a minor number of respondents.

n. Table showing the circumstances when respondents report feeling uncomfortable interacting via text messaging per relationship stage

			Stage						Total
			stage 1	stage 2	stage 3	stage 4	stage 5	N/A	
Circumstance	None	Count	4	3	7	22	28	0	64
		% within Circumstance	6.3%	4.7%	10.9%	34.4%	43.8%	.0%	100.0%
		% within Stage	44.4%	37.5%	35.0%	43.1%	45.2%	.0%	42.4%
	Conflict/Dissolution	Count	2	4	6	12	8	0	32
		% within Circumstance	6.3%	12.5%	18.8%	37.5%	25.0%	.0%	100.0%
		% within Stage	22.2%	50.0%	30.0%	23.5%	12.9%	.0%	21.2%
	Lack of privacy	Count	0	0	0	1	7	0	8
		% within Circumstance	.0%	.0%	.0%	12.5%	87.5%	.0%	100.0%
		% within Stage	.0%	.0%	.0%	2.0%	11.3%	.0%	5.3%
	Accessibility	Count	0	1	3	2	3	0	9
		% within Circumstance	.0%	11.1%	33.3%	22.2%	33.3%	.0%	100.0%
		% within Stage	.0%	12.5%	15.0%	3.9%	4.8%	.0%	6.0%
	Other	Count	0	0	1	4	4	0	9
		% within Circumstance	.0%	.0%	11.1%	44.4%	44.4%	.0%	100.0%
		% within Stage	.0%	.0%	5.0%	7.8%	6.5%	.0%	6.0%
	No Answer	Count	3	0	3	10	12	1	29
		% within Circumstance	10.3%	.0%	10.3%	34.5%	41.4%	3.4%	100.0%
		% within Stage	33.3%	.0%	15.0%	19.6%	19.4%	100.0%	19.2%
Total		Count	9	8	20	51	62	1	151
		% within Circumstance	6.0%	5.3%	13.2%	33.8%	41.1%	.7%	100.0%
		% within Stage	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

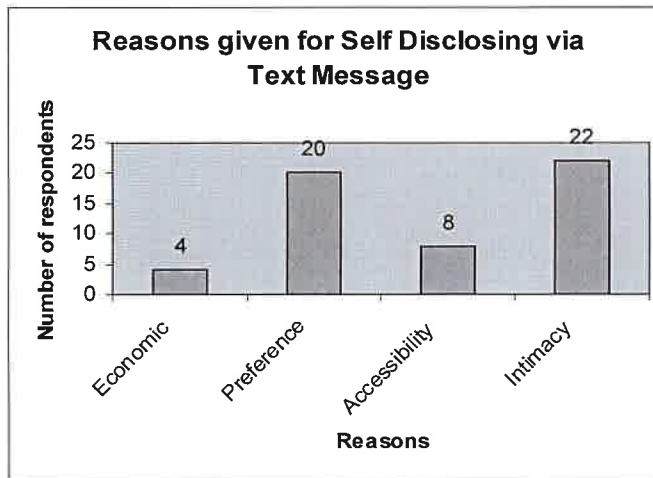
As could be expected, most participants in stage five (45.2%) felt that there was no situation when they could not interact freely via text messaging. Repeating the trend with topics, however, 44.4% of persons in stage one also indicated the same sentiment. Again, it could be inferred that the respondents in these two stages mean different things: possibly that text messaging helps persons in stage one to reduce anxiety in potentially potent situations, whereas the medium simply continues the ease of communication between the partners in stage five.

o. Table showing if participants self-disclose via text messaging per relationship stage

			Stage						Total
			stage 1	stage 2	stage 3	stage 4	stage 5	No answer	
Disclosure	Yes	Count	5	6	8	26	32	0	77
		% within Disclosure	6.5%	7.8%	10.4%	33.8%	41.6%	.0%	100.0%
		% within Stage	55.6%	75.0%	40.0%	51.0%	51.6%	.0%	51.0%
	No	Count	4	2	11	24	29	1	71
		% within Disclosure	5.6%	2.8%	15.5%	33.8%	40.8%	1.4%	100.0%
		% within Stage	44.4%	25.0%	55.0%	47.1%	46.8%	100.0%	47.0%
	No answer	Count	0	0	1	1	1	0	3
		% within Disclosure	.0%	.0%	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	.0%	100.0%
		% within Stage	.0%	.0%	5.0%	2.0%	1.6%	.0%	2.0%
Total		Count	9	8	20	51	62	1	151
		% within Disclosure	6.0%	5.3%	13.2%	33.8%	41.1%	.7%	100.0%
		% within Stage	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

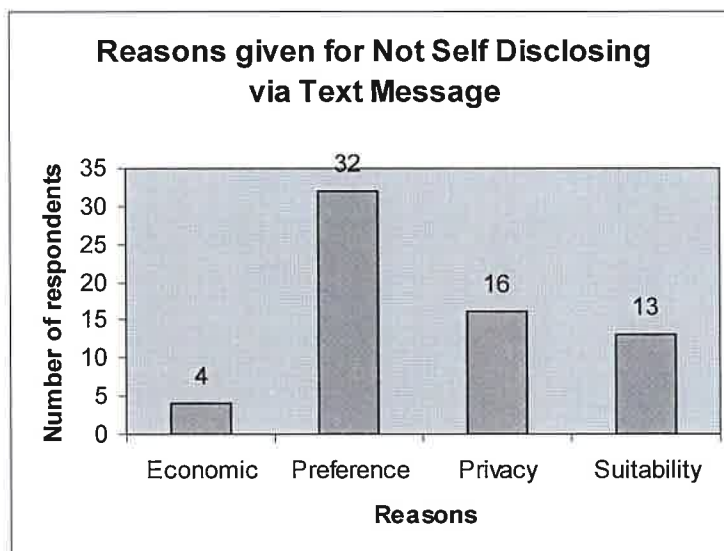
Here we see a potential pattern of self-disclosure as the relationship develops. In stage one, participants indicate that they are slightly more likely to reveal sensitive or personal information through text messaging. In stage two however, the tendency becomes clearer with 75% of respondents willing to self-disclose through the medium. The pattern begins to invert in stage three where participants report being slightly less inclined to self-disclose via SMS. In the fourth and fifth stages, there is no clear preference, as the figures show no substantial difference between positive and negative disclosure.

p. Graph showing the reasons given by respondents for self-disclosing via SMS



We see that participants choose to self-disclose via text messages mostly because of a preference for the medium and because of strong feelings of intimacy. Minor reasons are those of accessibility (the ability to reveal personal information whenever one feels the need due to the spatial and temporal mobility afforded by the medium) and economic factors (time, financial cost, etc).

q. Graph showing the reasons given by respondents for not self-disclosing via text messaging



Participants refused to self-disclose through text messages mostly because of preference for other means of communication for this purpose, followed by

concerns about privacy of their messages (uncertainty if their messages are intercepted by mobile service providers or if these messages will be shown to persons other than their intended receiver), the suitability of the medium for such communication, and the economic factors of doing so (time, money, etc).

r. Table showing respondents' answers to the question: "Did the language used by your partner in text messages affect your decision to pursue a relationship with him/her?"

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
Did the language used by partner in SMS affect decision to pursue the relationship?	Yes	Count	7	12	19
		% within Gender	14.6%	11.7%	12.6%
	Neutral	Count	7	17	24
		% within Gender	14.6%	16.5%	15.9%
	No	Count	33	70	103
		% within Gender	68.8%	68.0%	68.2%
	N/A	Count	1	4	5
		% within Gender	2.1%	3.9%	3.3%
Total		Count	48	103	151
		% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The majority of respondents disagreed with this statement, with only a bare minimum actually responding positively. However, an unanticipated factor may have affected the response – most persons are unaware of the role language plays in their perception and judgment. As such, it could be inferred that the question was faulty as it asked participants to report about something of which they were unconscious, thereby gaining faulty data.

s. Table showing participants' responses to the statement: "I had to get used to the way my partner expresses him-/herself in text messages."

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
Adjustment to partner's language necessary	Agree	Count	17	25	42
		% within Gender	35.4%	24.3%	27.8%
	Neutral	Count	7	24	31
		% within Gender	14.6%	23.3%	20.5%
	Disagree	Count	24	54	78
		% within Gender	50.0%	52.4%	51.7%
Total		Count	48	103	151
		% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

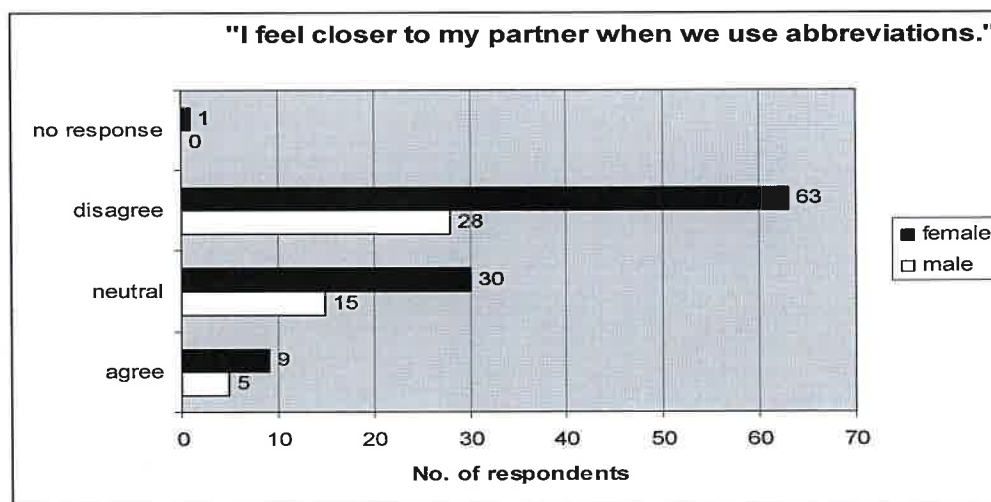
Most respondents denied having had to adapt to their partner's texting idiolect (50 % of males and 52% females). However, it is noteworthy that 35% of males reported that they in fact had to adjust to their partner's language style in text messages, whereas only 24% of females said this.

t. Table showing participants' response to the statement: "I feel less close to my partner when we use Standard English [in text messages]."

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
Less intimacy when using Standard English	Agree	Count	5	8	13
		% within Gender	10.4%	7.8%	8.6%
	Neutral	Count	11	22	33
		% within Gender	22.9%	21.4%	21.9%
	Disagree	Count	32	72	104
		% within Gender	66.7%	69.9%	68.9%
	N/A	Count	0	1	1
		% within Gender	.0%	1.0%	.7%
Total		Count	48	103	151
		% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The researchers attempted to uncover if participants thought that register choice (Trinidadian Creole or Standard English) influenced feelings of intimacy. Most respondents indicated that register choice did not have any effect (about seventy percent females and sixty-seven percent males). However, ten percent (10%) of men thought that register choice did have an effect on their intimate feelings.

u. Graph showing participants' responses to the statement: "I feel closer to my partner when we use abbreviations."



Most participants negated that the norm of using abbreviations in text messages had any effect on their feelings of closeness to their partner. While few were neutral towards the statement, even fewer actually agreed with it.

v. Table comparing the number of words and/or terms coined by the participants to the relationship stage

			Stage					Total
			stage 1	stage 2	stage 3	stage 4	stage 5	
Abbreviations	0	Count	7	2	12	23	31	75
		% within Abbreviation	9.3%	2.7%	16.0%	30.7%	41.3%	100.0%
		% within Stage	100.0%	40.0%	80.0%	52.3%	62.0%	62.0%
	1	Count	0	2	0	9	7	18
		% within Abbreviation	.0%	11.1%	.0%	50.0%	38.9%	100.0%
		% within Stage	.0%	40.0%	.0%	20.5%	14.0%	14.9%
	2	Count	0	1	2	3	1	7
		% within Abbreviation	.0%	14.3%	28.6%	42.9%	14.3%	100.0%
		% within Stage	.0%	20.0%	13.3%	6.8%	2.0%	5.8%
	3	Count	0	0	0	1	2	3
		% within Abbreviation	.0%	.0%	.0%	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
		% within Stage	.0%	.0%	.0%	2.3%	4.0%	2.5%
	4	Count	0	0	1	2	2	5
		% within Abbreviation	.0%	.0%	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	100.0%
		% within Stage	.0%	.0%	6.7%	4.5%	4.0%	4.1%
	5	Count	0	0	0	3	3	6
		% within Abbreviation	.0%	.0%	.0%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
		% within Stage	.0%	.0%	.0%	6.8%	6.0%	5.0%
	10	Count	0	0	0	3	4	7
		% within Abbreviation	.0%	.0%	.0%	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
		% within Stage	.0%	.0%	.0%	6.8%	8.0%	5.8%
Total		Count	7	5	15	44	50	121
		% within Abbreviation	5.8%	4.1%	12.4%	36.4%	41.3%	100.0%
		% within Stage	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Remarkably, 100% of the participants in the first stage of a romantic relationship revealed that they have not coined any words whatsoever, as compared with those participants in stages four and five who consistently reported having created more unique words and terms than those in other stages.