

A CROSS-SECTIONAL INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECTS OF INSTANT MESSAGING USAGE ON YOUNG ADULT RELATIONSHIP QUALITY

Ryan Prins; Anthony Trotter; Rufino Virata; Jamie Yaptinchay

Abstract

This study will examine the association between instant messaging use and dating relationship quality among young adults using a cross-sectional, quantitative design. Participants will be gathered through various campus advertisements. Individuals that meet the study's criteria will be selected to participate in this study using random sampling. A comparison between participants that use instant messaging and those that do not will be performed. Relationship Quality has been conceptualized into four parts: Support, Conflict, Harmony, and Accepting Influence. In addition, Instant Messaging Use has been conceptualized into Instant Messaging Quantity. We will also be recording the Relationship Duration to determine whether a causal association exists between the aforementioned independent and dependent variables. To measure these variables, a combination of tests and methods obtained from similar research, as well as a questionnaire developed by our research team, will be used. The Quality of Relationship Inventory will be used to measure both Support and Conflict. Accordingly, Harmony will be calculated as the difference between these two variables. Accepting Influence will be measured using a video-recall method. Relationship Duration is a simple ratio variable and will be measured using a General Questionnaire. Instant Messaging Quantity will also be measured using the General Questionnaire. The relationship between these variables will be analyzed using cross-tabulation and other bivariate statistical analysis techniques. Conclusions will be drawn regarding the impact of Instant Messaging Quantity on Relationship Quality.

KEY WORDS: instant messaging quantity ~ relationship quality ~ quality of relationship inventory (QRI) ~ video-recall session

Goals of the Proposed Research

Our research question:

Does instant messaging use affect the quality of young adult of relationships?

Instant messaging offers an alternative method of communication, now giving couples the freedom to communicate online, providing alternatives to the more traditional methods of contact, like telephone and in person. However, instant messaging (IM) is a rather limited type of communication. Body language and tone of voice are essential aspects of human expression and are both difficult to convey over IM. We hypothesize that couples who rely on IM heavily may experience negative effects in the quality of their relationship due to the diminished quality of communication. It is expected that couples who use IM more frequently will have a poorer relationship quality than those who do not rely on it as heavily. The goal of our proposed research is to assess the validity of this claim by determining the effects of instant messaging use between couples on relationship quality. We hope to satisfy the needs of couples and users of instant messaging in helping them assess the effectiveness of IM for its continued use. Furthermore, stakeholders in the business industry and social service could profit with increased or diminished level of instant messaging use would find our study of interest.

Background and Significance

While no research studies have been completed explicitly regarding the effects of instant messaging use on relationship quality between couples, significant research has been made on related topics. Studies on instant messaging use and its effectiveness, as well as on determinants of relationship quality, have been completed previously. For our study in particular, we plan to employ prior research that assessed relationship quality.

Relation to Our Research Question

To explore our research question we intend to use methods, namely the Quality of Relationship Inventory (QRI) and a video-recording assessment, established and outlined in Galliher (1998). The methodology provided to us by Galliher relates to the research question in that it enables us to quantitatively measure relationship quality. The researchers' ability to successfully use these measures as a reasonable representation of relationship quality provoked our interest in their methodologies.

Prior research that discussed instant messaging will not be used in our study because our research question hopes to focus its attention on the assessment of relationship quality, as supported by the literature mentioned above, rather than the effectiveness of instant messaging technologies.

Because there has been no previous study that encompasses what we are trying to accomplish, there is an opportunity to explore such a topic. Our study hopes to make a relation between relationship quality and a particular form of communication: instant messaging. There have been many studies about these topics independently (Emmers-Sommer and Galliher being two of them) but no one research study that encompasses the aspects of IM-use and relationship quality. These parts correlate together in a manner that will lead us to complete this lack of study on how this particular medium of communication affects dating relationship quality.

Concept Background

The idea that the use of instant messaging could affect relationship quality is a new topic to be explored in the field of social sciences. One particular study that has been done in the past has looked at how relationship quality is perceived and provides a solid definition of the concept of relationship quality (Galliher, 2004). Accordingly, the resulting conceptualization of relationship quality was useful in our study.

Keeley and Hart (1994) have argued that the 'quality of a personal relationship is inexorably related to the quality of communication between the parties involved in that relationship' (p. 135). Keely and Hart assert that a relationship exists between the quality of communication and the quality of a relationship. Accordingly, this theory was used as a basis for our research question. In assessing the effectiveness of instant message communication, we are assuming that effective communication in turn leads to increased perceived quality of relationships.

With the correlation between quality communication and quality relations established, the actual concept of "relation quality" needs further definition. Relationship quality has been defined as male and female romantic partners' perceptions of their conversations which were used to

predict overall relationship quality (Galliher, 2004). In addition, relationship quality is further defined into positive relationship quality and negative relationship quality. Positive relationship quality has been termed 'support' (Gavin & Furman, 1996) and encompasses such connecting subjective experiences as affection, intimacy, and nurturance, while negative relationship quality has been characterized by conflict, irritation, and antagonism.

Given the perception (Galliher, 2004) of a relationship as a foundation for relationship quality, these bodies of literature will be reviewed and used as the basis for which relationship quality will be defined. This "quality of a relationship" concept can contain many aspects, such as quality time within that relationship. In fact, quality time has been defined as focused, uninterrupted time with partners, friends, or children (Lingren, 1998). While this factor also plays a role in relationship quality, it is not a determinant of relationship quality we wish to focus on. We recognize the many variables that can affect one's perceived level of relationship quality, but for the purposes of our study, we shall only evaluate communication's effect on relationship quality, namely communication via instant messaging.

For the purpose of our research, instant messaging services shall be defined as a simple text-based chat service that allows users to privately and directly communicate in real-time through the electronic exchange of typed messages. An "instant message" is the actual text-based message exchanged between two persons while the term "instant messaging" can be the term describing this type of communication or the verb describing the actual exchange of these messages. In addition, instant messaging also alerts users whether their previously defined online correspondents (friends, family, co-workers) have come online or offline to indicate the ability to IM him or her.

Broad Impact of the Proposed Study

Increasing amounts of people are connecting to the Internet. Correspondingly, the use of instant messaging as a form of communication in one's dating life is increasingly prevalent. Our research question has mass appeal in that it provides evidence of communication effectiveness for two major demographics: Internet users and those in a dating-relationship. The millions of Internet users who currently use IM will benefit from our study; our findings will allow them to assess the potential effects of IM on their relationships for continued use. Similarly, people currently in a dating-relationship have an interest in knowing whether IM-use can help them strengthen their communication with their significant other and thereby improve relationship quality. It is our hope that these two needs can be satisfied with the findings of our study

In addition, persons who regularly use instant messaging with their significant other and experience problems due to a lack of quality communication would find the research constructive. More importantly, with the premise that more quality communication comes better relationships, our research contributes to the understanding of communication effectiveness.

Stakeholders in Business

Besides the vast appeal and applicability of our research findings to the American population, there are substantial stakeholders in the business industry who would find our study findings to be of interest.

- *Owners of dating websites*
If instant messaging proves to have a positive affect on relationship quality, they will more readily adopt instant messaging services as a feature of their existing systems or more strongly encourage its members to participate in IM-use to create better results.
- *Instant message providers*
The findings of our research has the potential to aid in the promotion of their instant messaging services or provide incentives to invest into developing features that would promote the user's communication in his or her dating life.
- *Providers of other technology-based communication tools*
Conversely, providers of other technology-based communication, such as cell phone text messaging, can find our results of interest to promote their own technology as superior. More importantly, developers of instant messaging software will gain further insight into design that effectively facilitates quality communication to build better instant message technologies in the future.
- *Providers of social services*
Although without direct economic impact, providers of social services, such as youth groups, counselors, and social organizers, may find the results of this research of importance. Striving to strengthen relationships and their positive effects on the human condition, such services and groups would benefit knowing whether instant messaging facilitates greater communication.
- *Advocates of Alternative Methods of Communication*
Alternatively, our findings could also be of interest to those who discourage instant messaging to further their promotion of other methods of communication (traditional or technological).

Research Design and Methods

Participants

Participants for this project will target young adult university students and their romantic partners. Young adults are individuals that are between the ages of 18 and 25. The age range is considered to be broad enough not to restrict the number of couples that may be eligible to participate. Also, we chose to use young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 due to the fact that a majority of young adults will be in a relationship at that age. In addition, it is more likely that participants of this age group are slightly more tech savvy than those of older age groups. Consequently, we will also have a greater chance at obtaining participants that use instant messaging clients. Target participants must also be romantic partners currently in a monogamous dating relationship and must have been dating for at least four weeks. The four week requirement ensures that the participants share some history. It should be noted that relationships will be restricted to heterosexual relationships, due to the fact that our video-recall session instrument is specifically tailored to heterosexual relationships. Moreover, the homosexual population in the United States is miniscule and will have no large effect on the generalizability of our results.

Due to the fact that the goal of our research is to generalize to the national young adult population, we will advertise our study at multiple college campuses throughout the nation. Participants will be selected from 10 large cities throughout the United States (i.e. New York, Seattle, and Minneapolis-St. Paul). It should be noted that advertising at multiple college campuses may affect generalizability to a national population of young adults; however, the study is generalizable to a limited population, that is, young adult university students. Nevertheless, since this is a pilot study, generalizability to all young adults is not one of our greatest concerns. Because we are attempting to generalize to the young adult population of the United States, we will need to collect a fairly large number of participants from various campuses (approximately 1000 participants total). To ensure protection from selection bias, couples will be placed into the control group or experimental group based on their use of instant messaging in their relationship using simple random sampling.

Finally, couples chosen from the sampling frame will be given a pre-paid dinner upon completion of their tests. As an additional bonus, couples that are contacted through college courses may receive extra credit for their participation.

Procedures and Measures

This experiment will be a cross-sectional study analyzing how IM usage affects the quality of relationship in young adult couples. Two test groups will be created; a control group will consist of participants that do not use IM while the experimental group will consist of those that do use IM. Because our project is a cross-sectional study, we do not feel that endogenous change threatens our results; maturation and testing pose no threat to our study. However, because our study deals with couples, it is possible that external events, such as an earlier argument between partners may have an effect on the rating of the other partner during the video-recall session. We will also be instructing our participants not to talk about their results with others, though they will be allowed to talk about the study as a couple once their participation is completed.

Moreover, we will also be using universities with large campus populations (approximately 30,000 students), minimizing the chance that participants know each other. Consequently, contamination between the control and experimental groups has low probability. Participants will also be completing the questionnaires and video-recall sessions in the absence of a research assistant to reduce the chances that the researchers are having an unseen effect on the participants, ultimately helping reduce the possibility of treatment misidentification.

To test the effects of IM usage, Instant Messaging Quantity in the experimental group will be recorded and used in comparison with the control group. Using a general questionnaire, the Quality of Relationship Inventory, and a video-recall session, quantitative data will be extracted. This data will then be analyzed to measure the relationship quality for each couple.

Our data collection instruments are broken into three parts: a General Questionnaire, a Quality of Relationship Inventory test, and a Video-Recall process. These parts will be discussed after an introduction to our variables.

Variables

The following sections describe the independent and dependent variables associated with this project, based on the conceptualizations determined earlier in the paper.

Independent Variables

Instant Messaging is conceptualized as Instant Messaging Quantity. The Instant Messaging Quantity of all participants in the control group will be zero. Relationship Duration, though not a part of the concept of Instant Messaging, will be measured as well. We do not wish to control Relationship Duration since doing so will affect the generalizability of our study. Hence, we wish to measure Relationship Duration to determine whether an unexpected relationship exists between Relationship Duration and the dependent variables; doing so will help us better identify the causal association between our variables. Definitions of each dependent variables are provided below:

- *Instant Messaging Quantity*
Instant Messaging Quantity measures the amount of time spent actively communicating using instant messenger between two persons dating as well as their communication to persons outside the relationship. IM Quantity is an estimate of the number of hours using IM per week.
- *Relationship Duration*
Relationship duration measures the length of time in which both persons concurrently believe that they are in an exclusive relationship with one another.

Dependent Variables

As mentioned earlier, Relationship Quality was conceptualized into four variables, and is measured by the combination of these variables:

- *Support*
Support is a measure that represents the perceived degree, by each person dating, of supportiveness that each person in the relationships offers to the other. (Gavin and Furman)
- *Conflict*
Conflict is a measure that represents the perceived degree of conflict, by each person dating, of conflict between the two persons in the relationship. (Gavin and Furman)
- *Harmony*
Harmony is defined by “frequent supportive interactions and infrequent conflictual interactions” (Gavin and Furman)
- *Accepting Influence*
The conditional probability of one person in a dating relationship to be persuaded or influenced by the other person efforts to do so. Accepting influence is further defined as the “Influence Hypothesis” by Gavin and Furman.

General Questionnaire

A general questionnaire will be used to measure IM Communication Quantity, relationship duration, and demographic information. IM Communication Quantity will be calculated by asking questions which measure the couple's length of IM usage every week (e.g., 'weekly, how many hours do you continuously chat with your partner on IM?'). Relationship Duration will focus on the length of the couple's relationship (e.g., 'how long have you and your partner been together in this relationship?'). For both IM Communication Quantity and Relationship Duration, an ordinal scale will be used. For demographic information, this section will contain fifteen items, all categorical questions (e.g., "what is your sex?" "what is your race?"). The questionnaire will have a total of 17 items and will approximately take 10 minutes to complete.

Quality of Relationship Inventory (QRI)

The Quality of Relationship Inventory (QRI) will be used to calculate the Relationship Quality between couples by measuring dependent variables Support and Conflict. Each partner will complete a 19-item QRI, which will take them an estimated 20 minutes. This QRI will closely model previous research done (Galliher, Welsh, Rostosky, Kawaguchi, 1998), using a 12-item Conflict subscale and a 7-item Support subscale. The Conflict subscale considers negative feelings like anger and discord between partners (e.g., 'how often do you and your partner argue?'). The Support subscale focuses on how much a partner can rely on the help of their partner (e.g., 'To what extent could you count on this person for help with a problem?'). These subscales will be rated based on a 4 point Likert-scale, where 1 is *not at all* and 4 is *very much*.

Video-Recall Procedure

A video-recall procedure will be used to measure the amount of Affecting Influence between each couple. The video-recall procedure will follow the guidelines set forth in previous research (Galliher, Welsh, Rostosky, Kawaguchi, 1998). This procedure involves the video taping of participants for 22 minutes. Each couple will have 2 conversations about issues which have been previously designed to engage conversation between young adult couples.

For the first conversation, participants will be asked to pretend that they were 20 years into the future and married to their partner. In addition, participants will be asked to imagine that they have teenage children. Participants will be asked to discuss their parenting plans, relationship changes, and how their family might be similar/different to their own families, as used by others (Galliher, Welsh, Rostosky, Kawaguchi, 1998).

The second conversation will also follow the guidelines set forth in the same research. Participants will be asked to "discuss a hypothetical dilemma" in which involves "a high school female whose parents were out of town for the weekend." As expected, the female receives an unexpected visit from her boyfriend. Participants will be asked to discuss how they would interact with each other in this situation.

Each participant will be given written instructions for each conversation, and will be left alone to have their discussion. Each discussion will be video-taped. At the end of the conversation, participants will view the video-tape of their conversations in 25-second intervals. The order in which participants rate each other (male first or female first) will alternate between couples.

Participants will rate each other using a 5-point Likert scale, where 0 indicates *not at all* and 4 indicates *very much* (Powers et al., 1994). Each participant will rate each other based on the following six dimensions:

- Support
- Conflict
- Humor
- Frustration
- Ability to Persuade the Other
- Tendency to Give In to the Other

Planned Analysis

The general questionnaire will determine the participants' IM Usage and Relationship Duration. These two variables will be measured on an ordinal scale. Relationship Quality is determined from the QRI and the Video-Recall Session.

The primary purpose of this analysis is to determine if there is an association between IM Usage and Relationship Quality. In order to show the distribution of relationship quality and IM Usage, cross-tabulation will be used, consequently revealing whether an association between IM Usage and Relationship Quality exists. Since IM Usage is taken from an ordinal scale, a gamma cross tabular analysis will be conducted to measure the strength of the association. To test if the finding is statistically significant, a chi-square will then be conducted, determining if the association found was just due to chance. We expect our findings to be statistically significant since our sample is quite large (500 couples), making it less likely for a chance association to occur. If the strength of the association is weak, it will then be determined that there is no association between IM Usage and Relationship Quality. If the association is strong, then we must look at the possible effects of Relationship Duration, since it was speculated that Relationship Duration may have a greater effect on Relationship Quality than IM Usage. To address this issue, preliminary analysis will determine if there is a statistically significant strong association between Relationship Quality and Relationship Duration.

If both Relationship Duration and IM Usage are found to have a statistically significant strong association with Relationship Quality, we can at least determine which variable is more strongly associated with Relationship Quality.

Timeline

After randomly selecting which cities to conduct the research in, the studies will be conducted in the largest universities located near each city. Advertisements for the research assistant positions will be sent to each university. After receiving applications from each university, we will then send one of our team members to that university. This team member will interview the potential assistants, select the two most qualified, and train them. It is estimated that it will take about four hours to train each assistant with our methods. Finding, hiring and training these twenty assistants will take about four weeks to complete (three weeks of advertising and receiving applications, one week for hiring and training).

After this training period, the researchers will initiate the study. We estimate it will take about four weeks to conduct this study in each city. In the first two weeks, they will advertise the research in the regional college campuses and obtain enough eligible couples to create a sampling frame. Eligible couples will be divided as IM or Non IM users, and twenty-five couples will be randomly selected from each. Selected couples will be contacted, and a schedule will then be created based on the time availability of each couple. During the third and fourth weeks, couples will participate in the two-hour studies and the data will be collected. This will end the data collection part of the study in the first five cities, and the researchers will then submit the data to us. After the data collection, the University of Washington Statistical Department has volunteered to do the analysis.

Our entire study, beginning from hiring our research assistants to the collected data being completely analyzed will take an estimated three months, or 12 weeks to complete.

Ethics Statement

Due to the nature of our study, there are some ethical concerns that we will need to address. Our largest concern is that of information sharing between the couples. As previously mentioned, our study will only involve couples. The information gathered during this study will not be completed as a couple, but as individuals. Consequently, the responses given by each individual in the relationship could vary.

We will leave the disclosure of participants' responses up to the participant. We will not bear the burden of informing the other partner in the relationship of the other's responses. This is not advantageous for us and it also places us at an ethical crossroads. We want to obtain pure results from our participants. To do so, we cannot cross this ethical boundary by giving information out behind the participant's back and therefore breaking our trust with that participant. In addition, providing answers without context may cause undo distress, confusion, or even anger between couples. This not only inhibits our ability to complete our study, but could have unforeseen negative consequences on participant relationships.

It should also be noted that at no deception techniques will be used during the study. The participants will know exactly what they are doing, when they are doing it. There is no benefit to our study to hide the details of what we are doing from our participants.

Our main ethical concern is that of information sharing. To solve this ethical concern, all information will be kept confidential. However, we will not prohibit the discussion of a particular participant's results to their significant other; couples will be allowed to discuss their results outside of the study. The decision to share information will be up to the individual's discretion. As researchers, it would be unethical to provide such information to the participants.

Budget

The following is the budget for our research proposal:

Item	Quantity	Cost	Total
Olive Garden Gift Certificates	500	\$45	\$22,500

Renting Room For Video Sessions	N/A	\$20,000	\$20,000
Equipment For Video Sessions	N/A	\$10,000	\$10,000
Printing Costs	N/A	\$10,000	\$10,000
Research Assistant	20	\$1,200	\$24,000
Misc Food	N/A	\$10,000	\$10,000
Transportation/Lodging Costs	N/A	\$12,000	\$12,000
Grand Total			\$108,500

Item Breakdown

Olive Garden Gift Certificates

These are given to the participants at the completion of the study. We elected to provide 500 of these cards (1 per couple) at a value of \$45 each.

Renting Room For Video Sessions

Because our study is going to be completed at ten locations across the United States we need a location to conduct our study. We have budgeted \$20,000 (\$2,000 per location) for renting a proper location to complete our research. This money will be used to acquire the testing location and any costs associated with this task.

Equipment For Video Sessions

Because of the nature of the video portion of our study we will need equipment to capture these interactions. The \$10,000 allocated will go towards the purchase of video equipment and also equipment for review by the participants and researchers.

Printing Costs

In order to attract participants and to administer our tests we will need to print these items out. We have allocated a total of \$1,000 per location (\$10,000 total) to cover the costs of advertisement printing and the printing of the tests.

Research Assistant

Due to the nature of our study, a research assistant will be needed. In order to budget properly we are assuming a wage of \$15 per hour with 20 hours worked per week. This will last for a period of one month. They will be in charge of all administrative tasks.

Miscellaneous Food

As a little thanks to our participants for taking part in our study we will be providing light snacks and beverages for them at the testing location. We have allocated \$1,000 for each of the ten locations to complete this task.

Transportation/Lodging Costs

In order to spread the word about the study and to train our research assistants, travel will be needed. This category aims to fulfill this task. We have allocated \$12,000 to be used towards all travel related expenses. This could be a hotel, rental car, meals, etc... that are needed to get the seed planted in each of our targeted cities.

References

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Human Subject Division Form

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

Human Subjects Division
Grant and Contract Services Box 351412

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW COMMITTEE APPLICATION

BOX FOR COMMITTEE USE ONLY
MASTER [] COMM. [] INVESTIGATOR []

APPLICATION NO.

Send nine copies of this form (including one copy with original inked signatures) and nine copies of all relevant materials (consent forms, questionnaires, instruments, drug information summary, data collection forms, debriefing statement, advertisements, etc.) to the Human Subjects Division, Box 351412. Do not leave blanks. Attach one copy of each research proposal, grant or contract, and/or one copy of the protocol and investigator's brochure for clinical trials. Students should attach one copy of thesis or dissertation proposals. For information and assistance, visit our web site at http://depts.washington.edu/hsd or call (206) 543-0098. We will not accept handwritten and/or incomplete forms. (Use 10 point type or larger throughout application.) The contents of this application and attachments will be kept confidential within the limits of the law.

[] Check this box if your project falls into one or more of the minimal risk ("expedited") categories of research (see web site for listing of categories) and send us only two copies of all your materials.

I. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (Provide all the information requested. Correspondence will be directed to this person. You may designate a contact person other than yourself in section II., below.)

Name Rufino R. Virata Jr. Title Informatics Student Position Informatics Student
Department UW Information School Division Informatics
Mail box or address 7247 Autumn Ave SE Snoqualmie WA 98065
Telephone 425-445-7834 Fax e-mail rvirata@u.washington.edu

II. CONTACT PERSON (Provide all the information requested. This person does NOT have signatory authority with regard to this application.)

Name Title Position
Mail box or address
Telephone Fax e-mail

III. TITLE OF PROJECT: Cross-sectional investigation of the effects of instant messaging usage on young adult relationship quality.

IV. SIGNATURES: The undersigned acknowledge that: 1. this application represents an accurate and complete description of the proposed research; 2. the research will be conducted in compliance with the recommendations of and only after approval has been received from the Human Subjects Review Committee (HSRC). The principal investigator is responsible for reporting any serious adverse events or problems to the HSRC, for requesting prior HSRC approval for modifications, and for requesting continuing review and approval.

A. Investigator:

TYPED NAME PLUS SIGNATURE DATE

B. Faculty sponsor (for student):

TYPED NAME PLUS SIGNATURE DATE

C. The Chair, Dean, or Director signing below acknowledges that this proposed activity has received intra-mural review and approval of scientific merit and investigator qualification.

TYPED NAME PLUS SIGNATURE DATE

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW COMMITTEE SIGNATURE DATE APPROVE [] DISAPPROVE []

Subject to the following conditions:

Period of approval is one year, from through

VALID ONLY AS LONG AS APPROVED PROCEDURES ARE FOLLOWED

V. CO-INVESTIGATORS (Provide all the information requested for each co-investigator. Add sheets if necessary.)

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Name _____ Title _____ Position _____
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VI. LIST EACH PROPOSED AND FUNDED GRANT OR CONTRACT RELEVANT TO THIS APPLICATION. IF NONE, CHECK HERE . FOR CENTER OR PROGRAM PROJECT GRANTS LIST P.I. AND TITLE FOR EACH SEPARATE PROJECT OR CORE. ADD SHEETS IF NECESSARY.

A. Type of proposal: Research Contract Fellowship Training grant Subcontract
 Other, specify

B. Name of principal investigator: Rufino Virata

C. Name of funding agency: Information school

D. Agency's number (if assigned):

E. Title of proposal: A CROSS-SECTIONAL INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECTS OF INSTANT MESSAGING USAGE ON YOUNG ADULT RELATIONSHIP QUALITY

F. Inclusive dates: from Jan 2005 through Mar 2005

G. Status: New Competing renewal Non-competing renewal

H. Submitted through UW Grant & Contract Services? Yes No, (attach explanation)

A. Type of proposal: Research Contract Fellowship Training grant Subcontract
 Other, specify

B. Name of principal investigator:

C. Name of funding agency:

D. Agency's number (if assigned):

E. Title of proposal:

F. Inclusive dates: from _____ through _____

G. Status: New Competing renewal Non-competing renewal

H. Submitted through UW Grant & Contract Services? Yes No, (attach explanation)

A. Type of proposal: Research Contract Fellowship Training grant Subcontract
 Other, specify

B. Name of principal investigator:

C. Name of funding agency:

D. Agency's number (if assigned):

E. Title of proposal:

F. Inclusive dates: from _____ through _____

G. Status: New Competing renewal Non-competing renewal

H. Submitted through UW Grant & Contract Services? Yes No, (attach explanation)

A. Type of proposal: Research Contract Fellowship Training grant Subcontract
 Other, specify

B. Name of principal investigator:

C. Name of funding agency:

D. Agency's number (if assigned):

E. Title of proposal:

F. Inclusive dates: from _____ through _____

G. Status: New Competing renewal Non-competing renewal

H. Submitted through UW Grant & Contract Services? Yes No, (attach explanation)

VII. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITY. Answer in spaces provided (add numbered and referenced sheets when necessary). Do not refer to an accompanying grant or contract proposal.

A. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF RESEARCH. Provide relevant background information and explain **in lay language** why this research is important and what question(s) or hypotheses this activity is designed to answer.

Our purpose is to understand the effect of instant messaging on the relationship quality of young adults.

B. RESEARCH PROCEDURES INVOLVED.

1. Provide a complete description of: a. the study design, and b. sequence and timing of all study procedures that will be performed, e.g., volume of blood, size of biopsy, drug administration, questionnaire, name of psychological test. Provide this information for each phase of the study (pilot, screening, intervention and follow-up). **Use lay language.** Attach study flow sheet, if available.

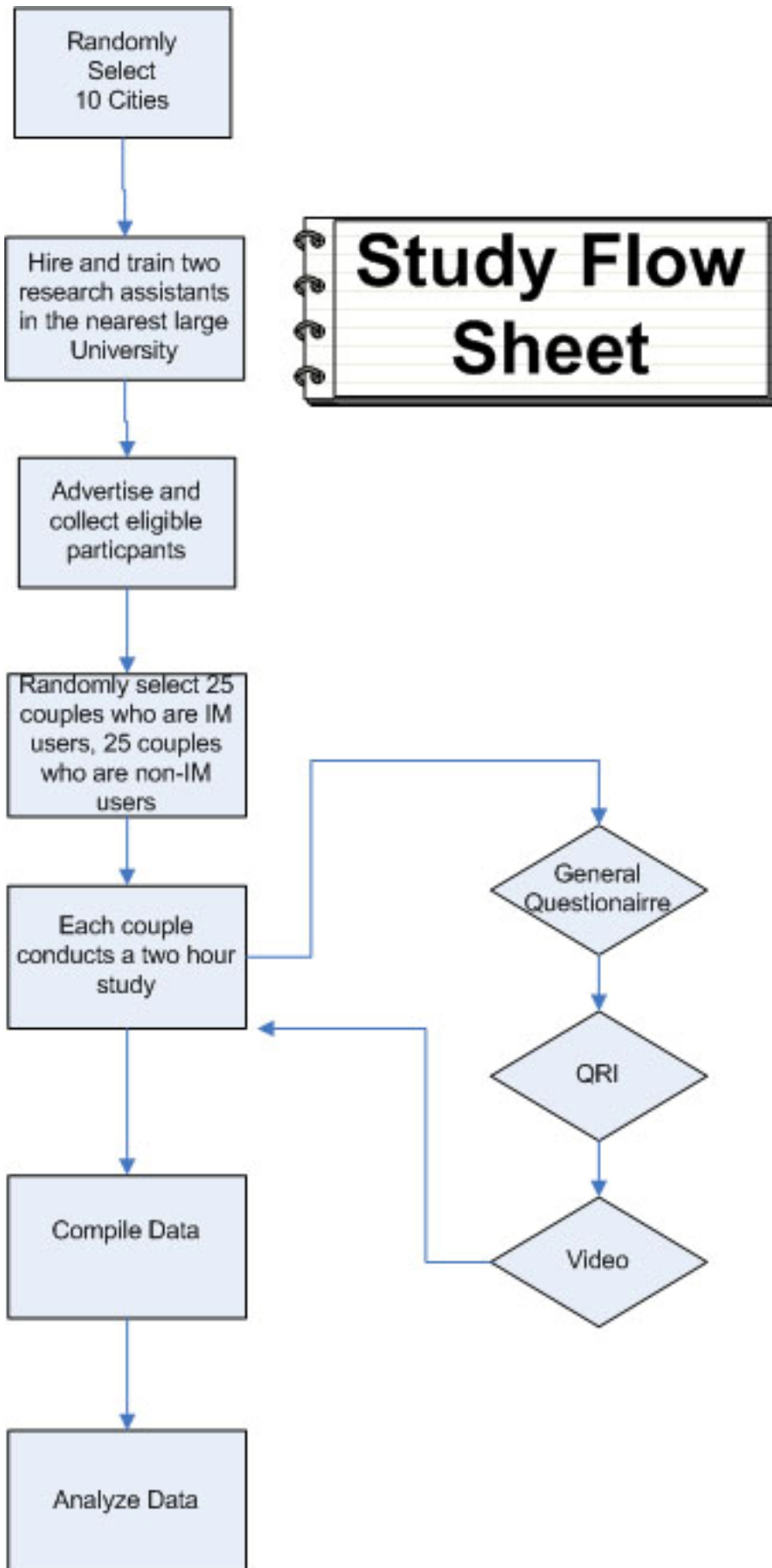
The following tasks are necessary for the completion of our research study:

- Randomly select 10 cities to obtain sampling frames
- Hire and train research assistants (2 per city) in the chosen university
- Advertise study in the chosen university and collect eligible participants
- Randomly select 25 couples per group (Non-IM vs. IM)
- Participants complete General Questionnaire, Quality of Relationship Inventory, and Video-Recall Session.
- Compile data and use bivariate analysis techniques for analysis

2. Would subjects undergo these or similar procedures (medical, psychological, educational, etc.) if they were not taking part in this research? No Yes If "Yes," describe how the study procedures differ from what subjects would otherwise undergo.

C. DECEPTION: If any deception or withholding of complete information is required for this activity, explain why this is necessary and attach a protocol explaining if, how, when, and by whom subjects will be debriefed.

No deception is necessary. Complete information will be disclosed to the subjects.



D. SUBJECTS

1. How many subjects will you need to **complete** this study? 1000 (500 couples) Number Age range 18-25
2. Explain how you will achieve equitable subject representation in the following categories. If not applicable, justify exclusions.
 - a. Age (minors, elderly):

Not applicable because our study is about young adults.

- b. Gender:

Couples must be heterosexual.

- c. Ethnic and racial minority populations:

The ethnic and racial minority population is not of import to our study. Further research may want to duplicate our study and take into account the ethnic and racial minority. We will, however, be recording demographic information in our General Questionnaire.

3. What characteristics (inclusion criteria) must subjects have to be in this study? (Answer for each subject group, if different.)

- They must be young adults (ages 18-25)
- They must currently be in a relationship
- Participants must have been dating for at least four weeks

4. What characteristics (exclusion criteria) would exclude subjects who are otherwise eligible from this study? (Answer for each subject group, if different.)

People who do not fit the above three inclusion criteria shall be excluded.

5. Describe the subject recruitment strategies you will use for each group of subjects. (Attach advertisements, flyers, contact letters, telephone contact protocols, Health Sciences recruitment web site template, etc.)

Due to the fact that the goal of our research is to generalize to the young adult national population, we will advertise our study at multiple college campuses throughout the nation. Participants will be selected from about 10 large cities throughout the United States, i.e. New York, Seattle, and Minneapolis-St. Paul.

6. Explain who will approach subjects to take part in the study and how this will be done to protect subjects' privacy. (Attach letters of cooperation from agencies, institutions or others involved in subject recruitment.)

Subjects will contact us using the contact information provided on the advertisement. Subjects will be added to our sampling frame and will be randomly selected to participate in their respective group. We will not disclose any personal information about our participants to the public or other participants. Moreover, access to this information will be restricted to the researchers of this study.

7. Explain what steps you will take during the recruitment process to minimize potential coercion or the appearance of coercion.

Participants have the option of dropping out at any point throughout the study.

8. Will you give subjects gifts, payments, services without charge, or extra course credit? No Yes If yes, explain:

Couples that complete the study will receive a pre-paid dinner to The Olive Garden.

9. Will any of the subjects or their third-party payers be charged for any study procedures? No Yes If yes, explain:

10. Where will the study procedures be carried out? (Attach copies of IRB approvals or letters of cooperation from non-UW research sites, if necessary.)

Study procedures will be carried out in secure, sound proof rooms at their respective university.

E. RISKS AND BENEFITS

1. Describe nature and degree of risk of possible injury, stress, discomfort, invasion of privacy, and other side effects from all study procedures, drugs and devices (standard and experimental), interviews and questionnaires. Include psycho-social risks as well as

physiological risks. Include risks of withholding standard care or procedures if this is the case. Do not reference the consent form.

The risk of injury, stress, discomfort, invasion of privacy is minimal, no recordings and records will be destroyed.

2. Explain what steps you will take to minimize risks of harm and to protect subjects' rights and welfare. (If you will include protected groups of subjects (minors, fetuses in utero, prisoners, pregnant women, decisionally impaired or economically or educationally disadvantaged subjects) please identify the group(s) and answer this question for each group.)

To minimize harm/arguments between the couples, we have chosen two non-controversial scenarios for use in our video-recall sessions.

3. Is it possible that you will discover a subject's previously unknown condition (disease, suicidal intentions, genetic predisposition, etc.) as a result of study procedures? No Yes If yes, explain how you will handle this situation.

4. Describe the anticipated benefits of this research for individual subjects in each subject group. If none, state "None."

There are no anticipated benefits.

5. Describe the anticipated benefits of this research for society, and explain how the benefits outweigh the risks.

- *Owners of dating websites*

If instant messaging proves to have a positive affect on relationship quality, they will more readily adopt instant messaging services as a feature of their existing systems or more strongly encourage its members to participate in IM-use to create better results.

- *Instant message providers*

The findings of our research has the potential to aid in the promotion of their instant messaging services or provide incentives to invest into developing features that would promote the user's communication in his or her dating life.

- *Providers of other technology-based communication tools*

Conversely, providers of other technology-based communication, such as cell phone text messaging, can find our results of interest to promote their own technology as superior. More importantly, developers of instant messaging software will gain further insight into design that effectively facilitates quality communication to build better instant message technologies in the future.

- *Providers of social services*

Although without direct economic impact, providers of social services, such as youth groups, counselors, and social organizers, may find the results of this research of importance. Striving to strengthen relationships and their positive effects on the human condition, such services and groups would benefit knowing whether instant messaging facilitates greater communication.

- *Advocates of Alternative Methods of Communication*

Conversely, our findings could also be of interest to those who discourage instant messaging to further their promotion of other methods of communication (traditional or technological).

The risks of our study are fairly minimal. Moreover, there are definitely more benefits than there are risks to our study.

F. ADVERSE EVENTS OR EFFECTS

1. Who will handle adverse events? Investigator Referral Other, explain:

No adverse effects are anticipated because no invasive or dangerous procedures are involved.

2. Are your facilities and equipment adequate to handle possible adverse events? Yes No, explain:

Not Applicable

3. Who will be financially responsible for treatment of **physical injuries** resulting from study procedures?

Study sponsor Subject or subject's insurer UW compensation plan Veterans Affairs Other, explain:

Not Applicable

G. CONFIDENTIALITY OF RESEARCH DATA

1. Will you record any direct subject identifiers (names, Social Security numbers, patient, hospital, laboratory or claim numbers, addresses, telephone numbers, locator information, etc.) No Yes If yes, explain why this is necessary and describe the coding system you will use to protect against disclosure.

Participants will be video-recorded, which is enough information to identify them. This information is necessary for the participants to rate their partners to help us measure affecting influence. Videos will be destroyed after the participant's session is over.

In addition, our surveys will not collect any participant identifiable information. All information collected will only be accessible to the researchers of this study.

2. Will you retain a link between study code numbers and direct identifiers after the data collection is complete? No Yes If yes, explain why this is necessary and for how long you will keep this link.

3. Describe how you will protect data against disclosure to the public or to other researchers or non-researchers. Explain who (other than members of the research team) will have access to data (e.g., sponsors, advisers, government agencies, etc.).

Nobody will have access to the data except for us. Information will be stored in secure rooms within a private computer network.

4. Will you place a copy of the consent form or other study information in the subject's medical or other personal record? No Yes. If yes, explain why this is necessary.

5. Do you anticipate using any data (information, specimens, etc.) from this study for other studies in the future? No Yes If "Yes," explain and include this information in the consent form.

H. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. If the study will involve radiation exposure to subjects, e.g., X-rays, radioisotopes, what is status of review by the UW Radiation Safety Committee (RSC): Pending Approved (Attach one copy of approval.) NA

2. Will you need access to subjects' medical, academic, or other personal records for screening purposes or during this study? No Yes. If yes, specify types of records, what information you will take from the records and how you will use them.

3. Will you make audio-visual or tape recordings or photographs of subjects? No Yes. If yes, explain what type of recordings you will make, how long you will keep them, and if anyone other than the members of the research team will be able to see them.

Participants will be video-recorded, which is enough information to identify them. This information is necessary for the participants to rate their partners to help us measure affecting influence. Videos will be destroyed after the participant's session is over. Only the research team and the couple participating will be allowed access to their video recording.

4. Will your study involve use of equipment involving energy input to the subjects (EMG, EKG, MRI, ultrasound, etc.)? No Yes. If yes, attach documentation that all equipment will be tested regularly by the Scientific Instrument Division (call (206) 543-5580 for information) or describe safety testing procedures you will use.

5. Have all Investigators (i.e., all UW personnel responsible for the design, conduct or reporting of the proposed research) read and complied with GIM 10, the University's policy governing the disclosure of Significant Financial Interests? No Yes.
(Note: This application can not be considered unless all Investigators have read and complied with GIM 10, which may be accessed at <http://www.washington.edu/research/gcs/gim/gim10.html>.)

6. Does any Investigator have a Significant Financial Interest related to the proposed research that must be disclosed as provided in GIM 10? No Yes. If yes, each Investigator having a Significant Financial Interest must comply with GIM 10, including submission of a Significant Financial Interest Disclosure Form. Final review of this application cannot occur until the GIM 10 review is complete. Delays in complying with GIM 10 will result in delays in completing the final review of this application. Please list the name of each Investigator having a Significant Financial Interest below:

- I. CONSENT FORMS** **Written** (Attach copies of all consent and assent forms for each subject group. Include a footer identifying the version date of each form and a header or title that identifies each different form.)
- Oral** (Attach written scripts of oral consent and assent for each subject group.)
- Waiver** (Attach written justification of waiver of consent per 45 CFR 46.116(d) – see Web site (<http://depts.washington.edu/hsd>) for information on requesting a waiver of consent.)

J. DRUGS, SUBSTANCES, AND DEVICES

1. List **all non-investigational** drugs or other substances used to conduct this research (analgesics, anesthetics, drugs used to treat side effects, etc.). Include products used for standard clinical care if they are used in this study for research purposes.

Name	Source	Dose	How administered

2. List **all investigational** new drugs or other investigational substances to be used in the study. Include marketed products used “off-label” (different formulation, dose, route of administration, or indication). Provide:

- **nine** copies of a concise summary of information about the drug prepared by the investigator (including animal and human toxicity data, studies done in animals and humans to date);
- **one** copy of the Investigator’s Brochure;
- **one** copy of the study protocol.

Important note: You must register an IND with the appropriate institutional pharmacy (**UWMC: 598-6054; HMC: 731-5448, VA: 764-2142**) before using the drug in research.

Name	Source	Dose	How administered	IND Number	Phase of testing

3. List all investigational devices you will use. Provide the information requested below and attach one copy of the company protocol. If there is no Investigational Device Exemption (IDE), explain why. Include a statement as to why the device qualifies as non-significant risk. Provide a copy of the FDA letter(s) which states the device classification (PMA, 510K, Class I, II, or III, or custom device) and categorization (Category A or B). “Category A” means that Medicare may **not** be billed for the device or for services related to its use. “Category B” means that Medicare may be billed for services related to its use **if** the U.S. Health Care Finance Administration (HCFA) grants authorization. **Important Note.** Register IDE devices with the UWMC Manager of Surgical Support Services (598-6538) or the HMC Business Manager of Surgical Services (731-8094) to obtain authorization for use.
- a. Name of the device:
 - b. Name of the manufacturer:
 - c. Description of its purpose and how you will use it in this study:
 - d. Descriptions of previous studies in humans and animals:
 - e. Investigational Device Exemption (IDE) number or FDA status:

Sample Question from the QRI

To what extent can you count on this person to listen to you when you are very angry at someone else?

To what extent can you turn to this person for advice about problems?

To what extent can you really count on this person to distract you from your worries when you feel

under stress?

To what extent could you count on this person for help with a problem?

If you wanted to go out and do something this evening, how confident are you that this person would be

willing to do something with you?

To what extent could you count on this person to help you if a family member very close to you died?

To what extent can you count on this person to give you honest feedback, even if you might not want to

hear it?

How angry does this person make you feel?

How upset does this person sometimes make you feel?

How often does this person make you feel angry?

How much do you argue with this person?

How often do you have to work hard to avoid conflict with this person?

How much would you like this person to change?

How much do you have to "give in" in this relationship?

How much does this person make you feel guilty?

How much does this person want you to change?

How often does this person try to control or influence your life?

How critical of you is this person?

How much more do you give than you get from this relationship?

To what extent can you trust this person not to hurt your feelings?

How often do problems that occur in this relationship get resolved?

How significant is this relationship in your life?

How much do you depend on this person?

How close will your relationship be with this person in 10 years?

How positive a role does this person play in your life?

How responsible do you feel for this person's well-being?

How much would you miss this person if the two of you could not see or talk with each other for a month?

If you could have only a small number of social relationships, how much would you want your contact

with this person to be among them?

How considerate is this person of your needs?