11

Romantic Relationships and Social Media

BREE McEWAN AND LEAH E. LEFEBVRE

Social media channels serve multiple roles throughout the lifespan of relationships. Although social media has been shown to be particularly useful for maintaining relationships with weak tie relationships such as acquaintances and casual friends (Ellison et al., 2007), social media channels also have implications for romantic partners, who may vacillate in tie strength over the course of the relationship. This chapter will focus on advancements in research on romantic and sexual relationships and consider social media's influence on the message strategies and outcomes of romantic couples. Social media may offer communication opportunities for direct relational communication related to the initiation, development, and maintenance of romantic relationships as well as provide a stage for couples to communicate the state their relationship to the broader social network. In addition, social media has altered strategies related to the dissolution of romantic relationships and post-dissolution interactions.

We offer the caveat that the popularity of specific social media platforms rises and falls over time. Within the literature, much of the research thus far focuses specifically on Facebook. Yet, Facebook may not represent the way that future romantic partners engage in relational communication via social media channels. Within the chapter, we attempt to weave in research from multiple platforms. Yet, we also note that if we consider the affordances of the platform, research conducted on Facebook may still provide information about the influence of message visibility or network connectivity even if the platform falls out of favor (see also McEwan & Fox, 2022).

INITIATING RELATIONSHIPS

When exploring potential options of romantic partners, people often use social media to aid in information seeking and uncertainty reduction. These processes, facilitated through social media, have led to changes and adaptations

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

to the relationship initiation process. Complex and diverse channels and pathways allow social media users to locate potential romantic partners and develop burgeoning romantic relationships.

Relationship Initiation

Communication technologies are able to accommodate the initiation and escalation processes used to seek, find, and communicate with potential romantic interests in-person and/or online (Sharabi & Caughlin, 2017; Van Ouystel et al., 2016). In particular, the blurring of interpersonal and mass communication offers the ability for individuals to have access to a wider network of numerous potential partners (Finkel et al., 2012; O'Sullivan & Carr, 2018). People may use online dating apps to evaluate a wide network of potential partners, social network sites (SNS) to facilitate information-seeking and disclosure processes, and messaging apps to begin relational communication.

The enhancement of communication technology affords users the ability to connect with easier accessibility and personalization, allowing for increased convenience of sending and receiving messages to a potentially wider array of possible partners. Social media can consist of public to private channels conveying impersonal to interpersonal messages. Social media are often masspersonal, in that they allow for messages that do the work of interpersonal communication while simultaneously being visible to a larger social audience (O'Sullivan & Carr, 2018). Individual motivation and communication practices may aid in locating potential romantic and/or sexual partner(s) with greater or lesser success (LeFebvre & Goodcase, 2021).

Relationship initiation is contingent on identifying available and potential partners. Prior to technological advancements in smartphones, online dating sites, and mobile dating applications, people commonly met romantic partners through the intermediation of friends and family (Coontz, 2005). These peripheral tie relationships offered the ability to bridge new connections (Granovetter, 1973). The internet increasingly altered the social arena for locating potential romantic partners. Although online dating sites or mobile dating applications[1] are typically what is thought of when we consider people seeking new romantic partners, the creation of connections (and reconnections) to potential partners can come through a variety of social media applications. Social networking sites (SNS; see boyd & Ellison, 2007) allow for unconventional platforms and channels for finding and locating partners, for instance, messaging or reconnecting on Facebook (Langlais et al., 2020; Ramirez et al., 2017), or sliding into DMs (direct messages) on Instagram, Twitter, or WhatsApp (Dibble et al., 2021; Sharabi & Hopkins, 2021). Other social media related relational behavior might involve interacting through TikTok (Vaterlaus & Winter, 2021), or watching video streams together on such platforms as Douyu, Twitch, or YouTube (Sheng & Kairam, 2020).

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

These and other communication technologies have modified and displaced traditional ways of meeting potential partners, especially for heterosexual individuals, who were previously relying on family members and friends (Rosenfeld & Thomas, 2012). Unlike mixed-sex couples, same-sex couples have been using mediated platforms for relational communication for several decades (Rosenfeld & Thomas, 2012), although the expansion of social and sexual platforms has afforded new opportunities for finding partner(s). Mediated platforms, whether dating apps or social media, allow LGBTQ+ adults more access to potential romantic and/or sexual partners, particularly in rural areas (Sumter & Vandenbosch, 2019).

Young adults often have the greatest access and availability to social media, and also the greatest availability of potential partners. Yet, although young adults are perceived (and often are) more technologically savvy, they are the least likely to meet potential partners using mediated platforms (Rosenfeld & Thomas, 2012). This outcome may be because young adults have access to a wide and available pool of potential dating partners through their regular social networks.

The availability of social media, including online dating apps, may alter the process of selecting romantic partners in two ways. First, when selecting potential partners offline, people tend to seek partners from within (endogamy) rather than outside (exogamy) their social groups. Social media has led to greater exogamy than was available in solely offline relational initiation (Thomas et al., 2020). In addition, social media and dating apps may allow people to find a wider pool of dating partners. This type of access to selected groups may be particularly useful for members of the LGBTQ community (Miller, 2015), especially those who live in smaller or more isolated communities (Blackwell et al., 2015). Second, in selecting romantic partners people tend towards homophily, or attraction to others they find to have similar personal qualities. Yet, research has found that couples who met online have greater interracial and interreligious connections as well as wider variation in their level of obtained education between the relationship partners (Thomas, 2020).

When using online dating platforms, individuals must understand how they want to brand themselves as well as explicitly delineate their preferences with predetermined personalized biographical descriptions, visual depictions, and parameters narrowing their potential connections (LeFebvre, 2018). These pre-interaction relational processes are generated prior to interaction and allow other users to passively consider future interaction and reduce some uncertainty (Sharabi, 2021). They break down into three stages: profile, matching, and discovery (Markowitz et al., 2018).

The profile stage involves intrapersonal decision-making processes about identity presentation and emphasizes users' curation of their motivations, authenticity, and self-promotion (Dredge & Anderson, 2021). Categorizing information about oneself for potential partners allows people to evaluate

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

their potential, and women are more likely than men to identify their own relationship motivations, religious beliefs, and employment (Vogels & Anderson, 2020). Self-presentational practices in dating profiles may involve careful selection of photos and messages, masking identity characteristics, or even providing erroneous information (Toma et al., 2018). On the other hand, most deception on online dating apps is slight (Gibbs et al., 2006) and likely not any more egregious than deceptive practices identified in face-to-face dating (Cunningham & Barbee, 2008; Tooke & Camire, 1991). The matching stage involves the potential to initiate interpersonal communication as users determine their attractiveness and interest in other users. This stage allows users to practice swiping behaviors, which take place in seconds (Levy et al., 2019). The discovery phase occurs after a match has been made and involves mediated communication to determine if the matched parties will choose to pursue a face-to-face meeting and possible relationship.

Information Seeking, Creeping, and "Facebook Stalking"

Whether individuals meet in-person or online, relationship initiation typically involves uncertainty and information gathering to reduce that uncertainty (Knobloch & Miller, 2008). Verifying, vetting, and seeking personalized information, particularly for online matches, necessitates combing through, scouting for, and scrutinizing potential partners and is not limited to online contacts. Social media provides a mechanism for relational partners in the early relationship stages to gather information about their potential or nascent romantic partner (Fox et al., 2014; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). These uncertainty reduction and information-seeking strategies can be applied sequentially or simultaneously to reduce uncertainty (Ramirez & Walther, 2009), and may be especially informative in relationship formation that coalescences with social media. The affordances of social media increase the persistence and searchability of the information available about potential and nascent romantic partners. The persistence of social media means that posted information endures online and then can be searched by other users, including potential new romantic partners.

This social media searching can represent a specific form of passive uncertainty reduction (see Berger & Bradac, 1982) called extractive information seeking (Ramirez et al., 2002). When locating potential partners, people are worried about others misrepresenting themselves (Gibbs et al., 2011) or deception (Sharabi & Caughlin, 2017; Toma et al., 2018). Verification processes are commonplace when many couples who meet online are perfect strangers with limited or no peripheral ties connecting them. Often individuals use information-seeking strategies (see Ramirez et al., 2002) that include passive (unobstructive available information), active (third-party sources), and extractive (non-human information sources, such as Googling prospective

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

daters) strategies to locate information, form assumptions, and find answers (see Gibbs et al., 2011). Even if partners are aware of their potential partners through in-person interactions, they often employ other SNS sites to locate identity-verifying information including their contact information, general description, romantic history, current relational status, and even personal values (Duguay, 2017; LeFebvre et al., 2019; Weser et al., 2021). This strategy of partner vetting can help users determine interest and compatibility, as well as reduce disillusionment or potential rejection (Chan, 2021).

Seeking information about social network members including romantic relationship partners is a form of interpersonal electronic surveillance (IES, Tokunaga, 2011). In the early days of Facebook, young adults experiencing this form of surveillance often referred to as "creeping" (Fox et al., 2014) or "Facebook stalking" (Hermida & Hernández-Santaolalla, 2020). These terms are colloquialisms referring to fairly expected forms of social information collection (Hermida & Hernández-Santaolalla, 2020). Searching through social media posts may be seen as a more socially acceptable method of seeking information about new and potential partners because the information is posted publicly, which might not be perceived as violation of trust (Utz & Beukeboom, 2011). People may look for information about the compatibility of a potential romantic partner (Andrejevic, 2005), or see if the person already has a romantic partner (Fox et al., 2014). Overall, information gleaned from scanning Facebook profiles can provide information about a potential partners' friends, level of education, and hobbies that can help reduce uncertainty about the potential partner (Goldberg et al., 2022).

Although most IES through social media is likely quite benign, people with darker intentions can use social media to engage in cyberstalking (Tokunaga & Aune, 2017). Cyberstalking refers to unwanted pursuit and surveillance via social media, search engines, and even applications such as keyboard loggers or smartphone apps (Reyns et al., 2011; Spitzberg & Hoobler, 2002). Around 11 percent of US adults have personally experienced cyberstalking (Vogels, 2021). Research with German participants suggests 6.5 percent of German adults have experienced cyberstalking (Dreßing et al., 2014) Perpetrators of cyberstalking may have problems with anger and desire immediate gratification (Kuar et al., 2021). Cyberstalkers may be more likely to be narcissistic (Ménard & Pincus, 2012). Cyberstalking in male perpetrators was also correlated with machiavellianism and physical aggression, whereas cyberstalking in female perpetrators is correlated with interpersonal jealousy and discomfort with intimacy (Kuar et al., 2021). There are other gender differences in cyberstalking as well; men may be less likely to experience victimization, but also less likely to report being stalked (Berry & Bainbridge, 2017; Fansher & Randa, 2019).

Like stalking, cyberstalking is accompanied by a threat to harm. Cyberstalking is particularly worrisome as it can cause serious psychological

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

distress for victims (Parsons-Pollard & Moriarty, 2009) and be a precursor for further harms (e.g., physical violence, reputation destruction) by the aggressor. Cyberstalking itself can be quite detrimental to victims. People being stalked through online channels may experience decreases in the quality of their eating, sleeping, and academic habits as well as increases in emotional distress, and other aspects of mental health such as anxiety, irritability and depression (see Kuar et al., 2021, for an extensive review).

RELATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As individuals move from initiation to development, social media use related to the relationship more often associates relationship development processes (Bryant et al., 2011; Ling et al., 2012) with network display and constraints (Hall, 2020; Weser et al., 2021). In addition, the masspersonal nature of social media, often reconfigures public-private boundaries (Hjorth & Lim, 2012; Hobbs et al., 2017; O'Sullivan & Carr, 2018), creating more channels for interpersonal connection, but also opening the communication between and about the romantic partnership to a larger networked audience.

When considering the influence and impact of media on romantic relationships, it is important to highlight the distinction that many behaviors or characteristics are enabled by media (particularly SNS), whereas other behaviors and characteristics have been created because of media (Rus & Tiemensma, 2017). Some scholars have used the relational development model (see Knapp et al., 2020) to articulate how social media might affect different stages of romantic relational development (Brody et al., 2016; Fox & Anderegg, 2014; Fox & Warber, 2013; Fox et al., 2014; Goldberg et al., 2022; LeFebvre et al., 2015). The relationship developmental model (see Knapp et al., 2020) illustrated relationship movement through five coming-together stages: *initiating, experimentation, intensifying, integrating*, and *bonding* and five coming-apart stages: *differentiating, circumscribing, stagnating, avoiding, and terminating*. These stages (along with other relationship dissolution models) examined and mapped SNS behaviors onto these models. When extending these prior models, scholars considered specific relational behaviors afforded by social networking sites such as surveillance, relationship broadcasting or status determination, communicating (in)stability, photo impression management, network management, considerations for privacy and sharing, and relational communication (see Brody et al., 2016; Fox et al., 2014). These patterns delineate strategies and behaviors that are multiphasic (e.g., Brody et al., 2016), and exist beyond face-to-face communication channels. In particular, the initiating and experimenting processes include finding and locating, but also highlighted the ambiguity and uncertainty that can unfold through perpetual contact (Katz & Aakhus, 2002) and continuous connectivity (Karsay & Vandenbosch, 2021). In these stages, people may use uncertainty reduction strategies, information-seeking,

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and stalking practices to initiate (described above) but also describe how individuals work to manage relationships as they develop.

Early work in relationships and computer-mediated dating highlighted the process of modality switching, or when relational partners shift their communication from online-only to face-to-face (Ramirez & Zhang, 2007; Sharabi & Dykstra-DeVette). Modality switching is still an important process for online daters who to continue the relationship generally must move from purely mediated channels to face-to-face interaction. For example, Ramirez et al. (2015) found that online daters fared the best when they switched modalities around 14–21 days after first meeting online. This finding is likely explained by the fact that online daters needed enough time to learn a bit about each other, but not spend so much time purely online so that they began to form overly idealized or hyperpersonal impressions (see Walther, 1996).

With current forms of mediated communication, it is unlikely that daters move from purely online communication to purely offline communication. Rather, the communication driving the formation of interpersonal relationships likely occurs through a tapestry of modalities. Even relationships that start online weave various forms of social media throughout their relational communication (McEwan, 2021). Social media users may use messaging and image sharing features to display their relationship to the broader network. They may share gifs or TikToks with each other to highlight their perceived similarity. They can use social media postings to seek information and reduce uncertainty about each other.

Overall, social media may lead people to consider how to share and integrate their relationship in current public and private spheres. During these stages, relational partners may begin to make choices about how they will portray their relationship on social media. Public social media messages often bring different network segments together into a single audience, creating context collapse (see Marwick & boyd, 2011). For romantic relationships, context collapse may require couples to navigate posting messages that are appropriate for friends, but also family members, and perhaps work colleagues. Partners may need to discuss their preferences and requirements for managing messages for their social media audience.

Earlier research on social media focused on Facebook, which offered the ability to sign a relationship connection by going *Facebook official* (see Fox et al., 2014; Papp et al., 2012). By adding a relational status, this action prompted an important display of commitment, especially in young adult romantic relationships (Fox & Warber, 2013; Lane et al., 2016). Today, social media users have moved away from the idea of "Facebook official" for dating relationships (although many still update statuses for marriages and engagements), yet users still create posts to broadcast the status of their relationship to their broader network. For example, people might upload a new profile picture that includes their romantic partner or relationship pictures (Toma & Choi, 2015).

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

As couples begin to integrate, they also begin the process of managing impressions not only of themselves but also of the relationship (Sharabi & Hopkins, 2021). Representations of the relationship on social media can serve as a sign of partners' commitment to the relationship. Relational posts signal the existence and importance of the relationship to the broader social network (Ito et al., 2021). This visual public intimacy may demonstrate a critical relational turning point by signifying the disclosure of a developing relationship (Brody et al., 2016). However, for some partners, the intimacy loses its status when advertised broadly on social media (Miguel, 2016). The privilege of posting visual intimacy often highlights heteronormative relationships, and even if individuals and partners may want to display their developing relationship, the public-private norms may not allow their relationship openness. It should be noted that research findings in this area are primarily from studies with young adult samples. Although older demographics are becoming steady adopters (Auxier & Anderson, 2021) further relationship development scholarship should explore how adults of all ages navigate romantic relationships and social media.

The display of romantic relationship status on social media may have particularly positive outcomes for members of the LGBTQ community. Positive feedback via comments and likes on relational status posts can lead to greater feelings of resilience and well-being for same-sex partners (Bond, 2015). Viewing posts of others in sexual minority relationships can also serve as identity-affirming experiences for people whose LGBTQ-related aspects of identity are emerging. Social media content can provide representation of everyday regular life that goes beyond stereotyped and fetishized LGBTQ representations found within mass media (Fox & Ralston, 2016).

Social Media Relational Maintenance Behaviors

The observation of the relationship development model draws in and highlights relationship maintenance as relational partners demonstrate behaviors and routines through social media. All relationships require some type of maintenance to remain in existence and ideally in a mutually satisfactory state. Relational maintenance behaviors are the strategic and routine behaviors that couples engage in to keep their relationship in a desired state (Dindia, 2003). These behaviors or tactics have been sorted into various strategies such as positivity (cheerful and upbeat messages), assurances (messages related to relational commitment), openness (discussions about the relationship), and more (see Canary et al., 1993; Stafford, 2011).

Although the formation and dissolution processes in relationships often garner the most attention, couples spend the most time in their relationships maintaining that relationship. Social media, particularly SNS, can facilitate maintenance behaviors across a variety of relational types, including romantic

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

couples. As people began to adopt social media platforms more widely, relational maintenance was a frequently cited motivation (Sheldon, 2008). Indeed, Ramirez and Walther (2009) noted that Facebook's "greatest utility" was likely relational maintenance.

In regard to specific studies of relational maintenance via social media, McEwan et al. (2014) developed a measure of Facebook relational maintenance. However, that measure has primarily been used to study platonic Facebook connections, and other scholars have adapted versions of general relational maintenance measures for social media contexts. For example, Stewart et al. (2014) examined sharing messages related to positivity, openness, and assurances and found that relational satisfaction was correlated with engaging in higher amounts of Facebook positivity and assurances. People may also use private channels provided through social media (e.g., Facebook messenger, Instagram DMs, Snapchat) to share maintenance messages (Langlais et al., 2020). More recent qualitative studies have found that young adults still use Facebook to maintain their romantic relationships. Goldberg et al. (2022) found social media such as Facebook and Instagram allowed users to create a sense of togetherness, but that Facebook was perceived as a better choice to display relational events as the Facebook audience is often a more closed network of friends, family, and social acquaintances whereas Instagram posts are often for the purpose of creating a particular aesthetic for a more public, less known audience.

Partners can tag each other as a type of electronic tie-sign (Goldberg et al., 2022; Ito et al., 2021; Tong & Walther, 2011). Engaging with each other's content through likes and comments can show that a partner endorses and confirms particular activities and identity displays (Goldberg et al., 2022). Other research has found that people may display their relationship on social media by posting pictures of gifts they have exchanged. Interestingly, motivations for posting gift pictures may vary by platform. Chinchanachokchai and Pusaksrikit (2021) found that people were more likely to post gifts they thought represented themselves on Facebook and use Instagram to post gifts that were high status. Overall, the utility of social media sites appears to be connected to the maintenance strategy of network connectivity. Social media allows a couple to display their relationship and commitment to their broader network. As one of Fox et al.'s (2014) participants noted, Facebook posts can be "the ultimate PDA [public display of affection], 'cause everyone can see it."

Ongoing Partner Surveillance

SNS can also serve as a site of ongoing surveillance of romantic partners (Fox et al., 2014; Tokunaga, 2016). SNS have several affordances including the visibility and persistence of posted information as well as increasing the perception of network associations that can lead to increased partner surveillance.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Through social media, romantic partners can monitor each other's posts and activity (Rueda et al., 2015).

Relational partners may use social media monitoring more when they are experiencing uncertainty about the relationship (Stewart et al., 2014). Relational uncertainty can be particularly high in the early stages of a relationship as partners get to know each other. In this stage, gathering information from a partner's or potential partner's social media feed may be a relatively benign way to get to know the person better. However, high levels of uncertainty later in the relationship may lead to jealousy-related reasons for monitoring a partner's social media behavior (Dainton & Berkoski, 2013; Dainton & Stokes, 2015; Stewart et al., 2014). SNS in particular may be breeding grounds for relational jealousy because the platforms provide easy access to survey network connections and interactions, facilitate relational maintenance with potential rivals, and produce more ambiguous social situations that could result in misunderstandings (Bevan, 2013).

Multiple studies have found that social media use can lead to conflict and jealousy when partners respond to potential rivals' posts, view profiles of potential rivals, and reconnect or post pictures with exes (Clayton et al., 2013; Muise et al., 2014). Seidmen et al. (2019) found that for couples with low levels of jealousy social media monitoring was perceived to be helpful for the relationship, but for those who were very jealous, monitoring did not improve the relationship. The persistence of social media information also allows partners to dig through previous posts and photos to find virtual artifacts and possessions or digital remnants such as social media evidence left over from previous romantic relationships (Frampton & Fox, 2018; LeFebvre et al., 2015; Robards & Lincoln, 2016). For some romantic partners, these virtual possessions or remnants may induce retroactive jealousy, which occurs when someone feels jealous about their partner's romantic history even though previous partners are not actively interfering in the current relationship (Elphinston & Noller, 2011; Frampton & Fox, 2018; LeFebvre et al., 2015).

Another way social media may contribute to increased jealousy in relationships is through hyperperception effects (Carpenter & Spottswood, 2021, see Walther 1996 for a review of the foundational hyperpersonal model). Hyperperception occurs when romantic partners view their partners' interactions with potential rivals on social media and perceive those interactions to be more intimate than they actually are. These effects can occur because (a) there is a limited amount of information available via social information and (b) social media tends to have a positivity bias where people post primarily positive content. Thus, if the observing partner perceives that their romantic partner and the potential rival are frequently engaging in positive interactions on SNS the observer may interpret this to mean that one or both members of the dyad are attempting to escalate their relationship. Actively seeking out interactions between partners and rivals, as well as engaging in a feedback

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

loop (feeling that observing some of the partner/rival interaction led the observer to actively look for more of their interactions) was associated with greater feelings of jealousy (Carpenter & Spottswood, 2021).

Conflict

As can be seen from the findings on surveillance and jealousy, social media does not always have a positive effect on romantic couples. Although jealousy and finding out information about one's partner or potential rivals may be a main driver of social media related conflict (Arikewuyo et al., 2020), social media interactions can contribute to other conflicts as well. For example, in interviews with Latino adolescents, Len-Rios et al. (2016) found that respondents felt that sites such as Facebook or Instagram could have negative effects on their relationships as the increased ability to monitor their partners' posts could lead to finding potential causes of conflict. Partners may also use social media to check up on their partners' claims and activities if there is a lack of trust in the relationship (Frampton & Fox, 2018). Another potential source of conflict is disagreement over what partners consider appropriate to post on social media (Fox et al., 2014). Posts, pictures, and public communication with others can all lead to relational conflict episodes between romantic partners and Facebook related conflict has been shown to be negatively correlated with relational satisfaction, commitment, and love (Rahaman, 2015).

RELATIONSHIPS END, SOCIAL MEDIA LIVES ON

The process of de-coupling from a romantic entanglement typically has involved the lessening of communication frequency and intensity (Baxter, 1984; Knapp et al., 2020). Social media influences multiple aspects of relational dissolution (Gershon, 2020). When breaking up, romantic partners must determine how to disconnect or disengage their identities and shared memories. Former romantic couples need to disentangle the many ways they have woven their digital lives together, including managing virtual relational possession (Brody et al., 2020; LeFebvre et al., 2020). They also need to manage the increased uncertainty that comes with the end of the relationship and consider how much they want to engage with their former partner's social media content (Fox & Tokunaga, 2015). Mediated communication channels can influence the choices regarding how partners communicate relational termination to each other as well as how to reduce or cut off communication post-break up. Former partners can make active social media choices such as unfriending, blocking, deleting, and hiding or passive tactics such as ghosting, or cutting off communication with no explanation.

Social media can also influence how people manage the broader social network's impression of the breakup (Frampton & Fox, 2018). They may turn

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

to social media to broadcast their side of the story or to post imagery of successfully moving on to the larger network. Social media also provides a persistent record of the relationship, by creating a visible chronology of previous communication, social interactions, and relational memory (Fox et al., 2021). This aspect of people's past must be managed as part of their own identity presentation and for what the record communicates to potential and future partners. The dissolution of a romantic relationship can be an incredibly distressing event in a person's life (Kendler et al., 2003). With the advent of social media, people now must manage public performances of the breakup, multiple communication channels connecting them to their break-up partner, and the potential for continue interaction and/or observance of the partner via social platforms.

Uncertainty Management

Often increased uncertainty bubbles up during the dissolution phase of a relationship (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985). For those who did not initiate the break-up, experiencing dissolution can increase uncertainty about their understanding of the relationship and their former partner. In this high-uncertainty situation, people may be drawn to monitor their former partner's social media as an uncertainty management strategy (Fox & Tokunaga, 2015; Tong, 2013). Unfortunately, social media monitoring of exes is associated with greater distress for the surveyor. Taking a break from an ex-partner's social media content may be a better choice to facilitate moving on from the former relationship (Fox & Tokunaga, 2015; Fox & Warber, 2013). However, due to the integration of their social media presences, partners will have to negotiate how much social media contact they wish to have with their ex (Gershon, 2020). Different couples negotiate this in different ways, with some remaining friendly on the group messaging app, and others choosing to cut off all contact.

Relational Curation

Earlier in the chapter, we outlined how people use posts on social media to maintain the relationship and present an impression of the relationship to the network. During relational dissolution, couples must decide what happens to these digital artifacts. Some people choose to delete every virtual possession connected to the relationship, others choose to selectively remove relationship-related artifacts, and still others choose to keep the social media record fully intact (Herron et al., 2017). The variance in keeping and deleting behaviors may represent different approaches to the relational curation process (LeFebvre et al., 2020).

When people based curation decisions on their connection with their ex-partner, they were more likely to choose to keep those artifacts (LeFebvre

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

et al., 2020). This choice may reflect a partner still connecting their identity with that relationship. However, keeping these artifacts may make adjusting to post-dissolution life more difficult (Sas & Whittaker, 2013) and lead to increased rumination regarding the failed relationship. On the other hand, people often delete virtual possessions in order to prepare for future relationships (LeFebvre et al., 2015; Frampton & Fox, 2018). Social media users who based their curation decision on potential future partners, were more likely to delete virtual possessions connected to their former partner. People who delete social media artifacts may be able to move on from the past relationship more quickly (Brody et al., 2020). Yet, the ability to encapsulate the past or hold onto memories that deal with past relationship social media (Garde-Hansen, 2009; LeFebvre et al., 2015) can call into question whether they can end or simply continue to exist through our social media.

Network Impression Management and Grave Dressing

The curation process articulates that relational identities can remain on social media long after the relationships have ended (McDaniel et al., 2021). Couples often have shared memories through social media and mutual connections making it more difficult to disentangle themselves (McDaniel et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2020). Relational information on SNS may be particularly difficult to manage post-dissolution as the persistence of past communication about the relationship conflicts with the current relational status. Former romantic partners may use social media to communicate their experience to the broader network. Whereas relationship curation typically occurs behind the scenes, the grave-dressing process prioritizes the need to present their version of the story of the breakup to a social audience.

This narrative, grave-dressing process is not new (see Duck, 1998), but social media may complicate its deployment. The masspersonal nature of SNS can lead to an audience expecting fairly fixed, consistent, and coherent identity expressions (see McEwan, 2015). Yet, relational dissolution narratives indicate a change in relationships, reconstruction of part of the identity of the former relational partners, and introduces the possibility of the former partners presenting conflicting narratives to the social media audience.

Social media allows people to follow relationships as they develop and dissolve in real time (Fox et al., 2021; Seraj et al., 2021). The public audience represented on SNS can alter the way memories are created in the grave dressing process (Brody et al., 2020). Networks on SNS tend to be comprised of large audiences of weak ties and it may be difficult to craft messages that are appropriate for all segments of the network (Marwick & boyd, 2011). The presence of these ties representing a wide variety of contexts may make it difficult to perform the narrative tasks related to the end of a relationship. In addition, the persistence of digital items that represent cues to relationship memories and

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

associated emotions can make it difficult to move on from past relationships (Herron et al., 2017; Sas & Whittaker, 2013).

Perhaps for these reasons, mediated sharing about a breakup may not have the same benefits as a face-to-face conversation. In a study of college students, Choi and colleagues (2017) found that discussing a breakup with friends in a face-to-face setting was related to feelings of personal growth but sharing via mediated channels did not have the same relationship to personal growth. When people are moving through their breakup, they must make decisions about what their digital items represent, how and which social networks to maintain, and how to organize their own relationship and individual identity moving forward.

Social Media-Related Break-Up Strategies

At times people may also use mediated channels to facilitate their break-up communication. Breaking up via mediated technology can generate physical and psychological separation (Sprecher et al., 2010). People may choose a particular medium in an effort to alter their message (Ledbetter, 2014) or maximize difference in perceived channel affordances (Fox & McEwan, 2017). In a study of college students, Choi et al. (2017) found that although most couples in a geographically-close relationship had a face-to-face conversation to break up, some chose texting instead. For long-distance romantic relationships, texting was a more popular choice for breaking up than a face-to-face conversation. Interestingly, a voice phone call was the least popular choice regardless of the partners' proximity to each other.

In other cases, people may avoid all communication with a former or potential partner and end the relationship with a strategy known as "ghosting." The term ghosting first appeared in 2006 in the Urban Dictionary as "the act of disappearing on your friends without notice or canceling plans with little or no choice." However, over time the term morphed into the concept of halting communication with a romantic partner or potential partner with no explanation. Based on qualitative interview data, LeFebvre et al. (2019) define the process as "unilaterally ceasing communication (temporarily or permanently) in an effort to withdraw access to individual(s) prompting relationship dissolution (suddenly or gradually) commonly enacted via one or multiple technological mediums." The individual withholding the communication is the ghoster, and the partner being avoided is the ghostee.

Ghosting is not an entirely new phenomenon; Planalp and Honeycutt (1985) include unexplained loss of contact such as the partner moving away in their typology of uncertainty-increasing events. However, the accessibility of social media and other forms of mediated communication makes it obvious to the ghostee that the ghoster could resume communication if they so choose. Thus, ghosting is typically thought of in connection with mediated contexts

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and channels (LeFebvre & Fan, 2020). In addition, mediated channels make ghosting an ambiguous loss. There is a physical and psychological absence, yet there remains a form of ambient access, the knowledge via digital technology that the person continues to exist (LeFebvre, 2018).

Ghosting may occur on a continuum; sudden ghosting occurs when communication suddenly ceases and gradual ghosting involves slowly spacing out communication episodes until they eventually cease altogether. In any case, most people feel that ghosting is an inappropriate break-up strategy, but it should be noted that people ghost anyway (LeFebvre et al., 2019). There are cases where ghosting may be seen as more appropriate such as in very early stages. As one of LeFebvre et al.'s (2019) participants noted, "I definitely think it's appropriate if you find someone on like Tinder. You start talking for a little bit but if you're not into it, you can just start ghosting them" (p. 134). In these cases, ghosters may feel that not enough has been invested into the relationship to go to the trouble of investing the time and energy required for a more explicit break-up discussion. Ghosting may also be seen as more appropriate if the ghostee begins behaving oddly or in a way that seems dangerous (Manning et al., 2019). In such a case, cutting off communication quickly and completely may be a safer dissolution strategy than attempting to explain the need for a dissolution in a face-to-face setting.

However, sometimes people ghost merely out of convenience or finding their attraction to the person has dissipated or not materialized. People who have strong implicit theories about destiny may be more likely to ghost than people who believe that relationship can grow and change over time (Freedman et al., 2019). In these cases, ghosting may create difficulties for the ghostee in that they likely experience ambiguity, uncertainty, and a lack of closure (Koessler et al., 2019; LeFebvre et al., 2019). Ghostees aim to make sense of the relationship itself often before transitioning to a new relationship; however, ghostees may engage in increased privacy settings (e.g., blocking of previous partners or social networks, deleting messages) in order to control the process of grave-dressing and begin resurrection (Pancani et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

Throughout the lifespan of a relationship, romantic partners weave together communication through a variety of channels, including social media (McEwan, 2021).

Social media does not greatly alter the processes involved in romantic relationships; people still need to locate potential partners, form and maintain relationships, and dissolve those relationships. However, the affordances of social media, in particular persistence and network connectivity, often change the audience and rigidity of these messages. Mediated

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

channels can allow for opportunities such as an increased pool of potential partners available via dating apps but also challenges such as experiencing conflict or jealousy related to a partners' social media posts. Much of the research on romantic relationships and social media thus far has occurred within the context of Facebook (although there is starting to be more work on other platforms e.g., Instagram, Snapchat). Whether Facebook remains an important social channel or not, young adults in particular are likely to weave their relational communication through many different mediated channels. Within this chapter, we have attempted to consider how relational processes and channel affordance intersect to make meaning in romantic relationships. Future research focusing on specific affordances can help us continue to increase our understanding of how the context of social media accommodates, amplifies, or alters relational communication processes (McEwan & Fox, 2022).

NOTE

1 It is an open question whether online dating applications are "social media." Using Carr and Hayes (2015) definition we would argue that many dating applications are Internet-based, they are disentrained (communication can send messages in real time or asynchronously from differing locations), and derive value primarily by connecting different users to each others' content. Thus, dating apps could reasonably be counted as social media.

REFERENCES

Andrejevic, M. (2005). The work of watching one another: Lateral surveillance, risk, and governance. *Surveillance & Society*, *2*(4), 479–497. https://doi.org/10.24908/ss.v2i4.3359

Arikewuyo, A. O., Lasisi, T. T., Abdulbaqi, S. S., Omoloso, A. I., & Arikewuyo, H. O. (2020). Evaluating the use of social media in escalating conflicts in romantic relationships. *Journal of Public Affairs*, *22*(1), e2331. https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.2331

Auxier, B., & Anderson, M. (2021). Social media use in 2021. *Pew Research Center*. www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/04/07/social-media-use-in-2021/

Baxter, L. A. (1984). Trajectories of relationship disengagement. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *1*(1), 29–48. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407584011003

Berger, C. R., & Bradac, R. (1982). *Language and social knowledge: Uncertainty in interpersonal relations*. Arnold.

Berry, M. J., & Bainbridge, S. L. (2017). Manchester's Cyberstalked 18–30s: Factors affecting cyberstalking. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, *4*(18).

Bevan, J. L. (2013). *The communication of jealousy*. Peter Lang.

Blackwell, C., Birnholtz, J., & Abbott, C. (2015). Seeing and being seen: Co-situation and impression formation using Grindr, a location-aware gay dating app. *New Media & Society*, *17*(7), 1117–1136. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444814521595

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Bond, B. J. (2015). The mediating role of self-discrepancies in the relationship between media exposure and well-being among lesbian, gay, and bisexual adolescents. *Media Psychology*, *18*, 51–73. https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2014.917591

Boyd, d. m., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *13*(1), 210–230. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x

Brody, N., LeFebvre, L., & Blackburn, K. (2016). Social networking site behaviors across the relational lifespan: Measurement and association with relationship escalation and de-escalation. *Social Media + Society*, *2*(4).

Brody, N., LeFebvre, L. E., & Blackburn, K. (2020). Holding on and letting go: Virtual memory, nostalgia, and the effects of virtual possession management practices in post-breakup adjustment. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *37*(7), 2229–2249.

Bryant, E. M., Marmo, J., & Ramirez, A., Jr. (2011). A functional approach to social networking sites. In K. B. Wright & L. M. Webb (Eds.), *Computer-mediated communication in personal relationships* (pp. 3–20). Peter Lang.

Canary, D. J., Stafford, L., Hause, K. S., & Wallace, L. A. (1993). An inductive analysis of relational maintenance strategies: Comparisons among lovers, relatives, friends, and others. *Communication Research Reports*, *10*(1), 3–14. https://doi.org/10/1080/08824099309359913

Carpenter, C. J., & Spottswood, E. L. (2021). Extending the hyperpersonal model to observing others: The hyperperception model. *Journal of Communication Technology*, *4*(2), 58–81. https://doi.org/10.51548/joctec-2021-010

Chan, L. S. (2021). Looking for politically like-minded partners: Self-presentation and partner-vetting strategies on dating apps. *Personal Relationships*. Advanced online version. https://doi.org/10.1111/pere.12375

Chinchanachokchai, S., & Pusaksrikit, T. (2021). The role of self-construal in romantic gift posting across social networking sites. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *117*, 106665, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106665.

Choi, M., Toma, C. L., Reinecke, L., & Eden, A. (2017). Social sharing with friends and family after romantic breakups: Patterns of media use and effects on psychological well-being. *Journal of Media Psychology: Theories, Methods, and Applications*, *29*(3), 166–172. https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-1105/a000226

Clayton, R. B., Nagurney, A., & Smith, J. R. (2013). Cheating, breakup, and divorce: Is Facebook use to blame?. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *16*(10), 717–720. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2012.0424

Coontz, S. (2005). *Marriage, a history: How love conquered marriage*. Penguin Books.

Cunningham, M., & Barbee, A. (2008). Prelude to a kiss: Nonverbal flirting, opening gambits, and other communication dynamics in the initiation of romantic relationships. In S. Sprecher, A. Wenzel, & J. Harvey, (Eds.), *Handbook of Relationship Initiation* (pp. 109–132). Psychology Press.

Dainton, M., & Berkoski, L. (2013). Positive and negative maintenance behaviors, jealousy, and Facebook: Impacts on college students' romantic relationships. *Pennsylvania Communication Annual*, *69*(1), 35–50.

Dainton, M., & Stokes, A. (2015). College students' romantic relationships on Facebook: Linking the gratification for maintenance to Facebook maintenance activity and the experience of jealousy. *Communication Quarterly*, *63*(4), 365–383. https://doi.org/10.1080/01463373.2015.1058283

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Dibble, J. L., Banas, J. A., & Drouin, M. (2021). Fanning the flames of back burner relationships electronically: Implications for romances and well-being among adults. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*. https://doi.org/10.1080/15456870.2021.1991349

Dindia, K. (2003). Definitions and perspectives on relational maintenance communication. In D. J. Canary & M. Dainton (Eds.), *Maintaining relationships through communication: Relational, contextual, and cultural variations* (pp. 1–30). Lawrence Erlbaum.

Dredge, R., & Anderson, J. (2021). The qualitative exploration of social competencies and incompetencies on mobile dating applications. *Personal Relationships*, *28*(3), 627–651. https://doi.org/10.1111/pere.12378

Dreßing, H., Bailer, J., Anders, A., Wagner, H., & Gallas, C. (2014). Cyberstalking in a large sample of social network users: Prevalence, characteristics, and impact upon victims. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *17*(2), https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2012.0231

Duck, S. W. (1998). *Human relationships* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Duguay, S. (2017). Dressing up Tinderella: Interrogating authenticity claims on the mobile dating app Tinder. *Information, Communication & Society*, *20*(3), 351–367. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1168471

Ellison, N. B., Steinfeld, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook "friends": Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *12*(4), 1143–1168. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00367.x

Elphinston, R. A., & Noller, P. (2011). Time to face it! Facebook intrusion and the implications for romantic jealousy and relationship satisfaction. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *14*(11), 631–635. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2010.0318

Fansher, A. K., & Randa, R. (2019). Risky social media behaviors and the potential for victimization: A descriptive look at college students victimized by someone met online. *Violence and Gender*, *6*(2), 115–123. https://doi.org/10.1089/vio.2017.0073

Finkel, E. J., Eastwick, P. W., Karney, B. R., Reis, H. T., & Sprecher, S. (2012). Online dating: A critical analysis from the perspective of psychological science. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, *13*(1), 3–66. https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100612436522

Fox, J., & Anderegg, C. (2014). Romantic relationship stages and social networking sites: Uncertainty reduction strategies and perceived relational norms on Facebook. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *17*(11), 685–691. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2014.0232

Fox, J., & McEwan, B. (2017). Distinguishing technologies for social interaction: The perceived social affordances of communication channels scale. *Communication Monographs*, *84*(3), 298–318. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2017.1332418

Fox, J., & Ralston, R. (2016). Queer identity online: Informal learning and teaching experiences of LGBTQ individuals on social media. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *65*, 635–642. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.06.009

Fox, J., & Tokunaga, R. S. (2015). Romantic partner monitoring after breakups: Attachment, dependence, distress, and post-dissolution online surveillance via social networking sites. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *18*(9), 491–498. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2015.0123

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Fox, J., & Warber, K. M. (2013). Romantic relationship development in the age of Facebook: An exploratory study of emerging adults' perceptions, motives, and behaviors. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *16*(1), 3–7. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2012.0288

Fox, J., Frampton, J. R., Jones, E., & Lookadoo, K., (2021). Romantic relationship dissolution on social networking sites: Self-presentation and public accounts of breakups on Facebook. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *38*(12), 3732–3751. https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075211052247

Fox, J., Osborn, J. L., & Warber, K. M. (2014). Relational dialectics and social networking sites: The role of Facebook in romantic relationship escalation, maintenance, conflict, and dissolution. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *35*(12), 527–534. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.02.031

Frampton, J. R., & Fox, J. (2018). Social media's role in romantic partners' retroactive jealousy: Social comparison, uncertainty, and information seeking. *Social Media + Society*, *4*(3). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118800317

Freedman, G., Powell, D. N., Le, B., & Williams, K. D. (2019). Ghosting and destiny: Implicit theories of relationships predict beliefs about ghosting. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *36*(3), 905–924. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407517748791

Garde-Hansen, J. (2009). MyMemories?: Personal digital archive fever and Facebook. In J. Garde-Hansen, A. Hoskins, & Reading, A. (Eds.), *Save as …. Digital memories* (pp. 135–150). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230239418_8

Gershon, I. (2020). The breakup 2.1: The ten-year update. *Information Society*, *36*(5), 279–289.

Gibbs, J. L., Ellison, N. B., & Heino, R. D. (2006). Self-presentation in online personals: The role of anticipated future interaction, self-disclosure, and perceived success in internet dating. *Communication Research*, *33*(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650205285368

Gibbs, J. L., Ellison, N. B., & Lai, C-H. (2011). First comes love, then comes google: An investigation of uncertainty reduction strategies and self-disclosure in online dating. *Communication Research, 38*(1), 70–100. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650210377091

Goldberg, S., Yeshua-Katz, D., & Marciano, A. (2022). Online construction of romantic relationships on social media. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*. Advanced online version.

Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, *78*(6), 1360–1380. www.jstor.org/stable/2776392

Hall, J. A. (2020). *Relating through technology: Advances in Personal Relationships*. Cambridge University Press.

Hermida, A., & Hernández-Santaolalla, V. (2020). Horizontal surveillance, mobile communication and social networking sites: Lack of privacy in young people's daily lives. *Communication & Society*, *33*(1), 139–152. https://hdl.handle.net/10171/62402

Herron, D., Moncur, W., & van den Hoven, E. (2017). *Digital decoupling and disentangling: Towards design for romantic breakup.* Proceedings of the 2017 Conference on Designing Interactive Systems, 1175–1185.

Hjorth, L., & Lim, S. S. (2012). Mobile intimacy in an age of affective mobile media. *Feminist Media Studies*, *12*(4), 477–484. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2012.741860

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Hobbs, M., Owen, S., & Gerber, L. (2017). Liquid love?: Dating apps, sex, relationships and digital transformation of intimacy. *Journal of Sociology*, *53*(2), 271–284. https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783316662718

Ito, K., Yang, S., & Li, L. M. W. (2021). Changing Facebook profile pictures to dyadic photos: Positive association with romantic partners' relationship satisfaction via perceived partner commitment. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *120*, 106748. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2021.106748

Karsay, K., & Vandenbosch, L. (2021). Endlessly connected: Moving forward with agentic perspectives of mobile media. *Mass Communication and Society*, *24*(6), 779–794. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2021.1974785

Katz, J. E., & Aakhus, M. (2002). *Perpetual contact: Mobile communication, private talk, public performance*. Cambridge University Press.

Kendler, K. S., Hettema, J. M., Butera, F., Gardner, C. O., & Prescott, C. A. (2003). Life event dimensions of loss, humiliation, entrapment, and danger in the prediction of onsets of major depression and generalized anxiety. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, *60*(8), 789–796. https://doi.org/10.1001/archpsyc.60.8.789

Knapp, M. L., Vangelisti, A. L., & Caughlin, J. P. (2020). *Interpersonal communication and human relationships* (8th ed.). Allyn & Bacon.

Knobloch, L. K., & Miller, L. E. (2008). Uncertainty and relationship initiation. In S. Sprecher, A. Wenzel, & J. Harvey (Eds.), *Handbook of relationship initiation* (pp. 121–134). Psychology Press.

Koessler, R. B., Kohut, T., & Campbell, L. (2019). When your boo becomes a ghost: The association between breakup strategy and breakup role in experiences of relationship dissolution. *Collabra: Psychology*, *5*(1), 29. https://doi.org/10.1525/collabra.230

Kuar, P., Dhir, A., Tandon, A., Alzeiby, E. A., & Abohassan, A. (2021). A systematic literature review on cyberstalking. An analysis of past achievements and future promises. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, *163*, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2020.120426

Langlais, M. R., Seidman, G., & Bruxvoort, K. M. (2020). Adolescent romantic relationship–oriented Facebook behaviors: Implications for self-esteem. *Youth & Society*, *52*(4), 661–683. https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X18760647

Lane, B. L., Piercy, C. W., & Carr, C. T. (2016). Making it Facebook official: The warranting value of online relationship status disclosures on relational characteristics. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *56*, 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.11.016

Ledbetter, A. (2014). The past and future of technology in interpersonal communication theory and research. *Communication Studies*, *65*(4), 456–459.

LeFebvre, L. E. (2018). Swipe me off my feet: Explicating relationship initiation on Tinder. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *35*(9), 1205–1229. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407517706419

LeFebvre, L. E., & Fan, X. (2020). Ghosted?: Navigating strategies for reducing uncertainty and implications from ambiguous loss. *Personal Relationships*, *27*(2), 433–459. https://doi.org/10.111/pere.12322

LeFebvre, L. E., & Goodcase, E. T. (2021). *The impact of rejection on mobile dating: Moderated mediation path analysis.* Paper presented at the 10th Society for the Study of Emerging Adults virtual conference.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

LeFebvre, L. E., Allen, M., Rasner, R., Garstad, S., Wilms, A., & Parrish, C. (2019). Ghosting in emerging adults' romantic relationships: The digital disappearance dissolution strategy. *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality*, *39*(2), 125–150.

LeFebvre, L. E., Blackburn, K., & Brody, N. (2015). Navigating romantic relationships on Facebook: Extending the relational dissolution model to account for social networking environments. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationship*, *32*(1), 78–98. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407514524848

LeFebvre, L. E., Brody, N., & Blackburn, K. G. (2020). How concerns about former or future partners influence virtual possession management: Examining relational curation in the relational dissolution model. *Communication Research Reports*, *37*(4), 161–171. https://doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2020.1796617

LeFebvre, L. E., Ramirez, A., Hayes, J., & Gabrielson, G. (2019). *Finding, seeking, and communicating in relationship initiation: Exploring the pathway of modality switching and information-seeking.* Paper presented to the Human Communication and Technology Division at the National Communication Association Conference in Baltimore, Maryland.

Len-Ríos, M. E., Streit, C., Killoren, S., Deutsch, A., Cooper, M. L., & Carlo, G. (2016). US Latino adolescents' use of mass media and mediated communication in romantic relationships. *Journal of Children and Media*, *10*(4), 395–410.

Levy, J., Markell, D., Cerf, M. (2019). Polar similars: Using massive mobile dating data to predict synchronization and similarity in dating preferences. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *10*. www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02010/full

Ling, R., Bertel, T., & Sundsøy, P. (2012). The socio-demographics of texting: An analysis of traffic data. *New Media & Society*, *14*(2), 280–297. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444811412711

Manning, J., Buchanan, C., & Denker, K. J. (2019). *Ghosting: Defining a relational communication phenomena.* In Meeting of the International Communication Association, Washington, DC.

Markowitz, D., Hancock, J., & Tong, S. (2018). Interpersonal dynamics in online dating: Profile, matching, and discovery. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *A networked self and love* (pp. 50–61). Routledge.

Marwick, A. E., boyd, d. (2011). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media & Society*, *13*, 114–133. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810365313

McDaniel, B. T., Drouin, M., Dibble, J., Galovan, A. M., & Merritt, M. (2021). Are you going to delete me? Latent profiles of post-relationship breakup social media use and emotional distress. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *24*(7), 464–472. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2020.0714

McEwan, B. (2015). *Navigating new media networks: Understanding and managing communication challenges in a networked society*. Lexington Books.

McEwan, B. (2021). Modality switching to modality weaving: Updating theoretical perspectives for expanding media affordances. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, *45*(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2021.1880958

McEwan, B., & Fox, J. (2022). Before the how: The whats and whys of studying social media. In A. Quan-Hasse and L. Sloan (Eds.), *Social media research methods* (2nd ed., pp. 27–39). Sage.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

McEwan, B., Fletcher, J., Eden, J., & Sumner, E. (2014). Development and validation of a Facebook relational maintenance measure. *Communication Methods and Measures*, *8*(4), 244–263. https://doi/org/10.1080/19312458.2014.967844

Ménard, K. S., & Pincus, A. L. (2012). Predicting overt and cyber stalking perpetration by male and female college students. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *27*(11), 2183–2207. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260511432144

Miguel, C. (2016). Visual intimacy on social media: From selfies to the co-construction of intimacies through shared pictures. *Social Media + Society*, *2*(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116641705

Miller, B. (2015). "They're the modern-day gay bar": Exploring the uses and gratifications of social networks for men who have sex with men. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *51*, 476–482. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.05.023

Muise, A., Christofides, E., & Desmarais, S. (2014). "Creeping" or just information seeking: Gender differences in partner monitoring in response to jealousy on Facebook. *Personal Relationships*, *21*(1), 33–50.

O'Sullivan, P. B., & Carr, C. T. (2018). Masspersonal communication: A model bridging the mass-interpersonal divide. *New Media & Society*, *20*(3), 1161–1180. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816686104

Pancani, L., Mazzoni, D., Aureli, N., & Riva, P. (2021). Ghosting and orbiting: An analysis of victims' experiences. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *38*(7), 1987–2007. https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075211000417

Papp, L. M., Danielewicz, J., & Cayemberg, C. (2012). "Are we Facebook official?" Implications of dating partners' Facebook use and profiles for intimate relationship satisfaction. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *15*(2), 85–90. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2011.0291

Parsons-Pollard, N., & Moriarty, L. J. (2009). Cyberstalking: Utilizing what we do know. *Victims and Offenders*, *4*(4), 435–441. https://doi.org/10.1080/15564880903227644

Planalp, S., & Honeycutt, J. M. (1985). Events that increase uncertainty in personal relationships. *Human Communication Research*, *11*(4), 593–604. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.1985.tb00062.x

Rahaman, H. S. (2015). Romantic relationship length and its perceived quality: Mediating role of Facebook-related conflict. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, *11*(3), 395. https://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v11i3.932

Ramirez, A., Jr., & Walther, J. B. (2009). New technologies and new directions in online relating. In S. W. Smith & S. W. Wilson (Eds.), *New directions in interpersonal communication research* (pp. 264–284). Sage.

Ramirez, A., Jr., & Zhang, S. (2007). When online meets offline: The effect of modality switching on relational communication. *Communication Monographs*, *74*(3), 287–310. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637750701543493

Ramirez, A. Jr., Sumner E. M., Fleuriet, C., & Cole, M. (2015). When online dating partners meet offline: The effect of modality switching on relational communication between online daters. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *20*(1), 99–114. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12101

Ramirez, A., Jr., Sumner, E. M., & Spinda, J. (2017). The relational reconnection function of social network sites. *New Media & Society*, *19*(6), 807–825. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444815614199

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Ramirez, A., Jr., Walther, J. B., Burgoon, J. K., & Sunnafrank, M. (2002). Information-seeking strategies, uncertainty, and computer-mediated communication. *Human Communication Research*, *28*(2), 213–228. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.2002.tb00804.x

Reyns, B. W., Henson, B., & Fisher, B. S. (2011). Being pursued online: Applying cyber-lifestyle–routine activities theory to cyberstalking victimization. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *38*(11), 1149–1169. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854811421448

Robards, B., & Lincoln, S. (2016). Making it "Facebook official": Reflecting on romantic relationships through sustained Facebook use. *Social Media + Society*, *2*(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116672890

Rosenfeld, M. J., & Thomas, R. J. (2012). Searching for a mate: The rise of the internet as a social intermediary. *American Sociological Review*, *77*(4), 523–547. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122412448050

Rueda, H. A., Lindsay, M., & Williams, L. R. (2015). "She posted it on Facebook": Mexican American adolescents' experiences with technology and romantic relationship conflict. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, *30*(4), 419–445. https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558414565236

Rus, H. M., & Tiemensma, J. (2017). "It's complicated." A systematic review of associations between social network site use and romantic relationships. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *75*, 684–703. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.06.004

Sas, C., & Whittaker, S. (2013). Design for forgetting: Disposing of digital possessions after a breakup. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on human factors in computing systems* (pp. 1823–1832). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/2470654.2466241

Seidman, G., Langlais, M., & Havens, A. (2019). Romantic relationship-oriented Facebook activities and the satisfaction of belonging needs. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, *8*(1), 52–62.

Seraj, S., Blackburn, K. G., & Pennebaker, J. W. (2021). Language left behind on social media exposes the emotional and cognitive costs of a romantic breakup. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, *118*(7), 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2017154118

Sharabi, L. L. (2021). Online dating profiles, first-date interactions, and the enhancement of communication satisfaction and desires in future interaction. *Communication Monographs*, *88*(2), 131–153. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2020.1766094

Sharabi, L. L., & Caughlin, J. P. (2017). What predicts first date success? A longitudinal study of modality switching in online dating. *Personal Relationships*, *24*(2), 370–391. https://doi.org/10.1111/pere.12188

Sharabi, L. L., & Hopkins, A. (2021). Picture perfect? Examining associations between relationship quality, attention to alternatives, and couples' activities on Instagram. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407521991662

Sheldon, P. (2008). Student favorite: Facebook and motives for its use. *Southwestern Mass Communication Journal*, *23*(2).

Sheldon, P., & Bryant, K. (2016). Instagram: Motives for its use and relationship to narcissism and contextual age. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *58*, 89–97. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.12.059

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Sheng, J. T., & Kairam, S. R. (2020). From virtual strangers to irl friends: Relationship development in livestreaming communities on twitch. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, *4*(CSCW2), 1–34. http://doi.org/10.1145/3415165

Sprecher, S., Zimmerman, C., & Abrahams, E. M. (2010). Choosing compassionate strategies to end a relationship: Effects of compassionate love for partner and the reason for the breakup. *Social Psychology, 41*(2), 66–75. https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-9335/a000010

Spitzberg, B. H., & Hoobler, G. (2002). Cyberstalking and the technologies of interpersonal terrorism. *New Media & Society*, *4*(1), 71–92. https://doi.org/10.1177/14614440222226271

Stafford, L. (2011). Measuring relationship maintenance behaviors: Critique and development of the revised relationship maintenance behavior scale. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *28*(2), 278–303. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407510378125

Stewart, M. C., Dainton, M., & Goodboy, A. K. (2014). Maintaining relationships on Facebook: Associations with uncertainty, jealousy, and satisfaction. *Communication Reports*, *27*(1), 13–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/08934215.2013.84675

Sumter, S. R., & Vandenbosch, L. (2019). Dating gone mobile: Demographic and personality-based correlates of using smartphone-based dating applications among emerging adults. *New Media & Society*, *21*(3), 655–673. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818804773

Thomas, R. (2020). Online exogamy reconsidered: Estimating the internet's effects on racial, educational, religious, political and age assortative mating. *Social Forces*, *98*(3), 1257–1286, https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soz060

Tokunaga, R. S. (2011). Social networking site or social surveillance site? Understanding the use of interpersonal electronic surveillance in romantic relationships. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *27*(2), 705–713

Tokunaga, R. S. (2016). Interpersonal surveillance over social network sites: Applying a theory of negative relational maintenance and the investment model. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *33*(2), 171–190. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407514568749

Tokunaga, R. S., & Aune, K. S. (2017). Cyber-defense: A taxonomy of tactics for managing cyberstalking. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *32*(10), 1451–1475. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260515589564

Toma, C. L., & Choi, M. (2015). The couple who Facebooks together, stays together: Facebook self-presentation and relationship longevity among college-aged dating couples. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *18*, 367–372. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2015.0060

Toma, C. L., Jiang, L. C., & Hancock, J. T. (2018). Lies in the eye of the beholder: Asymmetric beliefs about one's own and others' deceptiveness in mediated and face-to-face communication. *Communication Research*, *45*(8), 1167–1192.

Tong, S. T. (2013). Facebook use during relationship termination: Uncertainty reduction and surveillance. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *16*(11), 788–793. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2012.0549

Tong, S. T., & Walther, J. B. (2011). Relational maintenance and CMC. *Computer-Mediated Communication in Personal Relationships*, *53*(9), 1689–1699.

Tooke, W., & Camire, L. (1991). Patterns of deception in intersexual and intrasexual mating strategies. *Ethology and Sociobiology*, *12*(5), 345–364. https://doi.org/10.1016/0162-3095(91)90030-T

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Utz, S., & Beukeboom, C. J. (2011). The role of social network sites in romantic relationships: Effects on jealousy and relationship happiness. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *16*(4), 511–527. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2011.01552.x

Van Ouytsel, J., Van Gool, E., Walrave, M., Ponnet, K., & Peeters, E. (2016). Exploring the role of social networking sites within adolescent romantic relationships and dating experiences. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *55*(Part A), 76–86. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.08.042

Vaterlaus, J. M., & Winter, M. (2021). TikTok: An exploratory study of young adults' uses and gratifications. *Social Science Journal*. Advanced online version. https://doi.org/10.1080/03623319.2021.1969882

Vogels, E. A. (2021). The state of online harassment. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/01/13/the-state-of-online-harassment/

Vogels, E. A., & Anderson, M. (2020). Dating and relationships in the digital age. *Pew Research Center*. www.pewresearch.org/internet/2020/05/08/dating-and-relationships-in-the-digital-age/

Walther, J. B. (1996). Computer-mediated communication: Impersonal, interpersonal, and hyperpersonal interaction. *Communication Research*, *23*(1), 3–43. https://doi.org/10.1177/009365096023001001

Weser, V. U., Opara, I., Sands, B E., Fernandes, C. F., & Hieftje, K. D. (2021). How Black teen girls navigate social media to form romantic relationships. *Social Media + Society*, *7*(3), 1–9.

Zhang, E., Freeman, G., & McNeese, N. J. (2020). Breakups and social media: Social behaviors and dilemmas. *CSCW '20 Companion*.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009158657.011 Published online by Cambridge University Press