Uncertainty Reduction on Facebook and Computer Mediated Communication

Ali Smith

Pittsburg State University

Uncertainty Reduction on Facebook and Computer Mediated Communication

Abstract

This study examines how social media effects relationships and uncertainty reduction. Research was primarily concentrated on Facebook and romantic relationships. Uncertainty reduction theory and social information processing theory are examined in the light of new technologies and social networking sites. Five participants were interviewed individually by the researcher. Analysis was limited because of the number of participants and the limited amount of research and responses. However, new insights can still be reached through this research and used to create a new research with a wider base of participants. The terms "Facebook Official" and "Facebook Stalking" or "Facebook Creeping" were brought up in interviews by the participants that show how integrated Facebook and social media is in our relationships and uncertainty reduction strategies. It was also shown by participants that some use Facebook a huge amount of the time, while others say they have moved on to other social networks for their primary use, like Twitter and Instagram.

Introduction

Facebook is the number one social networking site (SNS) in the world today. Twitter and Pinterest follow Facebook as the second and third most popular (Osman 2012, Palmieri 2012 and Paradise 2012). Facebook has 1.25 billion active users per month, they have 945 million monthly active users who used Facebook mobile products as of December 31, 2013 and there are 757 million daily active users on average in December 2013 (Facebook Factsheet 2013). Computer-mediated communication is becoming more and more prevalent through the increase of technology and other social networking sites (SNSs). Despite this growing topic of research on computer-mediated communication (CMC) in the human communication field, there is lack of research. Not much has been accomplished because of the short time of its existence. Many researchers on this topic agree that future research still needs to be done and as of right now, there are not many research studies on this topic. It is difficult for the researching world to keep up with the growing technology, abundance of SNSs, and the increase of CMC in general (Antheunis 2012, Fox 2013, and Ledbetter 2011). It is therefore extremely important to update and keep up on research in this field in order to better understand how relationships develop and unfold online, as well as the transformation of computer-mediated communication and how people adapt to it over time.

Theories

Walther's social information processing theory (SIP) is being consistently used and adapted as research progresses and other communication theories are beginning to be viewed with a new technological lens and being adapted to use in CMC. Uncertainty reduction theory (URT) is a primary example of this as it is being consistently tied with SIP as new research begins to come out (Fox 2013).

Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT)

URT is becoming a primary theory when researching CMC and online relationships. Uncertainty reduction is the increased knowledge of another person that provides increased discernment into how future communication with that person will turn out. URT, which was created by Charles Berger in 1975, states that uncertainty reduction is a person's primary concern when they meet someone new (Berger 2011). When an initial interaction isn't going the way that previous interactions have gone when meeting new people, we become unsettled and disturbed. If the new person is acting in an abnormal way, the conversation becomes more difficult to keep going and the interaction becomes draining and arduous (Berger 1986, Berger 2011, and Griffith 2013). Others in the field of communication argue that not everyone has uncertainty reduction as their primary goal in an initial interaction. Berger's response is that the primary goal of people when the stranger they are communicating with will be encountered in the future, when they will be provided with rewards, or when the stranger behaves in an abnormal manner. People reduce this uncertainty with certain non-verbal or verbal strategies. People introduce these strategies regularly, but most are unaware that they do this (Berger 1986, Berger 2011, Byron 2007 and Gudykunst 1995). Berger states that predictability is the opposite of uncertainty and as humans, we seek to find predictability in others in order to be comfortable around them. Some of the strategies for uncertainty reduction that Berger lists are verbal output, nonverbal warmth, self-disclosure, similarity, and shared communication networks (Berger 1986, Berger 2011 and Griffith 2013). Berger also states that the human being's need to reduce uncertainty might have been what led to certain traditions and norms in initial interactions. Most people have a certain routine they go through when they meet a new person. In the U.S., we shake hands and introduce ourselves. Most people ask "what do you do?" or "what do you

study?" as a preliminary question to begin to get to know the other person a little and reduce uncertainty (Berger 1986). Even though URT applies heavily to new relationships, it can be applied to relationships that are in varied stages as well. People are always seeking new information about others and wanting to get to know their friends or significant others better. This constant reduction of uncertainty helps people decide if they want to continue in the relationship they are currently in (Berger 1986).

Social Information Processing Theory (SIP)

SIP by Joseph Walther in 1992 is based on the verbal content of CMC. It states that people who meet online can develop a relationship that is just as meaningful and deep as a relationship that is cultivated through face-to-face communication. This idea was laughed at in the beginning. CMC was never thought to be a method in which to establish intimacy or cultivate a relationship. CMC was only seen as a way to give and receive information. It was thought that the lack of non-verbal cues made CMC a wasteland for cultivating relationships. CMC lacks things like facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice. Walther does not think this loss non-verbal cues hinders relationship development in CMC. He believes that when people are motivated, they can cultivate a relationship online. Uncertainty reduction theory supports SIP when they are studied together by saying that people make up for the lack of non-verbal cues by increasing the amount of verbal cues (Antheunis 2012, Byron 2007, Chan 2004, Griffith 2013, Hobman 2002, Ledbetter 2011, Palmieri 2012, Pratt 1999, Ramirez 2002, Tidwell 2002 and Walther 2005). According to Walther, CMC is much slower than face-to-face communication and therefore takes much longer to cultivate relationships; however, relationships cultivated through CMC, although slower, can be just as strong as face-to-face relationships (Griffith 2013).

My husband and I were friends for two years before we began officially dating. We spent a large amount of time at the beginning of our friendship getting to know each other online through Facebook chat, email and text messaging. During that time, he didn't live close to me so we didn't see each other that often. Because of this, the internet was the primary way that we communicated. Soon, we began to see each other more and more face-to-face. We had gotten so used to communicating textually that communicating verbally was foreign to us and it took a while before that awkwardness went away. We had learned how to communicate through text in a very efficient way. We could read each other very well after a while, but it took us longer to develop our relationship outside of that bubble because of this. We had to learn to read outside of just words on a page and learn to read facial expressions, body language and tone of voice. It was like a whole new world of communication, but ultimately our friendship became well balanced in that we could communicate efficiently in both CMC and face-to-face after a while.

SIP discusses how the exchange of information through text only communication is much slower than face-to-face communication. It does take a little longer to send a text message, have the other person receive it, think of how to respond and then reply. But text only communication can go on for a lot longer than face-to-face communication. My husband and I would text each other throughout the day, making conversations on topics last all day and throughout the next day. When communicating face-to-face, this cannot happen unless you quit everything else in your life to hang out with this person and talk to them all day. With text only communication, all day communication is possible and extremely realistic. It is a way to have almost constant communication. With more and more people owning smart phones, this is possible with SNSs as well.

Facebook

Research has consistently shown that online relationships can become just as strong as face to face relationships and that CMC can be a beneficial addition to current face to face relationships. Facebook is a primary contender of CMC between people today. The SNS Facebook is the most popular and lasting social networks. Facebook was created in 2004 and has steadily grown and kept itself prevalent throughout the decade. Despite some perceptions that Facebook is becoming less popular for the younger crowd, it is still the most popular SNS worldwide. Facebook has become a primary tool for people to keep in contact with friends both new and old. Instead of asking for someone's phone number, people now ask if that person has a Facebook. Users in Fox's qualitative study stated that by doing this, there is less rejection, versus asking for someone's phone number, which is considered more personal (Fox 2013).

Uncertainty Reduction in CMC

As media and technology increase, uncertainty reduction theory is always changing and morphing as it is being applied to new types of relationships. Uncertainty reduction in computer-mediated communication (CMC) is a newer phenomenon and one that more and more research is being done on. When speaking to someone through text based communication, non-verbal communication cannot be monitored and uncertainty reduction strategies are more difficult to put into place. A recent study compared uncertainty reduction strategies in both face-to-face communication and CMC. The researchers looked at CMC with a text-only format and CMC with a text and video format. The experiment used college students and paired students together who did not know each other. Certain student pairs were put in each of these situations and their communication and uncertainty reduction strategies were compared. The researchers were specifically looking at statements of verbal affection and if they increased in CMC because of the lack of non-verbal communication. No differences were found in both of the CMC groups,

therefore they were merged together in the final analysis. There was significant data showing that there were an increase in verbal statement of affection in CMC versus face-to-face communication. This study proved that in CMC, an increase of verbal statements must be made in order to decrease uncertainty and make up for the lack of non-verbal cues in face-to-face communication. Many other studies have also shown that the lack of non-verbal communication in CMC does not affect the outcomes of the communication. Human beings instinctively make up for this by other means (Antheunis 2012, Ramirez 2002, Tidwell 2002, and Walther 2005).

In SNSs there are more ways to reduce uncertainty about another person other than asking that person directly. On SNSs, each person has their own profile where they can post photos, status updates, or pictures for their "friends" or "followers" to look at. Seeing the activities of another person through their profile and what they post about themselves can reduce the uncertainty about that person (Fox 2013, Gibbs 2011 and Ramirez 2002). Facebook and many other SNSs enable you to check-in to a certain place where you are located. People don't even have to announce they are looking at someone's online information to reduce uncertainty. This is yet another way that others can reduce uncertainty about others. Knowing the places that are regular spots for someone can be a way to get to know them and reduce uncertainty. The popularity of "checking-in" has increased and it is now just another way to check up on others (Wang 2013). People can participate in the activity of looking at someone's profile anonymously. Things like "Googling" and "Facebook Stalking" are becoming regular terms in today's society. It is becoming natural to look someone up before going on a date with them, interviewing for a job, or even after you first meet someone in a face to face situation (Fox 2013, Gibbs 2011 and Ramirez 2002).

Many believe that CMC leads to greater self-disclosure. Because of the anonymity of the internet, people feel more at ease and less pressure to impress another person. They also feel like they have less of a chance of being rejected or ridiculed when they open up. Their non-verbal communication is not being judged and they can take their time to contemplate a proper response to the message. The communicator has a greater control over the environment and this has been shown to lead to greater self-disclosure and therefore, a greater certainty of the other person. This is especially true for a person who is socially anxious. The anonymity of CMC makes them feel less anxious and more likely to self-disclose (Tian 2011).

SIP discusses strategies to reduce uncertainty in CMC and uses points similar to URT. People can use extractive strategies to seek information about other people through CMC by communicating with third parties about the person in question. This has been done even before SNSs with email and chat. SNSs have changed the face of this type of information seeking. People can now look at someone's profile and see what others have posted on their wall and have said about them. They can look at the interactions of that person and see photos that their friends have posted or tagged them in. It has been shown that people are more likely to believe something about a person if it was said by a third party. (Fox 2011 and Ramirez 2002).

Facebook is a primary tool in current CMC and deserves current research and experiments. It is important to see how uncertainty reduction is being used and applied in new relationships in CMC on Facebook.

Methods

Five college students were interviewed face-to-face by the researcher. All interviews took place on campus in various locations. The first two interviews (participants 1 and 2) were done in a classroom before a meeting began. The classroom was empty and quiet. The third interview

(participant 3) was done in a campus building hallway while sitting on a bench. This seemed a little less private since people were walking by as questions were being asked to the participant. The fourth interview (participant 4) was done in the student center U-Club. This seemed like a more relax atmosphere, but it was also much louder because of music and people constantly filtering through. The fifth interview (participant 5) was done in a dormitory lobby. The space was empty and quiet, except for the occasional passerby. Each participant chose their location

Participant 1 was a Caucasian male in his senior year of college, who studied biology. Participant 2 was a Hispanic female in her senior year of college, who studied fashion merchandising. Participant 3 was a Caucasian female in her sophomore year of college, who studied nursing. Participant 4 was a Caucasian male in his junior year of college, who studied elementary education. Participant 5 was a Caucasian female in her junior year of college, who studied psychology.

Participants were chosen from acquaintances and friends of the researcher at random. The researcher asked the participants if they would like to participate through a Facebook message. This also gave the researcher an idea of how often the participant used Facebook, by how quickly they responded. Of course, this is only assumed. The participant could only check their Facebook once a month and when they received the message that just happened to be the time that they were online. But according to the findings, all of the participants were regular Facebook users.

Discussion

Although only five participants were interviewed for this study, there were many observations to be analyzed in both similarities and differences between answers. The

participants were asked both how many hours per week they spent on Facebook and how many times per day they checked Facebook. These answers are the perceptions of the participants and an average guess by them. Participant 1 said that he spent about eight to ten hours on Facebook per week and checked it four or five times per day. Participant 2 stated that she probably spent around ten hours per week on Facebook and checked it seven to eight times per day. Participant three stated that she spent a large proportion of her time on Facebook and speculated that she spent twenty hours per week on Facebook and checked it ten to twenty times per day. Participant 4 and 5 spends the least amount of time on Facebook with participant 4 stating he spends three or four hours per week on Facebook and checks it three times per day, and participant five stating that she spends four to five hours on Facebook per week and checks it two or three times per day. Several participants referred to their Facebook smart phone apps as the culprit of how much time they spend on Facebook. Participant 3 stated: "When I'm walking across campus it's usually open…it's open a lot."

A common theme that popped up in interviews was the term "Facebook Official". Participants noted that posting your relationship status on Facebook is the way most people tell others that they are in a romantic relationship. However, "Facebook Official" usually takes place after the relationship has been more established. However, to some, it doesn't matter that is on Facebook, where it matters quite a bit to other people. Participant 4 noted that, "I feel like everyone uses the term 'Facebook official'. I have friends back home that are in relationships but it's not 'Facebook official' yet. It's not a big deal to them. And then I have other friends who are like, 'it isn't Facebook official yet?'" Participant 3 pointed out that her relationships have never become "Facebook Official" because her parents are on Facebook and do not know that she is

homosexual. She let her friends know by other ways, whether it be through face to face communication or phone calls and text messages.

Another common theme was that when asked how they learn more about a person they are romantically interested in, most participants stated that they would "Facebook stalk" or "Facebook creep" on their profile. Others mentioned other forms of social media like Instagram and Twitter. Participant 5 stated:

"Deep creep their internet life for sure. And then casually talk about what you've seen…for example, if they have something on their Instagram like a shared music taste, and it's really important to you that it's the same thing, you could ask them over the internet or in real life 'hey, what kind of music do you listen to?' It can kind of subconsciously reassure you that they are the same person on the internet as well as getting to know them better."

Participants were split on deciding whether the overall effect of Facebook on romantic relationships is negative or positive. Participant 1 said it was more of a negative effect because it causes a lot of unnecessary drama. Participant 2 said that she said the effect Facebook has on a romantic relationship depends on those people and their personality. It could be negative or positive depending on how that person's views. Participant 3 stated that she believed that Facebook has an overall positive effect because information on others is out there and it makes getting to know people easier. Participant 4 stated that it has both effects sometimes. He did state that Facebook can cause unnecessary drama and that is bad, but he believes that there is more good than bad in it all. It is good because it allows others to be a part of the relationship and keep up with it. "People need the support from people on Facebook," stated Participant 4. Participant 5 stated that Facebook has a positive effect on romantic relationships, but the positive effect is higher on people with more mature romantic relationships. Overall she stated that she believes

the world views Facebook as a positive. "I think it's viewed by society as well as myself as a positive thing to show your friendships and family and affection towards others because it shows how much you are loved and how much people are loved."

Future Research

This research had several limitations. The biggest limitation of the small sample size. Only five participants were interviewed for this research. This is a very limiting number and does not allow the research to be analyzed deeply. The sample size should be expanded in further research. Ideally, future sample sizes should include a proportional amount of males and females and evenly distributed between class/year in college. A topic that did come up in this study was the differences between homosexual and heterosexual relationships and how they are affected by Facebook. Sexual orientation is definitely a variable to consider in future research. My interviews would have also benefited from some more specific questions about uncertainty reduction strategies in getting to know someone on Facebook. Future research on other specific social networking sites like Twitter and Instagram, which are gaining more and more users, should definitely be looked into.

References:

Antheunis, L. Marjolijn, Schouten, P. Alexander, Valkenburg, M. Patti and Peter, Jochen. Interactive uncertainty reduction strategies and verbal affection in computer-mediated communication. (2012).*Communication Research, 39*(6), 757-780.

Berger, Charles. From Explanation to Application (2011). *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 39(2), 214-222.

Berger, Charles. Uncertain Outcome Values in Predicted Relationships Uncertainty Reduction Theory Then and Now (1986). *Human Communication Research*, 13(1), 34-38.

Byron, Kristin and Baldridge, David C. E-Mail Recipients' Impressions of Senders' Likability: The Interactive Effect of Nonverbal Cues and Recipients' Personality (2007). *Journal of Business Communication*, 44(2), 137-160.

Chan, K.-S., Darius, & Cheng, H.-L., Grand. (2004). A comparison of offline and online friendship qualities at different stages of relationship development. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*.

Facebook Statistics 2013. [Accessed March 2, 2014]. Available from: https://newsroom.fb.com/key-Facts

Fox, Jesse, Warber, M. Katie, & Makstaller, C. Dana. (2013). The role of Facebook in romantic relationship development: An exploration of Knapp's relational stage model. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 30*(6), 771.

Gibbs, L. Jennifer, Ellison, B. Nicole, and Lai, Chih-Hui. First comes love, then comes google:

An investigation of uncertainty reduction strategies and self-disclosure in online dating.

(2011). *Communication Research, 38*(1), 70-100.

Griffin, Em. (2012). A first look at communication theory (8th Ed.) (pp. 125-137, pp. 138-150).

New York, New York. McGraw Hill.

Gudykunst, William. (1995). Watershed Research Traditions in Human Communication Theory.

Cushman, P. Donald, Kova, Branislav. Watershed Research Conditions in Human

Communication Theory (pp. 67-69). Retrieved from Google Books.

Hobman, E.V. The expression of conflict in computer-mediated and face-to-face groups (2002).

Small Group Research, 33(4), 439-465.

Ledbetter, M. Andrew, Mazer, P. Joseph, DeGroot, M. Jocelyn, Meyer, R. Kevin, Mao, Yuping,

and Swafford, Brian. Attitudes toward online social connection and self-disclosure as predictors

of Facebook communication and relational closeness. (2011). *Communication Research, 38*(1),

27-53.

Osman, Andrew, Wardle, Andrew, and Caesar Richard. Online professionalism and Facebook –

Falling through the generation gap (2012). *Medical Teacher*, 34(8), 549-556.

Palmieri, Cynthia, Prestano, Kristen, Gandley, Rosalie, Overton, Emily and Zhang, Qin. The

Facebook Phenomenon: Online Self-Disclosure and Uncertainty Reduction (2012). China Media

Research, 8(1), 48-53.

Paradise, Angela. Sullivan, Meghan. (In)Visible Threats? The Third-Person Effect

In Perceptions of the Influence of Facebook (2012). *CyberPsychology, Behavior & Social Networking,* 15(1), 55-60.

Pratt, Laurie, Wiseman, Richard L, Cody, Michael J and Wendt, Pamela F. Interrogative strategies and information exchange in computer-mediated communication (1999). *Communication Quarterly*, 47(1), 46-66.

Ramirez, A. Information-seeking strategies, uncertainty, and computer-mediated communication (2002). *Human Communication Research*, 28(2), 213-228.

Tian, Qing. Social Anxiety, Motivation, Self-Disclosure, and Computer-Mediated Friendship: A Path Analysis of the Social Interaction in the Blogosphere (2011). Communication Research, 20(2), 237-260.

Tidwell, Lisa Collins, Walther, Joseph B. Computer-Mediated Communication Effects on Disclosure, Impressions, and Interpersonal Evaluations: Getting to Know One Another a Bit at a Time (2002). *Human Communication Research*, 28(3), 317-345.

Walther, Joseph, Loh, Tracey, and Granka, Laura. Let Me Count the Ways: The Interchange of Verbal and Nonverbal Cues in Computer-Mediated and Face-to-Face Affinity (2005). The Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 24(1), 36-65.

Wang, Sharon Shaojung and Stefanone, Michael A. Showing Off? Human Mobility and the Interplay of Traits, Self-Disclosure, and Facebook Check-Ins (2013). *Social Science Computer Review*, 31(4), 437-457.

Appendix

PARTICIPANT 1: MALE, SENIOR IN BIOLOGY.

Interviewer: On average, how many hours a week would you say that you spend on Facebook?

Participant 1: Per week…about 8-10 hours maybe.

Interviewer: How many times a day would you say you check Facebook?

Participant 1: I have the app on my phone so I would say 4 or 5 at least.

Interviewer: What do you consider the stages or steps to beginning a romantic relationship?

Participant 1: I would say you have to meet them first. You have to have some sort of connection. And then there is courting which you take them out on dates and impress them I guess. And make sure you stay in a relationship or get a relationship status.

Interviewer: So if you are getting to know someone romantically, at what point would you say that you are in a relationship?

Participant 1: I would say at about the third date. If you are going out on 1-2 dates a week…probably the third or fourth date, I would consider a relationship.

Interviewer: Do you think that is an unspoken rule? Do you think most people feel that way?

Participant 1: I don't know because I know that I know people who have said before 'we aren't boyfriend and girlfriend, but we've been on five or six dates'. So it's more of just a personal belief. Overall it's probably the 3rd or 4th date in my opinion. I hope I'm not crazy.

Interviewer: How do people usually tell others that they are in a romantic relationship?

Participant 1: Most people will go through the whole Facebook status and make it "Facebook official" but I don't typically fit into that category. I've seen it too many times to where they're in a relationship, then they're not in a relationship, all in like a three hour span. That's not that important to me. But my girlfriend on the other hand, she asked my Facebook account for the relationship status so, I don't know.

Interviewer: So you would say it was more important to her, than you?

Participant 1: Yes, for sure. I guess it's just a social media thing. You have to let everyone know.

Interviewer 1: How long did you guys wait to make it "Facebook official"?

Participant 1: I know we were talking for like three weeks before we started dating and I think it was like a couple weeks after that before we made it "Facebook official". So about a month or a month and a half.

Interviewer: So did you tell your friends or your family before you put it on Facebook?

Participant 1: I guess Facebook was just the way I told everyone. I'm not too big on telling people in the first place. I guess Facebook was the way people found out.

Interviewer: We kind of discussed this a little already, but what roles do technologies play in the stages of a romantic relationship?

Participant 1: In today's life, it's huge, just because everyone's on their phone 24/7 and it used to be to talk to someone you had to call them, spend a couple hours on the phone, or mail them a letter, and now it's just a quick text message and you get back or you don't get back and you get upset about it or something. In today's society technology is one of the number one factors in

either a good or bad relationship depending on where it's at or what is taken and how it's taken.

Just because you could post something online as a joke and someone sees it real quick and freak

out and let someone else know real quick and it all gets back to the wrong person before you

have time to actually talk to that person.

Interviewer: Do you have any personal examples that you would be willing to share? …Or have

you just seen it with friends?

Participant 1: I think I've just seen people post stuff on Facebook and it just explode and

everyone's business is everyone's business if you put it on Facebook.

Interviewer: If you are romantically interested in someone, how would you learn more about

that person?

Participant 1: Probably Facebook. I'd probably look them up on Facebook or if I have a class

with them I will look them up on GUS or Canvas and see their full name, and then I'll look them

up on Facebook.

Interviewer: So if you look them up on Facebook, what do you look for on their profile?

Participant 1: Likes, interests, some of their recent activity. Make sure they aren't some crazy

weirdo that I don't want anything to do with. Maybe also guy to girl friend ratio. If she has a

bunch of guy friends, maybe I don't want to get into that situation. I would just look around and

see if anything sticks out like red flags.

Interviewer: What would be a red flag for you?

Participant 1: Probably a newly created account, seeing as Facebook is 10 years old already.

Also maybe, like I said, if they have a high guy friend ratio, like a couple girl friends and 60 or

70 guy friends, then it's kind of awkward and weird. But then again they could also just be better friends with guys, get along with guys better. So then you message them and say 'what's up?'

Interviewer: We kind of talked about this too, but what does it mean to be "in a relationship" with someone on Facebook to you?

Participant 1: To be in a relationship on Facebook…I don't really know.

Interviewer: If you see two of your friends on Facebook announce that they are now in a relationship, what would that mean?

Participant 1: I guess that means that they are comfortable enough to share and they are open about it and not trying to hide it. But I also think they are trying to get attention for it. It's more of a, you're not really posting it for yourself but you're posting it for other people to get attention for it. And that's kind of my reason for not being that into posting stuff on Facebook because it's more of an attention getter than anything. How many likes or comments compared to someone else. It's all a competition to see who can be the top dog.

Interviewer: What does it mean if your relationship status is "it's complicated"?

Participant 1: Anything I guess. They could be fighting and it's complicated. Or one person could have said 'we're done' but the other person is like 'I'm not ready to be done yet', so it's complicated. Or they could have both walked away but they just don't want to tell anybody about it, so it's complicated.

Interviewer: Do you have many friends who put that as their relationship status?

Participant 1: A few, yeah. I know a couple years back I saw it a lot. The girls would put 'it's complicated' and the guys were out doing single guy stuff.

Interviewer: If you were in a situation like that would you put your relationship status as "it's complicated"?

Participant 1: No. It's a personal thing. I wouldn't have put it on there in the first place. Me and my girlfriend have talked about it to where the only time it changes if we talk about it and it's going to be "over, over". A couple weeks ago Facebook glitched and I had to re-add her as my girlfriend and I got like 15 'likes' about it, but we've been dating for a year and a half already. It's more of a personal 'I need attention' thing, is what Facebook is about these days.

Interviewer: What does it mean if your relationship status is invisible on Facebook?

Participant 1: I guess, I mean, they could just not care what anyone thinks of them being in a relationship, or they could be ashamed that they are in a relationship. Or hiding from one person that they are in a relationship. It could mean a lot of different things. To me, the only reason I would hide my relationship status is if I was trying to hide an actual relationship from somebody, like trying to get with someone else. Like 'I'm still dating this person, but I'm going to put them on the backburner while I look around for someone else, that way no one will know that I'm in that relationship if I'm looking'.

Interviewer: What kind of benefits does Facebook have for romantic relationships?

Participant 1: I can't really think of much. I guess you can communicate quicker than emails or something because of Facebook messenger, but you have your phone which is just as quick. You can share pictures and tag each other in pictures and stuff like that. I guess you can tell a wider range of people about your relationship and what's going on by sharing pictures with people. Overall, I don't think it's much of a benefit.

Interviewer: What kind of drawbacks does Facebook have for romantic relationships?

Participant 1: It can just cause problems. I know at the beginning of my relationship I would get on and play games on Facebook. She would see me on Facebook and freak out and be like 'what are you doing on Facebook?' She thought I was trying to flirt or something. But she just realized I liked to play games. Other drawbacks are just how one person can read a comment and one way and it could be meant to be another way and it can get things worked up weird. It's really fast. Technology and communication are really fast.

Interviewer: Overall do you think Facebook has a positive effect, a negative effect, or no effect on romantic relationships?

Participant 1: I would say in the full scheme of things it's more of a negative effect. Just because there are more ways for it to go bad than there are ways for it to go good. I mean, it can't really help a relationship that much, but it can really hurt a relationship, by what is posted and the way things are taken. You can like a picture because you think it's funny but someone may think you are liking a picture because you *like* the picture. It can get taken way out of context and blow up in your face. A lot of unneeded drama. I don't like to deal with it.

PARTICIPANT 2: FEMALE, SENIOR IN FASHION MERCHANDISING.

Interviewer: On average, how many hours per week do you spend on Facebook?

Participant 2: A week? Um. Oh, I don't know. Probably like 10. I spend a lot. I feel like I Facebook creep a lot.

Interviewer: How many times a day, on average, do you check Facebook?

Participant 2: Oh my gosh. I probably check on my phone at least 7 times a day. And then on my computer I check once.

Interviewer: What do you consider to be the stages or steps to beginning a romantic relationship?

Participant 2: Oh. Um, I think you have to be friends first and then kind of build off of that trust, honesty, and openness. And then continue from there.

Interviewer: How do people usually tell others that they are in a romantic relationship?

Participant 2: Everyone does it on Facebook I feel like. I usually text my friends 'hey, this is happening' and then I'll put it on, but I think it's stupid. Like, putting it on Facebook before it's "official" is stupid.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Participant 2: I think it's just. I don't need a Facebook status to tell me who I'm dating. I don't like people who say 'oh it's not official until you're on Facebook'.

Interviewer: What role do technologies play in the stages of a romantic relationship?

Participant 2: I think it's made it easier to get to know people. You can text them, call them, do all of that stuff, but at the same time it can also mess it up, if you know, if a person is doing something wrong and you know. It's easier for that person not to lie to that person I guess you could say.

Interviewer: What do you mean by that?

Participant 2: Like, if I am dating someone and I'm doing something bad on my phone, like I'm talking to someone I shouldn't be, it's easier for them to find that on my phone than if I were doing it face to face.

Interviewer: So you would say it is harder to keep secrets?

Participant 2: Yeah.

Interviewer: If you are romantically interested in someone, how would you learn more about that person?

Participant 2: I like hanging out with people. I like getting to know them face to face. I feel like you can read people's body language and get to know more about them than you can through a text message or creeping through their Facebook profile.

Interviewer: So you just call them up and ask them to hang out?

Participant 2: Yeah, I usually text them and be like 'let's hang out'.

Interviewer: If you are romantically interested in someone, what would you look for on their Facebook Profile?

Participant 2: I'd probably look at their posts to see what kind of things they post. Like if they post funny things then I'm like 'haha, this is funny we share the same sense of humor'. Or if they're like cussing a lot and talking about politics then I'm like 'yeah I don't care, you should probably stop that'. Yeah, probably things like that. I like to see if they're involved with their family. Cause my dad is really obnoxious and he posts on like everything.

Interviewer: What do you look for with their family, like if they are obnoxious? Or if they are close?

Participant 2: Like yeah, if their family is on if they talk to them. If their mom is on and she comments on something and they're like 'hey mom!' or 'love you mom' or something like that. I think that's nice and they aren't just completely ignoring them.

Interviewer: What does it mean to be "in a relationship" with someone on Facebook?

Participant 2: Oh gosh, I don't know. It means you are only seeing that person I guess. Only dating that person I guess. Probably what it means to me.

Interviewer: How do you and a partner get to a point where you are "in a relationship" on Facebook?

Participant 2: I honestly don't know. My boyfriend one day was like 'hey, do you want to put it on Facebook' and I was like 'yeah I guess so' so I really don't know, haha. It's kind of like we had been exclusively talking to one another for like two months I guess and we were just kinda like 'why not'.

Interviewer: So on a scale of importance do you think it's not that important to you personally or? Do you think it's important to other people?

Participant 2: Yes. I mean, it was important to my boyfriend, that's why I did it. But to me it doesn't matter. Definitely a lot of younger people I feel like, like I have a lot of younger cousins who are like: 'oh my gosh, we're Facebook official'. They are so excited about it. I think it's funny.

Interviewer: What does it mean if your relationship status is "it's complicated"?

Participant 2: Haha. I don't know. I don't know, man. I feel like that means you have no idea what you're doing with your life.

Interviewer: Do you know people who put that on Facebook?

Participant 2: I don't think I know anyone who has put that on Facebook actually. I don't think I've had anyone. If I did I'd be like 'what does this mean?'

Interviewer: What does it mean if your relationship status is invisible on Facebook?

Participant 2: I don't know, I mean, mine used to not be on mine for a really long time because I just don't think it matters. I'm only friends with people on Facebook that I actually know and I feel like they don't really care about that. I think it means that you just don't care. It's not there, whatever! Haha.

Interviewer: What kind of benefits does Facebook have for romantic relationships?

Participant 2: It's nice for like, my family lives in California, so it's nice for the to like see who I'm dating right now and for them to be like 'oh that's who she's spending her time with'. I think it's good for that. But I think that's really out. It hasn't really helped me or my boyfriend personally as a couple.

Interviewer: What kind of drawbacks does Facebook have for romantic relationships?

Participant 2: I think that people make too big of a deal out of the whole "Facebook relationship thing". I remember when my boyfriend asked me and I was like 'why?' It kind of caused a little argument. I think it's just obnoxious and I think I just need to shut mine down. But I don't know. I can't think of any specific drawbacks.

Interviewer: Overall do you think Facebook has a positive effect, a negative effect, or no effect on romantic relationships?

Participant 2: I think it depends on your personality and who you are. I know I personally, I use Facebook to network with my family mainly. And that's nice, and that's a positive for me. But I know other people who have had problems with Facebook and Facebook chat and friending and liking and all of that sort of crap. I think in that way it is definitely a negative, for people who have that personality and take things the wrong way.

Interviewer: You mean they dramatize it?

Participant 2: Yes, exactly. They get all dramatic.

PARTICIPANT 3: FEMALE SOPHOMORE MAJORING IN NURSING

Interviewer: On average, how many hours a week would you say that you spend on Facebook?

Participant 3: Oh boy. Probably like 20. A lot.

Interviewer: On average, how many times would you say that you check Facebook in a day?

Participant 3: Probably 10-20. Somewhere in there. Depends on the day.

Interviewer: Do you have the Facebook application on your phone?

Participant 3: Yes. When I'm walking across campus it's usually open, or I'm texting. It's open a lot.

Interviewer: What do you consider the stages or steps to beginning a romantic relationship?

Participant 3: Well there's like the interest, and then talking to them, and maybe going on a date or two and then the discussion on whether or not you want to be in a relationship. At least that's how it worked for us, so.

Interviewer: How do people usually tell others that they are in a romantic relationship?

Participant 3: Normally it's through Facebook. It becomes "Facebook Official", but mine still hasn't become Facebook official. We just kind of told people. It's not going to be Facebook official ever. [Her parents do not know she likes girls]

Interviewer: So how do you tell your friends? Do you just tell them when you see them or text them or something?

Participant 3: I texted a couple about it. Otherwise it's just people seeing me with her or I tell people in Gorillas (in your midst).

Interviewer: What role do technologies play in the stages of a romantic relationship?

Participant 3: I think it really helps in the talking stage and getting to know them. Me and my partner are really busy so the talking stage is mostly done over text because we couldn't be with each other. And even now that we are in a relationship most of it is going to be over text because we are out of town or whatever. So it really helps to be constantly in touch with your significant other.

Interviewer: If you are romantically interested in someone, how would you learn more about that person initially?

Participant 3: Normally I actually Facebook stalk them. So haha. That happens. I talk to their friends or my friends and try to find information.

Interviewer: If you are romantically interested in someone, what would you look for on their Facebook Profile?

Participant 3: Common interests, see what they are interested in so I can bring it up in conversation or something. Actually the first thing I look at is who their interested in. You know how you put either male or female? Because it's terrible to fall for someone that is straight. I look at that first before anything.

Interviewer: Do you find that most people put that on Facebook?

Participant 3: Um. Not really actually. Which is surprising. A lot of straight people have them, but some people in the gay community don't because their parents don't know. So that's a little more difficult.

Interviewer: What does it mean to be "in a relationship" with someone on Facebook?

Participant 3: That means that they have a significant other that you need to respect and not pursue them.

Interviewer: How do you and a partner get to a point where you are "in a relationship" on Facebook?

Participant 3: Well since I haven't gotten to that point, I'm not quite sure. I think it would have to come to letting parents know before that happens. Her Facebook says she is "in a relationship" and her parents know, but my parents don't. I'd have that conversation with my parents which I am not willing to do.

Interviewer: What does it mean if your relationship status is "it's complicated"?

Participant 3: It depends on the situation and if I know them as to what does it mean. Sometimes it just means that they are fighting. Other times it may mean they are taking a break. Or some huge fight is going on. Sometimes I don't know the specifics so I don't know what it means per say. Like, I don't actually know what it means.

Interviewer: Yeah, do you have many friends who put that on their Facebook?

Participant 3: I had that happen before and one of them I knew what was going on because I was involved, but that was more like they were constantly fighting and took what's called a

"break" and then that much I knew. But other than that I usually don't know what's going on so I don't know what it means.

Interviewer: If you were to the point where you talked to your parents or you were comfortable putting your relationship status on Facebook would you every put, if it was a certain situation where it was complicated, would you ever put "it's complicated" on Facebook?

Participant 3: No. I think that's our business. Like, if we are having a problem I think it's in-between us not the Facebook world. You're either in a relationship or you're not. I feel like that's a pretty good distinction.

Interviewer: What does it mean if your relationship status is invisible on Facebook?

Participant 3: Normally when I encounter that it's because that person is not straight and their parents don't know or something like that. There's nothing to put out there because their parents don't know about anything. Mine is blank because of that reason. I would probably put it at that. Otherwise it's usually because people just don't want to put that information out there. It's for them not for other people.

Interviewer: What kind of benefits does Facebook have for romantic relationships?

Participant 3: I think it's good for when you first meet someone and you are interested in them and you like go check their Facebook and see that they are in a relationship and you know to back off. I think it really helps with that when you first meet people. It really helps when you first meet people because it's a lot of work to like sit there and text or call everyone and ask if they are in a relationship. Some people get butt hurt about not knowing about that kind of stuff and it's been a while. And they find out from like a third party source. Facebook is a good way

for everyone to find out at the same time. Cause there are people that will get butt hurt about finding out after a certain person. It's really dumb, but whatever.

Interviewer: Do you know people who have felt that way after it was put on Facebook and that person didn't tell them about it before they put it on Facebook?

Participant 3: Not that I know actually. I haven't heard anything like that. I haven't ever felt like that.

Interviewer: What kind of drawbacks does Facebook have for romantic relationships?

Participant 3: I think it makes it hard to keep the relationship private. Kind of like airing your dirty laundry. If you have a break up and you take it down and everyone asks you about it and you don't actually want to talk about. It could cause a lot of problems there and friction.

Interviewer: Do you have an example of that that you would like to share?

Participant 3: Um. I had a friend who put "it's complicated" and everyone knew I was friends with her so they asked me about it. I can't say anything because it's their privacy and it put me in an awkward position. I know what's going on but I can't tell you. It kind of makes it awkward.

Interviewer: Overall do you think Facebook has a positive effect, a negative effect, or no effect on romantic relationships?

Participant 3: I think it has a positive effect just because people have that information and to get to know someone they can know that a person has a partner, or that they are open, or what type of partner. And it helps get to know their interests.

PARTICIPANT 4: MALE, MAJORING IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Interviewer: On average, how many hours per week do you spend on Facebook?

Participant 4: Altogether probably around three or four. I'm on Twitter more. But I would say probably three or four hours altogether. I try and keep up with all my friends and stuff.

Interviewer: On an average day, how many times do you check Facebook?

Participant 4: Probably about three. One in the morning, one when I get time for lunch and one at night before I go to bed to check the whole day and see what's been posted. I've also unfollowed people. Like, I'm still friends with them, but I've unfollowed people so I don't see their stuff that I don't really care about, but my friends I see their stuff. But there are some people that are annoying and I don't want to see their stuff, but it would be weird if I unfriended them, so.

Interviewer: What do you consider the stages or steps to beginning a romantic relationship?

Participant 4: Friends first definitely. But I think that's the worst thing for me. I have to establish a friendship and I can't ever, we always just stay friends. Sometimes we become too good of friends and then either I get friend zoned or like it just doesn't work out. Or they date someone else and it never occurs to them that I like them. It's probably happened like four or five times.

Interviewer: But you still think it's important to be friends first?

Participant 4: Yes I do. I've never been that type of person to go up to somebody and ask for their number and ask them out. I need to be friends first so I know what they're like.

Interviewer: How do people usually tell others that they are in a romantic relationship?

Participant 4: I feel like people say at first that they are talking to someone and then if they keep on talking to somebody then usually it develops into a relationship or it doesn't.

Interviewer: I mean, if two people decide that they are in a relationship, how do they usually tell their friends or family?

Participant 4: Oh, okay. Usually they tell their friends or they put it on Facebook. I feel like everyone uses that term "Facebook Official". I have friends back home that are in relationships but it's not Facebook official. It's not a big deal to them. And then I have other friends who are like 'is it Facebook official yet?' And I'm like, it doesn't matter to me. If you're in a relationship, you're in a relationship, if it's on Facebook, cool, if it's not, cool. It's harder to know if they're in a relationship if it's not on Facebook. I had a friend who was in a relationship with someone for four years and then they took it off Facebook and then just never, it never like popped up or anything and so I didn't know for like eight months. He's a really good friend but he's a friend that I just don't keep up with as much because he's from back home.

Interviewer: What do you think about the term "Facebook Official"?

Participant 4: I don't really like it. I feel like it stereotypes our generation and I don't like that. I was dating my ex-girlfriend for about three or four months before it became "Facebook Official" just because I forgot. And then once everybody saw it they were like 'yay! That's exciting' and I'm like, well it's been happening for like three months so I guess I just forgot to put it on Facebook. I feel like that's just our generation, how they can tell.

Interviewer: What role do technologies play in the stages of a romantic relationship?

Participant 4: I think it takes away the cute ideas or anything like that. I think you can be so in tune with your significant other that like it doesn't allow you to be spontaneous and things like that. I would love to do like cutsie things for a girl but technology it feels like it ruins that. I don't know.

Interviewer: Can you give an example?

Participant 4: I do like technology because it does give me ideas for asking a girl out and things like that, but sometimes it turns me off just because it like, if a girl tweets something like: 'chivalry is dead' or something like that. It pisses me off because I always hold doors open for people. If someone is behind me I always hold the door for them. When I do go out on dates and stuff I would hold the door open for the girl, like opening the car door, opening the restaurant door, getting her chair for her. Like, I used to do that but now I think a lot of girls don't like that, or take it for granted or think that's awkward or something. I don't know.

Interviewer: How do you think technology plays into effect on that?

Participant 4: I always think girls see certain things and they don't like it or it is old fashioned. I don't know. That's hard. Hmm. Okay ask that question again.

Interviewer: The first question?

Participant 4: The question that you just asked.

Interviewer: I asked how you thought technology plays into that; what you were talking about with chivalry and everything.

Participant 4: I don't know that chivalry plays a part in it but I think girls like, they like those cutsie texts and stuff where I would rather do romantic things like give them flowers or personal cards, instead of texting. I don't think that's very romantic. Yeah there are some cutsie things that happen all the time but like I'd rather see my girlfriend and kiss her goodbye or tell her goodnight than just text her. But also if I can't see her, that's nice, because it allows you to be like 'hey goodnight' or 'I love you'.

Interviewer: If you are romantically interested in someone, how would you learn more about that person?

Participant 4: I try and hang out with them more or I keep up with their social media. I know when I started liking a girl about at the beginning of this school year in August I started keeping up with her Twitter and I'd message her about what she tweeted or something or I'd give her crap about it or I'd tweet back at her. Now I'm really not interested in her because of her making stupid decisions. So I don't keep up with her as much anymore. I don't even like seeing her stuff on Twitter or Facebook.

Interviewer: If you are romantically interested in someone, what would you look for on their Facebook Profile?

Participant 4: I would look for a lot of pictures of friends or something because I like a person who is outgoing because I'm outgoing and I have a lot of friends. Somebody who has accomplished a lot so if they post 'hey I got into this club' or 'hey I made this position'; something that they are proud of. I use my Facebook, I don't update my status with philosophical stuff, I usually use my Facebook to say 'I just got into this' or 'I've been doing this'; just things so people can keep up with me. I usually update it over Christmas break or I'd say once every couple weeks I'd say something that I'm excited about or happy about.

Interviewer: So you mostly look at what they post and pictures?

Participant 4: I really don't look at the 'likes' or whatever because everybody's different and if they like a book that doesn't affect the way I like them. You know what I mean? If they like The Hobbit then good for them, I'm not particularly interested in that, but that's good for them. They like to read so that's cool.

Interviewer: What does it mean to be "in a relationship" with someone on Facebook?

Participant 4: Um. I feel like if you're in a relationship on Facebook then you're in a relationship, you're Facebook official, you've marked that on the single or married status thingy. Also you're probably in a lot of pictures together or tagged in a lot of pictures together. Or when you're doing something with them you tag them in your status. Or say I love you or something. I feel like sometimes that gets annoying. Like, I don't really care. With my acquaintances from high school they put 'I'm in love with this person' and are always with them and they always tag each other like every other day and it gets kind of annoying. It's different for everybody but I don't really take people seriously until they're like in college rather than high school.

Interviewer: How do you and a partner get to a point where you are "in a relationship" on Facebook?

Participant 4: I think, with my ex-girlfriend I think it just kind of came up. Does it need to be Facebook official? We were both living out of our hometowns and so I think it was a way for everybody else to keep up with us if we were putting it on Facebook. But if we were living in the same town, I probably would put it on Facebook just so it would be on there, but it would just be to put on Facebook so that people would know. I don't know.

Interviewer: What does it mean if your relationship status is "it's complicated"?

Participant 4: I think it means you're talking to somebody or you may be in a relationship but you don't want to put yourself out there as 'not taken' anymore. My junior year of high school I was talking to this girl and she wanted me to put 'it's complicated' with her on Facebook because it was complicated. I went to Germany for the first part of that summer and when I came back she was going to Michigan so we couldn't really have a relationship where we'd be with

each other and this was before FaceTime or Skype. But when we came back and started the

school year together, we decided not to date because she didn't want to. She ended up dating

somebody else after we both said that we really weren't ready for a relationship even though I

guess she was.

Interviewer: So she wanted you to put 'it's complicated' on Facebook and did you put that on

Facebook?

Participant 4: Yeah, yeah. I did. She did the same thing, but nobody knew about us. Only a

couple people knew about us, like our parents knew that we were trying to figure things out if we

were going to date or not. I had a couple people ask 'what's that about?' and I told them, but it

wasn't like people thought 'he's dating that girl'. It was like we might date, we might not. We

were just talking kind of.

Interviewer: I know when that kind of thing shows up on Facebook sometimes people comment

on it or like it. Did that happen to you guys?

Participant 4: Um. I think a couple people liked it but that was it because nobody really knows

what that means so they didn't know if they should like it or not like it. So. I think we got a

couple likes, no questions or anything. We already told our good friends and family.

Interviewer: What does it mean if your relationship status is invisible on Facebook?

Participant 4: I take that as like, you don't want to be labeled I guess. I don't know. Maybe they

just don't want it on there. I know some older people who get Facebook just don't have it on

there. I don't know. Mine is single right now and that's just because I don't care about it. I don't

check other people's. If it's on there, cool. If it's not, it's not.

Interviewer: What kind of benefits does Facebook have for romantic relationships?

Participant 4: I think it's really cool that when couples get engaged they can post on there, or married or have kids or something. I think Facebook really is something that is for the good of most people. I just think there should be, you should have to wait until a certain age to get Facebook. Like in high school your emotions are like a roller coaster where in college you should be more of a levelheaded person and you don't mind professors or future employers to see. I think Facebook is more of just an update on your life and it shouldn't be, don't tell me about something dumb. If you're going to make a joke, that's fine. I use it, and I think a lot of people use it to say 'this is how I've been feeling' or 'this is what I've been doing with my life' and I like it. I put stuff on there so people can keep up with me.

Interviewer: What kind of drawbacks does Facebook have for romantic relationships?

Participant 4: I feel like it can cause drama. Say you're a girl and you go hang out with a bunch of guys and you tag a bunch of those guys on Facebook and you're in a relationship with a guy, he might get mad because you did that and it was important enough to you that you made it your status. Yeah I think that's it. I personally have a lot of friends that are girls and I have always been a little bit more mature than guys my age, and so my ex-girlfriend broke up with me because she didn't like that I had so many other friends that were girls, which is kind of unfortunate. She didn't like how many friends I had in general. I'm pretty outgoing pretty nice person. I like to have a lot of friends. She only liked to have two or three friends. I think she just wasn't as outgoing as what I thought. I know she'd get mad if I posted about hanging out with a girl even though it was one of my childhood best friends that I wasn't interested in and never will be. She'd get mad.

Interviewer: So you think it causes a lot of drama that is unnecessary?

Participant 4: Yeah. It's not necessary. If you want to ask me to tell you about it, I will. I have a group of friends and we are all really close. I've been friends with three of them since I was like two. They are all girls. I'm like their big brother to them and they're like my sisters. I watch over and protect them and keep up with them really well so.

Interviewer: Overall do you think Facebook has a positive effect, a negative effect, or no effect on romantic relationships?

Participant 4: I think it's kind of up and down. I think it can cause unneeded drama that's ridiculous. But I think it's also really good to see people getting married or engagements. People want that support. People need that support from people on Facebook. I think you can keep friendships longer if you're friends with them on Facebook. If you're friends with somebody and they get engaged, they can keep up with you and you can keep up with them in their lives. I think it's kind of just the way you look at it. I think it's a 50/50. I think it's caused a little less bad than good in relationships. The bad is just because of drama. I feel like drama can really wreak havoc on your life.

PARTICIPANT 5: FEMALE, MAJORING IN PSYCHOLOGY

Interviewer: On average, how many hours a week would you say that you spend on Facebook?

Participant 5: Probably four to five hours a week.

Interviewer: On average, how many times per day do you check Facebook?

Participant 5: Two to three. I'm more of a Twitter person now. Facebook is pretty great though.

Interviewer: What do you consider the stages or steps to beginning a romantic relationship?

Participant 5: Probably some type of communication whether it be viral or texting, that sort of thing. Then when it gets to the next level is you have to have some sort of face to face contact whether it be Skype or FaceTime something like that. And then...hmm…I'd say open communication is the number one thing. Just asking when a romantic relationship is to that level.

Interviewer: How do people usually tell others that they are in a romantic relationship?

Participant 5: I'd say friends and family on the internet when it's super official. Other than that, if you're immediately around them you'd be able to tell. Like your inner social circle, I think, telling them by body language, around that person and chemistry. And then you're not so immediate family and friends, obviously my friends back home they know because of really cute things I put on the internet.

Interviewer: What role do technologies play in the stages of a romantic relationship?

Participant 5: A huge role. I think it's great because it breaks down boundaries in the sense of; in the past when you didn't have technology to guess what other people's emotions are necessarily face to face like for sub-tweeting or Facebook updates and things like that. Um, you can definitely tell it has helped break down barriers to bring the relationship further and further if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Okay, could you give an example?

Participant 5: For example if both you and your romantic partner follow each other on both Twitter and Facebook and you retweet a funny thing about butts, I did something about butts the other day. And obviously they know that they're talking about their butt. And it's a friendly reminder of when you're thinking about them throughout your day. Or if you're angry you could

do some sub-tweet and say 'I don't like it when people don't talk to me throughout the day' but obviously you know it's toward your partner in that sense.

Interviewer: Okay. How does that effect relationships?

Participant 5: It effects them in the sense of, um, let me think about this…of communication and how they act towards each other in the sense of; I think it can guide their communication of each other, um, trying to think of a really good word for this…whether it be positive or negative. Like if someone is talking about really wanting chocolate Hershey bar or something like that, and their partner sees that they want that, it's a great way to, you know what I mean? It's like subtlety.

Interviewer: Without directly telling them?

Participant 5: Right, right. It's kind of an indirect way that people can use, in that sense. Yeah.

Interviewer: If you are romantically interested in someone, how would you learn more about that person?

Participant 5: Deep creep their internet life for sure. Yes, absolutely one hundred percent Instagram deep creep. And then casually talk to them about what you've seen. And try to make sure they, like for example, if they have something on their Instagram like a shared music taste, and it's really important to you that it's the same thing you could ask them over the internet, or in real life 'Hey, what kind of music do you listen to?' and it can kind of subconsciously reassure you that they are the same person on the internet as well as getting to know them better. They don't put that stuff up there for no one else to see but themselves. If that makes sense. They put that stuff up there so people can know about them.

Interviewer: If you are romantically interested in someone and you're looking at their social media, just like you said, and say you're looking at their Facebook profile, what would you look for?

Participant 5: I look at their pictures first. It's really important to me that they have pictures up there that are kind of off key, not all just selfies. Making sure they have a good friendship base. It's really important to me that they have really good music tastes and that they don't have anything that are like red flags, like things that I'm completely against, you know what I mean. Also, that they have a big bio, not a big bio, but that they aren't just like 'ask questions' but they care about their bio and their personality and how they're viewed on the internet for sure.

Interviewer: You said make sure there aren't any red flags. What would be a red flag for you?

Participant 5: For me personally, a red flag would be if like they are homophobic or if they are against something, like I just recently go into feminism so if they're not for equality, they aren't for me. It could be anything like that, or it could be red flags of the relationships they have with others. If they have someone like an ex or a family member all over their page and it may seem weird or awkward, I'm going to definitely keep that in mind when talking to them on the internet or not on the internet.

Interviewer: What does it mean to be "in a relationship" with someone on Facebook?

Participant 5: Um. To me, it hmm. For me personally I enjoy seeing, well it's really difficult. It has many different meanings. It's the meaning of showing the world, obviously, that you're taken. So don't talk to that person in a romantic type of way and pursuing them. But at the same time it is great because that you get to say that someone claims you as theirs, in that sense. So, it's important more, not necessarily for the people in the relationship, but for the rest of the world

to see and kind of know where they should stand when they talk to the specific people, whether it be like romantic or friendship and so and so forth.

Interviewer: How do you and a partner get to a point where you are "in a relationship" on Facebook?

Participant 5: Kind of like the discussion of it going on Facebook or?

Interviewer: Yeah. Is there a discussion? Is there not a discussion? Is it assumed? What is the process?

Participant 5: Personally, I've always asked before I sent requests. We've always discussed it either on the phone or face to face. With the current thing I'm in now, he doesn't have a Facebook so just being in the relationship itself. By no means does it bother me that his name is not tagged on my Facebook, but I was definitely like 'Hey, can I put myself as in a relationship on Facebook. Is that okay with you?' And he was okay with it. I've never just sent a request for someone I was just casually talking to. I've always talked with them in person before I make any valid big changes like that.

Interviewer: When you've done something like that, has the other person always been like 'Yeah, sure' or have they ever been like 'I don't want to put that on Facebook'? Has there ever been a situation like that?

Participant 5: I had a gentleman I was dating, I don't know how many years ago, like one or two, and we had talked about it, like 'Is it okay if I do that?' and he said 'Yeah, that's fine' but he didn't accept the request, for a long time. Right? I didn't bug him about it all the time, but I was like 'Hey, it shows that I'm in a relationship request and I see you on Facebook, why don't you just accept it?' And it was obviously a great pathway into more discussions into what his

family really thinks about me and how he doesn't necessarily want that to be on Facebook, he was just doing it to please my train of thought at the time, if that makes sense.

Interviewer: What does it mean if your relationship status is "it's complicated"?

Participant 5: I think it could mean anything from…I think if it's tagged with another person's name, that relationship is open and that person is weighing their options about that person. If it's complicated without a tagged person, I think it could be anything from you know like, I have a single specific person I'm talking to, or I have multiple people I'm talking to or I don't even know where I want to be, necessarily. Like, I don't know if I want to be single or I don't know if what we have me and a person or me and all these people are doing.

Interviewer: Have you ever put "it's complicated" on Facebook?

Participant 5: I've never put "it's complicated" no. I think if I got to a point where "it's complicated" I would not, I kind of see myself as I'm going to be single or I'm going to be in a relationship or fingers crossed married someday and things like that. But I personally don't want people to think it's complicated in the weird sense that I don't want people to think I don't know what I'm doing, but if we have to have the discussion about if it's not a real relationship or not, then it's not a real relationship and it shouldn't be labeled as complicated. Yeah.

Interviewer: What does it mean if your relationship status is invisible on Facebook?

Participant 5: Um. I think it could mean an array of things. I think specifically if we are thinking of, um, I don't know. I've seen people do it because employers look at their social media pages and they just don't think employers should have to know what their personal lives are. Um, but I've had mine not being able to be viewed. I've done it to get back at that one person because when he finally did accept it, and he was being a butt to me, I hid it so that he

would wonder what I was doing with my life. I don't think it necessarily is negative or positive. You just have to know the person for who they are, if that makes sense. Or if it's someone who you are looking to look at, it could be a sign for you, if they have all these other things about them, um, and they don't have it shown. It's a very situational type of thing.

Interviewer: What kind of benefits does Facebook have for romantic relationships?

Participant 5: I think it's beneficial in itself. I think, I basically use Facebook now as a photo gallery so that I can look back on memories. I think it's very beneficial in keeping a timeline track for the relationship from like the first date to like wedding pictures and engagement pictures. It's a great way to keep people involved as well as kind of, with all relationships there is going to be a downside, so it's a great way of seeing most of the positives, and maybe some of the negatives when in a romantic relationship. I think it's basically just a photo place, like a personal timeline and an easy way to look back on the great times in life.

Interviewer: What kind of drawbacks does Facebook have for romantic relationships?

Participant 5: Um. Your privacy is out there. I guess obviously you choose what you're going to put on Facebook, but the drawbacks are the public's view of it obviously. They could interpret it several different ways. And also people, depending obviously if your Facebook is private or not, other people from outside sources that could be kind of, I don't want to say like stalker-ish, but there could be outside people looking at it that you didn't necessarily want them to. And that could either interfere with the relationship or just I don't know. Just unknown words and things and doings that shouldn't be there are drawbacks. Like negativity in general from outside people so yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, so it kind of gives others a look into your relationship?

Participant 5: Right. I think it's important to keep in mind, whatever you do put on social media, you're going to have to hear some positive or negative feedback of it. So just be prepared.

Interviewer: Overall do you think Facebook has a positive effect, a negative effect, or no effect on romantic relationships?

Participant 5: I think it has a positive effect. I do however think it has more of a positive effect towards older relationships. I'm saying like junior or senior in high school or above and not younger. That is however because I'm psychology and those little kids haven't had their frontal lobe fully processed yet. But I think it's a positive. I think it's viewed by society as well as myself as a positive thing to show your friendships and family and affection towards others because it shows how much you are loved and how much other people are loved.