
Edley and Houston (2011) discuss "ubiquitous computing" (UC) as the major contributor to work-life interruptions and blurring work-life boundaries because they are "discreet computers that are so naturally interspersed into our everyday lives that they are deemed invisible and normal" (electronic devices) that allow us continuous connections to friends, family and work (p. 194). Some examples are wireless laptops, smartphones, flash drives and iPads (p. 194). The authors also discuss gender roles and technology, telework, mobile phones, social networking (SNS) and its dark side, and “The Three Illusions of ICTs and Work-Life Balance” (pp. 194-209). The illusions are empowerment and choice. Choice shows up in three ways: choice to purchase, class-based nature of ICTs and race (pp. 208-209). The choice to purchase discusses pressure to fit-in; that we must purchase devices in order to be “successful, productive, or to make our lives easier.” The ‘darker’ side of the choice to purchase is that it has a class-based nature. Depending on your class and income, you might not have a choice to purchase equipment because your income will not allow it. Finally, race, is invisible in most of the new media and work-life balance studies (Edley and Houston, 2011, p. 209). The authors discuss a study by Young “that found African Americans and Latinos are no longer lagging behind in their use of mobile technology. Now, both groups are innovators and early adopters” (p. 209).

While intriguing, this chapter does not discuss online dating/long-distance relationships and the role of CMC and self-presentations. Still, UC is a contributing factor to online dating’s popularity. When communicating with others, it is important to remember the work-life
boundaries and discuss this with the other person. When is communication acceptable at work? Discussions such as these can help avoid miscommunication and feelings such as hurt, being ignored, mad, or not caring which could contribute to a break-up.

This source does not change or contribute to my topic of online dating and CMC, but it may provide an explanation as to its popularity. It did not help me narrow my topic or find an area of particular interest.


Toma and Hancock (2011) discuss, in detail, self-presentation in online dating profiles. The authors investigate the kind of information people reply on to form first impressions. They discuss and apply a theory by Leary and Kowalski (1990) which posits a “two-component model of self-presentation: 1) motivational processes, or the degree to which self-presenters are motivated to control how others see them; and 2) construction processes, or the actual implementation of a desired impression” (p. 42). Within the theoretical framework, they discuss the influence and limitations of CMC and they review several studies. What they found is self-presentation differs from face-to-face (FtF) communication in a couple of crucial ways. It requires the disclosure of personal information up-front; information that people may not normally disclose in FtF communication until they get to know the other person better and feel comfortable disclosing it. The type of information is of a personal nature, i.e., income, weight, and religious and political beliefs (or lack thereof). However, CMC also gives the presenter many tools to control the disclosures. Results show that presenters are strategic and take advantage of the affordances that CMC allows such as the asynchronous nature of CMC and
deceptions through tactics such as touching up photographs to appear more attractive (p. 53). Overall, CMC and online dating has not changed dating behaviors, but are predictable via “relation goals” and “preferences” that are “hardwired” though “millennia of evolution” (p. 54).

Toma and Hancock’s chapter is instrumental to my research topic. It delves into detail pertaining to online dating, CMC and self-presentation. The studies they discuss will be beneficial to understanding the many aspects of this “new twist on love’s labor.” On the other hand, it did not explore a question of mine, is online dating really dating? Is it more matchmaking that ends in FtF communication?

This chapter changed my thinking about online dating. The strategic processes people use to construct their profiles are much more meaningful and deliberate than was my impression. Based on my own experiences, I found their theoretical framework applicable and valid.


Sparks (n.d.) explains Katz’s uses and gratifications theory clearly and with illuminating examples. Overall, the theory posits that people choose media channels depending on the time, their mood and/or their motivation. In other words, their own purpose. Because of this, their communication experiences will differ. For example, a husband and wife decide to watch a sports game together. The husband wants to watch it because it is a match that will decide which teams will play at a national conference. The wife decides to watch it because there is nothing better to do or watch on T.V. Their experiences will be completely different. For the husband, he will be completely happy sharing in the experience of victory or miserable sharing in the experience of defeat with his chosen sports team. For the wife, the experience provided ‘together time’ with her husband and a way to retreat from reality for a few hours.
The uses and grats theory is not especially fruitful to my research topic. However, it does provide an explanation for why certain people choose to date online. The theory offers eight typologies, or “major reasons why people voluntarily expose themselves to different media”: passing time, companionship, escape, enjoyment, social interaction, relaxation, information and excitement (pp. 361-362). I think combining this theory with Toma and Hancock’s research would provide illuminating results.

This theory changed my thinking about online dating in that it provided additional motivational factors for constructing self-presentation and additional explanations as to why people choose to date online. Perhaps my research topic should look at these additional motivational factors and CMC using Tom and Hancock’s research and theoretical framework. However, as to the true aim of my research, to discover if online dating is truly dating, it does not yield satisfactory results.


Petronio and Durham (2008) concisely explain the Communication Privacy Management Theory (CPM) using an example of a person that tests positive for HIV and how they make decisions about to whom they disclose this information. The authors also describe research that proves the validity of the theory as well as limitations and future research. CPM provides an “evidenced-based understanding of the way people regulate revealing and concealing” personal or private information (p. 310). CPM “views ‘disclosure’ as the process of revealing private information, yet always in relationship to concealing private information” (p. 310). There are six
major principles of this theory. The first three constitute the “assumption maxims” and are 1) public-private dialectical tension; 2) conceptualization of private information; and 3) privacy rules (p. 311). When people disclose information, they experience a “push and pull”, or tension, about revealing or concealing information based on the receiver’s perception of how the receiver will feel about the information. CPM posits that private information is conceptualized as a possession; it is “rightfully yours [and] belongs to you” (p. 311). Privacy rules “illustrates the way people make choices about dissemination to others” and includes at least five criteria – cultural, gendered, motivation, contextual and risk-benefit ratio (p. 312). People learn these rules through socialization and can vary in different social groups or through institutions such as employment (p. 312). The remaining three principles constitute the “interaction maxims” and demonstrate how CPM is a communication theory and are 4) shared boundaries; 5) boundary coordination; and 6) boundary turbulence (p. 313). Petronio explains that shared boundaries occur when one person shares private information with another, making the other a “co-owner or shareholder [and] together, [both] create one mutual boundary around the information” (p. 314). How people co-own and co-manage private information is boundary coordination. These boundaries must be coordinated through three processes: regulation of boundary linkages, boundary ownership rights, and boundary permeability. The last concept, “boundary turbulence”, describes smooth management of private information when it is co-owned. All the parties must coordinate their actions, which is difficult due to unintended disclosures and misunderstandings (p. 316).

While this article does not indicate research about online dating, it offers a theoretical framework that can explain why certain information is revealed through self-presentation of the online profile, or self. Combining this theory with uses and grats and research on self-
presentation would reveal more insights into communication online. CPM would help understand turbulence and the darker side to online communication including online dating and social media.

The article opened my thinking about my research topic to the complexities involved in deciding what information to reveal in the online profile. It provides a theoretical framework to understand all the dimensions involved in sharing private information due to the large audience in the virtual world, which is available via CMC.


This article details a study that examined the impact that changes in Internet-based technologies have on romantic relationships developed exclusively online. The researchers divided participants into three categories based on self-reported media preference: asynchronous text, synchronous text, and rich media. Their findings indicated no significant differences existed on measures of relational confidence or intimacy based solely on media selection. Participants utilizing the Internet to maintain a secondary romantic relationship reported higher levels of relational certainty and greater expectations of future interaction with their online partner than participants involved exclusively in online relationships (i.e., the online relationship was the participant’s only romantic relationship) (p. 411).

The researchers analyze uncertainty-reduction theory (URT), media richness theory (MRT) and social identity/deindividuation (SIDE) model. The first theory, URT, posits “the major goal in relationship development is to increase the level of partner certainty.” The sender and receiver engage in “passive, active, or interactive strategies to reduce uncertainty” (p. 412).
The resulting uncertainty reduction and reciprocal self-disclosure might be even more prevalent in CMC than in FtF interactions (pp. 412-413). What may cause this is or force the disclosure of privacy is the lack of nonverbal cues and environmental factors that are present in FtF communication – distractions. In MRT, the relationship between the message and channel are examined (p. 414). Previous research found “certain media could be identified as richer and were utilized for different purposes in maintaining relationships” (p. 414). Other research had mixed results finding “vast differences in the rated ‘richness’ of five different types of media used commonly in the workplace: FtF, email, memo, telephone, and voicemail. Of these, email scored as one of the poorest media in terms of richness (second only to memos)” (p. 414). Most results rated FtF communication as “almost twice as rich as email, and telephone rated as significantly richer than email” (p. 414). The researchers found that “while these results may lead to the assumption that richer media yield more positive relational outcomes, much of the research on CMC conflicts with this notion” (p. 414). In analyzing the SIDE mode, the authors state it “argues that people’s behaviors are less individualized and more conformant to prevailing group norms or behaviors in cyberspace” (p. 414). Research supports the argument that “‘cyberlove, electronic communities, and other examples of virtual togetherness’ support the notion that the deindividuating effects of CMC help to make cyberspace a boundary-free social medium” (p. 415). Therefore, users construct messages with the prevailing groups values in mind; i.e. the audience. Thus, carefully choosing words, pictures, private information to disclose and level of truthfulness.

The article broadened my thinking about CMC and online dating through the combination of URT, MRT and SIDE. These theories lay a holistic framework to describe the complexities of CMC and contributions to successful or unsuccessful online relationships. The
discussion of developing secondary online relationships was new to me as was the finding of strictly online relationships. In this research study, online dating included a matchmaking perspective where one purpose of developing online relationships was to meet FtF for long-term, personal relationships. It still did not expressly target the question is online dating truly dating, but, it implies that online dating is used as a method to begin FtF communication. Perhaps it is used as a way to save time and money? This implies a cost-benefit analysis.


The article reports on a study that investigated self-presentation strategies among online dating participants and how participants managed their online presentation of self. Qualitative data analysis suggested that participants attended to small cues online, mediated the tension between impression management pressures and the desire to present an authentic sense of self through tactics such as creating a profile that reflected their “ideal self,” and attempted to establish the veracity of their identity claims. This study provides empirical support for Social Information Processing theory (SIP) in a naturalistic context while offering insight into the complicated way in which “honesty” is enacted online (p. 415).

The article begins with a brief history of romantic relationships and mediated-communication methods. Using technology to find romantic partners dates back to the mid-19th century beginning with personal advertisements in newspapers (p. 416). Online dating gained momentum in recent years, due in part to the ubiquitous access to the Internet and information and communication technologies (ICTs) (pp. 416-417). The article focuses on self-presentation and self-disclosure in online and offline contexts; how interactants resolve tension of self-
presentation and impression-management. The authors write, “Research suggests that pressures to highlight one’s positive attributes are experienced in tandem with the need to present one’s true (or authentic) self to others, especially in significant relationships” (p. 417). Interestingly, the expectation and increased anticipation of FtF meetings drives honest responses for those writing online dating profiles (p. 418). The asynchronous nature of CMC allows interactants more control of self-presentation and may enable freedom of expression because of editability and the ability to post information after review and thought. The authors write “Higgins (1987) argues there are three domains of the self: the actual self (attributes an individual possesses), the ideal self (attributes an individual would ideally possess), and the ought self (attributes an individual ought to possess)” (p. 418). The authors also discuss misrepresentation and assessing and demonstrating credibility before moving on to details of their method, data, results and discussion of their study. Overall, if intention of both parties is to find an offline, romantic relationship, the more likely it is their self-presentation is accurate and disclosures are honesty. Also, the interactants will assess and demonstrate their own and other’s credibility via small contextual cues like proper spelling and grammar, time of day when communicating, length and construction/verbiage of message (if the individual values those aspects, then they will assess their own communication for those specific details). Additionally, some will conduct informal background checks such as using a search engine to research the other person’s name.

The author’s research was easy to read and relatable to my topic. While it does not answer the question is online dating really dating, it does have direct implications that online dating is a matchmaking method ending in FtF communication to determine if a person is suitable for a long-term romantic relationship. Perhaps my topic should focus more on why it is difficult to be honest online. The tension between self-disclosure, privacy and self-presentation
catapults anxiety about honesty as well as the way online dating websites use search criterion. It is surprising that we do not seem to know ourselves well enough to provide honest descriptions online. The researchers found most people present the ought self instead of the actual self. Why?


Maguire (2007) reported on her study that examined uncertainty in long-distance dating relationships (LDDRs) from two different perspectives. The uncertainty reduction theory (URT) posits that uncertainty could be problematic for LDDRs and introduced the uncertainty management theory (UMT), which recognizes that considerations of future evaluations could determine if uncertainty is problematic (p. 415). Results of her study indicated that “participants who were uncertain about ever living in the same city as their partners were significantly more distressed, less satisfied, and rated communication coping strategies as less helpful than those who felt more certain about reunion” (p. 415). Also, “results showed that uncertainty was not as problematic when evaluations about the future were taken into account” (p. 415). According to Maguire, research by Brashers (2001), indicated that uncertainty exists when the details of situations are ambiguous, complex, unpredictable, or probabilistic; when information is unavailable or inconsistent; and when people feel insecure in their own state of knowledge or the state of knowledge in general (Brashers, 2001, p. 478). Relational uncertainty is the degree to which people perceive confidence or lack of confidence in the relationship and stems from physical absence of a long-distance relationship, which compounds the lack of nonverbal cues, which fuels uncertainty about the future of a relationship (pp. 416-417). Also, the cultural norms that govern close relationships (geographic proximity, frequent face-to-face contact) cause
uncertainty and stress about maintaining the relationship and may be less satisfied than those who know they will unite/reunite in the future (p. 417). It is interesting that individuals who feel certain they will physically meet their partner are more open to coping strategies than those who feel uncertain about future unions (p. 418). Maguire makes the connection between cost and benefits by writing “Sunnafrank (1986) was one of the first to claim that an individual’s perception of future rewards and costs needs to be considered when examining uncertainty in developing relationships” (p. 419). Results from her study support both URT and UMT, recognizing that UMT “may be a more heuristic way to understand uncertainty in LDDRs” (p. 425).

Maguire’s study makes sense and implies the self-fulfilling prophecy. If either partners, or one, have doubts about where the relationship is heading, it is most likely going to fail. Both partners need to openly and frankly communicate about the future of the relationship as well as arrange to meet in person, if they want a successful relationship. Her results show that uncertainty is certain in long-distance relationships but can be managed successfully if coping mechanisms are in place and agreed upon by both partners.

In my own experiences, doubt about the future of the relationship ended communication. Communication ended sooner with those who did not want to meet in person within a certain period because of my personal goal of having a physical, long-term, romantic relationship. Maguire’s findings confirmed my personal experiences and illuminated analyzing costs and rewards when examining uncertainty in a developing relationship.

Manning (2014) compares presentational rhetorics in online personal advertisements to articulated rhetorics of online dating. Results of his study indicate ethos is a primary concern of online daters and limits what people say in online profiles. Discussion of the study explores implications of articulated and presentational rhetorics as well as potential future studies.

Manning focuses on rhetoric because much research focuses on uncertainty reduction or honesty in self-presentations but not the rhetorics (pp. 309-310). Manning builds on previous research by Toma and Hancock (2010) who discuss motivation and construction of online dating profiles, “that individuals must be motivated to try and control how others see them in consideration of all circumstances” (Manning, 2014, p. 310). Therefore, what people say in their profiles matters; rhetoric means something, it is not frivolous. Manning focuses on how people create meaning using “suasive forces” (p. 312). He discusses “rhetorical vision - ‘a depiction of values, preferences, or opinions, whether explicit or implicit’” (p. 312). Manning proposes that personal ads are a form of explicit rhetoric where interactants are openly trying to persuade another to take interest; and, in the case of those who placed the advertisements, as a form of implicit rhetoric where “‘a person’s values, judgments, preferences, and opinions are bound up in the topics chosen or avoided in everyday conversation”’ (p. 312). That is, there are two different rhetorics: presentational rhetorics, where individuals engage a heightened awareness of suasive forces as they attempt to attract another in relational pursuit; and articulated rhetorics, where the focus of individuals is not on language’s suasive forces and the exigencies of the social situation (p. 312).

The findings of the study indicated that “rhetorical vision” created an advertisement that highlighted ideal features and that would draw an ideal dating partner. Respondents indicated desirable qualities such as laid back, good looking, sweet, active, and likes to cuddle to the
researcher but the results of the research showed that to explicitly list those qualities are taboo according to the rhetorical visions of online dating presentations (pp. 320-321).

This article illuminates the importance of rhetoric when constructing an online dating profile. It also demonstrates the differing views and meanings of words to individuals. Rhetoric is just as important as images. Manning brings up interesting information for online daters and his research has implications for my research on self-presentation. It is the very essence of describing yourself and attributes of your future partner. At the same time, it is difficult to represent yourself accurately online due to the tension between your actual self and ought self. Choosing the correct words to represent yourself online is very important, yet difficult.


Boyd (2014) explores many clichés about identity, privacy, safety, danger and bullying associated with teens and online social media in her book, *It’s Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*. Her overarching goal is to explain “what young people are doing when they engage with social media and why their attempts to make sense of the world around them should be commended” (p. 26). She explains in the introduction that her book is “written with a broad audience in mind” (p. 26) which she does effectively, mainly through using personal, real-life stories from teens she interviewed through her research.

She touches on many aspects of CMC, mainly social media (Facebook, MySpace), in relation to teen's social lives and eagerness to join the adult world. Boyd discusses that a lot of miscommunication and assumptions adults make in regards to teen's communication are not necessarily research-based. Teens are communicating to adults their need for attention and validation of self-worth but many times adults do not hear them because they are blind to the
complex social context teens are involved in and believe they know what is best without putting themselves in the teen’s shoes and societal context. There is a general lack of understanding about how the social lives of teens cross over from offline to online networks and vice-versa. Boyd explains this miscommunication as the influence of the “collapsed context.” A “collapsed context” occurs when “people are forced to grapple simultaneously with otherwise unrelated social context that are rooted in different norms and seemingly demand different social responses” (p. 31). The effect is that the person using CMC does not realize the wide potential audience of social media spaces when they create their online identity.

The concept of “collapsed context” illuminates my topic area. Collapsed contexts may affect the dialectal tension between our rhetorical presentation or vision of ourselves online and the difficulty representing, honestly, the actual self in an online dating profile. When writing an online dating profile, people make decisions about rhetoric based on the expectations of the audience of which norms and taboos play a role.


Kim and Dindia (2011) review current online self-disclosure research “examining the effects of key variables in online self-disclosures across various CMC channels” (p. 176). The authors distinguish between self-presentation and self-disclosure. According to Kim and Dindia (2011), self-presentation refers to “selectively presenting aspects of oneself to control how one is perceived by others and is concerned with impression management.” “Self-disclosure refers to revealing personal or private information about oneself that is generally unknown and not available from other sources. However, self-disclosure always involves an element of self-
presentation” (p. 157). The authors discuss gender, culture and age in determining online CMC self-disclosure and compare those aspects to FtF and CMC environments. Some CMC channels are gaining in popularity such as audio and video-conferencing. In these channels, vocal cues and nonverbal cues are present lessening the concern of honesty and increasing warranting information. Warranting refers to information about oneself that cannot be manipulated (p. 175).

The authors found “Internet romantic relations progress through inverted developmental sequence” (p. 176). Offline, people meet FtF, then get to know each other better; but, online people get to know each other through privacy disclosure upfront, then choose whether or not to meet FtF (p. 176). Most participants in the different research studies reported more intimacy through CMC channels and they disclosed more than participants in FtF conditions (p. 162).

This article is enlightening for my research. It supports the idea that online dating is difficult to navigate because we self-disclose private information first, before getting to know someone, which is opposite of the way relationships develop when the initial meeting is FtF. Because of this, people may feel more intimacy before meeting the person FtF and determining if their online presentation is accurate. More research in this area is needed. Perhaps people are under an ‘illusion of glamour’ when romantic relationships develop online. There is also lack of research indicating whether romantic relationships that develop online are successful. I think research into how the successfullness of online romantic relationships and why would illuminate strategies to help others successfully navigate online dating.
The goal of my digital and media literacy project is to help online daters understand the complexities of online self-presentation.

Three main concepts play a large role in the development of a dating profile. They are the asynchronous nature of CMC, and the terms “self-presentation” and “self-disclosure.” First, when using CMC, an individual has more control of the message, can make edits before and after posting the information, and can have others review and/or write the information. CMC also provides the opportunity to review and think about the information before posting it online and allows for the manipulation of images. Second, it is important to distinguish self-presentation and self-disclosure. Self-presentation refers to “selectively presenting aspects of oneself to control how one is perceived by others and is concerned with impression management.” “Self-disclosure refers to revealing personal or private information about oneself that is generally
unknown and not available from other sources. However, self-disclosure always involves an element of self-presentation” (Kim and Dindia, 2011, p. 157). What this throws into question is the honesty of the self-presentation. However, current theories that examine uncertainty suggest the expectation and increased anticipation of FtF meetings drives honest responses for those writing online dating profiles (Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006, p. 418). Additionally, developing online romantic relationships requires disclosing private information before determining if the other’s online presentation is accurate. This is the opposite of relationship progression when the initial meeting is FtF and implies people might be under an ‘illusion of glamour’ when romantic relationships initially develop online and move offline.

Single people looking for a long-term romantic relationship will benefit from this research because it identifies methods to develop accurate online dating profiles that will attract appropriate potential partners as well as help them interpret the dating profiles of others.