ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS AND SOCIAL MEDIA USE: THE EMERGENCE AND

MANAGEMENT OF RELATIONAL DIALECTICS

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of the
North Dakota State University
of Agriculture and Applied Science

By

Bethany Rose Lutovsky

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

Major Department:
Communication

July 2016

Fargo, North Dakota

North Dakota State University
Graduate School

Title

Romantic relationships and social media use: The emergence and
management of relational dialectics

By

Bethany Rose Lutovsky

The Supervisory Committee certifies that this ***disquisition*** complies with North Dakota

State University's regulations and meets the accepted standards for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

Dr. Stephenson Beck

Chair

Dr. Carrie Anne Platt

Dr. Claudette Peterson

Approved:

July 7, 2016	Dr. Mark Meister
Date	Department Chair

ABSTRACT

This study implements Baxter's (1988) relational dialectic theory to determine how relational dialectics emerge and are managed when people in romantic relationships use social media. Eighteen participants who were in romantic relationships and used social media took part in one-on-one semi-structured interviews. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using the framework analysis method.

The participants in this study experienced both internal and external dialectics when sharing information about their relationship on social media and when sharing information about their social media use with their significant other. Revelation-concealment emerged as the dominant dialectic, as participants faced the inherent expectations of transparency with social media. Participants stated that it is important to determine the other person's comfort level with sharing on social media and how they typically use social media. This study reinforces the need to include both internal and external dialectics in future research on romantic relationships and social media use.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people supported me during the process of completing my thesis. While I put a lot of hard work into my research and writing, it would have been difficult to complete this thesis without the help of the following people.

To Dr. Stephenson Beck: there are many things that I should thank you for. Thank you for seeing my potential and encouraging me to carry on beyond my bachelor's degree. I would not even have considered the idea of pursing a master's degree had it not been for your encouragement and support that started in the first very first class I took from you. I appreciate your continued support during the master's program. Having you as my adviser has allowed me to develop my learning, research, and writing abilities, and your guidance has allowed me to be prepared to continue of for my PhD. You have been there when I had questions and needed guidance, and I hope that you will continue to be my mentor as I continue my education.

To Dr. Carrie Anne Platt: I appreciated the invaluable experience I gained both as your teaching assistant and in your courses which were instrumental in completing this thesis. Taking your courses in my undergraduate degree and being your teaching assistant spurred my interest in the area of digitally mediated communications and social media and how they can affect relationships. Had it not been for your courses and your guidance, I would not have realized my potential in this area. Thank you for helping me enjoy learning, about this research area and more.

To Dr. Claudette Peterson: Thank you for being so flexible and accommodating when it came to helping with this thesis. The experiences and knowledge I gained in your course was invaluable. I have so much respect for you as an educator, and I was grateful to have you join my committee and provide me with feedback when I needed it.

To Bryce Tellmann: Thank you for stepping in to act as my second coder. I appreciate all of the time and effort you put in to help me make this thesis possible.

To my husband, Joe: Thank you for being my main support system throughout this entire process. Your support and encouragement have allowed me to grow as a person and as a member of academia. Thank you for being willing to take this next step in our adventure as I continue in my education.

To my family, friends, and other graduate students: thank you for everything you have done for me from answering questions to simply lending an ear when I needed one. I have received so much support during my master's program and it has helped immensely to have all of your encouragement.

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INTRODUCTION

Many types of social media have emerged over the past decade, adding to the numerous ways that people can connect with one another via technology. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat allow people to stay in contact with friends and family and maintain relationships. Nearly two-thirds of adults in the U.S. use social media (Perrin, 2015). The increase in social media types has coincided with an increase in societal social media usage and frequency. In fact, half of social media users log onto their various social media accounts several times a day (Duggan, 2015). Facebook, the most popular medium, used by 72% of online adults, maintained relatively constant user totals over the past few years (Duggan, 2015). Other social media, such as Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Instagram, experienced significant growth in users (Duggan et al., 2015). In addition to this, 17% of smartphone owners use apps such as Snapchat or Wickr which automatically delete sent messages (Duggan, 2015). As individuals adopt new social media in their communication with others, they must adapt their communication style for each social media.

When individuals enter a romantic relationship, they must learn to balance their social media use with relationship expectations. As has been shown in past research (Baxter, 1986), there are implicit relationship rules that exist in romantic relationships. If a romantic partner were to violate these implicit rules, their significant other may see it as a reason to terminate the relationship. Consistent with this research, Petronio (1991) determined that relationship partners need to balance issues of privacy and transparency when interacting with one another and those outside the relationship. In certain circumstances, relational partners may expect open and straightforward communication. However, there may be other situations where partners will choose to withhold or keep information private.

Baxter (1988) explained that people in relationships experience dialectical tensions, or contradictions, in their relationship. Contradictions are present when there are two opposing tendencies that emerge in a relationship, such as being open or closed in their communication with the partner. These contradictions both "affect and are affected by the communication strategies the relationship parties enact" (Baxter, 1988, p. 272). In other words, the tensions relationship partners face influence how the partners choose to solve the contradictions, and the strategy used to manage contradictions influences how the tensions will emerge in the future. For instance, if one partner wants to share information about the relationship with others and the other partner does not, they will need to determine how they will manage this tension. The choice taken for managing the tension will influence the future decisions in the relationship. However, these contradiction are not negative; instead, they are inherent to social life and emerge in all relationships (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). These contradictions do not simply emerge within a relationship, but also between those in the relationship and those in one's social network (Baxter & Erbert, 1999). Although initial research by Baxter and Erbert (1999) has deemed the contradictions within the relationship to be more central to relationship success, the emergence of social media have made communication with people in a social network more prevalent (Cohen, Bowman, & Borchert, 2014; Linke, 2011). The rise of social media has led to a need to reexamine the contradictions as they emerge between people in the relationship and their social network and how these contradictions impact the romantic relationship.

The varying levels of privacy and transparency across social media types may complicate the management of tensions within romantic relationships. People who are on social media have the option of using various methods to control the information that others see about them, however, there may be the expectation that they will be providing information about themselves

for everyone to see. Fox, Osborn, and Warber (2014) found that participants agreed that their relationships would be better off if they did not use Facebook; however, nearly all of their participants chose to continue their profile. Multiple studies have determined that jealousy and suspicion emerge when partners see posts on social media that involve their partner and a perceived rival (Cohen, Bowman, & Borchert, 2014; Fox, Osborn, & Warber, 2014; Miller, Denes, Diaz, & Buck, 2014; Samp & Palevitz, 2014). However, there are inconsistencies in this research. While much research states that public posts may be considered threatening to a relationship, Cohen, Bowman, & Borchert (2014) state that messages sent in private may be perceived as more threatening, and jealousy from offline experiences may cause the partner to search for perceived transgressions on social media. Samp & Palevitz (2014) found that individuals who believe their partner has other relationship alternatives would perceive messages on Facebook as more threatening. More research is needed to determine how transparency and privacy aspects of social media impact those in relationships. By determining what tensions arise due to social media use and how couples manage these tensions, this study may offer insight to people entering or already in romantic relationships in this social media dominated world.

Much of the existing literature on relational dialectics theory focuses on the internal dialectics (e.g., Fields & Ifert Johnson, 2013; Sahlstein & Dun, 2008; & Sahlstein, Maquire, & Timmerman, 2009). This had resulted in less focus on external dialectics. However, the emergence of social media and other technology has made communication with social networks outside of the romantic relationship both more accessible and more visible to others. In addition to this, much of the relational dialectics research focuses on how people maintain their relationship using technology rather than on how social media use impacts the romantic relationship offline (Fox, Osborn, & Warber, 2014; Stephenson-Abetz & Holman, 2012). Since

existing literature on social media and the emergence of relational dialectical tensions has

neglected external dialectics, the present study focuses on both external and internal dialectics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In order to examine the influence of social media on relationships, four areas are discussed in the following sections of the literature review. First, Baxter's (1988) relational dialectics theory discusses contradictions that people face within their relationships. Second, a discussion of past social media research provides a background on how social media and relationships have been studied in the past and how it relates to relational dialectics theory. Next, the concepts of transparency (sharing information with others) and privacy (keeping information from others) are examined in regard to their relationship with social media and romantic relationships. While social media have inherent privacy settings, individuals make decisions on how they use these settings, as well as how they use the public and private aspects of each of the social media. Finally, Baxter's (1986) Rules Theory and Petronio's (1991) Communication Boundary (Privacy) Management theory explains how people in relationships establish rules to avoid conflicts. As social media becomes more prevalent, they may impact the romantic relationships that exist offline. Each of these four areas explores the relational dialectics that exist in these social media influenced relationships, and how the relationship partners manage the contradictions that emerge.

Relational Dialectics Theory

Individuals in relationships often manage a variety of interpersonal tensions. Relational dialectics theory (RDT) attempts to explain how relationship partners manage these tensions or dialectics. Dialectics are "contradictory forces pulling in opposite directions" (Duran, Kelly, & Rotaru, 2011, p. 20). Dialectics, or contradictions, consist of two factors that are interdependent on one another, yet they also oppose or negate one another (Baxter & Erbert, 1999). Such

contradictions are not negative; instead, they are inherent in all relationships and a part of everyday life (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Baxter & Simon, 1993). These contradictions between relational partners do not exist as outside forces acting on the relationships, but as internal and inherent within communication between individuals (Baxter, 2004). Partners' ability to manage these contradictions determines whether the relationship is healthy and successful. Maintaining the relationship consists of maintaining the quality and satisfaction of the relationship, as the relationship goes through dialectical changes (Baxter & Simon, 1993). In order to successfully manage the tensions, relationship members must be willing to maintain a "both/and" focus, meaning they must be able to include both poles of the dialectical tension into their relationship rather than choosing only one (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). In relational dialectics theory, "interpersonal communication involves constant negotiation and renegotiation of competing tensions that continually reshapes the relationship" (Fields & Ifert Johnson, 2013). However, according to Baxter (1988), the way dialectics are experienced changes depending on the relationship history and the length of the relationship.

Supra-dialectics

Baxter and Erbert (1999) theorized that there are three main supra-dialectics that exist in two separate ways: between the relationship members and between the people in the relationship and society as a whole. In other words, the supra-dialects manifest differently depending on if they exist within a romantic relationship or if they exist between the couple and those outside of their relationship (often their social network). The three main supra-dialectics are integration-separation, stability-change, and expression-privacy. As seen in Table 1, each supra-dialectic contains smaller internal and external dialectical tensions that manifest within the relationship, as well as between the relationship members and those outside of the relationship.

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Table 1

Internal and External Breakdown of the Supra-Dialectics

Supra-Dialectic	Internal dialectic	External dialectic
Integration-Separation	Autonomy-Connection	Inclusion-Seclusion
Stability-Change	Predictability-Novelty	Conventionality-Uniqueness
Expression-Privacy	Openness-Closedness	Revelation-Concealment

Note. Internal dialectics manifest within a relationship, while the external dialectics emerge between the relationship members and those outside of the relationship (Baxter & Erbert, 1999).

The integration-separation supra-dialectic "refers to the basic contradiction between social solidarity or unity, and social division or separation" (Baxter & Erbert, 1999, p. 548). This supra-dialectic includes two dialectics: autonomy-connection and inclusion-seclusion. The autonomy-connection dialectic takes place within a relationship. Those experiencing the autonomy-connection dialectic are feeling a tension between being their own person, independent from the relationship, and being in a relationship, dependent on the other person (Baxter, 1990; Baxter & Erbert, 1999; Baxter & Simon, 1993). In a relationship, the partners must be willing to give up some of their independence in order to be a part of the relationship, yet giving up too much of themselves to be in a relationship will result in a loss of personal identities (Baxter & Simon, 1993). The external manifestation of the integration-separation supra-dialectic is the tension of inclusion-seclusion. This dialectic highlights the partners' desire to communicate with those outside of the relationship versus isolating themselves as a couple from others (Baxter & Erbert, 1999). While taking time to be together as a couple is important, too much isolation from society is unhealthy. Relationships often require acknowledgement from those in their social circle (Baxter & Erbert, 1999). Therefore, partners need to maintain a balance between being with others while also keeping time for just the two of them.

The second supra-dialectic is that of stability-change, which "refers to the fundamental opposition between stability and flux" (Baxter & Erbert, 1999, p. 548). In other words, this is the idea that relationships may be the same as or different from other relationships or the relationship may also differ from how the same relationship was in the past. The internal dialectic is that of predictability-novelty. This tension exists when partners either know what the other partner will do and say or they find the other person to be unpredictable in their actions (Baxter, 1990; Baxter & Erbert, 1999; Baxter & Simon, 1993). When a partner is too predictable, the relationship may become boring and may not provide enough stimulation for each person (Baxter & Erbert, 1999). According to Baxter and Simon (1993) boredom due to predictability is often a reason given for ending a relationship. However, having a partner who is not at all predictable can lead to a dysfunctional relationship, as one person never knows what the other will do (Baxter, 1990). The external dialectic is the conventionality-uniqueness tension. Partners experience this dialectic when comparing their relationship with those of the people around them. While society expects couples to maintain the social norm of relationship behavior, it is important for them to be able to have unique aspects to their relationship, so that they are not identical to all of the relationships around them (Baxter & Erbert, 1999). Partners maintain a balance of fulfilling the society expectations of the relationship, yet they are also attempting to have aspects of their relationship that do not adhere to the expectations of others in order to be unique.

The final supra-dialectic is that of expression-privacy, or the tension of "informational candor versus informational discretion," which can be explained as the decision to disclose information or keep it private (Baxter & Erbert, 1999, p. 549). Within the relationship, the tension exists as openness-closedness, or choosing to share information with the other person versus keeping that information to oneself. In relationships, it is important that partners are

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honest with one another; however, there is some information that partners choose to keep private in order to maintain a healthy relationship (Baxter & Simon, 1993). The revelation-concealment dialectic exists when partners communicate with those outside of the relationship. This tension portrays the need to share information about the relationship with those in one's social circle versus keeping that information private (Baxter & Erbert, 1999). While relational partners may talk to their friends about their relationship, it is also important to keep certain things private. However, in today's society, social media have increased the prevalence of this tension. Partners need to decide what information about the relationship they will share online and what they will keep private.

Relational partners must balance each of these dialectics during a relationship. Of the six dialectics, scholars have focused primarily on the three internal contradictions. Less research has focused on the external dialectics; scholarly articles tend not to include the external dialectics due to this lack of research (Cools, 2011; Li, Jackson, & Trees, 2008; Prentice, 2009). However, the social network we find ourselves in plays an important role in the continuation of a relationship. It is important to understand the relationship between the couple and their social world. Of the three internal dialectics found in research, Baxter (1988) identified autonomy-connection as the primary dialectic in relationships, meaning that predictability-novelty and openness-closedness followed from this dialectic. Learning how to balance and manage the dialectics could determine the success of the relationship.

Phases of Relational Dialectic Development

Baxter (1988) identified four relational dialectic phases that a relationship goes through. While the identification of four phases is somewhat over-simplified (relationships progress in different paths), Baxter's identification of phases shows the link between dialectical tensions. In

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the discussion of dialectical phases, Baxter (1988) identified autonomy-connection as the primary dialectical tension, with the novelty-predictability and openness-closedness building from it. Not only does this show the link between dialectical tensions, but the dialectical phases also emphasize that the dialectical tensions change throughout the relationship.

The first phase in a relationship is Autonomy to Connection (Baxter, 1988). According to Baxter (1988), "this phase is one of mutual exploration as the parties get to know one another and determine whether they want to form an interdependent relationship" (p. 262). Naturally, uncertainty is a dominant characteristic of this phase, since the two potential partners get to know one another. While the individual will feel a great sense of novelty (being unsure of what the other will do), actual relational interactions in this phase are largely predictable, as the social scripts for initial interactions are the basis for one's actions (Baxter, 1988). Society has defined the appropriate interactions to have in the initial phases of the relationship. This causes the relationship members to be superficially open in their communication. While partners may discuss trivial topics openly, they tend to remain closed on more serious and personal topics (Baxter, 1988). However, this does not prevent partners from taking a more indirect approach to gathering information.

The second phase is also Autonomy to Connection; however, this is a more serious level. In this phase, the individuals work out the details of the relationship and how the relationship impacts the partners as individuals (Baxter, 1988). Partners in this phase feel uneasy about the relationship; there will be an increase in conflict and decrease in stability as the partners debate whether they are making a mistake. People in this phase attempt to create predictability in the relationship through the formation of symbols and rituals, such as nicknames and anniversaries. Baxter (1988) states, "Because symbols and rituals emerge from a time-specific situation in the

relationship's history, they are constant reminders of the relationship's past and thus bridge the certainty of the known past with the uncertainty of the unknown present and future" (p. 266). Conflicts in this stage are often positive for the relationship, as partners work cooperatively to solve the conflict. Yet, in this phase, partners are often apprehensive about having open discussions about the state of the relationship. Instead, parties use 'secret test' strategies to gauge the partner's response to a situation, such as testing jealousy through the introduction of a real or hypothetical romantic rival, making the relationship costly to the other to test the strength of the commitment, and using public displays of the relationships to see the other's response.

The third phase is the Autonomy-Connection Synthesis period, where "a relationship will likely experience a dialectical synthesis in which autonomy and connection are no longer regarded as opposites but have become functionally reinforcing of one another" (Baxter, 1988, p. 267). In this phase, partners experience predictability in their daily routines and how well they believe they know one another; however, this can lead to emotional and cognitive deadening, as well as reduced emotional arousal (Baxter, 1988). It is important for the partners in this phase to work on their relationship in order to experience some level of novelty. The partners need to be willing to be open with one another, as the cognitive deadening is a side effect of the perception that the partners already know everything about each other. Partners who are not open in this stage will likely struggle, as they are not putting 'work' into their relationship to maintain it.

The final possible phase is Connection to Autonomy, which is the dissolution phase of the relationship. Those that are unable to manage the dialectics may reach this phase. Relationships in this phase experience increased conflict, however there will be declining attempts to repair the relationship. While conflict in phase two is constructive and novel, the conflict in this phase ensures the dissolution of the relationship (Baxter, 1988). In this phase,

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both the novelty and predictability poles are detrimental to the relationship. With the openness-closedness dialectic, most communication about the intent for dissolution occurs indirectly, through pseudo de-escalation, cost escalation, and indirect withdrawal. According to Baxter (1988), pseudo de-escalation is the act of telling the other person you wish to remain friends while never intending to see the other after the dissolution. Cost escalation includes raising the cost of the relationship so that the other initiates the dissolution. Finally, indirect withdrawal is a reduction in contact and self-disclosure. Both openness and closedness ensure the dissolution of the relationship in this phase.

As relationships progress, the emergence of the dialectic tensions are likely to change. There are different pressures that exist as relationships develop. It is likely that the external dialectics would progress in much the same way as the internal dialectics. The ability of the partners in balancing and managing the dialectical tensions may influence the development and possible dissolution of the relationship. It is imperative for partners to understand how to manage the tensions that emerge throughout the relationship.

Managing Dialectics

It is important to study not only what dialectics exist within a relationship, but also how the two parties manage these contradictions. Both ends of the dialectical tensions must exist within a relationship in order for the partners to be successful. Putting too much emphasis on only one side of the contradiction may cause the relationship to falter. All couples face relational dialectics throughout their relationship, and the way they handle these oppositions determines how healthy their relationship will be.

Baxter and Erbert (1999) found that managing dialectical tensions played an important role during significant turning points in relationships. When relationship members were asked to

identify significant moments in their relationship, multiple relational dialectics emerged within each particular instance. The relational dialectics did not occur in isolation from one another, and thus, the relationship members must learn to manage each dialectic. Baxter (1988, 1990) identified basic types of strategies that relational parties enact to manage the contradictions. Originally, the strategies were split into three different types (selection, separation, and integration). However, Baxter reframed these strategies into four main types: selection, separation, neutralization, and reframing. The current four strategies will be the ones used in this study.

First, selection refers to situations where "relationship parties select actions consistent with one polarity of the contradiction" (Baxter, 1988, p. 260). In this strategy, one polarity becomes the dominant choice (e.g., choosing to remain autonomous over increased connection to one's partner). By selecting one contradictory pole over the other, the partner is choosing to prioritize this aspect in the relationship. For example, if one's partner is consistently prioritizing closing oneself off from the other, this may damage the relationship. However, consistent openness with the other person may also be detrimental. Using selection partners will prioritize one polarity over the other, meaning that managing tensions through this strategy may cause strife in the relationship.

The second strategy is separation, which can include both temporal and topical detachment. Individuals using this strategy enact the two poles separately, either over time or depending on the topic/activity. (Baxter, 1990; Duran et al., 2011). Separation exists in two different ways: cyclic alternation and topical segmentation. Cyclic alternation is when individuals respond to each polarity at different times. This could be demonstrated by moving between the two sides of the dialectic over time, such as being autonomous, to showing

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connection, to being autonomous again. (Baxter, 1988). Topical segmentation is "the separation of content or activity domains into those for which one contrasting pole is appropriate and those for which the other contrasting pole is appropriate" (p. 73). Duran et al. (2011) later characterized these areas as simply separation, where the partners choose one pole for some topics, while choosing the other pole for different topics.

Integration "involves the attempt to respond simultaneously to both opposing tendencies in a contradiction" (Baxter, 1988, pp. 260-261). Although originally conceptualized as three categories, more recent studies suggest there are two: neutralization and reframing (Baxter, 1990; Duran, et al, 2011). Neutralization "features the perceived presence of both contrasting poles" (Baxter, 1990, p. 73). This is very similar to integrative moderation in Baxter's (1988) article, as both strategies are sacrificing some aspects of each pole in order to resist biases to one pole or the other, instead remaining neutral or in a diluted middle position in the dialectic. This is equal to neither being too autonomous nor connected. Instead, the partners enact a compromised version, in which a portion of each side is sacrificed. This results in a diluted intensity of each side of the dialectic. Within neutralization, there is also disqualification, which is when there is ambiguity in the way in which the poles are handled, meaning that the dialectic is handled indirectly or in a way that is "off the record" (Baxter, 1990, p. 73).

Reframing is the second strategy integration was split into. Reframing is "characterized by a perceptual transformation of the elements along different dimensions of meaning such that the two contrast are no longer regarded as opposites" (Baxter, 1990, p. 73). This strategy includes a change in the perception of the dialectic. In this sense, predictability-novelty is no longer seen as a contradiction; instead they work together to create a successful relationship.

Predictability, in reframing, will not be seen as opposite to novelty; instead, predictability will enhance the novelty under this management strategy.

Relational Dialectics and Media

Scholars have used many different types of relationships in their research of relational dialectics theory. This research has led to insights on how different relationship members choose to manage the dialectics that emerge. In a study on breakups and autonomy-connection, Sahlstein and Dun (2008) found that eight of their 45 couples had broken up within their study period due to difficulties managing this dialectic. However, only three of these eight couples had attempted to use multiple strategies to attempt to manage this dialectical tension. The inability to manage contradictions in this study led to relationship termination. In a study on father-adolescent child communication on TV, Fields and Ifert Johnson (2013) found that children and fathers presented in scripted television shows used different strategies to manage the autonomy-connection dialectic. Also, experience was able to "lead to more effective integration of the continuum between autonomy and connection" (Fields & Ifert Johnson, 2013, p. 296). Those who had more experience managing a dialectic used different strategies from less experienced individuals. While this study was based on scripted characters in popular television shows, these factors may emerge in real-world relationships as well. Sahlstein, Maquire, and Timmerman (2009) studied wives' perspectives before, during, and after wartime deployments. They found that different dialectical tensions existed throughout the deployment periods: "uncertainty-certainty during predeployment, autonomy-connection during deployment, and openness-closedness upon reunion" (p. 427). They also found that the most common praxis (strategy) used was denial, which is known to be a dysfunctional strategy in a majority of situations. These studies show us that the strategies used to manage dialectical tensions vary depending on the relationship and the

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experience of the relationship members. The use of multiple methods may increase the likelihood of effective management.

In recent years, researchers have begun to include technology in their approach to the topic. Technology has changed the way partners communicate, and thus, has influenced dialectical tensions. In a study focusing on cell phone use in romantic relationships, Duran, Kelly, and Rotaru (2011) found relational partners who experienced high levels of the autonomy-connection tension reported more frequent conflict when it came to the partner using cell phones to communicate with someone of the opposite sex. This is a factor that may emerge when dealing with dialectical tensions in social media use. Stephenson-Abetz and Holman (2012) found that new college students face dialectical tensions when attempting to negotiate their connections between family and friends back home and new friends made in college using Facebook. While participants experienced some tensions more often than others did, each participant reported a mixture of multiple tensions, including: "(a) preservation and (re)invention, (b) uniqueness and conformity, and (c) openness and closedness" (Stephenson-Abetz & Holman, 2012, p. 181). In a study of Facebook and relationships, Fox, Osborn, and Warber (2014) found that "Facebook is likely changing the way people develop, maintain, and dissolve romantic relationships, and people are still in the process of trying to figure out how best to manage these changes" (p. 533). Dialectical tensions in this study were found both internally (between the members of the couple) and externally (between couples and their social networks). This follows the original theory of the supra-dialectics, as this states that the dialectical tensions exist between the relationship members as well as between the couple and their social network. In summary, relationships are becoming increasingly dependent on social media and technology, and this is influencing the ways couple manage relational dialectics. As

relationships change, the dialectics come into play in different ways. The increasing use of social media creates a need for considering both internal and external dialectics in future relational dialectic theory research.

Social Media and Relationships

The use of social media is commonplace in society. According to a survey done by the Pew Research Center, the number of adults using two or more social media sites is increasing, with 52% of online adults now using multiple social media. (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, & Madden, 2015). The most popular social media site is Facebook, with 71% of internet using adults, 58% of all adults, using this social media (Dugan et al., 2015). Other emerging social media have gained widespread popularity as well, such as Snapchat, Instagram, and Twitter. Since social media have become commonplace, including between relational partners, an investigation of social media influence on relationships is warranted.

Each type of social media comes with unique capabilities. For instance, Facebook, one of the most popular sites for social media, allows users to share aspects of their life on their "Timeline." However, the security options on Facebook allows an individual to hide posts from certain individuals or groups. There is also an option to send private messages to another person. This allows the user to determine how much they would like to share with others. Snapchat, on the other hand, is a social media that gained popularity due to the secretive nature of the sent messages. Users can send "snaps" to other individuals; these messages "disappear" after a short amount of time. However, users may also include videos or pictures in a section called "My Story" which is shared with all of their friends on Snapchat for 24 hours before they are gone.

Prior research focusing on social media and relationships has covered topics such as cell phone usage rules (Miller-Ott, Kelly, & Duran, 2012), partners' social media use and jealousy

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(Cohen, Bowman, & Borchert, 2014; Miller, Denes, Diaz, & Buck, 2014; Samp & Palevitz, 2014), and how social media affects relationships in general (Linke, 2011). Three areas of interest in these studies include relationship satisfaction, reconnecting using social media, and relationship threats due to social media. First, when looking at satisfaction in relationships, Miller-Ott, Kelly, & Duran (2012) found that partners who were satisfied with the cell phone use within their relationship were more likely to be satisfied with their relationship in general. However, these young adult couples tended to not have boundaries established with their partner on what was acceptable cell phone use.

Ramirez and Bryant (2014) looked at a different type of relationship that existed due to Facebook and other social networking sites, which were reconnecting relationships. In these relationships, the state that the relationship was in prior to losing contact initially played a large role in whether the relationship would eventually become a face-to-face relationship once again after reconnecting. This study shows that experiences within the relationship past will influence how the relationship continues. This relates to the phases of development that were established by Baxter (1988), as the experiences that the couple has with managing relational dialectics will impact the future of that relationship.

Finally, there have been many studies on relationship threats due to social media. Cohen, Bowman, and Borchert (2014) found that relationship partners perceived ambiguous personal messages sent by a significant other to a potential romantic rival as more threatening to a relationship if it were sent in a private message that the partner was not supposed to see. This is potentially because the partner was attempting to hide this message from their significant other. Miller, Denes, Diaz, and Buck (2014) found that women would often respond more negatively to photos of ambiguous nature of their partner with someone of the opposite sex. In addition to this,

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participants perceived different types of touch exhibited in Facebook photos to be more threatening than others. When dealing with perceived transgressions, Samp and Palevitz (2014) found that people who feel that their partner has other relationship alternatives and is less committed to the relationship would feel more threatened by perceived transgressions on Facebook. However, these individuals will also be less likely to confront their partner, and will instead resort to what Samp and Palevitz (2014) refer to as "Facebook stalking" in order to gather information on what their partner is doing.

This purpose of this study is to build on the knowledge gained from past research on social media and relationships. Findings showed that people in relationships were more satisfied when there were no established boundaries of cell phone use; however, another study found past relationship experiences affected those in the future and people in relationships perceive threats from social media use. One aspect that made an impact on perceived threats included the public or private nature of the communication. In other words, relationship partners found messages sent in private to be more threatening than those sent where anyone could see them. It is important to determine if the availability of information in relationships and on social media impacts relational dialectics.

Transparency vs. Privacy in Relationships and Social Media

As people enter into a romantic relationship and attempt to maintain that relationship, the relational dialectical tensions they face will go through a series of stages (Baxter, 1988). These tensions often coincide with the relationship length, as the partners give up some of their autonomy to be together, become more predictable to one another, and share more about themselves (Baxter, 1988). However, social media may cause these dialectical contradictions to emerge in different ways. Social media is a method that many Americans use to communicate

with other people. However, when an individual is in a relationship, they must determine how their online communication will factor into their relationship, greatly influencing how they manage external dialectics. An important part of social media communication takes place between individuals and those outside of the relationship. This communication may cause conflicts in the relationship depending on how much information one shares with their significant other about their social media use. When people are in a relationship, there is an assumed sharing of information. Because of this, a lack of information about the relationship online and a lack of communication about social media use may negatively impact the relationship. People may feel that if their significant other is not talking about the relationship online or sharing information about how they use social media, they might be hiding something. Therefore, information sharing is an important aspect to consider when looking at romantic relationships and social media.

Transparency and privacy are two concepts regarding availability of information. First, transparency is the "passive availability of information or the active disclosure of information" (Kim, Hong, & Cameron, 2014, p. 812). In this sense, transparency is when someone makes information available to others without being asked to do so. Transparency has often been associated with organizations in public relations; however, the act of transparency also makes sense for the study of relationships. For instance, Kim, Hong, and Cameron (2014) found that there were common types of information disclosures: voluntary or mandatory. When considering the use of social media in relationships, voluntary disclosure could be the acts of clearly stating one's relationship status on social media (transparency to those outside of the relationship) or giving one's password to one's significant other (transparency to one's partner). These actions could also be viewed as mandatory if these were actions that were necessary based on requests of

one's partner. Berkelaar (2014) called these concepts "old transparency" and "new transparency," because in traditional organizations, the organization was expected to provide information if they were asked for it. However, in the current society, expectations exist to provide important information to their stakeholders without someone asking them to. Determining if these concepts impact romantic relationships would be beneficial. As members of the relationship become involved on social media, there is a need for the members to understand whether their partner expects the other to provide information about their social media use without being asked.

However, transparency requires that an individual trusts the people they are open with, as this openness in communication requires this person to make themselves vulnerable (Rawlins, 2008). When someone discloses information to another person, there is a trust that this person will use the information appropriately. If the interaction goes as expected, the amount of trust one has in the other individual will likely increase.

Privacy, on the other hand, is the ability to control what others see and know about you, in the sense that one is intentionally making information inaccessible (Quinn, 2014). As social media have gained popularity, the amount of information that the average person makes available about himself or herself is increasing. With this increase in information, privacy concerns arise, especially for younger users (Gnagopadhyay & Dhar, 2014). Young adult users take the least advantage of the privacy settings on social media sites when interacting with their peers (Gnagopadhyay & Dhar, 2014). While privacy is an important aspect to consider with social media, social media requires that individuals make at least basic information available to others.

The implementation of privacy measures depends on the context and the other individual. For instance, Child and Westerman (2013) and Kanter, Afifi, and Robbins (2012) both look at parental friend requests on Facebook. Both studies found that young adult participants were quick to accept Facebook friend requests from their parents. Maintaining a Facebook friendship with their parents even improved their relationship (Kanter, Afifi, and Robbins, 2012). Contrary to expectations, few respondents in the study actually changed the privacy settings allowing them to block information from their parents. This may have been due to the positive relationships that already existed in the parent-child relationship (Child & Westerman, 2013; Kanter, Afifi, & Robbins, 2012). Although the participants in these studies tended to use minimal privacy settings, this may just be due to the context. It was suggested that those who participated in the study may have had positive relationships with their parents prior to the Facebook friend requests. It is possible that the relationships of study participants may be more positive than those who do not participate.

Individuals use Facebook to connect with other people; therefore, people are placing information that is more personal online. After growing up with the internet and technology, young adults also tend to be more open with how they communicate online. Those who are older, however, may approach Facebook differently. Quinn (2014) found that adults at midlife (45-65 years of age) were more likely to implement the use of privacy settings and other privacy tactics. Not only were these individuals more likely to be careful about whom they 'friended,' but they were also more likely to control the content that was available. This ranged from including a false date of birth, not posting information about location (in order to prevent home break-ins), and creating boundaries on who they added to Facebook vs. LinkedIn. Older adults used these actions to increase the privacy of the social media.

In some situations, young adults are also more likely to utilize the different privacy settings associated with different social media. In a study by Vickery (2015), the young adults in the study stated the importance of using different social media platforms to reach different audiences. For instance, some participants chose to use sites that made their communication more private than Facebook, because they did not want others to monitor their actions. They also considered their personal phone to be private. While they said that they had nothing to hide, they felt that passwords on phones were their way of maintaining privacy from friends and family. While these are not specifically privacy settings that the individual is able to change, people may be more willing to share more personal information on social media that they deem as having more strict privacy settings.

Transparency and privacy exist in two ways in social media: through the technological affordances of the specific social media or through the actions of the user. In terms of the affordances of the social media, the inherent design of some social media promotes the sharing of information with other people. For instance, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are popular social media that encourage the users to share posts, pictures, etc. with their friends or followers. This is encouraged by the use of likes, retweets, and favorites by those seeing one's posts. The user in these situations often can choose whom they would like to have view the posts, depending on if they would like to have a private account or a public one. At the same time, other social media emphasize privacy. Snapchat, for instance, revolves around privacy. Any message sent via Snapchat "disappears" shortly after viewing. In addition to this, the individual sends a message to specific people and others cannot see them. While there is an option to share images and videos on what is referred to as My Story, Snapchat gained its popularity based on the privacy aspects of the medium.

Transparency and privacy are dependent on the actions of the user. Most social media have standard privacy settings. It is up to the user to decide who is able to view the message, depending on if their account is private or public (on Twitter and Instagram, for instance), or by making special privacy setting groups for their posts (on Facebook). When one considers privacy, transparency is also apparent on social media. Users are able to decide how open they are willing to be on social media, including what information he or she will provide upfront, and what will be provided if asked. These decisions are important to consider when attempting to understand how social media impact romantic relationships. Members in the relationship may need to establish rules for what information should be shared about their relationship on social media and what information to share with one another.

Rule Establishment in Relationships

The privacy and transparency of social media may cause tension when an individual enters a relationship. Upon entering a relationship, there may be an expectation of increased openness in social media use. Partners may expect that the other provide them with information about what they are doing on social media, with or without questions from their partner. However, this may depend on the length and seriousness of the relationship. This is why it would be important to determine if people in relationships create rules about their media use, and if so, what types of rules do the relationship members see as positive. People in relationships may create rules for what they see as acceptable behavior. According to Miller-Ott, Kelly, and Duran (2012), "Rules allow regulation and coordination between partners, and are typically shared among relational partners . . . although rules can be implicit and explicit" (p. 21). Miller-Ott et al. divided rules into two types: regulative rules, which focus on appropriate and inappropriate behavior, and constitutive rules, which focus on the interpretation and understanding of the

partner's actions (Miller-Ott et al., 2012). Each of these rules may emerge in relationships where members are active on social media. There have been multiple theories established to discuss the creation of rules.

Baxter's (1986) Rules Theory identified eight implicit relationship rules that existed in opposite-sex relationships. Baxter (1986) identified these rules through coding of anonymous essays regarding why the participants initiated a break-up of their prior relationships. Baxter found that autonomy, similarity displays, supportiveness, openness, loyalty/fidelity, shared time with one another, relationship equity, and romance were all important categories of relationship rules that implicitly existed in the relationships. However, she also suggested that not all relationship members would be able to identify rules that exist until they are broken in a relationship. This is because the relationship members are not always conscious of the rules that exist within their relationship. Individuals only become aware of these rules when the other person violates them.

Bäccman, Folkesson, and Norlander (1999) used Baxter's (1986) criteria in their study comparing homosexual and heterosexual men's expectations in romantic relationships. They defined rules in this study as "prescriptions of obligated/preferred/prohibited behavior in specific situations" (p. 363). These rules are determined in the relationship, and if one person breaks a rule, they see it as a socially acceptable reason to break off the relationship. Overall, Bäccman et al. (1999) found that experiences and age were the primary source of differences between the individuals in the study. Past experiences and the perceptions of these experiences, as well as age, will likely continue to influence what rules are established and seen as most important in future studies.

Petronio (1991) established the Communication Boundary Management theory, which later became the Communication Privacy Management theory. This theory suggests, "revealing private information is risky because there is a potential vulnerability when revealing aspects of the self. Receiving private information from another may also result in the need for protecting oneself" (p. 311). In order to protect themselves, individuals tend to build boundaries in order to manage what private information they share with others; they do this in order to maintain autonomy and to control how open they are with others. According to this theory, sharing information with one's partner also implies reciprocation of information. While originally established to describe disclosure between partners in a marriage, scholars have used this theory to study other dyadic relationships.

Afifi (2003) applied the Communication Privacy Management theory to stepfamily relationships, with the understanding that "revealing information is risky" (p. 731). They found that the circumstances of the parents' divorce often created boundaries between the children and the stepparents. It was often difficult in these families to create consistent rules, as the members were not always willing to work together to coordinate the boundaries. Parents also crossed boundaries when they failed to create rules about what information they would reveal or conceal about the divorce.

In a study by Duran, Kelly, and Rotaru (2011) on relationships and cell phone rules many partners who stated that they did not create rules for cell phone use actually had implicit rules that were mentioned by participants in surveys, such as how soon to respond to texts, timing of texts, and frequency of texts/calls. However, because the relationship members never explicitly discussed rules, relationship members struggled to identify them. The researchers combatted this response by asking open-ended questions about why the participant had not established rules

with their significant other. These responses included the identification of implicit rules. Miller-Ott et al. (2012) found that couples were more satisfied with cell phone use in the relationship if they did not have rules limiting communication with other people while the couple is spending time together, rules about repeated contact when there is no response, and rules prohibiting the partner from checking the other person's phone. However, rules about not starting arguments over the phone increased relational satisfaction.

Rationale

Social media and other communication technology have changed the way partners communicate with one another and with those outside of the relationship. Not only are individuals able to communicate with one another via social media and other technologies, but the way people communicate through this technology may also affect how the couple interacts offline. Social media differ in the amount of information that users publicly share. Even when social media allow users to share information publicly, there are options to keep certain communication private. While someone is in a relationship, keeping interactions on social media private from a partner may cause increased jealousy, distrust, and conflict. As the couple communicates about their interactions with others (or attempts to keep these outside interactions from the other person) dialectical tensions may emerge.

Relational dialectics revolve around the communication partners have within the couple and between the couple and their social network. This theory portrays how couples manage tensions across three supra-dialectics: integration-separation, stability-change, and expression-privacy. These supra-dialectics consist of external dialectics (how the partners communicate with those in their social circles) and internal dialectics (the interaction of the couples). Understanding which tensions exist in relationships due to social media use and how these contradictions

emerge would contribute to the current literature, and this knowledge would benefit people in existing and future relationships.

RQ1: What dialectical tensions emerge among relationship members using social media?

As dialectic tensions emerge due to social media use, partners will need to face the contradictions in their interactions with one another. If the partners are using social media low in transparency or using social media in less transparent ways, then their actions will not be visible to their significant other. The significant other will be dependent on their partner for knowledge about his or her social media use. In addition to this, the partners are likely to experience different tensions depending on which social media the partner use. Those built on privacy (e.g. Snapchat) may cause different tensions than those used often for transparent communication (e.g. Twitter). However, the way the social media are used may influence the emergence of the tensions. Therefore, partners will need to determine how they will manage the tensions that emerge.

First, as couples experience tensions, they may establish rules for acceptable behavior on social media, as well as rules for sharing about their social media use with their partner. There are also multiple strategies for managing the contradictions that scholars have identified in past literature. Determining if partners communicate about their social media use would be beneficial, because struggles may exist due to being on social media while in a relationship. Discovering whether partners are willing to share passwords or simply tell the other about their social media behavior would help to establish how social media impacts relationships. Transparency may exist in relational interactions even when social media lack transparency.

Finally, research has shown that the ability to manage dialectical tensions effectively increases as those managing the tension gain experience. Since dialectical tensions manifest in

different ways throughout the relationship phases, it would be important to see if the tensions

with social media use and communication about that use change depending on the length and

status of the relationship. While in longer relationships, partners may expect that the other will

be transparent with them; they may also not need as much transparency due to growth in trust

and time spent together. This is an important aspect to discover in this study.

     RQ2: How do relationship partners manage the relational dialectics that emerge from

social media use?

METHOD

Participants

Eighteen individuals who identified themselves as being part of a romantic relationship and a social media user participated in one-on-one interviews for this study. Interviews ranged in length from approximately 19 minutes to 49 minutes, with an average of about 30 minutes ($M = 30.56$, SD = 7.516). Of those who completed the interview process, a greater proportion were women ($n = 14$, 77.8%) than men ($n = 4$, 22.2%). The average age of the participants was 24 years of age ($M = 24.11$, ages 18-38, SD = 6.038). The participants were predominantly white ($n = 14$, 77.8%), followed by those who identified as other ($n = 2$, 11.1%), and then Hispanic/ Latino ($n = 1$, 5.6%) and Asian ($n = 1$, 5.6%). Six of the participants were graduate students (33.3%), followed by freshmen ($n = 4$, 22.2%), juniors ($n = 4$, 22.2%), and sophomores ($n = 3$, 16.7%).

The length of the relationships ranged from 3 months to 14 years, with an average of about 3 ½ years ($M = 3.49$, SD = 3.61). Of these relationships, a majority identified as exclusive and serious (considering marriage, $n = 11$, 61.1%), followed by married ($n = 4$, 22.2%), exclusive romantic ($n = 1$, 5.6%), casual romantic ($n = 1$, 5.6%), and newly out of a relationship ($n = 1$, 5.6%). Of the 18 participants, 17 used Facebook (94.4%), 9 used Instagram (50%), 9 used Snapchat (50%), 7 used Twitter (38.9%), 3 used Tumblr (16.7%), 2 used WhatsApp (11.1%), and 1 used Telegram (5.6%). Participants stated that of their partners, 17 used Facebook (94.4%), 9 used Instagram (50%), 9 used Snapchat (50%), 5 used Twitter (27.8%), 4 used Reddit (22.2%), 2 used WhatsApp (11.1%), 1 used Tumblr (5.6%), and 1 used Gaming Networks (such as PlayStation Network, 5.6%).

Procedures

Participants were recruited using two separate research pools at a large Midwestern university. The first pool included undergraduate students in a general education requirement course for all students at this University. These students received a recruitment notice in a Blackboard announcement for the course. The other research pool was recruited through a recruitment email sent to the research listserv for the University. Those receiving this email were students at the university who had not opted out of receiving research listserv emails. Students were targeted for this study because young adults are consistent users of social media. In current census based research, young adults aged 18-29 use social media the most, with 90% saying they are on social media (Perrin, 2015). In addition to these traditional web-based social media, 41% of smartphone users in this same age bracket use apps such as Snapchat or Wickr which automatically delete sent messages (Duggan, 2015).

In order to take part in the study, participants were required to be at least 18 years of age, define themselves as in a romantic relationship, and use social media to communicate with people outside of the relationship. Participants did not receive compensation; however, those in the undergraduate course were able to receive required research participation credit, while one participant from the research listserv pool was randomly selected to receive a $25 gift card. Students of the primary investigator were not able to participate in this study in order to avoid undue influence. Participants were recruited for approximately one month.

One-on-one interviews were used in order to allow for more in-depth responses; interviews allow participants to share their stories related to the research topic (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). These responses allowed the researcher to obtain details about the participants' thoughts, feelings, and emotions on a certain phenomenon, which is an important aspect of

qualitative research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The recruitment notice disclosed the purpose of

the study and notified the participants that the entire interview process would take about 45-60

minutes. Those who volunteered for the study were able to sign up for an interview time that

worked with their schedule. They were sent a reminder email two days prior to their participation

in the study with the location of the interview. Thirty-three participants were initially recruited;

however, not all were able to make their scheduled appointment. However, interviews were

completed until theoretical saturation was reached. Eighteen interviews took place in a private

room within the Communication Department on campus. The private room allowed the

participant to offer more honest and in-depth answers. Prior to beginning the interview,

volunteers were again informed of the purpose of the study and were provided with an informed

consent form so that they were aware of their rights as a participant (See Appendix A).

Participants were notified that all interviews would be recorded and no identifying information

would be used in the final report. After giving consent, participants filled out a questionnaire

concerning demographic and general relationship information (See Appendix B).

A semi-structured interview protocol was used for this study. Well-structured interview

protocols serve as a guide for the interviewer so that the interviewer can make sure that the

information gained from the interview answers the research questions (Jacob & Furgerson,

2012). Participants were asked open-ended questions related to social media use within their

relationship (See Appendix C), such as what information they communicate about their

relationship on social media and how much they believe their significant other is aware of their

social media use. Potential follow-up questions were included on the protocol; however, the

interviewer asked additional follow up questions to prompt the participants as needed. These

additional questions allowed a participant go more in-depth on a specific answer or allowed the

interviewer to ask participants more about an unexpected topic that emerged during the interview. All interviews were recorded to ensure the accuracy of the information. In addition to this, the interviewer took short notes during the interview and wrote a short analytic memo describing any important nonverbal behaviors that took place, any significant themes that emerged, how the interview differed from or were similar to information in other interviews, and any difficulties that were experienced in the interview. In order to help ensure confidentiality, the findings were presented using pseudonyms; all pseudonyms used were culturally similar to the participants' real name in order to maintain the cultural integrity of responses. Pseudonyms were chosen using a list of popular names given during the years surrounding the participant's birth. Following the interviews, all interviews were transcribed.

Data Analysis

The interviews yielded a total of 189 single-spaced pages of transcribed data. A qualitative approach was used to analyze the participants' perceptions of social media use within the relationship and their communication with their partner. Qualitative analysis is done for "the purpose of discovering concepts and relationships in raw data and then organizing these into a theoretical explanatory scheme" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11). Prior to analysis, each interview was read in its entirety in order for the researcher to become more familiar with the data. The analytic memos and any notes taken pertaining to the interview were also read to clarify the context of comments made during the interviews. Upon reasonable familiarity with the transcript, data analysis began.

This study implemented framework analysis during the coding process. Due to this study's grounding in theory, it was imperative to use a concept-driven coding system such as framework analysis (Gibbs, 2007). Framework analysis includes key thematic elements that are

used during the coding process; these themes are often adapted from prior literature and research or are taken from existing theories (Gibbs, 2007). Since this study was grounded in the relational dialectics theory, thematic elements for coding already existed in the literature. However, this approach also accounts for the emergence of data not related to current themes, resulting in potential new thematic categorizations for coding through an "Other" category in the coding process. This category was used for any dialectic or management strategy that is not part of Baxter's relational dialectics theory.

This study used the framework analysis process described in detail by Rabiee (2004). The analytical process will be adapted for an interview for this study. For research question one, the six relational dialectics were identified as the primary themes for coding. Participant responses were analyzed for information regarding communication between the participant and his/her partner about social media (internal dialectics: autonomy-connection, predictability-novelty, and openness-closedness) and communication between the couple and those outside of the relationship via social media (external dialectics: inclusion-seclusion, conventionality-uniqueness, revelation-concealment). For research question two, the current descriptions of the management strategies for relational dialectic tensions were used for thematic analysis (selection, separation, neutralization, and reframing).

To answer the research questions, the researcher implemented the following process. Following the identification of themes, indexing occurred. Indexing is the process of "sifting through the data, highlighting, and sorting out quotes, and making comparisons both within and between cases" (Rabiee, 2004, p. 657). First, each interview was read and analyzed for each research question, taking each statement separately. The researcher both conducted and transcribed the interviews prior to coding, which increased the familiarity with the data.

Transcripts were read to determine the emergence of relational dialectics in the conversations. Each dialectical tension was identified according to the existing themes. Any tensions that emerged that were inconsistent with the current theory were marked for future coding. Second, the researcher read through for the existing management strategies, again marking any that emerged that were inconsistent with the current literature.

Next, the researcher created a codebook that utilized definitions and examples of the various codes to be used by a second coder. In order to train the second coder on the codes for this study, the researcher and second coder coded one transcript together. The second coder then coded 20% of the data (four transcripts) to achieve intercoder reliability. Reliability was determined for the two separate research questions. The researcher and the second coder agreed on 71% of assigned relational dialectic codes, for a reliability with a kappa value of .61. This rate falls within the range identified as substantial agreement between the researcher and the second coder (Sun, 2011). The agreement for the management strategies was slightly lower at 61%, with a kappa value of .48, signifying only moderate agreement between the coders (Sun, 2011). All discrepant cases were discussed between the researcher and the second coder until agreement was reached and final codes were assigned. The final codes from the discussion were then used to determine if the initial coding of the transcripts was appropriate.

Following the coding of the interviews, charting of the coded statements occurred; this consisted of lifting the coded quotes and sorting them in tables (Rabiee, 2004). Each coded statement was placed into the table under the specific dialectic it was coded for, and was also identified by the corresponding management strategy used if applicable. This allowed for the identified thematic quotes to be read through in order to compare and contrast participant responses. However, it was important that each original interview transcript remained unchanged

in order for the researcher to review the interview as a whole to determine the context of the situation. Due to the need to remain aware of the context of the coded statements, each statement that was transferred to the table included the pseudonym of the participant and the line numbers of the transcript. Following the charting of the quotes that fit the pre-established dialectic tensions or management strategies, all of the statements that were coded as "Other" were placed in the table and reviewed again. This was done to determine if there were any common themes that emerged, resulting in the identification of new dialectical tensions or any new management strategies. If new themes emerged, they were separated from the other examples and a new description was added in the results section.

ANALYSIS

Eighteen interviews, consisting of 189 single-spaced pages of data, were analyzed to determine how relational dialectics emerged in the way the participants discussed their relationship and social media use. Statements made by the participants were analyzed to determine what dialectical tensions emerged among romantic couples who used social media (RQ1) and what strategies the couples used to manage these dialectics (RQ2). First, an overview of findings for each research question will be presented. Second, a deeper analysis of the use and management of relational dialectics is discussed. This analysis will explain how past experiences, relationship characteristics, and other relationship factors influence each of these areas.

Research question one aimed to determine what dialectical tensions emerged among relationship members using social media. Transcripts were analyzed to determine the presence of internal (autonomy-connection, predictability-novelty, and openness-closedness) and external dialectics (inclusion-seclusion, conventionality-uniqueness, and revelation-concealment) relating to social media use among romantic couples. Each of the six dialectics were present, however the prevalence of each varied. A total of 374 statements were coded as including relational dialectics. There were 127 statements related to revelation-concealment, 75 discussing openness-closedness, 59 related to predictability-novelty, 53 of autonomy-connection, 44 of inclusion-seclusion, and 8 dealing with conventionality-uniqueness. Eight statements were coded as "Other"; however, there was not enough commonality between these statements to suggest any significant emergence of a new relational dialectic. A visual representation of this data, as well as exemplars of each of the relational dialectics, can be found in Table 2.

Table 2
Emergence of Relational Dialectics and Exemplars

Relational Dialectics	Frequency of Emergence	Exemplars
Revelation-Concealment	127 statements	"We have decided at this point not to make our relationship on social media … because we're both camp counselors and so we can't … let our … campers know that we're dating during the summer. And so if they were on social media and our relationship was on social media, then … it would be very hard to keep that a secret. But once we're done being camp counselors … we plan to um, make it official on social media, so it's not like we're against it. But, it's just like, we don't want to because of the camper situation" (Hannah, 144-149).
Openness-Closedness	75 statements	"I, like I wouldn't, it wouldn't bother me if he had my passwords cause I have nothing to hide and I know he has nothing to hide too. Cause we're so open that there is nothing like else that I really need to know, I think … like I have the password to his phone and vice versa. But like as far as social media there's no need for a password" (Samantha, 429-431).
Predictability-Novelty	59 statements	"… be aware of what they are doing, what sites they are on, who they are on that site… communicate to them about that … Be aware of … what they post, what they say, who they interact with, you know. I mean not like actively like stalking them but like be generally aware of generally who they communicate with" (Elizabeth, 461-465).
Autonomy-Connection	53 statements	"… we are kind of private people. It's kind of weird, we're like I guess two cats going on the same adventure together. We let each other have each other's space and social media is kind of considered the other person's private space … It's not a shared venue. And as long as we don't break the other person's trust, there's really no, there's no need to monitor that sort of thing" (Jennifer, 196-200).
Inclusion-Seclusion	44 statements	"… well, our rule is that … we're not on it when we're with each other … Because we just, want to value like actual face time with people. (Hannah, 298-299).

Table 2. Emergence of Relational Dialectics and Exemplars (continued)

Conventionality-Uniqueness	8 statements	"… and you can't like recover what you had deleted. All of your posts. And so I was just kind of annoyed by that. And um ... I didn't want to look like I was a psycho and the only, that you know shares on social media. Cause sometimes that can look weird (Samantha, 335-337).

Revelation-concealment was the most prominent dialectic in this study. This dialectic emerged throughout the study, and can be characterized by statements such as "I mean I could definitely see where it could be problematic for relationships. Some people are posting pictures of their significant other doesn't want posted, or personal information that they don't want posted. That kind of stuff" (Stephanie, 366-370). Statements demonstrating the emergence of the revelation-concealment dialectic focused on the tension between sharing information about the relationship on social media versus keeping it private.

Openness-closed was the second most prevalent dialectic; however, this dialectic emerged at nearly half of the frequency of revelation-concealment. This dialectic can be illustrated by the statement "I can see the post that she's doing, but there's always … something in mind that what's going on messages so … I don't like ask her that, but I kind of like, as I shared those things I want her to share it … which she, you know, sometimes do … (Imran, 394-398). Statements regarding this dialectic focus on the need to share information with the other person about social media versus keeping that information to oneself. The two prominent dialectics in this study were from the expression-privacy supra-dialectic.

While these were the prominent dialectics, autonomy-connection, inclusion-seclusion, and predictability-novelty emerged at similar rates to one another. While these dialectics occurred often, they were not as prominent when dealing with the use of social media in a

relationship. The least prevalent dialectic was conventionality-uniqueness. This dialectic emerged rarely during the interviews. While participants at times expressed disapproval over how others used social media, they were less likely to express how their relationship was either adhering to social norms or unique in how it is expressed on social media. One of the few examples of this dialectic is "… people take pictures, selfies with their significant other. And we don't see each other as often, so we don't take pictures of ourselves that often. And usually we are both photography… hobbyists. So we take I guess better quality pictures than just selfies. (Elizabeth, 248-251). This example illustrated the participant's attempt to make the posts about the relationship different from other relationships, as their photos are often higher quality than the traditional selfies of social media. Aside from the initial six dialectics, no new tensions emerged at a rate that was significant.

While each of the dialectics emerged in differing amounts, they did not emerge in a vacuum. The emergence of relational dialectics was influenced by the relationship in which they occurred, but also were impacted by how people in that relationship have managed relational dialectics in the past. As the couple either successfully or unsuccessfully managed a dialectical tension, this will influence the successfulness of their future tension management. Due to this, it was also important to analyze the statements made by the participants to determine how they choose to manage the tensions as they emerge.

Research question two aimed to discover how relationship partners manage the relational dialectics that emerge from social media use. Each of the four management strategies were found within the statements made by the participants. Selection and separation were the prominent strategies used to manage the dialectics that emerged from social media use; however, selection occurred about twice as often as separation. Out of 272 statements that illustrated the use of a

management strategy, selection was used in 155 statements, 76 statements included separation,

24 were using neutralization, and 17 used reframing. A visual representation of this can be seen

in Table 3.

Table 3
Emergence of Management Strategies and Exemplars

Management Strategy	Frequency of Emergence	Exemplars
Selection	155 statements	"… To me I feel like that's my Facebook page and like that's his Facebook page, and I don't know why he would need mine … I don't think he needs to post anything off mine. I don't know. I think that's like, weird" (Selection > Autonomy; Emily, 333-335).
Separation	76 statements	"… like he'll even know like when I am, before I'm going to post stuff, he knows what I'm posting, and like if it includes him. Sometimes if it doesn't include him like unless I'm like talking to him at that moment, I'm not telling him. But if it includes him, like he knows and if it includes me, he'll like tell me. And it's not like out of like the fact that like I need to know. Like I want him to ask my permission, it's just more of like hey I'm posting this on social media" (Openness-Closedness; Hannah, 259-264).
Neutralization	24 statements	"… definitely don't post about problems or even, even bragging I think is kind of, it's just, it looks kind of ugly. And then, when you brag about how good it gets, if it gets bad, you're probably gonna, you know complain about that too, you know. You talk about the highs, you'll you know like, you'll talk about the extremes on both sides … Everything in moderation. (Revelation-Concealment; Ashley, 372-377).
Reframing	17 statements	"… it's been awhile, so I don't really have an opinion on that anymore … initially I used to be upset, because… it would come naturally to me to feel like ok, I should post this, that we visited this place or we … went for a movie, something like that … that was just me. But eventually, I think just knowing that he doesn't like it, I don't even think about it" (Revelation-Concealment; Farah, 196-200).

An example of selection would be a statement such as, "I was just like she can do whatever she wants. Not really nit-picky on that" (Matthew, 104-105). In this example, the participant was using the selection strategy to manage the dialectic of autonomy-connection by allowing his significant other to have autonomy in how she uses social media. Separation, on the other hand, could be demonstrated by the statement "… maybe I only share it when I know that I have the time to waste … Because if I was supposed to be studying for an exam and I told him like hey I can't text because I'm studying for an exam, and then I'm procrastinating by being on Facebook, I probably wouldn't tell him" (Rachel, 301-304). In this example, the participant used the separation strategy to manage the openness-closedness dialectic, by only being open about her use if she did not have something else that she was supposed to be doing.

While separation and selection were the dominant strategies, neutralization and reframing also occurred. However, each management strategy that was used depended on the relationship. There were instances where more than one participant faced a dialectic in a similar way, however based on past experiences, relationship characteristics, or other influences, the participants chose to use different management strategies. The successfulness of the management strategies used depended on how well the couple was able to assess the relationship and what management strategy would be best for both of them. In addition to statements that incorporated each of the strategies, there were statements made by participants that displayed the emergence of a dialectic that did not illustrate the use of a management strategy. These statements were sometimes used to give context to future statements made by the participant, as they provided important information about the relationship needed for analysis.

Relational dialectics (RQ1), and the subsequent management strategies (RQ2) emerged when the participants discussed various aspects of their social media use and relationships. In

order to fully understand how the dialectical tensions emerged and why the couples chose to manage these tensions in a particular way, the analysis will more thoroughly illustrate the specific influences. The following section will discuss specific areas where the relational dialectics were prominent. These areas consisted of sharing information about their relationship on social media and sharing information about their social media use with one another. These areas illustrate prominent examples of the emergence of both internal and external dialectics, as well as the couples' attempts to manage these tensions.

Sharing Information about the Relationship on Social Media

Relational dialectics emerged when participants discussed the amount and type of information they shared about their relationship on social media. The dialectic of revelation-concealment was one of the dominant relational dialectics that emerged when discussing how the participant shared information about the relationship on social media. Since this dialectic revolves around the need to share information about the relationship with others in the social circle vs. keeping this relationship information private, this dialectic was expected to emerge. However, other dialectics emerged when discussing what they shared on social media, consisting of autonomy-connection, openness-closedness, and inclusion-seclusion. Participants used a variety of management strategies when faced with dialectical tensions related to sharing information. Five significant themes relating to sharing information about relationships emerged, including privacy concerns, amount of personal information, specific people who influenced sharing, sharing little to no information, and image control. Participants also learned from their past experiences with the dialectic and suggested that it is important to be careful about posting about the relationship and to determine the partner's comfort level with posting. A visual representation of these themes is included in Figure 1. This figure is a summary of the data from

retrieved through the one-on-one interviews, and should not be perceived as a decision tree. The

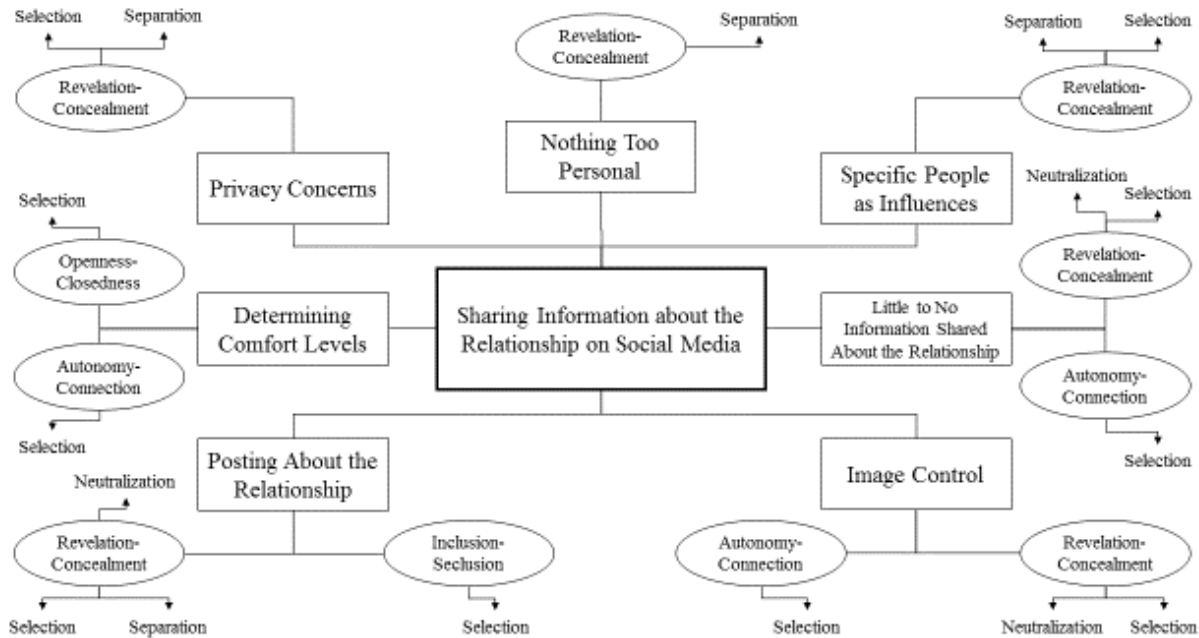following sections will detail how each of the relational dialectics emerged in these situations

Selection   Separation   Separation   Separation   Selection

Revelation-Concealment

Revelation-Concealment   Revelation-Concealment

Selection

Privacy Concerns   Nothing Too Personal   Specific People as Influences   Neutralization   Selection

Openness-Closedness   Revelation-Concealment

Determining Comfort Levels   Sharing Information about the Relationship on Social Media   Little to No Information Shared About the Relationship

Autonomy-Connection   Autonomy-Connection

Selection   Selection

Posting About the Relationship   Image Control

Neutralization

Revelation-Concealment   Inclusion-Seclusion   Autonomy-Connection   Revelation-Concealment

Selection   Separation   Selection   Selection   Neutralization   Selection

Figure 1. Visual representation of the emergence of relational dialectics and management strategies when sharing information about the relationship on social media. This diagram summarizes the results of the one-on-one interviews. Branching from the center of the diagram are the seven significant themes in which statements exemplifying the relational dialectics emerged. In each of the themes, specific relational dialectics emerged, which can be seen in the ovals within the diagram. From these, the management strategies chosen for the relational dialectics within each theme are identified. This diagram is a summary of the analysis, not a decision tree; the diagram signifies results of the current study and is not a suggestion management in future relationships.

and how this impacted the management strategies the participant chose.

Privacy Concerns

Privacy related to social media in general influenced the emergence of relational

dialectics when the participants and their partners decided what to share about their relationship

on social media. However, for certain participants, privacy concerns played a more significant

role in what they posted. Responses given by participants illustrated how privacy concerns

impacted their choice of management strategies when faced with the dialectic of revelation-concealment.

Alam was a participant who took full advantage of the privacy settings on social media. He had each of his friends on Facebook sorted into a specific group. Alam stated that this was because,

> I don't want my, I mean, other colleagues, my previous colleagues, to see how kind of parties that we have, being with my wife, and yeah. These kind of things and even in some cases, it will be interesting that the kids are, I mean, they just try to hide some parts of their relationship and their friends from their parents. (Alam, 63-67)

Alam's use of the specific groups was due to his privacy concerns with social media. He stated, "For myself, I have categorized in many different ways, because of basically … the culture that I am coming from" (Alam, 62-63). His friend list included groups for coworkers from his home country, professionals in his field, friends back home, friends in his current town, family, etc. The information that he reveals depends on which group he is allowing to see the information. The professional friends see very little about his relationship, while those he deems friends and family are able to see more. However, he still does not share much about his relationship with these groups either, only an occasional picture. This illustrates the revelation-concealment dialectic, because he is only revealing information about his relationship to certain groups, and even then, he only shares a minimal amount. This is an example of separation, because the information shared varies depending on the group, and he will only share certain information about the relationship while keeping the rest private.

Ashley offered a different perspective, as her boyfriend of over one and a half years was the one with more privacy concerns. He was not a fan of social media and was very resistant to having her post things about him. Ashley stated,

> We'd had some disagreements just 'cause, like I say he's really big into privacy. Like he's actually a paranoid government person, which is a little annoying … So he says, you know, the world already sees so much, why do we need to add to what they're seeing? And I just, you know, was kind of like … save your paranoia for someone who agrees with you, because I think you're being ridiculous. (Ashley, 235-240)

Ashley's boyfriend struggled to accept the amount of information that she was putting online about the two of them. During their relationship, she did delete her Facebook account and decreased the amount she posted to Snapchat. However, her posting on Instagram has remained consistent. Ashley stated that he wanted, "Like just, no like stuff about me. So I don't know. I mean I'm pretty much going against what he's telling me to do. It's not damaging to him" (Ashley, 219-220). This situation is unique, because the two members of the relationship manage the revelation-concealment dialectic differently. Ashley's boyfriend attempted to use the selection management strategy to conceal information about the relationship. However, Ashley's response to managing this tension was to use separation, by limiting the information that she presented about the relationship on social media he was present on, while continuing to post about the two of them on Instagram, which he was not a part of. While this has not caused tensions in the relationship yet, this may be likely if he were to find out about her continued Instagram posts.

Nothing Too Personal

When discussing the information they would share about their relationship on social media, many of the participants stated that they would share information about their relationship as long as it was not something they considered too personal. These instances illustrate the use of the separation strategy to manage the revelation-concealment dialectic. In each of these relationships, there is a difference between what the participant sees as too personal to share and what they would be comfortable sharing. There are also differences in these categories between each relationship.

Rachel discussed her nearly four-year relationship with her boyfriend. The two of them tend to be more private when it comes to posting on social media. Rachel mentioned, "I think just in general we're less personal people. So we're less likely to share personal things on social media. So it's just kind of not said because that's the type of people that we are" (Rachel, 418-420). She chose to limit the amount of personal relationship information that appeared on social media. Rachel stated that this was "maybe because I'm more guarded I guess. I don't like people knowing that many details about me, or at least having those details that readily accessible. Rather than asking me directly, I guess" (Rachel, 436-438). Rachel used the separation strategy to manage the revelation-concealment dialectic, because she chose to share only information that she deemed as not being too personal. Information that was too personal was not posted on social media; instead, she only shared this information with people who were close to her who asked her questions.

Another participant who shared the perspective of not sharing information that was too personal was Amanda. Amanda has been with her girlfriend for about 3 months. She and her girlfriend mostly post pictures of themselves to Facebook. Amanda stated "She wants pictures

more than I do. I'm just like I don't want … ok. I'm not a huge picture person" (245-246). Although Amanda will often relent to her girlfriend's desire to post pictures, she does have standards for the pictures that her girlfriend posts, such as no kissing pictures. Amanda stated, "usually, like anything that I feel to be a little, an intimate moment, that's something just, like for us, I don't like to share that" (266-267). However, Amanda had a few different reasons for not wanting to share information that was too personal. Part of this was due to the intimate nature of these pictures, but another aspect was that her mother did not know about her relationship yet. Since she is not in a heterosexual relationship, she will only reveal this information once she knows the relationship is lasting, simply due to her mother attempting to be comfortable with her daughter's relationship choices. Considering either of these influences, this again illustrates the use of separation to share only information that Amanda does not deem too personal. However, since they are still in the early stages of the relationship, the approach may change slightly once Amanda reveals the relationship to her mother and social media.

A final example of choosing not to share information that was too personal is from Ashley. As mentioned, Ashley chose to share information about the relationship on Instagram after her boyfriend asked her not to share information about them on social media. Yet, Ashley also discussed how the information that she shared on social media was information that she considered not to be too personal. Ashley stated that what she shared was,

> … nothing too personal. A picture of us, some kind words … you know saying like thanks for coming to see me or something like that, you know. Not like, hey this is what we did. But I don't know … just not something too personal and informative. (Ashley, 146-149)

Since much of the information she shares about the relationship is over Instagram, it typically consists of pictures and something brief. However, her views on what is too personal is different from that of Amanda, as mentioned above. Information that she would be willing to share through Instagram include, "Pictures of us kissing, hugging … my sweetheart, my love, my boyfriend. You know, those words are used" (Ashley, 177-178). For Ashley, posting pictures of her kissing or hugging her boyfriend were not seen as too personal. Instead, the information that Ashley provided about the relationship was limited in order to make sure that it was not too personal. Again, this is an example of someone using the separation strategy to regulate what information they revealed about the relationship and what information they concealed.

Specific People as Influences

A few participants identified a specific person or groups of people as the influence for what information they chose to share about their relationship on social media. Revelation-concealment was the dominant relational dialectic in this instance; however, the participants utilized differing strategies when managing this dialectic.

One participant, Hannah, discussed her relationship with her boyfriend of eight months. The dialectic of revelation-concealment emerged when the two discussed what information to share about their relationship. Hannah explained their decision, stating,

> We have decided at this point not to make our relationship on social media … because we're both camp counselors and so we can't … let our … campers know that we're dating during the summer. And so if they were on social media and our relationship was on social media, then … it would be very hard to keep that a secret. But once we're done being camp counselors … we plan to um, make it official on social media, so it's not like

we're against it. But, it's just like, we don't want to because of the camper situation.

(144-149)

Hannah and her significant other approach this dialectic with a separation management style, as they chose to separate the two ends of the pole over time. At the current time, the two chose to conceal the relationship from those on social media; this was due to their positions as camp counselors at the same camp. However, the two had already discussed making the relationship official on social media once the summer, and their duties as camp counselors, had ended. When discussing how they would talk about their relationship on social media, Hannah stated, "… but then, how I foresee me using it is like, for like just like again, significant events of our relationship. Not like extremely overboard, because I really get annoyed by people like that" (153-155). In this sense, she was prepared to reveal significant events about the relationship, while keeping most of the relationship aspects concealed. These examples illustrate both temporal (time-based) and topical (topic-based) separation when managing the revelation-concealment dialectic.

Another instance where revelation-concealment emerged in relation to sharing information on social media was in the case of Brittany and her boyfriend of four and a half years. Brittany described her parents as extremely conservative, and they did not approve of her boyfriend in the very beginning due to his lack of Christian faith. After their disapproval, Brittany and her boyfriend attempted to simply be friends, however this was not possible for them and they chose to have a semi-secret relationship. Due to her having extended family and others from her small hometown on Facebook, there was no identifying relationship information revealed on social media. She stated,

So, I didn't list myself as in a relationship, and I would never refer to my significant other

when we posted pictures of him being my significant other. Only like six-seven, six or

seven months ago did we post a picture together where I like actually let people know

that he was more than just a buddy. (Brittany, 59-62)

Brittany and her boyfriend used the management style of selection for nearly four years of their

relationship by choosing the concealment pole in order to keep the relationship private from her

parents. The two only began to reveal information about their relationship once her parents

realized that their expectations were harming their children and chose to support their daughter's

relationship. After this support, Brittany began using the separation management style, by only

choosing to share about significant events in the relationship.

Little to No Information Shared About the Relationship

Hannah and Brittany chose not to share anything about their relationship on social media

during the beginning of their relationship due to people in their lives. However, in addition to

participants choosing to conceal information because of specific people, there were participants

who chose to completely conceal their relationships on social media. Participants who fit this

description faced the dialectics of revelation-concealment and autonomy-connection.

Imran tends to be careful in all of his social media posts, and posts about his relationship

are no different. His girlfriend of one year, however, is someone who tends to post various things

on social media. When it comes to posting about their relationship, Imran said, "a few months

ago, she posted a few things about you know, about us, like our close pictures. But … I was not

interested about like, posting pictures together, and she then stopped" (108-110). Imran did not

like that there were pictures of the two of them posted on social media, especially because people

would make comments on the pictures, a fact that he did not like. Another factor of this is that

most of his social media connections do not know that he is in a relationship. Imran stated "… in her friend list… mostly people knows. But from my point of view, only very close people, friends, they know" (179-180). In this relationship, Imran implemented the strategy of selection by making concealment the primary pole of the dialectic of revelation-concealment. However, as stated by the theory, choosing only one pole may cause problems. In this case, Imran's girlfriend grew upset by his insistence on concealment. Imran stated,

> I told her if you share something, don't, don't tag me, or make sure that none of my friends would see. And make sure that if anyone posts any comments, which I don't like, just delete it, or ask them not to you know, comment anymore. (272-274)

Imran was willing to compromise with his girlfriend, taking on the strategy of neutralization. He does this by sacrificing a bit of his desire for concealment, but allowing her to have a moderated ability to discuss the relationship on social media. The reason this played out is the autonomy-connection dialectic. He was willing to let her make individual choices about what to post about the relationship, but he also desired that she not include a reference to him in the post so that he could control what other people saw about him.

Farah, had a rather unique relationship, in that she and her husband did not connect with one another on social media. While they were friends with similar people on Facebook, her husband made the choice to not "friend" anyone in his family, including his wife. In addition to not being friends on Facebook, her husband also prefers that she does not post about him. Farah stated,

> Well, um … we have our wedding pictures on Facebook. Which, um he didn't like go on opposing, but he didn't really like it … I remember uh an instance where I had a picture of us posted, like a year ago or so. And initially he didn't say anything, in couple of

weeks, he ended up expressing that you should, you should take that picture down. (159-

162)

Although Farah initially posted pictures of the two of them together, her husband requested that

she refrain from this and take down pictures of them together. She stated that this was "because I

feel like, it's not just me or my opinion, it, he's an individual too. So … I basically respect

whatever his view of the world is" (Farah, 163-164). Farah believed that since he was an

individual, he should have the ability to decide whether she posts a picture of him. Farah's

situation illustrates two different dialectical tensions, revelation-concealment and autonomy-

connection. Revelation-concealment emerges in the tension between sharing the relationship and

posting pictures of the two of them or leaving these offline. In Farah's situation, concealment

was chosen, as they used the selection management strategy. Farah stated that "I think my mind

is conditioned in a way that I don't even think about posting anything, because I know that he

does not like it. So I don't." (170-171). Her husband's preference for concealment has become so

engrained that there is no thought to post about them. The tension of autonomy-connection is

apparent in the fact that Farah accepts her husband's view as an individual. She has put aside her

feelings about posting and used the selection management style to prioritize his autonomy over

expressing their connection through the posting of pictures.

Image Control

The desire to control the image presented on social media influenced the emergence of

dialectical tensions. Multiple participants expressed that either they or their partner wanted to be

able to control the image that they presented on social media. This affected what the other person

in the relationship was able to post about the relationship. Both the revelation-concealment and

autonomy-connection dialectics emerged when one of the partners wished to control the image that they presented on social media.

As mentioned, Alam had privacy concerns surrounding social media and chose to incorporate separate groups when posting information. However, his wife sometimes shared pictures of him without his approval. Alam stated,

> So I don't want to be, you know public, you know, wanting my photo having my dinner in my t-shirt and my shorts, but in some cases my wife does that and I don't like that. Recently she posted a picture of me taking a nap on the sofa in front of the TV, and I don't like that. Because I want to show off, actually this kind of person that I want. (247-249)

Alam did not want his wife posting pictures of him on social media, because he wanted to be able to control the information about him on social media. When discussing how his posts would differ, he stated, "The other posts would be my t-shirt and my shorts sleeping on the couch watching a movie. I don't like this. So, that's why I want to show this kind of person from myself. Much more framed" (Alam, 314-317). In his relationship, Alam struggled with the management of the revelation-concealment dialectic. While he was attempting to use selection to conceal information about the relationship on social media, his wife was selecting to reveal information about the relationship. When facing this difficulty, Alam and his wife encountered the autonomy-connection dialectic. Alam stated, "we are different, but we try to respect each other. You know … we have different perspective on the things that we do" (378-379). Alam stated that the two of them attempted to respect the other person's perspective and compromise. When confronting this dialectic, they chose to use the neutralization strategy. Alam was willing

to give up a bit of his autonomy with his image control, however, he did not want to be completely connected to her in the way that she posted about him.

Jessica had been with her boyfriend for about two and a half years before they ended their relationship a week prior to the interview. One of the difficulties that they experienced during the relationship was her boyfriend's desire to control the information that was presented about him. Jessica stated that her boyfriend had difficulties with,

> Mostly just like pictures of him that he thought he looked bad in. Um, just like insecurities, like I thought that it was a fine picture and like that's what you look like, but if you don't like that ok, I'll take it down … it was never like, that's too personal or something. It was just like I don't like the way I look in that photo. (231-234)

Jessica's boyfriend had attempted to control the information that she shared about him on social media. This illustrates the revelation-concealment dialectic and her boyfriend's attempt at selecting concealment of the relationship. When discussing this further, Jessica stated,

> like if I would snap a picture and put it on My Story and he didn't like it, he would be like why would you do that? Why wouldn't you give me, or why wouldn't you just like run that past me sort of thing. Um so conversations maybe happened that way, like, in response to posts. Or sometimes I would just like ask like is it ok if I post this. (219-224)

As she discussed the tension that she was facing with the revelation-concealment dialectic, she also hinted at issues that the couple faced with autonomy-connection. In his attempt to control the image of him that was presented on social media, Jessica's boyfriend selected to prioritize his autonomy over anything else. Both Jessica's ability to feel connected by posting about the relationship and her autonomy in choosing what to post were secondary to her boyfriend's

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control of the his social media image. This was only one of the tensions that this couple faced during their relationship.

Posting about the Relationship

Participants offered advice about how to post about the relationship on social media. Much of the advice that was provided was based on the participant's personal experiences. Areas of advice surrounded the emergence of the revelation-concealment and inclusion-seclusion dialectic. There were three dominant topics that emerged when discussing social media posts: posting too early, posting about problems, and sharing too much.

Multiple participants discussed the importance of not posting too much about the relationship online, especially early on. Brittany stated, "Don't tell anybody you're getting into a relationship, because you never know how long it's going to last and it's better to leave the world guessing than to air your dirty laundry on a beautiful blue and white Facebook platter" (396-398). Brittany is a prime example of this, because she did not reveal anything about her relationship on social media until nearly four years into her relationship. Imran also voiced his opinions on sharing early on when he stated to, "not get carried away at the start of relationship, like people post a lot of things … and if it doesn't work out, they kind of feel sad or ashamed … and may face questions that they don't want to face" (436-439). Both Brittany and Imran voiced the need to manage the dialectic of revelation-concealment. However, the two used slightly different strategies to manage this tension. Brittany encouraged the use of selection to prioritize concealment over sharing information about the relationship. Even though she has shared information on social media, she still limits it. Imran, on the other hand, discussed the strategy of separation. He encouraged limiting the posts about the relationship early on, however the amount of posts may increase later on, showing a change over time from concealment to revelation.

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Another aspect of sharing information that participants discussed was sharing information about problems that are occurring within a relationship. Participants expressed the importance of not discussing problems online. Imran discussed the fact that social media makes it easier for someone to post something without thinking it through and how this can make the problem worse. Imran stated, "Or you just talk to someone or like reveal some information … you're kind of like getting a load off of you, and don't think about that. So you're kind of escaping the situation and … it can aggravate" (484-487). Venting on social media can make the problems one is facing in the relationship even worse. Imran discussed the importance of not sharing too much information about the relationship, but especially about problems. When faced with the dialectic of revelation-concealment he suggested using the selection strategy to conceal this information. Amanda also expressed the importance of concealing information when she stated, "… if you're in a relationship with someone and had an argument, it's probably not best to post that. Because you're not going to be angry about that forever" (502-503). She emphasized the importance of concealing this information because this problem is not always going to exist in the relationship, but it would have been shared on social media. It is important to keep information about problems within the relationship.

Brittany also discussed the importance of not sharing information about problems on social media. When faced with the dialectic of revelation-concealment, she also used selection and chose concealment. Brittany supports not sharing too much about the relationship, and she stated,

"My grandma had a really good piece of advice once. She said when you fight with your significant other, the only person who should know about that fight is your significant other … her point was like, if you talk to everybody except for him about your issues,

you're always going to have issues … I think that when I'm tempted to like post things

on Facebook that are really vague, you know angry statuses I just remember, you know

what, the only person that should know about this is him. So I should just go talk TO

him. And sometimes people use Facebook and social media as a way to like vent about

somebody instead of communicating, actually with that person, and I would recommend

not doing that. (402-410)

Not only does Brittany discuss the importance of not sharing information about problems, but

she also explains that you should not be talking to other people about problems, and that one

should discuss this with the significant other instead. When faced with the dialectic of inclusion-

seclusion, Brittany suggests using selection to seclude oneself with the significant other. By

talking to other people about problems, it could damage the relationship. However, by

prioritizing seclusion, people are able to fix the problem rather than just venting about it.

Ashley, on the other hand, suggested that couples should refrain from posting about

problems as well as bragging about things that are going well. Ashley stated,

… definitely don't post about problems or even, even bragging I think is kind of, it's just,

it looks kind of ugly. And then, when you brag about how good it gets, if it gets bad,

you're probably gonna, you know complain about that too, you know. You talk about the

highs, you'll you know like, you'll talk about the extremes on both sides. … Everything

in moderation. (372-377)

Ashley emphasized a different point of view from the other two. She does agree that there should

be limited posting about problems, but she also pointed out that bragging about the relationship

could also be dangerous. Therefore, she recommended the neutralization strategy. She did not

say that everything needed to be concealed or revealed, but that moderation should be used when deciding what to post.

Finally, when considering what to post on social media, two respondents suggested to limit the amount of information that was posted. Amanda suggested that people should be guarded against posting too many pictures onto social media. Amanda stated,

> … don't go crazy about posting pictures. Especially to Facebook. You have to delete every one individually. So, if it's ends badly and you don't want pictures of you up together, that's going to be a long chunk of your time after a breakup looking at pictures of you two together over, and over, and over … It's not a pretty thing, and I've helped a friend with that process before. Because she didn't want to be looking at these pictures. She had a lot of pictures. And also, on Facebook, you don't, you don't need to share everything about your life. Because, one, if it's important to you, then the only people it should be important to is like whoever you are sharing it with, like … personally. (494-503)

Amanda gave advice based on an experience she had with a friend who ended up needing to delete pictures after a breakup. She also expressed the importance of not sharing everything on social media. Amanda encouraged the use of selection when deciding what to reveal or conceal. She stated that it is important to prioritize concealment in these situations in order to not be carried away with posting.

Ashley also discussed sharing too much on social media. However, Ashley's concern was with being too sappy in the posts. Ashley stated,

> … over sappiness towards each other … if the significant other is … also on social media, I think, you know, people see that and … no one ever goes oh my gosh I love that

… it's an annoying thing to come across. It's one reason why I didn't care to delete

Facebook … it's a waste of brain cells reading it … I'm a very sappy person, but it's

nauseating when people do it in public. (381-386)

Ashley also expressed the importance of using the selection strategy in order to manage the

revelation-concealment dialectic. She stated that people do not enjoy seeing things online that are

too personal. Because of this, people in relationships should choose to conceal this information

and not communicate as much about their relationship on social media.

Determining Comfort Levels

Another piece of advice that participants offered to those entering future relationships is

to find out what the other person's comfort level is with social media posts. When faced with this

topic, the dialectics of openness-closedness and autonomy-connection emerged. Each participant

offered a suggestion for managing the dialectics as they emerged.

Jennifer has been with her significant other for 14 years, and she does not feel that social

media is a crucial part in her relationship. She feels that this may be because social media did not

exist when her relationship started. However, she has noticed that for other relationships, social

media has played a larger role in the relationship. Jennifer discussed the importance of

determining comfort levels when she stated,

> … I suppose now that because it is a thing, I would say maybe talk to your partner about
>
> what sorts of things … they're comfortable with having shared on social media … and
>
> also that it's your own special spaces, so you don't get to control each other's stuff. You
>
> can make requests, like say, he dumps the ex who he still has feelings for and defriends
>
> her, but he doesn't necessarily have to honor that request. Cause it's his space. (317-321)

Jennifer addresses two different dialectics in her advice. First, she mentions the importance of discussing one's comfort level with the significant other. When attempting to manage the dialectic of openness-closedness, Jennifer stresses the importance of being open with the other person about what you are comfortable with. The second dialectic is that of autonomy-connection. In this situation, she is showing the selection of autonomy. She states that social media is a separate space. On this space, one can make requests of their significant other, but that person can choose not to accept that request since they are an individual.

Jennifer also addressed the fact that even if a social circle is small, the other person could still be uncomfortable with posts. Jennifer stated,

> … you may still have a smaller circle of friends and family, but that doesn't mean other people can't be aware of it or find out about it, which is again, why you need to check in with your partner about what they feel comfortable with being put … on social media. (346-348)

Alexandra also reaffirmed this point when she stated, "if I didn't know what his feelings on Facebook were and talking about things on Facebook, I would probably say something like, um … you now … this is my comfort level with posting things" (350-352). In each of these examples, being open with the other person allows them to feel more able to communicate about their comfort level in return. Therefore, the selection of openness allows for the other member of the relationship to choose openness over closedness when faced with this dialectic.

Sharing Information about Social Media Use

The second topic that lead to the emergence of relational dialectics was when participants explained how they shared information about their social media use with their partners. Many dialectics emerge when determining how to share information about this use, the most prominent

being openness-closedness. Other dialectics that emerge include autonomy-connection, inclusion-seclusion, and predictability-novelty. In addition to the variety of dialectics that emerged, each of the management strategies were used by couples when managing the tensions. Themes emerged when determining what information to share about social media use included levels of sharing, building trust, and password sharing. However, when participants discovered how their significant other used social media, there were some disagreements that illustrated the emergence of relational dialectics. These included talking to perceived rivals and using social media when together. Finally, as partners experienced successful and unsuccessful maintenance of the relational dialectics, they suggested to share information about social media use from the beginning and to build an awareness about how the other uses social media. The following sections detail how the relational dialectic emerged in these situations and how this influenced the management strategies the participant chose. A visual representation of these themes can be seen in Figure 2. This figure is a summary of the current analysis, and should not be interpreted as a decision tree.

Levels of Sharing

When it comes to sharing information about social media use, various levels of sharing occur. The level of sharing is influenced by the way the couples decide to manage the dialectics of openness-closedness and autonomy-connection. Couples primarily used the strategies of selection and separation to manage these dialectics.

When faced by the prospect of sharing information about social media use, Hannah discussed the fact that she shares everything with her boyfriend. She stated,

I guess we're in a very open relationship, so we communicate a lot about everything. And so, just following the fact that we just talk about everything then, I just tell him … how I

use social media. And, he just like does the same, because we're just in this very open
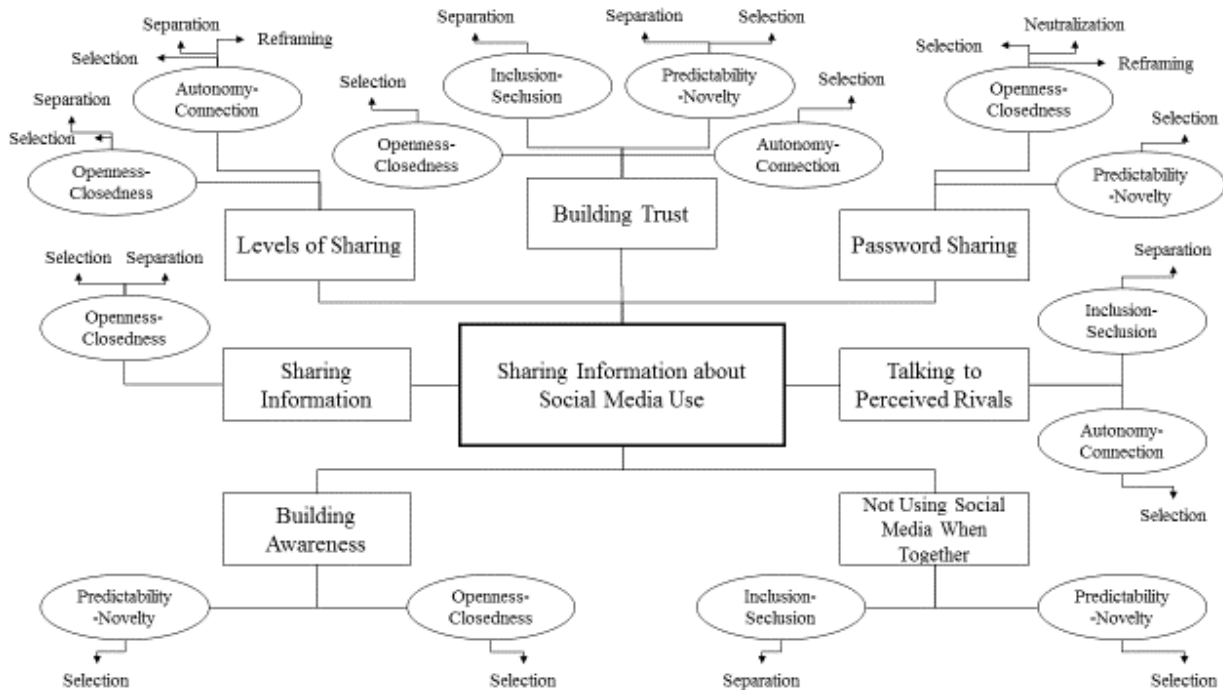
communication relationship. (248-251)

Figure 2. Visual representation of the emergence of relational dialectics and management strategies when sharing information about one's social media use with one's partner. This diagram summarizes the results of the one-on-one interviews. Branching from the center of the diagram are the seven significant themes in which statements exemplifying the relational dialectics emerged. In each of the themes, specific relational dialectics emerged, which can be seen in the ovals within the diagram. From these, the management strategies chosen for the relational dialectics within each theme are identified. This diagram is a summary of the analysis, not a decision tree; the diagram signifies results of the current study and is not a suggestion management in future relationships.

In this part of the discussion, Hannah stated that she and her boyfriend share everything with one

another. When looking at the relational dialectic of openness-closedness, it is clear from this

example that they chose to use the selection to manage the tension and chose to be open about

their use. However, Hannah later stated,

> …before I'm going to post stuff, he knows what I'm posting, and like if it includes him.
>
> Sometimes if it doesn't include him like unless I'm like talking to him at that moment,

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I'm not telling him. But if it includes him, like he knows and if it includes me, he'll like

tell me. And it's not like out of like the fact that like I need to know, like I want him to

ask my permission, it's just more of like hey I'm posting this on social media. (259-264)

This example illustrates the use of the separation strategy, as she only chooses to tell him what

she is posting if the post includes him. She is separating what she is open about into things that

include him and is closed when it does not. However, if she is with him at the time she is

posting, she may tell him about her post. Yet as a long-distance couple, this type of sharing may

be less likely. She is using topical separation, because she is only telling him information about

her social media use that involves him. While Hannah states that she is very open with her

boyfriend, the actions that she shared were actually a separation between when to be open and

when she was closed.

While Hannah shares information about her use with her boyfriend, Brittany and her

boyfriend shared almost no information about their social media use with one another. When

asked how they communicated about social media use, Brittany stated,

We don't communicate about it. Um, he finds out if I posted something about him when

he logs on, on Facebook once a month and sees, oh hey look! It's a picture of me. Um, I

don't really tell him. And as far as his Reddit use, you know, I don't notice when he's on

it and we don't talk about it much. He might share funny stories of his. (214-218)

When faced with the dialectic of openness-closedness when discussing social media use, the two

used the selection management strategy. They are closed with one another and do not make

active attempts to be transparent with one another. Brittany explained that "We didn't even talk

about it. … well we're so used to being like, independent, fly solo people, that … a lot of areas

of our lives … they're not in the same sphere and that's ok with us" (223-225). From Brittany's

explanation, there is a connection between the choice in openness-closedness and the autonomy-connection dialectic. The choice to select autonomy over connection in the way they use social media influences how much information they feel that they need to share. Brittany expressed that the two chose to be autonomous and independent from one another when using social media.

Similar to Brittany, Jennifer and her husband share very little information about their social media use. Jennifer stated that the lack of sharing was because,

we are kind of private people. It's kind of weird, we're like I guess two cats going on the same adventure together. We let each other have each other's space and social media is kind of considered the other person's private space. It's not, It's not a shared venue. And as long as we don't break the other person's trust, there's really no, there's no need to monitor that sort of thing. (196-200)

Jennifer stated that the two of them trust each other and allow each other to have their own separate space online. This highlights the autonomy-connection dialectic, and the two have used the selection strategy by choosing to allow each other to be their own individual. This has effected how open the two are with each other about their social media use. Jennifer stated, "because we are probably older than most of your participants, it's just not as integral a part of our everyday communication … It never struck me that that would be a conversation that I would need to have with him" (150-153). Because Jennifer did not feel that social media was very significant in their lives, they were able to maintain their autonomy. This has lead the two to use the selection strategy to be closed about their social media use, when confronted with the openness-closedness dialectic. Jennifer and her husband saw social media as a private place, and therefore they did not feel a need to be transparent in their use.

A final example is from Ashley and her boyfriend. The two of them have had conversations regarding her overuse of social media in the past. However, Ashley stated,

> We're both pretty independent and strong-willed, but, he won't say anything unless it is really bad and by then I'm kind of just like oh yeah, I forgot … I used to like to you know go crazy on My Snapchat Stories to the point where people deleted me cause they're just like this is too much, I can't. So I've cut back considerably. So, when he says it, it's kind of like a reminder, like hey, you know, slow down a little bit. (199-204)

As the couple has used social media, the dialectic of autonomy-connection emerged. Ashley and her boyfriend prioritize autonomy; however separation is the strategy that comes into play, as the couple becomes more connected and less independent if one member begins to post too much on social media. After Ashley's boyfriend reminds her not to post as much, the two revert back to autonomy until they need to discuss it again. Ashley doesn't feel the need to always communicate about what she is doing. She states that this is because, "It's not like you know he doesn't want me to see. I respect his privacy. It's kind of just like I trust that he's either talking to his good guy friends, good girl friends, or no one" (284-287). Because the two have built up trust, the two do not feel the need to always be open. They use the reframing, because being closed about the social media use is not seen as being opposite of being open. They are not trying to hide information; they just trust the other person.

Building Trust

As mentioned briefly by Ashley, when talking about sharing information about social media use, a major influence to how much is shared is the couple's ability to build trust. The main dialectic that emerged dealing with trust is the dialectic of predictability-novelty. When one is able to make their actions predictable to the other person, is may be easier to build trust. Other

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dialectics that emerged in relation to attempting to build trust include autonomy-connection, openness-closedness, and inclusion-seclusion.

Samantha discussed a change in trust that occurred over her relationship. About two months into the relationship, she was looking through her boyfriend's messages and found that a girl kept messaging him, and that he would sometimes reply because he felt she needed to talk to someone. However, she felt threatened by this interaction, so she brought it up to her boyfriend. Samantha stated, "… it's like I don't like the way she's talking to you. So then I looked more and then I brought it up. And therein lies the discussion" (281-282). Through this discussion, they were able to establish trust that has continued to grow throughout the relationship. Samantha said,

> … there wasn't much of a base there. There was a lack of trust just because we didn't have a lot of time to establish it. So I think when that girl was messaging him, there was that part of me like, do I need to be worried about … it? Is this something that we need to talk about? But, right now, that's not something I worry about. Like if a girl messages him I don't worry about it cause I already know, you know. I mean, I already know what his responses would be like. Just because I know him so well. (446-451)

Samantha felt threatened by her boyfriend's communication with another person initially; however, as the two had time to build a base of trust, she did not feel threatened anymore. Samantha initially felt insecure when her boyfriend was talking to someone she perceived as a rival, which caused the dialectic of inclusion-seclusion to occur. Separation was initially the strategy used, as the two determined that talking to perceived rivals was not acceptable. However, over time, this management strategy has not been as important to them as they built trust. The emergence of trust signifies the dialectic of predictability-novelty. The management

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dialectic of predictability-novelty has changed over time. This signifies separation, as the two featured novelty in the beginning, as their actions were unexpected in the beginning when there was not base. However, as the base of trust grew, the two have increased the predictability, as they are now aware of what the other person would do on social media.

Alexandra also stressed the importance of building trust. While she and her boyfriend of over six and a half years do not experience many conflicts, she contributes this to the trust they began establishing early in the relationship. Alexandra stated,

> We don't have conflict a lot in general and we maybe did a little bit in the beginning as we were sort of figuring out the relationship. And … just were able to build trust and that and really be clear about what we would constitute as I guess appropriate things to tell each other or not tell each other … You know, like maybe we're just really predictable, so I know he's not going to go out and do something crazy and I'm generally not either. (308-314)

As the two of them have been able to build trust, they have increased the predictability of the relationship. This illustrates how the two used the selection strategy to choose predictability when faced with the predictability-novelty dialectic. As the two have become more predictable in their actions, their views have become very similar to one another. While they feel that the other is more predictable, Alexandra stated, "I guess it's just we have similar thoughts about it … I mean, there is never a time when I would try to keep my social media use a secret from him or vice versa" (195-197). The fact that they have been able to become predictable and share their views on social media, the two have used the selection strategy with the openness-closedness dialectic. Alexandra stressed the important of building trust and being willing to be open with one another.

Elizabeth also expressed the fact that trust has grown over time. Elizabeth stated, "We know more now about what we do. Maybe in the very beginning we didn't know all of what we do. But now we just know it, so it's there" (405-407). In the beginning of the relationship, the couple was not aware of the others actions, making novelty the primary pole, however, this has changed over time as things have become more predictable. This is an illustration of temporal separation. Due to the trust that they were able to establish, the two do not share much about how they use social media. Elizabeth stated, "We're both our own people and we're allowed to do our own thing, generally" (376-377). In the relationship, the two have chosen the selection strategy to manage the dialectic of autonomy-connection. They emphasize the right to be an individual in how they use social media, and this was possible due to the trust they have built.

Password Sharing

Participants were asked their opinions on sharing passwords to social media with their partners. Feelings about this aspect varied, with some of the respondents showing a willingness to share passwords and felt it meant that there was nothing to hide, while others were resistant or thought it showed a lack of trust. The varied responses to password sharing illustrate the dialectics of openness-closedness and predictability-novelty.

Two participants discussed their partner's willingness to share the password, but also about their reluctance. Brittany discussed how her boyfriend was willing to share his password, but she refrained until recently. Brittany explained that,

> … he only has one password for everything, or like of a variation of it, and I knew what it was pretty much on day two of dating. Because he was like oh, by the way, this is my password. I just told him my computer password like two days ago, because I was finally ready to share that information with him. He's very open, he doesn't care. But, I'm very

protected … So, I'm very careful, even though he's probably going to be my husband.

And he's very open. (324-331)

Brittany discussed her boyfriend's selection of being open, while she originally selected to be closed. This was partially due to her guarded nature. She needed to be able to keep her password private. Brittany explained that the reason she finally shared it was "Cause he was like, can I please watch something on your computer … I'm like fine, this is my password. Normally I just type it in, but I'll tell you what it is. Part of that is I'm embarrassed of my password" (Brittany, 339-341). She used selection to remain closed about her password, partially out of concerns of privacy, but also because of embarrassment.

Imran is the second participant who was reluctant to share his password, even though his girlfriend was willing to share. Imran stated, "she's willing to share her passwords, but from my point of view… I'm not comfortable with that" (355-356). His comfort level however varied from what Brittany explained. While Brittany was not sharing her password due to privacy and embarrassment of the password, Imran was concerned with what his girlfriend might see. Imran stated, "we're together for only one year, and I've been using Facebook … since 2008. So, there may be something that … if she kind of goes through it, she may not like. Without knowing the context" (360-363). When faced with the dialectic of openness-closedness, Imran used the selection strategy to manage the dialectic, by choosing to remain closed. He was afraid that his girlfriend would find something in his social media from years past when he used to post everything, and he was afraid that she would not understand it out of context.

There were also differing opinions from a few other participants, with Samantha and Ashley being prime examples of the difference. Samantha initially was insecure in her relationship, but has been able to build trust. Samantha stated, "it wouldn't bother me if he had

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my passwords cause I have nothing to hide and I know he has nothing to hide too … we're so open that there is nothing like else that I really need to know" (428-430). When faced with the dialectic of openness-closedness, Samantha used the reframing strategy. She did not find the fact that they did not share their passwords as being closed, because they were open in other areas of their lives. Although she said she would not mind sharing her password, she felt that neither of them were hiding anything. Ashley, on the other hand, believed that needing to share passwords signified that a lack of trust in the partner. Ashley explained, "That's a little weird … mainly just cause that makes me feel like there's a lack of trust … If you need a password to something, why is it locked in the first place?" (309-311). Ashley used the neutralization strategy in terms of dealing with the openness-closedness strategy. She discussed that the couple needs to be able to give up a little openness as well as a closedness. She felt that it showed a lack of trust if you asked for a password, but that locking the social media may also show a lack of trust.

Stephanie, on the other hand, understood both aspects of the password debate. Stephanie stated, "I go back and forth … I mean, I could see where people would want other people's … passwords, but I don't think it's necessary, because you should trust the other person enough to not look at their stuff" (300-303). The explanation of this is that one should use the selection strategy to be predictable in their actions. When the other person does this when faced with the predictability-novelty dialectic, they are able to build trust in order not to need password sharing. However, Stephanie also stated, "But at the same time I can see the opposite, where …why would he have a problem sharing it if you have nothing to hide" (303-304). When she looked at the situation from this point of view, she understood the selection of openness when the dialectic of openness-closedness occurred. She questioned not sharing passwords if there was nothing to hide.

As the relationship partners learned about how their significant other used social media, there were disagreements that emerged in relation to different dialectical tensions. Inclusion-seclusion, autonomy-connection, and predictability-novelty were prominent dialectics that emerged and caused disagreements. Managing these dialectics consisted mainly of separation and selection. Common disagreements and rules that emerged dealt with talking to perceived rivals and using social media when together. Each of these is detailed in the next sections in order to determine how dialectics emerge and what influences the management of these dialectics.

Talking to Perceived Rivals

One of the main disagreements that emerged when discussing social media use was when one of the partners was communicating with someone perceived to be a romantic rival by the significant other. A dominant dialectic emerged in relation to this disagreement, inclusion-seclusion. This emerged due to one's desire to communicate with people outside of the relationship and the other wanted to remain more secluded. In addition to this, couples were also facing the dialectic of autonomy-connection.

For Jessica, this was a dominant disagreement in her relationship, and it contributed a great deal to the dissolution of her nearly two and a half year relationship. Jessica discussed the fact that this was her first serious relationship, so she had many insecurities. Not only that, but the long-distance nature of the relationship increased these insecurities. Jessica explained, "There was a lot of insecurities in long-distance relationships in general … and we had a lot of, we were kind of having like problems feeling close to each other when we were apart" (316-318). She was aware of females that her boyfriend talked to that she saw as threats to the relationship. Jessica explained that this problem was compounded when,

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… he told me like oh I had this really good conversation about, like about us with my, this friend who is a female … So, when he was like gone, I went looking for that conversation as a means of like making myself feel better. I wanna like know what you're saying to other people, which is not ok, but then, in that conversation that's not what I found. I found like … more kind of like … it was an ex-girlfriend. And it was like somewhat more suggestive and sexual than I ever expected. So … the problems were already there kind of in the beginning, and then what I found like broke down a lot of trust. (319-326)

Jessica stated the reason this broke down trust when she said,

… it's not like I'm just super jealous and one of those girls who like would think, you can't be friends with any females, because there were differences, like … there were females that you would, you would publically post like I'm hanging out with this friend or whatever, you are ok with that being a public thing. And then there were some that it was like, I feel like your relationship is private, like your friendship with them is private, and that's intentional, and that's like scary. (447-453)

In this disagreement, Jessica and her boyfriend were attempting to manage the dialectic of inclusion-seclusion. Jessica attempted to implement the separation strategy by identifying females that she felt were fine for him to talk to while also pointing out that others were threats to the relationship and they should be secluded from them. She also attempted to separate communication between public settings, which were non-threatening and private settings, which were seen as hidden. However, Jessica's boyfriend went against this strategy by selecting inclusion. He chose to communicate about the relationship and other aspects with one of his exes through private messaging. While Jessica and her boyfriend discussed issues revolving around

this dialectic, the inability to manage it while in a long-distance relationship was a major proponent to the dissolution of their relationship.

Alam brings a different dimension to this disagreement. Alam had a conversation through private messaging with a former colleague, whom his wife became suspicious of. Alam stated,

> … she asked me what these message means to you, why are you … what if your colleague in your previous company has some problem with her husband, why she doesn't refer to her friend, why she is asking you? How much close are you? She was trying to get at … she's asking so many kind of private questions. (393-397)

Alam and his wife were confronted with the dialectic of inclusion-seclusion. Alam was talking to a female former colleague, and his wife did not approve of this. His wife only became aware of this, however when Alam left his private messages open on his computer. Alam stated, "… it wasn't so normal to ask this kind of questions between a man and a woman. So I just got shocked and … got badly angry, why my wife is just digging into my messages and what's she-looking for?" (397-400). This initial dialectic caused a second dialectic to emerge, as the two were facing a struggle between autonomy and connection. Alam was attempting to use selection to maintain autonomy, by communicating with people without being questioned by his wife. However, the two were not able to find a way to manage this dialectic. Despite his desire to maintain autonomy, his choice to ensure that he never left his social media open has caused his wife to feel she needs to monitor his actions more. This has led to the two continuing to face the dialectics, while being unable to manage them successfully.

Not Using Social Media When Together

Dialectical tensions also emerged due to a member of the relationship communicating with other people and using social media while the two were spending time together. This

required many of the participants who faced the tensions to create rules on when to communicate with those outside of the relationship. The dominant dialectic for this dilemma was the inclusion-seclusion dialectic. However, predictability-novelty also emerged from the primary dialectic.

Jose emphasized his preference when he stated "when we are with each other, we're gonna spend time with each other" (342-343). When faced with the dialectic of inclusion-seclusion, Jose and his wife chose separation, meaning that when the two of them were spending time with one another, they would not be using social media to communicate with anyone else. Hannah took a similar strategy with her long-distance boyfriend, saying "Um, well, our rule is that, we don't, we're not on it when we're with each other … Because we just, want to value like actual face time with people" (298-299). Hannah and her boyfriend valued the time that they were able to spend with each other, especially given the fact that they were long-distance. Using the separation strategy allowed the two to create a rule for their interaction with other people. In the situations with both Jose and Hannah, there was agreement in the strategy that they used.

Rachel and her boyfriend of nearly four years discussed this dilemma as well. Rachel stated,

> So, like he mentioned … it was like a couple months ago that I always seemed to be on social media at like meals and it really bothered him. So he brought it up and we talked about it. And now … we try not to unless it's something like really interesting that we saw that morning or like pictures or something. (318-322)

After her boyfriend brought up her use over lunch, she attempted to use it minimally while the two were together. However, she stated,

> But it's been like back and forth between the two of us. Um, like sometimes I'll pick my phone up during lunch and it will be like a string of doing that for like a … week or like a

couple days, and then he'll bring it up again and I'll be like of like super sorry, I forgot

about that. And then, too maybe he'll be watching a Twitch stream while we're like

hanging out and I'll be like hey, like what are you doing? And he's like oh yep, my bad.

(Rachel, 334-339)

The use of social media while the two are together has been back and forth. They have chosen

separation for their strategy for the inclusion-seclusion dialectic. They are attempting to choose

seclusion, however, Rachel also mentions that both members of the relationship struggle to

continue this strategy. Therefore, the two are revolving between the two poles of inclusion-

seclusion over time.

A final example of this is from Brittany. During Brittany's four and a half year

relationship, her boyfriend became depressed. As his depression worsened, she realized that he

began to pull away from her and communicate on social media more when they were together.

Brittany stated,

… when he was really depressed and he was really struggling with that and we would be

hanging out and like going out to eat or something, he was on it all the time. Even if we

were on a date. And he was just really withdrawing from the entire world, and that was

like his way of withdrawing … he would just be looking at it all the time because he was

really depressed … that's when we started to have … these conversations where I was

upset, cause I felt ignored, and, so then we did kind of talk about like, stop disengaging

with everybody. You've got to engage with me instead of just with internet. (286-289,

359-361)

Brittany and her boyfriend were facing the dialectic of inclusion-seclusion due to her boyfriend's

depression. As she communicated with him, she attempted to emphasize the strategy of

separation. She was upset with his use of social media while the two were together, because she felt that he was pulling away. She asked him not to disengage and to make sure that he was actually present when they were together. She noted that as his depression has improved, he has been accepting this strategy and no longer uses social media while the two are together. Brittany stated, "… we've gotten to the point that we know what to expect of the other person in terms of like this is when you pay attention to me, this is when you don't have to pay attention to me" (363-365). Through the discussion over the inclusion-seclusion dialectic, another dialectic emerged. This dialectic was predictability-novelty. In this relationship, the two have selected to be predictable; this is in the fact that the two now know when they are supposed to be with the other person rather than on social media. She mentioned that this is now very straightforward, and that there are very few surprises in terms of this.

Sharing Information

Many participants discussed the importance of communicating and sharing information about social media use with the significant other. There was a distinct opinion that communicating with the other person would cause the number of disagreements to decrease. Openness-closedness was the dominant dialectic that emerged when considering sharing information. Participants often suggested that future couples should use the selection strategy to prioritize openness.

Jose and his wife are open about many things in their relationship, and this includes social media use. The two are willing to tell the other person what they are doing at any time. Jose stated,

I would tell them to just start at open. There's no reason for you to keep everything

private. If you start open, you're going to be yourself and things are going to go good

from there on, instead of hiding stuff and then later on it comes up. Just be open about it.

If you're in a relationship, you don't need to keep anything private. (402-405)

Jose emphasized the fact that people should be open from the very start of the relationship instead of trying to hide things. This illustrates the dialectic of openness-closedness and the use of the selection strategy to choose being open over closed. Jose felt that this was very important in every relationship, stating, "Everything I share with her, even if she gets angry with me". While being continually open with his wife sometimes made her angry, he felt that being open was better for the relationship than keeping things a secret from the significant other.

Farah also expressed the importance of being open with one's significant other. As people use social media more, they create a history that others are able to find. Farah stated,

Because just assuming that the other person will never know about certain things is a bad

idea, because of … how much social history we have created, or how much internet

presence we have. So … it's nice to have these social networks, because you can

communicate, but the downside is that you have all this social history that you could have

easily … forgotten yourself in the old days when there was no social media. (416-419)

Assuming that your significant other will not find out about your past interactions on social media is dangerous, according to Farah. The information one shares on social media will stay unless the partner intentionally clears it, but often people will forget what is on social media after some time. Because of Farah's perceived dangers of social media, she stated,

So, if people are going into a relationship … that are starting not as transparent in the

beginning, because I don't think any relationship is absolutely 100 percent transparent,

especially in the beginning. So, if that is the case, then you probably need to know what

you're going to do, and what you're going to tell, and how the other person is going to

process that information. (434-438)

This advice is an example of the separation strategy in relationship to the openness-closedness dialectic. Each person needs to decide how much or what information they are going to share. As each person decides what information they are going to share, they are determining topical separation. Each person needs to determine how the information they are going to share will differ depending on the topic.

While Jose and Farah mentioned the dangers of someone hiding information on their social media use, the final two participants express the need to discuss problems with the significant other rather than trying to find information through social media. Jessica expressed her opinion on this by saying,

… communication is really important. Like, very direct conversations about who you are

and what you want and your needs are important. And if you have a problem it's

important to have like a conversation about it and not go looking on social media for

ways to like fix that problem indirectly. Cause that's yeah, that's just like my problem in

general is that I have a hard time communicating problems until they're too big of a

problem that I explode or they just rip me apart from the inside. So communicating when

you're feeling insecure or when you have questions about a relationship is really

important. (520-527)

Jessica gave advice about the importance of communication based on her relationship. Jessica and her boyfriend broke up partially because of issues they had with social media and problems with trust. Being able to communicate when feeling insecure is something she suggests. This illustrates the dialectic of openness-closedness, as one should be able to use the selection strategy

to be open about insecurities rather than keeping this closed and searching for information online.

Emily reaffirmed Jessica's advice by stating,

Maybe talk to them. Don't go through their phone. Cause I feel like a lot of those situations are texts or posts or things taken out of context, and they view it a different way than it was actually meant. So, it could start a whole disagreement over nothing. So maybe talk to them. (Emily, 454-457)

Emily again emphasized the use of the selection strategy to prioritize openness over closedness. Emily's viewpoints followed in line with the other views from Farah and Jessica. She emphasized the importance of talking to the other person about problems rather than going to social media. She also emphasized Farah's point that there are things on social media that we leave behind that may cause problems. It is important to be open about these and any concerns that stem from the posts rather than closing oneself off from the other person.

Building Awareness

A final piece of advice that participants gave was that people who are going to use social media while in a relationship need to be aware of the other's use. It is important to become aware of their use early on in the relationship in order to avoid disagreements in the future. When building awareness to avoid disagreements, the dialectics of predictability-novelty and openness-closedness emerge. Participants often suggested the use of selection as the management strategy in this situation.

Amanda was in the shortest relationship out of all of the participants, but so far, in the relationship, she and her girlfriend have been able to avoid conflict dealing with social media. Amanda stated that it was important to,

Know how they use social media. If it's, if it's something that you both use like Facebook or Twitter, or whatever you use, know how they use it. If you don't know how they use it and you get mad about something, maybe they have been using it like that their entire use of it. That's something you need to then deal with. Is it something that's gonna be a make or break in the relationship; then maybe the relationship isn't really worth having? (509-513)

Amanda's statement illustrates the importance of using the selection strategy when managing the predictability-novelty dialectic. She states you need to be aware of how the other person uses social media. If someone has used social media in a certain way the entire time they have been on it, then it may be your problem since you were not aware of that in the beginning.

Elizabeth also stressed the importance of being aware of the other person's use; however, her situation was different from Amanda's. Elizabeth is in a long-distance relationship with her boyfriend. Elizabeth stated,

… be aware of what they are doing, what sites they are on, who they are on that site… communicate to them about that … Be aware of … what they post, what they say, who they interact with, you know. I mean not like actively like stalking them but like be generally aware of generally who they communicate with. (461-465)

Elizabeth stated that she and her boyfriend do not need to communicate about this, because they are already aware. She emphasized the selection of predictability over novelty. However, Elizabeth also stated that she has been paranoid about her boyfriend possibly finding someone else. To deal with this paranoia, Elizabeth suggested,

… just communicate. Like, I feel that you should not be on this website because of this, and I feel that I think that you should leave that website because of … these reasons …

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they can make a counter-argument of I feel that I should stay on this website for these reasons. And maybe they can come to a compromise of you can stay on the website, but maybe she or he has their password, they can monitor, not like stalk, but … But, be aware of what they're doing on that site … one reason they might be paranoid is about who they are talking to on that site or something. (471-478)

Where Amanda emphasized the importance of finding out how your significant other uses social media to determine if you have a problem with it, Elizabeth emphasized communicating about the problems one might have with the significant other's social media use. Elizabeth suggested using the selection method to choose openness over closedness with your significant other. It is important to be open about reasons if there are expectations for the significant other to change.

DISCUSSION

This study used Baxter's (1988) relational dialectics theory to determine what dialectics emerge in romantic relationships when the members of the relationship use social media. More specifically, this study hoped to determine which relational dialectics emerged when people communicated about their relationship online and when they communicated about their social media use with their significant other. Another key component to the study was to determine what strategies these relationship members implemented when attempting to manage these dialectics. Eighteen participants who were in relationships and used social media shared their experiences in one-on-one semi-structured interviews. While similar relational dialectics emerged in certain contexts, they sometimes led to the emergence of additional dialectics. The dialectics that emerged were managed in different ways depending on the relationship members.

Emergence of Relational Dialectics

RQ1 focused on the emergence of relational dialectics. In this study, each of the six dialectics emerged as participants discussed how they share about their relationship on social media and how they communicate about their social media use with their significant other. Consistent with this study, Fox, Osborn, and Warber (2014) stated that both internal and external dialectics emerge when relationships are on social media. However, what was surprising considering past research on relational dialectics was that revelation-concealment emerged as the dominant dialectic in this study, with nearly twice as many statements regarding this dialectic than the second highest, which was openness-closedness. The dialectic of revelation-concealment emerged in many contexts regarding sharing information about the relationship online. With the exception of a few studies (Baxter & Erbert, 1999; Cools, 2011; Fox, Osborn, &

Warber, 2014; Li, Jackson, & Trees, 2008; Prentice, 2009) much of the relational dialectic research has focused on the internal dialectics.

However, the emergence of revelation-concealment as a dominant dialectic in this study illustrates the importance of incorporating external dialectics into future studies of relational dialectics theory. It is apparent that the amount of information shared about the relationship on social media has the potential to cause tension within a relationship. There were multiple participants, or their partners, who expressed a dislike for having too much information about the relationship available on social media. The reasons varied, whether it was privacy concerns, a specific person or group of people who were influencing the decision, or simply the desire to control the image that one presents on social media. The couple's ability to manage this tension determined whether there would be future emergence of this dialectic. Participants were able to learn from past emergence of the dialectic, however, stating that it is important to determine what the other person feels comfortable about sharing, as well as limiting certain types of posts, whether they are too personal, negative, or just undesired posts.

In addition to the revelation-concealment dialectic, each of the other five dialectics emerged in the statements participants made about their relationship and social media. Openness-closedness was the second most prevalent dialectic, and this dialectic emerged often when participants commented on how they communicate with their significant other about their social media use. This dialectic often emerged when discussing how partners established different levels of sharing, building trust, and password sharing. Couples varied in their need to be open with one another during their relationship, as some stated that in the beginning, there was more openness required, but as they built trust, openness was not as much of a concern. However, participants also explained that it would be important to become aware of how the other person

used social media early on in the relationship, so that there were no problems later on. Others stated that the key to a successful relationship with social media was to start at open and continue this throughout.

Implementation of Management Strategies

Each of the management strategies were described in statements from the participants, which answers RQ2. The most prevalent management strategy from this study was selection. Selection was used in nearly every context that emerged in the study, and it was used with each of the relational dialectics. Past research has also shown the prevalence of using selection to manage tensions related to social media and technology use, however each of these focused specifically on the dialectic of autonomy-connection (Duran, Kelly, & Rotaru, 2011; Sahlstein & Dun, 2008). The current study expands on this research by illustrating the use of selection in relation to each of the relational dialectics. However, past research has stated that selection can be harmful to the relationship, as it prioritizes one pole of the dialectic over the other, when instead it is important for both poles to be present in the relationship (Baxter, 1988).

In this study, the most harm was inflicted when the partners did not agree over what management strategy was to be used. In certain instances, one partner attempted to prioritize one pole over another, yet they met resistance from their partner. This caused the dialectic to continue to emerge within the relationship. For instance, there was one situation in which the boyfriend did not want information about the relationship to be placed online, which is selection. His girlfriend instead chose to manage this dialectical tension by using the separation strategy by only posting about the relationship on social media that he was not involved on. As far as he was aware, she did not share information about the relationship, however her actions created a potential for more disagreements in the future. Another way in which selection was used was

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when one partner implemented this strategy and the other person had to comply with this. For instance, in a similar situation to the one mention, one partner did not want information shared online. This person's partner complied with this request, even though they wanted to share information about the relationship online. In some instances, the partner who was not allowed to share became upset; however, others understood that their partner deserved to make decisions as an individual. In the latter relationships, selection was a successful management strategy for managing the dialectic. However, as social media becomes more prominent in relationships, selection may become more harmful if relationship partners do not agree on appropriate social media use.

Throughout this study, it was also apparent that the relational dialectics emerged and were managed differently depending on the relationship of the participant. A few significant factors determined how the participants managed dialectics. For instance, the length and seriousness of the relationship determined how the partners managed the dialectics. A few participants explained that the way they handled relationship disagreements has changed over the course of the relationship. While there were a few participants who struggled in the relationship in the beginning, they have been able to build trust over their time together, which influenced the way the dialectics emerged and were managed later on. Therefore, management strategies that are used in the beginning of the relationship may change, as the relationship is either strengthened or weakened by past management strategies. Participants learned from these experiences and gave suggestions about how to maintain a successful relationship while using social media. Some participants discussed past actions they have taken in their relationship that have strengthened the relationship, while others discussed advice they would give so that future relationships could avoid disagreements that they had. In each of these cases, the participants had

learned from their experiences managing dialectics. Because they had learned from their experiences, the management strategies they used were able to influence the way the relational dialectics emerged in the future.

Social Media Use and Relational Dialectics

As social media use increases, there has been an increased expectation for transparency in recent years (Berkelaar, 2014). Yet, even though social media, in its design, was built for transparency, there are differing viewpoints on the use of security settings to enhance the privacy that one is able to have on social media. The divide between privacy and transparency ended up emerging as a prominent reason for the emergence of relational dialectics. Both sharing information about the relationship on social media and sharing about social media use were correlated with the privacy or transparency of the social media.

Consistent with Gnagopadhyay and Dhar (2014), the young adults in this study were unlikely to implement privacy settings when interacting on social media. Instead, many of the participants discussed the revelation or concealment of information depending on the specific social media being used. The one individual in this study who did implement the use of privacy settings to separate specific groups on Facebook was one of the older participants. However, other participants implemented specific privacy settings that were consistent with the action of middle-aged participants in the study from Quinn (2014). These tactics consisted of creating different boundaries based on social media and not revealing too much personal information. However, unlike the participants in Quinn's (2014) article, the participants ranged in age from 18-38, with an average of 24 years. This age range is remarkably lower than Quinn's study; however, the participants reported using similar methods.

Context collapse emerged as a prominent concept with social networking sites. Concept collapse occurs when connections or relationships from different aspects of one's life are grouped together on social media; the boundaries that typically separate these groups are removed online (Davis & Jurgenson, 2014; Vitak, Lampe, Gray, & Ellison, 2012). Context collapse on social media is difficult to avoid because of the transparent structure (Davis & Jurgenson, 2014). As people are interacting on social media, their distinct social networks are becoming combined. In addition to this, there is a blurring of public and private communication online, as messages intended for a specific person on social media may be seen and interpreted by a public audience, which is known as masspersonal communication (Tong & Westerman, 2016). These concepts emerged in the data, such as when participants chose specific social media to share on and limiting the information they shared.

Participants in this study expressed the need to communicate different information on certain social media. For instance, multiple participants described the perceived differences between the social media that they were involved on. Reddit and Tumblr were social media where participants and their significant other revealed no information about their relationship, while they were more likely to share information on Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook. However, even when participants would reveal information on social media, they were not always as transparent on certain social media. For instance, participants saw Facebook as a more professional social media where employers and older relatives were present. This caused the participants to limit the information they readily revealed on these sites, while being more casual and informative on others, such as Snapchat and Instagram. Facebook was used often for only significant events. Therefore, participants used separation to determine what information was shared on specific social media. This is consistent with context collapse, as participants in the

study by Vitak, Lampe, Gray, & Ellison (2012) used multiple accounts in order to allow them to create new boundaries with specific people, such as coworkers.

Multiple participants also discussed the need to only reveal information on social media that they would share with an acquaintance. While many of the participants were connected to family and friends on social media, much of the information that was revealed about the relationship was information they would tell an acquaintance. Information that was seen as too personal and private was concealed from their general social media audience. Consistent with Vitak et al. (2012), participants in this study limited information shared online to make sure that it was appropriate to everyone in their network. This allowed some of the participants and their significant others to control the image that they wanted to present on social media.

In addition to this, contrary to Fox, Osborn, and Warber's (2014) study, many of the participants did not see the declaration of the relationship on social media as an important milestone. Many stated that they did not see the need to be Facebook official, because the important people in their life knew about the relationship. Participants who began their relationships prior to both partners being on Facebook or relationships where partners unequally used social media were more likely to find it unnecessary to reveal their relationship status on Facebook. Those who began their relationship prior to being on social media often did not see the point in posting their relationship status after the fact. Those who use social media unequally often included one member posting the status and not knowing or caring if the other person did, since the other member did not use Facebook as often. These participants showed that not everyone sees becoming Facebook official as a way of proving the strength and connection of the relationship.

In addition to this, many respondents stated that they were not sure of how their significant other used certain social media; this was especially true for long-distance relationships, in which the members are not present to see how the other person uses social media. However, the respondents also stated that not knowing was not a problem. Ten of the participants from this study were in long-distance relationships, with only a couple of these stating that they struggled with not knowing what the other was doing on social media. This feeling emerged due to the long-distance nature of the relationship.

When looking at the expectation for transparency, couples in this study seemed consistent with Berkelaar's (2014) concept of "old transparency". Participants often expected their significant other to share information about the social media use if asked, however they did not expect the other person to share without being asked, which is referred to as "new transparency". This study suggests that relationships may not be based on "new transparency", which was thought of as the modern expectation of transparency. One reason that "new transparency" was not as prominent in some relationships may have been due to when the members joined social media. A few participants joined social media after the relationship was formed and already serious. In these relationships, social media was not seen as important and therefore not a cause of disagreements. These couples often showed a selection of autonomy, as there was already trust formed when joining social media. These couples did not feel the need to share information about their social media use.

Future Relational Dialectic Theory Studies

This study adds to the current literature on relational dialectics because as social media use increases, it will influence how relationships develop. Much of the current literature on relational dialectics theory focuses primarily on the internal dialectics, with autonomy-

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connection being the primary focus of studies. As technology and social media have emerged, there have been multiple studies focusing on how relational dialectics emerged in the relationship (Duran, Kelly, & Rotaru, 2011; Fox, Osborn, & Warber, 2014; Stephenson-Abetz, & Holman, 2012). Yet the focus on internal as well as external dialectics has emerged only recently. As mentioned, social media have inherent abilities to be transparent or private with communication with those in one's social network. Social media, in this study, caused the emergence of dialectical tensions as couples faced private messages with perceived rivals, using social media too much while together, disagreements about how much to share, among others. The success of the relationship, as well as the future emergence of the dialectics, was impacted by how the couple chose to manage the dialectics that emerged.

Future research on relational dialectics and social media should include both the internal and external dialectics. Baxter & Erbert (1999) discussed the importance of internal dialectics, while stating that external dialectics are less crucial to the relationship. Multiple studies, including those using social media, have since focused solely on these internal dialectics (Duran, Kelly, & Rotaru, 2011; Sahlstein & Dun, 2008; Sahlstein, Maguire, & Timmerman, 2009). Yet, even as studies have included external dialectics, the couple has chosen to communicate with specific members of the social network, such as immediate family, friends, and new in-laws (Cools, 2011; Prentice, 2009). Baxter & Widenmann (1993) found that people reveal information about their relationship based on whom they are communicating to, such as likelihood of negative response, closeness, etc.

However, consistent with context collapse and masspersonal communication, the increased use of social media has led to a larger network with whom one communicates. Social media do not have the traditional boundaries of face-to-face communication (Davis & Jurgenson,

2014; Tong & Westerman, 2016; Vitak et al., 2012). People who communicate with others on social media and online environments often experience the external dialectics (Fox, Osborn, & Warber, 2014; Li, Jackson, & Trees, 2008). The act of being transparent about one's relationship on social media increased the number of people who are receiving this once private information. While prior to social media, people may for instance only share pictures of them with their partner or vent about issues with specific trusted members of the social network, social media made it easier to communicate this information with a larger audience. This has increased the relevance of the external dialectics, as revelation-concealment, inclusion-seclusion, and conventionality-uniqueness have become more prevalent.

In this study, all six of the internal and external dialectics emerged, with an external dialectic being the primary tension that participants faced. As couples determine what information to share on social media, they are faced with the tension of revelation-concealment. The second key dialectic in this study was openness-closedness, although this appeared at half the rate of revelation-concealment. This dialectic emerged in nearly every situation when sharing information about social media use with the significant other. These two areas were found to be areas in which participants of this study often experienced tensions. These findings support the continued use of both the internal and external dialectics when discussing the influence social media has on romantic relationships.

Practical Implications

This study indicates the importance of social media in romantic relationships. Implicit rules emerged in statements from participants. Consistent with Baxter (1986) and Duran, Kelly, and Rotaru (2011) a majority of participants were not able to identify any rules that existed in their relationship. However, those who had experienced a violation of an unspoken expectation

were able to identify rules that were created. Created rules that emerged included not using social media when together and not communicating with perceived rivals. The majority of the participants stated that they did not have rules, yet they stated expectations they had for their significant other, such as not posting too much, nothing too personal online, or not disclosing the relationship online. In addition to this, participants also offered advice for people who may be entering relationships and using social media.

While various participants felt comfortable with their own and their partner's current social media use, there was common advice that people should be open about how they use social media in order to make the other person aware early on in the relationship. This was a common suggestion from participants, as many felt that this would allow people who are entering a relationship to avoid disagreements that have occurred in their relationship. By building trust, people are able to reduce their feelings of insecurities. Various past studies have focused on jealousy of perceived rivals on Facebook (Cohen, Bowman, & Borchert, 2014; Miller, Denes, Diaz, & Buck, 2014; Samp & Palevitz, 2014). However, this study found that relational dialectics play a large role in this topic. In romantic relationships in which couples are able to manage the dialectic effectively and build trust, partners felt less suspicious over time. However, if couples were not able to manage the dialectic effectively, this dialectic continued to emerge, even if there is no real interaction with a perceived rival. In these cases, the trust needed to be built early on when one partner initially had a concern over a perceived rival. If this did not occur, partners experienced issues with the same topic later in the relationship.

Another implication of this study is that people need to be thoughtful with what they share about their relationship on social media. Many of the participants discussed the desire to only share certain information on social media. Since social media has an inherent transparency

to it, the participants chose to use each social media differently. Certain social media that were seen as more casual, such as Instagram or Snapchat, were seen as ones where someone could post random pictures together. However, because Facebook typically included family members and was seen as more professional, most of the participants who did post about the relationship stated that they only shared significant events. Many of the participants stated that they would not post anything too personal on social media, and they would instead limit posts to things they would tell an acquaintance. Participants suggested that people entering into a relationship should establish early on, what they are comfortable with having posted on social media. There were couples in this study who faced tensions because of a disagreement on what was appropriate to post on social media. Having a discussion early on was seen by participants as a way to avoid these disagreements. Couples also suggested not posting anything when in a fight with the other person, because it allowed others to know about the fight, and because it was not going to last forever. Social media has the ability to create a public record of a relationship. So posting too much about the relationship can cause problems in the relationship, but can also affect how the social network views the relationship.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The primary limitation of this study was the reliability values for the secondary coding. The secondary coder was chosen based on his knowledge of the internal dialectics. However, additional training, further than coding one transcript together, should have been implemented. This should have been done in order to ensure that the secondary coder and the researcher had similar understandings of the internal and external dialectics, as well as the management strategies. Because this study was implementing these concepts with social media, additional training may have increased the reliability values. The researcher and secondary coder discussed

each of the disagreements that emerged in order to come to agreement on the final code. This allowed the researcher to understand where the disagreements emerged, and from this, the researcher verified that the codes were implemented in similar ways throughout the remainder of the transcripts. However, had more training taken place initially, this process may have been simplified by higher reliability.

Another limitation is that both partners did not take part in interviews. Including both partners in the interview process would have allowed the researcher to determine if both members of the relationship had the same perception of the relationship, social media use, and related disagreements. This study, like many others, focused on one person's interpretation of the relationship. Therefore, the other partner may have both categorized the relationship in a different way and perceived the social media use differently. Differing categorizations of the relationship could be a contributing factor in the emergence of relational dialectics and the management of these dialectics, as one person may be more committed than the other. In addition to this, the perception of social media use and related disagreements may differ, especially when dealing with perceived rivals and privacy concerns. Including both members of the relationship would have resulted in a more even distribution of males and females, due to the predominantly heterosexual nature of the relationships in this study. Including both would also have allowed the researcher to determine if the differences in perception lead to the emergence of the relational dialectic and how the couple managed the tensions.

Longitudinal studies would be beneficial when studying relational dialectics in social media use, as many of the participants in the current study discussed changes that have occurred throughout the relationship. However, as relationships progress, it may be difficult for participants to fully recall disagreements or tensions that emerged in earlier periods of the

relationship. There were certain instances in this study where participants could not remember why they had chosen to behave a certain way on social media or discuss their social media use in a certain way with their significant other. Future studies may benefit from engaging participants for a longer period of time. By perhaps having the participants keep a journal on what they communicated about their relationship on social media or what they communicated about their social media use with their significant other, researchers would be able to prompt participants based on this information. This would allow researchers to go more in depth on records that the participant is making of potential relational dialectics.

One aspect to consider in future studies is to recruit participants in separate distinct groups in order to compare demographics. While this study had participants from different demographic groups, the total number in each group was not high enough to determine if a difference existed between the groups. This study, along with others, predominantly focus on one main demographic. While this provides extensive information on that specific group, it does not make it possible to ensure that the findings are unique to that group. Recruiting to ensure diversity would enable the researcher to make claims about the differences between demographics. Possible demographic comparisons could be by gender, age group, culture, sexual orientation, and categorization of relationship.

The majority of the participants in this study were women, and therefore, the experiences that were reported may have been influenced by this. Within this study, there were frequent reports of the girlfriend or wife wanting to share information about the relationship online, while the boyfriend or husband wanted to conceal this information. It would be important to determine if this perspective is consistent in future studies. Determining the reasoning for this behavior would also be important, as the current study suggests that the men in the relationships have

more control over what is shared online. A majority of the participants who restricted the sharing of the relationship on social media were males who wanted to be able to control their social media image. This behavior could become dangerous to the relationship if one member was able to control aspects of the relationship.

While many of the participants in the study fit the young adult age range that had been set prior to the study, they expressed social media use similar to the use of middle aged adults from Quinn's (2014) study. If possible, future studies should attempt to determine if the dialectics emerge in similar ways to those under 18, who have grown up with social media. Age not only determines when social media became available to the participant, but also what outside factors influence their use. People at different age groups may be facing differing expectations that influence their use of social media and how much they communicate about their relationship. Participants mentioned that Facebook has become more professional and that older family members are on this social media. This influences the way they communicate on social media, as there are more expectations on how they should post.

Cultures should also be considered for future studies on relational dialectics and social media. While the University in which this study took place is more diverse, the region surrounding this University is rather homogenous. This resulted in a mostly Caucasian participant pool. It would be important to conduct interviews with a more diverse audience. This is the case, because two participants who identified as being Middle-Eastern/Asian used more privacy settings than others did in the study. However, this is only one separate demographic. Recruiting additional participants from other cultures would allow researchers to determine if there are specific cultural expectations that are influencing the way that individuals use social media and discuss their relationship. These differences could make a considerable impact on the

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emergence of relational dialectics and management strategies, not just because of the differences, but also because of potential differences between relationship members.

Sexual orientation should also be studied when related to social media. Although many areas of research no longer study the difference between heterosexual and homosexual couples, the increased use of social media may require study to determine if differences emerge between the two groups. This study only included one participant in a same-sex relationship, but there were some differences in the way she experienced the relationship from other participants. She did not reveal her relationship on social media out of respect for her mother, who was trying to be supportive of her sexuality. However, since her mother was not comfortable with non-heterosexual relationships for her daughter, the daughter did not reveal her relationship on social media until she knew it was serious. It would be important to determine if revelation-concealment plays an important, yet different role in same-sex relationships, due to the stigma that is attached to them. Because there is still intolerance to same-sex couples, people in these relationships may share or hide information differently than those in heterosexual relationships.

Finally, almost all of the participants in this study either were in an exclusive and serious relationship or were married. Although the recruitment notice for this study stated that all types of relationships were wanted for the study, most of the participants were in serious relationships. Future studies should aim to recruit individuals in more casual relationships, as the one participant in this type of relationship in this study used social media differently than the other participants. He did not communicate about the relationship on social media at all, because he felt that it would cause unnecessary questions and discussions. Because they were in a causal relationship, they were more autonomous with their social media use and concealed their relationship on social media. It would be important to determine what the difference is between

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relationship types. If people in causal relationships are not connecting to one another on social media, then it may not be seen as important.

Conclusion

As social media use increases, people in romantic relationships must determine how they will communicate about their relationship on social media and how much they will share with their significant other about their social media use. As partners are faced with these topics, it is likely that tensions will emerge. How the members of the relationship manage these tensions will determine their future emergence and the overall successfulness of the relationship. Both internal and external dialectics emerged in this study, with revelation-concealment being the dominant dialectic. Due to the increase in social media use in recent years and the wider social network audience, it is increasingly important to incorporate both internal and external dialectics in research.

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Title of Research Study: An Investigation of Relational Dialectics and Social Media Use

This study is being conducted by: Dr. Stephenson Beck, North Dakota State University, 338D4 Minard Hall, Fargo, ND, 58105 and Bethany Lutovsky, NDSU, 338D20, Minard Hall, Fargo, ND, 58105.

What is the reason for doing the study? Social media are becoming an increasingly popular method of maintaining relationships. However, how and what we communicate on social media may impact the romantic relationships we have offline. This study helps to determine how people in romantic relationships deal with the potential consequences of social media on their relationship.

What information will be collected about me? You will be asked a variety of questions about your social media use and your relationship. The majority are open-ended questions where you will provide your perceptions related to social media use and your relationship. There will be a limited amount of closed-ended questions used to collect demographic and relationship information.

Where is the study going to take place, and how long will it take? Interviews will take place in the Communication Department offices at North Dakota State University, 338 Minard Hall. Upon arrival at the office, you will fill out a short demographic and relationship questionnaire. Following this, you will be taken into a private room for one-on-one interview. Interviews will last between 45-60 minutes depending on responses.

What are the risks and discomforts? There is minimal to no risk in completing the interview. If you feel discomfort, you may stop the interview at any time. Please know that all responses will be kept confidential and all names and descriptive information will be kept separate from the interview transcripts. All names will be changed in order to protect your identity.

What are the benefits to me? There are no direct benefits to participating in the interview. However, reflecting on relationship behavior may lead to positive behaviors in the future. Additionally, data collected from the study will be used to evaluate and understand social media use and romantic relationships.

Do I have to take part in the study? Your participation in the research is your choice. If you choose to participate in the study, you may change your mind and stop participating at any time without penalty.

What will it cost me to participate? There is no cost to taking part in this study.

What are the alternatives to being in this research study? If you choose, you may not participate.

Who will see the information that I give? We will keep private all research records that identify you. Information that identifies you will be kept separate from the interview materials. We may publish results of the study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private. Following the interview, the recording will be transcribed and this document will include a pseudonym in order to protect your identity. All documents will be kept electronically in a password-protected file.

Will I receive any compensation for taking part in this study? There is no compensation for taking part in this study. However, students enrolled in the Spring 2016 semester of COMM 110 will be able to earn their 10 research points. Participants who are not enrolled in COMM 110 will be entered into a drawing for a $25 gift card.

What if I have questions? Before you decide to accept this invitation to take part in the research study, please ask questions that might come to mind now. Later if you have questions, you can contact Dr. Stephenson Beck via email (stephenson.beck@ndsu.edu).

What are my rights as a research participant? You have the right as a participant in research. If you have questions about your rights, or complaints about this research, you may talk to the researcher or contact the NDSU Human Research Protection Program by:
- Telephone: 701-231-8908
- Toll-free: 855.800.6717
- Email: ndsu.irb@ndsu.edu
- Mail: NDSU HRPP Office, NDSU Dept. 4000, PO Box 6050, Fargo, ND 58108-6050

The role of the Human Research Protection Program is to see that your rights are protected in this research; more information about your rights can be found at: www.ndsu.edu/research/irb

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Documentation of Informed Consent:
By signing below, you agree that you are:
- You are 18 years of age or older
- You are in a romantic relationship
- You use social media
- You have read and understood this consent form
- You have had your questions answered, and
- You have decided to be in the study

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Please detach at the dotted line and keep the top portion for your own records.

APPENDIX B. DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

What is your age?

_____

What is your gender?

Male   Female   Other

What is your race or ethnicity? (Please mark all that apply)

White	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Black/ African American	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Asian	Hispanic/ Latino	Other

What is your year in school?

Freshman   Sophomore   Junior   Senior   Graduate

How would you categorize your relationship?

Casual romantic	Exclusive romantic	Exclusive and serious (considering marriage)	Married	Near dissolution (considering break-up)

What is the length of your relationship? (in approximate years and months)

_____

What social media are you active on? (mark all that apply)

Facebook   Twitter   Instagram   Snapchat   Other: _____

What social media is your significant other active on? (mark all that apply)

Facebook   Twitter   Instagram   Snapchat   Other: _____

APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Distribution of Informed Consent followed by the Demographic Survey.

START RECORDING

The following are questions asked of the participants during the one-on-one interviews. Follow-up questions may be asked depending on the answers received from participants.

1. Describe how you use social media to communicate with others.

2. Describe how your significant other's social media use is similar to or different from your own.

    a. How did you become aware of this use?

3. Describe your relationship status with your significant other.

4. What information do you communicate about your relationship on social media?

5. How do you and your partner communicate about each other's social media use?

6. How much is your significant other aware of your social media use?

    a. Interviewer note: How do you decide what to share?

7. Have you and your partner had any disagreements about social media use?

    a. What kinds of disagreements have occurred?

    b. Interviewer note: If no, how are you and your partner able to avoid disagreements about social media use?

8. Have you and your partner placed any rules on social media use?

    a. What types of rules do you have?

    b. How do you feel about password sharing in relationships?

9. How has your communication about social media changed throughout your relationship?

    a. How do you think it will change in the future?

10. What advice would you give to someone entering a relationship when it comes to social

media use?

STOP RECORDING

Check if there is anything they would like to add off of the recording. If they add something that

is pertinent, ask if they would be willing to have that information recorded.

Thank and DISTRIBUTE COMPLETION CERTIFICATE or HAVE THE PARTICIPANT

FILL OUT DRAWING SLIP.