Disharmony and Matchless:

Interpersonal Deception Theory in Online Dating

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1 Corinthians 13:6-7 "Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always

protects, always trust, always hopes, and always preserves."

This Project is Dedicated to My Parents--

Ralph and Shelly Wagner

--Who Have Always Given Me the Freedom to Hope and the Encouragement to Preserve.

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Abstract

In recent years, computer-media dated communication has not only become extremely popular but has also begun to hold an important function in daily social interactions. This qualitative study investigates the communication phenomena of deception as it occurs in the online dating environment. The research study focused on four questions: (1) About what characteristics are online daters deceptive? (2) What motivation do online daters have for their deception of others in the online dating environment? (3) What perceptions do online daters have about other daters' deceit towards them in the online dating environment? (4) How does deception affect the romantic relationships formed in the online dating environment? Through an online surveying tool data was collected with 15 open ended questions. A total of 52 participants were included in the study ranging in ages from 21-37. The results of the study found that the majority of online daters consider themselves and others to be mostly honest in their online self presentations. Those online daters that did use deception were motivated to do so by the longing to attract members of the opposite sex and project a positive self-image. Daters were also willing to overlook deception in others if they viewed the dishonesty as a slight exaggeration or characteristic of little value to the dater. Despite the deception that does occur, participants still believe that the online dating environment is capable of developing successful romantic relationships.

Key Words: Interpersonal Deception Theory, Online Dating, Motivation, Perception, Romantic Relationships

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

For the past several decades, technologies such as the computer and Internet have begun to change significantly the way the world communicates. Through computer-mediated communication such as email, instant messaging, Facebook, and Twitter, individuals can maintain close relationships without face-to-face interaction. However, what happens when we want to move these relationships from the cyber world to the real world? Can individuals be the same person in real life that they have created for themselves online?

With the increased popularity of computer-mediated communication, it is no surprise that the Internet is also becoming increasingly popular as an option for finding a romantic partner and, as some hope, true love. Most people have either tried online dating for themselves or knows someone that has. According to Lawson and Leck, Internet dating is defined as a "method of courting used by individuals who meet on the Internet and continue online correspondence in hopes of forming a supportive romantic relationship" (189). People choose to use online dating services because they create opportunities to meet people they would not have otherwise met. Online dating websites also offer a confidential environment in which one can have more control over that very important first impression. Other individuals choose online dating for pure convenience. In a fast moving society in which numerous items compete for attention, online dating can be a straightforward and quick way to meet a variety of people.

In recent years, online dating has shifted from being a taboo practice for the romantically desperate to an acceptable and mainstream form of meeting a romantic partner. By diminishing the social stigma associated with online dating, the affordable cost of Internet access, and the wide availability of online dating sites, more and more singles are leaving the social clubs, churches, and bars to look for dates on their home computers. Online dating services also allow

users to broaden the geographic area of their dating pool. They provide an easy way for users to meet a potential romantic partner who may live in another town, state, or even country.

"According to Mark Brooks, editor to onlinepersonalswatch.com, half of singletons in the US-around 40 million people- now use Internet dating" (Jamieson). A 2006 study by Pew Internet and American Life Project reports that 31% of American adults (63 million) say they know someone who has used a dating website; 26% of American adults (53 million) say they know someone who has gone on a date with a person they met through a dating site; 15% of American adults (30 million) say they know someone who has been in a long-term relationship or married someone he or she met online (Madden and Lenhart 12-13). In April of 2011, a simple search on Google.com for "online dating sites" came back with over 56 million results.

While all dating websites have their unique characteristics, there are some common themes. Online daters usually start by creating a personal profile. Here they can upload pictures of themselves and list physical characteristics including age, height, hair and eye color, and body type. They also fill out personal information about themselves like education, marital status, occupation, zodiac sign, income level, interest and hobbies. Other sites such as eHarmony.com ask in-depth questions to gain better understanding of one's personality in order to provide a compatible match. In contrast, Match.com and similar online dating sites allow users to fill out the same information about a possible date, allowing users to publish their own personal "type."

While some individuals view online dating as an acceptable way to meet potential romantic partners others believe it to be impersonal and awkward. As a form of computer-mediated communication, technology barriers exist in online dating that are not found in face-to-face interactions. Due to the lack of nonverbal communication, "a sender cannot easily alter the mood of a message, communicate a sense of individuality, or exercise dominance or charisma…

Communicators feel a greater sense of anonymity and detect less individuality in others" (Keisler 48). Without these social cues, Lea and Spears state that computer-mediated communication users will "place greater reliance on social categorization processes to interpret the available information so as to form an adequate social context" (324). Therefore, minor manipulation of the available cues can have a powerful effect on the impressions formed by others (Lea and Spears 325).

On the contrary, other scholars claim that the Internet provides communication advantages over face-to-face interactions. Donn and Sherman claim one of these advantages is that individuals can share their personal thoughts more openly and freely (110). Clinical psychologist John Suler terms this freedom to say or do things online that one would not normally do face-to-face "the online dishinbition effect" ("Online" 321). Several computer-mediated communication characteristics contribute to this dishinibition effect, such as dissociative anonymity, invisibility, asynchronicity, and a minimization of authority ("Online" 321). Suler states that another communication advantage for online daters is that is that "they are more directly encountering the mind, heart, and even soul of the other person when they are not being distracted or mislead by the physical appearance of the person, as in 'real life' " ("Cyberspace Romances"). Cooper and Sportolari agree with Suler by stating that "[c]omputer-mediated relations reduce the role that physical attributes play in the development of attraction, and enhance other factors such as propinquity, rapport, similarity and mutual self-disclosure, thus promoting erotic connections that stem from emotional intimacy rather than lustful attraction" (7).

While dating and looking for dates through the Internet provide both positive and negative aspects, it is still a relatively new and uncharted territory for its users. One area of

concern for many online daters is risk that romantic interests may not be honestly portraying themselves online. Whether it is lying, telling half-truths, exaggerating, withholding information, cheating, stealing, or hiding behavior, deception is a common part of everyday life. Research has shown that on average individuals tell one to two lies per day (DePaulo et al., "Lying" 984, Hancock, Thom-Santelli, and Ritchie 132) or 4.2 per week (Lippard 94). In a study by DePaulo et al. college students were found to lie in one out of every three social interactions, and members of the community lied in one out of every five ("Lying" 984). Participants also reported little regret or feelings of guilt over their lies (DePaulo et al., "Lying" 991). While not as frequent, deception is also apparent when communication moves from face-to-face to computer-mediated communication (George and Robb 98). Most everyday deception is small and inconsequential; however, more serious lies can be detrimental to a relationship and leave an unforgettable mark on the lives of those affected. Interpersonal deception theory by Buller and Burgoon builds understanding of this phenomenon through the context of interactive communication particularly how "social interactions alter deception and how deception alters social interaction" (203). Since its publication in 1996, interpersonal deception theory has gained significant attention from research scholars and numerous studies have been conducted to test and expound on its 18 principles. The majority of these past studies have focused on the communication characteristics of deceivers and the ability of an individual to detect deception in others.

With the increasing popularity of online dating, numerous other articles have been published specifically to build understanding of deception as it occurs in this modern context. According to previous research, online daters reported that deception is one of the main disadvantages and concerns of online dating (Brym and Lenton 36, Donn and Sherman 115). In

their 2001 study, Byrm and Lenton found that a quarter of all online dating participants reported misrepresenting some aspects of their identity (42). The most commonly lied about characteristics are age (14%), marital status (10%), and appearance (10%) (Byrm and Lenton 42). A more recent study in 2006 found that while almost all participants said they attempted to portray themselves accurately, they did admit to an having an "inclination to project a version of self that was attractive, successful, and desirable" (Ellison, Heino, and Gibbs 425).

Expounding on these past studies, this qualitative research study aims to provide a description of daters' motivations, perceptions, and experiences of deception in the context of online dating. Unlike laboratory settings that focus on the behavior and speech of deceivers at an exact moment, this study examines a broader scope of deception as it occurs through an individual's self-disclosure and actions overtime. Research has found that in the real world, detecting the deceit of others is a process that can take days, weeks, months or even years. (Park et al. 152)

This study is unique in that it seeks information about daters' specific experiences expressed through their own words in responses to open-ended questions. This study also aims at providing insight into the rationale that some online daters use as a basis for their dishonesty. Four primary questions will be used to guide this research:

RQ1: About what characteristics are online daters deceptive?

RQ2: What motivation do online daters have for their deception of others in the online dating environment?

RQ3: What perceptions do online daters have about other daters' deceit towards them in the online dating environment?

RQ4: How does deception affect the romantic relationships formed in the online dating environment?

This study is significant to the field of communication because it explores the frequency of deception in online dating, and the cognitive foundations that motivate daters to deceive their online romantic partners, and online daters' perception of others' deceit. The online dating industry is also a significant area for academic study as it continues to grow in popularity and membership. While many other businesses were suffering due to the recent economic recession, online dating sites like Craigslist personals, eHarmony, and Match.com continue to profit with membership increases of 20-22% (Carpenter). This Internet based transition in the way society creates and maintains romantic relationships demands inquiry from the academic community. This study is beneficial to potential and current online daters by providing insight into the ethical issues that can occur with the dishonesty they may experience through this dating option. For dishonest online daters, this study can provide self-awareness about their behavior and the implications it may have on future romantic relationships.

The following thesis contains a total of five chapters and an Appendix section. The first chapter provides an introduction into the topic of deception and online dating as well as the rationale and purpose for the study. Chapter two contains an extensive review of the literature on interpersonal deception theory, deception in romantic relationships, deception in computer-mediated communication, and deception in the online dating environment. Chapter three describes the research methods used in this study, including the participants, data collection, and data analysis. The fourth chapter contains the results of the study conducted through the research methods. In addition, chapter 4 provides a discussion of findings and their implications on the online dating industry. The fifth and final chapter of this thesis contains the limitations to the study, recommendations for future research, and a conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

One common concern with online dating is the opportunity for dishonesty. With the anonymity offered by technology, people have the freedom to portray themselves however they wish in their online dating communication. Online individuals can describe themselves accurately or inaccurately without restrictions. Often daters want to "put their best foot forward," making themselves as appealing as possible to the opposite gender. They typically upload pictures in which they look their best; some even go so far as to have professional photos taken. Many online daters list interests that can be perceived as out of the ordinary or exciting to appeal to other daters such as traveling and sports. Very few dating profiles list watching TV as a favorite hobby, even though it is considered by most a common pastime for the average American. This type of editing is actually common in real life social interactions as the "self" that we present to others is often revised in accordance to particular interactions (DePaulo et al., "Lying" 979). However, deception occurs when this editing results in a complete new and untrue self (DePaulo et al., "Lying" 992). This raises the question: where is the line between showing one's good side and being down right dishonest?

The tension between these two sometimes opposing values leaves a gray area in the social rules of online dating. In order to firmly define deception in this new social phenomenon, this literature review will look at past research on interpersonal deception theory, deception in romantic relationships, deception in computer-mediated communication, and deception in the online dating environment.

Interpersonal Deception Theory

In 1996, David B. Buller and Judee K. Burgoon established interpersonal deception theory as a way of integrating the interpersonal nature of communication into the definition of

deception. They chose to focus this theory not on what happens within people but what happens between people during deception communication. Buller and Burgoon hoped this theory would "explain the interplay between active deceivers and detectors who communicate with multiple motives, who behave strategically, whose communication behaviors mutually influence one another to produce a sequence of moves and countermoves, and whose communication is influenced by the situation in which the deception transpires" (Buller, Strzyzewski, and Comstock 2). Based on over 25 years of the authors' and other scholars' research, interpersonal deception theory expounds on the dynamic properties of interpersonal communication, nonverbal behavior, message processing, credibility, and deception as it is achieved through interpersonal interaction (Buller and Burgoon 204). Since the theory's publication, Buller and Burgoon have become the experts on deception research within the field of communication, testing and verifying their propositions with other scholars.

Interpersonal communication can be simply defined as "the creating and sharing meaning between person who are in a relationship" (Seiler and Beall 25). This communication becomes interactive when the exchange of messages provides the opportunity for feedback and reciprocates influence to its participants (Buller and Burgoon 205). Buller and Burgoon define deception as occurring "when communicators control the information contained in their messages to convey a meaning that departs from the truth as they know it" (205). Another definition of deceptive communication offered by Boon and McLeod states that deception is "any verbal and or nonverbal message that one partner sends with the intent of leading the other to a belief or confusion that the sender considers to be less than absolutely true or less than totally complete" (467).

According to interpersonal deception theory, there are three components to deceptive messages (Buller and Burgoon 209). The first component is the central deceptive message, which is typically a form of verbal communication. The second is the ancillary messages, which can be either verbal or nonverbal. These ancillary messages are used to reinforce the authenticity of the deceptive message or protect the sender in the event that that the deception is discovered. The third component of deceptive messages is inadvertent behaviors. These behaviors are mostly nonverbal forms of communication that tend to "leak" deceptive intent and reveal the truth.

These inadvertent behaviors or leakage creates suspicion in the receiver. A receiver can become suspicious of deception, whether the sender is indeed deceiving or telling the truth. "Suspicion refers to a belief, held without sufficient evidence or proof to warrant credibility, that a person's speech or actions may be duplicitous" (Buller and Burgoon 205). Overtime this suspicion can become more certain as the receiver becomes more confident that the sender is either being truthful or deceptive. Whether deception is authentic or simply perceived, interpersonal deception theory seeks to explain deception and the reactions individuals have in response to it (Buller and Burgoon 206).

Deception and deception detection are extremely complex and require greater cognitive demands than truth telling (Burgoon, Blair, and Hamel 18). In order to simplify this complex process, interpersonal deception theory outlines 18 separate propositions that explain and predict the empirical phenomenon of deception as it occurs in interpersonal communication. These 18 propositions focus on two core ideas: (1) deception is an interactive form of interpersonal communication and (2) strategic deception requires cognitive effort. This theory also specifies the importance for the context of the communication and recognizes that the justification and rationalization of interpersonal deception are dependent upon the situation and the relationship in

which the interaction occurs (Buller and Burgoon 212). The first proposition of interpersonal

deception theory states:

> "Proposition 1: Sender and receiver cognitions and behaviors vary systematically as
>
> deceptive communication contexts vary in (a) access to social cues, (b) immediacy, (c)
>
> relational engagement, (d) conversational demands, and (e) spontaneity" (Buller and
>
> Burgoon 214).

According to this proposition, various communication contexts differ in the amount of social

cues available to the users. Face-to-face communication provides users with nonverbal cues,

such as eye contact, tone and pitch of voice, and touch to determine the message. Lesser

interactive methods, such as the telephone and Internet, provide fewer social cues that affect the

communication used. Communication context also varies in the amount of immediacy felt by its

users. Context with high immediacy offers a sense of psychological and physical closeness;

while low immediacy conveys distance and a lack of connection (Buller and Burgoon 212). The

amount of immediacy participants experience affects how relationally engaged they are with one

another. When individuals feel close with each other, this sense of relationship may lead to

greater expectations of trust and a positive bias (Buller and Burgoon 213). In fact, participants in

a study by DePaulo et al. reported that social interactions free of deception were more pleasant

and relationally intimate than interactions in which deception occurred ("Lying" 985). Because

of its mutual dependency and opportunity for feedback, the interactivity of the communication

context affects the conversational demands and spontaneity of its users (Buller and Burgoon

213). Face-to-face communication is dynamic and cannot always be predicted, while computer-

mediated communication allows time between responses for greater planning of its users. Based

on the availability of social cues, the degree of immediacy, relational engagement,

conversational demands, and spontaneity, it is clear that the "attributes of contexts systematically alter communication" (Burgoon and Buller 319).

Along with the communication context, deception is also dependent on the degree of relational familiarity and interdependence of the deceiver and receiver (Buller and Burgoon 212). The second proposition of interpersonal deception theory states:

> "Proposition 2: During deceptive interchanges, sender and receiver cognitions and behaviors vary systematically as relationships vary in (a) relational familiarity (including informational and behavioral familiarity) and (b) relational valence" (Buller and Burgoon 215).

Relational familiarity can be defined as "the degree to which interactants are acquainted with one another, [and] combines personal knowledge of sender's background and habits with first-hand experience with their particular interaction style . . . " (Burgoon et al., "Interpersonal Deception: V" 308). This shared history between individuals provides background information about the person's past experiences and insight into their predictable behaviors based on past interactions (Buller and Burgoon 214). Relational valence (positive or negative feelings toward the other person) also affects deceptive interchanges. Communicators in relationships with a more positive valence, such as friends, are more likely to be given the benefit of the doubt during deceptive exchanges, than strangers or acquaintances. This benefit has been defined by deception scholars as "truth bias" and means that "people err in the direction of perceiving another's communication as truthful rather than deceptive . . . [and] is especially common as people become more familiar with one another" (Burgoon et al., "Trust"). Likewise, Burgoon and Floyd found that friends were seen as more pleasant and sincere than strangers in both deceptive and truth telling instances (264). Thus "positivity and truth biases . . . may undermine

detection by causing receivers to overlook, discount, or misinterpret evidence of deceit, while greater shared history may improve detection by providing . . . a behavioral baseline against which to compare sender messages" (Buller and Burgoon 215).

Interpersonal deception theory states that deceivers may use strategic means for successfully lying in order to manage their individual image and accomplish personal goals. The third proposition of interpersonal deception theory states:

> "Proposition 3: Compared with truth tellers, deceivers (a) engage in greater strategic activity designed to manage information, behavior, and image and (b) display more nonstrategic arousal cues, negative and dampened affect, noninvolvement, and performance decrements" (Buller and Burgoon 218).

One of the most evident ways that individuals deceive other is by managing the information presented. This information management can be achieved by modifying or manipulating the central message through falsification, equivocation, or concealment (Buller and Burgoon 216). After examining 940 acts of deception from 75 undergraduate communication students, Lippard outlines seven distinct types of deception and the frequency of their use: lies (81%), half-truth/distortion (4%), exaggeration (5.2%), withholding information (6.4%), cheating (.4%), stealing (.5%), and hiding behavior (2.1%) (94).

Another way that deceivers attempt to manage their information is through ambiguous or vague verbal content, linguistic style, and nonverbal behaviors (Buller and Burgoon 216-217). In order to test this strategic attribute of deception, Hancock et al. examined the use of disfluencies and discourse markers in the language of deceptive conversations and anyalzed them for linguistic inquiry and word count. Disfluencies are words such as "uh" and "umm" that are used to fill pauses in conversation. These words can be a signal of deception by revealing the

cognitive difficulties experienced by deceivers (Hancock et al., "Attending" 6). Discourse

makers are phrases such as "you know" and "I mean" and are typically dependent on the context

in which they are used. For example, "you know" invites the receiver to agree with the sender's

statement, increasing mutuality and building credibility (Hancock et al., "Attending" 9). The

statement "I mean" can also be used by deceivers to manage information by distancing

themselves from the deceptive statement or indicating a lack of commitment (Hancock et al.,

"Attending" 10). The results of the study found that senders used the discourse marker "you

know" frequently during both deceptive and truth telling (Hancock et al., "Attending" 16), but

the discourse marker "I mean" was used more often during deceptive communication (Hancock

et al., "Attending" 17). Liars also maintain the credibility of their image by using terms such as

"you know" and to manage their presentation of information with terms such as "I mean". The

phrase "I mean" may be used to downplay deception and indicating that the following comment

is only an opinion (Hancock et al., "Attending" 21). Zhou et al. confirms the fact that liars are

strategic in the language they use by finding that deceivers used more "you" pronouns and less

possessive language than truthful participants, demonstrating a lack of immediacy with their

communication partner ("Exploratory Study" 9).

Deceivers can also strategically manage their behavior by suppressing certain actions or

mannerisms that might expose their deceit or adjusting their behavior to appear more credible

(Buller and Burgoon 217). For deceivers to be successful, they need to establish their own

credibility as a source and the credibility of their messages. One way deceivers can enhance

their credibility is by altering their voice's tone and pitch to appear more calm and controlled.

Deceivers can appear more open and trustworthy by smiling, maintaining eye contact, and

adopting an open body posture. However, if a deceiver strategically alters their image and

behavior management too much, it may result in an "over controlled or rigid presentation" (Buller and Burgoon 217).

While deceivers are strategic in their communication, they also display nonstrategic behaviors that can reveal the truth. One such nonstrategic cue is that of arousal. According to psychologists, deception can be arousing due to the fear of being detected (Vrij and Semin 66). In addition, deception can have a negative effect by causing guilt over doing something one knows is unethical (Vrij and Semin 66). Deceivers can leak nonstrategic behaviors as well such as noninvolvement and poor performance.

In the article "Testing Interpersonal Deception Theory: Strategic and Nonstrategic Behaviors of Deceivers and Truth Tellers" Frank and Vasilyseva contradict these results that support the third proposition. For their study the authors recruited 48 participants (24 representing truth tellers and 24 representing liars) from local religious, social, and political interest groups based on the strength of their beliefs. The participants were placed in a hypothetical scenario and given the choice to "steal" a 100 dollar check. Afterwards they were asked to convince an "interrogator" of their innocence regardless if they actually committed the crime or not. The results reveal that 16 of 24 (66.7%) truth tellers and 21 of 24 (87.5%) of deceivers used some kind of strategic behavior (Frank and Vasilyseva 9). Testing the participants' behavior control, the results show 19 of 24 (79.2%) of truth tellers and 22 out of 24 (87.5%) of deceivers managed their messages during the interrogation (Frank and Vasilyseva 10). While the number of deceivers who used strategic activity and exhibited nonstrategic behavior is higher than the truth tellers, this difference was not shown to be statistically significant when put into a Chi-square analysis (Frank and Vaislyseva 9-10). The authors state that "[t]hese facts indicate that engaging in strategic and nonstrategic activities is more likely to

be a characteristic of interpersonal communication in general, regardless where it involves

deception or not (Frank and Vasilyseva 12).

While deceivers may leak certain nonstrategic behaviors, these behaviors should be

reduced over time as participants gain feedback, make adjustments and become better performers

through interactive communication (Buller and Burgoon 220). The fourth proposition of

interpersonal deception theory states,

> "Proposition 4: Context interactivity moderates initial deception displays such that
>
> deception in increasingly interactive contexts results in a greater strategic activity
>
> (information, behavior, and image management), and reduced nonstrategic activity
>
> (arousal, negative and dampened affect, and performance decrements) over time relative
>
> to noninteractive contexts" (Buller and Burgoon 220).

Communication exchanges range from high interactivity to almost no interactivity. This

variation is no different in deceptive communication in which senders may engage in higher

interactive two-way conversations or lesser interactive one-way conversation. However, does an

increase in sender and receiver participation through an interactive context actually increase

deception success when compared to less interactive contexts? According to the principle of

interactivity, deceivers should be more successful in two-way conversations, since they usually

generate a greater connection between the deceiver and receiver and allow the deceiver more

opportunities to adjust and improve their communication performance through feedback.

Used as a foundational study for this principle, Burgoon, Buller, and Floyd took 32

friendship and stranger dyads and had them alternate between dialogue and monologue

conversation settings. The results indicate participation in the dialogue settings created a

stronger sense of mutuality among both the friend and stranger dyads (Burgoon, Buller, and

Floyd 526). These feelings of connectedness, rapport, similarity, and trust encourage a positive bias and a sense of credibility for the sender (Burgoon, Buller, and Floyd 526). This led to higher success rates for deceivers in the dialogue settings. "Dialogue also enabled deceivers to better manage their informational content, speech fluency, nonverbal demeanor, and image, resulting in less accurate deception detection by the partners" (Burgoon, Buller, and Floyd 503).

Confirming the principle of interactivity as well is the article "The Effects of Participation on the Ability to Judge Deceit" by Dunbar, Ramirez, and Burgoon. The authors state that "[t]he principle of interactivity holds that communication processes and outcomes vary as a function of whether the communication context is interactive or not" (Dunbar, Ramirez, and Burgoon 23). By having participant receivers compare impressions of senders and observers to the communication, the study found that senders, the more participatory and interactive members, were seen as more positive, competent, and of higher character than the observers (Dunbar, Ramirez, and Burgoon 28, 29). Furthermore, the receivers were found less likely to detect deception than the more passive participant-observers due to their higher activity in the communication process (Dunbar, Ramirez, and Burgoon 29). Consistent with interpersonal deception theory, Dunbar, Ramirez, and Burgoon agree with the findings of Burgoon, Buller and Floyd by stating that "clear and consistent differences emerged between participant- receivers and observers on deception detection and its associated judgments" (31). The data reveal[ed] that high interactivity in the form of an active participant role was detrimental to deception detection accuracy" (29).

Individual's Expectations, Goals and Motivations, Knowledge, and Skills

One individual difference that affects deception interactions is one's expectation for honesty. The next two propositions in interpersonal deception theory are interrelated and expound on this theory.

"Proposition 5: Sender and receiver initial expectations for honesty are positively related to degree of context interactivity and positivity of relationship between sender and receiver.

Proposition 6: Deceivers' initial detection apprehension and associated strategic activity are inversely related to expectations for honesty (which are themselves a function of context interactivity and relationship positivity" (Buller and Burgoon 221).

It has been stated earlier that interactive communication leads to greater mutuality and relational closeness of its participants. This emotional connection creates a sense trust between the sender and receiver, which can lead to a truth bias (Burgoon, Buller, and Floyd 519; Dunbar, Ramirez, and Burgoon 25). This truth bias can then in turn create an expectation for honesty in the other person. "Expectancies are enduring patterns of anticipated verbal and nonverbal behavior for a particular individual that are appropriate, desired, or preferred. Violations of these expectations occur when actions are sufficiently discrepant as to be noticeable by the receiver" (Dunbar, Ramirez, and Burgoon 25). The higher this expectation, the greater the consequences one might experience when it is not met and deception occurs. This is why many find it much more hurtful to be lied to by a spouse or close family member than by a coworker or acquaintance. When there are expectations for honesty, a deceiver may become apprehensive of detection and the negative reactions he or she might experience if discovered. This apprehension then leads deceivers to use more strategic activity to avoid being caught.

While an individual's expectation for honesty does have a noteworthy effect on deceptive behavior, their unique goals and motivations for the deceit also have a significant impact on the communication strategies used. In the article "Ask Me No Questions, I'll Tell You No Lies: Situational Exigencies for Interpersonal Deception," Lippard identified several motivational categories for deception responses in undergraduate students. The most popular motivations were found to be to protect or enhance one's social image (13.8%), to avoid hurting another's feelings (13.3%), and to fulfill an undesirable request in order to avoid disharmony, conflict, retaliation (12.6%). The least popular categories were to initiate or maintain a desired interaction (1.1%), to avoid worrying another (1.3%), and to use deception as a form of humor or joke (1.5%) (94-95). In addition to motivations for deceit, Lippard found five situational contexts that affect how deception can be used as a strategy to solve problems. These include deceiving a parent to avoid a lecture, criticism or punishment (8.5% of all deception), using excuses to others of power (5.9% of all deception), saving face (9.3% of all deception), avoiding hurt feelings (8.1% of all deception), and faking a willingness to a friend's request (7.5% of all deception) (Lippard 96-99).

These goals and motivations are the subject of the seventh proposition in interpersonal deception theory.

"Proposition 7: Goals and motivations moderate strategic and nonstrategic behavior displays.

Sub-proposition 7a: Senders deceiving for self-gain exhibit more strategic activity and nonstrategic leakage than senders deceiving for other benefits.

Sub-proposition 7b: Receivers' initial behavior patterns are a function of (a) their

priorities among instrumental, relational, and identity objectives and (b) their initial intent

to uncover deceit" (Buller and Burgoon 223).

Burgoon and Floyd tested proposition 7 by studying the goal oriented strategic behaviors

of high motivated and low motivated deceivers. In their study 64 undergraduate students,

assigned to friend and stranger pairs, participated in videotaped topic conversations and then

watched the videos to analyze the interaction and evaluate the other person's performance. The

results of the study found that the sender with "higher motivation was associated with more

complete, clear, and direct verbal messages and more involved and pleasant nonverbal

demeanor" (Burgoon and Floyd 262). Also, the more motivated the sender was, the more trust

was experienced by the receiver and the less accurate they were at detecting deceit (Burgoon and

Floyd 259). However, participants that started with deception in the conversations were found to

demonstrate less involvement and experience difficulty managing their nonverbal behaviors

(Burgoon and Floyd 262). Following interpersonal deception theory, the results show that both

verbal and nonverbal communicative performance were enhanced by motivations, although this

was not dependent on the individual deceiving (Burgoon and Floyd 262).

Another way that goals and motivations have been theorized to influence deceptive

communication is described in the earlier work of DePaulo and his colleagues. Their hypothesis

titled the motivation impairment effect (MIE), states that "deceivers who are highly motivated to

succeed should suffer detrimental effects on nonverbal performance but facilitative effects on

verbal performance relative to deceivers who are less motivated" (Burgoon and Floyd 243)."

The more motivated senders are to deceive the more apprehension they may experience over fear

of detection resulting in "leakage" of their nonverbal behaviors, therefore sabotaging their efforts (DePaulo et al., "The Motivational" 191).

In the article "Attending to the Unattended: Disfluencies and Discourse Markers in Deceptive Conversation," Hancock et al. contradicts the motivational impairment effect by studying the linguistic nature of deceivers versus truth tellers. In their study, the authors found that "highly motivated senders were detected at the same rate (M= 53.8%; SE= .05%) as unmotivated senders (M= 53.1%; SE=.04%)" (Hancock et al., "Attending" 18).

In addition to predicting the type of strategic communication used, an individual's goals and motivations can also determine the degree. In support of sub-proposition 7a, Buller and Burgoon state, "when deceit is motivated by self-interest, it should contain greater strategic behavior to formulate plausible lies, reduce leakage, and project a favorable image because senders want to avoid any negative reactions likely to attend such dishonesty. At the same time, self-serving deceit should be accompanied by nonstrategic behaviors because of senders' heightened detection apprehension and discomfort over violating moral standards" (222).

In the article "Lying in Everyday Life," DePaulo et al. found that the majority of lies are indeed self-centered (45.54% for college students, 56.68% for community members) as opposed to other-oriented (35.74% for college students, 24.45% for community members) (986). For both groups, almost twice as many lies were told to benefit the liars instead of other people (DePaulo et al., "Lying" 991). Results show that senders based the majority of these lies on psychological reasons such as self-presentation and emotion rather than the personal advantage of the liar, either material or convenience (DePaulo et al., "Lying" 987).

Deceivers with the goal to avoid hurting their partner or causing trouble in the relationship may not be as apprehensive about detection, since they believe their deception is an

acceptable and sometimes even desirable alternative (Buller and Burgoon 222). The participants

from a DePaulo et al. study "describe their lies as protective of the targets and of themselves;

they claimed that both they and the targets of their lies would have felt a bit worse if the truth

had been told instead of a lie" ("Lying" 989). Participants claimed that they would repeat 70%

of their deception if placed in the situation again (DePaulo et al., "Lying" 989). A possible

example of other-oriented deception would be a wife's asking her husband if a certain dress

makes her look fat. Most people would agree that a good husband will answer "no" to protect

the feelings of his wife, even if the dress is not the most flattering. The wife may actually know

that there is some untruth to her husband's statement but accepts the lie since it builds her self-

esteem. This example also supports sub-proposition 7b in that receivers' behavior pattern is a

function of their own goals and their desire to uncover deceit.

In addition to expectations, goals, and motivations, communicators' preexisting

knowledge about each other also impact deception. The next proposition of interpersonal

deception theory states:

> "Proposition 8: As receivers' informational, behavioral, and relational familiarity
>
> increase, deceivers not only (a) experience more detection apprehension and (b) exhibit
>
> more strategic information, behavior, and image management but also (c) more
>
> nonstrategic leakage behavior" (Buller and Burgoon 224).

The more familiar deceivers are with the receiver the more anxiety they may experience with

detection. This background knowledge may make it easier for the receiver to spot falsehood as it

contradicts the individual's normal verbal and nonverbal behavior (Buller and Burgoon 223). As

a result, senders may extend greater effort and exhibit more strategic behavior and image

management to appear more credible in the eyes of the receiver.

The article titled "Interpersonal Deception: V. Accuracy in Deception Detection" by Burgoon et al. investigates how relational and behavioral familiarity affects one's accuracy in detecting deception. Through research with stranger (50%) and acquaintance dyads (50%), the authors offer support for IDT"s eighth proposition by finding that the participants overestimated the honesty of acquaintances but underestimated the honesty of strangers (Burgoon et al., "Interpersonal Deception: V" 317). Burgoon et al. also tested the effect of behavioral knowledge in detection accuracy but found somewhat contradicting results. Through expert and non-expert participants, they found that the experts (participants with behavioral familiarity) were more accurate than the non-experts when judging deception in others.

The final individual difference that affects deception is that of one's communication competence and skills. The ninth proposition of interpersonal deception theory states:

> "Proposition 9: Skilled senders better convey a truthful demeanor by engaging in more strategic behavior and less nonstrategic leakage than unskilled ones" (Buller and Burgoon 224).

Those individuals with a high communication skill set should be able to control information, manipulate their behavior, and restrain from leakage while deceiving others (Buller and Burgoon 224). In contrast, individuals lacking in communication skills may show discomfort, leak arousal, and appear less confident when completing the complex task of deception. In the article "Interpersonal Deception: VI. Effects of Preinteractional and Interactional Factors on Deceiver and Observer Perceptions of Deception Success," Burgoon et al. tested this claim with 40 adults from a southwestern community. Prior to the experiment the participants' social skill level was tested according to their social control, social expressivity (mainly verbal skills), and emotional expressivity (mainly nonverbal skills). Based on two

different interviews, one truthful and the other based on dishonesty, observers stated that the participants with greater verbal control and expressivity were more believable (Burgoon et al., "Interpersonal Deception: VI" 271).

Frank and Vasilyseva contradict these findings in their study of social anxiety and affective communication techniques of truth tellers and deceivers. Their results revealed no significant difference between the two groups in both categories, but they did find that the highly skilled communicators were able to exercise more control over their behavior (Frank and Vaislyseva 11). Frank and Vaislyseva failed to support proposition 9 by stating that "it would be unreasonable to deny that communication skills play an important role in deception success, but these facts imply that more strategic behavior does not necessarily lead to appearing truthful" (Frank and Vaislyseva 13).

Detecting Deceit

A significant amount of research on interpersonal deception theory has been focused on the ability and accuracy of individuals to detect deception in others. According to interpersonal deception theory, detection accuracy refers to the "correct recognition of both truthful and deceptive messages" (Buller and Burgoon 225). Receivers are considered successful if they can detect both accurately, while deceivers are considered successful if their deceit is not detected and they remain credible to the receivers. While the majority of research has found an individual's accuracy is only slightly higher than chance (Bond and DePaulo 482, Ferrara et al. 102, Hancock et al., "Attending" 18), the tenth and eleventh propositions of interpersonal deception theory state that several factors can determine receivers' judgment of a sender's credibility and their level of accuracy in differentiate truthful statements from deceptive statements.

"Proposition 10: Initial and ongoing receiver judgments of sender credibility are positively related to (a) receiver truth biases, (b) context interactivity, (c) and sender encoding skills; they are inversely related to (d) deviations of sender communication from expected patterns.

Proposition 11: Initial and ongoing receiver detection accuracy are inversely related to (a) receiver truth biases, (b) context interactivity, (c) and sender encoding skills; they are positively related to (d) informational and behavioral familiarity, (e) receiver decoding skills, and (f) deviations of sender communication from expected patterns" (Buller and Burgoon 228).

Burgoon et al. states, "Unmasking deception requires considering multiple sender and receiver factors and the dynamic interplay between the two" ("Interpersonal Deception: V" 319). One such factor that affects a receivers' judgment and detection accuracy is their own truth bias. As stated earlier, individuals are prone to have truth biases, tendencies to believe another person as honest (Ferrara et al. 102, Levine, Shaw, and Shulman 14). This bias affects receivers' judgment of sender credibility and their own capability to recognize deceit when it is exists. When this truth bias is associated with individuals of relational familiarity, it becomes highly resistant to suspicion and doubt (Burgoon et al., "Interpersonal Deception: V" 320). Receivers may be "motivated to find the 'truth' in their friends' answers and to overlook or rationalize away any questionable answers" (Burgoon et al., "Interpersonal Deception: V" 320).

Another factor that affects receivers' judgments and abilities to detect deceit is the level of interactivity of the communication context. In highly interactive context, a receiver has to process large quantities of information and prioritize what is the most important. This increase in information results in a greater cognitive ability required for deception detection. Thus, both

truth biases and interactive contexts lead to an elevated sender credibility and reduced detection accuracy for the receiver.

Another factor that affects receivers' judgments and detection accuracy are their communication skills. A deceiver with fluid speech and the ability to manage information and control their behavior will be more successful at avoiding deception detection. Likewise, a receiver with discernment, sensitivity, and detection skills will be more successful at identifying truthful and deceptive messages (Buller and Burgoon 227).

Informational and behavior knowledge about the sender also affects a receiver's ability to detect deceit. This knowledge gained from past interactions allows receivers to develop a baseline for truthful behavior and recognize when a sender's behavior deviates from the expected pattern, possibly exposing deceit (Buller and Burgoon 227). In their study with 55 premarital romantic couples, McCornack and Parks found that as a relationship becomes more intimate and involved, one's ability to detect deception in the partner declines (115). In addition, DePaulo and Kashy found that lies told to emotionally close relationship partners were more likely to be discovered than those told in less close relationships (76).

While it is logical that deception detection accuracy should increase as sender encoding and receiver decoding skills increase with training and practice, little research has been found to support these claims. Through a psychometric analysis of 247 previous research studies, Bond and DePaulo found that the difference in an individual's ability to detect deceit is minimal, resulting in less than 1% (482). Several reasons for this could be that research studies on deception detection typically utilize lies with low stakes, sanctioned lies, and student participants with little life experience (Levine, Shaw, and Shulman 6, Park et al. 146). In real life situations

where deception has greater consequences, individuals might be more motivated to accurately detect deceit in others, and therefore be more successful.

Park et al. also suggest that receivers find it difficult to judge deception accurately because research experiments do not include the methods individuals use when detecting deception in their daily lives (144). Through the open ended questionnaires of undergraduate students, the authors analyzed a total of 194 instances of deception. Taking into consideration the participants used several methods in combination, the researchers found the most common methods of discovering deception were third party information (52.1%), physical evidence (30.9%), and solicited confessions (18.6%) (Park et al. 151). The verbal and nonverbal behaviors expressed in interpersonal deception theory were listed as the sole basis for detection in only four out of the 194 instances (2.1%) (Park et al. 150).

Levine, Shaw, and Shulman contradict these findings in their article titled "Assessing Deception Detection Accuracy with Dichotomous Truth-lie Judgments and Continuous Scaling." Through a study of 140 undergraduate students at a large Midwestern university, the authors conclude that individuals can judge deceit more accurately than previously believed. In their study, participants played a trivia game in which cheating and lying were encouraged and were then interviewed about their performance. The interviews were videotaped and later watched by separate participants who were instructed to label the person as a lying/cheater or an honest/ non-cheater. This study compared the detection accuracy of two separate methodologies: dichotomous (participants labeled the sender as a lying-cheater or an honest-noncheater) or continuous (participants rated the deception/honesty of the sender on a 1 to 7 scale). The results of the dichotomous questioning found participants to be accurate 57.8% overall for detecting deception: 69.1% accuracy when judging truthful statements and 46.4% accuracy when judging

deceptive statements (Levine, Shaw, and Shulman 14). The continuous scale found similar results with 58.8% overall accuracy: 72.7% for truths and 44.9% for lies (Levine, Shaw, and Shulman 14). While at first glance 58% of overall accuracy for the dichotomous test doesn't seem significant, the authors claim that "relative to 50-50 chance, judges were +19% for truths and -3% at lies netting +16%" (Levine, Shaw, and Shulman 16).

Bond and DePaulo claim that while people do not differ in their ability to evaluate deception, they do differ in their detectablity as liars (486). "In an individual difference sense, the accuracy of a deception judgment depends more on the liar than the judge" (Bond and DePaulo 486). They state that generally some individuals are considered by others more credible communicators, whether they are lying or telling the truth. Bond and DePaulo found that accurate deception detection depends more on a liar's credibility as opposed to individual differences of the judge (487).

In the article "Group and Individual Accuracy in Deception Detection," Ferrara and her colleagues examine the differences between the ability of an individual and the ability of a group to detect deception. Specifically, this study examines differences in deception detection, truth-bias, judgmental confidences, and self-reported cue reliance between individuals working alone or within groups working together. Of the 129 participants, 47 were assigned to work individually, while the remaining 82 participants were assigned to work in small groups ranging from 3 to 6 members. The participants were asked to watch a video that showed a male and female source's discussing their answers to items from the Machiavellianism scale. The study contained a total of 16 video clips, 8 from each source with half representing truthful statements and the other half lies. Participants were asked after each clip if the source was being honesty or lying. The participants in groups were asked to collaborate with each other and agree on a

collective answer, and the individual participants worked alone. After each question, the members were also asked to rank how confident they were in their answer using a 7 point Likert scale.

Similar with past research both sets of participants were found to have a substantial truth bias, considering 66% of the statements to be truthful (Ferrara et al. 102). Total accuracy of deception detection was 52% for the individuals working alone and 53% for those working with groups (Ferrara et al. 102). These results show no significant difference between individuals and groups and confirm past studies that state one's accuracy of detecting deceit is only slightly higher than chance. While the results of the study found no major differences between the individuals and groups in detection accuracy, truth-bias, and self-reported cue reliance, the results did find that individuals were more confident in their decisions when working together rather than alone (Ferrara et al. 103).

Suspicion of Deception

While individuals may not be accurate in determining the difference between truthful and deceptive messages, there are still times when one becomes suspicious of another's deceit. Just as deceivers engage in strategic and nonstrategic behaviors, receivers also carry out strategic and nonstrategic behaviors when suspicious of a sender's deceit. The next proposition in interpersonal deception theory states:

"Proposition 12: Receiver suspicion is manifested through a combination of strategic and nonstrategic behavior" (Buller and Burgoon 229).

When receivers are suspicious of deceit, their behavior will reflect whether they want to make their suspicion to be known (Buller and Burgoon 229). Receivers may choose to evaluate a sender's verbal and nonverbal interactions covertly, having little effect on the sender. Other

receivers may choose to make their suspicions known and openly confront the sender. Likewise, if senders recognize the receiver's suspicions they may alter their strategic behavior, resulting in greater deception success.

Other senders prefer to take a more strategic approach to suspicion and use skeptical questioning or confrontation to intimate a possible deceiver. A study by House examines the differences between receivers' reactions to suspicion and their choice to confront a possible deceiver. The author claims that most deceit is used not to ruin or attack the face of another but to maintain the communicator's own face (432). House states that one viable concern of confrontation is that of saving one's own "face" by not being fooled or manipulated and protecting the deceiver's "face" of embarrassment of being caught in a lie (432).

Through research with 54 undergraduate communication students, House identifies six general motives for confronting a deceiver. These motives are: "the speaker was wrong/I knew otherwise (50%); the speaker can't get away with feigning to me (15%); the speaker made up too much, went too far (15%); I had to speak up (10%); to see the speaker's reaction (5%); I knew it wouldn't bother the speaker (5%)" (House 431). The research also found several reasons one might have for choosing not to confront a deceiver. These were: to avoid offending/hurting/embarrassing the speaker (30%); it wasn't important or worth the bother of confronting (14%); to avoid possible negative repercussions such as anger or a fight (12%); the speaker does this all the time (9%); to let him or her make a fool of him/herself (9%); the speaker was so sincere/convinced he/she was right and didn't want to seem like a know-it-all myself (3%); other/vague response (12%) (House 431). House explains "non-confronters may be more concerned with not being heartless or rude to their speaker, while confronters may be more concerned with their own face projection and maintenance in conversations where they

experiences suspicion" (432-433). However, the results did show no statistical difference between the instances in which confrontation did or did not occur.

In addition, Boon and McLeod discovered several ways senders may react to being confronted with suspicion of deceit. They would found 45% of participants would confess to their deceit (Boon and McLeod 468). Other responses included "adding to the story (22%), ignoring the situation (10%), and changing the subject (8%). A small, but not inconsequential, number of respondents said that they would respond to their partner's suspicions by denying everything (6%)" (Boon and McLeod 468).

Deception is an interactive form of communication that in order to be successful requires feedback from the other person. This feedback signals to deceivers that they are either being successful in their deception or adjustments need to be made. In order to increase their success, senders make these necessary adjustments when they recognize perceived suspicion in the receiver. This interactive nature of suspicion leads to the thirteenth proposition and sub-propositions of interpersonal deception theory.

"Proposition 13: Senders perceive suspicion when it is present.

Sub-proposition 13a: Deviations from expected receiver behavior increase perceptions of suspicion.

Sub-proposition 13b: Receiver behavior signaling disbelief, uncertainty, or the need for additional information increase sender perceptions of suspicion" (Buller and Burgoon 231).

Since it has been proposed that suspicion is made apparent through behaviors and that these behaviors can be recognized by senders, it can also be argued that perceived suspicion

leads to behavioral adjustments in receivers. The next proposition in interpersonal deception

theory states:

"Proposition 14: Suspicion (perceived or actual) increases senders' (a) strategic and (b)

nonstrategic behavior" (Buller and Burgoon 231).

When deceivers perceive suspicion they may increase their strategic behaviors in order to

combat suspicion and increase their deception success. At the same time deceivers and truth

tellers alike may also engage in nonstrategic behaviors due to their discomfort with being

suspected. Deceivers may reveal anxiety, a nonstrategic behavior associated with detection

apprehension; whereas, truth tellers may reveal evidence of frustration, since their honesty is

being doubted (Buller and Burgoon 231).

Scholarly research has led to mixed support for the thirteenth and fourteenth propositions

of interpersonal deception theory. As a foundational study for interpersonal deception theory,

Burgoon, Strzyzewski, and Comstock studied deceivers' reactions to receivers' suspicions and

probing. This extensive work included 420 undergraduate participants divided into 118 friend

and 92 stranger dyads (Burgoon, Strzyzewski, and Comstock 5). Supporting proposition 13, the

authors found that receivers were in fact more suspicious after one minute interactions with

deceivers than with truth tellers (Burgoon, Strzyzewski, and Comstock 10). However, the

receivers' perceived suspicion was not evident in their behaviors, such as turn length,

interruptions, pauses, speech errors, laughter, fluency, loudness, and pitch variety (Burgoon,

Strzyzewski, and Comstock 13). The results also found support for proposition 14 because

participants "who perceived more suspicion enacted fewer illustrators, less bodily activity, and

shorter turns than [participants] who perceived less suspicion (Burgoon, Strzyzewski, and

Comstock 14 and 15). However, this suspicion was not always accurate, since deceivers were

not found to perceive more suspicion than truth tellers (Burgoon, Strzyzewski, and Comstock 13). Since suspicious receivers were less accurate than nonsuspicious receivers when attempting to detect deception in others (Burgoon, Strzyzewski, and Comstock 17), it is still unclear if suspicion aids in deception detection accuracy. Burgoon et al. explains "suspicion might help or hinder accuracy, depending on one's basic predisposition to judge others as truthful or dishonest and whether the information being judged is truthful or untruthful" ("Interpersonal Deception: V" 306)

One explanation for these mixed findings can be found in the next proposition of interpersonal deception theory.

"Proposition 15: Deception and suspicion displays change over time" (Buller and

Burgoon 232).

This proposition brings focus back to the main principle of interpersonal deception theory, which claims that deception takes place in interactive contexts. These patterns of sender and receiver interactions are dynamic in that the participant acts and react to the other's communication style. These interactions lead to verbal and nonverbal behavior changes over time as each person makes adjustments according to the other's feedback. For example, senders may show fewer signs of discomfort as they begin to believe their partner is becoming less suspicious. (Buller and Burgoon 232). Buller and Burgoon explain, "Proposition 15 should be particularly true if senders or receivers perceive a threat to the success of their performance because such threats should activate (a) greater self-monitoring and partner-surveillance for feedback about one's one effectiveness and (b) subsequent moves designed to authenticate the performance, protect self, and/or preserve the interpersonal relationship" (232).

Another way that deception and suspicion displays change over time is that they can influence the likelihood of each other building a never ending circle. Cole states, "Suspicion may tempt one to engage in deception, ultimately sending the relationship on a downward trajectory of decreased relational outcomes, increased suspicion, and more deception" (125).

One way that deception and suspicion behaviors change over time is through normal dyadic communication patterns in interpersonal communication. The sixteenth proposition of interpersonal deception theory states:

"Proposition 16: Reciprocity is the predominant interaction adaptation pattern between

senders and receivers during interpersonal deception" (Buller and Burgoon 233).

According to this proposition, a sender may begin to match the communication and behavioral styles of a receiver during deceptive situations. For example, if a receiver is calm and agreeable the sender may begin to show these traits. Due to the interactive nature of communication, senders and receivers engage in mutual verbal and nonverbal behaviors as the conversation moves back and forth (Buller and Burgoon 232). An article titled "Purpose and Effects of Lying" by Hample offers some support for this proposition. Hample found that most lies are actually responses to interactions as opposed to initial statements (41). Hample also found that lies are often automatic and repeated over and over again (38).

Cole tested this reciprocity proposition in deception as it occurs in romantic relationships. Based on self-reported questionnaires from 128 heterosexual couples, the study found that one's use of deception in a relationship is positively related to the belief that his/her partner is also being dishonest (Cole 118). Likewise, an individual's perception about the partner's dishonesty was found to be positively related to the extent he/she engaged in deception (Cole 118).

The final two propositions of interpersonal deception theory focus on the success of a deceiver to deceive and a receiver's success to detect deception after the interaction is over. The seventeenth and eighteenth propositions state:

"Proposition 17: Receiver detection accuracy, bias, and judgments of sender credibility following an interaction are a function of (a) terminal receiver cognitions (suspicion, truth biases), (b) receiver decoding skill, and (c) terminal sender behavioral displays.

Proposition 18: Sender perceived deception success is a function of (a) terminal sender cognitions (perceived suspicion) and (b) terminal receiver behavioral displays" (Buller and Burgoon 234).

While propositions 10 and 11 analyze the bias, judgments, credibility, and success of deceivers during an interaction, propositions 17 and 18 identify how these determine detection accuracy and deception success following a deceptive interaction. The sender and receiver cognitions, communication skills, and behavior displays affect how accurately receivers detect deception and how accurately senders believe their own deception to be. Burgoon et al. further explain: "Unmasking deception requires considering multiple sender and receiver factors and the dynamic interplay between the two" ("Interpersonal Deception: V" 319). Therefore, deceivers' success is reliant on how well they adjust their information, behavior, and image based on receiver feedback (Buller and Burgoon 234).

Established in 1996, interpersonal deception theory was developed to integrate past research of deception with the concepts of interpersonal communication. Separated into 18 separate propositions, this theory is based on several core concepts that include: (1) deception is interactive, (2) deception is strategic, and (3) deception is influenced by the context of the communication and the relationship that it occurs in. These broad principles offer some

explanation into the multifaceted and complex nature of deceptive communication. This theory's functional approach on the relationship between deceivers and the deceived make it an appropriate foundation for examining deception within the romantic relationships formed through online dating services.

Deception in Romantic Relationships

One way communication researchers use interpersonal deception theory is to understand how deception operates within romantic relationships. Many individuals believe honesty to be one of the most important characteristics in romantic relationships (Boon and McLeod 469), and generally individuals believe their romantic partner will be honest with them (Horan and Dillow 149). However, this belief is not based on statistical evidence. Rowatt et al. also found that 90% of participants would be willing to tell at least one lie to a prospective date ("Lying"). They found that participants were more willing to lie about less-verifiable qualities such as personality traits and interests rather than verifiable characteristics such as status and age. Another study by Kaplar and Gordon asked 108 undergraduate students to recall an instance when they lied in a romantic relationship and another instance when they lied to their partner. These participants described a variety of deceptive occurrences, including lies regarding infidelity (32.7%), their or their partner's whereabouts or activities (17.1%), reasons for breaking up (8.3%), romantic feelings for someone else (6.9%), sexual experiences prior to the relationship (4.6%), feelings about the relationship (4.1%), and drug and cigarette use (3.7%) (Kaplar and Gordon 496).

One explanation for the commonality of lies in romantic relationships is the important function of altruistic or other-oriented lies. Batson and Shaw define altruism as "a motivational state with the ultimate goal of increasing another's welfare" (108). Simply put, altruistic lies are selfless deception used to benefit another person and protect their feelings. A study with college

students and community members by DePaulo and Kashy found that participants in emotionally close relationships used more altruistic lies than lies that benefited themselves (71). These lies are not meant to harm but "communicate understanding, validation, and caring- the essential components of intimacy" (DePaulo and Kashy 76).

A study based on individual's attitudes towards deception in romantic relationships found that the majority of participants (65%) expressed a conditional viewpoint, claiming that the choice for complete honesty depends on the situation (Boon and McLeod 469). These conditions in which participants believed it was better to mislead a romantic partner than tell the truth included "protecting the partner's feelings (59%), preventing damage to the relationship (14%), and increasing or avoiding damage to the partner's self-esteem (14%). Ten percent of the participants said it was better to lie than to tell the truth if the deception was minor, and 6% responded that it was better to mislead a partner than to tell the truth if doing so avoided conflict" (Boon and McLeod 469). Despite the importance of honesty in romantic relationships, Boon and McLeod state that "many people feel that deceiving their partners is not merely acceptable under some circumstances, but is in fact the proper and –perhaps from some ethical standpoints- the moral thing to do" (472).

Boon and McLeod also found some correlation between romantic partners' attitudes towards deception and the types of deception used. Those participants with a stronger belief in complete honesty were less likely to use falsification and more likely to use jokes or sarcasm as a means to mislead their partners (Boon and McLeod 470).

DePaulo and Kashy found that one in every three interactions of unmarried romantic partners contained deception, while for married couples this number was less than one in ten interactions (77). Does the frequency of deception decrease as the emotional closeness and

commitment of the relationship increase? In their study, DePaulo and Kashy found that participants told fewer lies in close relationships such as friends and best friends than in the less close relationships between strangers and acquaintances (73). The participants reported feeling more distress before and after lying to those they are emotionally close with and that these lies were more likely to be discovered (DePaulo and Kashy 75).

Contrast to married couples, individuals in dating relationships are striving to make a good impression and may be insecure about their ability to succeed (DePaulo and Kashy 77). A lack of long term commitment and insecurity with accomplishing these goals can be a breeding ground for deceit. "Uncertain about whether their 'true selves' are lovable enough to attract and keep such appealing mates, people present themselves as they wish they were instead of how they believe they are in fact" (DePaulo and Kashy 77). Without the relational commitment of marriage, individuals may use deception as a means to gaining approval and reducing the relational anxiety of abandonment (Cole 120).

In her study on romantically involved Australians, Peterson found that small, white lies, such as claiming to enjoy a meal that actually wasn't appetizing, were used more often and produced less guilt than any other deceptive strategy (282, 284). One explanation for this is that individuals see white lies as less dishonest than other types of lies and even helpful in avoiding relationship conflict (Peterson 284). Peterson found that questionnaire respondents preferred telling and receiving a white lie over having an argument with their significant other (284).

In intimate relationships, Kaplar and Gordon found that liars often claim the motivation for their lies is to protect their relationship partner. In their study, the researchers asked 108 undergraduate students (41 males and 67 females) to write two autobiographical narratives, one in which they lied to a romantic partner and the other about an instance when a romantic partner

lied to them and then complete a questionnaire about each of these events. Examining both viewpoints of deception in which both the lie teller and lie receiver are the same person produced some interesting findings. The results reveal that when participants described their own lies, they viewed themselves as more selflessly motivated, experienced greater guilt, and justified their actions based on the situation or being antagonized by the lie receiver (Kaplar and Gordon 497). However, when relationship partners lied to them, participants did not extended the same views and typically became enraged (Kaplar and Gordon 497). Lie receivers viewed the lies as intentionally harmful and claimed their anger was justified (Kaplar and Gordon 499).

Several reasons can account for this difference between lie tellers and lie receivers. First, lie receivers do not have access to the same information as lie tellers regarding the reasons for the lie and the multitude of related factors (Kaplar and Gordon 492). "Second, lie receivers may not process the information that is available to them in the same manner that lie tellers do" (Kaplar and Gordon 492), and third, lie receivers may be prone to a negative bias used as a defensive mechanism in an effort to protect themselves from getting hurt (Kaplar and Gordon 492).

While some believe small, white lies to be acceptable in romantic relationships, such lies can be a risky and detrimental practice to the relationship's success. While white lies were found to have no implication on relationship satisfaction, the results did show that partners in relationships with a higher frequency of deception reported to be less satisfied with their relationship (Peterson 285). Likewise, Peterson states, "students who were gaining the most satisfaction from their couple relationships were the least likely to conceal things from their partners by making intentionally deceptive statements" (283).

A study by Horan and Dillow attempted to discover a connection between feelings of guilt and shame that some experience after being deceptive, relational qualities such as commitment and satisfaction and the type of deceptive messages used. There were a total of 258 participants, ranging in ages 17-27, recruited for the study. The participants were asked open-ended questions about an instance when they had deceived a romantic partner. Of these participants 175 reported on a serious dating relationship, 74 about a casual dating relationship, and 9 on another type of relationship. About half (N= 39) of the respondents reported they were no longer dating their partner with 27 of them blaming deception as a factor in the relationship ending. The results indicated that the type of deceptive messages used were not influenced by relational qualities nor had an impact on emotional reactions to deceit (Horan and Dillow 160). However, the results showed that the more committed and satisfied a person was to the relationship the greater feelings of guilt and shame they experienced over their deception (Horan and Dillow 159). The study also found that women more than men reported higher levels of guilt and shame after deceiving a romantic partner (Horan and Dillow 158).

One possible reason individuals are dishonest in how they represent themselves to potential romantic partners could be their personality type. In the article, "Deception to Get a Date," Rowatt, Cunningham, and Druen describe a study they conducted with participants of two different personality types, high self-monitors (high SMs) and low self-monitors (low SMs). High SMs can be described as individuals that are conscientious of their self-presentation, especially in varying social situations (Rowatt, Cunningham, and Druen, "Deception" 1230). These individuals are more likely to adjust aspects of their personality, depending on the situation. Low SMs can be described as just the opposite, individuals who are not concerned with the appropriateness of varying situations and who remain consistent in their self-

presentation (Rowatt, Cunningham, and Druen, "Deception" 1230). For the study, the authors instructed participants to create their own self-descriptions (dating profiles) after reviewing two profiles of potential dates. The results showed that the high SMs were more likely to deceive a potential date by providing an impression that is similar to that of their ideal partner than the low SMs (Rowatt, Cunningham, and Druen, "Deception"1238). The authors state that these findings support the "interpretation that high SMs intended to be misleading and that low SMs intended to be more straightforward" (Rowatt, Cunningham, and Druen, "Deception" 1238). The study also revealed that men of both high SMs and low SMs "preferred to date the more physically attractive women, even though they were depicted to have a less desirable personality" (Rowatt, Cunningham, and Druen, "Deception" 1234).

A similar article by the same authors titled "Lying to Get a Date: The Effect of Facial Physical Attractiveness on the Willingness to Deceive Prospective Dating Partners" discusses the importance of physical attraction in a potential date and its effect on deception. Based on two separate studies, the results show that both men and woman preferred to date more physically attractive prospects over less attractive ones and were therefore more likely to modify their own self presentations to these prospective daters. (Rowatt, Cunningham and Druen, "Lying" 217, 214). Participants "reported a willingness to lie about their personal appearance, personality, income, past relationship outcomes, career skills, and course grades" (Rowatt, Cunningham and Druen, "Lying" 217). An interesting finding is that the participants were more willing to lie to a prospective date about their physical appearance than personality traits (Rowatt, Cunningham and Druen, "Lying" 218). The authors offer several explanations for these lies including: to avoid rejection, to attract a desired date, and to enhance perceived similarity (219).

Deception in Computer-Mediated Communication

Along with deception in romantic relationships, another area of increasingly popular deception research is that of deception in computer-mediated communication. Media are not static entities but are always changing. As new technologies are developed and brought into everyday culture, their usage alters the way individuals communicate with each other. With the widespread popularity of computer-mediated communication, the amount of textual information is rapidly growing and further increasing the opportunity for deceit. However, the ability to detect communication deception still remains ineffective.

Based on interpersonal deception theory and the principle of interactivity, "Trust and Deception in Mediated Communication" by Burgoon et al. examines whether individuals are less likely to develop trust and are more susceptible to deception through mediated communication rather than face-to-face communication. In nondeceptive situations, more interactivity should lead to increases in trust and credibility. While in deceptive situations, interactivity should lead to greater truth biases and therefore produce less accurate deception detection. For this study, the authors paired together 128 participants into 64 dyads and assigned them equally roles of deceiver and truth-teller. The dyads were then observed communicating in three mediated settings (text, audio, and audio visual "AV") and face-to-face. In contrast to popular belief, the study found that participants were able to establish trust and mutuality even without meeting face-to-face (Burgoon et al., "Trust" 7). In some conditions participants even had a higher amount of mutuality and trust in mediated communication than in face-to-face. The two oral mediated communication contexts, audio and AV, were found to create the most trust, while audio, AV, and face-to-face contexts created the highest estimates of truth (Burgoon et al., "Trust" 7). However, compared to the other communication modes, text messaging was found to foster the least amount of trust and truth. The participants were found to experience higher

levels of truth and trust when they felt involvement and mutuality with their partners (Burgoon et al., "Trust" 8).

In a 2004 study, Hancock, Thom-Santelli, and Ritchie analyzed the social interaction journals of 28 undergraduate students to investigate the correlation between deception and the specific designs of computer-mediated-communication technologies. Comparing face-to-face interactions with telephone, email, and instant messaging, the authors found that "the degree to which a medium 1) allows for synchronous interaction, 2) is recordless, and 3) is distributed, the greater the frequency of lying" occurred (Hancock, Thom-Santelli, and Ritchie 134). Based on a total of 1198 recorded interactions, the telephone had the highest percentage of lies with 37%, followed by face-to-face (27%), instant messaging (21%), and email (14%). Although email lies were reported as the most planned, no difference was found in the importance or believability of lies across all categories (Hancock, Thom-Santelli, and Ritchie 134). The results showed a correlation between the frequency of email use and the total number of lies produced in email. Hancock, Thom-Santelli, and Ritchie suggest that "increased experience with a communication technology may lead to increased deception with that technology" (134).

Four years later in 2008, George and Robb also analyzed the frequency of deception in computer-mediated communication compared to other media outlets. Through their study, George and Robb found that deception accounts for 22% to 25% of all social communication. In two separate diary studies participants kept track of their communication interactions over a 7-day period. By analyzing face-to-face, telephone, instant message, email, and text messaging, participants identified 152 lies out of a total 693 messages. In the first study, face-to-face communication resulted in 20% of the total lies, phone (33%), instant message (25%), and email (33%) (George and Robb 98-99). The second study found 19% of lies to be face-to-face, 24%

phone, 16% instant message, and 61% in email (George and Robb 99). The results of this study show that the participants were less likely to lie face-to-face than they were with other computer-mediated communication methods with email consistently the medium with the largest percentage of deception.

Comparing these findings with similar and earlier studies of DePaulo et al. ("Lying") and Hancock, Thom-Santelli and Ritchie show that as the popularity and usage of new media increases so does the percentage of deception among the media's total communication interactions. "For both studies, the interactions during which lies were told (compared with those during which no lies were told) were relatively more likely to involve the more distant modality of the telephone and relatively less likely to involve the closer modality of face-to-face interaction" (DePaulo et al., "Lying" 985)

While it has been proven that deception occurs in computer-mediated communication just as much if not more than face-to-face communication, can this deception be detected in the language of the user? Expounding on earlier studies, Hancock and his colleagues reports on the specific linguistic behavior of computer-mediated communication users when being deceptive as opposed to telling the truth in a 2008 article titled ""On Lying and Being Lied To: A Linguistic Analysis of Deception in Computer-Mediated Communication." Their study consisted of 242 instant message transcripts from 35 same-sex dyads (19 women, 16 men) of upper-level students at a northeastern American University. The results indicate that liars used a greater overall quantity of words and more sense-based words (e.g., seeing, touching) than truth tellers in their text based language (Hancock et al., "On Lying" 16). Zhou et al. also found the deceptive participants used more words in their email messages than truthful participants ("Exploratory Study" 8). One possible explanation for the higher quantity of words in deceptive messages is

that the deceivers are trying to establish credibility with their partner, while the truth tellers had nothing to prove and therefore do not need to expound in their responses (Zhou et al., "Exploratory Study" 8). These studies prove that the deception is interactive in nature and deceivers rely on their interactions for success even in computer-mediated communication.

Hancock et al. also claim that liars in computer-mediated communication are more likely to use other-oriented pronouns rather than self-oriented ones ("On Lying" 17). By analyzing language, the authors found that motivated liars were more likely to avoid causal terms such as "because", "hence", and "effect" and unmotivated liars were more likely to use denial language (Hancock et al., "On Lying" 17). Confirming interpersonal deception theory, the motivated liars were more successful in their deceptions than the unmotivated liars (Hancock et al., "On Lying" 17).

Another way deceivers use language in computer-mediated communication is to establish dominance over the other person. According to Zhou et. al, dominance can be an effective strategy for detecting possible deception as well as useful in negotiation and online settings ("Language Dominance" 381). In a study with 60 undergraduate students, the authors examined how language dominance is used in deception via computer-mediated communication. The 60 participants were randomly assigned into pairs and then given truthful or deceptive assignments. Over a period of three days participants communicated via email messages about a desert survival problem. The results of this experiment found that deceivers used higher levels of dominance over truth tellers and gradually increased this dominance over time (Zhou et al., "Language Dominance" 394). Deceivers controlled their communication by starting with low language dominance and then gradually increasing the language to a higher dominance by

changing the intensity, expressivity, positive affect, and subjunctive language (Zhou et al., "Language Dominance" 394).

"Deceivers' increase of dominance over time implies that they tend to keep a low status to protect themselves from being suspected at the beginning. Once deceivers built relationship with their partners, which reduced the immediate threat to the image of the deceivers, they started to work towards their deceptive goal in a more noticeable way" (Zhou et al., "Language Dominance" 394).

By examining the relationships between sensation-seeking and Internet dependent individuals, Hung-Yi sought to identify the personal characteristics of individuals more likely to practice deception in an online context. To gather data, Hung-Yi gave a cross-sectional survey to 675 randomly selected Taiwanese college students from 8 different universities across the country. The students' sensation-seeking was measured by the eight-item Brief Sensation-Seeking Scale (BSSS). In order to determine their Internet dependency students were also asked to indicate their agreement with five statements about Internet use on a 5-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The results of this study found that high sensation-seeking individuals were more likely to deceive others online than low sensation-seeking individuals (Hung-Yi 229). Hung-Yi confirms that the more dependent an individual is on the Internet, the more likely they are to practice online interpersonal deception (229).

A shocking example of online deception can be found in a case study by Joinson and Dietz-Uhler. On a network of bulletin boards for information technology professionals in October of 1999, a well known member "DF" created another alias and began posting on the site under a new name "Nowheremom". On the bulletin board Nowheremom began attracting a lot of attention from other male members and began an online relationship with DF. In January

2000, DF posted a shocking and detailed account of Nowheremom's sudden death in a car accident. The online community was stunned and over the next year many members posted comments on the site about their grief and loss for Nowheremom, even to the point of setting up a memorial web page. However, a small number of group members began to question the authenticity of Nowheremom's death and even her actual identity. On May 16, 2001, DF posted a confession of his deceit in creating the identity of Nowheremom to the online bulletin board community. In the eight hours that followed the confessional, DF's post received 458 replies before being locked out by the site's moderators. This story is an excellent example of real life deception that occurs in the online context. Joinson and Dietz-Uhler provide several explanations for online deception. "One possible explanation for category deception is that it is due to a preexisting psychiatric illness that is expressed online through attention seeking and deception. To be sure, the Internet would seem to provide an ideal playground for those with sociopathic tendencies, and cases of people claiming various illnesses in support groups . . . " (279). Other possible explanations for online deception are identity play and expressions of true self. Joinson and Dietz-Uhler state, "The use of online persona can serve a useful purpose for expressing and understanding our core selves unfettered by shyness, social anxiety, and physical states" (280).

Zhou and Zhang investigated whether deceivers behave differently when deceiving a group of two people or a group of three people. The authors conclude from past research that the larger a group, the more difficult it is for a deceiver to be effective because there is a greater chance that a member of the group will be skilled in detecting deception. A deceiver is more likely to experience greater levels of arousal and potentially leak cues to deception in a larger group. In a controlled laboratory 68 undergraduate students from an East Coast public university

were randomly assigned into dyadic or triadic groups and then asked to participate in the Desert Survival decision making exercise. One participant in each group was assigned the role of deceiver and this role was kept a secret from the other group members. The results for the study reveal that the signs of deception are affected by the size of the groups. Deceivers were found to show lower levels of pleasantness and language complexity in the dyad groups (Zhou and Zhang 155). Since there is more opportunity and expectation to talk in a dyad group, a deceiver is less likely to use intricate language to avoid detection (Zhou and Zhang 156). The results also showed that the triadic group deceivers showed higher levels of complex language choices and more frequent initiation, since they have to work harder convincing more members of their deceptions (Zhou and Zhang 156). Therefore, it is more difficult for a deceiver to be successful as the communication group increases in size.

Rockmann and Northcraft have also have studied the degrees of deception along with defection in computer-mediated communication as it occurs within groups. Their study includes a variety of media richness by looking at three different communication contexts: computer-mediated, video-mediated, and face-to-face interactions. Rockmann and Northcraft analyze how the richness of these various mediums affects the non-cooperative behavior (defection) and deception within small group interactions. For their study, 232 undergraduate students from a large Midwestern university were placed in groups of 2, 4, and 6. The groups participated in a social dilemma exercise and then reported back on their experience. The results indicate that the computer-mediated mediums as opposed to face-to-face interactions changed the relationships within a group and made it more likely for an individual to deceive the other members (Rockmann and Northcraft 117). In addition, the study revealed that due to the lack of non-

verbal cues in the leaner mediums, the participants were less likely to trust other group members

(Rockmann and Northcraft 119).

Deception in Online Dating

One increasingly popular area of computer-mediated communication is that of online

dating. In the past decade more and more single Americans are turning to the Internet and online

dating websites to find love. According to "Top 10 Best Dating Sites of 2010," the top three

online dating websites based on total number of users and user satisfaction are Match.com,

chemistry.com, and eHarmony.com. As of March 2, 2010, Match.com was listed as having the

most users with 20 million singles with memberships. On Match.com, users can search for a

potential romantic partner by age, location, or other key words. They list up to 23 different

criteria, allowing users to develop a custom search based on the qualities for which they are

looking. Chemistry.com comes in at number two with a membership of 15 million singles. On

Chemistry.com there are no search options and matches are suggested by the site based on a

personality test. The third most popular online dating site is eHarmony.com with 7 million

single users. eHarmony offers an emphasis on serious relationships for its users and matches

them together based on an in-depth personality test with over 100 questions. A 2006 study by

Pew Internet and American Life Project found that 31% of American adults (63 million) say they

know someone who has used a dating website; 26% of American adults (53 million) say they

know someone who has gone on a date with a person they met through a dating site; 15% of

American adults (30 million) say they know someone who has been in a long-term relationship

or married someone he or she met online (Madden and Lenhart 12-13).

Of these millions of users, Brym and Lenton define some basic characteristics of online

daters in their 2001 Canadian study.   According to their findings, the majority of online daters

are male (68.3%), in their 30s or 40s (56.8%), and employed (85%) (Brym and Lenton 14).

Stereotypically one might also think that the typical online dater is unsocial offline, but this is

not the case.   Twenty-four percent of online daters belong to a religious organization, 41%

belong to clubs, 82% visit family or relatives at least once a month, and 53% go out with others

for social or leisure activities more than once a week (Brym and Lenton 18). Sixty-six percent of

online daters would consider themselves as someone who likes to try new things (Madden and

Lenhart 12). Brym and Lenton list four possible reasons for the increasingly popularity of online

dating: (1) increase in the percentage of singles, (2) increase of career and time pressures, (3)

increase in the time singles spend traveling, and (4) decline of workplace romance due to a

heightened sensitivity towards sexual harassment (9-11). Other reasons singles may be drawn to

online dating is that 55% of those looking for partners claim it is difficult to meet people where

they live (Madden and Lenhart 8).

Through in-depth interviews with 50 online daters, Lawson and Leck found that their

participants turned to online dating for a variety of other reasons. Due to loneliness, participants

sought online dating for companionship or comfort after a life crisis such as death in the family,

divorce, or losing a job (Lawson and Leck 192-193). Individuals also turned to online dating

because it allows them control over their self-presentation and environment. "For people who

are shy, anxious, and deficient in social skills, use of the Internet may facilitate social interaction

because it requires different skills … than a face-to-face setting" (Lawson and Leck 195).

Lawson and Leck also found that individuals turn to online dating over conventional methods

because it offers a sense of freedom from commitment and stereotypic roles (196). For others

online dating can be full of adventure and romantic fantasy (Lawson and Leck 197-198)

In the article, "Attitudes and Practices Regarding the Formation of Romantic Relationships on the Internet," Donn and Sherman report several differences between those that choose online dating and those that prefer traditional methods. By conducing two separate studies with undergraduate and graduate students in a small Midwestern university, Donn and Sherman found significant differences in the common attitudes and practices of these two groups with meeting people online. By studying 235 undergraduate students and 67 graduate students, the authors found that a higher number of graduate students compared to undergraduate students reported having thought about or actually taken steps to start a relationship online (Donn and Sherman 114). One of the reasons for this might be that graduate students are typically older than undergraduate students and closer to the age in which most people marry. They also might be at a place in their lives where they desire a serious relationship and are willing to do so through unconventional ways.

While past studies have found that individuals' general perception of developing romantic relationships online is negative (Anderson 528, Donn and Sherman 115), Madden and Lenhart found that 61% of online adults do not consider those looking for love online to be "desperate" and consider it a good venue for finding a mate (16, 15). Another study that surveyed 177 people that have never participated in online dating found that as one's Internet affinity (the degree people feel attached and gain satisfaction from the Internet) and time spent online increases their perceptions of online dating become more positive (Anderson 523-4).

Despite its increasing popularity, many people are still apprehensive about looking for a romantic partner online due to a lack of trust and the risk of dishonesty. According to an ongoing online survey, the question "Can you trust the honesty of online dating participants?" received an overwhelming response of no with 85% of the votes (Schulz). Schulz states that

"one cannot trust online dating site participants any more than one can trust random people at singles bars or nightclubs."

Studies by Donn and Sherman and Brym and Lenton also confirm Schulz's survey by finding that one of the one of the main disadvantages to looking for romantic relationships through the Internet is deception (Brym and Lenton 36, Donn and Sherman 115). In their studies, both groups expressed concern with trusting someone they had met on the Internet. Donn and Sherman stated that they would be more cautious with their safety during a face-to-face meeting with an online match as opposed to a date with someone they had not met on the Internet (114). This caution is not unrealistic, since over a quarter of online dating participants report misrepresenting some aspects of their identity (Byrm and Lenton 42). The most commonly lied about characteristics are age (14%), marital status (10%), and appearance (10%) (Byrm and Lenton 42). Gibbs, Ellison, and Heino found higher statistics when asking online daters about their beliefs of other daters. Their results show that they believe 86% of other online daters misrepresented their physical appearance, 49% relationship goals, 46% age, 45% income, and 40% marital status (170). However, the authors also note that this deception is not always intentional and can be a result of an "inaccurate self-concept, fudging demographic information such as age to avoid being "filtered out" in searches, and portrayal of an idealized or potential future version of the self" (Gibbs, Ellison, and Heino 170).

Another article by the same authors titled "Managing Impressions Online: Self-Presentation Processes in the Online Dating Environment" analyzes how participants present themselves online in order to find a romantic partner. By interviewing 34 members of an online dating service called "Connect.com", Ellison, Heino, and Gibbs seek to find out how honesty and self-disclosure reflect the participants' success. Almost all of their participants stated that they

attempted to portray themselves accurately but at the same time admit to an "inclination to project a version of self that was attractive, successful, and desirable" (Ellison, Heino, and Gibbs 425) For potential online daters these two sometimes conflicting choices in self-presentation can leave a gray area in the social rules of online dating.

Through computer-mediated communication online daters have the tools and freedom to create and edit their dating profile, allowing their first impressions to be an advertisement of their "best" self. Originally termed selective self-presentation, Walther states that self-presentation is "more selective, malleable, and subject to self-censorship in CMC than it is in face-to-face interaction because only verbal and linguistic cues-those that are most at our discretion and control are our displays" (20). Due to the anonymity and asynchronous communication of online dating, this "creative endeavor… takes into account both the target audience and the context of the social interaction, and it involves making choices about what information to include, what to leave out, and whether to engage in deception" (Toma, Hancock, and Ellison 1024). In online dating "most of these strategies revolve around the profile, which is a crucial self-presentation tool because it is the first and primary means of expressing one's self during the early stages of correspondence and can therefore foreclose or create relationship opportunities" (Ellison, Heino, and Gibbs 423). While deception can be detrimental to a relationship, Walther claims that selective self-presentation afforded by CMC can lead itself to positive partner attributions and greater levels of intimacy than face-to-face communication (27-28).

In the article titled "Separating Fact from Fiction: An Examination of Deceptive Self-Presentation in Online Dating Profiles," the authors Toma, Hancock, and Ellison look beyond self-reporting to discover exactly how deceptive online daters are through cross-validation. For their study a total of 80 current online daters (40 men, 40 women) completed a questionnaire

about their online dating profile. Their answers were then compared for accuracy against their actual observable characteristics such as height, weight, and age. The results show that "81% of participants provided information in their online profile that deviated from at least one of their observed characteristics" (Toma, Hancock, and Ellison 1028). For height participants measured from 3 inches taller to 1.75 inches shorter than what was reported on their profile. On average men over reported by .57 inches and women by .017 inches (Toma, Hancock, and Ellison 1029). The results also revealed that the participants' actual weight ranged from 35 pounds heavier to 20 pounds lighter than what they reported. On average the men under reported their weight by -2.81 pounds and women by -8.48 pounds. The participants' age ranged from 3 years younger to 9 years older than what they reported on their profiles with men under reporting an average of -.51 years and women -.37 years. As expected when comparing men and women, men were found to overstate their height more than women and women were found to understate their weight more than men. The authors "suggest that participants were aware of the inaccuracies in their profiles and that the discrepancies were most likely intentional" (Toma, Hancock, and Ellison 1029).

Hall et al. confirm these findings in their article titled "Strategic Misrepresentation in Online Dating: The Effects of Gender, Self-monitoring, and Personality Traits." Based on a survey with over 5,000 online daters, their results show that men were more likely than women to misrepresent their age and personal assets such as income and education, while women were more likely to misrepresent their weight (Hall et al. 125). Taking personality into account, the researchers found that extroverted individuals were less likely to lie about their personal interest (which may seem attractive) but more likely to lie about their past relationships (of which they may have more) (Hall et al. 130).

According to Lawson and Leck, "Online dating allows people to create personas that are less constrained than in real life because dating partners know very little about the person on the other side of the screen. Unfortunately, when online partners meet for the first time, both are usually disappointed because the online personas are never identical to the people who create them" (199). While most of the observed deceptions in the study were slight, a few extreme instances stood out (3 inches in height, 35 pounds in weight, and 11 years in age) (Toma, Hancock, and Ellison 1032). Since these lies are significant and memorable they are more likely to be shared with other online daters, further increasing the belief that dishonesty is rampant in online dating.

Besides the dating profile, online daters have also been found to misrepresent themselves in the photographs they post of themselves online. A similar study by Hancock and Toma titled "Putting your Best Face Forward: The Accuracy of Online Dating Photographs" analyzed the accuracy these online photographs with current ones taken by the researchers (373). In their study the researchers found that online photographs are highly susceptible to deception by users posting their most flattering photos, selecting older photos in which they appear younger or editing the photographs through computer software (Hancock and Toma 377). Through the participants' self reports and ratings of independent judges, the results show that the participants rated their own pictures as accurate (M=4.46, where 1= completely inaccurate and 5= completely accurate) while the independent judges rated them just above the midpoint scale (M=3.35) (Hancock and Toma 376). The age of the online profile pictures were on average 21 months old (females= 17 months, males=6 months) (Hancock and Toma 377-378). The photographs of the female online daters were also found to contain an average of 3.00 discrepancies (from weight, hair length, hair style, teeth, and the photographic retouching), while the male photographs

contained an average of 1.33 discrepancies (from hair length/baldness and age). One explanation the authors have for the unequal deception of males and females is that women might increase the attractiveness of their online dating photographs to resemble how they might look on a first date, a more glamorous version of their day-to-day appearance (Hancock and Toma 382). The results of this study show that the majority of online dating photographs contained some misrepresentation (46 of the 54 photos) and that photographs are a method online daters use to select, edit, and modify their self-presentation (Hancock and Toma 378).

Another reason online daters may project inaccurate representations of themselves is that they actually don't have an accurate idea of their own identities. Only by first understanding one's self, can a dater truthfully showcase those characteristics to others. Ellison, Henio, and Gibbs explain that some online dating participants are not blatantly lying in their inaccurate self-descriptions of the online profile, but rather they are only held back by the constraints of a technical system and the limits of self-knowledge (431).

The difference between online dating and other forms of computer-mediated communication is that participants typically have the goal of developing intimate in-person relationships. For this to be achieved, the relationship will eventually have to move from the realm of cyberspace to real life. In this transition, users will be forced to come to an agreement between their online identities and that of their true selves. In their study with 349 current online daters, Gibbs, Ellison, and Heino found that online daters who were focused more on long-term face-to-face relationship goals were found to engage in higher amounts of intentional and honest self-disclosure (165). However, this disclosure was not always positive as daters may be trying to present themselves realistically (Gibbs, Ellison, and Heino169). The results revealed that online daters with greater amounts and more intentional self-disclosure experienced strategic

(how well they achieved their goals) and self-presentation (the degree daters felt they made a good impression) success (Gibbs, Ellison and Heino 168). However, this success was not attributed to online daters that were more honest in their self-disclosure (Gibbs, Ellison, and Heino 165-8)

Gibbs, Ellison, and Lai investigate several techniques online daters use to reduce their uncertainty and warrant the credibility of those they meet online. According to Walther et al. "warranting refers to the capacity to draw a reliable connection between a presented persona online and a corporeally-anchored person in the physical world" (232). Based on a survey with 562 current online daters, the researchers found that online dating participants with higher concerns of personal security and misrepresentation were more likely to use uncertainty reduction strategies while communicating with other online daters (85). These strategies outlined by Ramirez et al. allow online daters to seek information about potential dates and include: interactive strategies (acquiring knowledge through direct interaction), passive strategies (acquiring knowledge through observation such as an online dating profile), active strategies (acquiring knowledge through a third party), and extractive strategies (acquiring knowledge through online searches) (219-20). Gibbs, Ellison, and Lai found that the most common uncertainty reduction strategy used by online daters was interactive and involved asking questions either on the phone (M=3.33) or in email/IM (M=3.19). The next popular strategy was passive, such as comparing photos and descriptions (M=3.11) and saving online conversations to check for consistency (M=3.07) (87-88). Extractive strategies such as using a search engine to verify personal information were the least popular (M=2.77) (Gibbs, Ellison, and Lai 88). These findings "suggest that online dating participants gather information from both online and offline domains to reduce uncertainty about potential romantic partners . . . that online daters engage in

other creative workabouts in the absence of "true" warranted data" (Gibbs, Ellison, and Lai 90-92).

The article, "Dating from the Inside Out: Truth Matters in Online Dating," author Susan Davis focuses on the importance of truthfulness in online dating. According to Davis, truthfulness and honesty are the foundation of all interpersonal relationships. Honesty is even more important in the online dating environment, where attitudes already reflect some degree of skepticism. Here any misrepresentation, no matter how small, can demonstrate a questionable character and sense of ethics. Relationships are delicate, especially when they are new and any form of dishonesty can have detrimental effects.

Summary

The majority of the literature has demonstrated the frequency of deception in everyday communication. With the increase of technology, more communication is occurring online, resulting in the increase of online deception. Through past research, this study has shown how interpersonal deception theory was used to demonstrate that deception is both interactive and strategic. With its anonymity and lack of nonverbal cues, computer-mediated communication is becoming the perfect environment for individuals to deceive others strategically. Through qualitative research this study hopes to further explore deception in the context of online dating and how it affects the relationships created through these sites.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The review of the literature illustrates the importance of additional research on interpersonal deception in the context of online dating. Online dating is a growing trend and has recently become a socially accepted means of meeting potential romantic partners. It has also been stated that deception is a common occurrence in human relations, taking place through interactive communication (DePaulo et al., "Lying" 984). This deception remains widespread when the communication moves from face-to-face to online (George and Robb 98). Deception by potential romantic partners is the "main perceived disadvantage of online dating" (Brym and Lenton 3). No one wants to be deceived, yet many online daters admit to some form of deception. With the increasing popularity of initiating romantic relationships online, further research is imperative to better understand how these relationships are affected by interpersonal deception.

It is the goal of this research study to provide a description of daters' motivations, perceptions, and experiences of deception in the context of online dating and reveal how this deception affects these romantic relationships. This study also aims at providing insight into the rational that some online daters use as a basis for their dishonesty. Four primary research questions were addressed in this study:

RQ1: About what characteristics are online daters deceptive?

RQ2: What motivation do online daters have for their deception of others in the online dating environment?

RQ3: What perceptions do online daters have about other daters' deceit towards them in the online dating environment?

RQ4: How does deception affect the romantic relationships formed in the online dating environment?

Researcher Credibility

The researcher for this study first became interested in the topic online dating when her brother married a woman that he had met through an online dating website. For the past five years, more and more of the researcher's social network have started to turn to online dating as a method of meeting potential romantic partners. As the researcher began to hear stories of her family's and friends' experiences, she learned deception is not only common but somewhat expected in online dating as daters attempt to market themselves positively.

Merrigan and Huston state, "For interpretive communication scholars, researcher credibility is an especially important standard because the researcher is the instrument through which interpretations are made" (89). Throughout the research process, the researcher attempted to remain objective and acknowledge her own limitations. The researcher was also aware of personal biases she may have on the topic.

Research Design

This study utilized qualitative research methods to collect and analyze the data of online daters. In contrast to quantitative research, "qualitative researchers seek to preserve and analyze the situated form, content, and experience of social action, rather than subject it to mathematical or other formal transformations" (Lindlof and Taylor 18). Qualitative methods were chosen because they are valuable in providing "rich descriptions of complex phenomena" (Sofaer 1102). Due to the psychological complexity of interpersonal deception, qualitative methods are an appropriate choice. Qualitative methods are also useful in showcasing the experiences of the participants and their own interpretation of these events. Qualitative research "considers the

social and cultural construction of the variables of interest as integral to the concepts under objective examination, rather than seeking to correlate or factor out these influences" (Brod, Tesler, and Christensen 1264).

In order to conduct this qualitative study, the researcher surveyed online daters with a series of open-ended questions. Open-ended questions are designed to allow the participants to report on their own thoughts, beliefs, opinions, and experiences in their own words. Merrigan and Huston define open-ended questions as "questions that ask respondents to provide unstructured or spontaneous answers to questions or to discuss an identified topic" (115). Open-ended questions were used with the intent of encouraging responsiveness and detailed descriptions from the participants. Each question used in the survey was carefully reviewed to insure it was clearly worded and easy to understand.

The survey questions required participants to use self-reporting to explain their personal behaviors, beliefs, and characteristics. The survey requested participants to describe in detail the various methods used in their own and other online daters' deception such as their online dating profile, pictures, email, or other form of communication. The participants were also asked for the rationale behind these deceptions and how they think these deceptions affect their relationships with their online romantic partners. The participants described any experiences they have encountered with the deception of other online daters and how this deception affected their view of those daters and their relationship with them.

Participants

There were several criteria participants must have met in order to take part in this study. First, the participants must currently be an active member of an online dating site or have been a member within the last three years. Since the study is designed on participants' self-reporting, it

is imperative that the data be as timely as possible. The criterion for participation is extended to

online daters from the past three years to include those acts of deception that may have not been

discovered right away or whose emotional impact may have diminished or increased over time.

For a more focused source of data the age of the participants were limited to include individuals

between the ages of 20-37. According to the 2002 National Survey for Family Growth

conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics, 86% of women and 81% of men will be

married by the age 40 (Goodwin, McGill, and Chandra 1). Being close to the average marrying

age, the participants for this study may feel pressure to find a long-lasting romantic partner.

Donn and Sherman also found that graduate students (M=30 years old) were more likely than

undergraduate students (M= 19 years old) to have thought about or attempted to form

relationships over the Internet. Knapp and Comadena suggest that "[t]he forces at work in some

life stages may encourage more deception than at others" (282). While the more common age of

online daters is between 18-49 (Madden and Lenhart 10), this study was designed to explore

online dating deception as it is perceived and observed in the specific life stage of young adults.

Both male and female online daters were considered for participation in the study so that the data

collected represents the viewpoints of both sexes.

The participants for the study were recruited through network sampling or, as it is

commonly referred to, "snowball sampling." In this method participants recruit other

participants through their own social network. This method is appropriate for online daters since

qualifying participants are usually aware of other individuals who also meet the study's

requirements (Merrigan and Houston 64). The researcher posted a description of the study and

link to the survey questions on Facebook, inviting her friends to participate in the study. The

researcher's Facebook friends could then choose to participate in the study and then invite their

friends to complete the survey by forwarding the link to them. These new participants could then also volunteer to complete the study and forward the link to their friends. The participant involvement snowballs from one social link to the next, growing in number each time. Each survey contained complete instructions and requested informed consent for each participant. Only after the participant had given informed consent were they allowed to complete the survey.

A total of 116 participants volunteered for the study; however, 60 of those were eliminated from the study because they only answered the demographic questions. Four other participants were eliminated for being outside of the target age range and one for not providing her age. Therefore, a total of 52 remaining participants were included in the study. This number of participants was ideal in order to provide a sufficient amount of data that the study's results can be generalized to other online daters. The number of participants was also limited to a manageable number to avoid an overabundance of information too broad to analyze and draw conclusions. Recruitment for participants took place between June and July of 2011.

Participant Anonymity and Confidentiality

The anonymity of the study's participants was insured through careful collection and storage of the data collected. The participants' personal information and responses were kept completely anonymous throughout the survey process. The survey questions did not request any identifying information such as the participants' name, address, or phone number. The data collected from the participants' answers were then printed and compiled solely by the researcher. Once printed, the participants' information was kept in a secure file cabinet under lock and key to which only the researcher had access. All electronic files were kept secure on the researcher's laptop under password protection. After a period of 3 years all participant responses and any

documents pertaining to the study will be destroyed. To protect the confidentiality of their

responses, each individual respondent was referred to as "one participant" throughout the study.

Data Collection

Once the participants had agreed to take part in the survey and logged into the online

questionnaire, they began by reading the study's purpose and instructions. Participants could

then volunteer to complete the survey by signing a consent form. After the form had been

signed, participants began to complete the survey. The survey used for the study gathered

information about the participants' specific attitudes and experiences of deception in online

dating. To maintain validity, deception was defined for the participants as "any verbal and or

nonverbal message that one partner sends with the intent of leading the other to a belief or

confusion that the sender considers to be less than absolutely true or less than totally complete"

(Boon and McLeod 467).

In line with the study's research questions, the participants were asked 15 open-ended

questions to gather information about their own perceptions, motivations and experiences with

deception in the online dating context. The complete list of survey questions can be found in

Appendix B. For more rounded results the participants were also asked to disclose their own

deception in online dating and their experiences with the deception of other online daters. The

researcher instructed participants to be as in-depth and comprehensive in their answers as

possible. All of the quotations provided by participants are stated in the exact manner in which they

were received, without editing by the researcher. To encourage accurate and detailed data, the

researcher confirmed the participants' anonymity and verified at the beginning of the survey that

any response would be kept confidential. By providing strict anonymity, the researcher hoped

participants would be able to provide unrestricted replies to the survey questions. Consistent

with research practices, the participants were also asked several demographic questions, such as their age, sex, and ethnicity.

The survey for this study was conducted through an online surveying website called surveymonkey.com. Online surveys provide numerous advantages for research studies (Evans and Mathur 197). Online surveys are convenient and timely, since they can be completed quickly and at the participants' own schedule. Online surveys also offer low administration cost, which is an advantage to the researcher, since this study is unfunded. Another significant advantage of online surveys is that they provide the opportunity for the survey to reach a large sample. The participants can be recruited on a global level that is not hindered by geography.

While there are significant advantages for online surveys, scholars have noted several disadvantages (Evans and Mathur 197). Online surveys require participants to have the technological skills or online experience necessary to complete them accurately. In addition, online surveys may be seen as impersonal to some participants that desire a more intimate method of sharing their experiences. Online surveys are also found to have a lower response rate than other methods.

Online surveys were selected as an appropriate means of data collection in this study for several reasons. Since the participants of the study were reporting about online experiences, it is appropriate that the means of collecting this data also be online. Participants that have chosen to use online dating will also have the necessary skills needed to complete a research survey online and be comfortable using technology in this manner and for this purpose. Since the researcher and participants will not be required to meet face-to-face, online surveys provide additional confidentiality and anonymity for the participants as well. It has also been noted that participants reveal more self-disclosure in computer-mediated contexts than in face-to-face interactions

(Joinson 182). By using an online survey to collect the data, the researcher hoped to increase the likelihood for self-disclosure in the participants.

Data Analysis

Once all of the surveys were completed, the researcher printed the surveys to gather and analyze the data. The researcher read through the participants' survey responses a minimum of three times to extract the necessary data. The first time the researcher read through all of the surveys in one sitting to gather a comprehensive understanding of the overall findings. The second time the researcher examined the data with a more detailed focus. She took her time highlighting participants' answers, taking notes, and scrutinizing every response. When analyzing the data, the researcher also compared the participants' responses for any similarities and differences. During her third review of the surveys, the researcher began to look for themes among the responses and personal experiences of the participants. In line with the study's research questions, these common themes were then used to draw conclusions.

Research Reliability and Validity

To confirm the reliability of the study's results, the researcher remained consistent with the measurement used throughout the research process. During the recruiting process, the communication and methods used were also consistent for each level of the snowball sampling and for each participant. All surveys contained the same instructions and ask the same questions for each participant. The questions were listed in the same order for each participant as well. In order to reduce the ambiguity of the measurement questions the researcher used clear and direct wording. At the beginning of each survey, the researcher defined the term "deception" for the participants in order to further increase the clarity of the research questions.

Another important quality in the research process is validity (Brod, Tesler, and Christensen 1263). One way that this study maintains validity is through the large number of participants surveyed. A sufficient amount of data collected is needed "to reach 'conceptual saturation'" (Brod, Tesler, and Christensen 1265). To increase the results' validity, the researcher also compared this study's findings with those across other studies. To reduce any researcher biases towards the data collected, the researcher had a peer review the data and results to confirm the study's findings.

Ethical Consideration

There are minimum ethical considerations in this study. In accordance with federal regulations, the researcher did gain approval for the study from Liberty University and the Internal Review Board (IRB). Before taking part in the study, all participants were made aware of any physical or psychological harm that may have occurred as a result of their participation. The participants were also required to sign a consent form before contributing to the study. Throughout the entire research process, the participants' identity and responses were kept confidential. Due to the taboo nature of this study, the health and well being of the participants was protected at all times. Throughout all interactions and investigations, the researcher executed the study with these ethical concerns in mind.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

This research study contained a total of 52 qualifying participants. Of these 52, 43 were

female (82.7%) and 9 were male (17.3%). The participants ranged in ages from 20-37. Eight

participants were between the ages of 20-24 (15.4%), 31 between the ages of 25-29 (59.6%), 9

between the ages of 30-33 (17.3%) and 4 between the ages of 34-37 (7.7%). The average age of

the participants was 27.7. The participants represented several different ethnicities including

Asian (N=1, 1.9%), Black/African American (N=2, 3.9%), White/Caucasian (N=46, 88.5%), and

other (N=3, 5.8%). The participants also had a variety of education backgrounds including high

school diploma (N=1, 1.9%), some college (N=6, 11.5%), two year college degree (N=1, 1.9%),

four year college degree (N=21, 40.4%), some graduate work (N=6, 11.5%), a master's degree

(N=16, 30.8%), and a doctorate degree (N=1, 1.9%)

To understand the participants' online dating backgrounds and experiences, the researcher

asked respondents to state how long they have participated in the online dating environment.

The results show that the participants' length of online dating varied from 0-3 months (N=12,

23.1%), 4-6 months (N=11, 21.2%), 7 months-1 year (N=5, 9.6%), 13 months-2 years (N=12,

23.1%), 3-4 years (N=6, 11.5%), and 5 years or longer (N=3, 5.8%). Three participants

answered that they have tried online dating on several occasions and for a few months each time

(5.8%).

Participants also reported having experience with a wide variety of online dating sites.

Thirty-five out of the 52 total participants indicated that they had used more than one dating

website (67.3%). Participants listed 17 different online dating websites with the most popular

being eHarmony (N=30, 57.7%) and Match.com (N=29, 55.8%). Other common dating websites

were PlentyofFish (N=15, 28.8%), OkCupid (N=11, 21.2%), ChristianCafe (N=7, 13.5%), and ChristianMingle (N=6, 11.5%).

While the amount and variety of online dating websites are expansive, the question still remains as to why singles choose this method over traditional means of forming romantic relationships. The most common answer from participants was that they were not meeting many singles in their current social circles (N=23, 44.2%). One participant stated, "I used online dating because I have not had great success meeting people through friends or at work recently. I feel like online dating kind of widens the dating pool." Another shared, "I didn't come into contact with a lot of single men. I teach elementary school which makes meeting men hard sometimes." Another participant said she chose online dating because there was a "lack of available and suitable dating partners" in her social circle.

Another common theme why singles choose online dating is that they want to meet new people and/or they are new to the area they live in (N=9, 17.3%). One participant explained, "I was a flight attendant and did not want the clichéd romances of pilots and FAs. I wasn't looking for a serious relationship, just someone to hang out with while I was overnighting in their city." Another participant shared that living in a small community made it difficult to meet new people and online dating opened up those possibilities.

Other daters shared that they were looking for specific criteria with a potential romantic partner and that online dating gave them greater access to these types of people (N=8, 15.4). One participant stated, "I choose [online dating] because I was specific about wanting to date a Christian man and the Christian community did not provide enough opportunities for me to expand my social circle in order to meet more Christian men." Another participant desired a less committed relationship shared, "I was going through a divorce when I started dating online. It

was easier to meet people who didn't want strings attached. I had a lot of one night stands, which was what I wanted at that time."

Participants also turned to online dating because it is convenient and, for some online dating services, free (N=5, 9.6%). Another popular reason for choosing to dating online were that participants live busy lives without time for traditional methods (N=4, 7.7%). One participant described meeting online as efficient. Another commented, "I am so busy with work and school that I don't have time to go out." Other themes for choosing online dating is that participants felt more comfortable with dating online than traditional methods (N=2, 3.9%), were curious about online dating (N=2, 3.9%), and believed that online dating was the new way to meet other single people (N=2, 3.9%). Another participant shared, "It's much easier to approach women online knowing that they're looking for someone to date and you're not hitting on someone who is already in a relationship. It's easier to take rejection from someone on a computer screen than someone I have to interact with on a regular basis. No awkwardness at all."

RQ1: Deceptive Characteristics in Online Dating

In line with the first research question participants were asked to recall the accuracy of other online daters as well as their own self-presentations. Only 21.2% (N=11) reported that other online daters were dishonest or deceitful in their online profile and communication. According to the participants, 53.8% (N=28) of the people they have meet through online dating were honest and accurate, while 25% (N=13) believed other online daters to be somewhat or sometimes honest. One participant reported, "Oftentimes the descriptions are in the ballpark, but not wholly truthful." Another stated, "Descriptions are usually vague in my experience so yes and no. They fit their description but you only get part of the story most of the time."

The first survey question asked "What characteristics are online daters deceptive about?" Due to the method of open ended questions, participants shared a wide variety of attributes that online daters are sometimes dishonest about in their online profile and communication. The most commonly reported characteristics were physical appearance (N= 11, 21.2%), height (N=9, 17.3%), and faith/ religious beliefs (N=7, 13.5%). One participant stated, "Many men under 6 feet lie about their height usually adding an inch or two." Another commented, "I often felt that people would classify themselves as Christian but not usually adhere to the morals and tenets of Christianity, even in its most casual form."

The next most common deceptive characteristics reported were weight, personality, and relationship status, and lifestyle such as smoking, drinking or sexual activity all received mention by 10% of the participants (N=5, 9.6%). A participant explained, "I'm a quiet person so I wanted someone very out going to make me feel more comfortable. I never met anyone who was as outgoing and spontaneous as they claimed." Another shared, "I was flabbergasted by the number of men who would lie about their relationship status. Some would say they were single when they were clearly married or dating someone seriously."

Other characteristics that online daters were found to be deceptive about included: relationship intentions (N=4, 7.7%), age (N=4, 7.7%), income (N=2, 3.9%), children (N=2, 3.9%), family or social status (N=2, 3.9%), photographs (N=2, 3.9%) and education (N=1, 1.9%). One participant reported, "If anything is deceptive, it's the profile pictures. Generally, most people look different in pictures than in person. A lot of people online however will post a picture that's several years old . . . before they gained 100 pounds. Or people will turn the white balance way up on their photo to obscure what they actually look like. It's always better when you meet someone in person and they look far better than their picture. This is rare." Another

shared, "One time I went out with a woman that claimed to be between 31-35 online. She was actually closer to 40 and I was 26. She refused to tell me her actual age, but I found out afterwards by doing a search on her online."

Some online daters shared stories of extreme dishonesty that included multiple lies and falsifications. One participant said, "There was this one guy, who told me he was a lawyer, and that he was new to the area as well. When I first met him, he looked to be around 20ish. He had sent a picture of his older brother. Not only that, but he was married with 3 kids. He was completely opposite of EVERYTHING he portrayed himself." Another shared, "I went on a date with a guy where his profile said he was 6'0 and in his picture he had a full head of hair. When I met him in person, he was 5'3 and balding. I was so mad."

Other online daters were not found to be deceptive through blatant misrepresentation but by hiding or failing to disclose negative aspects of themselves or their lives through the self-reported data. One participant reported, "I wouldn't say people 'lied' to me. They just don't tell the negative things on their profile--for example, that they had a degenerative tooth disease and would need dentures at the age of 40, which a man admitted once I asked him why he never smiled in photos."

Another online dater shared, "I met a great guy on eHarmony and after the initial steps, we started emailing every day. We totally clicked and then we started talking on the phone for hours a few times a week. After a few months of this, he and I were both discussing our next steps, if we would take it further. In the discussion, he admitted that he was bipolar, and wouldn't travel outside of his home state to meet me and my family (because travel exhausted him which led to a downward spiral in his depression). I felt that was a HUGE piece of information to leave out of a burgeoning relationship."

Another reason online daters consider others to be deceptive could be due to misguided perceptions. For example, one participant stated, "This woman portrayed herself as a positive, upbeat person, but she was actually quite flat in her affect and quick to complain." Another said, "The guy I dated said he was looking for a relationship, yet wasn't willing to commit after dating for 3-4 months." A third participant shared, "His name was James and he portrayed himself as a laidback happy go lucky guy. But, the more we talked the more I realized he had a controlling personality and liked to dominate every discussion with his opinion."

Along with reporting on the deceptions of other online daters, the researcher asked participants to describe their own degree of accuracy in online dating. The results reveal that 67.3% of participants (N=35) claimed to be 100% honest in their online dating self-presentation. One participant said, "I figured I would be very honest in my profile because I had nothing to lose. I wanted to make sure they knew exactly who I was and what I was looking for." Another participant stated, "Yes. I am super honest because I don't like rejection. There would be nothing worse than meeting a guy and having him disappointed or taken aback and then never hear from him again because he wasn't interested in the real me". A third participant shared, "I have actually let friends read some of my emails and look at my profiles to make sure they felt they were accurate. I see no point in not being forthcoming. The other person will eventually find out the truth one way or another!" Another participant reported, "I try to be as honest about myself as possible especially since I might actually go on a date with the person. The only thing that I would be tempted to lie about is my body type. I am plus-sized but I would love to lie and say that I am athletic and fit, but I don't."

The remaining 32.7% (N=17) of participants answered that some items on their online dating profile may be somewhat inaccurate. The most commonly lied about characteristics were

physical appearance/body type (N=5, 9.6%), photographs (N=4, 7.7%), and exercise (N=3, 5.8%). Other deceptive characteristics mentioned by at least one participant included height, weight, drinking habits, musical talent, location, hobbies/activities, and personality. One participant reported, "I say that I'm 5' 8" and I'm probably more like 5' 6" or 5 '7". Match.com asks you to describe your body type and some people might describe me as "a few extra pounds", but I believe "about average" is a more accurate description for me. I also don't exercise as often as I say I do." Another participant shared, "When I first started using online dating my pictures weren't really that up to date. I finally decided that if someone was going to genuinely like me they were going to like me no matter what I looked like."

Some participants admitted to initially leaving some things out of their online dating profile. One participant stated, "My profile is accurate, in the sense that none of it is a lie. However, I also do not list all of my bad qualities: that I'm bossy or impatient, that I really don't want to marry someone who has been divorced, etc." Another participant explained this about her dating profile: "I actually didn't go into much detail about myself and preferred people get to know me based on my instant messages and from face-to-face contact rather than a profile or email where I could sit and think about how to describe myself to make it perfect."

Several participants blamed their partial dishonesty on the culture of online dating or the designs of online dating websites. One participant said, "I try to be as honest as possible, but people are always going to put the best version of themselves out there. In other words, I am not going to put up pictures of myself that I don't like or think I look bad in." Another participant explained, "I always find it hard to list my body type because they usually don't let you put down anything specific. I try to let my pictures speak for themselves but the camera adds 10 lbs so

that's not really that accurate either. I'm not thin, I'm not fat, I'm not obese, I'm not a bodybuilder

so I usually put down "average" if it's an option. But average doesn't seem quite right either."

To review, the first research question of the study asked participants to report on the

deceptive characteristics of online daters. While 67.3% of participants (N=35) reported complete

honesty and 78.8% (N=41) reported honesty in other online daters, deception was still evident in

the online dating environment. Daters were found to lie most frequently about physical

appearance/body type (N=5, 9.6%), photographs (N=4, 7.7%), and exercise practices (N=3,

5.8%) in their own communication, while others were commonly deceptive regarding their

physical appearance (N= 11, 21.2%), height (N=9, 17.3%), and faith/ religious beliefs (N=7,

13.5%).

RQ2: Motivations for Online Deception

The second research question in the study states: "What motivations do online daters have

for their own deception of others in the online dating environment?" Again the results show a

large variety of motivations for deceiving others in online dating. The most commonly self-

reported motivation was to attract others (N=4, 7.7%). One participant stated, "I wanted more

people interested in me, so I tried to better present myself." Another shared, "I like to seem like

I have varied interests so I can attract potential partners, who I can then get a dialogue going

with. If we are suited for each other then it is alright that I actually don't pursue all those

activities with equal gusto." A third participant commented, "I think that no one would respond

if I wrote the true, but negative things about my personality. People who meet in real life

situations don't list their negative qualities prior to the first date. People will find those things

out in due time, like everyone else in every other relationship."

Other participants responded that they were deceitful in online dating to appear more physically attractive (N=2, 3.9%) and to make a good impression (N=3, 5.8). One participant stated, "I wanted to be liked. I wanted to seem more attractive and approachable." Another said, "I didn't want to seem lazy or like a drunk because I may have more than two drinks a week. The phrase . . . 'several drinks a week' . . . seems like a stereotype."

The participants in the study also shared that their profile deceptions were mostly descriptions of the person they wanted to be (N=3, 5.8%). One participant admitted, "I wanted to be like that, so I said it." Another stated, "At the time I made my profile I had better intentions about working out." Three participants reported that their dishonesty in online dating was due to the technological flaws in the online dating system (5.8%). One participant commented, "It's really hard to give a complete picture of myself without someone seeing me in person. I've seen some women's pictures and then met them in person and didn't think they looked as good. I'm sure people think the same of me. Real chemistry is made in person." Another stated, "[Deception about one's] body type is about lack of definition. If most people are overweight, isn't "a few extra pounds" the same thing as "about average"? The third participant commented, "I used to list myself as slightly overweight, but one of my friends told me not to because she said guys would see that and think I was very overweight, which I am not. She felt it gave people the wrong impression of my body type and I saw her reasoning in this."

The results show another motivation for online deception is to avoid being weeded out by other daters' searches (N=2, 3.9%). One participant explained, "[Lying about] height and body type are really about making it through search results. If someone is searching for someone who is 5'8" and I'm listed as 5'7", they will never see my profile. I also have found that people in general believe that they are taller than they actually are". Another participant stated, "I think

that when people do a search there are certain key words that stand out and you avoid those people. I would avoid fat guys so I know that if a man sees the words, 'full-figured' in my description he will probably pass my profile."

The final two motivations found for online deception is safety (N=2, 3.9%) and participants' insecurity with themselves (N=1, 1.9%). One participant said, "I live in a small town and would prefer not to inform them of my exact whereabouts until after we have talked a while and possibly met." Another shared, "I stopped pursuing one guy because he was very clingy and even creepy. I told him there was just no chemistry or 'spark' between us and that we could stay friends. I just didn't want to anger him or have him stalk me if I told him he was clingy."

In summary, the second research question asked participants to report on their motivations when choosing to use deception in the online dating environment. The research found that these motivations can be as unique as the online daters themselves. Despite the various responses, several common themes were revealed in the self-reporting. These include: to attract others (N=4, 7.7%), to appear more physically attractive (N=2, 3.9%), and to make a good impression (N=3, 5.8).

RQ3: Perceptions of Other Dater's Deception in Online Dating

The third research question addressed in the study asks: "What perceptions do online daters have about other daters' deceit towards them in the online dating environment?" In order to discover these perceptions the researcher asked participants to describe any characteristics they would be willing to look past their potential dates' being dishonest about and which characteristics they would not be willing to overlook. In response, 65.4% of participants stated that they would be willing to overlook some deceptive statements (N=34) while 21.2% stated that they would be unable to look past any form of deception in a potential date (N=13.5).

Those that claimed they would be unable to overlook deception also shared a firm belief in the importance of honesty in a romantic relationship. One participant said, "Dishonesty in one area can lead to dishonesty in other areas." Another stated, "I am being 100% honest, why couldn't they?" A third participant shared, "I would have trouble looking past any dishonesty as I feel being able to be open and honest is the key in a relationship." Another participant explained her belief by stating, "… Being dishonest about small things that can be overlooked is still some kind of insight into someone's character."

When describing the characteristics they would be willing to overlook, participants shared that these were mainly small things or slight embellishment. One participant stated, "I'd be able to look past exaggerations, if they weren't too serious." However, one problem with this is that these small things are different to different people. Another person shared, "Being able to look past dishonesty depends on the how dishonest they were." Another participant claimed that a willingness to forgive deception was dependant on the connection she felt with the other person. She reported, "If someone lied about something and then we met and totally clicked on every other level, it would be admissible, but also I rarely remember what people wrote in their profiles, so I wouldn't be fact checking any dates."

When analyzing the different deceptive characteristics listed by participants, the most commonly mentioned were found to be hobbies/interests (N=9, 17.3%), height (N=9, 17.3%) and weight (N=4, 7.7%). One participant commented, "I can look past a man lying about this height. Guys always think they are taller than they are." Another claimed, "I would be willing to look past a slight weight variance (less than 30 pounds) or slight height variance (less than 2 or 3 inches). None of those are very important to me, and I would certainly be able to look past slight exaggerations in any of these areas."

Participants also listed being able to look past a potential date misrepresenting their income and drinking habits (N=3, 5.8%). One participant stated, "I can look past the fact if he says he makes less than what he does. I can also look past if he says he doesn't drink but he really does." Another said, "As long as a person is a responsible drinker, I would be ok with them drinking more than they said they did."

Lying about one's own appearance (N=3, 5.8%) and personality (N=3, 5.8%) were equally mentioned by participants as well. One stated, "I would look over anything about their personality or looks that I found to be a stretch of the truth. We all have egos and no one's perception is exactly the same." Another said, "[I would be willing to] definitely overlook anything regarding their personality because I don't think a person can really accurately describe his or herself. I'd also say that I almost completely disregard the profile after I start communicating with them and then disregard most of that communication after I meet them." A third participant explained, "I think if there are minor embellishments that would be understandable. Some people tend to think they are funnier than they are or perhaps more culturally-relevant than they are. I think I might be more accepting of the non-tangible things."

Other characteristics listed by participants when asked what deceptions they would be willing to overlook were career (N=2, 3.9%), exercise or activity levels (N=2, 3.9%), failing to disclose bad habits (N=2, 3.9%) age (N=1, 3.9%), smoking (N=1, 1.9%), family history (N=1, 1.9%), education (N=1, 1.9%), location (N=1, 1.9%). While 65.4% of participants said they would be willing to overlook small misrepresentations, too many can still be harmful to a developing a relationship. One participant explained, "I would be willing to overlook physical things such as height and weight. But if there would too many discrepancies I would back off

completely. If a guy can't be honest about little things how could I trust him with the bigger issues?"

To fully understand participants' perceptions of other daters' deception in the online dating environment, the survey asked them to describe any deceptive characteristics that they would not be able to overlook in a potential date. The self-reported results indicate that the most popular type of deception participants could not overlook was being lied to about another dater's faith/ religious beliefs (N=19, 36.5%). One participant shared, "[I would not be willing to overlook deception about] core issues for me such as relationship with God [and], willingness to serve in a local church." The next most popular response was being lied to about a potential dater's current relationship or marriage status (N=12, 23.1%) followed by career (N=11, 21.1%), and education (N=10, 19.2%). Other characteristics included deception about a potential dater's past history such as having children (N=10, 19.2%), 19.2%), previous relationships/marriages (N=9, 17.3%), sexual history (N=2, 3.9%) and serving jail time or having a criminal history (N=2, 3.9%).

Additional participants were not willing to overlook deception about lifestyle choices such as alcohol use (N=7, 13.5%), drug use (N=6, 11.5%), and smoking (N=5, 9.6%). One participant stated, "I have a hard time with people being dishonest about their drinking or smoking habits because these are two things I don't care for." Other deceptive characteristics reported were age (N=6, 11.5%), appearance (N=4, 7.7%), intentions of online relationship (N=3, 5.8%), hobbies/interest (N=3, 5.8%), income (N=3, 5.8%), desire to have children (N=2, 3.9%), and personality (N=2, 3.9%). One participant also responded with each of the following characteristics (1.9%): family, gender, race, gender preference, height, life goals, where they are

from, ability to interact with others, still living at home, and posting photographs of other people as themselves.

Due to the open-ended questions in the survey structure, participants were given the freedom to answer freely as opposed to selecting choices from a predetermined list. Based on this, one can evaluate the responses to make several conclusions. The results show that participants listed many more characteristics that they would not be willing to overlook compared to those they could. Therefore, one can make the assumption that online daters have a negative view of deception.

When comparing the two separate lists of characteristics many items overlap. A closer look reveals that 12 separate deceptive characteristics were listed by some participants as something they could overlook but by others that they could not. These characteristics were appearance, career, income, education, age, height, alcohol use, smoking, hobbies/interest, personality, family, and location. This overlap in importance of deception reveals that dishonesty can be a matter of individual perceptions and prior expectations. Individuals are less lenient on those criteria that they feel are most important in a potential romantic partner.

To review, the third research question asked participants to report on the perceptions they had about other online daters' deception. The survey findings highlight the individualistic nature of these perceptions. Some participants were willing to accept deception in characteristics such as appearance, career, and hobbies or interest while others were unwilling of the same things. Despite the negative connotation of dishonesty, the majority of participants stated that they would be willing to overlook some deceptive statements (65.4%, N=34) from other online daters.

RQ4: Affect of Deception on Online Dating Romantic Relationships

The fourth and final research question asked in this study is "How does deception affect the romantic relationships formed in the online dating environment?" In order to answer this question the survey requested that participants share how their own and other daters' deception affected their online romantic relationships. When reporting on their own deception, many participants choose to leave this question unanswered. For those that did respond, the majority claimed that these slight misrepresentations had no effect on their relationships (N=12, 75%). However, when reporting on the effect of other daters' deception the effect was much more detrimental. Only 11.9% of the participants that answered the question claimed that this deception had a neutral or positive effect on the relationship (N=5).

When asked to report on the relational effect of their own online dating deception, many participants claimed it had little or no effect on their relationships (N=12, 75%). One participant stated, "I really haven't seen it interfere with [my relationships with other daters]." Another said, "I have not perceived an effect."

Several daters claimed that their deception had not affected their relationships because they balance their deceptive self-description with accurate pictures. One participant explained, "Well, I always try to include pictures of myself that are full body-length images, and not just face shots. Even though I list myself as 'average' I want people to see what I actually look like and then judge for themselves if they like how I look." Another agreed, "My deception is not major because I have pictures that are recent posted on my page and my size and shape are obvious."

Few participants acknowledged their deception as harmful to their online dating relationships (N=2, 12.5%). One participant reported, "I am sure that when I first started some may have been disappointed." Another shared that their own deception had a more negative effect on themselves. "[Being deceitful] probably makes me a little less confident in what they like about

me." A third participant claimed that her extreme honesty might actually do more harm to her online dating relationships than deception. She shared, "They actually think I'm deceptive at first, then realize it's accurate . . . and then run."

Participants also reported on the effect that other dater's deception had on their online dating relationships. As opposed to their own deception, other daters' misrepresentation had damaging outcomes to the participants' online dating relationships. The majority of participants reported that other dater's deception caused them to end the relationship (N=13, 25%). One participant shared about another online dater: "One in particular told me shortly after we exchanged numbers that he was married and his wife was currently deployed. I asked him not to call me again and he didn't." Another reported, "I was slightly annoyed. After the date we never spoke or saw each other again." A third participant stated that she "left the date after one drink."

Some participants felt so violated by another online dater's deception that they stopped using online dating all together (N=9, 17.3%). One participant explained, "For a long time I just didn't even check in on eHarmony because I felt that people leave out information. EHarmony, for example, doesn't differentiate people who have been divorced, so unless they put that in their profile (in one of the descriptor paragraphs), you find that out later (as well as all the details they are willing to share)." Another commented, "I just don't like online dating anymore. I don't think it's organic. It's just too forced."

Other common themes in the participants responses was that deception in others led them to be more skeptical (N=6, 11.5%) and cautious (N=6, 11.5%) when meeting other potential dates online. One participant shared, "It has made me very skeptical now. I haven't been on another date since then. I assume they are all lying." Another stated, "[My experience] definitely made me more cautious in the world of online daters." A third participant explained, "It just made me

wary of people who give vague answers, especially on a topic that's important to me. It helped me realize that I should stay strong in my convictions and not make excuses for people I barely know."

Participants also claimed that experiences with other dater's deception have altered the way they approach online dating. One participant said, "I now spend more time getting to know guys before I met them in person." Another reported, "It made me smarter and wiser. I am cautious now when I date online." A third remarked, "I now take everything with a grain of salt and a healthy sense of skepticism. And avoid the ones that are super cocky. That's just not okay."

While the majority of participants stated that other online dater's deception was harmful, a few claimed that it did not hurt their relationships (N=5, 9.6%). One participant said, "It did not affect my attitude or relationships. In fact I went into the whole thing expecting people to be much more deceptive." Another participant shared, "I didn't find out the truth until after we married so it did not affect me. Plus I felt that a little white lie in order to impress me wasn't too bad."

In summary, the fourth research question asked participants how deception affects their online dating romantic relationships. The majority of participants claimed their own deception in online dating had no effect on their online dating relationships (N=12, 23.1%). However, when asked about the impact of other daters' deception only 9.6% reported this deception to have a neutral or positive effect on the relationship (N=5). More commonly reported, other daters' deception had a negative effect by causing participants to end the relationship (N=13, 25%) or stop using online dating services all together (N=9, 17.3%).

Discussion

After reviewing past literature on interpersonal deception theory, the researcher created the current study to discover and explore new implications of deception that have not been previously addressed.   While the majority of past research on interpersonal deception has been conducted with quantitative and experimental methods, this study presents new insight with its qualitative design. The current thesis not only looks into the behaviors of online daters but also offers a look into their motivations and perceptions of this deceit. While there is still much to be learned about this growing venue for finding love, this study adds valuable insight to current research on deception in online dating.

Honesty of Online Daters

One surprising finding of this research is the high level of honesty reported by participants about the online dating environment. Participants reported honesty in their own self-presentations (N=35, 67.3%) as well as in those of other daters that they have encountered in the online dating environment (N=41, 78.8%). Similar to the findings of Brym and Lenton, this study found that only around one quarter of online daters are deceptive. One reason for this high degree of honesty could be the negative connotation of deception. The majority of society shares the belief that lying is "fundamentally wrong, immoral, and reprehensible" (Kaplar and Gordon 489).

Another explanation for the honesty of participants can be due to as social desirability bias. "Social desirability bias is the tendency of individuals to want to make themselves appear better than they actually are" (Regnerus and Uecker 146). According to Paulhus, social desirability bias is made up of two factors: self-deception and impression management. In self-reporting research these factors can lead participants to respond in ways that are socially accepted, even if it compromises the accuracy of their responses (606). "This is particularly

problematic in studies of deception, where participants are asked to report the truth about their own deception, but might not do so for fear of being negatively judged by the experimenter" (Hanock and Toma 381)

In addition, individuals may choose to be honest to avoid judgment by society or other online daters due to the widely accepted Golden Rule. "Do to others as you want others to do to you" (Wattles 3). This teaching is engrained in young children by parents and teachers, becoming a time-honored part of western culture. In the online dating environment daters may be more inclined to tell the truth in their self-presentations, since they themselves do not wish to be lied to.

In the context of the majority of online dating individuals are focused on forming long-term romantic relationships. Gibbs, Ellison, and Heino found that online daters who were focused more on long-term face-to-face relationship goals were found to report more honest self-disclosure (165). When online daters have a more serious and permanent romantic relationship in mind, they may choose to practice less deception, putting a higher value on honesty. Some online dating services also require daters to invest significant amounts of time and money into their services. For these daters, practicing deception in any form may be a risk too big to take.

Based on participant self-reporting, this study found that most online daters are honest in their online self-presentation. In contrast, some scholars have found that online daters have much higher percentages of misrepresentation when the study is based on actual measurement of characteristics (Toma, Hancock, and Ellison 1028). Several factors can be at blame for this difference in research findings. One could be that self-reporting participants do not have an accurate view of themselves. Ellison, Henio, and Gibbs explain that some online dating participants are not blatantly lying in their inaccurate self-descriptions of the online profile, but

rather they are only held back by the constraints of their own self-knowledge (431). Online

daters can also have a false perception of physical characteristics such as height or weight

because they have simply not measured themselves recently.

Another reason online daters consider themselves honest can be due to differing

definitions of the self-reported criteria. When daters are asked to describe themselves in general

terms such as attractiveness, faith, and hobbies or interest, different people can have different

definitions. For example, one online dater can state that he or she likes to travel. For them this

means taking to the open road and discovering new places within the United States. Another

dater might claim to enjoy traveling as well but means taking international trips and experiencing

new cultures. Both daters consider "liking to travel" an honest description of themselves but the

definition of the term is not the same for both. Another example of this is when daters are asked

to describe their body type. One dater might describe themselves as about average, while

another person would classify them slender, athletic, or slightly overweight. When self-reporting

characteristics that are not black and white but more a matter of opinion, daters often think they

have given an honest description, while others might disagree.

Motivations for Deception in Online Dating

While the majority of online daters consider themselves honest, 32.7% of participants

admitted to some deception and 21.2% reported deception in others. The current study reveals

several different motivational factors that contribute to the deception online daters use in their

self-presentations. Kaplar and Gordon state, "[L]ies, like most behaviors, are multiply

determined and stem from multiple motives, of which . . . an individual may or not be aware"

(490).

Proposition 7 of interpersonal deception theory states that "[g]oals and motivations moderate strategic and nonstrategic behavior displays" (Buller and Burgoon 223). The current study found that the most common motivation of online daters is to project a positive self-image and attract potential dates. The results show that in order to accomplish these goals online daters misrepresented a wide variety of personal characteristics such as physical appearance, height, weight, age, income, and level of education. In line with the third proposition of interpersonal deception theory, these deceptive online daters are "engage[ing] in greater strategic activity designed to manage [their] information, behavior, and image" (Buller and Burgoon 218).

When deceptive online daters misrepresent themselves to increase their attraction to potential partners, they are also doing so for self-gain. Proposition 7b of interpersonal deception theory states that "[s]enders deceiving for self-gain exhibit more strategic activity and nonstrategic leakage than senders deceiving for other benefits" (Buller and Burgoon 223). This study reveals several ways that online daters engage in strategic methods of deception for self-gain. Participants admitted to posting old or edited pictures, hiding negative characteristics about themselves, or omitting certain negative attributes in order to portray themselves in the best possible light and attract possible dates.

Online daters can also be prone to using deceptive communication due to a fear of intimacy. Several participants revealed that other daters lied to them about their current relationship status. They claimed to be single when in reality they were dating someone else or even married. Another dater shared, "I dated a guy for over a year and thought we were going to get married. Looking back, I think he wasn't necessarily intentionally deceptive, but the fact he was on a dating site and talked about wanting to be married one day left me to assume he was ready for that. Turns out he wasn't ready and it has been really painful for both of us because he'd

like to be able to commit, but he's still got some growing up to do." These online daters may not

be capable or willing to create an emotional connection and use deception as a means to reduce

the intimacy of their online dating relationships. Cole states that "[f]ailing to disclose pertinent

information or misleading others allows individuals to manage the boundary between themselves

and their relational partners" (112). "[I]t is likely that individuals uncomfortable with intimacy

use deception to keep others at a safe distance" (Cole 112).

Perceptions of Deceptive Online Daters

Along with individual motivations, the study's findings reveal that online daters'

perceptions of deception are just as varied. While the study's results show that the majority of

participants would be able to overlook some form of deception from another online dater (65.4%,

N=34)., this acceptance was dependent on several factors. One is that the deception is "small" or

a slight exaggeration from the truth. In general, online daters understand the desire to form a

favorable impression and have come to expect slight misrepresentations in the online dating

profile of others. Online daters are also accepting of deception in intangible characteristics such

as a dater's hobbies and interest. For example, one dater may claim to really enjoy skiing in their

online dating profile. Another dater may read this and think he or she is an avid skier when in

reality he or she has only gone a few times. Many daters are willing to overlook this form of

deception because the degree of involvement can be a difference in opinion and is not a

straightforward misrepresentation.

One's perception of another online dater's deception is also determined by his or hers

own preferences in a romantic partner. The results show that online daters are much more

forgiving when being lied to about matters they do not consider significant. For example, if

one's level of education is not something a dater considers important he or she may not mind if

another lies about having a college degree. This finding offers support for the second half of sub-proposition 7b of interpersonal deception theory, which claims that "[r]eceivers' initial behavior patterns are a function of (a) their priorities among instrumental, relational, and identity objectives" (Buller and Burgoon 223). Therefore, an online dater's acceptance behavior of deception is based on their own objectives and priorities in the opposite sex.

Likewise, a negative perception of dishonesty in online dating is more prevalent when the deception concerns a core issue or characteristic of value to the dater. Another example that illustrates that a receivers' perception of deceit is based on their own relational and identity objectives is seen in the height of online daters. For example, consider a male online dater that is 5'7" but claims to be 5'10" in his online dating profile. Since most women like to date a man that is taller than they are, this slight deceit may not be significant for a woman that is 5'5". However, for a woman who is herself 5'7", this deceit may be more striking. Since an online dater's perception of another's deceit is based on their own objectives, it can be concluded that most online daters are offended not only by the act of deception itself but by the disappointment that comes from being attracted to another's nonexistent qualities as well.

The study's findings also reveal that about a quarter of online daters believe in beginning romantic relationships with complete honesty. Supporting sub-proposition 7b these daters' relational objectives contribute to their perceptions of online deception.   For them any form of deception no matter how small can be an illustration of someone's true character. Valuing extreme honesty, these daters can become easily offended and quickly end the relationship. Therefore, an online daters' individual preference for honesty can affect their perceptions of another's deception, no matter how small.

Besides individual preference, perceptions of deceit can also be attributed to stories that have been passed down from other online daters. The 2006 study by Pew Internet and American Life Project reports that 26% of American adults (53 million) know someone who has gone on a date with a person they met through a dating site (Madden and Lenhart 12-13). Like all daters, these individuals looking for love online have both positive and negative experiences. When these negative incidents contain severe instances of deception, they can be shocking to daters and become a significant story they share with others. These stories then begin to circulate among the community, further increasing the belief that dishonesty is rampant in online dating (Toma, Hancock, and Ellison 1032). These widely circulated stories leave a memorable mark other online daters' presuppositions and perception of the online dating environment.

Is Deception a Disadvantage of Online Dating?

Previous studies claim that deception is one of the major disadvantages of the online dating environment (Brym and Lenton 36, Donn and Sherman 115). While about a quarter of participants admit to being deceptive and experiencing deception in other daters, is this deception really a disadvantage? One of the common themes that emerged from the study is that deception affects an individual's ability to trust those they meet through online dating. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, trust can be defined as an "assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something." Trust as it occurs in digital contexts, such as online dating, has gained such attention from research scholars that it is being termed "e-trust" (Taddeo 23).

In the originally published article on interpersonal deception theory, Buller and Burgoon state, "Trust is the foundation on which enduring relationships are built, and trust grows with the belief that another is communicating in an honest, straightforward manner" (209). Many of the

study's participants agree with this belief and consider deception to be a negative indicator of a dater's character, hindering their ability to trust the other person. One participant replied, "If you can't trust someone, you can't have a relationship." Sissela Bok agrees that trust is a foundation on which all relationships are built. In his book *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life, Bok states,* "Trust in some degree of veracity functions as a foundation of relations among human beings… Whatever matters to human beings, trust is the atmosphere in which it thrives" (31).

While trust is important in all relationships, some individuals choose to offer trust in the beginning of a relationship, while others consider it something that needs to be earned over time. Lawson and Leck state, "Basic interpersonal trust is either contractual trust based on social contracts as in family relationships or trust based on time in relations" (204). Even when this communication is conducted through mediated means, Burgoon et al. found that developing relational trust is possible when individuals feel involved with their partners and believe there exists a sense of mutuality in the relationship ("Trust" 8).

One way that individuals can build mutual trust in their relationships over time is through the reciprocal process of self-disclosure (Giddens 121). "Self-disclosure" can be defined as "the voluntary sharing of information about the self that another person is not likely to know" (Seiler and Beall 359). "In addition, [one's] self-disclosure to others encourages them to reciprocate and creates an atmosphere of interpersonal communication and meaningful relationships" (Seiler and Beall 361). Because of the physical barriers that exist in the online dating environment, daters feel the need to speed up their typical rate of self-disclosure in order to obtain an intimate bond (Lawson and Leck 203). This early self-disclosure may lead to an unwarranted sense of trust, only to be shattered if deception is discovered later in the relationship.

Besides earning trust through self-disclosure, online daters may also offer trust based on their experiences with previous online daters. Due to the taboo associations with online dating, this environment can be awkward and sometimes risky for its daters. When online daters have several good experiences with meeting trustworthy potential partners online, they will be more inclined to offer trust to others they meet through online dating, even before communicating or meeting them (Molm, Takahashin, and Peterson 1425). Likewise, if online daters have had several negative experiences with deceptive romantic interests, they may also be less likely to trust others. This study found that when online daters had experiences with deception, it was not only their trust in other online daters that was broken but trust in the whole online dating process as well, resulting in some choosing to end their subscriptions.

Relationship Satisfaction in Online Dating

Although not included in the study's research questions, relationship satisfaction was an evident theme that emerged from the data collected. Despite the evidence of deception and opportunity for violated trust, most participants remain confident that online dating can still be a good environment for facilitating romantic relationships. In fact, 9.6% of participants shared that they met their spouse through online dating services (N=5). An additional 5 participants also reported that they have dated seriously or are currently dating someone they have met through online dating (9.6%).

There are several factors that can contribute to relationship satisfaction in the online dating environment. According to a study by Anderson and Emmers-Sommer, the three most common contributors were intimacy, trust, and communication satisfaction (166). Due to widely available Internet access, computer-mediated communication also allows online daters to correspond with high levels of frequency. This regular interaction encourages online daters to

quickly develop a strong sense of intimacy in their romantic relationships (Anderson and Emmers-Sommer 157). Anderson and Emmers-Sommer found that "those who had been in their online relationships a greater amount of time reported greater levels of intimacy" (163).

Another study by Hassebrauck and Fehr on relationship satisfaction reveal that individuals with intimate relationships were also more likely to trust their partners (265). Anderson and Emmers-Sommer explain, "[T]rust and intimacy are linked closely; as partners grow closer and depth increases, trust develops and as trust increases, so do levels of intimacy" (166).

It is no surprise that research contributes communication satisfaction to the relationship satisfaction of online daters. Without the ability to have a physical presence or share the mutual activities that come with traditional dating, online daters must rely solely on communication skills to develop the relationship. In fact, in online dating "the online communication *is* the relationship" (Anderson and Emmers-Sommer 166).

Through participants' own words, this study provides valuable insight into the online dating environment and the effect deception has on these romantic relationships. Similar to past studies, the findings reveal greater amounts of honesty than dishonesty in the interactions and experiences of online daters. Those online daters that did use deception were motivated to do so by the longing to attract members of the opposite sex and project a positive self-image. Daters were also willing to overlook deception in others if they viewed the dishonesty as a slight exaggeration or characteristic of little value to the dater. Despite the deception that does occur, participants still believe that the online dating environment can be a vehicle for successful romantic relationships, if not for themselves then for other singles.

Summary

All communication phenomena require the engagement of unique individuals. As a result, participants' responses to qualitative research will be as unique as the individuals who create them. However, despite the broad range of data collected, several commonalities can be found. This study found that the majority of online daters consider themselves and others to be honest in their self-presentation. When online daters are deceptive, they choose to do so for self-gain, motivated by the desire to attract potential romantic partners and leave a favorable impression. Online daters also seem to understand this desire and be willing to overlook other daters' small deceptions when they are regarding characteristics these daters view with lesser importance. However, when this deception is larger in nature or concerning values of importance, online daters are often disappointed, ending the romantic relationship or online dating all together.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

While there are many theoretical insights that can be gained from this study on deception in online dating, some research limitations did exist. First, the data collected were solely dependent on participants' self-reporting. The accuracy of self-reported data can always be questioned as participants may not remember past interactions and events in their entirety. Participants may also not be fully aware of the deceptive nature of their communication or the motivations behind their deceptive behavior. Since deception is viewed as morally wrong, participants may have been hesitant to admit their dishonesty when questioned for fear of being judged. One way that this could be rectified in future studies is to notify participants that the researcher has a neutral viewpoint of deception, neither approving nor disapproving it in others. It would also be helpful to let participants know that the study is not designed to judge or criticize deception but to study qualitatively.

Although the sample size was appropriate for the current study, a larger number would have allowed more data, further increasing the validity of the findings. The sample sized used in the study contained participants from different genders, ethnicities including White/Caucasian, Black/African American, and Asian and educational backgrounds ranging from a high school diploma to a doctorate degree; however, the majority of participants were female, Caucasian college graduates. One reason for the unequal amount of women and men participants could be that women are significantly more likely to develop personal relationships online than men (Parks and Floyd 86). This unbalanced participant pool does have an impact on the study's findings and may hinder the application of its results to the entire online dating community. For the purpose of this study, the age of participants was also limited to 21-37. Future studies need

to incorporate a broader range of participant demographics to include a more generalized sample of the online dating population's age, gender, ethnicity, and education levels.

Along with participants used for this study, there were several limitations to the survey tool used. One was that the survey did not ask participants to specify whether they were reporting on heterosexual or homosexual relationships. Having this knowledge would have provided further clarification and validity to the study's findings. While, the survey's instructions attempted to inform online daters of the study's participation criteria, the researcher cannot guarantee that all respondents fully met the requirements for participation due to the anonymous method of data collection.

Another common limitation for research on interpersonal deception is the assurance of honest participants and responses. When participants have already admitted to dishonesty in online dating, one cannot be confident that they were honest in their answers to the survey questions. To encourage accuracy of the study's findings, participants were asked to evaluate the honesty of their answers at the end of the survey. Out of the 49 participants that choose to answer this question, all of them claimed to have been 100% or very honest in their responses.

Despite these limitations, this study can be used to launch additional research on deception as it occurs to the online dating environment. While this study sought out explanatory data through qualitative research, future studies could explore the same research questions with a quantitative methodology. Having participants classify their attitudes and actions regarding deception in a Likert scale questionnaire could provide further precision to the results. This study is also based on participants self-reporting of their experiences. Although more difficult to conduct, observing daters' actual communication and interactions in an online setting could be an option for future studies on deception in online dating.

The current study also focused on the deception of online daters as young adults. This age bracket was chosen not only on availability to the researcher but to provide a narrower framework of the study's findings as well. Future research could expound on these results but replicating this study's methodology with other online dater age groups. Would the results of this study be confirmed if the participant age group was adolescents or older adults? In the current study, three participants were eliminated because they failed to meet the target age criteria. These participants were 55, 56, and 60 years old. Future research could also examine the development of online dating for senior citizens and its increasing popularity. It would be interesting to investigate if this older generation's motivations for and perceptions of deception would be consistent or varied from that of the young adults used in the current study.

Along with the age of online daters, future research could investigate the similarities and/or differences between the deception of male and female online daters. Based on the research questions addressed in this study, it would be beneficial for communication scholars to compare male and female online dater's motivations for using deceptive strategies. It would also be valuable to analyze one gender's perceptions of online dating deceit with that of the other. This study found that an online dater's perceptions of another's deception are based on their own individual preferences for a romantic partner. Future research could investigate how a gender's preference in the opposite sex influences their acceptance or rejection of the deception they encounter in others.

The participants in the current study offer only one viewpoint to the deception they exhibited and experienced. For example, a participant may claim complete honesty in their online dating presentation while those they date would disagree. Future research could question both members of the online dating relationship for a broader and more accurate perspective on

the deception used. Although it would be more difficult to recruit both individuals and acquire their agreement to participate, this double-sided analysis would provide dual perspectives to deception in the online dating relationship. While complete agreement may never be fully realized as there are always multiple perspectives to one event, involving both parties in the data collection process could keep them accountable to the accuracy of their responses, further increasing the precision of the study.

While interpersonal deception theory was valuable in guiding this study on deception in the context of online dating environment, additional research could apply other theories to this topic. One theory that could also be used to guide research on deception is online dating is social penetration theory. This theory by Altman and Taylor states that individuals disclose information about themselves in increasing layers of depth and breadth. This theory might be applicable to a study on deception on online dating because some daters consider not revealing past experiences or negative aspects of themselves a form of dishonesty. At the same time, online daters do not want to disclose too much personal information too soon for fear of scaring off potential daters. Another theory that would be useful in research studies on deception in online dating would be Walther's hyperpersonal model. This theory states that due to the lack of non-verbal cues in computer-mediated communication, users have the ability to edit their online dating presentations strategically. While all daters want to present a positive image, this editing can be viewed by others as dishonesty, causing them to end the relationship.

Deceptive communication is related to the particular context within which it occurs. The fourth proposition of interpersonal deception theory explains that the interactivity of a communication context effects one's strategic deceptive actions such as information, behavior, and image management and nonstrategic deceptive actions such as arousal and decreased

performance (Buller and Burgoon 220). Future research could investigate deception as it occurs in the context of other online relationships. It would be interesting to explore individual's motivations and perceptions of deception between new co-workers who have not met face-to-face but telecommute from separate locations. Social media are also becoming a popular and influential form of computer-mediated communication. Future research could explore deception and its effect on these social networking relationships such as Facebook friends and Twitter followers.

Conclusion

Throughout the years, more and more social connections are involving computer-mediated communication. Romantic relationships are no exception to this as 31% of American adults (63 million) say they know someone who has used a dating website (Madden and Lenhart 12). In recent years online dating has transformed from a taboo practices to a socially acceptable means of finding love. However, with the technological barriers of computer-mediated communication, online daters have the opportunity to portray themselves in any way they choose. This manipulation may seem innocent as daters are trying to obtain a favorable impression but may also be perceived as dishonest, harming the chances for a successful romantic relationship.

The purpose of this study is to provide a description of online daters' experiences, motivations, and perceptions of deception in the context of online dating environment. Expounding on past research of interpersonal deception theory, this study is unique in that the data collected contained daters' specific opinions and experiences expressed through their own words. Unlike laboratory settings that focus on the behavior and speech of deceivers at an exact moment, this study examines a broader scope of perceptions and interpretations of deception as it occurs through an individual's self-disclosure and actions over time. This study also provides

insight into how deception affects the romantic relationships created in the online dating environment.

Four primary research questions were used to guide the framework of this qualitative study.

RQ1: About what characteristics are online daters deceptive?

RQ2: What motivation do online daters have for their deception of others in the online dating environment?

RQ3: What perceptions do online daters have about other daters' deceit towards them in the online dating environment?

RQ4: How does deception affect the romantic relationships formed in the online dating environment?

Collected through an online survey of open-ended questions, the study's findings show that the majority of online daters consider themselves and others generally honest in their online dating interactions. Online daters who are deceptive do so to make a favorable impression in others and attract a potential partner. At other times, daters may not realize the extent of their deception based on a lack of self-awareness or the technological barriers of the online dating environment. Many participants understand these motivations for deception and are willing to overlook slight exaggerations or dishonesty in others. However, when significant deception occurs, it can be too much for the dater, resulting in a breach of trust in the romantic partner and the online dating process.

This exploratory study benefits the field of communication by providing insight into deception as it occurs in real human interactions. Through the lens of online dating, this study explores how deceptive communication affects human behavior and how one's human behavior affects the way he or she communicates. This study adds to past research on interpersonal

deception theory by exploring one's motivations for engaging in deception. The study also provides evidence of how individuals evaluate deception in others and the impact deception has on romantic relationships. These findings not only have practical implications for the online dating community but are morally significant for all users of computer-mediated communication.

Like all communication interactions, deception affects those that use it and those that encounter it in others. These experiences no matter how trivial or tragic can provide valuable life experiences and opportunities of growth. Gibbs, Ellison, and Heino state that "success in online dating may be partially a 'numbers game'… but it also requires a cognitive ability to reflect and learn from one's encounters, as well" (171). With every new person one meets through online dating, there is the opportunity to be deceived but also the opportunity to learn from the experience, and for some lucky singles, the opportunity to discover true love.

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Appendix A: Propositions of Interpersonal Deception Theory

Proposition 1: Sender and receiver cognitions and behaviors vary systematically as deceptive communication contexts vary in (a) access to social cues, (b) immediacy, (c) relational engagement, (d) conversational demands, and (e) spontaneity.

Proposition 2: During deceptive interchanges, sender and receiver cognitions and behaviors vary systematically as relationships vary in (a) relational familiarity (including informational and behavioral familiarity) and (b) relational valence.

Proposition 3: Compared with truth tellers, deceivers (a) engage in greater strategic activity designed to manage information, behavior, and image and (b) display more nonstrategic arousal cues, negative and dampened affect, noninvolvement, and performance decrements.

Proposition 4: Context interactivity moderates initial deception displays such that deception in increasingly interactive contexts results in (a) greater strategic activity (information, behavior, and image management) and (b) reduced nonstrategic activity (arousal, negative or dampened affect, and performance decrements) over time relative to noninteractive contexts.

Proposition 5: Sender and receiver initial expectations for honesty are positively related to degree of context interactivity and positivity of relationship between sender and receiver.

Proposition 6: Deceivers' initial detection apprehension and associated strategic activity are inversely related to expectations for honesty (which are themselves a function of context interactivity and relationship positivity).

Proposition 7: Goals and motivations moderate strategic and nonstrategic behavior displays.

Sub-proposition 7a: Senders deceiving for self-gain exhibit more strategic activity and nonstrategic leakage than senders deceiving for other benefits.

Sub-proposition 7b: Receivers' initial behavior patterns are a function of (a) their priorities among instrumental, relational, and identity objectives and (b) their initial intent to uncover deceit.

Proposition 8: As receivers' informational, behavioral, and relational familiarity increase, deceivers not only (a) experience more detection apprehension and (b) exhibit more strategic information, behavior, and image management but also (c) more nonstrategic leakage behavior.

Proposition 9: Skilled senders better convey a truthful demeanor by engaging in more strategic behavior and less nonstrategic leakage than unskilled ones.

Proposition 10: Initial and ongoing receiver judgments of sender credibility are positively related to (a) receiver truth biases, (b) context interactivity, (c) and sender encoding skills; they are inversely related to (d) deviations of sender communication from expected patterns.

Proposition 11 : Initial and ongoing receiver detection accuracy are inversely related to (a) receiver truth biases, (b) context interactivity, (c) and sender encoding skills; they are positively related to (d) informational and behavioral familiarity, (e) receiver decoding skills, and (f) deviations of sender communication from expected patterns.

Proposition 12: Receiver suspicion is manifested through a combination of strategic and nonstrategic behavior.

Proposition 13: Senders perceive suspicion when it is present.

Sub-proposition 13a: Deviations from expected receiver behavior increase perceptions of suspicion.

Sub-proposition 13b: Receiver behavior signaling disbelief, uncertainty, or the need for additional information increase sender perceptions of suspicion.

Proposition 14: Suspicion (perceived or actual) increases senders' (a) strategic and (b) nonstrategic behavior.

Proposition 15: Deception and suspicion displays change over time.

Proposition 16: Reciprocity is the predominant interaction adaptation pattern between senders and receivers during interpersonal deception.

Proposition 17: Receiver detection accuracy, bias, and judgments of sender credibility following an interaction are a function of (a) terminal receiver cognitions (suspicion, truth biases), (b) receiver decoding skill, and (c) terminal sender behavioral displays.

Proposition 18: Sender perceived deception success is a function of (a) terminal sender cognitions (perceived suspicion) and (b) terminal receiver behavioral displays.

Appendix B: Participant Letter of Consent

Dear Possible Participant-

      You are invited to participate in a research study of deception in online dating. If you are currently using an online dating website or have used one in the past 3 years, you are eligible to participate in this study. This study is being conducted by Lyndsey Wagner, Department of Communication with Liberty University.

      The link to access the survey is included below. The survey will ask you to explain your perceptions of your own deception in online dating and the experiences you may have with the deception of other online daters. Please be as open and detailed as possible in your responses.

      Participation is totally voluntary; you may skip any question that you do not feel comfortable answering and may withdraw from the survey at any time. This study will provide little to no risk to its participants. Any embarrassment or psychological harm you may experience with recalling your perceptions or experiences with deception should be alleviated by the anonymity of the survey. Your name and other identifying information will not be requested or attached to the study in any way. All responses will be kept secure under password protection and in a locked file cabinet that can only be accessed by the researcher. After three years all information pertaining to the study will be destroyed.

      The researchers conducting this study are Lyndsey Wagner and Dr. Faith Mullen. If you have any questions about the study and your participation, you are encouraged to contact them at 410-693-2164, lwagner5@liberty.edu or fmullen@liberty.edu.

      If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1582, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at fgarzon@liberty.edu.

      If you choose to decline participation please disregard this email and the survey link. Thank you for your willingness.

Sincerely,

Lyndsey Wagner

Appendix C: Survey Questions

1. Please select your gender.
   - Male
   - Female

2. Please state your age: _____

3. Would you describe yourself as:
   - American Indian / Native American
   - Asian
   - Black / African American
   - Hispanic / Latino
   - White / Caucasian
   - Pacific Islander
   - Other

4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   - Grade school only
   - Some high school, but did not finish
   - Completed high school
   - Some college, but did not finish
   - Two-year college degree
   - Four-year college degree
   - Some graduate work
   - Masters degree
   - Doctorate degree

5. How long have you participated in online dating?
   - 0-3 months
   - 4-6 months
   - 7 months-1 year
   - 13 months-2 years
   - 3-4 years
   - 5 years or longer
   - Other (please specify)

6. Which online dating services have you used in the past or are currently using?

7. Please explain the main reasons you have chosen to use online dating.

8. Are the people you meet through online dating accurate in their descriptions of themselves? Please explain your answer.

9. If not, what characteristics do they lie about?

10. Tell me about someone that you have met through an online dating service that was dishonest in how they portrayed themselves? Please explain your answer.

11. How did this deception affect your relationships with the online dater(s)?

12. If a friend or family member evaluated the honesty of your online dating communication would they think you accurately described yourself?

13. Identify and describe any items in your online profile that are not 100 percent honest.

14. Please explain your motivation for this dishonesty.

15. Describe how your own deception affects your relationships with other online daters.

16. Describe which characteristics, if any, would you BE able to look past your date being dishonest about?

17. Describe which characteristics, if any, would you NOT be able to look past your date being dishonest about?

18. Do you think online dating is a good environment to facilitate romantic relationships? Please explain.

19. Please tell me a story about an experience you have had with deception in online dating.

20. Evaluate how honest you have been in answering the questions on this survey.