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Why Can't We Be Friends? Examining the Influence of Social Network Profiles on Initial Interactions

Liesel Sharabi

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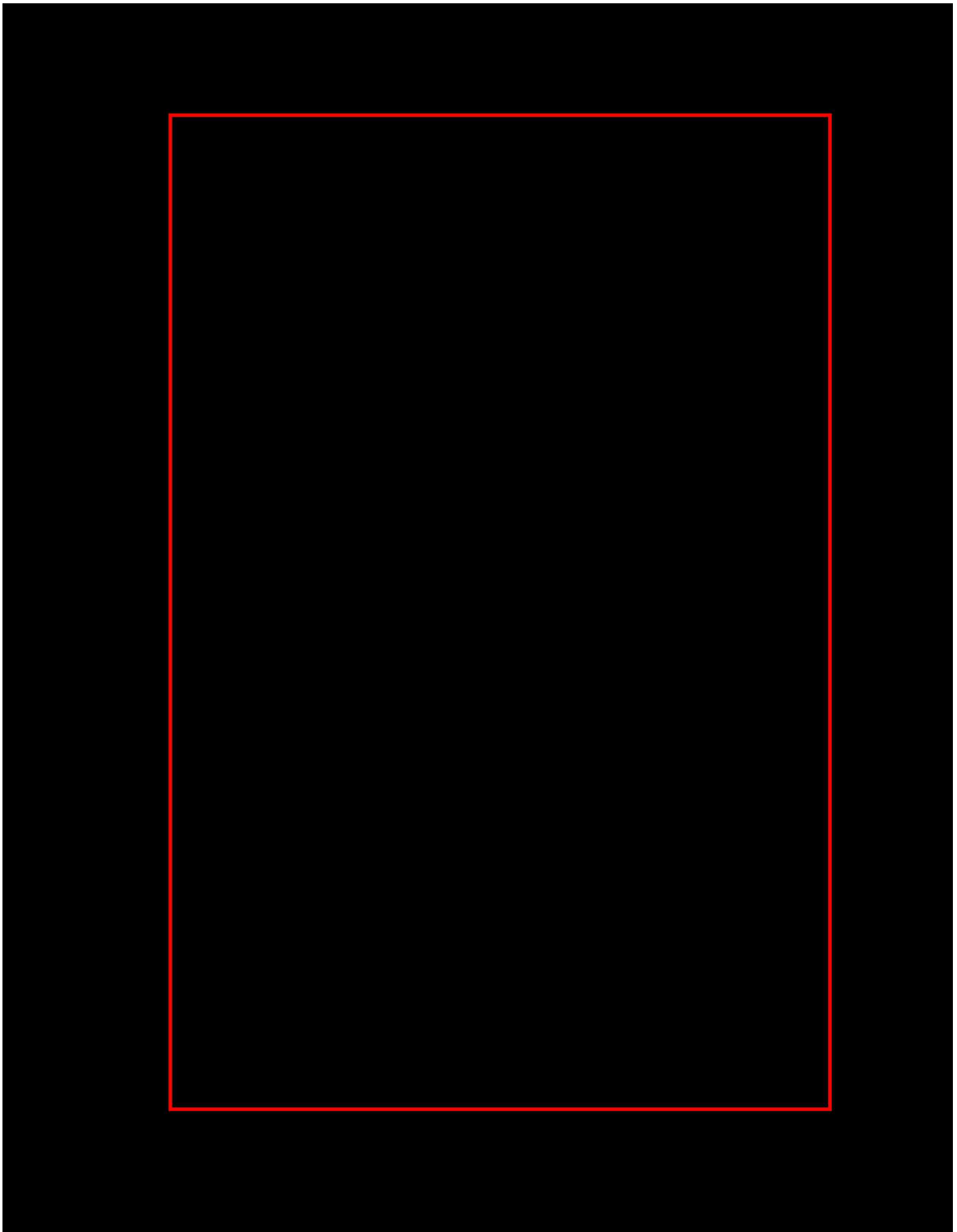_____
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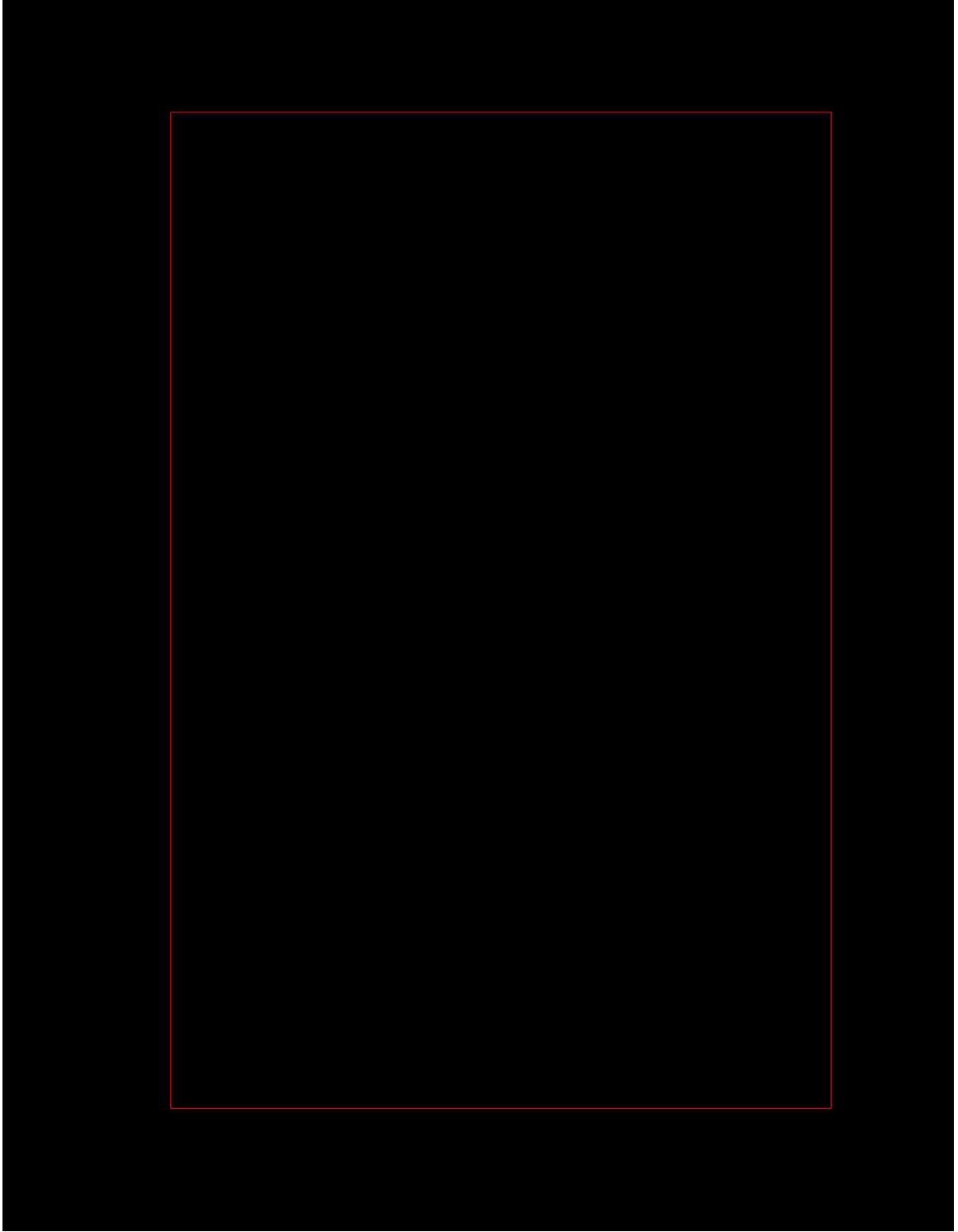
WHY CAN'T WE BE FRIENDS?
EXAMINING THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL NETWORK PROFILES ON
INITIAL INTERACTIONS

by

Liesel Sharabi

B.A., Communication, University of New Mexico, 2007
M.A., Communication, University of New Mexico, 2010

ABSTRACT

Despite the growing number of people using social network Web sites to establish and maintain relationships, we know little about how the information available on these sites affects communication patterns and perceptions of partners. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study was to extend Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) into the Information age by examining the effect that the type of information available on social network sites may have on initial interactions. Thirty strangers were matched with one another to create fifteen dyads. These dyads were assigned to one of two groups: one group received their partner's social network profile and the second group was provided an index card containing basic information about their partner. Then, participants completed a pretest, engaged in a get-to-know-you conversation, and completed a posttest. Several weeks later, the Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire was administered to assess the lingering effects of uncertainty. These findings contradict five of URT's seven axioms and show the limited applicability of URT to electronic communication while also providing support for Predicted Outcome Value Theory and Uncertainty Management Theory.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The widespread use of the Internet for socialization purposes represents a global

shift away from relationship development and maintenance relying solely on face-to-face

communication to people using computer-mediated and computer-enhanced

communication in all stages of their relationships. A press release by the Nielsen

Company ranks member communities as the fourth most popular online activity—ahead

of personal email (Nielsen.com, 2009). Member communities include blogs and social

network sites such as Facebook.com and Match.com, which are Web sites that allow

users to form and maintain interpersonal relationships. The popularity of these social

network sites is also evidenced by the fact that, worldwide, two-thirds of Internet users

visit member community sites (Nielsen.com, 2009). Yet, despite the growing number of

individuals who are using social network sites to meet people, we still do not know how

the information available on these sites affects communication patterns and perceptions

of partners. This project is intended to explore how exposure to social network profiles

influences the patterns and perceptions of initial interactants.

Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) is valuable to studies of the

acquaintanceship process. URT has been used to explore the needs that people have when

initiating relationships in a face-to-face context. According to Berger and Calabrese

(1975), when we are getting to know another, our communication patterns are associated

with our uncertainty about our partner—how much information we seek, how much

information we share, and even our nonverbal communication, are associated with our

uncertainty. In fact, Berger and Calabrese even posit that as an individual's uncertainty

about a conversational partner decreases his or her liking for that person increases. This negative relationship between uncertainty and liking may explain why some relationships flourish while others never move beyond the initial stages of development. However, URT was developed in the 1970s, so our knowledge about communication in initial interactions is primarily limited to face-to-face interactions. We need to know more about how the tenets of URT may or may not be applicable to online relationship initiation.

Recently, researchers have attempted to extend the face-to-face theory of uncertainty reduction to electronic interactions. The results have been mixed. Some researchers claim that the theory is applicable to an online context (Emmers-Sommer & Pauley, 2007; Tamborini & Westerman, 2008). Others insist that uncertainty reduction functions differently in Cyberspace (Antheunis, Peter, Schouten, & Valkenburg, 2009; Antheunis, Peter, & Valkenburg, 2008; Cody, Pratt, Wendt, & Wiseman, 1999). Yet, regardless of their findings, their attempts reflect the need that interpersonal communication scholars have to explain this new form of online relationship development.

Purpose

This innovative study of communication in initial interactions involves the use of an experimental design to accomplish one primary and three specific purposes. The primary purpose of this project is to extend URT into the Information age by examining the effect that the type of information available on social network sites may have on initial interactions. The specific goals of this study include: (1) to determine the impact that access to information has on a person's initial impression of a stranger; (2) to determine the impact that access to information has on an individual's communication

patterns during a get-acquainted conversation; and (3) to determine the impact that access to information prior to a get-acquainted conversation has on partners' perceptions of the initial interaction. Since experimental designs are the genesis of uncertainty reduction and interpersonal attraction theories, an experimental method will be employed in this study. Using URT as the theoretical frame, I will compare in-depth social profiles with basic introductory information to explain how they affect communication patterns and perceptions of two previously unacquainted individuals.

Rationale

In addition to the theoretical implications of this study, there are also several practical reasons for investigating the impact that social network profiles are having on the relationship initiation process. In this section, I will provide a rationale for this research by pointing out just how little we know about the following: the applicability of URT to electronic communication; the impact that social network Web sites are having on the relationship initiation process; why people are using tools, such as social network profiles, to initiate relationships in Cyberspace; and the potential that social networkers have for developing different communication skills as a result of their exposure to these sites.

Although URT helps to explain relationship initiation in a face-to-face context, it is important to continually examine this theory and adapt it to changing interaction patterns. Applying URT to electronic communication provides further insight into the impact that the Internet is having on the acquaintanceship process by allowing for the comparison of on- and off-line communication patterns and impressions. Furthermore, the reexamination of URT resulted in Brashers et al.'s (2000) Uncertainty Management

Theory and Sunnafrank's (1986) Predicted Outcome Value Theory. This endeavor may lead to yet another adaptation of URT, only this time it will be applied to electronic interactions.

Social network Web sites continue to grow, yet the impact that they have on relationship initiation remains unknown (Bucklin, Pauwels, & Trusov, 2009). While we can speculate that the relationship initiation process has changed as a result of these sites, further research is needed to support this claim. Clearly, relationships are now developed and sustained in ways that interpersonal communication scholars did not anticipate prior to the Internet. As Smith and Wilson (2010) noted:

> Early research on the use of technology in interpersonal relationships claimed that the use of "lean" media, such as e-mail, would lead to depersonalization in interpersonal relationships. In the 1980s, there were still scholars arguing that interpersonal communication could only occur between two individuals who were interacting face-to-face. (pp. 13-14)

We can no longer ignore the fact that interpersonal communication is changing, nor can we continue to underestimate the appeal of gathering information about a person prior to meeting him/her face to face. Rather, we should examine the tools offered by social network sites so that we understand how our ever-increasing access to others' personal information affects interactants' behavior in initial interactions.

An examination of the history of social network Web sites provides further evidence of this need for research. Although some may say that social networking is a trend, it has actually been growing in popularity since the introduction of online dating Web sites in the 1980s (Carry & Whitty, 2006). Social network sites have continued to

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emerge, as demonstrated by the introduction of online dating giant Match.com in 1995 and the subsequent launch of Friendster.com in 2002; a site that was designed to compete with the former by introducing users to potential romantic partners within their social networks (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Match.com, 2009). Then, in 2003, eUniverse CEO Tom Anderson launched Myspace.com by instructing his eUniverse employees to encourage their friends to join the site (Day, Qingwen, & Urista, 2009). Approximately one year later, Mark Zuckerberg, Chris Hughes, Dustin Moskovitz, and Eduardo Saverin introduced Facebook.com as a social network site that was only available to students at Harvard University. Shortly after, the site became available to students at other universities and high schools before it opened to the general public in 2006 (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Day, Qingwen, & Urista, 2009).

In 2008, approximately 50 social network Web sites claimed to host over one million registered users (Cardon, 2009). Of these sites, Myspace.com was the largest with 56 million unique visitors per month, followed by Facebook.com with 49 million unique visitors per month (Bucklin, Pauwels, & Trusov, 2009). While some argue that millions of people worldwide use these sites to connect with people whom they already know (Boyd & Ellison, 2007), it seems just as likely that these users also communicate with strangers and/or "friends-of-friends" and initiate relationships in Cyberspace.

Research suggests that social network Web sites will become even more popular among an adult audience. According to Bulik and Klaassen (2009), "As of January, more than 50% of Facebook users and 44% of Myspace users in the U.S. were over 35 years old, according to ComScore estimates." However, Facebook.com claims that its fastest growing demographic consists of users who are over the age of 55 (Bulik & Klaassen,

2009). These projections about the future use of social networking sites demonstrate that their popularity will continue to increase. This popularity provides a warrant for studying how initial interactions are influenced after people access the information on others' profiles.

It seems likely that social networkers, compared to individuals who are initiating and sustaining relationships through "traditional," face-to-face means, develop different communication skills. This development may put social networkers at an advantage or a disadvantage when communicating with others or attempting to move their online relationships offline. If technology can help people fulfill their needs for human companionship, scholars must understand the impact that social network profiles have on initial interactions.

Key Definitions

This study merges interpersonal communication and electronic communication research to explain the impact that social network profiles have on initial interactions. Therefore, it is important that the reader is familiar with the terminology that is used within these fields. In this section, I present five key definitions: (1) partners; (2) social network Web sites; (3) profile; (4) initial interaction behavior; and (5) initial interaction outcomes.

The term *partners* refers to two previously unacquainted individuals who receive information about one another before engaging in a get-acquainted conversation. Unless otherwise indicated, it can be assumed that partners are nothing more than strangers or acquaintances prior to the experiment.

S*ocial network Web sites* are "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (Boyd and Ellison, 2007, p. 2). Therefore, dating sites like Match.com and eHarmony.com are included in this definition along with Facebook.com and Myspace.com. Although social network Web sites have multiple functions, including relational maintenance and identity construction, this study deals with initial interactions. Therefore, I examine social network profiles as sources of information that aid in the relationship initiation process.

A *profile* is a one-page description that a user posts on a social network Web site. Although the format may vary from site to site and from person to person, a profile page typically contains a picture(s) of the user and his/her demographic and attitudinal information. Regardless of small differences, all social network profiles function to provide information about an individual to his or her network. This information is valuable in that it can influence a social networkers decision to initiate contact with a stranger.

The verbal and nonverbal exchanges that take place between partners during a get-acquainted conversation are *initial interaction behaviors*. URT identifies several behaviors that partners typically employ during an initial interaction, and any deviation from these norms may be attributed to an outside source. For instance, exposure to their partner's social network profile prior to a get-acquainted conversation may cause the individuals to display unexpected initial interaction behaviors. Examples of initial

interaction behaviors include information-seeking, nonverbal affiliative expressiveness, self-disclosure, verbal intimacy, amount of communication, and similarity.

Initial interaction outcomes include the judgments that partners form about one another following a get-acquainted conversation. These outcomes, such as an individual's satisfaction with the conversation and attraction to his or her partner, are important determinants of whether or not the partners will voluntarily interact again in the future. Therefore, initial interaction outcomes are crucial components of the acquaintanceship process.

Preview

I hope to further our understanding of relationship initiation and communication by exploring social network profiles through the lens of URT. By applying this theory to a previously unexamined area, I fill a gap in knowledge while also testing the applicability of URT in the Information Age. Hence, this study seeks to determine whether reading an online social network profile sufficiently reduces uncertainty and, if it does, the effect that knowing more about a conversational partner has on an initial face-to-face interaction.

This will be accomplished using an experimental method and a survey method. During the experiment, thirty undergraduate participants will be matched with one another to form fifteen dyads consisting of previously unacquainted individuals. Prior to the experiment, half of the dyads will be assigned to a "with profile" condition. In this condition, participants will read their partners full 1-2 page profile. In the second condition, participants will be provided an index card with their partner's name, job, and favorite things. The information on the index card is meant to approximate the

information one may be given by a mutual acquaintance. Then, each participant will be asked to complete a pretest, interact with his or her partner for 10-minutes, and respond to a posttest. After the experiment is complete, the participants will be asked to complete an additional online Questionnaire in order to assess their relational uncertainty. This Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire is used to study the lingering effects of uncertainty by asking participants about their interactions three weeks after the experiment. This information will indicate whether or not social network profiles are powerful enough to lead to meaningful differences in uncertainty over time.

In this study, I will explore the uses of online uncertainty reduction tools by face-to-face interactants. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how previous researchers have applied URT in both contexts. This thesis provides (1) a review of literature that includes prior examinations of URT in face-to-face and online environments, initial interaction behaviors and influences, and initial interaction outcomes; (2) hypotheses to guide this study; (3) a detailed description of the experimental and survey methods that I use to collect data; (4) a presentation of the results of the hypothesis testing; and (5) a discussion of the findings, the implications of these results, the limitations of this study, and directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

As human beings, we desire companionship, and we devote much of our time to the development and maintenance of friendships, romantic relationships, and familial relationships. When we share our lives with others, we create social support systems comprised of individuals whom we care about, and who care about us in return. Therefore, these relationships are crucial to our happiness and our health. This makes it important for interpersonal communication scholars to understand how relationships are initiated in a variety of contexts, including online.

In the following review of literature, I will: (1) provide a theoretical framework for examining initial interactions; (2) summarize previous research regarding initial interaction behaviors, influences, and outcomes; and (3) introduce the hypotheses that guide this study.

Uncertainty Reduction Theory

Overview and Axioms

Successful interactions between previously unacquainted individuals are the foundations upon which relationships are built, while unsuccessful encounters often prevent relationships from moving beyond the initial stages of development. Though a variety of factors may leave an individual feeling satisfied or dissatisfied with an encounter, URT predicts that the uncertainty experienced by either partner is likely to have the greatest influence on a conversation between strangers and an individual's subsequent judgment of the interaction (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Numerous studies of get-acquainted conversations confirm the predictions made by Berger and Calabrese,

making the examination of uncertainty in a variety of contexts a popular endeavor among interpersonal communication scholars, particularly those scholars examining face-to-face communication and computer mediated communication (CMC) (Craig, Cunningham, Igiel, Ploeger, & Wright, 2007; Donnerstein, Jacobsen, & Mongeau, 2007; Douglas, 1990; Mongeau, Serewicz, & Therrien, 2004).

URT guides the study of get-acquainted conversations by demonstrating the rather low tolerance that most individuals have for ambiguity while conversing with an unfamiliar partner. This theory asserts that when interacting with strangers, people are driven by their desire to reduce their uncertainty about the other person and they use communication as a tool for doing so. In minimizing their uncertainty, people strive for both explanation and prediction of behavior. Prediction fulfills a need to forecast what the other person will do or say during the conversation while explanation refers to the need to understand, or explain, why the other person behaved the way he or she did in the interaction (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). When uncertainty about a conversational partner is not sufficiently reduced the interaction becomes difficult to navigate and, as Berger (1986) notes, "first dates, marriage proposals, and interactions with foreigners are difficult precisely because individuals involved in them are uncertain of what is expected of them and how others will respond to them" (p. 35). If an individual is unable to sufficiently reduce his or her uncertainty through explanation and prediction, then the occurrence of a future interaction is unlikely (Berger & Calabrese, 1975).

URT presents seven axioms, or causal statements, and twenty-one theorems from which predictions can be derived. These seven axioms relate uncertainty to the following: verbal communication, nonverbal affiliative expressiveness, information seeking,

intimacy level, reciprocity rate, similarity, and liking. In addition, the twenty-one theorems offer directional relationships between an individual's uncertainty level and each of the seven axioms. Put quite simply, these axioms and theorems offer ways of conceptualizing uncertainty during get-acquainted conversations.

This theory also proposes that strangers develop relationships in three phases: the entry phase, the personal phase and the exit phase. The initial interaction between strangers marks the entry phase and typically involves an exchange of surface-level information that eventually moves to the sharing of attitudes and opinions. The next stage, known as the personal phase, is less structured and constrained when compared to the entry phase and may consist of revelations that are decreasingly influenced by social norms. During the exit phase interactional partners decide whether they will participate in future interactions or terminate the relationship (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). By reading profiles to obtain surface-level information such as an individual's interests or occupation, social networkers seem to be participating in the entry phase before they ever initiate contact with another individual, thus possibly accelerating the entry phase and allowing them to move quickly to the personal phase of the relational development process.

URT suggests that the success of an initial interaction depends upon an individual's ability to access information about an unfamiliar partner (Berger and Calabrese, 1975). Social network Web sites offer profiles as tools that aid in the uncertainty reduction process, and this prior information is likely to impact the interactions that occur between members of these sites. Therefore, URT provides the

appropriate framework for this study of the influence of social network profiles on initial, face-to-face interactions.

Face-to-Face Environment

Berger and Calabrese (1975) argue that uncertainty reduction is the primary objective sought by individuals in initial interactions. Sunnafrank (1986), however, argues that individuals are more concerned with achieving positive relational outcomes. The positive relational outcomes predicted by interactants include rewards such as pleasant experiences in the relationship and in the future as a result of continued interactions. Uncertainty reduction is still desirable in initial interactions due to its role in increasing the likelihood that positive relational outcomes will be attained, but it is not the primary motivational force driving the interactants. For instance, uncertainty reduction strategies can provide individuals with the tools they need to communicate effectively with their partners and achieve positive outcomes (Sunnafrank, 1986). If uncertainty reduction is the means by which social networkers achieve positive relational outcomes, then the abundance of information available to these individuals may allow for greater success in initial interactions.

Although Sunnafrank (1986) is one of many to address the weaknesses of URT, Berger (1986) both directly acknowledges the truthfulness of one of Sunnafrank's claims and counters that only some uncertainty reduction strategies are attempts to achieve positive outcome values. According to Berger, Sunnafrank is correct in his challenge that predicted outcome values are important in forecasting the success or failure of initial interactions in prompting future encounters. However, if any outcomes are to be predicted, regardless of whether they are positive or negative, than the information-

seeking tactics that characterize uncertainty reduction must be employed. Therefore, uncertainty reduction and the attempted attainment of positive outcome values play equally important roles in the success or failure of a relationship during the initial stages of development (Berger, 1986). This further supports the notion that social networkers are better able to reduce their uncertainty and predict outcome values by viewing profiles prior to engaging in getting-to-know you conversations.

Perhaps the most significant challenge to URT comes from Brashers et al. (2000), who have used their research involving patients with HIV and AIDS to develop a new theory of uncertainty management. Similar to Berger and Calabrese (1975), these researchers agree that uncertainty reduction strategies may result in positive outcomes, but "While uncertainty may be rewarding up to a point, the ability to completely predict another's behavior might lead to boredom. Boredom in an interpersonal relationship might well be a cost rather than a reward" (Berger & Calabrese, 1975, p. 101). Aside from this mention of costs, URT is limited in focus to the benefits of uncertainty reduction, whereas Uncertainty Management Theory accounts for the costs and rewards associated with a reduction in uncertainty. Brashers et al. reported that for those living with HIV or AIDS, information-seeking strategies may result in greater harm when compared to other strategies, such as avoidance, that allow patients to maintain or increase their uncertainty levels. Therefore, Uncertainty Management Theory acknowledges that uncertainty reduction is not always desirable, and that individuals elect to manage their uncertainty based upon the strategies that will result in the least amount of harm (Brashers et al., 2000). In an online context, an individual may desire increased uncertainty about a potential partner who divulges information in Cyberspace

that is inconsistent with his or her self-presentation during their first face-to-face encounter. However, it is probable that a social networker will manage his or her uncertainty using information seeking techniques, which will likely result in a minimal amount of harm and which may lead to the benefit of a relationship.

URT has its flaws, which resulted in the development of Sunnafrank's (1986) Predicted Outcome Value Theory and Brashers et al.'s (2000) Uncertainty Management Theory. Yet, these critiques generated two additional theories of face-to-face communication, meaning that the applicability of URT to electronic interactions remains largely unknown.

Computer Meditated Communication

Until recently, research about get-acquainted conversations has been largely limited to face-to-face interactions between strangers. The implicit premise of "initial interactions" is that individuals know nothing about one another prior to this initial meeting. However, in the real world, frequently, individuals already possess some knowledge of one another–they've been introduced by mutual friends, they've seen each other in social situations, or, in the last couple of years, they've researched one another online or used social network sites to initiate contact. Although the relationships between social networkers may vary from complete strangers to best friends, Gale and Morr Serewicz (2008) report that these relationships affect interactions to a lesser extent than does the context. For instance, social networkers who are interested in pursuing a romantic relationship are likely to find that whether their first date takes place at a restaurant or a bar will have a greater impact on their first date scripts than will their relationship with one another prior to the encounter. Other elements of a first date, such

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as the gender of the individual producing the script or the gender of the individual who initiated the encounter, also influence the first date scripts of the interactants (Gale & Morr Serewicz, 2008). Therefore, those who meet online, like most singles, already possess some information about one another prior to the first interaction/date. However, the way that people initially met (online or face-to-face) does not have a significant effect on the actual interaction. If there are differences between those who meet online and those who meet face-to-face, then they are likely to result from other factors such as the social networker's exposure to a profile prior to the interaction.

Antheunis, Peter, and Valkenburg (2008) tested URT in a study of social attraction online. Their findings indicate that individuals who are engaged in CMC employ uncertainty reduction strategies somewhat differently than do people in face-to-face interactions. In a survey involving 704 members of Hyves, a social networking site in the Netherlands, participants were asked to answer questions about one friendship they had formed on Hyves. Their responses were analyzed to determine the types of uncertainty reduction tactics used to form friendships online and the influences that these strategies, along with perceptions of valence and similarity, have on social attraction. Findings confirm that the passive, active and interactive strategies presented in URT are employed in online interactions, with passive uncertainty reduction strategies being used the most frequently and interactive strategies being the most effective in reducing uncertainty. They also reported that a decrease in uncertainty does not always lead to an increase in social attraction. Rather, social attraction is mediated by the valence of the information obtained using uncertainty reduction strategies (Antheunis et al., 2008; Berger & Calabrese, 1975). In an online context, a passive strategy, such as viewing a

profile, combined with an interactive strategy like interacting with a potential partner during the first face-to-face encounter may result in less uncertainty and, if perceptions of the other are positive, greater levels of attraction.

In a similar study, Antheunis, Peter, Schouten, and Valkenburg (2009) once again achieved limited success in using the uncertainty reduction strategies presented by Berger and Calabrese (1975) to explain interpersonal attraction online. In an experiment involving 81 cross-sex dyads, three groups of unacquainted participants were instructed to participate in either 12 or 24- minute interactions. Participants in the first group partook in face-to-face conversations while those in the second group engaged in text-only CMC using Instant Messaging (IM) software. Participants in the third group experienced the same conditions as those in the second with one minor exception; these interactants were shown pictures of their partners in the lower corners of their IM screens. Contrary to the predictions of URT, those who engaged in CMC admitted to liking each other more than those who participated in the face-to-face interactions. Furthermore, although those who engaged in CMC asked more questions of one another and shared more in-depth information when compared to the face-to-face interactional partners, the amounts of self-disclosure and reciprocity were consistent among the three experimental groups. Therefore, although social networkers may ask more questions, they disclose at the same rate as those in face-to-face encounters (Antheunis et al., 2009). This study suggests that social networkers may experience increased levels of attraction to those whom they have never met before due to the information conveyed in their profiles, which allows for less questioning and more in-depth self-disclosure during initial encounters.

Cody, Pratt, Wendt, and Wiseman (1999) can attest to the differences between interrogatory uncertainty reduction strategies in face-to-face and online interactions, although their findings indicate that some elements of URT still hold true in Cyberspace. These researchers examined the information-seeking strategies presented in URT by conducting a content analysis of the messages exchanged between intergenerational e-pals, or Internet pen pals. In this study, school-aged participants were paired with senior citizens to create 109 dyads that interacted for five to six months. The researchers hypothesized that interactants would ask the most questions in stage one (messages one through five) and that they would engage in the most polite interrogatory strategies during this stage, with both of these hypotheses confirmed. They also hypothesized that the responsiveness of an interactional partner to questioning would be related to the persistent use of interrogatory strategies, although results indicated no relationship between these two variables. In addition, the researchers predicted that e-pals would ask fewer questions as they exchanged more messages when, in fact, the opposite was true; e-pals asked more questions as they exchanged more messages. Their finding contradicts URT and demonstrates the limited applicability of the theory to CMC. In regard to temporal effects, the researchers reported that questions relating to attitudes, opinions and preferences were first introduced in stage one, thus violating another claim made by URT (Cody et al., 1999). Though these questions may be more in-depth than would be expected in an initial interaction, they are not too personal for presentation in an online profile, and the inclusion of this information in a profile may influence the interrogatory strategies used in face-to-face situations.

While some may be quick to point to the differences between Internet users and "regular" people in attempting to explain why a host of researchers have experienced difficulty in using URT to explain CMC, this is actually not the case. In fact, it has become so common to use the Internet for socialization purposes that the individuals who do so tend to be representative of the general population (Peter & Valkenburg, 2007). Researchers Emmers-Sommer and Pauley (2007) found URT to be an accurate predictor of communicative behavior in Cyberspace. Using URT and media richness theory as their theoretical frameworks, these researchers explored the differences between individuals involved in online romantic relationships (primary relationships) and those involved in face-to-face romantic relationships in addition to online romantic relationships (secondary relationships). They recruited 36 participants engaged in romantic relationships online with individuals whom they had never met face-to-face and asked them to complete 44-item Web-based questionnaires. They analyzed data and made comparisons based upon an individual's involvement in a primary or secondary online relationship and his or her preference for asynchronous text (a.k.a. e-mail), synchronous text (a.k.a. instant messaging), or rich media (a.k.a. video chat). Similar to the findings of Antheunis et al. (2008), they discovered that those who engage in romantic relationships online prefer interactive communication strategies involving direct contact with a relational partner. Their findings also indicate that individuals who anticipate a high likelihood of future interaction with a relational partner will also experience less uncertainty about that person, and vice versa (Emmers-Sommer and Pauley, 2007). Therefore, the level of uncertainty experienced by a social networker may be influenced by his or her expectation of seeing an interactional partner again, regardless of the

individual's exposure to his or her partner's profile prior to the initial face-to-face interaction.

Tamborini and Westerman (2008) also found similarities between the uncertainty reduction strategies employed in online and face-to-face interactions, although these researchers used social information processing theory to explore initial interactions rather than those between romantic partners. Thirty previously unacquainted cross-sex dyads were assigned to either a face-to-face or CMC condition, with those in the former participating in "traditional" interactions and those in the latter being asked to communicate via instant messenger. Participants were asked to identify their uncertainty levels before, during and after their 15-minute interactions, while coders were responsible for measuring the occurrences of uncertainty reduction strategies during these conversations. It was reported that, prior to the initial interactions, those in the CMC condition experienced higher levels of uncertainty about their partners when compared to those in the face-to-face condition. Furthermore, uncertainty reduction strategies were used the most frequently during the first three minutes of conversation in both conditions, although participants in the CMC condition decreased their usage of these strategies at a slower rate. Yet most importantly, despite these differences the uncertainty reduction patterns identified in the face-to-face and online interactions were the same. This similarity led Tamborini and Westerman (2008) to speculate that the differences in uncertainty experienced by those engaged in face-to-face and online interactions are the result of initial uncertainty levels rather than the lack of nonverbal cues available in Cyberspace. However, further research is needed to determine what would happen if those in the CMC condition were given profiles to examine prior to their interactions, as

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would have been done if they were users of popular social network sites such as Match.com, Facebook.com, Myspace.com, or eHarmony.com.

Ramirez and Wang (2008) used expectancy violation theory to investigate the transition from CMC to face-to-face communication. Their findings show that the timing of a modality switch affects an individual's uncertainty about an interactional partner as well as his or her perceptions of a partner's unexpected behavior as either positive or negative. To arrive at this conclusion, Ramirez and Wang assigned 172 pairs of strangers to a short-term or long-term association condition, with the former requiring dyads to interact via a computer conferencing system for three weeks and the latter requiring the same interaction over a six week time span. Of these pairs, half of those in both the short-term and long-term conditions were also assigned to modality switching conditions, meaning that they would interact via computer conferencing systems for their respective amounts of time before participating in one face-to-face interaction. Upon the completion of their interactions, participants in all conditions were asked to evaluate their partner's behavior and physical attractiveness, the expectedness of their partner's behavior and physical attractiveness, the importance of the interaction and the impact of the interaction on their uncertainty. Those assigned to the short-term modality-switching condition experienced reductions in uncertainty and identified the information that they received from their partners as positive expectancy violations when compared to those who only engaged in CMC. On the contrary, those assigned to the long-term modality switching condition experienced heighted uncertainty levels and identified the information that they received from their partners as negative expectancy violations when compared to the CMC-only condition. Participants who switched from CMC to face-to-face

communication, as well as those in the long-term CMC-only condition, also identified their interactions as being more important when compared to those in the short-term CMC-only condition. The researchers attributed these differences to the tendencies that participants may have had to form impressions while engaging in CMC, with those in the short-term condition being given little time to develop impressions about their partners before switching modalities (Ramirez & Wang, 2008). Therefore, a social networker's access to a conversational partner's profile prior to the first face-to-face interaction may decrease his or her uncertainty and increase the likelihood that the partner's unexpected behavior will be interpreted positively, assuming that these individuals have not engaged in CMC for a long period of time before this modality switch.

Though the aforementioned studies merely suggest that profiles reduce the uncertainty of social networkers and stimulate the acquaintance process, McKenna (2008) confirms these notions in a discussion of the differences between online dating and face-to-face encounters. Online dating services provide users with options that are not available in other mediums, not the least of which is the option of getting to know someone through his or her profile prior to initiating contact with that person. As McKenna notes:

> By following online group discussions or by reading through someone's personal blog prior to interacting, a reader can initiate a discussion with a new online acquaintance already armed with a great deal of knowledge about that person's opinions, values, background, and behavior. It is rare, indeed, to be privy to this depth of information prior to making the acquaintance of another through traditional means and venues. (p. 236)

Although online daters obtain this information through profiles, as opposed to personal

blogs or group discussions, this demonstrates the unique nature of relationships that are

initiated in Cyberspace. Yet despite this acknowledgement of the importance of profiles

in reducing uncertainty and identifying similarities, McKenna also goes on to say that

physical attractiveness has the greatest influence on whether or not an online dater

initiates contact with another single, followed by the individual's self-presentation in his

or her profile. In the online dating community this researcher measures physical

attractiveness by examining the photograph or series of photographs that an individual

elects to post in his or her profile. The importance of this assessment of physical

attractiveness may also be credited to an online dater's desire to reduce his or her

uncertainty about a potential partner, with profile pictures combining with textual

elements to provide a wealth of information about another person. It seems that members

of other social network sites will also be interested in photographs for similar reasons;

even if they are interested in establishing platonic relationships.

There are some contradictions in URT driven research, especially in an online

context. While some researchers argue that the theory can be used to explain CMC,

others insist that it can only be applied to face-to-face interactions. Yet despite their

inconsistent findings, the aforementioned studies are all similar in their failure to account

for the influence of social network profiles on initial interactions. It seems likely that

profiles affect getting-to-know-you conversations, but the extent to which this

information impacts strangers' perceptions remains unknown. Perhaps an examination of

social network profiles as uncertainty reduction tools will provide support for URT in

Cyberspace.

Initial Interaction Behaviors and Influences

URT presents seven axioms that are useful in predicting the impact that an

individual's uncertainty level will have on his or her interaction with a stranger.

Specifically, these seven indicators of an individual's uncertainty level are likely to

influence his or her communicative behavior during a getting-to-know-you conversation

(Berger & Calabrese, 1975). The behaviors associated with these seven indicators can be

used to assess if a social network profile decreases an individual's uncertainty about a

partner and alters the scripts that are traditionally associated with an initial, face-to-face

interaction.

Information-Seeking Strategies

When getting to know one another, interactants tend to communicate in

predictable manners that may vary slightly from conversation to conversation

(Kellermann & Lim, 1989). In a study of the ways that strangers become acquainted in

social situations, Svennevig (2000) made use of this predictability by developing a model

of a self-presentational sequence that interactional partners use to begin a conversation.

The sequence consists of three phases, with the third requiring one of three possible

responses that is dictated by the occurrences in the second phase. The first portion of the

sequence is marked by a presentation-eliciting question designed to obtain public

information that is either biographical or relating to an interactional partner's

membership in a cultural group. By seeking information in regards to the latter, the

initiating individual can use his or her knowledge of the cultural group to make

assumptions about the other person, thereby reducing his or her uncertainty. The second

phase consists of self-presentation, meaning that one individual provides information

about him or herself in the form of an extended response to a question while also making a topical bid by offering a subject for further discussion. In the event that neither interactional partner is willing to elaborate, the question-asking will continue until one person opts for an extended response rather than a minimal response. In the final phase, the initiating individual, or the person who asked the question that lead to the other person's self-presentation, will respond to the self-presentation with an acknowledgement token, a continuation elicitor, or a self-oriented comment. By reacting with an acknowledgement token the initiator recognizes what the other person has said but fails to accept his or her topical bid, therefore resulting in a change in subject or the asking of a new question. On the other hand, a continuation elicitor indicates the acceptance of a topical bid by encouraging the self-presenter to elaborate further, while a self-oriented comment can also be used to signify interest in a topic by allowing the initiator to relate what the self-presenter said to him or herself (Svennevig, 2000). While two previously unacquainted individuals likely will follow this self-presentational sequence, their exposure to profiles prior to the interaction may result in little need to discuss biographical information and group membership during the first phase, resulting in deviation from the assumed interactional sequence.

Similarly, Davis (1973) has also identified the steps that two previously unacquainted individuals take when they are introduced by a third party, such as a social network Web site, as part of an initial encounter. He predicts that these interactants will begin by determining if the other person possesses the qualifying characteristics that he or she typically looks for in a partner and, if so, if the other individual is cleared for a relationship. One of these singles will proceed by opening a conversation in an attempt to

gain the other person's attention, thus leading to a high volume of questioning on behalf of both individuals as they attempt to find an integrating topic that will sustain the interaction. By this point, each individual should have presented a come-on self, the aspects of his or her personality that the other person is most likely to find attractive, thus increasing the likelihood that these individuals will end the interaction by scheduling a second encounter. Prior information eases this acquaintanceship process and is typically provided by the individual who introduced the interactants. However, when using a social network site these interactants obtain this information directly from the person whom they are interested in, therefore reducing the likelihood that their uncertainty will be heightened by inconsistent information presented during the initial encounter. Although Bredow, Cate, and Huston (2008) recently updated Davis' model, the importance of similarity and uncertainty reduction is still identified as being critical to the success of a getting-to-know-you conversation.

These researchers demonstrate that information-seeking strategies and perceived similarities are critical components of the acquaintance process. As an information-seeking strategy, question-asking occurs frequently at the onset of a conversation between strangers and is used to initiate topical talk. Rubin (1979) conducted a study involving previously unacquainted participants in ambiguous situations and found that participants began by asking for demographic information and, as these questions subsided, they were replaced with attempts at uncovering the other person's attitudes and opinions. Oftentimes, these opening questions also lead to categorization sequences or category-activity sequences, with the former involving questions that are used to reveal an interactional partner's membership in various groups and the latter containing

questions about an interactional partner's membership in a specific group(s). An individual's decision to use either of these two sequences can be viewed as an attempt at uncertainty reduction, along with his or her need for affiliation during an initial interaction (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984; Svennevig, 2000). Affiliation is the uncovering of similarities between conversational partners and, as Maynard and Zimmerman note, "While we cannot develop the complete argument in this paper, we do suggest that topical talk may be increasingly self-revealing after such displays of similarity and intimacy" (p. 313). Therefore, when two individuals discover that they share certain things in common, they become affiliated and may disclose more, leading to an increasingly intimate relationship (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984). Those who are introduced in Cyberspace are provided with profiles that are likely to facilitate the categorization and question-asking sequences by displaying a potential partner's demographic information and group memberships. Furthermore, these profiles may aid in affiliation by presenting interactants with similarities that may have gone undiscovered during the course of a "traditional" acquaintance conversation, with these similarities potentially resulting in increased feelings of intimacy.

Douglas (1990) also conducted a study of the uncertainty levels experienced and the information-seeking strategies employed by strangers in initial interactions. In conducting this investigation, Douglas assigned 78 same-sex dyads to one of three experimental conditions requiring them to participate in two-minute, four-minute, or six-minute face-to-face conversations. After engaging in these conversations, each participant was asked to complete a questionnaire that measured self, partner and global uncertainty as well as the individual's social attraction towards his or her partner.

Findings were consistent with URT in that participants initially asked lots of questions (during minutes one and two of each interaction), yet they disclosed the most during the latter portions of their respective conversations. The positive relationship between uncertainty and social attraction was also confirmed, contrary to Uncertainty Management Theory's suggestion that unpredictability may actually increase liking during initial interactions (Brashers et al., 2000; Douglas, 1990). However, whereas URT treats self-disclosure, an information-provision strategy, as a way of acquiring information, this study concludes that information-provision strategies actually increase as uncertainty levels decrease.

URT posits that the attainment of information is essential if an individual is to sufficiently reduce his or her uncertainty about a stranger. However, the information-seeking strategies employed by an individual who was exposed to his or her partner's social network profile prior to the initial interaction are likely to differ from those used by an individual who did not have access to an abundance of information beforehand.

Nonverbal Affiliative Expressiveness

The level of comfort that an individual experiences during an interaction can be assessed through the observation of his or her nonverbal affiliative expressiveness, such as the number of statements he or she utters or the number of times the individual nods during the conversation (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Specific behaviors, such as pausing, may also be indicative of how satisfied he or she is with the encounter. Christenfeld (1995) suggested in a study of listeners' impressions of speakers who use the vocalized filler "um" that individuals who silently pause are perceived as being more anxious than those who fill the silence with "um" or those who avoid filled and silent pauses

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altogether. In a similar examination of listeners' perceptions of interactants who pause and/or say "um," Fox Tree (2002) found that participants who prefaced a three-second pause with "um" and those who paused for four-seconds were viewed as being more uncomfortable, less honest, and less capable of articulating their thoughts than those who paused briefly (1-second or less), those who uttered "um" before pausing briefly, and those who did not pause at all. Hence, initial interactants who are comfortable with one another are expected to engage in pausing that is infrequent and short in duration.

Smiling may also be indicative of an individual's level of comfort during an interaction. For instance, Floyd and Ray (2006) found that an individual communicates his or her liking for a partner by smiling, with it being unlikely that said individual will express liking for a partner with whom he or she is uncomfortable. Furthermore, Guéguen (2008) claims that smiling females are more attractive to males and more likely to be approached by potential suitors when compared to nonsmiling females, while Kappas, Krumhuber, and Manstead (2007) argue that, regardless of gender, individuals who smile for long onsets are perceived as being more attractive, flirtatious, trustworthy, and authentic while also being seen as less dominant than those who smile for short onset durations. It seems that few males will approach a female if they feel uncomfortable, and that interactants will feel more comfortable around an attractive, trustworthy person. Although it is possible that simply to be polite interactants will employ "fake" smiles while conversing with a stranger, individuals can assess a partner's emotional state and distinguish an enjoyment smile from a non-enjoyment smile, thus making it unlikely that they will feel as comfortable with a partner who fails to display genuine smiles (Johnston & Miles, 2007). It is expected that interactants will express comfort with a partner by

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producing genuine smiles, and perhaps partners will feel more relaxed in the company of a smiling individual.

Nonverbal affiliative expressiveness can be used to gauge an individual's uncertainty and comfort levels during an initial interaction. Specifically, pauses and smiles can be indicative of an individual's feelings toward a stranger, making these nonverbal behaviors important in the identification of differences between strangers who are exposed to social network profiles before meeting one another and those who are not offered access to this information.

Self-Disclosure

Altman and Taylor's (1973) Social Penetration Theory can be used to examine initial encounters, although these researchers are quick to point out that conversations between acquaintances are oftentimes unpredictable and seldom proceed in the same manner. The social penetration process is introduced to characterize an interaction by its level of intimacy rather than its position in relation to other concrete steps in the acquaintanceship process. Three levels of intimacy, ranging from the most public to the most private, are used to describe the accessibility of an individual's personality: the public-accessible level, the semi-private level, and the personal level. During the orientation stage of the social penetration process interaction is at the public-accessible level and is heavily influenced by societal norms. Exploratory affective exchange is also characterized by interaction at the public-accessible level, although these conversations are much more fluid and relaxed than those that occur during the orientation stage. The next stage, known as affective exchange, consists of in-depth interaction beyond the public-accessible level and is oftentimes associated with close friendships or romantic

relationships. Stable exchange is the final stage in the process and is marked by equal amounts of openness in the public-accessible and semi-private levels of intimacy, therefore demonstrating the in-depth nature of a relationship (Altman & Taylor, 1973). A social network profile seems to reflect intimacy at the public-accessible level, thus suggesting that exploratory effective exchange may occur during the first face-to-face encounter.

The three levels of intimacy presented in Social Penetration Theory are characterized by the depth and breadth of the information that an individual chooses to self-disclose during the initial interaction (Altman & Taylor, 1973). The information presented in a social network profile may be more in-depth than that which would be obtained during the course of a typical get-acquainted conversation, making the examination of self-disclosures an important aspect of this study.

Verbal Intimacy

Strangers engage in self-disclosure in order to become acquainted and reach the various levels of verbal intimacy described by Altman and Taylor. According to Andersen and Wang (2005), "FtF [face-to-face] self-disclosure is defined as the encoding of verbal messages that reveal to other(s) private, intimate, and/or risky personal information, experiences, thoughts, feelings, and emotions without the use of mediated channels" (p. 4). Barbato, Graham, and Perse (1993) found that individual's varied the number topics discussed (breadth) and the intimacy of their disclosures (depth) in order to obtain specific gratifications in addition to getting to know one another and forming relationships (Altman & Taylor, 1973). For example, those who desired pleasure and affection discussed many different topics at low levels of intimacy, while those who

wanted to control their partners discussed fewer topics at higher levels of intimacy

(Barbato et al., 1993). Ellison, Gibbs, and Heino (2006) surveyed Match.com members

and found that online daters who hoped to develop long-term face-to-face relationships

with their potential partners disclosed greater amounts of personal information that was

more honest and intentional than that of the online daters who only desired short-term

and/or casual relationships. Hence, the relational outcomes desired by online daters and

perhaps users of other types of social network sites are likely to be reflected by their self-

disclosures. In addition, Andersen, and Wang (2005) discovered that individuals

disclosed more during face-to-face encounters with their friends than they did while

engaged in CMC, regardless of whether they had met online or through "traditional,"

face-to-face means. It seems likely that these friends had different motives for engaging

in face-to-face disclosures that led to these increased amounts of revelations. For

instance, they may have disclosed online in order to maintain their relationships while

saving the majority of their intimate disclosures for encounters that allowed for both

verbal and nonverbal support. As a result of being exposed to a potential partner's profile

prior to meeting him or her, a social networker may have different motives that influence

his or her disclosures during this initial face-to-face encounter.

Harvey, Hatfield, Schwartz, and Sprecher (2008) took a unique approach to verbal

intimacy and the exploration of relationship initiation online by combining Schwartz's

first-hand experience as an advisor at Perfectmatch.com with research regarding Internet

matchmaking services. The end result of their efforts is an application of Levinger's

model of pair relatedness to the online dating process, from the viewing of profiles to the

first face-to-face encounter. Contrary to what may be expected of individuals who are

exposed to profiles, these researchers claim that online contact begins with superficial exchanges that become more intimate as the relationship progresses (Harvey et al., 2008). This raises the question why this attempt at uncertainty reduction is still necessary when superficial information is provided in an individual's profile. This claim also suggests that previously unacquainted social networkers will share superficial information during the initial interaction, despite their exposure to their partner's profile beforehand.

It is important to note that an individual's verbal intimacy and the personal information that he or she chooses to reveal or conceal is largely dependent upon his or her relationship with an interactional partner. In a study conducted by Derlega, Mathews and Morrow (2006), participants considered a self-disclosure to be verbally intimate if it belonged to one of the following categories: self-concept/self-image, romantic relationships, sex, physiological problems, abuse/assault, death/illness, family relationships, moral issues/illegal activities, unplanned pregnancy, friendships, or miscellaneous. Furthermore, an individual's disclosures were more likely to be considered intimate if they consisted of negatively valenced information. It was also more common for an individual to disclose highly personal information to same-sex friends and/or a dating partner rather than his or her mother or father (Derlega et al., 2006). In fact, the relationship between two conversational partners (or lack thereof) had more of an impact on the disclosures that took place than did the gender of the interactants (Derlega et al., 2006; Dindia, Fitzpatrick, & Kenny, 1997; Kendrick & Rosenfeld, 1984).

Self-disclosures may be used to increase the verbal intimacy experienced by two initial interactants while simultaneously decreasing their uncertainty about one another.

Therefore, verbal intimacy must be assessed in order to determine whether the information that two strangers disclose in their social network profiles has an impact on their self-disclosures during the initial, face-to-face interaction.

Amount of Communication

According to Berger and Calabrese (1975), as strangers reduce their uncertainty about one another they increase the amount that they communicate. For those who meet online, the majority of this communication takes place in a face-to-face context (Carr & Whitty, 2006). For instance, despite having met in Cyberspace, online daters typically attempt to embark upon their first face-to-face encounter as quickly as possible, therefore resulting in little CMC to aid in the acquaintance process. In fact, 65% of participants in a study conducted by Whitty admitted that within one week of meeting another single using an online dating service, they had also arranged and participated in a face-to-face encounter with the single (Carr & Whitty, 2006). Like an individual who has never experimented with a social network Web site, the interactional behaviors employed by a social networker over the course of an initial interaction are also designed to form a relationship with a potential partner (Sillars, 1991). Thus, although social networkers may meet one another online, they tend to develop their relationship by increasing the amount that they communicate in an offline, face-to-face context.

The greatest amount of communication between online daters are more likely to occur in offline contexts, suggesting that the frequency of contact between these individuals may only differ slightly when compared to those who meet through "traditional," face-to-face means. However, online daters/interactants are likely to engage in greater amounts of communication than their "traditional" counterparts in offline

contexts due to their exposure to social network profiles and the subsequent reductions in uncertainty that are expected to occur as a result (Berger & Calabrese, 1975).

Similarity

The Bogus Stranger experiment (Byrne, 1971) demonstrates the relationship between uncertainty reduction and liking as well as the influence of similarity on judgments of attractiveness. Initially, Byrne (1971) assigned 34 college students to one of two experimental groups: a similar attitude group and a dissimilar attitude group. The researcher then asked each individual participant to complete a 26-item Attitude Scale. The responses generated by the students were used to create surveys on behalf of "Bogus Strangers" whom the study participants believed were real strangers with attitudes similar or dissimilar to their own. These bogus surveys were matched with participants, who were asked to rate how much they liked or disliked their assigned "Bogus Stranger" and whether they would like or dislike working with the fictitious individual using a six-point Interpersonal Judgment Scale. Subsequent studies similar to Byrne's original study were conducted to correct problems and verify findings. Experimental results consistent among these studies indicate that individuals are attracted to those with attitudes similar to their own, perhaps because they are less uncertain about those who are like themselves (Byrne, 1971). Hence, if a social networker is provided with the profile of another individual with attitudes similar to his or her own, the networker may experience a heightened level of attraction prior to engaging in face-to-face contact with the other person.

Similar to Berger and Calabrese (1975), skeptical researchers challenge Byrne (1971) by claiming that the artificiality of the Bogus Stranger experiment created a

flawed paradigm. In identifying the strengths and weaknesses of Byrne's study, two such researchers noted:

> In real life one does not get attitudinal information on sheets of paper from
>
> strangers, except in job interviews; in normal discourse one has to detect such
>
> information for oneself or process it when it is freely offered and interpret it in the
>
> course of everyday communication. (Barnes and Duck, 1992, p. 200)

Hence, while Barnes and Duck (1992) agree that there is a relationship between similarity and attraction, they also believe that this correlation is more complex than indicated by Byrne's Bogus Stranger findings. Specifically, Barnes and Duck speculate that similarity is an indicator of shared meaning and that individuals who are similar tend to be attracted to one another because they assign similar meaning to day-to-day events and because these meaning systems are reinforced when they are shared by others. However, it is up to the individuals engaging in an interaction to discover any similarities that may exist, resulting in the potential for some shared meaning to go undiscovered (Duck & Montgomery, 1991). Yet in their critique of the Bogus Stranger experiment, Barnes and Duck failed to anticipate social network Web sites and the "social resumes" that would someday be available to potential partners in the form of online profiles. Although these researchers may be correct in asserting that similarity is simply an indicator of shared meaning, the changes brought by CMC prevent one from discrediting the Bogus Stranger paradigm too quickly on the basis of artificiality when, in fact, social networkers are presented with pages of attitudinal information about other individuals.

The aforementioned studies suggest that exposure to a partner's social network profile will decrease an individual's uncertainty, as evidenced by seven indicators. This

decrease, in turn, will influence the individual's communicative behavior during the initial interaction. However, unlike the uncertainty reduction strategies that an individual typically employs during a get-acquainted conversation, he or she can experience a reduction in uncertainty *prior* to the interaction by reading a partner's social network profile. Thus, it seems likely that social network profiles accelerate the acquaintance process and alter the verbal and nonverbal behaviors of initial interactants.

Initial Interaction Outcomes

An individual's uncertainty level is likely to influence the outcomes of his or her conversation with a stranger. If the seven axioms presented in URT are accurate predictors of the relationships between an individual's uncertainty level and his or her verbal and nonverbal behaviors, it can be expected that an individual's responses to uncertainty will impact his or her conversation and subsequent judgment of the interaction and his or her partner (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Yet an individual who is able to sufficiently reduce his or her uncertainty about a partner by reading the other person's social network profile may experience different outcomes as a result of this prior information and its influence on his or her communicative behavior.

Satisfaction with Conversation

Tidwell and Walther (2002) aimed to compare the uncertainty reduction strategies used by online and face-to-face interactants as well as the judgments that participants in both groups made of their conversational partners. In doing so, they paired social information processing theory with URT to examine impression formation in Cyberspace. The cross-sex dyads needed for this study were comprised of 158 previously unacquainted individuals who were assigned to either a face-to-face or CMC condition,

with those in the latter group being required to communicate via e-mail. Participants were asked to interact for 15 to 60 minutes, although actual conversation times varied and were not consistent among dyads. Afterwards, participants were required to complete questionnaires measuring their communicative behaviors during the interactions as well as their impressions of their partners.

Tidwell and Walther's (2002) conversations were coded and analyzed along with the survey data to arrive at several conclusions that demonstrate the applicability of URT to CMC. For instance, online interactants employed more of the questions and self-disclosures that Berger and Calabrese (1975) claim are critical components of uncertainty reduction. However, participants in both groups tended to use similar uncertainty reduction cues. Tidwell and Walther (2002) reported that CMC partners shared more intimate self-disclosures and were perceived as being more effective communicators when they engaged in interactive uncertainty reduction strategies, as compared to their face-to-face counterparts. Additionally, although online interactants experience less attributional confidence initially they quickly compensate for this discrepancy and make greater gains in attributional confidence overall (Tidwell & Walther, 2002). Similar to other comparisons of CMC to face-to-face communication, the participants in this study were not given profiles beforehand and were, therefore, denied what appears to be a powerful uncertainty-reducing tool. This further demonstrates the need for a study that replicates initial interactions and examines an individual's satisfaction with a partner whom he or she was familiar with prior to the encounter.

Although researchers have reported consistencies among first date encounters, it is the satisfaction that results from these conversational behaviors that is of the utmost

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importance in determining whether or not a future interaction will occur. The widely used instrument in the field of health communication for assessing provider-patient interactions, the Roter Interaction Analysis System (RIAS), may also be a useful tool for measuring satisfaction among initial interactants due to its assignment of utterances to nine different categories of talk. These categories include: close-ended questions, open-ended questions, biomedical information, psychosocial exchange, social/personal talk, positive talk, negative talk, facilitation and orientation. (Deagle, Desroches, Koehn, Li, & Yum, 2007; Miller & Nelson, 2005). Although this scale must be altered if it is to be used to code utterances during an initial interaction, it still seems worthwhile to use the RIAS as the basis for a coding scheme due to the measure's broad categories that could easily be used to describe talk during getting-to-know-you conversations.

In addition, Mongeau, Serewicz, and Therrien (2004) and Donnerstein, Jacobsen, and Mongeau (2007) were able to identify the factors that contribute to a college student's judgment of a get-acquainted conversation as satisfactory. Mongeau et al. (2004) did this by conducting three studies in order to identify, measure and contextualize the goals that undergraduate students had for first date encounters. The first study required 144 participants to identify the reasons why they went on their most recent first dates. The coding of these responses revealed that uncertainty reduction was the most common goal identified by participants. The second study involved 241 new participants and was used to develop a 52-item survey to measure the previously identified goals. The survey was administered to a fresh group of 218 undergraduates who were asked to read eight scenarios and respond as if they were in different, fictitious situations. It was reported that the goals identified by participants were fairly stable, although they did

differ in certain contexts. For instance, college students were more likely to select friendship as goals when they were presented with a scenario that did not involve alcohol. Based upon the results of these studies, Mongeau et al. speculated that the most successful first dates involve individuals with compatible goals. In a later comparison of the perceptions that undergraduates and single adults had of dating, Donnerstein et al. (2007) were able to identify uncertainty reduction as the most commonly sought after goal among young and old participants alike. If social networkers place the same importance upon uncertainty reduction as a goal during any type of initial encounter, including a first date, then their exposure to profiles beforehand may contribute to the success of their interactions by aiding in the uncertainty reduction process.

Individual's satisfaction with a conversation is largely dependent upon their goals, with uncertainty reduction being the most frequently identified goal among singles (Mongeau, 2007; Mongeau et al., 2004; Donnerstein, 2007). Social network profiles may be used to facilitate the uncertainty reduction process, making the RIAS useful for assessing the impact that these profiles have on conversational satisfaction among previously unacquainted individuals (Deagle et al., 2007; Miller & Nelson, 2005).

Liking

Afifi and Burgoon (2000) merged the assumptions of expectancy violation theory and URT to determine the extent to which expectancy violations influence uncertainty levels and perceptions of attractiveness in initial interactions. As part of this study, 107 participants were required to view three films and complete a series of corresponding questionnaires regarding their uncertainty levels and feelings of attraction towards those whom they viewed on television. The first film introduced participants to either a male or

female character who was shown interacting with a member of the opposite sex in the second film and engaging in positive congruent violations, positive incongruent violations, negative congruent violations, negative incongruent violations or consistent behavior (absent of violations). The interactants maintained this same behavior in the final film, meaning that if one character engaged in a positive congruent violation in the second film then he or she behaved in a consistent manner in the third film. While Afifi and Burgoon (2000) hypothesized that incongruent violations would increase participants' uncertainty levels and congruent violations would decrease uncertainty levels, an incongruent positive violation on the part of a filmed interactant did not serve to increase uncertainty levels. Furthermore, they discovered that the valence of a violation had more to do with a violator's perceived attractiveness than did the impact of the violation on a participant's uncertainty level. For a social networker who is able to acquire information about a potential partner prior to ever interacting with him or her, the socially appropriate behavior by which one typically measures an expectancy violation may be different and could influence the perceived valence of a violation as well as the individual's uncertainty level and liking for a partner.

In a similar study of attraction, Redmond and Vrchota (1997) manipulated the lengths of initial interactions only to find that participants who liked their partners initially tended to experience decreases in attraction as their interactions progressed, whereas those who were not initially attracted tended to experience increases in attraction after getting to know their partners. Because it is possible for attraction levels to decrease over time, the length of an interaction seems to be of less importance when compared to the information-seeking and information-provision strategies employed during that time

(Redmond & Vrchota, 1997). While some uncertainty may be beneficial in certain situations or stages of a relationship, it seems more likely that a successful conversation between two strangers will be characterized by significant reductions in uncertainty followed by increased amounts of information-provision strategies, regardless of the length of the interaction.

According to Berger and Calabrese (1975), there is a negative relationship between an individual's uncertainty level and his or her liking for a stranger. Although certain aspects of an initial interaction may influence an individual's attraction to his or her partner, such as the occurrence of an expectancy violation or the length of the encounter, uncertainty is likely to have the greatest impact (Afifi & Burgoon, 2000; Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Redmond & Vrchota, 1997). Hence, an individual who is exposed to a social network profile prior to an initial interaction is expected to experience an increased level of liking for a stranger when compared to someone who is not exposed to a profile beforehand.

Perceived Similarity

While Byrne (1971) demonstrated the influence that actual similarities have on attraction, perceptions of similarity are just as important to judgments of initial interactions. This notion was supported by Craig, Cunningham, Igiel, Ploeger, and Wright (2007), who explored the relationships between perceived similarity, self-disclosure, and social attraction in a study of relationship development on Facebook.com. In a study involving 283 college-aged facebook.com members, participants were asked to complete online surveys while thinking of the person with whom they interacted the most often on Facebook.com. These responses were subsequently interpreted using structural

equation modeling and regression analysis and used to create a model of relational

development online. The applicability of the Bogus Stranger paradigm to CMC was

demonstrated by the discovery that attitudinal similarity predicted social attraction. URT

was also supported by the confirmation of the second and third hypotheses, which stated

that greater breadth and depth of self-disclosure would be related to a higher level of

social attraction and an increased ability to predict the behavior of a Facebook.com friend

(Craig, Cunningham, Igiel, Ploeger, & Wright, 2007). The importance of perceived

similarity was also demonstrated by Andersen and Marshall (1980), who found that

interactants who perceived their partners as having similar attitudes and values were

likely to experience lower levels of uncertainty and higher levels of feeling good and

safety. Therefore, if social networkers believe that they are similar to their partners,

regardless of whether or not their perceptions are accurate, they may experience lower

levels of uncertainty and higher amounts of self-disclosure during their interactions.

Yet the importance of perceived similarities to social networkers is perhaps best

demonstrated by Carr and Whitty (2006) in their analysis of Whitty's research involving

60 members of an Australian Internet dating site. When asked what they were looking for

in a partner, the subjects of this study most frequently responded with "physical

attractiveness" followed by "similar interests/values." Furthermore, these researchers

summarized the information provided by one participant, known as Lisa, by noting that,

"Like many other participants, Lisa tells us that being equipped with a fair amount of

knowledge about the person saves time. Unlike meeting someone in a pub for the first

time, individuals do not have to spend time on the preliminaries" (Carr & Whitty, 2006,

p. 136). Rather, an online dater is similar to users of other social network Web sites in

that he or she is equipped with some information about a potential partner prior to the initial interaction. This leads to a reduction in uncertainty while also allowing the individual to judge how similar he or she is to a potential partner.

Perceived similarity is important in that it lowers an individual's uncertainty and increases his or her attraction to a stranger (Andersen & Marshall, 1980; Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Craig et al., 2007). For the user of a social network Web site, similarities and dissimilarities may be identified more quickly as a result of viewing a stranger's profile. Therefore, it seems likely that an individual who is exposed to a social network profile will experience a reduction in uncertainty, and his or her perceived similarity to a partner will also play a role in the level of attraction that is experienced.

The previously referenced studies seem to suggest that, as an individual's uncertainty decreases, his or her likelihood of experiencing or exhibiting positive interaction outcomes increases. These positive outcomes may include higher levels of satisfaction with a conversation, increased liking for a partner, or higher levels of perceived similarity to a partner. If these positive outcomes can be attributed to a social network profile and its influence on an individual's uncertainty about a partner, then we will be one step closer to understanding why so many people are opting for relationship initiation in Cyberspace.

<center>Summary</center>

URT and previous research regarding initial interaction behaviors, influences, and outcomes indicate that knowing more about a conversational partner has a positive impact on initial, face-to-face interactions. Furthermore, it appears that an individual can acquire this information by reading his or her partner's social network profile prior to the

interaction. It is now possible to predict the relationships between these variables. The hypotheses are presented in three sets: the first set of hypotheses focus on how access to social network profiles influences participants' initial perceptions of their partner; the second set of hypotheses focus on how access to social network profiles influences conversational behaviors; and the third set of hypotheses focus on how access to social network profiles influences participants' perceptions of the conversation.

Hypotheses

Initial Perceptions Hypotheses

H1: Individuals who read their conversational partner's social network profile prior to interacting will experience a lower level of uncertainty than individuals who do not read their partner's profile beforehand.

H2: Individuals who read their conversational partner's social network profile will experience a higher level of attraction prior to meeting their partner than individuals who do not read their partner's profile beforehand.

Conversational Behaviors Hypotheses

H3: Individuals who read their conversational partner's social network profile prior to interacting will employ a lower amount of information-seeking strategies than individuals who do not read their partner's profile beforehand.

H4: Individuals who read their conversational partner's social network profile prior to interacting will engage in a greater amount of nonverbal affiliative expressiveness than individuals who do not read their partner's profile beforehand.

H5:   Individuals who read their conversational partner's social network profile prior to interacting will display a higher level of verbally intimate behavior than individuals who do not read their partner's profile beforehand.

H6:   Individuals who read their conversational partner's social network profile prior to interacting will engage in a greater amount of verbally intimate behavior than individuals who do not read their partner's profile beforehand.

H7:   Individuals who read their conversational partner's social network profile prior to interacting will engage in a greater amount of communication than individuals who do not read their partner's profile beforehand.

H8:   Individuals who read their conversational partner's social network profile will experience a higher level of perceived similarity prior to meeting their partner than individuals who do not read their partner's profile beforehand.

H9: Individuals who read their conversational partner's social network profile will experience a higher level of perceived similarity after interacting with their partner than individuals who do not read their partner's profile beforehand.

Conversational Outcomes Hypotheses

H10: Perceived similarity to a partner will increase after engaging in the initial interaction, regardless of whether or not the individuals were exposed to their partner's profile beforehand.

H11: Individuals who read their conversational partner's social network profile prior to interacting will experience a higher level of satisfaction with the conversation than individuals who do not read their partner's profile beforehand.

H12: Individuals who read their conversational partner's social network profile will experience a higher level of attraction after interacting with their partner than individuals who do not read their partner's profile beforehand.

H13: Attraction to a partner will increase after engaging in the initial interaction, regardless of whether or not the individuals were exposed to their partner's profile beforehand.

CHAPTER 3

Method

The data for this study was collected using experimental and survey methods. The pretest-posttest type of experimental design involved the simulation of multiple getting-to-know-you conversations in a controlled environment that, contrary to a natural setting, was less susceptible to outside interferences. This design allowed me to compare the effects of my independent variable on the conversations of those in two separate groups without having to be physically present to observe the interactions and potentially influence what was said. In addition, the survey method allowed me to pretest and posttest my participants immediately before and after their interactions and again three weeks later, regardless of their locations. On the day of the experiment, participants were given privacy to complete their surveys so that they did not feel pressured by their interactional partners, thus encouraging them to answer honestly. For the second round of posttest questions, this method also reduced the risk of participant mortality and increased the likelihood that I would obtain responses several weeks later.

Experiment

Participants

Thirty students were recruited from interpersonal communication courses at a large Southwestern university. These students were appropriate for this study because they were required to create social network profiles as part of an assignment for the course. Thus, they were already prepared to participate in the experiment. Furthermore, these students had some familiarity with interpersonal communication and social

networking, which suggests that they were competent communicators with some understanding of profiles and how they are used in an online context.

Participants consisted of a higher number of females (80%; n=24) than males (20%; n=6). The average age of participants was 21.0 (SD=5.58) with ages ranging from 18 to 48 years. The majority of respondents self-identified as European American (30%; n=9) and Latino American (30%; n=9) followed by Latino American/European American (13.3%; n=4), Other (10%; n=3), African American (6.7%; n=2), Native American (3.3%; n=1), Asian American (3.3%; n=1), and Asian/European American (3.3%; n=1). Of the participants, most were single (53.3%; n=16), while others noted that they were in a relationship (23.3%; n=7), dating (10%; n=3), or engaged (10%; n=3). In addition, 80% (n=24) of the participants either currently were displaying or had previously displayed a profile on a social network Web site.

As an incentive, students were offered 10 to 15 extra credit points in exchange for their participation in this portion of the study. There were more students enrolled in interpersonal communication then there were available spaces in the experiment, so students who were unable to participate or who did not want to participate were provided with an alternative extra credit option. Thus, students were not pressured to participate in this study in exchange for course credit.

Procedure

I recruited participants by visiting six interpersonal communication courses, where I announced the study, distributed a handout, and asked interested students to send me an e-mail with several dates and times that they were available during a one-week span of time. The scripts and handouts for these recruitment sessions are presented in

Appendix A and Appendix B, respectively. I contacted the students within one week to schedule their 35-minute sessions and to request their social network profiles, which they needed to send to me via e-mail prior to the experiment. The template for these social network profiles is presented in Appendix C. The amount of time allotted for each portion of the session were as follows: (1) five minutes to read the index card or profile; (2) ten minutes to complete the pretest; (3) ten minutes to engage in the get-acquainted conversation; and (4) ten minutes to complete the posttest. Two participants were scheduled for each 35-minute block of time.

In preparation for the experiment, I separated the participants by sex and randomly assigned equal numbers of males to the "with profile" or "without profile" condition. There were more females than males, so I randomly paired the remaining participants in same-sex dyads. I examined the pairs and, to increase the likelihood that the individuals in the dyads were strangers, I reassigned participants who were in the same interpersonal communication class. In the end, there were seven dyads (46.7%) in the "with profile" condition and eight dyads (53.3%) in the "without profile" condition.

When they arrived at the Communication and Journalism (C&J) building for their session, participants were asked to check in. Then, they were sent to separate waiting rooms to prevent any interaction prior to the experiment. I visited the waiting rooms to explain, administer, and collect consent forms. In addition, I prevented cross talk by requesting verbal commitments from the participants, meaning that they agreed to refrain from discussing the study with students who had yet to participate. The effectiveness of this technique was demonstrated by Edlund, Sagarin, Skowronski, Johnson, and Kutter (2009), who almost eliminated cross-talk in their experiment when they asked their

participants to verbally commit that they would not to talk about the study. If the dyad was assigned to the "with profile" condition, then undergraduate volunteers assigned to each waiting room were responsible for providing each participant with his or her partner's social networking profile. If the dyad was assigned to the "without profile" condition, then volunteers provided each participant with an index card containing his or her partner's name, job, and favorite things.

After providing each participant with a profile or an index card, the volunteers administered a pretest survey. After completing the pretest, participants were told that they might encounter their conversational partner again during the next stage of the study. Although the experiment did not require subsequent interactions, this warning encouraged participants to take the interaction seriously while preventing them from behaving differently simply because of the "stranger-on-the-train" phenomenon. According to Altman and Taylor (1973), an individual may disclose an atypical amount of in-depth information to a "stranger on a train" due to the likelihood that he or she will never see the stranger again. Then, I arrived to collect the pretest surveys and the social network profiles or index cards.

I lead the participants to the interaction lab, where they were offered refreshments and instructed to make themselves comfortable. Then, I told them that they had 10 minutes to get to know one another in as normal a manner as possible. After that, I left the interaction lab and the audio and video recording of the interaction began. The participants were aware that they were being recorded. After 10 minutes had passed, I re-entered the room to announce the end of the getting-to-know you conversation. Once again, I separated the participants by escorting them back to their original waiting rooms.

In the waiting rooms, the undergraduate volunteers administered a posttest survey. Once the participants had completed the survey, I returned to each waiting room to debrief the interactants. After that, the participants were thanked for their time and told that they could leave.

Transcription, Unitizing, and Coding

The first five minutes of the audio recordings were transcribed in preparation for analysis. I chose to only focus on the first half of each conversation because I was interested in how participants became acquainted with one another, and I did not need to transcribe the full ten minutes to accomplish this goal. Furthermore, I anticipated that I would only need five minutes to observe patterns in conversational behavior. I used a two-step transcription process: step one was verbatim transcription and step two was verification and placement of interruptions. I referred to the interactants using letters instead of names to protect their privacy and prevent gender from affecting the judgment of the coder.

The researcher and an undergraduate research assistant coded the transcripts using four variables: (1) nonverbal affiliative expressiveness; (2) amount of information; (3) information-seeking; and (4) verbal intimacy. The coding of each variable is detailed below.

Nonverbal Affiliative Expressiveness. An undergraduate research assistant conducted the global assessment of each partner's nonverbal affiliative expressiveness. The research assistant participated in two training sessions. During the first training session, she was provided with a handout that contained detailed descriptions and examples of nonverbal affiliative expressiveness in initial interactions. The global

assessment was based on the appearance of comfort, attentiveness, and friendliness and was evaluated by asking the research assistant the degree to which she agreed with the statement, "The participant displayed nonverbal affiliative behaviors." Agreement was measured using a 4-point Likert-type scale that ranged from *1=strongly disagree* to *4=strongly agree*. Then, the research assistant viewed segments of the reality dating show *Holidate* and discussed instances of each of the four levels with the researcher.

When the research assistant appeared proficient in the identification of nonverbally affiliative behavior, she was asked to code 30 segments of *Holidate* alongside the researcher. Each of the segments was 15-seconds in length, making the data equivalent to 10% of the experimental data. When the coding was complete, the researcher calculated Scott's pi to measure intercoder reliability and the proportion of agreement observed between the research assistant and myself. I attained an insufficient level of agreement (.62) during the first session. Thus, it was necessary to retrain the research assistant before coding an additional 10% of the data.

During the second round of training, the coding handout was revisited and the discrepancies in our coding of *Holidate* were discussed before moving to the experimental data. To account for changes in behavior over the course of an interaction, each 5-minute conversation was broken into 15-second segments. This time, the research assistant was asked to code 10% of the experimental data alongside the researcher. Before calculating Scott's pi, the researcher discussed each of the segments with the coder and made changes to the scores when appropriate. This training session yielded a Scott's pi of .95 and demonstrated an acceptable level of intercoder reliability. Thus, the research assistant received permission to code the remainder of the experimental data on

her own. When she had finished, the codes were aggregated for a total measure of nonverbal affiliative expressiveness.

Amount of Information. To assess the amount of information shared, the researcher unitized the conversations into independent thoughts. An independent though unit corresponds to a complete thought; it may be expressed as a simple sentence or an independent clause. The following four decision rules were utilized to code independent thought units: (a) the predicate of an idea unit must be expressed explicitly but the subject may be either implicit or explicit; (b) clauses with multiple subjects will be treated as one idea unit; (c) "if/then" constructions will be treated as one unit; and (d) clauses linked to an independent clause by "since," "so," or "because" will be treated as part of the prior idea unit. Scott's pi was calculated to measure the proportion of agreement observed between a communication professor and myself. A sufficient level of agreement was attained (.89).

The research assistant was provided with transcripts of the first five minutes of each interaction and instructed to assess the amount of information shared by the participants. She did this by counting the occurrences of turns and words per participant and per interaction. Word counts were estimated during indiscernible portions of each conversation. Intercoder reliability was not assessed due to the objective nature of the assignment.

Information-Seeking. The research assistant measured information-seeking by using the transcripts to count the number of questions asked by each participant and the overall number of questions asked per interaction. Questions included interrogative sentences as well as requests for information. For example, "Tell me about yourself" was

considered a question. Once again, intercoder reliability was not assessed because the research assistant was asked to count, as opposed to code, the number of questions.

Verbal Intimacy. During the training session, the research assistant was provided with detailed coding instructions and examples of verbal intimacy. Verbally intimate behavior was defined as the disclosure of potentially sensitive information. She was instructed to identify the self-disclosures within a conversation and assess each participant's self-disclosure(s) using a 4-point Likert-type scale that ranged from "not at all intimate" to "in-depth self-disclosure." Specifically, the levels of disclosure ranged from *1=mutual situational/public information, 2=biographical, 3=attitudes,* and *4=beliefs and values/private information.*

After the training session, the research assistant used the transcripts to code 10% of the experimental data alongside the researcher. Together the research assistant and I identified the self-disclosures within each transcript, which yielded an acceptable Scott's pi of .81. Furthermore, we attained a sufficient Scott's pi of .80 when assessing the depth of the self-disclosures. Then, I coded the remainder of the data. In doing so, I identified and scored instances of verbal intimacy per participant and per interaction.

Instruments

The pretest and posttest (see Table 1) were comprised of several previously validated scales. The pretest also contained questions designed to obtain demographic information from the participants. In addition to the measures listed below, the posttest also contained one question to gauge how well the partners knew one another prior to the experiment and, had they been previously acquainted, the dyad would have been deleted from the study.

Table 1

Pretest and Posttest Measures

Pretest	Posttest
Interpersonal Attraction Scale	Interpersonal Attraction Scale
Revised Self-Disclosure Scale	Perceived Homophily Measure
Perceived Homophily Measure	Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction Inventory
Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24)	

Two of the pretest measures, the PRCA-24 and the Revised Self-Disclosure Scale,

functioned as manipulation checks. The reliability of the scales was assessed using

Cronbach's alpha, and both measures demonstrated acceptable reliability: PRCA-24 .81

and Revised Self-Disclosure Scale .79. The PRCA-24 was used to ensure that the "with

profile" and "without profile" conditions did not differ in terms of interpersonal

communication apprehension. Results of a one-way ANOVA were not significant

$F(1,28)=1.68$, $p=.13$, $\eta^2=.05$. However, the moderate effect size indicated that there was

a meaningful difference in the interpersonal communication apprehension experienced by

those in the "with profile" condition ($M=3.85$, $SD=.64$) and those in the "without profile"

condition ($M=3.44$, $SD=1.00$). The Revised Self-Disclosure Scale was intended to

demonstrate that, outside of the experiment, those in the "with profile" condition did not

have significantly different self-disclosure strategies when compared to those in the

"without profile" condition. Results were not significant $F(1,26)=.00$, $p=.94$, $\eta^2=.00$. The

self-disclosure strategies of those in the "with profile" condition ($M=4.63$, $SD=. 63$) were

not significantly different from the strategies of those in the "without profile" condition (*M*=4.61, *SD*=.43).

Interpersonal Attraction Scale. The 15-item Interpersonal Attraction Scale measures three dimensions of interpersonal attraction using a 7-point Likert-type scale. The three dimensions of Interpersonal Attraction that are measured include Social Attraction, Physical Attraction, and Task Attraction. However, for the purposes of this study only Social Attraction was measured, simply because questions regarding task attraction were inapplicable in a study of getting-to-know-you conversations while questions regarding physical attraction may have caused the participants to feel uncomfortable. The 7-point scale items range from *1=strongly disagree* to *7=strongly agree*. A participant's Social Attraction to a partner is indicated by his or her response to a variety of questions including, "I think he (she) could be a friend of mine" and, "He (she) just wouldn't fit into my circle of friends" (McCroskey & McCain, 1974).

According to McCroskey and McCain (1974), the Interpersonal Attraction Scale is valid and internally reliable. The reported alpha level for the Social Attraction subscale demonstrates the reliability of the measure, with Social Attraction having an alpha of .84. In addition, Graham attested to the construct validity of the measure by recognizing the positive correlation of the Interpersonal Attraction Scale with a number of other scales in the communication discipline (as cited in Palmgreen, Rubin, & Sypher, 1994).

Revised Self-Disclosure Scale. The 31-item Revised Self-Disclosure Scale measures the following five dimensions using a 7-point Likert-type scale: Intended Disclosure, Amount, Positive-Negative, Control of Depth, and Honesty-Accuracy. The 7-point scale items range from *1=strongly disagree* to *7=strongly agree*. Participants are

asked to respond to statements such as, "When I express my personal feelings, I am always aware of what I am doing and saying" and, "I do not often talk about myself" (Wheeless, 1978).

Wheeless (1978) demonstrated the reliability of the scale by reporting the following alpha levels for each of the five dimensions: Intended Disclosure, .85; Amount, .88; Positive-Negative, .91; Control of Depth, .84; and Honesty-Accuracy, .87. These alpha levels are acceptable, thus indicating that the items within each dimension are internally consistent. In addition, the internal validity of the scale was evidenced by the successful confirmations of both content and predictive validity (Wheeless, 1978).

Perceived Homophily Measure. According to Daly, McCroskey, and Richmond (1975), the Perceived Homophily Measure can be used to assess an individual's perceived similarity to a partner. This 8-item questionnaire measures the dimensions of Attitude Similarity and Background Similarity using a 7-item continuum ranging from *1=very strong feeling* and *7=very strong feeling* to *3=fairly weak feeling* and *5=fairly weak feeling*. Participants are asked to circle a number between two extremes as demonstrated by the following examples: "Doesn't think like me" and, "Thinks like me"; and, "Status like mine" and, "Status different from mine" (Daly, McCroskey & Richmond, 1975).

Reported alpha levels demonstrate the reliability of the Perceived Homophily Measure. Elliot (1979) identified an alpha of .71 for the dimension of Background Similarity and .88 for the dimension of Attitude Similarity (as cited in Palmgreen, Rubin, & Sypher, 1994). Furthermore, Daly, McCroskey, and Richmond (1975) confirmed the

internal validity of the measure by conducting a principal component factor analysis and concluding that the dimensions of homophily are indeed independent.

PRCA-24. The PRCA-24 is a 24-item questionnaire developed by McCroskey (1982) that measures the following four dimensions: apprehension when communicating in a Group, apprehension when communicating in a Meeting, apprehension when communicating in a Dyad, and apprehension when delivering a speech in Public. However, only the dimension of Dyadic Apprehension was appropriate for use in this study. This 6-item dimension is measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *1=strongly agree* to *5=strongly disagree*. To measure dyadic apprehension, McCroskey (1982) asked respondents to indicate their agreement with statements such as, "While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous" and, "Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations" (as cited in Palmgreen, Rubin, & Sypher, 1994).

The PRCA-24 is a reliable and valid measure of communication apprehension in a variety of contexts. As Beatty noted, "With its repeatedly high reliability estimates and its well-documented validity, the PRCA-24 is highly recommended as a means of assessing a persons' trait or generalized-context [communication apprehension] CA" (as cited in Palmgreen, Rubin, & Sypher, 1994, p. 293). McCroskey and Beatty (1984) add strength to the recommendation by reporting of an overall alpha of .94.

Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction Inventory. The Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction Inventory is a 19-item, unidimensional questionnaire that measures an individual's satisfaction with a conversation. Participants are asked to indicate their agreement with a variety of statements using a 7-point Likert-type scale

ranging from *1=strongly agree* to *7=strongly disagree*. For instance, participants are asked to respond to statements such as, "The other person genuinely wanted to get to know me" and, "I was very satisfied with the conversation" (Hecht, 1978).

Hecht (1978) demonstrated the reliability of this scale by reporting a handful of alpha levels that corresponded to conversations with different targets, including strangers. When using the Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction Inventory to assess conversations with strangers, he obtained an alpha of .96. This indicates that the scale is appropriate for measuring a participant's satisfaction with an initial interaction. In addition, he was successful in establishing content and construct validity, thus suggesting that the scale is an internally consistent measure of communication satisfaction.

Follow-up Survey

The Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire was used to study the lingering effects of uncertainty while also indicating whether or not the social network profiles were powerful enough to lead to meaningful differences in uncertainty over time. Despite the popularity of uncertainty reduction research, it was necessary to create a new Questionnaire to accomplish the goals of this study. The Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire is unique in that it may be used in conjunction with interaction analysis to quantify the uncertainty experienced by strangers using several of the axioms that are presented in URT.

The development and distribution of the Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire required three phases. Throughout phase one, relational uncertainty was conceptualized and operationalized using an open-ended questionnaire. During phase two, the Questionnaire was validated using Confirmatory Factor Analysis

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(CFA) and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation to establish factorial and construct validity, respectively. Phase three required the completion of the Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire by the partners who participated in the experiment.

Phase One: Conceptualization and Operationalization

Participants. Twenty participants were recruited from an undergraduate communication course at a large Southwestern university. Participants consisted of a higher number of females (60%; n=12) than males (40%; n=8). The average age of the participants was 20.5 (SD=2.7), with ages ranging from 18 to 30 years. The majority of respondents self-identified as European American (55%; n=11) followed closely by Latino American (25%; n=5), Other (10%, n=2) Asian American (5%; n=1), and Pacific Islander (5%; n=1). Although there were only twenty participants, the size of the sample was not important because they saturated the pool of ideas about relational uncertainty. I also anticipated that, as undergraduates, the individuals would be accustomed to participating in a survey study, and hoped that they would be willing to provide thoughtful responses to open-ended questions. In addition, students who are enrolled in communication courses may be interested in the development of an interpersonal communication questionnaire, and this interest may have resulted in a higher rate of participation than would have been obtained if I had recruited students from outside of the department. These students were not offered extra credit in exchange for their participation in this study, which is why it was important for them to be interested in communication and willing to participate without the promise of an "extra" incentive.

Procedure. A 10-item open-ended questionnaire was used to identify the dimensions of relational uncertainty. Participants were instructed to react to these items

as they related to a typical interaction between the respondent and someone whom he or she had never met before. The questions were intended to measure the following: (1) verbal and nonverbal indicators of self, partner, and relationship uncertainty; and (2) verbal and nonverbal behaviors that increase and decrease an individual's uncertainty about a target.

Data Analysis. The open-ended questionnaire was meant to provide the multiple indicators of relational uncertainty that were needed to create the Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire. A constant comparative method was employed to code the responses to the open-ended questionnaire. Similar ideas were grouped together to form categories, and categories were collapsed to encompass all of the indicators within a given dimension. This resulted in the emergence of the following 10 dimensions of relational uncertainty: (1) Perceived Similarity, (2) Future Rewards, (3) Explanation/Prediction, (4) Compliments, (5) Self-Disclosure (Partner), (6) Self-Disclosure (Self), (7) Interest, (8) Information-Seeking, (9) Future Interaction; and (10) Nonverbal Affiliative Expressiveness. Seven of the 10 dimensions are identified in URT, and the other three are indirectly supported by the theory. Of these three, Compliments and Interest may be viewed as indicators of liking, while Future Rewards can determine whether or not a Future Interaction is likely to occur (Berger & Calabrese, 1975).

The initial 36-item Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire consisted of questions that were designed to measure the 10 dimensions of relational uncertainty (see Appendix D). Asking each respondent to recall his or her most conversation with a stranger who could have potentially become a friend provided a context for the interaction. The content validity of the Relational Uncertainty in Initial

Interactions Questionnaire was established by the inclusion of at least three questions designed to measure a given dimension. Two communication experts attested to the face validity of the Questionnaire. Each expert was asked to review the Questionnaire for both content and clarity. They agreed that the dimensions appeared to measure relational uncertainty in initial interactions.

Phase Two: Validation

    Participants. Two hundred participants were recruited from undergraduate communication courses and invited to take part in the second phase of the study. According to Guilford (1954), this kind of sample provides sufficient power for the CFA. These students did not receive extra credit for completing the survey. Participants consisted of a higher number of females (n=118) than males (n=82). The average age of the participants was 20.2 (SD=3.7), with ages ranging from 18 to 49 years. The majority of respondents self-identified as European American (39.5%; *n*=79) followed closely by Latino American (33.5%; *n*=67), Mixed Ethnicity (13.5%; *n*=27), Native American (6%; *n*=12), Asian American (3.5%; *n*=7), African American (2%; *n*=4), Pacific Islander (1%; *n*=2), and Other (.5%; *n*=1).

    Instruments. Participants were asked to respond to the Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire, the Television Affinity Scale (divergent validity), the Relational Distance Index (convergent validity), and the Attributional Confidence Scale. Television Affinity was measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale. Participants were instructed to respond to the three remaining measures using a 7-point Likert type scale while thinking of their most recent interaction with a stranger who could have potentially become a friend. The validity of each of the three scales was established to ensure that

the underlying dimensions and indicators of Television Affinity, Relational Distance, and Attributional Confidence were captured (Clatterbuck, 1979; Hess, 2003; Rubin & Rubin, 1982). The following Cronbach alphas for the three previously validated scales indicated good reliability: Television Affinity was .78, Relational Distance (Avoiding) was .78, Relational Distance (Disengaging) was .83, Relational Distance (Cognitive Dissonance) was .74; and Attributional Confidence was .90.

Procedure. Participants were provided with a context for responding to the Questionnaire items. The instructions read:

> Please think about your most recent interaction with a <u>stranger</u> (someone whom you had never met before.) This stranger should be someone with whom you could have potentially developed a friendship. Then, use this interaction as the basis for answering the following questions.

Participants were provided with different instructions when responding to the Television Affinity scale because the measure was not designed to assess human-human interactions.

Participants were given class time to complete the questionnaire. Their involvement in the study was voluntary, and they were informed that their responses were anonymous and would be kept confidential. The 200 completed questionnaires were immediately transported to my office for safekeeping.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The initial 36-item Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire was submitted to CFA using the AMOS structural equation modeling program. Four criteria were established to aid in the process of identification while also being used to estimate model fit. First, each item needed to have a factor loading of at least .50. Second, the items within a dimension needed to have

adequate reliability as indicated by a Cronbach alpha of at least .60. Third, items needed to have a single path to only one latent variable. Fourth, at least three items needed to remain as indicators of one latent variable (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003).

The following fit indices were used to assess the model fit of the Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire: the chi-square test statistic (χ^2), the ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom (χ^2/df), the comparative fit index (CFI), the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), the incremental fit index (IFI), and the root mean square residual (RMR). The desired χ^2 is p >.05, the expected ratio for χ^2/df is less than or equal to 3.0, the fit standard for the CFI, GFI, and IFI is greater than or equal to .90, and the fit standard for the RMR is less than or equal to .08. The initial model fit indices were as follows: χ^2(549, N=200)=1356.19; p=.00; CFI=.81; GFI=.71; IFI=.81; and RMR=.17. Thus, the data was not a good fit for the initial 36-item Questionnaire.

The final Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire consisted of 13-items (see Appendix E). Five of the original Questionnaire items were deleted because of their low factor loadings. Then, eleven items were removed after examining the modification indices, which were indicative of measurement overlap. The Cronbach alpha for Nonverbal Affiliative Expressiveness was .53, thus demonstrating inadequate reliability and resulting in the deletion of the dimension. To retain content validity, the Future Interaction dimension was deleted because it was left with an insufficient number of indicators. In addition, the Compliments dimension was deleted because it seemed out of place among the remaining dimensions, which were representative of the axioms presented in URT. The Self-Disclosure (Self) and Self-Disclosure (Partner) dimensions

were combined to create one subscale that measured the verbal intimacy axiom introduced in URT.

After eight iterations, four of the six fit indices suggested good model fit. The final model fit indices were as follows: χ^2(59, N=200)=94.87; p=.00; CFI=.97; GFI=.93; IFI=.97; and RMR=.08. Thus, the data was a good fit for final 13-item Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire.

The four dimensions of the Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire were reliable. The following Cronbach alphas indicated good reliability: Perceived Similarity .84, Self-Disclosure .81, Interest .78; and Information-Seeking .79.

Construct Validity. Construct validity was established by using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation to test three hypotheses. The following relationships were proposed: (1) a significant positive relationship between the Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire and the Attributional Confidence Scale, (2) a significant negative relationship between the Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire and the Relational Distance Index; and, (3) no relationship between the Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire and the Television Affinity Scale. All of the aforementioned hypotheses were supported, thus demonstrating the construct validity of the Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire. The means, standard deviations, and correlations among the scales are displayed in Appendix F.

Phase Three: Distribution

Participants. The individuals who participated in the experiment were invited to participate in the second posttest survey. It was necessary for the same individuals to

participate in this portion of the study because they were asked about those with whom they interacted during the experiment. This posttest survey was administered three weeks after the completion of the experiment, meaning that the participants had already received extra credit in interpersonal communication. Therefore, each person who completed an online posttest survey was eligible to win one of nine Target gift cards in the amount of twenty-five dollars.

Procedures. Three weeks after their get-acquainted conversations, participants received e-mails with links to an online posttest survey. Participants were given one week to complete the survey. Those who did not complete the survey within one week received a subsequent e-mail and four additional days to complete the survey. The 90% response rate shows that the majority of the participants completed the Questionnaire, despite the passage of time. This may have been due to the possibility of future interaction, which could have enhanced their investment in the study. Yet, regardless of their reasoning, the high response rate suggests that the participants were committed to this research.

There is no way to ensure that the participants did not contact their partner during the three-weeks that separated the experimental interactions from the post-posttest Questionnaire. However, I do not perceive this to be a limiting aspect of this study. If participants were to interact during this time then it is likely that their uncertainty about their partner was already sufficiently reduced. In other words, if they enjoyed their conversation enough to engage in a future interaction, then they clearly benefitted from their placement in the experimental or control condition and their responses should be included in further analysis.

Instrument. The Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire is a

13-item measure that is used to assess an individual's uncertainty about a partner.

Participants are asked whether they agree or disagree with a variety of statements using a

7-point Likert-type scale ranging from *1=strongly agree* to *7=strongly disagree*. For

example, participants are presented with statements like, "His (her) interests are similar to

mine" and, "We have many things in common."

The final version of the Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions

Questionnaire is a reliable measure. This is demonstrated by the following Cronbach

alphas for each of the four dimensions: Perceived Similarity .84, Self-Disclosure .81,

Interest .78; and Information-Seeking .79. Furthermore, the face, content, and construct

validity of the Questionnaire suggest that the measure is internally consistent.

CHAPTER 4

Results

The hypotheses were tested using one-way between-groups analyses of variance (ANOVAs) and paired-samples t-tests. The small sample size resulted in insufficient power to detect statistical significance for all but two tests: the paired-samples t-test that measured changes in Social Attraction among those in the "without profile" condition (.95) and the one-way between-groups ANOVA that compared the number of turns taken by those in the "with profile" condition to the "without profile" condition (.85). However, I was not expecting to find statistical significance due to the size of the sample. Rather, I examined effect sizes to determine whether or not there were meaningful differences within and/or between the "with profile" and "without profile" groups.

The reliability of the scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The following pretest measure demonstrated acceptable reliability: Social Attraction dimension of the Interpersonal Attraction Scale .66. The Perceived Homophily Measure displayed inadequate reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .41. Although the reliability of the Perceived Homophily Measure at pretest was lower than desired, the scale's established reliability was high and the reliability at posttest was also acceptable. The lower than expected reliability at pretest was likely due to the small number of respondents, because one person's inconsistent responses may have had a substantial effect. The following posttest and post-posttest measures demonstrated acceptable reliability: Social Attraction dimension of the Interpersonal Attraction Scale .86; Perceived Homophily Measure .72; Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction Inventory .82; and Relational Uncertainty in

Initial Interactions Questionnaire .88. A correlation matrix displays the relationships

between these scales and is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Pretests and Posttests

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	M	SD
1	1						5.27	.82
2	.47**	1					3.84	.62
3	.43*	.13	1				5.87	.68
4	.35	.20	.70**	1			6.02	.87
5	.32	.23	.39*	.45*	1		4.23	.98
6	.23	.25	.81**	.58**	.48*	1	5.34	.87

Note. 1 = Interpersonal Attraction Scale (Pretest), 2 = Perceived Homophily Measure
(Pretest), 3 = Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction Inventory (Posttest), 4 =
Interpersonal Attraction Scale (Posttest), 5 = Perceived Homophily Measure (Posttest), 6
= Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire (Post-Posttest).
**p<.01; *p<.05, two-tailed.

The results of this study are displayed in Table 3 and discussed in the following

sections. Findings are presented in three sets that match the three sets of hypotheses

presented in the literature review: (1) initial perceptions; (2) conversational behaviors;

and (3) conversational outcomes.

Table 3

Results of the Pretests and Posttests

Hypothesis #	Prediction	"With Profile" Mean	"Without Profile" Mean	Sig.	η2
1	Reading a profile will reduce uncertainty.	5.22	5.43	.56	.01
2	Reading a profile will increase attraction prior to the interaction.	5.13	5.39	.39	.02
3	Reading a profile will reduce information-seeking.	14.86	13.00	.34	.03
4	Reading a profile will increase nonverbal affiliative expressiveness.	3.49	3.70	.06	.11
5	Reading a profile will increase the level of verbally intimate behavior.	2.14	2.44	.08	.10
6	Reading a profile will increase the amount of verbally intimate behavior.	30.14	37.13	.08	.10
7	Reading a profile will increase the amount of communication. a) Words b) Independent Thoughts c) Turns	a) 430.21 b) 71.93 c) 58.29	a) 477.13 b) 79.81 c) 71.88	a) .30 b) .12 c) .01	a) .03 b) .08 c) .18
8	Reading a profile will increase perceived similarity prior to the interaction.	3.73	3.94	.37	.02
9	Reading a profile will increase perceived similarity after the interaction.	4.27	4.20	.86	.00
10	Perceived similarity will increase from the pretest to the posttest. a) Profile i) Pretest ii) Posttest b) Index Card i) Pretest ii) Posttest	a) i) 3.73 ii) 4.27	b) i) 3.94 ii) 4.20	a) .08 b) .31	a) .21 b) .06
11	Reading a profile will increase satisfaction.	5.70	6.01	.22	.05
12	Reading a profile will increase attraction after the interaction.	5.70	6.30	.06	.11
13	Attraction will increase from the pretest to the posttest. a) Profile i) Pretest ii) Posttest b) Index Card i) Pretest ii) Posttest	a) i) 5.13 ii) 5.70	b) i) 5.39 ii) 6.30	a) .05 b) .00	a) .26 b) .49

Initial Perceptions

The first hypothesis predicted that individuals who read their conversational partner's social network profile prior to interacting would experience a lower level of uncertainty (measured as Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions) than individuals who did not read their partner's profile beforehand. Results of a one-way between-groups ANOVA revealed that the hypothesis was not supported, $F(1,24)=.34$, $p=.56$, $\eta^2=.01$. Individuals in the "with profile" condition ($M=5.22$, $SD=.86$) did not experience significantly lower levels of Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions than those in the "without profile" condition ($M=5.43$, $SD=.90$).

The second hypothesis predicted that individuals who read their conversational partner's social network profile would experience a higher level of attraction (measured as Social Attraction) prior to meeting their partner than individuals who did not read their partner's profile beforehand. Results of a one-way between-groups ANOVA revealed that the hypothesis was not supported by the pretest data, $F(1,28)=.73$, $p=.39$, $\eta^2=.02$. Individuals in the "with profile" condition ($M=5.13$, $SD=.89$) did not experience significantly higher levels of Social Attraction to their partners than participants in the "without profile" condition ($M=5.39$, $SD=.76$).

Conversational Behaviors

The third hypothesis predicted that individuals who read their conversational partner's social network profile prior to interacting would employ a lower amount of information-seeking strategies (measured as number of questions asked) than individuals who did not read their partner's profile beforehand. Results of a one-way between-groups ANOVA indicated that the hypothesis was not supported, $F(1,28)=.92$, $p=.34$, $\eta^2=.03$.

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Individuals in the "with profile" condition (M=14.86, SD=5.27) did not ask significantly fewer questions than those in the "without profile" conditions (M=13.00, SD=5.29).

The fourth hypothesis predicted that individuals who read their conversational partner's social network profile prior to interacting would display a greater amount of nonverbal affiliative expressiveness (measured as comfort, attentiveness, and friendliness) than individuals who did not read their partner's profile beforehand. Results of a one-way between-groups ANOVA revealed that the hypothesis was not supported, F(1,28)=3.56, p=.06, η^2=.11. However, there was a meaningful difference between the groups. Individuals in the "with profile" condition (M=3.49, SD=.32) actually displayed *less* nonverbal affiliative expressiveness than those in the "without profile" condition (M=3.70, SD=.29).

The fifth hypothesis predicted that individuals who read their conversational partner's social network profile prior to interacting would display a higher level of verbally intimate behavior (measured as depth of self-disclosures) than individuals who did not read their partner's profile beforehand. Results of a one-way between-groups ANOVA suggested that the hypothesis was not supported, F(1,28)=3.21, p=.08, η^2=.10. Yet, the large experimental effect confirmed that there was a meaningful and unexpected difference between the groups. Individuals in the "with profile" condition (M=2.14, SD=.36) displayed a *lower* level of verbally intimate behavior than those in the "without profile" condition (M=2.44, SD=.51).

The sixth hypothesis predicted that individuals who read their conversational partner's social network profile prior to interacting would engage in a greater amount of verbally intimate behavior (measured as number of self-disclosures) than individuals who

not read their partner's profile beforehand. Results of a one-way between-groups ANOVA indicated that the hypothesis was not supported, $F(1,28)=3.21$, $p=.08$, $\eta^2=.10$. However, there was a meaningful and unexpected difference between the groups. Individuals in the "with profile" condition ($M=30.14$, $SD=10.16$) self-disclosed *less* frequently than those in the "without profile" conditions ($M=37.13$, $SD=11.03$).

The seventh hypothesis predicted that individuals who read their conversational partner's social network profile prior to interacting would engage in a greater amount of communication (measured as number of words spoken, independent thoughts shared, and turns taken) than individuals who did not read their partner's profile beforehand. Participants who engaged in greater amounts of communication were expected to exhibit higher amounts of words and independent thoughts and lower amounts of turns, since complex responses take extra time and result in more communication and fewer turns. Results of the one-way between-groups ANOVAs suggested that the hypothesis was not supported. The first prediction was not supported, because individuals in the "with profile" condition ($M=430.21$, $SD=110.49$) did not utter more words than individuals in the "without profile" condition ($M=477.13$, $SD=130.80$), $F(1,28)=1.10$, $p=.30$, $\eta^2=.03$. The second prediction was also not supported. Contrary to the hypothesis, the large experimental effect suggested that individuals in the "with profile" condition ($M=71.93$, $SD=10.14$) communicated *less* independent thoughts than those in the "without profile" condition ($M=79.81$, $SD=15.91$), $F(1,28)=2.52$, $p=.12$, $\eta^2=.08$. The third prediction was supported and there was a large, meaningful difference between the groups. Individuals in the "with profile" condition ($M=58.29$, $SD=5.31$) took less turns than individuals in the "without profile" condition ($M=71.88$, $SD=19.34$), $F(1,28)=6.45$, $p=.01$, $\eta^2=.18$.

The eighth hypothesis predicted that individuals who read their conversational partner's social network profile would experience a higher level of perceived similarity (measured as Perceived Homophily) prior to meeting their partner than individuals who did not read their partner's profile beforehand. Results of a one-way between-groups ANOVA indicated that the hypothesis was not supported by the pretest data, $F(1,28)=.80$, $p=.37$, $\eta^2=.02$. Individuals in the "with profile" condition ($M=3.73$, $SD=.71$) did not experience significantly higher levels of Perceived Homophily than those in the "without profile" condition ($M=3.94$, $SD=.54$).

The ninth hypothesis predicted that individuals who read their conversational partner's social network profile would experience a higher level of perceived similarity (measured as Perceived Homophily) after interacting with their partner than individuals who did not read their partner's profile beforehand. Results of a one-way between-groups ANOVA suggested that the hypothesis was not supported by the posttest data, $F(1,28)=.03$, $p=.86$, $\eta^2=.00$. Individuals in the "with profile" condition ($M=4.27$, $SD=.98$) did not report significantly higher levels of Perceived Homophily than participants in the "without profile" condition ($M=4.20$, $SD=1.01$).

Conversational Outcomes

The tenth hypothesis predicted that perceived similarity (measured as Perceived Homophily) to a partner would increase after engaging in the initial interaction, regardless of whether or not the individuals were exposed to their partner's profile beforehand. Results of the paired-samples t-tests revealed that the hypothesis was not supported by the experimental or control groups. Yet, the large experimental effect suggested that individuals in the "with profile" condition experienced meaningful

increases in Perceived Homophily from the pretest ($M=3.73$, $SD=.71$) to the posttest ($M=4.27$, $SD=.98$), $t(13)=-1.90$, $p=.08$, $\eta^2=.21$. Similarly, although the results were not significant, individuals in the "without profile" condition reported meaningful increases in Perceived Homophily from the pretest ($M=3.94$, $SD=.54$) to the posttest ($M=4.20$, $SD=1.01$), $t(15)=-1.03$, $p=.31$, $\eta^2=.06$.

The eleventh hypothesis predicted that individuals who read their conversational partner's social network profile prior to interacting would experience a higher level of satisfaction (measured as Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction) with the conversation than individuals who did not read their partner's profile beforehand. Results of a one-way between-groups ANOVA indicated that the hypothesis was not supported, $F(1,27)=1.52$, $p=.22$, $\eta^2=.05$. Although the results were not significant, the moderate effect size indicated that there was a meaningful difference between the groups. Surprisingly, individuals in the "with profile" condition ($M=5.70$, $SD=.62$) experienced *less* Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction than those in the "without profile" condition ($M=6.01$, $SD=.70$).

The twelfth hypothesis predicted that individuals who read their conversational partner's social network profile would experience a higher level of attraction (measured as Social Attraction) after interacting with their partner than individuals who did not read their partner's profile beforehand. Results of a one-way between-groups ANOVA revealed that the hypothesis was not supported by the posttest data, $F(1,28)=3.81$, $p=.06$, $\eta^2=.11$. However, there was a large experimental effect. Contrary to what was expected, individuals in the "with profile" condition ($M=5.70$, $SD=.89$) reported *less* Social

Attraction to their partners than individuals in the "without profile" condition (*M*=6.30, *SD*=.78).

The thirteenth hypothesis predicted that attraction (measured as Social Attraction) to a partner would increase after engaging in the initial interaction, regardless of whether or not the individuals were exposed to their partner's profile beforehand. Results of the paired-samples t-tests revealed that the hypothesis was supported by the experimental and control groups. As expected, individuals in the "with profile" condition reported significant increases in Social Attraction from the pretest (*M*=5.13, *SD*=.89) to the posttest (*M*=5.70, *SD*=.89), *t*(13)=-2.16, *p*=.05, η^2=.26. Similarly, individuals in the "without profile" condition reported significant, meaningful increases in Social Attraction from the pretest (*M*=5.39, *SD*=.76) to the posttest (*M*=6.30, *SD*=.78), *t*(15)=-3.83, *p*=.00, η^2=.49.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to extend URT into the Information age by examining the effect that the type of information available on social network sites may have on initial interactions. Although URT suggests that knowing more about a partner is desirable (Berger & Calabrese, 1975), a number of researchers have found that uncertainty functions differently in electronic initiated or mediated interactions (Antheunis, Peter, Schouten, & Valkenburg, 2009; Antheunis, Peter, & Valkenburg, 2008; Cody, Pratt, Wendt, & Wiseman, 1999). These findings fail to support eleven of the thirteen hypotheses, thus challenging URT and the assumption that initial interactants benefit from knowing more about one another. In this section, I will: (1) discuss key findings; (2) provide the implications of these results; and (3) offer limitations and directions for future research.

Key Findings

As social network Web sites continue to grow, more and more people are using profiles to access information about one another (Bulik & Klaassen, 2009; Cardon, 2009). Potential friends, romantic partners, or even employers may use these uncertainty reduction tools to form impressions about strangers. Until now, it seemed that these individuals would profit from accessing information about an unfamiliar partner prior to the first face-to-face encounter. However, the majority of these findings fail to support URT and the assumption that initial interactants benefit from knowing more about a stranger. Once again, the results of this study are discussed in three sets: (1) initial perceptions; (2) conversational behaviors; and (3) conversational outcomes.

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Initial Perceptions

        The first hypothesis predicted that participants who viewed their conversational partner's full-page social network profile would be less uncertain about their partner than those who only read a short index card. The results of the three-week post-test indicate that participants in both groups experienced equal reductions in uncertainty, regardless of whether or not they viewed a full-page profile prior to the interaction. Although it is unclear whether the profile, the conversation, or the combination of the two reduced the uncertainty of those in the experimental group, the premise of URT, that more information reduces uncertainty, was not supported (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Those in the experimental group were given more information about their conversational partners, yet they did not experience less uncertainty than those in the control group.

        The second hypothesis predicted that participants who viewed their conversational partner's full profile would experience higher levels of attraction prior to meeting their partner than those who only read an index card. However, the results indicate that participants in the "with profile" condition were not more socially attracted to their partners prior to the first interaction than those in the "without profile" condition. Given that URT's seventh axiom posits a negative relationship between uncertainty and liking, this finding is unexpected (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). After all, participants in the "with profile" condition were provided with a powerful uncertainty reduction tool-- they should have reported higher levels of attraction. Yet, participants in the "without profile" condition were just as attracted to their partners, despite their limited access to information.

Conversational Behaviors

The third hypothesis predicted that participants who viewed their conversational partner's full profile would engage in less information-seeking than those who only read an index card. However, there was not a significant difference in the number of questions asked by the participants in either group. This violates the third axiom presented in URT, which predicts that uncertainty and information-seeking are positively related (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). If the participants in the "with profile" condition experienced less uncertainty than those in the "without profile" condition, then they should have also asked fewer questions during their interactions. In addition, Davis (1973) and Svennevig (2000) assert that questions are used to initiate topical talk during get-acquainted conversations. Their claim implies that, because they knew more about one another, the participants in the "with profile" condition would ask fewer questions before arriving at topics for conversation. Hence, this finding does not have empirical or theoretical support.

The fourth hypothesis predicted that participants who viewed their conversational partner's full profile would display a greater amount of nonverbal affiliative expressiveness (measured as comfort, attentiveness, and friendliness) than those who only read an index card. Results indicated that there was not a significant difference between the groups. Yet, the large experimental effect suggested that participants in the "with profile" condition appeared to engage in *less* nonverbal affiliative expressiveness than those in the "without profile" condition. This finding contradicts URT's second axiom, which states that nonverbal affiliative expressiveness and uncertainty are negatively related (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Although participants in both conditions displayed polite nonverbals, those in the "without profile" condition were clearly less

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anxious and more comfortable, as demonstrated by specific behaviors such as pausing and smiling (Christenfeld 1995; Floyd & Ray, 2006; Fox Tree, 2002). Thus, knowing more about a partner seemed to cause more discomfort and less friendliness, despite the notion that uncertainty reduction is beneficial during initial interactions.

The fifth hypothesis predicted that participants who viewed their conversational partner's full profile would display higher levels of verbally intimate behavior (measured as depth of self-disclosures) than those who only read an index card. The difference between the two groups was not statistically significant, but it was meaningful. Unexpectedly, participants in the "with profile" condition self-disclosed *less* in-depth information than those in the "without profile" condition. This finding contradicts URT's fourth axiom, which proposes a negative relationship between uncertainty and verbal intimacy (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Sunnafrank's (1986) Predicted Outcome Value Theory and Brasher et al.'s (2000) Uncertainty Management Theory may explain this discrepancy. Perhaps participants in the experimental group were more uncertain about their partners, despite having been exposed to more information than those in the control group. It is possible that participants in the experimental condition interpreted the information provided as undesirable information, which may have increased their uncertainty. They may have managed their uncertainty by self-disclosing less in-depth information to their partners.

The sixth hypothesis predicted that participants who viewed their conversational partner's full profile would engage in a greater amount of verbally intimate behavior (measured as number of self-disclosures) than those who only read an index card. Although there was not a significant statistical difference between the groups, the large

experimental effect suggested that the results were meaningful. Surprisingly, participants in the "with profile" condition self-disclosed *less* frequently than those in the "without profile" condition. Perhaps participants in the "with profile" condition felt that they knew "too much too soon" and, as Uncertainty Management Theory proposes, they handled their uncertainty by sharing less information (Brashers et al., 2000). In doing so, they were likely to obtain certain outcomes, such as limiting the amount of information that their partner felt comfortable disclosing (Altman & Taylor, 1973). However, regardless of their reasoning, their behavior once again challenges URT's fourth axiom (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Furthermore, this finding demonstrates that knowing more about a partner does not always result in an increased amount of self-disclosures.

The seventh hypothesis predicted that participants who viewed their conversational partner's full profile would communicate more than those who only read an index card. However, there was not a significant difference in the amount of words uttered, independent thoughts shared, or turns taken by participants in either group. Yet, the large experimental effect indicated that there were meaningful differences between the groups in terms of independent thoughts and turns. Contrary to the hypothesis, participants in the "with profile" condition produced *fewer* independent thoughts than those in the "without profile" condition. Yet, as predicted, those in the "with profile" condition took fewer turns than those in the "without profile" condition. These conflicting results both confirm and challenge URT's first axiom and the assumption that verbal communication increases as uncertainty decreases (Berger & Calabrese, 1975).

The eighth hypothesis predicted that participants who viewed their conversational partner's full profile would experience higher levels of perceived similarity prior to

meeting their partner than those who only read an index card. The results indicate that participants in the "with profile" condition did not experience higher levels of perceived similarity prior to meeting their partners. Because Berger and Calabrese (1975) claim that perceived similarity leads to reduced uncertainty (not that more information leads to perceived similarity), this finding does not contradict URT. However, it is surprising that participants in the experimental group did not perceive themselves to be more similar to their partners simply because they were exposed to more information, making it less likely that their similarities would have gone undiscovered. As uncertainty reduction tools, profiles are capable of drawing attention to similarities and dissimilarities, and this may explain why participants in the experimental condition did not find that they were more similar to their partners than those in the control group. Furthermore, participants in the control group may have experienced an egocentric bias and assumed that, in the absence of information, their partner was just like them. However, their low mean scores suggest that participants in the "without profile" condition were unlikely to have experienced such a bias.

The ninth hypothesis predicted that participants who viewed their conversational partner's full profile would experience higher levels of perceived similarity after interacting with their partner than those who only read an index card. Similar to the pretest, the posttest finding indicates that participants in the "with profile" condition did not perceive themselves to be more similar to their partners than those in the "without profile" condition. This is slightly less surprising than the result of the pretest simply because the participants attained information about one another during their get-acquainted conversations. However, this finding is still interesting because the

participants in the "with profile" condition were given even more information, and they could have uncovered additional similarities during their conversations. Once again, their attention may have been drawn to similarities *and* dissimilarities, causing the participants in the "with profile" condition to experience similar levels of perceived similarity when compared to those in the "without profile" condition.

Conversational Outcomes

The tenth hypothesis predicted that participants would experience increases in perceived similarity to their partner after engaging in the initial interaction, regardless of whether or not they were exposed to their partner's profile beforehand. The participants did not report significant changes in perceived similarity from the pretest to the posttest, although the effect sizes suggested that participants in the "with profile" and "without profile" conditions experienced meaningful increases. Hence, these findings support URT and Berger and Calabrese's (1975) claim that perceived similarity and uncertainty are negatively related. After having read their partner's index card or profile, the participants were able to uncover additional similarities during their get-acquainted conversations, thus resulting in lower levels of uncertainty and higher levels of perceived similarity.

The eleventh hypothesis predicted that participants who viewed their conversational partner's full profile would experience higher levels of satisfaction with the conversation than those who only read an index card. Although the result was not significant, the moderate effect size suggested that there was a meaningful difference between the groups. Surprisingly, participants in the "with profile" condition reported *less* satisfaction with the conversation than those in the "without profile" condition. Despite the common assumption that initial interactants are more satisfied when they are

able to reduce their uncertainty about one another (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Donnerstein et al., 2007), more information actually lead to less satisfaction for those in the "with profile" condition. This finding may be explained by Predicted Outcome Value Theory and Uncertainty Management Theory, which claim that uncertainty reduction is not always beneficial (Brashers et al., 2000; Sunnafrank, 1986). Perhaps the information presented in the profiles was undesirable, causing the participants in the "with profile" condition to predict that positive outcomes would not be attained. Thus, more information would have lead to decreases in uncertainty and satisfaction among those in the "with profile" condition.

The twelfth hypothesis predicted that participants who viewed their conversational partner's social network profile would experience higher levels of attraction after interacting with their partner than those who only read an index card. Although there was not a statistically significant difference, the large experimental effect size indicated that participants in the "with profile" condition actually experienced *less* social attraction than those in the "without profile" condition. Contrary to URT's seventh axiom, this finding suggests that a decrease in uncertainty does not always lead to an increase in social attraction (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Rather, as Antheunis et al. (2008) predicted, social attraction may be mediated by the valence of the information presented in a profile and/or during an initial interaction. Furthermore, this discovery supports Sunnafrank (1986) and Brashers et al.'s (2000) claim that a reduction in uncertainty can lead to costs as well as rewards. The participants in the "with profile" condition were provided with more information about a partner, yet this may have led them to believe that a relationship with the other person was unfavorable.

The thirteenth hypothesis predicted that participants would experience increases in attraction to their partner after engaging in the initial interaction, regardless of whether or not they were exposed to their partner's profile beforehand. As expected, participants in both groups reported significant increases in social attraction from the pretest to the posttest. Most likely, the increase was due to their exposure to more information about a partner as the initial interaction progressed. Unlike the between-groups comparisons, this finding supports URT and its assertion that uncertainty and liking are negatively related (Berger & Calabrese, 1975).

For the most part, these findings fail to support URT's claim that initial interactants benefit from knowing more about one another. In fact, there were meaningful differences between the experimental and control groups that contradicted five of the Theory's seven axioms (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Until now, it was a widely held belief that more information decreased uncertainty. Yet participants in the "with profile" condition did not benefit from this information, perhaps because they perceived a relationship with their partner to be undesirable. However, these results may also suggest that more information actually *increases* the uncertainty experienced during get-acquainted conversations. Knowing more about their partner may have caused participants in the "with profile" condition to focus on their differences, making them more uncertain. Hence, participants in the "without profile" condition may have benefited from knowing *less* about a partner.

Implications

This study shows the limited applicability of URT in interactions where the participants have access to each others' personal information (such as occurs in electronic

initiated interactions) while also providing support for Predicted Outcome Value Theory and Uncertainty Management Theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Brashers et al., 2000; Sunnafrank, 1986). Contrary to the predictions made by Berger and Calabrese (1975), more information, which is supposed to lead to uncertainty reduction, does not always result in more positive outcomes. Additionally, more information can heighten the differences we see. Predicted Outcome Value Theory and Uncertainty Management Theory best support these findings by suggesting that more information, and less uncertainty, is not always beneficial (Brashers et al., 2000; Sunnafrank, 1986). In fact, this study demonstrates that a reduction in uncertainty was harmful in that it resulted in lower levels of (a) nonverbal affiliative expressiveness, (b) verbal intimacy (measured as amount and depth of self-disclosures), (c) amount of communication (measured as independent thoughts shared), (d) communication satisfaction, and (e) social attraction (measured post-interaction) among those who were exposed to a stranger's social network profile.

Furthermore, when using a social network profile to reduce our uncertainty about a person we remove the "script" that we would normally follow when meeting someone new, which may heighten our uncertainty about the interaction. Kellerman and Lim (1989) support this observation by noting that interactants tend to communicate in predictable manners that vary slightly from conversation to conversation, as does Svennevig's (2000) use of this predictability to develop a model of the self-presentational sequence. We rely on these "scripts" during get-acquainted conversations, as demonstrated by the participant in the "with profile" condition who told her partner, "I feel like I already know most of this." This highlights the importance of the typical, face-

to-face acquaintance process while also suggesting that these results may not be as inconsistent with URT as they seem. Perhaps we are simply removing the participants' uncertainty about their partner and replacing it with uncertainty about the interaction.

This study may be valuable to interpersonal communication scholars who are interested in how new media options, such as social network Web sites, influence relationship initiation. Results indicate that the type of information commonly available on social network profiles may cause more harm than good for individuals who first encounter each other online and then attempt to transition these relationships to a face-to-face context. By providing some participants more-in-depth personal information, I short-circuited the traditional "get-to know you" routine. Those participants who needed the conversation to get to know each other ("without profile") followed the predictable patterns posited in URT and were more satisfied with their interaction. Those participants who did not need the conversation to get to know their partners ("with profile") were less satisfied and engaged in fewer behaviors that indicate interest in each other. This contradicts URT and many of our assumptions about the acquaintanceship process because in this study the most satisfying and engaged conversations occurred between the partners who had less information available to them. By calling into question the premise that "more information is good," this study may have highlighted the importance placed on actual face-to-face encounters and the give-and-take we expect when first meeting someone.

Further, this study has important implications for the owners of social network Web sites and their users. In 2008, approximately 50 social network Web sites claimed to host over one million registered users (Cardon, 2009). One can only imagine the

disappointment that these social networkers would experience if they were to learn that their profiles were causing strangers to form negative impressions of them. In addition, online dating Web sites such as Match.com and eHarmony.com are based upon the assumption that a stranger will be more attracted to a potential romantic partner after reading his or her profile. This study suggests that the owners of these Web sites and their users need to question their assumptions about the relationship between uncertainty reduction and attraction.

Yet, most importantly, this study demonstrates that the tenets of URT are not applicable to online relationship initiation. As Predicted Outcome Value Theory and Uncertainty Management Theory predicted, more information can be harmful to initial interactants (Brashers et al., 2000; Sunnafrank, 1986), especially in an online context. Thus, rather than attempting to extend URT into the Information age, future researchers should focus on adapting the theory to electronic communication.

<center>Limitations, Directions for Future Research, and Conclusions</center>

There were seven potentially limiting aspects of this study. The first limitation was the insufficient power to detect statistical significance that impacted all but two tests. However, even though the sample size was too small to detect statistical significance, the effect size of each test indicates that there were important differences between the two groups.

The second limitation was the result of a manipulation check. The PRCA-24 was used to ensure that the "with profile" and "without profile" conditions did not differ in terms of communication apprehension. Results indicated that participants in the "with profile" condition were more apprehensive than those in the "without profile" condition.

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Perhaps participants were nervous knowing they would have to read someone else's profile prior to talking with them, and their interaction was influenced by this nervousness. In the future, the PRCA-24 should be administered prior to the index card/profile to rule out the possibility that there is a positive relationship between a participant's apprehension and his or her exposure to more information about a partner.

The third limitation was that the sample was largely female. This resulted in a mixture of cross-sex and same-sex dyads that was lacking male-male pairings. This means that these findings are only indicative of certain types of relationships. Unfortunately, the sample was too small to test if there was a difference between same-sex and cross-sex interactions. Thus, it is possible that more information is beneficial in one type and impedes conversational behavior in the other type.

The fourth limitation was that all of the participants were drawn from interpersonal communication classes. This means that they were interested in relationships and communication prior to the study, and they may have had heightened sensitivity to norms and behaviors. Therefore, the results of this study may not be generalizable. Yet, even though the participants were enrolled in interpersonal communication, I avoided matching two students from the same class. In addition, the pretest asked how well they knew their partner prior to the interaction, and I looked for indicators of familiarity when transcribing the conversations. Thus, I am confident that the participants did not have meaningful relationships with one another prior to the experiment.

The fifth limitation was the poor sound quality of the recorded interactions. Although, for the most part, the number of words uttered by each participant was

apparent, this limitation still resulted in the inability to transcribe and code some portions of the conversations. Therefore, the amount and depth of the self-disclosures may be inaccurate.

The sixth limitation was the delay in administering the Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire. The Questionnaire was being developed when the experimental data was collected, which resulted in its distribution several weeks later. This may have impacted the ability of the participants to remember their interactions in enough detail to complete the Questionnaire.

The final limitation of this study was the time that participants in the "with profile" condition had to process the information presented in their partner's profile. These participants engaged in the initial interaction almost immediately, meaning that they may not have had enough time to process the information as a social networker would. This time constraint may have resulted in cherry-picking, or quickly focusing on a few pieces of unfavorable information in their partner's profile. Yet, participants in the "with profile" condition were given five minutes to read a 1-2 page profile, which indicates that their knowledge of the other person was fresh and that they did actively process the information.

In addition to continuing to explore how the type of information commonly available to future partners affects interactions, future researchers should also examine the valence of the impressions formed after viewing a social network profile. This will help clarify whether participants perceive the information presented in their partners profile as unfavorable or if it is actually knowing more about their partner that increases uncertainty. In doing so, it would be helpful to identify the aspect of the stranger's profile

that has the greatest negative impact on readers. It seems likely that, at a certain point, people stop reading the profile. This may happen when the reader finds something that he or she dislikes about the stranger, but it is unclear if there are commonalities in that "something."

In addition, researchers should attempt to find statistical significance by conducting the same study with more male and female participants. Not only will this increase the power of the tests, but it will also allow for consistent dyads. This will ensure that participants are responding to the stimulus rather than the gender of their partner.

Overall, this study raises some interesting questions about the applicability of URT in the Information age while also suggesting that Internet users should think twice before displaying a profile on a social network Web site. Yet, future research is needed to determine *why* social network Web sites are negatively impacting initial interactions. Until then, social networkers are left to wonder, "Why can't we be friends?"

APPENDICES

Appendix A. *Recruitment Script*

Appendix B. *Recruitment Handout*

Appendix C. *Social Network Profile Template*

Appendix D. *Initial 36-Item Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire*

Appendix E. *Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire Items and Factor Loadings*

Appendix F. *Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of the Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire with Three Previously Validated Scales*

Appendix A

Recruitment Script

Hello Everyone,

My name is Liesel Sharabi, and I am a graduate student in the Communication and Journalism Department. I am here today to invite you to participate in a study that I am conducting.

I would like to start by telling you a little bit about my research and why I have chosen to visit your class. This is a study of how people get to know each other, so I am going to have people sit down with someone they don't know and have a 10-minute conversation. So, it's pretty easy. I'm inviting you to participate because (1) you are enrolled in C&J 221 and (2) you have created social network profiles as part of a separate assignment for the class. You will need these profiles to participate in the study—these profiles or some information from the profiles will help you get to know the person you are talking to.

If you decide to participate you will need to commit approximately 35-minutes to the study. This includes filling out a few surveys before and after you talk with your assigned partner. You **may** also be asked to complete an online survey at the start of the spring semester that will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete—there will be separate compensation for doing that. If you agree to participate, the following things will happen:
- You will be asked to sign up for one 35-minute session. Before your session, you will need to e-mail your social network profile to Liesel Sharabi.
  - When you arrive at the Communication and Journalism building on the date of your session, you will be asked to complete a pretest survey.
  - You will be randomly matched with a student from a different interpersonal class. I will provide you some information about your assigned partner—that way it won't be a total stranger. Your partner will also be provided with information about you. This information will come from the social network profiles that you created in your interpersonal class.
  - You will be introduced to your partner and then you will be asked to "get to know" this person by engaging in an eight to ten minute conversation. This interaction will be recorded using audio and video equipment.
  - After the interaction, you will be escorted back to a waiting room where you will be asked to complete a posttest survey. You will not be asked to complete the pretest OR posttest survey in the same room as your conversational partner. As part of this survey, you will also be asked if you had met your partner prior to the interaction.
  - I will collect all information, including the profiles, before you leave. The researcher will destroy this information after the data is entered.
  - You will be asked to provide the researcher with your name and e-mail address so that she may contact you during the spring semester. You **may**

also be asked to participate in an online follow-up survey at the start of the spring semester.

o You MAY be asked to participate in a follow-up interaction with your partner. You will receive further information about this potential interaction at the start of the spring semester.

- **If** you are asked to participate in a follow-up survey at the start of the spring semester:
  - o The researcher will e-mail you the link to the survey, and you will have [insert time] weeks to complete this survey online.
  - o You will be asked questions about the interaction you participated in as part of the experiment.

There are several reasons why you may want to participate in this study: (1) if you are interested in interpersonal communication, this is a great opportunity to learn about how research is conducted in this field; (2) research is a big part of graduate school, and if you are thinking about applying to a graduate program you will benefit from understanding how a study is carried out; and (3) you will receive 15 extra credits for your participation.

If you do not want to participate in this study, but if you would still like to receive extra credit, you may complete an alternative assignment that is also worth 15 points. If you decide to complete the alternative assignment, I will provide you two journal articles about uncertainty reduction. Then, you will need to read both articles and write a 1-2 page typed, double-spaced summary of the articles. You will need to e-mail your assignment to me, and I will notify your instructor that you have earned extra credit. That way, your instructor will not know whether you participated in the experiment or completed the alternative assignment. The alternative assignment will be due by [insert date].

If you are interested in participating in this study, please send an e-mail to sharabi@unm.edu by [insert date]. In your e-mail, please provide me with several days and times that you are available during the week of [insert date]. Please remember that you will need to e-mail your social network profile to me **prior** to your scheduled session.

Thank you for your time!

Appendix B

Recruitment Handout

Participant Information

If you participate, you will receive the following benefits…
- You will learn how interpersonal communication research is conducted.
- You will learn how graduate-level research is conducted (a benefit for those interested in applying to graduate school.)
- You will receive **15 extra credit points** in this class!

If you participate, the following things will happen…
This semester you will be asked to:
- E-mail your social network profile to Liesel Sharabi.
- Commit approximately 35-minutes to this study/Contact Liesel Sharabi to schedule your 35-minute session.
- Fill out a few surveys when you arrive for your session.
- Engage in an eight to ten minute conversation with a student from a different class in the Communication & Journalism Department. I will provide you with some information about your conversational partner—that way it won't be a total stranger. Your partner will also be provided with information about you. This information will come from the social network profiles you created in your interpersonal class. This conversation will be recorded using audio and video equipment.
- Provide Liesel Sharabi with your name and e-mail address (if it changes) so that she may contact you during the spring semester.
- You <u>may</u> be asked to participate in a follow-up interaction with your partner. You will receive further information about this potential interaction at the start of the spring semester.

Next semester you <u>may</u> be asked to:
- Complete an online survey about the conversation you participated in during the fall semester. The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. You will be given [insert time] weeks to complete the survey.
- There will be separate compensation for completing the survey.

If you would like to participate, you will need to do the following…
- Send an e-mail to sharabi@unm.edu no later than [insert date]. In this e-mail, please provide three dates and times that you are available to participate during the week of [insert date].

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- Liesel Sharabi will contact you via e-mail on [insert date] to schedule your 35-minute session. If you decide to participate, you will need to send your social network profile to sharabi@unm.edu no later than [insert date].
- All sessions will take place the week of [insert date].

If you do not want to participate…
- If you do not want to participate in the study, but if you would still like to receive 15 extra credit points, you may complete an alternative assignment.
- If you would like to complete this assignment, please send an e-mail to sharabi@unm.edu no later than [insert date]. In your e-mail, please indicate that you are interested in the alternative assignment.
- Liesel Sharabi will e-mail you two journal articles about uncertainty reduction no later than [insert date].
- You will be asked to read both journal articles and write a 1-2 page typed, double-spaced summary of the articles.
- You will need to send your summary, via e-mail, to sharabi@unm.edu no later than [insert date].

Thank you for your time!

Appendix C

Social Network Profile Template

CandJ221.comm

Your interpersonal communication profile

	First name:
	One sentence description of self:
	Age:
	Ethnicity:
	Height:
	Smoke:
Insert photo here—delete this text and paste a picture of yourself in this box.	Drink:
	Hair:
	Eyes:

In my own words…	**About my life and what I'm looking for…**
for fun:	
job:	
religion:	
politics:	
education:	
favorite hot spots:	
exercise:	
favorite things:	
last read:	
kids:	
pets:	
member of:	

Appendix D

Initial 36-Item Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire

Perceived Similarity
    1. His (her) interests are similar to mine.
    2. We talked about things that I am interested in.
    3. I think that his (her) personality is similar to mine.
    4. We have many things in common.
    5. We are *not* dissimilar.

Future Rewards
    6. I would feel comfortable interacting with him (her) again.
    7. I would enjoy hanging out with him (her) again.
    8. I would like to see him (her) again in the future.

Explanation/Prediction
    9. I think I have a good sense of what this person is like.
    10. I think I have a sense of what makes this person "tick."
    11. I think we could be friends.

Compliments
    12. He (she) praised me during the conversation.
    13. He (she) complimented my appearance.
    14. He (she) complimented my interests.
    15. He (she) complimented my personality.

Self-Disclosure (Partner)
    16. He (she) told me something about himself (herself.)
    17. He (she) did *not* share highly personal information with me.
    18. I think that I learned a lot about him (her.)
    19. I feel like I really know him (her.)

Self-Disclosure (Self)
    20. I felt comfortable telling him (her) about myself.
    21. I would feel comfortable sharing personal information with him (her.)
    22. I told him (her) something about myself.

Interest
    23. He (she) seemed interested in what I had to say.
    24. He (she) appreciated what I had to say.
    25. We were focused on each other during the conversation.
    26. I do *not* think that he (she) was bored with the conversation.

Information-Seeking
    27. He (she) asked questions about my life.

28. He (she) asked questions about my goals.
29. He (she) asked questions about my interests.
30. I believe that he (she) asked a lot of questions.

Future Interaction
31. We made plans to see each other again.
32. I believe that he (she) wants to see me again.
33. I think that he (she) did *not* want the conversation to end.

Nonverbal Affiliative Expressiveness
34. He (she) smiled at me a lot during the conversation.
35. He (she) looked me in the eyes during the conversation.
36. His (her) posture let me know that he (she) was comfortable.

Appendix E

Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions Questionnaire Items and Factor Loadings

Dimension	Factor Loading
Perceived Similarity	
1. His (her) interests are similar to mine.	.70
2. We talked about things that I am interested in.	.75
3. I think that his (her) personality is similar to mine.	.75
4. We have many things in common.	.86
Self-Disclosure	
5. He (she) told me something about himself (herself.)	.62
6. I think that I learned a lot about him (her.)	.71
7. I felt comfortable telling him (her) about myself.	.75
8. I told him (her) something about myself.	.80
Interest	
9. He (she) appreciated what I had to say.	.76
10. We were focused on each other during the conversation.	.77
11. I do *not* think that he (she) was bored with the conversation.	.67
Information-Seeking	
12. He (she) asked questions about my goals.	.77
13. He (she) asked questions about my interests.	.86

Appendix F

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of the Relational Uncertainty in Initial

Interactions Questionnaire with Three Previously Validated Scales

Scale	1	2	3	4	M	SD
1	1				1.93	.78
2	-.06	1			4.54	1.13
3	.06	-.49**	1		1.96	.67
4	.04	.48**	-.22**	1	4.03	1.23

Note. 1 = Television Affinity Scale, 2 = Relational Uncertainty in Initial Interactions
Questionnaire, 3 = Relational Distance Index, 4 = Attributional Confidence Scale.
**p<.01; *p<.05, two-tailed.

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