

How do College Students Maintain Romantic Relationships Through Media Platforms and Relational Maintenance?

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ABSTRACT

This research study focuses on the ways college students maintain their romantic relationships through mediated channels. This study collected qualitative data as I used an interview format of 14 open ended questions. This study included 14 students from St. Norbert College both male and female. This presentation will answer the question of what themes can be found amongst college students and the ways they maintain their relationships. This study focuses on specific and general ways these couples do this. It will focus on long term relationships to short term 3 month relationships.

BACKGROUND

Emerging adults experience many new relationships when they are navigating adulthood, especially romantic relationships. These relationships teach individuals many life lessons during this time of growth. The term relational maintenance describes the ways that individuals keep their romantic relationships together. Relational maintenance can take many forms such as assuring your partner of your commitment, sharing tasks, being open, and staying positive. All of these are very important when it comes to maintaining relationships.

Research objective

To answer this question:

What is a common practice amongst emerging adults in how they maintain their relationships using mediated channels?





METHODS



My sample- Participants

14 St. Norbert College male and females who had all been in a relationship for over three months. The ages ranged from 18 (1), 19 (3), 20 (5), 21 (2) and 22 (3)



12 females



2 males



My sample- Participants

Out of all these participants, Seven of the participants were in a long distance relationship and seven were in a in person relationship.

3 - 5 months: Two participants

10-15 months: five participants

1- 2 years: Two participants

3 years-4 years: four participants

5 1/2 years: One participant



Design

Collect participants through SONA
interdisciplinary research- 14 successful
interviews

Conduct 10 minute in person
interviews to collect qualitative data
through audio recording the interview
portion

Analyze the data

The procedure



For this research, I had specific restrictions in order to collect the most accurate data. The restrictions I had were,

1. The participants needed to be 18 years of age or older.
2. Be in a current relationship for over 3 months.

For this research I asked a series of 14 open ended survey questions regarding relational maintenance. I recorded these interviews to have a less chance of error when analyzing the data. Overall, I collected 14 interviews.



Materials

1. Consent forms
- recording consent
- Participation consent
- Debriefing

2. Iphone
- To record interviews

The participant!

The interview questions

1. What is your gender and age?
2. How long have you been in this relationship?
3. Is your relationship long distance or in person?
4. Describe your relationship in a few sentences? For example- what are some characteristics about your partner or what are some activities you guys enjoy doing?
5. What communication technology do you use to keep in touch with your partner? Do you use multiple at one time? How often would you say you and your partner use technology to communicate?
6. How open are you with your partner about dissatisfaction about yourself or your partner's actions?
7. What is a way you give your partner reassurance and what is a way they give you reassurance?

Interview questions contd...



8. Do you have access to your partners social media and phone? Do they share their location with you?
9. Has social media made you lose trust in your partner? In what ways?
10. What has been the longest time you've spent not communicating using technology with your partner?
11. Do you share tasks with your partner? Such as calling, traveling to one another or other responsibilities such as cleaning and cooking when together?
12. Do you handle disagreements in person or over the phone? If you're in a distance relationship how do you make sure the disagreement gets settled over the phone?
13. Do you find it easy to communicate using technology with your partner or do you save conversations for when you're together in person.
14. On a scale of 1-10 $\overrightarrow{\hspace{1.5cm}}$ how satisfied are you in your relationship? Why?



Results

Questions ONE, TWO AND THREE:

1. What is your gender and age?

- 12 females, 2 males and the ages ranged from 18 (1), 19 (3), 20 (5), 21 (2) and 22 (3)

2. How long have you been in this relationship?

- Four participant's answered 12 -15 months, four participants answered 3 - 4 years, two participants answered 3 - 5 months, two participants answered 1 - 2 years and one participants answered 5 ½ years. Three of these participants are “High School sweethearts”

3. Is your relationship long distance or in person?

- Seven participants answered in person and seven participants answered long distance



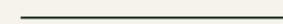


Results

Question: FOUR

4. Describe your relationship in a few sentences? For example- what are some characteristics about your partner or what are some activities you guys enjoy doing?

- Many of the responses included, we enjoy each others company by watching movies and going out to eat together. (6/14)
- Common characteristics participants used to describe their partner was; tentative, caring, cute and best friend





Results

Question: FIVE

5. What communication technology do you use to keep in touch with your partner?

- Everyone said snapchat and texting
- 3/14 said facetime
- 1 participant said discord

Do you use multiple at one time?

- 12/14 said they will have a conversation on one platform and another on a different media

How often would you say you and your partner use technology to communicate?

- "Everyday, throughout the whole day" was majority (13/14)
 - 1 participant said once or twice a day





Results

Question: SIX AND SEVEN

How open are you with your partner about dissatisfaction about yourself or your partner's actions?

- "Very open" "I am very straightforward" were the answers from every participant

What is a way you give your partner reassurance and what is a way they give you reassurance?

- "Understand our different love languages" (3/14)
- "Words of affirmation and physical/acts of kindness" (4/14)
- "Making time for each other" (3/14)
- "Long texts of reassurance" (1/14)
- "Communicating what we need" (2/14)
- "Showing up when we need each other" (1/14) —————>



Results

Question: EIGHT AND NINE

Do you have access to your partners social media and phone? Do they share their location with you?

- 4 Participants said no they do not have access to media and phone and 10 said yes
- 8 participants said they do not have locations of partners while 6 said they did share locations.

9. Has social media made you lose trust in your partner? In what ways?

- 12 participants said no
- 2 participants said yes because of past traumas from other relationships





Results

Question: TEN

What has been the longest time you've spent not communicating using technology with your partner?

- 8 participants said 2-3 days
- 2 participants said several hours
- 2 participants said two weeks
- 2 participants said one week





Results

Question: ELEVEN

II. Do you share tasks with your partner? Such as calling, traveling to one another or other responsibilities such as cleaning and cooking when together?

- Everyone said yes they share tasks
- Everyone who is in a long distance relationship said the tasks they share are calling and traveling to one another
- The people in relationships that are in person said they share tasks such as cleaning and sharing their individual spaces





Results

Question: TWEELEVE

Do you handle disagreements in person or over the phone? If you're in a distance relationship how do you make sure the disagreement gets settled over the phone?

- All long distance relationships said they handle them over the phone and by doing this they need to set aside enough time to resolve the problem.
- In person relationships said in person if its big but over the phone if its not a big deal

13. Do you find it easy to communicate using technology with your partner or do you save conversations for when you're together in person.

- 4 people said yes it is easy to have those conversations
- 10 people said it was hard because you cannot truly see/feel hwo the other is feeling





Results

Question 14:

On a scale from
1-10 how
satisfied are you
in your current
relationship?

-Two participants said 10 at the moment

-Five participants said 9

-Three participants said 8

-Three participants said 7

-One participant said 6





Discussion and limitations

This study had many successes in the sense that it allowed us to understand how college students maintain their relationships however, It did also have some limitations.

- Could have used a bigger study sample
- Had an equal amount of men and women
- Individuals could have lied
- Answers vary in depth

Overall

This study taught me and showed me that many college relationships follow a lot of the same practices in order to maintain their romantic relationships. Many of the themes included what media they used, how they handle conflict and what they do together as a couple.