

Can You See How Happy We Are? Facebook Images and Relationship Satisfaction

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Abstract

Love is often thought to involve a merging of identities or a sense that a romantic partner is part of oneself. Couples who report feeling more satisfied with their relationships also feel more interconnected. We hypothesized that Facebook profile photos would provide a novel way to tap into romantic partners' merged identities. In a cross-sectional study (Study 1), a longitudinal study (Study 2), and a 14-day daily experience study (Study 3), we found that individuals who posted dyadic profile pictures on Facebook reported feeling more satisfied with their relationships and closer to their partners than individuals who did not. We also found that on days when people felt more satisfied in their relationship, they were more likely to share relationship-relevant information on Facebook. This study expands our knowledge of how online behavioral traces give us powerful insight into the satisfaction and closeness of important social bonds.

Keywords

romantic relationships, emotion, Internet/cyberpsychology, well-being, self-presentation

Life has taught us that love does not consist in gazing at each other but in looking outward together in the same direction.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Love is often thought to involve a merging of identities or the sense that one's lover is part of oneself. The theory of self-expansion, which describes this phenomenon, suggests that greater identity overlap with one's partner is tied to greater relationship well-being (Aron & Aron, 1996). Indeed, married and dating couples who are more interconnected report feeling more satisfied with their romantic relationships (e.g., Agnew, Van Lange, Rusbult, & Langston, 1998; Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). This interconnectedness spills into unconscious behavior as well; romantic couples with higher quality interactions are more likely to use pronouns that represent their sense of unity or togetherness such as "we," "us," and "our" (Seider, Hirschberger, Nelson, & Levenson, 2009).

In the present research, we hypothesized that online Facebook profile photos could serve as a novel and valid way to tap into romantic partners' merged identities. We hypothesized that the more satisfied people felt with their relationships and the closer they felt to a partner, the more likely they would be to post dyadic photos of themselves and their partner as their main Facebook profile photo.

With over 800 million active users, Facebook is a popular way to connect with others (Facebook, 2012). Previous research has found that participation in online social networks builds social capital (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007) and is

used to strengthen offline relationships (Salimkhan, Manago, & Greenfield, 2010) by enabling users to express affection toward loved ones (Utz & Beukeboom, 2011). Information shared on Facebook is associated with feelings of romantic jealousy (Muise, Christofides, & Desmarais, 2009) and relationship satisfaction in young dating couples (Papp, Danielewicz, & Cayemberg, 2012), but no research to date has examined Facebook behavior in the context of marital relationships or over the course of time in relationships.

On Facebook, all users choose a photo to represent themselves. Because this profile photo is displayed prominently, Facebook members can see each other's profile photos without needing to "friend" each other or otherwise interact. The photos that people choose to display on Facebook constitute a type of behavioral residue, "the physical traces left in the environment by our everyday actions" (Gosling, 2008, p. 25). Such behavioral residue, including how we decorate our homes and design our websites, has been linked to psychological phenomena such as Big Five traits (Reis & Gosling, 2010).

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Facebook profile images are very public representations of the self and provide opportunities for self-presentation. Research has found that people tend to post especially attractive versions of themselves online (Siibak, 2009; Strano, 2008; Young, 2008). As such, it is possible that people who are less satisfied in their relationships would post dyadic profile pictures as a self-presentation strategy to appear happier in their relationships to other people. Research has also found, however, that Facebook profiles provide fairly accurate portrayals (Back et al., 2010; Wilson, Gosling, & Graham, 2012). In one study, strangers' ratings of an individual's personality based solely on their Facebook profile were strongly correlated with participants' self-ratings and the ratings of close others who knew the participants well, but only weakly correlated with participants' ideal self-ratings (Back et al., 2010). In another study, people who were liked on the basis of a face-to-face interaction were also liked based on their Facebook profiles, and people used the same criteria (i.e., social expressiveness and self-disclosure) in both situations to determine the person's likability (Weisbuch, Ivcevic, & Ambady, 2009). Because Facebook is so popular and has become integrated into the fabric of many people's social lives, it provides an ideal, naturalistic setting to investigate how people present themselves to others.

Photographs, in particular, have been found to reflect the state of our relationships and well-being. The intensity of smiles and warm touch in family photos has been related to the expression of positive emotions (Oveis, Gruber, Keltner, Stamper, & Boyce, 2009); positive emotional expressions in photos predict later marital status and divorce (Harker & Keltner, 2001; Hertenstein, Hansel, Butts, & Hile, 2009); and the intensity of undergraduates' smiles in their Facebook profile photos predicts their personal well-being several years later (Seder & Oishi, 2011). Taken together, this research suggests that the profile images that romantic partners choose to display on Facebook may reflect how individuals feel in their relationships and that people who choose to post photographs with a romantic partner may be more satisfied with their relationships and feel closer to their partners than those who do not.

The Current Research

We tested our hypotheses linking relationship satisfaction and closeness with the decision to display dyadic profile pictures on Facebook in three studies. Study 1 was a cross-sectional study in which we assessed whether relationship satisfaction and closeness are associated with the tendency to post profile images with one's romantic partner. In Study 2, we measured initial relationship satisfaction and closeness and then coded participants' profile pictures 3 times over a 1-year period. We hypothesized that greater satisfaction and closeness at baseline would be associated with the tendency to post dyadic profile pictures at three time points over the course of a year. In Study 3, we conducted a daily experience study of dating couples to consider how both partners' feelings of relationship satisfaction

are associated with posting dyadic profile pictures and sharing relationship-relevant information on Facebook.

Study 1

In our first study, we used self-report measures to test our hypothesis that the more satisfied people felt in their romantic relationship and the closer they felt to their partner, the more likely they would be to post dyadic profile pictures on Facebook.

Participants

Participants were 115 individuals living in the United States recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (44 men, 70 women, 1 of unreported gender; ages 18–73, $M = 36.62$, $SD = 11.53$; married between less than a year and 39 years, $M = 9.83$ years, $SD = 9.40$; 87 were European American, 5 were Asian American, 10 were Latino, 9 were African American, and the rest were of another ethnicity; participants were allowed to choose more than one ethnicity). To be eligible for the study, participants had to be current Facebook users. Participants recruited through this online service are shown to be more representative of the U.S. population than participants in typical online samples (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Participants received monetary compensations and were included in the study if they correctly answered two "catch" items ("Please answer strongly disagree"; 16 did not answer correctly) and identified as married and 18 years of age or older.

Design and Procedure

Profile photos. We asked participants to rate how often over the past 6 months they had chosen to display, as their main Facebook profile photo, images that included themselves and their spouse (1 = *never*, 2 = *rarely*, 3 = *sometimes*, 4 = *usually*, and 5 = *always*; $M = 2.55$, $SD = 1.24$).

Relationship satisfaction and closeness. We measured relationship satisfaction and closeness with two face-valid items based on the Perceived Relationship Quality Component Inventory (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000), rated from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*) with higher scores representing greater satisfaction: "How satisfied/content/happy are you with your relationship?" and "How intimate/close/connected is your relationship?" As the 2 items were highly correlated ($r = .93$, $p < .001$) and overlapping in meaning, we averaged the 2 items into one measure ($M = 5.77$, $SD = 1.43$).

Results

Consistent with our predictions, the more satisfied participants felt with their marriages and the closer that people felt to their spouses, the more frequently they reported posting a dyadic profile picture on Facebook ($r = .21$, $p = .028$).¹ Gender was not a significant predictor and did not moderate this effect.

Study 2

Study 1 provided initial support for our hypothesis that relationship satisfaction and closeness relate to how people represent themselves in photos online. Study 2 extends this finding in four critical ways. First, Study 1 was limited by an exclusive reliance on self-report measures. It is possible that happily married people may be more likely to misremember that they have posted dyadic profile pictures on Facebook. Study 2 rectifies this limitation by including outside observer codes of married partners' profile pictures. Second, since Study 1 was cross-sectional, in our second study we recruited married individuals, assessed their initial feelings of satisfaction and closeness, and then assessed the content of their profile pictures at three separate time points over the course of a year. Third, while our first study included 1-item indicators of relationship quality, we improved the measurement of these constructs in Study 2 using longer, well-validated measures. Finally, by including measures of personal happiness, personality, and attachment style, we sought to rule out the possibility that our initial findings could be accounted for by people's more general levels of happiness or personality traits. For example, it may be that individuals who are higher in Extraversion or who are more securely attached are more likely to post dyadic pictures and simultaneously more likely to be happy in their marriage. We hypothesized that people higher in satisfaction and closeness at baseline would be more likely to post dyadic profile pictures over a 1-year period and that these results would not be due to general levels of personal happiness or individual differences in personality.

Participants

Participants were 148 individuals living in the United States recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (38 men, 110 women; ages 19–59, $M = 31.85$, $SD = 9.24$; married between less than a year and 38 years, $M = 6.51$ years, $SD = 7.27$; 110 were European American, 9 were Asian American, 3 were Latino, 4 were African American, and the rest were of another ethnicity; participants were allowed to choose more than one ethnicity). As in Study 1, participants were all current Facebook users, received monetary compensation for participating, and were only included in the study if they answered two "catch" items correctly (16 did not answer correctly) and identified themselves as married and 18 years of age or older.

Design and Procedure

Profile photos. With permission given at baseline, we downloaded participants' Facebook profile images at three time points: baseline (Time 1), 4 months after baseline (Time 2), and 12 months after baseline (Time 3). Across all time periods, a trained coder rated whether or not a married couple was present in the photo (1 = *dyadic photo*; 0 = *nondyadic photo*). To demonstrate the reliability of these codes, five raters coded all images at baseline ($\alpha = .95$). We compared coders' ratings to participants' reports, which were assessed by asking

participants the following at baseline: "Is your current profile picture of you and your romantic partner?" with either a *yes* (1) or *no* (0). Participants' reports were associated with the observer ratings at baseline: $\chi^2(1) = 155.73$, $p < .001$. For all subsequent analyses, we used observer codes. Across each of the three time points, 23–25% of the photos were coded as dyadic and 75–77% were coded as nondyadic. Over time, 61% of people never posted a dyadic photo, 16% of people posted a dyadic image once, 14% of people posted a dyadic image twice, and 9% of people posted a dyadic image at all three time points.

Relationship satisfaction and closeness. At baseline, we assessed relationship satisfaction and closeness with two subscales from the Perceived Relationship Quality Component Inventory (Fletcher et al., 2000), rated from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*) with higher scores representing greater quality (relationship satisfaction, 3 items: $\alpha = .98$; $M = 5.96$, $SD = 1.39$; relationship closeness, 3 items: $\alpha = .92$; $M = 5.80$, $SD = 1.34$). As in Study 1, since the two measures were highly correlated ($r = .88$, $p < .001$), we averaged the 2 items into one measure ($M = 5.88$, $SD = 1.32$).

Personal happiness. We measured personal happiness with the Subjective Happiness scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999; 4 items), rated on a 7-point scale with higher scores representing greater happiness ($\alpha = .88$; $M = 5.16$, $SD = 1.23$).

Personality. Participants completed the Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI; Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003), which contains 2 items for each of the Big Five personality constructs of Extraversion ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 1.60$), Openness ($M = 5.20$, $SD = 1.10$), Conscientiousness ($M = 5.34$, $SD = 1.22$), Neuroticism ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.47$), and Agreeableness ($M = 5.30$, $SD = 1.10$). Items were answered on a scale ranging from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 7 (*agree strongly*). As reported in Gosling, Rentfrow, and Swann (2003), the scale is a reliable and valid measure.

Attachment style. Participants were presented with three descriptions from Hazan and Shaver (1987), which briefly describe the prototypical secure, anxious, and avoidant attachment styles. Participants selected the scenario which best described themselves. We then recoded answers to reflect secure attachment (70%; coded as a 1) or insecure attachment (30%; coded as a 0).

Results

We hypothesized that relationship satisfaction and closeness measured at baseline would predict the tendency to post dyadic profile pictures over the course of a year. To assess if our continuous measures of relationship satisfaction and closeness predicted correlated binary responses over time, we used Generalized Estimating Equations (Zeger & Liang, 1986). We conducted these analyses using the REPEATED statement in the GENLIN procedure in SPSS 19. None of the effects interacted with time; that is, the associations between relationship quality and the tendency to post dyadic profile images did not differ

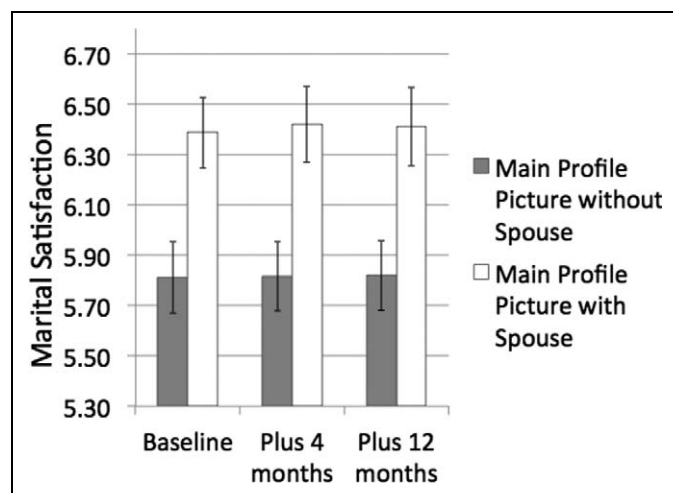


Figure 1. The relationship between relationship satisfaction at baseline and dyadic Facebook profile images over 1 year (Study 2). Error bars represent standard errors of the mean.

across the three time points in the study. Therefore, we report results with the main effect of both time and the photo variable entered into the model.

Consistent with our predictions and the results of Study 1, the tendency to post dyadic profile pictures was significantly predicted by relationship satisfaction and closeness ($\beta = .07$, $p = .002$, $\chi^2 = 9.85$).¹ See Figures 1 and 2. Gender was not a significant predictor of the tendency to post dyadic profile pictures and did not significantly moderate this effect. Moreover, none of the covariates (happiness, personality, and attachment style) were significantly associated with the tendency to post a dyadic profile picture (all $ps > .15$), and the results remained significant after controlling for each of these covariates.

Study 3

Studies 1 and 2 provided support for our hypothesis that individuals who are more satisfied in their relationship and feel closer to their romantic partner are more likely to post dyadic profile pictures on Facebook. Study 3 is a 14-day daily experience study of dating couples that enabled us to extend these findings in two critical ways. First, in Studies 1 and 2, we only had reports from one partner; therefore in Study 3 we considered whether people's own feelings of relationship satisfaction predict whether they post a dyadic profile picture and whether their partner posts a dyadic profile picture, controlling for their partner's own relationship satisfaction. Past research drawing on interdependence theory has shown that people's own expressions of commitment influence how their romantic partner feels about the relationship (Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster, & Agnew, 1999). Based upon this work, we predicted that people who are more satisfied in their relationship would be more likely not only to post dyadic profile pictures but to have partners who are more likely to do so as well. Second, we also considered whether daily feelings of relationship

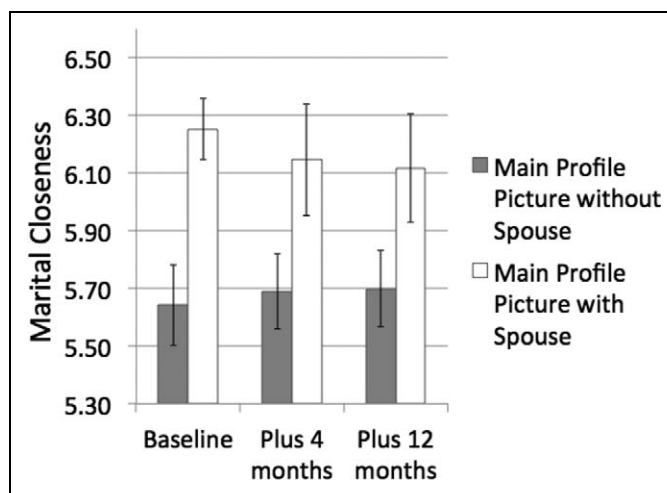


Figure 2. The relationship between relationship closeness at baseline and dyadic Facebook profile images over 1 year (Study 2). Error bars represent standard errors of the mean.

satisfaction influence the sharing of relationship-relevant information on Facebook. Previous research has shown that on days when people feel more jealous in their relationships, they spend more time monitoring their partner's activities on Facebook (Marshall, Bejanyan, Di Castra, & Lee, 2012), suggesting that daily feelings about a relationship can influence Facebook use. Thus, we tested the prediction that on days when participants report greater relationship satisfaction, they would be more likely to post relationship-relevant information on Facebook. We also tested whether daily feelings of satisfaction would predict a partner's tendency to post relationship-relevant information on Facebook.

Participants

Participants were 108 heterosexual dating couples ($N = 216$) recruited from a small university in Ontario, Canada. The participants ranged in age from 19 to 31 ($M = 21.05$, $SD = .94$) and had been together from 2 to 73 months ($M = 73.00$, $SD = 19.74$), with 9% of the couples living together. Participants comprised a diverse range of ethnicities; European (40%), Asian (20%), Black/African American (8%), Latin American (5%), Aboriginal (2%), and 25% self-identified as "other." To be eligible for the study, participants had to be current Facebook users.

Procedure

On the first day of the study, participants were asked to complete a 30-min background survey and to "friend" the study's Facebook page. Upon joining the study, participants consented to allow us to download their Facebook profiles. The participants were also asked to complete a 10-min online survey each night for 14 consecutive nights, and to do so independently from their partner. To maximize compliance with the daily part of the protocol, reminder e-mails were sent to the

participants who had not completed their daily diaries by 10 p.m. each night. On average, participants completed 12 diaries across the 14-day study ($Range = 1-14$, $M = 12.45$, $SD = 3.72$) for a total of 2,689 days across participants. Participants were paid \$40 each for taking part in the study.

Background Measures

Profile photos. With permission given at baseline, we downloaded participants' Facebook profile images on the first day of the study. Two trained coders rated whether or not a couple was present in the photo (1 = *dyadic photo*; 0 = *nondyadic photo*). Since both members of the couple participated in the study, after the ratings were complete, coders were able to verify that the other person in the photo was in fact the person's romantic partner.

Relationship satisfaction. Relationship satisfaction was assessed with 5 items such as "I feel satisfied with our relationship" ($\alpha = .91$; $M = 7.77$, $SD = 1.16$) from Rusbult, Martz, and Agnew (1998) rated on a 9-point scale from 1 (*do not agree*) to 9 (*agree completely*).

Satisfaction with life. Satisfaction with life was assessed with 5 items such as "In most ways my life is close to my ideal" ($\alpha = .87$; $M = 5.01$, $SD = 1.27$) from Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985) rated on a 7-point scale from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 7 (*strongly disagree*).

Personality. As in Study 2, participants completed the TIPI (Gosling et al., 2003), with measures of Extraversion ($M = 4.76$, $SD = 1.48$), Openness ($M = 5.36$, $SD = 1.05$), Conscientiousness ($M = 5.29$, $SD = 1.17$), Neuroticism ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 1.36$), and Agreeableness ($M = 4.81$, $SD = 1.08$). Items were answered on a scale ranging from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 7 (*agree strongly*).

Attachment. Attachment was measured using the 12-item Experiences in Close Relationship–Short Form (Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, & Vogel, 2007). Items assessed attachment anxiety (6 items; $\alpha = .79$, $M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.24$; "I worry romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them") and attachment avoidance (6 items; $\alpha = .87$, $M = 1.97$, $SD = .96$; "I try to avoid getting too close to my partner") and were rated on scale from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 7 (*agree strongly*).

Time spent on Facebook. Participants were asked, "On average, approximately how many minutes per day do you spend on Facebook?" and responded by entering the number of minutes ($Range = 0-400$, $M = 57.56$, $SD = 52.77$).

Daily Measures

Relationship satisfaction. Participants responded to three items about how satisfied they felt in their relationship (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998; $\alpha = .93$, $M = 5.71$, $SD = 1.40$) on a 7-point scale from 1 (*do not agree*) to 7 (*agree completely*).

Satisfaction with life. Participants rated how happy they were on a scale from 1 (*very unhappy*) to 6 (*very happy*) with three aspects of life: yourself, your friends, and your family ($\alpha = .80$, $M = 4.87$, $SD = 1.15$).

Facebook posts. Participants responded to 1 item "I shared information about my relationship or my partner on Facebook today (i.e., posted a status update, wall post, photo comment, or photos about or with my partner)" on a 7-point scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*).

Time spent on Facebook. Participants reported the number of minutes they spent on Facebook ($Range = 0-600$, $M = 32.07$, $SD = 49.08$).

Results

The coding of participants' Facebook profile picture resulted in high initial agreement between coders ($\kappa = .97$). The coders only disagreed on two of the photos, and after discussion, both of these photos were considered nondyadic. Consistent with Study 2, about one quarter (27.5%) of the participants had a dyadic profile picture, and about three quarters (72.5%) had a nondyadic profile picture.

To test our first prediction that participants who reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction would be more likely to display a dyadic photo on Facebook, we conducted a binary logistic regression. As expected, participants who reported higher relationship satisfaction were more likely to post a dyadic profile picture (odds ratio [OR] = 2.32, 95% confidence interval [CI] [1.59, 3.39], $p < .001$). That is, for each unit increase in relationship satisfaction, participants were more than 2 times as likely to post a dyadic profile picture. This association remained significant after controlling for the amount of time participants spent on Facebook, their satisfaction with life, their ratings on the Big Five personality traits, and attachment anxiety and avoidance. None of these variables significantly predicted posting a dyadic profile picture. In addition, gender was not a significant predictor of whether or not a person posted a dyadic profile picture and did not moderate any of the effects.

Consistent with our second prediction, participants who were higher in relationship satisfaction had partners who were more likely to post a dyadic profile picture on Facebook (OR = 1.94, 95% CI [1.37, 2.74], $p < .001$). For each unit increase in relationship satisfaction, a person's partner was almost 2 times as likely to post a dyadic profile picture on Facebook. This finding remained significant after controlling for the partner's own relationship satisfaction. In addition, the romantic partner's relationship satisfaction did not moderate the association between one's own relationship satisfaction and posting a dyadic profile picture.

Our third prediction concerned the association between daily relationship satisfaction and the tendency to share relationship-relevant information on Facebook. We analyzed the data using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM, Version 6.08; Raudenbush, Bryk, Cheong, & Congdon, 2004). We used

a three-level model to simultaneously control for dependencies in the same person's reports across days and dependencies between partners (Gable & Poore, 2008). Level-1 (i.e., daily) predictors were centered on each individual's mean across the 14-day study, which assesses whether day-to-day changes from a participant's own mean are associated with changes in the outcome variable, consequently unconfounding between- and within-person effects. These results showed that on days when participants felt more satisfied with their relationship (than they typically did across the 14-day study), they were more likely to share relationship-relevant information on Facebook, $b = .03$, $t(2281) = 2.35$, $p = .02$. This association remained significant after controlling for time spent on Facebook and daily feelings of satisfaction with life. In addition, we tested whether a person's daily relationship satisfaction was associated with their partner's tendency to post about their relationship, but this association was not significant. Finally, posting pictures in general was not associated with relationship satisfaction ($r = .012$, $p = .87$) and our effects remained significant after controlling for this factor, suggesting that this association is specific to the sharing of relationship-relevant information.

Discussion

When people interact with others online, they must choose how to represent themselves. The current research provides the first empirical evidence to show that the ways in which people chose to represent themselves pictorially on Facebook are related to how happy they are in their relationships and how close they feel to their romantic partner. We found evidence through cross-sectional self-report (Study 1), longitudinal outside-observer coded behavior (Study 2) and dyadic daily experiences (Study 3) that individuals who are more satisfied in their relationships are more likely to post images of themselves and their partner as their main profile photo on Facebook. In Study 3, we also found that on days when people are more satisfied with their relationships they are more likely to share relationship-relevant information on Facebook. Posting dyadic profile pictures and other relationship-relevant information on Facebook was not associated with personal well-being, satisfaction with life, or individual differences in Big Five personality traits. These results suggest that people who post dyadic pictures and share relationship-relevant information tend to be more highly satisfied with their romantic relationships, as opposed to being happier or more satisfied with their lives in general.

In addition, we found that people who are more satisfied in their relationships have partners who are more likely to post dyadic profile pictures on Facebook. However, our prediction that one partner's daily feelings of satisfaction would be associated with the other partner's tendency to post relationship-relevant information was not supported. It is possible that romantic partners are simply more in tune with each other's general levels of relationship satisfaction, as opposed to daily feelings of satisfaction, and therefore

one partner's day-to-day feelings are not associated with the other partner's Facebook use.

The current study provides evidence that dyadic profile pictures on Facebook are an important marker of interconnectivity in a relationship. Interdependence theory posits that romantic partners who rely on and are influenced by each other are more likely to depart from their own self interest in order to pursue goals that strengthen the relationship (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Self-expansion theory argues that a close relationship involves expanding the self to include the other (Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991), and a greater overlap with one's partner is associated with higher relationship quality (Aron & Aron, 1996). Extending this work, just as the language that couples use (e.g., pronouns such as "we" and "us") provides an unconscious marker of closeness (Agnew et al., 1998; Aron et al., 1992), pictorial representations displayed on social networking sites provide another, novel marker of the quality of important social bonds.

The current findings support a growing body of research suggesting that representations on Facebook correspond closely with offline personality ratings and emotions. For example, individuals high in narcissism are more likely to engage in self-promotion on their Facebook profiles; however, independent raters are able to see through these self-promotion tactics and correctly judge these users as narcissistic (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). Although individuals with low self-esteem indicate that Facebook is an appealing forum for self-disclosure, their expressions of low positivity and high negativity on their Facebook profiles result in people liking them less than people with high self-esteem (Forest & Wood, 2012). In addition, strangers are accurate in assessing an individual's personality based solely on their Facebook profile (Back et al., 2010).

The current study indicates several directions for future research. We provide evidence that feelings of relationship satisfaction are linked to displaying dyadic profile pictures, but we did not explicitly test a mechanism for this association. As we suggest above, couples who are more satisfied may choose to post dyadic profile pictures due to increased feelings of interconnectivity or self-other overlap. We believe the reverse association—that having a dyadic profile picture predicts greater satisfaction—is less likely, but acknowledge that this link could be bidirectional. More satisfied couples are more likely to post dyadic profile pictures; seeing their Facebook profile may then remind them of their happy relationship and make them feel more satisfied.

Previous research indicates that, in addition to being associated with positive relationship outcomes, information posted on Facebook is associated with jealousy and conflict in relationships (Marshall et al., 2012; Muise et al., 2009). Given the widespread use of Facebook and its association with feelings about a romantic partner, future research could further examine how romantic couples use Facebook in the context of their romantic relationships, how they make decisions about what information to share on Facebook, and the individual and relational factors associated with the positive and negative

consequences of sharing relationship-relevant information on Facebook. In addition, future research could consider how sharing relationship-relationship information on Facebook is associated with other people's perceptions, such as whether outside observers can judge a person's relationship satisfaction from their Facebook profile alone, and how people perceive those who disclose information about their romantic relationship on Facebook. In conclusion, our findings demonstrate that how individuals feel about their romantic partner spills into their online behavior. Following in the vein of other studies on behavioral residue (e.g., Gosling, 2008), the current research suggests that analyzing the content of online behavior will lead to a richer understanding of social and psychological behavior.

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Note

1. The results hold when we consider relationship satisfaction and closeness separately.

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