

The Role of Communication Technologies in Long Distance Romantic Relationships:
Defining Intimacy and Emotional Satisfaction

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“Maybe stories are just data with a soul” – Dr. Brene Brown, Author, researcher

“to be alive sociologically, and socially, is to practice the normal rules of social participation—sometimes with a flourish of independence, never exactly as the rules are passed down, but close enough so as not to disrupt the party” - Charles Lemert, Sociologist

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine how technology has changed long-distance romantic relationships. Specifically it examines how technology changes romantic relationships when geographically close (face-to-face) relationships become long-distance relationships. My study examines their experiences with technology and self-reported feelings of emotional satisfaction from three perspectives; one, the strategies undergraduate students use to maintain romantic relationships through periodic phases of geographic separation (the academic school year September-May); two, the effectiveness of various technologically mediated forms of communication (texting, Skype, Facebook, etc) as strategies for maintaining romantic relationships (e.g. emotional support); and three, the rules and norms of technologically mediated communication.

Introduction

It has been said that humans are social creatures and that therefore in everything we do and throughout our lives we try to relate to others and we try to build relationships with other people in order to find emotional satisfaction. Historically, communication was limited to face-to-face communication and outside of that only few options such as letters or phone calls existed. However, since the communication technology boom of the early 2000s many new forms of communication have emerged. Email, the explosion in cellular phone usage, text messaging and various forms of social media, including Facebook and Snapchat, along with technologically mediated forms of face-to-face communication such as Skype, have together allowed individuals the ability to communicate with others much more easily and frequently even across geographic distance. As a result, individuals are increasingly using these forms of technology to maintain

friendships and romantic relationships that historically would have either declined or would have been strained because of geographic distance and a related lack of ability to communicate.

Long-distance romantic relationships are a growing social phenomenon that is under researched and underrepresented in academic literature. This renders my study a significant and original contribution to the sociological understanding of long distance communication. Through this research I aim to discover the role that communication technologies play in allowing these relationships to function and to probe how these relationships perhaps re/define our concepts of emotional fulfillment.

Globalization Economic Considerations: Harvey and Marxism

As a result of globalization individuals now have the ability to work, learn, and live in many countries around the world. Even in Canada, these effects can be seen as individuals move throughout the country in order to take advantage of any different number of opportunities. Economic factors and the trend towards urbanization also influence migration patterns within Canada (Census Snapshot of Canada 2007). Individuals, particularly young adults, are affected by these realities as a result of their need to acquire an education and establish themselves within their chosen career. Anthropologist/Geologist David Harvey provides one rationale for the increasing phenomenon of long-distance romance in pointing to how, as a result of changes within the global economic system in the mid-20th century, the nature of markets and capitalism has changed with globalization and hyper-advanced capitalism. Harvey specifically cites more micro-economic management by governments following the stabilization of economies after the Second World War (Harvey 1990).

Likewise, the Canadian population is becoming increasingly urbanized. In 2006, 80% of all Canadians lived in an area classified as urban, up from 78% in 1996 (Census Snapshot of Canada 2007). Almost 90% of the total population growth in Canada since 2001 has occurred in the country's 33 census metropolitan areas (CMA) (Census Snapshot of Canada 2007). The fact that four out of five Canadians currently live in an urban area represents a significant shift from earlier years in the 20th century (Census Snapshot of Canada 2007) is significant evidence of this shift to the urban. For example, before the Second World War only half of the Canadian population was urbanized (Census Snapshot of Canada 2007). With globalization comes the internationalization of jobs, increased competition for jobs, an increase in credentialization, and an overall precarious work and economic situation in which individuals are easily replaceable (Harvey 1990). Harvey highlights the effects of a precarious economy in stating: "...the adaptability and flexibility of workers become vital to capitalist development. Workers, instead of acquiring a skill for life, can now look forward to at least one if not multiple bouts of de-skilling and re-skilling in a lifetime" (Harvey 1990). Likewise, Statistics Canada states: "today's young people face a labour market that earlier cohorts did not have to contend with: an increasing wage gap between newly hired employees and those with more experience; more temporary jobs for newly hired workers; and fewer male employees covered by registered pension plans" (Clark 2007). These new underlying economic realities mean individuals have to spend longer in school acquiring education and are more likely to have to return to school throughout their life.

These realities are relevant to long-distance romantic relationships because with increased time spent acquiring education and long periods of time necessary to establish one's self in their chosen career, individuals are delaying or are not as focused during this time on

other life pursuits such as finding a romantic partner, getting married or having children (Clark 2007). Specifically Statistics Canada states “while the overall fertility rates in Canada for women under age 30 have dropped since the early 1970s, rates for women in their 30s have increased...this delayed fertility is generally linked to women's increased education and labour force participation” (Clark 2007). Overall, research has shown that in North American individuals are waiting later to get married and have children; these realities are no doubt influenced by economic changes (Clark 2007). Harvey’s Marxist analysis highlights the economic underpinnings of crisis-prone capitalism that cause long-distance romantic relationships to emerge. These economic needs often cause people to leave their hometowns to live where these opportunities are available.

Background on Long-Distance Relationships

Long-distance relationships have therefore become a significant phenomenon, particularly but not exclusively amongst young people who are establishing themselves (Johnson 2009). Also of interest is the fact that long-distance relationships can be just as successful as geographically close relationships, specifically in terms of emotional satisfaction with the relationship (Guldner and Swensen 1995). Emotional satisfaction in Guldner and Swensen (1995)’s study is measured by the characteristics of relationship satisfaction, trust, intimacy as measured by Hendrick’s (1988) Relationship Assessment Scale and Spanier’s (1976) Dyadic Adjustment Scale; trust being measured by Larzelere and Huston’s (1980) Dyadic Trust Scale; and intimacy being measured by Schafer and Olson’s (1981) Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships scale. Schafer and Olson’s (1981) scale measuring five different areas of intimacy: (1) emotional intimacy (the experiencing of closeness of feeling; the ability to share openly, in a

non-defensive atmosphere when there is supportiveness and genuine understanding); (2) social intimacy (the experience of having common friends and a similar social network); (3) sexual intimacy (the experience of showing general affection, touching, physical closeness and/or sexual activity); (4) intellectual intimacy (the experience of sharing ideas, talking about events in one's life, or discussing job-related issues, current affairs, etc); and finally (5) recreational intimacy (shared experiences of interest in pastimes or hobbies, mutual participant in sporting events, mutual involvement in any general recreational or leisure activity) (Guldner and Swensen 1995). Guldner and Swensen (1995) characterize "long-distance" partnerships as "my partner lives far enough away from me that it is difficult or impossible to see them every day". They defined geographically closeness as the inverse of this situation, the individual lives close enough to their partner that they could see them every day or two if they close. It is interesting that despite these different levels of geographic proximity the authors found that emotional satisfaction was similar. In its essence this reality means society can no longer dismiss these relationships as being less significant or not "real" relationships because long-distance romantic relationships can be just as emotionally intimate as geographically close relationships.

Guldner and Swensen (1995)'s study of 384 undergraduate students at a major university in the American Midwest also found that individuals in long-distance romantic relationships reported levels of relational satisfaction, intimacy, trust and commitment that are identical to those reported by individuals in geographically close relationships, despite the individuals in long-distance relationships on average only seeing their partner once every 23 days. The separation time being on average 23 days with no clear definition of the time frame of the geographical separation other than the average visit at least once a month visit (Guldner and Swensen (1995).

Guldner and Swensen (1995) also reference the research of Reissman et al. (1993) which showed a disassociation between increased time spent together and relational satisfaction. Guldner and Swensen (1995) argue that while a basic level of communication is needed for a relationship to be maintained, Reissman et al's. study challenges the supremacy of the notion that the more time individuals spend together the better the relationship will be. This finding in relation to time spent together may be helpful in our understanding of how long-distance relationships are able to succeed. Success, in this study, is defined as self-reported feelings from the individuals involved in these relationships that their relationships are emotionally fulfilling, as determined either by quantitative measures such as scales via surveys or qualitative measures such as narratives from interviews (Guldner and Swensen 1995). In relation to Reissman et al's (1993)'s finding, a disassociation between increased time spent together and relational satisfaction could support the notion that long-distance relationships can follow non-linear patterns of communication defined by high levels of communication at one point and then lower levels of communication at another point, then a return to higher levels (Johnson 2009). However, future research is necessary to substantiate possible links and to examine non-linear relationships patterns over long-distances.

Related Literature and Literature Review

With more possibilities for communication, and as new opportunities for maintaining relationships emerge, the limiting effects of geographic distance on the formation and maintenance of relationships with people who live too far away for frequent face-to-face contact is being reduced (Johnson et al. 2009). Although long-distance relationships are not considered the norm for interpersonal communication, they are increasing in frequency. Stafford and Reske (1990) suggested that as many as one-third of all college dating relationships may be long

distance romantic relationships (Sahlstein 2004). Dellmann-Jenkins, Bernard-Paolucci, and Rushing (1994) reported that 43.2% of their college dating couple sample was in a long-distance relationship (Sahlstein 2004). The number of individuals in these relationships is clearly of interest to Sociologists as they seek to investigate this growing phenomenon. Rohlfsing (1995) reports that even though scholars have reported a significant number of long distance romantic relationships in undergraduate populations, long-distance relationships continue to be an understudied phenomenon and research with both long distance and friendship groups is limited (Sahlstein 2004). The lack of research on long-distance relationships is interesting; it may be possible that researchers have focused more of their attention on other non-normative forms of communication such as people meeting on the internet (Bargh and McKenna 2004). Sahlstein (2000) argues that within the personal relationships literature, long distance romantic relationships are often compared with geographically close romantic relationships, typically in terms of communication frequency, quality, amount of contact, maintenance strategies, and emotional and relational satisfaction (as defined by self-reported and psychological scales) (Sahlstein 2004). Since the ultimate goal of long-distance relationships are to be geographically close again it is not surprising that researchers use geographically close relationships as the basis for comparison when discussing long-distance relationships.

Guldner and Swensen (1995) point out that an important finding for consideration is that individuals in both long distance romantic relationships and geographically close romantic relationships report average to high relational satisfaction despite the obvious differences in face-to-face communication and contact frequencies (Sahlstein 2004). Therefore, individuals in long-distance romantic relationships are reporting being just as satisfied emotionally as their geographically close counterparts, even though the long-distance individuals have significantly

fewer opportunities for communication. Stafford and Reske (1990) reported that partners in long distance romantic relationships idealize their relationships more than geographically close romantic relationships and are more optimistic about their futures as couples (Sahlstein 2004). Because of the assumption that long distance romantic relationships are limiting and communication is restricted, Stafford and Reske concluded that those in long distance romantic relationships were more likely to overlook the negative aspects of their relationships in order to accentuate the positive characteristics and to make the most of their interactions (Sahlstein 2004). This is an interesting hypothesis, particularly if the individuals already knew each other before hand and already had an emotional background with the other person to build on. It would be interesting for future research to examine if length of dating before the long-distance influenced the success of the relationship during long-distance. Sahlstein (2004) argues that these levels of emotional satisfaction are not surprising if long distance romantic relationships are viewed as having positive qualities and if geographically close romantic relationships are not conceptualized as the standard for comparison. A difficult part of examining long-distance relationships remains not privileging geographically close relationships as the norm, while at the same time long-distance individuals report that being geographically close again is their ultimate goal. Therefore, technologically mediated forms of communication are still seen as the other by those using them but limiting our analysis of them to just being the other puts us at risk of falling in the stereotypes that these relationships are somehow less real. How those living at a distance use communication technology as a tool for maintaining levels of emotional satisfaction, is the main focus of my study.

Research Considerations and Questions

Interviewing participants in these situations allows me to examine their personal experiences and views on the issue in order to find out first of all, whether or not they consider their long distance relationship emotionally fulfilling and secondly, what technologically mediated maintenance strategies they use in order to make these relationships effective. By interviewing individuals who are in long-distance romantic relationships, I can analyze their experiences and perceptions. A measure of relationship success, for the purposes of this study, is determined by whether or not the relationship is emotionally fulfilling for the individuals involved, as described by the participant in their interview. Emotional fulfillment is measured here by the participant's self-reported feelings and their self-described maintenance strategies, which are likely related to their sense of fulfillment; we must, however, understand that emotional fulfillment could be defined differently depending on the individual.

This project examines how communication technologies have effected long-distance communication in romantic relationships. Specifically in the context of the participants being geographically close and knowing each other before the long-distance. It probes what qualities or maintenance strategies augment emotional satisfaction in long-distance communication and how specifically technologies are used in this process. I am examining the specific question: are long distance romantic relationships perceived to be emotionally fulfilling? And what roles does technology play in the maintenance strategies that allow or do not allow these relationships to be successful. More specifically questions for consideration include:

- 1) what are the strategies undergraduate students use to maintain romantic relationships through periodic phases of geographic separation (the academic school year September-May)

2) how effective are various technologically mediated forms of communication (texting, Skype, Facebook, etc) as strategies for maintaining romantic relationships (e.g. emotional support)

3) what are the rules and norms of technologically mediated communication.

Methods

Gathering participants

I recruited participants through a mass email that was sent to the entire university population. In it I included information about my project in order to allow potential respondents to self-identify to me. I then set up meetings with interested individuals through email. I also gathered participants through discussions of my project with friends and acquaintances, some of whom disclosed to me that they are in such relationships and expressed an interest in being interviewed. Through the interview process some participants disclosed that they had friends or acquaintances in similar situations and that they would pass along information about my study to them and let them self-identify to me in the event they were willing to participate. As a result of this snowballing technique, I was able to gather an additional interviewee.

Participants

My participants include seven university students in their early twenties from Grenfell Campus, Memorial University in Corner Brook. All of them knew and dated their long-distance significant other before the relationship going long-distance, in terms of the participants in their twenties this was always for school. I also interviewed one middle age women who was a mature student. The participants who agreed to participate in this study represented: female

heterosexuals in long-distance romantic relationships with males, and a male in a long-distance romantic relationship with another man. All of my participants were white and with the exception of the one male participant they were all female. The sex demographics of the interviewees who came forward are not surprising if you consider the fact that Grenfell Campus's undergraduate population is 70% female. Even if you discount the Western Regional School of Nursing which is included in the undergraduate population and is 90% female, even then Grenfell is still 66% or two-thirds female (Registrar's office of Grenfell Campus 2015).

Methodological Research Considerations

This study employs tape-recorded qualitative semi-structured interviews. Many university students as a result of needing to travel and live outside of their hometown for schooling, work or other opportunities, find themselves in long-distance relationships. As a result members of my identified focus population were readily available at Grenfell Campus.

Originally I was hoping to interview both males and females in long distance romantic relationships and in long distance friendships and then contrast the two. However, because of time restraints, a smaller friendship cohort, and a larger amount of data generated from the romantic relationships interviews, I decided to reduce the scope of my project. However, when I interviewed my participants the project was still being oriented towards contrasting the two types (romantic and friendship) of relationships. Recognizing the emotional nature of interpersonal relationships, the interview questions were framed broadly enough to allow individuals to describe and inject their personal experiences into one of these types of relationships. Originally, in order to avoid generalities and to allow for comparisons between the different groups (i.e. do females behave differently in long-distance friendships or romantic relationships with males?) I asked the participants to select their gender and pick from a list of relationship types and then

select one to discuss. Limiting the participant's interview to one type of relationship (i.e. not talking about long-distance romantic relationships and then friendships all in the same breath) I believed would have allowed me to better investigate which personal and emotional expectations individuals have in each relationship type and what strategies they employ based on that type.

Ethics

Since my project involved interviewing individuals about their personal friendships and romantic relationships the data could potentially contain sensitive information. As a result, many strategies were used to mitigate potential risk to participants. All participants signed a consent to participate in research form. Confidentiality was respected throughout the process and all interviews were conducted in a confidential setting. Pseudonyms (where preferred) were used to identify the participants in all communication of the study and no identifying details were used. The recordings of the interviews were destroyed following the release of final grades for the project; and my supervisor and I were the only ones who had access to the recordings. All email communications with participants, in order to set up meeting times or other related inquiries, were destroyed following the final completion of my project. Participants were reminded they are free to withdraw from the interview at any time. My supervisor approved by my interview questions and my research proposal was approved by the Social/Cultural Studies Department before any interviews are conducted. The Social/Cultural Studies Department and my supervisor served as my ethics review panel and the approval of my research proposal included an ethics review and approval by the unit. Before the interviews I verbally conveyed to participants the ethical guidelines outlined above and explained to them the topic of my research, what my research was examining, and I answered any questions they may have had. Since the discussion of interpersonal relationships could potentially trigger difficult emotions or questions, I made sure

that the contact information for the school counsellors was provided to my participants following their interview. I also provided my and my supervisor's contact information in case they had further questions or concerns. Finally I informed my participants that the final copy of my project will be included with the other student projects in a volume which will be preserved in the campus library.

I interviewed my participants in study rooms in the school library which provided a private setting for them to discuss these matters. All participants signed a permission form confirming their willingness to participate and they were provided with a form summarizing my research project, the scope of their participation, and how they could withdraw from the project. I also provided an opportunity for all participants to ask questions of my project before being interviewed. The contact information for the school counsellors was also included on the form summarizing my research due to the sensitive nature of interpersonal relationships. Due to time restrictions on my project I was not able to advertise my project as aggressively as I would have liked, if I had had the time to advertise it more than there could have been a possibility I would have gotten a more diverse group of individuals to self-identify, specifically more heterosexual male participants. Overall, there were no major issues with the collecting of data or the recruiting of participants.

Theoretical Framework

Giddens: Time-Space Distanciation

Time Space Distanciation as previously stated is interrelated with globalization because globalization produces the technological innovation that allows for geographical distance and the time associated with it to be compressed or, in other words, the gap between time and geographic

space becomes smaller as a result of technology and it therefore becomes distanced. In order to fully understand the concept of time-space distancing and how it is relevant to long-distance relationships we need to examine Anthony Giddens' writings on the topic.

Giddens argues in his 1991 book *Modernity and Self-Identity*, "Globalization concerns the intersection of presence and absence, the interlacing of social events and social relations 'at distance' with local contextualities. We should grasp the global spread of modernity in terms of an ongoing relation between distancing and the chronic mutability of local circumstances and local engagements". Giddens is stating that local contextualities such as the economy and by extension globalization allow technology to bridge the time gap between communications. For example, if one of my participants sends a text to their local distance significant other they know that they received it immediately and even if the other person cannot respond immediately they still know whatever piece of information was sent. Therefore, as Giddens states technology in long-distance communication "concerns the intersections of presence and absence" because while their long-distance other is physically absent the time-space distancing allows them to provide information to their other as quickly as if they were geographically close, this in turn allows for feelings of telepresence to emerge. Moreover, Giddens states in a later book:

The global nature of social interaction in the modern era has gone along with the invention of new media reducing the distances involved in presence-availability. The telephone, and television video techniques, do not of course achieve the full presence of parties to interaction characteristic of ordinary face-to-face encounters, but they do permit immediacy of time contact across indefinite spatial distance (Giddens 1995).

Giddens is stating here that the main benefit of technology is the immediacy of communication and this immediacy is at the center of time-space distancing, as a product of the compression of the time it takes to communicate through technology. Since telepresence is defined by being in communication through a technological medium which maintains most of

the emotional intimacy of face-to-face presence, we can also understand immediacy as being critical to the authentic functioning of telepresence in allowing it to mirror presence. Most interesting to my study, Giddens stated that the technologically mediated forms of communication “do not of course achieve the full presence of parties to interaction characteristic of ordinary face-to-face communication” (Giddens 1995). This observation supports the notion that face-to-face communication is more intimate than technologically mediated interaction, which, in my study, was a finding supported by my participants. But Giddens’ comments also support the notion I’ve proposed, that because of the geographic distance, maintenance tools such as technology and maintenance strategies (such as being able to share information instantly) are used to preserve the level of discourse so that participants continue to feel present.

What is implied by Giddens research is that the participants cannot expect that same level of interaction as they experience face-to-face, which is why I contend that reciprocation and commitment, and not just communication alone is necessary for the success of long-distance relationships. Perhaps this reality is why different maintenance strategies exist in long-distance communication versus geographically close relationships. Giddens’ theory supports this view to some degree, specifically time-space distancing being necessary if telepresence is to take place. By examining how technology has produced time-space distancing, and how time-space distancing allows telepresence to emerge, we can examine the maintenance strategies, specifically in terms of Hochschild’s feeling rules, which permit these relationships to be just as emotionally satisfying as geographically close ones.

Milne’s presence versus telepresence

In the field of long-distance communication, how the physical distance between people effects a relationship is the primary concern of many researchers, specifically sociologists. In this

regard, the concepts of presence and telepresence becomes relevant for understanding how technology allows one to feel like they are with another person when they are physically apart and communicating through technology (telepresence). Esther Milne, an Associate Professor of Media and Communications defines presence as “the degree to which geographically dispersed agents experience a sense of physical and/or psychological proximity through the use of particular communication technologies” (Milne 2003). Milne is thus stating that technologically mediated forms of communication have to have a psychological element of presence in order for them to be successful in presenting a more “human” experience to the users. Milne expands upon this definition by citing the work of Communications scholar Jonathan Steuer who states, “presence refers to the experience of natural surroundings...in which sensory input impinges directly upon the organs of sense”. For example, in face-to-face communication physical gestures such as hand movements and facial expressions can be used to denote emotion and presence. These types of physical reactions and systems of emotional communication would be all but missing in long-distance communication. Steuer goes on to define telepresence as “the experience of presence in an environment by means of a communication medium” (Milne 2003). In Steuer’s definition of telepresence, social media such as Skype, Snapchat, and Facebook, along with other technologically mediated means such as phone calls and texting can be understood as communication mediums through which the construction of the feelings of presence can take place. Steuer’s model has been criticized for its reliance on the dichotomy that presence is more “natural” and “real” while telepresence is “mediated” or “less organic” (Milne 2003). However, since face-to-face communication and geographically close relationships continue to be the norm Steuer’s model of presence versus telepresence appears to be accurate.

In my research I pose the question about which form of communication participants prefer, face-to-face or technologically mediated, and the overwhelming answer was face-to-face. While different maintenance strategies using technology (such as face-to-face web cam) can reduce the feelings of telepresence and make the communication seem more natural; all of my long-distance romantic relationship participants stated the understanding that long-distance to them is only a temporary situation or means of communication until they can be geographically close again, with that always being the norm and goal.

Milne references how presence and time-space distancing are interrelated, in stating: “as a result of the rapid flow of data through digital information systems, distance appears to shrink and time seems to collapse.” Citing American Philosophy professor Michael R. Heim she asserts that “the speed up of communication and the concomitant perception of a collapsing time and space will often produce an intense, quasi-spiritual sense of presence: through the computer, thought seems to come across like a flowing stream from mind to mind” (Milne 2003). Specifically in long-distance communication, as a result of texting, social media, such as Facebook and Snapchat, individuals can be in communication with their long-distance other continuously. This continuous availability provokes feelings of emotional closeness, as the communication has not stopped producing feelings of “telepresence”. Telepresence in turn, is significant to my study because as a result of technologically mediated means of communication the telepresence maintains many degrees of the emotional closeness of presence (geographically close).

Technology allows for time-space distancing by providing instantaneous communication, and this ability in turn creates telepresence because the communication is available, and this telepresence in turn is primarily successful because the constant availability

allows it to maintain much of the emotional satisfaction of presence. For example, in terms of my research with long distance communication, my participants have the ability to text, Snapchat or Facebook message their long-distance other whenever they please, and because of the nature of social media the other individual has that information but can respond to it whenever they have time. So the constant ability to share information as it happens creates the time-space distanciation, which is even more important for creating a sense of intimacy in long-distance relationships. This sense of intimacy and emotional connection as a result creates telepresence. Since they can share information as quickly as if the person was physically with them, as long as their communication is reciprocated (which would be the norm in successful long-distance relationships, failure to do so may lead the relationship to decline) than the individual can feel just as much emotional satisfaction as if the person was geographically “present”. The combination of the use of technology as a maintenance tool and regular communication as a maintenance strategy allows for levels of emotional satisfaction similar to if the individual was actually geographically close or physically present. This in turn allows these long-distance relationships to be successful.

Milne argues “presence is dependent on (and in part created by) rhetorical strategies and effects such as intimacy, immediacy, spontaneity and disembodiment” (Milne 2003). Therefore, as I argued the use of technology as a maintenance tool creates feelings of intimacy and presence equal to the emotion satisfaction of physical presence. However, this ability to use technology to create this level of emotional satisfaction is based in the participants ability to use maintenance tools and strategies which can also be understood as boundaries or “feeling rules” to maintain regular communication with each other, thus allowing for emotional reciprocation.

Feeling Rules as Theory: Hochschild

American Sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild studies the ways in which individuals manage their emotions in their personal lives and how people perform emotional labor in the workplace. In this context Hochschild provides a concept she has dubbed “feeling rules”, or the socially constructed and culturally appropriate ways in which we express our emotions to others. Hochschild contends that cultural influences shape the way we communicate our emotions to others. She says, “We feel. We try to feel. We want to try to feel. The social guidelines that direct how we want to try to feel may be describable as a set of socially shared, albeit often latent (not thought about unless probed at), rules” (Hochschild 97). Hochschild then poses the important sociological question, “in what way, ... are these rules themselves known and how are they developed?” (Hochschild 97). Through examining why we are taught to feel certain emotions and to express them only in certain places or situations we begin to see how these socially constructed rules around emotions start to emerge.

If we also examine the socialization process of North Americans, with a focus on the social construction of gender and the pressures to conform, we start to see how these norms emerge. Hochschild states that evidence of feeling rules can be seen in the fact that “we often talk about feelings or those of others as if rights and duties applied directly to them” (Hochschild 97). Hochschild cites as examples, the fact that we say “we have the right to be angry at someone” or that we “should feel more grateful” when someone helps us or something positive happens. Hochschild also states that feeling rules are socially taught based on people’s reactions to our emotions. She states, “we know feeling rules, too, from how others react to what they infer from our emotive display” (Hochschild 97). Here I examine how feeling rules or the notion that there is a time and place for certain communication are affected by technology and how this

changes emotional expectations. For example, one of my research participants gave the example of understanding that if your partner has a big test tomorrow and they cannot call you the night before this is all right because your partner has other stressful considerations. This example is different from geographically close contexts because the physical distance and more limited time to communicate make these limited communications very important. Examples like these highlight how boundaries are constructed in long-distance relationships and how such relationships demand differently constructed feeling rules.

It is important to understand that we adjust our emotions based on the reactions of others in order to ensure social desirability and conformity. Hochschild provides an example of this by stating: “you shouldn’t feel guilty: it wasn’t your fault” or “you don’t have a right to feel jealous given our agreement”. Hochschild states that these claims and social sanctions can be seen as “rule reminders” (Hochschild 97). Hochschild also discusses the role of social sanctions around feeling rules, she states: “at other times, a person may, in addition, chide, tease, cajole, scold, shun—in a word sanction—us for misfeeling”. Hochschild contends, “such sanctions are a clue to the rules they are meant to enforce” (Hochschild 97). For example, in a long-distance situation if one partner is doing all of the communicating and the other person is not reciprocating this could be the violation of a feeling rule. Through social sanctions in the form of negative reactions and ridicule to certain emotions individuals come to learn “feeling rules” and in turn change their behavior to accommodate these rules in order to eliminate the social sanctions and to increase social desirability. The quest for social desirability and validation is key to understanding human approaches to emotions. This has specific significance in relation to long-distance relationships because in relationships we want to provide the best image of ourselves possible in order to gain emotional validation and approval from the other person.

Hochschild also examines how feeling rules are influenced and shaped by “framing rules”, which are related to and part of ideology. By framing rules Hochschild means “rules according to which we ascribe definition or meanings to situations” (Hochschild 99). As an example, Hochschild cites a man being fired from his job. The man can understand this situation as the result of a personal failure or heartless capitalism. The way the man frames the situation will influence what emotions the man feels and how he reacts. Therefore, Hochschild argues that framing and feeling rules “mutually imply each other. They stand back to back” (Hochschild 99). Hochschild states that framing rules are also unpinned by the notion that “when an individual changes an ideological stance, he or she drops old rules and assumes new ones for reacting to situations, cognitively and emotively” (Hochschild 99).

In terms of my research, the use of technology for long-distance interpersonal communication can be understood as providing new framing rules and reconfiguring old ones. As a result of this ideological change, as Hochschild argues, “A sense of rights and duties applied to feelings in situations is also changed. One uses emotional sanctions differently and accepts different sanctioning from others” (Hochschild 97). Hochschild provides the example of how in America feeling rules have differed for men and women because of assumptions that their natures differ basically (Hochschild 99). In terms of my research, I am examining how the emergence of mass use of communication technology changes the emotional expectations or sanctions in long-distance relationships. In relation to Hochschild I am specifically interested in how such technologies have changed the sense of rights or duties in the maintenance strategies used by individuals, with a specific focus on how these changes influence emotional satisfaction.

Hochschild also discusses how this change in framing rules affects feeling rules. She states “one can defy an ideological stance not simply by maintaining an alternative frame on a

situation but by maintaining an alternative set of feeling rights and obligations” (Hochschild 99). Hochschild states that some sets of feeling rules succeed and others dwindle depending on the social norms of the time; for example, how the feminist movement has reconstructed interpersonal relationships in North America. She states, “sets of feeling rules contend for a place in people’s minds as a governing standard with which to compare their actual lived experience” (Hochschild 100). In this sense, since long-distance is the not norm for interpersonal communication, the feeling rules and expectations associated with long-distance communication can be seen as negotiating a new set of standards to live their experiences by outside the norm of face-to-face communication. This new set of standards can be understood in terms of new maintenance strategies which are shaped by these new feeling rules. By examining these maintenance strategies I can better understand how these relationships are able to succeed, specifically in terms of their emotional satisfaction. In Hochschild’s terms, technology can be understood then first and foremost as providing a new frame in which interpersonal interactions to exist. This in turn leads to the creation of new feeling rules and expectations.

Hochschild discusses how feeling rules are related to social exchange. Hochschild’s definition of social change describes how norms around reciprocity affect our feelings. She states that “any gesture—a cool greeting, an appreciative laugh, the apology for an outburst—is measured against a prior sense of what is reasonably owed another, given the sort of bond involved” (Hochschild 100). These bonds, in turn, influence the formation of relationships, and therefore reciprocity, which in turn affects the feeling rules used. Reciprocation thus becomes increasingly important in long-distance communication, as it is one of the only ways to maintain the relationship, since for example other avenues such as doing activities together or seeing each other in school are not available.

We can understand reciprocity as having to actively plan and take time out of your day to maintain the relationship, for example with daily phone conversations. Reciprocity is important to my study because over long distances it can mean taking additional time out of your normal day to maintain the relationship. Given that, for instance, many of my participants cannot enjoy the convenience of seeing each other directly or daily, as they once did when they attended school together or lived in the same place, when they would see each other in their daily mundanities, the dynamics of making time for one another changes with distance. Therefore, what the couple engages in is maintenance strategies in order to maintain their relationship and progress. As previously stated, how communication technology is used in these strategies and what type of expectations and feeling rules they produce, allows me to probe the question of whether or not these relationships are emotionally satisfying and if so how are they maintained?

In her research on emotions Hochschild also discusses the use of gestures, which is relevant to my study if we consider gestures as forms of negotiated reciprocation. We can understand the negotiation of this reciprocation as being the basis that the new feeling rules are developed on and inform the maintenance strategies. Gesture in terms of long-distance communication could be understood as answering a text or phone message right away or other forms of reciprocating emotional labour. Hochschild states, “it is an exchange of display acts—of the surface acting—and an exchange of emotional work—of deep acting. In either case, rules (display rules or feeling rules), once agreed upon, establish the worth of a gesture and are thus used in social exchange to measure the worth of emotional gestures” (Hochschild 100). Through ascribing emotional meaning or feeling rules to gestures it is possible for individuals to see possible problems with the relationship when these gestures and the feeling rules associated with them are not normatively performed. Gestures also allow individuals a code for communicating

their emotions to each other through agreed upon norms and in turn can be reciprocated. If long-distance communication, particularly in romantic relationships, requires different forms of feeling rules in order to cope with the use of communication technology as their primary maintenance tool, then gestures can be understood as the negotiation and practice of these new rules.

Gestures reflect what types of interactions or emotional needs are most important to couples and therefore set the basis for shaping the feeling rules and maintenance strategies they use. Hochschild argues that in understanding these social exchanges, the individual takes the “owed” feeling to heart and thus takes it seriously, producing a response that is in line with the feeling rule governing that situation. This is the social basis of reciprocation and relational maintenance. Hochschild also references the commodification of feelings. She asks the question “why do we feel in ways appropriate to the situation as much of the time as we do?” (Hochschild 102). She contends that the reason our feelings are so often appropriate to the situation is because we try to manage how we feel in accordance with emotional or “feeling” rules shaped by social norms and enforced by social sanctions. In my research this idea of managing feelings is interesting in relation to how individuals cope when their levels of emotional satisfaction are below what they desire. By examining the role of feeling rules in shaping our emotional communication we can see how they shape maintenance strategies and in turn how these strategies are adapted or maintained to affect the success of long-distance relationships.

Findings

At the beginning of my study I proposed three themes I wanted to examine in relation to technology and long-distance relationships. These themes were firstly, the strategies undergraduate students use to maintain romantic relationships through periodic phases of

geographic separation (the academic school year September-May); secondly, the effectiveness of various technologically mediated forms of communication (texting, Skype, Facebook, etc) as strategies for maintaining romantic relationships (e.g. emotional support); and finally, the rules and norms of technologically mediated communication.

The first theme I examine is the strategies my participants use to maintain their romantic relationships during periodic phrases of geographic separation, in my study these periods are most clearly defined by the academic school year. My participants use a concept best described as the “countdown”—keeping track and counting down the days until you will see you’re long-distance significant other again—to help them cope with the distance. Likewise, my participants stated how having regular visits, when you know you are going to see each other face-to-face, is critical for the maintenance of long-distance romantic relationships. One of participants Lillian, a female in her early twenties with a long-distance boyfriend outside of North America stated that the countdown is important for establishing, through regular visits, the state of the relationship in terms of whether or not the geographic distance is only temporary. Lillian states:

LILLIAN: the countdown is very important and like also it works throughout, it really does but the countdown is nice. Like I think I’d still work even if it was a super long countdown but the countdown is important but also like you said it develops to a point where is this temporary? I think it kind of needs to be temporary in the end, you need to have some hope that it’s like well do I want this to become temporary and when you get to the point when your like yes I want this to be temporary then it has to be because you can’t spend the rest of your life wanting to be with someone.

Another participant, Lauren, a female in her early twenties with a long-distance boyfriend within the province (seven hours away) whom she had dated for a lengthy amount of time before they became long-distance, spoke of how important regular visits are. When I asked her how she and her partner reconcile the geographic distance between them she stated:

We talk a lot, and we'll be on the phone and we'll watch movies together like while on the phone so we can hear each other's reactions to it or watch YouTube videos. We try like, when I'm there I meet his friends and like when he's here he meets my friends and we all hangout together. I'm going out there Friday and like we are going to a party with his friends Friday night. But we just do the best we can really, because I mean there's no way like I'm ever going to be able to reconcile the fact that I can't just go and get a coffee with him or go get lunch with him at random. But I think that if you love someone, it's just worth it. And there's going to be one day when we're going to be together again and we can go get a cup of coffee.

My participants also stated that long distance romantic relationships involve a need for day to day communication, many of my participants stated that they talk every night and send text or Facebook messages throughout the day. Regular communication was found to be a maintenance strategy. Lauren discussed how day-to-day communication is in her view part of prioritizing the relationship. She states how regular communication is a strategy use to continue to make you feel like you're part of the other person's life. When I asked her what "prioritizing" looks like for her in her relationship she responded,

Well, we call each other every day, and we text each other throughout the day, like sending each other good morning texts, like I hope you have a good day or just letting him know that I'm thinking of him and or that he's thinking of me. Like setting aside time to call him and just hear his voice and let him hear mine and just listen about how his day is going, listening about what's going on with school or what's going on with his friends or what he did on Saturday night. And not just focusing on me all the time when someone else wants my attention.

Lisa, a mature student at Grenfell Campus in her mid-forties with a long-distance boyfriend outside the province states how she will leave voice messages for him every day when he is at work in order to show that she is thinking of him. She also mentions how they normally talk on the phone as he is driving to work. She states that these communication habits become a strategy and do require work to maintain. She states:

It works but it does take some effort, like I do have to make a point of texting him everyday. I actually have a habit of every morning when I get up which is obviously hours before he gets up, I leave a message on his work phone, so six days a week I normally don't do it on Sundays, a lot of times I'll do it on Saturdays as well, I'll leave a

little message for him on work phone, which is his private number, wishing him, you know a great day or telling him something fun or something I like about him, or love about him, or be naughty on the phone just anything. And if I miss a morning doing that he's like you didn't leave a message. So it's kind of like I have to work with him to do that. Whereas sometimes it just very natural to call him in the evening to talk about what I'm doing with homework or when I'm doing the dishes, and for him its very natural to call me 11:30 in the morning which is 8 o'clock his time, but if I say hey you can't call me tomorrow because I'm going to be here and I'm not going to have my phone on me. He finds it very awkward to drive to work, without calling me without me there talking to me. But it's like so funny that even if he knows he can't talk to me he'll call and leave a message on my phone....but that still takes work, it becomes a habit, but it still takes work you want to be with someone.

The second theme I examined with my participants is the effectiveness of various technologically mediated forms of communication (texting, Skype, Facebook, etc) as strategies for maintaining these romantic relationships. Overall, the participants expressed that they were emotionally satisfied and content with their relationship. My participants even claimed that their relationship were just as emotionally fulfilling as geographically close relationships. When asked how emotionally satisfied she was with her long-distance relationship, for example, Lillian said she felt more emotion and satisfaction in her long-distance relationship than a previous relationship she had which was geographically close (same place). In fact Lillian told me that she was "very emotionally satisfied".

I was in a real relationship [geographically close] that was really positive there was nothing really negative about it but it was just like I sign up for an awesome contract deal were it just really worked. There was no real feeling, it's very strange this is long distance but I have more feeling, like more butterflies, more emotion than when I was in a real person relationship...with someone who's here all the time. That you would argue was realer so it should have felt realer but it didn't, it felt like neutral, I was happy but I don't know definitely more feeling.

Lauren too states that while there are some downsides to long-distance, such as seeing each other less, she is very satisfied with her relationship and would not end it just for someone geographically close. She states:

I'm very satisfied like obviously there's part of me, like you know it hurt because I'm not with my boyfriend because obviously I love him and I want to be with him to go see movies and go do regular couple things, you know what I mean. There are days were I think, oh I want to go out and get lunch and I wish he could be here and we could just go get lunch together but in term of like, I still feel happy I don't feel like I'm missing out or my life sucks. I'm still very content in my relationship I would never just break up with him to date someone who was here. Like long-distance has never been a reason for me to break up with him.

All of my participants believed that their relationship could grow/evolve even with the geographical distance, in other words stating that they felt relational advancement is possible under these conditions. Lillian states that with the geographic distance between her and her boyfriend at first she did not believe relational growth was possible but after spending more time in the relationship and seeing it grow even with the distance she changed her mind. She states:

I was really worried in the beginning about if things could grow with you being apart, I didn't think that that was possible, but now I think it's possible. Like I think sometimes you might, like I don't know what's going to happen in the future. I think you could hit a slump and you need to focus more so on the maintaining but I think it can grow, I really do. I like him more now...like I see him sometimes now but I like him more now than I did than when were together when we first started. So it must be able to grow.

Lauren states that since individuals in long-distance relationships are still growing as individuals while they're apart they are still maturing as people and these experiences allow the relationship to grow and evolve because the people in them are still changing. Lauren also states that in her experience the communication increased after initially adjusting to long-distance and that with time this skill has improved and this aids the growth of the relationship. She states:

I think it can definitely grow or evolve because were changing, because were not together we are still growing as people. I think we can still grow together while being physically apart...like things get better and better in terms of communication because when he first moved away we definitely didn't talk as much as we do now because we were both so busy and it was hard to adjust and realizing how we had to make each other more of a significant priority...cause before it was like we hangout all the time, it's no big deal, I

don't need to call you everyday, I don't need to text you 24/7, cause we hanging out. We went to school together five days a week and then we hungout Friday and Saturday.

All of my participants stated hypothetically that if their long-distance relationships were so open-ended that there was no guarantee that they would ever be geographically close again, that they believed that they would not be able to stay in their relationship or they would question staying in the relationship. Lillian states that at the beginning of her relationship even a large period of time like a year before seeing her boyfriend again would have been too much. She states she could probably handle that amount of time now but states that at some point their needs to be an end point to the long-distance. She states:

I kind of said I wouldn't be his girlfriend unless he was going to come see me. Cause I don't think I could do that, I'm just a very pessimistic person and I'm like...the countdown is important, now I would be able to. Right now after this long time, knowing that the long-distance works if it was like I can't see you for another year, I could probably deal with that. If it was the beginning, I don't know if I could have dealt with that, it would have been too hard. Even saying a year puts an end on it...now I would probably be able to deal with that, back then no I couldn't deal with that.

When asked specifically, all of my participants stated that they always understood and continue to believe that long-distance is only a temporary situation and that the ultimate goal is always to be face-to-face, in a geographically close relationship. Lauren reiterated this in stating that long-distance, in her opinion, cannot replace human interaction. She states:

Yeah, like that's the thing emotional intimacy is everything when it comes to long-distance I think because obviously physical intimacy is not there like I can't hold his hand, I can't do anything, like what am I going to do hold my phone close at night. But no I mean, I just think obviously as an end goal we are both grown up and mature adults and together in the end. You know what I mean like we're not doing distance anymore.

All of my participants also stated that face-to-face is a preferable form of communication to technology. Johannah, a female in her early twenties who is in a long-distance relationship with an individual within the province discusses how technology is helpful in allowing them to continue the relationship but she sees technologically mediated forms of communication as being temporary, until they are geographically close again. She states:

Best form is always face-to-face, the long-distance part and the technology part, I think is viewed by both of us as a temporary situation. Like this isn't going to be our entire relationship. This is just one part of it. And it's good that we are still able to use the technology to talk to each other because I think it would be worst if you had no contact with that person at all.

A third theme that developed from my findings is a focus on the rules and norms that are produced from technologically mediated communication. My participants stated that as a result of limited time to communicate the phone calls that are had therefore involve much more disclosure and emotional intimacy and are much more emotionally serious. My participants say this is one way for romantic couples to learn more about each other and to maintain some intimacy. Lisa, for example, describes how these in-depth conversations can sometimes lead to temporary feelings of emptiness following them because the individual is not there with you.

There's a night when we have every in-depth conversation and then we have to say goodnight because it's 5:30 my time so 2AM one night, and he said we got to go you need some sleep and I said oh no I'll be fine but when we hang up it's kind of like a bit of emptiness cause he's not here with me he's up there [Alberta]. So it's not easy but it's worth it at the same time.

Most of my participants also stated that in romantic relationships, trust and emotional intimacy are among the most important characteristics for making their long-distance situation successful. Daniel, a male in his early twenties in a romantic relationship with another man living in the

same province states that because individuals in long-distance relationships cannot be physically together every day and are changing as individuals during the time apart, trust is crucial in maintaining the relationship. He states:

It's kind of hard to think of a characteristic but I know in my experience when he first left we were only going out for a couple months...I feel like the more time we spent apart the more time we've had to kind of talk on more personal levels. Because like I said the biggest factor is the trust thing because you don't talk to them every day in person. And then when you do see them it's like a whole new experience, like both people have changed so much and you kind of have to get to know all the new things about them. So I feel like you're constantly adapting to new things about the person and I think it keeps it more fresh, the relationship sort of thing. Like it doesn't get boring cause if you're with someone every single day, then you just kind of see them you don't get to see like the changes that they go through or the things they experience but if you spend time apart and come back together than you do get to see them.

Lisa is likewise concerned about trust, stating how being able to trust her boyfriend to remain committed to her while she is not physically with him is important for her in maintaining those feelings of personal intimacy.

Yeah, it's the communication, you have to know that, I don't think you could sustain a relationship were you talk to someone once a week or once a month. Like in today's technology you have instant access to someone, he and I are very lucky we are in the same country but then you have to think about people who are dealing with partner who are in the army or we'll say the military were they cannot talk to them every day and like that must be ten times harder than what he and I are going through but for us it's definitely communication and various forms of communication and having private jokes, like I can send him a picture of something stupid and he'll know exactly what I mean by it. You need that personal intimacy but you need the loyalty and the trust to know that if he decides he's going out with the boys for the night, I'll joke with him and say hey you going to go to see the strippers don't forget to take some small bills and we'll laugh about it, because I know he would never do that and I know he would never cheat on me. We have that honesty between us that I know what he's doing, I know where he is, I know what he's doing, I know his work colleagues. It just happens that we live in two different provinces at this moment.

My middle aged participant Lisa also stated that because she is older she uses technology differently than the participants in their twenties. Specifically she uses more private forms of communication, such as phone calls and posts less information on public domains such as Facebook. She told me,

We don't do so much Facebook because Facebook is such a public domain, that we tend to do things privately; we do FaceTime, we do emails, and text messages rather than professing how feel about each other in the equivalent of an electronic newspaper. Because nothing is safe or secure on Facebook. So yeah, and things can be misconstrued on Facebook, so like we both have Facebook but we don't communicate through it.

When I probed her a little more about the private forms of communication she chose to use, and about her preference for them Lisa said:

Yeah, like were older I'm forty-six and he's forty-seven he'll be forty-eight soon, were not kids were not going to be posting stupid stuff on Facebook. He posts things about his kids, I might post something about my dogs or share something I see on Facebook but we don't communicate there. I think we are at a different point in our lives and we don't need that sort of silliness... I have a sixteen year old niece, she and her boyfriend I think he's sixteen or seventeen, there always posting photos of each other, hugging and kissing, and all these self-portraits which is great because their sixteen, seventeen. I can't see myself and my partner ever doing that because there that age group and were at our age group. Just the stuff that he and I talk about is completely different than what my niece and her boyfriend talk about. Yeah, different things, were both couples but we have different things in common.

In interviewing Daniel, I found no differences between how homosexual and heterosexuals use technology to maintain their relationships. In my conversation with Daniel there was also no confirmation that same-sex couples would be more likely to be in a long-distance situation because of a more limited selection of partners. I asked specifically whether he felt long-distance was more of a likelihood for same sex couples because of fewer options to meet people in a

small community. Daniel said that he thought so, “maybe...so you’re asking do you feel like the long-distance relationship is more vital because there’s not many options around here?”

I never really thought of that before. Um, I guess it kind of makes sense though, like if you come across someone I guess there is less chance that you’d find someone you’d want to be in a relationship with than once you kind of do then you don’t just want to kind of just say of that’s find I’ll just have another boyfriend or whatever. I feel that’s kind of a very detached like unemotional way of thinking about it but I know like with me and my boyfriend like even if there were like a million other options around I don’t think I’d want to break it off with him. Once you establish a connection with someone it’s really hard to just say like this isn’t going to work because you’re moving away...I never really thought about. I guess for some people it may be like that, like oh I’m not going to find someone else around here so I have to make it work with you. But I don’t think that’s one of the pressures that held me to want to maintain a long-distance relationship, personally.

Through analysing the strategies used to maintain these romantic relationships, the effectiveness of technologically mediated forms of communication, and the new feelings rules and norms the technologically mediated communication produces we can understand the interconnection between time-space distancing, telepresence and feeling rules. Specifically we can more clearly see how the unique feeling rules produced are the product of time-distancing and telepresence.

Discussion/Analysis

Strategies Used to Maintain the Relationship: Time-Space Distancing

I first turn my attention to the strategies undergraduate students use to maintain romantic relationships through periodic phases of geographic separation (the academic school year September-May). My participants discussed their use of a concept they described as the “countdown”. As discussed above, this strategy helped them cope with the distance. Likewise,

my participants also stated that daily communication is important for the maintenance of long-distance romantic relationships. In terms of the countdown, a study by Salhstein (2004) found nine characteristics that were related to how spending time together (visits) had a positive influence on the time spent apart from one another. The fifth, and for my purposes the most important characteristic, was anticipation, which was described as: “partners report that the time together creates a basis for feeling excited when they are apart for the next time they are together. They construct something to look forward to while they are separate...” (Salhstein 2004). According to Salhstein, the countdown could be understood as a form of anticipation, as the feeling of closeness and excitement increases the closer the individual is to the date of seeing their significant other again. Likewise, the countdown is simply a way of codifying the anticipation the individuals have about being able to see one another again and being able to express these feelings in a socially prescribed way. The anticipation provided by the countdown could also be understood as a way of creating a sense of closeness or intimacy by focusing on how they will soon be physically close. These feelings of closeness are likely the product of time-space distancing, as the individuals are actively distancing (distancing themselves from) the gap between time and physical distance by focusing on how close they are about to come instead of focusing on the underlying geographic distance.

Sigman (1991) argues that relationships are maintained in a number of ways, such as in the absence of physical presence. Sigman states “relationships are not only constructed in the face-to-face interactions between partners, but are also stretched across time and space between face-to-face interactions” (Salhstein 2004). The countdown would be one example of how the feelings of emotional closeness of face-to-face are “stretched” or “preserved” between times of

physical presence (visits). One of my participants Lillian describes how important the countdown is for mitigating the temporary feeling of long-distance. She states:

The countdown is very important and like also it works throughout, it really does but the countdown is nice. Like I think I'd still work even if it was a super long countdown but the countdown is important but also like you said it develops to a point where is this temporary? I think it kind of needs to be temporary in the end, you need to have some hope that it's like well do I want this to become temporary and when you get to the point when your like yes I want this to be temporary then it has to be because you can't spend the rest of your life wanting to be with someone.

The feeling of closeness that time-space distancing produces through the countdown it also creates an additional sense that the time-space gap between the two individuals is only temporary because it creates a mind-set of always looking forward to the next time you and your significant other are going to be together. The countdown alters our regular understandings of time and geographic distance because it provides a social and psychological mindset through which feelings of anticipated closeness can overpower and downplay negative feelings about the distance. This positive anticipation of the future could be a reason why levels of emotional satisfaction in long-distance relationships are similar to those of geographically close relationships despite the distance.

One of my participants Lauren discussed how day-to-day communication is in her view part of prioritizing the relationship. She states how technologically mediated forms of communication, in her case texting, allows her to share information with her boyfriend instantly making her feel like they are in communication. She states:

Because if I think of anything I want to tell him, I'll just text him and he'll text me back at some point but he knows what I'm thinking. We'll just talk about it together, like if I get a bad mark on a test I'll text him and I know he'll see it and he knows I'm upset about it.

In Lauren's case her ability to use texting to provide her boyfriend with information immediately, even if he cannot respond right away highlights the use of technological mediated

means through time-space distancing to produce feelings of closeness. Specifically as a result of the fact that Lauren's boyfriend knows the information instantly, and even if he cannot respond instantly, Lauren still has the feeling of sharing that information with him and knowing he is aware of what is happening in her life. In Lauren's case, without texting or other instantaneous forms of technology she would have to wait until her boyfriend was free and then call him or use the more impersonal method of leaving a phone message. If Lauren had to use these other methods there would have been a time gap between the event and when she was able to tell her boyfriend about it. By distancing the time-space gap, Lauren can share information with her boyfriend, as easily as if he was just down the hall even when he is seven hours away. This ability helps to create feelings of closeness because the time-space gap becomes similar to if you had a geographically close boyfriend or friend and just did not see them every day. While, one could argue that these feelings of time-space distancing could therefore be just as real in geographically close relationships since information can be shared instantaneously, I would argue that the geographic distance between long-distance couples makes this ability more significant.

The Effectiveness of Technologically Mediated Communication: Telepresence

Many of the feelings of emotional closeness that emerge in long-distance relationships are the result of time-space distancing but also involve telepresence. The distancing of time and geographic distance through technology allows for feelings of presence (telepresence) to take place through technological mediation. Communication Scholar Jonathan Steuer defines telepresence as: "the experience of presence in an environment by means of a communication medium" (Milne 2003). In Steuer's definition of telepresence, social media –such as Skype, Snapchat and Facebook, along with other technologically mediated means such as phone calls

and texting --can be understood as communication mediums through which the construction of the feelings of presence can take place. This conceptualization of telepresence is helpful in examining the effectiveness of various technologically mediated forms of communication (texting, Skype, Facebook, etc) as strategies for maintaining romantic relationships. The participants in my study were emotionally satisfied and content with their relationships. Interestingly, my participants even claimed that their relationships were just as emotionally fulfilling as geographically close relationships. My participants made this assessment based on their previous experience of dating while geographically which thus allowed them to compare the two experiences. While some could argue that my participants would be more likely to speak of their relationship positively because they want it to succeed, this reality is more likely based on the fact that people in successful relationships are likely more willing to talk about them with researchers. However, Sahlstein (2004) acknowledges that idealization of the relationship by overlooking negative aspects may also be an issue. She states: "idealization is the concept of perceiving one's relationship through a positive frame and mainly occurs when the relational partners are not in physical presence with each other". Stafford and Reske (1990) reported that partners in long-distance romantic relationships idealize their relationships more than individuals in geographically close relationships. Stafford and Reske argue that this is likely because with more restrictions on communication individuals in long-distance make the best of their communications and instead focused on more positive aspects of the relationships. This perceptual bias may play a role in why my participants found their relationships to be as satisfying as geographically close ones. However, I do not believe that idealization plays a notable role for my informants. It is also likely that my participants were in successful relationships to begin with and were therefore more willing to discuss them. Many of the

participants gave similar answers which also supports this assertion. Lisa states how the use of web-cam mediated technology, such as Face-Time, allows her to feel like she and her boyfriend are in the presence of each other even when they are in separate provinces because they can see what the other one is doing. She described an example of such interaction as follows:

Yeah, like there's times we will have FaceTime [web-cam mediated face-to-face technology] going and one night he was folding laundry but we were still talking and laughing and I was doing something as well, so he could look over the screen and see I was, I think was doing embroidery or playing with my dog or something. So he could see what I was doing and I could see what he was doing, he was folding laundry and putting it away and we were still talking and laughing. So that's kind of almost as good as being there because we were interacting and at times he's been cooking, and yeah it's fun I have to say.

In Lisa's experience FaceTime allows her to experience situations similar to physical presence with her boyfriend, such as seeing each other doing the laundry, cooking, or playing with her dog. Lisa can use technology like FaceTime to create experiences similar to the two of them were living together. She can thus use these experiences to maintain a sense of intimacy even though the intimacy of being geographically close is not available. The telepresence resulting from the distancing of the time-space gap, as with FaceTime, causes the time and geographic distance to become a non-issue through the immediacy of seeing each other. The shared presence and the intimacy it creates allows for feelings of closeness, causing telepresence to occur. The reason why Lisa states that FaceTime is "almost as good as being there" is because the telepresence created through the use of FaceTime maintains most of the emotional and some of the visual contact of geographic closeness allowing for maintenance of feelings of intimacy.

Despite Lisa's perception, one of my participants Lauren discusses the qualities of being geographically close that telepresence cannot maintain, such as the organicness of being able to just see your boyfriend whenever you please, and how as a result you have to make time to give the other person attention in order to maintain the relationship. She states:

I think that when you're in the same physical town it's easy because you can just text each other and be you can be together, you can drive ten minutes and be with your significant other. But when you're doing long-distance you have to set out time in your day to call that person. Or I mean, even if you live in the same house, like you see that person all the time, you see them when you wake up in the morning, when you go to bed, at supper time, whatever but when you're in long-distance it's not like that you know. You really have to focus on giving that person attention because if you don't then there just no point.

My participants thus suggested that there are some limits to the effectiveness of telepresence, such as telepresence not replacing face-to-face intimacy. My participants stated also that they review long-distance as a temporary situation and that if their relationships would remain permanently long-distance they do know if they would stay in them. They also stated that face-to-face communication is always a better form of communication over technologically mediated means.

These findings show that technology is still reviewed as “the other” or “the lesser of two evils” when it comes to communicating and that being geographically close is the best way to maintain a long term relationship. However, my participants did also state that they believe their relationships could grow during a long-distance separation and, as previously discussed, they stated they feel emotionally satisfied in their long distance relationship. So while technologically mediated forms of communication cannot replace face-to-face communication permanently, it does appear to be just as successful as face-to-face communication during periodic times of geographic separation.

In a 2004 study of undergraduate students at a major American university in the Midwest Salhstein (2004) interview 20 heterosexual couples living between 70 to 5600 miles apart in which the individuals had been dating for on average two years of which 1 year was long-

distance and 90% of them were Caucasian. She found when examining the theme of “being apart is also a constraint on the time long-distance partners spend together” that the most popular subcategory that emerged from the participants self-reports was “pressure for quality/positive time” (46%) (Salhstein 2004). This finding is significant if we consider it in terms of Lauren’s experience, that maintaining a long-distance relationship requires paying attention to the person because if you do not then in her opinion it would not work. One could argue that the relationship would not work without regular communication and reciprocation because without it most of the intimacy and communication that comes to form telepresence would be missing from the relationship. Similarly, Holt and Stone (1988) found that those long-distance couples that visited at least once a month reported greater satisfaction than those visiting less often than once a month (Salhstein 2004). So generally, it could be argued that there is a link between the amount of time invested in emotional labour and the subsequent success of the relationship. However, Guldner (1992) along with Stafford and Reske (1990) have found that long-distance couples have similar breakup rates equal to or less than those of geographically close couples, despite long-distance couples spending significantly less time together (Salhstein 2004). In order to understand how long-distance couples reconcile the reduced communication and how some still manage to find their relationships emotionally satisfying we need to consider how emotional expectations and feeling rules are formed and negotiated across a long-distance.

Rules and Norms of Technologically Mediated Communication: Hochschild

Long-distance relationships do produce new feeling rules or new maintenance strategies through which socially acceptable and normative behaviour can be redefined and configured in this new medium of technologically mediated communication. Feeling rules can be understood simply as social norms which are negotiated between the two participants, and are used to define

how they should emotionally react to certain situations. Lauren describes how she and her boyfriend have certain emotional needs and how it is important for them to understand each other's needs in order to have a healthy relationship. Lauren states:

I think we both work equally as hard in different ways, because we each have different needs, so it might seem like I contact him more or he contacts me more but for each of us what we feel we need it works. Kirk: What are some of those needs? Lauren: Like emotional needs, like attention and stuff like that, like he knows that if I have a big test that he should probably make sure to call me and be like how'd that go, are you ok, and same thing if he has a big performance like I call or if he's composing a piece or something like that and wants me to hear it, like it's a big need for him for me to listen to all of the stuff he does. Because I'm always he first person who hears it before he submits or anything like that because he wants to know my opinion on it. So, it's just like you know, realizing like some days oh he's busy and he can't or I'm busy.

In Lauren's case, the feeling rule at play would be fulfilling each other's emotional needs through giving each other attention in order to highlight the other as a priority. Lauren discusses how her boyfriend is studying music and therefore an important form of emotional reciprocation becomes her listening to his music before anyone else. Likewise, for Lauren she has the expectation that if she is undergoing a stressful situation like a test he will call her afterwards to make sure she is feeling good about it. Interestingly, Lauren states that if she has a big test her boyfriend should know to call her afterwards to check in on her. Hochschild states: "Feeling rules differ curiously from other types of rules in that they do not apply to action but to what is often taken as a precursor to action" (p. 99). Hochschild's implication is that certain feeling rules, such as those we likely see in romantic relationships do not apply to just one specific scenario but apply more generally to certain behaviour. For example, in Lauren's case the feeling rule of her boyfriend expressing concern over her school work does not apply just to that specific test but it applies more generally to knowing that if his girlfriend has a stressful situation taking place he should check in with her to make sure she is doing alright and to provide emotional support. Therefore, the feeling rule is not just check in on her after one test but a broader

understanding that during times of stress he should be providing her emotional support and therefore proactively checking on her without having to be explicitly told to do so by her. While these feeling rules of proactively seeking to understand your partner may also be seen in geographically close relationships, they differ in long-distance because with less opportunities to communicate these feeling rules have to operate within each other getting less attention because of the nature of long-distance. In answer to my question about whether it requires more emotional maturity to navigate a long distance romance Lauren states:

Yeah, I think so because you need to be willing to not always get as much attention as you would normally expect...there's a lot of give and take you know what I mean? Like letting him get away with some stuff, like oh yeah he couldn't call me tonight but he has a big test in the morning. But at the same time being like ok, you do have to call me at some point, like you can't just be like oh he's not here so he doesn't have to call me, he doesn't have too. You can be mature enough. Kirk: There's expectations. Lauren: Yeah there's expectations, and I think just because were doing distance you can't just brush them aside.

Lauren's statement is interesting because, as Hochschild discusses, feeling rules can be adapted but as Lauren states the understanding is still there that her boyfriend calls her. Therefore, the feeling rule is still there, there is just more flexibility around the feeling rule to make the reciprocation work in long-distance.

Similarly, in long-distance romances feeling rules change around normative forms of anger, for example since communication is more restricted there are more opportunities for miscommunication. Lisa discusses how her boyfriend sent her card in the mail too late and therefore she did not receive it on her birthday. She states that while she could have gotten upset she simply asked her boyfriend about it and he clarified that did send the card but just sent it too late. Therefore, long-distance requires different feeling rules in terms of more patience in order to make sure small miscommunications like the birthday card situation do not turn into major arguments and cause strain on the relationship. Lisa states:

Neither one of us are argumentative type people, if I have a disagreement with him which I have had, I would talk to him the way I'm talking to you now I have never raised my voice to him and he's never raised his voice to me. If we have something to discuss, if he said something off handed which I didn't appreciate I wouldn't say anything then I would think about it, then I might call him back or I might call him the next day and say well what did you mean by such and such and ask him to clarify. I won't just fly off the handle and say why the hell did you say this. No neither one of us are like that. We are very agreeable people; we just sit back and go ok let's talk why did this happen or why didn't you say that or why did you forget to do something. Like, he forgot to send me my birthday card it showed up late, so on my birthday I texted and said I'm disappointed you didn't send a birthday card, and he's like on the phone saying I did I just sent it too late. So whereas that could have turned into a huge big argument, it's just plain and simple I'm sorry I forgot.

Therefore in long-distance romances, clear communication and assuming the best of your partner are ways you need to frame the interactions in order for them to not be misinterpreted.

Hochschild states: "feeling rules...delineate a zone within which one has permission to be free of worry, guilt, or shame with regards to the situated feeling. A feeling rule sets down a metaphoric floor, walls, and ceiling, there being room for motions and play within boundaries" (p. 98).

Therefore, in long-distance Hochschild's notion of there being flexibility within feeling rules is seen because as in Lisa's case, she and her boyfriend understood that it was a minor miscommunication, and even though that miscommunication broke a feeling rule (remembering her birthday) they were able to understand the influences of distance in making it harder to communicate and did not get angry over this feeling rule breach. Therefore, changing feeling rules around anger and communication to understand that miscommunications can arise as a result of long-distance is necessary in order to assume the best in each other and to not over exaggerate situations.

My participants also discussed trust and communication as being two of the most significant factors that has influenced the success of their long-distance relationship. Specifically since you cannot see your long-distance partner daily trust becomes a key issue in allowing the

relationship to succeed. Daniel discusses how at first when his boyfriend moved away they were just maintaining the relationship but as they learned to trust each other more, their relationship started to grow. Daniel argues that in long-distance you have fewer opportunities to talk so when you do, you discuss more serious matters, which he believes has helped to strengthen his relationship. He states:

At first when he left it was sort of maintaining like I said but as time goes on you kind of need to learn to trust them more, like when you're talking you sort of run out of the mundane things to talk about and you want to get to know them better. So I feel like over time it actually strengthens the relationship a bit more and it makes it so much better when you actually see them in person. You're starting over but not really, it's hard to explain but I feel like the longer you're apart the more strength and effort you need to put into the relationship to make it work.

Daniel finds that his time away from his boyfriend causes him to have to trust him more, leading to better disclosure and in turn this better disclosure helps them to communicate better even when geographically close. Daniel's experience is interesting because Sahlstein (2004) found in a previously mentioned study that when examining the theme "apart enables together", openness was cited in the self-reports of 10% of the participants. Openness was described as: "partners report during the time apart they get to talk more (mainly about the relationship, but not necessarily only this) and thus the time together is better because of that openness. Also, the time apart can create situations that when they are together they talk about the relationship, how they are feeling, and/or what is going on in their lives (i.e. disclosure of varied forms)" (Sahlstein 2004).

Long-distance is an interesting situation because the fewer times couples have to communicate in turn cause more serious conversations with more disclosure, overall this higher level of disclosure can make for better communication throughout the relationship. Likewise, higher levels of disclosure changes feeling rules around emotional labour, since with

geographically close couples most disclosure happens face-to-face and over a longer period of time. However, with long-distance couples a lot of disclosure happens over the telephone or through other technologically mediated conversations and happens during a quicker period of time. As Daniel states, as the relationship progresses and more trust is built, more effort needs to be invested in the relationship, while this is the same as geographically close relationships, as we just discussed, the mediums through which long-distance couples construct this trust is different than with geographically close individuals, thus forming different feeling rules. Hochschild states: “work to make feeling and frame consistent with situation is work in which individuals continually and privately engage. But they do so in obedience to rules not completely of their own making” (p. 97). Daniel does not control the fact that long-distance causes fewer opportunities to communicate and requires more disclosure; however he does have the ability to normatively respond to this circumstance by working within the new feeling rules presented to him. These feeling rules, as Hochschild states can change based on the progress or lack thereof in a relationship or based on the breaking of previous feeling rules. Overall, trust and communication are key issues in the formation of intimacy which is important in any type of relationship.

When discussing feeling rules it is important to understand that in relation to long-distance the feeling rules created are not lower standards but different standards. For example, Lauren discusses how if her boyfriend is home visiting her and others, she expects he will spend the majority of his time with her because they have a limited window of opportunity to see each other. Lauren maintains that “There’s a lot of different expectations when you’re in long-distance versus when you’re face-to-face”.

Kirk: What do you think some of those [expectations] are? Lauren: I think like, when your together, like when he's home I expect him to hangout with me a lot in short period of time versus when he lived here all the time we hungout two to three times a week and it would be no big deal. But if he's only home for a week, then I want to see him almost every day. So like obviously there's a time and like I just expect him to come and see me and me go see him, a least once every four weeks or five weeks, you know what I mean and like if he wasn't willing to do that. Then it's like well if you're not willing to come see me why should I come see you? Like it can't be all one sided, like one person going and seeing the other person all the time, all the time, all the time.

Lauren first talks about how important reciprocation is in terms of both of them putting in the effort to go visit each other and how this is an emotional expectation or feeling rule in long-distance. Lauren statement is interesting because it supports the research developed by Sahlstein (2004). Sahlstein states that when examining the theme of "apart constrains together" 13.8% of her participants self-reported "network negotiation" as an issue. She defined network negotiation as: "the fact that partners only have a limited amount of time together when they are face-to-face (i.e. because they spend most of their time apart), other relationships are neglected when they come together because partners spend that time, or the majority of the time, with one another" (Sahlstein 2004). While we do not know how my participants time together affects their other relationships. It is clear that the feeling rules around spending time together changes from when they were geographically close to when they are seeing each other periodically during long-distance (i.e. during visits). These feeling rules are reshaped because the context has changed (they are no longer geographically close and cannot see each other every day) and because the medium has changed. For example, since they normally use technologically mediated communication, opportunities for face-to-face communication now take on extra or new meaning in terms of intimacy.

Overall, my research has examined how my participants' lives are changed by their relationships becoming long-distance and the role technology, specifically time-space

distanciation and telepresence plays in allowing these relationships to continue and grow. The fact that many of my participants had similar experiences which are also consistent with previous findings highlights the validity of my sample and long-distance as a sociological phenomenon.

Looking Forward: Future areas for research

Due to the parameters that must be placed on any research project and the time constraints around this project in particular, some potentially helpful and interesting areas of inquiry were left unexplored. For example, how long-distance relationships are maintained or why they decline is definitely an area of sociological inquiry that demands more research. Specifically, research is needed to examine why differences may exist in perceived levels of success of emotional satisfaction in both long-distance romantic relationships as compared to long-distance friendships. Also other than the one male participant in a same-sex relationship, all of my other participants were female. In addition, my research only had one mature (over 30 years of age) female in a romantic relationship so future research might use bigger samples in order to allow for internal and cross-generational comparisons. My study also lacks heterosexual males and therefore it could be possible that they use different maintenance strategies. Also my research only had one same-sex male romantic relationship participant, future research should include both gay, lesbian and other queer participants and should allow for middle aged LGBT participants to see if any generational differences exist or if gay or lesbian individuals approach communication or relationships differently because of social stigma or fewer potential partners available in rural areas. I would also note that because of societal stigma gay and lesbian participants have little incentive to participate (Meyer and Wilson 2009). Future research should also examine the notion that communication levels can rise and fall (i.e. non-linear communication patterns) and that these events (declining and rising in communication levels)

may provide opportunities to strengthen the relationship. Further, research should also examine the interconnection between regular communication, reciprocation and trust in maintaining both romantic relationships and friendships, specifically probing for potential differences between the two types of relationships. Research should also be done to examine why communication levels are significantly lower in friendships compared to romantic relationships and how maintenance strategies differ between the two types of relationships.

Conclusion

Through examining the effects of communications technology on how individuals are able to maintain their long-distance romantic relationships it becomes clear differences do exist in terms of communication strategies and the emotional expectations governing these strategies. By examining the strategies my participants use to maintain their relationships through the use of technology, the effectiveness of technology in allowing them to feel emotionally satisfied, and the new emotional rules and norms that emerge in the face of reduced communication, the clear role of time-space distancing and telepresence in influencing these new feeling rules becomes evident. Through allowing my participants to discuss their personal experiences in great detail I was able to examine how their experiences are influenced by technology and their subsequent ability to rework their emotional expectations to adapt to no longer being geographically close. By using participants who were in geographically close relationships with their partners before becoming long-distance it was even more clear the changes that do occur. The high levels of emotional satisfaction individuals in long-distance relationships experience despite having lower levels of communication highlights why these relationships constitute a sociological phenomenon worthy of further scholarly examination.

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Appendix A: 7 Points of the Briefing Form

My name is Kirk Quilty, I am a fourth year Social/Cultural Studies student currently recruiting volunteers to be interviewed for my 4950 research project.

Title of Research

How technology has changed romantic relationships when geographically close becomes long-distance.

Subject of Research

I intent to examine the research question: how has technology changed long-distance romantic relationships in which the members of the relationship knew each other before the relationship became long-distance.

Participation of the person

I intend to examine how technology changes romantic relationships when physically close (face-to-face) relationships become long-distance relationships. Many university students, as a result of needing to travel and live outside of their hometown for schooling, work, or other opportunities, find themselves in long-distance relationships. I will be examining their self-reported feelings of emotional satisfaction, intimacy and their views on the possibility of relational advancement despite the distance between them. Participants will be take part in an open-ended interview.

How person can withdraw

Participants can refuse to answers any questions they do not feel comfortable answering. Participation is voluntary. Participants can request pseudonym be used in the dissemination of the research. If a participant would like to withdraw after completing an interview they can contact myself: Kirk Quilty, kiquilty@grenfell.mun.ca or my supervisor Dr. Marie Croll, mcroll@grenfell.mun.ca

Possible risks and how the researcher has mitigated them

Since my project involves interviewing individuals about their romantic relationships the data could contain sensitive information. As a result, many strategies will be used to mitigate potential risk to participants. All participants will sign a research consent form. Confidentiality will be respected throughout the process and all interviews will be conducted in a confidential setting. Pseudonyms (where preferred) will be used to identify the participants in all communication of the study and no identifying details will be used in the study. My research proposal and interview questions have been approved by the Social/Cultural Studies Department, including my supervisor. Since the discussion of romantic relationships could potentially trigger difficult emotions or questions, participants are reminded of the contact information for the school counsellors:

Maureen Bradley, (709) 637-6211 ext. 6211 Email: mbradley@grenfell.mun.ca

Joanne Barber, ext. 6234 Email: jbarber@grenfell.mun.ca

Dissemination of research

My research will be presented in our public 4950 presentations and a final copy of my project will be included with the other student projects in a volume which will be preserved in the campus library.

What happens to the data after

The recordings of the interviews will be destroyed following the release of final grades for the project; and my supervisor and I will be the only ones who will have access to the recordings. All email communications with participants in order to set up meeting times or other related inquires will be destroyed following their interview or in the case of inquires following the final completion of my project.

Appendix B: Demographics Form for Participants

Which gender do you identify with?

- Male
- Female
- Trans
- Other

How old are you?

- Under 30
- Older than 30

Which one of the following situations (1) would you like to discuss?

- Female in long-distance romantic relationship with male
- Male in long-distance romantic relationship with female
- Male in a long-distance friendship with female
- Female in a long-distance friendship with male
- Female in a long-distance friendship with female
- Male in a long-distance friendship with male
- Female in a long-distance romantic relationship with female
- Male in a long-distance romantic relationship with male

Appendix C: Interview Guide

What mediums do you use to communicate with your long-distance x?

How long have you know x?

Why did this person move away?

How often did the two of you communicate?

How often do you communicate with this person now? (Define time in terms of hours/days)

Are you satisfied with your current level of communication?

Do you find that forms of social media, such as Facebook, texting, and Snapchat allow you to feel like you're in communication even when both of you are not interacting together?

Do you feel like you miss out on part of x's life because of the distance?

Do you believe your relationship/friendship with x can grow/evolve even with the physical distance between you or do you focus on just maintain a basic level of communication?

If the relationship can evolve, even with distance between you, what does relational advancement look like?

Do you feel like you have to try harder to maintain/grow your relationship/friendship due to the distance between you?

Who works harder to maintain your friendship/romantic relationship?

How emotionally satisfied are you with your friendship/relationship?

Does physical distance cause you to lower your emotional expectations?

What characteristics define/shape emotional satisfaction for you in a long-distance situation?

Which type of communication would you rather use face-to-face or technologically mediated?

What qualities do you think are lost in long-distance communication?