formed, expectancies serve as cognitive baselines from which future interactions are evaluated. An expectancy violation occurs when a partner deviates from expectations; provoking additional information-seeking and secondary cognitive appraisals of why the violation occurred and how it should be interpreted (Burgoon & Hale, 1988). Individuals consider not only how far a partner deviated from expectations (i.e., the level of *expectedness*), but also the extent to which the deviation was better or worse than expected (i.e., the valence or *evaluation*).

Online daters form initial partner impressions using the dating app (Ellison et al., 2006), and these impressions form the basis of expectations regarding how the partner will look (i.e., *physical appearance expectancies*) and behave (i.e., *behavioral expectancies*) FtF. For example, an online dater who reads their potential partner is "athletic" might form the physical appearance expectancy that this person will have a muscular physique. Likewise, someone who always responds to dating app messages promptly might be granted the behavioral expectancy of being an attentive communicator. Social and nonverbal cues gained by switching to a cue-rich modality could uphold - or conversely, violate – these and other partner expectancies. As such, the first FtF-like meeting might diminish, confirm, or enhance online daters' evaluations of each other and their relationship (Finkel et al., 2012; Sharabi & Caughlin, 2017; Whitty, 2008). The present study, therefore, seeks to explore whether elements of pre-MS communication (i.e., the length of online association, number of partner photographs seen, and use of pre-MS phone calls) and MS channel choice (i.e., holding the first cue-rich FtF-like meeting in person or via video chat) are related to post-MS expectancy violations and evaluations among online daters.

Pre-MS Length of Online Association and Post-MS Expectancy Violations

The first FtF-like meeting between online daters can be conceptualized as an act of modality switching in which partners shift from a cue-lean to a cue-rich communication environment (Ramirez et al., 2015). The modality switching perspective (e.g., Ramirez & Zhang, 2007) built upon social information processing theory (Walther, 1992) and the hyperpersonal perspective (Walther, 1996) to posit that switching from lean to rich modalities can yield differential effects depending on the timing of said shift (e.g., the length of online association). Early MS research examined zero-history experimental work groups and found that longer periods of online association were conducive to the development of idealized partner impressions (Ramirez & Zhang, 2007) and the formation of unrealistic expectancies that were violated when partners met in person (Ramirez and Wang, 2008). Hence, this body of experimental research implies that modality switching might be beneficial for partners with a relatively brief period of online-only interaction, yet risky for partners with a lengthy period of online-only interaction.

Pre-MS length of association has also emerged as an important consideration in online dating modality switches. In Ramirez et al.'s (2015) retrospective survey of online daters, length of online association was curvilinearly related to daters' assessments of relational messaging following the first FtF meeting. Participants benefited from a short period of online interaction, but a tipping point emerged in which waiting longer was associated with more negative relational ratings. The authors speculated that expectancy violations may have played a role in their find-

ings, however, they did not directly test whether the pre-MS length of association was related to post-MS expectancy violations. Likewise, expectancies were not probed within Sharabi and Caughlin's (2017) longitudinal study that assessed online daters' pre-MS and post-MS ratings of a partner and revealed a reduction in attraction after partners met offline.

To fill this void, the present study examines a central claim of the MS perspective; that the pre-MS length of association will be related to expectancy violations upon meeting FtF (Ramirez & Zhang, 2008). More specifically, it stands to reason that online daters will benefit from a brief period of online only interaction to get acquainted and reduce uncertainty. Conversely, partners who interact online only for increasingly longer periods will be prone to establish idealized expectancies that are violated upon meeting FtF; provoking uncertainty and leading them to make more negative post-MS evaluations of their partner. We therefore predict:

> **H1:** The pre-MS length of association will be curvilinearly related to online daters' partner behavioral (H1a) and physical appearance (H1b) expectedness assessments following the first FtF-like meeting; such that the associations will be positive initially but negative over time.
>
> **H2:** The pre-MS length of association will be curvilinearly related to online daters' partner behavioral (H2a) and physical appearance (H2b) evaluations following the first FtF-like meeting; such that the associations will be positive initially but negative over time.

Pre-MS Partner Photographs Seen and Post-MS Expectancy Violations

While the modality switching perspective offers consistent predictions regarding partners' pre-MS length of association and post-MS expectancy violations, other aspects of pre-MS communication deserve attention. For example, the number of partner photos seen before a MS might play a role in the development of expectations, especially concerning a partner's physical appearance. Within the hyperpersonal perspective (Walther, 1996) partner idealization is common in lean environments where communicators can present themselves strategically to craft positive impressions. Whether photos factor into this framework, however, remains unclear.

On the one hand, photographs can be labeled as lean cues that are susceptible to strategic posing, editing, and alteration in ways that might promote partner idealization. Online daters who view a larger number of photographs before meeting FtF could therefore be prone to idealize the person in the photographs in ways that leave them disappointed when FtF reality fails to match heightened online expectations. Hence, the relationship between the number of pre-MS partner photos seen and post-MS partner expectedness and evaluation assessments might follow the same curvilinear trend as seen between pre-MS length of association and post-MS partner assessments (e.g., Ramirez et al., 2015).

On the other hand, photographs are a more visual and cue-rich channel compared to text-based messages. Photos can provide a basic sense of a person's physical appearance and perhaps even demeanor (e.g., whether they were doing something active, or smiling warmly). Profile photos convey important cues about a user's physical appearance, so daters tend to select a photo that is "flattering and positive, such that it attracts potential mates, but also realistic, such that it makes it

possible to develop and sustain relationships" (Toma & Hancock, 2011, p. 49). As such, online daters who engage in MS are likely to have provided somewhat accurate photos of themselves to potential partners. With this in mind, online daters who see an increasingly large number of partner photos – likely in different poses, clothing, and settings – might form increasingly accurate expectations of how their partner will look and behave FtF. If partner photographs enable online daters to form more accurate expectations, then online daters who see many photos and still choose to meet FtF might also be prone to evaluate their partner more positively upon meeting FtF. As such, the number of pre-MS partner photos seen might be linearly related to post-MS expectedness and evaluation assessments.

Extant research has not yet examined the role of partner photographs as a variable of interest within the context of online dating modality switching. In one study, Ramirez et al. (2015) found the number of pre-MS partner photos seen was related to positive relational communication assessments and POV following online daters' first FtF meeting. The authors, however, treated photos as a control variable and, therefore, did not examine whether photos – as a source of partner expectancy formation – might display the same curvilinear trend as the pre-MS length of association. As such, the following research questions will be examined:

> **RQ1:** Is the number of pre-MS partner photos seen linearly or curvilinearly related to online daters' partner behavioral (RQ1a) and physical appearance (RQ1b) expectedness assessments following the first FtF-like meeting?
>
> **RQ2:** Is the number of pre-MS partner photos seen linearly or curvilinearly related to online daters' partner behavioral (RQ2a) and physical appearance (RQ2b) evaluations following the first FtF-like meeting?

Pre-MS Phone Calls and Post-MS Expectancy Violations

Online daters' decision to speak on the phone before meeting FtF is another aspect of pre-MS communication that might influence post-MS expectancy violations. Online daters often embrace richer and more synchronous channels such as telephone calls before meeting offline (Finkel et al., 2012). However, existing research about online dating modality switching typically assumes a direct transition from online platforms to in-person interaction (e.g., Ramirez et al., 2015; Sharabi & Caughlin, 2017). Meanwhile, Antheunis and colleagues' (2020) study on channel progression in dating did not include phone calls in their analysis, leaving a gap in understanding about how pre-MS phone calls might impact post-MS outcomes.

The act of embracing multiple communication channels has been studied under the rubrics of media multiplexity theory (Haythornthwaite, 2001), modality expansion (Ramirez et. al., 2017), modality weaving (McEwan, 2021), and mixed-mode relationships (Parks, 2017). These approaches all imply that closer partners will adopt and subsequently utilize a greater number of communication channels as they attempt to develop and sustain their bond. Online daters who communicate via phone calls before meeting FtF increase their degree of multiplexity in ways that suggest increased closeness heading into a modality switch. That said, past research explored the number of channels online daters used (i.e., the degree of multiplexity) before a modality switch as a potential control variable (Ramirez

et al., 2015), and ultimately excluded the variable due to a lack of correlation with online daters' impressions after the first FtF date.

The lack of a relationship between the number of pre-MS channels and post-MS outcomes could reflect that online daters are using different combinations of channels that possess drastically different levels of bandwidth (McEwan, 2021). For example, someone who shifts from app-based messaging, to texting outside the app, to FtF communication stayed in a relatively lean-cue environment despite having expanded to the same number of channels as someone who shifted from app-based messaging, to phone calls, to FtF interaction.

To summarize, "it is not clear how well previous modality-switching research describes today's overall online environment, in which communicators switch among several different modes and media platforms" (Parks, 2017, p. 4). Meeting in person will test the expectations formed online, but whether this process is affected when partners progress through a more moderate-cue channel such as phone calls requires formal investigation (McEwan, 2021). Texting and social media sites serve as extensions of the online dating app by offering more diverse text-based messaging and photo opportunities, but they remain asynchronous, editable, and prone to strategic self-presentation. Phone calls, on the other hand, enable synchronous interaction of a less editable nature, while offering vocalic cues that might help partners refine their expectations. While it seems likely that phone calls would be related to greater expectedness and more positive evaluations following a MS, this remains untested. As such, we ask:

> **RQ3:** Is online daters' use of pre-MS phone calls related to their partner behavioral (RQ3a) and physical appearance (RQ3b) expectedness assessments following the first FtF-like meeting?
>
> **RQ4:** Is online daters' use of pre-MS phone calls related to their partner behavioral (RQ4a) and physical appearance (RQ4b) evaluations following the first FtF-like meeting?

MS Channel and Post-MS Expectancy Violations

As previously noted, online daters' communication choices before a MS likely influence their expectations of each other heading into their first FtF-like encounter. It is also prudent, however, to interrogate factors related to the MS itself; such as online daters' choice of MS channel. Past research describes the first in-person date as an important screening point for online daters (Finkel et al., 2012), and recent research implies that video chat might function similarly to in-person interaction during the channel expansion process (Antheunis et al., 2020; Sprecher & Hampton, 2017). However, this potential remains speculative, highlighting the necessity to broaden the modality switching perspective by comparing video chat to in-person conversations as venues for the first FtF-like meeting.

Video chat has become popular among online daters who aim to balance health and safety concerns with their desire to assess compatibility in a synchronous FtF-like setting (Wiederhold, 2021). Some dating apps (e.g., Match and Bumble) have even integrated video chat within their platforms, believing it to be a viable method for determining whether a potential partner warrants the effort and expense of meeting in person (Duguay et al., 2022). While online daters are increasingly shifting from text-based communication to video chat, it is unclear how video chat should be conceptualized within the modality switching perspective.

While modality switching was originally conceptualized as the initial shift from online to offline communication (e.g., Ramirez & Zhang, 2007), Ramirez and Sumner (2015) later defined modality switching as "shifting between communication channels that vary in their ability to transmit nonverbal and social information" (p. 1). A MS represents a critical juncture in which online impressions and expectations can be affirmed or violated as communicators gain access to additional nonverbal and social cues. Video chat fits the general criteria of a MS because it is a synchronous and cue-rich channel that is FtF-like in the sense that it enables users to see and hear each other in real time. For online daters, the first video chat might thus serve as the critical modality switching moment in which online expectations are put to the test. Past MS research has, however, predominantly focused on direct transitions from text-based to in-person interaction (e.g., Ramirez & Wang, 2008; Ramirez et al., 2015; Sharabi & Caughlin, 2017).

The present study therefore directly compares online daters who held their first FtF-like meeting via video chat to those who held their first FtF-like meeting in person. While no known research has compared video chat to in-person interaction as acts of modality switching, a limited body of work has addressed the role of video chat as a precursor to in-person interaction. For example, Antheunis and colleagues (2020) conducted a speed-dating experiment in which unacquainted participants engaged in two brief interactions over a short time period; the first of which was either held via text or video chat and the second of which was always held in person. The authors detected evidence of hyperpersonal effects among female participants, with text-based initial communicators holding greater social attraction both heading into and following an in-person meeting than initial video chat communicators. This finding implies that individuals whose initial encounter occurs through video chat are less prone to idealize their new partner, which means that video chat might function more similar to in-person interaction than it does to text-based communication.

In a second study, Sprecher and Hampton (2017) compared a control group that met a partner in person three times to an experimental group that progressed from text, to video chat, to in-person communication with a partner. While communicating through text, the experimental group reported lower levels of liking, closeness, and enjoyment than their in-person counterparts. That said, participants reported increased levels of each outcome as they shifted to video chat, with the experimental group catching up to their fully in-person counterparts by the end of their video chat conversation. These results, once again, suggest video chat might offer enough richness to function in a manner that is somewhat similar to in-person interaction.

While the previously mentioned studies offer important insight, fundamental differences in study goals and conceptual frameworks raise questions over whether similar trends will emerge within the present study. First, Antheunis et al. (2020) compared video chat to text messaging as alternative channels for initial communication before an in-person MS, whereas Sprecher and Hampton (2017) explored video chat as part of the channel expansion process leading up to an in-person MS. In comparison, the present study conceptualizes video chat as akin to in-person interaction, with both channels serving as cue-rich modality switching venues in which online expectations meet FtF-like reality as partners see and hear each other

Table 1.
*Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations among Variables of Interest (**N** = 298)*

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 MS Channel	.64	.48	--								
2 Pre-MS Phone	2.35	.86	-.17*	--							
3 Pre-MS LOA	12.65	13.68	.13*	-.03	--						
4 Pre-MS # Photos	9.17	12.42	.05	-.01	.17**	--					
5 Behavioral Expectedness	4.88	1.29	-.05	-.01	-.01	.14*	--				
6 Physical Appearance Expectedness	5.19	1.39	.03	.09	-.01	.16**	.41**	--			
7 Behavioral Evaluation	5.47	1.37	-.12*	.15*	-.03	.08	.42**	.23**	--		
8 Physical Appearance Evaluation	5.63	1.40	-.05	.16**	-.03	.21**	.26**	.36**	.62**	--	
9 POV	4.37	1.10	-.15**	.13*	-.03	.14*	.34**	.21**	.73**	.63**	--

Notes: The *M* and *SD* for pre-MS LOA and # of photos are reported in their original unit of measurement.

*$p < .05$ (two-tailed); **$p < .01$ (two-tailed)

(photos seen = 5.68; length of association = 2.61) and kurtosis (photos seen = 37.56; length of association = 8.66) for both variables. Taking the log helped normalize the distributions, so log values were used for further analyses.

Expectedness and Evaluation

The central EVT measures of expectedness and evaluation were adapted from Afifi and Metts (1998) and completed twice, first in response to the partner's behavior during the first FtF-like meeting, and then in response to the partner's physical appearance. Items were (re)coded so that higher scores indicate greater expectedness and more positive evaluations.

Behavioral expectedness (α = .73) was assessed using three semantic differential items in which participants were prompted to rate their partner's behavior during the first FtF-like meeting using a set of opposing poles (e.g., 1 = was completely what I expected, 7 = was not at all what I expected; and 1 = surprised me a great deal, 7 = did not surprise me at all). *Physical appearance expectedness* (α = .81) utilized an identical set of three semantic differential poles, except the prompt asked participants to rate their partner's physical appearance during the first FtF-like meeting.

Partner evaluation scores were measured using similar semantic differential scales, but four sets of poles were rephrased to assess the extent to which participants evaluated their partner's behavior or appearance negatively or positively (e.g., 1 = was very negative, 7 = was very positive; 1 = I did not like at all, 7 = I liked a lot). The *behavioral evaluation* (α = .92) and *physical appearance evaluation* (α = .96) scales both achieved high internal reliability.

Predicted Outcome Value Forecasts

POV (α = .93) was assessed using an abbreviated 4-item version of Sunnafrank's (1986) 10-item measure in which participants were provided a set of semantic differential style scales and asked to forecast what they thought a continued relationship with their online dating partner would be like in comparison to their expectations for a typical relationship of that nature. For example, "Given your general expectations about your partner, how positive will this future relationship be for you?" (1 = much less than I expected, 6 = much more than I expected).

Results

The hypotheses and research questions were tested using a series of five multiple hierarchical regression analyses with the expectedness (i.e., behavioral and physical appearance), evaluation (i.e., behavioral and physical appearance), and POV measures as criterion variables. Participants' age, the number of messages exchanged with a partner before the MS, and the number of days since the MS occurred were considered as controls but excluded due to lack of correlation with the criterion variables. To enable consistent interpretation of hypotheses and research questions across models, insignificant variables and steps were preserved in each model.

Expectedness and Evaluation Models

The expectedness and evaluation models examined linear and curvilinear

predictions. The linear terms for pre-MS length of association, number of pre-MS partner photos seen, MS channel (dummy coded; 0 = video chat, 1 = in person), and use of pre-MS phone calls (dummy coded; 0 = no phone calls, 1 = used phone calls) were entered at step one, while the quadratic terms for pre-MS length of association and number of pre-MS partner photos were entered at step two (for a discussion of this procedure, see Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Pedhazur, 1982).

Partner Expectedness

The two expectedness models collectively examined H1, RQ1, RQ3, and RQ5. The final models for behavioral expectedness and physical appearance expectedness were statistically significant (see Table 2), but certain steps of each model failed to achieve significance.

The pre-MS length of association was curvilinearly related to both behavioral expectedness (β = -.50, p = .03) and physical appearance expectedness (β = -.52, p = .02). The linear terms for pre-MS length of association were not significant within either model. These results fully support H1; behavioral expectedness (H1a) and physical appearance expectedness (H1b) displayed inverted u-shaped curvilinear relationships to pre-MS length of association.

Meanwhile, the number of pre-MS partner photos seen was linearly and positively related to both behavioral expectedness (β = .15, p = .01) and physical appearance expectedness assessments (β = .17, p = .01). The quadratic terms for the number of pre-MS partner photos failed to achieve significance in either model. Hence, to answer RQ1, the relationship between the number of pre-MS partner photos seen and post-MS behavioral (RQ1a) and physical appearance (RQ1b) expectedness assessments was linear and positive in nature.

There were no significant relationships detected between online daters' use of pre-MS phone calls (RQ3) nor their choice of MS channel (RQ5) and their post-MS behavioral or physical appearance expectedness assessments.

Partner Evaluation

The two evaluation models collectively examined H2, RQ2, RQ4, and RQ6. The final models for behavioral evaluation and physical appearance evaluation were both significant (see Table 3); however, the second step of each model failed to achieve significance.

The linear and quadratic terms for pre-MS length of association were not significantly related to behavioral (H2a) or physical appearance evaluations (H2b) within the models, so H2 was not supported. RQ2 explored the nature of the relationship between partner evaluations and the number of pre-MS partner photographs seen. To answer RQ2a, the number of pre-MS photographs was neither linearly nor curvilinearly related to post-MS partner behavioral evaluations. However, to address RQ2b, the number of pre-MS photographs displayed a linear positive relationship with physical appearance evaluations (β = .22, p < .001).

In response to RQ4a and RQ4b, the use of pre-MS phone calls was positively related to both behavioral evaluations (β = .13, p = .03), and physical appearance evaluations (β = .15, p = .01) after the first FtF-like meeting. In response to RQ6, the MS channel was not related to either behavioral or physical appearance evaluations.

Table 2

Hierarchical Regressions Predicting Behavioral Expectedness (N = 294) and Physical Appearance Expectedness (N = 290)

	Behavioral Expectedness								***Physical Appearance Expectedness***							
	Coefficients					*Model Statistics*			*Coefficients*					*Model Statistics*		
Predictors	B	*SE* B	β	*t*	*p*	ΔR^2	ΔF	*p*	B	*SE* B	β	*t*	*p*	ΔR^2	ΔF	*p*
Step One						.03	1.91	.11						.04	2.67	.03*
Pre-MS LOA	-.04	.08	-.03	-.51	.61				-.06	.09	-.04	-.65	.52			
Pre-MS # Photos	.27	.11	.15	2.57	.01**				.32	.12	.17	2.79	.01**			
MS Channel	-.15	.16	-.05	-.91	.37				.13	.17	.04	.74	.46			
Pre-MS Phone Calls	-.06	.18	-.02	-.31	.75				.30	.19	.09	.1.57	.12			
Step Two						.02	3.07	.05*						.02	2.74	.07
Quad. Pre-MS LOA	-.16	.07	-.50	-2.24	.03*				-.17	.08	-.52	-2.32	.02*			
Quad. # Photos	-.09	.08	-.23	-1.20	.23				-.03	.08	-.06	-.30	.76			

Notes. Full Model Summary for Behavioral Expectedness: Total $R^2 = .05$; adjusted $R^2 = .03$. F (6, 294) = 2.30, $p = .04$*
Full Model Summary for Physical Appearance Expectedness: Total $R^2 = .05$; adjusted $R^2 = .03$. F (6, 290) = 2.71, $p = .01$**
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

Table 3

Hierarchical Regressions Predicting Behavioral Evaluation (N = 292) and Physical Appearance Evaluation (N = 291)

	Behavioral Evaluation								***Physical Appearance Evaluation***							
	Coefficients					*Model Statistics*			*Coefficients*					*Model Statistics*		
Predictors	B	*SE* B	β	*t*	*p*	ΔR^2	ΔF	*p*	B	*SE* B	β	*t*	*p*	ΔR^2	ΔF	*p*
Step One						.03	2.53	.04*						.07	5.78	<.001**
Pre-MS LOA	-.04	.09	-.03	-.46	.65				-.09	.09	-.06	-1.05	.30			
Pre-MS # Photos	.19	.11	.10	1.71	.09				.44	.11	.22	3.91	<.001**			
MS Channel	-.27	.17	-.10	-1.67	.10				-.06	.17	.-.02	-.34	.73			
Pre-MS Phone Calls	.39	.18	.13	2.15	.03*				.48	.19	.15	2.61	.01*			
Step Two						.003	.47	.63						.003	.50	.61
Quad. Pre-MS LOA	.01	.07	.02	.08	.93				-.02	.07	-.06	-.28	.78			
Quad. # Photos	-.08	.08	-.20	-1.03	.31				-.08	.08	-.18	-.97	.33			

Notes. Full Model Summary for Behavioral Evaluation: Total $R^2 = .04$; adjusted $R^2 = .02$. F (6, 294) = 2.15, $p = .05$*
Full Model Summary for Physical Appearance Evaluation: Total $R^2 = .08$; adjusted $R^2 = .06$. F (6, 293) = 4.01, $p = .001$**
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

POV Model

The POV model probed the same linear and curvilinear trends examined in the above models, while also testing for EVT's hypothesized main and interaction effects for expectedness and evaluation on POV. As such, the linear terms for pre-MS length of association, number of pre-MS photos seen, MS channel (dummy coded, 0 = video chat, 1 = in person), and use of pre-MS phone calls (dummy coded; 0 = no phone calls, 1 = used phone calls) were entered at step one, the quadratic terms for pre-MS length of association and pre-MS number of partner photos were entered at step two, behavioral and physical appearance expectedness were entered at step three, behavioral and physical appearance evaluations were entered at step four, and the two interaction terms (behavioral expectedness x behavioral evaluation, and physical appearance expectedness x physical appearance evaluation) were entered at step five. The final model for POV was significant, however, step two failed to achieve significance (see Table 4).

Table 4
Hierarchical Regression Predicting POV (N = 288)

Predictors	B	*SE* B	β	*t*	*p*	ΔR^2	ΔF	*p*
Step One						.05	3.61	.003**
Pre-MS LOA	-.04	.07	-.04	-.58	.56			
Pre-MS # Photos	.24	.09	.16	2.66	.01**			
MS Channel	-.30	.13	-.13	-2.19	.03*			
Pre-MS Phone Calls	.27	.15	.11	1.82	.07			
Step Two						.002	.35	.71
Quad. Pre-MS LOA	-.03	.06	-.10	-.43	.67			
Quad Pre-MS # Photos	.04	.07	.12	.63	.53			
Step Three						.11	18.00	<.001**
Behavioral Expectedness	.44	.04	.53	10.48	<.001**			
Physical Appearance Expectedness	.06	.05	.08	1.32	.19			
Step Four						.45	160.54	<.001**
Behavioral Evaluation	.44	.04	.55	10.55	<.001**			
Physical Appearance Evaluation	.23	.04	.29	5.63	<.001**			
Step Five						.01	3.68	.03*
Behavioral Expect x Eval	-.06	.02	-.62	-2.58	.01**			
Physical Appearance Expect x Eval	.001	.02	-.01	-.02	.98			

Notes. Final Model Summary: Total $R^2 = .62$; adjusted $R^2 = .60$. F (12, 288) = 37.21, $p < .001$
$^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$

H3 and RQs 7-9 collectively explored potential main effects for the pre-MS length of association, number of pre-MS partner photos seen, use of pre-MS phone calls, and choice of MS channel on post-MS POV assessments. No relationships were detected between POV and the linear or quadratic terms for pre-MS length of association (H3), so this hypothesis was not supported. To answer RQ7, a positive linear relationship was detected between POV and the number of pre-MS partner photos seen ($\beta = .16$, $p = .01$), while the quadratic term for partner photos did not achieve significance. Regarding RQ8, no relationship was detected between pre-MS phone calls and POV. To address RQ9, a negative relationship was detected between the MS channel and POV ($\beta = -.13$, $p = .03$); such that meeting via video chat was associated with greater POV than meeting in person.

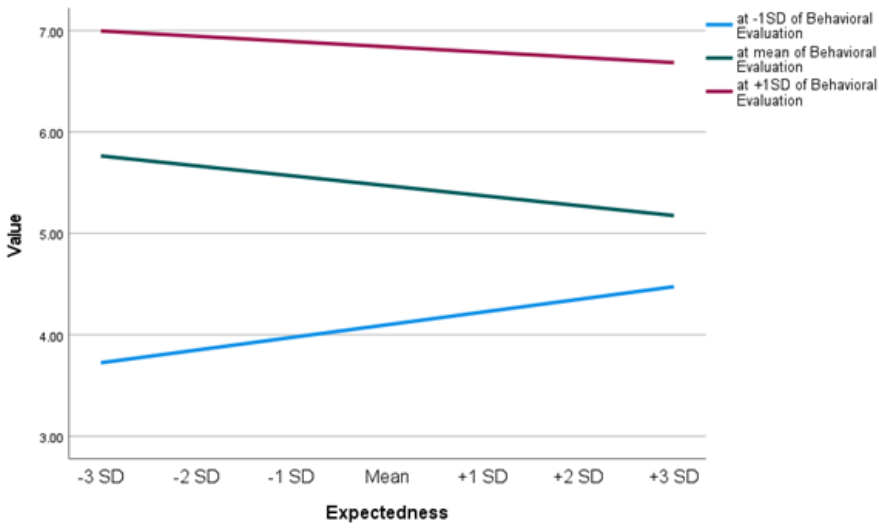
The remaining hypotheses predicted main and interaction effects for the expectedness and evaluation variables on POV. H4 predicted main effects for expectedness on POV, and the hypothesis received mixed support. In support of H4a, POV was positively related to behavioral expectedness ($\beta = .53$, $p < .001$). However, POV was not significantly related to physical appearance expectedness, so H4b was not supported. H5 predicted main effects for evaluation on POV, and this hypothesis was fully supported. POV was positively related to both behavioral evaluation (H5a; $\beta = .55$, $p < .001$) and physical appearance evaluation (H5b; $\beta = .29$, $p < .001$).

Finally, H6 predicted an interaction between expectedness and evaluation assessments on POV. H6a was supported, as the interaction of behavioral expectedness on behavioral evaluation emerged as significant ($\beta = -.62$, $p = .01$). H6b, however, was not supported, as the interaction term failed to achieve significance for physical appearance assessments.

The interaction between behavioral expectedness and behavioral evaluation on POV was probed (see Figure 1). An examination of the interaction per Aiken

Figure 1

Results of Simple Slope Analysis of Behavioral Expectedness by Evaluation Interaction on POV



should seek to unpack this finding by examining objective ratings of physical attractiveness within the context of online dating modality switching.

In contrast, the use of phone calls - a cue-richer yet non-visual channel - failed to achieve statistical significance. This is particularly interesting given the findings associated with partner evaluation discussed earlier. Phone calls appear relevant to immediate social evaluations following a MS, but have little to no influence on projections of the relationship's future outcomes. As previously discussed, future research should explore this conundrum within the context of online daters' motives or goals (Corriero & Tong, 2016). It is possible, for example, that online daters seeking hook-ups might benefit from seeing photos of a potential partner, yet not benefit from calling the person before meeting FtF. Meanwhile, the same person in search of a hook-up might evaluate a partner's behavior and physical appearance positively, yet still report low POV forecasts because they never desired a relationship in the first place.

The present study also sought to compare video chat and in-person interaction as potential MS channels, and results revealed that online daters who held their first FtF-like meeting via video chat also tended to report higher POV than those who met in person. This result is intriguing when combined with the lack of the predicted relationships between MS channel and expectedness and evaluation assessments. It is vital to note that the MS channel could feasibly influence POV outcomes if each channel's divergent affordances and bandwidth influence communication therein. At the same time, online daters in the present study got to choose which channel to use, so any relationship between MS channel and POV might also reflect online daters' motives, as discussed above. Future research should therefore examine online daters' goals for meeting FtF, as well as their reasons for selecting video chat or in-person interaction as their first venue for FtF-like communication.

The final set of analyses examined whether POV forecasts were associated with the EVT-related factors of expectedness and evaluation. The analysis revealed a complex set of relationships. On the one hand, POV was positively related to expectedness ratings for partner behavior but not for physical appearance. The more expected a partner's behavior was, the more positive participants forecasted the relationship would be in the future. On the other hand, POV was positively related to participants' evaluations of both behavior and physical appearance, which suggests that relational forecasts are enhanced when daters evaluate their partner's behavior and appearance positively after meeting for FtF-like interaction. However, interpretations regarding partner behavior are conditional because the presence of a significant expectedness-evaluation interaction superseded the findings and indicated that the association of behavioral expectedness on relational forecasts is dependent upon how behavioral expectedness is evaluated. The overall pattern showed that higher, more positive evaluation of a partner's behavioral expectedness did not predict daters' POV for the relationship; however, lower, less positive evaluation of partner behavioral expectedness did. Put differently, using EVT vernacular, negative expectancy violations appeared to be more useful to daters in predicting their potential relationship's viability than were positive violations.

Limitations, Future Directions, and Conclusions

This present study offers opportunities for future research, especially if inherent limitations are addressed. First, while the present study's survey design offers important replication of past experimental research (Ramirez & Wang, 2008) regarding modality switching and EVT, this design also offers less predictive control than an experiment. Conceptually, it would not make sense for first-date assessments of expectedness or evaluation to affect the length of association that predated the first FtF-like meeting; however, the directionality of effects could not be ascertained within the present design. The detected relationships should, therefore, be read as correlational. Moreover, the naturalistic setting and corresponding reduction in control likely contributed to the small effect sizes in the present study. Future research should apply an experimental approach to modality switching among online daters by manipulating the timing of the first FtF-like date in relation to EVT and POV theory's claims.

Second, the present study sought to understand online dating modality switching, so the sample was limited to individuals who had met an online dating partner in person or through video chat. Only one-quarter of participants reported having used phone calls before their MS, so these individuals could reflect online daters whose phone calls went well enough to warrant a FtF-like meeting in person or through video chat. Online daters might use phone calls as an initial screening point, and those who hold negative evaluations following a phone call might choose to end communication rather than meet through FtF-like channels. As such, online daters who ceased communication with a partner following a bad phone call would not be reflected within our sample, nor would those who stopped communicating after chatting on the app or through text messaging. Future research might, therefore, examine whether phone calls provide enough richness to constitute a MS for online daters by directly comparing phone calls to video chat and in person as cue-richer venues for modality switching.

Finally, the present study involved retrospective assessments and POV forecasts made following the first FtF-like meeting. History effects could be present in which daters' assessments were influenced by any additional communication (or lack thereof) between partners. Likewise, assessments after the first FtF-like date are an indicator of its success, but POV does not reveal whether a relationship actually persisted into the future. Finally, the present study only examined one-sided perceptions of POV, and long-term relational success would require interest from both partners. Future research should employ longitudinal and/or dyadic designs to explore the shift from online to offline dating as it occurs in real time.

Despite limitations, the present study provided additional insight regarding EVT and POV theory with regard to modality switching and online dating while adding important clarifications regarding how pre-MS communicative elements (length of association, photographs seen, and use of phone calls), and choice of MS channel (in person or video chat) are related to expectedness, evaluation, and POV assessments as online daters attempt to shift their relationship offline. Future research can thus use the present study as a springboard for additional work regarding online dating modality switching.

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