



*TITLE: Making it 'Facebook Official': Reflecting on romantic relationships through sustained Facebook use*

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For the past eleven years, Facebook has played a significant role in mediating the lives of its users. Disclosures on the site go on to serve as intimate, co-constructed life records. The ways in which romantic relationships are mediated on the site are complex and contested: What is the significance of articulating a romantic relationship on Facebook? Why do some choose to make socially and culturally critical moments like the beginning and ends of relationships visible on Facebook, whereas others (perhaps within the same relationship) do not? How do these practices change over time? When is it time to go 'Facebook official'?

In this paper we draw on qualitative research with young Facebook users (including straight, queer, and trans participants) in their twenties in Australia and the UK who have been using the site for five or more years. Interviews with participants included scrolling back through their profiles to consider how 'critical' moments are documented on the site. Romantic relationships were central to many of these narratives, and in this paper we draw out examples to discuss four kinds of (non-exclusive) practices: 1) overt relationship status disclosures, mediated through the 'relationship status' affordance of the site; 2) implied relationship disclosures, mediated through an increase in images and tags featuring romantic partners; 3) the intended absence of relationship visibility; and 4) later-erased or revised relationship disclosures. We also critique the ways in which Facebook might work to produce normative 'relationship traces', privileging neat linearity, monogamy, and obfuscating (perhaps usefully, perhaps not) the messy complexity of romantic relationships.