Romantic Jealousy on Facebook: Causes and Outcomes

Christopher J. Carpenter, Communication Department, Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL, USA

ABSTRACT

This article uses White and Mullen’s jealousy model as a basis to derive hypotheses about the causes and effects of Facebook-related romantic jealousy. A cross-sectional survey was conducted to test these hypotheses (N = 196). General Facebook use by the user or the romantic partner were not substantially related to user jealousy. Reports of a variety of interactions between partners and potential rivals were positively related to jealousy, including the partner posting on others’ walls and acquiring new Facebook friends which are unknown to the user. Additionally, those interaction were also associated with attempts to improve the relationship using Facebook relational maintenance behaviors as well as intentions to end it or have casual extra-dyadic sex (infidelity).

KEYWORDS

Facebook, Infidelity, Jealousy, Relational Maintenance, Social Networking Sites
INTRODUCTION

In 2009, Muise, Christofides, and Desmarais published the first article linking regular Facebook use to romantic jealousy of one’s romantic partner. This finding was replicated in several additional studies (Elphinston and Noller, 2011; Hoffman and DeGroot, 2015; Hudson, Nicolas, Howser, Lipsett, Robinson, Pope, Hobby, and Friedman, 2009; Orosz, Szekeres, Kiss, Farkas, and Roland-Lévy, 2015), though the effects are usually small and several studies did not find evidence of that relationship (Dainton and Berksoski, 2013; Marshall, Bejanyan, Castro, and Lee, 2012). Additional studies have exposed several of those behaviors’ associations with jealousy. Additionally, this study applied the appraisal based model of jealousy by White and Mullen (1989) to predict which kinds of Facebook communication will produce jealousy as well as explore additional outcomes as coping mechanisms.

This study makes several important contributions to computer-mediated communication and jealousy research. First, on a practical level, romantic jealousy has been linked to a variety of negative emotional and violent outcomes (Guerrero and Anderson, 1997). Facebook related jealousy has been specifically related to physical aggression (Brem, Spiller, and Vandehey, 2015). If Facebook use is contributing to this negative emotion, it is important to explore exactly what kinds of Facebook communication contributes to it. Just as media researchers do not find all television viewing causes the same effects, it is also unlikely that all different kinds of Facebook use cause romantic jealousy. If the specifics of this problem can be identified, then interventions to reduce such problems can be developed both at the level of social networking sites (SNSs) and for individual clinical interventions.

Additionally, Facebook represents a unique environment for jealousy research. Before social networking sites (SNSs), people generally did not have a semi-permanent method of observing their romantic partner’s interactions. As Muise et al. (2009) observed, people can now see many of one’s partner’s friends and observe the closeness or intimacy of one’s partner’s interactions with hundreds of potential rivals. Before SNSs one was usually only vaguely aware of all the people that one’s partner might be connected to and what kinds of messages one’s partner might be exchanging with those people. Muscanell and Guadagno (2016) note several aspects of the Facebook experience that may heighten jealousy. The viewable and semi-permanent record of the interactions between one’s partner and people who may seem like potential rivals on Facebook also allows the observing partner to examine them repeatedly. Additionally, those interactions are often seen in SNSs without context. Messages like “I hope to see
Related Content

Audience Participation in Television and Internet: Attitudes and Practices of Young People in Portugal
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/audience-participation-television-internet/29202?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/audience-participation-television-internet/29202?camid=4v1a)

Social Communication: Recommendations for a Hybrid Approach
[www.igi-global.com/article/social-communication/208184?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/social-communication/208184?camid=4v1a)
Wearables and People With Disabilities: Socio-Cultural and Vocational Implications
www.igi-global.com/chapter/wearables-and-people-with-disabilities/201987?camid=4v1a

Viewing Alone or Together: Linking the Viewing Context for Sexually Explicit Internet Materials to Sex-Related Attitudes
www.igi-global.com/article/viewing-alone-or-together/191322?camid=4v1a