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## Green-Eyed Facebook Monster: Social Network Use and Relationship Disruption

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Green-Eyed Facebook Monster:  
Social Network Use and Relationship Disruption

Theresa Hurton

Providence College

A project based upon an independent investigation,  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Social Work.

2011

### Abstract

This study looks at the relationship between the social network site Facebook and how it impacts college romantic relationships. A review of the literature reveals that Facebook can be a direct cause of jealousy and a negative impact on romantic and sexual relationships and can be responsible for creating suspicion between romantic partners, but there is still need for more research to be done in the future. This correlational study used a questionnaire with Likert style items administered to one hundred undergraduates having them rate frequency of Facebook use and jealousy in past and present relationships. The findings reveal that there is a positive correlation between checking Facebook daily and the presence of jealousy in relationships. Implications from this study were the need for future research since Facebook is a fairly new social network site and the need to gather data from a more diverse student sample.

Green-Eyed Facebook Monster:  
Social Network Use and Relationship Disruption

This study explores the relationship between the use of Facebook and the occurrence of jealousy in both committed and casual college relationships. It will look to see whether Facebook contributes to fights or even break-ups in relationships. The study will look to see if the amount of time one spends on Facebook is related to increased frequency and severity of jealousy. The study will look at gender to determine what factors increase jealousy for males and females, and see what differences or similarities exist.

This topic is timely since Facebook is a relatively new phenomenon. It would be difficult to find a college student who does not know what Facebook is, or to find one who does not have his or her own Facebook account. Facebook has become one of the biggest “procrastinating tools” for college students. I became interested because of the overwhelming interest that all college students have with it. Due to “status updates” and the “newsfeed,” hundreds of people can know within seconds who is dating whom, what couples broke up, or what their significant other at a different school did over the weekend. “Facebook official” has become a widely used term throughout the student population referring to couples who have made their relationship public via Facebook’s “relationship status” application. I have heard about fights happening because of Facebook. I have heard college students speaking about how their partner was hanging out with members of the opposite sex over the weekend and how it was going to be a big problem. Since there is not much prior research done on this topic, I am interested to see

if the experience of Facebook creating jealousy is common throughout the rest of the college-aged population

I also became interested because I do believe there is significance in studying the effects of Facebook on relationships. There has not been much research done on this topic because Facebook is a fairly new phenomenon. There is definitely a social significance, in that social networking is a major way that individuals interact and form or strengthen platonic or sexual relationships. It is important to keep up with the ever-changing culture and the means of communicating that are becoming mainstream. Social workers must know the types of interaction that clients have with other individuals in their lives. Social work is based on working with people to facilitate their interactions. Studying Facebook and its relation to college-students and the relationships they keep, or choose to end, will give insight to the impact Facebook has on individuals.

It is my hypothesis that Facebook use is positively correlated with an increase of jealousy. The method of my study and findings will follow the review of literature. I will be handing out questionnaires to as many undergraduate students of Providence College as possible to gather information on their Facebook use, their current or past relationship status, and how the two are related. I look to support the hypothesis that Facebook has a direct correlation to increased feelings of jealousy in both casual and committed relationships. I will analyze the data once collected to determine the biggest contributors to jealousy that stem from Facebook. In addition, I will look at gender to see if there is a significant difference between factors creating jealousy in males and females.

## Literature Review

College students today rely on technology to keep in touch with friends and form new relationships. Facebook, a relatively new social network, has become a part of this relentless dependency that students have on technology. They are able to learn about new relationships and who is dating whom. Facebook adds to the stress of maintaining a relationship and of keeping it healthy and free of jealousy. Developing and maintaining a romantic relationship involve a number of new factors due to the advancement of technology. The Internet has evolved so much that “online communities are created, social networks thrive, business transactions occur, future marital partners are found, and even sexual desires can be fulfilled” online (Merkle & Richardson, 2000, p. 187). The use of the Internet now differs greatly from the original intended purpose, according to Merkle and Richardson (2000). Due to fear that the country was losing the technological and strategic defensive advantage over Communist rivals in the 1960’s, the Defensive Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) developed a communication system allowing the first computers to be networked together. Almost forty years later, the first recognizable social network site launched. Social network sites are web-based services that allow individuals to “construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 2).

From 1997 to 2001, social networks began expanding, which enabled individuals to create “personal, professional, and dating profiles” (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 4). From 2003 forward, many new social network sites were launched with most being centered

around personal profiles, trying to target particular age groups. However, in the year 2004, Facebook, unlike all previous social network sites, was initially “designed to support distinct college networks only,” specifically Harvard University (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 8). To keep the site moderately closed, all users had to have university email addresses associated with those institutions, which also gave users a sense of a private community. However due its immediate popularity, in 2005 Facebook expanded to “include high school students, professionals inside corporate networks, and, eventually, everyone” (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 8). Unlike other social network sites, Facebook is used to maintain existing offline relationships, rather than forming new ones (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 11). Now, however, relationships that beforehand were established and maintained largely through face-to-face communication have come to be complemented by social technology that is creating a new assortment of interpersonal relationships.

In search of how online social network sites contribute to jealousy in relationships, it is important to understand the concept of jealousy and the differences, if any, between how it is constructed by males and females. Jealousy can be defined as “a protective reaction to a perceived threat to a valued relationship” (Hansen, 1982, p. 513). Hansen describes how jealousy is a response to “symbolic stimuli” which have meanings to the individual that result from subjective interpretation of them. This understanding of jealousy to the individual includes two separate factors. First, how a person defines a partner’s actual or even imagined behavior as conflicting with their own definition of the relationship can trigger jealous feelings. Second, the person must view the romantic relationship as valuable. The idea that a partner’s differing opinion of the relationship contributes to jealousy is also supported by White’s study, “Jealousy and Partner’s

Perceived Motives for Attraction to a Rival” (1981). White thought that the perception of a partner’s discontent as a motive amplifies the perception of threat to the existence or value of the relationship, resulting in jealousy. In Hansen’s study, 220 subjects were presented with descriptions of eight hypothetical jealousy producing events involving their partner.

The findings of Hansen’s study shows that events, such as a partner being involved with a hobby, or a night out with his or her friends, produces the smallest amount of jealousy in the other partner. Hansen’s study, however, did not explicitly differentiate between male and female responses, which White’s study did (1981). White’s study involved 300 heterosexual couples, so 150 females and 150 males completed a thirty-five page “Relationships Questionnaire” (White, 1981, p. 25). For example, “perception of a rival attraction’s motive predicted positively for females but negatively for males” (White, 1981, p. 27). Perception of a “sexual motive” was the only predictor of a threat to the relationship throughout the study for both male and females. An interesting finding was that the thought of a sexual motive predicted male anger, but not female anger. Female anger was attributed to the perception of a rival attraction’s motive. The findings also support the observation that females tend to value the interpersonal and emotional aspect of relationships more than sexual aspects. The study concluded that females were more likely to emphasize nonsexual qualities of the rival relationships, such as the “rival’s” personality and ability to communicate.

As previous studies suggested that jealousy evolves if the relationship in question is valued, Buss, Larsen, Semmelroth, & Westen (1992) take that belief a step further by studying whether jealousy is greater if that valued relationship is sexual. The first of their



small studies tested the hypothesis that men and women greatly differ in which form of infidelity, sexual or emotional, triggers more upset and subjective distress. The data supported their hypothesis. Eighty-three percent of females reported greater anguish would be experienced if their partner formed an emotional attachment to a rival. Sixty percent of males, however, reported greater distress relating to their partner's potential sexual infidelity. The study took this a step further by varying the scenario with a contrast between love and sex. It remained consistent with the "majority of women reporting greater distress over a partner's falling in love with a rival" than with their partner's sexual involvement with a rival (Buss et al., 1992, p. 252).

Buss et al. (1992) also found support for the hypothesis that "jealousy involves physiological reactions (autonomic arousal) to perceived threat and motivated action to reduce the threat" (p. 251). Simply put, the results suggest that male jealousy develops more so when sexual feelings are possible between a partner and a rival, whereas female jealousy is more rooted in emotional bonds between a partner and a rival. Buss et al. (1992) included 202 undergraduate students who participated in a study, in which they were presented with various imaginary situations involving a significant other. A limitation of this study, however, is that it only pertained to a certain age group. It would be beneficial to conduct more studies to see if these results hold across different age groups.

Most importantly, it is necessary to see the link between social network sites, specifically Facebook, and the effect they have on jealousy in relationships. According to Christofides, Desmarais, & Muise (2009), Facebook is a direct cause of jealousy and negatively impacts romantic and sexual relationships, a conclusion which was supported

by anecdotal evidence from discussions with undergraduates. This site is responsible for creating suspicion between romantic partners, as well as jealousy. Generally, Christofides et al. found that people in committed relationships experience a lower level of jealousy than those in newer, more casual ones. However, Facebook creates an exception. The exposure of information about a “romantic partner’s friends and social interactions may result in an environment that enhances jealousy” (2009, p. 442), no matter what stage the committed or new relationship is in. Facebook creates the possibility of making connections with previous romantic and sexual partners much easier, which creates the potential for jealousy in current relationships.

Christofides et al. (2009) suggest that exposing one’s partner to all the individuals that his or her romantic other is “friends” with, many of whom may be unheard of to the partner, increases jealousy and suspicion. These findings came from an anonymous online survey of 308 respondents. A majority of the participants (74.6%), all undergraduate students between the ages of seventeen and twenty-four, were at least “somewhat likely” to add previous romantic or sexual partners as friends on Facebook (Christofides et al., 2009). This could correlate with the fact that 78.9% of participants indicated that their partner had in fact added previous romantic or sexual partners as friends. A “Facebook Jealousy scale” was created to evaluate the occurrence of jealousy in the specific context of Facebook, which in its final form was a 7-point Likert scale. This specific study (Christofides et al., 2009) found that women spent significantly more time on Facebook than men, and women also scored significantly higher on Facebook jealousy. The study seems to be suggesting that the more time the students spend browsing Facebook, the more likely they are to develop jealous feelings about their

partners. It was relevant to my study because the ages of the respondents, 17 to 24 years, were the same as college-aged students.

At the end of the survey, an open-ended question was asked in order to gain qualitative information on the participants' experience of jealousy related to Facebook. An interesting piece of information came from the same study in the "open-ended" section. The results were grouped into categories by a rater who was blind to the purpose of the study. Although only sixty-eight participants responded to the open-ended question, the groups that emerged were: accessibility of information, relationship jealousy, Facebook as an addiction, and lack of context (Christofides et al., 2009). The two most pertinent to the purpose of this study are "relationship jealousy" and "lack of context." The information on someone's Facebook page can be interpreted in a variety of ways given its common lack of context. Uncertain scenes involving a partner and contact with an "ex" are one of the common triggers of jealousy in relationships, and Facebook presents people with both of those ambiguous situations.

Facebook users have the option of uploading pictures and videos from their cameras or even mobile devices to make them available for viewing to the general Facebook community, their own "friends," or even select a few certain "friends" who have access to their pictures and videos. It also gives users the ability to download certain "applications" which allow the users to personalize their profiles. Applications also enable tasks such as comparing music preferences between "friends" or even charting travel histories (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Facebook has a specific place to indicate a user's "relationship status." The options are "single," "in a relationship," "in an open relationship," "it's complicated," "engaged," "married," "separated," "widowed,"

and “divorced.” A user can choose not to display any relationship status, one of the aforementioned labels, or even choose one of those labels and indicate whom the relationship, whatever form it takes, is with as long as the other partner has a Facebook account as well. Boyd (2007) asserted that the introduction of the “News Feed” feature, the homepage of Facebook that automatically updates itself to display exactly what “friends” have been up to on Facebook, disrupted students’ sense of control, even though data exposed through the feed were previously accessible. All of this information that is becoming accessible through this social network creates privacy issues.

Apart from privacy, social networking is having a major impact on the development of adolescent relationships. According to Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008), beginning in adolescence, individuals are using electronic media such as Facebook to reinforce existing romantic relationships, just as is done with platonic relationships. In a study of 1,440 first-year students at Michigan State University, it was found that first year students might have been using Facebook to “check out people they had met as prospective dates” (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008, p. 130). This is a unique way of obtaining what is considered personal information, which before the Internet was extremely unlikely without speaking directly with that person. Another study by these researchers of relationship formation asked a sample of Facebook users about a time when they had met someone socially and then reviewed his or her Facebook profile. “Heavy” Facebook users reported being more confident in the information they had collected from the profile. An interesting finding is that, in addition to being more confident, users felt more attracted to and similar to the person in the profile they reviewed. Subrahmanyam and Greenfield’s study suggests that the manner in which

online communication affects romantic relationships may be subtle: getting more information about people one has met to screen potential dates.

One aspect of Subrahmanyam and Greenfield's study that was not discussed in other literature was "electronic communication and identity development." It was thought that through the use of the Internet, individuals could be whomever they chose to be and could slip in and out of various identities. Although initially, the Internet was thought to be a good place for identity exploration, apprehensions have been raised that such exploration holds back an individual's development. In today's society, traditional adolescent issues such as intimacy, sexuality, and identity have all been transferred to and transformed by the electronic stage (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008).

The potential for jealousy in this environment is evident. Facebook is a growing phenomenon. The vast majority of results in literature indicate that many individuals say that their partner is "friends" with a previous romantic or sexual partner. One of the more interesting findings is that many individuals know that a high-degree of self-disclosure can increase a feeling of jealousy without proper context (Christofides et al., 2009). However, college-aged students do indeed practice high self-disclosure, which could suggest that individuals may not adequately recognize that their own information disclosure may be a cause of concern or jealousy for their partner. On the other hand, it could be a form of "payback" if they feel their partner is disclosing too much information. No matter the reasoning, the result is a vicious cycle whereby a "person's acontextual disclosure on Facebook may only increase the likelihood that one's partner may also do the same, thus increasing the likelihood of causing one's own experience of jealousy" (Christofides et al., 2009, p. 443).

In this study, I will gather information from undergraduate students. I will gather the information of students from different grades, genders, and majors. Since Facebook is a relatively new topic, there is no clear-cut relationship between it and jealousy. More research is needed to determine if the results of Christofides et al. (2009) can be found across repeated sampling. After distributing questionnaires, I expect to determine that there is a direct correlation between Facebook use and jealousy in college relationships, just as Christofides et al. (2009) suggest. I will attempt to gain more specific knowledge than Christofides et al. (2009) by determining factors that contribute to jealousy and factors that heighten the jealous feelings, such as the newsfeed, wall posts, new friendships, or tagged pictures. The data will also provide information indicating whether Facebook causes arguments or any major fights between partners. I will not limit the study to individuals currently in relationships, because it is beneficial for my study to look at past relationships as well. Finally, I will be interested to see if any information that is disclosed via Facebook has caused an individual to discover some information about their partner, such as unfaithfulness, that has led to a break-up.

This study will help to understand social relationships among individuals. Facebook is one of the main techniques through which college students communicate, through “wall-posts,” “inboxs,” and “statuses.” It is important for a social worker to remain up-to-date on how people are communicating and what types of social networking clients are involving themselves with, in order to understand their current situation. The social relationships that a person has can explain a lot about what that individual sees as important. The people with whom a client associates shows who and what that client values in relationships and every day life.

## **Methodology**

My research is looking at the relationship between the usage of Facebook and the jealousy it leads to in committed or casual college relationships. The study will look at different factors on Facebook that could create the most jealously-inducing situations, such as “wall-posts,” “tagged pictures,” and newly added “friends.” The research is a quantitative correlational study.

### **Participants**

In order to be a subject in this study, the individual must be an undergraduate college student. The study is not limited to students residing on-campus and was administered to both males and females. Faculty and staff were not included in the study. In order to obtain the information in the study, I passed out questionnaires to students by traveling from dorm to dorm. I attempted to distribute an equal number of questionnaires to male and female students, which makes the sampling one of convenience. All students are members of a private Catholic college in a small New England city.

### **Data Gathering**

While going from room to room, I asked the students who were present in the room if they would be willing to take a questionnaire (see Appendix A) that would take a few brief minutes. I assured them that their information would remain anonymous, with the details provided in a release form. The participants themselves put completed surveys in a manila envelope provided, which I provided, to preserve anonymity. They were informed that once the survey was completed and handed over to me, they could not request to remove themselves from the study and that their information would be used as part of group analysis of data.

## **Data Analysis**

Once all the data were collected, I separated the information by gender. By doing so, I could then look at all the information regarding Facebook use, jealousy, relationship turmoil, and factors that create the most jealousy by male and female. It allowed the study to determine if there was a difference in jealousy by gender. Also, it allowed me to see what was constant throughout the genders. Since the questionnaire included questions regarding the subject's partner, I analyzed if a partner's use in Facebook, or what applications they took advantage of, resulted in the subject disclosing more information to "even out" the jealous feelings. Since there were not prior studies done on this topic, analyzing the data was the first step in creating the framework for developing further research and studies to gain greater knowledge on this area. Correlations between Facebook use variables and variables of jealousy and relational functioning and disruptions were examined via the nonparametric Kendall's tau-b test. These relationships were also analyzed separately for male and female subjects to explore gender differences.

## **Findings**

The main findings of this relational study include that one hundred percent of the participating students have an active Facebook account and ninety-three percent check their Facebook daily. This study suggests that Facebook contributes to jealousy in relationships. The positive relationship between how often an individual checks his or her partner/crush's Facebook and the presence of jealousy in current or past relationships is significant. First, the data will be reported descriptively, and then key relationships will be discussed.



One hundred college students participated in this study. There was an equal number of males and females, fifty each, who participated. Members from all four classes took part in the study. There were fifteen seniors, twenty-eight juniors, thirty-eight sophomores, and nineteen freshmen. Twenty-nine percent of those on Facebook are in a relationship, and twenty-one percent are listed as “in a relationship.” The data show that ninety-five percent of these subjects are “friends” with past partners. In addition, ninety-eight percent of these students’ current partners are “friends” with past significant others. Fifty-four percent of these college students check their partner or crush’s newly tagged pictures every single time they sign onto their account. Eighteen percent of college students post on their partner’s/crush’s “wall” to let other “friends” know about the relationship, no matter what level of commitment is involved. The data show that sixty-three percent of participants have uploaded pictures to their Facebook from social events and parties, which leads to forty-one percent of the other partners in the relationships seeing their significant other in pictures with people that they do not feel comfortable with.

The data show that information discovered via Facebook has led to twenty-nine percent of these college students to question their partner’s commitment to the relationship. In addition, information discovered via Facebook has led directly to jealousy in current and past relationships: Facebook has led thirty-percent of these college students to have a discussion with their partner about his or her Facebook “activity.” A greater percentage of these students, thirty-three percent, have had an argument or fight due to information that was discovered while on Facebook. Forty-nine percent of students have “vented” to their friends about their partner due to things that

they have seen or read on Facebook. Just about the same percentage, forty-eight percent, have vented to their friends about a potential “threat,” an ex-partner for example, who has shown up on their partner’s wall. Information discovered via Facebook is reported to have contributed to a break-up for twelve-percent of these students, while it is reported to have led directly to a break-up for ten-percent.

The data revealed relationships between Facebook use and problems in relationships (table 1). The table shows that all the relationships are significant. When someone checks his or her Facebook daily, it leads to questioning of his or her partner’s commitment to them. This relationship is statistically significant ( $\tau = 0.163$ ,  $p = 0.029$ , 1-tailed). The relationship between checking Facebook daily and jealousy in past or current relationships is also statistically significant ( $\tau = 0.175$ ,  $p = 0.020$ , 1-tailed). When the first variable is changed from checking one’s own Facebook daily to checking their partner or crush’s Facebook daily, the relationships become more significant. For example, the relationship between checking one’s partner or crush’s Facebook and questioning their commitment is significant ( $\tau = 0.216$ ,  $p = 0.003$ , 1-tailed). In this sample, there was a significant positive correlation between frequency of checking a partner’s Facebook and becoming uncomfortable with pictures discovered there ( $\tau = 0.248$ ,  $p = 0.001$ , 1-tailed). In this sample, there was also a significant positive correlation between someone checking a partner or crush’s newly “tagged pictures” and jealousy in the relationship ( $\tau = 0.251$ ,  $p = 0.001$ , 1-tailed).

**Table 1**

			Seen pictures of partner→ uncomfortable	Questioned my partner's commitment	Led to jealousy
Kendall's tau_b	Check FB daily	Correlation	.187*	.163*	.175*
		Coefficient			
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.014	.029	.020
		N	100	100	100
	Check Partner's FB when I sign onto my account	Correlation	.248**	.216**	.326**
		Coefficient			
		Sig.(1-tailed)	.001	.003	.000
		N	100	100	100
	Check my Partner's/ Crush's Newly "tagged pictures" when on FB	Correlation	.261**	.255**	.251**
		Coefficient			
		Sig.(1-tailed)	.000	.001	.001
		N	100	100	100

The data also show that individuals feel the need to post on his or her partner or crush's "wall" to let other "friends" know about the relationship, no matter the level of commitment. The table below, table two, shows there is a statistically significant relationship between posting on a partner's wall and many other variables. This could suggest that those who feel the need to post on their partner's wall may already be somewhat jealous or have reasons to be concerned about their relationship, a possibility that cannot be corroborated by these data. However, whatever the reason may be for posting on their wall, it is positively correlated with the occurrence of fighting or arguing in the relationship. This relationship is significant ( $\tau = 0.364$ ,  $p = .000$ , 1-tailed). The relationship is significant between posting on a significant other's wall and venting to one's friends about the partner or venting about someone who has shown up on the

partner's Facebook who is seen as a threat, like an ex-boyfriend or girlfriend ( $\tau = 0.209$ ,  $p = 0.004$ , 1-tailed and  $\tau = 0.339$ ,  $p = 0.000$ , 1-tailed, respectively). Again, those who are posting on their partner's "wall" to let others know about the relationship are more likely to have Facebook be a contributing factor in a breakup. Posting on the "wall" has a statistically significant relationship with information on Facebook leading directly to a breakup ( $\tau = 0.283$ ,  $p = .000$ , 1-tailed). When someone sees pictures of his or her partner socializing with others that he or she is not comfortable with, the likelihood is that information discovered via Facebook increases the chances of arguments between partners, venting to friends about partners, and contributing to a breakup.

**Table 2**

		V17:led to Fight	V18:vent to friends	V19:vent to friends about "threat"	V20:contributed to a breakup	V21:led directly to a breakup
V11:post on Partner's FB	Correlation Coefficient	.364**	.209**	.339**	.265**	.283**
	Sig.(1-tailed)	.000	.004	.000	.001	.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100
V12:partner has uploaded pictures	Correlation Coefficient	-.081	-.017	-.079	-.044	.005
	Sig.(1-tailed)	.157	.415	.162	.296	.477
	N	100	100	100	100	100
V13:seen Pictures of Partner → Uncomfortable	Correlation Coefficient	.438**	.556**	.507**	.242**	.179*
	Sig.(1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.002	.015
	N	100	100	100	100	100

When looking at the differences between male and females, there are findings that were not expected. The chart below (table 3) shows that the correlation between checking one's Facebook daily and jealousy in a relationship is much higher for males. This relationship is statistically significant ( $\tau = 0.260$ ,  $p = 0.015$ , 1-tailed), even with only fifty male subjects. The relationship is not statistically significant for females. The data suggest that the correlation between males checking their Facebook daily and questioning their partner's commitment to the relationship is also much higher than that of females.

**Table 3**

Gender			V13:seen Pictures of Partner→ uncomfortable	V14:question partner's commitment	V15:led to jealousy	
Kendall's Tau_b	Female	V8:check FB daily	Correlation Coefficient	.029	.031	-.022
			Sig.(1-tailed)	.407	.402	.432
			N	50	50	50
Male	V8:check FB daily	Correlation Coefficient	.305**	.289**	.260**	
			Sig.(1-tailed)	.006	.009	.015
			N	50	50	50

When looking at the year of graduation of the students, seniors were the most likely to post on their partner's "wall" to let other "friends" know about the relationship. The mean score for seniors was 65.90, with freshmen ranking the second highest with a mean score of 54.87 (figure 4). This could possibly be due to the fact that seniors are more likely to be in committed serious relationships while they are approaching graduation and feel a need to "protect" their relationships. It is also possible that freshmen, since they have the second-highest mean, are potentially still in "high-school

relationships” and trying to stay connected to their partner if they attend a different college. The data also show that seniors had the highest mean score for all the years for “venting” to their friends about someone they see as a threat who has shown up on their partner’s wall. The mean score of the seniors was 66.37, with the next highest mean score only at 52.78 for sophomores. Again, one can only speculate about the reasons for this, but it is possible that seniors are more likely to be a serious relationship that they have invested time into.

**Table 4**

		Rank	
	YOG	N	Mean Rank
V11:posting	2011	15	65.90
On	2012	28	41.34
Partner’s	2013	38	48.99
Wall	2014	19	54.87
	Total	100	
V19:	2011	15	66.37
Venting	2012	28	40.50
To friends	2013	38	52.78
About	2014	19	48.16
Threat	Total	100	

### Summary and Implications

This study looks at the relationship between the social network site Facebook and how it impacts college romantic relationships. A review of the literature reveals that Facebook is a direct cause of jealousy and negatively impacts romantic and sexual relationships and is responsible for creating suspicion between romantic partners, but there is still need for more research to be done in the future. This correlational study used a questionnaire with Likert style items administered to one hundred undergraduates having them rate frequency of Facebook use and jealousy in past and present

relationships. The findings reveal that there is a positive correlation between checking Facebook daily and the presence of jealousy in relationships. Implications in this study are considered below.

It is important to note that there are implications that come with this study, as with any study. The data collected might not be representative of the whole student population of Providence College. There are a little over four thousand undergraduate students who attend Providence College, and this study analyzed the data of a sample of convenience of that population. In addition, the data might not be representative of all college students who attend different universities. Although I did my best to select the participants completely randomly, those who agreed to participate were the students who were in their dormitory rooms when I went around knocking on doors. In some cases, students did not have the time to fill out the questionnaire and could not participate.

The analyzed data show some interesting relationships. However, it is difficult to determine why certain correlations happened. For example, the relationship between posting on a partner's "wall" to let other "friends" know about the relationship and information on Facebook leading to a break-up was significant. Posting on the "wall" also had a correlation with arguing in relationships. Further research would need to be done to determine if there is already jealousy in relationships that influence someone's desire to post on their partner's "wall." If there is already jealousy prior to Facebook use, then that could be a contributing factor to the break-up as well.

What requires some attention from the findings are the correlations by gender. The correlation with someone checking their Facebook daily and the presence of jealousy in relationships is much higher for males. The correlation between checking Facebook

daily and questioning the partner's commitment to the relationship is also much higher for males. This could be due to what was stated in the literature. When one checks Facebook, he or she can only conjecture what posts on their partner's "wall" mean. When checking the "tagged pictures" of their partner, they cannot put themselves in the situation in which the picture was taken so they do not know exactly what was going on or who was present. The literature suggests that females value the interpersonal and emotional aspect of relationships more so than the sexual aspects, where it is the opposite for males. When males believe there is a sexual motive involving their partner another person, it produced anger, which was not the case for women. Perhaps Facebook creates more situations where males feel a "sexual threat" due to the posting of pictures from parties and social events.

This study is important and beneficial for social work practice because it addresses the social aspects of interpersonal relationships. In today's society, the use of online social networking sites is becoming more universal. In social work practice, if one wishes to work directly, or even indirectly in a policy setting, with clients it is necessary to be as educated and up to date as possible on how individuals are communicating. While working with clients, it is necessary that they have support systems in their own personal life and understanding how very popular social networking sites influence those support systems and relationships could be extremely advantageous.

There has not been much research done on this topic but if future research happens on the Facebook phenomenon, the results from this study could be supported and workers in the social work practice would be able to keep up with the ever-changing culture and the ways in which people communicate. Studying social networking sites,



especially Facebook, have a definite social significance. With future research, helping professionals will become more knowledgeable on common means of interactions that clients have with important people in their lives.

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## Appendix A

## Questionnaire

CIRCLE YOUR ANSWERS!

**Gender:** Male Female

**Year of Graduation:** 2011 2012 2013 2014

**Do you have a Facebook account? :** Yes No

-if No, the survey is complete

**Are you currently in a Relationship? :** Yes No

**-If Yes, does your “relationship status” on Facebook say “in a relationship”?**

Yes No

-I am “friends” with past “crushes” or ex-boyfriends/girlfriends: Yes No

-My crush/boyfriend/girlfriend is “friends” with their past significant others:

Yes No

For the next scenarios use the following scale:

1. Always
2. Very Frequently
3. Occasionally
4. Rarely
5. Very Rarely
6. Never

-I check my Facebook daily.

1 2 3 4 5 6

-I check my partner’s/crush’s Facebook when I sign onto my account.

1 2 3 4 5 6

-I check my partner’s/crush’s newly “tagged pictures” when I browse Facebook.

1 2 3 4 5 6

-I post on my partner’s/crush’s “wall” to let other “friends” know about our relationship (whatever level of commitment is involved).

1 2 3 4 5 6

**Has any information you have discovered via Facebook...:** (include both past and present relationships)

...led you to question your partner's commitment to your relationship?

Yes

No

...led to jealousy in your current or past relationships?

Yes

No

...led you and your partner to discuss concerns about their "activity"?

Yes

No

...led to an argument/fight between you and your partner?

Yes

No

...led you to "vent" to your friends about someone you see as a "threat"(ie: an ex) who has shown up on your partner's wall?

Yes

No

...led directly to a breakup?

Yes

No

## Appendix B

### Consent Form

Dear Potential Participant,

I am a senior Social Work major at Providence College, and I am inviting you to participate in a study that addresses Facebook and relationships. The data gathered in this study will be reported in my senior thesis.

At the present time, male and female college students are being recruited for this research. Participation will involve a questionnaire that participants will execute honestly and to the best of their ability. The total participation time should not exceed 10 minutes.

There are no anticipated significant risks associated with involvement in this research.

Benefits of participating in this study include the possible reward of knowing that the participant has contributed to the generation of knowledge that may aid in work with others in the future. There is no other anticipated compensation.

Confidentiality of participants will be protected by collecting questionnaires in a way that ensures anonymity.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate or to decline to participate will not influence your grades or your relationship to Providence College in any way.

**YOUR RETURN OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICPATE IN THE STUDY.**

Thank you for participating in this study.