Gender Differences in Social Media Behaviors as Predictors for Romantic Jealousy

Julia C. Smaltz & David E. Szwedo
James Madison University

Introduction

- A qualitative study that conducted group interviews on teens found that teens use technology to start, maintain, and end dating relationships through the use of various outlets including text messaging, phone calls, and SNSs (Baker and Carreno, 2015).

- A study conducted with 846 adult Facebook users found that higher levels of self-reported hostility, physical aggression, verbal aggression, and lower levels of self-esteem all predicted higher levels of Facebook jealousy (i.e. the jealous feelings and behaviors that are caused by excessive exposure to content on Facebook). Further, it was found that higher levels of physical aggression, verbal aggression, and hostility predicted higher levels of sexual jealousy (Demirtaş-Madran, 2018).

- Females are more likely to experience emotional jealousy, and males are more likely to experience sexual jealousy. Further, males who experience sexual jealousy are more likely to experience Facebook jealousy (Demirtaş-Madran, 2018).

- The purpose of the current study is to investigate gender differences in the relationship between problematic social media behaviors predicting jealousy and jealousy-related behaviors in the context of romantic relationships. This study will further the investigation of the relationship between aggression and jealousy by exploring aggressive behaviors that take place on social media platforms as predictor variables for romantic jealousy.

Hypotheses

- More time spent on social media pages will predict higher amounts of jealousy-related behaviors.

- More observed social media activity online will predict higher amounts of jealousy-related behaviors.

- More aggressive and inappropriate behaviors observed online will predict higher amounts of jealousy-related behaviors.

- The outcomes of aggressive and inappropriate behaviors on jealousy-related behaviors will differ by gender.

Method

Participants

N = 184

Gender	Race/ethnicity	Income
86 males	107 Caucasian	Median = $40,000 - $59,000
98 females	53 African American	
	24 Mixed/Other	

Due to the fact that the Online Social Networking Coding System was added later in the study, a smaller subset of this sample consisting of 115 individuals were assessed for online social networking activity

Measures

Online Behaviors (age 20) Assessed using the the Online Social-Networking Coding System (OSN), an observational coding system completed by researchers on Participants' Facebook or MySpace profiles. Also assessed using the Online Friendships Questionnaire (OFQ), a self-report survey assessing participants' activity and time spent online.

Jealousy (age 20) Assessed using the Multidimensional Jealousy Scale (MJS), a self-report survey measuring cognitive, behavioral, and emotional jealousy.

Romantic Relationship Satisfaction (age 20) Assessed using the Network of Relationships Inventory (NRI), a self-report measure about satisfaction with their significant other.

Results

Correlations between variables of interest are presented in Table 1.

Correlations show a significant association between male participants and online aggression, as well as an association between male participants and inappropriate comments.

Regression analyses found that several online activity variables served as predictors for jealousy and jealousy-related behaviors. Analyses controlled for participant gender and household family income. (See Figure 1)

Two significant interactions were found between gender and variables of interest. (See Figures 2 and 3)

Table 1. Univariate statistics and correlations between variable of interest.

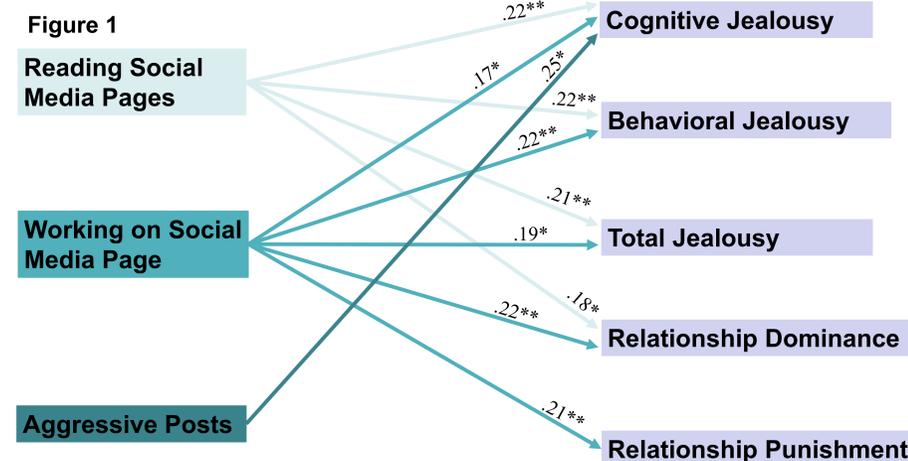|	Gender	Relationship Dominance	Relationship Punishment	Dyadic Dominance	Cognitive Jealousy	Emotional Jealousy	Behavioral Jealousy	Total Jealousy
1. Gender	–	.20*	-.24**	.15	.05	.38***	.14	.22**
2. Income	-.11	.16	.09	-.19	.04	-.13	-.05	-.07
3. Time Spent Reading Social Media Pages (20)	-.02	.20*	.14	-.11	.23**	-.02	.22**	.21*
4. Time Spent Working on Social Media Page (20)	.02	.22**	.21*	-.13	.18*	.05	.24**	.21*
5. Number of Friends on Social Media (20)	-.03	.12	-.04	-.18	-.13	.29**	-.11	-.21
6. Number of Wall Posts on Social Media (20)	.18	.07	-.09	-.12	-.08	-.26*	-.05	-.15
7. Online Hostility (20)	.15	-.03	-.20	.26*	-.15	.09	-.13	-.10
8. Online Aggression (20)	-.19*	.13	.21	.11	.22*	.01	.21	-.20
9. Inappropriate Comments (20)	-.24**	.22*	.14	-.13	-.05	-.01	-.08	-.07

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Figure 1. Pictorial representation of significant associations between predictor and outcome variables. (All variables coded in positive directions)

Figure 2. Interaction between online hostility and gender predicting relationship dominance. Males who exhibited more hostile behaviors online also exhibited more dominance in their romantic relationships.
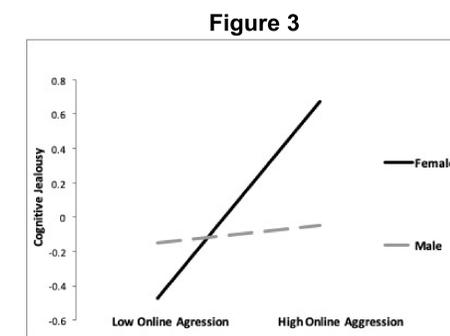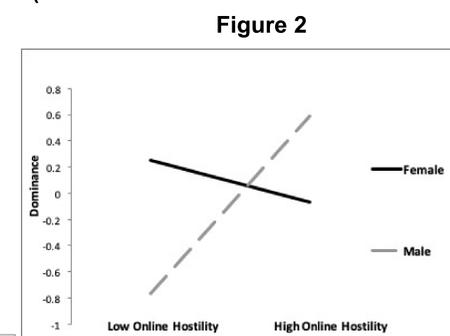

Figure 3. Interaction between online aggression and gender predicting cognitive jealousy. Females who exhibited higher levels of online aggression also reported higher levels of cognitive jealousy in their romantic relationships.

Discussion

- These findings suggest that use or overuse of social media is associated with behaviors such as heightened jealousy. De Vries & Kuhne (2015) found that high Facebook use is associated negative social comparison, negative self-perception, and lower self-esteem. This, in turn, may explain the association between social media use and jealousy

- These results also suggest that using social media in unhealthy manners such as exhibiting aggression predicts jealousy in romantic relationships as well. This may be due to low self-regulation in individuals who lack the ability to regulate their actions on and offline.

- The interactions found provide support that gender may moderate the relationship between aggressive online behaviors and jealousy-related relationship behaviors such that online aggression may be portrayed differently between males and females.