The Role of Motivations and Attachment Style in Understanding Romantic Partner Monitoring on Social Media
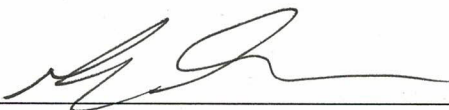
Chanel Lepone

Candidate for the degree

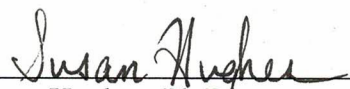Bachelor of Arts

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Susan Hughes, Ph.D.

Elizabeth Kiester, Ph.D.
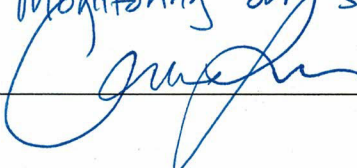
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Title: The Role of Motivations and Attachment Style in Understanding Romantic Partner Monitoring on Social Media

Signature of Author: _____ Date: 4/27/2018

Printed Name of Author: Chanel Lepore

Street Address: 802 Camino Real Unit #207

City, State, Zip Code: Redondo Beach, CA 90277

The Role of Motivations and Attachment Style in Understanding Romantic Partner Monitoring

on Social Media

Chanel N. Lepone

Albright College

Abstract

Social networking sites (SNS) are associated with both positive and negative effects on relationship quality for users in romantic relationships. The present study examines the role of attachment style and motivations that drive individuals in romantic relationships to monitor their partner's SNS activity. College students (*N*=105) participated in an online 10-day daily diary study, assessing participant's behavior on social media, their relationship quality, how they perceived their SNS use affected their relationship, and motivations for partner monitoring SNS. Results showed that individuals high in attachment anxiety were more likely to monitor their partner's SNS activity out of distrust, to seek information pertaining to themselves, and out of curiosity about their partners' daily activities. Multi-level analyses of daily behaviors revealed that on days when participants spent more time monitoring a romantic partner online, they experienced greater feelings of overall jealousy within the relationship, and jealousy and conflict due to SNS use. Intimacy avoidance was associated with experiencing less daily relationship satisfaction and heightened daily conflict within the relationship due to SNS use. Individuals high in attachment anxiety reported experiencing less daily jealousy due to SNS use. An interaction between attachment anxiety and SNS monitoring frequency revealed individuals low in anxiety experienced more jealousy due to SNS use when they monitored their partner more frequently.

Keywords: Social media, Attachment style, Monitoring

The Role of Motivations and Attachment Style in Understanding Romantic Partner Monitoring

on Social Media

Social networking sites (SNS) have altered the way many people communicate, maintain, and build relationships (Hand, Thomas, Buboltz, Deemer, & Buyanjargal, 2013). SNS can profoundly affect the way individuals initiate, experience, and terminate romantic relationships, yet the role SNS play in the development and maintenance of romantic relations has not fully been explained. One way to understand the role of SNS in romantic relationships is to consider how individual differences in romantic attachment style relate to the use of SNS (Rus & Tiemensma, 2017).

The use of social media may vary for individuals with different attachment styles. Attachment theory characterizes the tendency to seek closeness to another person into two dimensions, avoidance and anxiety, with individuals falling in the middle of the continuum classified as securely attached. These individual differences have a pronounced effect on how individuals experience and maintain their close relationships. For example, individuals who report high attachment avoidance tend to spend less time on Facebook (Fox & Tokunaga, 2015), whereas individuals high in attachment anxiety report spending more time on Facebook. Furthermore, studies on surveillance behaviors of couples on Facebook revealed individuals high in attachment anxiety are more likely to monitor their partner's activity online and have increased feelings of Facebook-induced jealousy compared to those high in avoidance (Marshall, Benjanyan, Di Castro, & Lee, 2013). These findings suggest the way individuals behave and perceive their partner's social media usage may depend largely on an individual's attachment style.

Engaging in electronic surveillance of a romantic partner's Facebook activity tends to lead to feelings of Facebook-increased jealousy (Tokunaga, 2011; Marshall et al., 2013; Fox & Tokunaga, 2015), however the motivations that drive these behaviors have been largely unexplored. Studying monitoring behavior by itself reveals who is more or less likely to engage in this behavior, but assessing different motives that drive the behavior would provide further insight into why individuals chose to monitor their romantic partner online. Since experiences on SNS may largely depend on individual differences in romantic attachment styles, motives to engage in monitoring behavior may also be influenced by one's attachment. Therefore, the current study aims to examine how attachment anxiety and avoidance are related to different experiences on social media platforms as well as different motives to engage in monitoring behavior online.

To understand how social media affects the quality of romantic relationships, previous studies have analyzed activity individuals conduct on social media, like posting dyadic photographs (Saslow, Muise, Impett, & Dubin, 2013) and monitoring (Fox & Tokunaga, 2015) to examine how such activities are used as relationship maintenance techniques and affect the romantic relationship overall. While this has provided substantial evidence for researchers to draw inferences from, these studies have primarily focused on Facebook activity rather than looking at activity across multiple social media platforms. Studies have encouraged future research to examine the effects of using multiple social media platforms (LeFebvre, Blackburn, Brody, 2015), but to date, no studies have risen to the task. As SNS continue to gain popularity, with over 1.9 billion users to date and a global increase of 17% among active mobile social media users between January 2015 to January 2016 (Chaffey, 2016). Thus, it is important to understand the psychological impact of SNS as new SNS continue to be created and used.

Facebook and Romantic Relationships

Facebook is one of many SNS which have become increasingly popular for users to initiate and maintain romantic relationships on as it promotes relational longevity regardless of romantic interest (Fox, Warber, & Makstaller, 2013). These social platforms help users stay connected to friends and loved ones, regardless of distance, while also allowing them to share information, photos, videos, and other content (Saslow et al., 2013; Fox et al., 2013). SNS offer several ways for users to feel connected to others, however, these features also serve as a source of information for current, potential, or past romantic partners (Tokunaga, 2011).

Individuals, especially those in long distance relationships, may be better able to determine if their partners are committed to the relationship after monitoring their social media accounts (Billedo, Kerkhof, & Finkenauer, 2015). Furthermore, sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, allow users to share and "like" content while communicating publicly. This level of transparency allows users to observe the behavior of others online whether they would like to or not. Intentionally engaging in this behavior is referred to as monitoring, a relationship maintenance technique where an individual examines a romantic partners electronic account(s). Individuals who tend to be jealous or anxious may find their partners ambiguous communication with others as threatening, which may cause increased feelings of jealousy and lead to conflict within their relationship (Muise, Christofides, Desmarais, 2009; Fox & Warber, 2014). This finding suggests relationship outcomes associated with SNS use largely depend on the person using it and how they engage with it, rather than the site or application itself (Hand et al., 2013).

One motivation for monitoring romantic partners' Facebook activity is to minimize relationship uncertainty (Fox et al., 2013), however, engaging in this behavior to maintain a relationship is risky as over-monitoring is associated with lower levels of satisfaction due to

increased jealousy (Elphinston & Noller, 2011). Due to the anonymity of a partner's friends and social interactions on SNS, these social media platforms may harbor an environment that enhances jealousy. Muise et al. (2009) revealed a majority (79%) of their college aged sample was likely to add past romantic or sexual partners as friends on Facebook, suggesting individuals may be entitled to feel concerned that their partner is in touch with a past lover. They also discovered participants were largely unaware which of their current partner's Facebook friends were past romantic or sexual partners, which led to increased feelings of jealousy and a greater likelihood to engage in jealousy-related behavior, like monitoring (Muise et al., 2009; 2014). Participants reported being aware that exposure to information online without proper context could increase feelings of jealousy, yet, they continued to engage in monitoring their partner's behavior online as they reported the urge to do so was too great to resist.

Darvell, Walsh, and White (2011) sought to better understand the psychological predictors that lead to partner monitoring behavior over Facebook. They discovered participants' attitudes toward partner monitoring and how acceptable they believed others see monitoring behavior significantly predicted the intention to engage in partner monitoring via Facebook. Trust was also found to be a significant predictor of monitoring behavior, suggesting the less trust an individual has in their partner, the more likely they are to monitor their Facebook activity. These findings are consistent with Muise et al. (2009) who proposed that Facebook users undergo a "feedback loop" of jealousy where information seen online invokes jealousy in a romantic partner which spurs further surveillance.

Hypothesis 1: On days when individuals monitor their partner due to distrust, they are more likely to experience less satisfaction, more jealousy, and more conflict within the relationship due to their social media use.

Despite the connection between engaging in online monitoring and feelings of jealousy, the extent to which different motives drive partner monitoring behavior remains largely unexplored. The motivations to engage in partner monitoring may differ among individuals, thus, the current study aims to analyze how different motives (e.g., distrust, seeking information pertaining to themselves, curiosity about partners daily activities, to learn about partners interest, effort to feel involved in partners life) contribute to engaging in monitoring behaviors across social media platforms and relational variables (e.g., satisfaction and commitment).

Attachment Theory

Bowlby (1969) led the initial studies examining attachment, a psychological, evolutionary, and ethological theory, that asserts a child needs to develop at least one primary relationship with a caregiver for survival, as well as social and emotional development. As Bowlby observed patterns of attachment in children, he theorized that while children learn from their interactions with caregivers they also create and apply what they learned to internal working models (Bowlby, 1973). Over time, the experiences children have with their caregivers allow them to form expectations about the availability and helpfulness of others, as well as if they were worth their caregivers' attention.

The topic of adult romantic attachment was later explored and developed by Hazan and Shaver (1987) who discovered adult lovers form affectionate bonds through a biosocial process, similar to the bonds formed between infants and their caregivers. Three prevalent attachment styles (e.g., secure, avoidant, and anxious) were revealed. Each reported experiencing romantic love in different ways and had similar characteristics found in children with different attachment styles. Participants who reported a secure attachment to their partner, considered their romantic experiences as trusting, friendly, and happy, while avoidant participants reported fear of

closeness in their romantic relationships. Furthermore, subjects who anxiously attached to their partners reported experiencing emotional highs and lows marked by jealousy and a desire for reciprocation within their relationship. Each attachment orientation also held different beliefs about the progression of romantic love, the availability and trustworthiness of their partners, and their own worthiness of love. These findings highlight how internal working models influence expectations, feelings, and thoughts about future relationships.

The importance of internal working models was later examined by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) who focused on two dimensions of attachment, later categorized as anxiety and avoidance (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). Attachment-related anxiety is characterized by a fear of interpersonal abandonment or rejection, an excessive need for approval from others, and distress when one's partner is unavailable. Individuals high in this trait tend to experience higher levels of jealousy and worry surrounding their relationship (Buunk, 1997). Attachment-related avoidance is the extent to which an individual fears interpersonal intimacy and dependence on a partner. It is characterized by an excessive need for self -reliance, maintaining personal distance from others, and reluctance to disclose information about themselves (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

Hypothesis 2: Individuals high in attachment avoidance will be negatively associated with daily reports of satisfaction within the relationship.

Hypothesis 3: Individuals high in attachment avoidance will be less inclined to monitor their romantic partner's social media profile to find information pertaining to themselves.

Hypothesis 4: Individuals high in attachment anxiety will be more likely to monitor due to distrust of their partners' activities will be associated with lower relationship satisfaction.

Hypothesis 5: Individuals high in attachment anxiety will be more inclined to monitor their romantic partners SNS due to curiosity about their partner's day, which will be associated with less satisfaction within the relationship.

The theory of attachment has also highlighted differences in people's responses to threats within their romantic relationship. Individuals classified as having a secure attachment, reporting low levels of both attachment anxiety and avoidance, are likely to use constructive and effective emotional regulation strategies (Cassidy & Kobak, 1988). However, individuals who score high on attachment anxiety tend to rely on hyperactivating mechanisms in which they elicit a romantic partner's attention or support and try to minimize the feeling of distance between themselves and their partner (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). Individuals high in attachment avoidance tend to employ deactivation strategies by attempting to avoid frustration or distress caused by their partner being unavailable by denying their attachment needs and instead, striving for independence and distance from others. These innate differences in individuals' attachment style and affect regulation, reliably predict differences in the way individuals form, perceive, and experience romantic relationships.

Hypothesis 6: On days when individuals spend more time monitoring a romantic partner through social media, they will experience less satisfaction, increased feelings of jealousy and conflict within the relationship due to social media use.

Romantic Attachment and Social Networking Sites

To better understand why individuals engage in Facebook monitoring, Fox and Warber (2014) conducted a one-time online survey of college students and found that attachment style predicted both feelings of uncertainty and time spent monitoring the Facebook profiles of former and current romantic partners. Individuals high in attachment anxiety experienced the highest

levels of relational uncertainty and engaged in the highest levels of electronic surveillance, whereas individuals high in attachment avoidance spend less time on Facebook.

Individuals high in attachment anxiety are also more likely than those high in avoidance to interpret information found on partner's SNS negatively (Fleuriet, Cole, & Guerrero, 2014). This predisposition may foster feelings of concern for individuals high in attachment anxiety. Dugas, Buhr, and Ladouceur (2004) define Intolerance of Uncertainty (IOU) as being a cognitive bias that affects how individuals observe, understand, and react to uncertainties. Thus, individuals high in attachment anxiety may feel as though uncertainty is more threatening than those with lower levels due to their heightened sensitivity to being abandoned or rejected. In turn, content easily available on SNS may be perceived as ambiguous and as especially threatening to those high in attachment anxiety as they may be more likely to observe and interpret this information in a negative way given their innate inclination to fear being abandoned or rejected.

Hypothesis 7: On days when individuals high in attachment anxiety monitor their partners, they will experience less daily satisfaction, more daily jealousy and more perceived negative outcomes.

Current Study

Despite the vast body of research on romantic attachment styles and partner monitoring on Facebook, the underlying motivations to engage in this behavior remain largely unknown. Research has demonstrated a positive association between attachment anxiety and time spent monitoring partners' Facebook accounts (Dugas et al., 2004; Muise et al., 2009; Reed, Tolman, and Safyer, 2015). Some suggest this association may be motivated by a desire to increase intimacy and ensure fidelity rather than cause emotional distress (Muise et al., 2009; Reed et al., 2015), which perpetuates a "cycle of anxiety" that stems from a social media trigger which

increases anxiety and leads to more electronic surveillance in an attempt to relieve anxiety. Thus, it is possible that increased feelings of jealousy, decreased satisfaction, and commitment are influenced by the individual's motive to engage in monitoring behavior and not just by monitoring itself.

The current study elaborates on past research by examining a variety of social media platforms instead of exclusively inquiring about Facebook activity. I used a longitudinal design, which allows me to examine changes of independent and dependent variables over nine consecutive days. Attachment style is used as a framework to further understand the innate psychological differences that influence perception and behavior on social media. This analysis also proposed six motives to monitor a romantic partner online which will allow us to better understand what drives monitoring behavior. How these motives are related to attachment style and relationship outcomes (e.g., satisfaction and commitment) will also be assessed to further understand who engages in monitoring for the reasons and how that relates to the quality of their relationship. Furthermore, the current study aims to assess participants' perceptions of daily social media use on their relationship. By providing insight into the immediate psychological and interpersonal consequences and benefits, this study provides a richer understanding of what results from using SNS as a source of information in a romantic relationship.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited from two sources (*N*=182). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 33 (*M* = 19.48, *SD* = 1.74). The total sample consisted of 22 Males and 158 Females with two preferring not to state their gender. Undergraduates attending a liberal arts college in the Northeastern United States were enrolled in one or more psychology courses and were offered

extra credit for participation ($n = 83$). Announcements were made in the beginning of

psychology classes taking place on campus. Interested students signed up via survey monkey and

were emailed a randomized identification code created through Excel's random number

generator to protect their identity and assure anonymity. Participants received extra credit

contingent on the longevity of their participation as an incentive to complete all research-related

tasks.

Additional undergraduates enrolled in an Intimate Relationships course were recruited at

a Midwestern United States mid-sized university and offered a grade for participation ($n =99$).

Students were offered an alternative assignment if they did not want to participate in the study to

avoid coercion (5 students opted for the alternate assignment; 4.8%). All single participants were

excluded ($n = 78$).

Participants used in this analysis were all in a relationship ($N = 104$), one was married

while 83 categorized themselves as seriously dating and 20 were casually dating. The sample

consisted of 14 men and 90 women. Two additional participants were excluded from this

analysis as they reported monitoring their partner for 900 hours per week, which is

mathematically impossible. The length of romantic involvement in the sample ranged from $> 1*$

month to 6.8 years (M=1.73, SD=1.56). A mean of 1.73 indicates on average, participants were

in their current relationship for 1.5 to 2 years. Time spent on SNS ranged from 2 to 90 hours a

week (M= 18.70, SD= 17.99), while they checked their social media accounts a few times a week

to over 30 times a day (M= 4.03, SD=2.12). A mean of 4 indicates on average, participants

checked their SNS 15-19 times a day.

Materials

Participants initially completed an online survey assessing background information later referred to as the baseline survey. Questions on the baseline assessed participant's level of attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, demographic information (e.g., age, sex, relationship status, and relationship length) and the Motives to Monitor Scale created by Dr. Seidman and myself for this study. Participants also completed a daily diary survey for nine consecutive days which assessed daily activities relating to social media use, such as the time they spent monitoring their partner, and daily levels of relationship satisfaction, closeness, romantic jealousy, and social media induced jealousy.

Baseline Measures

Attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety. To measure attachment avoidance and anxiety, participants completed a short version of the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECR; Brennan, et al., 1998) proffered by Bartholomew and Shaver (1998). The scale was comprised of 12 items, six assessing attachment avoidance, such as "I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back" and six assessing abandonment anxiety, such as "I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner." Responses ranged from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Commitment. Participants indicated on a 7-point scale (1= *disagree strongly*, 7 = *strongly agree*) how committed they were to their romantic relationship. This scale is based on Stanley and Markman's (1992) measure of commitment. It included four items, such as "My relationship with my romantic partner is more important to me than almost anyone else in my life."

Motives to Monitor. The *motivations to monitor scale* was created for this study and consisted of 6-items created for this study. Responses were gathered on a 7-point Likert scale (1= *not at all*, 7 = *extremely*). Each question aimed to measure a different motivation a participant might experience that drives them to monitor their partner's social media account. Motivations to monitor included distrust of partner's activities, seeking information pertaining to themselves, curiosity about daily activities, effort to learn about interests, curiosity about day, and effort to feel involved in life. To assess motivations leading to monitoring behavior, participants were asked: 1)To what extent do you monitor your romantic partner's social media to make sure that they are not flirting with or showing interest in anyone else? 2) To what extent do you monitor your romantic partner's social media to see if they are talking about you or your relationship? 3) To what extent do you monitor your romantic partner's social media to find out what they've been up to during the day? 4) To what extent do you monitor your romantic partner's social media to learn more about them and their interests? 5) To what extent do you monitor your romantic partner's social media to see how their day went? 6) To what extent do you monitor your romantic partner's social media to feel like you are more involved in their daily life?

Daily Measures

Relationship quality. To measure relationship satisfaction, an altered form of the 7-item relationship assessment scale (Hendrick, 1988) was included in the daily surveys. Items on the scale included: "How satisfied are you with your relationship today?" "How content are you with your relationship today?" "How happy are you with your relationship today?" "How close do you feel to your partner after today?" "How intimate do you feel to your partner after today?" and "How connected do you feel to your partner after today?" Responses range from 1 (*low*) to 5 (*high*), with higher scores indicating greater satisfaction with the relationship.

Perceived Outcomes of Personal Social Media Use. Participants also completed a measure to determine how they felt their social media use affected relationship quality variables which was adapted from Seidman, Langlais, and Havens (2017). This version, however, expanded on the former by including all SNS instead of inquiring exclusively about Facebook activity, and applying it to daily behaviors. Participants reported how their social media use affected their relationship by using a 7-point Likert scale (1= *not at all*, 7 = *very much*). Two of the items assessed positive outcomes from social media use by asking: "To what extent did seeing your partner's social media posts today make you feel more satisfied in your relationship?" and "To what extent do you feel that social media increased your feelings of intimacy in your relationship today?" Negative outcomes related to social media use were assessed by asking: "Today, how much conflict did you experience in your relationship as a result of excessive media use?" and "Today, how jealous did you feel after viewing your romantic partner's social media today?"

Social media behaviors. Participants were asked to indicate the number of minutes they spent each day engaging in various activities on different social media platforms, both in general, and with their partners. These behaviors included monitoring their partners social media, information communicated publicly (e.g., posts, photographs, and videos), information communicated privately (e.g., private message on Facebook, SnapChat, Instagram, etc.), and time spent communicating with romantic partner not on social media via texting, in person, and on the phone or through video chat. Participants also answered these same questions with regard to how much time spent engaging in those activities overall, not just specifically with their partners.

Procedure

All aspects of the current study were approved by the appropriate Institutional Review Boards. A link to each survey was e-mailed to participants at 8:00 PM with their randomized identification code for 10 consecutive days. Participants provided consent before beginning each survey. On the first day of the study, participants were sent a background questionnaire, which I refer to as the baseline survey. The baseline survey took approximately 30 minutes to complete, while the remaining nine surveys aimed to assess daily frequencies of engaging in monitoring behavior and how that impacted the romantic relationship took an average of ten minutes to complete. Every participant in this analysis completed the baseline survey, with 76% completing at least half of the daily diary surveys, and 51% completing the entirety of the 9-day consecutive study. Regardless of completion, all recorded responses were included in this analysis.

<div align="center">

Results

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Predicting Motivations to Monitor

First, I used baseline measures to assess how attachment style related to motivations to monitor. A step-wise regression was conducted using the following predictors: hours of social media used per week, abandonment anxiety, intimacy avoidance, relationship satisfaction and commitment to relationship. Descriptive statistics for all variables are presented in Table 1. Motives pertaining to this analysis include: distrust of partners activities, seeking information pertaining to themselves, curiosity about daily activities, effort to learn about interests, curiosity about day, and effort to feel involved in life. Each of the six motivations were used as criterion variables and followed the same step-wise regression. Hours of social media used per week was entered in Step 1. Individual attachment differences (e.g., attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety) were entered in Step 2. Relationship quality variables (e.g., relationship satisfaction and

commitment) were entered in Step 3. Correlations between each motivation and the predictor

variables are displayed in Table 2. The results of the step-wise regression are displayed in Table

3 and include regression coefficients, standard errors, and the overall change in R^2.

Attachment anxiety was associated with greater monitoring due to distrust of partners

online activities, seeking information pertaining to themselves, and curiosity about their partner's

day. In accordance to Hypothesis 2, individuals high in attachment anxiety were more likely to

monitor due to distrust and experience less satisfaction within the relationship. In accordance

with Hypothesis 4, seeking information pertaining to oneself was negatively associated with

intimacy avoidance. This motive to monitor a romantic partner over SNS was also associated

with less relationship satisfaction. In support of Hypothesis 5, monitoring one's partner's SNS

due to curiosity about their partner's daily activities was positively associated with attachment

anxiety and negatively associated with relationship satisfaction.

Predicting Daily Positive and Negative Outcomes

To test the association between engaging in monitoring behavior of one's partner's SNS

activity and daily relationship outcomes, several multi-level regressions were conducted using

the proc mixed analysis on SAS. The mixed-model feature reveals how daily actions relate to

feelings about the relationship on that day. All predictors were mean-centered to reduce the

correlation between main effects and their products. Control variables used in this analysis

included: gender, length of romantic involvement, weekly hours spent on SNS, and frequency of

checking SNS. To assess daily changes in each criterion variable (e.g., satisfaction, overall

jealousy within the relationship, social media use induced jealousy, and conflict due to social

media use), a lagged version of each dependent variable was entered to control for the previous

day's value. Attachment style (e.g., abandonment anxiety and intimacy avoidance), time spent

monitoring a romantic partner's SNS, and the motive to monitor a partner's SNS out of distrust were also entered in each model. Lastly, interactions between attachment style, monitoring frequency, and monitoring due to distrust were entered in each model. The results of the multi-level regressions are displayed in Table 4 and include regression coefficients, standard errors, and significance. Means and standard deviations of predictor variables can be found in Table 5.

In accordance with Hypothesis 1, on days when individuals spend time monitoring their partners SNS due to distrust they were more likely to experience less relationship satisfaction, more jealousy, and more conflict in their relationship due to social media use. Contrary to Hypothesis 7, the interaction between attachment anxiety and monitoring frequency was not associated with less satisfaction or more jealousy, however, the interaction was associated with less feelings of jealousy due to social media use. Unexpectedly, individuals low in attachment avoidance reported experiencing more jealousy due to SNS use when they spent more time monitoring their partner. The results of this interaction can be found in Figure 1. The third column of Table 4 shows attachment anxiety was negatively associated with jealousy due to social media use, whereas attachment avoidance was positively associated with jealousy due to social media use. The amount of time spent monitoring a partner's social media was positively associated with experiencing overall jealousy, jealousy due to social media use, and conflict due to social media use. Furthermore, individuals higher in attachment avoidance reported experiencing more conflict within their relationship due to social media use than those high in anxiety.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine what underlying motivations influence individuals to monitor their romantic partner on social media, and how engaging in monitoring

behavior affects the quality of the relationship. The results indicate attachment anxiety and

attachment avoidance contribute to the relationship between certain motivations to monitor a

romantic partner and the feelings experienced after doing so. Motivations that influenced

individuals high in attachment anxiety to monitor romantic partners SNS included distrust of

partner's activities, information seeking pertaining to themselves, and curiosity about partner's

daily activities. These results support previous findings that suggest individuals high in anxiety

tend to monitor their partner's Facebook activity as a way to increase intimacy and ensure

fidelity (Muise et al., 2009; Reed et al., 2015). Each motive was also associated with lower

relationship satisfaction, suggesting individuals who are less satisfied in their relationship may

engage in monitoring their partner more often than individuals who are more satisfied, however,

the reverse may also be true thus a causal relationship between monitoring and low satisfaction

cannot be confirmed. Future research should aim to elaborate on the relationship between the

engaging in monitoring behavior and relationship satisfaction to illuminate how these variables

are related.

Motives that guide individuals high in attachment anxiety to monitor their partner's SNS

may be hyperactive relationship maintenance techniques employed by anxiously attached

individuals when they are less satisfied in their relationship as an attempt to minimize the feeling

of distance between themselves and their partner. These findings are in accordance to Hypothesis

3; Individuals high in attachment anxiety were more likely to monitor their partner due to

distrust, which was also associated with less relationship satisfaction. Hypothesis 6 was also

supported; individuals high in attachment anxiety were more likely to monitor their romantic

partner out of curiosity about their day and experience lower satisfaction within the relationship.

Being that anxiously attached individuals are more likely to experience concern that their partner

will abandon them (Simpson, 1990; Roisman, 2009), these individuals may be motivated to keep up to date with their partners activities out of concern they will leave them. This may explain why this motive was associated with lower relationship satisfaction, especially for those who are anxiously attached.

In accordance with Hypothesis 4, attachment avoidance was negatively associated with monitoring a partner's SNS to seek information about them self. Individuals high in attachment avoidance tend to be reluctant to disclose information about themselves online (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007) and desire less visibility of their relationship on SNS (Emery, Muise, Dix, &Le 2014). This finding supports this previous research suggesting individuals high in attachment avoidance do not desire information pertaining to themselves to be online, thus they are significantly less likely to monitor their partner as a way to discover information about them self.

Using Facebook frequently (Kalpidou, Costin, & Morris, 2011) and monitoring the Facebook activity of a romantic partner has been associated with higher levels of jealousy and conflict within the relationship (Utz, Muscanell, & Khalid, 2015). The present study revealed monitoring a partner's SNS due to distrust of their online activities was associated with more jealousy and conflict within the relationship. In line with previous research, trust was a significant predictor of engaging in monitoring behavior and poor relationship quality (Darvell et al., 2011). In accordance with Hypothesis 1, individuals motivated to monitor their partner's SNS out of distrust experienced less satisfaction, more jealousy, and more conflict in their relationship due to social media use. Trust is positively associated to the development of adult romantic relationships (Fraley & Davis, 1997). Engaging in monitoring due to this motivation may be a sign of fundamental problems within the relationship, especially since it is essential to the formation of a romantic relationship.

Previous research has demonstrated a positive relationship between attachment anxiety and engaging in monitoring the SNS of a romantic partner (Fox & Warber, 2014; Muise et al., 2014). This association is often linked to reports of lower relationship satisfaction, however, contrary to Hypothesis 7, the interaction between attachment anxiety and monitoring frequency was not associated with less satisfaction or more jealousy. This finding may be explained by the content participants viewed while using SNS and monitoring their romantic partner. Pictures and posts of coupledom on SNS have been associated with higher levels of commitment and relationship satisfaction; especially declarations of love and commitment through positive and assuring statuses (Dainton, 2013), thus, participants may have discovered positive or assuring posts while monitoring their romantic partner resulting in feeling less jealousy due to social media use. Another explanation of this finding may be influenced by the length of a participant's romantic relationship as 85% of participants classified themselves as seriously dating. The analysis revealed individuals in longer relationships were significantly less likely to experience jealousy and conflict within their relationship due to social media use.

Unexpectedly, the interaction between low attachment anxiety and high monitoring frequency was associated with more feelings of jealousy due to social media use. This moderately significant interaction may have been influenced by the duration of the relationship or the content participants observed when monitoring their partner's SNS activity. If participants came across less assuring statuses or more troublesome content while monitoring their romantic partner, they may experience more jealousy due to their social media use. Attachment avoidance was also associated with more feelings of jealousy due to social media use. Future studies should inquire about the content participants come across while monitoring their romantic partner online

to further understand what influences individuals with different attachment styles to experience

different relationship outcomes due to social media use.

Future research should include questions to assess the type of posts individuals come

across while monitoring their romantic partner to further understand how content observed when

monitoring a romantic partner interacts with daily feelings and motivations to engage in

monitoring a partner's activity again. Future research could also examine different motivations to

further understand what drives monitoring behavior.

This investigation has several limitations. First, this study used self-report measures,

prone to bias (Bradfield & Wells, 2005). A second limitation is that we based this study on

reports from one partner, thus I was unable to examine couple-level methods. Future studies

should incorporate both partners to better understand how both partners perceive their social

media use is affecting their relationship. The sample obtained for this study was 86% female,

college-aged participants. While sex was not a significant predictor in any of the models, it was a

marginally significant predictor of relationship satisfaction. This analysis cannot exclude

potential sex differences due to the small sample of men observed in this study which may be

insuffiencent to achieve a significant difference between the sexes ($n = 14$). Furthermore, young

people in serious relationships likely differ from older individuals who are involved in longer-

term relationships and obtaining a more diverse sample could have addressed this issue. This

study measured motives to monitor a romantic partner from a baseline measure, thus we could

not assess whether daily motivations changed or influenced the frequency at which participants

monitored their romantic partner. Lastly, by measuring a broader scope of online activity across

multiple SNS, standardizing questions became harder to do. It is important to move away from

exclusively studying Facebook activity given the growth of other sites, particularly among young adults. The development of new scales and measures will be essential in accomplishing this task.

Despite these limitations, the current study elaborates on past research by being among the first to investigate different motivations that can lead to engaging in monitoring a romantic partner's activity across multiple SNS, and examined how engaging in such behavior affects relationship quality and perceived negative outcomes due to social media use. By taking a longitudinal approach, this study assessed day-to-day changes in satisfaction, overall jealousy, jealousy due to social media use, and conflict within the relationship due to social media use. The results provide further insight into what drives people to monitor their romantic partner on social media and how that may affect the quality of their relationship. Motivations to monitor a romantic partner over SNS varied per attachment style and were associated with lower relationship satisfaction. The motivation to monitor due to distrust was most closely tied to poorer relationship quality and more perceived negative outcomes due to participants social media use. The findings provide a framework for future investigations examining motivations to monitor a romantic partner through SNS and reiterates the importance of how social media use can influence the development and maintenance of romantic relationships.

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Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for Regression Models

Variable	Mean (*SD*)
Hours on SNS per week	18.71(17.99)
Attachment Anxiety	3.84 (1.14)
Attachment Avoidance	2.77 (1.11)
Relationship Satisfaction	4.21 (.54)
Commitment	3.97 (.96)
Distrust of Partners Activities Motive	2.50 (1.62)
Seeking Information Pertaining to Themselves Motive	2.49 (1.65)
Curiosity About Daily Activities Motive	2.49 (1.61)
Learn About Interests Motive	2.38 (1.52)
Curiosity About Day Motive	2.33 (1.47)
Effort to Feel Involved Motive	2.30 (1.57)
Jealousy Due to SNS Use	2.53 (1.44)

Table 2

Correlations among Motivation to Monitor Scale and Predictor Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Hours on SNS per week		.126	-.021	-.094	.002	.240*	.169	.112	.191	.031	-.076
2. Attachment Anxiety			.357**	-.392**	-.219*	.335**	.356**	.277**	.178	.163	.075
3. Attachment Avoidance				-.568**	-.415	.210*	.032	.111	.048	.079	.024
4. Relationship Satisfaction					.478**	-.482**	-.309**	-.325**	-.101	-.186	-.174
5. Commitment						-.205*	-.006	-.083	-.053	-.014	-.0334
6. Distrust of Partners Activities							.681**	.559**	.317**	.403**	.361**
7. Seeking Info Pertaining to Themselves								.639**	.467**	.497**	.580**
8. Curiosity About Daily Activities									.549**	.623**	.512**
9. To Learn About Interests										.634**	.526**
10. Curiosity About Day											.651**
11. Effort to Feel Involved											

Note. *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.001.

Table 3

Final Model Results of Step-Wise Regression Predicting Monitoring of Partners Social Media Account

	Predictors B(*SE*)					
Criterion Variables	Hours on SNS per Week	Attachment Anxiety	Attachment Avoidance	Relationship Satisfaction	Commitment	ΔR^2
Distrust of Partners Activities	.014 (.008)*	.316 (.156)**	-.264 (.187)	-1.391 (.323)***	-.076 (.166)	.328***
Seeking Info Pertaining to Themselves	.005 (.008)	.612 (.169)***	-.585 (.203)**	-1.276 (.349)***	.218(.179)	.272**
Curiosity About Daily Activities	.002 (.009)	.416 (.175)**	-.341 (.211)	-1.094 (.364)**	.094 (.187)	.180**
To Learn About Interests	.013 (.009)	.205 (.175)	-.126 (.210)	-.265 (.362)	.026 (.186)	.061
Curiosity About Day	-.002 (.009)	.250 (.171)	-.151 (.206)	-.565 (.355)	.111 (.182)	.062
Effort to Feel Involved in Life	-.010 (.009)	.171 (.184)	-.238 (.221)	-.695 (.381)*	.059 (.196)	.056

Note. *$p<.10$, **$p<.05$, ***$p<.001$.

ΔR^2 represents ΔR^2 change from Step1 to Step 2 to Step 3.

Table 4

Multi-Level Regression Results

Predictor	Criterion Variable B(*SE*)			
	Satisfaction	Jealousy	Jealousy Over SNS Use	Conflict Due to SNS Use
Lagged Dependent Variable	.237(.043)***	.082(.041)**	.212(.040)***	.149(.044)***
Sex	.572(.301)*	-.172(.223)	-.257(.156)	-.212(.205)
Relationship length	.019(.057)	-.054(.042)	-.081(.029)**	-.093(.039)**
Hours on SNS per Week	.004(.005)	-.005(.004)	.003(.003)	.000(.004)
Daily Frequency Checking SNS	.021(.084)	.074(.062)	-.022(.043)	-.016(.057)
Attachment Anxiety	.065(.117)	-.083(.086)	-.113(.061)*	-.067(.080)
Attachment Avoidance	-.282(.126)**	.126(.093)	.220(.066)***	.268(.088)**
Daily Partner Monitoring	.002(.005)	.009(.004)**	.014(.066)***	.008(.004)**
Distrust Motive	-.217(.076)**	.179(.056)**	.050(.039)	.110(.052)**
Distrust Motive X Daily Partner Monitoring	.002(.003)	.002(.003)	-.000(.002)	.000(.002)
Attachment Anxiety X Daily Partner Monitoring	.011(.009)	-.005(.009)	-.010(.006)*	-.012(.008)
Attachment Avoidance X Daily Partner Monitoring	-.014(.009)	-010(.008)	-.007(.006)	.000(.008)

Note.*p*<.10, **p*<.05, ***p*<.001.

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations for Multi-Level Regression

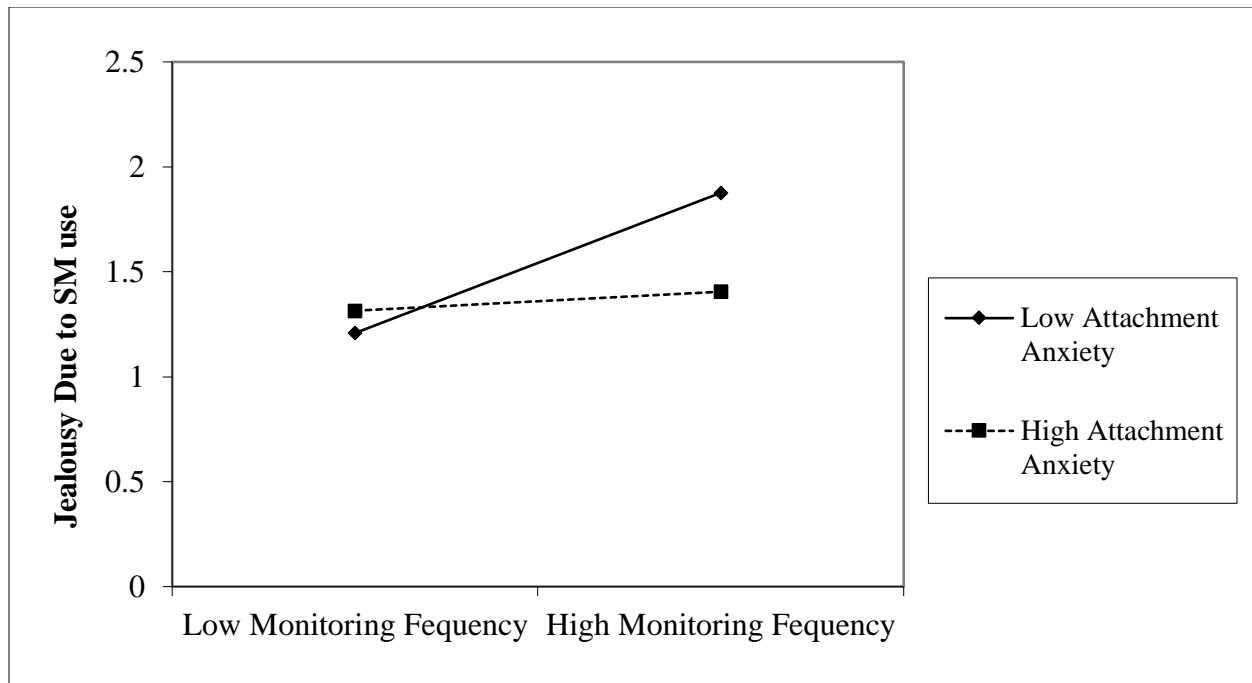| Variable	Mean (SD)
Relationship Length	1.73(1.56)
Hours on SNS per Week	18.71(17.99)
Daily Frequency Checking SNS	5.32(1.21)
Attachment Anxiety	3.65 (1.07)
Attachment Avoidance	2.42 (0.98)
Distrust Motive	2.50 (1.62)

Figure 1. Interaction between attachment anxiety and frequency of monitoring a romantic

partner's SNS for social media use induced jealousy based on a 1-7 point scale.