

HOW LEBANESE SERIOUS ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS ARE AFFECTED BY
FACEBOOK: A SOCIAL PENETRATION APPROACH

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts in Media Studies/Advertising

by

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Department of Mass Communication

Notre Dame University – Louaize

Lebanon

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Abstract

An online survey was conducted to understand how Social Networking Sites such as Facebook can impact Lebanese serious romantic relationships (20-40 years old). 196 participants through snowball sampling provided information about their significant other and replied to questions dealing with elements of relationship satisfaction, stage of relationship, Facebook usage, meeting new people, surveillance, and jealousy. ANOVA and independent T-test sample were used to measure whether there is an association between certain Facebook behaviors and feelings on romantic relationships. Referring back to results, it was apparent that Facebook usage was a significant predictor of partner surveillance but not on jealousy. Additionally, there wasn't an association between contacting past or future partners and jealousy in a relationship. The social penetration theory adapted from Altman and Taylor (1973) was used to describe the stages a relationship undergoes from orientation into stable exchange. This developmental theory demonstrated the growth in relationship stages. Results found phase of relationship did not have a significant effect on the amount of surveillance within a relationship. Results also indicated that there was a significant association between stage of relationship and meeting new people.

Keywords: Social penetration theory, social networking sites, Facebook, romantic relationships, relationship satisfaction, stages of relationship, meeting new people, surveillance, jealousy

Introduction

It is a generally held belief that communication plays a foundational role in the development of any healthy relationship. People have always been creating ways to communicate, evolving from primitive languagesuch as smoke signalsand carrier pigeons to more recent technologies including telephones, computersand Smartphones.In earlier times, prior to today's technology, face-to-face interaction was common among people. Such interaction allowed a person to use both verbal and nonverbal cues while conversing with others. In today's digital era, face-to-face communication is declining as people are relying more on the convenience of social networking sites. Nowadays, communication is considered to be the easiest to people with the introduction of social media (Jarche,2010). It is faster, more convenient, and readily available.

Online social networking sites create interaction on the web by allowing people to interact publicly or privately. Many people use the media as a way to stay in contactwith family, friends and colleagues while others use the medium as a way to develop new connections.The social networking sites also provide other benefits to their users such as offering them the ability to share opinions and join groups that share likeminded interests, to stay up to date with news and recent events, to fill up spare time, and to find entertainment content. Due to the many benefits such sites provide, their popularity is rapidly increasing among the users. The world of technology has evolved and keeps on evolving enormously.

Facebook is considered among the top social media sites in our days. For many young adults, this medium is considered a tool to communicate and stay in touch with friends, family and even romantic partners. The popularity of this social networking site, having more than one billion users worldwide (Facebook, 2016), has set it apart from other mediums. Facebook has

changed the way of people getting to know each other and staying in contact with the ones they care about. It is seemingly easier these days to send a “friend request” on Facebook, rather than to ask for a person’s number.

One of Facebook heavily used functions is the indications of relationship status: single, in a relationship, or married; allowing people to identify their personal relationship statuses online for anyone to see. With serious romantic relationships being an essential part to many lives, it is noteworthy and crucial to learn how everyday activities such as using Facebook may affect these relationships positively or negatively. Thus, the aim of this study is to determine the impact that Facebook has on serious romantic relationships among the Lebanese young adult generation (20-40 years old) through the framework of the social penetration theory in describing the stages a relationship undergoes from orientation till it reaches stable exchange as proposed by Altman and Taylor (1973).

The initial section of this paper includes an introductory overview on computer mediated communication (CMC), Facebook, and other terms in specific for the readers who are not very familiar with them followed by an explanation of social penetration theory as a theoretical framework for the proposed research in which the various research questions and hypotheses are derived. Following, is the methodology and data analysis section. Ending with proposed limitation and conclusion.

Literature Review

"Around 40 percent of the world population has an Internet connection today. In 1995, it was less than one percent. The number of internet users has increased tenfold from 1999 to 2013. The first billion was reached in 2005, the second billion in 2010, the third billion in 2014" (Internet World Stats, 2014). In 2015-2016 the number has increased by 7.5% reaching exactly 3,424,971,237 users (Internet World Stats, 2016).

According to "The Arab Social Media Report" (2017), Lebanon is in the top five most active Arab countries across social media networks and achieves the third highest rate of female social network users in the region. Facebook has 3,100,000 users in Lebanon. One in four minutes online is spent on social media networks. In Lebanon, people spend an average of 16 hours per week on social media sites (Internet World Stats, 2016).

The Worldwide Independent Network (WIN)/Gallup International Association (GIA) is the largest association of leading independent market research and polling firms throughout the world. According to this network, the top five personal social media sites are as follows:

	Facebook	YouTube	Google+	MSN	Twitter
World	56%	48%	31%	21%	17%
Lebanon	87%	49%	41%	80%	10%

The growth of the Internet has been said to enable people to expand their social networks beyond their local neighborhoods into online social communities (Hampton & Wellman, 2001). This Internet technology has consequently shifted the communication between social networks from local to non-local and from face-to-face to computer-mediated communication (Hampton & Wellman 2001).

Computer mediated communication (CMC)

Computer mediated communication (CMC) is now common in our era. "CMC is the process by which people create, exchange, and perceive information using networked telecommunications systems (or non-networked computers) that facilitate encoding, transmitting, and decoding messages" (December, 1996, p.73).

When conversing, CMC permits a person to combine various media types in a single message. Therefore, it can be considered as an interactive channel which lets individuals to be active and take part of a two-way communication process. This could be considered as an inexpensive way to seek information that might increase efficiency and output. (Miller 2009).

CMC is a way in which people are developing relationships online, often without the visual and oral cues that face-to-face communication would deliver (Rau, Gao, & Ding, 2008; Whitty, 2007). Not only CMC is a social media and web communication, but also it includes texting, emailing, instant messaging, video conferencing, and social media platforms to name a few.

CMC differs by degree of synchronization. It is therefore divided into two modes which are the "synchronous" including channels such as online chatting and "asynchronous" including e-mail. (Kruger et Al., 2005). Synchronous communication involves the simultaneous online presence of all the participants. An example of such mode is the online chats where the users receive and send information directly without having to wait for another date. On the other hand, asynchronous communication involves times constraints on messages and responses. The time in which the sender posts a message is different from the time in which the recipient receives it. An example includes emailing where a user sends a note to an online forum for another user to read it at a later date.

Social media, a type of CMC, particularly make it possible for people to extend beyond two-way communication by allowing groups of people to directly connect across geographical locations by exchanging personal information online. Because of such networks, users are able to interact with thousands of people from all around the world by sharing opinions and thoughts with a far wider audience. The number one social networking site with the most popular network worldwide is Facebook. According to Statista (2017), Facebook is the market leader and is considered the first social network to have surpassed 1 billion registered accounts. It currently has 1.87 billion monthly active users.

Facebook

Facebook is a free social networking site that was created by Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg in 2004. Initially, it aimed to target a niche community of Harvard graduates. Demand on this site started to grow as of September 2006, opening it up to other colleges and schools (Martinez, 2009). It has been developing and growing among a wider population since. Facebook offers its users many elements such as profile creations, blogs, photo/video sharing, game applications, online forums and groups. All of which enable people to communicate with one another regardless of geographical location. Users are given the choice of making the shared content publicly accessible or by limiting it only to a selected group of friends and family.

Facebook is available in thirty seven different languages and includes public features such as:

1. Events& Birthdays

This feature displays any events the person has been invited to and allows him/her to add it to the calendar. Birthdays feature notifies users about upcoming birth dates of friends and displays them on the feed. Facebook also permits users to export events and birthdays into calendar programs such as Google, Apple, and Microsoft Outlook.

2. Pokes

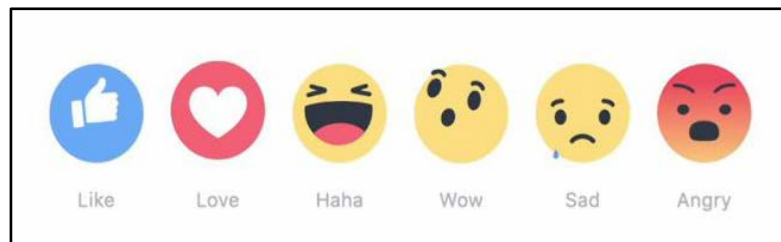
A poke is a Facebook characteristic that is included with every account. People are able to send pokes to both their friends and to others that are not included on their friends' list. A poke is used as a way to say hello, or to remind someone that a person is awaiting his acceptance of request or message reply, or to let someone think that the sender is thinking about him/her, or simply just for fun.

3. Facebook Messenger

Facebook released its instant messaging app on August 2011(Black, 2016). This app allows its users to send texts, messages, and voice notes to other participants whether they are found on their friends list or not. It also enables group chats.

4. The Reaction Button

Facebook allows its users to react to any post by using the reaction button where users can express their emotions non-verbally. The button consists of six emoji-like characters which are the "like, love, haha, wow, sad, angry".



5. News Feed

News Feed is an updated list of stories on a person's Facebook homepage. The feed includes photos, videos, status updates, links, and activities of a user's friends.

6. Relationship Status

Facebook enables the users to define their relationship statuses to other people. This makes it easier on others to determine whether the person they like is single, engaged, married, or in an open relationship.

What is a Serious Relationship?

In order to understand the meaning of a serious relationship, defining the term "relationship" by itself is important. Relationship is the way in which two or more people are connected and involved with each other. People who feel relaxed and comforted in each other's company and agree to be with each other usually enter into a relationship. An interpersonal relationship is a close association between individuals who share common interests and objectives. There are different kinds of interpersonal relationships such as friendships, platonic connections, family, professional, and love. Love is a form of a serious relationship (Srivanti, 2017). A serious relationship occurs when two people are in a devoted, committed relationship with each other (VanBaren, 2010).

According to a study done by Winter (2014), the top signs which reveal that a relationship is serious are the following: dating for average of five months, being introduced to family and friends, sharing details such as health issues and finances, discussing plans for the future, exchanging password and pin codes, sharing secrets and personal information about one another, going out with family and friends without the partner being there, texting and calling one another continually.

Studies Implying the Negative Impact of CMC on Relationships

In 1998, communication scholars Kraut, Patterson, Lundmark, Kiesler, Mukodpadhyay, and Scherlis conducted a study to examine the effects of Internet usage on social involvement.

Their research examined the social and psychological impact of the Internet on 169 people in 73 households during their first one to two years online. They used longitudinal data to examine these effects. They found that increased Internet use was associated with withdrawal from one's circle and resulted in less psychological well-being. They explained that strong personal ties are usually supported by physical closeness and that the Internet diminishes the importance of physical closeness in initiating and maintaining strong social connections. These physical connections are what preserve people from the stresses of life, and a withdrawal from these relationships may have negative implications for one's sociality, (Kraut et al., 1998). Their study was titled the "Internet Paradox", because the Internet is heavily used for communication, yet it can make people lonelier.

Similarly, another study titled "Internet and Society" by Nie and Erbring(2000) found that the more time people spent using the Internet, the more they lost contact with their social environment. According to their proposal, the Internet demands a lot of engagement and responsiveness. Data was collected using questionnaires that were distributed on a random sample of several individuals from different households. Respondents reported that the increase in Internet usages resulted in a decrease in time spent with family and friends, watching TV, and performing other activities. This study definitely matches the previous one done by Kraut et al.

A study was done by Young (1996) to investigate the consequences of high Internet usage on interactive social communication. A survey was distributed to 256 respondents to measure this implication. Results showed that too much Internet use resulted in higher personal complications. This included a negative effect on marriages and other close relationships. People who reported to use the Internet excessively were spending less time with close people in their lives and were avoiding performing their daily tasks.

Another research conducted in 2014 by Sebastian Valenzuela et al., examined if there was any correlation between social media use, marriage fulfillment, and divorce rates in the United States. A survey was distributed among married individuals to measure the relationship. The study showed that Facebook penetration was associated with increasing separation rates among couples. Also, and at the individual level, the use of social networking sites was negatively correlated with marriage quality.

"Results show that using SNS is negatively correlated with marriage quality and happiness, and positively correlated with experiencing a troubled relationship and thinking about divorce" (Valenzuela et al., 2014, p.2).

Cooper and Sportolari (1997) conveyed that Internet relationships were reported to feel unconnected from face-to-face relationships. They added that this separate influence had the capability to lead to erotic relationships which will in turn break apart steady real-life relationships that lack the novelty and complete availability of online relations. Wysocki (1998) performed a study that investigated the development of romantic online relationships. He found that respondents typically used the Internet at work or when their partner went to sleep. Some participants reported spending many hours on the computer and this resulted in a withdrawal from domestic and other activities. Others reported that they knew other couples who had broken up due to online unfaithfulness.

Furthermore, it was suggested by Cooper, McLoughlin and Campbell (2000) that online infidelity is becoming a progressively attractive form of social and sexual behavior. The researchers found that people who were engaged in online romantic relationships tend to avoid solving spousal complications. Instead, they looked for closeness, relaxation and acceptance with their online partner. This resolution energy that is being directed into the online relationship is

preventing discussion and problem solving with the primary relationship which in turn decreases the potential for its development and advancement.

Dr. Russel Clayton, a professor in the University of Missouri School of Journalism (2013) conducted a research study by surveying American Facebook users between 18 to 82 years old. Respondents were asked about the time spent on Facebook and whether any conflict arose due to the use of this platform. Dr. Clayton argued that individuals who spend more time on Facebook are more likely to connect or reconnect with other users. This might result in cheating whether emotional or physical.

The study showed that people who use Facebook in an excessive manner were more likely to experience conflict with their partners. Such conflict may encourage dreadful outcomes such as breaking up, cheating, and even divorcing.

Nowadays, people can access the Internet anywhere from their portable devices such as their mobile phones or tablets. These hand-held devices are so convenient and have made it easier and more common on a person to perform Internet browsing on a phone than on a computer.

According to Roberts and David (2016), cell phones are a major cause in damaging romantic relationships and increasing depression among people. Roberts and David (2016) explained

What we discovered was that when someone perceived that their partner phubbed them, this created conflict and led to lower levels of reported relationship satisfaction. These lower levels of relationship satisfaction, in turn, led to lower levels of life satisfaction and, ultimately, higher levels of depression (p. 96).

Phubbing is a term used to describe the extent to which people become distracted by their mobile phones while they are in the company of their partners. Dockterman's interview with Kim Stolz (2014) concluded that social media has been leading to digital breakups. Stolz claimed

A lot of relationships have been ruined by one person's addiction to social media, whether that addiction leads to a connection with a past love or crush—and that can be detrimental—or sometimes it simply means that you get home at night to spend time with your significant other and you have nothing to talk about because you've spoken about everything all day through social media or you've looked through each other's social media feeds. There's been an emerging body of research that shows that when you stop having offscreen interaction, you lose empathy. You lose the ability to have genuine reactions to real problems and real things.

CMC has been also been blamed for the failure and break up of relationships. Cummings, Butler, and Kraut (2002) did several empirical researches in order to measure the quality of online and offline social relationships. Their studies included the following: A survey of an international bank where employees described the value of particular communication sessions; a survey of college students, using the same methodology, but focusing on personal relationships; a longitudinal study of new Internet users. Cummings et al. deduced that CMC was less effective than face to face contact in building and sustaining close social relationships. On the other hand, the implications of their findings depend on whether the interaction online adds to or substitutes for offline interaction and relationships. They state that surveys of the general public continually reveal that most people using the Internet value electronic mail and other forms of online social interaction. However, in one-to-one comparisons, an email message is not as good as a phone call or a face-to-face meeting for developing and sustaining social relationships.

Studies Implying the Positive Impact of CMC on Relationships

Other previous studies clarify that communication scholars have held diverged point of views about whether computer-mediated communication enhances or reduces relationship quality.

McKenna, Green, and Gleason (2002) assumed that people who disclose their inner self to others over the Internet better than in a face-to-face environment are more likely to build close relationships online. They will also tend to carry the virtual connections into their actual life. These researchers formed two studies and an experiment. The first study contained a survey where participants were randomly selected Internet newsgroup users. Results showed that people who were able to better express their inner self virtually were more expectedly to form close online connections and move these relationships to face-to-face settings. The second study revealed that these close connections produced online were still unbroken after two years. Lastly, a laboratory experiment revealed that undergraduates who initially meet over the Internet liked each other more than when meeting face-to-face. This study proved that CMC plays a role in increasing the relationship quality. Furthermore, McKenna et al. (2002) claimed that social networking sites have a naturally interactive and personal nature. An increase in future face-to-face contact is more likely to occur when relationships are formed online. In other words, individuals were more likely to meet and continue a conversation when they have already spoken on social media first.

Haythornthwaite and Kendall (2010) stated that the combination of Internet and social media have produced a vivacious and essential communication and information platform for today's world. According to Haythornthwaite and Kendall's article published in 2010 in the issue of *American Behavioral Scientist*,

Research on who people communicate with online shows a lot of local activity. So online communication always reinforces local relationships and local identities that build networks of interacting individuals who are mutually aware of each other. Together, this demonstrates a continuous change in how we maintain local community, while also emphasizing the importance and significance of our attachments to local places and spaces.

As stated by Kendall (2010), "While people can go to a site for information and personal support, they have also formed some long-term relationships with others they've met there and communicated with".

Online discussions permit more time for a person to think clearly about a reply before responding to the individual in which they are conversing with.

Rosen (2008) claimed that having online conversations allow the individual to feel more assertive and reliant about who he/she wants or wishes to be. These virtual interactions eliminate the possibility of being observed through body languages and therefore removes all restrictions. Just as Facebook makes conversations easier, people also use this medium as a way to depict the image that they want others to see.

When people are not in a face-to-face interaction, they tend to reveal more information about themselves. Tidwell and Walther (2002) realized in their study that online communications were more likely to create higher self-disclosure and tolerate trust building, resulting in an increase will in asking deeper and more personal questions. They argued that face-to-face interactions created typical social restrictions so difficult and more daring topics were easier to be discussed online.

Several individuals consider starting a conversation in person can be hard or intimidating, but Facebook has offered an initial point for chats that may otherwise not have happened. The continuous social connections on a Facebook wall leads to building relationships. Helfand (2009) suggested that preceding dialogues online have the ability to break the ice and lead to future conversations in person, based upon the trust developed online. The posts that people put on Facebook are viewed by family and friends and these are constant updates on life. This constant information serves as a link between individuals and thus create a more intimate relationship amongst them. Just like social media conveys personal information and eventually builds relationships, this medium also makes interactions more comfortable and convenient.

A study conducted by Fox, Warber, and Makstaller (2013) intended to explore the inferences of Social Networking Sites such as Facebook within romantic relationships. Results revealed Facebook plays a major role in reducing uncertainty in the initial stages of relationship foundation. Because of this medium, people are able to filter out potential partners with similar interests and compatibility in an easier and faster manner. Instead of waiting until the third date to recognize that a person is not a good match for you, Facebook directly offers information about the potential partner's interests and hobbies.

Moreover, Facebook permits people to integrate their social network with their partner's (Weigel, 2008). By being a part of each other's environment, couples can preserve sustaining relationships. "Facebook also allows people to communicate with their romantic partners easily, at a distance. In order for relationships to be successful, it is important that partners continuously work on and nurture the relationship. We can keep our relationships strong by having positive interactions with our partner, and providing them with assurances - declarations of love and commitment" (Seidman, 2015)

Clark, Lee, and Boyer's study (2007) found that more than 57% of couples post pictures of themselves on Social Networking Sites. The upload of such pictures played a role in adding value to the relationship by showing affection and attachment. The expression of such attachment is a way the partners used to express significance regarding their connection. Another study by Steers et al. (2015) found that when people displayed information about their relationship online such as statuses and picture of themselves, higher fulfillment was reported.

As seen from the literature review, many studies have been conducted on the impact of social media in general on personal relationships. Nevertheless, research tackling social media specifically as it relates to romantic relationships was rather limited. Additionally, most of the studies were done on foreign markets and not locally.

Theoretical Framework

Social Penetration Theory:

According to the Social Penetration Theory as adapted from Altman and Taylor (1973), as relationships develop, they penetrate deeper and deeper into private and personal matters. The researchers compared people to a multilayered onion. According to them, every opinion, belief, and obsession is layered around and within a person. The layers consist of a breadth and a depth. Breadth refers to the numerous aspects of a person's life, like work, family, interests and relations. Depth relates to the details regarding each of these aspects. Only superficial information such as physical appearance and speech are exposed by the outer layers. More intimate information such as thoughts and feelings are represented by deeper layers. The layers start to shed away as soon as individuals get to know each other more and this reveals the core of the person.

As partners navigate from relatively shallow communication to deeper connections overtime, intimacy develops. Penetration goes through a number of stages:

1. *Orientation* is a way for people to begin to develop a relationship by revealing basic information about themselves to others. Orientation can be awkward because there is not enough shared information to generate conversation."Self-disclosure is sharing with someone information which helps him or her understand you. Self-disclosure is most revealing when the sharing is in the present and least revealing when the sharing is about the past" (Allyn&Bacon 1997, p.33).

Martin Buber discusses in his communication theory about the importance of dialogue. According to Buber, conversation is more than just talking. It is "a relation between persons that is characterized in more or less degree by the element of inclusion" (Buber, p. 97).When

individuals converse using dialogue and expose parts of themselves to another person, they are self-disclosing. In today's world, it has become usual to communicate through social media networking sites, such as Facebook. There is a focus of social media networking which gives new hope to society. The results of dialogue are respect and acceptance of contrary views. Buber's theory coincides with the idea of building Facebook relationships.

According to Park, Jin and Jin (2011), Social Networking Sites allow users to interact by sharing photos, stories, statuses and messages. Thus, when people share information on Facebook, they are involved in a self-disclosure act. Responses to this self-disclosure by others occur when they respond to the content that was shared by liking, commenting or sharing the material. Papp, Danielewicz, and Cayemberg (2012) concluded that the use of Facebook has changed the way people interact and develop relationships, finding "we can no longer disregard the potential connections between Facebook and intimate relationships, which serve as one of the most important contexts of individual growth and development" (p. 85).

Facebook also allows people to join groups that could possibly interest them and meet people where they can develop further connections with. From the point of initial attraction, Facebook users, whether single or involved in a relationship, can add people, poke them and even message them with just few clicks.

2. *Exploratory affective exchange* is where people begin to gain a better understanding of the personality of the individual they are conversing with. The information has passed the basic phase and becomes more detailed.

La Salle (2004) states that "the conversational exchange is more comfortable than in the orientation phase, but individuals are still cautious not to offend the other person."

Furthermore, people who are searching for developing their relationship may start to get curious about their lover's interests online. They might visit their Facebook page, send them a text, and thus conversation would evolve. It would include topics related to favorite movies, foods, activities and interests. In this stage, couples become more comfortable with each other and personalities are exposed. The way a person displays affection offline is different from the way he/she does it online. Affection displayed offline includes holding hands, giving each other hugs and kissing. Affection displayed online includes liking posts, sharing comments and pictures on the partner's wall. Uploading a picture with a significant other on Facebook is a demonstration of commitment to other people. Facebook pokes are also considered to be a private way to flirt online (Marshall et al, 2012). Bove (2010) conveys in his study that couples found it significant and essential to reciprocate actions of posting about their relationship online.

3. *Affective exchange* is where the relationship becomes more intimate. The exchange of conversation includes more personal information and the pair conversing is comfortable with the exchange.

When couples are getting closer, they feel that they can start sharing their relationship with their surroundings. Facebook has a setting which allows its users to share their relationship status to the public or keep it private. Bove (2010) states that in our times, announcing publically online that you are in a relationship is a notification to friends and family on the commitment you have made. Unlike old times where people used to know about other's relationships through word of mouth, many Facebook users nowadays use this medium to declare to their friends that they are in a commitment; thus the social media network working as a sort of word-of-mouth. In addition to declaring their relationship status online, couples also used Facebook to post pictures and information about themselves just as Clark et al. found in their study in 2007. Posting such

pictures played a role in adding worth to the relationship by showing fondness and attachment. The expression of such attachment is a way the partners used to express significance regarding their connection. Also, as mentioned previously by Steers et al. (2015), when people displayed information about their relationship online such as statuses and picture of themselves, higher fulfillment was reported.

4. *Stable exchange*, the final stage, is where the relationship is the strongest. There is complete openness to talk about all aspects of life. People develop idioms which make the conversation much more personal and ambiguous. They start sharing personal feelings about each others, and intimate details about their pasts. Not all people reach this phase. La Salle (2004) declares that some couples might experience negative feelings during this phase as a result of the vicious honesty that might occur. Recent couples who are in a serious relationship and are using social networking sites such as Facebook may experience surveillance and feelings of jealousy due to the various types of messages shared and time spent on the medium. Such approaches might alter the feelings of trust. According to Rousseau et al. (1998): "Trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another." Similarly, Lewicki et al. (1998) described trust as "an individual's belief in, and willingness to act on the basis of, the words, actions, and decisions of another".

Consequently, with surveillance and feelings of jealousy being common feelings developed by the use of social media, it is important to understand these two terms in a further matter.

Surveillance and Jealousy

It is common for people within a romantic relationship to stay alerted of what's going on in their partners' lives. Communication within the couple is the best and most direct way to collect this information; however, it is also common for partners to seek other approaches to learn about their other companion. For instance, a spouse may use another strategy to observe the partner's behavior from a distance, such as observing the latter interact with others at a party or any other gathering. Furthermore, the spouse may engage in an active strategy and consult third parties, such as mutual friends, for information about the partner (Muisse et al., 2009).

With the introduction of the social networking sites, online surveillance has been more common between couples. Users started using information posted online to observe their partners. Tonkunaga (2011) stated that partner monitoring is the second most regularly reported performance on Facebook. Surveillance corresponds with trust issues within couples, (Darvell et al., 2011; Helsper and Whitty, 2010; Tonkunaga, 2011). According to Marshall et al. (2012), surveillance is considered to be an advantage to online websites because the act is anonymous. At the same time it could be disadvantageous due to its nature.

In relation to Facebook, this website's monitoring doesn't limit the person to his/her current partner. Most people get tempted into getting information about past lovers (Bowe, 2010; Darvell et al., 2011). Tonkunaga (2011) realized that people would rather monitor a former lover or their current partner, rather than develop a new relationship in the online environment. Checking up on a significant other can reveal the jealous feelings which a person may experience. Darvell et al. (2011) propose that partner monitoring is interesting due to the ease of accessing information. Certainly, a person's privacy settings have a lot to do with this (Tokunaga, 2011). Privacy settings are internal settings in Facebook which permit users to limit

the amount of information they show in public. Nevertheless, several people do not recognize that they have the ability to set boundaries to what others can see online. On the other hand, Tokunaga (2011) concluded that if an observer was to come across enough information about someone they were observing, the former was more likely to do it again. In turn, Elphinston and Noller (2011) concluded that this ease of information into the online world of Facebook in daily life directly caused more issues than good. Utz and Beukeboom (2011) conveyed a study about a couple's usage of social network sites, relationship satisfaction, and jealousy. Results have shown that the more time people spent on Facebook monitoring, the more feelings of jealousy they reported sensing. All of these acts of surveillance may lead to feelings of jealousy. Consequently, the capability of accessing a spouse's social network cannot develop the quality of a person's relationship. All of these acts of surveillance may lead to feelings of jealousy.

Jealousy is a provoked feeling, generated by an event concerning a friend or a significant other. According to Marshall et al. (2012), higher passion and love can result in greater jealousy and Facebook activities put a negative strain onto relationships. Conversely, jealousy is not approached that way by all researchers. There are other relationship factors and character traits that can be contributed to feelings of jealousy. These sensations can be associated with low levels of trust and self-esteem (Muisse et al., 2009). People nowadays have the ability to access their partner's profile and get all the information they want. This facility was not provided before Social Networking Sites were available. Muise et al. (2009) proved that people can become jealous if they realize that their significant other is interacting with potential romantic partners on Facebook.

According to Marshall et al., 2012

Facebook increases exposure to information about one's partner that may arouse jealousy and jealousy in turn, may increase the time spent on Facebook in search of relationship-relevant information(p. 2).

The amount of time spent on Facebook immediately linked it to the jealousy felt between couples. The latter were afraid that their partner was developing connections with another person online, leading to more jealousy.

When people are jealous, they worry that their partner might find someone else more attractive and interesting and that's why they will feel threatened (Wade, 2010). Consequently, feelings of jealousy will be activated as a way to cope with this threat. These people might consider that jealousy may keep them from being surprised, help them defend their rights, and force their partner to give up interests elsewhere.

Gender can also play a role and have a consequence on jealousy in a relationship. Women are more likely to be jealous of emotional unfaithfulness than men. On the other hand, men tend to be more jealous of sexual unfaithfulness than women (Buunk & Dijkstra, 2004).

Jealousy causes a person to focus only on the negative. People who are jealous interpret their partner's behavior as reflecting a loss of interest in them or a growing interest in someone else. All of these will lead to trust issues and misunderstandings between the couples (Leahy, 2008).

Surveillance and jealousy can be related to the social penetration theory since as people develop in their relationship and get to know each other more; the disclosing of information about one another will increase. This might stimulate feelings of jealousy as Utz and Beukeboom (2011) reported.

In romantic relationships, couples are given the chance to perform acts of surveillance and get to find out more information about one another on social media platforms. Technology is making it easier for people to perform acts of monitoring which in turn might lead to an escalation in jealousy feelings.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

Today, with individuals being allowed to meet in online environments, one must speculate how satisfying and fulfilling the relationship can be when Facebook is used. As each stage of relationship passes, individuals share more information about themselves. During each stage, people should act in a different way based on the amount of self-disclosure in the relationships. Darvell et al. (2011) concluded in their study that people interact differently online, consequently:

RQ1: Is there a difference between Lebanese couples in the different stages of relationship and their use of Facebook for surveillance?

RQ2: Does varying levels of Facebook usage within a relationship result in different levels of surveillance and/or jealousy between individuals?

H1: As relationships develop, Lebanese couples get used to each other and refer back to Facebook to meet new people and break the routine.

RQ3: Does contacting past or future romantic partners lead to jealousy and/or trust in relationships?

H2: As relationships develop, people are more likely to be satisfied with their relationship.

Methodology

Since this is an underexplored subject in Lebanon a pilot study had to be conducted to get a general idea about Facebook couple usage and their relationship status and issues that might evolve. The aforementioned research questions and hypothesis were developed after the initial two questions posed and responses analyzed. The two questions that guided the pilot study were as follows: Is there a difference between Lebanese couples in the different stages of relationship and their use of Facebook for surveillance (e.g., negative impact). Does varying levels of Facebook usage within a relationship result in different levels of jealousy and trust issues between individuals? Quantitative method was used to get people's attitudes, opinions, and current behaviors in regards to the subject matter. The pilot study is first indicated below followed by sample procedure and variables for the actual study.

Pilot study

Sample

Participants were gathered from a snowball (non-probability) sample. The sample was generated from individuals who were Facebook friends with the researcher. Then the researcher's friends shared the link with their friends allowing the survey to reach a larger population. There were 62% (31) female respondents and 38% (19) male respondents.

All respondents were Lebanese. The age group varied; the youngest group making up 25% of participants, were between 20-24 years old, 45% ranged from 25-32 years old and 30% of respondents were between the ages of 33-40.

Procedure

An online-based survey was conducted during the summer of 2015, where all participants agreed to take part in the survey by accepting the terms and following instructions. Applicants

were also notified that the online survey was going to be confidential and anonymous. They were free to end their participation at any time. The removal of incomplete or non-responsive surveys left a total of 50 respondents.

Variables

Variables used in the pilot study were related to the respondents' age, gender, amount spent on Facebook, jealousy, surveillance, relationship satisfaction. Different scales were used to determine how people are using Facebook as a way to keep track of their significant other, how satisfied they are from their current relationship, and how likely they are to get jealous.

Data Analysis

The data was assessed using frequencies and descriptive analysis to examine if such a phenomenon exists among Lebanese users and if so, the prevalence level.

The pilot testing allowed for a better understanding of the targeted demographic overall which in turn assisted in the development of the measurement instrument for the actual study. Questions were reformulated for better comprehension and reliability factors.

Pilot Study Results and Discussion

Two questions drove the initial research: (a) Is there a difference between Lebanese couples in the different stages of relationship and their use of Facebook for surveillance (e.g., negative impact) (b) Does varying levels of Facebook usage within a relationship result in different levels of jealousy and trust issues between individuals?

Regarding the first research question, results from the pool of participants indicated that couples who participate in high levels of self-disclosure on Facebook, also reported that the amount of time spent on observing/watching others also increases. Thus, it would be important to study further whether self-disclosure and surveillance have a direct relationship, since these two

components can lead to serious problems in relationships (e.g., jealousy, trust) also because the relationship is progressing with time allowing couples to get closer to each other - bonding the relationship. The pilot study also revealed that stages of relationship does not have to do with level of Facebook usage; however it is significant to explore whether the various variables (self-disclosure, surveillance, jealousy, trust) differ due to the different stages of a relationship.

The second research questions examined the varying levels of Facebook usage and its consequences on the level of jealousy and trust within the relationship. This study found that the use of Facebook was a significant predictor of jealousy. Couples who are on Facebook are more prone of becoming jealous when there is more information revealed to the public. Thus, further exploration would indicate whether Facebook usage is associated with jealousy for the reason that couples are trying to balance their current relationship in an online environment. The capability of sharing and having access to information could make it hard on couples who are trying to grow and advance through the stages of relationship with the threat of jealousy drawing near. Facebook usage has the potential to directly cause jealousy among the couple. As a relationship develops, one partner's continual use of Facebook may hold back their relationship because of the jealousy it may cause. Increasing Facebook usage offers people an increased access to information, which may directly lead to jealousy in the relationship. Couples who experience increased jealous feelings with the increase of Facebook usage should have this feeling decreased if Facebook usage levels also decreased.

Due to the results and assumptions from the pilot study it is significant to test further and do a more in-depth exploration of the Facebook influence on couples attitudes, especially that the utilization of this medium can in some cases break relationships because of jealousy that could have possibly been avoided otherwise. Thus, the following description details what factors and

how the actual study will be conducted in order to answer the research questions and hypotheses of this bigger research initiative.

Study

Sample

Participants for the study were recruited through a snowball sample in which Facebook users shared the link with their friends allowing the survey to spread to a bigger population; as well as a convenient sampling method of gathering participants from classrooms and social meeting areas (e.g., cafeteria) around Lebanese universities. Participants were informed that the survey was going to be confidential and anonymous. The sample for the study originally consisted of 225 respondents; however, the elimination of incomplete or nonresponsive surveys left a total of 196 respondents. There were 74 (37.8%) male respondents, 119 female (60.7%) respondents and three unanswered responses (1.5%). The youngest age group ranging from the ages 18-21 had 16.8% of the total; the largest population of the respondents had an age range of 24-27 (41.3%). Respondents between the ages of 28-31 made 28% of the total. 82.7% of the participants reported that they were currently involved in a relationship, 14.8% were not involved but have been in a certain period of their life, and 2.6% preferred not to answer. 99% of the respondents have a Facebook account with only 1% with no response. The majority of the respondents (84.7%) claimed that they checked their Facebook account on a daily basis; with 12.2% reporting that they did not, and 3.1% who did not respond. Participants were asked about their daily time spent on Facebook. The responses mainly focused on two timings: less than 50 minutes (32.1%) and 1-2 hours (36.2%) per day. Ninety-eight participants (50%) had been in the same relationship for more than a year and therefore have reached stage four where personal stuff is constantly shared and the emotional reactions of one on another can be predicted. Most of the

respondents (61.7%) do not have their relationship status listed on Facebook, 35.7 % have it listed, and 2.6% did not respond.

Procedure

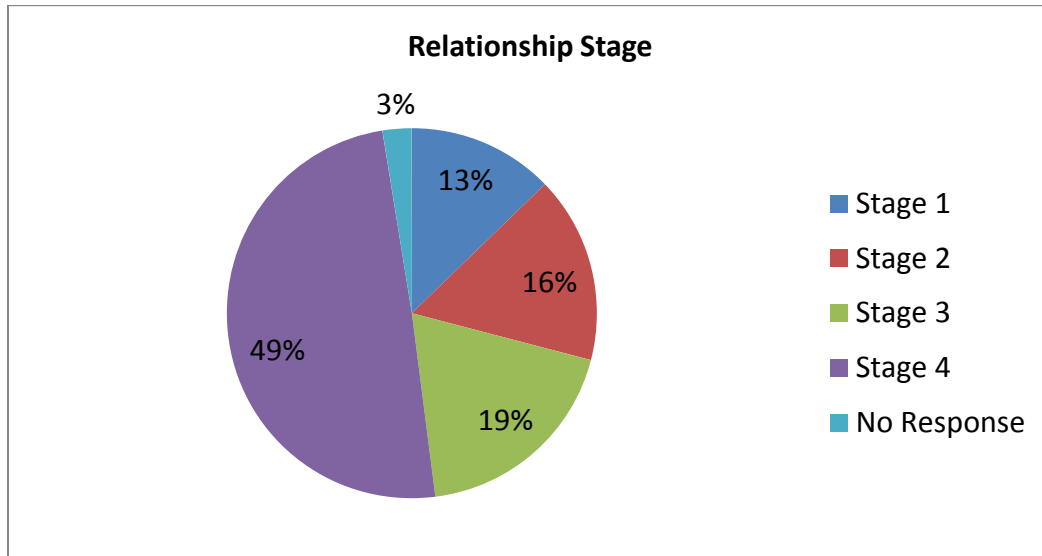
A survey link was disseminated to all participants and responses were collected via Qualtrics. Participation was strictly voluntary and responses were only used for academic purposes. IRB approval was attained before collecting data. Participants were anonymous throughout the study.

Variables

The survey used variables such as gender, age, amount spent on Facebook, stage of relationship, relationship satisfaction, partner surveillance, jealousy, relationship development, and possibility of meeting new people. The scales were arranged in this order to best facilitate participant answers, while masking the true aim of the survey. The complete questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

Stage of Relationship. The stage of relationship variable inspired from Altman & Taylor's social penetration theory (1973) was used to determine the phase couples have reached in their relationship. Respondents had to choose between one of four different stages to describe their situation. The following values were associated with each stage; Stage 1 "We play it safe. Just small and simple talk", Stage 2 "We reveal ourselves, expressing personal attitudes about moderate topics", Stage 3 "We start to talk about private and personal matters. We may use personal idioms. Criticism and arguments may arise. There may be intimate touching and kissing", and Stage 4 "We constantly share personal stuffs and each can predict the emotional reactions of the other". Out of the 196 respondents, 25 (12.8%) referred to their relationship

phase as stage 1, 32 (16.3%) as stage 2, 37 (18.9%) as stage 3, 97 (49.5%) as stage 4, and 5 (2.6%) did not respond.



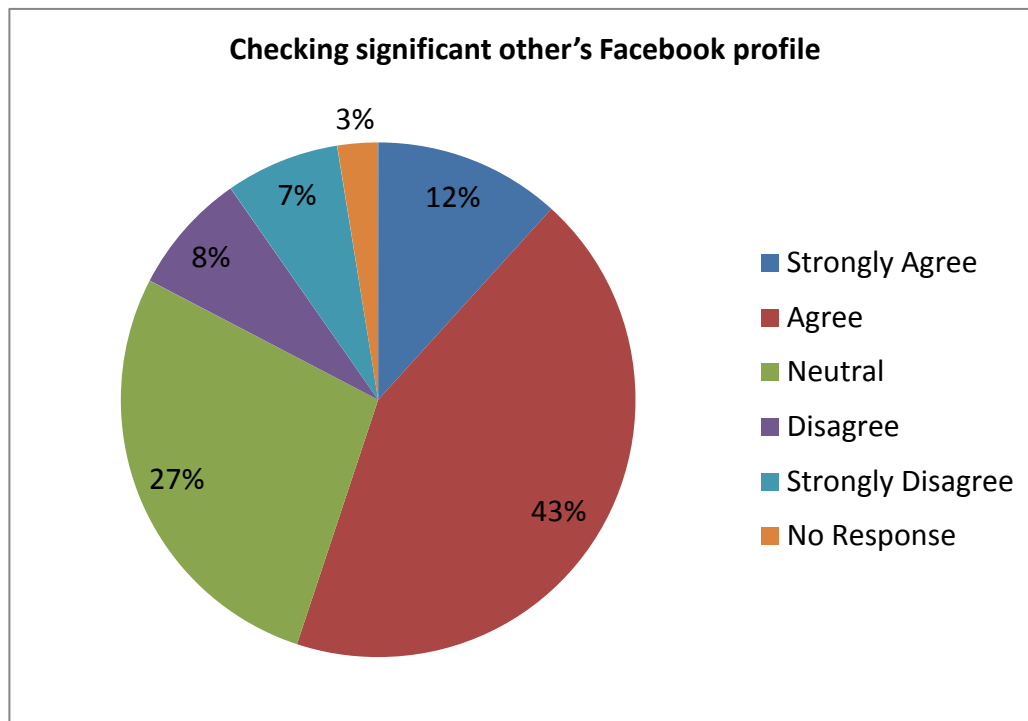
Relationship satisfaction. The relationship satisfaction scale inspired from Hendrick's stud (1988) was used to determine how satisfied individuals were in their current relationship. Through reviewing previous satisfaction measures, internal consistency was measured using Chronbach's alpha. The scale was found to have a reliability score of $.918(M=1.86, SD=0.75)$.

Questions falling under this category were grouped into two parts. The first section included statements that were measured using a Likert scale rating system ranging from 1 (highly satisfied) to 5 (highly unsatisfied). The second section included a question requiring responses measured from 1 (best) to 5 (worst).

The relationship satisfaction scale concentrated on how partners felt about their bonding with a significant other. The first section had statements such as "How well does

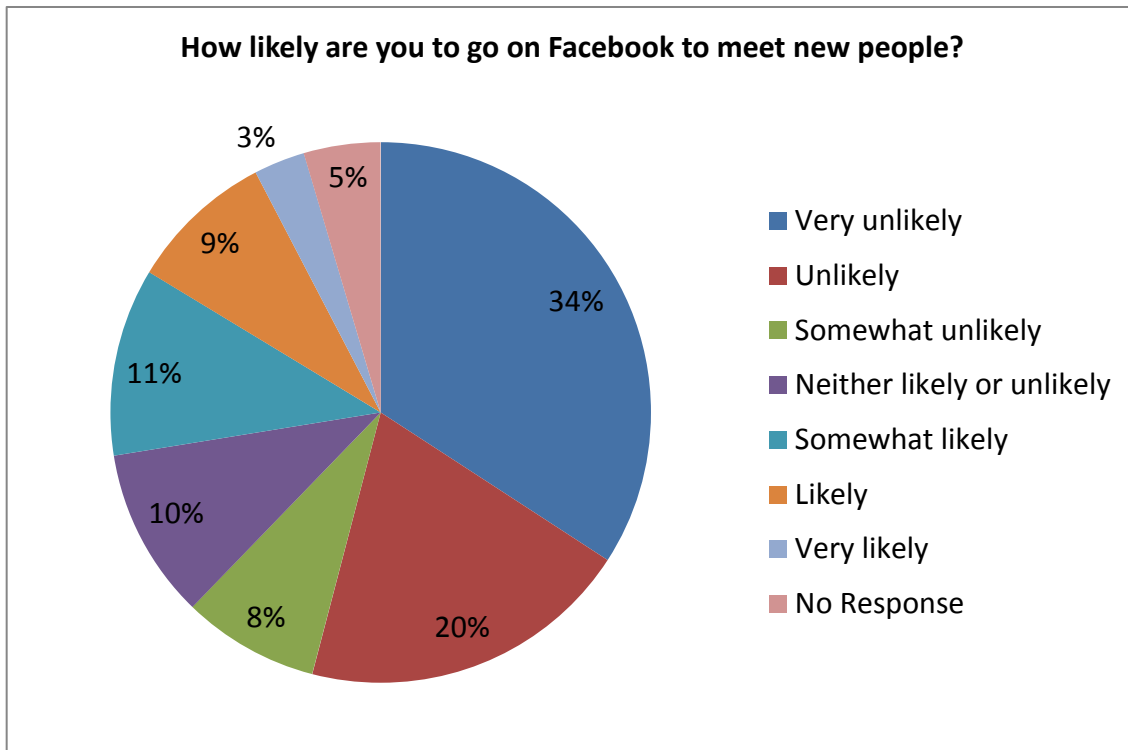
your partner meet your needs?", "In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?" and "My relationship has met my original expectations". The second section asked "How good is your relationship compared to most?"

Partner surveillance. A partner surveillance scale was utilized to gain vision into a person's surveillance of their significant other on Facebook. This scale was generated by the researcher through reviewing previous surveillance measures. The surveillance scale also used a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Internal consistency was measured using Chronbach's alpha. The scale was found to have a reliability of .778 ($M=2.45, SD=0.52$). The partner surveillance scale examined how individuals were utilizing Facebook as a way to keep track on their partner. Statements such as "I check my significant other's Facebook profile", "I know that my significant other may have ex-lovers on his/her Facebook page", "I like when my significant other posts on his/her page about me/us", and others were used to verify surveillance.



Jealousy. The jealousy scale adapted from Utz and Beukeboom (2011) was used to measure participants' levels of jealousy within their relationships examining online jealousy dealing immediately with Social Networking Sites. The jealousy scale was used to check how jealous a participant could be after checking his/her partner's behavior online ($\alpha = .797$, $M=4.3$, $SD=1.25$). Statements such as "Become jealous after seeing that your partner has added an unknown member of the preferred sex to Facebook", "Become jealous after seeing that your partner has received a wall message from someone of the preferred sex", "Be jealous if your partner posts pictures of him or herself with a previous romantic or sexual partner", and "Become jealous after seeing that your partner has posted a message on the wall of someone of the preferred sex" were measured on a Likert-type scale from 1 (very unlikely) to 7 (very likely).

Meeting People. The meeting people scale was used to measure how often a person refers to Social Networking Sites such as Facebook to meet new individuals or even catch up with past lovers. Responses were measured using a Likert scale rating system from 1 (very unlikely) to 7 (very likely). Statements such as "How likely are you to go on Facebook to meet new people?", "How likely are you that when you get used to your partner, you check out Facebook to meet new people and break routine?," and "How likely are you to contact your ex on Facebook, while you are in a current relationship?" were used and internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's alpha. Results of the scale showed good reliability ($\alpha = .845$, $M=2.58$, $SD=1.08$).



Demographics and relationship characteristics. Participants will need to indicate their age. Also, they will specify their gender. They will be also asked to specify their relationship status along with the relationship duration. In addition, they will need to indicate which stage (1-4) of the relationship they feel they are closest too.

Media usage. Participants will be asked to specify how many hours they spend on a daily bases using Facebook, along with how many of the total hours do they spend observing what their partner is doing on the medium.

In a typical day, how many hours do you spend on Facebook?	1	0 hours	4
	2	Less than 50 minutes	63
	3	1-2 hours	69
	4	3-4 hours	33
	5	5-6 hours	9
	6	7-8 hours	6
	7	9 or more hours	3

Data Analysis

The results were examined for outliers. The results of the study were based on 196 participants instead of 225 original set of participants.

Three research questions and two hypotheses drove this research: (1) Is there a difference between Lebanese couples in the different stages of relationship and their use of Facebook for surveillance?, (2) Does varying levels of Facebook usage within a relationship result in different levels of jealousy and trust between individuals?, (3) As relationships develop, Lebanese couples get used to each other and refer back to Facebook to meet new people and break the routine, (4) Does contacting past or future romantic partners lead to jealousy in relationships? and (5) As relationships develop, people are more likely to be satisfied with their relationship.

Research questions one and two were tested through univariate ANOVA. To examine research question three, an independent t-test was used. Both hypotheses were analyzed through a univariate ANOVA.

Results

The first research question examined the different phases of a relationship (e.g., stage 1: play it safe, stage 2: reveal ourselves, stage 3: start to talk about private and personal matters, stage 4: constantly share and predict reactions) and the Facebook use by partners for surveillance ($M=2.45$, $SD=0.52$). A univariate ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Lebanese couples and the different stages of relationship on their use of Facebook for surveillance. Results indicated no significant effect of relationship stage on partner surveillance $F(1, 187) = 1.776$, $p = 0.153$.

The second research question was also measured using univariate ANOVA test. The independent variable "Facebook Usage" was used to check whether it had an effect on the dependent variable "Partner Surveillance" ($M=2.45$, $SD= 0.52$) and "Jealousy" ($M=4.3$, $SD=1.25$). The test indicated that there was a significant statistical difference between "Facebook Usage" and "Partner Surveillance" $F(1,185)= 3.612$, $p<0.01$). A post hoc test was conducted to see which level of usage impacted surveillance the most. Turkey's post hoc results indicated that a significant difference between those who spend less than 50 minutes ($M = 2.62$, $SD = .570$) on Facebook versus those who spend 1-2 hours ($M = 2.36$, $SD = .372$) on Facebook on a daily basis; such that those who spend more time on Facebook (e.g., 1-2 hours) participate in more partner surveillance than those who spend less time (e.g., 50 minutes or less) on Facebook. A further look at this occurrence prompted an Independent T-test between those who check their Facebook accounts daily versus those who do not and their surveillance habits. Sure enough, people who check their Facebook accounts on a daily basis ($M = 2.391$, $SD = .482$) are more likely to engage in partner surveillance than those who do not log in ($M = 2.858$, $SD = .609$) to their account daily (Welsh's $t(1, 26.599) = -3.740$, $p < .01$).

However, There was no significant influence of levels of Facebook usage on levels of jealousy between individuals $F(1,181)= 1.254, p>.05$

The third research question intended to figure out whether contacting past or future partners associates with jealousy and trust. Independent t-test results indicated that there wasn't a statistically significant difference for jealousy however there was a statistically significant difference for those who use Facebook to contact previous or future romantic partners and trust (Welsh's $t(1, 66.108) = -5.069, p < .001$). As speculated, those who do not use Facebook to contact previous or future partners ($M = 4.18, SD = .945$) are more likely to trust their partner than those who use Facebook to contact others ($M = 3.43, SD = .765$).

The first hypothesis was tested using ANOVA, knowing that the independent variable is "relationship development" and the dependent variable is "meeting new people" ($M=2.19, SD=1.21$). "Relationship development" is treated as categorical whereas "meeting new people" is continuous. This measure was used to identify whether the development of a relationship (e.g., stage 1: play it safe, stage 2: reveal ourselves, stage 3: start to talk about private and personal matters, stage 4: constantly share and predict reactions) encourages the individual to meet new people and break the routine. ANOVA indicated that there was a significant variance among the variables ($F(1, 183) = 12.28, p < 0.01, \eta = .168$).

A post hoc test was conducted to see which stage of relationship encouraged meeting new people the most. Tukey's post-hoc showed that there is a significant difference between stage 1 and 4, stage 2 and 4, and stage 3 and 4. Nevertheless, there is no statistically significant difference between stages 2 and 3, or 1 and 2 or 1 and 3. People are more likely to meet people in stage 1 ($M = 3.08, SD = 1.484$), than in stage 4 ($M = 1.74, SD = .834$) of their relationship, stage 2 ($M = 2.56, SD = 1.383$) than in stage 4, stage 3 ($M = 2.44, SD = 1.199$) than in stage 4.

Furthermore, looking at relationship time which significantly correlates to relationship development ($r = .680, p < .001$), thus ANOVA was used to show the statistically significant difference among the time and if participants would meet new people ($F(1, 181) = 8.188, p < .001, \eta = .184$). Tukey's post hoc indicated that there is a significant difference between the duration of partners being together couple of weeks and more than one year, a month and more than one year, few months (more than one but less than 6 months) and more than one year. People are more likely to meet people when they have been together for a couple of weeks ($M = 3.01, SD = 1.574$) rather than more than one year ($M = 1.78, SD = .918$), a month ($M = 3.09, SD = 1.215$) rather more than one year, few months ($M = 2.57, SD = 1.421$) rather more than one year. This means that people are more likely to meet others during the initial stages of their relationship rather than the later stage; as time spent in a relationship also indicated.

Finally, the second hypothesis was also tested using ANOVA. The independent variable "relationship development" (e.g., stage 1: play it safe, stage 2: reveal ourselves, stage 3: start to talk about private and personal matters, stage 4: constantly share and predict reactions) was used to determine whether it has an influence on "partner satisfaction" ($M = 1.861, SD = .756$). ANOVA indicated that there was significance between the variables ($F(1, 187) = 21.871, p < .001, \eta = .260$).

A post hoc test was conducted to see which stage of relationship influenced partner satisfaction the most. Tukey's post hoc test indicated that there was a significant difference between stage 1 and 3, 1 and 4, 2 and 4 and 3 and 4 when assessing partner satisfaction. People are less likely to become satisfied in stage 1 ($M = 2.45, SD = .693$), than in stage 3 ($M = 2.04, SD = .688$) of their relationship, stage 1 than in stage 4 ($M = 1.50, SD = .559$), stage 2 ($M = 2.19, SD$

= .693) than in stage 4. This means that couples will become more satisfied as they reach higher stages in the relationship.

Discussion

Revealing information about Facebook and the impact the social media platform has on relationships was the main purpose of this research. The use of previous studies allows an evaluation of the results of this study and a comparison between present and earlier outcomes. Findings of this research fall both in consistency and in difference with earlier studies. This research focused on questions evaluating elements such as stage of relationship, partner surveillance, jealousy, relationship satisfaction, and meeting new people. Discussed below are the ways the results of this study enhance the theory and concepts used and suggest practical application of such variables.

The first research question examined whether there is a difference between Lebanese couples in the different stages of relationship (e.g., stage 1: play it safe, stage 2: reveal ourselves, stage 3: start to talk about private and personal matters, stage 4: constantly share and predict reactions) and their use of Facebook for surveillance. Results indicated no significant impact of relationship stage on partner surveillance. When asked about surveillance 11.7 % of the participants strongly agreed to check their significant other's Facebook profile. On the other hand, 82.6% of the respondents claimed to know people who check their significant other's Facebook profile while only 4% claimed the opposite. Possibly, people are afraid to admit that they personally do acts of surveillance but are not afraid to claim to know individuals who do and hence this might be the reason behind the large difference in percentage between people who admit to do acts of surveillance and others who admit knowing others who do. When it comes to sensitive subjects of those reflecting our own somewhat negative behavior the third-person effect plays a key role. Maybe they do not want to identify themselves as stalkers and intruders

because this might imply that they have jealousy and/or trust issues. It is also easier to blame others instead of one self.

Perhaps, as relationships develop, couples start investing more time into the relationship and less time on the web therefore leaving little opportunity for online surveillance. Tonkunaga (2011) stated that partner monitoring is the second most regularly reported performance on Facebook. This happens when the couples are in the early stages of the relationship and still need to monitor each other's acts to get more information about the significant other. 50.8% of the participants in this study reported to belong to stage four when asked about classifying the stage of their relationship, hence being in the later stage of the relationship adheres to the aforementioned and helps underscore the results about surveillance. Furthermore as Muise et al.(2009) reported, couples can refer to means other than social media to monitor their partner's behavior. For instance, a spouse might observe the mate's behavior from a distance, such as observing the latter interact with others at a party or any other gathering. Furthermore, the spouse may engage in an active strategy and consult third parties, such as mutual friends, for information about the partner. Although, 63.3% of participants spend more than one hour a day on Facebook, they did not follow the same patterns of surveillance (those of the earlier stages), or at the very least did not admit to them. Not all relationships succeed to reach the last stage or the "Stable Stage" (i.e., stage 4) as indicated by Altman and Taylor's (1973) social penetration theory. People who do reach this stage have succeeded to share a relationship in which disclosure is open and comfortable. The participants, with this technological age, ease of use and knowing that at any given point people would know what is happening through the various posts might not be so cautious or in need of observing or investigating their partner's path. Instead, individuals might be using the web for purposes other than surveillance such as reading articles,

watching videos, connecting with family members, or even doing other activities. However, Facebook can influence other factors such as jealousy.

The second research question was used to measure if varying levels of Facebook usage within a relationship result in different levels of surveillance and/or jealousy between individuals; this differs from research question one in that here one is examining the social media platform usage rather than the stage in the relationship. This study concluded that Facebook usage was a significant predictor of surveillance. More time spent on social media platforms lead to more acts of monitoring among individuals. . Darvell et al. (2011) propose that partner monitoring is interesting due to the ease of accessing information. Certainly, this is related to how much time the individual is spending on the social media platform. People who spend 50 minutes or less on Facebook per day will use the platform mainly to check what's new or what's going on in their feed. They will skim their home page quickly unlike people who spend more time (1 to 2 hours). More Facebook use will lead to more time spent on the platform which in turn means there is a bigger chance of performing acts of surveillance; however the results only indicated this for those who spend 1 to 2 hours versus less than an hour. This means that the prolonged usage of Facebook does not necessarily indicate more surveillance which again is in accordance with the previous results and even highlight the essence of the social penetration theory that as people invest more time in their relationship (e.g., reaching stage 4) that less surveillance is needed because of factors such as the buildup trust.

This study also concluded that there was no significance between different levels of Facebook usage and jealousy. This result did not support Marshall et al.'s (2012) claim that the amount of time spent on Facebook immediately was linked to the jealousy felt between couples. The latter were afraid that their partner was developing connections with another person online,

leading to more jealousy. Referring back to this study, 50 % of participants reported to develop feelings of jealousy after seeing that their partner has added an unknown member of the preferred sex on Facebook. Additionally, a 54.6% also reported to become jealous after seeing that their significant other has posted a message on the wall of someone of the preferred sex. When asked about becoming jealous after their partner has posted a picture of him or herself with a previous romantic or sexual partner, 59.2% of the participants agreed to develop such a feelings. As noticed from these numbers that people do admit to being jealous, however this doesn't always directly tie to the Facebook usage.

It is true that this study showed that there was no significance between levels of Facebook usage and Jealousy in a relationship; however, jealousy can be directly linked to the acts of surveillance instead. A person can spend time on Facebook doing things other than partner monitoring, such as keeping in touch with family and friends, reading articles, watching videos and so forth. However once the person uses Facebook for acts of surveillance, this might initiate feelings of jealousy among the partner. So it is not time spent on Facebook but rather the reason behind using this social platform. This justification is in agreement with Utz and Beukeboom's study (2011) about a couple's usage of social network sites, relationship satisfaction, and jealousy. As mentioned previously, results of their study have shown that the more time people spent on Facebook monitoring, the more feelings of jealousy they reported sensing. All of these acts of surveillance may lead to feelings of jealousy. Consequently, the capability of accessing a spouse's social network cannot develop the quality of a person's relationship.

The wide ability to share and have access to information may make it challenging for couples who are trying to advance through the stages of their relationship to move forward with

the threat of jealousy approaching. The more time people spend using Facebook, the more they are prone to doing acts of surveillance, the more they will have information access related to past or future lovers, and consequently the more feelings of jealousy will be generated by their significant other. This also coincides with Clayton(2013) study which showed that people who use Facebook in an excessive manner were more likely to experience conflict with their partners. Such conflict may increase jealousy feelings that encourage dreadful outcomes such as breaking up, cheating, and even divorcing. If increased usage of Facebook leads to more feelings of jealousy between couples, reducing Facebook usage should also reduce the levels of jealousy sensed.

The third research question intended to figure out whether contacting past or future partners lead to jealousy and/or trust in relationships. Unlike what one would assume, results indicated that there wasn't an association between contacting past or future partners and jealousy in a relationship. As Muise et al. concluded in their study (2009), there are relationship factors and character traits that can be contributed to feelings of jealousy. These sensations can be associated with low levels of trust and self-esteem. Perhaps, most of the participants have a high level of confidence, which explains why results indicated low levels of jealousy in relation to contacting other partners. This can also depict that although they might be jealous they would not admit to being jealous of their partner's ex and perhaps reject the idea of their partner contacting a future partner

Nevertheless, there was an association between contacting other partners and trust such that as a person engages in meeting other people on Facebook, trust decreases. As Cooper et al. (2000) have previously mentioned in their study, online infidelity is increasing when people search for closeness with new online partners. This decreases potential for real relationship

development. When a partner discovers that his/her significant other is searching for other partners, this will definitely decrease the trust and lead to problems within the relationship which might in turn lead to breakups (Docklermen, 2014).

The first hypothesis was used to measure whether the development of a relationship (e.g., stage 1: play it safe, stage 2: reveal ourselves, stage 3: start to talk about private and personal matters, stage 4: constantly share and predict reactions) encourages the individual to meet new people and break the routine. Results indicated that there was a significant association between the variables. Post-hoc analysis revealed that people are more likely to meet other individuals in stage one rather than in stage four of their relationship, which is in direct support of the social penetration theory. Stage one or the playing it safe stage is much different than stage four of sharing more in-depth and predicting the other person's reactions where the couple have spent and devoted much time to their relationship, thus finding it harder to separate than initial stages.

Furthermore, looking at relationship time which significantly correlates to relationship development. The results showed that there was a difference among the time spent in a relationship and whether participants would meet new people. In further support of the theory, people are more likely to meet others during the initial stages of their relationship and also as more time is spent rather than the later stage.

So, as relationships develop and as more time passes in the relationship, couples are less likely to search for new partners to break the routine. Perhaps when people are new to the relationship, they spend more time on social media platforms searching for information about their partner. This large time spent on the Internet will make the individual prone to checking more information and become exposed to more people. Being new in the relationship doesn't require developing commitments yet makes it kind of "okay" to meet other people; in other

words less time, money and effort has been put into the relationship giving the person a bit more freedom to venture out looking for better types of "investments" on their time. Moreover, as people spend more time on Facebook, there is a higher chance of checking previous partners' profiles and exes (Roberts & David, 2015).

Consequently, as relationships develop and become more serious, couples become more committed to one another and less likely to go on the net to search for other partners. Marriage is contemplated in the last stages. When a person reveals and demonstrates commitment to his/her partner, this encourages the latter to also reveal commitment in return and thus the bond between the two is strengthened. When there is commitment, several needs are fulfilled such as a balance of respect, love, belonging, power and freedom. Both individuals choose to be with each other through thick and thin and there is real desire for meeting new partners. This does not match previous studies claiming that increase Facebook use leads to increase in divorce rates between couples (Valenzuela et al., 2014).

The second hypothesis was used to measure whether the stages of a relationship have an influence on partner satisfaction. Results indicated that a significant association exists such that there is less satisfaction in stage 1 but more so the other stages when compared to the first. The participants are less likely to become satisfied in stage one than in stage three, stage one than in stage four, stage two than in stage four. This means that as relationships develop, couples will become more satisfied. However, results also indicated that there isn't a difference in satisfaction between the first two stages, nor from stage two to three; perhaps the stages are too close to each other. To show that great of a difference in satisfactions level, so one can assume satisfaction is the same at those particular levels. For people to advance and grow in their relationship, they must share trust, respect, love, and loyalty with one another. For two lovers to be able to reach

stage 4, this means that they have succeeded in overcoming many of the difficulties and obstacles that couples might face. Therefore, as couples develop more within their relationship, they will be more satisfied. This can be linked to the previous hypothesis. As stages of relationships develop, the chances of couples referring to Facebook to meet new people decrease. Due to commitments and senses of belonging to one another, definitely couples will become more fulfilled and gratified.

Limitations

There were several limitations due to the use of online survey to conduct the research. Even if online surveys are able to accomplish higher response rates than that of traditional approaches, internet users nowadays are frequently bombarded by messages. They might get them annoyed from this advance and thus delete the survey without taking it into consideration. Respondent may also believe that online surveys raise ethical concerns and can invade their privacy. However, all participants were promised confidentiality and anonymity.

Additionally, the lack of the researcher to clarify the answers of the respondents can initiate less reliable data, but at the same time reduce the bias. Also, the researcher runs the risk of introducing random error because there is no way of knowing whether the intended participant is the person who really filled out the questionnaire; however error was controlled for during the statistical outputs. An additional limitation of the study was that the researcher was restricted to looking at only communication theories, such as the Social Penetration Theory, while perhaps psychological and/or sociological theories can also apply in understanding how people think and act within any given society.

Furthermore, the sample population was not a probability sample, so one cannot generalize back to the population, thus external validity might be hindered, although the aim of this study was not generalizability. It is true that the convenience sample permitted snowballing to occur; however, the downside to this distribution method is that the survey reached only a restricted population of individuals. As a result, the distribution method formed limited representation of sections in the answers. Participants of this survey were close in age and since some of the participants were reached through a snowball sample, they would more than likely be friends to the researcher.

Moreover, although most of the participants agreed to have reached stage 4 in their relationship, 61.7% did not reveal their status to the public on Facebook. Not revealing the status could have several meanings. Does the couple want to embrace the notion of privacy so that nobody can interfere or they want to hide the status in order to leave room for any other potential partner?

Further Suggestions

Referring back to the results of this study, there are suggestions for future research. Additional studies must demonstrate if Facebook usage has an effect on the relationship in the long-term. Is the lack of trust causing partners to fight and thus break up? Or are couples feeling more committed to the other, thus become more honest, and tell their significant other the truth? Does the technology of smart phones and social media truly oblige individuals to be more honest with their spouse because anyone can document someone's locations constantly? In addition, more research should be done to examine the first stages of a relationship and the impact level of Facebook and other social media usage such as Instagram.

Furthermore, another opportunity for future research would be to emphasize on social media as a main source for the end of healthy and trusting relationships. Are couples ending their relationships due to information revealed and discovered online? Are couples that reveal more details about their personal relationship on Facebook more likely to break up since they are looking for fulfillment in the wrong place? In doing so, jealousy and satisfaction need to be assessed in order to understand if within these developments if induced jealousy is the primary reason for the breakup or is it satisfaction or just not matching. Also, what happens within stages 2 and 3 of the relationship since there is more discrepancies with these variables at those particular times of the relationship.

It is also crucial to note this research was not consistent with findings. The second research question showed no significant influence of levels of Facebook usage on levels of jealousy between individuals. However, previous studies claimed that the amount of time spent on Facebook immediately was linked to the jealousy felt between couples(Marshall et al., 2012). This contradiction of results ascertains further research on Facebook and its effects are vital to explore while illuminating the difference confounding variables found in this study.

As mentioned previously, a study done by Bunk and Dijkstra in 2004 found that Gender can have a consequence on jealousy in a relationship. Women are more likely to be jealous of emotional unfaithfulness than men. Similarly, results in this research also stated that women (60.4%) tend to be more jealous than males (38.1%). Therefore, it is important that future studies tackle more the subject of gender in order to see if being a male or female actually affects jealousy which in turn has a consequence on relationships.

For further look into the matter of relationships, it is also fundamental for future studies to examine the attachment theory. This theory was developed by John Bowlby in the 60's. It is a psychological model that attempts to explain the dynamics of long-term and short-term interpersonal relationships between individuals. (Bowlby, 1969). It is a concept that is related to the importance of "attachment" in regards to personal development. This theory claims that when a person is able to form a physical and emotional "attachment" with another individual, a sense of stability and security is formed between the two which allows for their growth and development. Understanding this term in a deeper matter allows us to comprehend more relationships and how they might be affected by external factors.

Additionally, using qualitative methods such as experimental studies would provide more understanding into what initiates certain partner behaviors. It enables the researcher to walk in the participants' shoes and therefore have a better insight on the subject.

In the practical aspect, future research could tackle more than one social media platform. Twitter, Instagram and any other popular site where a person can disclose him/herself to a wide population can also be examined. Increasing the scope of the study will lead to a more precise description of people in relationships and their use of social media sites.

Conclusion

The study research design was employed to evaluate whether or not Facebook has negative influences on committed, romantic relationships among men and women between twenty and forty years old whom both interact using the social network. This study gave the researcher a quick overview about the factors that seem to be the strongest predictors in the participant data.

Information discovered in this study proved that it is fair to say Social Networking sites such as Facebook are having a limited consequence on the way couples are developing their relationships.

Facebook doesn't really impact individuals traveling through the stages of Altman and Taylor's social penetration theory (1973) negatively or at least not in every stage. Stage of a relationship did not associate with an increase in partner surveillance though this study concluded that Facebook usage was a significant predictor of surveillance. Perhaps, as relationships develop, couples start investing more time into the relationship and less time on the Web therefore leaving little opportunity for online surveillance, or if not less time on the Web at least less time checking up on their partner. However, when a person is using Facebook, he/she has a bigger chance for carrying out acts of surveillance - one is perhaps more tempted due to the ease of access and anonymous availability of "snooping" around. Thus, more time spent on social media platforms lead to more acts of monitoring among individuals. However, increased Facebook usage did not escalate the chance for jealousy within the relationship in so far in relation to the participants of this study.

Furthermore, there was an association between contacting other partners and trust such that as a person engages in meeting other people on Facebook, trust decreases. When a partner

discovers that his/her significant other is searching for other partners, this will definitely decrease the trust and lead to problems within the relationship which might in turn lead to breakups (Docklermen, 2014).

Facebook plays a major role in providing information about the other. This platform makes it quicker and easier for a person to filter out potential partners who might have mutual interests and hobbies. Finally and in summary, it is crucial to understand how Facebook has somewhat modernized the way people communicate and form connections.

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Appendix A: Facebook and Relationships

Start of Block: Default Question Block

I would appreciate your assistance with this research on determining whether Facebook has an impact on relationships. All you need to do is complete this questionnaire, which should take approximately 15 minutes. Responses will be completely anonymous; your name will not appear anywhere on the survey. All responses will remain confidential and only used for academic reasons (such as a thesis and academic journal). There are no risks involved in participating. Your answers will be of valuable to the researcher to advance knowledge about social media and its uses. If you agree to participate, please write (or copy and paste) the following sentence below in the box as a form of consent and then press the next button.

"Being informed that any particular treatment or procedure may involve risks which are currently unforeseeable; I state hereby that my participation in the research study is voluntary. Any refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which I am entitled. I may as well discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am entitled."

Thank you in advance for your voluntary participation!

Gender

Male

Female

Please specify your age (ex:22)

Do you have a Facebook account?

Yes

No

Skip To: End of Survey If Do you have a Facebook account? = No

Display This Question:

If Do you have a Facebook account? = Yes

Do you check your Facebook account daily?

Yes

No

In a typical day, how many hours do you spend on Facebook?

- 0 hours
 - Less than 50 minutes
 - 1-2 hours
 - 3-4 hours
 - 5-6 hours
 - 7-8 hours
 - 9 or more hours
-

Are you in a relationship?

- Yes
 - No
-

How long have you been in this same relationship?

- Couple of weeks
 - A month
 - Few months (more than one but less than 6 months)
 - Several months (6 months or more but less than a year)
 - One year
 - More than one year
-

Which stage best describes your relationship currently:

- Stage 1: We play it safe. Just small and simple talk.
 - Stage 2: We reveal ourselves, expressing personal attitudes about moderate topics.
 - Stage 3: We start to talk about private and personal matters. We may use personal idioms. Criticism and arguments may arise. There may be intimate touching and kissing.
 - Stage 4: We constantly share personal stuffs and each can predict the emotional reactions of the other.
-

Do you currently have your relationship status listed on your Facebook page?

Yes

No

If so, what is your relationship status

Married

In a relationship

It's complicated

Single

Not Listed

Other

When did you change your status online?

Automatically when got into the relationship

Sometime; please specify _____

Do you use Facebook to get in contact with previous or future romantic partners?

Yes

No

My relationship strengthened because of Facebook.

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

I know a couple that broke up because of Facebook use.

Yes

No

I know of Facebook causing relationship problems in couples.

Yes

No

Kindly answer the following statements to the best of your ability using rating system ranging from Highly satisfied to highly unsatisfied.

	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Average	Unsatisfied	Highly Unsatisfied
My partner meets my needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My relationship has met my original expectations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How good is your relationship compared to most?

- Best
 - Better than most
 - Average
 - Worse than Most
 - Worst
-

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability using the Likert scale rating system ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

(Response Scale: 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree)

	1 = Strongly agree	2 = Agree	3 = Neutral	4 = Disagree	5 = Strongly disagree
I trust my significant other.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I trust my significant other's online activity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I check my significant other's Facebook Profile.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know that my significant other may have ex-lovers on his/her Facebook page.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It bothers me that my significant other has ex-lovers on his/her Facebook page.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like when my significant other posts on his/her page about me/us.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like to post pictures that have my significant other in them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like when my significant other posts pictures of us.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know people who check their significant other's Facebook profile.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like seeing other people post status updates about their relationship on	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Facebook.

I like seeing pictures of friends who are in a relationship on Facebook.

I think couples should demonstrate their happiness online.

On a scale from 1 to 5 (5 being the most) rate how much you trust your partner.

1

2

3

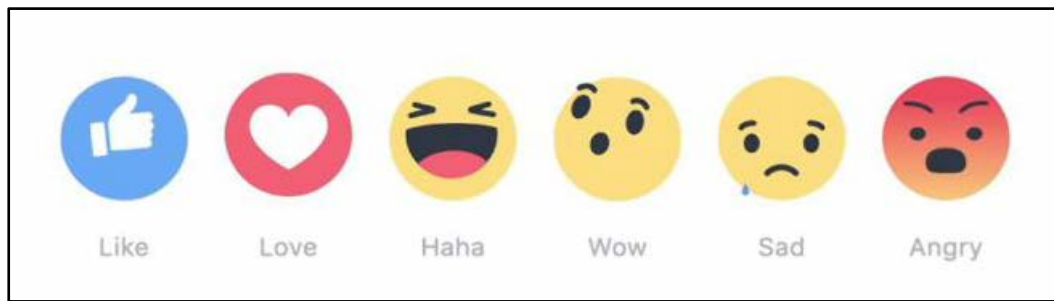
4

5

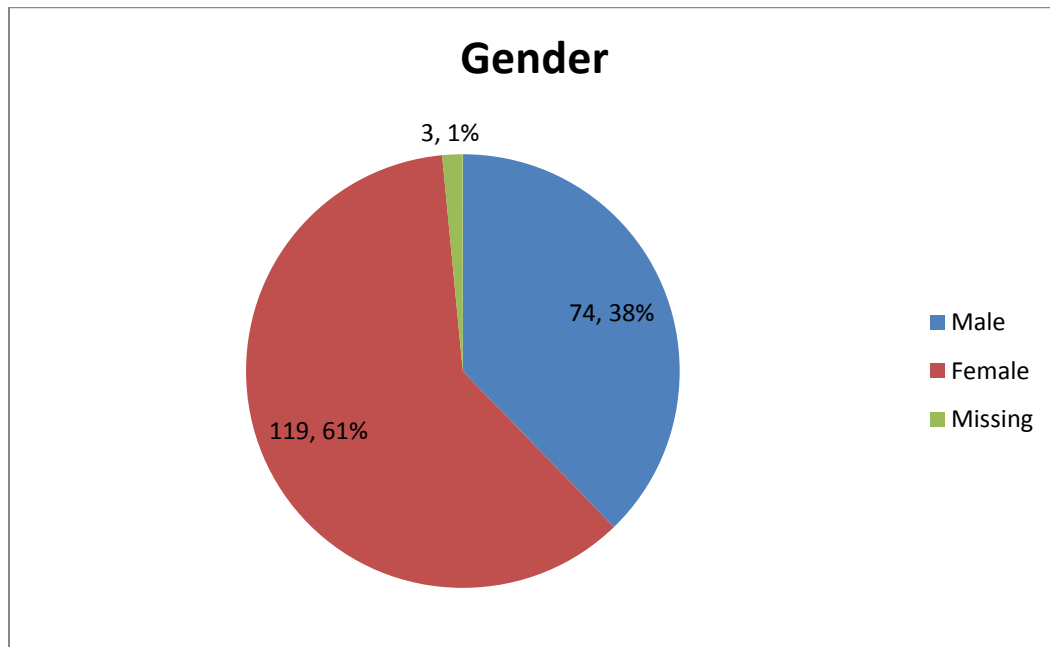
Appendix B: Figures, Tables and Charts

	Facebook	YouTube	Google+	MSN	Twitter
World	56%	48%	31%	21%	17%
Lebanon	87%	49%	41%	80%	10%

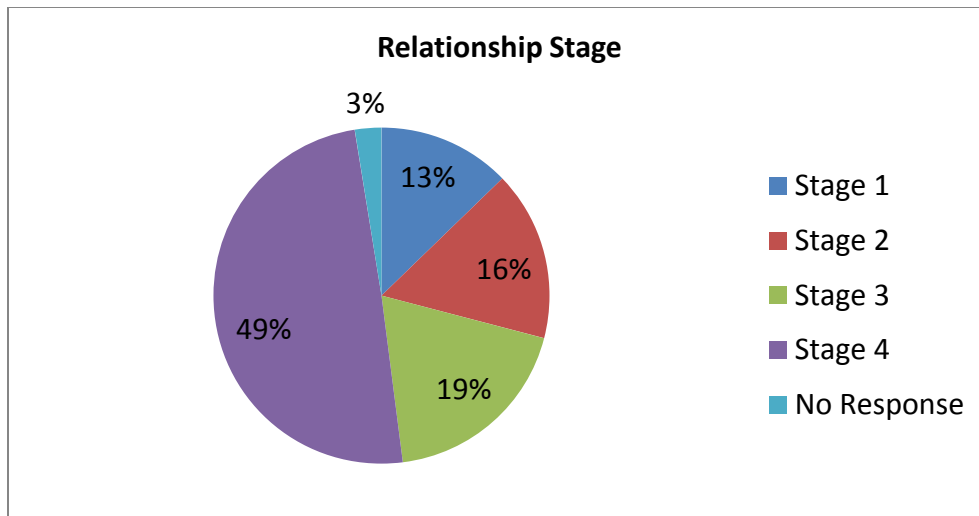
Top five personal social media sites according to the Worldwide Independent Network (WIN)



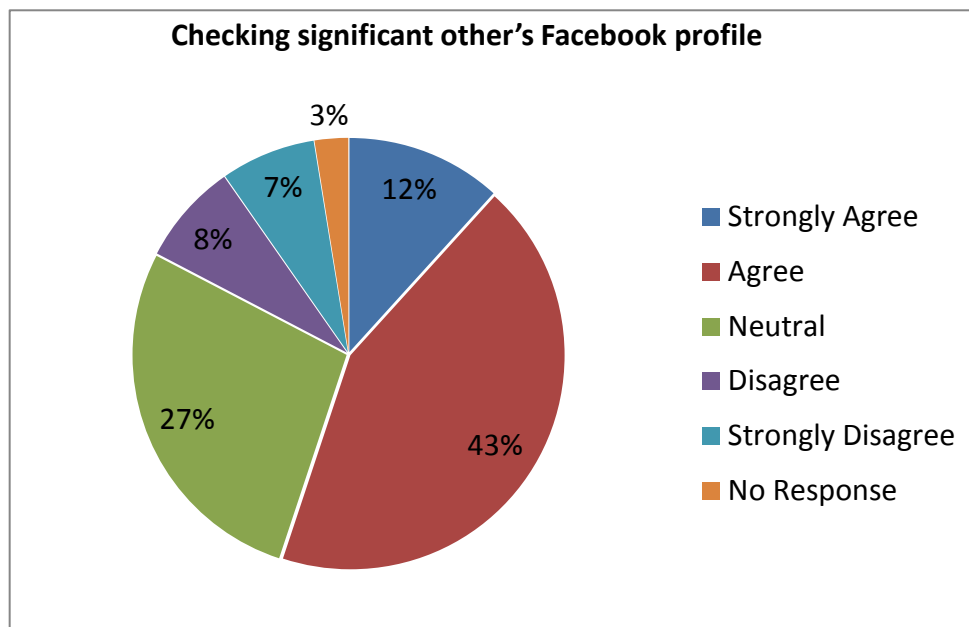
Facebook reaction buttons



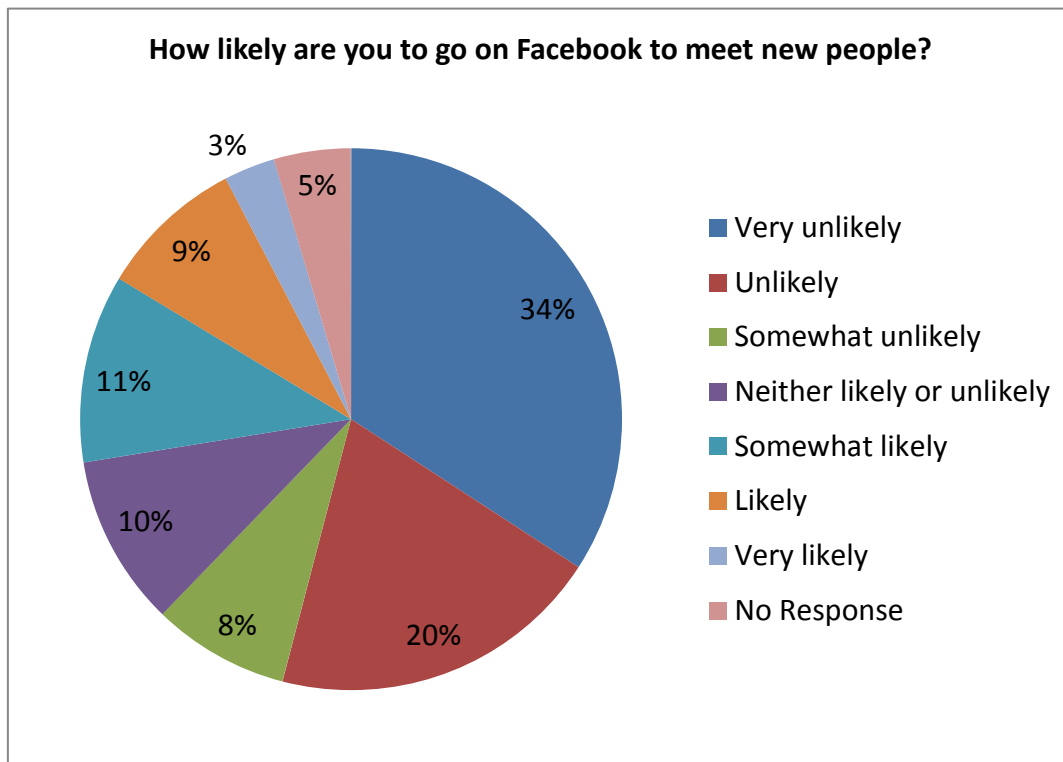
Participants' Gender Frequency and percentage pie chart



Results of participants responses to the Relationship Stage question, knowing that Stage 1 "We play it safe. Just small and simple talk", Stage 2 "We reveal ourselves, expressing personal attitudes about moderate topics", Stage 3 "We start to talk about private and personal matters. We may use personal idioms. Criticism and arguments may arise. There may be intimate touching and kissing", and Stage 4 "We constantly share personal stuffs and each can predict the emotional reactions of the other".



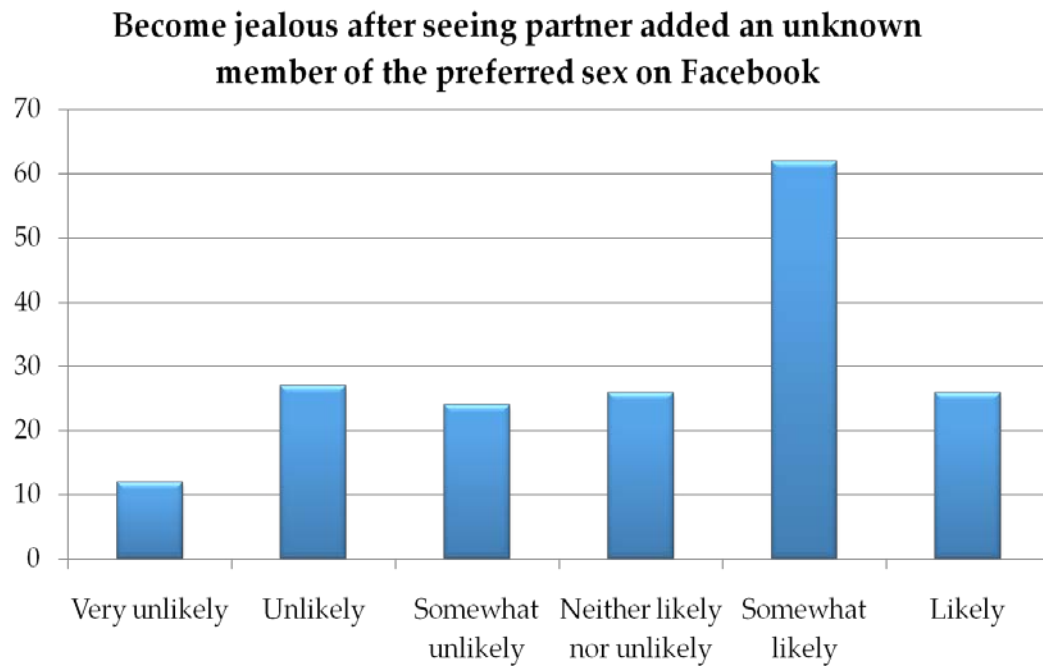
Responses of participants to the partner surveillance scale.



Responses of participants to the “Meeting new people” scale.

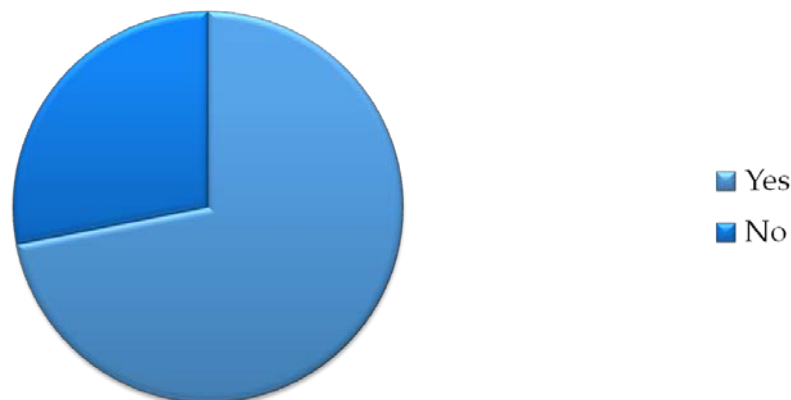
In a typical day, how many hours do you spend on Facebook?	1	0 hours	4
	2	Less than 50 minutes	63
	3	1-2 hours	69
	4	3-4 hours	33
	5	5-6 hours	9
	6	7-8 hours	6
	7	9 or more hours	3

Table showing the participants’ number of time spent per day using Facebook.

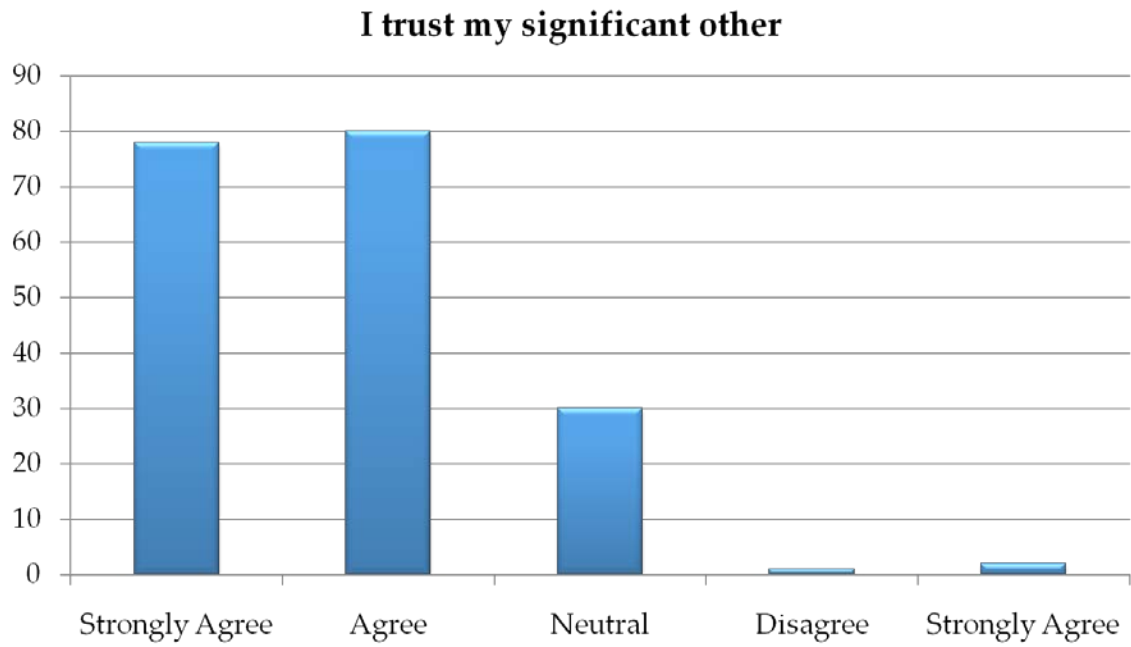


Bar graph displaying participants' responses to one of the jealousy questions.

Do you use Facebook to get in contact with previous or future romantic partners?



Pie Chart displaying participants' responses to whether they use Facebook to get in contact with past or future romantic partners.



Bar Graph showing participants' responses to a trust question.