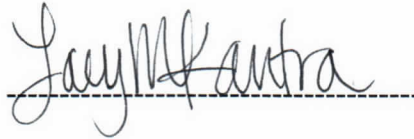


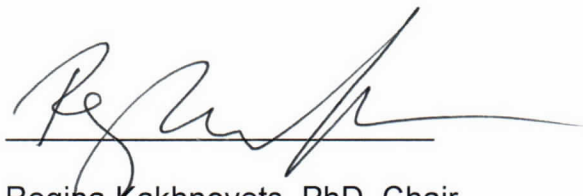
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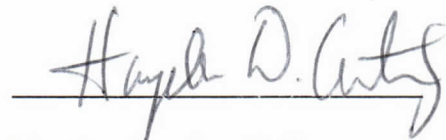


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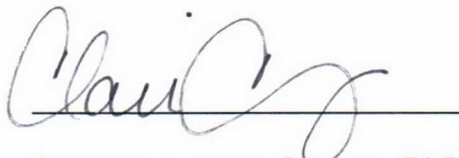
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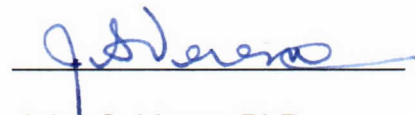
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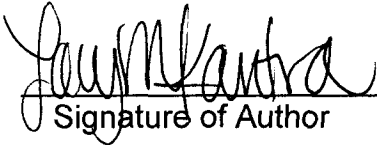
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INTERNET USAGE AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

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Internet Usage and Relationship Satisfaction

by

Lacy Kantra

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Auburn University Montgomery
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Psychology

Montgomery, Alabama
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[Internet, Relationship Satisfaction, Joint Leisure]

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the internet behaviors of individuals in committed relationships and their subsequent relationship satisfaction. Participants ($N = 395$) were recruited from Auburn University at Montgomery ($n = 156$) and through online forums ($n = 234$). Each participant filled out a survey with the IAT (Internet Addiction Test), MRQ (Multidimensional Relationship Questionnaire), and a measure made for this study that detailed the internet behavior of the individual. Findings indicate that individuals with higher levels of internet addiction also reveal feeling relationship anxiety and arguing about internet usage. Joint internet usage was also positively related to several dimensions of relationship satisfaction.

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With my deepest gratitude for my family, friends, teachers, and mentors, who have been encouraging and supportive throughout this entire process. You all mean the world to me.

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Review of Literature

I. Introduction

In the past few years, internet usage has skyrocketed. The world has become much more technological, from how people get information to how they communicate. The internet can now take the place of an address book, mail, newspapers, gaming consoles, and many other things. Because of the internet, distance no longer hinders communication. People can use the internet to instantly communicate with other people, whether they are in another room or in another country. This technology, however, comes with its downfalls. Some people use the internet problematically, letting it negatively affect school or job performance, sleep schedules, household chores, and interpersonal relationships (Kraut et al, 1998; Anderson, 2001; Welsh, 1999; Milani, Osualdella, & Blasio, 2009). This problematic internet use spiked the interest of Young (2004), who was the first to begin referring to it as internet addiction. While the negative consequences of Internet Addiction have been well-researched, there have been fewer studies on the exact number of hours or type of internet usage that begins to correlate with negative effects. This research study looks into the various types of internet usage and what level begins to negatively correlate with the user's dating relationship and intimacy.

II. Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction can be difficult to pinpoint. It refers to the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors within the dating relationship. These feelings, thoughts, and behaviors interact in a complex way to form an overall quality for a

specific relationship. High relationship satisfaction is a major part of general life satisfaction (Kim & McKenry, 2002), so it is important to examine. Looking at all of the aspects of how a relationship functions is a vital component of understanding relationships as a whole. One measure that is used to empirically measure relationship satisfaction is the Multidimensional Relationship Questionnaire (MRQ) developed by Snell in 1996. The MRQ uses a five point Likert scale for each of the 60 questions, ranging from “not at all characteristic of me” to “very characteristic of me.” Participants answer the question based on their relationship with their current partner, and it is scored on the 12 subscales which measure different subcategories of intimacy. The first, relationship esteem, evaluates the extent to which people feel confident about their intimate relationships and feel like they are an adequate romantic partner. The second measures relationship preoccupation, or the tendency to become obsessed with the intimacy of the dyadic relationship. Internal relationship control refers to the control people feel like they have over what occurs in their relationships. Relationship consciousness involves an awareness of the nature of the couple’s relationship. Relationship motivation measures a person’s drive to engage in intimate activities with their partner. The next subcategory, relationship anxiety, refers to the feelings of tension and discomfort a person may have about his or her dyadic relationship. Relationship assertiveness is associated with how decisive and self-reliant a person is about the pursuit of his or her intimate relations. Relationship depression involves the negativity associated with the relationship. The next factor, external relationship control refers to how much of a

person's experience (in a relationship) he or she feels is out of their control and controlled by external circumstances. Relationship monitoring looks at the image of the relationship that the person is trying to present to the world. The final subcategory, relationship satisfaction, involves people's assessment of the status of their intimacy needs. Research indicates that the MRQ has high internal and test-retest reliability, and it has been compared to the Relationship Satisfaction Scale (RSS), which employs seven questions on a five point Likert scale from low satisfaction to high satisfaction (Hendrick, 1988). Several studies have been done with the MRQ, including one by Altin and Terzi in 2010, which examined mediator roles between attachment styles and depressive symptoms in intimate relationships. The MRQ was used to measure the intimate relationship orientations. In a study in 2008, Good and Sanchez used the MRQ to measure relationship motivation in a study about male stereotypes. This study will use the MRQ to assess the relationships of the participants, which will be used to compare to the level and kinds of internet usage they engage in.

III. Internet Usage Research

The internet is a rapidly growing phenomenon. According to the Pew Research Center (2010), 93% of teens ages 12-17 and 95% of young adults ages 18-29 get online. Seventy-nine percent of all adults over 18 use the internet. This is a monumental increase considering the leap from 46% of adults who used the internet in March of 2000. With this dramatic surge in internet usage comes a variety of new research areas, including new benefits as well as problems. Before going over some of the potential problems of high internet

usage, it is important to look at how an average person uses the internet every day.

Anderson (2001) commissioned faculty members from eight different colleges to administer a survey to their classes about internet usage. The survey was sent to each of the faculty members, including standardized administration procedures and guidelines. It contained questions, adapted from clinical experience and research in the area, about students' internet usage, demographics, life experiences, and their perceptions of the consequences of the usage. For this study, "internet usage" was operationally defined as time *voluntarily* spent on the internet engaging in activities such as sending or receiving email or playing interactive games. This means that internet usage required for school and work was excluded. Of the 1,302 usable surveys, Anderson found that 72% of the college students were internet users and the typical student spends about 100 minutes on the computer per day. Roughly 6% of the respondents reported that they spend upwards of 400 minutes per day online, and 9.8% of them fit the study's criteria for internet dependence (a positive answer to three of the seven questions). Compared to other college students who did not fit the study's criteria for dependence, these students reported more negative effects from their internet usage, including trouble with their academic work, meeting new people, and disrupted sleep patterns. Limitations of this study include that "internet dependence" was defined by answering positively to at least three of the seven questions, and was therefore

not a generalizable definition. Another limitation lies in the fact that the survey used for the study was not validated.

One study, the HomeNet project (Kraut et al, 1998), received considerable media attention. Using data on 169 people in 73 families from different income ranges, the HomeNet project showed a correlation between higher internet usage and less communication between families. It found that internet usage was associated with negative outcomes such as increases in depression and loneliness. However, other studies, including a follow-up study by Kraut (2000), found the opposite to be true and showed internet use in a positive light, linking it to computer literacy and slightly increased academic performance. Howard et al. (2001) concluded that the internet allows people to stay in touch with family and friends and, in many cases, extend their social networks. A sizable majority of those in his study who sent email messages to relatives said it increased the level of communication between them and their family and friends. Chesley (2005) says that "results suggest that persistent communications use rather than computer use is significantly linked to increased distress and decreased family satisfaction as well as increases in negative work-to-family or family-to-work spillover in individuals" (p. 1243). Therefore it may be the communication aspect of the internet instead of just general internet use that cuts into family time and correlates with relationship dissatisfaction.

A. General Internet Usage versus Internet Addiction

While some studies have found that internet usage has positive effects on people (Kraut, 2000), it can become excessive. At some point, the problems

associated with high usage negate the benefits of the internet. Excessive usage of the internet is related to lower academic performance, difficulty in maintaining interpersonal relationships, developing sleep problems, and reducing everyday activities (Welsh, 1999). While there is no listing of internet addiction in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (4th ed., text rev.; 2000), internet addiction was introduced as a disorder at an annual meeting of the American Psychological Association in 1996. Young (2004) regards it as much like pathological gambling in that it is an impulse-control disorder which does not involve an intoxicant (p. 404). She created a set of criteria to define Internet addiction, including questions about preoccupation with the internet, need to use it for increasing amounts of time, lack of control over internet use, mood changes, lying or concealing the extent of internet usage, and using the internet to escape. The list includes only one question regarding relationship satisfaction ("Have you jeopardized or risked the loss of a significant relationship, job, educational, or career opportunity because of the Internet?"). The Internet Addiction Test (IAT), also developed by Young, measures six factors that have been shown to be associated with compulsive internet use: salience (choosing the internet over going out with others), excess use (staying online longer than intended or hiding internet use), neglecting work (suffering of job performance), anticipation (how often there is anticipation of next occasion of internet usage), lack of self control (failed attempts to control usage), and neglecting social life (preferring the excitement of the internet over real life relationships). Scherer

(1997) found that 13% of college aged internet users fit the criteria for internet dependence.

A study of Italian adolescents found that 36.7% of the sample showed signs of problematic internet use (PIU) (Milani, Osualdella, & Blasio, 2009). PIU is marked by a score higher than fifty on the Internet Addiction Test (IAT). The study also found that PIU was negatively correlated with quality of interpersonal relationships. However, instead of looking at how internet usage is related to their interpersonal relationships, this study looked at how relationships may affect internet usage. It states that the problem may actually start within the social arena, and that the negative relationships lead to problematic internet usage. This is an interesting switch of perspective, and it leads toward an understanding that these domains can just correlate without one directly causing the other.

Kerkhof (2008) did a study of 199 newlywed couples in which he examined the frequency of internet usage and their relationship quality. He found that couples who use the internet frequently and compulsively also reported several indicators of low relationship quality. He found that both husbands and wives experience lower levels of intimacy and passion, and that the females' use of the internet was related to loneliness in their husbands. Conversely, Kerkhof hinted that the personality traits and characteristics which cause someone to use the internet compulsively in the first place can actually lead to the lack of communication. He measured neuroticism and depression, and found that these traits were positively correlated with compulsive internet use. Therefore, in this case, it could have been the underlying traits of those who use the internet that

ended up hurting the relationship versus the internet usage itself. Kerkhof suggested follow-up studies in which the kind of internet usage that partners engage in should be measured as well as if the time on the internet is spent together.

B. Different Types of Use

There are several different areas of interest when discussing the internet. Many people use the internet only for business, whereas some people may use it to play games for hours on end. With the rise of the internet, there is an ease of communication, access to quick entertainment, and faster methods of computation and writing. These benefits have spread to many different types of internet usage. Computer-mediated communication, pornography, the use of social networking sites, online gaming, and online shopping are five of the main types of internet usage widely practiced by people around the world. The following sections will discuss more extensively these subjects and the correlations they present with society and aspects of daily life.

1. Computer-Mediated Communication

Computer-mediated communication has become increasingly popular over the last few years. With the increased popularity, the need for research in these areas has increased. A new journal, called *Cyberpsychology and Behavior*, has been developed to study how the Internet is affecting our behavior and society as a whole. Over one third (39.3%) of participants in one study said that they would discuss sensitive topics such as relationship issues or family problems with people online that they would not discuss with their partner (Cole & Griffiths,

2007). This can cause a gap in communication between the partners. Sproull and Kiesler (1985) considered computer-mediated communication to be a communication experience lacking normal social cues, which can provide a greater feeling of anonymity.

Because of this anonymity, developing relationships over the computer helps people to overcome their shyness. McKenna et al. (2002) performed a laboratory study where previously unacquainted males and females met for the first time either face to face or through an internet chat room. They found that, even if it was the same partner both times, the people liked one another better when they met through the internet. The anonymity that the internet provided allowed the people to make a deeper connection more quickly. Morahan-Martin and Schumacher (2003) surveyed 277 undergraduate internet users on their levels of loneliness. They concluded that people who were already more lonely were more likely to use the internet to modulate their negative moods, and also to report that their internet use was causing disturbance in their everyday lives. They also reported much higher likelihood to use the internet for emotional support and making internet friends instead of real life friends.

A study by Turkle in 1995 demonstrated the idea that people may attempt to recreate their sense of self over the internet, perhaps trying to be more outgoing, more spontaneous or fun-loving, less shy, or generally more socially skilled. This recreated sense of self is more satisfying to them, and they therefore withdrew from the real world in favor of virtual reality. Bargh and McKenna (2004) concluded that the internet can be like a transformation, allowing the user to

become, in a sense, whoever he or she wants to be. This encourages self-expression on a deeper level. Even though the user may not meet virtual friends face to face, it creates a sense of unity based on shared values and beliefs. One concern of this study is that since internet communication is so limited, things can be left more up to interpretation and therefore be misunderstood.

2. Pornography

With the dramatic increase of internet usage, the use of pornography has also risen. Pornography is defined as “sexual content (visual, auditory, or written)... for the purpose of sexual arousal and stimulation” (Schneider, 2000, p. 250). In it lies a way for people to satisfy their sexual urges safely and in the privacy of their own home. However, pornography can cause strains in relationship satisfaction as well. A study by Zitzman and Butler (2009) examined the effect of pornography on attachment trust in relationships. Fourteen women in therapy for their partner’s pornography use were interviewed. The interviews were analyzed by factor, and it was found that pornography use goes hand in hand with a lack of trust. Global mistrust was positively correlated with the amount of pornography usage, which was related to a decrease in the satisfaction of the relationship. A limitation of this study is that the small sample, including only women in individual therapy, does not make it completely generalizable.

Paul and Shim (2008) researched not only the correlation between pornography and relationship satisfaction, but looked into why people use pornography in the first place and analyzed the role of gender. Undergraduate

students ($N=321$) took part in the study, responding to an online questionnaire about pornography usage and motivation. They found that pornography use can be broken down into four distinct categories: relationship, mood management, habitual use, and fantasy. Relationship motivation involved using pornography to actually become closer socially, mood management referred to using pornography for entertainment and to raise mood, habitual use involved using it out of habit, and fantasy involved using pornography to fuel sexual fantasies and pretend as if they are taking part in the action on screen. Males showed stronger motivations than females in all four categories, and were more likely to seek out pornography than women. The study found that high levels of pornography consumption is associated with greater difficulty in maintaining social and intimate relationships. Therefore, pornography could threaten the intimacy between a couple, or, using the relationship motivation, could bring a couple closer. Much of it depends on if the pornography is used individually or in a couple. This study is limited by the volunteer bias.

3. Social Networking Sites

Social networking websites have surged in popularity in concurrence with internet usage. Websites such as Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, and Second Life have emerged, which include personal profiles with basic information about the person. To examine this phenomenon, Taylor, McMinn, Bufford, and Chang (2010) conducted a study about therapists and the level of self-disclosure they allowed on social networking sites. Psychologists and doctoral students ($N=929$) were contacted through email and asked to complete an online survey discussing

their usage of social networking sites and other online activities. The majority of the participants (77%) reported that they had a profile on at least one of the social networking sites, though most of them did at least have the forethought to maintain a stricter level of privacy than is normally required. Approximately 86% of people under thirty years of age reported maintaining a profile on at least one site. The personal snapshot quality that this profile provides allows the person to work on positive impression management. By being reflected from one web page, the person has more control over how he or she appears to the world. This "online identity" can become time-consuming to keep up, whether it includes commenting on another person's personal profile or updating statuses about what is going on the person's life. This other identity can cause strain in relationships, since it does not go along with the significant other's idea of the person. The amount of self-disclosure on social networking sites is a personal choice, but can have significant consequences.

4. Online Gaming Research

In recent years, online gaming has become the largest entertainment medium in the world (Ryan, et al, 2006). Many people gather together in a virtual world and play make-believe. They are represented by avatars (three-dimensional lifelike cartoon characters) that carry out actions in the game. These virtual actions sometimes take the place of real life interactions, and people can become more devoted to the game than they are to their lives (Allison, Von Wahlde, Shockley, & Gabbard, 2006). People in a study by Yee (2006) who identified themselves as gamers played, on average, for 22.71 hours per week,

with a median of 20 hours per week. Ng and Wiemer-Hastings (2005) found that 83% of those who played Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs) reported playing for at least 7 hours per week. This study also revealed a dangerous pattern of communication: People who played MMORPGs online reported being happier with themselves and their communication while in the game. They also reported that things like real life relationships and responsibilities felt less important while they were playing.

Padilla-Walker, Nelson, Carroll, and Jensen (2009) found that, in their study of unmarried adults, relationship quality with parents and friends was negatively correlated with the frequency of time spent gaming. A decreased sense of self-worth as well as a propensity toward drug and alcohol use were also correlated with time spent gaming. These behaviors could contribute to the relationship dissatisfaction as well. Young (1998) found that marriages, dating relationships, parental relationships, and friendships were disrupted by the amount of internet usage that is required to be a high level player in an MMORPG. Most of the disruptions occurred because of the time spent online versus interacting with the real world.

5. Online Shopping

The internet makes it easy to buy things without even leaving one's home. People can order books, groceries, clothes, and almost anything else they want with just the click of a button. The ease of online shopping is convenient, but can also lead to impulse spending, which can create a deficit in a couple's finances.

A lack of finances can be troublesome for individuals, but can also cause significant stress in a relationship. Koutstaal (1998) examined the relationship between financial issues and marital satisfaction. One hundred four couples took part in the study, which used self-report measures to examine financial and marital satisfaction. An examination of the results showed a correlation between financial satisfaction and positive marital satisfaction. When the couple was going through a conflict with their finances, their marital satisfaction was lower. A limitation of this study is the convenience sample of couples from a conservative Protestant church, which makes the study less generalizable to the general population. Another related study looked closely at couples in negative financial circumstances (Kendal, 2003). The study did not indicate that financial disturbances cause marital dysfunction, but that they can exacerbate preexisting problems within the relationship.

Another way in which the internet can affect relationships is involved in the perceptions and personalities of online shoppers. A survey with a list of descriptors was given to 326 undergraduates concerning the social perceptions of online shoppers. They were to rate online shoppers on several different personality traits. The research showed that students perceived those who shopped online as more lazy and less worried about security (Lammers, Curren, Cours, & Lammers, 2003). If the person feels as if his or her partner is lazy, it could reflect badly on the couple's relationship satisfaction. Another study done by Wu and Chang in 2007 relates to the presence of a "risk attitude" in those who shop online. This risk attitude can lead the person to be more rash, making

decisions without fully considering the consequences. These attitudes and perceptions could skew feelings regarding significant other relationships. Also, if significant others show a “risk attitude,” they may be more likely to risk important things in their relationships.

IV. Relationship Quality and Internet Usage

The dramatic change in the way people live since the invention of the internet has likely caused many changes in people's everyday lives. Many studies have been done correlating internet addiction to a lower relationship satisfaction level. Reasons for this negative correlation may include the idea that when a person is not with his or her partner, the person is taking away from quality time that could be spent together. This displacement could cause a disruption or a feeling of decreased intimacy. The next section will go over how joint leisure and displacement theory may be correlated with lower relationship satisfaction.

A. Joint Leisure and Relationship Satisfaction

Many couples engage in something called “joint leisure,” where they spend time together doing something fun or relaxing. Johnson, Zabriskie, and Hill (2006) found that the “best predictor of marital satisfaction was leisure satisfaction” (p. 83). This justifies looking into joint leisure as well as internet usage. The negative effects may be magnified for couples who use the internet for disproportionate amounts of time. Similarly, using the internet together or talking about time spent on the internet could decrease the negative effects or even promote a sense of togetherness. Cole and Griffiths (2007) found that

20.3% of people who played online games believed that it had a negative effect on their relationships with people who did not play. This suggests that the time spent together could be an important part of whether internet usage is detrimental to relationship quality.

Conversely, a study by Crawford, Houts, Huston, and George (2002) that consisted of 117 married couples suggested that perhaps researchers have been too hasty in making such a strong connection between relationship satisfaction and joint leisure. They point out that while engaging in activities that both members of the dyad enjoy can be beneficial to the relationship by increasing intimacy, there is more to the story. Sometimes couples participate in joint leisure, but only one of them actually likes what he or she is doing. The study suggested that pursuing activities that the husband, but not the wife, enjoyed can actually cause a great reduction in the satisfaction of the relationship. Therefore, it is important that both members of a dyad enjoy the activity they are taking part in together. It is not simply the time spent together, but the enjoyment they receive from the activity.

B. Displacement Theory

One major way in which internet usage, especially compulsive internet usage, shows a negative correlation with relationships is that excessive or compulsive internet use may take away attention or time that could be spent together (Kerkhof, 2008). Nie and Hillygus (2002) found that internet usage at home has a strong negative impact on the time spent with friends and family as well as time spent in social situations, but that occupational internet usage has

no such effect. Similarly, internet usage during the weekends is correlated with more problems than usage during the weekdays. These findings support a displacement theory of internet use – basically, time spent online competes with actual social activities. People who are spending time online instead of with their romantic partner are losing valuable face to face time. Nie (2001) said that “time is a limited commodity, so hours spent on the internet must come at a cost to other activities. (p. 425)” Therefore, the time that partners spend on the internet takes away from their time spent with one another. The current study will look at the displacement theory by asking questions about if the person spends time online with the partner or separately and if he or she wishes they, as a couple, would spend more time together.

Purpose and Hypotheses

The current findings stressed the need for more in depth research regarding the type of internet use and the point at which it begins to cause relationship dissatisfaction. There are studies that show that high and compulsive internet use is correlated with negative effects on relationships, and there are also studies about specific types of use that contribute (i.e. pornography). This study, however, looked at relationships and types of use as a whole for the same people to see what activities contribute most to discord in interpersonal relationships. Also, joint internet usage was measured to see if it was correlated with overall relationship satisfaction.

The hypotheses for the current study include the following:

- (a) Internet addiction (as defined by the IAT) will be negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction.
 1. Specifically, higher levels of internet addiction will correlate with lower relationship esteem and relationship satisfaction. People who use the internet frequently will be less happy with themselves and their relationships.
 2. Also, higher levels of internet addiction will correlate with higher relationship depression and relationship anxiety. People who feel generally depressed or anxious will turn to the internet, and conversely, people who use the internet frequently will become more anxious and depressed.

- (b) People who report higher rates of arguing about internet usage will have a lower score on the relationship satisfaction subscale of the MRQ.
- (c) People who report that internet use has a positive effect on their relationships will show a positive correlation on the MRQ.
- (d) People who report a significant discrepancy between their partners and their internet usage will have a lower relationship satisfaction score.
1. Higher reported joint usage will be positively correlated with relationship esteem, internal relationship control, and relationship satisfaction. (Paul and Shim (2008) found that the use of pornography correlated with positive effects when used in a joint setting.)
 2. Higher reported separate usage will be positively correlated with relationship anxiety, relationship depression, and external relationship control. People will be more depressed and lonely if they spend more time on the internet and less time with their partners.
 3. In surveys that indicate a higher internet usage for the partner, internal relationship control will be lower. People whose partners use the internet frequently will feel as if their relationships are not under their control.

(e) Decreased relationship satisfaction will be apparent in couples who use the internet very frequently. Specifically:

1. Use of pornography separate from the partner will be negatively correlated with relationship esteem (Zitzman and Butler, 2009).
2. Use of internet for school or work purposes or to send and receive email will be less correlated with negative effects (Howard et al, 2001).

Method

Participants

All participants in this study were required to be in a committed relationship. The study included 395 participants (95 males and 300 females). Participants were mostly heterosexual (91.9%) and Caucasian (70.1%) (See Table 1). Two separate samples were used in this study. The first sample (Group A) ($n = 156$) included undergraduates from Auburn University at Montgomery. Participants were compensated with required research credit (for psychology introduction courses). The second sample (Group B) ($n = 234$) was recruited through various online forums, including www.mmorpg.com, www.forum.neverendless-wow.com, <http://forums.zynga.com/>, <http://messages.yahoo.com/>, www.circleofmoms.com, and www.mmorpgfocus.com/forum/. Site administrators were contacted through email prior to the posting of the recruitment flyer with the information to be contained in the flyer and a request to put it up on the website (Appendix 1a). Upon receiving permission from the site administrator, the flyer was put up in the most appropriate location in the forum (Appendix 1b). The second sample in this study was included in an attempt to represent the individuals with higher levels of internet usage. Participants in Group B were not paid and had no incentive to complete the survey. Thus, many of the participants did not answer every question before exiting; Group B had only a 48.4% completion rate ($n = 121$). However, results from the survey were analyzed by question, so even incomplete surveys could be used for several of the correlations. There was a significant difference between age in Group A ($M = 21.77$ years, $SD = 5.93$) and Group B

($M = 31.06$ years, $SD = 11.66$); $t(365.902) = -10.342$, $p < .01$. Further, the difference between the average income of Group A ($M = \$43,295$, $SD = 36,727$) and Group B ($M = \$59,330$, $SD = 70,466$) was significant; $t(295.773) = -2.591$; $p = .01$. The difference in average relationship length was also significant when comparing Group A ($M = 37.97$ months, $SD = 39.96$) with Group B ($M = 80.62$ months, $SD = 97.12$); $t(277.933) = -6.916$; $p < .01$. Finally, there was a significant difference between IAT scores of Group A ($M = 50.26$, $SD = 26.41$) and Group B ($M = 41.03$, $SD = 16.53$); $t(252.248) = 3.549$; $p < .01$. Due to the significant differences between the demographics and scores of the samples, groups were analyzed separately after an analysis together.

Measures

The following measures were used: (a) the 60-item Multidimensional Relationship Questionnaire (MRQ), which measures the individual's level of relationship satisfaction; (b) the 20-item Internet Addiction Test (IAT), used to assess internet addiction; (c) an internet usage measure made for this study, which measures different types of internet use, time spent, and interactions between internet usage and relationship satisfaction; and (d) basic demographic questions.

MRQ. The Multidimensional Relationship Questionnaire (MRQ) was developed by Snell in 1996 to measure relationship satisfaction. Research indicates that the MRQ has high test-retest reliability (.80), and has a Cronbach's alpha of .81. The MRQ is similar to the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS), with correlation coefficients between -.41 and .69 (Buyuksahin, 2005).

The MRQ uses a set of 60 questions, each set on a 5-point Likert scale with responses ranging from “not at all characteristic of me” to “very characteristic of me.” Participants answer the questions based on their relationship with their current partner. Some items, designated on the measure with an (R), are reverse scored. Finally, they are summed for each of the 12 subscales so that higher scores show a high level of that certain subscale.

IAT. The Internet Addiction Test (IAT) was developed by Young in 2004 to measure the new phenomenon of internet addiction. It contains 20 items scored on a 5-point Likert scale with options ranging from 1 (Rarely) to 5 (Always). Items that do not apply to the participant are marked with a no score option. The IAT uses a scale of 20 to 100, with higher scores revealing higher levels of addiction to the internet. Questions on the IAT discuss salience, excessive use, neglecting work, anticipation, lack of control, and neglecting social life. These six factors were all significantly correlated with one another, with correlations (Pearson's r) ranging from $r = .62$ to $r = .226$ (Widyanto & McMurrin, 2004).

Internet Usage Measure. Additional questions assessing internet usage were included on the survey (See Appendix 1f). There are 34 questions, which asked about different types of internet usage (e.g. pornography, internet shopping, school/work activities, etc.). People also rated how often they spend time online with their partner instead of separately, as well as their perceptions of how internet usage affects their relationship. Questions were answered either by entering a numerical value for hours (e.g. When not at school or work, how many hours per day do you use the internet? _____) or using a 5-point Likert scale

to identify how much a statement applies to them (e.g. My partner and I argue about **my** internet usage.).

Demographic Information. Participants also answered demographic questions about age, race, gender, sexual orientation, income, type of relationship, and length of relationship.

Procedure

A survey was put together using the SurveyMonkey survey software found on the website www.surveymonkey.com. The students recruited in undergraduate classes at Auburn University Montgomery (Group A) each set up an appointment in the computer lab, where a researcher directed them to the survey. The participants recruited from the internet (Group B) were given the link to the survey directly. A consent to participate was provided and clicking on the survey indicated agreement to the terms of consent. The data was recorded anonymously, and no identifying information about the person specifically is retrievable.

The data was collected and organized using SurveyMonkey.com. After that, the quantitative data collected from the survey was uploaded into the SPSS statistical analysis program. A screening of the data collected was performed, and faulty data was removed. Next, a set of descriptive statistics was generated to show the general characteristics of the research sample.

The following correlations were hypothesized to occur within our data:

A. A high score on the IAT will be correlated with the scores of some subscales on the MRQ. Specifically,

A higher IAT score will be negatively correlated with lower relationship esteem and relationship satisfaction.

A higher IAT score will be positively correlated with relationship depression and relationship anxiety.

- A. A high score on the IAT will be positively correlated with reported relationship problems (e.g. arguing) from the Internet Usage Measure.
- B. Higher reported joint usage of the internet will be positively correlated with some subscales on the MRQ, including relationship esteem, internal relationship control, and relationship satisfaction.
- C. Higher reported separate usage of the internet will be positively correlated with some subscales on the MRQ, including relationship anxiety, relationship depression, and external relationship control.

Finally, the data was used to generate multiple correlational coefficients and t-tests for the independent and dependent variables.

Results

Internet Addiction and Relationship Satisfaction

The initial goal of this study was to determine the associations between levels of internet usage and relationship satisfaction. The study hypothesized that scores on the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) would be negatively correlated with relationship esteem and relationship satisfaction (as measured by the MRQ) (See Table 2). This hypothesis was not supported for relationship esteem ($r = -.050$, *ns*) or for relationship satisfaction ($r = -.034$, *ns*). The study also hypothesized that IAT score would be positively correlated with relationship depression and relationship anxiety (as measured by the MRQ). Results indicate that IAT score was not correlated with relationship depression ($r = .055$, *ns*), but, as predicted, was positively correlated with relationship anxiety ($r = .157$, $p = .010$). As seen in Table 3, when the results are viewed only for Group A (the sample collected from undergraduates at Auburn University at Montgomery) ($n = 156$), results indicate that IAT score is not significantly correlated with relationship esteem ($r = .041$, *ns*), relationship satisfaction ($r = .021$, *ns*), relationship depression ($r = .034$, *ns*), or relationship anxiety ($r = .113$, *ns*). In Group B (the sample collected from forums on the internet) ($n = 234$), however, results are consistent with the hypothesis, and indicate that IAT score is negatively correlated with both relationship esteem ($r = -.210$, $p = .018$) and relationship satisfaction ($r = -.237$, $p = .008$). While IAT score is not significantly correlated with relationship depression ($r = .153$, *ns*), it is positively correlated with relationship anxiety ($r = .243$, $p = .007$).

Internet Addiction and Arguing or Negative Relationship Effects

The study also hypothesized that IAT score would be positively correlated with reported relationship problems (e.g. arguing) from the Internet Usage Measure (See Table 4). As predicted, results indicate that scores on the IAT were positively correlated with reported arguing about personal internet use ($r = .189, p = .002$) and arguing about internet use of the respondent's significant other ($r = .140, p = .021$). Also consistent with the study's hypothesis, IAT scores were also positively correlated with reported negative effects of personal internet use ($r = .201, p = .001$). However, the hypothesis was not supported when comparing IAT scores with reported negative effects of the partner's internet use ($r = .102, ns$). Table 5 shows results from this hypothesis broken down by sample. Contrary to hypotheses, in Group A, results show no significant correlations between IAT score and arguing about personal internet use ($r = .100, ns$), arguing about internet use of the respondent's significant other ($r = .129, ns$), or reported negative effects of personal internet use ($r = .127, ns$) or internet use of the partner ($r = .096, ns$). However, in Group B, IAT score was positively correlated with arguing about personal internet use ($r = .411, p < .01$) and reported negative effects of personal internet use ($r = .435, p < .01$). It was not significantly correlated with arguing about internet use of the respondent's significant other ($r = .179, ns$) or reported negative effects of internet use of the partner ($r = .101, ns$).

Joint Internet Usage

This study also hypothesized that reported joint usage of the internet would be positively correlated with some subscales on the MRQ, including relationship esteem, internal relationship control, and relationship satisfaction (See Table 6). The hypothesis was supported for joint usage and relationship esteem ($r = .255$, $p < .01$) and relationship satisfaction ($r = .186$, $p = .001$). However, it was not supported for joint usage and internal relationship control ($r = .100$, *ns*). Table 7 displays the results from this hypothesis broken down by sample. In Group A, joint internet usage was positively correlated with relationship esteem ($r = .218$, $p = .007$). It was not significantly correlated with internal relationship control ($r = .112$, *ns*) or relationship satisfaction ($r = .153$, *ns*). In Group B, joint internet usage was positively correlated with relationship esteem ($r = .295$, $p = .001$) and relationship satisfaction ($r = .245$, $p = .007$), but not significantly correlated with internal relationship control ($r = .095$, *ns*).

Separate Internet Use

The last hypothesis of the study conjectured that reported separate usage of the internet would be positively correlated with some subscales on the MRQ, including relationship anxiety, relationship depression, and external relationship control (See Table 8). Results indicate that levels of separate internet usage were positively correlated with relationship anxiety ($r = .135$, $p = .026$), but not with relationship depression ($r = .102$, *ns*) or external relationship control ($r = .012$, *ns*). When cases examined by groups (See Table 9), separate internet

usage was not significantly correlated with relationship anxiety, relationship depression, or external relationship control in either sample.

Gender Differences in Internet Use and Relationships

Data was also analyzed by gender. These results should be interpreted with caution due to the difference in the number of males ($n = 95$) and females ($n = 300$), but did display some significant correlations. The results indicate that IAT scores were positively correlated with both relationship depression ($r = .245, p = .047$) and relationship anxiety ($r = .384, p = .001$) in males, but correlations in females between IAT score and relationship depression and relationship anxiety were not significant (See Table 10). Also, as seen in Table 11, males who had higher IAT scores also indicated arguing about their personal internet usage ($r = .330, p = .007$). There were no significant correlations between IAT scores and arguing about internet usage of the partner ($r = -.005, ns$) or reported negative effects of personal internet usage ($r = .140, ns$) or the partner's use ($r = -.086, ns$). In females, IAT score was positively correlated with arguing about their partners' internet usage ($r = .181, p = .010$), but not arguing about personal internet usage ($r = .137, ns$). Also IAT score was positively correlated with reported negative relationship effects from their personal internet use ($r = .227, p = .001$) as well as their partners' use ($r = .166, p = .018$). When broken down by gender (See Table 12), joint usage was significantly correlated with relationship satisfaction ($r = .316, p = .012$) in males, but not with relationship esteem ($r = .191, ns$) or internal relationship control ($r = .133, ns$). In females, joint usage was correlated with relationship esteem ($r = .280, p < .01$) and relationship

satisfaction ($r = .158, p = .021$), but not internal relationship control ($r = .116, ns$).

It is noted that separate internet usage had a significant positive correspondence with relationship anxiety ($r = .250, p = .044$) in males. In females, no significant correlations occurred between separate usage and scores on the MRQ.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine if high levels of internet use and internet addiction would be negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction or positively correlated with reported negative relationship effects. An additional purpose of the current study was to determine if joint internet usage had a positive correlation with relationship satisfaction. Conversely, the reported negative effects of separate internet usage were measured.

Internet Use and Relationships

When the data was pooled and analyzed as a group, several significant correlations occurred. People who endorsed higher levels of internet addiction reported being more anxious in their relationships. It is unclear whether the relationship anxiety occurred before or after the internet addiction. Either could be fuel for the other. Kerkhof studied the underlying traits of individuals who use the internet, and he suggested that it is impossible to tell whether the high internet use caused an increase in negative relationship factors or whether people who had relationship problems used the internet as comfort (2008). Either way, the two are correlated. Further studies should be done in an attempt to measure people's personality traits compared to their levels of internet usage.

The study also found that higher levels of internet addiction were coupled with a higher frequency of arguing about personal internet use and that of the person's partner. This could stem from the negative relationship factors that go along with internet addiction. People who have higher levels of internet addiction are more anxious in their relationships, and in turn, they may argue more

consistently because of insecurity. The results of the current study also indicated that people who expressed an increased level of internet addiction were also more likely to report that their internet use negatively affected their relationships. Excessive usage of the internet is related to lower work and academic performance, difficulty in interpersonal relationships, and sleep problems (Welsh, 1999). A decreased sense of self-worth as well as a propensity toward drug and alcohol use are also correlated with time spent gaming (Padilla-Walker, Nelson, Carroll, & Jensen, 2009). Past research also indicates that a high level of internet use is correlated with depression and loneliness (Kraut et al, 1998). If people feel consistently unhappy in life or have difficulties in other areas such as work or sleep, they are more likely to feel unhappy with their relationships, since relationship quality is an indicator of overall life satisfaction (Kim & McKenry, 2002).

Joint internet use was examined and compared to peoples' perceptions of their control over their relationships as well as their relationship satisfaction and esteem. Results indicated that people who used the internet more often together as a couple did not perceive themselves as having more control in their relationships. However, higher reported joint usage was correlated with higher relationship satisfaction and esteem. People who used the internet together as a couple indicated having happier and more fulfilling relationships. Perhaps this is because people who spend time together on the internet spend less time separately. Time spent separately takes away from the joint leisure time that couples crave and creates more of a space between them (Nie, 2001).

The final hypothesis of the study discussed whether separate use of the internet was correlated with any negative relationship effects. Results show that more time spent separately on the internet is correlated with increased relationship anxiety in the partner. Basically, people's feelings of tension and discomfort regarding the intimate aspects of their relationships increase concurrently with separate use of the internet. Again, it is impossible to tell which of the two came first. Because of the anonymity that the internet provides, people may attempt to recreate their sense of self (Turkle, 1995). This recreated self may cause anxiety within the person's intimate relationship when real life does not match the improved internet identity. Therefore, people who are anxious could be using the internet as an escape from the stresses of real life. This correlation could occur for several reasons. First, many people who use the internet report that they would discuss sensitive topics with people online that they would not discuss with their partner (Cole & Griffiths, 2007). Also, people who are already lonely are more likely to use the internet to modulate their negative moods (Morahan-Martin & Schumacher, 2003). Since those people are turning to the internet instead of their partner, it could create a communication divide between partners that is troubling to them. Also, people who are lonely may inherently have more anxiety regarding their relationships.

Results by Sample

Several other notable results were indicated when data was analyzed separately by sample. Group A's results were less significant. This could be due to its limited sample pool of undergraduates at a small university. There are also

other confounding factors that could have contributed, including being a student or desire to accurately complete the survey. The undergraduates may have hurriedly answered the questions to the survey in order to finish more quickly. Group B most likely shows a significant self-selection bias due to the high drop-out rate. Only 48.4% of people online fully completed the survey. The people who dropped out may have represented traits or attitudes that are not present in the completed sample. For example, people who use the internet frequently may have been embarrassed about being asked specific questions.

The current study found that, in Group B, as internet addiction increased, participants' relationship esteem and satisfaction decreased. Basically, as people's dependency on the internet increased, they felt less and less comfortable and happy with their relationships. This is consistent with Kerkhof's finding that couples who use the internet compulsively also reported lower levels of intimacy and passion (2008). It could be that people who have certain personality traits may tend toward negative relationships and also toward internet addiction. It is difficult to deduce which of the results came first. Depression and anxiety in relationships may cause the partner to use the internet excessively, or the constant internet use may cause negative effects in relationships. Kerkhof noted that neuroticism and depression were correlated with excessive internet use (2008).

In the internet sample, internet addiction was concurrent with arguing about personal internet use and negative effects of their own use. It was not correlated with negative effects (including arguing) regarding the partner's internet use.

Because of the higher average age of Group B, they may be more likely to accept personal responsibility for negative factors in their relationships.

Results by Gender

Finally, the results were broken down and analyzed by gender. Several different significant results occurred. First, results indicate that males who endorsed a higher level of internet addiction also felt depressed and anxious in their relationships, but females did not. Also, while males with higher internet addiction reported arguing about their personal internet use, females with higher internet addiction reported arguing about their partners' internet use. Several hypotheses could be generated as to why results turned out in the way that they did. It could be that females have more of a tendency to blame their partners. It could also occur due to the previous results that males with higher addiction feel more depressed and anxious. Someone who feels that way is most likely going to blame themselves for negative relationship effects. Since females did not note significant depression or anxiety about their internet use, they may not consider that it could negatively affect their relationships. Kerkhof did a study that found that as females' use of the internet increased, their husbands reported higher levels of loneliness (2008). This could lend to the idea that males consider internet use to be a more personal issue. Therefore when their partners use the internet excessively, it may more likely feel like a personal attack or rejection of their affections. Also, Paul and Shim found that males were more likely to seek out pornography than women. The study found that higher levels of pornography consumption were related to difficulty in maintaining social and intimate

relationships (2008). Joint internet use was correlated with relationship satisfaction in both males and females. It was also correlated with relationship esteem in females. This suggests that females who spend more time with their partners feel better about their relationships. Finally, separate internet use concurred with relationship anxiety in males but not females. There is a possibility that the way males use the internet (increased pornography) causes guilt or suspicion about their partners' usages.

Limitations

Since the Internet Usage Measure was made for this study, some of the wording may have lacked clarity or understandability. It may need to be reworked in future studies to provide additional direction. For example, time frames such as "sometimes" or "rarely" may need to be empirically defined so that answers are not simply conjectures as to the meanings of the words. Another drawback of collecting data from internet forums is the difficulty of obtaining a representative sample. The people who use the internet more frequently or who are in distressed or unhappy relationships may not choose to participate in a survey addressing those domains. It may be uncomfortable for people with high internet addiction or low relationship satisfaction to admit that to themselves. They may find their own problems distressing. Additionally, people who use the internet as a tool of escape would not want to face their real lives by answering direct questions about negative aspects. Also, as with all survey-type data collected online, there is low completion rate for the survey. This created an issue with missing data. While data could still be analyzed by question, there is a concern

that the people who did not finish the survey represented a different demographic, internet usage level, or relationship satisfaction score. This issue could be better addressed in a future survey if a reward was offered to encourage people to take the entire survey. Another limitation lies in the significant disparity between male ($n = 95$) and female ($n = 300$) participants. Finally, another limitation within this study was the use of undergraduates who were required to take part for class credit. In an attempt to finish quickly, they may have skimmed through some of the questions and not answered to the best of their abilities.

Future Directions

In the future, a broader sample should be attained with a more complete internet sample. Participants should be given an incentive to finish the entire study. It would also be beneficial for couples to answer questions as a pair in order to compare the two answers to each question. This would also allow for the investigation of the discrepancy between respondents' perceptions of their own use and their partners' use of the internet. It could allow for an interesting disparity between perception and reality, and could add another dimension to the study. It would also add to the solidity of the results by comparing both sides of a couple's answers.

Also, a future study could use a less direct measure of relationship satisfaction. The indirect measure could allow people to more accurately represent themselves. There is a possibility that people tried to present themselves in a positive light or that they were unaware and unable to accurately

measure their own tendencies in relationships. By switching up the questions to allow for a more mysterious measure, people would perhaps be more likely to think through their answers instead of simply answering in the way they feel they should.

Conclusion

Overall, the reported internet use of the respondents was correlated with several negative relationship factors. People who used the internet excessively also reported higher relationship anxiety and increased arguing. However, when partners reported using the internet together, positive correlations were shown. This suggests that joint leisure is a factor in relationship satisfaction. There were several relationship tendencies that may have occurred before excessive internet use and possibly exacerbated it. So overall, whether it is difficult to see where the negative relationship effects started, this study allows us to examine the compounding of preexisting personality traits, time spent on the internet, and gender and compare it to overall relationship satisfaction. The internet, which can be described as both vital and devastating, has long term effects that are just beginning to become known. Further research into this area will help people in the future to become more aware of the negative affects that can occur due to the phenomenon of the online world.

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Table 1

Demographics of Internet Use and Relationship Satisfaction Survey Module Respondents: Weighted Percentages

Demographics of Survey Respondent (n=395)	Weighted Percentages
Gender	
Male (n=95)	24.1%
Female (n=300)	75.9%
Race	
Asian/Asian American	3.0%
Black/African American	21.8%
Hispanic/Latino	3.0%
White/Caucasian	70.1%
Other	2.0%
Sexual Orientation	
Heterosexual	91.9%
Homosexual	3.0%
Bisexual	4.6%
Questioning	0.5%
Relationship Status	
Single	7.1%
Dating	42.3%
Living Together	14.2%
Engaged	8.1%
Married	25.6%
Other	2.8%
Sample	
AUM Sample (Group A) (n=156)	24.1%
Internet Sample (Group B) (n=234)	75.9%

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Matrix among Internet Addiction Scores and Relationship Factors

	Relationship Esteem	Relationship Satisfaction	Relationship Depression	Relationship Anxiety
Internet Addiction Score (n=280)	-.050	-.034	.055	.157**
Relationship Esteem (n=269)		.682**	-.427**	-.389**
Relationship Satisfaction (n=273)			-.654**	-.415**
Relationship Depression (n=269)				.600**

*p<.05 **p<.01

Table 3

Pearson Correlation Matrix among Internet Addiction Scores and Relationship Factors (Separated by Sample)

	Relationship Esteem	Relationship Satisfaction	Relationship Depression	Relationship Anxiety
Internet Addiction Score				
Group A (n=149)	.041	.021	.034	.113
Group B (n=131)	-.210*	-.237**	.153	.243**
Relationship Esteem				
Group A (n=146)		.623**	-.483**	-.322**
Group B (n=127)		.738**	-.789**	-.512**
Relationship Satisfaction				
Group A (n=146)			-.275**	-.250**
Group B (n=123)			-.568**	-.552**
Relationship Depression				
Group A (n=145)				.664**
Group B (n=124)				.554**

*p<.05 **p<.01

Table 4

Pearson Correlation Matrix of Reported Arguing about Internet Use or Negative Effects of Internet Use

	Argue about Personal Use	Argue about Partner's Use	Negative Effects Personal Use	Negative Effects Partner's Use
Internet Addiction Score (n=280)	.189**	.140*	.201**	.106
Argue about Personal Use (n=271)		.461**	.543**	.330**
Argue about Partner Use (n=270)			.386**	.688**
Negative Effects Personal Use (n=271)				.609**

*p<.05 **p<.01

Table 5

Pearson Correlation Matrix of Reported Arguing about Internet Use or Negative Effects of Internet Use (Separated by Sample)

	Argue about Personal Use	Argue about Partner's Use	Negative Effects Personal Use	Negative Effects Partner's Use
Internet Addiction Score				
Group A (n=149)	.100	.129	.127	.096
Group B (n=132)	.411**	.179	.435**	.101
Argue about Personal Use				
Group A (n=149)		.655**	.570**	.498**
Group B (n=122)		.163	.504**	.057
Argue about Partner Use				
Group A (n=149)			.473**	.672**
Group B (n=121)			.256**	.718**
Negative Effects Personal Use				
Group A (n=149)				.764**
Group B (n=122)				.377**

*p<.05 **p<.01

Table 6

Pearson Correlation Matrix of Joint Internet Usage and Relationship Factors

	Relationship Esteem	Internal Relationship Control	Relationship Satisfaction
Joint Internet Usage (n=283)	.255**	.100	.196**
Relationship Esteem (n=273)		.437**	.682**
Internal Relationship Control (n=272)			.264**

*p<.05 **p<.01

Table 7

*Pearson Correlation Matrix of Joint Internet Usage and Relationship Factors
(Separated by Sample)*

	Relationship Esteem	Internal Relationship Control	Relationship Satisfaction
Joint Internet Usage			
Group A (n=158)	.218**	.112	.153**
Group B (n=125)	.295**	.095	.245**
Relationship Esteem			
Group A (n=154)		.478**	.623**
Group B (n=119)		.402**	.738**
Internal Relationship Control			
Group A (n=152)			.324**
Group B (n=120)			.208*

*p<.05 **p<.01

Table 8

Pearson Correlation Matrix of Separate Internet Usage and Relationship Factors

	Relationship Anxiety	Relationship Depression	External Relationship Control
Separate Internet Usage (n=283)	.135*	.102	.012
Relationship Anxiety (n=275)		.600**	.489**
Relationship Depression (n=273)			.405**

*p<.05 **p<.01

Table 9

*Pearson Correlation Matrix of Separate Internet Usage and Relationship Factors
(Separated by Sample)*

	Relationship Anxiety	Relationship Depression	External Relationship Control
Separate Internet Usage			
Group A (n=158)	.105	.115	-.048
Group B (n=125)	.176	.093	.095
Relationship Anxiety			
Group A (n=155)		.664**	.485**
Group B (n=120)		.554**	.496**
Relationship Depression			
Group A (n=154)			.437**
Group B (n=119)			.422*

*p<.05 **p<.01

Table 10

Pearson Correlation Matrix among Internet Addiction Scores and Relationship Factors (Separated by Gender)

	Relationship Esteem	Relationship Satisfaction	Relationship Depression	Relationship Anxiety
Internet Addiction Score				
Males (n=67)	-.135	-.141	.245*	.384**
Females (n=212)	-.023	-.002	.000	.084
Relationship Esteem				
Males (n=65)		.690**	-.422**	-.423**
Females (n=204)		.687**	-.433**	-.379**
Relationship Satisfaction				
Males (n=64)			-.638**	-.415**
Females (n=208)			-.656**	-.419**
Relationship Depression				
Males (n=66)				.595**
Females (n=202)				.610**

*p<.05 **p<.01

Table 11

Pearson Correlation Matrix of Reported Arguing about Internet Use or Negative Effects of Internet Use (Separated by Gender)

	Argue about Personal Use	Argue about Partner's Use	Negative Effects Personal Use	Negative Effects Partner's Use
Internet Addiction Score				
Males (n=67)	.330**	-.005	.140	-.086
Females (n=212)	.137	.181**	.227**	.166*
Argue about Personal Use				
Males (n=65)		.473**	.614**	.295**
Females (n=205)		.496**	.478**	.367**
Argue about Partner Use				
Males (n=65)			.277**	.511**
Females (n=204)			.439**	.748**
Negative Effects Personal Use				
Males (n=65)				.381**
Females (n=205)				.715**

*p<.05 **p<.01

Table 12

*Pearson Correlation Matrix of Joint Internet Usage and Relationship Factors
(Separated by Gender)*

	Relationship Esteem	Internal Relationship Control	Relationship Satisfaction
Joint Internet Usage			
Males (n=66)	.191	.133	.316**
Females (n=216)	.280**	.116	.158*
Relationship Esteem			
Males (n=64)		.458**	.690**
Females (n=209)		.430**	.687**
Internal Relationship Control			
Males (n=64)			.238
Females (n=207)			.285

*p<.05 **p<.01

Dear website manager,

My name is Lacy Kantra, and I am currently a graduate student in the department of Psychology at Auburn University in Montgomery. My advisor at AUM is Dr. Regina Kakhnovets. I am conducting a study investigating the relationship between different kinds of internet use and relationship satisfaction. I would really appreciate if you could help me with my research by allowing me to post an invitation to participate on your forum. Potential participants would fill out various questionnaires online.

If you will allow me to post an invitation to participate on your website, please tell me the best location for it. For your information, I have attached a copy of the invitation to participate as it would appear. Again, thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,

Lacy Kantra, B.S.
Masters Candidate
Clinical Psychology Program
Department of Psychology
Auburn University at Montgomery

Regina Kakhnovets, Ph.D.
Advisor
Assistant Professor
Department of Psychology
Auburn University at Montgomery

Dear potential participant,

My name is Lacy Kantra, and I am currently a graduate student in the department of Psychology at Auburn University in Montgomery. My advisor at AUM is Dr. Regina Kakhnovets. I am conducting a study investigating the relationship between different kinds of internet use and relationship satisfaction. I would really appreciate if you could help me with my research by participating in this study. Your participation would entail filling out various questionnaires online. The time you might spend on this study would be between 30-45 minutes.

If you are in a committed monogamous relationships, I invite you to participate in this study. Your participation will allow us to have more information about relationships and internet usage.

Please understand that all the information you provide in this study will be kept confidential, and no identifying information will be requested from you.

In order to participate in my study, please follow the link below. Thank you so much for your time and effort. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,
Lacy Kantra, B.S.
Masters Candidate
Clinical Psychology Program
Department of Psychology
Auburn University at Montgomery

Regina Kakhnovets, Ph.D.
Advisor
Assistant Professor
Department of Psychology
Auburn University at Montgomery

**Appendix A – 1c
Informed Consent Form – AUM Sample**

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
(Electronic Submission)

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Auburn University at Montgomery

TITLE OF STUDY: Internet Use and Relationship Satisfaction.

RESEARCH SUPERVISOR: Dr. Regina Kakhnovets

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Lacy Kantra

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY? The purpose of this study is to examine the correlation between internet use and relationship satisfaction.
WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO? If you agree to participate in this study, we ask that you complete as much of the survey as you feel appropriate. The entire survey will take approximately 30-45 minutes to complete. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you will not be penalized should you decide not to participate.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? The main benefits of participating in this study lie in the contribution you would make towards further understanding human behavior and attitudes. We hope that you gain an appreciation for the research process. You are also welcome to inquire about the results of this study if you are interested in learning more about the topic. If you would like to receive a copy of the results, please contact the investigator.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS? There are few foreseeable risks to participating in this research. For some students, some questions may bring about some emotional discomfort in association with thinking of relationship problems. If you have any concerns or would like to talk with someone, the counselors at AUM Counseling Center are available to talk to you. At the end of the survey, you will be receiving information about the Counseling Center.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY? Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty.

PROMISE OF CONFIDENTIALITY: The data of this study will be kept confidential and only the researchers will have access to the data. No personal identifying information will be collected. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When I write about the study to share it with other researchers, I will write about the combined information I have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. I

will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is.

If you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Lacy Kantra at lkantra@gmail.com or (251)605-5656. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Debra Tomblin, Research Compliance Manager at AUM, 334-244-3250, dtomblin@aum.edu. Please print a copy of this document for your files.

Your electronic signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. By clicking "Yes, I give my consent to participate in this study" I indicate that I understand the procedures involved in this study. I am aware that I have the right to refuse to participate and may withdraw at any time without any penalty, simply by closing my web browser. Furthermore, I know I do not have to answer any question that I do not wish to, and can merely skip such questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary.

Yes, I give my consent to participate in this study.

No, I do not give my consent to participate in this study.

Appendix A – 1d
Informed Consent Form – Internet Sample

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
(Electronic Submission)

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Auburn University at Montgomery

TITLE OF STUDY: Internet Use and Relationship Satisfaction.

RESEARCH SUPERVISOR: Dr. Regina Kakhnovets

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Lacy Kantra

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY? The purpose of this study is to examine the correlation between internet use and relationship satisfaction.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO? If you agree to participate in this study, we ask that you complete as much of the survey as you feel appropriate. The entire survey will take approximately 30-45 minutes to complete. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you will not be penalized should you decide not to participate.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? The main benefits of participating in this study lie in the contribution you would make towards further understanding human behavior and attitudes. We hope that you gain an appreciation for the research process. You are also welcome to inquire about the results of this study if you are interested in learning more about the topic. If you would like to receive a copy of the results, please contact the investigator.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS? There are few foreseeable risks to participating in this research. For some students, some questions may bring about some emotional discomfort in association with thinking of relationship problems. If you have any concerns or would like to talk with someone, information for doing so will be given to you at the end of the study.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY? Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty.

PROMISE OF CONFIDENTIALITY: The data of this study will be kept confidential and only the researchers will have access to the data. No personal identifying information will be collected. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When I write about the study to share it with other researchers, I will write about the combined information I have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. I

will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is.

If you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Lacy Kantra at lkantra@gmail.com or (251)605-5656. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Debra Tomblin, Research Compliance Manager at AUM, 334-244-3250, dtomblin@aum.edu. Please print a copy of this document for your files.

Your electronic signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. By clicking "Yes, I give my consent to participate in this study" I indicate that I understand the procedures involved in this study. I am aware that I have the right to refuse to participate and may withdraw at any time without any penalty, simply by closing my web browser. Furthermore, I know I do not have to answer any question that I do not wish to, and can merely skip such questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary.

Yes, I give my consent to participate in this study.

No, I do not give my consent to participate in this study.

Appendix A – 1e
Parent Consent Form – AUM Sample (People under 19)

Parental Permission to Participate in a Research Study
Auburn University at Montgomery

TITLE OF STUDY: Internet Use and Relationship Satisfaction.

RESEARCH SUPERVISOR: Dr. Regina Kakhnovets

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Lacy Kantra

Your child is invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Lacy Kantra (supervised by Dr. Regina Kakhnovets), which involves an in-depth look into the correlations between different types of internet use and relationship satisfaction. Your child was selected as a possible participant simply because he or she is a college student. Since your child is age 18 or younger, I must have your permission to include him/her in the study.

WHAT WILL BE INVOLVED IF YOUR CHILD PARTICIPATES? If you agree to let your child participate in this study, he or she will be asked to complete a survey. The entire survey will take approximately 30-45 minutes to complete. Your child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and he or she will not be penalized should he or she decide not to participate.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION? The main benefits of participating in this study lie in the contribution your child would make towards further understanding human behavior and attitudes. We hope that he or she gains an appreciation for the research process. You or your child are also welcome to inquire about the results of this study if you are interested in learning more about the topic. If you would like to receive a copy of the results, please contact the investigator.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS? There are few foreseeable risks to participating in this research. For some students, some questions may bring about some emotional discomfort in association with thinking of relationship problems. If your child has any concerns or would like to talk with someone, the counselors at AUM Counseling Center are available to talk to him or her. At the end of the survey, your child will be receiving information about the Counseling Center.

DOES MY CHILD HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY? Your child's participation in this research is voluntary. If he or she decides to participate in the study, he or she may withdraw consent and stop participating at any time without penalty. Your decision about whether or not to allow your child to participate or stop participating will not jeopardize yours or your child's future relations with Auburn University at Montgomery.

PROMISE OF CONFIDENTIALITY: The data of this study will be kept confidential and only the researchers will have access to the data. No personal identifying information will be collected. Your child's information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When I write about the study to share it with other researchers, I will write about the combined information I have gathered. Your child will not be identified in these written materials. I will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that your child gave us information, or what that information is.

If you (or your child) have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Lacy Kantra at lkontra@gmail.com or (251)605-5656. If you have any questions about your child's rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Debra Tomblin, Research Compliance Manager at AUM, 334-244-3250, dtomblin@aum.edu. Please print a copy of this document for your files.

Having read the information provided, you must decide whether or not you wish for your child to participate in this research study. Your signature indicates your willingness to allow your child to participate.

Participant's Printed Name

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Parent's/Guardian's Printed Name

Appendix A – 1f
Internet Usage Measure and Demographics

Internet Usage Measure

Demographic Information

How do you classify your race/ethnicity?

- A. Asian/Asian American
- B. Black or African American
- C. Hispanic or Latino
- D. American Indian or Alaska Native
- E. Pacific Islander
- F. White/Caucasian
- G. Other

What is your gender?

- A. Male
- B. Female
- C. Transgender

What is your age? (Numeric value)

What is your sexual orientation?

- A. Heterosexual
- B. Homosexual
- C. Bisexual
- D. Questioning

What is your annual household income? (Numeric value)

How many computers do you have at home? (Numeric value)

Current relationship status?

- A. Single
- B. Dating
- C. Living Together
- D. Engaged
- E. Married
- F. Other _____

How long have you been with your current partner? (Numeric value)

Answer the following questions about an average day. Please round to the

nearest half hour (ex. 3.5).

When not at school or work, how many hours per day do you use the internet?

How many hours per day do you spend checking/answering your email?

How many hours per day do you spend on the internet doing school or work activities (outside of work hours)?

How many hours per day do you spend on internet gaming (World of Warcraft, Xbox Live, Farmville, etc.)

How many hours per day do you spend on social networking sites (Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, etc.)

How many hours per day do you spend on online shopping (Ebay, Etsy, Amazon, various store website, etc.)

How many hours per day do you spend looking at pornography online?

How many hours per day do you spend reading news online?

How many hours per day do you spend watching television shows/movies online (Hulu, Netflix, etc.)?

How many hours per day do you spend on YouTube?

How many hours per day do you spend looking at comics or blogs online (The Bloggess, LOLcats, Failblog, PeopleofWalmart, etc.)?

How many hours per day do you spend writing on a blog online (Xanga, Livejournal, etc.)?

Answer the following questions about an average day FOR YOUR PARTNER. Please round to the nearest half hour (ex. 3.5).

When not at school or work, how many hours per day does **your partner** use the internet?

How many hours per day does **your partner** spend checking/answering his/her email?

How many hours per day does **your partner** spend on internet gaming (World of Warcraft, Xbox Live, Farmville, etc.)

How many hours per day does **your partner** spend on social networking sites (Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, etc.)

How many hours per day does **your partner** spend on online shopping (Ebay, Etsy, Amazon, various store website, etc.)

How many hours per day does **your partner** spend looking at pornography?

How many hours per day does **your partner** spend reading news online?

How many hours per day does **your partner** spend watching television shows/movies online (Hulu, Netflix, etc.)?

How many hours per day does **your partner** spend on YouTube?

How many hours per day does **your partner** spend looking at comics or blogs online (The Bloggess, LOLcats, Failblog, PeopleofWalmart, etc.)?

How many hours per day does **your partner** spend writing on a blog online (Xanga, Livejournal, etc.)?

Think of all the things that you and your partner do online.

During the time spent online, what percentage of the time are you with your

partner, looking at the same thing?

During the time spent online, what percentage of the time are you around your partner, but looking at different things?

Answer the following questions by choosing a number from 1 to 5.

My partner and I argue about **my** internet usage.

<i>Never</i>		<i>Sometimes</i>		<i>Almost Always</i>
1	2	3	4	5

My partner and I argue about **my partner's** internet usage.

<i>Never</i>		<i>Sometimes</i>		<i>Almost Always</i>
1	2	3	4	5

My partner and I talk positively about **my** internet usage.

<i>Never</i>		<i>Sometimes</i>		<i>Almost Always</i>
1	2	3	4	5

My partner and I talk positively about **my partner's** internet usage.

<i>Never</i>		<i>Sometimes</i>		<i>Almost Always</i>
1	2	3	4	5

I often wish my partner was spending time with me instead of being on the internet.

<i>Never</i>		<i>Sometimes</i>		<i>Almost Always</i>
1	2	3	4	5

I think **my** internet usage negatively affects my relationship.

<i>Never</i>		<i>Sometimes</i>		<i>Almost Always</i>
1	2	3	4	5

I think **my partner's** internet usage negatively affects the relationship.

<i>Never</i>		<i>Sometimes</i>		<i>Almost Always</i>
1	2	3	4	5

I think **my** internet usage positively affects my relationship.

<i>Never</i>		<i>Sometimes</i>		<i>Almost Always</i>
1	2	3	4	5

I think **my partner's** internet usage positively affects the relationship.

<i>Never</i>		<i>Sometimes</i>		<i>Almost Always</i>
1	2	3	4	5

General internet usage has a _____ effect on my relationship with my partner.

Negative *Neutral* *Positive*
1 2 3 4 5

Checking/answering emails has a _____ effect on my relationship with my partner.

Negative *Neutral* *Positive*
1 2 3 4 5

Online school/work activities have a _____ effect on my relationship with my partner.

Negative *Neutral* *Positive*
1 2 3 4 5

Social networking websites have a _____ effect on my relationship with my partner.

Negative *Neutral* *Positive*
1 2 3 4 5

Internet gaming has a _____ effect on my relationship with my partner.

Negative *Neutral* *Positive*
1 2 3 4 5

Online shopping has a _____ effect on my relationship with my partner.

Negative *Neutral* *Positive*
1 2 3 4 5

Online pornography has a _____ effect on my relationship with my partner.

Negative *Neutral* *Positive*
1 2 3 4 5

Online news has a _____ effect on my relationship with my partner.

Negative *Neutral* *Positive*
1 2 3 4 5

Watching TV/movies online has a _____ effect on my relationship with my partner.

Negative *Neutral* *Positive*
1 2 3 4 5

YouTube has a _____ effect on my relationship with my partner.

Negative *Neutral* *Positive*

