Jealousy and the Relationship Between Equity Restoration Via Retaliation and Surveillance

Camille Burdge, Bora Song, Karen Gonzalez, Launa Kressin, and Olivia Martinez

Chapman University
Abstract

Jealousy in romantic relationships and its influence is explored in this study. Because of the digital age, new technologies in social media have allowed public access to anyone’s personal page. Due to social media’s advancements, surveillance methods as a retaliation goal have become more widespread. Previous research shows surveillance methods have damaging effects on the relationship and cause relational dissatisfaction. Due to this, we will explore if there is an association between how jealous a person becomes with the goal of equity restoration via retaliation and surveillance behavior. Measures of romantic jealousy, equity restoration, and surveillance were given to a sample of 604 participants. The study’s results reflect that there is a positive correlation between both variables; the more a person works toward the goal of equity restoration, the more likely they will resort to surveillance on their romantic partner. These results suggest that people are likely to express jealousy depending on their equity in the relationship, and this will lead to surveillance and overall dissatisfaction.

*Keywords:* romantic jealousy, equity restoration, surveillance
Jealousy and the Relationship Between Equity Restoration Via Retaliation and Surveillance

In recent years, there has been an increase of interest in relationship satisfaction and in an individual’s motivation to be in a relationship and preserve that relationship. This is because humans are social beings and they look for that interaction in order for them to persist. Several theories have prospectively elucidated many ways human behavior is motivated by a person’s actions, desires, and needs. Based on these needs, humans, therefore, seek relationships with other beings and tend to stay satisfied in relationships as long as their needs are being met.

This study focuses on jealous people and their goal of equity restoration via retaliation, and the various types of surveillance/restriction behaviors in response to the feelings of jealousy. According to Elphinston, Feeney, Noller, Connor, and Fitzgerald (2013), the concept of jealousy is extremely complex and includes several cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. Conceptually, cognitive jealousy is defined as “the negative thoughts that focus on partner behaviors, emotional jealousy reflects related emotions such as anger and fear (e.g., Yoshimura, 2004), while behavioral jealousy may be expressed in many ways, such as surveillance behaviors designed to monitor a relationship partner and/or aggressiveness towards a partner” (Elphinston et al., 2013, p. 294). Keeping this in mind, Park, Kingsley, and Lee (2005) have shown that jealousy acts as a crucial catalyst for the intentions to retaliate to ultimately gain equity. Theiss and Solomon (2006) argue that an equitable relationship keeps both partners motivated to restore balance and once the relationship becomes unbalanced, people begin to engage in destructive ways of retaliation. The Equity Theory is used as the framework throughout this research to help understand the associations between certain emotions and certain actions, such as what effect equity restoration and surveillance has on the romantic relationship. This research is based in the realm of romantic relationships between partners. Because of trends in research, there has been
notice that responses to behavior such as jealousy, lead to actions from that jealous person towards their partner. The goal of this study is to discover, in the context of jealousy in relationships, how the goal of equity restoration via retaliation is related to the increase of surveillance/restriction behaviors individuals participate in as a response to the jealous feelings.

Review of Literature

The Equity Theory’s central claim is based on the fact that people seek equitable relationships, and when it is unbalanced, they will engage in actions to restore that equity. The human mind and the behaviors of human beings are very complex. In order to understand these complexities, various theories and models have integrated to create the concept of equity. Social Exchange Theory is a dominant contributor to the growth of Equity Theory and provides the framework that relationships are built from social exchanges (Myers & Goodboy, 2013). Equity Theory essentially explains a type of checks and balances for each member of the relationship when engaging in particular situations or tasks (Park et al., 2005). This ratio of relational benefits is significant in how individuals assess their romantic relationship (Myers & Goodboy, 2013). Equity Theory details why and how fairness and equity are so important to interpersonal relationships. This particular theory reiterates diverse ways in which equity can utilize predictability in order to understand the ways in which certain situations arise within interpersonal or romantic relationships (Park et al., 2005).

The Equity Theory proposes that the nature of situations should be just, proportional, and fair. Equity Theory suggests that individuals may become uncomfortable if the proportions of outcomes and inputs into a relationship are not equivalent to each other (Park et al., 2005). This afflicting ‘checks and balances’ type of behavior suggests there will be conflict within relationships if partners feel the relationship is not equal (Park et. al, 2005). The theory also
explains that the perception of an individual in an interpersonal or romantic relationship may alter and shape the ideology of whether or not equality is being accomplished (Park et al., 2005). Equity Theory demonstrates two ways in which to restore equity in a relationship. An individual may take action to improve the equality or cognitively undertake ways to resolve the inequality (Park et al., 2005).

Equity Theory also focuses on the benefits one gets from relationships. There must be a balanced ratio of benefits and losses, or equity will begin to be regained by the individual who feels unequal or lower than the other (Myers & Goodboy, 2013). Because the lack of equity in relationships can cause so much animosity, the theory predicts unwarranted behaviors such as feeling angry, guilty, and jealous. Van Yperen and Buunk (2012) identify that different emotional responses can be generated from such inequalities, and can evoke expressing suspicion and jealous behavior. Realizing these several aspects of Equity Theory are essential to understanding conflict and resolution in many interpersonal and romantic relationships (Park et al., 2005). Previous research has examined both the cause and effect of jealous individuals who attempt to restore equity in their relationship (Guerrero, 1998).

**Equity Restoration via Retaliation**

Research has shown that the self-esteem, relational goals, and self-concept of jealous individuals are all predicting factors of equity restoration in romantic relationships. Equity restoration is conceptually defined as a “state of inequity that leads to the cognitive and behavioral changes through which equity is restored” (Critelli & Waid, 1980, p. 625). Walster, Berschied, and Walster (1976) reflect these cognitive behaviors in their scholarly work. Ultimately, this study identifies self-esteem as a main cognitive principle in equity restoration. Individuals choose their partners who mirror their own self-worth, and individuals also prefer a
partner who seems more desirable (Walster et al., 1976). Self-worth has taken precedence as a predicting factor in performing equity, and research suggests that an individual who has a higher self-esteem will experience more of a need to behave equitably than an individual who has a lower self-esteem (Brockner, O’Malley, & Davies, 1987).

Studies also address how self-esteem acts as a moderator to behaving in negative equity. People who have a lower self-esteem are much more susceptible to behaving in this context because they are more likely to express fear, doubt, and jealousy in relationships due to low confidence and insecurities (Brockner et al., 1987). Individuals who hold a higher self-esteem are likely to avoid negative equity behaviors and are more affected from their own performance in the relationship than their partners (Brockner et al., 1987). Thus, scholarly research projects that individuals who hold a negative self-perception will experience more cognitive jealousy and as a result, there is a higher chance they will try to retaliate and seek equity restoration in a negative way.

In addition, previous research shows how individual goals in relationships are another predictor of restoring equity through retaliation. People seek retaliation to intentionally make their partners jealous in order to gain relational rewards and relational revenge (Fleischmann, Spitzberg, Andersen, & Roesch, 2005). Ultimately, jealousy has a powerful effect in relationships, and people use jealousy intentionally to achieve these two primary goals. Goals of relational rewards primarily function because of a desire to increase one’s self esteem (Fleischmann et al., 2005). Individuals who feel they are in an inequitable relationship, and experience feelings of jealousy, create jealousy to make themselves feel better and gain more confidence in the relationship (Fleischmann et al., 2005). Fleischmann et al. (2005) also adds that a popular retaliation behavior includes making the opposing romantic partner believe the
false perception of a more attractive person awaiting an opportunity to infiltrate the relationship. Research also identifies other popular retaliation methods such as showing interest in other people, talking about previous romantic relationships, and engaging in ambiguous interactions with other people (Fleischmann et al., 2005). This behavior is directly linked to goals of relational rewards and relational revenge. In addition to relational reward goals, Fleischmann et al. (2005) supports that people also engage in retaliation to seek relational revenge when experiencing romantic jealousy. The goal of equity restoration via retaliation can thus be conceptually defined as a reaction to experiencing jealous emotions through the desire to seek revenge, and to restore back control and balance in the relationship (Fleischmann et al., 2005).

Ultimately, previous research focuses on how these relational goals and self-esteem are significant causes of equity restoration and retaliation behavior. As a result, there are additional research focusing on the effects of equity restoration and retaliation. Research by Dainton and Gross (2008) supports that satisfaction level is a predictor of behaviors of equity restoration and retaliation in romantic relationships. An individual will continue a relationship based on their level of relational satisfaction and the level of reciprocity in the relationship (Dainton & Gross, 2008). This reflects the framework of the Equity Theory and its cost-reward relationship: as long as there are more positive aspects than negative aspects within the relationship, it is likely that an individual will continue to be in that relationship to satisfy their personal needs (Dainton & Gross, 2008). In addition, those who view their relationship as equitable have been found to be more likely to participate in positive maintenance behaviors and less retaliation behaviors (Dainton & Gross, 2008). Focusing on negative relational aspects predicts more retaliation and equity restoration behaviors (Dainton & Gross, 2008). Research by Dainton and Gross (2008) identifies these retaliation behaviors as engaging in spying, jealousy, induction, destructive
conflict, avoidance, granting control and infidelity. These six behaviors were found to have no positive effects in romantic relationships.

Research also explores how retaliation behaviors are linked to one’s self worth and engaging in social comparison. People tend to form their expectations of love depending on what they believe they deserve (Gehl, 2011). It is likely that if an individual has a low self-worth, he or she is more susceptible to becoming jealous and reacting via equity restoration and retaliation behaviors. In addition, Gehl (2011) expresses that equity restoration behaviors can sometimes occur because of social comparison. Social comparison is found to evoke feelings of romantic jealousy, fear and envy towards a romantic partner and Gehl (2011) predicts that engaging in social comparison results in aggressive behavior and mistrust within the relationship. Ultimately, research supports that how an individual feels about themselves and their comparison to others are factors that lead to negative equity restoration and retaliation behavior.

Research by Gehl (2011) has also discovered that retaliation behavior is a popular method to restoring equity in romantic relationships. This scholarly work has found that individuals with certain personality traits engage in more retaliation behavior when experiencing romantic jealousy (Gehl, 2011). These personality traits are generally aggressive and have negative consequences to the relationship. These highly aggressive individuals express high levels of revengefulness, mistrust, anxiety, withdrawal, surveillance, and competitive behaviors to restore equity in the relationship (Gehl, 2011). In comparison, individuals interested in positive relational maintenance exhibit avoidance and non-aggressive behavior.

A main goal of our study is to identify if equity restoration via retaliation leads to an increase in surveillance methods. Because of the explosive market in social media platforms, research shows that this allows easy access to engage in surveillance methods, such as keeping
tabs on romantic partners. Research explores the numerous methods to engage in surveillance, and the negative effects it has on romantic relationships.

**Surveillance**

More than ever, it seems that individuals resort to surveillance methods in order to keep an eye on their romantic partner. Surveillance has been conceptually defined as following or spying on a romantic partner, examining their personal belongings for signs of infidelity, and/or keeping constant tabs on their whereabouts (Guerrero, Andersen, Jorgensen, Spitzberg, & Eloy, 1995). Research has focused on why people engage in surveillance behavior, and how surveillance ultimately leads to relational dissatisfaction (Elphinston et al., 2013).

An individual’s emotional factors play a role in why they surveil their romantic partner. When an individual becomes emotionally distressed and jealous in the relationship, there is a higher chance of them engaging in rumination and surveillance behavior (Elphinston et al., 2013). Emotional jealousy is one way individuals react to the negative thoughts toward their romantic partner (Elphinston et al., 2013). Emotional jealousy is linked to actions of monitoring the relationship partner due to aggression and fear. There is a positive correlation between jealous cognition and surveillance behaviors, which can be signs of possessiveness and anxiousness. This type of emotional reaction refers to reactive jealousy in which the partner has concerns about possible infidelity in the relationship (Elphinston et al., 2013). In addition, experiencing emotional jealousy can cause rumination. Rumination is conceptually defined as an individual's recurring thought process due to external threats of the relationship (Elphinston et al., 2013). The dwelling and repeated negative reflections of the relationship cause emotional distress, which leads to more patterns of surveillance. Research reflects that the cycle of
jealousy and surveillance behaviors stimulate rumination, and this causes individuals to confirm their suspicions through surveillance behaviors (Elphinston et al., 2013).

In addition, research reports that self-esteem is another significant factor to related acts of rumination and surveillance. Guerrero, Trost, and Yoshimura (2005) identify that signs of insecurity and vulnerability reflect a correlation to behaving out of envy, guilt, anger, and fear in romantic relationships. These emotional responses are a direct cause of negative self-esteem, and this leads to surveillance behaviors (Guerrero et al., 2005).

Up until the sudden boom of online technologies, researchers were mostly concerned with types of non-technological ways to surveil a romantic partner. This can include anything from spying on the person by following them, checking their e-mails or phone messages, or looking through their pockets — anything that might give one person some insight on what the other is up to (Goodboy, Myers, & Members of Investigating Communication, 2010). This kind of behavior can also be referred to as intrusive behavior.

According to Petronio (1994), there are two different types of intrusive behavior: covert and overt. When one member in the relationship reads the other’s text messages or emails without their knowledge or permission, they are engaging in covert intrusive behavior (Petronio, 1994). When someone in a relationship engages in overt intrusive behavior, on the other hand, the other individual in the relationship is aware of it and usually physically present when it happens (Petronio, 1994). This type of intrusive behavior occurs when “people excessively intervene into others’ private matters, such as by meddling with the other’s affairs” (Finkenauer, Hawk, & Vinkers, 2011, p. 110).

Tokunaga (2011) reports that web based technologies are a main way individuals engage in surveillance behavior. Ultimately, the accessibility of web-based technologies has allowed for
people to engage in more surveillance behaviors. The younger generation, in particular, gain most of their information through social networking sites because of its anonymity and easy access. As a whole, the electronic surveillance method has been found to release emotional distress in romantic relationships. Other forms of surveillance online are identified as horizontal, peer-to-peer, and social searching (Tokunaga, 2011). Relational maintenance and coping with the emotional distress from rumination result in exercising surveillance (Elphinston & Noller, 2011).

Within web-based technologies, research reflects that Facebook has become a popular method people use to engage in surveillance. With the creation of Facebook, an entirely new kind of surveillance behavior has been born: Facebook Surveillance. Researchers have coined this term, along with others, to describe the private use of certain technological and social media platforms to track other people’s activities. This new type of surveillance allows people to engage in all the same surveillance behaviors, but it offers a singular platform that is unique in its anonymity and ease of use (Bejanyan, Di Castro, Lee, & Marshall, 2012). As time goes on, researchers are finding that Facebook has a large and increasing impact on many relationships. Studies have found that Facebook’s second most common use is for people watching and to find out what others are up to. In fact, 60% of college students have admitted that they have used social media sites like Facebook in order to and keep an eye on romantic partners and their peers (Stern & Willis, 2007). But what is all of this Facebook surveillance doing to these relationships? In one study, research suggests that anxious attachment styles in romantic relationships have a positive correlation to Facebook jealousy and surveillance, while avoidant attachment styles are negatively correlated to Facebook jealousy and surveillance (Bejanyan et al., 2012). In other words, if a person tends to be nervous about keeping their relationship intact,
they are more likely to have Facebook jealousy and engage in Facebook surveillance than those with more avoidant attachment styles.

Furthermore, research focuses on the negative effects surveillance has on romantic relationships. More specifically, Elphinston et al. (2013) depict that surveilling romantic partners causes relational dissatisfaction. Goodboy et al. (2010) found that people who report being less satisfied in their relationships are more likely to partake in surveillance behaviors. Goodboy et al. (2010) identify that spying on partners by checking their cell phone or e-mail is a popular surveillance behavior. Surveillance on romantic partners is said to involve “indirect, unobtrusive ways of managing jealous thoughts and if individuals have a high tendency to ruminate, partner surveillance may be detrimental to relationships” (Elphinston et al., 2013, p. 301). Rumination is a common reaction to engaging in surveillance and involves worrying thoughts that leads to expressions of jealousy. Research found that if an individual responds from surveilling their partner with hurt and anger, it will threaten the relationship and lead to damaging communication interactions (Elphinston et al., 2013). Feeney and Noller (1996) support this claim that surveillance leads to relational dissatisfaction and state that if an individual uses damaging communication expressions due to what they found through surveillance, it will eventually lead to relational decay. If relational dissatisfaction has the tendency to lead to more surveillance behaviors, and surveillance behaviors have also been known to cause relational dissatisfaction, a very unproductive, continuous cycle may be occurring in many romantic relationships.

Rationale

The value of human connection has taken a central role in society for hundreds of years. Humans have been socially constructed to form relationships and seek out human connection.
These are two pivotal goals everyone seeks at some point in their life, because at the end of the day, human connection allows one to feel important, loved, and valued. Human beings are not biologically wired to live in an isolated world without emotional connection to other beings. Establishing an intimate connection evokes an array of personal and emotional benefits (Yoo, Bartle-Haring, Day, & Gangamma, 2014). Scholarly research supports the importance of human connection and indicate that intimacy in romantic relationships causes overall satisfaction and provides many emotional, cognitive, and social benefits (Greef & Malherbe, 2001). With that being said, there has been a growth in American singles today and divorce rates have become an unfortunate, common occurrence in today’s society. We live in a world where social media, relationship dating sites, and smartphone dating applications are at the touch of our fingertips. Yet although these advocate human connection, it also provides easy access to surveillance and retaliation. Research have shown that using surveillance as a retaliation method holds many negative consequences such as destructive communication exchanges, which leads to relationship dissatisfaction (Elphinston et al., 2013). Due to the effortless availability of surveillance and the negative effects it has on human relationships, we as a group believe that this study provides an important addition to the realm of human relationships, and how today’s society plays a role in sabotaging the human connection we all seek and need. Our goal is to provide support in why it is important to avoid these surveillance behaviors in order to establish healthier, long lasting relationships. Due to this, we will explore if there is an association between how jealous a person becomes with the goal of equity restoration via retaliation and surveillance behavior.

H: The more a jealous person has the goal of equity restoration via retaliation, the more he or she will engage in surveillance behaviors in response to jealousy.
Method

Participants

This sample ($N = 604$) consists of 120 males, 460 females, and 24 participants who did not respond. The average age of the participants was 25.55 years old, ($SD = 9.54$, $range = 18-68$). The participants’ ethnicity and race categorization is Asian ($n = 53$), Bi/multiracial ($n = 42$), Black/African American ($n = 11$), Hispanic/Latino ($n = 26$), Native American ($n = 3$), White ($n = 429$), Middle Eastern ($n = 8$), and did not respond ($n = 32$). Participants’ sexual orientation was also assessed: Heterosexual ($n = 536$), Homosexual ($n = 15$), Bisexual ($n = 21$), individuals who don’t know ($n = 1$), and the missing answers were ($n = 31$). The number of participants that are current college students is ($n = 364$), and those participants who are not attending college or a university amounted to ($n = 202$). The amount of individuals who did not respond was ($n = 38$).

Participants were asked to best describe the relationship they have with their romantic partner. The choices go as follows: In a casual dating relationship, in a serious or exclusive dating relationship, living together but not engaged or married, engaged, married, or other. Participants reported ($n = 69$) in a casual dating relationship, ($n = 337$) in a serious or exclusive dating relationship, ($n = 53$) living together but not engaged or married, ($n = 25$) engaged, ($n = 92$) married, ($n = 3$) other, and ($n = 25$) did not respond. Participants were additionally asked whether or not they were reporting on a current or former romantic relationship, ($n = 446$) reported on current, ($n = 134$) reported on former, and ($n = 24$) did not respond.

Procedures

Individuals were required to be at least 18 years of age, have a current romantic partner of at least one week, or have been in a romantic relationship in the last 12 months. Once
individuals met these specific requirements, it was permissible to participate in this survey. The individuals who agreed to participate in the study were emailed an electronic link to take the survey on SurveyMonkey.com. All participants were given an informed consent form and were told that the survey was completely anonymous. In addition, participants were told that their responses in the survey could not be linked back to their name or any other identifying information about them and research would be stored electronically on a laptop computer in a password protected, encrypted file. Participants were told they could withdraw participation at any time throughout the survey without any negative consequences. This ensured complete confidentiality for every participant who desired to take the survey. Each informed consent form was obtained.

Once individuals took part in the online survey, they were asked to recall experiences and expressions of jealousy with a romantic partner. The survey revealed its topic of interest, that being the relationship one has with their romantic partner, and the jealousy that one may experience. Jealously in this study was referenced to feeling threatened by a third party rival. The entire survey took individuals 10-15 minutes to complete. Participants did not receive any compensation for taking the survey.

Convenience and snowball sampling techniques were used as methods of gathering participants. The research team used convenience sampling to gather participants based on their proximity and accessibility. This technique relied on selecting participants who volunteered and who were readily available to take the survey. Members of the research team posted electronic links on their personal and public social media pages to recruit desired participants. In addition, members also reached out to their personal set of contacts and each recruited individuals.
Snowball sampling was also utilized in this study, in which participants who had already taken the survey used word of mouth and passed on the survey link to their social networks.

Measures

**Equity restoration via retaliation.** Participants’ attitudes towards equity restoration via retaliation, such as seeking to hurt or make a romantic partner feel bad in return, was assessed. A three-item scale from Guerrero and Afifi (1999) was used to measure the goal of equity restoration via retaliation jealousy. All items were scored on a 1 to 7 scale, with 1 being never and 7 being always. Participants were asked what they were most concerned about when feeling jealous in their romantic relationship. Participants were asked to answer this through the three statements, “making my partner feel bad,” “showing the partner what it’s like to feel negative emotion,” and “hurting the partner back.” This three-item scale has a Cronbach’s alpha score of .82, a mean of 2.93, and a standard deviation of 1.61.

**Surveillance/restriction.** Surveillance and restriction behaviors such as spying and probing towards a romantic partner, were calculated on a seven-item scale from Guerrero, Hannawa, and Babin (2011). All items were scored on a 1 to 7 measure, with 1 being never and 7 being always. Participants were given the statements, “looked through my romantic partner’s belongings/computer for evidence of a relationship with the rival,” “kept closer tabs on my romantic partner,” “tried to determine my romantic partner’s whereabouts,” “repeatedly called my romantic partner,” “tried to find out what my romantic partner was doing when he or she isn’t with me,” “checked up on my romantic partner more than usual,” and “spied on or followed my romantic partner.” This scale has a Cronbach’s alpha of .91, a mean of 2.70, and a standard deviation of 1.47.

Results
To test the hypothesis, the correlation between equity restoration via retaliation and surveillance was analyzed. H1 predicted that the more determined a jealous person is in their goal of equity restoration via retaliation, the more he or she will engage in surveillance behaviors in response to jealousy. A Pearson Correlation analysis was conducted to test this hypothesis. The results conveyed that there was a positive correlation between equity restoration via retaliation and surveillance behaviors ($r = .35, p < .001$). These results were statistically significant, and therefore H1 is supported.

**Discussion**

The primary purpose of this study was to analyze how the jealous goal of equity restoration via retaliation and the jealousy behavior of surveillance relate to one another in romantic relationships. In studying the context of these two variables, we hypothesized that the more a jealous person has the goal of equity restoration via retaliation, the more he or she will engage in surveillance behaviors in response to jealousy. The results of our study reflect a positive correlation between the two variables; thus, the more an individual has the goal of equity restoration via retaliation, the more they will engage in surveillance behaviors. These results indicate several important practical implications that can be applied to the realm of romantic relationships. This section will cover what these practical implications are, how our findings related to previous literature, the limitations to our findings, and conclusions and suggestions for future research.

**Equity Restoration via Retaliation and Surveillance**

Overall, our findings remained consistent with previous research and reflect a pattern of jealous behaviors in romantic relationships. The Equity Theory supports that individuals are likely to restore equity in romantic relationships through an analogy of checks and balances. If a
romantic relationship is perceived as unbalanced, and one individual is exerting more effort than
the other, the Equity Theory predicts that an individual will try to restore the relational balance.
If an individual feels they are in this inequitable relationship, Van Yperen and Buunk (2012)
predicts that they will begin to feel negative emotions in response to this and will express jealous
behavior. Park et al. (2005) support this finding and indicate that jealousy behaves as a catalyst
to gain back equity in romantic relationships. Additionally, Fleischmann et al. (2005) reveal that
when individuals begin to express jealousy, they will engage in retaliation methods. This
discovery in previous research remains consistent with our findings, as it reflects that when
experiencing jealousy, people with the goals of equity restoration will engage in retaliation
behaviors because of an unbalance in the relationship.

In addition, our findings also remain consistent with previous research on surveillance
methods as a retaliation goal depicted by Dainton and Gross (2008) and Elphinston et al. (2013).
Both Dainton and Gross (2008) and Elphinston et al. (2013) support that when an individual
becomes jealous in their romantic relationship, they will engage in surveillance methods.
Identifications of these surveillance methods are expressed through spying and induction
behaviors (Dainton & Gross, 2008). Similarly, our findings reflect a paralleled pattern and
confirm that the more a jealous individual has a goal of restoring equity the more they will
engage in surveillance.

Implications

With the results determining that the more jealous an individual becomes with the goal of
equity restoration via relation, the more they will engage in surveillance methods, this finding
allows for a new awareness about the effects jealousy has on romantic relationships. In addition,
this can become a helpful learning aid for individuals about the relational outcomes of their jealous behavior.

First our findings provide awareness on the effects jealousy has on romantic relationships. Through the Equity Theory’s main assumptions of equity restoration and a focus on how jealousy acts as a catalyst to retaliation methods, this can serve as a reason to several individuals who suffer from jealousy in relationships. Individuals with history of expressing jealous behavior in response to relational retaliation can benefit from the findings of this study by changing their behavior to experience a positive, successful relationship. This can serve as an educational platform for jealous individuals to learn about the consequences of behaving out of a response to their jealousy.

Additionally, our findings also reflect how jealousy plays a damaging role in relationships. As previous research suggests, retaliation methods such as surveillance will lead to destructive communication and relational dissatisfaction. Although scrolling through Facebook’s public pages or engaging in spying methods seem like the quickest fix in restoring equity in a romantic relationship, this study shines an informative light on how surveillance does not have the most positive, effective relational outcomes. Thus, if individuals deviate from surveillance methods, they will experience more successful results in their relationships. Ultimately, this knowledge on how jealousy affects romantic relationships can allow for individuals to reevaluate how they will express jealousy in the future towards their romantic partner, and this will help improve both communication methods and long term, relational satisfaction.

**Limitations**

Similar to most studies, this study contains a few limitations and areas of future
improvement. One limitation is that the study excludes other factors such as why individuals begin surveilling their romantic partner. There are many other internal and external reasons for why people choose to surveil on others, not solely because of a desire to restore equity. In addition, jealousy reaches a broad spectrum of different cognitive and behavioral definitions and narrowing it down to more of a specific area could have provided more comprehensive results.

Another limitation lays in the sampling techniques chosen to gather participants. As reflected in this study’s methods, participant demographics were not evenly distributed. The participants of this study mainly consisted of white females, who identified themselves as heterosexuals, and whose ages averaged 25.55 years. This disproportionate sample can be attributed to the snowball and convenience sampling. Both sampling techniques rely on convenience and therefore do not collectively represent a whole, unbiased population. Although this type of sampling generated a majority of our participants, it may have led to biased responses. With this uneven data, the results of this study are not applicable to diverse groups of individuals.

**Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research**

The results of this study offer various ways by which future research can be implemented and tested to evaluate equity restoration via retaliation and its positive correlation with increasing surveillance and restriction behaviors that individuals engage in. Modifications can help improve and replicate data with a more specific and in-depth analysis. In particular, one aspect of future research can analyze jealousy through a more thorough examination on what exactly jealousy means and a scale to test the various perceptions of what jealousy entails for certain individuals. This could result in more extensive results with a specified idea of what jealousy means for that particular individual. Another aspect of future research can focus on specific social media sites that can be utilized to surveil an individual’s romantic partner. For example,
future research can monitor surveillance on sites such as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter, and explore how these social media sites affect equity restoration, jealously, and the satisfaction of individuals within the romantic relationship. Lastly, future research should try to examine other internal and external factors as to why individuals choose to utilize surveillance on their partner. This research can explore whether these reasons might be because of individual characteristics, past events that affected the trust in a relationship, or low self-esteem. Any or all of these factors could potentially give way to prominent discoveries for future research on this current study.

To conclude, jealousy and its role in romantic relationships must be understood in order to maintain healthy relationships. Jealous partners must understand that having goals such as equity restoration via retaliation will increase their engagement in surveying. This increase will in turn create a reaction of being more jealous. This vicious cycle can lead to destructive communication and relational decay. By being aware of these correlations, individuals who are in romantic relationships can strive to create a trusting and healthier relationship with long-term satisfaction and relational longevity.

References


maintenance behaviors in romantic relationships. *Communication Reports, 23*, 65-78. doi: 10.1080/08934215.2010.511397


Tokunaga, R. S. (2011). Social networking site or social surveillance site? Understanding the use of interpersonal electronic surveillance in romantic relationships. *Computers in Human Behavior, 27*, 705-713. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2010.08.014


Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 9, 1-42. doi:
10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60057-X