Jealousy in Romantic Relationships

One thing that affects almost everybody in the world is the “green eyed monster”, otherwise known as jealousy. For this paper I will focus on a couple of main ideas about jealousy in romantic relationships. I will start by first going into more detail about jealousy in general to give more background information. Next I will focus on how people express their jealousy, because that can help relationships if one partner can tell that their partner is jealous. By knowing this there can be better communication and the relationship can be healthier. And finally I will look to see if there is a difference in jealousy between men and women. First off let me go into more detail about jealousy.

Jealousy can be defined in a number of different ways. These types can differ depending on the researcher; because this is a fairly new area of study and many researchers are defining new types of jealousy appear and include morbid jealousy as stated by Harris (2004), suspicious, symptomatic and pathological jealousy as stated by Hansen and Zeng (2003) and normal and abnormal jealousy as explained by Hansen and Zeng (2003). From what I have read the two main categories can be called normal and abnormal jealousy. Normal is when jealousy is provoked and there is a real threat of infidelity and abnormal is when a threat to the relationship is either expected or when the threat is just psychological and there is no real threat (Hansen & Zheng). The term ‘morbid jealousy’, falls under abnormal jealousy because it is often caused by a deep fear of infidelity that leads to delusions and can cause extreme anger and depression (Harris). Suspicious jealousy is exactly what it sounds like and occurs when somebody suspects that there is a threat to their relationship (Hansen & Zeng). Symptomatic jealousy is when you get jealous due to major illness such as schizophrenia (Hanse & Zeng). Finally pathological jealousy occurs when people have low self esteem or have experienced a threat to a relationship.
before (Hansen & Zeng). Not only are there different types of jealousy but I also found that jealousy generally affects men more than women (Bevan & Lannutti, 2002). With this variety of jealousy it can affect almost everybody.

Since jealousy effects just about everybody, most people fall into the scope of this research. Even people who have not had a romantic relationship have had some other relationship, either a friendly one or one with a family member, so even thought I am covering romantic relationships does not mean that jealousy does not appear in other relationships.

All three of the research articles that I read were related to the objective paradigm. Every one of the articles used surveys to see if prior studies were still true, which is the basis of the objective paradigm. The research preformed by Gary L. Hansen and Zheng Zeng used surveys; however in this article they assimilated their findings when comparing them to previous studies (Hansen & Zeng, 2003). The information that they produced was consistent with Eugene Mathes’s (1991) point that jealousy is determined by a person’s beliefs (Hansen & Zeng). The survey that Christine R Harris centered on college students that completed a self-report study in which they received a credit. The students were asked to imagine a romantic relationship and then imagine that their partner was either having sex with somebody else or falling in love with somebody else and then report on which scenario would be more upsetting to them (Harris, 2004). She compared her findings to other surveys of this type, known as the forced-choice method, and determined that it was in line the findings that 70 percent or more of women indicated that the falling in love choice would be more disturbing where as 40 to 60 percent of the men indicated that they would be more devastated by the infidelity (Harris, 2004). The third study that was performed by Jennifer Bevan and Pamela Lannutti (2002) focused on the difference of jealousy between same-sex and opposite-sex relationships. Their hypothesis was
proven false when they found that everybody experiences jealousy in much the same manner, but there research question led them to find that the way different orientations react to jealousy was different in most circumstances (Bevan & Lannutti, 2002).

There was a large sample range to all three of these articles. The samples included college students, males, females, heterosexuals, homosexuals, bisexual and people that were transgender. The article by Hansen (2003) did not provide me with an age range of the individuals that they survived or how many individuals were involved, the Harris (2004) survey did say that they interviewed college student, however, not the amount, so I imagine that most of them were between the ages of 18 and 23 but there is the possibility of older students taking the survey. The Bevan and Lannutti (2002) study, gave me an age range of 18 to 56 and stated that they had a sample size of 149 people but only studied 136 of them (Bevan & Lannutti).

The people in these studies were researched in a verity of ways. I explained the Harris and Hansen sample above but the Bevan and Lannutti article studied their participants in a number of ways. They tested their jealousy experience using Pfeiffer and Wong’s cognitive jealousy measure, jealousy expression using Guerrero et al.’s modified communicative responses to jealousy scale and sexual orientation (Bevan & Lannutti, 2002). One thing that ties this article to the previous two is that, even though they did more extensive research they also used questionnaires to get their information, so all three articles used surveys.

One validity threat is that these studies were done in mainly westernized cultures so other cultures might have different outcomes (Bevan & Lannutti, 2002). Another on is that the same-sex couples were all from a pride parade so the answers for same-sex partners that are not open might be different. As with any survey an additional threat is that the participants might not take them seriously. These studies covered a broad range of people in both same sex and opposite sex
relationships with a wide age range, so this topic can pertain to just about any romantic relationship or even other types of relationships.

The topic of jealousy is recently new in the terms of studying, so I think that there is a lot of room for future studies, which is why this topic is important today. The information from these and future studies can help people with their relationships, which I think will be good for the world because nobody wants to worry or be unhappy. The research articles that I read sounded like they were well on their way to becoming part of the solution of eliminating jealousy. The Bevan and Lannutti (2002) study stuck out the most to me as far as trying to help the future, because it looked at different kinds of relationships. The first step to trying to fix something is targeting the problem and that is what they did by looking at both same-sex and opposite-sex relationships. The other two articles needed to include information, because they did not tell the reader who they studied and if they did, they did not go into detail about age, ethnicity, gender or even the number of participants they had.

With this being such a new field of study I feel that the research needs to branch out more. With more and more people getting on the internet, studies could focus on how internet relationships work and if there is that same jealousy that normal relationships have. Another important factor that research needs to focus on is what situations provoke jealousy. If people know what situations might make their partner jealousy than they might think twice before getting into them or they might talk to their partner first about the situation. I think that if researchers would study these aspects then society might be able to control its jealousy but I do not think that we can overcome it all together. The reason that I say that is because jealousy is a natural feeling that everybody has even if it just appears for one split second.
When I started this paper, I wanted to provide a background about jealousy, go into depth about how people express their jealousy and find out if there was a difference between men and women when it comes to jealousy. I did provide the background information but the ways that people express it was difficult. I talked about it a little bit but the truth is that people can express it in a number of ways, including anger, hate, depression or sadness or they might not express it at all, so it is hard to tell. Finally, I did find out that most of the time jealousy is different in men and women. Usually men get jealous over physical aspects whereas women generally get jealous over emotional aspects. One important finding that came up in my research was that same-sex relationships generally feel the same jealousy that opposite-sex relationships feel. I cannot predict the future but I hope that this research goes towards helping people cope with their jealousy because I know at times I get fairly jealous and I do not think that it is fair to my partner.