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**TITLE:** Social Networking and Feelings of Acceptance, Loneliness and Relationships in ASD and Neurotypical Populations

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**Abstract:** In the past few decades, innovations in the use of technology to support learning have gained momentum for supporting individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), particularly for those with significant communication impairments. One technological media, Internet-usage, however, has seldom been studied in this population even though it is popular media for interactions with neurotypical (NT) populations. With the most prominent features of Autism being social anxiety and pragmatic deficits, the Internet can and does act as a portal for less intimidating social interactions for individuals with ASD (Hacking, 2010, Davidson, 2008). This exploratory study examined how online social networking usage correlates with social difficulties, loneliness, and relationships for adults over the age of 18 with High-functioning Autism and Asperger's Syndrome and neurotypically-functioning young adults. Through a 20-25 minute Skype interview (online video chat application) and an 15-minute online survey to measure usage of social networking and internet habits. They also responded to select questions from sections of the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) assessing their social difficulties, loneliness, and relationships. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses will be used to search for trends in how each community uses the Internet and if that correlates with positive or negative emotions. Depending on the results of this study, researchers and clinicians may wish to explore further the role of online communication in therapeutic settings and beyond in an effort to reduce negative feelings among the ASD community and beyond.