SOCIAL NETWORK INFLUENCE ON ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP

COMMITMENT: DO FRIENDS AND FAMILY DICTATE OUR LOVE LIVES?

by

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fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Communication

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the unique influences that different social network members have on individuals' perceived social influence and ultimately their romantic relationship commitment. The research additionally sought to determine other predictors of the social network influence process including one's disclosure to network members and one's adult attachment style.

Two hundred and eight undergraduate students in romantic relationships ($n = 208$) completed questionnaires measuring their frequency of disclosure, subjective norms, attachment style, and romantic commitment. Results indicated that participants were more motivated to comply with their parents than their friends and thus their subjective norms for their parents were more influential than those for their friend network members. The results also suggested that one's attachment style, specifically avoidance, was a significant predictor of both disclosure and subjective norms.

The model in the current study contributes to social network influence research by offering an examination of friends and parents as separate network members with distinct effects on individuals' perceived social influence. Additionally, the model illustrates the effect of several predictors on both the social influence process and romantic commitment.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The classic tale of Romeo and Juliet articulates more than simply a forbidden love

between two young adults. It also emphasizes the vast influence that both parental

figures and friends wield over the lovers' relationship. Throughout this tragedy,

Shakespeare captures the essence of one of the most significant predictors of romantic

relationship satisfaction and commitment: social network influence. Ajzen & Fishbein

(1980) describe social network influence as the social pressures put on an individual to

perform or not perform a behavior from network members such as friends and family.

Social network members convey influence via supporting or disapproving of one's

behaviors, including relational choices. Romantic partners can either receive support for

or pressure to terminate their relationships from network members which can ultimately

affect their romantic relationship commitment.

Previous studies indicate that social network members' approval or disapproval of

relational choices affects people's relational satisfaction and commitment (Etcheverry &

Agnew, 2004; Etcheverry, Le, & Charania, 2008). As social network members, friends

and parents are distinctly separate groups by definition and societal recognition, but they

are rarely acknowledged as such in extant research on social network influence. The lack

of distinction between these two social groups provides a limitation in social network

research in which the influences of each group are not separately identified or compared. Influences on one's romantic relationship commitment may vary due to both the source of the influence and the relationship that a romantic partner shares with that source. Researchers have ignored this important distinction; therefore, the present study seeks to broaden social network influence research by examining friends and parents separately as social network groups and consequently their distinct influences on relationship quality, particularly romantic relationship commitment.

Romantic relationship research focuses on the cognitive, behavioral and emotional predictors of relationship satisfaction and sustainability. Social network influences are identified in this research as important predictors of romantic relationship satisfaction (Bryant & Conger, 1999; Cox, Wexler, Rusbult, & Gaines, 1997; Parks, Stan, & Eggert, 1983; Sprecher, 1988; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992). There are several limitations, however, in the extant research on social network influence. First, most social network influence studies focus primarily on friends as the social network members of interest (e.g., Agnew, Loving, & Drigotas, 2001; Etcheverry et al., 2008; Milardo, 1982). Other social network groups, such as family and co-workers, might also influence one's romantic relationship satisfaction or commitment. Researchers do not, however, take such network groups into consideration. Second, the few studies that examine both friend and familial social network members (e.g., parents, siblings) conceptualize each of these groups as equally influential on romantic relationship satisfaction. Third, methodological limitations in extant research make it difficult for researchers to accurately examine social network groups' unique effects on romantic

relationship satisfaction and commitment (e.g., Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004; Lehmiller & Agnew, 2008).

The predictor of relationship type in the proposed model of social network influence on romantic relationship commitment distinguishes between friend and parent as the two social network members of interest in the present study. Commitment is "the psychological construct that directly influences everyday behavior in relationships, including decisions to persist – that is, commitment mediates the effects on persistence of the three bases of dependence" (e.g., satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, investment size) (Rusbult, 1998, p. 360). Social influence literature suggests that friends and parents differ in their influence on romantic relationship commitment in regard to the experiences and characteristics of one's relationships with family as opposed to friends (Burger & Milardo, 1995; Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004). A significant difference between the groups is that friendships are initiated and sustained based on a voluntary nature in comparison to families which are constructed and maintained on an involuntary basis. Due to this difference, friends and family members can have a considerable effect on the degree of influence that they project onto romantic partners. For example, a person with positive family relationships might feel more compelled to adhere to the influence of a parent rather than a friend in order to maintain a secure relationship with family members. On the other hand, a person who selects a social network of friends based on the common interests, beliefs, and values that they share could potentially make one's friends very influential, especially if that person's family does not share those same convictions. Factors such as these that distinguish between friends and parents as social network

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members provide support for including social network type in the present model as a predictor of social network influence and thus a predictor of romantic relationship commitment.

The omission of additional predictors of relational commitment between romantic partners provides a fourth limitation to research on social network influence. One potential predictor is the frequency of disclosure between a romantic partner and a member of that partner's social network. Research on social network influence examines self-disclosure primarily in regard to the amount of disclosure that occurs between romantic partners (Agnew et al., 2001) or disclosure between partners and their joint social networks (Parks & Adelman, 1983; Parks et al., 1983). Self-disclosure literature observes communication between romantic partners mainly as a predictor of their relationship sustainability. Research has yet to examine the amount of disclosure that occurs between romantic partners and their network members. Examining the quantity of communication between romantic partners and their network members could help explain the degree to which they divulge important information regarding their romantic relationships to their social networks. Additionally, researchers could gather information on the amount of opportunities network members have to influence romantic partners regarding the personal information that they share.

A second important predictor of romantic relationship commitment is one's adult attachment style. Attachment theorists propose that individuals develop attachment styles which define the quality of their attachments most notably identified as secure, anxious, and avoidant, the last two of which are insecure attachment patterns (e.g.,

Ainsworth, 1989; Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1979). There are emotional and behavioral patterns that research associates with individuals who experience secure and insecure attachment styles. For example, secure individuals are generally more trusting of others and feel that they are worthy of love and support (Daly, 2002). Individuals who are insecure display anxiety and fear of abandonment from others due to a decrease in trust and self-worth (Daly, 2002).

Infant-caregiver attachments influence one's attachment behavioral system (secure/insecure) which can then influence one's adult romantic attachments (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Bowlby's (1973) attachment theory literature identifies working models of attachment in which children begin to conceptualize representations of themselves and others due to the nature of their relationships with caretakers. Other research that specifically examines adult attachment behavior has identified young adults viewing themselves as secure, dismissive, or preoccupied (Kobak & Sceery, 1988). Those who were secure viewed themselves as undistressed and others as supportive, dismissive or avoidant individuals saw themselves as undistressed and others as unsupportive, and those who were preoccupied (anxious) saw themselves as distressed and others as supportive.

Attachment literature identifies adult attachment style as a predictor of romantic relationship satisfaction, commitment, and dissolution (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Morgan & Shaver, 1999; Simpson, 1990). However, research has not addressed questions concerning how adult attachment styles influence the frequency of disclosure that takes place between romantic partners and their social network members.

Additionally, the question of how adult attachment styles affect the degree to which romantic partners are influenced by social network members is also left unanswered.

In light of the limitations reviewed thus far, the literature would benefit from a model that accounts for the influence of social network type, frequency of disclosure, and attachment style on romantic relationship commitment. Romantic commitment is a predictor of relational persistence that mediates the effects of individuals' satisfaction with their romantic partners, their perceived quality of alternative romantic partners, and their romantic relationship investments (Rusbult, 1998). Extant research includes theoretical models that predict romantic relationship commitment by examining romantic partners' social network influences (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004; Etcheverry et al., 2008; Sprecher, 1988; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992). The present study expands upon these theoretical models by including predictors of social network influence that ultimately affect romantic relationship commitment.

As previously discussed, the frequency of disclosure that occurs between romantic partners and their social network members is important to examine. The present study conceptualizes disclosure as the amount of information that romantic partners and social network members communicate to one another. The proposed model hypothesizes that the amount of disclosure shared between a romantic partner and a friend is likely to differ from the amount of disclosure that takes place between a romantic partner and a parent, whether that parent is the mother or father figure. More specifically, research on self-disclosure between young adults and their parents suggests that there is a significant amount of disclosure that occurs between them (Driscoll, Davis, & Lipetz, 1972; Leslie,

Huston, & Johnson, 1986; Miller & Stubblefield, 1993). An integral part of an adolescent's individuation or self-identity process occurs within the context of supportive relationships with parents (Campbell, Adams, & Dobson, 1984). More specifically, research suggests that self-disclosure involves many risks in terms of loss of control of information and/or authority; therefore, genuine self-disclosure is often accompanied by trust and love which are characteristics typically found within close relationships such as child-parent relations (Jourard, 1964; Miller & Stubblefield, 1993). Friendships can also embody love and trust, but friendships among young adults may fluctuate; whereas, familial relationships are likely to remain constant. Thus, the proposed model suggests a higher frequency of disclosure to take place between young adults and their parents rather than young adults and their friends. Therefore:

> *H1: There will be a higher frequency of disclosure between a romantic partner*
>
> *and a parent than between a romantic partner and a friend.*

The previous hypothesis states that the relationship type of the social network member (e.g., friend or parent) affects the frequency of disclosure that takes place between romantic partners and their social network members. Relationship type also affects the manner in which a romantic partner behaves in a relationship based on the social support (approval/disapproval of behaviors) received from different social network members. The construct of subjective norms, which derives from the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), represents this relationship (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). As TRA proposes, people rely just as much on the support that they receive from their social groups in making behavioral decisions as they do on their own attitudes and judgments of

behaviors (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). The theoretical construct of subjective norms represents "the *overall* degree and direction of social influence felt by a person when making a decision about what action to enact" (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004, p. 410). Social influence is the component of TRA which suggests that social pressures influence a person's intention to perform a behavior along with one's own attitudes toward that behavior.

There are two underlying dimensions that constitute the construct of subjective norms; motivation to comply and normative beliefs (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). TRA describes the motivation to comply component as "a tendency to yield to the perceived opinions of a particular social referent" (Etcheverry et al., 2008). The more motivated an individual becomes to comply with a particular social referent's views toward a behavior, the more likely that person will either act or not act upon the behavior according to the social referent's preferred influence. In regard to romantic relationship commitment, romantic partners have intentions to commit to their relationships partly due to the social support that they receive for them. Normative beliefs comprise the second component which TRA describes as "a person's belief that a social referent feels the person should or should not perform some action" (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004, p. 410). This construct represents the degree of approval or disapproval that one expects to receive from a social network member.

Literature on subjective norms provides support for the hypothesis that social network members influence romantic partners' intentions toward performing behaviors (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004; Etcheverry et al., 2008). The question remaining is whether

or not social network type affects this influence process. Research that examines parental influence on adolescent romantic relationship behaviors identifies a significant amount of influence that occurs from both parents and their young-adult children relating to the young-adult's choice of a romantic partner (Leslie et al., 1986; Parks et al., 1983). Considering that influence represents the pressures one feels to act or not act upon a behavior, literature proposes that young adults engage in influence attempts to make such pressures more pertinent. Influence attempts, specifically from parents, involve the exclusion or inclusion of a romantic partner from family events as well as behaviors that hinder romantic partners' opportunities to spend time together (Leslie et al., 1986).

Parental support, whether direct or indirect, appears to be a significant factor in young adult's decisions to maintain a relationship with their current romantic partners (Driscoll et al., 1972; Leslie et al., 1986; Parks et al., 1983). Extant research proposes this is partly due to young adults' desire to receive their parents' approval and the approval of their partners' parents. There is also an unequal balance of authority between young adults and their parents unlike the relationship that often exists between friends which can cause young adults to adhere to the influence of the more authoritative social network member. Due to these findings, the proposed model hypothesizes that a young adult's subjective norms regarding a romantic relationship will differ based on the type of social network member with whom the young adult interacts. More specifically, the degree of social influence felt by a romantic partner will be greater when the influence comes from a parent rather than a friend. Influence in this hypothesis represents the

degree to which a romantic partner's subjective norms cause an alteration in cognition regarding his romantic relationship. Therefore:

> *H2: Subjective norms for a parent will be more influential (positively or negatively) regarding a romantic partner's relationship commitment than subjective norms for a friend.*

Although the two constructs of normative beliefs and motivation to comply constitute the subjective norms construct, it is important to examine them individually to determine if they are both similarly affected by the relationship (e.g., friend, parent) that a romantic partner shares with a social network member. The proposed model thus hypothesizes that a romantic partner's motivation to comply with a social network member as well as one's normative beliefs regarding the romantic relationship in question will differ depending on the relationship type of the social network member. Based on the theoretical reasoning provided for H2, these associations will be stronger between a romantic partner and a parent. In these hypotheses, normative beliefs and motivation to comply represent different types of social influence at work. Therefore:

> *H3: A romantic partner will be more motivated to comply with a parent than a friend regarding the partner's romantic relationship.*
>
> *H4: A romantic partner's normative beliefs for a parent will be more influential regarding his romantic relationship commitment than the romantic partner's normative beliefs for a friend.*

A romantic partner's subjective norms regarding a relationship can become affected by factors other than the relationship that he shares with a social network

member. The frequency of disclosure that occurs between a romantic partner and a social referent is also influential on one's motivation to comply with that network member and one's perceived approval or disapproval from the network member regarding a particular behavior. Research indicates that disclosure provides the momentum for relationships to grow (Miller & Stubblefield, 1993). For example, parental disclosure to young children may emphasize a power structure in which the parents have control and influence over all decisions. Disclosure between parents and their adult children may offer a renegotiation of this power structure in which parental control is less influential. Additionally, some extant research utilizes the amount of interaction/communication that occurs between romantic partners and their social network members as a measurement of social network influence. A degree of interaction which arguably allows for the most direct source of influence to occur is disclosure. Thus, it is likely that the more two people within a social network communicate, the more opportunities they will have to influence one another. The proposed model argues this hypothesis. Therefore:

> *H5: The frequency of disclosure between a romantic partner and a social network member is positively associated with the romantic partner's subjective norms regarding his romantic relationship.*

Another factor that has an effect on a romantic partner's subjective norms is one's adult attachment style. As previously discussed, one's adult attachment style represents the pattern or quality of attachments that a person shares with others, most notably one's caregiver(s) and romantic partner(s). The present study identifies adult attachment types as either secure, anxious/ambivalent, or avoidant. Considering that these attachment

types lead to different outcomes in interpersonal interactions, it is likely that one's adult attachment style will have an effect on the way in which the person communicates with and behaves toward a social network member with whom an attachment likely exists. The proposed model acknowledges an association between adult attachment styles, disclosure between a romantic partner and a social network member, and one's subjective norms regarding his romantic relationship. It does not, however, determine directional relationships among these constructs. The model instead seeks to answer questions as to the manner in which a romantic partner's attachment style will affect the disclosure that occurs between that partner and a social referent as well as one's subjective norms. The following research questions are therefore posed:

RQ1: How will a romantic partner's adult attachment style affect the frequency of disclosure with his social network members?

RQ2: How will a romantic partner's adult attachment style affect the subjective norms regarding his romantic relationship?

Attachment theorists suggest that attachment styles directly affect romantic relationship commitment. Specifically, extant research suggests that secure attachment styles are associated with greater romantic relationship commitment, satisfaction, and trust than anxious and avoidant styles (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Simpson, 1990). To remain consistent with previous research, one's adult attachment style is a predictor of romantic relationship commitment in the proposed model. Therefore:

H6: A romantic partner's adult attachment style will be a significant predictor of his romantic relationship commitment.

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In addition to one's adult attachment style, the predictors of subjective norms as described in the model thus far ultimately affect romantic relationship commitment as well. The relationship type of the social network member, the frequency of disclosure between a romantic partner and a social network member, and a romantic partner's adult attachment style are hypothesized to affect the degree of social network influence that one receives in making decisions regarding romantic relationship commitment. This social network influence affects the overall commitment that one invests in a romantic relationship and in a romantic partner. Research supports the claim that subjective norms or social pressures from network members predict romantic relationship commitment (Cox et al., 1997; Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004; Etcheverry et al., 2008). Therefore, it can be hypothesized that subjective norms, under the influence of the three predictors as outlined in the proposed model, will predict a romantic partner's commitment to a romantic relationship.

> *H7: A romantic partner's subjective norms (for friend and for parent) will be a significant predictor of his romantic relationship commitment.*

The hypotheses and research questions previously discussed constitute the theoretical model illustrated in Figure 1. The model specifically demonstrates the process by which predictors of social network influence affect one's romantic relationship commitment.
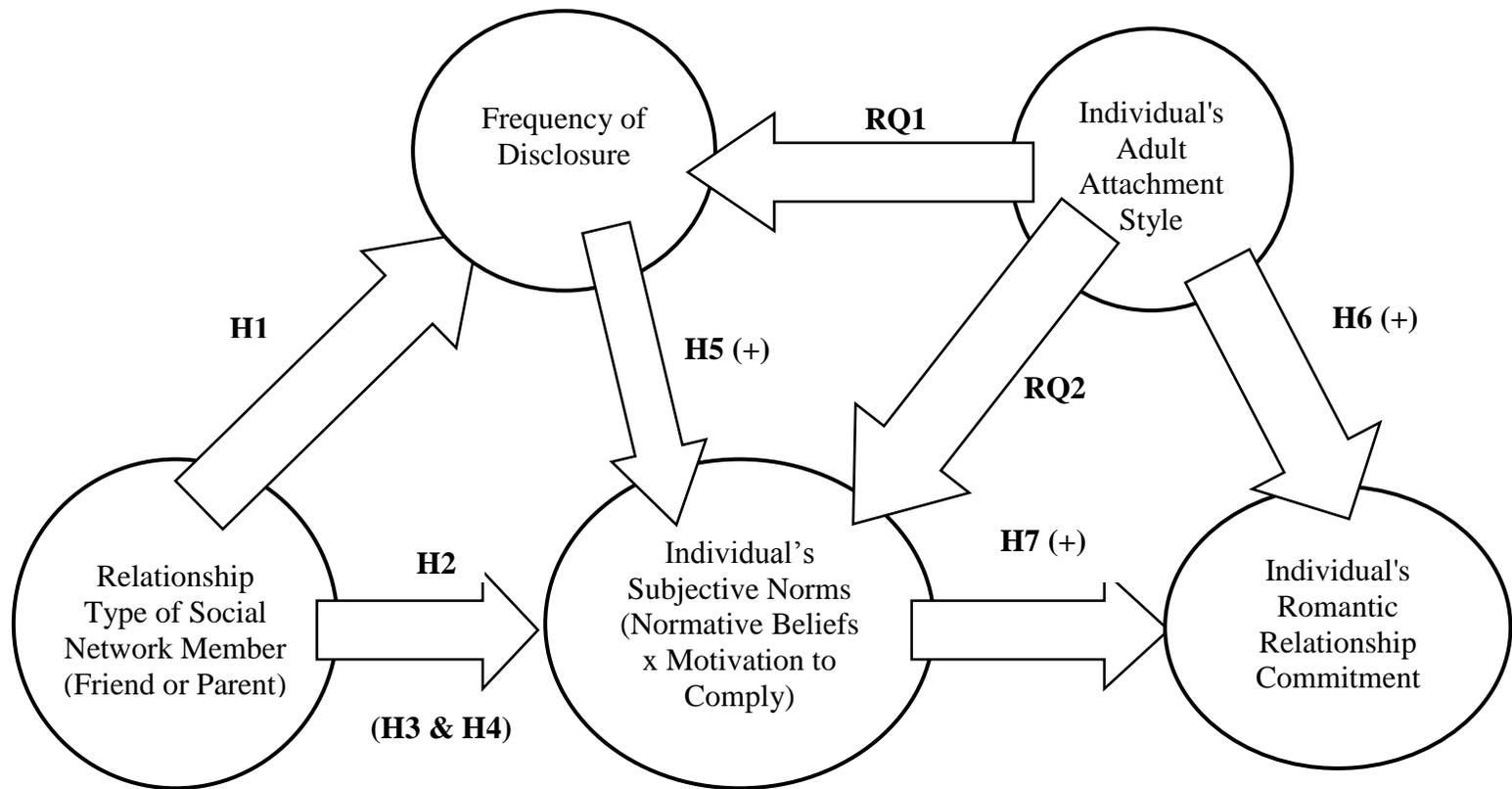
Figure 1. Model of Social Network Influence on Romantic Relationship Commitment

Chapter 2

METHOD

Participants

Participants included undergraduate college students for the purpose of assessing parental and friend social network influence. In addition, the study utilized the sample to assess the influence of one's adult attachment style and the frequency of disclosure with social network members on romantic relationship commitment. The final sample size was $n = 208$. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 40 years old ($M = 20.03$, $SD = 2.46$). In terms of gender, 52.4% of the sample were women ($n = 109$) and 47.6% were men ($n = 99$). The students received course credit for their participation.

Procedures

Each participant answered a set of standard demographic questions about themselves. One of the questions included in this questionnaire inquired about the status of participants' current romantic relationships. Another question asked about past romantic relationships that participants have been involved in. For the purpose of assessing relational variables such as one's current romantic relationship commitment, those participants who indicated they were not in a current romantic relationship were excluded from the study. A second question included in the demographic questionnaire

asked about the duration (number of months) of participants' romantic relationships in order to control for this potentially confounding variable ($M = 19.84$, $SD = 19.41$).

Participants were prompted to answer measurements for one of two social network members; a friend or a parent or guardian/childhood caregiver. In terms of the prompt variable, 50.5% of participants received the family network member prompt ($n = 105$), and 49.5% received the friend network member prompt ($n = 103$). Participants were randomly assigned to respond to questions about either family or friend relationships along with measures of romantic relationship commitment. Measurement items assessed the participants' subjective norms regarding their romantic relationships (e.g., normative beliefs, motivation to comply with social network members), self-disclosures with a social network member, and adult attachment styles. Having half of the participants complete measurements for a friend and half for a parent allowed for comparisons between the social network influence felt by participants from these two separate social network members.

Measures

Normative beliefs. Participants completed items that assessed their perceptions of each social network member's (friend and parent) views regarding the participant's current romantic relationship (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004). Four items were used to assess normative beliefs (e.g., "This person thinks I [should not/should] continue in my current romantic relationship.") (see Appendix A). Participants responded to these four items using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to

7 (strongly agree). Researchers have conducted reliability tests for this measurement scale which have resulted in high alphas (ranging from .95 to .98) (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004; Etcheverry et al., 2008). In the current study, the normative beliefs scale was highly reliable, $\alpha = .97$.

Motivation to comply. Participants completed items that assessed their motivation to comply with each social network member (friend and parent). A four-item scale measured motivation to comply (e.g., "With respect to my romantic relationships, I do *not* want to do what this person thinks I should do.") (see Appendix B). Participants responded to these four items using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Researchers have conducted reliability tests for this measurement scale which have resulted in medium to high alphas (ranging from .66 to .83) (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004). The motivation to comply scale produced a high reliability in the current study, $\alpha = .87$.

Self-report attachment style. Participants completed the Multi-Item Measure of Adult Attachment Scale: Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR) (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998) which includes two 18-item scales designed to measure adult attachment styles, specifically avoidance and anxiety (see Appendix C). Participants answered 36 items regarding their adult attachment styles (e.g., "I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners."). Participants responded to these items using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Researchers have conducted reliability tests for this measurement scale which have

resulted in high alphas (avoidance, $\alpha = .94$; anxiety, $\alpha = .91$) (Brennan et al., 1998). The current study also revealed high alphas for both avoidance ($\alpha = .90$) and anxiety ($\alpha = .91$).

Commitment level. Participants completed the commitment level items of the Investment Model Scale (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998) which is designed to measure four areas of romantic relationship commitment including satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, investment size, and commitment level (see Appendix D). Participants answered seven questions regarding their commitment to their current romantic relationships (e.g., "I want our relationship to last for a very long time."). Participants responded to these items using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Researchers have conducted reliability tests for this section of the measurement scale which have resulted in high alphas (commitment level, $\alpha = .91$) (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004). In the current study, the scale demonstrated high reliability, $\alpha = .89$.

Self-disclosure. Participants completed the amount factor section of the Revised Self-Disclosure Scale (Wheeless, 1976), which is designed to measure the quantity of self-disclosures (see Appendix E). Participants assessed their disclosures with social network members by completing the items in the amount factor section of this scale. Participants answered seven questions regarding the amount of their disclosures (e.g., "My conversation lasts the least time when I am discussing myself."). Specifically, participants rated the self-disclosures *to* their social network members to remain consistent with previous research (Wheeless, 1976). Participants responded to these items using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). In

previous studies, the scale demonstrated high reliability (amount, $\alpha = .85$) (Wheeless, 1976). In the current study, the disclosure scale was moderately reliable, $\alpha = .79$.

The self-disclosure measure was used to test H1 (there will be a higher frequency of disclosure between a participant and parent rather than a friend). The motivation to comply measure was used to test H3 (a participant will be more motivated to comply with a parent than a friend). The normative beliefs measure was used to test H4 (a participant's normative beliefs for a parent will be more influential than those for a friend). In order to test H2 and H7, which make predictions about subjective norms, the normative beliefs measure was multiplied by the motivation to comply measure (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004; Etcheverry et al., 2008; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The attachment style measure and the commitment level measure were used to test H6. The attachment measure collected data to address RQ1 and RQ2.

Chapter 3

RESULTS

The current study sought to analyze the unique effects of parents and friends as
social network members on romantic relationship commitment. Additionally, the study
examined the frequency of disclosure between romantic partners and their network
members as well as romantic partner's adult attachment styles to determine their
influence on the outcome variable. This chapter reports results of analyses designed to
test the hypotheses and answer the research questions presented in Chapter 1.

Hypothesis 1

H1 predicted that there would be a higher frequency of disclosure between a
participant and a parent than between a participant and a friend. To test this hypothesis, a
one-way ANOVA procedure was performed with the relationship type of the social
network member (i.e., parent, friend) serving as the independent variable and frequency
of disclosure as the dependent variable. The ANOVA revealed no significant difference
between the level of disclosure to parents ($M = 23.91$, $SD = 4.13$) and the level of
disclosure to friends ($M = 24.80$, $SD = 3.55$); therefore, H1 was not supported, $F(1, 206)$
$= 2.72$, $p = .1$, $\eta^2 = .01$. For all ANOVA tests, eta squared was computed by dividing the
between-groups sums of squares by the total sums of squares.[1]

Hypothesis 2

H2 posited that subjective norms for a parent would be more influential (positively or negatively) regarding a romantic partner's relationship commitment than subjective norms for a friend. A one-way ANOVA procedure was performed to test this hypothesis. The friend and parent relationships were once again the independent variable and subjective norms were entered as the dependent variable. In support of H2, the test revealed significant differences between parents and friends, $F(1, 206) = 7.92$, $p = .005$, $\eta^2 = .04$, suggesting that subjective norms for a parent regarding a participant's relationship commitment ($M = 417.52$, $SD = 155.87$) were greater than subjective norms for a friend ($M = 355.20$, $SD = 163.43$) (see Table 1 for results).

Hypotheses 3 and 4

Considering that the subjective norms variable represented participants' motivation to comply as well as their normative beliefs for a social network member, two separate one-way ANOVA tests were performed to determine which variable was responsible for the effect found in H2. The ANOVA procedure that included motivation to comply as the dependent variable revealed a significant difference, $F(1, 206) = 8.31$, $p = .004$, $\eta^2 = .04$, suggesting that participants responding to questions about their parents reported higher motivation to comply ($M = 17.70$, $SD = 5.04$) than participants responding to questions about their friends ($M = 15.61$, $SD = 5.43$). The ANOVA procedure used to test normative beliefs did not identify a significant difference between a participant's normative beliefs for a parent ($M = 23.46$, $SD = 4.87$) and those for a

friend ($M = 22.53$, $SD = 5.50$). Taken together, the results from the two ANOVAs

supported H3 but did not support H4 (see Table 1 for results).

Table 1

One-way ANOVA Analysis: Parental and Friend Social Network Influence

Source of Variation	SS	df	Mean SQ	F	η^2
Disclosure	40.43	1	40.43	2.72	.01
Subjective Norms	201937.53	1	201937.53	7.92**	.04
Motivation to Comply	227.80	1	227.80	8.31**	.04
Normative Beliefs	44.31	1	44.31	1.65	.01

$*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$.

Hypothesis 5

　　H5 predicted that the frequency of disclosure between a participant and a social

network member would be positively associated with the participant's subjective norms

regarding his romantic relationship. To test this hypothesis, a linear regression procedure

was performed with frequency of disclosure and subjective norms as the independent and

dependent variables respectively. The regression model indicated that disclosure was not

a predictor of subjective norms, adjusted $R^2 = .004$, $F(1, 206) = 1.75$, $p = .19$; thus, H5

was not supported.

Research Questions 1 and 2

The current study sought to determine the association between a participant's adult attachment style and his disclosure to a network member (RQ1) as well as an association between attachment style and the participant's subjective norms regarding his romantic relationship (RQ2). To examine the associations between these variables, two separate linear regressions were performed. The first regression procedure, which was used to test RQ1, was performed with disclosure as the dependent variable and both avoidance and anxiety (measures of attachment style) as the independent variables. The regression model accounted for 2.8% of the variance in reporting frequency of disclosure, adjusted $R^2 = .028$, $F(2, 205) = 3.95$, $p = .021$. Avoidance was a significant direct predictor of the frequency of disclosure between a participant and his social network member, $\beta = .04$, $t = 1.97$, $p = .05$. Anxiety was not a significant predictor, $\beta = .02$, $t = 1.30$, $p = .20$.

With regard to RQ2, subjective norms were entered as the dependent variable, and avoidance and anxiety remained the independent variables of interest. The model produced by the regression accounted for 2.8% of the variance in reporting subjective norms, adjusted $R^2 = .028$, $F(2, 205) = 3.94$, $p = .021$. Avoidance was a significant inverse predictor of subjective norms, $\beta = -1.95$, $t = -2.61$, $p = .01$. Once again, anxiety was not a significant predictor, $\beta = 1.14$, $t = 1.78$, $p = .08$.

Hypotheses 6 and 7

Based on previous research, H6 and H7 respectively posited that a participant's adult attachment style and subjective norms would be significant predictors of his romantic relationship commitment. These hypotheses were tested with a hierarchical regression procedure with romantic relationship commitment entered as the dependent variable. Since the attachment style measure was divided into its two dimensions of avoidance and anxiety, both of these attachment measures were entered as predictors on the first step along with the participant's relationship length. The second step, which takes into account effects from the first step, incorporated subjective norms as a predictor of commitment (see Table 2 for results). The purpose of the hierarchal regression was to isolate the unique contribution of subjective norms in the second step by controlling for the effects of the attachment and relationship length variables in step one.

The first step accounted for 15.9% of the variance in reporting romantic relationship commitment, adjusted $R^2 = .159$, $F(3, 176) = 12.28$, $p = .00$. Avoidance was a significant inverse predictor of relationship commitment, $\beta = -.09$, $t = 4.23$, $p = .00$, and anxiety was a significant direct predictor, $\beta = .05$, $t = 2.46$, $p = .015$. Both of these results support H6.

The second step produced a significant increase (4.6%) in variance accounted for by the regression model, adjusted $R^2 = .205$, $F(4, 175) = 12.53$, $p = .00$. This regression indicated that avoidance, $\beta = -.08$, $t = 3.66$, $p = .00$, anxiety, $\beta = .04$, $t = 2.03$, $p = .044$, and relationship length, $\beta = .07$, $t = 4.02$, $p = .00$, by themselves accounted for 15.9% of the variance in romantic relationship commitment. However, when the influence of

subjective norms, $\beta = .01$, $t = 3.34$, $p = .001$, was included on the second step, the

variables accounted for 20.5% of the variance in commitment. Thus, H6 and H7 were

supported. An examination of collinearity statistics revealed that multicollinearity was

not present in any of the regression analyses in this study.

Table 2

Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Romantic Relationship Commitment

Step	Variables Entered	β	t	R^2 Change	F Change	R^2 Total	F Total
1	Avoidance	-.091	4.23***	.173	12.275***	.173	12.275***
	Anxiety	.046	2.46*				
	Rel. Length	.064	3.69***				
2	Avoidance	-.078	3.66***	.050	11.152**	.223	12.525***
	Anxiety	.037	2.03*				
	Rel. Length	.068	4.02***				
	Subjective Norms	.006	3.34**				

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

In summary, the results of the study support H2, H3, H6, and H7, but they do not

support H1, H4, or H5. Additionally, the results indicated that only avoidance, not

anxiety, was a significant predictor of both frequency of disclosure and subjective norms

(RQ1, RQ2). The next chapter will discuss both the theoretical and practical implications

of these findings.

Observed power was computed for each of the ANOVA and regression analyses with the use of G Power 3.1.2 (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). The ANOVA analyses (H1, H2, H3, & H4) which compared friend and parent social network groups resulted in a power of 0.3 for the small effect size, 0.9 for the medium effect size, and 1.0 for the large effect size. The regression analysis for H5 which included one independent variable, disclosure, had a power of 0.5 for the small effect size, 1.0 for the medium effect size, and 1.0 for the large effect size. The regression analyses for RQ1 and RQ2 which included two independent variables, anxiety and avoidance, resulted in a power of 0.4 for the small effect size, 1.0 for the medium effect size, and 1.0 for the large effect size. Finally, the regression analyses for H6 and H7 included four independent variables and resulted in a power of 0.3 for the small effect size, 1.0 for the medium effect size, and 1.0 for the large effect size. These results suggest that the observed power for small effects is low and thus there is an increased chance in the current study of missing some of the small effects in the ANOVA and regression analyses. The observed power for the medium and large effects, however, is high.

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION

The current study tested a model of romantic relationship commitment and several of its predictors, including one's perceived social network influence and adult attachment style. The results of the study are important for several reasons. First, the results support the proposed model which identifies predictors of both social network influence and romantic relationship commitment that have been absent from previous research. The literature has already determined that social network influence directly impacts the quality of one's commitment to a romantic relationship (Cox et al., 1997; Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004; Etcheverry et al., 2008), but it is equally important for researchers to identify variables that affect the influence process itself such as the relationship that exists between an individual and her network member. Additionally, the results suggest that differences exist between parent and friend social network members in terms of their degree of influence on individuals. The previous finding represents an important addition to social network influence literature by distinguishing between different types of network members and their varying degrees of influence. The following discussion expounds upon the results from the current study and their implications regarding social network influence and romantic relationship commitment research. The limitations of the current study are also reviewed, and suggestions for future directions in social network influence research are provided.

Results Summary and Implications

Relationship Type of Social Network Member on Disclosure

One way to distinguish between different types of network members in the proposed model is to observe the frequency of disclosure between participants and their friend and parent network members of interest. H1 proposed that participants would disclose more to their parents than to their friends. The results indicated no difference in the amount of disclosure from participants to friends than to parents; therefore, the results did not support H1. Research supports the claim that young adults and their parents share a large amount of disclosure with one another (Driscoll, Davis, & Lipetz, 1972; Leslie, Huston, & Johnson, 1986; Miller & Stubblefield, 1993), and more specifically, individuals self-disclose to their parents about their romantic relationships for the purpose of seeking their approval of certain romantic relationship behaviors (Campbell, Adams, & Dobson, 1984). Providing further detail on disclosure literature, the results of the current study revealed that, on average, participants did not talk more with their parents than their friends as proposed in H1.

As research suggests, self-disclosure helps facilitate growth in relationships by building trust between two individuals through the disclosure of meaningful, personal information (Jourard, 1964; Miller & Stubblefield, 1993). The sharing of personal information occurs in various types of relationships that are considered to be of equal status such as friend, dating-partner, and marital relationships. In unequal status relationships, such as one shared between a parent and child, it is likely that additional communication would need to take place in order to re-negotiate equality and control in

the relationship (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986). Additionally, a young adult may also need

to communicate more to a parent (unequal status) than a friend (equal status) when

talking about a relational partner or an aspect of her romantic relationship that the parent

does not approve of in order to seek support and acceptance from that network member.

The process of influencing one's parents to receive the desired outcome of acceptance for

a dating partner has been found to have a significant impact on parental reactions to

dating relationships (Leslie et al., 1986). With research revealing these findings of a

significant amount of disclosure between young adults and their parents and the potential

need for more communication in unequal status relationships, it is difficult to understand

why participants' frequency of disclosure to their parents and friends was similar rather

than disproportionate in the current study. The amount of general disclosure from

participants which could include information about their romantic relationships did not

differ between parents and friends.

The results of the analysis for H1 have several implications. First, the results

indicate that even though young adults may disclose a lot of information to their parents,

they also disclose a significant amount to their friends. Additionally, perhaps the content

rather than the quantity of disclosure differs between individuals and their network

members. Young adults may feel the need to disclose information about their dating

partners to their parents for the reason of gaining approval and support for their romantic

relationships. At the same time, they may disclose information about their relational

partners to their friends for the purpose of sharing personal experiences and seeking

relationship advice. In terms of general disclosure that could or could not include

information about one's romantic relationship, participants did not differ in their amount of disclosure to parents and friends. Participants instead determined that they disclose approximately the same amount of information about themselves to both network members. It is likely, however, that the content and quality of information shared differs among friends and parents which is an avenue for future disclosure research.

Relationship Type of Social Network Member on Subjective Norms

Although there were no differences found between friend and parent network members on disclosure, the current study found that parents and friends differed regarding their influence on participants' subjective norms. H2 hypothesized that participants' subjective norms for parents would be more influential than those for a friend. The results from the current study support H2, suggesting that participants felt a greater degree of influence from their parents than their friends. The subjective norms variable represents perceived social network influence and perceived social support, so the results reveal that individuals perceive their parents to have more influence over their behavioral decisions.

Social network members are the basis of individuals' subjective norms because they are the source of the social influence felt by individuals regarding their behavioral intentions. As described in TRA research, subjective norms represent the general degree of social influence an individual feels from a network member regarding his decision to perform some action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Research supports the conclusion that subjective norms influence one's behavioral intentions and thus serve as a predictor of

one's performance of the behaviors in question, including one's romantic relationship behaviors (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004). Therefore, it is particularly significant that the results from the current study indicate that subjective norms for parents were more influential than those for friends.

The results of H2 contribute to extant research by identifying network member type as an additional predictor of social network influence. The results indicate that only 4% of the variance was explained by the relationship type variable; therefore, the effect was small and the difference between friends and parents on subjective norms was minimal. The results, however, establish a foundation for a study of differences among social network members. Beyond simply indicating that subjective norms generally have an effect on one's behavioral intentions, researchers can now begin to explore how subjective norms vary based on the relationships individuals maintain with certain social network members. Additionally, researchers can examine how different network members uniquely impact the degree of influence felt by individuals regarding their romantic relationship behavioral intentions.

Normative Beliefs and Motivation to Comply

Subjective norms are comprised of both one's normative beliefs for and motivation to comply with a network member. To account for the individual effect of each component of subjective norms, the normative beliefs and motivation to comply variables were tested separately for the different network members. Participants responded to questions about their motivation to comply with and normative beliefs for both their friends and parents. H3 and H4 respectively predicted that participants would

be more motivated to comply with their parents than their friends and that participants'

normative beliefs for their parents would be more influential than those for their friends.

Results from the current study support H3, suggesting that participants were more

motivated to comply with their parents rather than their friends. Participants' normative

beliefs for their parents and friends were the same; therefore, H4 was not supported.

Participants perceived their friends and parents to have similar preferences for the

behaviors they should or should not perform. Perhaps participants determined there was

no difference between their friends and parents in this manner because they did not

expect to receive more approval or disapproval of their actions from one network

member over another. One's expectation of approval/disapproval from a network

member often determines his normative beliefs for that social referent (Fishbein & Ajzen,

1975). The similarity in participants' normative beliefs for both network members in the

current study could therefore be a result of participants determining that they did not

receive more or less support regarding their romantic relationship behaviors from their

friends and parents.

The results for H3 and H4 suggest that although participants indicated more

motivation to comply with the wishes of their parents than their friends, they did not

necessarily employ stronger normative beliefs for their parents. TRA research suggests

that there is a weighted relationship between normative beliefs and motivation to comply

such that if one's motivation to comply with a particular social network member is high,

the influence of normative beliefs for that person should be strengthened (Ajzen &

Fishbein, 1980). Although an association between the two components of subjective

norms has been supported in extant research (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004), results from the current study reveal that high motivation to comply with a network member does not necessarily strengthen a participant's normative beliefs for that social referent. Additionally, an examination of the eta² value for H3 suggests that there was only a small amount of variance in a participant's motivation to comply with a network member that can be accounted for by the parental relationship type; however, this finding has significant implications.

The current study's findings regarding the two separate components of subjective norms are significant for several reasons. First, the results indicate that participants who reflected on their relationships with a parent network member reported high motivation to comply with the parent but their normative beliefs for that network member were no higher than their normative beliefs for a friend. The ANOVA analysis for H3 and H4 indicate that participants who reported high motivation to comply with a particular network member did not always have strong normative beliefs for that network member. Second, participants' motivation to comply was greater for their parents than their friends, as posited in H3.

Since the subjective norms variable is a composite of motivation to comply and normative beliefs, the current study attempted to determine where the difference between friend and parent network members for these two variables was taking place. The difference was revealed in the motivation to comply variable which resulted in participants having more motivation to comply with their parents than their friends. Since H4 was not supported and it was determined that participants' normative beliefs for

their friends and parents were not significantly different, the results suggest that the significant difference between friends and parents found on subjective norms occurred because of the motivation to comply variable. The normative beliefs variable was not a factor in the association between the relationship type of a network member and one's subjective norms.

The results previously mentioned are significant because they reveal the stronger tendency that participants have to yield to the perceived opinions of their parents rather than their friends. The foundation of the study was to determine differences between network members and their influence on individuals, and the results demonstrate such differences in participants' motivation to comply with parents more so than friends. Therefore, the results of H3 are significant to social network influence research.

Participants reporting high motivation to comply with parents suggests that individuals value the opinions of their parents to such a degree that they would be willing to follow through with their parents' wishes regarding their romantic relationship behaviors more so than complying with their friends' wishes. Perhaps the reason for this difference in participants' motivation to comply with different network members derives from their perceptions of possible consequences if they were to disregard their parents' wishes. For example, a young adult might fear the loss of emotional and financial support from a parent if she were to choose a dating partner that the parent did not approve of. An individual could also depend on such tangible and intangible materials from a friend, but it is likely that due to the age and status (college students) of the participants, they would be more dependent on their parents for such support. Weighing

the consequences of one's actions could potentially be a contributing factor in studies that indicate a strong association between parental support and romantic relationship commitment (Lewis, 1973; Parks et al., 1983). Further explanation of the social network influence effect should be explored in future research.

Frequency of Disclosure on Subjective Norms

In addition to the relationship type of the social network member, the model in the current study also predicted that the amount of disclosure shared between a participant and a network member would influence his subjective norms or perceived influence from his network members (H5). The results revealed that disclosure was not a significant predictor of participants' subjective norms and thus did not support H5. A component of one's subjective norms derives from normative beliefs or perceptions of network members' beliefs and opinions. It is likely that such perceptions would originate from past interactions between individuals and their network members, specifically trends in network members' reactions to certain disclosed information. Previous research on disclosure between young adults and their parents suggests that young adults engage in influence attempts via disclosure to their parents about their dating partners in the hopes of seeking approval for their romantic relationships (Leslie et al., 1986; Lewis, 1973). Perceptions of approval or disapproval regarding certain behaviors stem from pre-existing exchanges of information; therefore, measuring one's disclosure to network members was thought to establish another predictor of social influence.

A potential explanation for the non-significant finding of disclosure as a predictor of subjective norms involves the assessment of disclosure quantity rather than quality.

Perhaps only asking participants to reflect on the amount of disclosure shared with their friends and parents and not the quality or content of their disclosure could have had an effect on the results. Additionally, a premise in TRA research regarding perceived approval from network members compared to reported network opinions could have an impact on the disclosure variable. Extant research that has tested both perceived social network approval and network members' own reported approval as predictors of romantic commitment have found that perceived approval is the more significant predictor (Etcheverry et al., 2008). Thus, communicated approval/disapproval from network members does not always have as great an impact on social network influence or commitment.

The current study, however, sought to observe disclosure as more than simply an exchange of communicated approval from network members regarding individuals' romantic relationships. Disclosure instead represented the frequency with which individuals disclosed personal information about themselves to their network members. Participants who perceived their parents or friends to show disapproval of their romantic relationships perhaps chose not to disclose information about their romantic partners or their relationships in order to refrain from receiving the disapproval that they expected. Participants' fear of disapproval from their network members could have led to less self-disclosure and thus the non-significant finding for H5. Leslie et al.'s (1986) study revealed a similar pattern of behavior and found that parent-young adult interactions regarding the topic of romantic relationships did not have a significant impact on romantic relationship sustainability. When testing disclosure as a predictor of either

social network influence or romantic relationship commitment, extant research indicates that many factors can affect the variable causing it to have a decreased impact on the outcome variable of interest, which is likely the case for the current study.

Subjective Norms on Romantic Relationship Commitment

Past research has consistently shown that subjective norms are a significant predictor of relationship state and fate. Based on previous research, the current model hypothesized that a participant's subjective norms would be a significant predictor of his romantic relationship commitment (H7). The results for this hypothesis are consistent with social network influence research indicating that subjective norms are a significant predictor of the outcome variable, thus supporting H7.

Initially, studies measuring only normative beliefs as an indicator of social network influence found that perceived support and approval from network members was a significant predictor of romantic commitment (Cox et al., 1997; Sprecher, 1988; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992). More recent work on social network influence has measured both TRA components of subjective norms (normative beliefs and motivation to comply) and has also found that subjective norms predict romantic relationship commitment above and beyond the effects of other Investment Model variables including satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004; Etcheverry et al., 2008). The results from the current study are consistent with these findings. Subjective norms was found to significantly predict commitment and provided an explanation of variance beyond that provided by measures of attachment and one's romantic relationship duration in predicting the same outcome variable. Separate from

previous research, however, the results of the current model suggest that subjective norms are working as a predictor of commitment while influenced by a predictor of their own: the relationship type of a network member.

Avoidance and Anxiety on Frequency of Disclosure and Subjective Norms

Research on attachment styles and their impact on variables such as disclosure and subjective norms is limited, especially regarding attachment styles as predictors of one's perceived social network influence. The current model sought to explore the relationship between attachment and social network influence through two research questions. RQ1 and RQ2 respectively inquired about the effect of a participant's adult attachment style on both her disclosure to network members and her subjective norms. Results from the current study revealed that avoidance was a significant direct predictor of disclosure as well as a significant inverse predictor of subjective norms. For both regression analyses, anxiety was determined to be a non-significant predictor of the outcome variables.

The working models of attachment as well as the research conducted on young adults and their attachment styles help explain the results of the current study when testing attachment styles as predictors of disclosure and subjective norms. The current study found that only avoidance was a direct predictor of the frequency of disclosure between a participant and his network member. As a direct predictor, the results indicate that the more avoidant a participant was, the more he disclosed to his network member. There was only a slight effect in the regression model for this research question. According to attachment research, avoidant individuals have a difficult time feeling

comfortable around others; they find it difficult to trust or depend on others which typically causes them to disengage on an intimate level (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Due to this prototype of avoidance, it is interesting to note that the current study revealed that individuals identifying themselves as avoidant disclosed more to their network members than participants identifying themselves as anxious. Perhaps the reason for this result is due to the disclosure variable as a measure of the amount of information shared rather than the content. Participants with avoidant attachment styles may not have perceived general disclosure to their parents and friends as a threat to their comfort level with closeness to others. Due to the results, the response to RQ1 was that avoidant participants disclose more to their social network members than anxious participants. Although further research should be conducted regarding disclosure and attachment styles, the current study provides a first step in attempting to understand the association between attachment style and communication with social network members as opposed to romantic partners.

In terms of attachment as a predictor of subjective norms, the current study revealed that avoidance was a significant inverse predictor indicating that the less avoidant participants were, the more motivated they were to comply with their network members. Again, there was only a slight effect in the regression model for this test, but anxiety was proven again to be a non-significant predictor. As indicated in the results for H3 and H4, motivation to comply was the primary source of the effect taking place in the subjective norms variable on commitment. Therefore, avoidance as it relates to subjective norms has little connection to one's normative beliefs. The results of the

regression analysis for RQ2 suggest that someone who is less avoidant and thus has a more secure attachment will be more motivated to comply with her network members.

Avoidance is characterized by the perception of others as unsupportive, whereas the secure attachment prototype is characterized by feeling comfortable depending on others (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). The results are therefore consistent with the attachment prototypes in that someone who was secure identified with behavioral intentions to comply with the wishes of others and rely on their opinions to guide their romantic relationships. The finding for RQ2 is especially important because it begins to make a connection between one's attachment style and her perceived social network influence to a degree that impacts her romantic behavioral intentions. Understanding how an attachment style directly affects one's romantic relationship with a dating partner is not enough without also accounting for the relationship she shares with network members who influence her romantic relationship behavioral intentions. This study is the first to observe attachment as it impacts one's relationship with social network members and thus one's perceived social network influence.

Avoidance and Anxiety on Romantic Relationship Commitment

Extant research on attachment has consistently found that attachment predicts romantic relationship commitment in that secure attachments typically lead to greater commitment to a romantic partner (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Simpson, 1990). Due to these findings, the model in the current study also predicted that attachment would be a significant predictor of one's romantic relationship commitment (H6). The results of the

regression analysis for this hypothesis provided further evidence that attachment, particularly avoidance and anxiety, are predictors of romantic commitment. Avoidance was found to be a significant inverse predictor and anxiety a significant direct predictor of the outcome variable.

The results of H6 have a number of implications. The finding of avoidance as a significant inverse predictor of commitment suggests that the less avoidant a person is, the more she commits to her romantic relationship. Additionally, anxiety was a significant direct predictor indicating that the more anxious a person is about his relationship, the more romantic commitment he displays. Once again, these results are consistent with the attachment prototypes. Individuals who are less avoidant, and thus find it easier to depend on others and get close to them, also experience greater commitment to their romantic relationships. Those who are highly anxious and worry about receiving affection from others also display a higher commitment to their romantic partners/relationships. Anxious individuals tend to get very close to their romantic partners in order to compensate for the perceived lack of affection that their partners provide them (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Although this overcompensation of closeness can sometimes cause the dissolution of a romantic relationship, the romantic commitment from the anxious partner does not dissipate; rather, the commitment is intensified. Based on these results, one's attachment style (avoidance and anxiety) predicts romantic relationship commitment.

Summary of Findings

The results of the current study contribute to social network influence research in several ways. First, the study revealed that the type of relationship one shares with his social network members has a great deal of influence over his perceived influence from those network members. Specifically, parents and friends as social network members differ in their degree of influence over individuals. The participants indicated that they are more motivated to comply with the perceived wishes of their parents regarding their romantic relationship behavioral intentions more so than complying with their friends. The difference between friends and parents on this variable is important in helping researchers begin to understand how young adults make romantic behavioral decisions and whose influence affects them more when making such decisions. A second important contribution that the current study makes to extant research is the exploration of attachment as a predictor of social network influence. Instead of focusing on individuals' adult attachment styles as they relate to relationships with romantic partners, researchers can now begin to understand how the attachment one shares with her network members affects her romantic behavioral intentions. Social network influence directly predicted one's romantic commitment, but the current study expands upon that association and has tested predictors of the actual influence process. The findings of this study are theoretically and practically significant, but there are certain limitations to the study that will need to be addressed as future research on social network influence takes place.

Methodological Limitations

Although this study produced interesting findings, interpretations of the results must also consider the study's limitations. Issues with measurement involving the disclosure variable and its assessment of only the quantity of disclosure from participants to their network members serves as one limitation to the study. Another limitation involves demographics of the sample and possible shortcomings in providing a sample for the study that was not representative of the population. The type of measurement utilized in the study to assess social network influence from parents and friends presents a third limitation in terms of it providing less data than could be acquired if more time and a larger participant pool had been available.

The first limitation is that the study measured the quantity of disclosure but did not measure quality. When asked about their disclosure to parents and friends, participants were asked specifically about the average amount of disclosure that they communicated about themselves. Participants were never asked to reflect on the quality of disclosure in terms of the content of information that they disclosed to their network members. Perhaps inquiring about content communicated to participants' parents and friends that specifically involved their romantic relationships might have led to different results. In terms of examining the association between the relationship type of a social network member (i.e., friend, parent) and a participant's disclosure to that network member (H1), it might be more beneficial to examine not only how much a participant discloses information about himself but also how much information is disclosed about his

current romantic relationship or romantic partner. Perhaps individuals would disclose such information more to a parent than a friend or vice versa.

Another limitation of the study is that the sample may not be representative of the population due to the age of the participants. The participants were mainly young adults, and that may have affected the model in terms of participants' perceived social network influence as well as the effect of that influence on their romantic relationship commitment. Extant research that examines the relationship between individuals and their social network members typically focuses on premarital or dating relationships and young-adult behavior (Driscoll et al, 1972; Leslie et al, 1986; Parks et al, 1983). Research in this area of interpersonal communication could be expanded, however, to consider the effect of social network influence on many age groups of both premarital and marital couples. Remaining consistent with past research, this study concentrated on young adults and their friend and familial relationships. The finding that participants in this study felt more motivated to comply with their parents than their friends could have been drastically different had the sample been comprised of adults primarily in their twenties and thirties. Such individuals may have more clearly established independence from their parents than those in their late teens and early twenties. Observing various types of relationships, such as marriages, might also render different results regarding the effect of subjective norms on participants' relational commitment.

Examining only one individual within a romantic relationship, and only one of her social network members, was a third limitation of the study in terms of testing the current model and not obtaining enough data to examine a participant's perceived social network

influence in a comprehensive manner. The procedures used in the current study were designed to generate an equal amount of responses from participants about friend and parent network members; however, each participant reflected on only one of the two network members. It would have been interesting to have each participant respond to measurements for both a friend and a parent and compare one's perceived social network influence from them. The results might have been more interesting in terms of examining the difference between network members and their degree of influence on each participant individually rather than across the entire sample.

Directions for Future Research

Due to the limitations of the current study and the results that were generated after testing the present model, researchers now have several directions for future research on social network influence both in terms of method and theory.

Regarding methods, there are many directions that researchers can take to move beyond some of the limitations that exist in the current study. In terms of the limitation with the disclosure variable assessing only quantity and not quality, researchers might consider specifying the measurement of disclosure when attempting to examine the communication that transpires between an individual and his social network members. Measuring both quantity and quality (content) would improve researchers' understanding of the effect that self-disclosure to network members has on one's perceived social network influence and relational commitment. Additionally, researchers continuing to explore social network influence and its effect on romantic relationship state and fate

would benefit the literature by applying extant research to samples beyond young adults and premarital/dating partners. An examination of older adults or marital couples and possibly even individuals involved in non-traditional romantic relationships might render interesting findings in terms of their perceived social network influence and its effect on their romantic relationships. Further assessment of multiple network members (i.e., one friend *and* one parent) rather than one friend or one parent would also benefit research in terms of comparing a participant's perceived influence from several types of social networks. None of these suggestions for methodological changes to the research are difficult to make, but they could potentially alter the results significantly if applied to the current model of social network influence.

In terms of theoretical suggestions for future research, there are several directions that researchers could take to expand upon the literature. Researchers might explore other variables that could potentially serve as predictors of one's subjective norms or perceived social network influence such as the type of one's romantic relationship whether it be a same-sex, interracial, or age-gap relationship. Individuals in such non-traditional relationships are known to experience differences in romantic relationship satisfaction and commitment from those in more traditional partnerships (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2008). It would be interesting, however, to examine their perceived social network influence specifically from parents and friends to see if further differences in relationship state and fate occur due to the nature of their relationships.

Additionally, some extant research has examined the effect of perceived influence from a romantic partner's social network members on an individual. Exploring that

relationship further would also be an interesting avenue of research to take with the model from this study. Research shows that as romantic partners become closer over time, their social networks begin to combine and overlap (Milardo, 1982); therefore, it becomes necessary to measure the effect of both social networks on each of the partners to accurately account for their total perceived social network influence.

Social network members are undoubtedly a significant factor in research on social network influence; therefore, researchers would benefit from directly observing the reported beliefs and opinions provided by participants' network members in future studies. The subjective norms construct specifically relates to individuals' perceptions of the beliefs and opinions held by their network members. Comparing one's perceptions of network members' beliefs with the actual reported beliefs provided by the network members themselves would offer some detail on the accuracy of social influence perceptions as they relate to reality. Due to limitations of time and comprising an adequate sample size, surveying individuals' social network members for the present study was not possible. However, applying the predictors of social network influence from the current study to these research ideas in the future, such as disclosure, attachment style, and network member relationship type, could potentially provide many answers to the questions still left unanswered in this particular area of study.

Researchers might also consider studying how one's subjective norms, under the influence of the predictors in the current model, affect relational outcome variables other than commitment. Extant research has rendered results indicating that subjective norms predict romantic relationship commitment above and beyond relationship satisfaction,

quality of alternatives, and investment size (Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004; Etcheverry et al., 2008). It would be interesting to examine whether or not social network influence from both friends and parents would remain such a strong predictor of other romantic relationship outcome variables such as relational conflict, romantic infidelity, or couples' parenting decisions. The current model's inclusion of attachment style as a predictor of network influence would offer interesting results especially in a study of the association between social network influence and relational partners' parental roles. There are many avenues that researchers can take to further explore the unique degree of influence that different social network members such as friends and parents have on individuals' behavioral intentions.

Conclusion

The current study sought to expand on social network influence research by distinguishing between different types of network members and thus measuring their different degrees of influence on individuals and assessing how such influence affects one's romantic relationship commitment. Additionally, the model in the study sought to provide explanation of social network influence beyond what extant literature has already discovered by examining predictors of network influence including the frequency of disclosure between an individual and his network member as well as the participants' attachment style. The proposed hypotheses which predict more perceived social network influence from parents than friends derives from a comprehensive literature review of theory and research findings on disclosure, attachment, social network influence, and

relational commitment which support a strong association between young adults'

subjective norms and their level of commitment to a romantic partner.

The results supported several of the hypotheses and provided interesting answers

to the research questions discussed in Chapter 1. The finding of subjective norms and

attachment as predictors of the outcome variable remained consistent with previous

research suggesting that one's perceived social network influence as well as his

attachment style have a significant impact on his commitment to a romantic relationship.

Specifically, those with secure attachment styles are more likely to comply with the

wishes of their social network members because they feel comfortable depending on

others for guidance and support. Additionally, it was discovered that participants were

more motivated to comply with the beliefs and opinions of their parents than their friends

regarding their romantic relationships. This finding has two important implications. The

fact that participants were more motivated to comply with their parents than their friends

clearly distinguishes between friends and parents as social network members which was

the original purpose of this study. Secondly, the finding suggests that network members

have a great deal of influence over one's behavioral intentions including one's relational

commitment.

The current study expands upon social network influence literature by utilizing a

measurement that allows for the equal assessment of friends and parents as network

members. The relationships that exist between individuals and their network members

are exceptionally important to analyze in order to accurately assess the source of one's

behavioral intentions whether they be romantic in nature or not. Considering that

people's behavioral intentions are determined equally by their own attitudes toward a behavior as well as the social support that they receive for that behavior, the value of studying social network influence becomes that much more prominent. The results of the current study emphasize the importance of examining predictors of social network influence that ultimately affect the state of individuals' romantic relationships.

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ENDNOTES

[1]See Reinard (2006) for details on computing eta^2.

APPENDIX A

Normative Belief Scale Items

<u>Instructions</u>: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding your perceptions of how your (friend or parent) feels about your current romantic relationship (circle an answer for each item).

1. This person thinks I should continue in my current romantic relationship.

      Disagree strongly   Neutral / mixed   Agree strongly
          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

2. This person thinks I have a current romantic relationship worth keeping.

      Disagree strongly   Neutral / mixed   Agree strongly
          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

3. This person thinks this is a good current romantic relationship for me.

      Disagree strongly   Neutral / mixed   Agree strongly
          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

4. This person is supportive of my current romantic relationship.

      Disagree strongly   Neutral / mixed   Agree strongly
          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

APPENDIX B

Motivation to Comply Scale Items

Instructions: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding your willingness to comply with your (friend or parent) in relation to your current romantic relationship (circle an answer for each item).

1. With respect to my romantic relationships, I do *not* want to do what this person thinks I should do.

       Disagree strongly   Neutral / mixed   Agree strongly
          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

2. When making decisions about my romantic partners, I am likely to let this person's opinion affect my actions.

       Disagree strongly   Neutral / mixed   Agree strongly
          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

3. When deciding who I spend time with, I want to do what this person thinks I should do.

       Disagree strongly   Neutral / mixed   Agree strongly
          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

4. When making decisions about who is a potential dating partner, I am affected by what this person thinks.

       Disagree strongly   Neutral / mixed   Agree strongly
          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Multi-Item Measure of Adult Romantic Attachment

Experiences in Close Relationships

<u>Instructions</u>: The following statements concern how you feel in romantic relationships. I am interested in how you generally experience relationships, not just in what is happening in a current relationship. Respond to each statement by indicating how much you agree or disagree with it. Write the number in the space provided, using the following rating scale:

```
Disagree strongly      Neutral / mixed        Agree strongly
        1       2       3       4       5       6       7
```

__ 1. I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down.

__ 2. I worry about being abandoned.

__ 3. I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners.

__ 4. I worry a lot about my relationships.

__ 5. Just when my partner starts to get close to me I find myself pulling
    away.

__ 6. I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care
    about them.

__ 7. I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close.

__ 8. I worry a fair amount about losing my partner.

__ 9. I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners.

__ 10. I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my
    feelings for him/her.

__ 11. I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back.

__ 12. I often want to merge completely with romantic partners, and this sometimes
    scares them away.

__ 13. I am nervous when partners get too close to me.

__ 14. I worry about being alone.

__ 15. I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my
    partner.

__ 16. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.

__ 17. I try to avoid getting too close to my partner.
__ 18. I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner.
__ 19. I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner.
__ 20. Sometimes I feel that I force my partners to show more feeling, more commitment.
__ 21. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners.
__ 22. I do not often worry about being abandoned.
__ 23. I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.
__ 24. If I can't get my partner to show interest in me, I get upset or angry.
__ 25. I tell my partner just about everything.
__ 26. I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like.
__ 27. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.
__ 28. When I'm not involved in a relationship, I feel somewhat anxious and insecure.
__ 29. I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.
__ 30. I get frustrated when my partner is not around as much as I would like.
__ 31. I don't mind asking romantic partners for comfort, advice, or help.
__ 32. I get frustrated if romantic partners are not available when I need them.
__ 33. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.
__ 34. When romantic partners disapprove of me, I feel really bad about myself.
__ 35. I turn to my partner for many things, including comfort and reassurance.
__ 36. I resent it when my partner spends time away from me.

APPENDIX D

Investment Model Scale

Commitment Level Items

Instructions: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding your current relationship (circle an answer for each item).

1. I want our relationship to last for a very long time.

        Disagree strongly   Neutral / mixed   Agree strongly
             1   2   3   4   5   6   7

2. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner.

        Disagree strongly   Neutral / mixed   Agree strongly
             1   2   3   4   5   6   7

3. I would not feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future.

        Disagree strongly   Neutral / mixed   Agree strongly
             1   2   3   4   5   6   7

4. It is likely that I will date someone other than my partner within the next year.

        Disagree strongly   Neutral / mixed   Agree strongly
             1   2   3   4   5   6   7

5. I feel very attached to our relationship – very strongly linked to my partner.

        Disagree strongly   Neutral / mixed   Agree strongly
             1   2   3   4   5   6   7

6. I want our relationship to last forever.

        Disagree strongly   Neutral / mixed   Agree strongly
             1   2   3   4   5   6   7

7. I am oriented toward the long-term future of my relationship (for example, I imagine being with my partner several years from now).

           Disagree strongly   Neutral / mixed   Agree strongly
                 1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Self-Disclosure Scale

Amount Items

<u>Instructions</u>: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements to reflect how you communicate with your (<u>friend or parent</u>) (circle an answer for each item).

1. I do not often talk about myself.

      Disagree strongly   Neutral / mixed   Agree strongly

          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

2. My statements of my feelings are usually brief.

      Disagree strongly   Neutral / mixed   Agree strongly

          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

3. I usually talk about myself for fairly long periods at a time.

      Disagree strongly   Neutral / mixed   Agree strongly

          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

4. My conversation lasts the least time when I am discussing myself.

      Disagree strongly   Neutral / mixed   Agree strongly

          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

5. I often talk about myself.

      Disagree strongly   Neutral / mixed   Agree strongly

          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

6. I often discuss my feelings about myself.

      Disagree strongly   Neutral / mixed   Agree strongly

          1   2   3   4   5   6   7

7. Only infrequently do I express my personal beliefs and opinions.

Disagree strongly   Neutral / mixed   Agree strongly

1   2   3   4   5   6   7