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**Extradynamic Communication with Friends about Negative Relational Events in
Romantic Relationships: Development of a Measure and Implications for
Friendship and Romantic Relationship Functioning**

Jessalyn I. Vallade

**Dissertation submitted
to the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences
at West Virginia University**

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy in
Communication Studies**

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Department of Communication Studies

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**Keywords: extradynamic communication; Investment Model; negative relational
events; topic avoidance; friendship, romantic relationships
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ABSTRACT

Extradyadic Communication with Friends about Negative Relational Events in Romantic Relationships: Development of a Measure and Implications for Friendship and Romantic Relationship Functioning

Jessalyn I. Vallade

Interpersonal relationships, and the communication that takes place within them, do not exist in a vacuum (Milardo, 1982). Extant research provides much useful information about the importance of perceived network support and interference for romantic relationships, yet there is limited information regarding why and how people engage in extradyadic communication with network members when they experience negative relational events in their romantic relationships. The purpose of the current dissertation was to (a) develop and validate measures of the motives and content of romantic partners' and friends' extradyadic communication about negative relational events in romantic relationships, (b) investigate relational and partner characteristics as predictors of extradyadic communication, and (c) examine the implications of extradyadic communication for communication behavior and relational outcomes in both friendships and romantic relationships. Three studies were designed to accomplish these goals. Results of focus groups conducted in Study One provided several dominant themes related to romantic partners' and friends' respective motives for and message content within extradyadic interactions about negative relational events in romantic relationships. These themes provided the basis for scale item development for Study Two, in which the results of exploratory factor analyses revealed the initial underlying factor structure of the motives and content scales for both romantic partners and friends. Results also indicated that romantic partners' perceived relational quality, as defined by the Investment Model (Rusbult, 1980), significantly and negatively predicted romantic partners' use of negative extradyadic messages, but not friends' extradyadic messages. In addition, romantic partners' perceived partner uniqueness negatively predicted the use of their own negative messages and friends' interference messages. Further, romantic partners' satisfaction with their friendship negatively predicted their use of negative extradyadic messages, and friends' perceptions of friendship closeness negatively predicted their use of support messages. In Study Three, additional scale modifications and confirmatory factor analyses were undertaken, validating the final factor structure of romantic partners' and friends' motives and content scales, respectively. Study Three also used observed conversations to examine the interactions of romantic partners' and friends' message content. Overwhelmingly, results indicated that the interaction of romantic partners' and friends' extradyadic messages (in terms of content) did not have a significant impact on immediate relational outcomes. Although there were some limitations to be considered, results provide a foundation for several areas of future research and continued investigation into reasons for and patterns of extradyadic communication and both romantic relationship and friendship functioning.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|------|
| ABSTRACT | ii |
| LIST OF TABLES | vi |
| LIST OF FIGURES | viii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | ix |
| CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| Social Networks and Romantic Relationships..... | 2 |
| Network Support and Interference..... | 5 |
| Extradyadic Communication about Negative Relational Events | 11 |
| Motivation for Extradyadic Communication | 12 |
| Social Support..... | 12 |
| Face Management | 14 |
| Relational Uncertainty | 16 |
| Extradyadic Communication Message Content..... | 22 |
| Extradyadic Communication Predictors and Consequences..... | 27 |
| Relational Quality Indicators as Predictors..... | 27 |
| Interdependence and the Investment Model in Romantic Relationships..... | 30 |
| Investment Model and Quality of Friendships..... | 32 |
| Partner Perceptions as a Predictor..... | 37 |
| Perceived Partner Uniqueness..... | 37 |
| Consequences for the Friendship | 40 |
| Consequences for the Romantic Relationship | 43 |
| Relational Satisfaction and Commitment | 43 |
| Summary..... | 46 |
| CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY | 47 |
| Overview..... | 47 |
| Study One..... | 47 |
| Participants..... | 47 |
| Procedure | 48 |
| Data Analysis | 50 |
| Study Two..... | 51 |
| Participants..... | 52 |
| Romantic Partner Sample | 52 |
| Friend Sample | 52 |
| Procedures and Instrumentation..... | 53 |
| Investment Model | 54 |
| Perceived Partner Uniqueness..... | 54 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Negative Relational Event | 54 |
| Friendship Quality | 57 |
| Extradyadic Communication Motives and Content..... | 57 |
| Romantic Partner Extradyadic Communication Motives | 59 |
| Romantic Partner Extradyadic Message Content | 62 |
| Friend Extradyadic Communication Motives..... | 65 |
| Friend Extradyadic Message Content | 65 |
| Data Analysis..... | 67 |
| Preliminary Analyses..... | 67 |
| Tests of Research Questions and Hypotheses..... | 70 |
| Study Three..... | 71 |
| Participants..... | 71 |
| Romantic Partner Sample | 72 |
| Friend Sample | 72 |
| Procedure | 73 |
| Confirmatory Factor Analyses..... | 74 |
| Romantic Partner Extradyadic Communication Motives | 75 |
| Romantic Partner Extradyadic Message Content | 76 |
| Friend Extradyadic Communication Motives..... | 76 |
| Friend Extradyadic Message Content | 77 |
| Time 1 Pre-Interaction Instrumentation – Romantic Partner..... | 84 |
| Friendship Quality | 84 |
| Investment Model | 84 |
| Perceived Partner Uniqueness..... | 84 |
| Negative Relational Event | 84 |
| Extradyadic Communication Motives | 84 |
| Time 1 Pre-Interaction Instrumentation – Friend | 87 |
| Friendship Quality | 87 |
| Suitability of Friend’s Romantic Partner | 87 |
| Extradyadic Communication Motives | 87 |
| Romantic Relationship Status and Quality | 87 |
| Time 2 Post-Interaction Instrumentation – Romantic Partner | 88 |
| Realism of Interaction..... | 88 |
| Extradyadic Communication Content..... | 89 |
| Friendship Quality | 90 |
| Topic Avoidance with Friend | 90 |
| Romantic Relationship Satisfaction and Commitment | 90 |
| Time 1 Post-Interaction Instrumentation – Friend..... | 91 |
| Realism of Interaction..... | 91 |
| Friends’ Extradyadic Message Content | 91 |
| Friendship Quality | 91 |
| Topic Avoidance with Friend | 92 |
| Data Analysis..... | 92 |
| Preliminary Analyses..... | 92 |
| Tests of Hypotheses | 93 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Summary | 94 |
| CHAPTER III: RESULTS | 96 |
| Study One..... | 96 |
| Study Two..... | 112 |
| Preliminary Analyses | 112 |
| Tests of Research Questions and Hypotheses..... | 113 |
| Study Three..... | 125 |
| Preliminary Analyses | 125 |
| Tests of Hypotheses | 126 |
| Summary | 138 |
| CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION | 141 |
| Limitations | 160 |
| Future Directions | 163 |
| Conclusion | 168 |
| REFERENCES | 170 |
| APPENDICES | 201 |
| A. Study One Participant Cover Letter | 201 |
| B. Study One Discussion Prompts..... | 203 |
| C. Study One Demographic Questionnaire..... | 205 |
| D. Study One Focus Group Guide | 207 |
| E. Study Two Cover Letter | 209 |
| F. Study Two Romantic Partner Questionnaire | 210 |
| G. Study Two Friend Questionnaire | 222 |
| H. Study Three Participant Consent Form..... | 230 |
| I. Study Three Pre-Interaction Questionnaire - Romantic Partner | 232 |
| J. Study Three Pre-Interaction Questionnaire – Friend | 237 |
| K. Study Three Post-Interaction Questionnaire - Romantic Partner..... | 243 |
| L. Study Three Post-Interaction Questionnaire - Friend..... | 248 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table 1. Psychometric Properties of Study Two Variables | 55 |
| Table 2. EFA Results for Romantic Partners' Extradynamic Communication Motives | 60 |
| Table 3. EFA Results for Romantic Partners' Extradynamic Message Content | 63 |
| Table 4. EFA Results for Friends' Extradynamic Communication Motives | 66 |
| Table 5. EFA Results for Friends' Extradynamic Message Content | 68 |
| Table 6. Modified Measure of Romantic Partners' Extradynamic Communication Motives | 80 |
| Table 7. Modified Measure of Romantic Partners' Extradynamic Communication Content | 81 |
| Table 8. Modified Measure of Friends' Extradynamic Communication Motives | 82 |
| Table 9. Modified Measure of Friends' Extradynamic Communication Content | 83 |
| Table 10. Psychometric Properties of Study Three Variables | 85 |
| Table 11. Study One Results for Romantic Partner Extradynamic Message Motives | 97 |
| Table 12. Study One Results for Friends' Extradynamic Communication Motives | 102 |
| Table 13. Study One Results for Romantic Partner Extradynamic Message Content | 105 |
| Table 14. Study One Results for Friends' Extradynamic Message Content | 109 |
| Table 15. Two-Tailed Correlations for Romantic Partner Motives and Content | 115 |
| Table 16. Two-Tailed Correlations for Friend Motives and Content | 116 |
| Table 17. Study Two Hierarchical Regression Results for Investment Model and Relational Negativity Messages | 117 |
| Table 18. Study Two Hierarchical Regression Results for Investment Model and Advice and Validation Messages | 119 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table 19. Study Two Hierarchical Regression Results for Investment Model and Event Explanation Messages | 120 |
| Table 20. Study Two Hierarchical Regression Results for Romantic Partners' Friendship Quality and Relational Negativity Messages..... | 122 |
| Table 21. Study Two Hierarchical Regression Results for Friends' Friendship Quality and Support Messages..... | 124 |
| Table 22. Study Three Hierarchical Regression Results for Friends' General Intent to Avoid based on the Interaction of Romantic Partners' Negative Messages and Friends' Interference Messages | 129 |

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Study Three Interaction Effect of Romantic Partners' Negative Messages and
Friends' Interference Messages for Friends' General Intent to Avoid131

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Chapter One

Introduction

Much of the research on interpersonal relationships has focused either on individual or dyadic attributes of relational partners, and how these attributes influence relational outcomes (Milardo, 1982). However, interpersonal relationships, and the communication that takes place within them, do not exist in a vacuum (Huston & Burgess, 1979; Milardo, 1982; Parks & Adelman, 1983; Parks, Stan, & Eggert, 1983; Sprecher, 1988). Members of individuals' social networks, or the people with whom they have relationships (Parks, 2011), are capable of aiding or impeding the development, maintenance, and dissolution of romantic relationships (Milardo, 1982, 1988; Sprecher, 1988; Surra, 1988). In particular, members of social networks with whom partners have interpersonal relationships have an especially elevated influence on the romantic relationship (e.g., Milardo, Johnson, & Huston, 1983). For example, in a study of inductively derived characteristics of families that function well, Greeff (2000) found that wives' perceptions of good relationships with friends and family members led to more effective marital and family functioning. As such, in the current dissertation, network members with whom individuals have interpersonal relationships, such as friends and family, and the impact they can have on romantic relationships will be examined.

Kim and Stiff (1991), among others (e.g., Parks & Adelman, 1983), have highlighted the importance of the interplay between relational partners and their social networks, which contributes to the evolution of romantic relationships. Sharing networks has been identified as one of five prosocial strategies for maintaining relationships, and has been consistently associated with positive relational qualities such as satisfaction,

commitment, control mutuality, and liking for one's partner in romantic relationships (Canary & Stafford, 1992; Stafford & Canary, 1991). Social networks can have a profound impact on the success or failure of romantic relationships (Agnew, Loving, & Drigotas, 2001), and have significant influence on the stability and change within these relationships (Sprecher, Felmlee, Orbuch, & Willetts, 2002). Extant research supports the influence that social network members can have on romantic relationships, although currently there are limited means of empirically assessing extradyadic communication behaviors. In general, extradyadic communication refers to communication about the romantic relationship or partner with individuals external to the romantic dyad, particularly with those with whom individuals have an interpersonal relationship, such as friends or family members. The purpose of this dissertation is to develop valid measurement of extradyadic communication motivation and content, and investigate the extent to which this communication impacts partners' relationships with each other as well as their relationships with network members (i.e., friends).

Social Networks and Romantic Relationships

Scholars have long acknowledged the importance of social interaction in the formation and maintenance of dyadic relationships (e.g., Waller & Hill, 1951). Much of this early work laid the foundation for current research on the social networks within which our romantic relationships are embedded. For example, symbolic interactionist theory (Mead, 1934) was based on the argument that the formation and maintenance of individuals' identities depends largely on the reactions of significant others, including members of social networks. This basic interactionist tenet was supported in early work by Bates (1942), which examined the role of parents in their children's selection of a

marital partner, and Dunphy (1963), who investigated how peer groups provide a context that can facilitate the development of romantic relationships. Further, Lewis (1973) argued that this basic interactionist tenet should logically extend to the formation of couples' relational identity, highlighting the role of social network members in the initiation, development, and maintenance of romantic relationships.

Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model argued that family functioning is affected by a family's mesosystem, or the relationships and interactions family members have with individuals in their larger social network. This model predicts that, to the extent that relationships with network members are supportive of the couple or family, individuals' or couples' outcomes will be optimal (Cotton, Cunningham, & Antill, 1993). This basic assumption is consistent with much of the work examining network support and interference in romantic relationships (e.g., Johnson & Milardo, 1984; Parks & Adelman, 1983; Parks et al., 1983).

Similarly, Heider's (1958) balance theory has provided the framework for predictions regarding the principle of transitivity in relation to social networks and romantic relationships. Transitivity (i.e., if A likes B and B likes C, then A should also like C) predicts that romantic involvement and social network involvement should be positively associated, such that as individuals become more involved with a romantic partner they will also become more involved with the members of that partner's social network (Parks et al., 1983). Sprecher and Felmlee (2000) found that liking for a partner's friends increased significantly over time, a finding which may provide evidence of a natural balance that ultimately occurs, whereby the relationships among romantic partners and members of their respective social networks become stable as romantic

partners develop positive relationships with each other's friends and family (and reduce interaction with those with whom partners do not have positive relationships). Indeed, many scholars have investigated what has been termed the dyadic or social withdrawal hypothesis (Johnson & Leslie, 1982), which refers to a pattern of network change as a romantic relationship develops. As a couple becomes more committed to each other, their individual networks tend to shrink in size and their shared network grows in size, resulting in higher network density (Huston & Burgess, 1979; Huston & Levinger, 1978; Johnson & Leslie, 1982; Kim & Stiff, 1991; Levinger, 1977; Milardo, 1983; Parks et al., 1983). Substantial support exists for the withdrawal hypothesis in terms of the shifting structure of couples' networks, generally suggesting that couples develop more shared friends and decrease their respective independent friendships as their romantic relationship progresses (e.g., Kalmijn, 2003; Kearns & Leonard, 2004; Milardo, 1982).

Over the past few decades, researchers have continued to examine the role of social networks in the formation and functioning of romantic relationships. Scholars persist in highlighting the need for increased focus on the reciprocal influence of social networks and dyadic relationships (e.g., Parks, 2011), and several studies have provided empirical support for the contention that the quality of a romantic relationship is positively associated with healthy relationships with and the perceived support of members of larger social networks. The majority of this research has primarily taken one of two forms: considerations of network structure or investigations of network support/interference.

Although much research has focused on the impact of couples' network structures (i.e., size, overlap/density, reach, centrality, transitivity) on relationship outcomes

(Johnson & Leslie, 1982; Krain, 1977; Milardo, 1982; Milardo et al., 1983), this dissertation is focused on perceptions and enactment of network support and interference. Additionally, although involvement with partners' families is particularly important for married couples (Cotton et al., 1993; Kearns & Leonard, 2004), dating couples may more often share friendship networks as their relationship progresses (Cotton et al., 1993). As such, friends appear to be especially influential for the functioning of dating relationships, but extant research is less informative regarding how friendship networks may influence romantic partners' communication and relational quality in dating relationships. Therefore, the focus of this dissertation is on extradyadic communication with romantic partners' friends, given the importance of friendship networks in the formation, functioning, and continued existence of premarital romantic relationships (e.g., Milardo et al., 1983), and the support and interference of friends during extradyadic interactions.

Network support and interference. Scholars have investigated the extent to which partners perceive their social networks to be supportive of the romantic relationship, and how this perceived support can enhance or mitigate the quality and endurance of the relationship. In other words, researchers have focused on the impact of couples' perceptions of network support or interference on relationship outcomes (Eggert & Parks, 1987; Johnson & Milardo, 1984; Lewis, 1973; Parks & Adelman, 1983; Parks et al., 1983). For example, based on the theory of psychological reactance (Brehm, 1966), Driscoll, Davis, and Lipetz (1972) predicted and found that perceptions of parental interference (e.g., disapproval of the relationship) in their young adult children's romantic relationships increased romantic partners' experience of romantic love in both married

and unmarried couples. However, this “Romeo and Juliet effect” has received little subsequent support (Parks et al., 1983). Instead, most researchers have found that the perceived support of one’s network members has a positive impact on the quality and strength of romantic relationships (Krain, 1977; Lewis, 1973), while perceived network interference tends to be associated with poorer relationship quality as well as shorter relationship duration (Johnson & Milardo, 1984). Indeed, despite the finding that perceived interference from parents was associated with higher levels of romantic love, Driscoll et al. (1972) also found this interference to be negatively associated with trust and positively associated with perceptions of critical and negative irritating behaviors within romantic relationships. Thus, although individuals may sometimes have strong feelings of love for their partners in the face of perceived network interference, the overall quality of the relationship appears to suffer.

Milardo (1982) argued that network interference is most likely to occur when romantic partners begin to become more involved with each other, but before their relationship is established as stable and intimate. Milardo’s argument centered on the notion of network change and competing affiliations, such that as a romantic relationship becomes more serious and partners become more intimate, the time and resources they once spent on friends are now diverted toward the romantic partner and relationship. This causes friends to react negatively and potentially attempt to interfere with the relationship. Johnson and Milardo (1984) found support for this argument, with the highest levels of network interference occurring during the middle stages of relational development. Findings regarding network interference parallel more recent research on partner interference, presented as a component of the Relational Turbulence Model

(Solomon & Knobloch, 2004). Within this model, perceived interference by a romantic partner is predicted to be highest at moderate levels of intimacy, with negative consequences for individual and relational functioning (Knobloch & Theiss, 2011; Theiss, Knobloch, Checton, & Magsamen-Conrad, 2009).

Perceptions of interference from network members have been associated with less frequent interaction with one's partner and less positive expectations for the future of the relationship (Parks et al., 1983) and are also predictive of relationship termination one year later (Johnson & Milardo, 1984). In marital relationships, when spouses perceive low levels of support from friends and family, they are more likely to consider separation or divorce from their spouse (Bryant & Conger, 1999) and divorced individuals often cite opposition from friends and family members as contributing to the failure of the marriage (Cleek & Pearson, 1985). Thus, research findings consistently support the association between perceived network interference and lower relational quality as well as increased likelihood of relationship termination.

Conversely, research findings consistently confirm the positive influence of perceived network support on romantic relationships. In a longitudinal study, Lewis (1973) found that the more positive the social reactions of friends and family are to the relationship (e.g., invitations to events as a couple, positive comments about the relationship), the more likely romantic relationships were to persist ten weeks later. In addition, positive social reactions at time one were associated with partners' greater commitment, value consensus, dating status, dyadic functioning, and boundary maintenance ten weeks later, suggesting that perceptions of network support encourage improved relational quality and increased relational stability. Scholars have found that

network support was positively linked with relational development, progression, romantic involvement and commitment, and negatively related to premarital breakups (Krain, 1977; Parks, 2007; Parks et al., 1983; Sprecher, 1988; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992). The more approval individuals perceived for their relationships, the more disapproval they perceived regarding the termination of their relationship, suggesting that network approval was associated with relationship stability (Sprecher & Felmlee, 2000).

Additionally, support from friends and family has been found to be a strong indicator of mate selection across cultures (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994; Zhang & Kline, 2009) and is predictive of relational well being across six stages of relational development in both cross-sex and same-sex romantic relationships (Blair & Holmberg, 2008). In dating relationships, the perception that friends and family want one to continue a romantic relationship positively predicts commitment to a romantic partner, regardless of the reported level of satisfaction, investments, or the perceived quality of alternatives to the relationship (Cox, Wexler, Rusbult, & Gaines, 1997), providing strong evidence of the influence of network support on relational stability. Similarly, as part of Commitment Theory (Johnson, 1973), Johnson (1999) identified the construct of structural commitment, which involves the consideration of costs associated with relational termination and subsequent feelings of being constrained in the relationship. One component of structural commitment concerns social pressures, which constrain an individual and may compel him/her to stay in a relationship. Other researchers have suggested that people who generally have supportive relationships with network members are more likely to be involved in a supportive romantic relationship, perhaps because they learn to expect and enact more positive relational behaviors, which they transfer from

friendships to romantic relationships (Connolly & Johnson, 1996; Furman, 1999).

Given the extensive evidence regarding the positive influence of network support on romantic relationships, it is not surprising that romantic partners often actively seek the support of friends and family members. Researchers have investigated how individuals try to actively influence members of their social networks in order to gain support for their romantic relationships. Leslie, Huston, and Johnson (1986) argued that, while parents are conveying their feelings about their young adult children's dating relationship (e.g., Driscoll et al., 1972), it is likely that young adults are attempting to influence their parents' opinions of their romantic partner and/or relationship. Indeed, Leslie et al. found that the majority of young adults reported intentionally attempting to influence their parents, more often targeting their mothers' opinions. Individuals identified strategies such as making direct, positive statements to parents about the partner, arranging opportunities for parents to spend more time with a romantic partner, and helping one's partner impress their parents. Young adults who reported relationships in later stages of involvement were most likely to try and influence their parents.

Similarly, Crowley (2012) explored the ways in which individuals attempt to marshal support for their romantic relationships from network members. Crowley found that approximately 84% of participants reported using an approach orientation, actively engaging in various direct (e.g., defending aspects of their relationship and/or partner, soliciting support by asking directly) and indirect (e.g., highlighting or exaggerating positives about their partner, increasing relationship talk) strategies in an attempt to obtain network support for a romantic relationship. These results further confirm the importance of network support, suggesting that individuals not only enjoy higher quality

and longer-lasting relationships when they perceive that their network approves of the association, they also actively seek this support for their romantic associations.

Taken together, extant research provides much useful information about the importance of perceived network support and interference and attempts to gain or maintain support for the relationship in general, yet researchers have not focused on specific contextual issues or conducted in-depth explorations of individual interactions with network members and their effects on romantic associations. For example, there is limited information regarding why and how people engage in extradyadic communication when they are experiencing problems in their romantic relationships. Fincham (2000) points out the irony that the people with whom we are closest are also the people who are most likely to hurt us. For instance, conflict has been identified as unavoidable in close relationships (e.g., Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991), and although conflict itself is not inherently problematic, it can have negative relational implications. Specifically, conflict can result in decreased relational satisfaction and can also influence decisions to terminate a relationship when handled poorly, using destructive communication and/or a pattern of avoidant behaviors (Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998; Kurdek, 1994). Further, within romantic relationships, partners often commit relational transgressions, engaging in acts that violate implicit or explicit relationship rules, norms, or expectations (Metts, 1994), such as infidelity or involvement with a third party, deception, betrayal of a confidence, or breaking of a promise (Afifi, Falato, & Weiner, 2001; Bachman & Guerrero, 2006a, 2006b; Guerrero & Bachman, 2008; Metts & Cupach, 2007). Hurtful messages from a romantic partner, particularly those devaluing the relationship, are also considered negative experiences in relationships

(Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998; Vangelisti, 1994). Further, people often report that their partners engage in irritating or frustrating behaviors (Solomon & Knobloch, 2004; Theiss & Knobloch, 2009). In short, a large body of research indicates that individuals often experience romantic relationship problems or negative relational events.

Although some research suggests that partners may avoid disclosure of relationship problems in order to garner or maintain network members' approval of the relationship (e.g., Crowley, 2012), other research suggests that partners may feel the need to discuss their relationship frustrations with friends, regardless of the overall desire for network support. Indeed, when negative events occur in a romantic relationship, individuals often seek communication with network members (Julien & Markman, 1991), but little is known about the specific motivators of this communication, the content of these discussions, and how this communication ultimately impacts the individual and his/her relationships, both with the friend and with the romantic partner. These processes and outcomes are investigated in this dissertation via the development of measurement for extradyadic communication motives and content, as well as subsequent exploration of how this communication influences both romantic relationships and friendships.

Extradyadic Communication about Negative Relational Events

In order to more fully understand how extradyadic communication about negative relational events in romantic relationships unfolds, as well as the effects of this communication on subsequent relationship outcomes, it is necessary to examine these interactions more closely. More specifically, it will be useful to know more about *why* individuals seek communication with friends when they are experiencing difficulties in

their romantic relationships. Thus, the present dissertation includes an exploration of individuals' extradyadic communication motives, or the reasons why people communicate (Rubin, Perse, & Barbato, 1988) with friends about negative relational events in a romantic relationship. Although there are a myriad of potential reasons for engaging in extradyadic communication about romantic relationship problems, three specific motivations emerge as particularly relevant in extant literature: social support, face management, and relational uncertainty. In addition to why individuals engage in extradyadic communication, it is necessary to glean more information about the content of these interactions in order to understand how they may impact subsequent communication and relationship outcomes. In the present dissertation, in addition to investigating individuals' motivation for discussing negative relational events in romantic relationships with friends, extradyadic communication content will be explored in terms of network messages of support and interference.

Motivation for Extradyadic Communication

Social support. Julien and Markman (1991) found that marital distress prompted spouses to seek social support from network members outside of the marriage. Specifically, when husbands and wives were experiencing higher levels of marital stress, they more often went to network members to discuss marital problems and to seek companionship than did husbands and wives experiencing lower levels of marital stress. However, when seeking support outside of the relationship regarding marital problems (as opposed to seeking support from the spouse within the relationship), spouses reported more negative mental and physical health symptoms. Thus, instead of mitigating the effects of marital stress, seeking support by discussing marital problems with others

exacerbated the effects of this stress. More research is needed to determine why this result was obtained, particularly given the wealth of research suggesting that social support typically alleviates physical and psychological symptoms of stress (e.g., Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002). The authors speculated that discussing marital problems and seeking support from network members might predict increases in marital distress to the extent that this communication is conducted to the exclusion of communication with the individual's spouse. In other words, when individuals seek communication with network members *instead of* communicating with a spouse about marital problems, it may lead to increases in marital distress.

Conversely, scholars (Lepore, 1992) have found evidence of cross-domain buffering, whereby social support from one domain (e.g., friends, family, romantic partner) can mitigate the effects of low support from other domains. Specifically, researchers have found that social support from network members can help to buffer the negative effects of low levels of romantic partner support, including loneliness (Eshbaugh, 2010) and physical and mental health related symptoms (Rini et al., 2008). Thus, when people experience stress-inducing negative events in romantic relationships, particularly if they perceive low levels of support from their romantic partner, they may engage in extradyadic communication in an attempt to garner the necessary social support.

At one time or another, everyone experiences events that may cause distress, and frequently, people choose to cope with this distress by seeking support from close members of their social networks (Chang, 2001; Mortenson, Burleson, Feng, & Liu, 2009). Cutrona, Cohen, and Igram (1990) pointed out that network members typically

offer support only after receiving some indication from the individual that s/he needs or wants support. Thus, support seeking initiates the social support process, often influencing the receipt and effectiveness of support from network members, as well as individual and relational outcomes associated with social support (Cunningham & Barbee, 2000).

Scholars have pointed out the importance of both seeking and receiving social support from trusted friends during times of distress for both mental and physical health (Burlleson, 2003; Burlleson & MacGeorge, 2002; Cunningham & Barbee, 2000; Mortenson, 2009). Additionally, researchers suggest that social support comprises a primary function of close relationships (e.g., Xu & Burlleson, 2001), and evidence indicates that people generally prefer seeking social support as a coping strategy over the use of solitary coping strategies such as problem management, avoidance, and emotion management (Mortenson et al., 2009). Given the importance and prevalence of seeking social support during times of stress, it is likely that individuals would be motivated to seek support from friends when experiencing negative relational events in their romantic relationships as a means of coping with the negative affect associated with these events (e.g., Feeney, 2005).

Face management. In addition to prompting a need for social support, negative relational events often cause threats to individuals' face (Afifi et al., 2001; Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987; Goffman, 1967; Hui & Bond, 2009; Metts, 1994; Metts & Cupach, 1994; Zhang & Stafford, 2008). Face refers to the desired image that a person presents to others (Goffman, 1967; Metts, 1997). Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) further advanced the notion of face by differentiating positive and negative face. Positive

face involves the desire to be liked and respected by others, while negative face reflects the need for autonomy and freedom from constraint. Threats to positive and negative face are experienced as aversive and are avoided (Goffman, 1967). Face-threatening acts (FTAs) occur when behaviors diminish a person's identity by threatening either their desired positive or desired negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). FTAs are determined to be more severe and face threatening to the extent that they violate an important rule, cause harm, or can be attributed to the responsibility of the individual threatening one's face (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992).

Certain negative relational events, such as when a romantic partner commits a transgression, are face-threatening and may prompt a partner to communicate with network members in order to restore his/her face or potentially threaten the face of the offending partner. Transgressions entail the violation of a relational rule or norm (Metts, 1994), and the severity of transgressions varies depending on the importance of the rule, which may cause some transgressions to be more face threatening than others. In general, relational transgressions not only violate rules, but also cause harm in the form of decreased self-esteem (Feeney, 2005), experiences of negative affect (Feeney & Hill, 2006), and psychological distress (Berman & Frazier, 2005). Additionally, victims of relational transgressions often view the transgressor as responsible for their hurtful behavior (e.g., Merolla, 2008), contributing to the face-threatening nature of relational transgressions. It is therefore not surprising that scholars have found relational transgressions to result in a loss of face (Hui & Bond, 2009).

When face threats occur as a result of a relational transgression or other negative relational event, there are often adverse consequences for the relationship (Cupach &

Carson, 2002; Leary et al., 1998), which may include the decision to terminate a relationship (e.g., Afifi et al.; 2001; Breakwell, 1986) or the experience of negative affect (Feeney, 2005; Kam & Bond, 2008). Negative affect, including anger and embarrassment, often prompts a desire to seek revenge (Burton, Mitchell, & Lee, 2005; Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004) or engage in other hostile behaviors including messages of criticism about the relational partner (Leith & Baumeister, 1998) or other types of verbal or even physical aggression (Yoshimura, 2007). These hostile behaviors may help an individual get even, teach their partner a moral lesson, or restore their own sense of self-worth (McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001).

An extension of these findings suggests that individuals might engage in extradyadic communication about a romantic relationship problem in order to construct their own situational account for the negative experience or behavior of a partner with the purpose of re-establishing one's face (Cupach & Metts, 1994; Schlenker & Wiegold, 1992) or to better cope with the experience of negative affect (Burlison & Goldsmith, 1998). Additionally, as a means of seeking revenge against a romantic partner, individuals have reported engaging in reputation defamation by highlighting a partner's negative characteristics or behaviors to others (Yoshimura, 2007), supporting the contention that, following a face-threatening relational event, individuals may be prompted to engage in negative extradyadic communication with network members to restore their own face or to threaten the face of a partner.

Relational uncertainty. Just as they might invoke a need for social support and threaten an individual's face, at times, problematic experiences in romantic relationships may cause individuals to question both their own desire to remain in the relationship as

well as their partner's feelings about the relationship. That is, relational difficulties and negative relational events likely cause uncertainty about the relationship (Emmers & Canary, 1996; Knobloch, 2008; Knobloch & Solomon, 1999). Relational uncertainty is the degree of confidence one has in the perception of involvement within a close relationship (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999), and consists of three sources of uncertainty. *Self-uncertainty* occurs when people cannot describe, explain, or predict their own attitudes or behavior in terms of desire for, evaluation of, and goals for the relationship (e.g., "Do I want to be in this relationship?"). *Partner uncertainty* occurs when people cannot explain or predict the attitudes or behavior of a relational partner in terms of his/her desire for, evaluation of, and goals for the relationship (e.g., "Does s/he want to be in this relationship?"). Finally, *relationship uncertainty* occurs when people are uncertain about the status of the relationship itself in terms of behavioral norms, mutuality of feelings, definition, and future direction of the relationship, independent of their uncertainty about the self or partner (e.g., "Where is this relationship going?").

Not only can relational problems increase perceptions of relational uncertainty, but in turn, relational uncertainty can exacerbate perceptions of romantic relationship problems. Scholars have found relational uncertainty to be positively associated with higher levels of anger and sadness about the uncertainty-causing event (Knobloch & Solomon, 2003; Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985), perceptions of irritations as more severe and relationally threatening (Solomon & Knobloch, 2004; Theiss & Knobloch, 2009; Theiss & Solomon, 2006b), relational turmoil (Knobloch, 2007), and perceptions that social network members are unsupportive (Knobloch & Donovan-Kicken, 2006). In terms of the latter result, it may be that, when an individual is experiencing relational

uncertainty regarding his/her romantic relationship, his/her friends and family members in turn become uncertain about the relationship, which may make them less supportive. Conversely, the perception of reduced network support may increase the experience of relational uncertainty.

Relational uncertainty has also been associated with a pessimism bias, whereby under conditions of uncertainty, individuals perceive more dominant and less affiliative behaviors in romantic partners regardless of the partners' actual observed behavior, a behavioral pattern that is conceptualized as negative for relationships (Knobloch, Miller, Bond, & Mannone, 2007). Further, individuals experiencing high levels of uncertainty in their romantic relationships are more likely to engage in topic avoidance with romantic partners (Knobloch & Carpenter-Theune, 2004) and to communicate less directly with partners about problems in the relationship (Theiss & Solomon, 2006a, 2006b).

Extant research makes clear that uncertainty often intensifies the experience of relational problems and prompts avoidance of direct discussion with a partner about these relational problems. However, decreased likelihood of discussing a relationship issue with a partner, with or about whom one is experiencing relational uncertainty, does not preclude the desire or tendency to discuss these relationship issues with network members. In fact, it may be the case that individuals experiencing relational uncertainty are even more likely to engage in extradyadic communication about relational difficulties, in part because they perceive that they cannot (or at least, do not want to) have these discussions with their romantic partner.

Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) contends that an increase in uncertainty will prompt increased information seeking attempts related to the target of the uncertainty

(Berger & Calabrese, 1975), which may occur through discussion with third parties (e.g., active information seeking; Berger & Bradac, 1982). In support of this contention, Planalp, Rutherford, and Honeycutt (1988) found that events that increased uncertainty in a young adult's romantic or platonic relationship (e.g., competing relationships, deception, betrayal of a confidence, decreased contact/disassociation) were discussed with network members approximately 75% of the time, suggesting that uncertainty may actually encourage individuals to seek interaction and support outside of the relationship. Further, individuals who report feeling uncertain about their marriage express a greater need to talk to people outside of the relationship than individuals who do not report experiencing marital uncertainty (Buunk, Vanperen, Taylor, & Collins, 1991). Thus, it seems that relational uncertainty may provoke increased communication with network members, thereby motivating extradyadic communication as it simultaneously motivates avoidance within the context of the romantic relationship.

Taken together, extant social support, face management, and relational uncertainty research suggest that these variables are likely among those that motivate the desire to engage in extradyadic communication with friends about negative relational events. To investigate these variables as potential motivators, the following research question was posed:

RQ1: Do social support, face management, and relational uncertainty motivate individuals to discuss negative relational events in their romantic relationships with friends?

It is likely that there are many conceivable motivations for discussing negative relational events in romantic relationships with network members beyond needs for social

support, face management, and coping with relational uncertainty. However, related research is disparate and disjointed. At present, available research does not provide a comprehensive or unified body of knowledge regarding motivations for extradyadic communication from which to forward complete claims about what motivates individuals to engage in communication about negative relational events with social network members. Thus, one of the goals of this dissertation is to form a more exhaustive understanding of individuals' motives to talk about negative relational events in romantic relationships with their friends. Toward that end, the following research question was proposed:

RQ2: What other factors (beyond social support, face management, and relational uncertainty), if any, motivate individuals to discuss negative relational events with friends?

In addition to examining romantic partners' motives for initiating discussions about negative relational events with friends, examining friends' motives to respond with either support or interference messages was also a focus in the current dissertation. Although existing research provides very little information about the potential motives for friends' extradyadic communication, it is likely that a desire to impart emotional support and comfort to a friend experiencing negative affect would serve as a motivating factor, given that social support is a basic component of interpersonal relationships (Burlison & MacGeorge, 2002) and is closely associated with relationship quality (Sprecher, Metts, Burlison, Hatfield, & Thompson, 1995). If romantic partners are motivated to engage in extradyadic communication in order to seek social support, friends may be motivated to provide that social support.

Additionally, however, friends may be motivated to communicate in certain ways based on a desire to avoid conflict or to protect the romantic partner, or possibly because of a feeling of obligation to be honest in friendship (Zhang & Merolla, 2006). For example, friends may be reluctant to express negative opinions about others' romantic partners because it could cause tension or conflict in the friendship, which may promote messages of support (Zhang & Merolla, 2006). Conversely, friends may feel compelled to share negative opinions about others' romantic partners due to the belief that friends should be honest with each other (Argyle & Henderson, 1984; Zhang & Merolla, 2006), which may encourage messages of interference. In the current dissertation, friends' motives for using support or interference messages when romantic partners engage in extradyadic communication about negative relational events was explored with the following research question:

RQ3: What motivates friends to use support or interference messages when discussing a romantic partner's negative relational event?

In addition to examining romantic partners' motives for discussing romantic relationship problems with friends and friends' motives for using support or interference messages, a goal of the present dissertation was to examine the content and effects of these extradyadic interactions. The effects of extradyadic communication when dealing with relational difficulties likely depend upon the content of the interactions that take place between partners and their network members. Despite the intention of individuals to garner support from network members during turbulent times in their relationships, network members may employ messages of interference as opposed to messages of support (e.g., Julien, Markman, Léveillé, Chartrand, & Bégin, 1994; Julien, Tremblay,

Bélangier, Dubé, Bégin, & Bouthillier, 2000), which may differentially influence subsequent communication patterns and experiences of relational quality. Indeed, not all social support is effective, and a lack of empathy or low person-centered messages can do more harm than good (Burlison & Goldsmith, 1998; High & Dillard, 2012).

Additionally, research indicates that the support-seeking and support-giving strategies between friends are interrelated (Chow & Buhrmester, 2011), such that the way in which a partner broaches the topic of a romantic relationship problem with a friend may influence the friend's subsequent messages. Thus, if a person communicates highly negative messages about his/her romantic partner, the friend may be inclined to use interference messages, whereas s/he may have used support messages if the person had discussed the problem in less negative ways. Therefore, it appears likely that the frequency of romantic partners' positive or negative extradyadic messages may be significantly associated with friends' support and interference messages. Examination of the content of extradyadic interactions between friends regarding negative relational events is warranted in order to more fully understand how these interactions impact relationship functioning.

Extradyadic Communication Message Content

Although available research has provided a wealth of information about the ways in which members of social networks and romantic relationships mutually influence one another, scholars have pointed out a major limitation of these data, which emphasize the structure of social networks or patterns of interaction at the expense of investigating the content of the interactions between partners and members of their social network (Julien & Markman, 1991; Kim & Stiff, 1991; Parks, 1997). A few studies represent noteworthy

exceptions, and have addressed this limitation by exploring conversational content of extradyadic communication between romantic partners and friends.

Julien et al. (2000) reasoned that much of network members' influence on the romantic relationship is constrained by the content of the romantic partner's disclosures. For example, a partner who speaks positively about his/her relationship and/or romantic partner provides the network member with the opportunity to reinforce this positive view, whereas a partner who speaks negatively about his/her relationship and/or romantic partner provides the network member with an opportunity to support and reinforce this negative view. Perhaps unfortunately for relational functioning, individuals who are dissatisfied in their marriages disclose and discuss marital problems with more friends, as compared to satisfied spouses (Crane, Newfield, & Armstrong, 1984; Julien & Markman, 1991), which may increase the opportunity for network members to bolster the negative views of these dissatisfied partners.

Julien et al. (1994) observed adjusted and non-adjusted wives' interactions with confidants (i.e., close friends) regarding conflict within their marriage, coding both interactants' statements for messages of support and messages of interference. Based on Locke and Wallace (1959), wives were considered adjusted to the extent that they were happy in their marriage, perceived high rates of agreement with husbands on important issues (e.g., handling family finances, demonstration of affection), handled marital disagreements constructively, confided in their husbands, and were satisfied with their decision to marry. Message content considered to be supportive included expressions of external attribution for marital conflict, suggestions of prodyadic solutions to marital problems, and recounting of positive marital experiences (Julien et al., 2000). Examples

of interference messages included expressions of distance, internal attributions for cause of problems, and “magical” (i.e., requiring no action or effort on the part of the individual) or counterdyadic (i.e., counterproductive to healthy relational functioning) solutions to marital problems (Julien et al., 2000). Adjusted wives and their confidants employed more support statements and were less likely to counter romantic partners’ positive messages with interference messages than non-adjusted wives and their confidants (Julien et al., 1994). In other words, despite the focus of the conversation on marital conflict, wives who reported higher marital quality largely focused on discussing the positive aspects of marriage, as did the network member in question.

In comparison to adjusted wives, non-adjusted wives and their friends did not use as many support statements (Julien et al., 1994). In all of the interactions, however, wives produced a higher proportion of interference messages than their confidants did, highlighting the wives’ own frustration with the marital conflict under discussion, and possibly confidants’ general reluctance to make negative comments about a friend’s husband. Wives’ expression of negative messages to friends is consistent with extant literature on social support, which stresses the importance of validating distressed individuals’ negative feelings, which can encourage exploration of these feelings in order to effectively cope with them (Burlison & Goldsmith, 1998). Thus, the mere fact that a partner communicates negative messages does not necessarily result in unproductive interactions with network members, and may even encourage productive coping.

Extradynamic communication may still play an important role in promoting or inhibiting romantic relationship functioning, despite the expression of negative affect messages by romantic partners. The content of partners’ extradynamic communication

messages about a negative relational event in a romantic relationship, as well as the content of friends' messages during these conversations, may either emphasize the positive aspects of the partner and relationship and suggest solutions for constructive problem-solving or message content may emphasize negative aspects of the partner and relationship and suggest destructive or passive solutions to relationship problems (e.g., Julien et al., 2000). In the current dissertation, the themes of extradyadic communication about negative relational events between premarital romantic partners and their friends were explored through the following research questions:

RQ4: What is the content of the extradyadic messages used by romantic partners when communicating with friends about negative relational events?

RQ5: What is the content of the extradyadic messages used by friends when discussing romantic partners' negative relational events?

In addition to exploring the reasons for and content of extradyadic communication, it is possible that the content of romantic partners' and friends' extradyadic messages about the partners' relationship problems vary depending on the individuals' specific motives within the extradyadic interaction. For example, if an individual is motivated by a need for face management, s/he may employ negative messages about his/her romantic partner during extradyadic interaction in order to construct an account of the negative relational event (e.g., Cupach & Metts, 1994) that portrays the romantic partner as being at fault. Conversely, if an individual is motivated by a need for social support, s/he may engage in positive content messages, seeking affirmation of the value of his/her romantic relationship in order to reduce negative affect and stress associated with the negative relational event (e.g., Burleson, 2003). A friend

that is motivated to provide comfort to a romantic partner may engage in support messages in order to reduce his/her negative affect. The possible associations among extradyadic motives and content were explored through the following research questions:

RQ6: How, if at all, are romantic partners' motives for extradyadic communication with friends about negative relational events associated with the content of partners' positive and negative extradyadic communication messages?

RQ7: How, if at all, are friends' motives for extradyadic communication with romantic partners about negative relational events associated with the content of friends' support and interference extradyadic communication messages?

Further, given the importance of romantic relationship quality and perceptions of a romantic partner in influencing communication patterns following difficult relational events, it is likely that these characteristics will also influence the content and consequences of romantic partners' extradyadic communication. Decades of research with the Investment Model (e.g., Le & Agnew, 2003) have demonstrated that the perceived quality of a relationship significantly predicts communication and relational decisions, both generally as well as following specific negative relational events (e.g., Guerrero & Bachman, 2008, 2010). In addition, other research has established the impact of partner evaluations such as perceived partner uniqueness (e.g., Dillow, Afifi, & Matsunaga, 2012) on individuals' communication patterns following relational transgressions in romantic relationships. To the extent that individuals perceive their relationships and partners to be high in quality, they should be committed to maintaining

the relationship, which should manifest in pro-relationship behaviors aimed at preserving the association (e.g., engaging in positive relationship talk about negative relational events with friends). Additionally, the quality of the friendship with the friend to whom one is confiding may influence not only the likelihood of confiding, but potentially the content of these interactions. Further, given that communication patterns following negative relational events can impact various relational outcomes (e.g., Guerrero & Bachman, 2008, 2010), extradyadic communication was also examined as a predictor of romantic relationship and friendship outcomes.

Extradyadic Communication Predictors and Consequences

Relational Quality Indicators as Predictors

Much of the research on social networks has emphasized the importance of interdependence in romantic relationships, which includes incorporating aspects of each other's lives into a shared life (e.g., sharing relationships with network members) (Milardo, 1982, 1986; Surra, 1988). The notion of network density, which involves both an individual's romantic partner and the partner's friends, is often compared to the larger construct of relational interdependence, which forms the foundation of Interdependence Theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) and, later, the Investment Model (Rusbult, 1980). Interdependence Theory (IT) was developed to explain how relationship satisfaction is determined, a factor upon which people often base decisions to maintain or terminate relationships (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). The components of Interdependence Theory include an individual's outcome value, comparison level, comparison level of alternatives, and satisfaction (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959).

A person's outcome value is determined by subtracting the total costs from total rewards in a relationship (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Each individual determines these rewards and costs subjectively; IT does not provide specific prescriptions for what one would or should find rewarding or costly. The comparison level (CL) is a person's minimum standard for a relationship, against which s/he evaluates the attractiveness of a current relationship and relational partner (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). To the extent that the outcome value is positive and exceeds the CL, IT predicts that a person should be satisfied in his/her relationship (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). In addition to the CL, Thibaut and Kelley (1959) identified the comparison level of alternatives (CL_{alt}), or the perceived availability of attractive alternatives to the relationship (e.g., a different relational partner, spending time with family and friends). The less attractive the alternatives (i.e., the less favorable the perceived reward/cost ratio of alternatives), the more satisfied an individual should be in his/her current relationship.

Rusbult (1980, 1983) incorporated components of IT into the Investment Model (IM) in order to account for the important contribution of investment size as well as to examine how interdependence theory components directly impact individuals' commitment, which is posited to be the most proximal predictor of relational outcomes. The reward/cost ratio (outcome value), comparison level, and alternative value are taken directly from Thibaut and Kelly (1959, 1978). Added to these components, and explicated more fully, are the concepts of investment and commitment.

Investment refers to the intrinsic and extrinsic resources that an individual puts into a relationship over time (Rusbult, 1980). Intrinsic investments are those resources put directly into the relationship, such as time, emotional effort, or self-disclosure.

Extrinsic investments, on the other hand, are resources that are initially extraneous to the relationship but over time become inextricably linked with the relationship, such as mutual friends, joint possessions, or shared activities (Rusbult, 1983). Commitment is defined as the tendency to maintain and to feel psychologically attached to a relationship (Rusbult, 1983). According to the IM, the outcome value is compared to the comparison level to determine an individual's satisfaction. Satisfaction and investment positively predict commitment, while quality of alternatives negatively predicts commitment (Rusbult, 1980). Thus, to the extent that a person is satisfied and invested in a relationship, and does not perceive high quality alternatives to the current relationship, they should be committed to maintaining the relationship.

Within the literature on social networks, combining networks and developing relationships with a partner's friends and family is seen as a form of investment in the relationship (Johnson, 1982; Milardo, 1982, 1983; Parks & Adelman, 1983; Sprecher, 1988). Thus, the interdependence of the romantic relationship, which increases as the relationship develops, is positively associated with the density (i.e., overlap) of partners' networks. This interdependence also suggests that there should be mutual influence between the romantic dyad and the partners' social networks, such that characteristics of the romantic relationship may influence interaction with network members and interaction with network members may influence characteristics of the romantic dyad. In addition, scholars have discovered that increased connections with partners' friends and family members are associated with higher levels of both satisfaction (Ackerman, 1963; Cotton et al., 1993; Julien & Markman, 1991) and commitment (e.g., Kim & Stiff, 1991;

Milardo, 1983; Parks et al., 1983). Thus, extant research supports the link between tenets of the IM and romantic partners' network overlap.

As expected, satisfaction, investment level, and quality of alternatives have been found to predict commitment in romantic relationships (Drigotas, Safstrom, & Gentilia, 1999; Rusbult, 1980, 1983; Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986), including in a 15-year longitudinal study that featured data from both relational partners (Bui, Peplau, & Hill, 1996). Further, the IM has been used to predict commitment in platonic friendships (Allen, Babin, & McEwan, 2012; Branje, Frijns, Finkenauer, Engels, & Meeus, 2007), supporting the predictive power of the IM across relationship types. Additionally, the IM has demonstrated utility within a variety of other contexts. For instance, researchers have used it to predict job commitment and turnover in the workplace (Farrell & Rusbult, 1981), as well as brand commitment in marketing (Sung & Campbell, 2009), and commitment to political policy (Agnew, Hoffman, Lehmler, & Duncan, 2007). Although the Investment Model has demonstrated utility across many contexts, its strongest predictive power remains in relational domains, particularly for romantic relationships (Le & Agnew, 2003). Given the demonstrated success of the IM in predicting communication patterns and relational outcomes (e.g., Guerrero & Bachman, 2008, 2010), particularly within the context of close interpersonal relationships, this model was deemed exceptionally applicable to the goals of the current dissertation.

Interdependence and the Investment Model in romantic relationships. Within romantic relationships, and specifically with regard to negative relational events, the IM has framed investigations of how people communicate within the romantic dyad following relational transgressions (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006a; Guerrero & Bachman,

2008, 2010; Rusbult, Zembrodt, & Gunn, 1982). The collective results of these studies suggest that, overall, higher levels of satisfaction, investments, and commitment, and lower quality of alternatives, are predictive of pro-relationship communication patterns. More specifically, to the extent that individuals perceive their relationship to be high in quality, as defined by the IM, they are more likely to engage in constructive communication and less likely to engage in destructive communication with a romantic partner following a relational transgression (Roloff, Soule, & Carey, 2001; Rusbult et al., 1982). For example, IM characteristics have longitudinally predicted post-transgression forgiveness and forgiving communication (Guerrero & Bachman, 2010), as well as more constructive forms of relational repair and less revenge (Guerrero & Bachman, 2008).

Research on social networks, combined with the tenets of the IM, suggests that, to the extent that an individual perceives his/her romantic relationship as high in quality, s/he will be motivated to maintain the relationship and garner network support for the relationship, which in turn is associated with increased relational stability (Krain, 1977; Parks, 2007; Parks et al., 1983; Sprecher, 1988; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992). When discussing their romantic relationship and/or partner with others, satisfied partners tend to use more positive and relationship-focused statements than dissatisfied partners (Buehlman, Gottman, & Katz, 1992), while dissatisfied partners communicate more negative messages about their relationship and romantic partner (Julien et al., 1994, 2000). Thus, to the extent that individuals are involved in a high quality relationship (high satisfaction, investments, commitment, and low quality of alternatives), they should engage in fewer negative messages when discussing romantic relationship problems with friends. This prediction was formalized with the following hypothesis:

H1: Romantic partners' relational satisfaction, investment, and commitment will negatively predict (and quality of alternatives will positively predict) the use of negative extradyadic messages by the romantic partner when communicating about a negative relational event with friends.

Additionally, as shared networks are a form of investment in interdependent romantic relationships, it is more likely that high quality relationships will involve mutual friendships with network members as well as higher levels of network member approval for the relationship, consistent with the IM (Rusbult, 1980) and the transitivity principle (e.g., Heider, 1958). Consistent with the contention that friends would more likely approve of the romantic relationship, Julien et al. (1994) found that the confidants of adjusted wives used more support statements and less interference statements during conversations about a marital conflict. It is possible that friends may be less likely to express negative or interference messages under these circumstances because they are aware that the partner is in a generally high quality relationship, which was investigated with the following hypothesis:

H2: Romantic partners' relational satisfaction, investment, and commitment will positively predict (and quality of alternatives will negatively predict) the use of extradyadic support messages by friends when communicating about romantic partners' negative relational event.

Investment Model and quality of friendships. Investment Model components have also been examined, though less frequently, within the context of friendships. Collectively, this research demonstrates that the impact of friends' relational quality (e.g., satisfaction, commitment, etc.) is associated both with how friendships progress as well

as the experience and expression of emotion within friendships. As with romantic relationships, friends' commitment is positively predicted by satisfaction and investments, and negatively predicted by quality of alternatives (Branje et al., 2007). IM variables predict friendship stability over time, such that more committed friends remain close friends, while less committed friends are more likely to change best friends over time (Branje et al., 2007).

In addition to the literature on the IM within friendships, extant research on extradyadic communication suggests that friendship quality may play an important role in whether or not a romantic partner chooses to disclose about a negative relational event and how this extradyadic interaction might progress. Friendship quality includes elements of closeness, satisfaction, and friendship continuance/commitment (Johnson, 2001), thereby encompassing elements of the IM (i.e., satisfaction, commitment) and including perceptions of how close an individual is with his/her friend. The quality of the friendship may be important in determining whether an individual will choose to disclose about a romantic relationship problem due to the potentially face-threatening nature of disclosing negative information to and seeking advice from friends (e.g., Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997). The perception that a friend will be unresponsive to one's problems provides motivation to avoid disclosure, as does a desire to avoid judgment, criticism, or embarrassment (Afifi & Guerrero, 1998; Guerrero & Afifi, 1995a, 1995b). Thus, in order to feel comfortable disclosing about personal issues, particularly negative ones, it appears necessary to feel close to the target of the disclosure.

These feelings of closeness are likely impacted by the view that a friend is supportive. Scholars maintain that emotional support is a basic component of important

interpersonal relationships (Burlison & MacGeorge, 2002; High & Dillard, 2012), suggesting that perceptions of support should characterize close friendships. Supportive communication has been positively associated with relationship quality (Sprecher et al., 1995), indicating that, when a friend is perceived to be supportive, individuals perceive their friendship as higher in quality, and may be more likely to discuss difficult or negative topics with him/her. Consistent with this contention, individuals report more reasons for topic avoidance in relationships characterized by low levels of closeness (Dillow, Dunleavy, & Weber, 2009).

Researchers also maintain that discussions of negative affect are particularly likely to occur in friendships characterized by feelings of closeness (Rose, 2002) and relational satisfaction (Calmes & Roberts, 2008). Therefore, to the extent that the friendship with a network member is perceived to be high in quality, romantic partners may be more likely to disclose potentially negative information to that network member about romantic relationship problems. A friendship characterized by high levels of satisfaction and commitment, for example, provides a stable and safe place to discuss sensitive issues, particularly given the confidence in the stability of the relationship (Branje et al., 2007) and the likelihood that, even if a friend or romantic partner were to experience negative affect, it will be expressed constructively (Allen et al., 2012).

Despite this possibility, the discussion of dating relationships has generally been identified as one topic that is avoided in friendships and family relationships (Guerrero & Afifi, 1995a, 1995b), and Baxter and Wilmot (1985) discovered that 42% of a sample of friends reported that discussion of extrarelatational involvement was a taboo topic. Although some of this avoidance may be caused by contextual factors (e.g., jealousy

regarding time spent with another, Baxter & Wilmot, 1985), avoidance may also occur when opinions of a friend's romantic partner are unfavorable, as individuals may be reluctant to communicate negative messages about a friend's romantic partner (Wilson, Roloff, & Carey, 1998).

Researchers have found that seeking and offering advice regarding romantic relationships is risky (Newell & Stutman, 1991), and the balance between a desire to be honest and a desire to be supportive presents a dilemma of social support between friends (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997), at least in situations where opinions about a friend's partner are negative. Communicating negative messages about a friend's romantic partner is precarious because it may potentially cause conflict or damage the quality of the friendship (Wilson et al., 1998). Indeed, Argyle and Henderson (1984) specified rules of friendship, including rules dictating that friends should be supportive, and not critical or jealous, of each other's romantic relationships. These rules, although functional for mitigating conflict in friendships, may inhibit individuals from communicating about problems they see in friends' romantic relationships, despite the fact that friendships are largely helping relationships and should encourage individuals to act on their friends' behalf (Argyle & Henderson, 1984).

Although the majority of people can identify concerns they have about a friend's romantic partner when asked, most individuals report not disclosing their concerns because they worry about upsetting their friend, they want to avoid conflict, or because they believe that the issues are none of their business (Wilson et al., 1998; Zhang & Merolla, 2006). That said, however, it is also the case that the messages of friends may differ based on the quality of the friendship, just as friendship quality indicators may

determine whether and how romantic partners choose to communicate about negative relational events. It seems that individuals are typically reluctant to interfere in their friends' romantic relationships, but will do so under certain circumstances. For those friends who were honest about their dislike of a friend's partner, most reported disclosing because of a desire to protect their friend's well-being or because of an obligation for honesty in friendship (Zhang & Merolla, 2006), which may be associated with friendship quality. Specifically, the happier, closer, and more committed a person is in a friendship, the more motivated s/he should be to protect that friend from potential harm. Thus, individuals may be more willing to interfere in a friend's romantic relationship in the best interest of that friend if they perceive that friendship to be high in quality

Despite a general reluctance to disclose negative feelings about friends' romantic partners in most circumstances, there is evidence that friends often experience distress when their friends' partners commit relational transgressions (Bohner, Echterhoff, Glab, Patrzek, & Lampridis, 2010). Thus, network members experience negative affect following a negative or hurtful event in a friend's romantic relationship, even if they are unlikely to directly express it via interference messages. This negative affect may be exacerbated because offenses are perceived as more severe and attributed to less benevolent causes when interpreted by friends (i.e., third parties) than by the actual victim of the offense (i.e., first parties) (Green, Burnette, & Davis, 2008). Third parties are also less likely to forgive friends' partner offenses than the partners themselves (Green et al., 2008), which might lead to a reduced tendency to communicate supportive messages during a discussion of a negative relational event.

Together, these various lines of research suggest that individuals perceive the

transgressions of their friends' romantic partners to be severe and to cause negative affect (Bohner et al., 2010; Green et al., 2008), which suggests that they might express negative messages during discussions of their friend's negative relational event. However, due to the risks involved in disclosing negative thoughts and feelings, friends often avoid these discussions (Newell & Stutman, 1991; Wilson et al., 1998) or avoid interfering for a variety of reasons (e.g., Guerrero & Afifi, 1995a, 1995b; Zhang & Merolla, 2006). Exceptions occur in situations where the friend who experienced the negative relational event initially brings it up in discussion or they feel obligated to be honest or protect their friend (Zhang & Merolla, 2006), which is more likely in a high quality friendship. Thus, a higher quality friendship should enhance motivation to protect a friends' well-being, which may prompt more honest expression of negative opinions. Based on these contentions and their supporting evidence, the following hypotheses were developed:

H3: Romantic partners' friendship quality will positively predict the use of negative extradyadic messages about a negative relational event with friends.

H4: Friends' friendship quality will positively predict the use of interference messages with romantic partners.

Partner Perceptions as a Predictor

Perceived partner uniqueness. In addition to the overall quality of the romantic relationship and the friendship, perceptions of the romantic partner may also play a role in the motivation and content of extradyadic communication about negative relational events. Perceived partner uniqueness (PPU) is the perception that a relational partner has a distinct ability to fulfill an individual's relational needs in ways that no other partner

(past or present) is thought to be able to do (Dillow et al., 2012). PPU includes those exclusive qualities and abilities of a relational partner that make him/her irreplaceable, or at least perceived as such. When people identify a partner as being highly unique and inimitably suited to fulfill their relational needs, this perception influences relational decisions in pro-relationship ways, particularly during difficult times, such as when individuals have experienced a negative relational event (Dillow et al., 2012).

PPU has been found to predict communicative responses to relational transgressions (e.g., infidelity and communicative infidelity) in romantic relationships. Partners' pre-transgression ratings of PPU in romantic relationships are predictive of post-transgression conflict communication, nonverbal immediacy, and termination decisions (Dillow et al., 2012) as well as communicative responses and forgiveness (Dillow, Malachowski, Brann, & Weber, 2011). More specifically, pre-transgression PPU has positively predicted accommodating conflict communication (i.e., a prosocial response based on concern for other) and increased nonverbal immediacy behaviors, and has negatively predicted competitive conflict communication (i.e., an antisocial response based on concern for self) and desire to exit the relationship following both hypothetical (i.e., infidelity) and actual (i.e., flirting) relational transgressions (Dillow et al., 2012). Additionally, PPU has been found to positively predict constructive post-transgression communication patterns of voice (e.g., actively suggesting solutions to problems, attempting to improve the relationship) and discussion (e.g., mutual perspective-taking and dialogue), and negatively predict the destructive response of neglect (e.g., ignoring the partner, refusing to discuss problems).

Further, across several studies, results have indicated that PPU was a relatively

better predictor of communicative and relational outcomes than IM variables immediately following a transgression, by significantly predicting these outcomes when IM variables did not (Dillow et al., 2011, 2012). Thus, in addition to IM components as indicators of relational quality, the current dissertation included partner perceptions in the form of PPU's ability to predict extradyadic communicative behavior when discussing romantic relationship problems. To the extent that individuals perceive their partner to be highly unique, they should be motivated to maintain the relationship, even during times of distress (Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002). This desire to continue the relationship should correspond with fewer negative messages about a romantic partner and relationship, even when negative relational events occur. The following hypothesis was based on this contention:

- H5: Perceived partner uniqueness will negatively predict romantic partners' negative extradyadic messages about a negative relational event to friends.

In addition to partner quality indicators as predictive of extradyadic communication with friends, this partner quality could also potentially impact how friends communicate during these extradyadic interactions. Specifically, to the extent that a romantic relationship and partner are perceived as higher in quality, a person may be more likely to engage in messages of support for that relationship. Support messages are typified by more benevolent explanations for partners' negative behavior, a focus on positive relational experiences and constructive solutions to problems (Julien et al., 2000), as well as reaffirming the value of a romantic partner and portraying relationships generally as satisfying (Julien et al., 1994; Milardo & Lewis, 1985). It is likely that a friend would find it easier to engage in support messages emphasizing the positive

characteristics of the romantic partner if there are more of these positive characteristics to emphasize. Thus, the following hypothesis was posed:

H6: Perceived partner uniqueness will positively predict friends' support messages during extradyadic communication with romantic partners about a negative relational event.

Engaging in conversations with friends about negative relational events can have important implications for the subsequent functioning of both the romantic relationship and the friendship maintained between the romantic partner and his/her confidant. Indeed, Julien et al. (1994) concluded that, through interactions and conversations with confidants, individuals "create beliefs, actively shape each other's knowledge, interpretation, reasoning, and solutions, and form other relationship structures" (p. 28), highlighting how the actual content of the messages received from network members can differentiate positive consequences and relational outcomes from negative consequences and relational outcomes.

Consequences for the Friendship

One way in which extradyadic communication about negative relational events may impact relational outcomes is through its effects on co-rumination. Rose (2002) coined the term "co-rumination" to refer to excessive discussion of personal problems in a dyadic relationship, often between friends. Co-rumination is a combination of self-disclosure and rumination, and is typically characterized by frequent discussion of problems, discussing the same problem repeatedly, mutual encouragement of discussing problems, and focusing on negative feelings. A prototypical example of co-rumination involves friends' excessive discussion of romantic interest or relationship problems

(Rose, 2002; Rose, Carlson, & Waller, 2007). In terms of friendship, co-rumination has been consistently associated with increased friendship quality (Byrd-Craven, Granger, & Auer, 2011; Calmes & Roberts, 2008; Rose, 2002; Rose et al., 2007; Smith & Rose, 2011), leading scholars to speculate that sharing such an intimate and intense form of disclosure may enhance feelings of closeness between friends (Rose et al., 2007).

The co-rumination research suggests that negative extradyadic communication about romantic relationship problems, if both friends are engaging in negative messages, can enhance perceived friendship quality. However, if messages are inconsistent, this may cause tension or conflict within the friend dyad (e.g., Zhang & Merolla, 2006), which may reduce friendship quality. This is likely to be particularly problematic when the romantic partner is communicating positive messages and his/her friend is communicating negative or interference messages. The perception that a friend does not approve of a valued relationship or relational partner may prompt not only a decrease in friendship quality, but a tendency to avoid further discussion of the romantic relationship with that particular friend (Afifi & Guerrero, 1998). Conversely, if a friend employs messages of support, this could offer the romantic partner an opportunity to reframe the negative relational event and decrease negative affect (Julien et al., 2000), which should have positive consequences for the friendship and encourage future discussion of the topic of romantic relationships.

Thus, the interaction of romantic partners' and friends' extradyadic messages may differentially impact the outcomes of friendship quality and topic avoidance intentions. Specifically, to the extent that friends reciprocate the positive or negative messages of romantic partners, or use messages of support when the romantic partner is expressing

negative messages, friendship quality should be enhanced. However, when a romantic partner's positive messages interact with friends' interference messages, this is likely to cause tension in the friendship, reduce the quality of the relationship, as well as increase future avoidance of the topic of the romantic relationship, as evidenced by the reluctance of friends to engage in this pattern of communication (Zhang & Merolla, 2006). To examine these predictions, the following hypotheses were posed:

- H7: Romantic partners' negative extradyadic messages will interact with friends' interference messages to (a) positively predict friendship quality from the perspective of both the romantic partner and the friend, and (b) negatively predict the intention to avoid future discussion of the romantic relationship generally and the negative relational event specifically (with each other) from the perspective of both the romantic partner and the friend.
- H8: Romantic partners' positive and negative extradyadic messages, respectively, will interact with friends' support messages to (a) positively predict friendship quality from the perspective of both the romantic partner and the friend, and (b) negatively predict the intention to avoid future discussion of the romantic relationship generally and the negative relational event specifically (with each other) from the perspective of both the romantic partner and the friend.
- H9: Romantic partners' positive extradyadic messages will interact with friends' interference messages to (a) negatively predict friendship quality from the perspective of both the romantic partner and the friend, and (b)

positively predict the intention to avoid future discussion of the romantic relationship generally and the negative relational event specifically (with each other) from the perspective of both the romantic partner and the friend.

Consequences for the Romantic Relationship

Although co-rumination may result in positive consequences for friendship quality, it is also associated with increased personal rumination, anxiety, stress, and depressive symptoms for the individual (Byrd-Craven et al., 2011; Calmes & Roberts, 2008; Rose, 2002; Rose et al., 2007; Smith & Rose, 2011), which may have subsequent negative consequences for the romantic relationship. For example, Julien et al. (1994) found that wives who received messages of interference from friends maintained higher levels of distress and increased distance from their husbands. Additionally, ongoing negative affect following a relational transgression, exacerbated by rumination, has been negatively associated with forgiveness and relational satisfaction in romantic relationships (Merolla, 2008). If extradyadic communication confirms or enhances the perceived severity of a partner's offense, it is likely to lead to increased rumination or negative affect for the romantic partner, which may prompt individuals to perceive lower levels of satisfaction with their romantic relationship (e.g., Cloven & Roloff, 1991).

Relational satisfaction and commitment. Relational outcomes of satisfaction and commitment are important to consider when examining romantic relationships because they have consequences for future communication as well as for decisions to continue or terminate the relationship. Indeed, individuals' reported levels of relational satisfaction and commitment have been consistently and positively associated with the

likelihood that an individual will choose to stay in a relationship (e.g., Le & Agnew, 2003). Additionally, romantic partners who are more satisfied in their relationships generally engage in more constructive patterns of communication and behavior (Guerrero & Bachman, 2008, 2010; Huston & Vangelisti, 1991; Julien et al., 1994, 2000). Thus, extant research suggests a cyclical pattern, whereby partners' communication behavior predicts satisfaction and commitment, and partners' satisfaction and commitment in turn predict communication behavior. Given the important role of these relational outcomes, both for the individual and the relationship, the third study of the current dissertation included an examination of how extradyadic interactions about negative relational events impact romantic partners' satisfaction and commitment.

Following an extradyadic interaction during which a friend uses messages of interference, potentially exacerbating romantic partners' negative affect, romantic partners may perceive lower levels of satisfaction and commitment in their romantic relationship. If a romantic partner has unfavorable perceptions of the negative relational event and his/her romantic partner, and expresses these perceptions through negative extradyadic messages, the friend may reinforce this negativity through interference messages, such as recounting negative relational experiences, blaming the partner for the negative relational event, and providing unproductive and/or unhealthy solutions to relational problems (Julien et al., 2000). These messages may serve to enhance romantic partners' existing negative affect and unfavorable perceptions of their romantic partner and relationship. These messages may also serve to change romantic partners' positive perceptions of the event and relationship by offering alternative (and counterdyadic) explanations for the event and perceptions of the relationship. The negative perceptions

and affect that potentially result from friends' interference messages may negatively impact romantic partners' relational satisfaction and commitment. This prediction is consistent with previous research that revealed individuals' reports of lower levels of closeness with their spouses following an extradyadic interaction comprised of negative and interference messages (Julien et al., 1994).

In contrast, when a friend communicates extradyadic messages of support, positive perceptions of the romantic relationship and partner may be bolstered, resulting in higher satisfaction and commitment. Specifically, friends' support messages may provide reinforcement of romantic partners' positive perceptions of, and extradyadic messages about, the romantic relationship by strengthening existing positive perceptions and affect. Additionally, support messages may encourage romantic partners to reframe existing negative perceptions of, and messages about, the relational event and their romantic relationship overall. For example, by reminding romantic partners of the positive aspects of their partner and/or relationship, suggesting more forgiving explanations for the negative relational event, and providing pro-relationship solutions (Julien et al., 2000), friends may help to calm romantic partners' negative affect and offer different perspectives regarding the negative relational event. The reinforcement of positive perceptions and affect, or the mitigating of negative perceptions and affect, may positively impact romantic partners' relational satisfaction and commitment. Given the potential for friends' support and interference messages to either reinforce or reframe romantic partners' perceptions, the following hypotheses were posed:

- H10: Romantic partners' positive and negative extradyadic messages, respectively, will interact with friends' interference messages to negatively

predict romantic partner's relational satisfaction and commitment in their romantic relationships.

H11: Romantic partners' positive and negative extradyadic messages, respectively, will interact with friends' support messages to positively predict romantic partner's relational satisfaction and commitment in their romantic relationships.

Summary

This dissertation is predicated on the contention that network members', specifically friends', messages regarding romantic partners' negative relational events can impact partners' perceptions of their romantic relationships as well as the quality of these friendships. Given this, one purpose of this dissertation was to explore the reasons why individuals engage in extradyadic communication with friends about negative relational events in romantic relationships as well as the content of these interactions, which is explored in Study One. Additionally, a goal of the current dissertation was to investigate how relational characteristics of romantic relationships (i.e., Investment Model, PPU) and friendships (i.e., friendship quality) predict extradyadic communication with friends about negative relational events in romantic relationships, examined in Study Two. Moreover, in Study Three, the associations among extradyadic communicative messages and subsequent communication behavior and relational outcomes in friendships, as well as relational outcomes in romantic relationships, are examined. This dissertation will serve to expand existing research on communication following negative relational events by exploring the complex interplay of communication in romantic relationships and friendships.

Chapter Two

Methodology

Overview

Data collection for this project proceeded in three stages: preliminary focus groups for theme identification (Study One), followed by scale development (Study Two), and an observational study of romantic partners' extradyadic communication with a friend (Study Three). To test the first five research questions, the major themes related to motives for and content of romantic partners' and friends' extradyadic messages regarding partners' negative relational events were identified in Study One. To test the sixth and seventh research questions, hypothesis one, and hypotheses three through five, the themes identified in Study One were used to develop measures to assess the motives for and content of romantic partners' and friends' extradyadic communication, and were subsequently analyzed using separate samples of romantic partners and friends, respectively, in Study Two. To test hypothesis two and hypotheses six through 11, friends (one of whom had to be involved in a romantic relationship) reported to the interaction lab, completed pre- and post-interaction measures, and were observed discussing a negative relational event in a current romantic relationship in Study Three.

Study One

Participants

Following approval from the Institutional Review Board, participants ($N = 36$) were recruited from undergraduate Communication Studies courses at a large Mid-Atlantic University for participation in focus groups. To qualify for participation in this study, participants were required to be 18 years of age or older and willing to discuss

their experiences interacting with friends about negative relational events in romantic relationships, either past or present. Focus group participants consisted of 12 males and 24 females, ranging in age from 19 to 24 years old ($M = 21.19$, $SD = 1.33$). Self-reported ethnicity indicated 6% African American and 94% Caucasian. All but one participant identified as heterosexual.

Although participants were not required to be involved in a romantic relationship at the time of the study, 15 participants reported current involvement in a romantic relationship. Of the individuals in romantic relationships, seven identified their relationship as casually dating, seven as seriously dating, and one as engaged to be married. Romantic relationships ranged in length from two to 72 months ($M = 19.43$, $SD = 21.76$). Romantic partners ranged in age from 18 to 27 years old ($M = 21.93$, $SD = 2.43$), and were identified as either African American (14%) or Caucasian (86%). All romantic partners were identified as heterosexual.

Procedure

In order to achieve the goal of Study One, to identify inductively the themes to be used in the development of measurement scales in Study Two, five focus groups were conducted to glean information from young adults regarding extradyadic communication with friends about negative relational events in romantic relationships. Focus groups are often used to provide in-depth information regarding topics about which little is known, as well as with the intention of learning how individuals communicate for the purposes of survey design (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Lindlof & Taylor, 2010; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1998). A questioning route was designed to stimulate discussion of specific issues related to motives for and content of extradyadic communication of romantic partners

about relational difficulties, as well as motives for and content of friends' responses. Theoretical saturation was achieved after four focus groups, but a fifth focus group was conducted to confirm that no new ideas emerged (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010).

Using a volunteer sampling procedure (Keyton, 2006), the researcher recruited participants from Communication Studies courses. Participants signed up for pre-scheduled focus groups, which met outside of regular class time in a reserved classroom. Five focus groups were conducted, ranging from three to 12 participants ($M = 7.20$), lasting an average of 30 minutes and 21 seconds. Participants were given a cover letter (Appendix A) informing them of their rights as research participants. Participants were then asked to complete discussion prompts related to the motives for and content of romantic partners' extradyadic communication with friends about negative relational events, as well as the motives for and content of friends' extradyadic communication in this regard (Appendix B). Participants were also asked to provide some basic demographic information (Appendix C). After these data were collected, a discussion was led by the researcher, probing for deeper detail and specific information about young adults' motives for and content of communication with friends about negative relational events in romantic relationships (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

A structured interview guide was created, containing questions developed based on the goals of the current study and targeted at gaining an in-depth understanding of participants' communication with friends about negative relational events in romantic relationships. Specifically, questions were aimed at discovering themes relevant to (a) romantic partners' motivation to communicate with friends about negative relational events in romantic relationships, (b) content of romantic partners' messages about

negative relational events, (c) motivation of friends' extradyadic communication regarding romantic partners' negative relational events, and (d) content of friends' extradyadic messages when discussing romantic partners' negative relational events (Appendix D). In order to maximize consistency, all questions were introduced at each focus group session in the same order (Boyatzis, 1998).

Data Analysis

All focus group discussions were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher and two research assistants, resulting in 89 single-spaced pages of transcription. The transcribed data were subsequently analyzed using thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). The transcriptions of the focus group sessions were content analyzed by the researcher and two trained independent coders, blind to the purposes of the study, for themes related to (a) motivation to discuss romantic relationship problems with friends, (b) content of romantic partners' extradyadic communication messages, (c) friends' motivation to communicate regarding romantic partners' relationship problems, and (d) content of friends' messages when discussing romantic partners' negative relational events. Key words and phrases were used as the unit of analysis to identify themes in participants' responses to each question relevant to romantic partners' and friends' motivation and message content. Similar themes were combined to form larger categories in the resulting codebook.

Two trained coders, blind to the purposes of the current study, independently analyzed approximately 25% of the data and these data were used to determine intercoder reliability using Scott's (1955) pi ($\pi = .96$). Due to this strong intercoder reliability coefficient (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002; Neuendorf, 2002), the remaining

data were coded independently. The themes that emerged from participant discussions were used to answer the first five research questions and formed the basis of item development for the Study Two scales.

Study Two

The goals of Study Two were to (a) develop scales assessing romantic partners' and friends' extradyadic communication motivation and content (b) examine the underlying factor structure and reliability of these scales, and (c) test research questions and hypotheses regarding relational and partner characteristics as predictors of extradyadic communication about negative relational events in romantic relationships. Toward that end, participants were recruited from undergraduate Communication Studies classes at a large Mid-Atlantic University using a convenience volunteer sampling method (Keyton, 2006), following approval from the Institutional Review Board. In order to accomplish the goals of this study, two separate samples were recruited. The first sample consisted of young adults involved in a romantic relationship at the time of data collection and willing to report on an extradyadic interaction about a negative relational event in that relationship. This romantic partner sample was used to assess the factor structure of the motives for and content of partners' extradyadic communication regarding negative relational events, and to test research question six and hypotheses one, three, and five. The second sample consisted of young adults who were willing to report on an extradyadic interaction with a friend about a negative relational event in that friend's romantic relationship. This friend sample was used to assess the factor structure of the motives for and content of friends' extradyadic communication regarding negative relational events, and to test research question seven and hypothesis four.

Participants

Participants were required to be at least 18 years of age to qualify for participation and could only participate in Study Two if they did not participate in Study One.

Romantic relationship sample. The first sample consisted of 216 participants (82 males, 126 females, 8 did not report sex), all of whom reported being currently involved in a romantic relationship at the time of the study. The average age of the romantic partner sample was 23 years ($SD = 4.88$). Self-reported ethnicity indicated 2% Asian, 2% Hispanic, 6% African American, 87% Caucasian, and 3% 'other' participants. The majority of participants (95%) identified themselves as heterosexual. Relationship status was identified as casually dating (15%), seriously dating (67%), engaged (5%), married (10%), or 'other' (3%) and length of romantic relationships ranged from one month to 28 years ($M = 31.25$ months, $SD = 37.68$). Participants reported on negative relational events in their current relationship with a romantic partner (121 males, 86 females, 9 did not report sex). Relational partners were, on average, 24 years old ($SD = 6.22$). The majority of relational partners (94%) were identified as heterosexual. Participants reported on an extradyadic interaction with a friend (76 male, 131 female, 9 did not report sex) about the negative relational event in their romantic relationship. These friendships were identified as acquaintances (1%), casual friends (2%), close friends (34%), best friends (58%), or 'other' (e.g., family member, 5%), and lasted from two months to 25 years ($M = 84.75$ months, $SD = 69.77$). Friends were, on average, 24 years old ($SD = 6.19$).

Friend sample. The second sample consisted of 220 participants (136 males, 81 females, 3 did not report sex). The average age of the friend sample was 22 years ($SD =$

4.17). Self-reported ethnicity indicated 2% Asian, 1% Hispanic, 8% African American, 78% Caucasian, 1% Native American, and 10% ‘other’ participants. The majority of participants (92%) identified themselves as heterosexual. Participants reported on an interaction with a friend (115 male, 100 female, 5 did not report sex) regarding a negative relational event in that friend’s romantic relationship. These friendships were identified as acquaintances (1%), casual friends (9%), close friends (43%), best friends (43%), or ‘other’ (e.g., family member, 4%), and lasted from one month to 25 years ($M = 83.21$ months, $SD = 68.96$). Friends were, on average, 22 years old ($SD = 4.06$). Relationship status of friends’ romantic relationships was identified as casually dating (21%), seriously dating (57%), engaged to be married (2%), married (6%), ‘other’ (9%), or was not reported (5%) and length of romantic relationships ranged from one month to 12 years ($M = 24.88$ months, $SD = 22.81$).

Procedures and Instrumentation

Upon participant consent (Appendix E), participants currently involved in a romantic relationship (i.e., the first sample) were asked to report on perceptions of their romantic relationship and partner, a negative relational event in their own romantic relationship, the perceived severity of this event, the quality of their friendship with the person with whom they discussed the negative relational event, and subsequent motives for and content of extradyadic communication with the friend (Appendix F).

Participants reporting on a negative relational event that occurred in the romantic relationship of a friend (i.e., the second sample) were asked to report on a negative relational event in their friend’s romantic relationship, perceptions of the severity of this event, the quality of their friendship, and subsequent motives for and content of

extradyadic messages with that friend during discussion of the negative relational event (Appendix G). All items were assessed using a seven-point response scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), unless otherwise noted. Study Two scale means, standard deviations, and internal reliability coefficients are listed in Table 1.

Investment Model. Rusbult, Martz, and Agnew's (1998) 37-item Investment Model scale was used to assess romantic partners' perceptions of their romantic partner and relationship, including satisfaction (ten items, e.g., "I feel satisfied with our relationship"), quality of alternatives (ten items, e.g., "My needs for intimacy, companionship, etc. could easily be fulfilled in an alternative relationship"), investments (ten items, e.g., "I feel very involved in our relationship – like I have put a great deal into it"), and commitment (seven items, e.g., "I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner"). Rusbult et al. have obtained internal reliabilities ranging from .82 to .95 for the various subscales.

Perceived partner uniqueness. Romantic partner participants' perceptions of their romantic partners' unique ability to fulfill their relational needs was assessed using Dillow et al.'s (2012) 14-item Perceived Partner Uniqueness (PPU) Scale (e.g., "My romantic partner is uniquely suited to fulfilling my relational needs"). Dillow et al. obtained a strong internal reliability of .97 for the PPU Scale.

Negative relational event. Consistent with previous research on relational transgressions (e.g., Roloff et al., 2001), participants were provided with a definition and some examples of common negative relational events (e.g., relational transgressions, hurtful messages) and asked to describe a negative relational event either in their own romantic relationship (the first sample) or a friend's romantic relationship (the second

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Cronbach Alphas for Study Two Variables

| Scale | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>α</i> |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Romantic Partner Sample | | | |
| Investment Model | | | |
| Satisfaction | 5.86 | 1.09 | .94 |
| Investments | 5.48 | 1.00 | .86 |
| Quality of Alternatives | 3.65 | 1.36 | .90 |
| Commitment | 5.84 | 1.32 | .91 |
| PPU | 5.74 | 1.32 | .98 |
| Event Severity | 4.15 | 1.61 | .85 |
| Friendship Quality | | | |
| Closeness | 6.04 | 1.04 | .84 |
| Satisfaction | 6.11 | 0.94 | .79 |
| Continuance | 6.20 | 0.93 | .92 |
| Extradyadic Communication Motives | | | |
| Need for Perspective | 5.26 | 1.23 | .90 |
| Entertainment | 3.02 | 1.48 | .87 |
| Need to Vent | 5.56 | 0.93 | .77 |
| Relational Uncertainty | 3.38 | 1.66 | .80 |
| Extradyadic Communication Messages | | | |
| Relational Negativity | 2.44 | 1.29 | .96 |
| Advice and Validation | 4.55 | 1.23 | .90 |
| Partner Protection | 3.05 | 1.35 | .80 |
| Event Explanation | 4.95 | 1.31 | .77 |
| Friend Sample | | | |
| Event Severity | 4.89 | 1.64 | .89 |
| Friendship Quality | | | |
| Closeness | 5.59 | 1.15 | .83 |
| Satisfaction | 5.66 | 1.19 | .85 |
| Continuance | 5.73 | 1.22 | .93 |
| Extradyadic Communication Motives | | | |
| Comfort and Caring | 5.74 | 1.06 | .83 |
| Annoyance with Discussion | 3.13 | 1.55 | .82 |
| Avoidance of Negative Affect | 4.60 | 1.19 | .75 |

Extradysadic Communication Messages

| | | | |
|-----------------------|------|------|-----|
| Interference Messages | 3.70 | 1.47 | .96 |
| Support Messages | 3.24 | 1.22 | .85 |

sample). Participants were then asked to respond to four items assessing the perceived severity of the negative event (e.g., “The event was one of the most negative things that could happen in my/my friend’s relationship”), consistent with Bachman and Guerrero (2006b). Bachman and Guerrero found good reliability for these four items, ranging from .87 to .89. The perceived severity of a negative relational event has been found to influence subsequent communication patterns and outcomes in romantic relationships (e.g., Bachman & Guerrero, 2006b). Thus, it was assessed in the current dissertation as a potential covariate. Consistent with previous research on negative relational events (e.g., Roloff et al., 2001), participants were instructed to keep this particular event in mind as they completed the remainder of the questionnaire in order to keep reports of extradyadic communication as specific and consistent as possible.

Friendship quality. Participants were also asked to evaluate the quality of the friendship with the friend with whom they discussed this negative relational event. Friendship quality was assessed using a 17-item measure of friendship quality developed by Johnson (2001). This measure is comprised of three dimensions: closeness (five items, e.g., “This friend is one of the closest I have ever had”), satisfaction (four items, e.g., “I am generally satisfied with this friendship”), and likelihood of friendship continuance (seven items, e.g., “I definitely would like to continue this relationship in the future”). Johnson obtained internal reliabilities ranging from .89 to .95.

Extradyadic communication motives and content. The four extradyadic communication scales developed for this study (based on results from the Study One focus groups) were used. Specifically, scales were developed to assess (a) romantic partners’ extradyadic communication motives about negative relational events, (b)

romantic partners' extradyadic communication content, (c) friends' extradyadic communication motives, and (d) friends' extradyadic communication content.

A minimum of five items were developed to represent each of the themes identified from focus groups in Study One responses, based on the criterion for scale development that each factor retain at least three items (Hatcher, 1994) and the assumption that some items would not meet the criteria for retention. Language consistent with that of the focus group participants was used in order to most accurately represent the ways in which romantic partners and friends describe their motives for and content of extradyadic communication about negative relational events (e.g., Stewart & Shamdasani, 1998). Participant responses to these items were solicited on a seven-point Likert scale, where higher values represent increased levels of each specific motive to engage in extradyadic communication and increased use of each type of content message about negative relational events. A seven-point Likert response scale is consistent with similar and widely used scales relevant to communication and behavior (e.g., Guerrero, Hannawa, & Babin, 2011). Participants were instructed to report on their own extradyadic communication motives and content regarding the negative relational event they previously described.

Items were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using varimax rotation to determine the underlying factor structure of each scale. Varimax is a form of orthogonal rotation in which factors are independent. Orthogonal rotation was chosen to avoid multicollinearity of predictors (e.g., motives, communication messages) (McCroskey & Young, 1979). Examination of the scree plot indicated the number of factors present in the data, and a factor was deemed significant if it met the criteria

recommended by Hatcher (1994). Specifically, each retained factor (a) had a minimum Eigenvalue of 1.0, (b) included at least three items with their primary loadings on that factor, and (c) accounted for at least 5% of the variance. The criterion for item retention included a primary factor loading of .50 or above, with no secondary factor loadings above .30 (Comrey & Lee, 1992). Additionally, all items were required to demonstrate adequate variability by achieving a standard deviation above 1.0. Items that did not meet the criteria for retention were eliminated prior to analysis.

Romantic partner extradyadic communication motives. After four iterations, 17 of the original 53 items met the 50/30 criteria, producing a 4-factor solution accounting for 59.92% of the variance. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(136) = 1815.86, p < .001$, indicating that the correlations among items included in the factor analysis were significantly different from zero, providing support for the conceptual relationships among items. Table 2 contains all rotated factor loadings, as well as the eigenvalue and variance for each factor.

Factor 1, labeled *need for perspective*, retained five items and accounted for 19.65% of the variance. Need for perspective items express the need or desire for a friend's perspective, reassurance, and advice. Factor 2, labeled *entertainment*, retained five items and accounted for 17.81% of the variance. Entertainment items express a desire to engage in extradyadic interactions because it is enjoyable, or because they think their friend will be entertained by the story. Factor 3, labeled *need to vent*, retained four items and accounted for 11.75% of the variance. Need to vent items express a need or desire to talk about the situation with a friend in order to relieve stress and to feel better. Factor 4, labeled *relational uncertainty*, retained three items and accounted for 10.70% of

Table 2

*Rotated Factor Loadings from the Exploratory Factor Analysis of Romantic Partners'**Extradyadic Communication Motives*

| Romantic Partner Extradyadic Motives | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 4 |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Need for Perspective</i> | | | | |
| 1. I need reassurance that I am not overreacting. | 0.62 | -0.01 | 0.23 | 0.11 |
| 2. I need advice about how to handle the situation. | 0.83 | -0.03 | 0.12 | 0.18 |
| 3. My friend can give me feedback about what I should do next. | 0.86 | -0.04 | 0.19 | 0.10 |
| 4. My friend can help clarify the problem. | 0.83 | -0.05 | 0.23 | 0.08 |
| 5. I want suggestions for how to work out the problem. | 0.79 | -0.03 | 0.07 | 0.13 |
| <i>Entertainment</i> | | | | |
| 1. I think it is a good story. | -0.07 | 0.70 | 0.07 | 0.03 |
| 2. It is fun to gossip. | 0.02 | 0.79 | 0.09 | 0.01 |
| 3. Sometimes it is fun to complain about people. | -0.04 | 0.77 | 0.05 | 0.13 |
| 4. It is a funny story. | -0.13 | 0.82 | -0.07 | -0.06 |
| 5. I think my friend would enjoy hearing the details of the situation. | 0.09 | 0.72 | 0.13 | 0.19 |
| <i>Need to Vent</i> | | | | |
| 1. It feels good to vent to my friends. | 0.14 | -0.03 | 0.73 | 0.02 |
| 2. It is therapeutic to let it all out to someone. | 0.09 | 0.03 | 0.77 | 0.02 |
| 3. Talking about the situation out loud makes it easier to deal with. | 0.19 | 0.10 | 0.55 | -0.09 |
| 4. It relieves my stress about the situation. | 0.22 | 0.13 | 0.59 | 0.01 |
| <i>Relational Uncertainty</i> | | | | |
| 1. I need help deciding whether I should stay in my romantic relationship or not. | 0.25 | 0.07 | 0.08 | 0.73 |
| 2. The problems in my relationship make me unsure about my romantic partner. | 0.12 | -0.04 | -0.01 | 0.76 |
| 3. I want my friend to tell me that I can do better than my current romantic partner. | 0.12 | 0.29 | -0.14 | 0.75 |

| | | | | |
|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Eigenvalue | 3.34 | 3.03 | 2.00 | 1.82 |
| Variance | 19.65 | 17.81 | 11.75 | 10.70 |

Note. Primary factor loadings are indicated in bold.

the variance. Relational uncertainty items express a need or desire to reduce uncertainty about a romantic partner or relationship by talking with a friend.

Romantic partner extradyadic message content. After five iterations, 31 of the original 64 items met the 50/30 criteria, producing a 4-factor solution accounting for 58.80% of the variance. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(465) = 4026.99, p < .001$, indicating that the correlations among items included in the factor analysis were significantly different from zero, providing support for the conceptual relationships between items. Table 3 contains all rotated factor loadings, as well as the eigenvalue and variance for each factor.

Factor 1, labeled *relational negativity*, retained 17 items and accounted for 32.99% of the variance. Relational negativity items include messages expressing negative opinions of the romantic partner as a person and a relational partner, as well as negative comments about the romantic relationship overall, expressions of partner blame, and a desire for retaliation against the romantic partner. Factor 2, labeled *advice and validation*, retained eight items and accounted for 14.49% of the variance. Advice and validation items include messages focused on asking friends about the appropriateness of one's reaction to a negative relational event, as well as for advice regarding how to handle the situation. Factor 3, labeled *partner protection*, retained three items and accounted for 5.91% of the variance. Partner protection items include messages focused on providing reasons and justification for a romantic partner's actions. Factor 4, labeled *event explanation*, retained three items, accounting for 5.41% of the variance. Event explanation items include messages describing the background leading up to and details

Table 3

*Rotated Factor Loadings from the Exploratory Factor Analysis of Romantic Partners'**Extradynamic Message Content*

| Romantic Partner Extradynamic Content Messages | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 4 |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <i>Relational Negativity</i> | | | | |
| 1. Say negative things about my romantic partner. | 0.76 | 0.12 | -0.06 | 0.02 |
| 2. Tell my friend that I am done with the relationship. | 0.85 | 0.06 | 0.01 | 0.07 |
| 3. Tell my friend that I would like to punish my romantic partner for what s/he did. ^a | 0.75 | 0.07 | 0.07 | -0.13 |
| 4. Exaggerate the negativity of what my romantic partner did or said. | 0.59 | 0.14 | 0.19 | -0.12 |
| 5. Tell my friend how much I dislike my romantic partner. | 0.85 | 0.06 | 0.02 | -0.01 |
| 6. Tell my friend that my romantic partner doesn't treat me right. | 0.83 | 0.04 | -0.07 | 0.07 |
| 7. Tell my friend that I just can't win in this relationship anymore. | 0.76 | 0.10 | -0.01 | 0.09 |
| 8. Talk about how the negative situation is all my partner's fault. | 0.75 | 0.21 | -0.01 | 0.02 |
| 9. Make negative comments about people of my romantic partner's sex (i.e., males, females) in general. | 0.56 | -0.02 | 0.10 | 0.01 |
| 10. Communicate to my friend that I don't think my romantic partner is a very good person. ^a | 0.87 | -0.07 | 0.10 | 0.02 |
| 11. Say unfavorable things about my romantic partner's character. ^a | 0.88 | -0.01 | 0.03 | 0.08 |
| 12. Make negative comments to my friend about his/her competence as a romantic partner. ^a | 0.81 | 0.03 | 0.13 | 0.03 |
| 13. Ridicule my romantic partner's shortcomings with my friend. ^a | 0.79 | 0.04 | 0.08 | -0.02 |
| 14. Tell my friend that all my romantic partner and I do is fight. | 0.73 | 0.01 | 0.18 | 0.06 |
| 15. Tell my friend that I am fed up with my romantic partner. | 0.86 | 0.14 | -0.06 | 0.14 |
| 16. Express my opinion that my romantic partner | 0.69 | 0.20 | 0.09 | 0.14 |

just doesn't understand me.

17. Threaten to punish my romantic partner for what s/he did.^a **0.72** -0.04 0.18 -0.07

Advice and Validation

1. Ask my friend if my reaction to the situation is normal. 0.02 **0.78** -0.06 0.01

2. Ask my friend if s/he thinks the problem is my fault. 0.12 **0.62** 0.11 0.09

3. Ask my friend how I should fix the problem. 0.02 **0.80** 0.01 0.12

4. Ask my friend if s/he thinks I am overreacting. -0.01 **0.88** -0.01 0.04

5. Ask my friend how I should react to the situation. 0.11 **0.74** 0.00 0.19

6. Ask my friend if a similar event has ever happened to him/her. 0.07 **0.62** 0.11 0.09

7. Ask my friend if s/he thinks I am over analyzing the situation. -0.00 **0.63** 0.14 0.25

8. Ask my friend what I should say to my romantic partner. 0.17 **0.61** 0.08 0.24

Partner Protection

1. Explain to my friend that my romantic partner was actually trying to protect me.^a 0.06 0.08 **0.64** -0.01

2. Tell my friend that my romantic partner actually had good reasons for what s/he did.^a 0.12 0.05 **0.83** -0.03

3. Explain to my friend that my romantic partner was justified in what s/he did.^a 0.14 0.12 **0.71** 0.13

Event Explanation

1. Explain all of the background leading up to the negative event. -0.03 0.29 -0.02 **0.68**

2. Provide as many details as I can, even if they are not all directly relevant. 0.05 0.17 0.09 **0.60**

3. Explain everything that my romantic partner said or did. 0.07 0.29 -0.03 **0.74**

Eigenvalue 10.23 4.49 1.83 1.68

Variance 32.99 14.49 5.91 5.41

Note. All primary factor loadings are indicated in bold.

^aItems originally developed by Vallade and Dillow (in press).

of the negative relational event. Overall, relational negativity consists of negative, counterdyadic messages, while partner protection consists of more positive, prodyadic messages. Advice and validation, as well as event explanation messages, appear to be more neutral in content.

Friend extradyadic communication motives. After four iterations, 11 of the original 36 items met the 50/30 criteria, producing a 3-factor solution accounting for 54.19% of the variance. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(55) = 853.33$, $p < .001$, indicating that the correlations among items included in the factor analysis were significantly different from zero, providing support for the conceptual relationships between items. Table 4 contains all rotated factor loadings, as well as the eigenvalue and variance for each factor.

Factor 1, labeled *comfort and caring*, retained four items, accounting for 20.63% of the variance. Comfort and caring items express the desire to communicate caring and to be a good friend. Factor 2, labeled *annoyance with discussion*, retained three items, accounting for 16.98% of the variance. Annoyance with discussion items express the individual's frustration with the friend's excessive discussion of romantic relationship problems and a preference for the friend to stop talking about his/her problems with the individual. Factor 3, labeled *avoidance of negative affect*, retained four items, accounting for 16.57% of the variance. Avoidance of negative affect items express a desire to spare the friend's feelings and avoid upsetting a friend or causing conflict within the friendship.

Friend extradyadic message content. After four iterations, 25 of the original 58 items met the 50/30 criteria, producing a 2-factor solution accounting for 56.97% of the variance. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(300) = 3823.64$, $p < .001$,

Table 4

Rotated Factor Loadings from the Exploratory Factor Analysis of Friends' Extradynamic Communication Motives

| Friend Extradynamic Communication Motives | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Comfort and Caring</i> | | | |
| 1. I want to let him/her know that s/he is not alone. | 0.53 | -0.04 | 0.21 |
| 2. I would want my friend to be there for me if I was upset. | 0.87 | -0.10 | 0.09 |
| 3. I want my friend to know that I care. | 0.86 | -0.14 | 0.13 |
| 4. I want to avoid seeing my friend get hurt. | 0.56 | -0.22 | 0.28 |
| <i>Annoyance with Discussion</i> | | | |
| 1. I am tired of listening to my friend complain about his/her romantic relationship. | -0.06 | 0.71 | 0.03 |
| 2. I am frustrated with how often my friend comes to me about his/her relationship problems. | -0.14 | 0.82 | 0.13 |
| 3. I would prefer that my friend stop talking to me about his/her romantic relationship. | -0.16 | 0.77 | 0.03 |
| <i>Avoidance of Negative Affect</i> | | | |
| 1. I want to spare my friend's feelings. | 0.02 | 0.17 | 0.56 |
| 2. I don't want to upset my friend. | 0.18 | 0.08 | 0.61 |
| 3. I want to avoid making my friend angry with me. | 0.23 | -0.05 | 0.68 |
| 4. I want to avoid a conflict with my friend. | 0.19 | -0.02 | 0.71 |
| Eigenvalue | 2.27 | 1.87 | 1.82 |
| Variance | 20.63 | 16.98 | 16.57 |

Note. All primary factor loadings are indicated in bold.

indicating that the correlations among items included in the factor analysis were significantly different from zero, providing support for the conceptual relationships between items. Table 5 contains all rotated factor loadings, as well as the eigenvalue and variance for each factor.

Factor 1, labeled *interference messages*, retained 19 items, accounting for 43.74% of the variance. Interference message items include messages expressing disapproval of a romantic partner or relationship, counterproductive relational advice, and assurances that a friend deserves better than their current romantic partner. Factor 2, labeled *support messages*, retained six items, accounting for 13.23% of the variance. Support message items include messages expressing positive explanations for a romantic partner's behavior and prosocial relational advice. Overall, interference messages consist of negative messages about the situation, the partner, and the romantic relationship, while support messages consist of more positive messages about the situation, the partner, and the relationship in general.

Data Analysis

Preliminary analyses. Preliminary analyses were conducted to investigate the potential impact of the length of romantic partners' and friends' (where appropriate) romantic relationships and the length of the friendship with the friend, which can interact with commitment related variables (e.g., Roloff & Solomon, 2002), as well as both romantic partners' and friends' perceptions regarding the severity of the negative relational event, which can influence subsequent communication, particularly within romantic relationships (e.g., Bachman & Guerrero, 2006b). Pearson correlations were conducted to ascertain whether significant relationships exist between these potential

Table 5

*Rotated Factor Loadings from the Exploratory Factor Analysis of Friends' Extradyadic**Message Content*

| Friend Extradyadic Communication Content | Factor 1 | Factor 2 |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Interference Messages</i> | | |
| 1. Tell my friend that his/her partner is a terrible person. | 0.74 | -0.13 |
| 2. Tell my friend to take a break from the relationship to show his/her partner what it is like without him/her. | 0.71 | -0.01 |
| 3. Tell my friend that s/he deserves better than his/her current partner. | 0.76 | -0.29 |
| 4. Tell my friend to give his/her partner an ultimatum. | 0.61 | 0.06 |
| 5. Tell my friend that s/he would be better off without his/her current partner. | 0.88 | -0.20 |
| 6. Tell my friend that his/her partner gives me a bad vibe. | 0.83 | -0.12 |
| 7. Tell my friend that I don't trust his/her partner. | 0.83 | -0.16 |
| 8. Comment that the partner is totally the problem, not my friend. | 0.76 | -0.13 |
| 9. Suggest that my friend date other people. | 0.83 | -0.05 |
| 10. Tell my friend that s/he is better than his/her partner. | 0.84 | -0.12 |
| 11. Tell my friend that his/her partner doesn't deserve him/her. | 0.81 | -0.05 |
| 12. Tell my friend that what his/her partner did was inexcusable. | 0.77 | -0.20 |
| 13. Tell my friend that s/he should just dump his/her partner. | 0.85 | -0.18 |
| 14. Tell my friend that his/her partner isn't worth it. | 0.90 | -0.12 |
| 15. Tell my friend that his/her romantic relationship shouldn't be a priority anyway. | 0.58 | 0.21 |
| 16. Assure my friend that s/he didn't do anything wrong. | 0.51 | 0.03 |
| 17. Express my opinion that my friend is not happy with his/her romantic partner. | 0.62 | 0.09 |
| 18. Encourage my friend to rethink his/her relationship. | 0.75 | 0.00 |
| 19. Tell my friend that, if his/her partner makes him/her unhappy, then s/he should leave. | 0.64 | -0.12 |
| <i>Support Messages</i> | | |
| 1. Explain his/her partner's behavior in a positive way. | -0.14 | 0.64 |
| 2. Suggest giving my friend's partner the benefit of the doubt. | -0.01 | 0.70 |
| 3. Try to defend his/her partner's behavior. | -0.01 | 0.71 |
| 4. Suggest that there is probably a reasonable explanation for his/her partner's behavior. | -0.16 | 0.73 |
| 5. Advise my friend to not be so hard on his/her partner. | 0.01 | 0.73 |

| | | |
|--|-------|-------------|
| 6. Tell my friend that his/her partner probably didn't mean to hurt him/her. | -0.06 | 0.68 |
| Eigenvalue | 10.94 | 3.31 |
| Variance | 43.74 | 13.23 |

Note. All primary factor loadings are indicated in bold.

covariates and romantic partners' and friends' extradyadic communication.

Tests of research questions and hypotheses. The data from Study Two was used to address the sixth and seventh research questions as well as hypothesis one and hypotheses three through five. Research question six inquired about the associations, if any, among romantic partners' extradyadic communication motives and content, and research question seven inquired about the associations, if any, among friends' extradyadic response motives and content. Due to the nondirectional nature of these research questions, two-tailed Pearson correlations were conducted using romantic partners' extradyadic communication motives and content scales, as well as friends' extradyadic communication motives and content scales developed in the current study.

Hypothesis one predicted that romantic partners' relational satisfaction, investment, and commitment would negatively predict (and quality of alternatives would positively predict) romantic partners' use of negative extradyadic messages. A multiple regression was used to test the first hypothesis, with Investment Model variables entered as predictor variables and romantic partners' extradyadic communication content entered as the outcome. If the results of the preliminary analyses indicated that romantic relationship length, friendship length, or the perceived severity of the negative relational event were significantly associated with romantic partners' extradyadic communication, the relevant covariate(s) were entered into the first block of the regression and Investment Model variables then entered in the second block.

Hypothesis three predicted that romantic partners' friendship quality would positively predict their use of negative extradyadic messages about a negative relational event. Hypothesis four predicted that friends' friendship quality would positively predict

their use of interference messages with romantic partners. Multiple regressions were used to test the third and fourth hypotheses, with friendship quality components (i.e., satisfaction, closeness, likelihood of friendship continuance) entered as predictor variables and romantic partners' extradyadic communication content (H3) or friends' extradyadic message content (H4) entered as the outcome. If the results of the preliminary analyses indicated that romantic relationship length, friendship length, or the perceived severity of the negative relational event were significantly associated with romantic partners' or friends' extradyadic communication, respectively, the relevant covariate(s) were entered into the first block of the regression and friendship quality variables then entered in the second block.

Hypothesis five predicted that perceived partner uniqueness would negatively predict the frequency of romantic partners' negative extradyadic messages. One-tailed Pearson correlations were conducted to test the fifth hypothesis. If the results of the preliminary analyses indicated that romantic relationship length, friendship length, or the perceived severity of the negative relational event were significantly associated with romantic partners' extradyadic communication, partial correlations were conducted.

Study Three

Participants

Following approval from the Institutional Review Board, friends were recruited from Communication Studies courses at a large Mid-Atlantic University to participate in an observed interaction. Consistent with previous observational research, 100 romantic partner-friend pairs were recruited (Julien et al., 2000; Samp, 2013). Two participant pairs were eliminated due to their discussion of a romantic relationship that was not

current at the time of the study, resulting in a final sample of 98 pairs. Individuals were required to be at least 18 years of age to participate, and at least one participant was required to be currently involved in a romantic relationship within which s/he had experienced a negative relational event. Participants involved in a romantic relationship were instructed to bring a close platonic friend to the interaction lab, one with whom they were willing to discuss a negative relational event in their romantic relationship. Individuals who participated in either Study One or Study Two were not eligible for participation in Study Three.

Romantic partner sample. A sample of 98 romantic partners (38 males, 60 females) reported to the interaction lab to participate. The average age of the romantic partner sample was 21 ($SD = 2.11$). Self-reported ethnicity indicated 3% Hispanic, 4% African American, 91% Caucasian, and 2% 'other' participants. The majority of participants (97%) identified themselves as heterosexual. Relationship status was identified as casually dating (16%), seriously dating (81%), married (1%), or 'other' (2%) and length of romantic relationships ranged from one month to 8 years ($M = 21.62$ months, $SD = 19.68$). Participants reported on negative relational events in their current relationship with a romantic partner (62 males, 36 females). Relational partners were, on average, 22 years old ($SD = 2.93$). The majority of relational partners (96%) were identified as heterosexual. Romantic partners also identified the type of friendship they had with the friend who accompanied them to the lab as acquaintances (3%), casual friends (17%), close friends (44%), or best friends (35%). These friendships had lasted from one month to 17 years ($M = 38.39$ months, $SD = 44.59$).

Friend sample. A sample of 98 friends (36 males, 62 females) reported to the interaction lab to participate. The average age of the friend sample was 21 ($SD = 1.80$). Self-reported ethnicity indicated 3% Asian, 3% Hispanic, 3% African American, 85% Caucasian and 6% ‘other’ participants. The majority of friend participants (92%) identified themselves as heterosexual. Friends also identified the type of friendship they had with the romantic partner who accompanied them to the lab as casual friends (23%), close friends (37%), best friends (38%), or ‘other’ (e.g., sibling; 2%).

Procedure

The goals of this study were to (a) investigate the ability of relational characteristics and partner perceptions to predict extradyadic communication following negative relational events, (b) confirm the factor structure of the extradyadic communication motives and content scales developed in Study Two, and (c) expand previous research by examining the implications of extradyadic communication for communication behavior and relational outcomes in romantic relationships and friendships. To fulfill these goals, the procedure for the third study proceeded in two stages.

First, two friends were recruited (one of whom was required to be involved in a current romantic relationship; hereafter referred to as the “partner”) via a convenience volunteer sampling method (Keyton, 2006) who reported to the interaction lab at a scheduled time. The partner and his/her close friend (hereafter referred to as the “friend”), to whom the partner was confiding, were initially separated to complete consent forms (Appendix H) and pre-interaction measures (identified below) consisting generally of relational quality assessments and motives for engaging in extradyadic

communication (Appendix I for partner, Appendix J for friend). Additionally, the romantic partner was asked to identify a negative relational event that had occurred in his/her romantic relationship (e.g., ongoing conflict, relational transgressions, irritations), which s/he was asked subsequently to discuss with his/her close friend. Further, the friend was asked to assess his/her perceptions of the suitability of the friend's romantic partner.

Second, participants were brought back together for the observed interaction. The romantic partner was asked to initiate a discussion about the specified negative relational event. Consistent with previous research, participants were asked to behave as naturally as possible, replicating the conversational style they use when they talk about similar topics in other settings (Julien et al., 1994, 2000). These interactions were audiorecorded for later transcription and coding. Immediately following the interaction, participants were asked to complete post-interaction measures consisting of an assessment of the realism of the interaction and self-reports of the content of their extradyadic communication messages in the preceding conversation, as well as measures assessing their perception of the friendship quality, intention to avoid similar conversations in the future, and satisfaction and commitment in their romantic relationship (Appendix K for romantic partner, Appendix L for friend).

Confirmatory Factor Analyses

Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) using maximum likelihood estimation (Iacobucci, 2010) were conducted on each of the four scales developed in Study Two in order to confirm and validate the factor structure revealed in the exploratory factor analyses. CFA models were considered acceptable when the Chi-square/degrees of

freedom ratio did not exceed 3.0 (Iacobucci, 2010; Kline, 2004), baseline comparison fit statistics (e.g., CFI, IFI) achieved levels of .90 or higher (King, King, Erickson, Huang, Sharkansky, & Wolf, 2000; Marsh, Hau, & Wen, 2004) and RMSEA values did not exceed .08 (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). The χ^2/df ratio was chosen because scholars have noted that the Chi-square value alone is an unreliable indicator of model fit, given its sensitivity to sample size, the impact of the size of the correlations in the model on the Chi-square value, problems with Type 1 error with small sample sizes and with non-normally distributed data, etc. (e.g., Curran, Bollen, Paxton, & Kirby, 2002; Kenny & McCoach, 2003). It has been suggested, therefore, that other fit statistics provide better indicators of model fit than the Chi-Square, such as the χ^2/df ratio (e.g., Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999).

Romantic partner extradyadic communication motives. Based on the EFA results from Study Two, a CFA was conducted with specific scale items as manifest variables and latent factors representing each subscale of *need for perspective* (five items), *entertainment* (five items), *need to vent* (four items), and *relational uncertainty* (three items). The fit statistics indicated poor model fit ($\chi^2/df = 1.78$, CFI = .89, IFI = .89, RMSEA = .09), although fit statistics approached acceptable levels.

Based on standardized residuals for each scale item and modification indices, areas of model misspecification were identified and the model was trimmed to achieve acceptable fit (Byrne, 2001). Two items from the relational uncertainty subscale evidenced large cross-loadings and were therefore eliminated (Byrne, 2001), leaving only one relational uncertainty item. Because a subscale requires at least three items (Hatcher, 1994), the subscale of relational uncertainty was removed. An additional cross-loading

resulted in one item being eliminated from the entertainment subscale. After re-estimating the model via a second CFA with the need for perspective (five items), entertainment (four items), and need to vent (four items) subscales, model fit was good, $\chi^2/df = 1.17$, CFI = .98, IFI = .98, RMSEA = .04.

Romantic partner extradyadic message content. Based on the EFA results from Study Two, a CFA was conducted with specific scale items as manifest variables and latent factors representing each subscale of *relational negativity* (17 items), *advice and validation* (eight items), *partner protection* (three items), and *event explanation* (three items). The fit statistics indicated poor model fit, $\chi^2/df = 1.85$, CFI = .74, IFI = .75, RMSEA = .09.

Following the same procedure identified previously, standardized residuals and modification indices were used to identify areas of model misspecification, and the model was trimmed to achieve acceptable fit. Five items were eliminated from the model due to large standardized residuals (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1988). Due to cross-loading, an additional five items were removed from the model. The resulting subscales consisted of event explanation (two items), partner protection (one item), relational negativity (12 items), and advice and validation (five items). Because a subscale requires at least three items (Hatcher, 1994), the subscales of event explanation and partner protection were removed, leaving the subscales of relational negativity (12 items) and advice and validation (five items). Results of a second CFA indicated a model that was an acceptable fit for the data, $\chi^2/df = 1.63$, CFI = .90, IFI = .90, RMSEA = .08.

Friends' extradyadic communication motives. Based on the EFA results from Study Two, a CFA was conducted with specific scale items as manifest variables and

latent factors representing each subscale of *comfort and caring* (four items), *annoyance with discussion* (three items), and *avoidance of negative affect* (four items). The fit statistics indicated a poor model fit, $\chi^2/df = 2.52$, CFI = .82, IFI = .83, RMSEA = .13.

Following the same procedure identified previously, standardized residuals and modification indices were used to identify areas of model misspecification, and the model was trimmed to achieve acceptable fit. Based on standardized residuals, one item was eliminated from the comfort and caring subscale. Due to cross-loadings, two additional items were removed from the annoyance with discussion subscale, resulting in a scale with only one item (Hatcher, 1994). Thus, the subscale of annoyance with discussion was removed. Results of a second CFA indicated a model that was an excellent fit to the data, $\chi^2/df = .73$, CFI = 1.00, IFI = 1.02, RMSEA = .00.

Friends' extradyadic message content. Based on the EFA results from Study Two, a CFA was conducted with specific scale items as manifest variables and latent factors representing each subscale of *interference* (19 items) and *support* (six items). Fit statistics indicated a poor model fit, $\chi^2/df = 1.76$, CFI = .84, IFI = .84, RMSEA = .09.

Following the same procedure identified previously, standardized residuals and modification indices were used to identify areas of model misspecification, and the model was trimmed to achieve acceptable fit. Based on standardized residuals, two items were eliminated from the interference subscale. An additional item was eliminated from the interference subscale for failing to load onto the latent factor. No changes were made to the support subscale. Results of a second CFA indicated a model that approached a significant fit to the data, $\chi^2/df = 1.71$, CFI = .88, IFI = .88, RMSEA = .09.

As it was necessary to modify the subscales that were identified in Study Two in

order to achieve model fit during the initial CFA process, these CFA results cannot be said to be truly confirmatory in nature (Byrne, 2001). Thus, an additional dataset was collected in order to confirm the newly modified scales before conducting any further analyses. Participants for this additional dataset were recruited from undergraduate Communication Studies classes at a large Mid-Atlantic University using a convenience volunteer sampling method (Keyton, 2006), following approval from the Institutional Review Board. Similar to Study Two, two separate samples were recruited and asked to complete questionnaires, which included the extradyadic motive and content scales developed in the current dissertation. The first sample consisted of young adults involved in a romantic relationship at the time of data collection and willing to report on an extradyadic interaction about a negative relational event in that relationship. The second sample consisted of young adults who were willing to report on an extradyadic interaction with a friend about a negative relational event in that friend's romantic relationship.

Romantic partners (i.e., the first sample) consisted of 207 participants (94 males, 110 females, 3 did not report sex), all of whom reported being currently involved in a romantic relationship at the time of the study. The average age of the romantic partner sample was 20 years ($SD = 1.94$). Self-reported ethnicity indicated 5% Asian, 3% Hispanic, 4% African American, 83% Caucasian, and 5% 'other' participants. The majority of participants (93%) identified themselves as heterosexual. Relationship status was identified as casually dating (28%), seriously dating (67%), engaged (2%), married (1%), or 'other' (2%) and length of romantic relationships ranged from one month to 17 years ($M = 24.10$ months, $SD = 25.75$). Participants reported on negative relational

events in their current relationship with a romantic partner (112 males, 93 females, 2 did not report sex). Relational partners were, on average, 20 years old ($SD = 2.66$). The majority of relational partners (92%) were identified as heterosexual. The length of the friendship between romantic partner participants and the friend with whom they had discussed the negative relational event ranged from one month to 21 years ($M = 86.91$ months, $SD = 66.05$).

Friends (i.e., second sample) consisted of 235 participants (140 males, 92 females, 3 did not report sex). The average age of the friend sample was 20 ($SD = 6.14$). Self-reported ethnicity indicated 3% Asian, 4% Hispanic, 10% African American, 81% Caucasian, and 2% 'other' participants. The majority of participants (97%) identified themselves as heterosexual. Participants reported on an interaction with a friend (116 male, 116 female, 3 did not report sex) regarding a negative relational event in that friend's romantic relationship. The length of the friendship between friend participants and the romantic partner with whom they had discussed the negative relational event ranged from one month to 26 years ($M = 76.83$ months, $SD = 64.50$).

CFA results in the second dataset supported the factor structure of the modified scales for romantic partners' extradyadic communication motives, ($\chi^2/df = 1.97$, CFI = .96, IFI = .96, RMSEA = .07) and content ($\chi^2/df = 1.89$, CFI = .95, IFI = .95, RMSEA = .06), as well as for friends' extradyadic communication motives ($\chi^2/df = 1.29$, CFI = .99, IFI = .99, RMSEA = .04) and content ($\chi^2/df = 1.87$, CFI = .91, IFI = .91, RMSEA = .06). Thus, Study Three analyses were conducted using the modified scales for romantic partners' extradyadic communication motives (see Table 6) and content (see Table 7) and friends' extradyadic communication motives (see Table 8) and content (see Table 9).

Table 6

Modified Measure of Romantic Partners' Extradynamic Communication Motives Based on CFA Results

| Romantic Partner Extradynamic Motives |
|--|
| <i>Need for Perspective</i> |
| 1. I need reassurance that I am not overreacting. |
| 2. I need advice about how to handle the situation. |
| 3. My friend can give me feedback about what I should do next. |
| 4. My friend can help clarify the problem. |
| 5. I want suggestions for how to work out the problem. |
| <i>Entertainment</i> |
| 1. I think it is a good story. |
| 2. Sometimes it is fun to complain about people. |
| 3. It is a funny story. |
| 4. I think my friend would enjoy hearing the details of the situation. |
| <i>Need to Vent</i> |
| 1. It feels good to vent to my friends. |
| 2. It is therapeutic to let it all out to someone. |
| 3. Talking about the situation out loud makes it easier to deal with. |
| 4. It relieves my stress about the situation. |

Table 7

*Modified Measure of Romantic Partners' Extradynamic Message Content Based on CFA**Results*

Romantic Partner Extradynamic Content Messages

Relational Negativity

1. Say negative things about my romantic partner.
2. Tell my friend that I am done with the relationship.
3. Exaggerate the negativity of what my romantic partner did or said.
4. Tell my friend how much I dislike my romantic partner.
5. Tell my friend that I just can't win in this relationship anymore.
6. Make negative comments about people of my romantic partner's sex (i.e., males, females) in general.
7. Communicate to my friend that I don't think my romantic partner is a very good person.
8. Say unfavorable things about my romantic partner's character.
9. Make negative comments to my friend about his/her competence as a romantic partner.
10. Tell my friend that all my romantic partner and I do is fight.
11. Tell my friend that I am fed up with my romantic partner.
12. Express my opinion that my romantic partner just doesn't understand me.

Advice and Validation

1. Ask my friend if s/he thinks the problem is my fault.
 2. Ask my friend how I should fix the problem.
 3. Ask my friend how I should react to the situation.
 4. Ask my friend if a similar event has ever happened to him/her.
 5. Ask my friend what I should say to my romantic partner.
-

Table 8

*Modified Measure of Friends' Extradynamic Communication Motives Based on CFA**Results*

Friend Extradynamic Communication Motives

Comfort and Caring

1. I want to let him/her know that s/he is not alone.
2. I would want my friend to be there for me if I was upset.
3. I want my friend to know that I care.

Avoidance of Negative Affect

1. I want to spare my friend's feelings.
 2. I don't want to upset my friend.
 3. I want to avoid making my friend angry with me.
 4. I want to avoid a conflict with my friend.
-

Table 9

*Modified Measure of Friends' Extradyadic Message Content Based on CFA Results***Friend Extradyadic Message Content****Interference Messages**

1. Tell my friend that his/her partner is a terrible person.
2. Tell my friend to take a break from the relationship to show his/her partner what it is like without him/her.
3. Tell my friend that s/he deserves better than his/her current partner.
4. Tell my friend that s/he would be better off without his/her current partner.
5. Tell my friend that his/her partner gives me a bad vibe.
6. Tell my friend that I don't trust his/her partner.
7. Comment that the partner is totally the problem, not my friend.
8. Suggest that my friend date other people.
9. Tell my friend that s/he is better than his/her partner.
10. Tell my friend that his/her partner doesn't deserve him/her.
11. Tell my friend that what his/her partner did was inexcusable.
12. Tell my friend that s/he should just dump his/her partner.
13. Tell my friend that his/her partner isn't worth it.
14. Express my opinion that my friend is not happy with his/her romantic partner.
15. Encourage my friend to rethink his/her relationship.
16. Tell my friend that, if his/her partner makes him/her unhappy, then s/he should leave.

Support Messages

1. Explain his/her partner's behavior in a positive way.
2. Suggest giving my friend's partner the benefit of the doubt.
3. Try to defend his/her partner's behavior.
4. Suggest that there is probably a reasonable explanation for his/her partner's behavior.
5. Advise my friend to not be so hard on his/her partner.
6. Tell my friend that his/her partner probably didn't mean to hurt him/her.

Time 1 Pre-Interaction Instrumentation – Romantic Partner

Before they began the observed interaction, romantic partners were asked to complete a questionnaire identifying the negative relational event that would provide the topic of the subsequent interaction, as well as their motives for communicating with their friend about the negative relational event, and variables hypothesized to be predictors of extradyadic communication about negative relational events (i.e., friendship quality, Investment Model, PPU). All Study Three scale means, statistics, and internal reliability coefficients are listed in Table 10.

Friendship quality. Friendship quality was assessed using Johnson's (2001) 17-item measure of friendship quality, as used in Study Two.

Investment Model. Rusbult et al.'s (1998) 37-item Investment Model scale was used to assess individuals' perceptions of their romantic partner and relationship.

Perceived partner uniqueness. Participants' perceptions of their partners' unique ability to fulfill their relational needs was again assessed using Dillow et al.'s (2012) 14-item Perceived Partner Uniqueness (PPU) Scale.

Negative relational event. Participants currently involved in a romantic relationship were asked to identify and assess the severity of a negative relational event that had occurred in their relationship using the same procedure as Study Two. The negative relational event described by the participant formed the topic of the subsequent discussion with his/her friend.

Extradyadic communication motives. Motivation to communicate with friends about negative relational events was assessed using a 13-item modified version of the measure developed in Study Two.

Table 10

Means, Standard Deviations, and Cronbach Alphas for Study Three Variables

| Variable | Romantic Partners | | | Friends | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>α</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>α</i> |
| | Time 1 | | | | | |
| Friendship Quality | | | | | | |
| Closeness | 5.36 | 1.40 | .90 | 5.55 | 1.36 | .93 |
| Satisfaction | 6.06 | 0.79 | .70 | 6.41 | 0.59 | .69 |
| Continuance | 5.82 | 1.04 | .91 | 6.00 | 1.00 | .92 |
| Investment Model | | | | | | |
| Satisfaction | 5.61 | 1.31 | .95 | 5.85 | 1.15 | .95 |
| Investments | 5.26 | 0.94 | .82 | 5.52 | 1.25 | .92 |
| Quality of Alternatives | 3.82 | 1.34 | .90 | 3.79 | 1.42 | .93 |
| Commitment | 5.51 | 1.43 | .93 | 5.68 | 1.36 | .91 |
| PPU | 5.34 | 1.46 | .97 | 5.72 | 1.32 | .97 |
| Event Severity | 4.21 | 1.60 | .86 | | | |
| Suitability of Friend's Partner | | | | 5.33 | 1.22 | .92 |
| Extradynamic Communication Motives | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|------|------|-----|------|------|-----|
| Need for Perspective | 5.24 | 1.19 | .87 | | | |
| Entertainment | 3.17 | 1.48 | .78 | | | |
| Need to Vent | 5.52 | 1.08 | .81 | | | |
| Avoidance of Negative Affect | | | | 4.93 | 1.13 | .70 |
| Comfort and Caring | | | | 6.21 | 0.82 | .71 |
| Time 2 | | | | | | |
| Extradyadic Communication Messages | | | | | | |
| Relational Negativity | 2.85 | 1.32 | .90 | | | |
| Advice and Validation | 3.61 | 1.49 | .80 | | | |
| Interference | | | | 2.66 | 1.46 | .95 |
| Support | | | | 3.55 | 1.33 | .77 |
| Friendship Quality | | | | | | |
| Closeness | 5.50 | 1.22 | .90 | 5.64 | 1.27 | .90 |
| Satisfaction | 6.06 | 0.79 | .76 | 6.32 | 0.78 | .75 |
| Continuance | 5.78 | 1.06 | .91 | 5.92 | 0.98 | .93 |
| Topic Avoidance Intentions | | | | | | |
| General Discussion of Relationship | 2.06 | 1.10 | .92 | 2.03 | 1.14 | .94 |
| Discussion of Negative Relational Event | 2.24 | 1.28 | .95 | 2.13 | 1.23 | .94 |
| Romantic Relationship Satisfaction | 5.55 | 1.47 | .97 | | | |
| Romantic Relationship Commitment | 5.35 | 1.48 | .91 | | | |

Time 1 Pre-Interaction Instrumentation – Friend

Before they began the observed interaction with the romantic partner, friends were asked to complete a questionnaire assessing the quality of their friendship with the romantic partner, their perceptions of their friend's romantic partner (i.e., the person their friend is currently dating), motives to respond to the romantic partner's negative relational event, and information about their own romantic relationship status and quality.

Friendship quality. Friendship quality was assessed using the same 17-item measure of friendship quality (Johnson, 2001) completed by romantic partners.

Suitability of friend's romantic partner. The perceived suitability of a friend's romantic partner was assessed as a potential covariate using a modified version of Tafarodi and Swann's (1995) Self-Liking Scale. In the current study, nine of the original ten items were modified to refer to individuals' liking and perceived suitability of their friend's romantic partner (e.g., "I feel that my friend's romantic partner is worthless at times"). One original item (i.e., "I'm secure in my sense of self-worth") was excluded due to its lack of applicability to the rating of someone other than oneself. Items were assessed using a seven-point response scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Tafarodi and Swann obtained an internal reliability of .92.

Extradyadic communication motives. Friends' extradyadic communication motives were assessed using the 7-item modified version of the measure developed in Study Two.

Romantic relationship status and quality. Friends' own romantic relationship status was measured using a single item. If friends indicated that they were currently involved in a romantic relationship of their own, they were asked to report on their

relational stage (e.g., casually dating, seriously dating) and relationship length, as well as Investment Model variables (Rusbult et al., 1998) and perceived partner uniqueness (Dillow et al., 2012). Researchers have found that the relationship quality of individuals' own romantic relationships may influence how they respond to disclosures about others' romantic relationships (e.g., Julien et al., 2000). Thus, friends' romantic relationship length and quality were assessed as possible covariates in the current study.

Time 2 Post-Interaction Instrumentation – Romantic Partner

Immediately following the interaction between friends, romantic partners were asked to report their perception of the realism of the interaction to assess how realistically the conversation proceeded. Additionally, they were asked to self-report on the content of their extradyadic messages, friendship quality, their intentions to avoid future discussions with their friend, and perceptions of satisfaction and commitment in their romantic relationship.

Realism of interaction. The comparability of the interaction between the partner and the friend to their spontaneous conversations outside of the laboratory was assessed using three items. One item (i.e., “How similar was this conversation to conversations you and your friend have had in other settings?”) was used, consistent with Julien et al.'s (2000) procedure. Two additional items (e.g., “How realistic was the interaction between you and your friend?”), consistent with Dillow et al. (2012), were also used to assess the realism of the interaction. All items were assessed using seven-point response scales, with higher scores representing more realistic interactions. Participant responses indicated that they perceived their interactions with a friend as similar to conversations in other contexts ($M = 5.84$, $SD = 1.08$).

Extradynamic communication content. Content of romantic partners' extradynamic communication messages about negative relational events was assessed via a 17-item modified version of the self-report measure developed in Study Two.

Additionally, an independent coder, blind to the purposes of the study, coded the content of romantic partners' extradynamic messages during the observed interaction with friends using Julien et al.'s (1994, 2000) procedure for coding observations of spouses and their confidants. A codebook was developed using Julien et al.'s (2000) original codebook, as well as through open and axial coding of transcripts. During the open coding process, coders examined each speaking turn as a coding unit and identified the valence of the content (e.g., positive or negative extradynamic communication), consistent with the study hypotheses. Axial coding requires that coders come together to identify larger themes to create the final codebook (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) for subsequent coding of interaction data.

Coders first listened to each interaction in its entirety to obtain contextual information. Then, using both the transcript and the audio recording of an interaction, coders coded the content of romantic partners' messages using the conversational turn as the coding unit, where a new coding unit was created each time there was a change in speaker (Julien et al., 1994, 2000; Schegloff, 1968). This process resulted in total frequency counts of romantic partners' positive ($M = 6.57$, $SD = 5.81$) and negative ($M = 27.19$, $SD = 15.26$) extradynamic messages, respectively. Approximately 25% of randomly selected data was independently coded by the researcher and one research assistant, and these data were used to determine intercoder reliability (Julien et al., 1994) using Scott's (1955) π ($\pi = .98$). Due to the high intercoder reliability (Neuendorf, 2002), the research

assistant, who was blind to the purpose of the study, independently coded the remainder of the data. Additionally, one week after initial intercoder reliability was calculated, coders independently coded an additional interaction to reassess intercoder reliability and check for coder drift. Acceptable intercoder reliability was obtained ($\pi = .87$), and the research assistant coded the remaining data independently.

Friendship quality. Friendship quality was assessed using the same 17-item measure of friendship quality developed by Johnson (2001) that was assessed prior to the interaction.

Topic avoidance with friend. Avoidance intentions of discussion of both the romantic relationship/partner in general and the negative relational event in particular were assessed. Although previous researchers have used a single item to assess the avoidance of discussing dating experiences generally (Afifi & Guerrero, 1998; Guerrero & Afifi, 1995), intention to avoid discussing a romantic relationship with a friend was assessed in the current dissertation using four items that were developed for use in this study (e.g., “I will avoid discussing my romantic relationship with my friend”). Each of these four items was then modified to refer to an intention to avoid discussing the specific topic of the identified negative relational event (e.g., “I will avoid discussing this event in my romantic relationship with my friend”). Items were assessed using a seven-point response scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*).

Romantic relationship satisfaction and commitment. Rusbult et al.’s (1998) relationship satisfaction and commitment scales were re-administered to assess these relational outcomes immediately following the extradyadic interaction.

Time 2 Post-Interaction Instrumentation – Friend

Immediately following the interaction, friends were asked to report their perception of the realism of the interaction to assess how realistically they believe the conversation proceeded. Additionally, they were asked to self-report on the content of their extradyadic messages, friendship quality, and their intentions to avoid future discussions with their friend.

Realism of interaction. The comparability of the interaction between the partner and the friend to their spontaneous conversations outside of the laboratory was assessed using the same four items as administered to romantic partners. Participant responses indicated that they perceived their interactions with their friend as similar to conversations in other contexts ($M = 5.86$, $SD = .99$).

Friends' extradyadic message content. Content of friends' extradyadic communication was assessed using a modified version of the extradyadic message content measure developed in Study Two. Additionally, an independent coder, blind to the purposes of the study, coded the content of friends' extradyadic messages during the observed interaction with romantic partners, employing the same procedure used to code romantic partners' message content. This process resulted in total frequency counts of friends' extradyadic support ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 4.72$) and interference ($M = 11.97$, $SD = 9.20$) messages, respectively.

Friendship quality. Friendship quality was reassessed using the same 17-item measure of friendship quality developed by Johnson (2001) that was assessed prior to the interaction.

Topic avoidance with friend. Intention to avoid discussing a romantic relationship with a friend was assessed using the same items completed by romantic partners, modified to refer to the topic of the romantic partners' relationship and negative relational event.

Data Analysis

Preliminary analyses. Preliminary analyses were conducted to investigate the potential impact of the length of romantic partners' romantic relationships and the length of participants' friendships, which can interact with commitment related variables (e.g., Roloff & Solomon, 2002), as well as romantic partners' perceptions regarding the severity of the negative relational event, which can influence subsequent communication in romantic relationships (e.g., Bachman & Guerrero, 2006b). Friends' romantic relationship length and quality (i.e., IM, PPU) were also examined as potential covariates, given that the romantic relationship quality of confidants has been found to affect their support and interference messages (Julien et al., 2000). Finally, friends' perceptions of the suitability of friends' romantic partners were examined, given the likelihood that a friend's perception of the romantic partner may influence how s/he talks about him/her. Pearson correlations were conducted to ascertain whether significant relationships existed between romantic partners' observed extradyadic communication (i.e., positive, negative) and romantic relationship length, friendship length, and perceived severity of the negative relational event. Additional Pearson correlations were conducted to ascertain whether significant relationships existed between friends' observed extradyadic messages (i.e., support, interference) and friends' perceptions of the suitability of the romantic partner, friendship length, and romantic relationship length/quality.

Tests of hypotheses. The data gathered in Study Three was used to test hypothesis two and hypotheses six through 11. Hypothesis two predicted that romantic partners' relational satisfaction, investment, and commitment would positively predict (and quality of alternatives would negatively predict) friends' use of support messages. A multiple regression was used to test the second hypothesis, with Investment Model variables entered as predictor variables and friends' extradyadic communication content entered as the outcome. If the results of the preliminary analyses indicated that romantic relationship length, friendship length, suitability of the partner, or the perceived severity of the negative relational event were significantly associated with friends' extradyadic message content, covariates were entered into the first block of the regression, with Investment Model variables then entered in the second block.

Hypothesis six predicted that perceived partner uniqueness would positively predict the frequency of friends' support messages. One-tailed Pearson correlations were conducted to test the sixth hypothesis. If the results of the preliminary analysis indicated that romantic relationship or friendship length, suitability of the partner, and/or the perceived severity of the negative relational event were significantly associated with friends' extradyadic responses, partial correlations were conducted.

Hypotheses seven through nine predicted that romantic partners' extradyadic messages (i.e., positive or negative) would interact with friends' message content (i.e., support or interference) to predict outcomes within their friendship. Hierarchical regressions were used to test these hypotheses. The number of romantic partners' positive or negative messages, as appropriate, were entered into the first block of the regression, with the number of friends' support or interference messages, as appropriate,

entered in the second block, the interaction between romantic partners' and friends' messages entered in the third block, and friendship quality or intention to avoid future discussion of the romantic relationship or negative event entered as outcome variables, respectively. If preliminary analyses indicated significant relationships, any necessary covariates were entered in the first block of the regression, with romantic partners' message content then entered in the second block, friends' message content entered in the third block, and the interaction term entered in the fourth block of the regression.

Hypotheses ten and 11 predicted that romantic partners' extradyadic messages (i.e., positive or negative) would interact with friends' message content (i.e., support or interference) to predict romantic partners' satisfaction and commitment in their romantic relationship. Hierarchical regressions were used to test these hypotheses. The number of romantic partners' positive or negative messages, as appropriate, were entered into the first block of the regression, with the number of friends' support or interference messages, as appropriate, entered in the second block, the interaction between romantic partners' and friends' messages entered in the third block, and relational satisfaction and commitment entered as outcome variables, respectively. If preliminary analyses indicated significant relationships, any necessary covariates were entered in the first block of the regression, with romantic partners' message content then entered in the second block, friends' message content entered in the third block, and the interaction term entered in the fourth block of the regression.

Summary

The purpose of the current dissertation was to (a) develop and validate measures of the motives and content of romantic partners' and friends' extradyadic communication

about negative relational events in romantic relationships, (b) investigate relational and partner characteristics as predictors of extradyadic communication, and (c) examine the implications of extradyadic communication for communication behavior and relational outcomes in both friendships and romantic relationships. Thus, three studies were designed to accomplish these goals. Studies One and Two were planned to aid in scale construction and development. Study Two allowed examination of the utility of the Investment Model and perceived partner uniqueness to predict extradyadic communication (from the perspective of the romantic partner), as well as the examination of the ability of friendship quality to predict extradyadic communication from both the romantic partners' and friends' perspectives. Finally, Study Three allowed for testing of predictions regarding the impact of observed extradyadic communication on subsequent communication intentions and relational outcomes. Data were analyzed through thematic analysis (Study One), exploratory factor analysis, multiple regression, and Pearson correlations (Study Two), and Pearson correlations, hierarchical regressions, and confirmatory factor analyses, as well as observational coding (Study Three). Results of these analyses are reported in Chapter III.

Chapter Three

Results

In this chapter, the results of thematic analysis, as well as a series of Pearson correlations and hierarchical regressions that were conducted to explore the seven research questions and to test the 11 hypotheses of the current dissertation are presented. Research questions one through five were answered with Study One data; research questions six and seven, in addition to hypotheses one, three, four, and five were tested with Study Two data; and hypotheses two, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, and 11 were tested with Study Three data.

Study One

The first research question asked whether social support, face management, and relational uncertainty motivate individuals to discuss negative relational events in their romantic relationships with friends. Thematic coding of the focus group responses resulted in themes consistent with these specific motives for extradyadic communication about negative relational events. (All themes relevant to romantic partners' motives for extradyadic communication, examples, and frequencies are available in Table 11.) Participants expressed a desire to *seek social support* from friends when they were experiencing or had experienced a negative relational event in their romantic relationships, including looking for comfort, reassurance, and to feel better about the situation. Participants also expressed a desire to *reduce uncertainty about their romantic partner and/or relationship*, including issues such as whether their relationship was worth their time or effort, how they should define the relationship, and how much their partner could be trusted or really cared about the relationship. These issues are largely consistent

Table 11

*Study 1 Focus Group Results for Romantic Partners' Extradyadic Communication**Motives*

| Theme | Definition | Example | Frequency | Percentage^a |
|------------------------------|---|---|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Venting negative feelings | Participants are motivated by a desire to express their negative feelings, relieve stress, and blow off steam. | "It's therapeutic to put it all out there. Get it all off your chest." | 35 | 26.52 |
| Seeking social support | Participants are motivated by a desire for friends to comfort them and make them feel better about the situation. | "Sometimes you just want them to make you feel better, and... I would want them to tell me what I want to hear..." | 28 | 21.21 |
| Desire for perspective | Participants are motivated by a desire for an objective, third-party, or unbiased perspective about the situation and/or romantic relationship. | "Sometimes you don't always think, 'cause you're so stressed or angry, and you don't think clearly, so your friend can help you out." | 22 | 16.67 |
| Seeking advice | Participants are motivated by a desire for friends to provide advice about what they should do next in their situation. | "I just want advice or feedback." | 18 | 13.64 |
| Validation/social comparison | Participants are motivated by a | "They could give you an example | 12 | 9.09 |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|------|
| | desire to compare their situation and/or reaction with those of their friends, often seeking reassurance that their reaction is “normal.” | of a similar thing that happened to then, so you don’t feel so alone.” | | |
| Talking through the issue | Participants are motivated by a desire to hear themselves talk about the situation out loud, to have someone listen, or to help themselves work through the issue. | “Just to talk to somebody about it... you don’t always want to hear yourself talk when you’re in the shower trying to replay it. You just want somebody else to listen.” | 6 | 4.55 |
| Reducing uncertainty about the relationship | Participants are motivated by a desire to reduce uncertainty about their romantic relationship and/or partner, including the definition, desire for, and future of the relationship. | “Trying to define what you are with someone... if he thinks you’re just talking to him or he wants to take it further.” | 3 | 2.27 |
| Entertainment | Participants are motivated by a desire to gossip and have fun. | “I think it’s just kinda fun to gossip. It’s entertaining hearing friends’ stories, and I don’t know, I | 3 | 2.27 |

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|------|
| | | think it's fun. It's sometimes fun to complain about people, too." | | |
| Enhancing self- esteem | Participants are motivated by a desire to boost their self-esteem, gain confidence, save face, and generally feel better about themselves. | "You could almost guarantee that they're gonna put the other person down, so you'll automatically feel better about the situation." | 3 | 2.27 |
| Reducing uncertainty about the event | Participants are motivated by a desire to reduce uncertainty about a negative relational event and/or a need for an explanation for the situation. | "I don't know what I did wrong or what they did wrong." | 2 | 1.52 |

^aPercentage of total comments relevant to romantic partners' motives

with the conceptualization of relational uncertainty put forth by Knobloch and Solomon (1999). Finally, some participants expressed a desire to *save face or boost self-esteem* following a negative relational event in their romantic relationships. This theme included such issues as being embarrassed about the negative event (e.g., being cheated on), wanting friends to tell them it is okay and seeking a friend to put the offending romantic partner down in order to make them feel better about themselves.

The second research question asked what other factors, beyond social support, face management, and relational uncertainty, might motivate individuals to discuss negative relational events in their romantic relationships with friends. In addition to the three motives already discussed, seven other themes emerged from the focus group discussions. First, participants frequently expressed a need to *vent negative feelings* after experiencing a negative relational event, often seeking interactions with friends in order to get their negative affect out and “blow off steam.” Second, participants expressed a desire for a *different/objective perspective* about the situation to help provide them with some clarity when they are overwhelmed with their own emotions or cannot view the situation objectively. Third, participants reported a desire to *seek advice* from friends, looking for feedback about what they should do or say next, and/or what their friend would do in their situation. Fourth, participants expressed a desire for *validation and social comparison*, looking for a friend’s agreement with and substantiation of their initial reaction to the negative relational event. Friends also reported seeking out friends who they knew had experienced similar issues, suggesting an overall need for social comparison. Fifth, participants expressed a desire to *talk themselves through the issue*, often saying that they just needed to hear themselves say it out loud, or just needed

someone to bounce ideas off of in order to help themselves work through the problem or event. Sixth, participants reported seeking interactions with friends following negative relational events in romantic relationships for *fun or entertainment*. Specifically, some participants reported that it is sometimes just fun to gossip or complain about a romantic partner, and to hear about others' issues. Seventh, participants expressed a desire to *reduce uncertainty about the negative relational event*, often asking friends to provide potential explanations for their partner's behavior or other possible causes of the situation.

The third research question asked what motivates friends to use support or interference messages when discussing a romantic partner's negative relational event. Six themes emerged from focus group discussions. (All friends' extradyadic communication motives, examples, and frequencies are available in Table 12.) First, participants reported being motivated to *provide an honest perspective* to their friend, including truthful opinions about the romantic partner, romantic relationship, or negative relational event, as well as helping the friend to re-evaluate the romantic relationship. Second, participants reported being motivated to *provide comfort* to their friends, including helping them feel better about the situation as well as themselves in order to reduce negative affect. Third, participants reported a desire to *protect or enhance their friendship* with their interaction partner, including attempts to prevent awkwardness or conflict between friends, to enhance relational closeness, and because reciprocation of support is key to a quality friendship. Fourth, participants discussed a desire to *appease* their friends, often simply telling them what they want to hear in the hope that it will end the conversation more quickly. This theme often emerged when participants brought up

Table 12

Study 1 Focus Group Results for Friends' Extradyadic Communication Motives

| Theme | Definition | Example | Frequency | Percentage^a |
|--------------------------------|--|--|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Provide an honest perspective | Friends are motivated by a desire to tell their friend the truth from an outsider's perspective about the situation, either romantic partners' behavior, or the romantic relationship, as well as to help the friend re-evaluate the situation or romantic relationship. | I am hoping "Just that she'll realize that it's unhealthy." | 31 | 38.75 |
| Provide comfort | Friends are motivated by a desire to make the romantic partner feel better, reduce negative affect, and/or boost self-esteem. | "Just doing things to help them feel better about themselves." | 17 | 21.25 |
| Protect/enhance the friendship | Friends are motivated by a desire to prevent awkwardness or conflict with their friend (i.e., the romantic partner), to become closer with this friend, and/or for a desire for reciprocation in their friendship. | "I've noticed, once girls start talking about boys, they're, like, buddy-buddy. So I feel like it's also a sense of getting closer with somebody." | 12 | 15.00 |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|--|---|-------|
| Appease the friend | Friends are motivated to tell the romantic partner what s/he wants to hear and/or to end the conversation. | “I have a friend that just won’t take my advice... So she comes to me and I just tell her what she wants to hear, ‘cause she’s not going to listen to me if I’m honest.” | 8 | 10.00 |
| Spare friend’s feelings | Friends are motivated by a desire to help the friend save face and/or to spare the friend’s feelings. | “To save face is probably the number one... Like, you don’t want to hurt their feelings so you just tell them, like, it’ll all work out when really you know the whole thing’s messed up, but you don’t want to hurt their feelings” | 8 | 10.00 |
| Provide a distraction | Friends are motivated to distract the romantic partner from thinking about the negative relational event and/or their negative affect. | “Taking them out to get something to eat, or, like, trying to get their mind off of something.” | 4 | 5.00 |

^aPercentage of total comments relevant to friends’ motives

the frequency of their friend's complaints; when an individual came to them often with similar complaints about a romantic partner or relationship, participants were more likely to tell their friends what they want to hear, regardless of whether it represented their honest opinion or not. Fifth, participants discussed a desire to *spare a friend's feelings* during extradyadic conversations about a negative relational event, often helping the friend to save face. Sixth, participants reported a desire to *provide a distraction* from their friend's negative thoughts and feelings following a negative relational event in a romantic relationship.

The fourth research question asked about the content of the extradyadic messages used by romantic partners when communicating with friends about negative relational events. Nine themes emerged from focus group discussions. (All romantic partners' extradyadic communication content themes, examples, and frequencies are available in Table 13.) First, participants reported making *negative comments about their romantic partner*, including criticism, blame, and exaggeration. Second, participants reported providing an *explanation of the situation*, often describing the details surrounding the negative relational event or elaborating on the background of the relationship or problem. Third, participants reported *expressing relational uncertainty*, specifically about their romantic partner or the relationship itself. Fourth, participants expressed *dissatisfaction with the romantic relationship* overall, making negative comments about the state or nature of the relationship. Fifth, participants reported *asking for advice* from friends about what to do or say after a negative relational event in a romantic relationship. Sixth, participants reported communicating messages of *positive affect for their romantic partner*, either expressing how much they care about their partner, or providing positive

Table 13

*Study 1 Focus Group Results for Romantic Partners' Extradysadic Communication**Content*

| Theme | Definition | Example | Frequency | Percentage^a |
|--|---|---|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Negative comments about the romantic partner | Romantic partners criticize or blame their partners, call them names, and exaggerate the negativity of the event and/or the partner's character or behavior. | "It's a lot of bashing, I notice. Like, you make up, like these crazy names, a lot of name calling, I guess. Like, exaggeration." | 45 | 27.12 |
| Explanation of the situation | Romantic partners provide friends with an explanation or description of the background and details of the negative relational event. | "I always have to explain the <i>whole</i> situation, if it's relevant or not." | 30 | 18.07 |
| Expressing relational uncertainty | Romantic partners express uncertainty about the romantic relationship and/or romantic partner, including the status and future of the relationship and the motives and desire of the self or partner. | "I don't know what he's thinking, I don't know if he wants this as much as I do." | 18 | 10.84 |
| Dissatisfaction with the romantic relationship | Romantic partners make negative comments about the state of the romantic relationship in | "I've had people come to me and say that they weren't happy..." | 17 | 10.24 |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--|----|------|
| | general and/or the extent to which their partner satisfies them. | | | |
| Asking for advice | Romantic partners directly ask friends for their feedback or opinion about what they should do, or what their friends would do, in their situation. | “What can I do? I don’t know what to do.” | 15 | 9.04 |
| Positive affect for partner | Romantic partners express positive feelings for their partner and/or defend or provide explanations their partner’s behavior. | “They said they want the best for this person, they were crying, so upset, but they love that person so much that no matter what, they want the best for them, but just sometimes things really hurt.” | 14 | 8.43 |
| Asking for validation | Romantic partners ask for friends’ reassurance about their reaction or behavior to the negative relational event. | “Would you be upset about this too?” | 9 | 5.42 |
| Expressing negative affect | Romantic partners make statements about or demonstrate what they are feeling as a result of the negative relational event. | “I’m so frustrated.” | 8 | 4.82 |
| Questioning own | Romantic partners | “What did I do to | 7 | 4.22 |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------------------|---|------|
| role in the situation | ask friends questions about what they might have done to contribute to the problem and/or to deserve the negative relational event. | deserve this?" | | |
| Other | General comments that did not fall under any existing category. | "Oh my gosh... I need to talk." | 3 | 1.81 |

^aPercentage of total comments relevant to romantic partners' message content.

explanations for their partner's behavior. Seventh, participants discussed *asking for validation* from friends, seeking reassurance that their reaction or behavior was acceptable and hoping that their friends agree with their perspective about the negative event. Eighth, participants reported *expressing negative affect* that they felt as a result of the negative relational event, including feelings of frustration, anger, and hurt. Ninth, participants reported *questioning their own role in the situation*, often asking friends what they did to deserve their partner's hurtful behavior or what they are currently doing to contribute to the problems in their romantic relationship.

The fifth research question asked about the content of the extradyadic messages used by friends about negative relational events. (All friends' extradyadic message content themes, examples, and frequencies are available in Table 14.) Ten themes emerged from focus group discussions. First, participants reported making *negative comments about the romantic partner* of their friend, criticizing or expressing negative opinions about him/her. Second, participants reported expressing *exasperation with their friend*, particularly with friends who frequently complain about a romantic partner or relationship, often expressing the desire for friends to stop discussing their relationship with them. Third, participants reported providing *counterdyadic advice*. In other words, friends reported making suggestions that are destructive or counterproductive for the healthy functioning of the romantic relationship. Fourth, participants also reported providing *prodyadic advice*, which includes constructive advice in the best interest of the romantic relationship. Fifth, participants made statements of *passive solutions or general positivity*, making it sound as though everything would work out without any action on the part of the romantic partner. Sixth, participants offered their perspectives about the

Table 14

Study 1 Focus Group Results for Friends' Extradyadic Message Content

| Theme | Definition | Example | Frequency | Percentage^a |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Negative comments about the partner | Criticizing or expressing negative opinions of the friend's romantic partner and/or the opinion that the friend is superior to his/her romantic partner. | "If it's, like, about boys and they screwed me over, then my friends will usually tell me that I'm better than them anyway." | 29 | 18.35 |
| Exasperation with friend | Expressing frustration with the frequency or content of friends' complaints, often expressing a desire for the friend to stop talking to them about it. | "I'm done talking about it. Just done." | 25 | 15.82 |
| Counter-dyadic advice | Offering advice that is not constructive or in the best interest of the romantic relationship. | "Just don't call him back because he's annoying anyway." | 23 | 14.56 |
| Prodyadic advice | Offering constructive advice, often encouraging partner perspective-taking, open communication, and mutual solutions to problems. | "What I would say to a friend is, like, ask them what is their partner's perspective? Like, if I was talking to your partner right now, what would they say to me about this | 18 | 11.39 |

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|----|-------|
| Passive solutions/general positivity | Making statements of general positivity, often making it sound as if the issue will resolve itself without any action on the part of the friend. | argument or conflict?" "It'll blow over soon, I wouldn't stress too much about it." | 16 | 10.13 |
| Relative importance of the problem | Offering some perspective about the gravity of the negative relational event. | "A lot of times people fight about dumb things that don't matter or that won't matter in a day or week or whatever, and people get so worked up about little things, so usually people are, like, it's not a big deal." | 16 | 10.13 |
| Disapproval of partner and/or relationship | Expressing negative opinions about the quality of the romantic relationship and/or the romantic partner. | "If you don't like the person, you're gonna say something negative, or you're gonna try to get them away from them." | 10 | 6.33 |
| Friend's best interest | Expressing a desire for the friend to be happy and/or offering support for any decision or action that will make the friend happy. | "As long as you're happy." | 7 | 4.43 |
| Blaming the | Expressing the | "You're in the | 7 | 4.43 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|------|
| partner | opinion that the friend is innocent and/or his/her romantic partner is at fault for the negative relational event. | right, she's wrong." | | |
| Positive explanation for partner behavior | Providing possible explanations or justifications for the negative relational event that place blame elsewhere or give the romantic partner the benefit of the doubt. | "Just kind of like rationalizing it a little bit. Like if the guy was talking to another girl... you're gonna tell her, oh, he's not cheating, he's just being nice and friendly." | 5 | 3.16 |
| Other | Comments that did not fit within another existing category. | "Sometimes you have to play the game a little bit." | 2 | 1.27 |

^aPercentage of total comments relevant to friends' message content

relative importance of the problem, usually minimizing the severity of the negative relational event. Seventh, participants reported expressing *disapproval of the partner and/or relationship* of their friend. Eighth, participants made comments about their desire for a *friend's best interest*, often supporting whatever decision a friend makes if it will make him/her happy. Ninth, participants made comments *blaming the partner*, expressing the opinion that the negative relational event was solely the fault of the romantic partner and not the friend. Tenth, participants reported providing *positive explanations for the partner's behavior*, often giving the partner the benefit of the doubt.

Study Two

Preliminary Analyses

Pearson correlations were conducted to determine whether perceived severity of the negative relational event, length of a friendship, and/or the length of a romantic relationship were associated with romantic partners' and friends' extradyadic communication about a negative relational event, respectively.

In the romantic partner sample, perceived event severity was significantly correlated with romantic partners' messages of relational negativity ($r = .25, p < .001$), partner protection ($r = -.26, p < .001$), and advice and validation ($r = .13, p < .05$). The length of the friendship between a romantic partner and the individual with whom s/he discussed the negative relational event was significantly associated with messages asking for advice and validation ($r = -.16, p < .05$) and messages of event explanation ($r = -.22, p = .001$). The length of a romantic relationship was also significantly associated with romantic partners' messages asking for advice and validation ($r = -.21, p < .01$) and messages of event explanation ($r = -.15, p < .05$). Therefore, when appropriate,

perceived event severity, length of friendship, and/or romantic relationship length were subsequently controlled in analyses involving romantic partners' extradyadic communication messages. As each covariate removes a degree of freedom from the error term and increases the critical value, the inclusion of covariates in the analysis also offers a more conservative test of the predictions.

In the friend sample, perceived event severity was significantly correlated with messages of interference ($r = .51, p < .001$) and support ($r = -.38, p < .001$). The length of the friendship between the friend and the romantic partner with whom s/he discussed the negative relational event was not significantly associated with either interference or support messages. The length of the friends' romantic relationship, if s/he was currently involved in one at the time of the study, was also significantly associated with interference messages ($r = -.33, p = .01$). Therefore, when appropriate, perceived event severity and/or romantic relationship length were controlled in analyses involving friends' extradyadic communication messages.

Tests of Research Questions and Hypotheses

The sixth research question inquired about the associations, if any, among romantic partners' extradyadic communication motives and content. Results of two-tailed Pearson correlations revealed significant associations between being motivated by a need for perspective and engaging in messages asking for advice and validation ($r = .74, p < .001$) and messages explaining the negative relational event ($r = .31, p < .001$). Additionally, being motivated by a desire for entertainment was significantly associated with both messages of relational negativity ($r = .36, p < .001$) and messages of partner protection ($r = .35, p < .001$). A need to vent was significantly associated with asking for

advice and validation from friends ($r = .37, p < .001$) and event explanation ($r = .40, p < .001$). Finally, relational uncertainty as a motive was significantly associated with messages of relational negativity ($r = .69, p < .001$), advice and validation ($r = .29, p < .001$), and event explanation ($r = .16, p < .05$). All two-tailed correlation values are available in Table 15.

The seventh research question inquired about the associations, if any, among friends' extradyadic communication motives and content. Results of two-tailed Pearson correlations revealed significant associations between the motivation to provide comfort and caring and interference messages ($r = .15, p < .05$). Annoyance with the discussion of a friend's romantic relationship problems was significantly associated with both interference messages ($r = .23, p = .001$), and support messages ($r = .24, p < .001$). Finally, motivation to avoid negative affect was significantly associated with both interference messages ($r = .18, p < .01$) and support messages ($r = .18, p < .01$). All two-tailed correlation values are available in Table 16.

The first hypothesis predicted that romantic partners' relational satisfaction, investment, and commitment would negatively predict (and quality of alternatives would positively predict) romantic partners' use of negative extradyadic messages. This hypothesis was partially supported. A hierarchical regression was conducted, with event severity entered as a covariate in the first block, Investment Model components entered in the second block, and relational negativity messages entered as the outcome variable. Results indicated a significant model, $F(5, 183) = 20.58, p < .001$. (All regression results for relational negativity messages are available in Table 17. In addition, the variance inflation factors (VIF) were below 5 and tolerance statistics were above .30 for all

Table 15

Two-Tailed Correlations for Romantic Partner Extradyadic Communication Motives and Content

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|-----|
| 1. Need for Perspective | 1.0 | | | | | | |
| 2. Entertainment | -.05 | 1.0 | | | | | |
| 3. Need to Vent | .35** | .13 | 1.0 | | | | |
| 4. Relational Uncertainty | .30** | .17* | .02 | 1.0 | | | |
| 5. Relational Negativity | .08 | .36** | .00 | .69** | 1.0 | | |
| 6. Advice and Validation | .74** | -.06 | .37** | .29** | .17* | 1.0 | |
| 7. Partner Protection | .12 | .35** | .01 | .07 | .18* | .17* | 1.0 |
| 8. Event Explanation | .31** | .13 | .40** | .16* | .09 | .43** | .10 |

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

Table 16

Two-Tailed Correlations for Friend Extradynamic Communication Motives and Content

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---------------------------------|--------|-------|------|-------|
| 1. Comfort and Caring | 1.0 | | | |
| 2. Annoyance with Discussion | -.24** | 1.0 | | |
| 3. Avoidance of Negative Affect | .35** | .07 | 1.0 | |
| 4. Interference Messages | .15* | .23** | .18* | 1.0 |
| 5. Support Messages | -.09 | .24** | .18* | -.18* |

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

Table 17

*Hierarchical Regression Results Predicting Romantic Partners' Relational Negativity**Messages from Investment Model Components*

| Variable | R^2 | β | t |
|----------------|-------|---------|--------|
| Step 1 | .06 | | |
| Event Severity | | .26 | 3.64** |
| Step 2 | .35 | | |
| Satisfaction | | -.32 | -2.89* |
| Investments | | .32 | 3.53** |
| Commitment | | -.35 | -2.94* |
| Alternatives | | .18 | 2.36* |

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

regression analyses conducted to test Study Two hypotheses, indicating that multicollinearity was not an issue (Menard, 1995; Myers, 1990.) Specifically, as predicted, messages of relational negativity were negatively predicted by satisfaction and commitment, and were positively predicted by quality of alternatives. However, contrary to predictions, relational negativity messages were positively predicted by investment.

Relationships were only hypothesized among IM variables and negative messages in hypothesis one, given the expectation that those in higher quality relationships, as defined by the IM, would be motivated to protect their romantic partner and relationship and would thus engage in fewer negative messages about a negative relational event in that relationship. However, in the interest of thoroughness, additional analyses were conducted to explore the potential relationships among the IM variables and positive (i.e., partner protection) extradyadic messages. In addition, the exploratory factor analysis revealed the presence of two factors containing messages that were relatively neutral in nature. Thus, again in the interest of thoroughness, the possible connections among the IM variables and the neutral messages that emerged were also investigated. The general pattern of results revealed few significant links between the IM variables and positive or neutral messages. Although a significant model emerged for partner protection messages, $F(5, 183) = 3.77, p < .01$, the covariate of perceived event severity was the only significant predictor ($\beta = -.28, t = -3.66, p < .001$). For messages asking for advice and validation, a significant model also emerged, $F(7, 179) = 3.41, p < .01$, with investments as a positive predictor (see Table 18). Finally, for event explanation messages, a significant model emerged, $F(6, 185) = 3.35, p < .01$, with alternatives as the only significant predictor (see Table 19).

Table 18

*Hierarchical Regression Predicting Romantic Partners' Advice and Validation Messages
from Investment Model Components*

| Variable | R^2 | β | t |
|---------------------------------|-------|---------|--------|
| Step 1 | .05 | | |
| Event Severity | | .11 | 1.45 |
| Friendship Length | | -.12 | -1.62 |
| Romantic Relationship Length | | -.18 | -2.42* |
| Step 2 | .09 | | |
| Satisfaction | | -.20 | -1.51 |
| Investments | | .29 | 2.63* |
| Commitment | | .09 | .60 |
| Alternatives | | .03 | .38 |

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

Table 19

*Hierarchical Regression Predicting Romantic Partners' Event Explanation Messages
from Investment Model Components*

| Variable | R^2 | β | t |
|---------------------------------|-------|---------|--------|
| Step 1 | .06 | | |
| Friendship Length | | -.22 | -3.02* |
| Romantic Relationship Length | | -.13 | -1.78 |
| Step 2 | .07 | | |
| Satisfaction | | -.07 | -.55 |
| Investments | | .08 | .71 |
| Commitment | | .06 | .41 |
| Alternatives | | .19 | 2.07* |

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

The third hypothesis predicted that romantic partners' friendship quality would positively predict their use of negative extradyadic messages about a negative relational event with friends. This hypothesis was not supported. Results of a multiple regression with perceived event severity entered as a covariate revealed a significant model, $F(4, 189) = 9.00, p < .001$, with friendship satisfaction as the only significant friendship quality predictor of relational negativity messages. However, contrary to predictions, friendship satisfaction negatively predicted romantic partners' use of relational negativity messages. Regression results for hypothesis three are available in Table 20.

Relationships were only hypothesized among friendship quality variables and negative messages in hypothesis three, given the expectation that those in higher quality friendships would be more comfortable expressing negative affect while discussing negative relational events with friends (e.g., Rose, 2002; Sprecher et al., 1995). However, in order to investigate the data thoroughly, additional analyses were conducted to explore the potential relationship between friendship quality and positive and neutral extradyadic messages. Although a significant model was revealed for partner protection messages, $F(4, 191) = 4.65, p = .001$, only the covariate of event severity was a significant predictor ($\beta = -.27, t = -3.78, p < .001$). The model for messages of advice and validation was also significant, $F(4, 191) = 4.65, p = .001$, but only the covariates of romantic relationship length ($\beta = -.17, t = -2.38, p < .05$) and friendship length ($\beta = -.19, t = -2.50, p < .05$) were significant predictors. Finally, results indicated a significant model for event explanation messages, $F(5, 193) = 5.34, p = .001$, but only the covariate of friendship length was a significant predictor ($\beta = -.26, t = -3.66, p < .001$). Thus, the

Table 20

*Hierarchical Regression Predicting Romantic Partners' Relational Negativity Messages**Based on Friendship Quality*

| Variable | R^2 | β | t |
|------------------------------|-------|---------|---------|
| Step 1 | .06 | | |
| Event Severity | | .25 | 3.47** |
| Step 2 | .15 | | |
| Satisfaction | | -.41 | -3.92** |
| Closeness | | .04 | .37 |
| Likelihood of Continuance | | .10 | .81 |

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

general pattern of results revealed no significant links between romantic partners' friendship quality and their use of either positive or neutral messages.

The fourth hypothesis predicted that friends' friendship quality would positively predict their use of interference messages with romantic partners. This hypothesis was not supported. Results of a multiple regression with perceived event severity and romantic relationship length entered as covariates indicated a significant model, $F(5, 47) = 6.60, p < .001$. However, only event severity was a significant predictor, ($\beta = .57, t = 4.83, p < .001$). Thus, no friendship quality indicators significantly predicted friends' use of interference messages with romantic partners: closeness ($\beta = .14, t = .83, p = .41$), satisfaction ($\beta = -.16, t = -.72, p = .48$), and likelihood of continuance ($\beta = -.07, t = -.29, p = .77$). Relationships were only hypothesized among friendship quality variables and interference messages in hypothesis four, given our expectation that those in high quality friendships would feel obligated and comfortable being honest with each other (Allen et al., 2012; Argyle & Henderson, 1984). However, again in the interest of a thorough exploration of available data, an additional regression was conducted to examine friendship quality and friends' use of support messages, with event severity entered as a covariate. Results indicated a significant model, $F(4, 207) = 9.70, p < .001$, with closeness negatively predicting friends' use of support messages (see Table 21).

The fifth hypothesis predicted that perceived partner uniqueness would negatively predict the frequency of romantic partners' negative extradyadic messages. Results of a first order correlation controlling for perceived event severity indicated that PPU was significantly associated with messages of relational negativity ($r = -.40, p < .001$), supporting hypothesis five. Again, although hypothesis five made predictions about

Table 21

*Hierarchical Regression Predicting Friends' Support Messages Based on Friendship**Quality*

| Variable | R^2 | β | t |
|------------------------------|-------|---------|--------|
| Step 1 | .14 | | |
| Event Severity | | .25 | 3.47** |
| Step 2 | .14 | | |
| Satisfaction | | .06 | .56 |
| Closeness | | -.19 | -1.94* |
| Likelihood of Continuance | | .05 | .46 |

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

negative extradyadic messages only, the remaining positive and neutral extradyadic messages were examined as well. Results of a first order correlation controlling for perceived event severity indicated that PPU was not significantly related to partner protection messages ($r = .07, p = .16$). Results of a third order correlation controlling for event severity, length of the romantic relationship, and length of the friendship indicated a significant relationship between PPU and messages of advice and validation ($r = .13, p < .05$). Results of a second order correlation controlling for both length of the romantic relationship and length of the friendship indicated that PPU was not significantly associated with messages of event explanation ($r = -.01, p = .46$).

Study Three

Preliminary Analyses

The results of Pearson correlations indicated that perceived event severity was significantly associated with romantic partners' positive ($r = -.34, p = .001$) and negative ($r = .28, p < .01$) extradyadic messages, but was not associated with friends' support or interference messages. Neither romantic relationship length nor friendship length was significantly associated with romantic partners' extradyadic messages. Friends' romantic relationship length was significantly associated with their use of support messages ($r = .38, p < .05$), but not their use of interference messages. However, friends' romantic relationship quality (i.e., satisfaction, investments, commitment, alternatives, and PPU) was not significantly associated with either support or interference messages. Finally, friends' perceptions of partner suitability were significantly associated with their use of support messages ($r = .25, p < .05$), but not interference messages.

Tests of Hypotheses

Due to the number of analyses being conducted with the Study 3 data and in order to reduce the risk of Type I error, results of subsequent analyses were only considered significant at the .01 level. The second hypothesis predicted that romantic partners' relational satisfaction, investment, and commitment would positively predict (and quality of alternatives would negatively predict) friends' use of support messages. This hypothesis was not supported. A hierarchical regression was conducted, with friends' romantic relationship length and partner suitability covariates entered into the first block, romantic partners' Investment Model variables entered in the second block, and friends' support messages entered as the outcome variable. Results indicated a nonsignificant model, $F(6, 34) = 1.63, p = .18$. The variance inflation factors (VIF) were below 5 and tolerance statistics were above .30 for all regression analyses conducted to test Study Three hypotheses, indicating that multicollinearity was not an issue (Menard, 1995; Myers, 1990). Although a relationship was only predicted between romantic partners' IM characteristics and friends' support messages, in order to be thorough, an additional regression was conducted with friends' interference messages. No covariates were necessary for this analysis, and the results again indicated a nonsignificant model, $F(4, 92) = 1.96, p = .11$. Romantic partners' relationship quality did not significantly predict friends' extradyadic support or interference messages.

The sixth hypothesis predicted that romantic partners' PPU would positively predict friends' use of support messages. Hypothesis six was not supported. Results of a second order correlation, controlling for friends' romantic relationship length and perceived partner suitability, indicated that PPU was not significantly associated with

friends' support messages ($r = -.16, p = .18$). A one-tailed Pearson correlation was conducted with friends' interference messages as well. Results indicated that romantic partners' PPU was significantly associated with friends' decreased use of interference messages ($r = -.25, p < .01$).

Following Dawson's (2014) recommendation, all covariates, independent variables, and moderator variables were standardized before conducting regression analyses for hypotheses seven through 11. Hypothesis seven predicted that romantic partners' negative extradyadic messages would interact with friends' interference messages to (a) positively predict friendship quality from the perspective of both the romantic partner and the friend, and (b) negatively predict the intention to avoid future discussion of the romantic relationship generally and the negative event specifically (with each other) from the perspective of both the romantic partner and the friend. Hypothesis seven was partially supported. To test hypothesis 7a, a series of hierarchical regressions were conducted with partners' perceived event severity entered as a covariate in the first block, partners' negative messages entered in the second block, friends' interference messages entered in the third block, the interaction between romantic partners' negative messages and friends' interference messages entered in the fourth block, and the components of friendship quality (i.e., closeness, satisfaction, and likelihood of continuance) for both the partner and the friend, respectively, entered as outcome variables.

Results revealed nonsignificant models for romantic partners' perceived friendship quality, including closeness $F(4, 97) = .14, p = .97$, satisfaction $F(4, 97) = 1.69, p = .16$, and likelihood of continuance $F(4, 97) = .25, p = .91$. Similarly, results of a

second series of hierarchical regressions revealed nonsignificant models for friends' perceived friendship quality, including closeness $F(4, 97) = .39, p = .82$, satisfaction $F(4, 97) = 1.29, p = .28$, and likelihood of continuance $F(4, 97) = .83, p = .51$. Thus, the interaction between romantic partners' negative extradyadic messages and friends' interference messages did not significantly predict perceptions of friendship quality.

To test hypothesis 7b, a series of hierarchical regressions were conducted with partners' perceived event severity entered as a covariate in the first block, partners' negative messages entered in the second block, friends' interference messages entered in the third block, the interaction between romantic partners' negative messages and friends' interference messages entered in the fourth block, and intentions to avoid discussing the romantic relationship in general and the negative relational event specifically for both the partner and the friend, respectively, entered as outcome variables.

Results for romantic partners revealed nonsignificant models for intent to avoid discussing their romantic partner and relationship in general with their friend, $F(4, 97) = .63, p = .64$, and intent to avoid discussing the specific negative relational event with their friend, $F(4, 97) = .59, p = .67$. Results for friends revealed a significant model for intent to avoid discussing their friends' romantic partner and relationship in general, $F(4, 97) = 3.91, p < .01$, with a significant interaction effect between romantic partners' negative messages and friends' interference messages ($\beta = .30, t = 2.77, p < .01$), consistent with the hypothesis (see Table 22). Aiken and West's (1991) procedure for interpretation of the moderation effect was used, whereby values for the moderator were chosen so that the relationship between partner's negative messages and friends' interference messages could be plotted at low and high levels. The sample minimum and maximum were used

Table 22

Hierarchical Regression Results Predicting Friends' General Intent to Avoid from the Interaction of Romantic Partners' Negative Messages and Friends' Interference Messages

| Variable | R^2 | B | t |
|--------------------------------------|-------|------|-------|
| Step 1 | .02 | | |
| Event Severity | | .18 | 1.60 |
| Step 2 | .02 | | |
| Romantic Partner Negative Messages | | -.16 | -1.34 |
| Step 3 | .04 | | |
| Friend Interference Messages | | -.23 | -1.73 |
| Step 4 | .11 | | |
| Romantic Partner Negative Messages * | | .31 | 2.77* |
| Friend Interference Messages | | | |

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

as the low and high values, respectively. This interpretation revealed that, while friends who used few interference messages maintained a relatively stable and comparatively moderate intent to avoid general discussion of the friends' romantic partner and relationship regardless of whether the partner communicated many or few negative messages, the avoidance intentions of those friends using frequent interference messages increased as romantic partners' use of negative messages increased (see Figure 1).

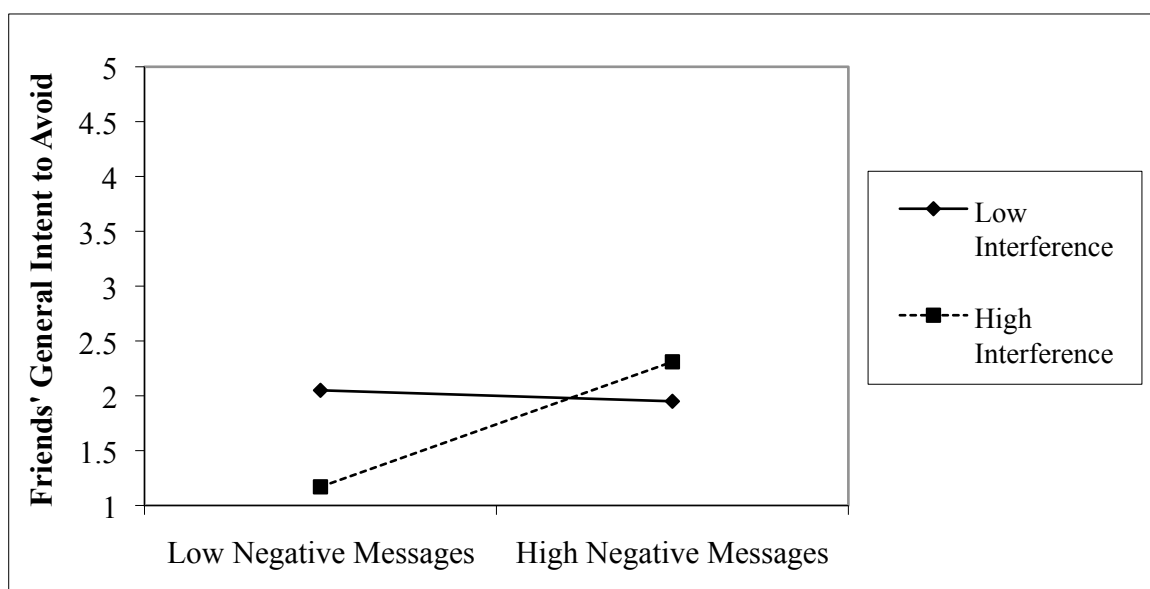
A significant model was also revealed for friends' intent to avoid discussing the specific negative relational event with their friend, $F(4, 97) = 3.88, p < .01$. However, upon closer examination of the beta weights, only perceived event severity was a significant predictor ($\beta = .27, t = 2.73, p < .01$), although friends' interference messages also approached significance ($\beta = -.54, t = -2.34, p = .02$).

Hypothesis eight predicted that romantic partners' positive and negative extradyadic messages, respectively, would interact with friends' support messages to (a) positively predict friendship quality from the perspective of both the romantic partner and the friend, and (b) negatively predict the intention to avoid future discussion of the romantic relationship generally and the negative relational event specifically (with each other) from the perspective of both the romantic partner and the friend. This hypothesis was not supported.

To test hypothesis 8a, a series of hierarchical regressions were conducted with partners' perceived event severity, friends' romantic relationship length, and friends' perception of partner suitability entered as covariates in the first block, romantic partners' negative or positive messages (as appropriate) entered in the second block, friends' support messages entered in the third block, the interaction between romantic partners'

Figure 1

Interaction Effect of Romantic Partners' Negative Extradidyadic Messages and Friends' Interference Messages on Friends' Intent to Avoid Discussing the Romantic Relationship in General



messages and friends' support messages entered in the fourth block, and the components of friendship quality (i.e., closeness, satisfaction, and likelihood of continuance) for both the partner and friend, respectively, entered as outcome variables.

Regression results examining romantic partners' negative messages and friends' support messages revealed nonsignificant models for romantic partners' perceived friendship quality, including closeness $F(6, 37) = .39, p = .88$, satisfaction $F(6, 37) = 1.39, p = .25$, and likelihood of continuance $F(6, 37) = .96, p = .47$. Similarly, results of a second series of hierarchical regressions revealed nonsignificant models for friends' perceived friendship quality, including closeness $F(6, 37) = .30, p = .93$, satisfaction $F(6, 37) = .42, p = .86$, and likelihood of continuance $F(6, 37) = 1.37, p = .26$. Thus, the interaction between romantic partners' negative extradyadic messages and friends' support messages did not significantly predict perceptions of friendship quality.

Regression results utilizing romantic partners' positive messages and friends' support messages also revealed nonsignificant models for romantic partners' perceived friendship quality, including closeness $F(6, 37) = .72, p = .64$, satisfaction $F(6, 37) = 1.01, p = .44$, and likelihood of continuance $F(6, 37) = 2.05, p = .09$. Similarly, results of a second series of hierarchical regressions revealed nonsignificant models for friends' perceived friendship quality, including closeness $F(6, 37) = .47, p = .82$, satisfaction $F(6, 37) = .31, p = .93$, and likelihood of continuance $F(6, 37) = 1.35, p = .26$. Thus, the interaction between partners' positive extradyadic messages and friends' support messages did not significantly predict perceptions of friendship quality.

To test hypothesis 8b, a series of hierarchical regressions were conducted with partners' perceived event severity, friends' romantic relationship length, and friends'

perception of partner suitability entered as covariates in the first block, romantic partners' negative or positive messages entered in the second block, friends' support messages entered in the third block, the interaction between romantic partners' extradyadic messages and friends' interference messages entered in the fourth block, and intentions to avoid discussing the romantic relationship in general or the negative relational event specifically entered as outcome variables for both partner and friend, respectively.

With regard to the interaction between romantic partners' negative messages and friends' support messages, results for romantic partners revealed nonsignificant models for intent to avoid discussing their romantic partner and relationship in general with their friend, $F(6, 37) = 1.80, p = .13$, and intent to avoid discussing the specific negative relational event with their friend, $F(6, 37) = 1.02, p = .43$. Results for friends also revealed nonsignificant models for intent to avoid discussing their friends' romantic partner and relationship in general with their friend, $F(6, 37) = .40, p = .87$, and intent to avoid discussing the specific negative relational event with their friend, $F(6, 37) = 1.12, p = .38$.

With regard to the interaction between romantic partners' positive messages and friends' support messages, results for romantic partners revealed a significant model for intent to avoid discussing their romantic partner and relationship in general with their friend, $F(6, 37) = 3.33, p = .01$. A closer examination of the beta weights revealed that only a main effect for romantic partners' positive messages approached significance as a predictor ($\beta = .60, t = 2.47, p = .02$). Results revealed a nonsignificant model for romantic partners' intent to avoid discussing the specific negative relational event with their friend, $F(6, 37) = 2.50, p = .04$. Results for friends revealed nonsignificant models

for intent to avoid discussing their romantic partner and relationship in general with their friend, $F(6, 37) = .79, p = .59$, and intent to avoid discussing the specific negative relational event with their friend, $F(6, 37) = .89, p = .51$. Thus, the interaction of romantic partners' extradyadic messages and friends' support messages did not significantly predict intent to avoid discussion of the romantic relationship generally or the negative relational event specifically.

Hypothesis nine predicted that romantic partners' positive extradyadic messages would interact with friends' interference messages to (a) negatively predict friendship quality from the perspective of both the romantic partner and the friend, and (b) positively predict the intention to avoid future discussion of the romantic relationship generally and the negative relational event specifically (with each other) from the perspective of both the romantic partner and the friend. This hypothesis was not supported.

To test hypothesis 9a, a series of hierarchical regressions were conducted with partners' perceived event severity entered as a covariate in the first block, romantic partners' positive messages entered in the second block, friends' interference messages entered in the third block, the interaction between romantic partners' positive messages and friends' interference messages entered in the fourth block, and the components of friendship quality (i.e., closeness, satisfaction, and likelihood of continuance) entered as outcome variables for both the partner and the friend, respectively.

Regression results revealed nonsignificant models for romantic partners' perceived friendship quality, including closeness $F(4, 97) = .51, p = .73$, satisfaction $F(4, 97) = .44, p = .78$, and likelihood of continuance $F(4, 97) = 1.04, p = .39$. Similarly,

results of a second series of hierarchical regressions revealed nonsignificant models for friends' perceived friendship quality, including closeness $F(4, 97) = 1.16, p = .33$, satisfaction $F(4, 96) = 1.14, p = .34$, and likelihood of continuance $F(4, 97) = .63, p = .64$. Thus, the interaction between romantic partners' positive extradyadic messages and friends' interference messages did not significantly predict perceptions of friendship quality.

To test hypothesis 9b, a series of hierarchical regressions were conducted with partners' perceived event severity entered as a covariate in the first block, romantic partners' positive messages entered in the second block, friends' interference messages entered in the third block, the interaction between romantic partners' extradyadic messages and friends' interference messages entered in the fourth block, and intentions to avoid discussing the romantic relationship in general or the negative relational event specifically for both partners and friends, respectively, entered as outcome variables.

Results for romantic partners revealed nonsignificant models for intent to avoid discussing their romantic partner and relationship in general with their friend, $F(4, 97) = 1.57, p = .19$, and intent to avoid discussing the specific negative relational event with their friend, $F(4, 97) = 1.84, p = .13$. Results for friends also revealed a nonsignificant model for intent to avoid discussing their friends' romantic partner and relationship in general with their friend, $F(4, 97) = 2.77, p = .03$. However, a significant model was revealed for friends' intent to avoid discussing the specific negative relational event, $F(4, 97) = 3.62, p < .01$. A closer examination of the beta weights indicated that only perceived event severity was a significant predictor, ($\beta = .28, t = 2.70, p < .01$), although the main effect for friends' interference messages approached significance, ($\beta = -.35, t = -$

2.15, $p = .03$). Thus, romantic partners' positive messages do not interact with friends' interference messages to predict intent to avoid discussing the romantic relationship generally or the negative relational event specifically.

Hypothesis ten predicted that romantic partners' positive and negative extradyadic messages would interact with friends' interference messages to negatively predict romantic partner's relational satisfaction and commitment in their romantic relationships. This hypothesis was not supported. Hierarchical regressions were conducted with partners' perceived event severity entered as a covariate in the first block, romantic partners' positive or negative messages entered in the second block, friends' interference messages entered in the third block, the interaction between partners' positive messages and friends' interference messages entered in the fourth block, and romantic partners' satisfaction or commitment entered as outcome variables.

With regard to the interaction between romantic partners' positive messages and friends' interference messages, results revealed a significant model for relational satisfaction, $F(4, 97) = 8.57, p < .001$. However, a closer examination of the beta weights indicated that only perceived event severity was a significant predictor, ($\beta = -.45, t = -4.78, p < .001$). A significant model was also revealed for romantic partners' commitment, $F(4, 97) = 5.76, p < .001$. A closer examination of the beta weights indicated that only perceived event severity was a significant predictor, ($\beta = -.39, t = -3.89, p < .001$). Thus, the interaction between partners' positive messages and friends' interference messages did not significantly predict romantic partners' satisfaction or commitment.

With regard to the interaction between romantic partners' negative messages and friends' interference messages, results revealed a significant model for relational satisfaction, $F(4, 97) = 7.89, p < .001$. However, only perceived event severity was a significant predictor, ($\beta = -.47, t = -4.97, p < .001$). A significant model was also revealed for romantic partners' commitment, $F(4, 97) = 5.67, p < .001$, but only perceived event severity was a significant predictor, ($\beta = -.41, t = -4.19, p < .001$). Thus, the interaction between romantic partners' negative messages and friends' interference messages did not significantly predict romantic partners' satisfaction or commitment.

Hypothesis 11 predicted that romantic partners' positive and negative extradyadic messages would interact with friends' support messages to positively predict romantic partner's relational satisfaction and commitment in their romantic relationships. This hypothesis was not supported. Hierarchical regressions were conducted with partners' perceived event severity, friends' romantic relationship length, and friends' perceptions of partner suitability entered as covariates in the first block, romantic partners' positive or negative messages entered in the second block, friends' support messages entered in the third block, the interaction between romantic partners' extradyadic messages and friends' support messages entered in the fourth block, and romantic partners' satisfaction or commitment entered as outcome variables.

With regard to the interaction between romantic partners' positive messages and friends' support messages, results revealed a significant model for relational satisfaction, $F(6, 37) = 5.50, p = .001$. A closer examination of the beta weights indicated that perceived event severity ($\beta = -.40, t = -2.75, p = .01$) and partner suitability ($\beta = .51, t = 3.60, p = .001$) were significant predictors, while the interaction between romantic

partners' positive messages and friends' support messages only approached significance ($\beta = .68, t = 2.24, p = .03$). A nonsignificant model was revealed for romantic partners' commitment, $F(6, 37) = 2.96, p = .02$. Thus, the interaction between romantic partners' positive messages and friends' support messages did not significantly predict romantic partners' satisfaction or commitment.

With regard to the interaction between romantic partners' negative messages and friends' support messages, results revealed a significant model for relational satisfaction, $F(6, 37) = 4.07, p < .01$. However, only perceived event severity ($\beta = -.41, t = -2.79, p < .01$) and partner suitability ($\beta = .42, t = 2.89, p < .01$) were significant predictors. A significant model was also revealed for romantic partners' commitment, $F(6, 37) = 3.23, p = .01$. However, only partner suitability emerged as a significant predictor, ($\beta = .51, t = 3.35, p < .01$). Thus, the interaction between romantic partners' negative messages and friends' support messages did not significantly predict romantic partners' satisfaction or commitment.

Summary

This chapter reported the findings of three studies conducted to develop measures of the motives for and content of romantic partners' and friends' extradyadic communication about negative relational events in romantic relationships, investigate relational and partner characteristics as predictors of extradyadic communication, and examine the implications of extradyadic communication for relatively immediate communicative and relational outcomes in both friendships and romantic relationships. Results of focus groups conducted in Study One provided several dominant themes in romantic partners' and friends' respective motives for and message content within

extradyadic interactions about negative relational events in romantic relationships. These themes provided the basis of item development for Study Two. Results of exploratory factor analyses revealed underlying factor structures, which were not initially confirmed in Study Three. After additional scale modifications and confirmatory factor analyses with a new dataset, a final factor structure was validated for each of four new scales assessing romantic partners' and friends' extradyadic communication motives and content.

Other results indicated that romantic partners' perceived relational quality, as defined by the Investment Model (Rusbult, 1980) significantly and negatively predicted romantic partners' use of negative extradyadic messages, but not friends' support or interference messages. Romantic partners' perceived partner uniqueness negatively predicted the use of their own negative messages and friends' interference messages. Romantic partners' satisfaction in their friendship negatively predicted their use of negative extradyadic messages, and friends' perceptions of friendship closeness negatively predicted their use of support messages.

Study Three used observed conversations to examine the interactions of romantic partners' and friends' message content. Overwhelmingly, results indicated that the interaction of romantic partners' positive or negative extradyadic messages and friends' messages of support or interference did not have a significant impact on relational outcomes immediately following a discussion of the romantic partners' negative relational events, with the exception of the interaction between partners' negative messages and friends' interference messages in predicting friends' intentions to avoid general discussions about the romantic relationship in the future. These results are

discussed in greater depth in Chapter IV, offering several explanations for the results, practical applications, limitations, and areas of future research.

Chapter Four

Discussion

The purpose of this dissertation was to (a) develop and validate measures of the motives for and content of romantic partners' and friends' extradyadic communication about negative relational events in romantic relationships, (b) investigate relational and partner characteristics as predictors of extradyadic communication, and (c) examine the implications of extradyadic communication for immediate communication behavior and relational outcomes in both friendships and romantic relationships. Results of three studies revealed five general patterns of results related to these purposes. First, results were generally consistent with negativity biases (Rook, 1984, 1998) in extradyadic communication following negative relational events in romantic relationships, in that participants most often used negative messages (as opposed to positive or supportive messages) when discussing a negative relational event. Second, results revealed generally weak associations among extradyadic communication motives and message content. Third, friendship quality did not emerge as a significant predictor or an outcome of extradyadic communication. Fourth, extradyadic interactions appear to have implications for topic avoidance in friendship. Finally, the perceived severity of a negative relational event has significant predictive power with regard to communication and perceived relational quality in both friendships and romantic relationships. This chapter begins with a discussion of these findings and their implications, followed by the limitations of these studies and future directions for research.

First, results across the three studies of this dissertation were generally consistent with a negativity bias (Rook, 1998) in extradyadic communication following negative

relational events in romantic relationships. Taken together, a general pattern emerged whereby individuals are more likely to produce negative than positive messages in extradyadic interactions and relational quality in both the romantic relationship and friendship predicts romantic partners' use of negative messages, but not positive messages, with friends. This pattern is consistent with findings from Vallade and Dillow (in press), suggesting that negative messages are much more salient than positive messages in the context of extradyadic communication following negative events in romantic relationships. Overall, results provide support for the operation of a negativity bias in extradyadic communication about negative relational events in romantic relationships.

Scholars have consistently identified a natural tendency for humans to give more emphasis to negative information as opposed to positive information, and for negative events and communication behaviors to have stronger, more consistent, and longer lasting effects on our relationships and perceptions (Gottman, 1994; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Levenson & Gottman, 1985; Huston & Vangelisti, 1991). The negativity bias appears consistent among events ranging from the common and mundane to the extreme and traumatic, and has an impact on a wide variety of individual and relational outcomes (see Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001 for a review). Individuals tend to remember bad behaviors over good behaviors (Dreben, Fiske, & Hastie, 1979; Bless, Hamilton, & Mackie, 1992) and more often attribute negative events to others, as opposed to attributing them to chance (Morewedge, 2009) or to themselves (Skowronski, Betz, Thompson, & Shannon, 1991). Moreover, this negativity bias manifests itself in linguistic tendencies (e.g., intensified expressions of negative emotion), allowing

individuals to maximize dramatic effects, and gain attention from and create connections with others (Jing-Schmidt, 2007). Given the pervasive nature of the negativity effect, it is perhaps not surprising that results revealed stronger tendencies toward a negative focus in extradyadic interactions and that negative extradyadic messages (on the part of both the romantic partner and the friend) were more commonly used than positive messages.

For romantic partners, the most frequently identified theme of extradyadic messages about negative relational events in Study One involved negative messages about the romantic partner, including criticism, blame, and exaggeration of the negativity of the event and/or the partner. Participants also identified messages communicating general dissatisfaction with the state of the relationship, articulating their relational uncertainty, and expressing negative affect. In contrast, romantic partners only identified one theme representative of positive messages directed toward their partner or relationship, representative of strategies for marshaling network support identified by Crowley (2012). Additionally, although results of exploratory factor analyses uncovered a positively valenced message factor (i.e., partner protection), only three items remained, and this factor was not confirmed in Study Three analyses, indicating infrequent and inconsistent self-reported use of these messages. In contrast, relational negativity messages formed a more robust subscale for romantic partners.

Further, observations of actual interactions between friends in Study Three revealed a higher frequency of negative messages than positive messages. Indeed, whereas some romantic partners neglected to say a single positive thing about their romantic partner or relationship, all participants used a minimum of three negative messages. Thus, the general pattern of results indicates a tendency for romantic partners

to produce more critical and destructive extradyadic messages than prosocial extradyadic messages. Given previous research indicating a negativity bias in perceptions of and reactions to events in everyday life and close relationships, as well as in emotional experiences, memory, and perceptions of the self (Baumeister et al., 2001), it is not surprising that this negativity surfaces in the messages chosen by romantic partners when they are asked to recall and discuss a negative relational event in their romantic relationships.

In addition to the mere presence of more negative than positive messages, results of Study Two indicated that romantic relationship and partner perceptions were predictive of the use of negative, but not positive, messages. Extant research has indicated that individuals' relational quality positively predicts pro-relationship behavior following negative relational events, prompting them to engage in more constructive and less destructive communication with their romantic partners (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006a; Guerrero & Bachman, 2008, 2010; Roloff et al., 2001; Rusbult et al., 1982). However, the results of Study Two, which examined Investment Model indicators of relational quality as predictors of communication with friends following a negative relational event, were only partially consistent with available research in that romantic partners' satisfaction, commitment, and quality of alternatives predicted destructive communication patterns as expected, but investments did not. Specifically, participants' satisfaction and commitment negatively predicted, and quality of alternatives positively predicted, partners' use of relational negativity messages. These results support the contention that relational quality encourages motivation to maintain the relationship and garner network support, specifically by refraining from saying negative things about the

partner and/or relationship (Crowley, 2012).

However, in contrast to IM predictions (Rusbult, 1980, 1983) and previous findings (e.g., Guerrero & Bachman, 2008; Vallade & Dillow, in press), investments positively predicted relational negativity messages. It may be possible that, when individuals have made numerous investments into a relationship, they feel increasing resentment toward a partner following a negative relational event. In other words, a negative relational event may be perceived as poor repayment for all that one has devoted to a relationship and/or partner, which may prompt the use of messages emphasizing the negativity of the event or the shortcomings and/or fault of the ungrateful partner.

In addition to perceptions of relationship quality, perceived partner uniqueness has been found to encourage pro-relationship communication and behavior patterns, particularly during difficult relational situations, such as following a negative relational event (Dillow et al., 2012). In the current study, similar to results obtained with IM components, higher levels of PPU were inversely associated with relational negativity messages, but were not significantly associated with messages of partner protection. Overall then, consistent with results obtained by Vallade and Dillow (in press) and with the negativity bias, results indicated that IM components and PPU were predictive of negative extradyadic messages, but did not significantly predict positive messages of partner protection. Scholars have recognized that, in terms of relational functioning, avoiding negative behaviors is more strongly related to the quality of relationships than the enactment of positive behaviors (e.g., Gottman, 1994). These results suggest that perceptions of relational quality and partner uniqueness encourage individuals to protect their relationships primarily by refraining from engaging in negative messages with

friends, but not by the overt use of positive messages (Crowley, 2012).

Perhaps more surprising, given Julien et al.'s (1994) finding and previous research outlining the risks involved with expressing negative opinions of friends' romantic partners, Study One results indicated that individuals most often express critical or disapproving comments about their friends' romantic partners during extradyadic interactions about negative relational events. Participants reported communicating messages of counterdyadic advice, disapproval of the partner and/or relationship, and blaming the partner. Results suggest, then, that young adults identify more interference themes than support themes when they reflect generally on these types of extradyadic interactions, a finding that is consistent with previous research (Julien et al., 1994, 2000), as well as the results of Studies Two and Three, which also found a higher prevalence of interference than support messages from friends.

Friends are a major source of social support during times of stress and negative affect (Chang, 2001; Mortenson et al., 2009), including stress or negative affect caused by a romantic relationship partner or negative relational event (Julien & Markman, 1991). Results of Study One suggest that people seek interactions with a friend following a negative relational event in their romantic relationships in order to help reduce this negative affect and obtain some level of comfort. Given the range of negative responses individuals experience following negative events such as relational transgressions and negative conflict (Berman & Frazier, 2005; Feeney & Hill, 2006), it is not surprising that friends become an important source of solace. Although some Study One focus group participants expressed a desire for someone to listen and perhaps empathize with the situation, consistent with previous research on effective social support (e.g., Burleson &

MacGeorge, 2002), others expressed a desire for someone to provide reassurance in the form of supporting one's negative opinions of the relational event or partner. In other words, they were seeking support in the form of agreement with existing negative opinions about the event, similar to research that has found that individuals seek out others to confirm existing feelings regarding the relationship (MacDonald & Ross, 1999), even if those feelings are negative. It is possible, then, that friends are merely trying to satisfy the romantic partner's desire by expressing more interference than support.

Thus, while extant research suggests that effective social support takes the form of person-centered messages and empathic responses (e.g., Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002), within the context of friends' discussions about negative relational events in their romantic relationships, there may be an exception in which negatively valenced messages may provide the type of support that is desired at that particular time (Burleson & Goldsmith, 1998). However, it is also possible that, although this may provide immediate relief, these types of support messages may not be effective for long-term comfort. It would be beneficial to examine in more depth the changes in desire for and role of social support over time, particularly given the fact that ineffective social support leaves more of a lasting impression (e.g., Burleson & Goldsmith, 1998; High & Dillard, 2012), and may thus impact individuals' reactions to these extradyadic interactions. The extent to which romantic partners perceive the prevalence of interference messages as effective or ineffective may in part be influenced by their motives for engaging in these extradyadic interactions in the first place. Although a goal of this dissertation was to explore the role of extradyadic communication motives, results regarding these motives

and their associations with communicative messages were, overall, not particularly strong.

A second general finding from the studies of this dissertation indicated generally weak associations among participants' extradyadic communication motives and content. For romantic partners, results of Study Two generally suggested that motives were relatively weakly and equally associated with both positive and negative extradyadic messages, suggesting that both types of messages may provide limited satisfaction for individuals' needs (e.g., need to vent, for perspective, or desire for entertainment) within an interaction. Given that individuals experience multiple goals during interpersonal discussions and the tendency of these goals to fluctuate in importance throughout an interaction (e.g., Dillard, Segrin, & Harden, 1989; Keck & Samp, 2007), it is possible that assessing overall motives across multiple interactions failed to capture the dynamic nature of individuals' extradyadic motives and goals. More specifically, perhaps a person's general motives may be more or less indicative of their specific motive at any given time.

One exception to the general pattern of weak associations was revealed in the relationship between romantic partners' relational uncertainty motive and their use of relational negativity messages, suggesting that individuals experiencing higher levels of relational uncertainty in their romantic relationship are more likely to make negative comments about their partners, their relationships, and/or the negative relational event in general than are individuals experiencing lower levels of relational uncertainty. This result, interpreted in the context of previous research suggesting that relational uncertainty often prompts individuals to either avoid communication or engage in less

direct communication with a partner (Knobloch & Carpenter-Theune, 2004; Theiss & Solomon, 2006a, 2006b), suggests that people may not only be communicating with individuals outside of the relationship instead of their romantic partners following a negative relational event, they seem more likely to engage in primarily negative messages under these circumstances.

As noted by Julien and Markman (1991), this pattern of behavior is potentially problematic, as it may result in negative consequences for the romantic relationship. For example, scholars have found topic avoidance in romantic relationships to be associated with both one's own and the romantic partner's dissatisfaction (e.g., Caughlin & Golish, 2002). Individuals may discuss the negative relational event with a friend instead of discussing it directly with their romantic partner in order to avoid conflict within their romantic relationship. However, conflict avoidance can have additional consequences for the romantic relationship, including increased levels of distress and dissatisfaction (Bodenmann, Kaiser, Hahlweg, & Fehm-Wolfsdorf, 1998; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989), particularly if it leads to demand/withdraw conflict patterns (e.g., Caughlin & Huston, 2002). In fact, Smith, Heaven, and Ciarrochi (2008) found conflict avoidance and withdrawal from the relationship to more strongly predict relational outcomes (e.g., dissatisfaction) than engaging in constructive conflict communication.

Given the variety of negative outcomes associated with avoidance in romantic relationships, it may be particularly important to encourage extradyadic communication about negative relational events that allows romantic partners to garner social support and relieve negative affect in a healthy and productive manner versus extradyadic communication that facilitates romantic partners' counterproductive avoidance of

communicating within their romantic relationship. Relatedly, results of the current study may provide practical implications for friends' extradyadic communication. It would be useful for friends to be able to recognize indicators of relational uncertainty, and provide effective social support by not only allowing romantic partners to vent their negativity, but also by providing productive suggestions for engaging in communication directly with one's partner. The present results suggest that, although motives generally may not differentially or strongly predict romantic partners' use of extradyadic messages, relational uncertainty is a salient motivator for extradyadic communication with friends following negative relational events in romantic relationships.

At the same time that romantic partners are motivated to seek out extradyadic interactions, a goal of the present dissertation was to explore friends' potential motives for engaging in these interactions. Although participants discussed several possible motives in Study One focus groups, the overall pattern of results indicates that friends' extradyadic motives may not be particularly salient to their own communication messages.

Generally, friends' motives appeared to mirror the motives of romantic partners. For example, friends articulated a desire to provide comfort during these extradyadic interactions, perhaps recognizing that this may be a primary reason that their friend has come to them to discuss a negative relational event. This finding is not surprising, given that friendships are fundamentally helping relationships, and the role of friend often carries expectations of social support (Argyle & Henderson, 1984). Additionally, participants identified the motive of sparing a friend's feelings, articulating a desire to help a friend save face. Participants most often identified the motive of providing an

honest perspective to friends who have experienced a negative event in a romantic relationship. The frequency of this theme is particularly interesting, given the contradictions in extant research regarding the risks and discomfort involved in discussing a friend's romantic relationship and/or partner with him/her (Newell & Stutman, 1991; Wilson et al., 1998) and the obligation to be honest in order to protect each other (Zhang & Merolla, 2006). Although not as prevalent, another theme emerged that appears to support the importance of protecting the friendship and avoiding negative affect, conflict, or tension within this relationship, consistent with Wilson et al. (1998). Thus, the current results do not resolve this contradiction; individuals appear to struggle with a desire to be direct and honest *and* a desire to protect themselves and the friendship when they approach discussions about a negative relational event in a friend's romantic relationship.

Although participants were able to discuss some of the reasons why they might choose to respond to romantic partners' negative relational events with support or interference messages, results of Study Two indicated weak associations among these motives and extradyadic communication content. Motives provide a reason to engage in communication (Rubin et al., 1988), which generally suggests that people are taking an active role in their communication, potentially seeking out communication opportunities based on these motives. However, given that the topic of conversation is an event in another person's romantic relationship, friends may not be highly motivated to engage in these interactions, and certainly less likely to seek out these interactions. It is possible that friends' motives are not as salient within this context because their participation is more passive and reactive than romantic partners' participation.

Indeed, focus group discussions revealed that young adults often experience some annoyance when friends discuss negative relational events in their romantic relationships, particularly if these negative relational events (and conversations about them) occur frequently. Participants noted that, under these circumstances, they would say whatever they thought the other person wanted to hear in the hopes that this would end the conversation more quickly. In this situation, these friends may be considered passive or reluctant confidants (McBride & Bergen, 2008) as opposed to active or invested participants, and may be more strongly motivated by what they perceive the romantic partner wants out of the interaction than by their own internal motives. Given the focus of the conversations in the current studies, then, friends' motives may not be influential in terms of their choice of communication messages.

A third general pattern of findings that emerged from this dissertation indicated that friendship quality did not play a significant role as either a predictor or an outcome of extradyadic communication. Extant research has suggested that friendship quality, in addition to the quality of the romantic relationship, may influence how an individual chooses to discuss a negative relational event in his/her romantic relationship. However, across the current studies, friendship quality indicators (i.e., closeness, satisfaction, and likelihood of continuance) were generally not strong predictors of romantic partners' or friends' extradyadic messages, with two exceptions.

For romantic partners, the only significant friendship quality predictor of relational negativity messages was satisfaction with the friendship, which, contrary to predictions and previous research (e.g., Calmes & Roberts, 2008), was negatively associated with romantic partners' relational negativity messages. One explanation for

this finding is that individuals establish less negative communication patterns in satisfying friendships. For example, positivity is a relational maintenance behavior involving cheerful, pleasant, and optimistic behaviors (Stafford & Canary, 1991), behaviors that are often expected of our friends (e.g., Oswald & Clark, 2003). Indeed, positivity has been found to be associated with higher levels of friendship satisfaction (McEwan & Guerrero, 2012; Oswald, Clark, & Kelly, 2004). Although scholars often hypothesize that positivity behaviors influence our relational satisfaction, we may also enact more of these behaviors in satisfying friendships. Thus, when discussing a negative relational event within a satisfying friendship, romantic partners may not necessarily have positive things to say, but they may still refrain from being overly negative in their extradyadic communication as a means of maintaining a more positive relationship. This may at least partially explain why individuals use fewer negative messages when disclosing about a negative relational event to friends with whom they are highly satisfied.

For friends, the closeness component of friendship quality was the only significant predictor of friends' extradyadic communication, specifically predicting less frequent use of support messages. Thus, although increased closeness between friends does not necessarily encourage the use of more interference messages, close friends may minimally feel less obligated to use supportive messages. Previous research has indicated that people often view the transgressions of their friends' romantic partners to be severe and less forgivable and to cause negative affect (Bohner et al., 2010; Green et al., 2008). Although individuals may be reluctant to express these negative opinions for various reasons (e.g., Guerrero & Afifi, 1995a, 1995b; Zhang & Merolla, 2006),

individuals in close friendships may also feel that they do not need to go so far as to say positive things about the romantic partner, relationship, or negative relational event.

Although these two exceptions emerged in the current results, the overall pattern of findings for friendship quality was underwhelming. One potential explanation for this general lack of findings regarding friendship quality may be found in the role that friends play within young adults' lives. Research on college students' friendships indicates that young adults are often focused on expanding their peer networks (Wright & Patterson, 2006), and that members of these networks function as their primary communication partners (Burlison & Samter, 1996). However, as individuals grow older and transition past college and into later stages of their lives, research indicates that their social networks and friendships change. Specifically, in Socioemotional Selectivity Theory, Carstensen (1987, 1991, 1992) argued that, over the lifespan, the potential risks and benefits of social interactions change, resulting in a lower likelihood that interactions with casual friends will be rewarding. Instead, individuals place increasing value on a smaller social network with a select group of significant relational partners. In support of this theory, results of a longitudinal study revealed that the number of individuals' friendships decreased from the age of 18 to the age of 50, although the quality (i.e., emotional closeness, satisfaction) of the remaining friendships increased over time (Carstensen, 1992).

Given research emphasizing the importance of increasing social networks during young adulthood (the age of participants across the studies in this dissertation), but the relative shift in these networks at later life stages, it is possible that the transience of young adult friendships during their college experience may at least partially explain why

friendship quality did not play a large role in terms of extradyadic communication patterns. In studies of college students' peer networks, individuals have identified more friends as "close" than as "casual" (McEwan & Guerrero, 2012), although researchers suggest that the majority of these friendships are unlikely to remain close over time (Carstensen, 1992). Thus, although participants generally rated their friendships as high in quality at the time of their participation, the importance of these friendships may change over time, particularly given the geographical distance often imposed following graduation from college (Becker, Johnson, Craig, Gilchrist, Haigh, & Lane, 2009). Given the increased value and stability of friendships beyond young adulthood, it is possible that extradyadic communication about negative relational events within an older population may have stronger associations with friendship quality, as suggested by Julien and colleagues (1994, 2000), who observed interactions between older, married individuals and their friends. Perhaps friendship quality is more meaningful at later life stages, and thus may play a larger role in influencing communication patterns.

A fourth general finding revealed that, although extradyadic communication interactions did not appear to have significant implications for romantic partners' or friends' friendship quality, results of Study Three appear to have stronger implications for topic avoidance intentions within friend relationships. Specifically, friends' intentions to avoid future discussions about romantic partners' relationships were significantly predicted by the interaction of romantic partners' negative messages and their own interference messages. This interpretation revealed that, while friends who used few interference messages maintained a fairly stable intent to avoid general discussion of the friends' romantic partner and relationship, the avoidance intentions of

those friends using frequent interference messages increased as romantic partners' use of negative messages also increased.

Friends who did not engage in frequent interference messages maintained a relatively stable and comparatively moderate level of intention to avoid future discussion of their friends' romantic relationships, regardless of how many negative messages the romantic partner used. Two potential explanations arise for this finding. First, it is possible that friends' infrequent use of interference messages may be indicative of varying levels of approval for the relationship, which may influence their intent to avoid future discussion of it. For example, this low level of interference on the part of a friend may indicate that s/he has a negative opinion of the overall romantic relationship but is generally hesitant to express it, perhaps due to the risks involved in such disclosures (e.g., Newell & Stutman, 1991). Friends may recognize that the romantic partner will not listen to what they have to say about the relationship or partner, as mentioned by several Study One focus group participants; often, when they knew that their friend was not going to listen to any criticism about their romantic partner, participants reported simply keeping their opinions to themselves. Thus, it may be possible that the friend is not using many interference messages despite their negative opinions about the romantic relationship, and therefore intend to avoid future discussion of the relationship in order to refrain from having to be dishonest or equivocal about their honest and negative opinions.

Second, it is possible that, because these individuals did not employ frequent interference messages even when the romantic partner engaged in frequent negative messages, they do not feel as strong a need to avoid future discussion of the romantic relationship. After all, they are not the ones contributing to the negativity of the

interactions, and the interactions are thus less risky from their perspective (e.g., Newell & Stutman, 1991; Wilson et al., 1998) and potentially unnecessary to avoid. They may also realize that the romantic partner is merely venting, and, having a generally positive opinion about the romantic relationship, they may see no need to avoid future discussion of it.

In contrast, friends who produced frequent interference messages expressed increased intent to avoid future discussion of the romantic relationship and partner as romantic partners' use of negative messages increased. When romantic partners used few negative messages (and friends used frequent interference messages), friends' avoidance intentions were at a minimum. This may be an indication that the friend is not particularly concerned about the risks involved in these messages (Newell & Stutman, 1991). More specifically, it may be that the friend is concerned enough about the romantic partner's wellbeing that s/he is willing to take the risk, regardless of the low negativity of the partner's messages, in order to try and protect the romantic partner from harm (Zhang & Merolla, 2006). Given the high level of friendship quality reported by friends, their level of concern for the romantic partner may be stronger than their desire to avoid conflict or awkwardness (Wilson et al., 1998), and they may intend to continue discussing the relationship and partner (i.e., low intent to avoid) until they believe that the romantic partner is no longer in danger of being hurt.

Conversely, when romantic partners used frequent negative messages, friends using higher levels of interference messages reported elevated intentions to avoid. Perhaps with the excessive focus on negative affect in these interactions, this co-rumination (Rose, 2002) results in aversive consequences that encourage the friend to

avoid future discussions of the romantic relationship. Indeed, scholars have found that co-rumination can activate physiological stress responses (Byrd-Craven, Geary, Rose, & Ponzi, 2008; Byrd-Craven et al., 2011) and may contribute to individuals' rumination and anxiety (e.g., Afifi, Afifi, Merrill, Denes, & Davis, 2013). Given this high level of negativity, friends may be motivated to avoid further discussion of this topic, as it may cause them to experience undue stress. Future research is needed to further parse out these possibilities and explanations in order to better understand how romantic partners' negative messages and friends' interference messages interact to predict friends' topic avoidance. Although results indicated that extradyadic communication messages have implications for topic avoidance in friendship, contextual factors (e.g., perceived event severity) appear to be the most salient predictors of romantic partners' satisfaction and commitment within their romantic relationships.

The final important pattern of findings that emerged from this dissertation suggested that the perceived severity of a negative relational event has significant predictive power with regard to both communication and perceived relational quality, particularly in romantic relationships. Previous research has revealed that the severity of negative relational events such as relational transgressions result in increased negative affect, both initially after the event (McCullough, Fincham, & Tsang, 2003) and later levels of ongoing negative affect (Merolla, 2008). Given these heightened levels of negative affect following these types of events in romantic relationships, it is not surprising that the conversations about these events would be correspondingly negative. Event severity has also been found to result in decreased likelihood of forgiveness (e.g., Afifi et al., 2001) and decreased levels of relational satisfaction (Ferrara & Levine, 2009;

Vallade & Dillow, in press). Results of the current study are consistent with previous research, indicating that perceived event severity significantly and negatively predicted extradyadic communication messages, as well as both satisfaction with and commitment to a romantic relationship. Indeed, perceptions of the severity of the event – not the nature of the extradyadic communication that was taking place – were often the only significant predictor of these romantic relationship outcomes. Although current results suggest that factors external to the extradyadic interaction, particularly those which are focused on the severity of the negative relational event, are most influential for perceived outcomes of these conversations, it should be noted that the interaction between romantic partners' positive messages and friends' support messages approached significance as a predictor of romantic partners' satisfaction. Examination of these messages within a larger sample, or perhaps over a greater length of time, might produce different results.

In addition to being a significant predictor of romantic partners' relational outcomes, extradyadic communication messages themselves were consistently predicted by the perceived severity of the negative relational event. Regardless of the quality of the friendship, friends may be predisposed to either use or refrain from using interference messages based on the severity of the event under discussion. In fact, perceived event severity was the only significant and positive predictor of friends' interference messages. It is possible that, when a negative relational event is perceived to be particularly damaging, individuals are motivated to employ more interference messages because of an obligation to protect a friend (Zhang & Merolla, 2006), regardless of whether that friendship is considered especially high in quality. In other words, individuals may be

motivated to protect even lower quality friends from threats perceived as particularly severe.

Limitations

The results of the current dissertation must be interpreted within the limitations of the studies conducted. Study Two found generally weak relationships among extradyadic communication motives and content, a finding which may be an artifact of asking participants to report on their overall motives for and content of extradyadic interactions. Although participants were asked to focus on one particular friend and one specific negative relational event in a romantic relationship, they may have had several previous conversations about this particular relationship or relational event, and their motives and messages may differ from interaction to interaction. Additionally, their goals and motives may shift within any given interaction, which can differentially impact the use of destructive versus constructive communication behaviors (Keck & Samp, 2007). The instructions to report on their motives with this friend generally, and the messages they have used overall, may limit the strength of the associations found among extradyadic motives and content. Although it is also possible that motives may not have a robust impact on extradyadic communication messages, the global way in which these motives were assessed may have contributed to the weak associations obtained here.

Additionally, issues of measurement reliability should be noted. In Studies Two and Three, Johnson's (2001) friendship satisfaction subscale obtained only acceptable internal reliabilities, ranging from .69 to .71. Although some scholars contend that alpha levels between .60 and .70 are acceptable (e.g., Kline, 2000), others maintain that these values represent the lower limit of acceptability (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010).

Inconsistency and measurement error in general can reduce statistical power and may thus have reduced the likelihood of finding significant relationships. However, the low reliability of this subscale is unlikely to fully account for the pattern of null findings that emerged across studies. Future research should examine these reliability issues before continuing to use Johnson's (2001) friendship satisfaction subscale to assess friendship quality. Additionally, the developed scales for friends' extradyadic communication motives also achieved relatively low internal reliabilities, and may need further examination before future use. These decreased reliabilities may be due to the low number of items, given that these scales only retained three or four items each (Nunnally, 1978). Additionally, the wording of the items may contribute to low reliabilities (Boyle & Harrison, 1981), a possibility that should be investigated before future use.

Another important limitation can be attributed to the simulated setting in which Study Three participants conducted their extradyadic conversations regarding a negative relational event. Specifically, these participants reported to an interaction lab and followed explicit instructions regarding their conversation, a situation that was undoubtedly different from their naturally occurring interactions. Given the artificial laboratory setting of Study Three, the generalizability of the results may be limited (Kerlinger, 1992). Additionally, given that participants were aware that their conversations were being recorded and that researchers would be listening to the content of their messages, participants may have chosen relatively "safe" negative relational events to discuss. Participants were provided with a general and inclusive definition of negative relational events; that is, these events could range from arguing over what television program to watch to a partner's infidelity. Although perceived severity was

controlled in all analyses involving communication about these events, it is still possible that the location and structured interaction influenced not only what topic participants chose to discuss, but how they chose to discuss them. Participants might have been motivated to manage their social desirability goals (DeAndrea, Tong, Liang, Levine, & Walther, 2012; Leary, 1995), given the fact that their conversations were being observed by outsiders. In addition to the choice of negative relational event, participants' choice of friend with whom to discuss this event may have also limited the realism of these interactions.

As with much scholarly research, the studies in the current dissertation utilized convenience samples comprised of college students. These samples were considered appropriate, given the goals of this dissertation involving the extradyadic communication motives and content of young adults. However, individuals were offered incentives for participation, whether in the form of course credit or the possibility of winning a gift card. These incentives may have influenced individuals to be less discerning in the friend they chose to bring with them to the interaction lab in Study Three. In other words, although participants were instructed to bring a close friend, it is possible that they chose interaction partners based on convenience instead of friendship. For example, classmates who could both earn credit may have chosen to participate together, regardless of their relationship outside of the classroom. In this way, participants might have been discussing a negative relational event in their romantic relationship with someone other than the friend(s) they would normally seek out for these types of interactions. Although participants rated their friendships as generally high in quality, the combination of the artificial laboratory setting, knowledge that their conversations would be recorded, and

potential choice of interaction partner based on convenience, may have influenced participants to discuss different negative relational events (and discuss them in different ways) than they would in more organic conversations in natural settings. Future research examining more naturalistic interactions between friends would supplement current results and add to existing knowledge regarding the content and outcomes of extradyadic communication about negative relational events in romantic relationships.

Future Research

Results of the three studies in the present dissertation provide some preliminary information about extradyadic communication following negative relational events in romantic relationships. However, there are many directions for future research, which will provide more insight and understanding of communication patterns with and implications of social networks.

Initial development of scales to assess romantic partners' and friends' motives for and content of extradyadic communication about negative relational events in romantic relationships was undertaken in the current dissertation. Future research should continue to examine the utility of these scales, including tests of concurrent and construct validity (Kerlinger, 1992). Also, given the minimally acceptable fit of the friends' extradyadic message content scale in Study Three, the factor structure of this scale warrants further investigation and validation. Finally, as noted previously, items may need to be added in order to bolster the internal reliability of some scales (e.g., friend motives; Nunnally, 1978). At minimum, however, the development of these scales provides opportunities for future investigation of self-reported extradyadic communication behaviors and patterns, and their associations with outcomes in both romantic relationships and friendships.

Although the current dissertation provided an initial exploration of extradyadic communication motives, future research would benefit from continued examination of motives for seeking out interactions with social network members during or following negative relational events in romantic relationships. Extant research supports the contention that social networks are important for romantic relationship functioning (e.g., Parks, 2011), but little research examines why or how these connections help to stabilize (or destabilize) romantic associations. During times of distress or turbulence, social network members may play an even more influential role in our perceptions of romantic partners and relationships, given the vulnerability, relational uncertainty, threats to identity and self-esteem, and negative affect that is experienced during these times (Afifi et al., 2001; Feeney, 2005; Feeney & Hill, 2006; Theiss & Knobloch, 2009).

In addition to further investigations into extradyadic communication motives, future research should focus on the extent to which extradyadic interactions and messages satisfy these motives, and how this may impact friendships and romantic relationships. For example, if, as some focus group comments from Study One suggest, some people are seeking a friend who will put their romantic partner down, the fact that their friend makes negative comments about their romantic partner may result in a positive outcome for their friendship. Indeed, the motives for engaging in these discussions with friends may help to at least partially explain why some friends are more willing than others to make such comments, and why these comments may sometimes, but not always, result in negative consequences. Future research should continue to focus on extradyadic communication motives in order to more fully understand these possibilities.

Results of the current dissertation suggest that romantic partners' negative extradyadic messages and friends' interference messages are more salient within the context of discussions about negative relational events. Indeed, relational quality does not appear to be predictive of more prodyadic messages generally, consistent with previous research (Vallade & Dillow, in press). Future research might examine this further by comparing the ways in which individuals discuss their romantic partner and relationship generally to how they talk about their romantic partner and relationship following a specific negative relational event. For example, do individuals who describe their partner and relationship in generally positive terms still use negative messages following a negative relational event? This type of comparison would allow for a deeper understanding regarding general patterns of extradyadic communication, as well as extradyadic communication patterns following specific negative relational events in romantic relationships.

Relatedly, future research should examine romantic partners' extradyadic communication patterns in conjunction with their communication behavior *within* their romantic relationships following negative relational events. There is a large and informative body of existing research examining romantic partners' communication with one another, including during conflict (Gottman et al. 1998; Rusbult et al., 1991) and following relational transgressions (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006a, 2006b). Present results suggest that conflict itself may be considered a negative relational event in a romantic relationship, and that individuals discuss these conflicts with friends. Together, these results suggest that patterns of communication within a romantic relationship may influence the motives for and content of communication with social network members.

Understanding the reciprocal relationships between dyadic and extradyadic communication patterns would provide practical implications in terms of suggestions for seeking and providing social support, as well as identifying problems within romantic relationships. For example, if individuals are motivated to seek extradyadic interactions in order to obtain social support, this may indicate a lack of social support from their romantic partner, which could be an area to focus on improving in order to enhance relational functioning. Additionally, extradyadic communication that takes the place of communication with a romantic partner may indicate unhealthy levels of relational uncertainty or destructive patterns of topic or conflict avoidance in the romantic relationship (Caughlin & Golish, 2002; Caughlin & Huston, 2002; Knobloch & Carpenter-Theune, 2004). Generally, extradyadic communication may serve as an indicator of problems within the romantic relationship. On the other hand, it may serve merely as a safe outlet for frustrations and negative affect, which may then allow individuals to engage in more constructive communication with their romantic partners. Future research is needed to parse out these possibilities because, as noted by Milardo (1982), our communication motives and behaviors within and outside of the romantic dyad may be mutually influential.

In addition to the impact on romantic relationships, there are also implications for friendship functioning that would benefit from continued exploration. Examination of multiple extradyadic interactions, in order to better understand patterns of communication between friends, would be beneficial. Does a particular friend have a tendency to use more interference or support messages? How might these repeated patterns of communication influence our friendship? Focus group participants mentioned that, when

they want someone to tell them what they want to hear, they might seek out a friend whom they know will meet these needs. However, when they want the hard truth, they might seek out a friend with a tendency to be more brutally honest. Thus, examining extradyadic communication with multiple friends would provide additional information regarding the role of social networks. Perhaps interference messages do not impact a friendship when one expects to receive these messages, and particular friends may have even been sought out specifically for this purpose. Additional investigation into the role of multiple members of social networks would provide useful insight into how these social networks function, for example, for seeking and obtaining social support. Motives may differ depending on the friend in question, as might satisfaction with the encounter and intentions to avoid future discussion with that individual.

Additionally, given the relative transience of young adult relationships (Becker et al., 2009; Carstensen, 1992) and the unexpected lack of findings regarding friendship quality in the present dissertation, future research might more directly compare differences in romantic relationship and friendship quality, as well as the content of extradyadic interactions, among various age groups and relationship types (e.g., dating vs. married). Further, given the changes in social networks over time, as well as the quality and role of interpersonal relationships (e.g., Carstensen, 1987, 1991, 1992), a longitudinal examination of negative relational events and extradyadic communication patterns may provide a deeper and more useful understanding of how social networks enhance or impede romantic relationship functioning, as well as how particular qualities of friendships might influence the likelihood and content of extradyadic interactions.

Finally, given the limitations of laboratory studies noted earlier (e.g., generalizability; Kerlinger, 1992), future research would benefit from more naturalistic research designs. Perhaps utilizing diary research methods, or providing participants with recording devices of their own, for use during naturally occurring conversations, would provide a more realistic assessment of extradyadic communication patterns and relational outcomes. Results of varied research designs would supplement current results by providing additional information about why and how people communicate with social network members, as well as with which social network members people choose to discuss these issues.

Conclusion

Research from the past three decades has revealed the importance of perceived network support and interference for romantic relationships, yet these studies have primarily focused on network structure and general perceptions of network support and interference (e.g., Johnson & Leslie, 1982; Milardo et al., 1983), to the relative exclusion of investigating why and how (and with what results) individuals engage in extradyadic communication with network members when they experience negative relational events in their romantic relationships. To address the latter, the aim of this dissertation was to identify the motives for and content of extradyadic interactions between friends about negative relational events in romantic relationships, in addition to examining the relational and communicative outcomes of these extradyadic interactions. Overall, the results suggest a stronger focus on negatively valenced extradyadic messages within this context, including a stronger propensity for both romantic partners and friends to use negative messages. Additionally, relational quality indicators are more likely to predict

the use of negative messages than positive messages, and the interaction of romantic partners' negative messages and friends' interference messages appears to predict communicative patterns of intended topic avoidance within their friendship. The findings from this dissertation provide a foundation for several areas of future research and continued investigation into reasons for and patterns of extradyadic communication and romantic relationship and friendship functioning.

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Appendix A

Study One Participant Cover Letter

Dear Participant,

You are being asked to participate in a study conducted by Principal Investigator Dr. Megan R. Dillow and Co-Investigator Jessalyn I. Vallade, both in the Department of Communication Studies at West Virginia University. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study. You are being asked to participate in focus groups about conversations that you and your friends have had regarding each others' romantic relationships. The purpose of this study is to learn more about why and how people talk about their romantic relationships and partners with friends, particularly when they are experiencing negative events in those romantic relationships. This research study will fulfill requirements toward earning a Doctorate in Communication Theory and Research for the co-investigator.

This study involves discussing experiences you have had talking about romantic relationships with your friends within a focus group of approximately 8-10 people and will take approximately one hour for you to complete. Focus groups will be audiotaped. Any information about you that is obtained as a result of your participation in this research will be kept as confidential as legally possible. Audiotapes will be kept locked up and will be destroyed as soon as possible after the research is finished. You will also be asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding some basic demographic information. This will take approximately five minutes. You do not have to answer all the questions. You will have the opportunity to see the questionnaire before signing this consent form.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may skip certain questions if you want and you may stop participation at any time without fear of penalty. If you are a student your actual performance in this study or your refusal to participate or withdrawal from this study will in no way affect your class standing, grades, job status, or status in any athletic or other activity associated with West Virginia University. There are no known risks associated with participation in this study, and it should take approximately one hour to complete.

If you would like more information regarding this research project, feel free to contact Co-Investigator Jessalyn Vallade by email at jvallade@mix.wvu.edu. This study has been acknowledged by West Virginia University's Institutional Review Board. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Dr. Megan R. Dillow
Associate Professor

Jessalyn I. Vallade
Doctoral Candidate

Principal Investigator
mrdillow@mix.wvu.edu

Co-Investigator
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Appendix B

Study One Discussion Prompts

Often in romantic relationships, we experience **negative relational events**. These negative events include behaviors that violate the rules or expectations you might have with your romantic partner such as lying, cheating, flirting with others, betraying a confidence, or ignoring you. It can also include frustrating or hurtful things that your partner does, like negative conflict or when a partner says hurtful or aggressive things to you.

List three REASONS you might talk to a friend about something negative in your romantic relationship or with your romantic partner. In other words, WHY do you talk to friends about negative relational events in romantic relationships?

1.

2.

3.

List three things you might SAY to a friend about something negative in a romantic relationship. In other words, WHAT do you say to friends about negative relational events? Try to write it exactly as you would say it to your friend, as if you are quoting yourself.

1.

2.

3.

Now think about a time that a friend has come to you to talk about a negative relational event in his or her romantic relationship. List three things that YOU HAVE SAID to a friend, again as though you are quoting yourself. Or, think about what a friend has said to you when you are having a problem in your relationship, and quote your friend.

1.

2.

3.

List three REASONS you have chosen to respond to a friend using these messages, or reasons you think your friend responded to you with these messages. In other words, WHY might people choose to respond a certain way to a friend who is having problems in a romantic relationship?

1.

2.

3.

Appendix C

Study One Demographic Questionnaire

Instructions: Please provide the following information about yourself and your romantic partner, if applicable.

1. Sex (Please circle one): Male Female

2. What year in school are you? (Please check one)

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| _____ 1 st Year | _____ Senior |
| _____ Sophomore | _____ Other |
| _____ Junior | _____ N/A |

3. How old are you? _____ Years

4. What is your dominant racial background? (Please check one)

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| _____ Asian | _____ Hispanic |
| _____ Black/African American | _____ White/Caucasian |
| _____ Native American | _____ Other |

5. What is your sexual orientation? (Please check one)

| | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| _____ Heterosexual | _____ Homosexual |
| _____ Bisexual | _____ Unsure |

6. Are you currently involved in a romantic relationship? (Please circle one):

| | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |
|-----|----|

If you answered “Yes” to the previous question, please continue with the survey. If you answered “No” to the previous question, the survey is complete.

7. How would you categorize your relationship with your romantic partner? (Please check one):

| |
|------------------------|
| _____ Casually dating |
| _____ Seriously dating |

Appendix D

Study One Focus Group Guide

Opening Questions

1. First, let's go around the group and have everyone tell me whether they are currently in a romantic relationship.
 - a. How serious would you say this relationship is?
 - b. If you are not currently in a relationship, how serious was your most recent relationship and about how long ago was it?
2. Now, tell me a little about the person you usually talk to when you are upset or frustrated.
 - a. Does this person also come to you when he or she is upset?

Introductory Questions

1. What kinds of things do you talk with this person about?
2. Does talking with this person usually help you feel better?
 - a. How does talking with this person help you feel better? In other words, how does talking to this person make you feel?

Transition Questions

1. How often do you hear friends, perhaps including this person, talking about negative events in their romantic relationships or with their romantic partners?
2. What do people usually talk about when they bring up a negative relational event in a romantic relationship/with a romantic partner?

Extradynamic Communication Motives

1. Under what circumstances do you find yourself talking to your friends about problems in your romantic relationship or with your romantic partner?
 - a. What encourages you to talk about negative events in your romantic relationship or with your romantic partner with your friends?
 - b. What do you hope to get out of these conversations with your friends?

Extradynamic Communication Content

2. What kinds of things do you talk about when you talk about negative events in your romantic relationships or with your romantic partners with your friends?

- a. What do you typically say when you are talking to your friends about a problem in your romantic relationship?
- b. What have other people said to you about problems in their romantic relationships?

Extradynamic Response Content

3. How do friends usually respond to you during these conversations?
 - a. What do your friends typically say when you are talking about a problem in your romantic relationship?
 - b. How do you usually respond to your friends when they are having problems in their romantic relationships?
 - c. What do you typically say to them?

Extradynamic Response Motives

4. Why do you respond positively or negatively when a friend tells you about his/her romantic relationship or partner problems?
 - a. What motivates you to respond in a certain way when a friend is telling you about something negative in his or her romantic relationship?
 - b. What do you hope to accomplish during these conversations?

Ending Questions

1. All things considered, what do you think is the most important reason for talking with friends about a negative event in a romantic relationship?
2. What do you think are the most common things that people say to friends about a romantic relationship?
3. Is there anything that we should have talked about today, but didn't?

Appendix E

Study Two Cover Letter

Dear Participant:

You are being asked to participate in a study conducted by Principal Investigator Dr. Megan R. Dillow and Co-Investigator Jessalyn I. Vallade, both in the Department of Communication Studies at West Virginia University. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study. You are being asked to report on how you communicate with your friends about negative relational events in your romantic relationship or how your friends communicate with you about a negative relational event in their romantic relationships. This research study will fulfill requirements toward earning a Doctorate in Communication Theory and Research for the co-investigator. Completing the questionnaire and submitting it indicates that you have agreed to participate in this study.

This questionnaire will in no way be linked to you. Do not put your name on this questionnaire to ensure anonymity. Please complete the survey independently and be sure to read the instructions carefully and answer honestly. There are no right or wrong answers. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may skip certain questions if you want and you may stop completing the survey at any time without fear of penalty. If you are a student your actual performance in this study or your refusal to participate or withdrawal from this study will in no way affect your class standing, grades, job status, or status in any athletic or other activity associated with West Virginia University. There are no known risks associated with participation in this study, and it should take approximately 25 minutes to complete.

If you would like more information regarding this research project, feel free to contact Co-Investigator Jessalyn Vallade by email at jvallade@mix.wvu.edu. This study has been acknowledged by West Virginia University's Institutional Review Board. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Dr. Megan R. Dillow
Associate Professor
Principal Investigator
mrdillow@mix.wvu.edu

Jessalyn I. Vallade
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Co-Investigator
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Appendix F

Study Two Romantic Partner Questionnaire

Investment Model

Instructions: **Think about your current romantic partner.** For each of the following items, please fill in the number that most honestly represents how strongly you agree with the following statements about **your romantic relationship and your romantic partner**. Use the following scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Unsure | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

Satisfaction

1. My partner fulfills my needs for intimacy (sharing personal thoughts, secrets, etc.).
2. My partner fulfills my needs for companionship (doing things together, enjoying each other's company, etc.).
3. My partner fulfills my sexual needs (holding hands, kissing, etc.).
4. My partner fulfills my needs for security (feeling trusting, comfortable in a stable relationship, etc.).
5. My partner fulfills my needs for emotional involvement (feeling emotionally attached, feeling good when another feels good, etc.).
6. I feel satisfied with our relationship.
7. My relationship is much better than others' relationships.
8. My relationship is close to ideal.
9. Our relationship makes me very happy.
10. Our relationship does a good job of fulfilling my needs for intimacy, companionship, etc.

Quality of Alternatives

1. My needs for intimacy (sharing personal thoughts, secrets, etc.) could be fulfilled in alternative relationships.
2. My needs for companionship (doing things together, enjoying each other's company, etc.) could be fulfilled in alternative relationships.
3. My sexual needs (holding hands, kissing, etc.) could be fulfilled in alternative relationships.
4. My needs for security (feeling trusting, comfortable in a stable relationship, etc.) could be fulfilled in alternative relationships.
5. My needs for emotional involvement (feeling emotionally attached, feeling good when another feels good, etc.) could be fulfilled in alternative relationships.
6. The people other than my partner with whom I might become involved are very appealing.

7. My alternatives to our relationship are close to ideal (dating another, spending time with friends or on my own, etc.).
8. If I weren't dating my partner, I would do fine – I would find another appealing person to date.
9. My alternatives are attractive to me (dating another, spending time with friends or on my own, etc.).
10. My needs to intimacy, companionship, etc. could easily be fulfilled in an alternative relationship.

Investment Size

1. I have invested a great deal of time in our relationship.
2. I have told my partner many private things about myself (I disclose secrets to him/her).
3. My partner and I have an intellectual life together that would be difficult to replace.
4. My sense of personal identity (who I am) is linked to my partner and our relationship.
5. My partner and I share many memories.
6. I have put a great deal into our relationship that I would lose if the relationship were to end.
7. Many aspects of my life have become linked to my partner (recreational activities, etc.), and I would lose all of this if we were to break up.
8. I feel very involved in our relationship – like I have put a great deal into it.
9. My relationships with friends and family members would be complicated if my partner and I were to break up (e.g., partner is friends with people I care about).
10. Compared to other people I know, I have invested a great deal in my relationship with my partner.

Commitment

1. I want our relationship to last for a very long time.
2. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner.
3. I would not feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future.
4. It is likely that I will date someone other than my partner within the next year.
5. I feel very attached to our relationship – very strongly linked to my partner.
6. I want our relationship to last forever.
7. I am oriented toward the long-term future of my relationship (for example, I imagine being with my partner several years from now).

Perceived Partner Uniqueness (PPU) Scale

1. My romantic partner is uniquely suited to fulfilling my relational needs.
2. My romantic partner meets my unique relational needs in ways that no other relational partner ever has in the past.
3. My romantic partner meets unique relational needs that none of my previous romantic partners were able to meet.

4. My partner is extremely special to me because s/he fulfills my unique relational needs in ways that none of my former relational partners were able to do as well.
5. My romantic partner fulfills relational needs that no other partner could ever fulfill as well.
6. My romantic partner is a rare find.
7. My romantic partner is irreplaceable to me.
8. No one has ever been able to fulfill my needs in a relationship like my current romantic partner can.
9. My romantic partner meets relational needs that none of my previous romantic partners were able to meet.
10. My romantic partner meets my expectations of an ideal relational partner more than any other person I've ever dated.
11. My partner satisfies my relationship needs like no one else can.
12. My romantic partner satisfied my relational needs in ways that no other relational partner ever has in the past.
13. My romantic partner is extremely special to me because s/he is unlike any other relational partner I've had.
14. My romantic partner fulfills my relational needs in ways that none of my former relational partners were able to do as well.

Negative Relational Event Generation

Often in romantic relationships, we experience **negative relational events**. These negative events include behaviors that violate the rules or expectations you might have with your romantic partner such as lying, cheating, flirting with others, betraying a confidence, or ignoring you. It can also include frustrating or hurtful things that your partner does, like negative conflict or when a partner says hurtful or aggressive things to you.

Instructions: Think of a negative relational event that has happened in your current romantic relationship and briefly describe it below.

How long ago did this negative relational event occur? _____ days OR _____ weeks
OR _____ months

Negative Relational Event Severity

Instructions: Answer the following questions about the negative relational event in your romantic relationship that you just described by circling the number that best represents what you think about this event. Use the following scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Unsure | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

1. This event was one of the most negative things that could happen in my romantic relationship.
2. My romantic partner's behavior was completely unacceptable.
3. This is one of the worst things my romantic partner could have done or said to me.
4. My romantic partner's behavior was highly inappropriate.

Friendship Quality

Instructions: Think about a close friend with whom you have discussed this negative relational event. Put that friend's initials here: _____

How often have you discussed this negative event with your friend? (please circle one):

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|------|-------|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Once | Twice | Three or four times | Five or six times | Seven or eight times | Eight or nine times | Ten or more times |

Rate your friend based on how close you think the friendship is on a scale from 0 to 100 (0 would mean 'not close at all,' while 100 would mean 'the closest friend I currently have': _____

For each of the following items, please fill in the number that most honestly represents how strongly you agree with the following statements **about your relationship with this close friend**. Use the following scale:

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Unsure | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

Closeness

1. This friendship is one of the closest I have ever had.
2. I do *not* feel particularly close to this person.*
3. I would describe myself as close to this person.
4. This individual and I share a great amount of emotional closeness.
5. I do *not* consider that person a particularly close friend.*

Satisfaction

1. I am generally satisfied with this friendship.
2. I am *not* satisfied with the relationship with this friend.*
3. There is little I would change about this friendship to make me more satisfied.
4. This friendship does *not* bring me much satisfaction.*

Likelihood of Friendship Continuance

1. I definitely would like to continue this relationship in the future.
2. I definitely see this friendship continuing for the rest of my life.
3. I doubt that this friendship will last much longer.*
4. I think that this friend and I will probably lose contact with one another.*
5. I would put much effort into continuing this friendship.
6. This friendship will certainly last for a long time.
7. This friend and I will maintain contact throughout our lives.

Note: *reverse-coded items

Extradyadic Communication Motives

Instructions: For each of the following items, please fill in the number that most honestly represents how strongly you agree with the following statements **about WHY you decide to discuss negative events in your romantic relationship with this friend.** Use the following scale:

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Unsure | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

I talk to my friend when something negative happens in my romantic relationship because...

Venting Negative Feelings

1. I need to get it off my chest.
2. It feels good to vent to my friends.
3. It is therapeutic to let it all out to someone.
4. I need to get all of my negative emotions out in the open.
5. I need to just be able to complain to someone.
6. It relieves my stress about the situation.

Seeking Social Support

1. I need a shoulder to lean on.
2. My friends know how to make me feel better.
3. I need some sympathy.
4. I want someone to empathize with my frustration.
5. I am looking for some emotional support.

Seeking Advice

1. I wonder what my friend would do in my situation.
2. I want to get his/her opinion about what I should do.
3. I need advice about how to handle the situation.
4. My friend can give me feedback about what I should do next.
5. I want suggestions for how to work out the problem.

Desire for Perspective

1. I am too emotional to see the situation clearly.
2. I want an objective point of view about the situation.
3. My friend can offer an unbiased opinion on the situation.
4. I want the perspective of someone of my romantic partner's sex (i.e., male, female).
5. My friend can help clarify the problem.
6. My friend might be able to offer an outlook similar to that of my romantic partner.

Reducing Uncertainty about the Event

1. I am confused about why this event happened.
2. This event was unexpected, so I wanted to talk about it with someone.
3. I want an explanation for why this problem occurred.
4. I want to know why this is happening to me.
5. My friend might have an explanation for my partner's behavior.

Reducing Uncertainty about the Relationship

1. I need help deciding whether I should stay in my romantic relationship or not.
2. I want my friend's opinion about my romantic partner's desire to stay in the relationship.
3. The problems in my relationship make me unsure about my romantic partner.
4. I want a third party to evaluate the status of my romantic relationship.
5. I am unsure whether to bring up my negative feelings with my romantic partner.

Validation/Social Comparison

1. My friend has experienced similar negative events in his/her romantic relationships.
2. I need reassurance that I am not overreacting.
3. I want my friend to support my reaction to this situation.
4. I want my friend to tell me that I am not crazy for feeling this way.
5. My friend can relate to what I am experiencing.
6. I want my friend to agree with my opinion.

Entertainment

1. I think it is a good story.
2. It is fun to gossip.
3. Sometimes it is fun to complain about people.
4. It is a funny story.
5. I think my friend would enjoy hearing the details of the situation.

Enhance Self-Esteem

1. My friend will make me feel better about myself.
2. Complaining about my romantic partner will make me feel better about myself.
3. I want my friend to tell me that I shouldn't be embarrassed about the situation.
4. My friend will put my partner down.
5. I want my friend to tell me that I can do better than my current romantic partner.

Talk Through the Issue

1. Sometimes I just need to hear myself say it out loud.
2. I just need to talk through the issue with someone.
3. Talking about the situation out loud makes it easier to deal with.
4. Simply thinking about the problem without discussing it with someone is frustrating.
5. I just need someone to listen.

Extradyadic Communication Content

Instructions: For each of the following items, please fill in the number that most honestly represents **how frequently you say the following types of statements to your friend when you discuss negative events in your romantic relationship.** Use the following scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|-------|-------------|--------|-----------|-------|------------|--------|
| Never | Very Seldom | Seldom | Sometimes | Often | Very Often | Always |

When I talk to my friend about something negative in my romantic relationship, I...

Asking for Advice

1. Ask my friend what s/he would do in my shoes.
2. Ask my friend how I should fix the problem.
3. Ask my friend how I should react to the situation.
4. Ask my friend what I should say to my romantic partner.
5. Ask my friend if I should stay or leave the relationship.

Asking for Validation

1. Ask my friend if my reaction to the situation is normal.
2. Ask my friend if s/he thinks I am overreacting.
3. Ask my friend if s/he sees where I am coming from.
4. Ask my friend if a similar event has ever happened to him/her.
5. Ask my friend if s/he thinks I am over analyzing the situation.
6. Ask my friend if s/he would be upset about this situation too.

Explanation of the Situation

1. Tell my friend all the details of what happened.
2. Explain all of the background leading up to the negative event.
3. Provide as many details as I can, even if they are not all directly relevant.
4. Give my friend the whole story about the situation.
5. Explain everything that my romantic partner said or did.

Expression of Uncertainty about Partner/Relationship

1. Express my uncertainty about whether the relationship is worth my time anymore.
2. Tell my friend that I never know where I stand in my romantic relationship.
3. Wonder aloud whether my partner wants this relationship as much as I do.
4. Express my uncertainty about whether I can trust my romantic partner or not.
5. Express doubts about whether my romantic partner still cares about me.

Expressions of Negative Affect

1. Tell my friend how frustrated I am with my romantic partner.
2. Talk about how my romantic partner is annoying me.
3. Cry to my friend because of the situation.
4. Tell my friend how angry I am.
5. Tell my friend how upset I am about the situation.
6. Tell my friend that my romantic partner hurt my feelings.

Negative Comments about the Romantic Partner

1. Say negative things about my romantic partner.
2. Exaggerate the negativity of what my romantic partner did or said.
3. Tell my friend how much I dislike my romantic partner.
4. Talk about the qualities of my romantic partner that I don't like.
5. Tell my friend that my romantic partner doesn't treat me right.
6. Talk about how the negative situation is all my partner's fault.

7. Make negative comments about people of my romantic partner's sex (i.e., males, females) in general.
8. Communicate to my friend that I don't think my romantic partner is a very good person.*
9. Say unfavorable things about my romantic partner's character.*
10. Make negative comments to my friend about his/her competence as a romantic partner.*
11. Ridicule my romantic partner's shortcomings with my friend.*
12. Emphasize to my friends that my romantic partner was at fault for hurting me.*
13. Blame my romantic partner for doing something hurtful to me.*
14. Tell my friend that my romantic partner was responsible for my negative feelings.*

Dissatisfaction with the Romantic Relationship

1. Tell my friend that I am done with the relationship.
2. Tell my friend that I just can't win in this relationship anymore.
3. Express a wish that things were different with my romantic partner.
4. Tell my friend that all my romantic partner and I do is fight.
5. Tell my friend that I am fed up with my romantic partner.
6. Express my opinion that my romantic partner just doesn't understand me.

Questioning Own Role in Situation

1. Ask my friend if s/he thinks the problem is my fault.
2. Ask my friend what I did to deserve this.
3. Ask my friend if s/he thinks that I am being too difficult.
4. Ask my friend why s/he thinks I behave the way I do.
5. Ask my friend if s/he thinks I did anything wrong.

Positive Affect for Partner

1. Try to keep the discussion as positive as possible.
2. Try to avoid bashing my romantic partner.
3. Tell my friend how much I care about my romantic partner.
4. Say that I want what is best for my romantic partner.
5. Bring up positive things about my romantic partner.
6. Explain to my friend that my romantic partner was actually trying to protect me.*
7. Tell my friend that my romantic partner actually had good reasons for what s/he did.*
8. Explain to my friend that my romantic partner was justified in what s/he did.*

Transgressor Retaliation

1. Tell my friend that I would like to punish my romantic partner for what s/he did.*
2. Talk about ways to get back at my romantic partner with my friend.*
3. Tell my friend that I hope something bad will happen to my romantic partner.*
4. Threaten to punish my romantic partner for what s/he did.*

*previously developed items by Vallade & Dillow (in press)

Instructions: Please provide the following information **about yourself.**

1. Sex (Please circle one): Male Female

2. What year in school are you? (Please check one)

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| _____ 1 st Year | _____ Senior |
| _____ Sophomore | _____ Other |
| _____ Junior | _____ N/A |

3. How old are you? _____ Years

4. What is your dominant racial background? (Please check one)

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| _____ Asian | _____ Hispanic |
| _____ Black/African American | _____ White/Caucasian |
| _____ Native American | _____ Other |

5. What is your sexual orientation? (Please check one)

| | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| _____ Heterosexual | _____ Homosexual |
| _____ Bisexual | _____ Unsure |

6. How would you categorize your relationship with your romantic partner? (Please check one):

| |
|-------------------------------------|
| _____ Casually dating |
| _____ Seriously dating |
| _____ Engaged to be married |
| _____ Married |
| _____ Other (Please specify): _____ |

7. How long have you and your romantic partner been in a relationship?

| | | |
|--------------|----|-------------|
| _____ months | OR | _____ years |
|--------------|----|-------------|

Instructions: Please provide the following information **about your romantic partner.**

8. Sex of Romantic Partner (Please circle one): Male Female

9. What year in school is your romantic partner? (Please check one)

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| _____ 1 st Year | _____ Senior |
| _____ Sophomore | _____ Other |
| _____ Junior | _____ N/A |

10. How old is your romantic partner? _____ Years

11. What is your romantic partner's dominant racial background? (Please check one)

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| _____ Asian | _____ Hispanic |
| _____ Black/African American | _____ White/Caucasian |
| _____ Native American | _____ Other |

12. What is your romantic partner's sexual orientation? (Please check one)

| | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| _____ Heterosexual | _____ Homosexual |
| _____ Bisexual | _____ Unsure |

Instructions: Please provide the following information **about your friend.**

13. Sex of Friend (Please circle one): Male Female

14. What year in school is your friend? (Please check one)

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| _____ 1 st Year | _____ Senior |
| _____ Sophomore | _____ Other |
| _____ Junior | _____ N/A |

15. How old is your friend? _____ Years

16. What is your friend's dominant racial background? (Please check one)

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| _____ Asian | _____ Hispanic |
| _____ Black/African American | _____ White/Caucasian |
| _____ Native American | _____ Other |

17. What is your friend's sexual orientation? (Please check one)

_____ Heterosexual _____ Homosexual
_____ Bisexual _____ Unsure

18. How would you categorize your relationship with your friend? (Please check one):

_____ Acquaintance
_____ Casual Friend
_____ Close Friend
_____ Best Friend
_____ Other (Please specify): _____

19. How long have you and your friend had this friendship?

_____ months OR _____ years

Appendix G

Study Two Friend Questionnaire

Negative Relational Event Generation

Instructions: Think about a close friend who has discussed a negative relational event (see below) that occurred in his/her romantic relationship with you. Put that friend's initials here: _____

Often in romantic relationships, people experience **negative relational events**. These negative events include behaviors that violate the rules or expectations you might have with your romantic partner such as lying, cheating, flirting with others, betraying a confidence, or ignoring you. It can also include frustrating or hurtful things that your partner does, like negative conflict or when a partner says hurtful or aggressive things to you.

Instructions: Think of a negative relational event in a romantic relationship that a friend has discussed with you and briefly describe it below.

How often has your friend discussed this negative event with you? (please circle one):

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Once | Twice | Three or four times | Five or six times | Seven or eight times | Eight or nine times | Ten or more times |

Negative Relational Event Severity

Instructions: Answer the following questions about the negative relational event in your friend's romantic relationship that you just described by circling the number that best represents what you think about this event. Use the following scale:

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Unsure | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

1. This event was one of the most negative things that could happen in his/her romantic relationship.
2. His/her romantic partner's behavior was completely unacceptable.
3. This is one of the worst things his/her romantic partner could have done or said to my friend.
4. His/her romantic partner's behavior was highly inappropriate.

Friendship Quality

Rate your friend based on how close you think the friendship is on a scale from 0 to 100 (0 would mean 'not close at all,' while 100 would mean 'the closest friend I currently have': _____)

For each of the following items, please fill in the number that most honestly represents how strongly you agree with the following statements **about your relationship with this close friend**. Use the following scale:

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Unsure | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

Closeness

1. This friendship is one of the closest I have ever had.
2. I do *not* feel particularly close to this person.*
3. I would describe myself as close to this person.
4. This individual and I share a great amount of emotional closeness.
5. I do *not* consider that person a particularly close friend.*

Satisfaction

1. I am generally satisfied with this friendship.
2. I am *not* satisfied with the relationship with this friend.*
3. There is little I would change about this friendship to make me more satisfied.
4. This friendship does *not* bring me much satisfaction.*

Likelihood of Friendship Continuance

1. I definitely would like to continue this relationship in the future.
2. I definitely see this friendship continuing for the rest of my life.

3. I doubt that this friendship will last much longer.*
4. I think that this friend and I will probably lose contact with one another.*
5. I would put much effort into continuing this friendship.
6. This friendship will certainly last for a long time.
7. This friend and I will maintain contact throughout our lives.

Note: *reverse-coded items

Extradyadic Response Content

Instructions: For each of the following items, please fill in the number that most honestly represents **how frequently you respond with the following types of statements to your friend when you discuss negative events in his/her romantic relationship**. Use the following scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|-------|-------------|--------|-----------|-------|------------|--------|
| Never | Very Seldom | Seldom | Sometimes | Often | Very Often | Always |

When my friend talks to me about something negative in his/her romantic relationship, I...

Honest/Harsh Perspective

1. Tell my friend how it is, even if I think s/he is wrong.
2. Am very honest about what I think about the situation.
3. Am straight up with my friend.
4. Try to be blunt with my friend, even if it's not what s/he wants to hear.
5. Don't just tell my friend what s/he wants to hear.

Share Similar Experience

1. Tell my friend about a time when something similar happened to me.
2. Relate his/her situation back to my own relationships.
3. Use my own past relationships as examples of ways that my friend could handle the situation.
4. Tell my friend that, since I made it through a similar situation, s/he can too.
5. Tell my friend how my romantic partner reacted in a similar situation.
6. Try to share my own experiences so s/he doesn't feel alone.

Negative Comments about Partner

1. Tell my friend that his/her partner is a terrible person.
2. Tell my friend that his/her partner gives me a bad vibe.
3. Tell my friend that I don't trust his/her partner.
4. Tell my friend that his/her partner doesn't deserve him/her.
5. Tell my friend that his/her partner isn't worth it.

6. Say negative things about my friend's romantic partner.

Counter-Dyadic Advice

1. Tell my friend to take a break from the relationship to show his/her partner what it is like without him/her.
2. Tell my friend to give his/her partner an ultimatum.
3. Advise my friend not to talk to his/her romantic partner.
4. Suggest that my friend date other people.
5. Tell my friend that s/he should just dump his/her partner.
6. Tell my friend that his/her romantic relationship shouldn't be a priority anyway.
7. Tell my friend that s/he will feel better if s/he takes his/her mind off of the problem.

Prodyadic Advice

1. Advise my friend to talk openly with his/her partner about the situation.
2. Suggest that my friend think about the situation from his/her partner's perspective.
3. Tell my friend to focus on the issues in order to resolve them.
4. Encourage my friend to tell his/her partner how s/he feels.
5. Tell my friend to work with his/her partner to try and come up with a mutual solution to the problem.
6. Advise my friend to not be so hard on his/her partner.
7. Encourage my friend to think about what s/he says before s/he says it.

Passive Solutions/General Positivity

1. Tell my friend that, if it's meant to be, it's meant to be.
2. Tell my friend not to worry about it.
3. Assure my friend that the problem will blow over soon.
4. Tell my friend that it will all work itself out.
5. Tell my friend that everything happens for a reason.

Blaming the Partner

1. Tell my friend that the situation is all his/her partner's fault.
2. Comment that the partner is totally the problem, not my friend.
3. Tell my friend that what his/her partner did was inexcusable.
4. Assure my friend that s/he didn't do anything wrong.
5. Tell my friend that s/he is right, and his/her partner is wrong.

Positive Explanation for Partner Behavior

1. Explain his/her partner's behavior in a positive way.
2. Suggest giving my friend's partner the benefit of the doubt.
3. Try to defend his/her partner's behavior.
4. Suggest that there is probably a reasonable explanation for his/her partner's behavior.
5. Tell my friend that his/her partner probably didn't mean to hurt him/her.

Disapproval of Partner and/or Relationship

1. Tell my friend that s/he deserves better than his/her current partner.
2. Tell my friend that s/he would be better off without his/her current partner.
3. Tell my friend that s/he is better than his/her partner.
4. Tell my friend that his/her relationship is not healthy.
5. Express my opinion that my friend is not happy with his/her partner.
6. Encourage my friend to rethink his/her relationship.

Hiding/Softening the Truth

1. Agree with everything my friend says, even if it's not how I really feel.
2. Try to be honest without being hurtful.
3. Try to choose my words carefully so as not to upset my friend.
4. Am not completely honest with my friend.
5. Tell my friend what s/he wants to hear, even if it's not the truth.
6. Lie to my friend about my honest opinion.

Exasperation with Friend

1. Tell my friend that I don't want to hear about his/her relationship anymore.
2. Tell my friend that I don't know what s/he wants me to say.
3. Point out to my friend that we've already talked about this many times before.
4. Tell my friend that I am done talking about this situation.
5. Point out to my friend that this is an ongoing problem.
6. Point out to my friend that s/he complains often, but never does anything about it.
7. Point out that I told him/her that this would happen.

Relative Importance of Problem

1. Encourage my friend not to stress about little things that aren't important.
2. Tell my friend that the situation is not as bad as s/he thinks it is.
3. Point out that many worse things could happen to him/her.
4. Point out that other people have gotten through similar situations.
5. Tell my friend that every relationship has its issues.

Friend's Best Interest

1. Express my desire for my friend to be happy.
2. Tell my friend that I support whatever decision will make him/her happy.
3. Ask my friend if this romantic relationship is what s/he really wants in life.
4. Ask my friend if his/her romantic partner will make him/her happy in the future.
5. Tell my friend that, if his/her partner makes him/her unhappy, then s/he should leave.

Extradynamic Response Motives

Instructions: For each of the following items, please fill in the number that most honestly represents how strongly you agree with the following statements **about why you**

decided or would decide to respond in a certain way to your friend when s/he is experiencing negative events in a romantic relationship. Use the following scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

I respond in a certain way to my friend when something negative happens in his/her romantic relationship because...

Provide Comfort

1. I want to let him/her know that s/he is not alone.
2. I want to make him/her feel better about the situation.
3. I want my friend to know that I care.
4. I want to make my friend feel better about him/herself.
5. I want to show my support for my friend.
6. I want to be sympathetic to his/her situation.

Protect/Enhance Friendship

1. I don't want to criticize to a point where my friend will be upset with me.
2. I want to become closer to my friend.
3. I would want my friend to be there for me if I was upset.
4. I want my friend to be comfortable coming to me for help.
5. I want to be a good friend without getting in the middle of his/her romantic relationship.
6. I know s/he would be there for me if I needed someone to talk to.
7. I want to avoid making my friend angry with me.
8. I want to avoid a conflict with my friend.

Provide an Honest Perspective

1. I want to help my friend see the situation clearly.
2. I think my friend needs some tough love.
3. I think it is helpful if I play the devil's advocate.
4. I think my friend needs an outside perspective about his/her romantic relationship.
5. I want my friend to realize that s/he can do better.
6. I want to be as honest as possible with my friend.

Appease the Friend

1. I know that my friend won't listen to my advice.
2. I just want to tell my friend what s/he wants to hear.
3. My friend is just going to do what s/he wants to do, regardless of what I say.
4. I am tired of listening to my friend complain about his/her romantic relationship.

5. I am frustrated with how often my friend comes to me about his/her relationship problems.
6. I would prefer that my friend stop talking to me about his/her romantic relationship.

Provide a Distraction

1. I want to distract my friend from his/her problems.
2. I want to keep my friend busy so s/he doesn't think about the situation.
3. I want to help my friend get some space from his/her romantic partner.
4. I think it would be helpful to stop thinking about the situation.
5. I want to get my friend's mind off of the situation.

Spare Friend's Feelings

1. I want to spare my friend's feelings.
2. I don't want to upset my friend.
3. I want to help my friend save face in a negative situation.
4. I want to avoid seeing my friend get hurt.
5. I want to help my friend avoid being embarrassed about the situation.

Instructions: Please provide the following information **about yourself.**

1. Sex (Please circle one): Male Female

2. What year in school are you? (Please check one)

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| _____ 1 st Year | _____ Senior |
| _____ Sophomore | _____ Other |
| _____ Junior | _____ N/A |

3. How old are you? _____ Years

4. What is your dominant racial background? (Please check one)

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| _____ Asian | _____ Hispanic |
| _____ Black/African American | _____ White/Caucasian |
| _____ Native American | _____ Other |

5. What is your sexual orientation? (Please check one)

| | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| _____ Heterosexual | _____ Homosexual |
| _____ Bisexual | _____ Unsure |

6. Are you currently involved in a romantic relationship? (Please Circle One):
 Yes No

Instructions: Please provide the following information **about your friend.**

7. Sex of Friend (Please circle one): Male Female
8. What year in school is your friend? (Please check one)
- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| _____ 1 st Year | _____ Senior |
| _____ Sophomore | _____ Other |
| _____ Junior | _____ N/A |
9. How old is your friend? _____ Years
10. What is your friend's dominant racial background? (Please check one)
- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| _____ Asian | _____ Hispanic |
| _____ Black/African American | _____ White/Caucasian |
| _____ Native American | _____ Other |
11. What is your friend's sexual orientation? (Please check one)
- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| _____ Heterosexual | _____ Homosexual |
| _____ Bisexual | _____ Unsure |
12. How would you categorize your relationship with your friend? (Please check one):
- | |
|-------------------------------------|
| _____ Acquaintance |
| _____ Casual Friend |
| _____ Close Friend |
| _____ Best Friend |
| _____ Other (Please specify): _____ |
13. How long have you and your friend had this friendship?
- _____ months OR _____ years

Appendix H

Study Three Participant Consent Form

Dear Participant:

You are being asked to participate in a study conducted by Principal Investigator Dr. Megan R. Dillow and Co-Investigator Jessalyn I. Vallade, both in the Department of Communication Studies at West Virginia University. You must (a) be 18 years of age or older and (b) participating with a close friend to participate in this study. Either you or your close friend must be involved in a romantic relationship during which a negative relational event has occurred. You are being asked to participate in an interaction with your friend about a negative relational event in one of your romantic relationships. The purpose of this study is to learn more about why and how people talk about their romantic relationships and partners with friends, particularly when they are experiencing negative events in those romantic relationships. This research study will fulfill requirements toward earning a Doctorate in Communication Theory and Research for the co-investigator.

This study involves discussing a negative relational event in the romantic relationship of either yourself or your close friend. You will be asked to complete a survey immediately before and immediately after your conversation with your close friend, as well as a short online survey one month after this conversation takes place. You do not have to answer all of the questions and you will have the opportunity to see the questionnaire before signing this consent form. Interactions will be videotaped. Any information about you that is obtained as a result of your participation in this research will be kept as confidential as legally possible. Videotapes will be kept locked up and will be destroyed as soon as possible after the research is finished. Participation in this study will take approximately one hour of your time, including completion of the follow-up online survey.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may skip certain questions if you want and you may stop completing the survey at any time without fear of penalty. If you are a student your actual performance in this study or your refusal to participate or withdrawal from this study will in no way affect your class standing, grades, job status, or status in any athletic or other activity associated with West Virginia University. There are no known risks associated with participation in this study, and it should take approximately one hour to complete.

If you would like more information regarding this research project, feel free to contact Co-Investigator Jessalyn Vallade by email at jvallade@mix.wvu.edu. This study has been acknowledged by West Virginia University's Institutional Review Board. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Dr. Megan R. Dillow
Associate Professor
Principal Investigator
mrdillow@mix.wvu.edu

Jessalyn I. Vallade
Doctoral Candidate
Co-Investigator
jvallade@mix.wvu.edu

SIGNATURE

I have read this section and all of my questions have been answered. By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and accept all of the above.

I willingly consent to participate in this research.

Signature of Subject or Authorized Representative

Date

Print Name of Subject or Authorized Representative

The participant has had the opportunity to have questions addressed. The participant willingly agrees to be in the study.

Signature of Investigator or
Co-Investigator

Printed Name

Date

Appendix I

Study Three Pre-Interaction Questionnaire - Romantic Partner

Friendship Quality

Instructions: Think about the close friend that you brought with you today. For each of the following items, please fill in the number that most honestly represents how strongly you agree with the following statements about your relationship with the friend who is here with you today. Use the following scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|-------------------|----------|-------------------|--------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Unsure | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

Closeness

1. Rate your friend based on how close you think the friendship is on a scale from 0 to 100 (0 would mean 'not close at all,' while 100 would mean 'the closest friend I currently have').
2. This friendship is one of the closest I have ever had.
3. I do *not* feel particularly close to this person.*
4. I would describe myself as close to this person.
5. This individual and I share a great amount of emotional closeness.
6. I do *not* consider that person a particularly close friend.*

Satisfaction

1. I am generally satisfied with this friendship.
2. I am *not* satisfied with the relationship with this friend.*
3. There is little I would change about this friendship to make me more satisfied.
4. This friendship does *not* bring me much satisfaction.*

Likelihood of Friendship Continuance

1. I definitely would like to continue this relationship in the future.
2. I definitely see this friendship continuing for the rest of my life.
3. I doubt that this friendship will last much longer.*
4. I think that this friend and I will probably lose contact with one another.*
5. I would put much effort into continuing this friendship.
6. This friendship will certainly last for a long time.
7. This friend and I will maintain contact throughout our lives.

Note: *reverse-coded items

Investment Model

Instructions: Think about your current romantic partner. For each of the following items, please fill in the number that most honestly represents how strongly you agree with the following statements about **your romantic relationship and your romantic partner**. Use the following scale:

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------------------|--------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Unsure | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

Satisfaction

1. My partner fulfills my needs for intimacy (sharing personal thoughts, secrets, etc.).
2. My partner fulfills my needs for companionship (doing things together, enjoying each other's company, etc.).
3. My partner fulfills my sexual needs (holding hands, kissing, etc.).
4. My partner fulfills my needs for security (feeling trusting, comfortable in a stable relationship, etc.).
5. My partner fulfills my needs for emotional involvement (feeling emotionally attached, feeling good when another feels good, etc.).
6. I feel satisfied with our relationship.
7. My relationship is much better than others' relationships.
8. My relationship is close to ideal.
9. Our relationship makes me very happy.
10. Our relationship does a good job of fulfilling my needs for intimacy, companionship, etc.

Quality of Alternatives

1. My needs for intimacy (sharing personal thoughts, secrets, etc.) could be fulfilled in alternative relationships.
2. My needs for companionship (doing things together, enjoying each other's company, etc.) could be fulfilled in alternative relationships.
3. My sexual needs (holding hands, kissing, etc.) could be fulfilled in alternative relationships.
4. My needs for security (feeling trusting, comfortable in a stable relationship, etc.) could be fulfilled in alternative relationships.
5. My needs for emotional involvement (feeling emotionally attached, feeling good when another feels good, etc.) could be fulfilled in alternative relationships.
6. The people other than my partner with whom I might become involved are very appealing.
7. My alternatives to our relationship are close to ideal (dating another, spending time with friends or on my own, etc.).

8. If I weren't dating my partner, I would do fine – I would find another appealing person to date.
9. My alternatives are attractive to me (dating another, spending time with friends or on my own, etc.).
10. My needs to intimacy, companionship, etc. could easily be fulfilled in an alternative relationship.

Investment Size

1. I have invested a great deal of time in our relationship.
2. I have told my partner many private things about myself (I disclose secrets to him/her).
3. My partner and I have an intellectual life together that would be difficult to replace.
4. My sense of personal identity (who I am) is linked to my partner and our relationship.
5. My partner and I share many memories.
6. I have put a great deal into our relationship that I would lose if the relationship were to end.
7. Many aspects of my life have become linked to my partner (recreational activities, etc.), and I would lose all of this if we were to break up.
8. I feel very involved in our relationship – like I have put a great deal into it.
9. My relationships with friends and family members would be complicated if my partner and I were to break up (e.g., partner is friends with people I care about).
10. Compared to other people I know, I have invested a great deal in my relationship with my partner.

Commitment

1. I want our relationship to last for a very long time.
2. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner.
3. I would not feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future.
4. It is likely that I will date someone other than my partner within the next year.
5. I feel very attached to our relationship – very strongly linked to my partner.
6. I want our relationship to last forever.
7. I am oriented toward the long-term future of my relationship (for example, I imagine being with my partner several years from now).

Perceived Partner Uniqueness (PPU) Scale

1. My romantic partner is uniquely suited to fulfilling my relational needs.
2. My romantic partner meets my unique relational needs in ways that no other relational partner ever has in the past.

3. My romantic partner meets unique relational needs that none of my previous romantic partners were able to meet.
4. My partner is extremely special to me because s/he fulfills my unique relational needs in ways that none of my former relational partners were able to do as well.
5. My romantic partner fulfills relational needs that no other partner could ever fulfill as well.
6. My romantic partner is a rare find.
7. My romantic partner is irreplaceable to me.
8. No one has ever been able to fulfill my needs in a relationship like my current romantic partner can.
9. My romantic partner meets relational needs that none of my previous romantic partners were able to meet.
10. My romantic partner meets my expectations of an ideal relational partner more than any other person I've ever dated.
11. My partner satisfies my relationship needs like no one else can.
12. My romantic partner satisfied my relational needs in ways that no other relational partner ever has in the past.
13. My romantic partner is extremely special to me because s/he is unlike any other relational partner I've had.
14. My romantic partner fulfills my relational needs in ways that none of my former relational partners were able to do as well.

Negative Relational Event Generation

Often in romantic relationships, we experience **negative relational events**. These negative events include behaviors that violate the rules or expectations you might have with your romantic partner such as lying, cheating, flirting with others, betraying a confidence, or ignoring you. It can also include frustrating or hurtful things that your partner does, like negative conflict or when a partner says hurtful or aggressive things to you.

Instructions: Think of the most negative relational event that has happened in your current romantic relationship and briefly describe it below.

How long ago did this negative relational event occur? _____ days OR _____ weeks
OR _____ months

Instructions: Answer the following questions about the negative relational event in your romantic relationship that you just described by circling the number that best represents what you think about this event.

1. This event was one of the most negative things that could happen in my romantic relationship.

| | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------|----------------------|--------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Unsure | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

2. My romantic partner's behavior was completely unacceptable.

| | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------|----------------------|--------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Unsure | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

3. This is one of the worst things my romantic partner could have done or said to me.

| | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------|----------------------|--------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Unsure | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

4. My romantic partner's behavior was highly inappropriate.

| | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------|----------------------|--------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Unsure | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

Extradyadic Communication Motives

Instructions: For the following items, think about what motivates you to discuss this negative relational event with the friend who came with you today. For each of the following items, please fill in the number that most honestly represents how strongly you agree with the following statements **about why you would discuss the negative relational event you described with the friend who is here with you today.** Use the following scale:

| | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------|----------------------|--------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Unsure | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

**Insert scale items developed in Study Two*

Appendix J

Study Three Pre-Interaction Questionnaire - Friend

Friendship Quality

Instructions: Think about the close friend that you brought with you today. For each of the following items, please fill in the number that most honestly represents how strongly you agree with the following statements about your relationship with the friend who is here with you today. Use the following scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|-------------------|----------|-------------------|--------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Unsure | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

Closeness

1. Rate your friend based on how close you think the friendship is on a scale from 0 to 100 (0 would mean 'not close at all,' while 100 would mean 'the closest friend I currently have').
2. This friendship is one of the closest I have ever had.
3. I do *not* feel particularly close to this person.*
4. I would describe myself as close to this person.
5. This individual and I share a great amount of emotional closeness.
6. I do *not* consider that person a particularly close friend.*

Satisfaction

1. I am generally satisfied with this friendship.
2. I am *not* satisfied with the relationship with this friend.*
3. There is little I would change about this friendship to make me more satisfied.
4. This friendship does *not* bring me much satisfaction.*

Likelihood of Friendship Continuance

1. I definitely would like to continue this relationship in the future.
2. I definitely see this friendship continuing for the rest of my life.
3. I doubt that this friendship will last much longer.*
4. I think that this friend and I will probably lose contact with one another.*
5. I would put much effort into continuing this friendship.
6. This friendship will certainly last for a long time.
7. This friend and I will maintain contact throughout our lives.

Note: *reverse-coded items

Suitability/Liking of Friend's Romantic Partner

Instructions: Think about the romantic partner of the friend who came here with you today. For each of the following items, please fill in the number that most honestly represents how strongly you agree with the following statements **about your friend's romantic partner**. Use the following scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|-------------------|----------|-------------------|--------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Unsure | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

1. I like my friend's romantic partner.
2. It is often unpleasant for me to think about my friend's romantic partner.*
3. I tend to devalue my friend's romantic partner.*
4. I focus on the strengths of my friend's romantic partner.
5. I feel that my friend's romantic partner is worthless at times.*
6. I feel comfortable about my friend's romantic partner.
7. I do not have much respect for my friend's romantic partner.*
8. I feel good about who my friend's romantic partner is.
9. I have a negative attitude toward my friend's romantic partner.*

Note: *reverse-coded items

Extradyadic Response Motives

Instructions: For the following items, think about what motivates you to respond to your friend when s/he talks about a problem in his/her current romantic relationship. For each of the following items, please fill in the number that most honestly represents how strongly you agree with the following statements **about what motivates you to respond in a particular way about a negative relational event in the romantic relationship of the friend who is here with you today**. Use the following scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|-------------------|----------|-------------------|--------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Unsure | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

**Insert scale items developed in Study Two*

_____ Bisexual

_____ Unsure

Investment Model

Instructions: Think about your current romantic partner. For each of the following items, please fill in the number that most honestly represents how strongly you agree with the following statements about **your romantic relationship and your romantic partner**. Use the following scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|-------------------|----------|-------------------|--------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Unsure | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

Satisfaction

1. My partner fulfills my needs for intimacy (sharing personal thoughts, secrets, etc.).
2. My partner fulfills my needs for companionship (doing things together, enjoying each other's company, etc.).
3. My partner fulfills my sexual needs (holding hands, kissing, etc.).
4. My partner fulfills my needs for security (feeling trusting, comfortable in a stable relationship, etc.).
5. My partner fulfills my needs for emotional involvement (feeling emotionally attached, feeling good when another feels good, etc.).
6. I feel satisfied with our relationship.
7. My relationship is much better than others' relationships.
8. My relationship is close to ideal.
9. Our relationship makes me very happy.
10. Our relationship does a good job of fulfilling my needs for intimacy, companionship, etc.

Quality of Alternatives

1. My needs for intimacy (sharing personal thoughts, secrets, etc.) could be fulfilled in alternative relationships.
2. My needs for companionship (doing things together, enjoying each other's company, etc.) could be fulfilled in alternative relationships.
3. My sexual needs (holding hands, kissing, etc.) could be fulfilled in alternative relationships.
4. My needs for security (feeling trusting, comfortable in a stable relationship, etc.) could be fulfilled in alternative relationships.
5. My needs for emotional involvement (feeling emotionally attached, feeling good when another feels good, etc.) could be fulfilled in alternative relationships.

6. The people other than my partner with whom I might become involved are very appealing.
7. My alternatives to our relationship are close to ideal (dating another, spending time with friends or on my own, etc.).
8. If I weren't dating my partner, I would do fine – I would find another appealing person to date.
9. My alternatives are attractive to me (dating another, spending time with friends or on my own, etc.).
10. My needs to intimacy, companionship, etc. could easily be fulfilled in an alternative relationship.

Investment Size

1. I have invested a great deal of time in our relationship.
2. I have told my partner many private things about myself (I disclose secrets to him/her).
3. My partner and I have an intellectual life together that would be difficult to replace.
4. My sense of personal identity (who I am) is linked to my partner and our relationship.
5. My partner and I share many memories.
6. I have put a great deal into our relationship that I would lose if the relationship were to end.
7. Many aspects of my life have become linked to my partner (recreational activities, etc.), and I would lose all of this if we were to break up.
8. I feel very involved in our relationship – like I have put a great deal into it.
9. My relationships with friends and family members would be complicated if my partner and I were to break up (e.g., partner is friends with people I care about).
10. Compared to other people I know, I have invested a great deal in my relationship with my partner.

Commitment

1. I want our relationship to last for a very long time.
2. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner.
3. I would not feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future.
4. It is likely that I will date someone other than my partner within the next year.
5. I feel very attached to our relationship – very strongly linked to my partner.
6. I want our relationship to last forever.
7. I am oriented toward the long-term future of my relationship (for example, I imagine being with my partner several years from now).

Perceived Partner Uniqueness (PPU) Scale

1. My romantic partner is uniquely suited to fulfilling my relational needs.
2. My romantic partner meets my unique relational needs in ways that no other relational partner ever has in the past.

3. My romantic partner meets unique relational needs that none of my previous romantic partners were able to meet.
4. My partner is extremely special to me because s/he fulfills my unique relational needs in ways that none of my former relational partners were able to do as well.
5. My romantic partner fulfills relational needs that no other partner could ever fulfill as well.
6. My romantic partner is a rare find.
7. My romantic partner is irreplaceable to me.
8. No one has ever been able to fulfill my needs in a relationship like my current romantic partner can.
9. My romantic partner meets relational needs that none of my previous romantic partners were able to meet.
10. My romantic partner meets my expectations of an ideal relational partner more than any other person I've ever dated.
11. My partner satisfies my relationship needs like no one else can.
12. My romantic partner satisfied my relational needs in ways that no other relational partner ever has in the past.
13. My romantic partner is extremely special to me because s/he is unlike any other relational partner I've had.
14. My romantic partner fulfills my relational needs in ways that none of my former relational partners were able to do as well.

Appendix K

Study Three Post-Interaction Questionnaire - Romantic Partner

Realism of Interaction

Instructions: Think about the interaction that you and your friend just had about a negative relational event in your romantic relationship and answer the following questions about this interaction by circling the number that best represents what you think about this interaction with your friend.

1. How similar was this conversation to conversations that you and your friend have had in other settings?

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not at all Similar | | | | | | Very Similar |

2. Did the conversation between you and your friend seem natural?

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not at all Natural | | | | | | Very Natural |

3. How realistic was the interaction between you and your friend?

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not at all Realistic | | | | | | Very Realistic |

Extradyadic Communication Content

Instructions: For the following items, think about what messages you communicated to your friend about a negative relational event in your romantic relationship. For each of the following items, please fill in the number that most honestly represents how strongly you agree with the following statements **about what you said about the negative relational event you described with the friend who is here with you today**. Use the following scale:

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Unsure | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

**Insert scale items developed in Study Two*

Instructions: Think about the close friend with whom you participated in this study today. For each of the following items, please fill in the number that most honestly represents how strongly you agree with the following statements **about your relationship with the friend who is here with you today**. Use the following scale:

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Unsure | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

Closeness

1. Rate your friend based on how close you think the friendship is on a scale from 0 to 100 (0 would mean 'not close at all,' while 100 would mean 'the closest friend I currently have').
2. This friendship is one of the closest I have ever had.
3. I do *not* feel particularly close to this person.*
4. I would describe myself as close to this person.
5. This individual and I share a great amount of emotional closeness.
6. I do *not* consider that person a particularly close friend.*

Satisfaction

1. I am generally satisfied with this friendship.
2. I am *not* satisfied with the relationship with this friend.*
3. There is little I would change about this friendship to make me more satisfied.
4. This friendship does *not* bring me much satisfaction.*

Likelihood of Friendship Continuance

1. I definitely would like to continue this relationship in the future.
2. I definitely see this friendship continuing for the rest of my life.
3. I doubt that this friendship will last much longer.*
4. I think that this friend and I will probably lose contact with one another.*
5. I would put much effort into continuing this friendship.
6. This friendship will certainly last for a long time.
7. This friend and I will maintain contact throughout our lives.

Note: *reverse-coded items

Topic Avoidance

Instructions: For each of the following items, please fill in the number that most honestly represents how frequently you think you will engage in the following avoidance behaviors with **the friend you brought to the lab with you today**. Use the following scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|-------|-----------------|--------------|------------------------|------------|------------------|--------|
| Never | Almost Never | Infrequently | Somewhat Frequently | Frequently | Almost Always | Always |

1. I will avoid discussing my romantic relationship with my friend in the future.
2. I will most likely change the subject if the topic of my romantic relationship comes up with my friend again.
3. I will do my best to try to avoid conversations about my romantic relationship with my friend.
4. I intend to avoid discussing my romantic partner with my friend.

Relational Satisfaction and Commitment

Instructions: For each of the following items, please fill in the number that most honestly represents how strongly you agree with the following statements about **your romantic relationship and romantic partner**. Use the following scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|----------------------|----------|----------------------|--------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Unsure | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

Satisfaction

1. My partner fulfills my needs for intimacy (sharing personal thoughts, secrets, etc.).
2. My partner fulfills my needs for companionship (doing things together, enjoying each other's company, etc.).
3. My partner fulfills my sexual needs (holding hands, kissing, etc.).
4. My partner fulfills my needs for security (feeling trusting, comfortable in a stable relationship, etc.).
5. My partner fulfills my needs for emotional involvement (feeling emotionally attached, feeling good when another feels good, etc.).
6. I feel satisfied with our relationship.
7. My relationship is much better than others' relationships.
8. My relationship is close to ideal.
9. Our relationship makes me very happy.

10. Our relationship does a good job of fulfilling my needs for intimacy, companionship, etc.

Commitment

1. I want our relationship to last for a very long time.
2. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner.
3. I would not feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future.
4. It is likely that I will date someone other than my partner within the next year.
5. I feel very attached to our relationship – very strongly linked to my partner.
6. I want our relationship to last forever.
7. I am oriented toward the long-term future of my relationship (for example, I imagine being with my partner several years from now).

Instructions: Please provide the following information **about yourself and your romantic partner.**

1. Sex (Please circle one): Male Female

2. What year in school are you? (Please check one)

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| _____ 1 st Year | _____ Senior |
| _____ Sophomore | _____ Other |
| _____ Junior | _____ N/A |

3. How old are you? _____ Years

4. What is your dominant racial background? (Please check one)

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| _____ Asian | _____ Hispanic |
| _____ Black/African American | _____ White/Caucasian |
| _____ Native American | _____ Other |

5. What is your sexual orientation? (Please check one)

| | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| _____ Heterosexual | _____ Homosexual |
| _____ Bisexual | _____ Unsure |

6. How would you categorize your relationship with your romantic partner? (Please check one):

| |
|-----------------------|
| _____ Casually dating |
|-----------------------|

Appendix L

Study Three Post-Interaction Questionnaire - Friend

Realism of Interaction

Instructions: Think about the interaction that you and your friend just had about a negative relational event in his/her romantic relationship and answer the following questions about this interaction by circling the number that best represents what you think about this interaction with your friend.

1. How similar was this conversation to conversations that you and your friend have had in other settings?

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not at all Similar | | | | | | Very Similar |

2. Did the conversation between you and your friend seem natural?

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not at all Natural | | | | | | Very Natural |

3. How realistic was the interaction between you and your friend?

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not at all Realistic | | | | | | Very Realistic |

Extradyadic Response Content

Instructions: For the following items, think about what messages you communicated to your friend about a negative relational event in his/her romantic relationship. For each of the following items, please fill in the number that most honestly represents how strongly you agree with the following statements **about what you said to the friend who is here with you today**. Use the following scale:

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Unsure | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

**Insert scale items developed in Study Two*

Friendship Quality

Instructions: Think about the close friend with whom you participated in this study today. For each of the following items, please fill in the number that most honestly represents how strongly you agree with the following statements **about your relationship with the friend who is here with you today**. Use the following scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|-------------------|----------|-------------------|--------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Unsure | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

Closeness

7. Rate your friend based on how close you think the friendship is on a scale from 0 to 100 (0 would mean 'not close at all,' while 100 would mean 'the closest friend I currently have').
8. This friendship is one of the closest I have ever had.
9. I do *not* feel particularly close to this person.*
10. I would describe myself as close to this person.
11. This individual and I share a great amount of emotional closeness.
12. I do *not* consider that person a particularly close friend.*

Satisfaction

5. I am generally satisfied with this friendship.
6. I am *not* satisfied with the relationship with this friend.*
7. There is little I would change about this friendship to make me more satisfied.
8. This friendship does *not* bring me much satisfaction.*

Likelihood of Friendship Continuance

8. I definitely would like to continue this relationship in the future.
9. I definitely see this friendship continuing for the rest of my life.
10. I doubt that this friendship will last much longer.*
11. I think that this friend and I will probably lose contact with one another.*
12. I would put much effort into continuing this friendship.
13. This friendship will certainly last for a long time.
14. This friend and I will maintain contact throughout our lives.

Note: *reverse-coded items

Topic Avoidance

Instructions: For each of the following items, please fill in the number that most honestly represents how frequently you think you might engage in the following

avoidance behaviors with **the friend you brought to the lab today**. Use the following scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|-------|-----------------|--------------|------------------------|------------|------------------|--------|
| Never | Almost Never | Infrequently | Somewhat Frequently | Frequently | Almost Always | Always |

1. I will avoid discussing my friend's romantic relationship with him/her.
2. I will most likely change the subject if the topic of my friend's romantic relationship comes up.
3. I will do my best to try to avoid conversations about my friend's romantic relationship.
4. I intend to avoid discussing my friend's romantic partner with him/her.

Instructions: Please provide the following information **about yourself**.

1. Sex (Please circle one): Male Female

2. What year in school are you? (Please check one)

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| _____ 1 st Year | _____ Senior |
| _____ Sophomore | _____ Other |
| _____ Junior | _____ N/A |

3. How old are you? _____ Years

4. What is your dominant racial background? (Please check one)

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| _____ Asian | _____ Hispanic |
| _____ Black/African American | _____ White/Caucasian |
| _____ Native American | _____ Other |

5. What is your sexual orientation? (Please check one)

| | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| _____ Heterosexual | _____ Homosexual |
| _____ Bisexual | _____ Unsure |