To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herein a dissertation written by Jeffrey M. Adams entitled "The Nature of Interpersonal Commitment." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Psychology.

Warren H. Jones, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the council:

Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of The Graduate School

THE NATURE OF INTERPERSONAL COMMITMENT

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Jeffrey Michael Adams

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On the face of it, the completion of the dissertation and the subsequent change in status from graduate student to Doctor of Philosophy seem to reflect an individual achievement brought about by years of steady labor, dedication to task, and great foresight. While all of this is true to one degree or another, such a perspective obscures the fact that behind nearly every individual's success are the often silent toils of numerous others. I am indebted to a great many people whose contributions to my personal and professional life have enabled me to attain a long sought-after goal. I could not do justice to these individuals if I had a thousand pages on which to write, but it is my hope that the following comments reflect the high esteem with which I hold them all.

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ABSTRACT

Commitment to the development and maintenance of close personal relationships has been the focus of considerable theoretical and empirical attention over the past 30 years. During this time, scholars from such diverse areas as sociology, family studies, psychology, and anthropology have generated numerous conceptual models and have contributed to a growing empirical literature that is broadening our understanding of the forces that bind couples together. However, despite these efforts, the literature on interpersonal commitment appears to be largely non-cumulative and without clear focus or direction. Four factors seem to be responsible for these deficits. First, no attempts have been made to review this literature with an eye toward identifying its common themes, methodological limitations, and areas in need of additional development. Consequently, researchers cannot comment effectively on the "state of the field" and therefore are not in a position to pursue systematically particular lines of research that might be most beneficial to our growing knowledge base. Second, a well-validated measure of interpersonal commitment has not enjoyed widespread use among researchers. In fact, the most common practice among investigators is the creation of measures designed to satisfy the requirements of a particular study or sequence of studies. Because it is often unclear what these instruments actually measure, and because extant measures have not been compared empirically, the results of studies in which different measures were used cannot be aggregated. As a result, few clear conclusions may be drawn from the literature regarding the ways in which commitment operates in close relationships. Third, progress has been hindered by researchers' apparent reluctance to explore alternatives to social exchange theory as an explanatory model of interpersonal commitment. While the cognitive aspects of commitment are fairly well represented in social exchange

theory, it is clear that humans are less than perfect processors of information, especially the kind of affect-laden information that is pervasive in most emotionally intimate relationships. Finally, insufficient empirical attention has been devoted to examining the dynamic nature of interpersonal commitment. While it clearly is important to understand commitment at the level of the construct, it is equally clear that commitment functions as a process, necessitating the exploration of the mechanisms involved in the rise and fall, or change in character, of this variable over time.

The overarching goal of this dissertation was to address the four impediments to literature development described above. As a first step, the literature on interpersonal commitment was extensively reviewed. On the basis of this review, two broad conclusions were drawn. First, despite the appearance of diversity among the various definitions and conceptualizations of interpersonal commitment, three common dimensions may be identified: an attraction dimension (Commitment to the Spouse) based on feelings of devotion, dedication, and attachment to one's partner, a moral/normative dimension (Commitment to the Marriage) based on one's belief in the importance of keeping one's promises and in the sanctity of the marital relationship, and a constraining dimension (Barriers to Dissolution) based on feelings of entrapment emergent from concerns over the social, emotional, and/or financial penalties of marital dissolution. A second conclusion is that the body of empirical findings relevant to interpersonal commitment may be usefully organized according to these three dimensions. A review of the empirical literature showed, for example, that Commitment to the Spouse is associated with love, satisfaction, positive communication, effective problem-solving, and relationship maintenance behaviors, Commitment to Marriage is related to spouse's sense of obligation and duty and

religious orientation, and Barriers to Dissolution is related primarily to external and normative constraints.

The second limitation was addressed by implementing several empirical strategies to assess the construct fidelity of the three dimensions of commitment. The results of six studies were consistent with the preceding review of the literature and supported the idea that commitment in marriage may be usefully described in terms of three basic dimensions. The robustness of this tripartite conceptualization was demonstrated using a variety of empirical strategies. For example, a series of psychometric and factor analytic treatments of items generated to satisfy 11 different definitions of commitment found in the literature yielded three general components of commitment in marriage corresponding to Commitment to Spouse, Commitment to Marriage, and Barriers to Dissolution. Whereas Commitment to Spouse and Barriers to Dissolution are unrelated, Commitment to Marriage is related to both, although the magnitude of the correlations suggested the utility of maintaining the conceptual distinction among the three. Furthermore, scores on Commitment to Spouse and Commitment to Marriage differentiated between, on the one hand, seriously dating, engaged, and married respondents versus casually dating and divorced participants, and all three components of commitment were found to be associated with self-reported marital satisfaction. Validity comparisons showed significant correlations between Commitment to Spouse and measures of personal dedication and interpersonal orientation; Commitment to Marriage was related to indexes of morality and religiosity; and the self-report of Barriers to Dissolution was significantly associated with obstacles to relationship termination. Also, measures of these three components tended not to be related to the correlates of other components. Ratings by marital partners and other family members suggested that the commitment scores of partners

are significantly related, partners' beliefs regarding the commitment of the other are significantly similar, and the ratings given by one's partner are significantly related to one's self-ratings across all three dimensions. Additionally, significant relationships were obtained in comparisons between self-ratings and ratings by other family members (e.g., one's children, one's own parents, etc.). Finally, the three dimensions of commitment were significantly related to extant measures of similar constructs with, again, little overlap in the pattern of correlates for each dimension, and items from extant measures of commitment, for the most part, reduce to the same three-component structure.

The third limitation was addressed by proposing an alternative perspective from which to view interpersonal commitment. Following a description of social exchange theory, its role in models of interpersonal commitment, and its shortcomings, three studies were conducted to determine whether interpersonal commitment may be regarded as an individual difference variable. In Study 1, simple correlations were computed between the three dimensions of commitment and two indexes of normal and deviant personality traits. Results indicated that the three dimensions of interpersonal commitment are related differentially to particular personality traits and hint at the possibility that certain clusters of traits influence the way commitment is experienced by spouses. The goal of Study 2 was to explore the role of more globally defined personality profiles in the experience of commitment by examining how attachment style helps to explain variations in interpersonal commitment. Results indicated that individuals who described themselves as securely attached differed from individuals who described themselves as either anxiously or avoidantly attached on the extent to which they are committed to their spouse. Finally, Study 3 examined the extent to which commitment is consistent across a broad range of experiential domains. Results

indicated that a high degree of commitment to the spouse as a valued person was positively related to goal commitment, family involvement, goal orientation, self-efficacy, and problem-solving ability (among other factors), whereas commitment to the marital relationship was associated with familism, internal religiosity, and perfectionism, and the experience of entrapment in marriage was associated with external religiosity and perfectionism and inversely related to goal commitment. Together, these studies seem to support the idea that in addition to the cognitive and situational factors that have been used to explain committed behavior, commitment may be affected by particular features of one's character.

The final limitation to the literature was addressed by asserting the position that viewing commitment as a dynamic process and taking note of the ways in which commitment changes throughout the course of a relationship have potentially important implications for future research and theory in this area. Further, it was argued that such a longitudinal perspective would bring into sharper focus the interplay of affective, cognitive, dispositional, and situational factors that affect, and are in turn affected by, interpersonal commitment, thereby providing a means for integrating the diverse set of findings comprising the commitment literature. On the basis of this argument, an attempt was made to outline a model of interpersonal commitment that emphasizes the changing nature of commitment and which seeks to integrate theory and research on marital satisfaction, exchange processes, personality, and the attraction, moral/ normative, and constraining dimensions of commitment. At the heart of this model is the idea that the experience of commitment as an enthusiastic pursuit, a moral imperative, or a sense of entrapment is influenced by the salience of various situational and dispositional factors to relationship partners during the course of their marital interaction.

To conclude, a research agenda devoted to examining the areas in greatest need of development was advanced. Several potentially fruitful avenues for future research were identified. First, greater attention needs to be devoted to examining the ways in which the three dimensions of commitment mediate or moderate relationship enhancing or relationship weakening behaviors. Such an approach could be integrated with the rapidly growing body of research on couple interaction patterns, yielding a more complete picture of healthy and unhealthy couple functioning. Second, current knowledge of interpersonal commitment would be enhanced by employing statistical modeling techniques to explore more thoroughly the range of predictors and outcomes of interpersonal commitment. Combining these procedures with longitudinal designs would move researchers closer to an understanding of the causal pathways involved in the development, maintenance, and dissolution of intimate relationships. Third, the range of interpersonal associations in which commitment might be expected to play an important role should be broadened. For example, whereas extensive literatures currently exist for marital and organizational commitment, very little is known about the importance of commitment in the development of family relationships, friendships, or more formal relationships such as those which exist between students and teachers, doctors and patients, and therapists and clients. Moreover, it would be instructive to know whether interpersonal commitment ends with the termination of a relationship through death or divorce, or whether it is possible to demonstrate commitment toward one's enemies (i.e., for the purpose of revenge). Fourth, research which examines cross-cultural differences in interpersonal commitment is greatly needed. Such investigations would shed light on the normative processes involved in making and breaking interpersonal commitments. Finally, clinical studies are needed to examine

the utility of appealing to commitment in treating distressed couples who are contemplating divorce.

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CHAPTER 1

COMMITMENT IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

As a construct of psychological relevance, commitment has long been the focus of numerous programs of research, including explorations in decision-making (Edwards, 1954; Festinger, 1957), deviation and conformity in group settings (Kiesler & Corbin, 1965; Kiesler & Kiesler, 1969; Kiesler, Zanna, & De Salvo, 1966), the maintenance of costly courses of action (Staw, 1976, 1981; Staw & Fox, 1977), and job turnover (Aranya & Jacobson, 1975; Grusky, 1966; Porter, Crampon, & Smith, 1976). However, the examination of commitment specifically within the context of close relationships is a relatively recent development in psychological research, with most theoretical treatments of the construct emerging after 1965 and most empirical studies published after 1980. Given the relatively long history of research on interpersonal relationships, it is somewhat perplexing that the critical examination of commitment has been so late in coming to this area. However, potential answers to the question of why this is so may be found by adopting a socio-historical perspective on the development of scholarly activity and by examining the social context in which particular research agendas emerged. It is the goal of the present chapter to apply this perspective to the study of marital commitment in an attempt to explain why commitment has become such an important interpersonal variable in research on close relationships.

In particular, this chapter has two primary purposes. The first is to introduce the concept of interpersonal commitment by tracing its emergence in the relationship literature. It will be argued that scholarly interest in interpersonal commitment

increased as a function of two related historical events. The first event was the explosion of research on marital stability and marital quality that resulted in a somewhat puzzling set of findings. Specifically, a considerable amount of evidence began to accumulate suggesting that the quality of a marriage was the best predictor of its long-term stability. On the other hand, a number of studies supported the idea that many relationships demonstrate considerable longitudinal stability even if the degree of satisfaction experienced by the participants is low. In this context, commitment began to be used to explain why unsatisfying marriages often remain stable. The second event was the increase in the divorce rate during the decade of the 1960s. The widespread social changes taking place at this time made divorce and separation much more acceptable solutions to dissatisfying marriages. The increase in theoretical efforts devoted to marital commitment was coincident with the increase in the divorce rate and may be seen as a social reaction to the large scale departure from the traditional family values of duty, sacrifice, and perseverance. That is, by commenting on the significance of commitment at a time when marriage was losing the social status it held for previous generations, social scientists may have been advancing an agenda that sought to reestablish traditional family values and thereby quell the rapid growth of an increasingly liberal populace.

The second goal of this chapter is to comment briefly on the current state of the literature on interpersonal commitment with an eye toward identifying areas in need of greater attention by researchers. Although interest in interpersonal commitment has continued to grow, resulting in a steadily expanding literature, it appears that the literature is growing in a rather aimless fashion. This aimlessness seems to be largely the result of researchers failing to address basic issues of conceptualization and measurement as well as an apparent lack of awareness regarding the state of the field.

Consequently, current research on commitment generally fails to follow systematically determined programs guided by the knowledge of which questions are most relevant to understanding the role of commitment in close relationships. The chapter concludes with a statement regarding the goals of this dissertation and a brief preview of the ways in which these goals will be met in Chapters 2 through 5.

Commitment in Close Relationships: An Historical Overview

Research on Marital Quality and Marital Stability

For the past 30 years, researchers in the area of close relationships have focused their attention primarily on two broad domains: the quality of interpersonal relationships and their stability. Of these, issues relevant to interpersonal quality (i.e., satisfaction) have dominated the theoretical and empirical literatures. Programs of research devoted to couple communication (Dindia & Fitzpatrick, 1985; Markman, 1981; Noller, 1981, 1987), interaction patterns of spouses (Gottman, 1979, 1994; Gottman, Markman, & Notarius, 1977; Levenson & Gottman, 1983), cognitive processes such as attribution (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990; Fincham, Beach, & Bradbury, 1989; Fincham & Bradbury, 1987, 1988), conflict and conflict resolution (Epstein, Finnegan, & Bythell, 1979; Grych & Fincham, 1981; Newcomb & Bentler, 1981), and marital therapy (Baucom & Hoffman, 1986; Jacobson, 1984; Segraves, 1990; Weiss, Hops, & Patterson, 1973) are illustrative of the various perspectives from which relationship quality has been examined. Common to each of these areas is an emphasis on (a) the cognitive, affective, and/or behavioral factors that presumably influence individuals' perceived happiness with a particular relationship, or (b) therapeutic interventions designed to modify these factors so as to decrease interpersonal distress and increase satisfaction. Regardless of the specific focus, this

research concentrates on an individual's subjective experience of well-being within the context of an intimate relationship.

Studies of relationship stability, on the other hand, highlight variables that seem to play a role in determining whether a relationship dissolves or remains intact. Researchers have assembled an extensive list of factors that are predictive of marital instability. For example, couples who marry at a young age, have a low level of formal education, and who are involved in low-level occupations are at higher risk for marital dissolution than are older, better educated, and more affluent couples (Bentler & Newcomb, 1978; Goode, Hopkins, & McClure, 1971; Mott & Moore, 1979; Renne, 1970). Further, there is considerable evidence that there are ethnicity differences in marital stability, with Black couples showing greater rates of dissolution that White couples (Renne, 1970). Several investigators have also found that certain personality characteristics are related to marital disruption, including achievement motivation, competition, individualism, and ambition (Bentler & Newcomb, 1978; Kirkpatrick, 1955). Together, these structural variables represent a "first order" explanation of marital disruption, for although such variables are useful predictors of marital outcomes, they do not capture the "higher-order" explanations that result from consideration of the thoughts, feelings, and interactions of the married individuals.

The growth of research in these areas did much to address important questions regarding the precursors of marital satisfaction and marital stability. Perhaps more intriguing, though, was the development of research on the relationship between the perceived quality of intimate associations and their longevity. In particular, this research produced two sets of apparently contradictory findings. First, a considerable number of studies emerged which supported the position that relationship quality and stability are inextricably intertwined phenomena, with reductions in the quality of a

relationship leading, perhaps inevitably, to its dissolution. Indeed, in their review of research on marital happiness and stability, Hicks and Platt (1970) noted that virtually all of the variables which correlated positively with marital satisfaction tended also to be inversely related to marital instability and divorce, leading researchers to conclude that happy marriages endure while unhappy marriages dissolve. In one of the clearest demonstrations of this point, Levinger (1966) examined the reasons given by 600 divorcing couples for ending their marriage. In general, Levinger found that among spouses in middle class marriages, emotional and psychological hardships were the most frequently given reasons for divorce. Interestingly, couples in lower class marriages gave primarily financial and economic hardship reasons for divorce, suggesting that for these couples, instrumental concerns were much greater and more salient than affectional concerns. It is likely, nonetheless, that economically deprived couples also experienced decreases in marital satisfaction as they progressed toward divorce, further supporting the notion that happiness and stability are closely related phenomena.

The notion that variations in relationship satisfaction are directly linked to a person's decision to continue in a romantic relationship is also implicit in social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), an approach to conceptualizing relationships that emphasizes the equitable exchange of interpersonal "goods and services." The basic premise of exchange theory is that, like consumers in the marketplace, people seek to maximize their rewards and minimize their costs in interpersonal relationships. Common examples of rewards in relationships include companionship, sexual gratification, love, or any other aspect of the partner or the interaction that brings one pleasure, whereas illustrative costs include the expenditure of time and energy on the maintenance of the relationship, restrictions on personal

freedoms, emotional distress borne from conflict, and so forth. The difference between rewards and costs in a relationship (referred to as outcome level) determines the overall quality of the relationship. Thus, relationships that have a larger number of rewards than costs are likely to be characterized by the participants as having positive outcome value and to endure, whereas relatonships that have negative outcome value (i.e., more costs than rewards) are more likely to dissolve.

A second set of findings, however, suggested that the quality of a relationship and its stability are not necessarily functionally interdependent attributes. Indeed, numerous examples of relationships that persist despite low levels of satisfaction or, conversely, relationships of relatively high quality that nevertheless dissolve may be found. The relationship between parents and their children is one example of the former scenario; in most instances, mothers and fathers do not summarily terminate their relationship with their infant child after several months of unsatisfying interactions (e.g., 2:00 a.m. feedings). Perhaps a more compelling illustration is the continuance of "voluntary" relationships such as marriages. Strictly speaking, a mother can never change her relationship to her children. Regardless of the quality of their interactions, she will always be her children's "mother." Such a permanent status may not be automatically ascribed to dating or marital relationships, however. These relationships are said to be voluntary to the extent that one or both partners may choose to end their association and thereby change the nature of the relationship. That some individuals persist in such relationships even when the quality of the relationship is, by all objective standards, of low quality is thus particularly noteworthy.

A study by Cuber and Harroff (1965) was the first to indicate that stable marriages are not necessarily happy. They noted that "[A] 'stable' married pair may on the one hand be deeply fulfilled people, living vibrantly, or at the other extreme

entrapped, embittered, resentful people living lives of duplicity in an atmosphere of hatred and despair (1963, p. 141). In both types of marriage (which the authors labelled instrumental and utilitarian, respectively), spouses remain together, but for quite different reasons and despite differences in satisfaction level. Another example of an unhappy but stable marriage that has contemporary relevance involves a spouse who remains in an abusive marriage. Research by Strube and Barbour (1983) and Bauserman and Arias (1992) indicates that abused wives often remain with their assailant because they are economically dependent on him or because they believe that they can somehow "save" him by staying in the marriage. Less dramatic, but more intriguing from the low relationship quality/high relationship instability standpoint, are "empty shell" marriages (Goode, 1959), unhappy unions that continue indefinitely out of concern for young children, strict adherence to religious values, or simply because divorcing one's spouse would require more effort than one is willing to expend.

Although partners who remain in unsatisfying relationships represent the most common form of unhappy-stable union, it is also possible to terminate a relationship with whom one is thoroughly satisfied. Many dating relationships fall into this category. For example, Rusbult (1983) found that college students who were romantically involved were more likely to break up between semesters or following graduation than they were during the regular school year. Importantly, these breakups often occurred even if the partners weren't especially unhappy with one another or with their relationship. Apparently, the separations that occurred during major college transitions were sufficient to facilitate the dissolution of otherwise satisfactory relationships. Other types of relationship may also be compromised because of changes in circumstances involving work or family transitions. Promotions or transfers, for example, may necessitate relocating to a different part of the country and may result in

the severing of important interpersonal ties with coworkers and colleagues. Likewise, in the case of divorce where custody issues are relevant, parents are often required to change drastically the nature of their relationship with their children, whom they presumably love and from whom they presumably derive great pleasure and meaning in life.

As this brief review shows, although many relationships end because they no longer provide the participants with rewarding experiences, it is clear that satisfaction level alone is insufficient to account for the various patterns of relationship stability that may be observed. In recognition of this fact, Hicks and Platt (1970) encouraged researchers to focus more attention on unhappy but stable relationships. Many investigators began to invoke the concept of commitment in an attempt to reconcile the disparate set of findings relevant to marital quality and stability. Psychological commitment has its empirical roots in research on decision-making and attitude change (e.g., Festinger, 1957; Heider, 1958; Osgood, 1960), wherein the very process of deciding to pursue one course of action over another commits an actor to the chosen course of action. In general, commitment is considered to be a cognitive variable, the ultimate effects of which are to bind an individual to behavioral acts and to make those acts less changeable (Kiesler & Sakumura, 1966). These effects are described in various ways, but most accounts of commitment are similar in substance to that provided by Becker (1960). According to Becker, commitment to consistent lines of activity result from an individual making a "side bet," in which the individual "has staked something of value to him, something originally unrelated to his present line of action, on being consistent with his present behavior (Becker, 1960, p. 35). To illustrate this idea, Becker cited an example from Schelling:

> Suppose that you are bargaining to buy a house; you offer sixteen thousand dollars, but the seller insists on twenty thousand. Now suppose that you offer your antagonist in the bargaining certified proof that you have bet a third party five thousand dollars that you will not pay more than sixteen thousand dollars for the house. Your opponent must admit defeat because you would lose money by raising your bid; you have committed yourself to pay no more than you originally offered." (p. 35)

According to this classical view of commitment, consistent behavior is the direct result of factors that are independent of the behavior in question, but which serve to bind and individual to that behavior.

Psychological commitment is hypothesized to vary as a function of several cognitive and behavioral conditions (Kiesler & Sakumura, 1966; Kiesler, 1971). Specifically, commitment to a course of action should increase to the extent that the action is explicit, personally important, irrevocable, freely chosen, engaged in frequently, and requiring effort to complete. Further, once a commitment has been made, it has powerful effects on behavior. For example, individuals who are committed to a particular belief or value system are likely to resist the persuasive efforts of antagonistic others (Kiesler, 1971). Also, individuals who have committed themselves to courses of action that yield consistently negative outcomes frequently persist in such actions despite incurring substantial losses (Staw, 1976, 1981). In part, the explanation for this counter-intuitive behavior lies in people's desire to not lose face for choosing a failed endeavor and in the hope that by persisting in the unsuccessful enterprise they may recover their losses.

By applying the principles of classical commitment theory to close relationships, researchers began to bring into sharper focus the nature of the connection between relationship satisfaction and relationship stability. In this regard, Levinger's (1965)

cohesion theory was especially useful. Levinger postulated that couples exist in a field of forces that serve to stabilize the couple's relationship. Attraction forces draw the couple together and consist of such pleasurable elements as sexual compatibility, personality similarity, companionship, and so forth. By contrast, barrier forces make leaving a relationship difficult by virtue of the costs associated with dissolution. Examples of barrier forces include negative social reactions, religious proscriptions, and the actual financial costs of divorce. From the perspective of cohesion theory, then, the apparently contradictory findings regarding marital quality and marital stability could be explained on the basis of a whole family of forces, including satisfaction, which operate to stabilize marriages in different ways. Of particular relevance was Levinger's assertion that unhappily married individuals might not dissolve their relationship because forces other than satisfaction were contributing to couple cohesion. In this context, commitment may be regarded as a barrier force insofar as both spouses freely chose to make public, promissory statements about the permanence of their union (i.e., wedding vows) and presumably had put some effort into maintaining their relationship. Alternatively, to the extent that the couples had continued to invest in their relationship (or, perhaps, began to invest more heavily) as marital quality began to decline, then persistence in an unsatisfying relationship might be seen as an intention to make the investments "pay off." In either case, the concept of psychological commitment provided a useful solution to the problem of unhappy stable relationships and came to be seen as an important interpersonal variable in its own right.

Changes in Patterns of Divorce During the Decade of the 1960s

While researchers were beginning to recognize the utility of commitment in explaining why some unhappy marriages end and why some do not, another social change was taking place that made this issue increasingly relevant to social scientists. This change involved the steady increase in the number of marriages ending in divorce, an event which has had profound effects on social policy, family functioning, and the focus of social psychological and sociological research.

In 1960, the Census Bureau reported that nearly 3 out of 10 marriages ended in divorce. By 1975, this number had risen to 5 in 10, and recent estimates indicate that as many as two-thirds of all marriages may end in divorce (Furstenburg & Spanier, 1984). Several explanations have been proffered to account for the dramatic increase in the divorce rate over the last 35 years. One factor may have been the growing participation of women in the labor force (Norton & Glick, 1976). For example, in 1950, approximately 26% of married women between the ages of 20 and 24 were employed outside the home, compared with 47% of married women of similar age in 1970. According to Phillips (1988), womens' participation in the labor force translated into higher earning power and higher social status, factors which made leaving an unsatisfying marriage more feasible. At issue here was the dependence of women on their husband's paycheck; by obtaining employment, women were able to reduce this dependence and thereby remove a significant barrier to divorce.

It is also possible that the increase in the divorce rate was a function of greater expectations being placed on marriage partners to satisfy one another's needs. For example, Phillips (1988) reported that beginning in the early 1960s there was a growing inclination of spouses to believe that their partners should be the primary source of their happiness, both present and future, as well as their primary source of

comfort, support, and understanding. The increase in the number of divorces, it is argued, occurred when spouses, dissatisfied with their partner's inability to satisfy their every need, left their partner in search of someone else who would be capable of satisfying their needs. In short, the divorce rate was seen as a function of individual's unrealistically high expectations of their spouse, a point which was made by Slater (1968) 20 years before:

> Spouses are now asked to be lovers, friends, and mutual therapists in a society which is forcingthe marriage bond to become the closest, deepest, most important and most enduring relationship in one's life. Paradoxically, then, it is increasingly likely to fall short of the emotional demands placed upon it and be dissolved (p. 99).

A highly speculative explanation for the rising divorce rate concerns the different proportions of males and females of marrying age in the early and middle 1960s (Parke & Glick; 1967). The argument for this "marriage squeeze" phenomenon employs the following line of reasoning: Traditionally, females have married partners who were, on average, two to three years older than they were. The marriage squeeze occurred because more women were becoming eligible for marriage (by virtue of their turning 18) in the mid 1960s than were men in the 20-21 age range. This age differential existed largely because the women who turned 18 in 1965 came from a large, post-World War II cohort, whereas 21 to 22-year-old males in 1965 came from a much smaller, pre-World War II cohort. This fact coupled with the large deportation of males in the Viet Nam war resulted in a rather substantial deficit of marriage-eligible males. With regard to divorce, Norton and Glick (1976) speculated that young single women, faced with the prospect of fewer eligble single men to marry, may have attempted to encourage unhappily married men to divorce their spouses and thereby enlarge the number of potential partners. Norton and Glick also noted that the

converse (i.e., that unhappily married men may have sought out single females) may also have triggered the increase in the divorce rate, but concluded that no data exist to support either possibility.

Regardless of which explanation seems to be the most viable, it is clear that the increase in the divorce rate has had a direct effect not only on the members of the dissolved family, but on society as a whole. Perhaps the most obvious effect of marital dissolution was the general disruption of spouse's lives. Economically, marital dissolution has tended to be harder on women. For example, a series of longitudinal studies (Morgan, 1973) showed that between the years 1967 and 1971, intact families had an increase in income of approximately 35%. Males who lost a spouse through death or divorce also showed an increase in family income over this period, but females who lost a spouse showed a decrease in family income of nearly 17%. These results are reflected in the overall incomes of male-headed and female-headed families: in 1974 the mean income for male-headed families was almost $14,000, whereas for female-headed families the mean income was less than half this amount (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975c). According to Bane (1976), there are several reasons for the economic hardship of women following divorce, including the fact that divorced women with dependent children have fewer opportunities to work outside the home than do males, and that women who do obtain jobs receive lower pay than males. Furthermore, fathers may be unable or unwilling to pay child support after establishing new identities and/or new relationships following the divorce, reducing the family income to that which could be earned by the now-single mother.

Another effect of divorce was the increase in the number of single-parent households. An area that has received considerable research attention is the psychological adjustment of children to parental divorce. Early research found that

children of divorced parents tended to be more psychologically disturbed, lower in achievement, more delinquent, and overrepresented in outpatient psychiatric populations than children from intact families (Gardner, 1976; Kalter, 1977; Tessman, 1977). Children of divorce also have been found to experience moderate to severe depression at a much higher rate than that found in the general population (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980), and have had greater difficulties adjusting to new social situations (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). Although some of this research has been criticized on the grounds that inappropriate samples were used or the wrong kinds of questions were asked (e.g., Herzog & Sudia, 1971, cited in Bane, 1976), most researchers continue to recognize the fact that parental divorce is a particularly stressful event for children and may have a significant impact on their subsequent psychosocial development and attitudes about close relationships in general (Pope & Mueller, 1976).

Although it is clear that marital dissolution affects the individual members of broken families, the implications of the rapid rise in the divorce rate extends beyond the single family unit to affect such areas as government policy, psychology, and society as a whole. For example, numerous family and social issues, including abortion and unwanted pregnancies (Ide, 1986; Jaffe, Lindheim, & Lee, 1981) and the difficulties associated with being a single-parent (Dempsey, 1981) were recognized and addressed by the federal government in the mid 1960s to early 1970s. Formal federal policy was drafted for such issues as child daycare (Morgan, 1983) and other political issues relevant to the family (Kamerman & Kahn, 1978), reflecting the degree to which formerly private family matters became the concern of society. Furthermore, with the breakup of marriage and of the families built around them came a corresponding increase in the range of issues addressed by psychologists and other mental health professionals, resulting in, among other things, the increased practice of divorce

counseling and interventions related to spouse abuse. In fact, the number of professional workers in individual and family services (e.g., psychotherapists, marriage counselors, etc.) has increased by 25% since 1983 alone (U.S. Department of Labor, 1983). In short, all of these changes in social policy (as well as in other areas, including the legal profession and social service programs) point to the overall social significance of the dissolution of the traditional family unit.

Given the social implications of the rising divorce rate, it is perhaps not surprising that the study of commitment in marriage emerged in parallel with the dissolution of the traditional family unit. By focusing on commitment, it became possible for researchers to advertise a construct that could hold marriages together and which was under the direct control of the married partners. Stated another way, commitment may have been seen as a relatively simple solution to the numerous social problems brought about by marital dissolution, as it could be invoked as the responsibility of the marriage participants without costing tax dollars. Thus, it seems at least plausible that one reason for the arrival of commitment research to the study of the family was the desire of researchers to identify variables that might contribute to the stability of the marital relationship. Of course, one cannot say with certainty what researchers' intentions were with regard to pursuing a particular research agenda. However, the fact that research on commitment appears to have coincided with the breakdown of the nuclear family, and addressed several important issues brought about by this breakdown, attests to the social relevance of the enterprise.

The Current State of the Commitment Literature

Interest in commitment to personal relationships has continued to increase in recent years, and scholars from a variety of disiplines have begun exploring in greater

detail both the range of interpersonal variables that affect or are affected by commitment and the role played by commitment in the development and dissolution of different types of relationships. Along these lines, one can see in the literature a number of recent studies devoted to examining the ways in which commitment facilitates relationship enhancing behaviors (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989; Rusbult & Verette, 1991; Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Dapkus, 1991; Rusbult & Zembrodt, 1983), and how marital commitment is affected by premarital cohabitation (Bennett, Blanc, & Bloom, 1988; Catlin, Croake, & Keller, 1978; DeMaris & Leslie, 1984; Glezer, 1991). Researchers have also become interested in how commitment is experienced in homosexual pairs (Duffy & Rusbult, 1985; Schwartz & Patterson, 1996), friends (Fehr, 1996; Gaia & Adams, 1996; Rusbult, 1980), ex-spouses (Hansson, Berry, & Berry, 1996; Masheter, 1996; Moss & Moss, 1984), and spouses from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds (Davis & Strube, 1993; Singh & Khullar, 1989; Singh & Kanjirathinkal, 1996). In short, research in which commitment is a variable of primary concern has expanded in numerous directions, contributing substantially to our understanding of how and why interpersonal ties are made, maintained, and broken.

Despite these interesting and useful developments, several basic issues have yet to be addressed by researchers. First, although a body of theory and research on commitment in intimate relationships has developed gradually over the past three decades, no attempts have been made to evaluate this literature with an eye toward integrating its various theoretical and empirical elements. Consequently, it is difficult to comment on the overall "state of the field" and to highlight avenues of future research that might be fruitful in advancing our understanding of interpersonal commitment. Several investigators have commented on the recent emergence of a

structure to this literature as well as the need to direct more effort toward describing this structure (Johnson, 1991; Rusbult, 1991), however, progress toward realizing this goal has been slow.

A second issue involves the conceptualization and measurement of relational commitment. Despite the fact that numerous models have been proposed to describe the presumed components, causes, and consequences of relational commitment (e.g., Brewer, 1993; Johnson, 1973, 1991; Kelley, 1983; Leik & Leik, 1977; Levinger, 1965, 1976; Rusbult, 1980, 1983), there is little agreement among researchers about what relational commitment is and how it operates to stabilize intimate relationships (Murstein & MacDonald, 1983; Wyatt, 1984). Moreover, the lack of consensus regarding the components of relational commitment has resulted in the development of a diverse collection of measures used by individual investigators (Pramann, 1986). Because it is often unclear what these instruments actually measure, direct comparisons among studies of relational commitment are problematic, and research evaluating the relative utility of competing models of commitment is conspicuously absent.

Third, theoretical treatments of interpersonal commitment have tended to focus on cognitive processes, especially those involved in the evaluation of relational rewards and costs, investments made in the relationship, possible alternatives to the current relationship, and so forth. Although commitment is properly regarded as a decisional process in some contexts (Sternberg, 1986), there is some question regarding the extent to which commitment is under the rational control of the relationship partners. Clearly, additional research needs to focus on the degree to which commitment is governed by the principles of social exchange, but efforts also need to be made to identify alternative perspectives from which commitment and commitment-related beahaviors might be better understood. Such efforts would move researchers closer to

developing more comprehensive and integrated theories of relationship initiation, maintenance, and dissolution that take multiple human capacities and social contexts into account.

Finally, in contrast to research on other variables of interpersonal relevance, the literature on interpersonal commitment is essentially devoid of longitudinal studies. Given that one of the primary effects of commitment is on the endurance of relationships over time, the relative lack of longitudinal research in this area is particularly noteworthy. Such investigations would permit researchers to explore the dynamic nature of commitment and would likely lead to answers to questions regarding the ways in which people form interpersonal ties throughout their life, the mechanisms involved in the dissolution of commitment, and the fluid relationship between commitment and other variables such as love, satisfaction, trust, and intimacy.

The goal of this dissertation is to address some of these basic issues. As a first step, the theoretical and empirical literature pertaining to interpersonal commitment will be reviewed in Chapter 2 with an eye toward identifying its underlying themes. It will be proposed, on the basis of conceptual overlap among competing theoretical models and extant measures of commitment as well as similarities among autobiographical accounts of individuals' commitment to their intimate relationships, that interpersonal commitment is a single construct with three broad dimensions. The first dimension reflects the attractive side of commitment: one's intention to maintain a particular relationship is based on the personal desire to see it continue. The second dimension reflects an obligation to maintain a relationship based on moral values, religious convictions, and/or social mores. The final dimension reflects the constraining aspect of commitment, whereby persistence in a relationship may not be an individual's preferred course of action, but certain barriers preclude the simple

dissolution of the relationship. It will be argued that these three dimensions are sufficient to account for the variety of reasons individuals give for remaining in or maintaining their close personal relationships. Additionally, the existing empirical literature will be reviewed and the findings will be summarized with respect to the three dimensions of commitment.

Following the review of the relevant literature, an attempt will be made in Chapter 3 to specify the nature and extent of convergence among conceptualizations of marital commitment by comparing them empirically. Specifically, the goal of this chapter will be to clarify the meaning of marital commitment by exploring empirically existing theoretical statements. By describing a set of themes around which to organize the various programs of research on marital commitment, it may be possible to offer a conceptual framework that proposes a structure for a research literature that currently lacks well-defined paths to further development.

A third issue to be addressed in this dissertation concerns the extent to which commitment may be explained from a perspective other than the decision-making paradigms on which most commitment research has been based. Specifically, the goal of Chapter 4 is to demonstrate that commitment to close relationships, and committed behavior in general, may usefully be described as an individual-difference variable. Drawing from previous theoretical work on attachment theory and object relations theory, and from research which highlights dispositional tendencies toward consistency in behavior, it will be argued that certain individuals, on the basis of personality characteristics, are more or less likely to commit to personal relationships. The relationship between the cognitive and dispositional perspectives on commitment also will be discussed and a rationale for integrating these perspectives will be presented.

The dissertation will conclude in Chapter 5 with a theoretical statement that takes into account the dynamic nature of developing and dissolving interpersonal commitments and which seeks to integrate current theory and research on interpersonal commitment. In particular, a salience model will be presented in an attempt to describe the dynamic relationship among marital satisfaction, exchange processes, relationship enhancing behaviors, personality, and the attraction, moral/normative, and constraining dimensions of commitment. To conclude, a research agenda devoted to examining the areas in greatest need of development will be advanced.

CHAPTER 2

THREE DIMENSIONS OF INTERPERSONAL COMMITMENT: AN INTEGRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

As suggested in the preceding chapter, commitment is an important factor in the development and long-term maintenance of close personal relationships. Broadly defined as an individual's intention to sustain a relationship with another person, commitment has been used to explain a wide variety of interpersonal phenomena, including persistence in an abusive marriage (Strube & Barbour, 1983), success in marital therapy (Beach & Broderick, 1983), and satisfaction in friendship (Rusbult, 1980). The concept of commitment has been the focus of several complex theories of human behavior, but it also is a term that is easily understood by laypeople and is commonly identified by married couples as being a highly relevant aspect of successful marriages (Fenell, 1993; Millward, 1991; Roberts, 1979). Thus, commitment is both a theoretically useful and experientially meaningful construct.

Despite the familiarity of the construct and its ubiquity in everyday language, there is some confusion in the literature regarding the definition of interpersonal commitment. One problem derives from the implicit (and sometimes explicit) assumption that commitment, relationship stability, and relationship status are essentially synonymous. Although these terms are related, they are categorically distinct: commitment is typically defined as a cognitive-affective process that reflects relational partners' intention to maintain their relationship, while relationship stability and status are best considered labels used to describe various kinds of interpersonal associations. Specifically, relationship stability is generally used to refer to whether a

particular pair bond is intact or not (although stability is sometimes used to describe fluctuations in commitment in an intact relationship; e.g., Surra, 1985, 1987), whereas relationship status reflects categories of relationships (e.g., friends or romantic partners) or culturally defined stages of relationship development (e.g., dating, engaged, married, divorced, etc.). This is not to say that relationship duration or status are irrelevant to an understanding of commitment; indeed, reference to the endurance of a relationship is common to many theoretical treatments of interpersonal commitment. However, the length of a relationship and the depth of intimacy between partners are not, strictly speaking, defining characteristics of interpersonal commitment and are more appropriately regarded as correlates of the construct or as outcomes of the commitment process.

A second problem stems from defining commitment in terms of its correlates. As mentioned above, commitment is often defined in terms of relationship length, a practice which fails to separate the construct from its effect on relationships. Likewise, Sternberg (1986) considers commitment to be a component of love, yet it is possible to love someone to whom one is not committed (Kelley, 1983). Similarly, commitment to and satisfaction with a relationship tend to be highly correlated, but instances in which couples are highly satisfied and relatively uncommitted (e.g., partners in open marriages) or highly committed and relatively unsatisfied (e.g., spouses in abusive relationships) are common. Moreover, it is important to distinguish commitment from such variables as investments made in the relationship (Rusbult, 1980), the attractiveness of alternatives to the relationship (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), and persistence in a relationship in the face of adversity (Lydon & Zanna, 1992). Despite the fact that each of these factors figure prominently in theoretical and empirical

treatments of interpersonal commitment, they, too, are not properly regarded as definitions of commitment.

As a cognitive-affective process, commitment has been defined in three primary ways. First, commitment has been defined as the personal desire to maintain a particular course of action. Implicit in this definition is the idea that the committed individual has chosen to follow a course of action and willfully continues this line of action indefinitely. Brickman (1987) notes that the experience of enthusiasm or "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) is commonly connected to this aspect of commitment. Individuals who are committed in this way are absorbed by the task to which their energies are directed, be that task an athletic or musical performance or the edification of one's relational partner. Moreover, the task or activity "is autotelic, or self-motivating, appearing to need no goals or rewards external to itself" (Brickman, 1987, p. 4). The key psychological manifestation of the positive face of commitment is enthusiasm, whereby a particular course of action is pursued without ambivalence and with the belief that the pursuit itself is meaningful. Within the context of marriage, this aspect of commitment is reflected in the willingness to invest energy in improving an ongoing relationship (Beach, 1985), in the emotional bond between two people based upon the caring each person has for the other as well as the pleasure each derives from the relationship (Clodfelter, 1977), and in the strength of an individual's desire and determination to continue a particular relationship (Dean & Spanier, 1974).

On the other hand, commitment is often regarded as an obligation to maintain a course of action, not because this is what the individual would prefer to do, but because the individual feels constrained to do it. In this regard, commitment may be said to exist when an individual makes a "side bet" that binds him or her to a course of action. In his seminal paper on commitment, Becker (1960) described the process of becoming

committed in terms of linking objects of value to a course of action, such that to desist in the action would be to lose the valued object in the process. A familiar example of this process is investing in a pension plan. Employees who contribute to their pension may ultimately find themselves unsatisfied with their job and desire to seek new employment elsewhere. Quitting one's job, however, could result in the forfeiture of pension funds accumulated over the years of employment. Thus, despite feelings of dissatisfaction, the employee is likely to remain in his or her job in order to retain the pension. In this way, the pension represents a side bet on the part of the employee that he or she will persist in his or her present job. As applied to romantic relationships, side bets might include spouses making major joint purchases (e.g., a home), having children, or simply declaring publicly one's love for one's partner. In each of these examples, the partners have "bet" on the duration of their relationship by making large investments in their relationship. In contrast to the more attractive side of commitment, which is experienced as enthusiasm, commitment as constraint tends to be experienced as persistence, endurance, or even entrapment. In this regard, partners do not maintain a particular relationship because they want to, but because they feel they have to (Johnson, 1973, 1991).

A third definition of commitment is the moral obligation to maintain a particular course of action (see Johnson, 1991). In one respect, this side of commitment involves a judgment of the "correctness" of following through on one's commitments; in another respect, it refers to an obligation that has religious overtones. In regard to the former, commitment is the result of personal or cultural values regarding the keeping of promises and/or behavioral consistency; in regard to the latter, commitment is the result of conforming to a set of religious proscriptions. The focus of moral or "principled" commitment is on self-constraint, and is thereby distinguished from the

form of constraint commitment discussed previously, in which the source of pressure to remain in a relationship is external to the individual. Whereas the attractive and constraining aspects of commitment are fairly clearly associated with positive and negative affect, respectively, the psychological manifestation of moral commitment may be either positive or negative. In one sense, one's feelings of obligation to a relational partner may be regarded as the only factor keeping an individual in an unsatisfying relationship (Levinger, 1965, 1976, 1991). Conversely, one may take considerable pride in sacrificing his or her own satisfaction for the benefit of the partner, or may believe that maintaining one's relationship will result in spiritual rewards.

In recognition of the multidimensionality of interpersonal commitment, many investigators include in their definitions more than one of these basic elements. Thus, for example, Rusbult (1983) defines commitment as the tendency to maintain a relationship and to feel psychologically attached to it, combining a general orientation toward relationship stability with a desire for connection with one's spouse. Melcher (1989) combines the voluntary act of meeting the needs of one's spouse with the continuing obligation to maintain one's marital relationship in his definition, while Clodfelter (1977) describes commitment as being both an emotional and a legal bond. This blending of such apparently disparate features of commitment highlights the uniqueness of this construct.

Table 1 presents the various definitions of interpersonal commitment found in the literature. Despite differences in terminology and in the number of dimensions emphasized, it appears that these definitions represent complementary rather than competing aspects of commitment, a point that is consistent with theoretical models that describe commitment as a construct with dynamic properties (Brickman, 1987;

Table 1

Definitions of Interpersonal Commitment

Reference	Definition
Barber (1974)	Marriage, as far as the Bible is concerned, involves commitment on the part of the couple to live together in a unique and abiding relationship. It is the plan of God that in marriage the couple have a commitment to each other that enables them to work through the problems which arise.
Beach (1985)	**Commitment 1**: willingness to continue an ongoing relationship. **Commitment 2**: willingness to invest energy in improving an ongoing relationship.
Beilby (1992)	"Commitments are associated with sustained lines of activity across situations. Commitment is typically conceptualized on one of two ways, one emphasizing identity as the locus of individual action. According to the behavioral approach, commitment is conceptualized with respect to situation determinants that sustain a line of activity. According to the identity approach, commitment is conceptualized with respect to personal meaning".
Clodfelter (1977)	Marital commitment is defined as the voluntary binding together of two people in a marriage relationship. It is both a legal and an emotional bond. The emotional bond is based upon the caring each person has for the other and the pleasure each derives from the relationship. Thus, marital commitment is both a discrete act, the original pledge or vow, and the product of an ongoing process of interaction between two married people.
Dean & Spanier (1974)	The strength of an individual's desire and determination to continue a particular marital relationship.

(Table 1 continues)

(Table 1 continued)

Reference	Definition
Donovan & Jackson (1990)	The sense of being irrevocably invested in a relationship and of having feelings that cannot be easily withdrawn and placed elsewhere (derived from Goldman & Coane, 1977).
Drigotas & Rusbult (1992)	A global, internal, subjective summarization of the factors that underlie stay-leave decisions.
Duffy & Rusbult (1986)	Commitment [is an] individual's feelings of attachment to his or her relationship and a strong intent to maintain the relationship.
Edwards & Saunders (1981)	"Commitment denotes the degree to which the self is identified with the marital relationship an no other. Simply put, commitment is the determination to continue a relationship which may or may not be equally shared by the pair. It is not a direct measure of exclusivity, although a highly committed individual in some instances may forego other relationships due to his or her immersion in the marital union. The level of commitment is postulated to be a direct function on one's comparison level and goodness of outcomes, and indirectly affected by existing barriers, alternatives, and marital congruity."
Eyman (1984)	A pledging of oneself to the spouse, implying caring and concern, loyalty, and stability over time.
Felmlee et al. (1990)	A desire to maintain one's relationship.
Goltz (1987)	The definition of commitment identified in this study is based on Johnson's (1973, 1978, 1991) differentiation between personal and structural commitment.

(Table 1 continues)

(Table 1 continued)

Reference	Definition
Jayroe (1979)	The strength of an individual's desire and determination to continue a particular marital relationship based on the mutual enhancement of its members.
Johnson (1973)	**Personal**: The extent to which an actor is dedicated to the completion of a line of action. **Behavioral**: Those consequences of the initial pursuit of a line of action which constrain the actor to continue that line of action. **Social**: Commitment to a line of action as a function of the expectations of others concerning the continuation of the line of action.
Johnson (1981)	Following Kanter's theory of commitment, three types of commitment are presented: **Continuance Commitment** is concerned with continued participation in a group. Continuance refers to staying the system and carrying out the duties associated with one's role or position in the system. Cognitive orientations support continuance behavior. Cognitive orientations discriminate among objects or systems, describing their possibilities for gratification or deprivation and distinguishing their location and characteristics. Thus, continuance commitment is commitment derived from consideration of the profits and costs of participation in a group. The cost of leaving the system is viewed as greater than the cost of the remaining-profit compels continued participation. Continuance commitment results in feelings of sacrifice and investment. **Cohesion Commitment** addresses the issues of group loyalty and solidarity. Group cohesion denotes the ability of people to stick together, to develop the mutual attraction to withstand threats to their relationships. Group cohesion is supported by an

(Table 1 continues)

(Table 1 continued)

Reference	Definition
	individual's cathectic orientations. These orientations represent an emotional state with respect to generate. Cohesion commitment, then, is commitment derived from emotional ties binding members to each other and to the community they form and from emotional gratifications stemming from involvement in the group. Cohesion commitment involves giving up emotional ties and relationships with others that might compete with the group or individual to which one is committed; it involves relinquishing separateness to identify with the group. **Control Commitment** deals with the issue of social control, that is, the readiness of people to obey the demands of the system, to conform to its values and beliefs. Social control is supported by an individual's evaluative orientations. Evaluative orientations refer to standards of judgement: good or bad, right or wrong. Control commitment is commitment derived from internalization of group norms and values. It involves such behavior as upholding norms, obeying the authority of the group, and supporting it's values. Control commitment involves the submission of private states (e.g., beliefs and values) to social scrutiny; an individual attaches decision-making prerogative to a greater power (social norms).
Jorgensen (1979)	An indicator of perceived marital quality, commitment is defined as the degree to which a spouse has maintained a value on remaining in his/her present marital relationship over time, indication the degree to which role reciprocity has been functioning in the relationship from each spouse's perspective.
Kersten (1988)	**Institutional Commitment**: Institutional couples feel that marriage is an institution based on a lifetime commitment and even though their marriage may become unfulfilling, they should preserve and not break the commitment.

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(Table 1 continued)

Reference	Definition
	Voluntary Commitment: Voluntary couples believe that while the institution may be important, what is more important is how the partners feel about each other and their personal happiness. For these couples, marriage must prove itself almost on a daily basis. When a marriage no longer fulfills the spouse's emotional needs, they believe its continuation should be reevaluated.
Kimmons (1981)	**Normative Commitment**: A decision to build and maintain a marriage per se and acting in accordance with that decision over a period of time.
	Interpersonal Commitment: A decision to build and maintain a marriage relationship with a particular person and acting in accordance with that decision over a period of time.
Lange (1989)	The willingness to maintain a relationship and feel psychologically attached to it (from Johnson, 1982 and Rusbult et al., 1986), involving strong feelings of solidarity and cohesion and low levels of monitoring alternatives (from Sabatelli and Cecil-Pigo, 1985).
Larson & Goltz (1989)	The authors use Johnson's personal commitment and structural commitment.
Lauer & Lauer (1986)	Commitment has a twofold aspect. It is commitment to the partner and to the institution of marriage.
Levinger (1965)	Group cohesiveness is defined as the total field of forces which act on members to remain in the group. Inducements to remain in any group include the attractiveness of the group itself and the strength of the restraints against leaving it; inducements to leave a group include the attractiveness of alternative relationships and the restraints

(Table 1 continues)

(Table 1 continued)

Reference	Definition
	against breaking up such existing relationships. Thus the strength of the marital relationship would be a direct function of the attractions with and the barriers around the marriage, and an inverse function of such attractions and barriers from other relationships.
Lewis (1973)	Pair commitment is defined as a couples' determination to continue their marriage.
Lund (1985)	Commitment is defined in accordance with the barrier model: Commitment consists of (a) judgements about a relationship's likely permanence; (b) expectations for avoiding involvement in other relationships; and (c) anticipation of losses if a relationship ends.
Medley (1977)	The term interpersonal commitment is used to describe the strength of commitment by each spouse to maintaining the paired relationship.
Melcher (1989)	Marital commitment, as expressed in traditional marriage vows, is the voluntary act and ongoing actions consistent with pledging oneself to a partner in an exclusive, lifetime marriage relationship. There is an accompanying sense of continuing obligation to put forth effort to work through problems and to participate in meeting the needs of the partner, while simultaneously entrusting one's own needs to safe-keeping in the marital relationship.
Money (1976)	Commitment as an "in" term is synonymous with commitment to the Freudian ideal of monogamous genitality, which itself is synonymous with the Judeo-Christian ideal of monogamous marriage.
Morrow (1988)	Commitment is defined as an individual's feelings of attachment to a relationship and his or her intentions to remain in that relationship.

(Table 1 continues)

(Table 1 continued)

Reference	Definition
Murstein & MacDonald (1983)	As used in the present study, commitment reflects a tendency to place the relationship with the spouse beyond the effect of any given negative act and to feel a sense of permanency about the relationship. Thus, it should be either independent of or negatively associated with the Exchange-Orientation score and positively associated with marital adjustment.
Pramann (1986)	Commitment within the context of marriage is defined as a three dimensional concept that includes (a) and initiating speech act (promise or pledge) and the entailments of such an act, (b) a state of intentionality (dedication or devotion), and (c) an emotional relationship to another person (attachment, bond or tie). Important qualities of commitment which pertain to all three dimensions but particularly to the attachment dimension include permanence, enduringness and exclusivity. Though not every "committed" marriage-like relationship is marked by all of these dimensions and qualities, commitment is maximal when it is marked by all three. This definition is essentially the one derived by Quinn (1982).
Rusbult (1978)	An individual's attachment, or commitment, to his partner is related to the probability that the individual will abandon the relationship. Commitment is, in part, a function of the partner reward/cost value and the individual's CL_{alt}. Commitment, a continuous variable, refers to the magnitude of the costs of withdrawing from the relationship and is defined by the distance between the obtained reward/cost ratio and the comparison level for alternatives. Commitment generally refers to the difficulty or costliness of adopting the comparison level for alternatives (CL_{alt}), and is not defined solely by the goodness of the outcomes obtained in the relationship; it is a function of the reward value of the partner, the goodness of the CL_{alt}, and investment size.

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Reference	Definition
Rusbult (1983)	The tendency to maintain a relationship and to feel psychologically attached to it. The definition of commitment includes two categories of definition advanced by other authors: behavioral intent and psychological attachment.
Rusbult & Buunk (1993)	Commitment level is a psychological state that globally represents the experience of dependence on a relationship; commitment summarizes prior experiences of dependence and directs reactions to new situations (e.g., willingness to sacrifice when outcomes are non-correspondent). Commitment represents long-term orientation, including feelings of attachment to a partner and desire to maintain a relationship, for better or worse. Thus, commitment is defined as a subjective state, including both cognitive and emotional components, that directly influences a wide range of behaviors in an ongoing relationship. Highly committed individuals need their relationships, feel connected to their partners and have a more extended, long-term time perspective regarding their relationships.
Sabatelli (1984)	Commitment is defined as a tendency toward relational stability/instability. Commitment is operationalized as the degree to which individuals monitor alternatives to their marriage (such as being single or wanting to marry another person).
Sabatelli & Cecil-Pigo (1985)	Commitment, as assessed in ongoing pairs, indicates a tendency toward relational stability/instability and is operationally defined following the social exchange views of commitment.
Singh (1989)	Commitment to marriage is operationally defined as one's feeling of emotional investment and ego involvement in one's spousal relationship. This definition includes the degree to which one gives importance to one's spouse as a person.

(Table 1 continues)

(Table 1 continued)

Reference	Definition
Sprecher (1988)	Commitment, generally defined as an individual's intent to remain psychologically attached to it, can be assumed to be a multidetermined phenomenon.
Surra (1985)	Chance of marriage (0-100%) was used to reflect increases or decreases in commitment. The author seems to find utility in Kelley's (1983) description of commitment (commitment is a function of the average difference between factors which keep an individual in a relationship and those which pull the individual away from the relationship, and the degree of variability in this difference).
Vanderkooy-Vos (1988)	**Marital Commitment to Spouse** is the resolve to become and to stay married to the other and to persistently act in a manner that is perceived to be appropriate to marriage and that benefits in specific ways the spouse who is affirmed to be an exceptionally worthy object. **Marital Commitment to Self** is the resolve to become married and to stay married to the spouse and to persistently act in such a manner that is perceived to be appropriate to marriage and that benefits the self, who is affirmed to be an exceptionally worthy object. **Marital Commitment to Permanence** is commitment to the principle that marriage is a permanent institution is the resolve to stay married to the spouse and to persistently act in a manner that supports this principle, who is affirmed to be an exceptionally worthy object.
Whitley (1993)	Decision commitment represents a self- attribution of being in love (decision) and a commitment to maintain the love relationship.

(Table 1 continues)

(Table 1 continued)

Reference	Definition
Worthington (1991)	Commitment is defined by the Rusbult (1980) model as described by the following equation: Satisfaction + Investments - Alternatives = Commitment.
Young (1978)	Defined according to the church: remaining in a marriage relationship until death.

Johnson, 1991; Kelley, 1983; Sternberg, 1986; Surra, 1987; Surra, Arizzi, & Asmussen, 1988). From this perspective, interpersonal commitment evolves over the course of a relationship, allowing partners to experience commitment alternatively as a binding force and as an enthusiastic pursuit (Brickman, 1987). Which dimension of commitment (i.e., attractive, moral/normative, or constraining) is salient at a given point in time may vary as a function of other factors such as relationship satisfaction (Adams & Jones, in press; Johnson, 1991; Levinger, 1976); nonetheless, it is reasonable to assert that each dimension comprises a single underlying construct. Theoretical issues pertaining to commitment as a dynamic process will be discussed in a subsequent section. The immediate goal, however, is to examine evidence bearing on the dimensionality of interpersonal commitment.

Three Dimensions of Interpersonal Commitment

The task of describing the conceptual boundaries of psychological constructs like commitment is a complex process that requires careful consideration of theoretical argument, empirical evidence, and phenomenology (Messick, 1989a, 1995), and only by integrating evidence from such diverse epistemological areas can the fidelity of a construct be determined (Cronbach, 1949). Contributing to the apparent lack of focus in the marital commitment literature is the fact that such an integration has not yet been attempted. The following section reviews literature bearing on the conceptualization of interpersonal commitment. In particular, the conceptual domain of interpersonal commitment will be explored by examining (a) formal theoretical models that seek to describe the structure of interpersonal commitment, (b) extant measures of interpersonal commitment, and (c) spouses' accounts of their decision to marry their partner as well as their descriptions of what it "feels" like to be committed.

Theoretical Perspectives on Commitment

Over 200 years ago, Immanuel Kant commented on the distinction between persisting in behavior because it is rewarding and persisting in behavior because of a sense of personal responsibility. This distinction was formalized in Kant's first proposition about duty: "A human action is morally good, not because it is done from immediate inclination--still less because it is done from self-interest--but because it is one's duty" (Kant, 1784). From Kant's perspective, maintaining a course of action because it is one's duty is a much more praiseworthy endeavor than continuing a behavior that has personally beneficial consequences, primarily because dutiful persistence reflects an adherence to a morally good principal of behavior rather than a focus on the results of one's behavior (Paton, 1964).

This basic dichotomy is noted (or at least implied) in virtually all theoretical treatments of commitment, including commentaries on commitment to a course of action (Becker, 1960; Brickman, 1987; Keisler, 1971; Staw, 1976), commitment to organizations and careers (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979), and commitment to personal relationships (Johnson, 1973, 1991; Levinger, 1965; Kelley, 1983; Rusbult, 1980, 1983; Stanley, 1986). Regarding the latter, most theorists recognize that interpersonal commitment has both attraction and constraining components. According to Goode (1959), for example, the attraction aspect of commitment is characteristic of couples in relatively satisfying and harmonious relationships. These partners are committed to furthering their relationship by working to resolve conflicts and seeking out ways to provide one another with both physical and emotional rewards. By contrast, marriages that endure in the absence of happiness are considered to be "empty shells," reflecting the fact that although these relationships have some structural integrity (e.g., formal legal status), they nevertheless no longer serve the interpersonal

functions they once did. Goode (1959) notes that spouses in empty shell marriages may avoid divorce for a variety of reasons, including the desire to protect the emotional well-being of their children, to maintain neighborhood respectability, or because of strong convictions that divorce is morally wrong.

Similarly, Hinde (1979) differentiated endogenous commitment from exogenous commitment. Endogenous commitment is characterized by relational partners actively striving to not only maintain their relationship but to provide one another with rewards. Central to this type of commitment is the personal drive to maximize one's partner's relational outcomes. By contrast, exogenous commitment is imposed from the outside in the form of binding legal and social ties. Exogenous commitment derives from the partner's belief that the relationship needn't be worked at and is consistent with the idea that external factors will keep the relationship intact. From Hinde's perspective, endogenous commitment is especially important in the development of love relationships because of its close association with happiness and personal fulfillment.

More recently, Rusbult (1980, 1983) has suggested that commitment to a relationship is affected by a person's consideration of several interconnected factors, including relational satisfaction (defined as the ratio of rewards to costs in the relationship), the quality of alternative partners or relational states (e.g., singleness), and investments in the relationship. Which of these factors is most salient to an individual determines whether the commitment is experienced positively or negatively. For example, according to Rusbult (1980), commitment should increase to the extent that the relationship increases in reward value and thus becomes more satisfying. Alternatively, commitment also may increase to the extent that one has poor alternatives and/or has invested heavily in the relationship. In the absence of relational

satisfaction, poor alternatives and high investments are likely to contribute to feelings of entrapment.

Other investigators have found utility in the attraction-constraint dichotomy for organizing the literature on marital instability and divorce. For example, Levinger's (1965, 1976) theoretical writings were an attempt to provide a parsimonious conceptual framework with which to organize the fragmented literature on divorce. Borrowing from Lewin's (1951) field theory, Levinger postulated two primary forces that influence the cohesiveness of a marital bond. *Attraction* forces serve to draw partners together and include such factors as esteem for one's spouse, desire for companionship, and sexual enjoyment. *Barrier* forces prevent spouses from breaking the marital bond and include such factors as obligations to dependent children, legal and economic bars, and proscriptive religion. From this perspective, marital cohesion is seen as a function of both of these forces affecting the marital dyad in different ways; whereas attractions are experienced positively by spouses, barriers are more likely to be experienced as obstacles to the dissolution of the relationship. Although Levinger's primary aim was to describe the factors that maintain the continuity of romantic pair bonds and not to describe the conceptualization of commitment per se (Levinger, 1991), it is clear that his discussion is consistent with other theoretical accounts of interpersonal commitment as well as with Kant's philosophical points about duty.

Using a different method (referred to as "retroduction"), Nye, White, and Frideres (1973) collapsed a large number of findings relevant to marital instability into three higher-order propositions. The first proposition states that "the greater the positive affect balance within marriage, the greater the likelihood of marital stability" (p. 108). The notion of affect balance involves the ratio of positive to negative affect within the marriage as well as with other potential partners, and in this way is similar

to the concepts of comparison level and comparison level for alternatives introduced by Thibaut and Kelley (1959). The second proposition parallels Levinger's (1965, 1976) notion of barrier forces: "the more severe the anticipated sanctions [against marital dissolution], the greater the likelihood of marital instability" (p. 109). The final proposition states, "the greater the task interdependency [between spouses], the more likely the stability of the marriage" (p. 109), where task interdependence refers to the performance of specialized tasks by each spouse in the marital relationship. Task interdependency functions to stabilize marriage primarily by making the particular role of one spouse indispensable to the continued well-being of the other. Whereas the first two propositions are clearly consistent with the attraction and constraining dimensions of commitment, the classification of the third proposition is somewhat less apparent. However, one could argue that the last proposition is also representative of the constraining aspect of commitment, as the fear of not being able to find another partner who would adequately fill a complementary marital role might constrain a spouse from leaving an otherwise unfulfilling marriage.

Other perspectives, while maintaining the attraction-constraint dichotomy inherent in interpersonal commitment, expand on this conceptualization by emphasizing a third dimension that captures the moral, religious, and normative aspects of commitment. The idea that the moral/normative dimension of commitment is distinct conceptually from the attraction and constraining dimensions is stated most explicitly in Johnson's (1973, 1991) commitment framework. Consistent with the theoretical models discussed above, Johnson's approach distinguishes personal commitment (remaining married because one *wants* to) from structural commitment (remaining married because one *has* to). Personal commitment consists of favorable attitudes toward one's spouse and one's marriage as well as an internalization of one's

membership in the marriage and the coincident incorporation of this membership into one's self-concept. By contrast, structural commitment arises out of the fear of perceived negative consequences of marital dissolution, including the loss of irretrievable investments, negative social reactions, and the accrual of costs associated with termination procedures. The third dimension, moral commitment, reflects the feeling that one should continue one's marriage because it is the right thing to do, and is based on people's personal value in behavioral consistency, beliefs about the stability of particular types of relationships, and a sense of obligation and responsibility for one's partner. The first source of moral commitment is the most general and is reflected in the theory of cognitive dissonance. With respect to this research tradition, spouses choose to remain married because to divorce would be inconsistent with their beliefs about the permanence of marriage. The second source of moral commitment concerns spouse's beliefs about the stability of particular types of relationships. For example, it is generally acceptable to end a dating relationship, but it is much less acceptable to end a marriage. The third source of moral commitment stems from spouses' sense of obligation to one another. Regardless of what one believes about the sanctity of marriage or the value of behaving in consistent ways, one can still honor the promises one made to his or her spouse on their wedding day.

Moral/normative commitment is given a unique role in other theoretical discussion as well. For example, Vanderkooy-Vos (1988) noted that it is useful to distinguish among marital commitments in terms of the object of the commitment. In this regard, the author postulated three types of commitment: commitment to spouse, commitment to self, and commitment to permanence. Whereas commitment to spouse and commitment to self refer to the personal resolve to initiate and maintain a relationship with a particular person and to behave in such a way that both the spouse

and the self are affirmed to be especially worthy objects, commitment to permanence involves holding steadfastly to the principle that the institution of marriage is to be valued. Likewise, Clodfelter (1977) indicated that a significant aspect of commitment in marriage is the extent to which the marital relationship is given preeminence over other areas in an individual's life, including work, family, and friends. The inherent value of the marriage bond is further embodied in Johnson's (1981) adaptation of Kanter's (1968) conceptualization of control commitment, which is described as adherence to the values and beliefs of a social system (i.e., marriage), and in commentaries written from a religious or spiritual perspective in which the marital relationship is regarded as a sacred union that has been consecrated by God and is thus deserving of honor and respect (Abdal, 1974; Barber, 1974; Hauerwas, 1985).

Despite the apparent utility of conceptualizing commitment in terms of its moral/normative features, there is still some debate over whether moral commitment is properly regarded as a construct that is distinct from commitment as constraint. Most models include the moral/normative dimension of commitment in discussions of constraint commitment, such that to remain married to one's spouse for religious or ideological reasons is essentially the same as not being able to leave one's marriage for financial reasons. For example, Levinger (1965, 1976) and Rusbult (1980) indicated that religious proscriptions and adherence to moral principles regarding behavioral consistency constitute barrier forces and investments, respectively. Similarly, Lauer and his colleagues (Lauer & Lauer, 1986; Lauer, Lauer, & Kerr, 1990) have suggested that commitment to the institution of marriage is a primary barrier that keeps spouses in an unhappy marriage. However, Johnson (1991) argues that maintaining the distinction between moral and structural commitment is useful because it focuses attention on the difference between internal and external constraints on relationship termination.

Specifically, remaining in a marriage because one is concerned about the moral standards of others (which is an element of structural commitment) is different from remaining in a marriage because one is concerned about living up to one's *own* moral standards. Further, moral commitment is best considered conceptually separate from the other dimensions of commitment because morality plays a different role in decision making than do other social forces. This theoretical debate has yet to be resolved, however, as few attempts have been made to examine the empirical utility of the conceptual uniqueness of moral/normative commitment.

Summary

Theoretical treatments of interpersonal commitment are prevalent in the literature. At first glance the various models of commitment appear to represent markedly different approaches to the conceptualization of the construct. However, comparisons of these models reveal a high degree of overlap and redundancy in the basic features of interpersonal commitment they describe. Specifically, it appears that all theoretical models can be classified according to the extent to which they highlight the attraction, moral/normative, and constraining dimensions of commitment. For example, most models assert that interpersonal commitment has an attraction or "positive pull" aspect. This aspect is characterized in a variety of ways, but generally is consistent with Brickman's (1987) notion of the enthusiastic pursuit of a desired goal. Similarly, most models refer to the constraining aspect of commitment as being a force that operates to keep a relationship intact despite variations in satisfaction. In its most negative manifestation the constraining dimension is experienced as feelings of entrapment. Finally, a few theoretical models assert the conceptual uniqueness of the moral/normative aspect of commitment, arguing that the pressure to remain married exerted by moral or religious standards is phenomenologically different from remaining

married because external factors have made dissolution virtually impossible. The empirical exploration of the dimensionality of interpersonal commitment remains a goal for future investigations.

The Assessment of Commitment

A second source of evidence bearing on the conceptualization of interpersonal commitment may be found in the means by which this construct is measured. Commitment is most frequently assessed with self-report measures, and by examining the items comprising these measures, one can determine what the authors of the various measures consider to be the important components of commitment. Before examining the item content of extant commitment measures, however, a few general comments should be made about the nature of assessment in this area. Table 2 shows the variety of measurement instruments employed in research on commitment along with indices of each scale's reliability and validity. The table reveals two particularly relevant facts about assessment in commitment research. First, it is clear that a dominant measure of commitment has not yet enjoyed widespread use among researchers. In the 76 studies reviewed, 39 different measures of commitment were utilized. In most instances, items were generated by authors to satisfy the particular requirements of the individual study, but other strategies are also evident. One common approach to assessment involves inferring the level of commitment between relational partners from relationship status. In this way, dating partners are assumed to be less committed to one another than engaged couples who, in turn, are assumed to be less committed than married spouses. Several investigators also employ sets of items that are variations of scales used by other researchers. Frequently these variations include alterations in the wording of

Table 2

Psychometric Characteristics of Measures of Interpersonal Commitment

Reference	Assessment Method	Description of Questionnaire	Reliability	Validity
Acker & Davis (1992)	Self-Report	Sternberg Triangular Love Scale (commitment subscale)	alpha = .93	The mean intercorrelation of the three commitment measures was greater than the mean intercorrelation of commitment with the Intimacy (.50) or Passion (.43) measures.
	Self-Report	Parallel Commitment Measure (adapted from Rusbult, 1983)	alpha = .79	
	Self-Report	Measure of Commitment-related behaviors.	alpha = .39	
Aron, Aron, & Smollan, (1992)	Self-Report	Rusbult's (1983) items	NP	NP
	Self-Report	Sabatelli & Cecil-Pigo's (1985) commitment measure.	NP	NP
Bagarozzi & Atilano (1982)	Self-Report	SIDCARB		
		Factor I	alpha = .86	NP
		Factor II	alpha = .74	NP
		Factor III	alpha = .80	NP
Bagarozzi & Pollane (1983)	Self-Report	SIDCARB		
		Factor I	alpha = .90	NP
		Factor II	alpha = .74	NP
		Factor III	alpha = .78	NP
Baily & Helm (1974)	Interview	N/A	NP	NP

(Table 2 continues)

(Table 2 continued)

Reference	Assessment Method	Description of Questionnaire	Reliability	Validity
Bauserman & Arias (1992)	Self-Report	Marital Status Inventory (Weiss and Cerreto, 1975)	Coefficient of Reproducibility = .90 Coefficient of Scalability = .87	NP
Beach (1985)	Self-Report	Marital Status Inventory (Weiss & Cerreto, 1975)	Reliability and Validity evidence for the MSI is provided by Weiss and Cerreto, 1975)	
	Self-Report	Broderick Commitment Scale	NP	NP
	Self-Report	Spanier Commitment Scale	NP	NP
Beach & Broderick (1983)	Self-Report	Broderick Commitment Scale	NP	NP
Beach, Jouriles, & O'Leary (1985)	Self-Report	Broderick Commitment Scale	NP	NP
Bennett, Blanc, & Bloom, (1988)	N/A	Commitment was inferred from demographic data.	NP	NP
Brewer (1993)	Interview	N/A	NP	NP

(Table 2 continues)

(Table 2 continued)

Reference	Assessment Method	Description of Questionnaire	Reliability	Validity
Broderick & O'Leary (1986)	Self-Report	Broderick Commitment Scale	NP	NP
Catlin, Croake, & Keller, (1978)	Self-Report	Commitment was assessed with items created by the authors.	NP	NP
Clodfelter (1977)	Self-Report	Marital Commitment Scale		
Cupach & Metts (1986)	Interview	N/A	NP	NP
Counts & Reid (1986)	Interview	The study was based on clinical case histories.	NP	NP
Davis & Strube (1993)	Self-Report	Four items adapted from Rusbult.	Alpha Males = .74 Females = .88	NP
Dean & Spanier (1974)	Self-Report	Bogardstype Scale	NP	NP
DeMaris & Leslie (1984)	Self-Report	Measured by the extent of agreement with the statement "No matter how much trouble a husband and wife are having getting along, the best thing to do is to stay married and try to work out their problems."	NP	NP

(Table 2 continues)

(Table 2 continued)

Reference	Assessment Method	Description of Questionnaire	Reliability	Validity
Dixon & Sciara (1977)	Self-Report	Section L of the Marital Pre-Counseling Inventory,(Stuart & Stuart, 1973)	NP	NP
Drigotas & Rusbult (1992)	Self-Report	Four items were adapted from Rusbult (1980)	Alpha = .94	NP
Duffy & Rusbult (1986)	Self-Report	Five items adapted from Rusbult.	Alpha = .91	NP
Eyman (1984)	Self-Report	Marital Commitment Scale, (Kohn, 1982)	Alpha = .81	NP
Felmlee, Sprecher, & Bassin,	Self-Report	A single item was used: "To what extent are you committed to your relationship?"	NP	NP
Godwin & Scanzoni (1989)	Self-Report	Spanier's bogardustype commitment measure.	NP	NP
Goltz (1987)	Self-Report	Items written by the author on the basis of Johnson's (1973) framework.		
		Personal commitment	Alpha = .61	NP
		Structural commitment	Alpha = .77	NP

(Table 2 continues)

(Table 2 continued)

Reference	Assessment Method	Description of Questionnaire	Reliability	Validity
Gonzales (1988)	Self-Report	Single item measure:	NP	NP
		"How often do you discuss or have you considered a divorce, seperation or termination of your relationship?"		
Green (1983)	Self-Report	Johnson's (1978) measure:		
		Alternitive attractions	NP	NP
		External Pressures	NP	NP
Green & Sporakowski (1983)	Self-Report	Johnson's (1978) measure:		
		Alternitive attractions	Alpha = .88	NP
		External pressures	Alpha = .79	NP
Heaton & Albrecht (1991)	Self-Report	Four values were assessed:		
		1. Pre-marriage values	NP	NP
		2. Social Contact	NP	NP
		3. Sense of Control	NP	NP
		4. Perceived consequences of divorce or seperation.	NP	NP
Heizenroth (1988)	Self-Report	Items adapted from Rusbult (1980a, 1980b).	Alpha = .80	NP

(Table 2 continues)

(Table 2 continued)

Reference	Assessment Method	Description of Questionnaire	Reliability	Validity
Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler (1988)	Self-Report	Lund Commitment Scale.	Alpha = .89	NP
Hingst, Hyman & Salmon (1985)	Self-Report	Intimate Relationship Questionnaire.	NP	NP
Holms & Esses (1988)	Self-Report	A factor analysis yielded 2 factors: 1. The importance and personal fulfillment related to marrying and raising a family. 2. Devotion or dedication to marriage and family life.	Alpha = .83	NP
Jayroe (1979)	Self-Report	The Differential Commitment	NP	Content validity was obtained by having 5 raters evaluate the extent to which each item reflected commitment.

(Table 2 continues)

(Table 2 continued)

Reference	Assessment Method	Description of Questionnaire	Reliability	Validity
Jedlicka (1975)	Self-Report	Commitment was assessed through relationship status: 1. Marriage with common consent. 2. Engagement. 3. Going Steady. 4. Friendship. 5. No particular relationship.	NP	NP
Johnson & Rusbult (1989)	Self-Report	Five items adapted from Rusbult (1980).	Alpha = .90	NP
Johnson (1973)	Interview	Three items are used to reflect three dimensions of commitment:		
		Personal Commitment	NP	NP
		Social Commitment	NP	NP
		Cost Commitment	NP	NP
Johnson (1981)	Self-Report	Continuance Commitment	Alpha = .90 MIICa = .43	NP
		Cohesion Commitment	Alpha = .93 MIIC = .46	NP
		Control Commitment	Alpha = .82 MIIC = .26	NP

(Table 2 continues)

(Table 2 continued)

Reference	Assessment Method	Description of Questionnaire	Reliability	Validity
Jorgensen (1979)	Self-Report	Three items written by the author were used to measure commitment.	NP	NP
Kersten (1988)	Self-Report	Three items were used to measure expectations for marriage permanence (derived from Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983).		
Kimmons (1981)	Self-Report	Commitment was assessed by the Clodfelter Marital Commitment Scale (Clodfelter, (1977).	NP	NP
Landis (1963)	Self-Report	Commitment is implied from relationship status.	NP	NP
Lange (1989)	Self-report	The Relationship Commitment Scale was used with two items deleted. Items were taken from Peplau et al. (1978), Blumstein and Schwartz (1983), and items adapted from Rusbult et al. (1986).	Alpha = .81	NP

(Table 2 continues)

(Table 2 continued)

Reference	Assessment Method	Description of Questionnaire	Reliability	Validity
Larson & Goltz (1989)	Self-Report	Scale items written by the author to reflect personal commitment (2 items) and structural commitment (4 items).	NP	NP
Lauer & Lauer (1986)	Self-Report	Open ended questions asked respondents to indicate which of the questionaire items were most important in explaining the stability of their own marriage.		
Lauer, Lauer, & Kerr, (1990)	Self-Report	Open ended questions asked respondents to indicate which of the questionaire items were most important in explaining the stability of their own marriage.		
Lewis (1973)	Self-Report	A 13 item scale was adapted from the Marital Success Schedule, (Burgess and Wallin, 1953).	NP	Scores on the Pair Commitment Scale correlated significantly with other DFI scales.
Lewis, Spanier, Atkinson, & LeHecka (1977)	Interview	Lewis Dyadic Formation Inventory, (Lewis, 1973b; 1973d)	NP	NP

(Table 2 continues)

(Table 2 continued)

Reference	Assessment Method	Description of Questionnaire	Reliability	Validity
Lloyd, Cate, & Henton	Self-Report	Single item measure of Chance of Marriage: 1. At this point in time, what do you feel the chance of your relationship ending in marriage?	NP	NP
Lund (1985)	Self-Report	Lund Commitment Scale Scale Construction Hypothesis Testing	 Alpha = .82 Alpha = .91	The validity of the Commitment scale was supported by their association with participants' other reports about their relationships.
Lyness, Lipetz, & Davis (1972)	Self-Report	One item scaled the degree of progress toward engagement (where 0 = no commitment or thoughts of commitment, 1 = thinking about marriage, and 2 =either a public or private engagement to marry.	NP	NP

(Table 2 continues)

(Table 2 continued)

Reference	Assessment Method	Description of Questionnaire	Reliability	Validity
Matula, Huston, Grotevant & Zamutt (1992)	Self-Report	Commitment was assessed by relationship status.	NP	NP
Melcher (1989)	Self-Report	Marital commitment was measured by a modification of the Primacy and Durability Scale from Wyatt's (1983) Dimensions of Commitment Scales.	Alpha = .91	Validity evidence is available from Wyatt (1983).
Miller, Williams, & Bernstein (1982)	Self-Report	Goal Attainment Scale Kiresuk & Sherman, 1968)	NP	NP
Millward (1991)	Interview	Institute's 1990 Becoming Adult study.	NP	NP
Morgan, & Scanzoni (1987)	Self-Report	16 items were used to assess permanence-pragmatism.		The authors indicate that the items appear to possess a convincing degree of face validity.
		Factor I	Alpha = .83	
		Factor II	Alpha = .43	
		Factor III	Alpha = .34	

(Table 2 continues)

(Table 2 continued)

Reference	Assessment Method	Description of Questionnaire	Reliability	Validity
Morrow (1988)	Self-Report	The individual's commitment to maintain his or her relationship with the current partner was measured by items reflecting commitment, desired duration of relationship, attachment probable longevity of relationship.	Alpha = .88	NP
Murstein & Holden (1979)	Self-Report	A five point scale measuring the nature of the relationship with the person with whom the subject had most recently had sex.	NP	NP
Murstein & MacDonald (1983)	Self-Report	The commitment items were drawn from a 44 item factor analysis with a sample of 45 married couples.	Alpha = .92	NP
Nadler & Dotan (1992)	Interview	Commitment was measured with respect to the person with whom one's partner was supposedly having an affair and assessed by manipulation of jealousy inducing vignettes (igh versus low commitment to rival partner.)	NP	NP

(Table 2 continues)

(Table 2 continued)

Reference	Assessment Method	Description of Questionnaire	Reliability	Validity
Oliver & Sedikides (1992)	Self-Report	Commitment was assessed by manipulating the instructions on the questionnairre administered to the participants: Low commitment: Imagine that you have a blind date Friday night... High commitment: Imagine a person that you would like to be your spouse...	NP	NP
Pramann (1986)	Self-Report	Broderick Commitment Scale (Broderick, 1980).	NP	NP
		Dimensions of Commitment Scales (Wyatt, 1984).	NP	NP
		Commitment Inventory (Stanley, 1986).	NP	NP
Robinson, Balkwell, & Ward, (1980)	Self-Report	Items written by the authors.	Alpha = .90	NP

(Table 2 continues)

(Table 2 continued)

Reference	Assessment Method	Description of Questionnaire	Reliability	Validity
Robinson & Blanton (1983)	Interview	The couples were interviewed separately so that each individual could freely discuss his or her ideas about the marriage with the guarantee of confidentiality. As an individual began talking about a significant area in the marriage, probing questions were used to explore the area in greater depth.	Alpha = .95	NP
Rusbult (1978)	Self-Report	Commitment was assessed by 3 items written by the author.	NP	NP
Rusbult (1980)	Role-Playing	Experiment 1: Each participant read a role-playing essay that described a dilemma: should he/she remain in a romantic situation?	NP	NP
	Self-Report	Experiment 2: The questionnaire contained items designed to measure relationship outcome value, alternative outcome value, investment size, satisfaction, and commitment.	NP	NP

(Table 2 continues)

(Table 2 continued)

Reference	Assessment Method	Description of Questionnaire	Reliability	Validity
Rusbult (1983)	Self-Report	The questionnairres used were modeled after Rusbult (1980a).	NP	NP
Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow (1986a)	Self-Report	Commitment was assessed with items modeled after Rusbult (1983).	Alpha = .90	NP
Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow (1986b)	Self-Report	Commitment was assessed with items modeled after Rusbult (1983)	Alpha = .92	
Rusbult (1986)	Self-Report	Commitment was assessed with items modeled after Rusbult (1983).	Alpha = .82	Validity was assessed by computing the correlations between each general measure and the specific items associated with that measure.
Sabatelli (1984)	Self-Report	5-item measure of commitment developed by the author in a previous study (Cecil-Pigo & Sabatelli, 1983).	Alpha = .82	NP

(Table 2 continues)

(Table 2 continued)

Reference	Assessment Method	Description of Questionnaire	Reliability	Validity
Sabatelli (1985)	Self-Report	Measure of commitment is from Cecil-Pigo & Sabatelli (1983).	Alpha = .82	NP
		Measure of barriers was based on Levinger (1965, 1976)	Alpha = .74	NP

Note. MIIC = Mean Inter-Item Correlation; NP = not provided in article.

previously used items without an accompanying examination of the psychometric properties of the hybrid items. Further, commitment is often measured with single items that ask respondents to indicate simply how committed they are to their relationship. In short, there appears to be little comparability among measures of commitment.

A second point is that very few studies provide data supporting the reliability of the measures of commitment employed and even fewer still provide supportive validity evidence. Specifically, reliability evidence was included in 33% of the studies whereas validity coefficients were reported in only 9% of the studies. Furthermore, validity evidence, when it was included, typically satisfied only content or concurrent validity criteria, leaving unanswered important questions about construct validity. Thus, as these data suggest, not only is there considerable variability in the types of commitment measures used in research, there is also good reason to question the psychometric adequacy of most of these measures.

Despite the psychometric shortcomings of most measures of commitment, one may obtain some sense of the content domain being tapped by these measures through an analysis of scale items. In general, it appears that a large proportion of commitment scale items can be usefully classified into categories that reflect the three dimensions described in the preceding section. Table 3 shows the breakdown of extant measures into categories defined by the attraction, moral/normative, and constraining dimensions. Also shown are sample items from each scale. As may be seen, items that reflect the attraction dimension of commitment emphasize such factors as devotion and dedication to one's partner, identification with the relationship, the desire to make one's partner happy and to sacrifice for one's partner, and a strong motivation to

Table 3

Commitment Measures and Sample Items

Measure	Sample Item/Scale Description
Measures of Commitment to Spouse	
Effort Subscale (Clodfelter, 1977)	Even when it takes a lot of effort, I try to give my spouse what he/she wants and needs if I can.
Mutual Concern Subscale (Clodfelter, 1977)	It is important to me to understand how my spouse is thinking and feeling.
Devotion/Dedication to Marriage (Holmes & Esses, 1988)	Scale Content: Importance and personal fulfillment related to marrying.
Differential Commitment Scale (Jayroe, 1979)	If I could never be with my partner, I would be miserable.
Personal Commitment Scale (Johnson, 1973)	How long would you like to stay with your partner?
Cohesion Commitment Measure (Johnson, 1981)	Doing something with my partner is usually enjoyable and interesting.
Items written by authors (Larson & Goltz, 1989)	I couldn't continue to live with my spouse if I didn't love him/her.
Importance of Marital Relationship Subscale (Clodfelter, 1977)	I like to be seen in public with my spouse and have people know we are married to each other.

(Table 3 continues)

(Table 3 continued)

Measure	Sample Item/Scale Description
Sternberg Triangular Love Scale (Sternberg, 1985)	I expect my love for my partner to last for the rest of my life.
Items written by the author (Goltz, 1987)	If my spouse were unfaithful, for whatever reason, our relationship would end.
Intimate Relationships Questionnaire (Hingst, Hyman, & Salmon, 1985)	While you were involved intimately with someone, do you ever engage in sexual relationsihps with someone other than your primary partner?
Items written by the author (Rusbult, 1978, 1980)	To what extent are you "attached" to your partner?
Items written by the author (Jorgensen, 1979)	If you had your life to live over again, would you (a) marry another person, (b) not marry at all, or (c) marry the same person?
Pair Commitment (Lewis, 1973)	Do you ever wish that you had never met [your current partner?]
Lund Commitment Scale (Lund, 1985)	How attracted are you to other potential partners or a single lifestyle?
Dimensions of Commitment Scales (Wyatt, 1984)	I often experience a "oneness" or a "we-feeling" with my partner.

(Table 3 continues)

(Table 3 continued)

Measure	Sample Item/Scale Description
Pragmatism (Morgan & Scanzoni, 1987)	A person in an intimate relationship should consider the other person's needs and wants before his/her own.
Commitment to Spouse (Vanderkooy-Vos, 1988)	I want to give a lot of time and energy to my spouse.
Commitment (Jones, Adams, Monroe, & Berry, 1996)	I do not have a sense of responsibility for my spouse.
Commitment (Morrow, 1988)	To what degree do you feel attached to your current relationship?
Items written by the authors (Murstein & MacDonald, 1979)	I would give up almost anything for my spouse.
Items written by the authors (Cecil-Pigo & Sabatelli, 1983)	If I had to do it all over again, I would probably marry someone else.
Items written by the authors (Singh & Khullar, 1989)	As a person, my spouse is more important to me than anyone else, including my parents, siblings, and children.
<u>Measures of Commitment to Marriage</u>	
Internal Psychological Barriers (Bagarozzi & Atilano, 1982)	Scale Content: Commitment to marriage vows and religious beliefs.

(Table 3 continues)

(Table 3 continued)

Measure	Sample Item/Scale Description
Pre-Marriage Values (Heaton & Albrecht, 1991)	Scale Content: Preferability of marriage, marriage as a lifetime commitment, and the acceptability of divorce when young children are present.
Control Commitment Measure (Johnson, 1981)	Even in the face of adverse circumstances, I intent to be loyal to my present partner in the next five years.
Items Adapted from Blumstein & Schwartz (1982) (Kersten, 1988)	Marriage is a lifetime relationship and should never be terminated except under extreme circumstances.
Sternberg Triangular Love Scale (Sternberg, 1985)	I view my commitment to my partner as a matter of principle.
Items written by the author (Goltz, 1987)	Our relationship involves a life-long commitment that is binding "until death do us part."
Relationship Commitment Scale (Lange, 1989)	How much do you value your relationship with your partner?
Items written by the authors (Lauer & Lauer, 1987)	Scale content: Marriage as a sacred obligation.
Lund Commitment Scale (Lund, 1985)	How obligated do you feel to continue this relationship?

(Table 3 continues)

(Table 3 continued)

Measure	Sample Item/Scale Description
Dimensions of Commitment Scales (Wyatt, 1984)	Having a committed relationship is a high priority in my life.
Commitment (Jones, Adams, Monroe, & Berry, 1996)	My spouse and I have a strong sense of commitment toward our relationship with one another.
Permanence (Morgan & Scanzoni, 1987)	Marriage is for life even if the couple is unhappy.
Commitment to Permanence (Vanderkooy-Vos, 1988)	Even if I were unhappy in my marriage, my conviction that marriage must be permanent would cause me to stay in my marriage.
Items written by the authors (Singh & Khullar, 1989)	I consider our marriage responsibilities and roles as more important than mine and my spouse's own individual needs, likes or dilikes.
<u>Measures of Constraint Commitment</u>	
External Circumstantial Barriers (Bagarozzi & Atilano, 1982)	Scale Content: Financial considerations, legal costs, job concerns, obligations to children, pressure from one's social network.

(Table 3 continues)

(Table 3 continued)

Measure	Sample Item/Scale Description
External Pressures (Green, 1983)	Scale Content: Amount of pressure experienced in the pre-divorce environment to remain married from obligations to their marital vows, religious beliefs and obligations to their dependent children as well as that from financial costs of divorce and the pressure from social networks.
Consequences of Divorce (Heaton & Albrecht, 1991)	Scale Content: Questions asked whether respondent's standard of living, social life, career opportunities, overall happiness, sex life, and parental role would be better or worse if the marriage ended.
Social Commitment (Johnson, 1973)	How do you think the important people in your life would feel if you and your partner broke up?
Cost Commitment (Johnson, 1973)	If you were to decide youno longer wanted to live with your partner, what changes would you have to make in your present plans and living conditions?
Continuance Commitment (Johnson, 1981)	Devoting time and energy to my relationship with my partner isn't very rewarding.
Items written by the authors (Larson & Goltz, 1989)	It would be a lot of trouble for my spouse and me to separate.

(Table 3 continues)

(Table 3 continued)

Measure	Sample Item/Scale Description
Items written by the author (Goltz, 1987)	I have a very large investment in my relationship with my spouse.
Relationship Commitment Scale (Lange, 1989)	What would be the extent of your loss if the relationship ended?
Lund Commitment Scale (Lund, 1985)	How much trouble would ending your relationship be to you personally?
Comparison Level for Alternatives (Lloyd, Cate, & Henton, 1984)	If you found yourself unattached again, for whatever reason, and wanted to find a new partner, how easy or difficult would that be?
Perceived Alternatives (Frazier & Cook, 1993)	I would have little trouble finding another romantic partner who could replace my ex-partner.
Commitment (Morrow, 1988)	All things considered, how much have you "put into" your relationship?
Item written by the authors (Cecil-Pigo & Sabatelli, 1983)	I often feel constrained by our relationship.
Item written by the authors (Singh & Khullar, 1989)	Under no circumstances can I terminate my marriage with my present spouse.

(Table 3 continues)

(Table 3 continued)

Measure	Sample Item/Scale Description
Global Commitment Measures/Measures of Relational Endurance	
Commitment (Bagarozzi & Atilano, 1982)	Scale Content: Willingness to separate/divorce, thoughts of separation/divorce.
Items written by the authors (Catlin, Croake, & Keller, 1978)	Scale Content: Expectations regarding the continuation of the relationship.
Item written by the authors (DeMaris & Leslie, 1984)	No matter how much trouble a husband and wife are having getting along, the best thing to do is to stay married and try to work out their problems.
Item written by the authors (Felmlee, Sprecher, & Bassin, 1990)	To what extent are you committed to your relationship?
Single item from the Dyadic Adjustment Test (Gonzales, 1988)	How often do you discuss or have you considered a divorce, separation or termination of your relationship?
Chance of marriage (Lloyd, Cate, & Henton, 1984)	At this point in time, what do you feel the chance is of your relationship ending in marriage (0100%)?
Sternberg Triangular Love Scale (Sternberg, 1985)	I view my relationship with my partner as permanent.

(Table 3 continues)

(Table 3 continued)

Measure	Sample Item/Scale Description
Intimate Relationships Questionnaire (Hingst, Hyman, & Salmon, 1985)	How likely is it that you will remain with one partner for the rest of your life?
Items written by the author (Rusbult, 1978, 1980)	How likely is it that you will end your relationship in the near future?
Items written by the author (Jorgensen, 1979)	Have you ever considered separating from your partner?
Relationship Commitment Scale (Lange, 1989)	Have you given serious consideration to ending your relationship with your partner?
Items written by the authors (Lauer & Lauer, 1987)	Scale Content: Marriage as a long-term commitment.
Lund Commitment Scale (Lund, 1985)	How likely is it that your relationship will be permanent?
Dimensions of Commitment Scales (Wyatt, 1984)	I am committed to this relationship.
Commitment (Jones, Adams, Monroe, & Berry, 1996)	I do not have a feeling of permanency about my marriage.
Commitment (Morrow, 1988)	How committed are you to maintaining your relationship?

(Table 3 continues)

(Table 3 continued)

Measure	Sample Item/Scale Description
Exclusivity of Relationship (Simpson, 1987)	What is your dating status? (dating one person [my current partner]/dating more than one person [my current partner and others]).
Chance of Commitment (Surra, 1985)	Chance of commitment (0-100%) was measured by having participants indicate on a graph the chance of marriage at various points in their developing relationship.
Emotional Vulnerability Subscale (Clodfelter, 1977)	I tell my spouse when I am feeling frightened, alone or unlovable.
Negotiation Subscale (Clodfelter, 1977)	Most of the time I am able to be reasonable and talk things out when my spouse and I have a disagreement.
Sexual Pleasure Subscale (Clodfelter, 1977)	I can think of nothing I enjoy more than having sexual intercourse with my spouse.
Equality Subscale (Clodfelter, 1977)	I think my spouse and I are fairly equal; he/she is better in some ways and I am better in others so that things even out.
Behavioral Commitment Measure (Johnson, 1981)	I generally avoid doing things my partner think are wrong.

(Table 3 continues)

(Table 3 continued)

Measure	Sample Item/Scale Description
Reward Level (Lloyd, Cate, & Henton, 1984)	Scale Content: Items assessed the amount of rewards in 6 resource areas (love, status, services, goods, money, information)
Commitment (Morrow, 1988)	In general, how do the rewards/costs of your relationship compare to those of other people's relationships?

expend energy to maximize the reward value of interactions and shared activities with the partner. The common theme linking these items is Csikszentmihalyi's (1975) notion of flow: the relationship is maintained in an almost unreflected manner. Items written to reflect the moral/normative dimension capture the act of placing supreme value on the state of marriage but also assess the more broadly conceived notions of keeping one's promises and fulfilling one's obligations, being persistent in one's endeavors, and being dutiful to religious proscriptions that endorse marital stability. Finally, items reflective of the constraining aspect of commitment capture the sense of entrapment and resignation brought about by fear of the potential costs of relationship dissolution. Thus, these items refer to the irretrievability of investments made in the relationship, the financial and social costs of divorce, and the possibility that satisfying alternative partners or lifestyles are not available.

It is important to note, however, that not all items may be classified according to this conceptual scheme. For example, one class of item includes those that ask respondents to make judgments about the likelihood that their current relationship will continue indefinitely. Despite their ubiquity, these items are of questionable utility for two reasons. First, such general items do not capture the richness of the experience of being involved in a committed relationship. For example, in responding positively to an item such as "I expect my relationship to last forever" a spouse may be drawing either from positive past experiences with his or her partner which leads to a personal desire to see the relationship continue, or from consideration of the various barriers to dissolution that makes the continuation of the relationship a foregone conclusion. Second, items which ask respondents to estimate the probability that their current relationship will last indefinitely require the respondent to engage in thought processes that may not be "natural" to the individual. A common finding in qualitative studies of

the meaning of commitment to spouses in satisfying marriages is that many respondents have considerable difficulty describing their commitment because it is not something to which they consciously attend. Rather, commitment is often simply assumed to exist by both partners and serves as a silent stabilizer of the marriage. Even if it were relatively common for couples to ruminate over the probability that their relationship will end in divorce or continue until "death do us part," it seems likely that such judgments would be contaminated by the cognitive biases that are routinely found to affect the accuracy of probability judgments (e.g., Kahneman & Tversky, 1979).

The psychometric picture is blurred further by the inclusion of items that assess correlates of commitment in measures that purport to assess commitment itself. For example, several measures include items designed to reflect such factors as commitment-related behaviors (Clodfelter, 1977; Johnson, 1981), rewards and costs in the relationship (Lloyd, Cate, & Huston, 1984; Morrow, 1988), and relational quality variables like love, sexual pleasure, and emotional vulnerability (Clodfelter, 1977; Sternberg, 1985). That these items are included in measures of commitment is, perhaps, not surprising, given the conceptual confusion surrounding interpersonal commitment. Nevertheless, scales that are comprised in part of items that assess correlates of commitment compromise the construct validity of the measures and thereby limit their utility.

Summary

Research in which commitment is a variable of interest commonly employs one or more measures designed to assess a spouse's commitment to his or her marriage. Although these measures vary with respect to number of items, number of subscales, and psychometric characteristics, they are relatively homogenous with respect to item content. In general, the items comprising most measures of interpersonal commitment

reflect, to varying degrees, the three broad dimensions described in theoretical models. The attraction dimension is commonly assessed with items that reflect dedication and devotion to one's spouse, personal desire to see a relationship continue, and a sense of identification with one's marriage. The moral/normative dimension of commitment is assessed with items written to reflect attitudes about divorce, behavioral consistency, keeping promises, and adhering to religious beliefs and convictions. Finally, measures of the constraining aspect of commitment are comprised of items that reflect external barriers to relationship dissolution, including financial constraint, social pressures, irretrievable investments, and the unavailability of alternatives. Other types of item also may be found, including those that ask respondents to make global judgments about the expected duration of their relationship and those that assess the correlates of commitment (e.g., investments, the attractiveness of alternatives, etc.); however, these items are of questionable utility in assessing the construct of commitment.

The Phenomenology of Commitment

Perhaps the simplest and most straightforward way to understand the nature of commitment is to ask relational partners to describe what it means to be committed to one another. This phenomenological approach requires individuals to provide autobiographical accounts of actual life events in which they report on the personally meaningful aspects of interpersonal commitment. Since it appears that people prefer to think about and describe their lives in narrative form (Vitz, 1990), such accounts are likely to provide valuable insights into the experience of interpersonal commitment. Presently, the question of interest is whether relational partners' descriptions of commitment are consistent with the attractive, moral, and constraining dimensions described above.

Research using unstructured interview techniques or other qualitative methods consistently reveals that romantic partners' descriptions of their relational commitment tend to be characterized by global statements reflecting broad experiential domains. Hilsdale (1962) found that when queried about issues pertaining to marriage, divorce, and remarriage, young engaged couples indicated an awareness of the basic distinction between an abstract, impersonal commitment to the institution of marriage and a more concrete, personal commitment to their own relationship. A similar distinction was made by a sample of older married couples (Swensen & Trahaug, 1985), whose reasons for marrying and remaining with their current partner ranged from the relatively impersonal (e.g., "It's human nature or instinct to be married") to the relatively personal (e.g., "My spouse is a person I trust and admire"). The basis of this distinction seems to be the experiential difference between being committed to a social institution and being committed to another person; whereas the former is manifested in dutiful persistence, the latter stems from feelings of love and attachment.

Further, when given the latitude to describe interpersonal commitment for themselves, peoples' responses appear to fall into groups which can be summarized by the construct's attractive, moral/normative, and constraining dimensions. Brewer (1993), for example, identified 15 "commitment concepts" that emerged from couples' narratives regarding the development of their relationship. Although the author did not attempt to characterize this set of concepts, it is clear that the items reflect three general themes. Specifically, couples spoke of being dedicated to the welfare of one's spouse, loving one's spouse and maintaining that love, and being sexually faithful, concepts that are illustrative of the attraction component of commitment. Also common to couples' accounts were examples of the moral dimension of commitment, including references to the sanctity of marriage, the importance of keeping promises, and the

inherent value of following through on one's commitments. One concept highlighted the notion that the primary function of commitment is to maintain a marriage for the sake of dependent children or for the good of society, reflecting the constraining aspect of commitment.

A different method for exploring peoples' perceptions of the conceptual boundaries of psychological constructs is prototype analysis (Mervis & Rosch, 1981; Rosch, 1975, 1978). Prototyping involves identifying a set of terms that represent the "best" examples of a given construct. A prototype analysis of the constructs of love and commitment conducted by Fehr (1988) revealed the three dimensional structure of interpersonal commitment. College students were asked to list features of both love and commitment in order to determine which features are uniquely characteristic, or prototypical, of the two constructs. For commitment, several attributes were generated, most of which could be categorized into its attractive, moral, and constraining dimensions. For example, the most prototypical features of commitment appear to reflect the moral/normative dimension: loyalty, responsibility, living up to your word, and faithfulness. Elements reflecting the attraction component (e.g., trust, devotion, supportiveness, concern about other's well-being, and love) also were considered to be highly characteristic of commitment; however, features reflecting the constraining dimension of commitment (e.g., obligation, hard work, and feeling trapped), though described by some of the respondents, were considered to be less prototypical of commitment than were the others.

In a series of studies designed to examine the development of couples relationships from casually dating to marriage, Surra and her colleagues (Surra, 1985, 1987; Surra, Arizzi, & Asmussen, 1988; Surra, Chandler, Asmussen, & Wareham, 1987) asked married couples to describe the reasons for changes in their commitment as

their relationship progressed toward marriage. Based on thematic similarity, the couples' reasons were classified into four categories: Interpersonal/Normative, Dyadic, Social Network, and Circumstantial. Whereas the interpersonal/normative and dyadic reasons for changes in commitment are founded in internalized values and direct experiences with the partner respectively, the social network and circumstantial reasons stem from the influence of important people and other external events or institutions. The connection between these categories and the attraction, moral/normative, and constraining dimensions of commitment is apparent.

The couples interviewed by Robinson and Blanton (1993) indicated that commitment was an essential factor contributing to the stability of their marriage, but that the form commitment may take changes over the course of the relationship. For example, many spouses spoke of the positive qualities of their mate and noted that their commitment enhanced the quality of their communication as well as the experience of intimacy within the marriage. As their marriage encountered difficult times, however, many respondents indicated that it was their commitment to the marital relationship or to their children that served as a barrier to relationship dissolution. As this study demonstrates, couples recognize not only the multidimensionality of commitment, but also its mutability.

The constraining aspect of interpersonal commitment figures prominently in the accounts of spouses whose marital relationship is in decline. For example, the reasons for staying married provided by couples contemplating divorce reflect a primary concern with the costs associated with relationship dissolution (Cupach & Metts, 1986), including the loss of investments made in the relationship, a lack of available alternative partners, and such factors as fear of loneliness, fear of rejection from friends and family, and actual costs of divorce. Kersten (1988) found a similar

preoccupation with barriers to divorce in her analysis of the disaffection process in marriage. Interestingly, the experience and development of disaffection in marriage varied depending on whether the spouses endorsed institutional commitment (commitment to the marital relationship) or voluntary commitment (commitment based on satisfaction and personal happiness), with couples oriented toward institutional commitment experiencing less disaffection.

Summary

Two broad conclusions may be drawn from this review of qualitative analyses of interpersonal commitment. First, couples' unrestricted responses to questions about the nature of their commitment consistently reflect three global aspects of commitment that can be characterized as attractive, moral/normative, and constraining. In each of these studies, respondents spoke at some length about the depth of their commitment to their spouse and about the importance of committing oneself to the marital relationship for better or for worse. In addition, some respondents characterized their commitment as feelings of entrapment brought about either by not wanting to look foolish for ending a relationship to which one made the public commitment to maintain, or by fearing the financial or social penalties that would likely accompany divorce or dissolution. Second, it would appear that which dimension of commitment is emphasized in an individual's account depends on the quality of his or her relationship at the time the account is given. Specifically, studies of newlywed couples or partners in satisfying relationships consisted primarily of descriptions of commitment that emphasized its attraction or moral/normative dimensions, whereas studies of relatively unsatisfied spouses reported on couple accounts that predominantly emphasized the constraining dimension of commitment. The empirical exploration of the moderating and mediating

effects of relational quality on the experience of commitment is clearly called for at this point.

Review of Empirical Findings

The preceding review sought to demonstrate that interpersonal commitment is a construct with three dimensions: an attraction dimension represented by the feeling of wanting the relationship with one's partner to continue because of its reward value, a moral/normative dimension based on one's internalized values regarding the inherent value of the relationship, feelings of obligation to keep one's marital vows, and a belief in the moral and/or religious correctness of maintaining one's relationships, and a constraining dimension reflecting the idea that the process of making a commitment to a relationship has set in place external factors that would make leaving the relationship difficult. Evidence to support this conceptualization of commitment was drawn from three sources. First, theoretical treatments of commitment were examined, and it was found that competing models all reflect, to one degree or another, commitment's attraction, moral/normative, and constraining dimensions. Second, an examination of extant measures of commitment revealed that the item content of most measures is consistent with the attraction, moral/normative, and constraining features of commitment. Finally, autobiographical accounts of couples' commitment were examined to see if consistent themes emerged from partner's descriptions of the development of their relationship. Again, supportive evidence for the three dimensions of commitment was found, with satisfied partners speaking primarily of commitment based on love, satisfaction, and respect for the marital relationship, and less satisfied spouses emphasizing the constraining feature of commitment.

In addition to simplifying the conceptual picture regarding interpersonal commitment, the identification of three broad dimensions of commitment may also facilitate the organized review of empirical findings in this literature. Given the apparent experiential distinctions among the three dimensions, one might expect to find unique sets of correlates that reflect different underlying processes for each dimension. The following review of the empirical literature was undertaken to explore this possibility.

In most instances, investigators do not specify which dimension or dimensions of commitment are most relevant to their research. This information may be gleaned, however, by examining the operationalizations and/or assessment methods employed in research and inferring the dimensions reflected therein. Frequently, the determination of which dimensions are captured by scale items or implied by definition is fairly strightforward, requiring only the recognition of key terms indicative of Commitment to Spouse (e.g., dedication, devotion, concern for partner, etc.), Commitment to Marriage (e.g., duty, obligation, sanctity of the marital relationship, etc.), and Barriers to Dissolution (e.g., constraint, entrapment, barrier, etc.). However, as indicated previously, researchers often use relationship length or, alternatively, employ global single-item measures or multi-item scales that assess simultaneously several dimensions of commitment. In these instances, it is unclear which dimension is reflected in participants' responses to the items, thereby obfuscating the meaning of the results obtained with such measures.

In the following review, efforts were made to categorize studies on the basis of their emphasis on the attraction, moral/normative, and constraining dimensions of commitment. It was often the case that a given study would employ multiple measures of commitment, each of which reflected a different dimension of the construct. In such

cases, results pertaining to the various dimensions were discussed separately so as to preserve the continuity of the review. Additionally, in order to integrate findings from studies in which relationship status and/or global measures of commitment were used with the results of studies employing more specific measures, two assumptions were made regarding the intention of the investigators and the nature of participants' responses to globally worded items. Specifically, for studies using relationship status as a proxy for commitment, it was assumed that the authors intended to assess the attraction dimension of commitment (Commitment to Spouse). Although, as indicated previously, it is not necessarily the case that couples in dating relationships are less personally committed than married couples, it is not altogether unreasonable to assume that as couples progress in their relationship, partners are likely to commit more strongly to one another. Second, it was assumed that participants asked to respond to single-item, global, or heterogenous measures of commitment are likely to infer the attraction and/or moral/normative dimensions. This assumption is based on the rationalization that most participants in studies involving commitment are relatively satisfied with their relationship, and that such individuals will respond to global measures in a manner that is reflective of the quality of their relationship. Of course, these assumptions require empirical verification before their veracity can be embraced. They are, however, reasonable, and have been included here to facilitate the review process.

Commitment to Spouse

Satisfaction, Adjustment, and Happiness

One of the most consistently obtained findings of research involving Commitment to Spouse is that this dimension is related to couples' experience of

satisfaction, happiness, adjustment, and overall well-being in their relationship. Indeed, marital quality commonly emerges as the strongest predictor of Commitment to Spouse (Acker & Davis, 1992; Beach, 1985; Beach & Broderick, 1986; Broderick & O'Leary, 1986; Duffy & Rusbult, 1986; Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988; Jayroe, 1979; Lewis, Spanier, Atkinson, & LeHecka, 1977; Melcher, 1989; Sprecher, 1988). Furthermore, this relationship seems to hold for both males and females, heterosexual and homosexual couples, and in relationships of different lengths (Acker & Davis, 1992; Duffy & Rusbult, 1986; Lange, 1989). In only two studies was satisfaction unrelated to Commitment to Spouse (Goltz, 1987; Gonzales, 1988), but in both instances unreliable measures of commitment were employed.

Although the nature of the causal relationship between marital quality and Commitment to Spouse has not been fully determined, some evidence suggests that satisfaction leads to greater commitment to one's partner. The bulk of this evidence derives from research conducted by Rusbult and her colleagues. For example, Rusbult (1983) found that couples who remained together over a 7-month period reported increases in satisfaction, commitment, rewards, costs, and investments, and decreases in the quality of alternatives to the relationship. Moreover, partner satisfaction at the beginning of the assessment period predicted subsequent increases in commitment, but initial levels of commitment were not predictive of changes in satisfaction during the same time period. Similarly, satisfaction was found to be predictive of commitment in a series of cross-sectional studies (Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986a, 1986b, 1986c), although the argument for causal directionality is less compelling in the absense of longitudinal data.

Some investigators have questioned, on the basis of the consistently strong relationship between marital quality and Commitment to Spouse, whether the two terms

refer to conceptually distinct phenomena. Indeed, several studies have obtained correlations between the two constructs in excess of .70 (Eyman, 1984; Jones, Adams, Monroe, & Berry, 1995; Melcher, 1989; Sacher & Fine, 1996), indicating that satisfaction and Commitment to Spouse share over 50% common variance. Further, like satisfaction, Commitment to Spouse seems to be more likely to fluctuate over the course of a relationship and appears to be more susceptible to external influences than either commitment to the marital relationship or commitment experienced as entrapment. In this way, Kersten (1988) suggested that voluntary commitment to an individual is conditional upon the quality of the relationship: commitment to the partner will remain high as long as the relationship in which he or she is involved remains rewarding. In her examination of the disaffection process in marriage, Kersten (1988) found that couples who endorsed a voluntary personal commitment were more likely to indicate that their marriage was in decline than couples who endorsed a more institutional commitment to their marital relationship. One explanation for this finding is that voluntarily committed partners appear to have higher expectations for the self-fulfilling aspects of marriage than do institutionally committed spouses. Accordingly, voluntarily committed spouses may become more easily disillusioned when their partner fails to meet their needs and, as a result, may be more likely to consider their relationship to be in decline.

Despite the similarities between satisfaction and Commitment to Spouse, there is good reason to maintain the conceptual distinction between the constructs. First, the correlation between satisfaction and Commitment to Spouse, while substantial, is less than total; in most cases at least 40% of the covariation between the two constructs is unexplained. Further, at least two studies have shown that satisfaction and Commitment to Spouse correlate differentially with selected comparison measures.

Sabatelli and Cecil-Pigo (1985), for example, noted that despite the high degree of overlap among equity, satisfaction, and commitment in close relationships, both equity and satisfaction make unique and independent contributions to the variance accounted for in commitment. Data are also available from Adams (1994) showing that although satisfaction and commitment correlate significantly with such variables as trust, love, marital goal orientation, and empathy, the difference in the magnitude of these correlations also are significant. Whether the statistical evidence supporting the conceptual distinction between satisfaction and Commitment to Spouse translates into experiential differences between the two constructs remains an issue for future research.

Intimacy, Love, and Closeness

In addition to experiencing high levels of relationship satisfaction, personally committed individuals also love (Fehr, 1988; Felmlee, Sprecher, & Bassin, 1990; Lund, 1985; Scanzoni & Arnett, 1987), trust and disclose to (Lazelere & Huston, 1980), and feel emotionally close to their partner (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992; White, Speisman, Jackson, Bartis, & Costos, 1973). Further, several studies have found that personally committed spouses identify with one another as a couple and think more in terms of the shared features of the relationship than in terms of individual needs, desires, or achievements. Lewis (1973), for example, found that individuals who reported a strong desire to maintain their relationship with their spouse scored highly on measures of dyadic inclusiveness and exclusiveness and identification as a pair. Similarly, Eyman (1984) noted that personally committed spouses seem to possess a merged identity, involving the "forsaking [of] some aspects of individual identity in order to achieve a sense of unity or oneness as a marital couple" (p. 92). The notions of unity and identification also have been incorporated into several

measures of interpersonal commitment (e.g., Stanley & Markman, 1992; Wyatt, 1984), reflecting the degree to which this aspect of intimacy is regarded as an integral component of Commitment to Spouse.

Similar themes emerge in qualitative studies of couple commitment. For example, using a semi-structured interview procedure, Swensen and Trahaug (1985) found that among spouses who had been married at least 30 years, couples who increased their commitment to each other expressed more affection to one another, gave each other more moral support and more frequent indications of their care and concern for each other, and had fewer feelings for each other that they failed to express overtly. Likewise, Robinson and Blanton (1993) found that the spouses in their study reported not only respecting and caring for one another, but also appreciating one another's strengths while downplaying their shortcomings.

As was the case with marital quality, studies that explore the relationship between Commitment to Spouse and love typically find a high degree of conceptual overlap between these constructs (Felmlee, Sprecher, & Bassin, 1990; Lund, 1985). The degree of convergence obtained by Lund (1985) is particularly noteworthy given her intention to demonstrate psychometrically the relative conceptual independence of love and commitment. Still, some investigators (e.g., Fehr, 1988) insist on maintaining the distinction between these constructs on the grounds that romantically involved individuals use different types of descriptors when talking about love and commitment and indicate that love and commitment "feel" different in a relationship.

Congruence

Congruence refers to the degree to which partners in a romantic relationship "match up" on various interpersonal, physical, demographic, and dispositional characteristics. In general, personally committed individuals indicate that they are

similar to their partners in several interpersonally relevant domains, including their perceptions of the strengths of their relationship, communication, intimacy, family orientation, and religious orientation (Robinson & Blanton, 1993). Spouses also tend to show a moderate to high degree of convergence on their perceptions of their personal commitment (Adams & Jones, 1996; Jones, Adams, Monroe, & Berry, 1995; Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988; Sprecher, 1988; Swensen & Trahaug, 1985).

Congruence also may refer to the extent to which a romantically involved individual's expectations or perceptions match his or her interpersonal experiences. For example, Bailey and Helm (1974) noted that partners in a dating relationshp are more likely to commit to marriage if their perceptions of one another's personal characteristics matched their ideal of what a mate should be like. Similarly, Morrow (1988) and Sabatelli (1984) found that higher levels of Commitment to Spouse were consistently and negatively associated with greater discrepancies between partners' current relationship outcomes and their romantic ideals for such variables as emotional intimacy, sexual behavior, traditional romantic behavior, security, and trust.

Behavioral Correlates

Commitment to Spouse is associated with several behaviors that are relationship enhancing. Brewer (1993), in an extensive qualitative analysis of couples' perceptions of their marriage, has identified several commitment-related behaviors commonly reported by spouses. For example, personally committed partners monitor their relationship's condition and take the initiative to correct or improve any aspect of the relationship that appears to be deficient. Such spouses also actively avoid situations that would threaten their relationship, such as an extramarital affair, and work toward overcoming both personal and marital crises together.

Avoiding alternative partners and foregoing opportunities to engage in extramarital relationships are consistent themes in research on the behavioral correlates of Commitment to Spouse. For example, in a series of studies, Johnson and Rusbult (1989) found that highly personally committed individuals tend to devalue alternative partners, particularly when the alternatives are highly attractive, available, and express an interest in the committed individual. A similar process occurs when individuals involved in a romantic relationship are confronted with sexual attraction to an opposite-sex friend (Heizenroth, 1988). Specifically, individuals who are more personally committed to their partner are less likely to act on feelings of sexual attraction to an opposite-sex friend and are more likely to distance themselves from the friend or avoid him/her altogether. Individuals with less personal commitment, by contrast, are more likely to act on their attraction. Perhaps not surprisingly, couples who present for marital therapy with extramarital sex being the primary issue score lower on measures of commitment than do therapy couples for whom extramarital sex is not an issue (Beach, Jouriles, & O'Leary, 1985).

Within the relationship, personally committed partners tend to accommodate each other's potentially disruptive or destructive behaviors by resisting the impulse to act disruptively or destructively in return and instead reacting constructively (Rusbult & Verette, 1991; Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991). These findings are consistent with research on differences between distressed and non-distressed couples in the reciprocity of negative behaviors and negative affect (cf. Gottman, 1994). Whereas distressed couples tend to engage in negative interaction sequences characterized by the rigid tit-for-tat exchange of insults, accusations, and threats, non-distressed couples display a greater tendency toward breaking the downward spiral of negative interactions by refusing to follow negative partner comments with negative

comments. In short, as noted by Medley (1977), "...if both partners are deeply committed to maintaining the paired nature of their relationship, each is likely willingly to engage in accommodation, compromise and the general avoidance of potentially troublesome areas" (p. 6-7).

A related point concerns the manner in which personally committed individuals resolve conflict and respond to dissatisfaction and distress in their relationship. In general, the greater the commitment to one's spouse, the more likely one is to engage in constructive problem-sovling (Swensen & Trahaug, 1985) and to use positive conflict resolution tactics (Scanzoni & Arnett, 1987). A more detailed treatment of the issue of responses to dissatisfaction in close relationships is provided by Rusbult, Zembrodt, and Gunn (1982) and Rusbult, Johnson, and Morrow (1986), who proposed four potential actions which might be taken by unhappy couples: *exit*, which involves ending the relationship or behaving in a deliberately destructive manner; *voice*, which involves actively and constructively attempting to improve the relationship; *loyalty*, which involves remaining passively loyal to the relationship and waiting for conditions to improve; and *neglect*, which involves passively allowing the relationship to atrophy. Results of analyses involving investment model variables as predictors of these responses to dissatisfaction indicated that the constructive responses of voice and loyalty fairly consistently produced more favorable immediate consequences and later satisfaction and commitment than did exit and neglect responses.

Finally, as proposed by Rusbult (1980, 1983), the strength of an individual's commitment to his or her partner increases as a function of the degree to which he or she invests in the relationship. In this context, an investment refers to anything that an individual puts into a relationship that he or she could not easily recover if the relationship were to end. Thus, for example, time, energy, and money spent on the

relationship are regarded as investments, as are resources emergent from the relationship itself, such as mutual friends. In several studies, Rusbult and her colleagues obtained considerable support for the positive relationship between investment and personal commitment for dating and married couples (Felmlee, Sprecher, & Bassin, 1990; Lund, 1985; Rusbult, 1980, 1983; Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986; Sprecher, 1988), homosexual couples (Duffy & Rusbult, 1986; Lange, 1989), and employer's commitment to their place of employment (Rusbult & Farrell, 1983).

Some investigators, however, have obtained results that are inconsistent with investment model predictions, suggesting that some qualifications to the model may be needed. For example, the investment model postulates that the act of investing in one's romantic relationship is positively related to commitment. However, Beach (1985) and Bauserman and Arias (1992) have demonstrated that this result does not always obtain. For example, Beach (1985) found that although Commitment to Spouse is significantly related to the perceived costs of making investments in one's relationship and with expectations of success as a result of investing, neither total level nor success of previous investment accounted for unique variance in commitment. Further, in their study of domestically victimized wives, Bauserman and Arias (1992) observed that whether or not investing predicts commitment in marriage depends on how successful past investments have been. Specifically, for abused women, investments that have "paid off" in the past (e.g., investments that have resulted in affection from the husband or in the cessation of abuse) are positively related to their commitment, whereas failed investments are inversely related to commitment. Thus, it appears that *any* investment will not necessarily result in greater personal commitment, but only those that have yielded positive outcomes in the past.

Demographic Variables

Although most studies of Commitment to Spouse report data pertaining to the demographic characteristics of samples, it is uncommon for investigators to incorporate these characteristics into analyses involving personal commitment. Indeed, such analyses were performed in only 6 studies and yielded mostly inconsistent results. For example, whereas Goltz (1987), and Larson and Goltz (1989) reported a positive relationship between income and educational level and personal commitment, these socioeconomic indices were not significantly related to commitment in studies by Eyman (1984), Kimmons (1981), Jorgensen (1979), and Pramann (1986). The age of one's children was positively related to Commitment to Spouse in one study (Goltz, 1987), but unrelated to the number of children and the presense or absense of children in four studies (Eyman, 1984; Kimmons, 1981; Pramann, 1986; Sabatelli & Cecil-Pigo, 1985). Finally, Commitment to Spouse is unrelated to the length of marriage and to the number of times a spouse has been married (Eyman, 1984; Pramann, 1986; Sabatelli & Cecil-Pigo, 1985).

Gender Differences

Another fairly consistent finding is that females tend to be more personally committed than males. Indeed, differences in the experience of commitment for males and females were obtained in 14 of 16 studies in which gender was a measured variable; women reported greater Commitment to Spouse in nine studies (Duffy & Rusbult, 1986; Jayroe, 1979; Kimmons, 1981; Melcher, 1989; Morrow, 1988; Murstein & MacDonald, 1983; Pramann, 1986; Sabatelli & Cecil-Pigo, 1985; Singh & Khullar, 1989). In the remaining five studies, differences in the amount of commitment were not assessed; rather, males and females were compared with respect to the influence of commitment on other outcome variables. For example, Brewer

(1993) found that husbands tend to struggle more with competing commitments (e.g, between marriage and career) and feel more conflicted about their marital commitment than do wives. Further, the initial level of commitment for husbands entering marital therapy with their wives is not predictive of changes in satisfaction during therapy, whereas pretherapy commitment is a significant predictor of changes in satisfaction for wives (Beach & Broderick, 1983). Interestingly, though, satisfaction appears to have a greater effect on commitment for males than for females (Sprecher, 1988). Additionally, commitment has been shown to be related to males' own level of satisfaction but not their wife's, whereas the wife's commitment is predictive of both her own and her husband's satisfaction (Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988). Finally, males and females differ on the extent to whcih investment model variables predict commitment (Davis & Strube, 1993); whereas satisfaction level and the attractiveness of alternatives are predictors of commitment for females, only the attractiveness of alternatives is predictive of commitment for males. Taken together, these results seem to suggest that the direction of causality for satisfaction and commitment as well as the dynamic interaction of these variables in marriage vary as a function of gender.

Ethnic Differences

Only two studies have examined potential differences in Commitment to Spouse on the basis of ethnicity. Davis and Strube (1993) attempted to determine whether differences in the gender ratio for Caucasian and African Americans would influence the personal commitment experienced by dating couples in each ethnic group. Only one significant race effect was obtained: increases in commitment as a function of increases in relationship satisfaction were noted for white males but not for black males. Comparisons of white and black couples on personal commitment also failed to yield significant results in a study by Kimmons (1981).

Personality Factors

Despite the important role of personality in the functioning of close personal relationships (Cooley, 1902; Hogan, 1983; Sullivan, 1953), almost no research has examined the contribution of personality traits to the prediction of interpersonal commitment. Five studies have included measures of dispositional characteristics in analyses involving Commitment to Sposue, but in each study, the personality variable examined was of minimal importance with respect to the other study results. Nevertheless, these studies represent the initial steps toward a broader understanding of the factors that influence interpersonal commitment and relationship stability. Specifically, Commitment to Spouse has been found to correlate in a positive direction with measures of defendance (defined as interpersonal stubbornness and reactivity in kind to another's negative behavior; Beach, 1985), self-actualization (Jayroe, 1979), and dependability and predictability (Lange, 1989), and inversely with external locus of control (Scanzoni & Arnett, 1987).

Two studies have assessed the relationship between sex role identification and Commitment to Spouse, yielding mixed results. In a study comparing heterosexual and homosexual couples on several variables of interpersonal relevance, Lange (1989) found that across participants in both sexual preference groups, commitment to one's partner was positively related to psychological femininity and inversely related to psychological masculinity. By contrast, Hingst, Hyman, and Salmon (1985) found no relationship between sex role identification and sexual exclusivity, a variable that was used as a proxy for commitment. These authors did note, however, that having an overprotective father as a child is predictive of one's sexual exclusivity as an adult. While this finding does not provide direct support for the role of personality factors in the development of interpersonal commitment, it is consistent with current research on

the contribution of childhood attachment patterns to the quality of subsequent romantic relationships, a process which has been discussed in terms of personality development (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994).

Commitment to Marriage

Vow of Permanence, Obligation and Duty

In contrast to Commitment to Spouse, in which the focus is on spouses' personal desire to remain with another and to grow in a love relationship with that person, the object of Commitment to Marriage is the relationship itself. From this perspective, the value of marriage is independent of one's feelings about one's spouse. Accordingly, a marital relationship may be maintained for its own sake and despite variations in the level of one's commitment to his or her spouse as a person. Often, this maintenance is borne from spouses' sense of obligation or duty to honor their vows of permanence. In this regard, Robinson and Blanton (1993) reported that many couples refer to the expectation that the marriage will endure indefinitely and indicate that divorce is not a viable response to dissatisfaction. Such a commitment may serve as a framework within which to interpret disillusionment or dissatisfaction with one's spouse, enabling partners to remain together during difficult times. On the other hand, the marital relationship itself is frequently considered to be an espeicially valuable and worthy "object," deserving of as much attention and respect as one's partner (Vanderkooy-vos, 1988). Of course, speaking of the marriage as an entity that is separate from the couple is something of a false distinction; clearly one cannot have a marriage without a husband and wife. The psychological distinction between one's marriage and one's spouse, however, is real, as evidenced by the different ways in which husbands and wives talk about the two terms (Brewer, 1993).

Religious Orientation, Spirituality, and Morality

Common to studies that assess the moral/normative dimension of commitment are analyses that examine the degree to which commitment to the marital relationship is related to attitudes about religion, spirituality, and moral responsibility, and to such behaviors as church attendance and participation in other religious observances. In general, most findings are supportive of the connection between religious orientation and marital commitment. For example, Goltz (1987) and Larson and Goltz (1989) found that whereas religious homogamy between husbands and wives did not predict the spouses' commitment to their marriage, commitment was predicted by participation in religious services and activities. Further, evidence is available from Pramann (1986) and Scanzoni and Arnett (1987) suggesting that Commitment to Marriage is related to commitment to God, religious devoutness, and to the importance of one's religion in one's life.

A study by Melcher (1989) indicated that different types of religiosity have differing degrees of association with Commitment to Marriage. Specifically, Melcher (1989) distinguished five forms of religiosity: Ideological, Ritualistic, Experiential, Consequential, and Intellectual. These categories reflect a continuum of "devoutness" ranging from defining one's life and purpose in it with respect to one's religious beliefs (Ideological) to entertaining spiritual thoughts as a matter of intellectual exercise (Intellectual). By regressing these dimensions of religiosity onto marital commitment, Melcher found that in addition to marital satisfaction and parental divorce, Ideological religiosity emerged as a significant predictor of commitment for females, whereas Consequential religiosity accounted for unique variance in commitment for males. Intellectual religiosity was unrelated to commitment in this analysis.

Religious devoutness and spirituality seems to encourage commitment to marriage primarily through the value that is placed on the marriage bond and through spiritual support in times of difficulty (Robinson & Blanton, 1993). An alternative explanation is provided by Melcher (1989), who adopted a social exchange perspective in describing the connection between spirituality and marital commitment. In this approach, the preservation of the marital bond is the result of each spouse's expectation of both immediate and eternal rewards for working toward keeping the marriage intact. That is, because marriage is considered a sacred union, honoring the marital bond may be seen by some spouses as being obedient to God and thus deserving of divine favor. It is also possible that marital commitment is enhanced through spirituality by making it "easier" to forgive one's spouse and trusting God to impart penalties and punishments to a spouse who has behaved inappropriately.

Satisfaction, Adjustment, and Happiness

Only three studies in which a measure of Commitment to Marriage was used have focused explicitly on relationship quality variables. Dean and Spanier (1974) found that individuals who reported high marital adjustment were also likely to indicate that they very much wanted their marriage to succeed and would do everything within their power to see that it did. Further, compared to spouses who characterized themselves as voluntarily committed (i.e., committed as long as the relationship is rewarding), spouses who endorsed institutional commitment (the conviction that marriage is a lifetime commitment that should not be broken even if the partners are unhappy) were less likely to indicate that the quality of their marriage was in decline (Kersten, 1988). It may be that spouses who believe that marriage is a lifetime commitment also wish to believe that they love and are satisfied with their partner, and may thus report less disaffection in marriage as a means of reducing the dissonance that

occurs during times of distress. Other explanations also are possible, however (Kersten, 1988). Finally, some evidence also supports the idea that Commitment to Marriage is associated with feelings of love and caring (Godwin & Scanzoni, 1989).

Despite the fact that relationship quality and Commitment to Marriage were positively associated in all of the aforementioned studies, there is good reason to believe that the nature of this association depends on other factors. For example, whereas it is easy to understand why spouses in relatively harmonious and satisfying relationships might indicate that they are highly committed to the institution of marriage, it is also likely that marital commitment may hold couples together despite variations in satisfaction, thereby serving a barrier function (Heaton & Albrecht, 1991; Robinsons & Blanton, 1993). Thus, spouses may report that, because of factors that are external to the relationship (e.g., the presence of children in the home, work-related stressors, etc.), the quality of their marriage is lower than it might otherwise be, but that they are nevertheless committed to maintaining their marriage. Despite the reasonableness of this scenario, the empirical verification of the dynamic relationship among marital quality, situational factors, and the experience of Commitment to Marriage remains a goal for future research.

Behavioral Correlates

Behavioral correlates of commitment to the marital relationship were found in two studies. Robinson and Blanton (1993) noted that couples who had been married over 35 years reported that their communication had improved over the course of their marriage. Apparently, by remaining married through trying times, these spouses had greater opportunity to learn how to communicate with one another compared to spouses whose marriages had ended. Moreover, it is possible that as the couples communicated about problem areas in their marriage, they were able to resolve conflicts which might

otherwise have weakened the marital bond. In both cases, it appears that commitment to the marital relationship held the couple together while they negotiatied, argued, and attempted to resolve their conflicts.

In a second study, Godwin and Scanzoni (1989) explored the extent to which Commitment to Marriage influences decision-making between spouses. Of particular interest to these investigators was the relationship between commitment and four interpersonal dimensions of the decision-making process: cooperativeness, coerciveness, control, and consensus. Results of correlational analyses indicated that wive's control was associated with their husband's commitment to the marital relationship, such that husbands who were more committed were more likely to respond positively to their wife's suggestions, ideas, and directives. Commitment to Marriage thus appears to have important effects on behaviors that promote equity in marital decision-making.

Gender Differences

Only two studies have examined gender differences in Commitment to Marriage. In her qualitative analysis of interviews with married couples, Brewer (1993) noted that wives differed from husbands along a number of commitment-relevant dimensions. Speicifically, wives reported a greater variety of meanings for commitment, had much more clearly defined personal conceptualizations of commitment, and engaged in a larger number of commitment-related behaviors than did their husbands. Brewer (1993) argued that these findings indicate that males and females differ not only in the magnitude of their marital commitment, but also in the ways in which they think about and act upon their commitment. By contrast, Kimmons (1981) failed to find gender differences on her measure of normative commitment (a decision to build and maintain a relationship and to act in accordance with that

decision). It may be that these inconsistencies are the result of the different assessment methods used by each investigator, but additional research is clearly called for at this point in order to determine if differences in Commitment to Marriage on the basis of gender are reliable.

Barriers to Dissolution

External Constraints

The primary experiential feature of Barriers to Dissolution is the feeling of entrapment in a marriage brought about by external constraints. Researchers have identified several background and demographic characteristics and other externally constraining factors which covary reliably with measures of constraint commitment (Goltz, 1987; Green & Sporakowski, 1983; Larson & Goltz, 1989; Pramann, 1986; Robinson & Blanton, 1993; Sabatelli & Cecil-Pigo, 1985). For example, factors that are positively related to feelings of entrapment include the age of the partners, length of marriage, number of children, establishment within and connection to one's neighborhood or community, and religious affiliation and participation. Moreover, constraint commitment has been shown to be inversely related to education level, income, and the number of times married and divorced.

When these correlates are examined as a set, a fairly clear picture of the "entrapped spouse" emerges. First, he or she has made large investments in the relationship in the form of time, energy, children,and financial resources which, as noted by Becker (1960), may serve to bind an individual to his or her marriage long after the relationship has become dissatisfying. Spouses may feel entrapped because, although they are unhappy, they are unwilling to sacrifice the many years spent toiling in the marriage, raising children, and so forth. Second, the entrapped spouse has

become enmeshed in his or her social network so that considerations of divorce must be tempered by concerns over the response of family members and friends to such an action. Unhappily married individuals may refrain from divorcing because of fear of social exclusion or because they value the connections with others that might be severed upon divorce (e.g., relationships with in-laws). Finally, entrapped spouses seem to be characterized by socioeconomic impoverishment. This is particularly true for wives who are financially dependent on their husbands and have no skills, training, or education that would make them marketable in the workplace, but is also true for husbands who have a low income, low education, and few opportunities for advancement.

Gender Differences

Studies by Goltz (1987), Green (1983), and Green and Sporakowski (1983) suggest that the relevant sources of constraint differ for husbands and wives. For example, Goltz (1987) noted that the relationship between age at first marriage and constraint commitment is different for husbands and wives; whereas males married before the age of 20 and after the age of 50 reported the lowest and highest degree of constraint commitment respectively, females demonstrated the highest degree of constraint commitment when they married for the first time between the ages of 30 and 49. Additional differences were noted in two studies by Green (1983; Green & Sporakowski, 1983). For example, external pressure to remain married imposed by members of the social network, dependent children, and financial costs were inversely related to adjustment following divorce for females but not for males. Further, the relationship between marital quality and marital stability is mediated by external constraints for males but not for females. These differences seem to reflect differential

responsiveness over the course of the marriage to the various attraction and barrier forces that exist in marriage (Green, 1983).

Conclusions

Several conclusions may be drawn from this review of the empirical literature on interpersonal commitment. First, the conceptual scheme emphasizing the attraction, moral/normative, and constraining dimensions of commitment proved to be effective not only in accounting for the themes underlying various theoretical, definitional, and phenomenological treatments of the construct, but also in organizing the relevant empirical literature. Each study reviewed could be assigned to one of the three dimensions through an examination of the operational definitions of commitment provided by the author or though an analysis of items comprising the measures of commitment employed. Although certain assumptions had to be made regarding the possible intentions of the investigators in their selection of global or composite commitment measures and the likely response patterns of study participants to these measures, it nevertheless appears that the framework demonstrated considerable organizational utility.

Second, as expected, it was possible to identify particular sets of correlates for each of the dimensions of commitment. Commitment to Spouse is related to several characteristics of relationships that may be described as positive, healthy, and self-affirming, including satisfaction, love, intimacy, congruence, and the tendency to engage in relationships enhancing behaviors. Commitment to Marriage is associated with variables reflective of integrity, responsibility, duty, and religiosity, factors that may support the temporal integrity of the relationship despite variations in relationship quality. Finally, Barriers to Dissolution was related to a variety of external constraints.

The themes reflected in these correlates are consistent with the meaning of the underlying dimensions of commitment.

Finally, a clear discrepancy in the number of studies focusing on each of the dimensions of commitment was apparent in the empirical review. In particular, the vast majority of studies of interpersonal commitment examined the attraction dimension. This outcome is likely the result of researchers' interest in the positive features of close relationships and in the role of commitment in maintaining satisfying relationships. A significant, albeit somewhat smaller number of studies assessed the moral/normative dimension of commitment, indicating that while quality variables still are of primary concern to researchers, greater attention is being devoted to couples' decision to remain together even when their relationship is less than satisfying. The smallest number of studies examined the various barriers to relationship termination. The likely reason for this is that investigators are less interested in structural constraints as predictors of relationship stability because such constraints are becoming less salient in spouses' decision to remain together (Attridge, 1994; Heaton & Albrecht, 1991).

CHAPTER 3

THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF INTERPERSONAL COMMITMENT: AN INTEGRATIVE ANALYSIS

The preceding chapter showed that the wide variety of conceptualizations and definitions of interpersonal commitment seem to coalesce into three broad dimensions and that the literature on interpersonal commitment may be parsimoniously organized with respect to these dimensions. These conclusions were drawn on the basis of thematic similarities among competing theoretical models, definitions, methods of assessment, and responses to unstructured interview questions. While such a qualitative analysis of the literature has merit, a more compelling demonstration that interpersonal commitment is a construct with three global dimensions would involve testing this notion empirically. The goal of this chapter is to employ a variety of empirical strategies to assess the extent to which commitment consists of attraction, moral/normative, and constraining features.

Study 1 describes the development of an inventory designed to reflect the common dimensions of commitment described in the literature. The position taken here is that the logic inherent in scale construction and item selection can also answer questions regarding the structure and utility of divergent conceptualizations of commitment (cf. Loevenger, 1957; Tellegen & Waller, 1993). Specifically, by providing respondents with items written to represent the various definitions of commitment, it is possible to assess the similarities and differences among these definitions and, further, to compare their relative merits in assessing the essential characteristics of marital commitment. Consistent with the preceding review, it is

expected that the various aspects of commitment presented in the literature will fall into three primary conceptual domains corresponding to attraction, constraining, and moral dimensions.

Five studies will then examine the extent to which these dimensions reflect a useful conceptualization of commitment. First, in Study 2, the issue of criterion-related validity will be addressed by using the three dimensions of commitment to distinguish among individuals engaged in relationships at differing stages of development (e.g., dating, engaged, married, divorced) and among married persons reporting different levels of marital satisfaction. Second, Studies 3 and 4 will endeavor to demonstrate the construct validity of the three dimensions of commitment by examining the intercorrelation of scores measuring these dimensions with variables of varying theoretical relevance (Study 3), and by using ratings of couple commitment by outside observers to demonstrate the degree to which the three dimensions reflect shared beliefs about marital commitment (Study 4). Finally, Studies 5 and 6 will examine the extent to which current measures of marital commitment reflect the tripartite conceptualization of commitment. Specifically, in Study 5, extant indices of commitment will be compared with the three dimensions of commitment to determine the degree of convergence among conceptually similar measures, whereas Study 6 will seek to support the three-factor conceptualization of commitment by examining the factor structure of items taken from the existing commitment measures described in Study 5.

Samples

Although most previous research on relational commitment has been conducted using college students involved in dating relationships, the focus of this article will be

on commitment as it is experienced by married individuals. While commitment undoubtedly is an important factor in the evolution of at least some dating relationships, it may be more salient within the context of marriage, which tends to be characterized by an interpersonal, social, and legal complexity that is absent in most dating partnerships (e.g., Cupach & Metts, 1986).

Four samples of married individuals (N = 1417) and one sample of unmarried persons (N = 370) participated in the six studies described below. The sample of unmarried respondents was included in analyses where direct comparisons of married and unmarried individuals were undertaken. Sample 1 consisted of 439 participants who responded to demographic items and to an initial set of 135 items written to reflect the aspects of commitment presented in the literature. The dimensions of commitment measure used in subsequent studies emerged from these participants' responses to this initial set of items. Sample 2 was comprised of 200 married participants who completed the demographic items and the resultant 45-item measure of commitment developed in Study 1. Sample 3 consisted of 598 participants who completed demographic items and the 45-item measure of commitment. In addition, subsets of this sample completed various alternative measures of commitment as well as a large number of other measures designed to assess specific constructs relevant to interpersonal relationships and personality. Sample 4 consisted of 347 unmarried participants involved in romantic relationships (casually dating, seriously dating, and engaged to be married) and 23 divorced individuals who completed the same set of measures as participants in Sample 3. Finally, Sample 5 consisted of 90 married couples and their relatives, including children (N = 88), siblings (N = 62), parents (N = 63), and more distant relatives (e.g., cousins, nephews and nieces, in-laws, etc.; N = 19). All participants in this sample completed the 45-item measure of the

dimensions of commitment and the demographic items; however, whereas the married couples completed the commitment measure for themselves, the relatives rated the target couple's level of commitment.

Considerable homogeneity was found among the four samples of married respondents. Most participants were Caucasian (92%), female (63%), earned less than $50,000 (83%), and were between the ages of 18 and 79 (mean = 40.5). The dating sample (Sample 4) was similar to the married samples in ethnicity (86% Caucasian), and gender breakdown (60% female), but were younger (mean age = 20.4) and had considerably lower annual incomes (82% earned less than $20,000).

Assessing the Dimensionality of Marital Commitment

Study 1

Study 1 used standard psychometric procedures to explore the interrelationship of various definitions and conceptualizations of commitment found in the literature (Jackson, 1970, 1971; Loevenger, 1957; Tellegen & Waller, 1993).

Method

Item Generation. After reviewing the literature on marital commitment, 135 items were written to reflect the following domains, all of which reflect, to some degree, the aspects of commitment that have received the most theoretical and empirical attention in recent years: (a) Quality of Alternatives (e.g., "I have to stay with my spouse because I couldn't find anyone better"), (b) Investments (e.g., "I invest so much of my time and energy into my marriage that I feel forced to keep it going"), (c) Relational Identity (e.g., "I identify more strongly with my marriage than I do with myself as an individual"), (d) Personal Dedication (e.g., "I'm dedicated to making my marriage as fulfilling as it can be"), (e) Moral Constraints (e.g., "I could never leave

my spouse because it would go against everything I believe in"), (f) Social Constraints (e.g., "A divorce would ruin my reputation"), (g) Family Constraints (e.g., "I have to stay married to my spouse or else my family will think badly of me"), (h) Financial Constraints (e.g., "It would be very financially difficult for me to leave my spouse"), (i) Commitment to the Marital Relationship (e.g., "The marriage relationship is extremely valuable in and of itself"), (j) Promise (e.g., "I've promised my spouse that I would never leave him/her"), and (k) Fringe Benefits (e.g., "Marrying my spouse raised my social standing"). The items were administered to participants comprising Sample 1.

Item Selection. An exploratory principal components analysis with varimax rotation was performed on participants' responses in order to provide an initial estimate of the number of dimensions underlying the set of items and to guide subsequent test construction procedures. The principal components analysis extracted six factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0; however, an examination of the scree plot and rotated factor matrix suggested the importance and clarity of only three of these factors. Accordingly, a second principal components analysis was performed specifying a three factor solution. The first factor accounted for 23.7% of the variance and consisted primarily of items reflecting Personal Dedication; the second factor accounted for 8.8% of the variance and consisted primarily of items reflecting Moral Constraint, Commitment to the Marital Relationship, and Social Constraint; the third factor accounted for 3.9% of the variance and consisted primarily of items reflecting Fringe Benefits, Investments, and Financial Constraints. Collectively, the three factors accounted for 36.4% of the variance in participants' responses.

Using the results of this preliminary factor analysis as a guide, further analyses were performed to eliminate items which correlated with more than one factor. An

item was retained if it met each of two conditions: (a) it loaded on one of the three factors at .30 or greater (items with loadings of .30 or higher on more than one factor were eliminated)[1]; and (b) if the correlation between that item and its factor exceeded the correlation between the item and any of the other factors by at least .20 (see Jackson, 1970). Together, these procedures resulted in the elimination of 56 items. An examination of the items discarded through this procedure indicated primarily items written to reflect the dimensions of Fringe Benefits, Financial Constraints, Relational Identity, and Quality of Alternatives. The remaining 79 items were subjected to a series of reliability analysis in order to further purify each of the three factors. In these analyses, 15 items from each factor were selected, on the basis of the highest item-total correlation, to represent the three factors.

Results

Reliability was assessed by calculating coefficient alpha and mean inter-item correlations for the three dimensions of commitment. Results of these analyses supported the internal consistency of the dimensions: for the first dimension, alpha was .91 and the mean inter-item correlation was .40. The corresponding values for the second and third dimensions were .89 and .34, and .86 and .28. Additional evidence for the reliability of the three dimensions was provided by subjecting the 45 items to a principal components analysis in a separate sample of 200 married individuals (Sample 2). Results of this analysis confirm the stable internal structure of the dimensions of commitment: a three-factor solution was obtained, with nearly all of the items from each dimension loading only on one factor. Together, the three factors accounted for 46% of the variance in participants' responses. The results of the principal components analysis are presented in Table 4. Based on item content, the three dimensions were labeled Commitment to Spouse (commitment to one's marital partner

Table 4

Factor Loadings for Commitment Items

Item #	Item	Factors I	II	III
18.	I want to grow old with my spouse.	**.81**	.11	-.03
26.	When I imagine what my life will be like in the future, I always see my spouse standing next to me.	**.81**	.12	.09
1.	I'm dedicated to making my marriage as fulfilling as it can be.	**.80**	.01	-.01
25.	I like knowing that my spouse and I form an inseparable unit.	**.79**	.13	.07
8.	I am completely devoted to my spouse.	**.79**	-.09	.18
29.	I'm not very devoted to my spouse.(R)	**.71**	.08	-.18
33.	I often think that my spouse and I have too many irreconcilable differences.(R)	**.68**	-.07	-.01
11.	When things go wrong in my marriage, I consider getting a divorce.(R)	**.68**	-.03	-.04
37.	I am not confident that my marriage will last forever.(R)	**.68**	.16	.09
45.	My future plans do not include my spouse.(R)	**.64**	.14	-.07

(Table 4 continues)

(Table 4 continued)

Factor Loadings for Commitment Items

Item #	Item	Factors I	II	III
32.	When my spouse and I promised "to have and to hold", we knew that it meant forever.	**.60**	.35	-.15
22.	I believe in the sanctity of marriage.	**.60**	.40	-.17
39.	I often think about what it would be like to be romantically involved with someone other than my spouse.(R)	**.60**	.12	-.15
4.	No matter what, my spouse knows that I'll always be there for him/her.	**.59**	.15	-.06
19.	I would be shattered if my spouse and I divorced.	**.59**	.22	.19
36.	I don't believe that marriages should last forever.(R)	**.55**	.36	-.27
14.	There is nothing that I wouldn't sacrifice for my spouse.	**.54**	.08	.31
28.	I frequently daydream about what it would be like to be married to someone other than my spouse.(R)	**.43**	.18	-.35

(Table 4 continues)

(Table 4 continued)

Factor Loadings for Commitment Items

Item #	Item	Factors I	II	III
16.	I don't feel obligated to remain married to my spouse.(R)	**.29**	.12	.17
35.	I don't think it's morally wrong to divorce your spouse.(R)	-.08	**.76**	-.01
3.	It is morally wrong to divorce your spouse.	.20	**.69**	.29
13.	I truly believe that spouses should remain devoted to one another "for better or for worse".	.24	**.63**	.05
21.	I could never leave my spouse because it would go against everything I believe in.	.20	**.62**	.48
24.	If there are too many problems in a marriage, it's o.k. to get a divorce.(R)	.25	**.62**	.08
9.	Marriages are supposed to last forever.	.39	**.60**	-.08
42.	I believe that marriage is for life regardless of what happens.	.04	**.58**	.43

(Table 4 continues)

(Table 4 continued)

Factor Loadings for Commitment Items

Item #	Item	Factors I	II	III
23.	A marriage should be protected at all costs.	.33	**.57**	.25
27.	Under no circumstances should the marriage bond be broken.	.04	**.55**	.26
38.	My spouse and I remain married because we value the institution of marriage.	.04	**.53**	.18
31.	I can imagine several situations in which the marriage bond should be broken.(R)	.17	**.49**	.25
30.	I feel free to divorce my spouse if I so desire.(R)	.29	**.40**	.25
6.	I was raised to believe that once one gets married, one doesn't get divorced, no matter how unsatisfying the marriage may be.	-.15	**.40**	.25
34.	I don't think I could handle the shame of being divorced.	-.09	.30	**.69**
43.	I'm afraid that if I were to leave my spouse, God would punish me	-.01	.44	**.63**

(Table 4 continues)

(Table 4 continued)

Factor Loadings for Commitment Items

Item #	Item	Factors I	II	III
2.	A divorce would ruin my reputation.	.05	.28	**.62**
5.	I have to stay married to my spouse or else my family will think badly of me.	.06	.09	**.62**
40.	It would be shameful if my spouse and I divorced or separated.	-.01	.28	**.61**
15.	My family would strongly disapprove if I divorced my spouse.	.09	.05	**.61**
20.	My friends would disapprove if I ended my marriage.	-.07	-.11	**.60**
7.	It would be humiliating if my spouse and I divorced.	.04	.39	**.60**
41.	I could never leave my spouse; I have too much invested in him/her.	-.07	.25	**.59**
44.	It would be particularly hard on my family and friends if my spouse and I divorced.	.07	.10	**.57**

(Table 4 continues)

(Table 4 continued)

Factor Loadings for Commitment Items

Item #	Item	Factors I	II	III
17.	I've spent so much money on my relationship with my spouse that I could never divorce him/her.	-.20	.02	**.53**
10.	Even if I wanted to, it would be impossible for me to leave my spouse.	.03	.36	**.50**
12.	I would not be embarrassed to get a divorce.(R)	.07	.34	**.35**

based on devotion and personal dedication), Commitment to Marriage (commitment to one's marital relationship as a sacred institution based on one's sense of moral obligation), and Barriers to Dissolution (external factors which make leaving one's marriage difficult, such as family disapproval or the likelihood of financial hardship). Collectively, these elements will hereafter be referred to as the dimensions of commitment, and the instrument reflecting these elements will be called the Dimensions of Commitment Inventory (DCI).

As an initial test of the conceptual independence of the three dimensions of commitment, correlations were computed for scores determined from Commitment to Spouse, Commitment to Marriage, and Barriers to Dissolution items using the responses provided by participants in Sample 2. Results indicated that the correlation between the Commitment to Spouse and Barriers to Dissolution dimensions was unreliable (r = .14), whereas the correlation between Commitment to Marriage and both Commitment to Spouse (r = .53) and Barriers to Dissolution (r = .60) were significantly different from zero and suggested that Commitment to Spouse shares features with both constructs. The proportion of shared variance in both cases, however, (r^2 = .28 and .36, respectively), suggested that Commitment to Marriage is best regarded as a separate, albeit related, construct.

Discussion

The three factor structure of commitment obtained in this study is consistent with our expectations and suggests that spouses' understanding and experience of commitment falls within the domains of wanting to stay married, feeling morally bound to stay married, and feeling trapped in a marriage. This conceptualization most strongly resembles the Commitment Framework presented by Johnson (1973, 1991), who suggested that spouses remain married because they want to (Personal

Commitment), because they ought to (Moral Commitment), or because they have to (Structural Commitment). The Commitment Framework is rooted in the phenomenology of the decision to persist in a relationship, and the present results suggested that there is utility in this experiential focus. It also is important to point out that the three dimensions of commitment obtained in this study resemble those described in various other definitions and models of commitment as well, and may be representative of fundamental elements common to these definitions and models. Furthermore, labeling these dimensions Commitment to Spouse, Commitment to Marriage, and Barriers to Dissolution highlights the idea that commitment is an individually held attitude that may differ both in valence and with respect to the referent or object of the commitment.

Given the major role of alternative attractions in the social exchange account of relational commitment, it is noteworthy that the items written to reflect this dimension failed to cluster reliably with any of the factors obtained in this study. An examination of the original factor loading matrix revealed that of the 7 items written to reflect the attractiveness of alternative partners, 1 loaded on the Barriers to Dissolution factor, 3 loaded on the Commitment to Spouse factor, and 3 failed to load significantly on any of the factors. One possible reason for the poor showing of these items is that they reflected only the likelihood of obtaining alternative partners and not other viable alternatives to a relationship (such as remaining single). However, similar difficulties in obtaining a theoretically meaningful cluster of alternative partner items were reported by Stanley and Markman (1992), suggesting that respondent's judgments of the items assessing alternatives to one's current marriage differ from what would be expected according to social exchange theory.

Assessing the Validity of the Three Dimensions of Commitment

Study 2

The initial test of the validity of the three dimensions of commitment involved their ability to discriminate among relationships at various stages of development as well as marital relationships that differed in overall quality. Based on previous research on the differences between dating and married couples (e.g., Cupach & Metts, 1986; Stafford & Canary, 1991), it was expected that individuals in dating relationships would express less commitment to their current partners and relationships than married or engaged individuals. Furthermore, divorced individuals were expected to report being less committed to their former mate and to their marriage than either married or dating individuals. Finally, it was anticipated that married and engaged individuals would ascribe greater salience to barriers to terminating their relationship than either dating or divorced individuals. With respect to relationship quality, married individuals who characterized their marriage as highly satisfying were expected to be more committed to one another and to their relationships than individuals who characterized their marriages as less satisfying, and it was believed that less-satisfied spouses would report greater sensitivity to barriers to marital dissolution than spouses who were relatively more satisfied with their marriage.

Method

Procedure. Married and unmarried respondents from Samples 3 and 4 participated in this study. Although these samples completed several measures (see Samples section above), only responses to the Dimensions of Commitment Inventory and to the Satisfaction subscale of the Marital Satisfaction and Commitment Scales (Jones et al., 1995) were used in the present analyses. Instructions for completing these measures were altered to reflect the relationship status of the respondent.

Specifically, dating and engaged participants were asked to respond to the items with respect to their current dating partner whereas divorced participants were asked to respond to the items with respect to their former spouse at the time of the divorce. Thus, the Commitment to Spouse and Commitment to Marriage dimensions may be relabelled "Commitment to Partner" and "Commitment to Relationship" for these participants.

Results

Mean scores and standard deviations for the three dimensions of commitment are shown in Table 5 for each category of romantic relationship. The results of one-way analyses of variance indicated that the individuals in the five relationship types differed significantly in their responses to the Commitment to Spouse/Partner ($F[4, 805] = 17.99$, $p < .001$) and Commitment to Marriage/Relationship dimensions ($F[4, 805] = 4.58$, $p < .002$); however, contrary to expectations, none of the groups differed significantly in their responses to the Barriers dimension ($F[4, 805] = .70$). An analysis of group means (using the Tukey post hoc test) revealed that divorced individuals obtained significantly lower mean scores than all other groups on Commitment to Spouse/Partner and Commitment to Marriage/Relationship. Casually dating individuals obtained significantly lower mean scores on Commitment to Spouse/Partner than seriously dating, engaged, and married individuals, but significantly higher mean scores than divorced individuals. Seriously dating, engaged, and married individuals did not differ significantly from one another on any of the dimensions of commitment.

Comparisons of married individuals on the basis of marital quality were undertaken by dividing the married participants ($N = 349$) into high and low marital

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations of the Three Dimensions of Commitment for Individuals in Different Relationship Types

	Commitment to Spouse		Commitment to Marriage		Barriers to Dissolution	
Relationship Status	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Casually Dating	57.7	10.0	49.8	9.5	37.8	8.9
Seriously Dating	61.8	9.0	50.6	9.7	37.5	8.9
Engaged	64.9	7.6	53.1	10.0	38.5	9.1
Married	61.6	9.6	50.5	10.3	38.0	9.1
Divorced	47.9	9.3	42.6	9.2	35.1	7.1

satisfaction groups. Participants whose marital satisfaction scores on the Marital Satisfaction and Commitment Scale (Jones et al., 1995) were one standard deviation above or below the sample mean were classified into the high and low marital satisfaction groups, respectively[2]. Following this procedure, a total of 44 participants (18 males, mean age = 39.9 years, mean length of marriage = 15.5 years; 26 females, mean age = 34.8 years, mean length of marriage = 14 years) were classified into the high satisfaction group and 41 participants (17 males, mean age = 34.4 years, mean length of marriage = 9.2 years; 24 females, mean age = 35.5 years, mean length of marriage = 12.4 years) were classified into the low satisfaction group.

Mean scores and standard deviations for the dimensions of commitment are shown in Table 6 for each group. As compared to participants in the low satisfaction group, participants in the high satisfaction group reported significantly greater commitment to their spouse ($t(2, 83) = 10.31$, $p < .0001$) and to their marriage ($t(2, 83) = 2.29$, $p < .03$), and significantly less external pressure to remain married ($t(2, 83) = -2.38$, $p < .02$).

Discussion

The purpose of Study 2 was to determine whether the three dimensions of commitment could differentiate among individuals participating in diverse relationship types. The results of this study generally supported expectations in that couples at different stages of relationship development as well as individuals whose relationship was seen as either satisfying or dissatisfying tended to respond differently to the Commitment to Spouse and Commitment to Marriage dimensions. The results for the Barriers dimension, however, were mixed. Although dating, engaged, married, and divorced individuals did not differ significantly on this dimension, significant differences were obtained when the married participants were divided into high and low

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations of the Three Dimensions of Commitment for Married Individuals in Satisfying and Unsatisfying Marriages

Relationship Satisfaction	Commitment to Spouse		Commitment to Marriage		Barriers to Dissolution	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
High Satisfaction						
Males	67.6	10.2	55.1	13.1	36.8	10.4
Females	70.2	3.7	49.4	10.6	34.7	9.6
Low Satisfaction						
Males	49.7	8.6	45.7	6.1	39.9	9.9
Females	50.0	11.0	47.2	10.0	41.0	9.2

satisfaction groups, with less satisfied spouses tending to report a heightened sensitivity to barriers to relationship dissolution than satisfied spouses. This finding suggests that the Barriers dimension discriminates more reliably among couples on the basis of relationship quality than on the basis of relationship status.

One possible explanation for the unique discrimination pattern of the Barriers dimension involves the salience of this dimension to spouses in relatively satisfying and unsatisfying relationships. For example, it is difficult to imagine individuals who are satisfied with their romantic relationships attending to or contemplating the barrier forces that keep them together. Rather, when a relationship is satisfying, couples tend to focus primarily on the positive qualities of their mate and their relationship (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990; Holtzworth-Munroe & Jacobson, 1987), and to seek out ways to please and benefit one another (Kirchler, 1988; Wills, Weiss, & Patterson, 1974). Thus, when relationships are satisfying to both partners, it appears that the dominant mechanism by which the relationship remains intact is the reward value of mutually beneficial positive interactions. By contrast, it is much easier to conceive of unhappy couples questioning their continued participation in a relationship that is no longer satisfying. In the absence of relationship satisfaction, the barriers to dissolution are likely to become more salient to the couple as they search for reasons for remaining in an unrewarding relationship.

Studies 3 and 4

The results from Study 2 provided some evidence of discriminant validity for the three dimensions of commitment. However, the question remains whether the three dimensions actually reflect separate aspects of marital commitment or whether they represent a conceptualization of commitment that is experientially meaningful to

married individuals. Consequently, in Study 3 we attempted to demonstrate the conceptual distinction among the three dimensions of commitment by examining the correlations between each of the dimensions and variables of varying theoretical relevance. In Study 4, couples' self-report of their commitment was compared to ratings of commitment by others. Data were obtained for Studies 3 and 4 from participants in Samples 3 and 5, respectively.

Study 3

Method

Demographic Variables. Investigators have identified several demographic variables that are associated with marital stability or longevity, including educational level, length of relationship, number of times married, presence or absence of children, number of children, income level, and frequency of church attendance. Accordingly, a set of items reflecting these demographic variables was written and included in the analyses described below. In addition, two variables not identified in the literature as predictors of marital stability were included in the set of demographic items to correspond specifically with the Commitment to Marriage dimension. These items asked respondents to indicate (a) how many different employers they had in the past five years and (b) whether or not they were still close to childhood friends, and were intended to reflect respondents' tendencies to commit to relationships or institutions in general.

Comparison Measures. Several measures were selected for inclusion in this study based on their likely association with the three dimensions of commitment. One set of measures assessed variables associated with marital quality. These included the Locke-Wallace Short Marital Adjustment Test (LWMAT; Locke & Wallace, 1959), the Marital Comparison Level Index (MCLI; Sabatelli, 1984), the Marital Goals

Orientation Scale (MGOS; Eggeman, et al. (1974), the Goal Orientation and Planfulness Scale (GOP; Frese, Steward, & Hannover, 1987), and selected variables from the Attitudes About Love Scale (AALS; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986). Two measures were selected to assess religiosity, including the religiosity scale developed by Rohrbaugh & Jessor (1975) and the Intrinsic-Extrinsic Religiosity Scale (IERS; Feagin, 1964). Finally, a large set of measures addressed basic orientations toward interpersonal relationships and attitudes about the self. These measures included the Interpersonal Orientation Scale (IOS; Swap & Rubin, 1982), the Emotional Empathy Scale (EES; Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972), the Interpersonal Dependency Inventory (IDI; Hirschfield, et al. (1977), the Revised Martin- Larsen Approval Motivation Scale (RMLAMS; Martin, 1984), the Personal Assertion Analysis (PAA; Edlund & Lindquist, 1984), the Guilt Inventory (GI; Kugler & Jones, 1992), the UCLA Loneliness Scale (UCLA; Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980), and the Social Reticence Scale (Jones & Russell, 1986).

Participants also completed various alternative measures of commitment and marital stability, including Spanier's (1971) measure of commitment, the commitment measure developed by Johnson (1978), the commitment scale developed by Rusbult (1978, 1980a, 1980b, 1983), the Marital Alternatives Scale (MAS; Udry, 1983), the Marital Instability Index (MII; Booth, Johnson, & Edwards, 1983), the Lund Commitment Scale (LCS; Lund, 1985), the Commitment Inventory (CI; Stanley & Markman, 1992), and the Commitment subscale of the Marital Satisfaction and Commitment Scales (Jones, et al, 1995). These measures were not included in the present analyses, however (see Studies 5 and 6).

Because of the large number of validity measures used in this study, several versions of the basic questionnaire were created. Specifically, all participants in

Sample 3 completed demographic items, the Dimensions of Commitment Inventory, the alternative commitment measures, and some combination of two or three of the validity measures described above. The specific measures included in a particular version of the questionnaire was determined by the length of the measures. Validity measures were combined so that each questionnaire consisted of a similar number of total items.

Expected Findings. It was expected that Commitment to Spouse would correlate positively with measures of marital satisfaction, goal-orientation, relationship orientation, and the positive aspects of love, and would correlate negatively with the unpleasant social emotions of loneliness, shyness, and guilt, and the negative (game-playing) aspects of love. Accordingly, the short version of the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test, the Interpersonal Orientation Scale, the Goal Orientation and Planfulness Scale, the Marital Goals Orientation Scale, the Marital Comparison Level Index, the UCLA Loneliness Scale, the Social Reticence Scale, the Guilt Inventory, the Eros (erotic), Agape (selfless), and Storge (friendship) subscales of the Attitudes Toward Love Scale, and the Emotional Empathy Scale were selected to support the validity of the Commitment to Spouse dimension. Second, because of its focus on moral obligation to and personal belief in the inherent value of the marital relationship, Commitment to Marriage was expected to correlate significantly with measures of religious attitudes and personal morality and/or integrity. Thus, it was anticipated that the Commitment to Marriage dimension would correlate positively with responses to the religiosity measure developed by Rohrbaugh & Jessor (1975), the Intrinsic subscale of the Intrinsic-Extrinsic Religiosity Scale, the Moral Standards subscale of the Guilt Inventory, and with the demographic items pertaining to the number of times married, number of different employers in the past five years, closeness to childhood friends, and frequency of church attendance. Finally, it was expected that the experience of

Barriers to marital dissolution would be related to such dispositional qualities as assertiveness, dependency, approval motivation, and emotional reliance on others, as well as the demographic items pertaining to income level, educational level, length of relationship, and both the presence and number of children. Also, adherence to a religious orientation based on external factors was expected to be associated with the Barriers dimension. The measures selected to validate the Barriers dimension include the Personal Assertion Analysis, the Interpersonal Dependency Inventory, and the Revised Martin-Larsen Approval Motivation Scale

Results

Reliability analyses were performed for each of the validity measures. Except for the Ludus subscale of the Attitudes Toward Love Scale (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986), all of the measures reached acceptable ($> .70$) levels of internal consistency. Analyses using the Ludus subscale should be interpreted with caution.

Significant correlations among the measures of relationship and personality variables and the three dimensions of commitment are presented in Table 7. In general, the expected pattern of associations was obtained: Commitment to Spouse tended to correlate significantly with measures designed to assess interpersonal orientation, personal dedication, and satisfaction; Commitment to Marriage tended to correlate significantly with measures designed to assess moral responsibility and religiosity; and Barriers to Dissolution tended to correlate significantly with measures reflecting obstacles to relationship termination. Regarding the demographic variables, three of the four items selected as possible predictors of Commitment to Marriage (number of times married, closeness to childhood friends, and frequency of church

Table 7

Correlations between the Three Dimensions of Commitment and General Measures of Relationship and Personality Variables

Validity Measure	CS	CM	B
Marital Adjustment Test[a]	.69**	.25**	.08
Marital Comparison Level[b]	.68**	.20**	.08
Agape[d]	.58**	.43**	.11
Eros[d]	.55**	.29**	.02
Marital Goal Orientation[c]	.51**	.34**	.09
Interpersonal Orientation[e]	.29**	.14	.06
Emotional Empathy[j]	.29**	.15	-.11
Goal Orientation/Planfulness[f]	.25**	-.01	.03
Ludus[d]	-.53**	-.17	-.01
UCLA Loneliness Scale[k]	-.51**	-.23**	.05
State Guilt[m]	-.37**	-.11	.11
Social Reticence Scale[l]	-.27**	-.03	.00
Assertion of Autonomy[h]	-.25*	-.22*	-.18
Trait Guilt[m]	-.23**	.03	.13
Personal Assertiveness[i]	-.16*	-.02	.11
Mean Correlation	**.43**	**.18**	**.08**
Moral Standards[m]	.37**	.50**	.20**
Internal[o]	.18*	.45**	.23**

(Table 7 continues)

(Table 7 continued)

Validity Measure	CS	CM	B
Religiosity Scale[g]	.14	.39**	.13
Mania[d]	.07	.23*	.21*
Church Attendance[n]	.11**	.33**	.31**
Times Married[n]	-.11*	-.21**	-.15**
Mean Correlation	**.17**	**.36**	**.21**
Emotional Reliance[h]	.17	.35**	.40**
Lack of Self-Confidence[h]	-.02	.17	.33**
Approval Motivation[i]	-.27**	-.01	.30**
Pragma[d]	-.28**	.11	.26**
External[o]	-.13	.00	.19*
Educational Level[n]	.03	.02	.11**
Income Level[n]	-.04	-.05	.09*
Mean Correlation	**.14**	**.10**	**.24**

Note. CS = Commitment to Spouse; CM = Commitment to Marriage; B = Barriers to Dissolution; [a]The short version of the Marital Adjustment Test (Locke & Wallace, 1959); [b]Marital Comparison Level Index (Sabatelli, 1984); [c]Marital Goals Orientation Scale (Eggeman et al. (1985); [d]The Attitudes About Love Scale (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1987); [e]The Interpersonal Orientation Scale (Swap & Rubin, 1982); [f]The Goal Orientation and Planfulness Scale (Frese, Stewart, & Hannover, 1987); [g]The

(Table 7 continues)

(Table 7 continued)

religiosity measure developed by Rohrbaugh and Jessor (1975); [h]The Interpersonal Dependency Inventory (Hirschfield, et al. (1977); [i]The Revised Martin-Larsen Approval Motivation scale (Martin, 1984); [j]The Emotional Empathy Scale (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972); [k]The UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980); [l]The Social Reticence Scale (Jones & Russell, 1986); [m]The Guilt Inventory (Jones, 1992); [n]Demographic Item; [o]The Internal-External Religiosity Scale (Hoge, 1972).

Note. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

attendance) correlated significantly with this dimension, although the magnitude of these correlations differed markedly. The number of different employers a participant had in the past 5 years was unrelated to Commitment to Marriage. Educational level and annual income were significant predictors of responses to the Barriers dimension, whereas length of relationship was unrelated to this dimension. Finally, number of children was unrelated to the Barriers dimension, but was significantly inversely related to Commitment to Spouse.

The three dimensions of commitment also tended to show discriminant validity. For example, in no instance did the measures selected to correlate with the Commitment to Spouse dimension also correlate positively with the Barriers dimension. Likewise, none of the measures selected to correlate positively with the Barriers dimension also correlated positively with the Commitment to Spouse dimension. When comparison measures were significantly related to both Commitment to Spouse and Barriers to Dissolution, the two correlations were opposite in sign.

The comparison measures selected to correlate with the Commitment to Marriage dimension were more strongly related to that dimension than to the other two, but the number of significant correlations on multiple dimensions was greater than was the case for either the Commitment to Spouse or Barriers dimensions. This pattern of results was expected, however, given the fact that Commitment to Marriage is more strongly related to the other two dimensions than they are to each other. Despite this overlap, it is noteworthy that the overall relationship between the selected comparison measures and Commitment to Marriage (as indicated by the mean correlation value) is clearly greater than the overall relationship between the selected validity measures and the other two dimensions of commitment.

Study 4

Study 4 sought to extend the argument that Commitment to Spouse, Commitment to Marriage, and Barriers to Dissolution represent separate dimensions of marital commitment by examining the convergence between couples' and outside raters judgments of commitment on each of these dimensions. Such convergence between estimates could be taken as evidence that the three dimensions are meaningful conceptualizations of commitment from the perspective inside the marriage as well as outside.

Method

Procedure. Undergraduate psychology students received course credit for serving as "questionnaire administrators" in this study. Each student received a set of materials containing 13 questionnaires (consisting of 2 copies of the Dimensions of Commitment Inventory and demographic questions), sealable envelopes, a set of instructions for the administers to read to the other members of their family, and a full written explanation of the purpose of the study to be given to participants following the completion of the questionnaire. The number of questionnaires corresponded to the number of raters targeted for this study: the spouses (2), and the spouses' parents (4), children (3), and siblings (4). For ease of administration, each questionnaire was labeled so as to specify which questionnaire went to which relative. Also, each set of materials was assigned a number so that the ratings of individual families could be easily identified.

A standardized set of instructions was given to all student administrators. Specifically, the student administrators were told to approach their parents (the "Spouses") first and present them with the appropriate questionnaires[3]. Administrators were then instructed to provide their parents with the demographic questions and

complete the two copies of the Dimensions of Commitment Inventory. On the first copy, the spouses were instructed to respond to the items in a way that reflected their own attitudes about their commitment; on the second copy, the spouses were instructed to respond to the items in a way that reflected what they believed to be their spouse's attitudes. Thus, each spouse completed the items once for him- or herself and once for his or her partner. Student administrators were instructed to give each spouse the written explanation of the study after completing the questionnaire and an envelope in which to put the questionnaire for return to the student administrator.

The relatives' ratings of the target couple's commitment were obtained in a similar fashion. The student administers approached each relative separately and asked him or her to complete the commitment items twice. In this case, the respondents completed the inventory to reflect the target wife's commitment, and the second version to reflect the target husband's commitment. Thus, for each relative, two ratings were generated: one reflecting the wife's level of commitment and the other reflecting the husband's level of commitment. Upon completing the questionnaire, the raters placed the questionnaires in the envelopes provided, returned them to the administrators, and received written explanation of the study from the administrators.

Results

Spousal agreement on the dimensions of commitment. To assess the degree of spousal convergence on the three dimensions of commitment, three sets of correlations were computed. First, correlations between spouse's self-ratings of commitment and their estimates of their mate's commitment were calculated to assess the extent to which spouses believe that their commitment is similar to that of their partner's. Second, correlations were calculated for both spouses' self-ratings of commitment to reflect the actual degree of spousal covariation on commitment. Finally, correlations between

spouses' self-ratings and their partner's estimates were calculated to assess the extent to which spouse's judgments of their partner's commitment is similar to their actual level of commitment.

Results of these analyses generally confirmed our expectations regarding spousal agreement on commitment. For husbands, the correlations between self-ratings and ratings of the spouse's commitment were .82, .85, and .91 for Commitment to Spouse, Commitment to Marriage, and Barriers to Dissolution, respectively. For wives, the correlations were .81, .87, and .84. Thus, both husbands and wives indicated that they believe there to be a high degree of convergence between their own level of commitment and their spouse's level of commitment. Significant correlations between husband's and wife's self-ratings also were obtained on all three dimensions; specifically, commitment to one another as spouses (r = .63), commitment to their marital relationship (r = .45), and feelings of constraint to remain married (r = .51). These correlations suggest that spouses do indeed experience commitment similarly. Finally, significant correlations were obtained for spouse's self-ratings and their partner's estimates of these self-ratings. For husbands, these correlations were .44, .29, and .54 for Commitment to Spouse, Commitment to Marriage, and Barriers to Dissolution, respectively, whereas for wives the corresponding values were .63, .16, and .45. This suggests the accuracy of spouses in judging the actual level of their mate's commitment.

Relatives' ratings of the couples' commitment. The correlations between the target couples' self-ratings on the three dimensions of commitment and relatives' estimates of the target couples' commitment are presented separately for husbands and wives in Table 8. As can be seen, the relatives' estimates of both spouses' commitment tended to be significantly related to the spouses' self-ratings. Similar to the results

Table 8

Correlations between Target Couple's Self-ratings on the Three Dimensions of Commitment and Relatives' Estimates of the Target Couples' Commitment

	Spouse's Self-Ratings					
	Husbands			Wives		
Raters	CS	CM	BD	CS	CM	BD
Children	.64	.26	.34	.55	.61	.41
Siblings	.82	.43	.57	.56	.71	.43
Parents	.83	.79	.72	.41	.54	.54
Other	.70	.62	.35	.50	.54	.06
All	**.81**	**.67**	**.59**	**.50**	**.71**	**.54**

Note. All correlations are significant at $p < .05$.

Note. CS = Commitment to Spouse; CM = Commitment to Marriage; BD = Barriers to Dissolution.

obtained for the couples' self- and other ratings, these results suggest that the three dimensions of commitment can be readily estimated by individuals who have a familial relationship with a given married couple.

Discussion

The data presented in Studies 3 and 4 support the argument that Commitment to Spouse, Commitment to Marriage, and Barriers to Dissolution reflect conceptually distinct dimensions of marital commitment. The pattern of correlations obtained in Study 3, for example, reflects both the breadth of the domain of constructs relevant to the three dimensions of commitment as well as commitment's conceptual boundaries, thereby satisfying two important criteria for the demonstration of construct validity (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Cronbach & Meehl, 1955). In all but a few cases, experientially and theoretically meaningful associations between the three dimensions of commitment and measures of other pertinent constructs were obtained. It is clear, for example, that Commitment to Spouse reflects an attitude toward one's partner that is positive, goal oriented, loving, and which promotes his or her well-being. By contrast, variables associated with lower commitment to one's spouse (e.g., loneliness, shyness, guilt, assertion of autonomy, etc.) seem to have in common a self-focus that precludes the pursuit of shared marital goals and mutually satisfying interactions. The variables that correlated most strongly with the Commitment to Marriage dimension also suggest a clear interpretation. Specifically, these variables seem to reflect attitudes regarding moral conduct and personal integrity, factors which may lead spouses to remain committed for commitment's sake. Commitment to Marriage thus appears to be founded more on the spouse's sense of right and wrong and perhaps less on the quality of the marriage. Finally, the Barriers dimension captures the negative feeling of being trapped in a marriage. Interestingly, in addition to such external factors as educational

level and income, several trait-like characteristics (e.g., emotional reliance on others and lack of self-confidence) seem to serve as barriers to marital dissolution. The barrier function of these characteristics may be manifested in spouse's belief that they do not have the social skills or physical qualities that would make them desirable to alternative partners.

The results of the multiple-rater analyses reported in Study 4 suggested that the three dimensions of commitment are readily identifiable by spouses and their relatives and that these family members are remarkably similar in their estimates of spouses' level of commitment in each of its manifestations. Although high interjudge agreement is not necessarily an indicator of judges' accuracy in describing the dispositional characteristics of others (e.g., Cronbach, 1955), the present data suggested the reasonableness of assuming accuracy of the judges in at least two respects. First, ratings of couple commitment were not made by one or two outside observers, but by several (up to 11 in some cases). Given the magnitude of the correlations between these raters' estimates of couple commitment and the couples' self-ratings, it seems likely that both spouses and their relatives are capable of assessing consistently the three dimensions of commitment. Second, the substantial degree of interjudge agreement is consistent with the pattern of correlations obtained in Study 3 in that one would expect ratings of outside observers to converge on conceptually distinct dimensions of commitment. Together, the results of Studies 3 and 4 begin to satisfy Cronbach and Meehl's (1955) requirement of applying multiple criteria for the evaluation of construct validity.

Studies 5 and 6

The final group of studies sought to compare the three dimensions of commitment with extant commitment measures and to evaluate the content domain represented in these measures. Although comparisons of new measures with older, more established instruments are typically used as a form of concurrent validity for the newer measures, the comparisons presented here are not intended to validate the three dimensions of commitment. Rather, the overarching goal of studies 5 and 6 was to demonstrate that items comprising most extant measures of commitment fall naturally into three groups represented by the three dimensions of commitment. Thus, the present analyses were designed to support the argument that the items comprising most putative measures of relational commitment represent the more global categories of Commitment to Spouse, Commitment to Marriage, and Barriers to Dissolution.

Study 5

Method

Extant Measures of Commitment. Several extant measures of commitment were adopted for use in the present study and were selected on the basis of previous theoretical and/or empirical work in which the constructs underlying the measures were identified as having attraction, moral, or constraining features.

Expected Pattern of Associations. The Commitment to Spouse dimension was expected to correlate most strongly with other measures of commitment/stability that, based on their apparent content, reflect the positive or attraction aspect of commitment. These measures included the Commitment subscale of the Marital Satisfaction and Commitment Scales (Jones et al., 1995), the Couple Identification, Primacy of Relationship, Satisfaction with Sacrifice, Alternative Monitoring, and Meta-Commitment subscales of the Commitment Inventory (Stanley & Markman, 1992).

Because the Marital Instability Index (Booth, Johnson, & Edwards, 1983) is scored in the direction of greater marital instability, an inverse relationship between Commitment to Spouse and this scale was anticipated. The Commitment to Marriage dimension was expected to be most strongly correlated with items reflecting the moral obligation to remain married. Accordingly, a positive relationship between Commitment to Marriage and the Morality of Divorce subscale of the Commitment Inventory (Stanley & Markman, 1992) was anticipated. Finally, the Barriers dimension was expected to be most strongly correlated with measures of restraining forces, including the Marital Alternatives Scale (Udry, 1983), Johnson's (1978) measures of the availability of alternatives and difficulty of termination procedures, and Stanley and Markman's (1992) Availability of Partners, Social Pressure, Structural Investments, Unattractiveness of Alternatives, and Termination Procedures subscales.

An examination of the items comprising Rusbult's (1980, 1983) commitment measure and the Lund Commitment Scale (Lund, 1985) suggested that these items reflect several dimensions of commitment rather than a single, global dimension. Accordingly, thematically similar items from each scale were combined and the resultant "subscales" were included in the present analysis. In Rusbult's measure, one item appears to tap into the attraction dimension ("To what extent are you 'attached' to your partner?"), one item refers to the attractiveness of alternatives ("How attractive an alternative would you require before adopting it and ending your current relationship?"), and four items appear to assess more general attitudes about commitment (e.g., "How committed do you feel to maintaining your relationship with your partner?"). The attachment item and the sum of the global items were expected to correlate most strongly with Commitment to Spouse, whereas the alternatives item was expected to correlate most strongly with the Barriers to Dissolution dimension. In the

Lund Commitment Scale, three items refer to the availability of alternatives (e.g., "How attractive would a potential partner have to be for you to pursue a new relationship?"), one item addresses obligation to continue a relationship ("How obligated do you feel to continue this relationship?"), one item reflects the difficulty of termination procedures ("How much trouble would ending your relationship be to you personally?"), and four items appear to assess global commitment attitudes (e.g., "How likely is it that your relationship will be permanent?"). Significant correlations were anticipated between Commitment to Spouse and the sum of the global commitment items, between Commitment to Marriage and the item reflecting obligation to continue the relationship, and between Barriers to Dissolution and the items reflecting alternatives to the current relationship.

Results

Reliability analyses performed on the alternative measures of commitment indicated that most of the measures demonstrated an acceptable level of internal consistency. However, the Structural Investments and Availability of Alternative subscales of the Commitment Inventory (Stanley & Markman, 1992) were not reliable (alpha $<$ .70) in this sample. Analyses using these subscales should therefore be interpreted with caution.

Correlations between the alternative commitment measures and the three dimensions of commitment are shown in Table 9. Consistent with predictions, Commitment to Spouse was related most strongly to other measures that, based on the apparent content of the items, assess one's intention to remain married because of the attractiveness and reward value of the spouse and/or the relationship. In each case, the correlation between the selected comparison measures and Commitment to Spouse were significantly greater than the correlations between the comparison measures and both

Table 9

Correlations between the Three Dimensions of Commitment and Other Measures of Commitment/Marital Stability

Commitment Measure	CS	CM	B
Measures Expected to Correlate with Commitment to Spouse			
Marital Commitment[g]	.73**	.47**	.16**
Marital Instability Index[f]	-.66**	-.27**	-.09
Relationship Agenda[d]	.62**	.29**	.01
Primacy of Relationship[d]	.61**	.24**	-.07
Couple Identification[d]	.59**	.28**	-.02
Rusbult "Attachment" Item	.57**	.18**	.03
Rusbult Global Items	.57**	.21**	.04
Alternative Monitoring[d]	.55**	.14**	-.08
Satisfaction with Sacrifice[d]	.54**	.25**	-.03
Lund Global Items	.49**	.11*	-.03
Mean Correlation	**.60**	**.25**	**.06**
Measures Expected to Correlate with Commitment to Marriage			
Morality of Divorce[d]	.39**	.74**	.44**
Lund Obligation Item	.30**	.31**	.18**
Meta-Commitment[d]	.45**	.16**	-.12*
Mean Correlation	**.38**	**.44**	**.25**

(Table 9 continues)

(Table 9 continued)

Commitment Measure	CS	CM	B
Measures Expected to Correlate with Barriers to Dissolution			
Social Pressure[d]	.38**	.31**	.28**
Termination Procedures[e]	.19**	.23**	.20**
Alternative Availability[d]	.21**	.21**	.19**
Alternative Unavailability[e]	.15**	.19**	.19**
Structural Investments[d]	-.14**	.00	.17**
Lund Termination Procedures Item	.40**	.14**	.06
Marital Alternatives Scale[b]	-.35**	-.15**	-.07
Lund Alternatives item	.43**	.11*	-.05
Rusbult Alternatives Item	.16**	-.04	-.04
Mean Correlation	**.27**	**.16**	**.14**

Note. CS = Commitment to Spouse; CM = Commitment to Marriage; B = Barriers to Dissolution; [a]Commitment items taken from Rusbult (1980, 1983); [b]The Marital Alternatives Scale (Udry, 1983); [c]The Lund Commitment Scale (Lund, 1985); [d]Subscales from the Commitment Inventory (Stanley & Markman, 1992); [e]The items used by Johnson (1978) to measure the availability of alternatives and difficulty of termination procedures; [f]The Marital Instability Index (Booth, Johnson, & Edwards, 1983); [g]Commitment subscale of the Marital Satisfaction and Commitment Scales (Jones et al., 1995).

Note. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Commitment to Marriage and Barriers to Dissolution (all Zs > 1.96). Interesting exceptions to the expected pattern of correlations were obtained, however, for the Commitment to Marriage and Barriers to Dissolution dimensions. For example, although the Morality of Divorce subscale of the Commitment Inventory (Stanley & Markman, 1992) was more strongly related to Commitment to Marriage than to either of the other DCI subscales (Zs = 7.57, 6.73, $p < .001$), the item from Lund's (1985) measure assessing obligation to relationships correlated at the same magnitude with Commitment to Spouse and Commitment to Marriage, and the Meta-Commitment subscale of the Commitment Inventory (Stanley & Markman, 1992) correlated more strongly with Commitment to Spouse than with either Commitment to Marriage (Z = 4.56, $p < .001$) or Barriers to Dissolution (Z = 5.12, $p < .001$). Furthermore, whereas the Marital Alternatives Scale (Udry, 1983), the Social Pressure subscale of the Commitment Inventory (Stanley & Markman, 1992), the Alternative Availability and Termination Procedures scales (Johnson, 1973), and the items assessing alternatives and termination procedures from Lund's (1985) and Rusbult's (1980, 1983) measures were expected to covary most strongly with the Barriers dimension, none in fact did so. Rather, the Marital Alternatives Scale and Lund's (1985) alternatives and termination procedures items were most strongly related to Commitment to Spouse, whereas the other measures tended to correlate equally well with each of the three dimensions of commitment. The only measure that clearly correlated with the Barriers dimension was Structural Investments (Stanley & Markman, 1992).

These results are surprising, particularly those obtained with Lund's measure, which was based on a model of commitment that emphasizes barriers to relationship termination. One possible reason for this pattern of results involves the differential

salience of barriers to marital dissolution among maritally satisfied versus unsatisfied spouses. Perhaps correlations between the "constraint" measures and the three dimensions of commitment were attenuated by a uniformly high satisfaction level among marital relationships. To test this possibility the spouses comprising Sample 3 were divided into high and low satisfaction groups (i.e., spouses whose scores on the Marital Satisfaction subscale of the Marital Satisfaction and Commitment Scales [Jones et al., 1995] were one standard deviation above and below the group mean) and correlations between the constraint measures and the three dimensions of commitment were recalculated for each group. For relatively less satisfied spouses, but not for relatively more satisfied spouses, significant correlations were found between the Barriers dimension and the availability of alternative partners ($r = .63$, $p < .001$), Lund's difficulty of termination procedures item ($r = .35$, $p < .05$), Rusbult's global items ($r = .34$, $p < .02$), and the Availability of Alternatives subscale of the Commitment Inventory ($r = .28$, $p < .05$). Further, whereas a significant association between structural investments and Barriers to Dissolution was obtained for relatively more satisfied spouses ($r = .30$, $p < .05$), investments were unrelated to barriers for the relatively less satisfied group. Finally, it is noteworthy that for relatively less satisfied spouses, 9 of the 12 constraint measures correlated significantly with commitment to spouse and 4 correlated significantly with commitment to Marriage. By contrast, only three constraint measures covaried reliably with Commitment to Spouse and none were significantly related to Commitment to Marriage for relatively satisfied spouses. These results suggested that marital quality may moderate responses to measures of external constraints.

Study 6

The purpose of Study 6 was to explore whether the three dimensions of commitment underlie the items comprising most extant measures of relational commitment. Using the same psychometric procedures and applying the same decision rules described in Study 1, our intention was to examine the way existing commitment items coalesce into meaningful clusters. To the extent that Commitment to Spouse, Commitment to Marriage, and Barriers to Dissolution are experientially distinct dimensions of commitment, responses to currently used measures should fall naturally into these three categories.

Method and Results

Principal Components Analyses. An exploratory principal components analysis with varimax rotation was performed on the various commitment measures completed by participants in Sample 3^4. Because of the moderate correlation between the Commitment to Marriage dimension and both the Commitment to Spouse and Barriers dimensions, an oblique rotation was also examined in addition to an orthogonal rotation; however, results using both rotations were nearly identical, so only the varimax results are presented here. The psychometric standards for the acceptability of items were the same as those described in Study 1, namely, that items had to obtain loadings on their own factors that exceeded .30, that the items could not load on more than one factor at the .30 level, and that the loadings of items on their primary factor should exceed those on other factors by at least .20.

The principle components analysis extracted 26 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0. An examination of the scree plot and factor matrix, however, suggested the existence of 3 to 5 meaningful factors, so an additional principal components analysis was conducted, first specifying a five factor solution. The five factor solution

accounted for 36.9% of the variance in commitment items. Factor I consisted of 45 items with loadings greater than .30. These items seemed to capture the attractive component of commitment as well as general attitudes about the value of keeping one's commitments. Factor II consisted of 21 items with significant loadings (> .30) which seemed to reflect the durability of marriage over time (relationship permanence). Factor III consisted of 13 items that reflected commitment to the marital relationship as a sacred institution and commitment as a moral obligation. Factor IV consisted of 13 items, most of which referred to the availability of alternative partners; however, items reflecting investments and general adjustment to divorce also loaded on this factor. Finally, seven items reflecting one's ability to take care of oneself economically following relationship dissolution comprised factor V.

Although all five factors seemed to represent fairly clear themes, considerable cross-loading on multiple factors was observed, particularly for Factors IV and V. For these factors, nearly half of the items with significant loadings on their primary factor also had substantial loadings on at least one other factor, calling into question the viability of these factors. For Factors I, II, and III, the problem of multiple loadings was not as great, although some examples clearly existed. In an attempt to further purify the factors, those items loading on multiple factors or failing to load significantly on any of the factors ($\underline{N}$ = 51) were eliminated and a second principal components analysis was run on the remaining 57 items, this time specifying a three factor solution. The result was a more easily interpretable factor structure.

The first factor consisted of 23 items that clearly reflected commitment to one's spouse based on feelings of love, devotion, and attachment, and accounted for 23.4% of the variance in responses to the commitment items. The second factor, accounting for 6.2% of the variance, consisted of four items reflecting relationship permanence

and three items reflecting the consideration of alternatives to the relationship. Taken together, the tone of these items suggested the intention to remain in a relationship regardless of its quality (e.g., "How likely is it that you and your partner will be together 6 months from now?" and "How much trouble would ending your relationship be to you personally?"). Finally, Factor III consisted of eight items that clearly represented the moral aspect of marital commitment (e.g., "Divorce is wrong"). This factor accounted for an additional 5.3% of the variance. As a set, the three factors accounted for 34.9% of the variance in responses to the commitment items, and only 17 items failed to meet the established psychometric standards across all three factors. The items comprising the three factors along with their respective factor loadings are presented in Table 10.

An examination of the items eliminated prior to the third principal components analysis suggested that these items fell into two groups. One group consisted of items that were either quite general ("I may not want to be with my partner a few years from now"), ambiguous ("I want to keep the plans for my life somewhat separate from my partner's plans for life"), or required considerable speculation ("If your relationship were to end in the next year, how likely is it that you would be quite satisfied without a partner?"). The second group consisted of items that reflect many of the components of social exchange theory, such as investments ("I would lose money, or feel like money had been wasted, if my partner and I broke up or divorced") and the availability of alternatives to the relationship ("How attractive would a potential partner have to be for you to pursue a new relationship?"), or involve constraints preventing marital dissolution ("It would be difficult for my friends to accept it if I ended the relationship with my partner").

Table 10

Factor Loadings for Items from Extant Measures of Commitment

Item #	Item	Factors I	II	III
1.	I try hard to follow through on all my commitments[a].	**.70**	.06	-.12
2.	I like to think of my partner and me more in terms of "us" and "we" than "me" and "him/her"[a].	**.69**	.20	.18
3.	I am willing to have or develop a strong sense of an identity as a couple with my partner[a].	**.69**	.18	.16
4.	I don't make commitments unless I believe I will keep them[a].	**.63**	.09	-.03
5.	Following through on commitments is an essential part of who I am[a].	**.63**	.07	-.08
6.	It makes me feel good to sacrifice for my partner[a].	**.61**	.04	.23
7.	I have put a lot of time and energy into this relationship[a].	**.60**	-.06	-.08
8.	When push comes to shove, my relationship with my partner comes first[a].	**.58**	.26	.08
9.	I do not want to have a strong identity as a couple with my partner[a].	**.58**	.18	.09

(Table 10 continues)

(Table 10 continued)

Item #	Item	Factors I	II	III
10.	I tend to think about how things affect "us" as a couple more than how things affect "me" as an individual[a].	**.57**	.04	.21
11.	I do not have a sense of responsibility for my spouse[a].	**.57**	.17	.11
12.	I get satisfaction out of doing things for my partner, even if it means I miss out on something I want for myself[a].	**.56**	.10	.12
13.	I do not feel compelled to keep all of the commitments that I make[a].	**.54**	.09	.07
14.	I have shared little of my real self with my partner[b].	**.54**	.19	-.04
15.	It can be personally fulfilling to give up something for my partner[a].	**.53**	.11	.23
16.	My friends want to see my relationship with my partner continue[a].	**.51**	.14	.14
17.	I have trouble making commitments because I do not want to close off alternatives[a].	**.50**	.16	-.00
18.	I can easily confide in my partner[a].	**.50**	.16	.10

(Table 10 continues)

(Table 10 continued)

Item #	Item	Factors I	II	III
19.	I do not get much fulfillment out of sacrificing for my partner[a].	**.49**	.17	.26
20.	My family really wants this relationship to work[a].	**.48**	.10	.19
21.	I have disclosed much of my true self to my partner[a].	**.47**	.02	-.01
22.	I want this relationship to stay strong no matter what rough times we may encounter[a].	**.47**	.17	.18
23.	Fairly often I make commitments to people or things that I do not follow through on[a].	**.41**	.09	-.01
24.	How much longer do you want your relationship with your partner to last?[c]	.22	**.77**	.07
25.	How long would you like your current relationship to last?[d]	.17	**.69**	.01
26.	How likely are you to pursue another relationship or single life in the future?[e]	.22	**.64**	.05
27.	How much trouble would ending your relationship be to you personally?[e]	.26	**.60**	.15

(Table 10 continues)

(Table 10 continued)

Item #	Item	Factors I	II	III
28.	How likely is it that you and your partner will be together six months from now?[e]	.16	**.58**	-.04
29.	How likely is it that your relationship will be permanent?[e]	.24	**.56**	.07
30.	How likely do you think it is that you will start a romantic relationship with someone else within the next year?[d]	.28	**.47**	.04
31.	Divorce is wrong.[a]	.26	-.15	**.63**
32.	If a couple works hard at making their marriage work but find themselves incompatible, divorce is the best thing they can do.[a]	.07	.07	**.61**
33.	It is all right for a couple to get a divorce if their marriage is not working out.[a]	.07	-.09	**.61**
34.	People should feel free to end a marriage as long as children are not going to be hurt.[a]	.28	-.06	**.59**

(Table 10 continues)

(Table 10 continued)

Item #	Item	Factors I	II	III
35.	Except when a spouse dies, marriage should be a once-in-a-lifetime commitment.[a]	.27	-.06	**.56**
36.	Though it might take awhile, I could find another desirable partner if I wanted or needed to.[a]	-.18	.21	**.49**
37.	If for any reason my relationship ended, I could find another partner.[a]	-.22	.23	**.42**
38.	If your spouse were to leave you this year, how likely is it that your prospects for a happy future would be bleak?[f]	.12	.12	**.38**

Note. [a]from the Commitment Inventory (Stanley & Markman, 1992); [b]from the Marital Satisfaction and Commitment Scales (Jones et al., 1995); [c]from Rusbult's (1980, 1983) commitment measure; [d]from the Lund Commitment Scale (Lund, 1985); [e]Johnson's (1973, 1978) measure of Personal Commitment; [f]from the Marital Alternatives Scale (Udry, 1983).

Discussion

Studies 5 and 6 sought to demonstrate that the items comprising most extant measures of relational commitment fall into three broad categories corresponding to Commitment to Spouse, Commitment to Marriage, and Barriers to Dissolution. Overall, the results of these studies lend some support to this notion. In Study 5, there was a tendency for most extant measures of commitment to correlate significantly with a particular dimension of commitment. For example, measures which, based on item content, seemed to assess happiness, dedication, and devotion to one's partner tended to be most strongly related to the Commitment to Spouse dimension. Moreover, the one measure explicitly designed to assess the moral component of commitment, the Morality of Divorce subscale of the Commitment Inventory (Stanley & Markman, 1992), was strongly related to the Commitment to Marriage dimension. Measures thought to assess external constraints, however, tended not to correlate in a meaningful way with the three dimensions of commitment. Although it is possible that these measures simply do not adequately capture the constraining aspect of commitment, an alternative explanation is that the items reflecting barriers to marital dissolution were less salient to the relatively satisfied spouses in this study.

The results of Study 6 also were suggestive of the idea that extant commitment measures reflect the three general dimensions of commitment. Through a process of item analyses based on procedures suggested by Jackson (1970) and other personality researchers (e.g., Loevenger, 1957, Tellegen & Waller, 1993), three general clusters of items were identified. Two clusters corresponding to the Commitment to Spouse and Commitment to Marriage dimensions were particularly clear. The third cluster was somewhat less clear, but appeared to reflect the Barriers dimension. As was the case in Study 5, however, less confidence can be placed in this grouping of items than in either

of the other two. A large number of items corresponding to the various barriers to marital dissolution were eliminated from these analyses because of multiple loadings on several clusters of items or non- significant loadings on any of the clusters. Again, one could argue that the poor showing of these items was based either on their psychometric inadequacy or their irrelevance to the participants.

General Discussion

Progress toward understanding the causes and consequences of marital stability is hampered by the fact that research involving commitment is largely non-cumulative. An important contributing factor to the non-cumulative status of the marital commitment literature is the failure of investigators to reach some level of agreement on such fundamental issues as conceptualization and measurement. The present studies sought to address this issue by determining empirically what extant definitions and conceptualizations of commitment have in common, thereby bringing into sharper focus the essential features of commitment in marriage.

The results of six studies supported the idea that commitment in marriage may be usefully described in terms of three basic dimensions: an attraction component based on personal dedication, devotion, and love, a moral component based on one's sense of obligation, religious integrity, and/or social responsibility, and a constraining component based on fear of the social, financial, and/or legal consequences of relationship termination. The robustness of this tripartite conceptualization was demonstrated using a variety of empirical strategies. For example, a series of psychometric and factor analytic treatments of items generated to satisfy 11 different definitions of commitment found in the literature yielded three general components of commitment in marriage corresponding to its attractive, moral, and constraining

aspects. These components were labelled Commitment to Spouse, Commitment to Marriage, and Barriers to Dissolution, respectively. Whereas Commitment to Spouse and Barriers to Dissolution are unrelated, Commitment to Marriage is related to both, although the magnitude of the correlations suggested the utility of maintaining the conceptual distinction among the three. Furthermore, scores on Commitment to Spouse and Commitment to Marriage differentiated between, on the one hand, seriously dating, engaged, and married respondents versus casually dating and divorced participants, and all three components of commitment were found to be associated with self-reported marital satisfaction. Validity comparisons showed significant correlations between Commitment to Spouse and measures of personal dedication and interpersonal orientation; Commitment to Marriage was related to indexes of morality and religiosity; and the self-report of Barriers to Dissolution was significantly associated with obstacles to relationship termination. Also, measures of these three components tended not to be related to the correlates of other components. Ratings by marital partners and other family members suggested that the commitment scores of partners are significantly related, partners' beliefs regarding the commitment of the other are significantly similar, and the ratings given by one's partner are significantly related to one's self-ratings across all three dimensions. Additionally, significant relationships were obtained in comparisons between self-ratings and ratings by other family members (e.g., one's children, one's own parents, etc.). Finally, the three dimensions of commitment were significantly related to extant measures of similar constructs with, again, little overlap in the pattern of correlates for each dimension, and items from extant measures of commitment, for the most part, reduce to the same three-component structure.

Taken together, these results suggest two broad conclusions. First, Commitment to Spouse, Commitment to Marriage, and Barriers to Dissolution appear to reflect, to varying degrees, the basic dimensions of interpersonal commitment identified in most theoretical writings. For example, Commitment to Spouse subsumes other descriptions of commitment that highlight its "positive-pull" characteristics, including attraction forces (Levinger, 1965), personal commitment (Johnson, 1973, 1991), satisfaction (Rusbult, 1980, 1983), and so on. Likewise, Commitment to Marriage reflects the moral, religious, and normative aspects of commitment found in Johnson's moral commitment as well as in less formalized commentaries (Barber, 1974; Brewer, 1993; Clodfelter, 1977; Larson & Goltz, 1989). Moreover, the results of the present studies lend support to Johnson's (1991) argument that commitment based on normative reasons is distinct conceptually from commitment experienced as a barrier to dissolution. Finally, Barriers to Dissolution capture the constraining feature of Levinger's barrier forces, Johnson's structural commitment, and Green's external pressures. It is important to point out that the present analyses argue against multidimensional conceptualizations of commitment in which numerous, overly specific elements are emphasized. Components of commitment that are considered to be distinct from the perspective of theory (e.g., comparison level, comparison level for alternatives, investments, social pressures, etc.), coalesce into more global constructs when subjected to statistical clustering techniques, suggesting that these elements fall into more general experiential categories from the perspective of the respondents.

That the experience of commitment in marriage can be described with three global dimensions is consistent with spouses' personal accounts of being in committed relationships. Unstructured interview methodologies have been employed in research on marital dynamics in order to obtain unconstrained descriptions of relational

commitment. Investigations by Quinn (1982) and Brewer (1993), for example, have demonstrated that the various ways in which spouses talk about commitment reduce to a small set of superordinate themes. Quinn (1982), for example, found that when spouses use the word commitment to describe or characterize their marriage, they are referring primarily to three separable experiences: an initiating speech act (Promise; e.g., "I made a commitment to her"), a state of intentionality (Dedication; e.g., "I feel a deep sense of commitment toward our marriage"), and a connection or bond to another person (Attachment; e.g., "The closer we get, the stronger our commitment gets"). Similar themes also emerged in a qualitative study by Brewer (1993), who found that spouses commonly refer to the dedication/attachment, moral, and structural aspects of commitment. These studies suggest that when given the freedom to define commitment for themselves, spouses tend to focus on the aspects of the construct that are most relevant to their experiences. In most cases, these aspects are globally conceptualized rather than narrowly conceived.

A second conclusion is that the three dimensions of marital commitment tap into divergent processes which may contribute to the stability of a relationship in differing ways at various points in the relationship or under differing circumstances. For example, Commitment to Spouse appears to be strongly related to marital satisfaction and may reflect the respondent's current attitudes and feelings about the relationship and about the partner. By contrast, Commitment to Marriage would appear from the perspective of these data to be more closely akin to a personality trait. Specifically, in addition to one's sense of obligation toward the partner specifically, this dimension appears to reflect the respondent's tendencies regarding obligations and morality in general as well as attitudes toward marriage as an instrument of society. Finally, data from these studies may be interpreted as suggesting that, under ordinary circumstances,

or at least when one is reasonably satisfied with one's marital relationship, psychological or situational barriers to dissolution of the marriage and acceptance of alternative relationships are not especially predictive of respondent experiences. This is surprising given the widespread use of exchange theory in which concepts such as investments, costs, comparison level for alternatives, etc. are emphasized. Instead, the construct of barriers appears to be most relevant precisely when the respondent is less than thoroughly satisfied with and personally committed to his or her partner.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The goal of this research was to use a variety of statistical and methodological techniques to identify the existence and robustness of three primary dimensions of commitment as it is experienced by married individuals. Although preliminary results support the theoretical argument that commitment consists of attractive, moral/normative, and constraining features, limitations to the present analyses need to be discussed and addressed in subsequent research in order to further refine our understanding of commitment. First, although steps were taken to evaluate the construct validity of the three dimensions of commitment in several different ways, all of our analyses relied on self-report instruments as the source of relevant data. While it is unlikely that the present findings are artifacts of our procedures, given the remarkable consistency of the findings across different samples, it is possible that the robustness of the three factor structure of commitment may be influenced to some extent by response biases or may have been inflated by common method variance. Accordingly, it would be useful to examine the extent to which the three dimensions of commitment differentially predict specific behaviors in marriage. To this end, future research should explore the relationship between Commitment to Spouse, Commitment to Marriage, and Barriers to Dissolution and such aspects of marriage as

communication efficacy, conflict resolution, diffusion of responsibility for household tasks, and so forth

Second, most of the participants in his research rated themselves as satisfied or extremely satisfied with their current marriage. As discussed previously, marital quality may affect the experience of commitment in that satisfied spouses may not actively evaluate the barriers that constrain them to remain married whereas such barriers may be the only factor keeping dissatisfied spouses from separating or divorcing. Because of the high proportion of satisfied spouses in our samples, it was impossible to test this possibility directly. Thus, one avenue for future research involves determining whether the conceptualization of commitment obtained in the present study can be replicated in a sample of relatively dissatisfied spouses.

Third, it is important to point out that the consistent finding that commitment consists of three global dimensions does not necessarily invalidate or rule out the effect of more specific components of commitment. For example, Stanley and Markman (1992) have postulated that commitment is meaningfully conceptualized as the additive function of 12 interrelated elements, including the morality of divorce, availability of alternative partners, structural investments, satisfaction with sacrifice, personal dedication, and so forth. While it is entirely possible that unique effects of these elements may be observed in some spouses, future research needs to examine the specific circumstances under which these elements become salient to the individual.

Finally, because commitment is best regarded as a construct with dynamic properties, the present results at best represent a snapshot of commitment taken at a single point in the lives of our study participants. While this research contributes to our understanding of the structure of commitment, it should be the goal of future research to explore more fully the dynamic interplay of Commitment to Spouse,

Commitment to Marriage, and Barriers to Dissolution throughout the course of marriage. The implementation of longitudinal designs and the application of causal modeling techniques in the analysis of longitudinal data would answer important questions regarding the development and change of commitment over time.

CHAPTER 4

PERSONALITY AS A PREDICTOR OF COMMITMENT IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

Although the issue of conceptualization is far from being completely settled, evidence from Chapters 2 and 3 provides good support for a three-factor model of commitment that is consistent with prior theory as well as spouses' personal accounts of being in a committed relationship. Future research should test the generalizability of this conceptualization across different types of relationship and within a given relationship across several time periods; however, the findings from the preceding chapters seem to provide some justification for concluding that interpersonal commitment is best described with respect to three global dimensions.

With this groundwork established, it is now possible to proceed to other issues of conceptualization, the successful treatment of which will broaden our understanding of commitment processes in close relationships. As was suggested previously, one factor that may be contributing to the rather restricted fashion in which the commitment literature seems to be developing is researchers' reliance on social exchange theory as an explanatory model for the operation of interpersonal commitment. According to this theoretical perspective, commitment is regarded as a function of the reward and cost value of the relationship, investments made in the relationship by the participants, and the attractiveness and availability of alternatives to the relationship. Commitment, then, is seen as an individual's response to the quality of his or her relationship or to the perceived costs associated with leaving the relationship. In either case, commitment is described as being a cognitive process that is activated in response to

events, either real or believed, that are largely external to the individual. Such a cognitive-situational analysis, while useful, is incomplete; individuals bring to the relationship past experiences, memories, behavioral tendencies, and dispositional characteristics which may have just as much or more relevance to human relating and relationship stability than situational factors alone. Unfortunately, the role of dispositional factors (i.e., personality) in relationship endurance has been relatively ignored in the literature. In order to come to a fuller understanding of the interaction of the person and the situation with respect to relationship endurance, more attention needs to be focused on the "person" part of the equation. It is the goal of this chapter to present evidence supporting the role of personality in the experience and expression of commitment in marriage.

First, though, as a prelude to the examination of personality influences on interpersonal commitment, social exchange theory will be discussed in some detail in order to specify its basic components, its application to theories of interpersonal commitment, and its limitations. The purpose of this discussion is to outline the epistemological context against which the personality perspective presented subsequently may be compared.

Social Exchange Theory and Commitment

Fundamental Principles

Most formal conceptual models of interpersonal commitment are rooted, to some extent, in social exchange theory, a general term that describes a diverse set of mid-range theories developed to apply the principles of learning theory to the study of interpersonal relationships (Hinde, 1979). The basic premise of exchange theory is that, like consumers in the marketplace, people seek to maximize their rewards and

minimize their costs in interpersonal relationships. Although the precise definition of relational rewards and costs is somewhat problematic, common examples of rewards in relationships include companionship, sexual gratification, love, or any other aspect of the partner or the interaction that brings one pleasure, whereas illustrative costs include the expenditure of time and energy on the maintenance of the relationship, restrictions on personal freedoms, emotional distress borne from conflict, and so forth. The difference between rewards and costs in a relationship (commonly referred to as outcome level) determines the overall quality of the relationship. Thus, relationships that have a larger number of rewards than costs are likely to be characterized as having positive outcome value, even if the costs of maintaining a relationship might be considered by outside observers to be relatively high.

In addition to the internal comparisons of rewards and costs in a particular relationship, partners also compare the quality of their relationship with two external standards (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). First, the global outcome value of a given relationship is compared to the partners' expectations about relationships in general. These expectations are based on each partner's unique experiences with past relationships, both romantic and platonic. Thus, for example, if one's past relationships are recalled as being warm, secure, and emotionally rewarding, then one is likely to expect his or her subsequent relationships also to be rewarding. To the extent that one's current relationship compares favorably with one's expectations regarding close relationships in general, one should feel satisfied with the outcome level of the current relationship. Likewise, one should be dissatisfied with a relationship whose outcome level is not consistent with one's expectations.

Whereas the comparison of outcome level with expectations for relationships in general influences the satisfaction one has in his or her current relationship, the

comparison of outcome level with the second external standard, comparison level for alternatives, influences one's commitment to the current relationship. Comparison level for alternatives refers to an individual's perception of the kinds of outcomes possible from other relationships or lifestyles. To the extent that a person believes in the availability of more rewarding alternatives, that person should be less committed to his or her present relationship (Berg, 1984; Green & Sporakowski, 1983). Alternatively, people are likely to remain committed to their partners if they believe they have few, or less desirable, alternatives, even if their current relationship is of low quality.

Virtually all formal theoretical models of the exchange process describe these elements to one degree or another; however, each model is unique in its characterization of the dynamic exchange of interpersonal resources. For example, in articulating the law of distributive justice, Homans (1961, 1974) noted that people expect to receive rewards in their social interactions that are proportional to their costs, and experience negative affect if they do not. Furthermore, the value and meaning of these rewards and costs are regarded by Homans to be objectively determined. Thus, an interpersonal reward, for example, is something that everyone agrees is rewarding and not an entity whose meaning varies as a function of the subjective value placed on it by a given individual. In this way, rewards and costs may be unequivocally quantified and compared, forming an outwardly visible standard for the fair distribution of interpersonal resources.

Thibaut and Kelley (1959) also were concerned with the distribution of rewards and costs within the context of close relationships; however, they focused more on the cognitive processes involved in choosing plans of action when interacting with others. In particular, Thibaut and Kelley noted that partners in close relationships are

interdependent (Lewin, 1951), a state that derives from each partner's ability to influence the behavior of the other by regulating rewards and punishments (costs) in the relationship. Furthermore, as noted above, individuals in an intimate dyad are embedded in a network of alternative relationships, including actual past and present associations as well as imagined potential relationships. According to the interdependence model, partners not only evaluate how many rewards and costs exist in their relationship, but they also compare the quality of this relationship with the quality of both past relationships and possible alternatives. This set of comparisons represents the basis on which partners make the decision to remain in or leave their relationship.

Finally, equity theories (e.g., Adams, 1965; Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978) assert the importance of the relative equality of outcomes that both members of the dyad experience. From this perspective, what is important is not that both partners benefit from and contribute to their relationship equally, but that the ratios of their benefits and contributions are comparable. Accordingly, if one partner benefits from the relationship more than the other, but also makes more contributions to the maintenance of the relationship, then the relationship is still considered to be equitable from the perspective of the participants. The usual result of inequity in relationships is distress. Interestingly, this outcome may be obtained if equity is compromised in either direction. Thus, partners are not only likely to experience distress if they feel underbenefitted in the relationship, but also if they feel overbenefitted.

It is important to emphasize the point that exchange theory, however it is presented, assumes a rational individual who is cognizant of the flow of interpersonal rewards and costs and monitors this flow in order to determine whether or not to end a relationship. Exchange theorists are careful to note, however, that people typically do not spend their every waking hour assessing the extent to which their interactions are

beneficial or costly, and most theorists acknowledge that relational partners are not always completely objective in making judgments about the reward value of a particular relationship. Still, it is clear that the explanatory power of social exchange theory rests on the notion that decisions to maintain or dissolve a relationship are made by invoking a cognitive algorithm that tabulates the value and relative proportions of exchange elements within that relationship. As will be discussed in greater detail subsequently, human rationality, particularly within the context of close relationships, is a dubious assumption. As research on problem-solving and decision-making has shown, people are much less rational and calculating than they would like to believe.

The Influence of Exchange Theory on Models of Interpersonal Commitment

At present, the literature on interpersonal commitment is dominated by theoretical frameworks founded on social exchange theory and the research these frameworks have generated. Of the extant theoretical models of interpersonal commitment, Rusbult's (1980, 1983) investment model is the most visible. This perspective has its roots in interdependence theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) and is thereby closely aligned with classical social exchange theory. According to Rusbult (1978, 1980, 1983), commitment to a relationship results from an individual's consideration of several factors. The first factor, satisfaction level, refers to the perceived quality of the relationship. The degree of satisfaction with a relationship is a function of the difference between rewards and costs in the relationship along with a lower comparison level (i.e., expectations regarding the quality of relationships in general based on one's past interpersonal experiences). Thus, an individual should be more satisfied in a relationship that is more rewarding than costly, especially if the individual has come to expect relationships to be unrewarding. Furthermore, the more

satisfied the individual is with the relationship the more likely he or she is to be committed to it. The second factor considered by relational partners is the quality of alternative relationships or lifestyles (e.g., singleness). The perceived quality and availability of alternatives determines the extent to which one's commitment to a primary relationship is challenged. Thus, an individual who believes that another romantic relationship, relationships with family members and friends, or even independence are more rewarding than his or her current romantic relationship is likely to be less committed to that relationship. The final factor, investment size, influences commitment through the mechanism of contributing irretrievable resources to the partner or the relationship. There are two kinds of investment specified in the model. Direct investments include such factors as time, self-disclosure, and money, whereas indirect investments include resources that were originally extraneous to the relationship but which have become connected to both partners, such as family networks and friends. Investments serve to increase commitment by making relationship dissolution costly.

A derivative of Rusbult's investment model is Lund's (1985) barrier model. This approach to the conceptualization of commitment capitalizes on Levinger's (1965) theoretical statements regarding barrier forces, which are hypothesized to impel spouses to maintain their relationship regardless of the partners' satisfaction level. According to Lund, commitment is a barrier to relationship dissolution borne from the accumulation of investments made in the relationship over time. In focusing on the constraining properties of commitment Lund was attempting to break from a research tradition which emphasized satisfaction and attraction as the predominant forces operating in close relationships. Indeed, one noteworthy finding from Lund's research

is that interpersonal rewards have a relatively small role in predicting commitment once investments are taken into account.

Other perspectives, while emphasizing different aspects of the exchange paradigm, make very similar points about how spouses evaluate their interactions and come to the decision to maintain or dissolve their relationship. For example, similar to Rusbult (1980) and Lund (1985), Bauserman and Arias (1992) asserted the importance of investments in relationships; however, these investigators suggested that not all investments have equal impact on relationship stability. Based on their research with domestically victimized wives, Bauserman and Arias (1992) concluded that the predictive utility of investing in a marriage depends on whether a spouse has experienced prior success in making investments. Within this context, a successful investment is one that has paid off, as when, for example, investing time and energy in the process of problem-solving results in a satisfactory solution. Thus, this perspective adds to Rusbult's (1980) notions about investing in relationships by noting that the result of a particular investment has greater impact on the experience of commitment than does the act of investing itself. Leik and Leik (1977), by contrast, spend little time talking about relationship investments and focus instead on the maintenance of one's relationship in spite of the availability of attractive alternatives. The point of interest according to this theoretical approach is that commitment is emergent from the reward value of the relationship.

The popularity of social exchange theory as a paradigmatic foundation for the study of interpersonal commitment is not difficult to understand. In part the appeal of these exchange-oriented models lies in their efforts to define precisely the elements involved in the development, maintenance, and disruption of interpersonal commitment. In fact, some models (most notably Rusbult's investment model) attempt

to quantify the commitment process by inserting the components of social exchange into mathematical formulae, a strategy that provides researchers with a tool which may be used to examine the precise relationships among interpersonal rewards and costs, investments, and alternatives. Further, exchange theories have proven to be quite versatile, as demonstrated by the broad range of interpersonal phenomena to which these theories have been applied. For example, the principles of exchange have been used to explain success in therapy (Bagarozzi & Atilano, 1982; Bagarozzi & Pollane, 1983; Beach & Broderick, 1983), persistence in abusive relationships (Bauserman & Arias, 1992; Strube & Barbour, 1983), the initiation of, and reactions to, divorce (Donovan & Jackson, 1990; Green & Sporakowski, 1983; Kitson, Holmes, & Sussman, 1983), and widow(er)'s persistent ties with the deceased spouse (Hansson, Berry, & Berry, 1996; Moss & Moss, 1984).

Limitations of Social Exchange Theories

Despite their popularity, social exchange theories have a number of shortcomings that limit their applicability to the study of social relationships. Many of these limitations concern issues of definition and measurement. For example, researchers have had difficulty operationalizing the value of relational rewards and costs. In the marketplace, the actual value of a product or service can be consistently determined by its price, which is fixed and readily identified by consumers. In social relationships, however, the value of interpersonal "goods and services" and the expense of interpersonal costs vary as a function of the individual and the nature of the relationship. For instance, emotional and physical intimacy are commonly regarded as rewarding aspects of a close relationship; however, the relative value of these two forms of intimacy may differ for males and females (Dion & Dion, 1985; Hendrick,

1988; Peplau & Gordon, 1985). Also, the reward value of emotional and physical intimacy may change for individuals as their relationship develops. In addition, whereas one would expect intimacy to be a positive aspect of love relationships, it is unlikely that emotional bonding would be considered a particularly rewarding aspect of the relationships of employers and employees.

A related issue concerns the assessment of rewards and costs in a relationship. As indicated above, some models of commitment attempt to quantify the exchange process by presenting the elements of exchange in terms of mathematical formulae. In Rusbult's (1980, 1983) model, for example, the degree of satisfaction experienced in a relationship is reflected in the equation: $SAT_X = (R_X - C_X) - CL$, where R_X refers to the rewards obtained in the relationship, C_X refers to the costs of relationship participation, and CL refers to an individual's comparison level or expectations about the outcome of the relationship. One difficulty with this formulation is that it assumes equivalence among the factors contributing to relationship staisfaction. Thus, as suggested by equity theory (Adams, 1965; Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978), the difference between high rewards and high costs should have the same impact on satisfaction as the difference between low rewards and low costs. However, the substantial research evidence supporting the differential importance of positive and negative experiences on relationship satisfaction (Adams & Moore, 1995; Bradbury & Fincham, 1987; Gottman, 1994), renders this conclusion untenable.

Just as the value of interpersonal rewards and costs is subjectively determined and changeable, so also is the notion of fairness in exchange. In one respect, determining what is a fair exchange of interpersonal resources depends on the value placed on these resources. For example, Wills, Weiss, and Patterson (1974) found that one source of disagreement and conflict among spouses involves the relative importance

of instrumental (e.g., taking out the garbage) and affectional (e.g., kissing one's spouse) behaviors: whereas instrumental behaviors are more important to husbands, affectional behaviors have greater value for wives. Given this disparity in values, it is possible for spouses to provide one another with similar rewards and yet feel that the exchange is inequitable.

Another point of contention regarding the determination of fair exchange concerns the issue of reciprocity. Homans (1974) observed that judgments of fairness necessarily involve expectations about the future, thereby rendering the assessment of fairness somewhat arbitrary. Invoking again the analogy of the marketplace, the exchange of payment for a product is founded on the norm of immediate reciprocity--the product may not be obtained until payment has been rendered in full. By contrast, in the exchange of interpersonal resources, the time-frame for "payment" may be extended so that a husband who provides affectional rewards to his wife on one day may not expect her to reciprocate immediately with the provision of instrumental rewards. Rather, the husband's expression of affection may have been done with the belief that his wife will provide him with rewards at some unspecified point in the future.

Other criticisms focus on the relationship between predictions made by exchange theories and actual human behavior. For example, while exchange theory predicts that people will seek to maxmize their rewards and minimize their costs in social interaction, it is clear that people often participate in relationships in which there is little or no direct reward for the participation and in which there may be considerable costs associated with continued participation (e.g., the relationships between strangers in need and helpgivers, parents and their dependent children, etc). Exchange theorists counter this criticism by arguing that the appearance of continued participation in a

costly relationship may be caused by observers failing to adopt a more longitudinal perspective on the relationship. The basis of this argument is, of course, the same one described above in the analysis of fairness. From this perspective, individuals maintain a costly relationship because they anticipate future rewards. An additional argument in defense of exchange theory predictions is that an individual's assessment of his or her profit in a relationship depends on what he or she values. Thus, if self-sacrifice is a prized characteristic, then eschewing personal rewards is itself rewarding. These arguments, however, are weakened by their all-inclusive nature. Much like the instinct theories that emerged to explain animal behavior in the early 1920s, exchange theories that regard virtually anything as possessing rewarding features are of limited explanatory value.

It is also questionable whether participants in romantic relationships exert the cognitive effort necessary to attend to all the elements of social exchange. For example, a guiding principle in social cognition is that most people are unwilling to exert more than the minimum amount of mental effort required in a particular situation (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). In following the "path of least resistance," people frequently use a variety of mental heuristics designed to simplify the task of making sense of social information. One such heuristic involves drawing conclusions on the basis of information that is most available in memory (Tversky & Kahneman, 1982), a strategy that might account for the negative interaction patterns experienced by distressed spouses (Gottman, 1979, 1994). Rather than engaging in constructive problem-solving, which requires taking the other person's perspective, assembling the relevant information, generating response options, and selecting a solution that will maximize joint outcomes, distressed couples often fall into routines where familiar scripts are followed rigidly. It could be argued that these predictable negative interaction patterns

are driven by the readily available memories of similar encounters in the past. In this way, it might be that dissatisfied spouses react to one another on the basis of expectations about the interaction rather than attend to the specific issues around which the interaction is organized.

Summary and Conclusions

As the preceding review shows, most researchers interested in interpersonal commitment have embraced social exchange theory as an explanatory paradigm that is particularly well-suited for examining empirically the cogntive aspects of the commitment process. Despite its popularity and its frequent utilization in theory and research on interpersonal commitment, however, social exchange theory has a number of shortcomings which limit its global application to close relationships. Perhaps the most important of these, from the perspective of the present research, is the fact that spouses are not always as calculating and rational as exchange theory suggests. Specifically, as indicated previously, studies of human cognitive processing and more focused investigations of cognition in marriage show fairly consistently that basic cognitive processes are affected by emotional states, supporting the argument that participants in emotionally charged relationships like marriage are unlikely to coldly and rationally evaluate the quality of their relationship and to make decisions regarding the long-term stability of the relationship on the basis of this evaluation. Moreover, couples often do not engage in the cognitive effort required by exchange theory, preferring instead to reenact well-established behavioral scripts reinforced over years of interaction with one's spouse. Finally, spouses commonly behave in ways that are inconsistent with exchange theory predictions, as when one spouse sacrifices personal opportunities for happiness for the sake of his or her mate. Exchange theory has

difficulty accounting for these findings, indicating that the model may be applicable to a fairly limited range of interpersonal phenomena.

Given the many factors that influence rational thought in close relationships, it seems likely that additional explanatory power may be obtained with alternative approaches to the study of commitment that do not rely so heavily on cognitively-based models. One such approach involves viewing commitment as an individual difference variable. From this perspective, committed behavior may be regarded as a dispositional tendency toward consistent, directed behavior that is driven more by internal standards than by reactions to external events. In the following section, prior theory and research on the connection between personality and the development of intimate relationships will be reviewed in an attempt to establish the plausibility of approaching the study of interpersonal commitment from an individual differences perspective. Subsequently, three studies will seek to test the utility of this approach.

Commitment and Personality

The essential connection between personality and interpersonal relationships is a well-established standard in psychology. Virtually all theories of personality and human development assert, to some degree, the importance of our interactions with caregivers, friends, and other agents of socialization in the formation of our dominant personality traits. Indeed, theorists such as Cooley (1902), Horney (1937), and Sullivan (1953) have suggested that personality cannot exist independently of one's relationships with others, and some phenomenological viewpoints (e.g., Pollio, Henly, & Thompson, 1996) emphasize the fact that people cannot have a fully integrated sense of self without the experiential background of other people. It is also clear, however, that personality plays an important role in the initiation, maintenance, and quality of

interpersonal relationships (Bell, 1985; Hansson, Jones, & Carpenter, 1984; Jones, Sansone, & Helm, 1983), leading some theorists to speculate that the primary purpose of studying personality is to better understand the dynamics of social interaction (Hogan, 1983). The influence of personality and relationships, therefore, is bi-directional and dynamic; each affects, and is affected by, the other (cf. Jones, 1991).

To a considerable degree, studies bearing on the relationship between personality and the development of intimate associations have focused primarily on quality variables (e.g., satisfaction, happiness, contentment, etc.) and on issues of partner compatibility (Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994; Kurdek, 1991; Schlesinger, 1983b; Simpson, 1990). While these lines of research have been instrumental in expanding our view of the factors that contribute to relational happiness, the range of relevant interpersonal variables which might be affected by dispositional characteristics needs to be broadened. For example, it would be of interest to know if particular personality traits influence the degree to which relational partners are committed to one another and to their relationship. Although commitment and satisfaction are often highly related in romantic relationships (e.g., Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988), it is also possible to be committed to someone with whom one is not particularly satisfied (e.g., Heaton & Albrecht, 1991). Thus, approaching commitment from the perspective of personality might yield important answers to questions regarding relationship maintenance and dissolution, particularly in the instance of enduring, but unhappy, relationships.

Commitment and Personality: Theoretical Perspectives

Personality theorists writing from diverse ideological perspectives have suggested that an individual's capacity to commit to personal relationships is rooted in

the process of personality development. In Erikson's (1950, 1964, 1968) psychosocial approach, for example, one sees in the various stages of personality development a gradual progression toward interpersonal commitment that emerges out of the successful navigation of eight ontological crises. One could argue that incipient tendencies toward commitment coincide with the emergence of the virtue of *will* during the second developmental stage (Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt). Will, in this context, refers to the growing ability to make decisions, delay gratification, and pursue goals in a persistent fashion and may be regarded as a necessary precondition for the experience of commitment. However, the capacity to commit to close relationships, according to Erikson, becomes most evident in the sixth stage of development, which is characterized either by the attainment of intimacy in relationships or the experience of social isolation. It is during this stage that the individual is most likely to seek out sexually intimate relationships and to display a willingness to commit to these relationships despite having to make sacrifices and endure hardships. Such a capacity depends on the attainment of an identity in Stage 5 (Identity vs. Identity Confusion), and failure to resolve the Stage 5 identity crisis makes it less likely that an individual will be able to develop the other-directedness necessary for commitment to occur.

The rootedness of interpersonal commitment in the dynamics of personality development is also emphasized in object relations theory, particularly in the writings of Fairbairn (1941, 1952), Guntrip (1961, 1968), and Winnicott (1958, 1965). In contrast to classical psychoanalytic accounts of personality development, which focus primarily on the dynamics of unconscious processes, the object relations approach asserts that personality is emergent from the interpersonal context into which a child is born. More specifically, an individual's character as well as the quality of his/her interpersonal relationships are believed to derive from the nature of an infant's

attachment to its mother or alternative ("transitional") objects. One dimension of personality development that appears to be particularly relevant to discussions of interpersonal commitment involves the infant's progression from a relatively undifferentiated organism, whose primary orientation is toward self-gratification, to a fully differentiated individual who is capable of selfless love, respect, and concern for the well-being of others (Damon, 1977; Fairbairn, 1952). To the extent that an infant is successful in integrating the "good" and "bad" aspects of a valued object as well as differentiating the self from the object, the infant's capacity to form stable, committed relationships with others and to invest emotionally in them should be enhanced (Weston, 1993; see also Brickman [1987] for a detailed treatment of the importance of integrating positive and negative dimensions of experience in maintaining commitment). Moreover, the development of personalities characterized by deficiencies in the ability to form and maintain stable, emotionally intimate relationships (e.g., borderline, schizoid, and antisocial) are regarded by some theorists (e.g., citations) to result from pathological object relations.

A benefactor of object relations theory, attachment theory (Bowlby, 1958, 1969, 1973) makes a similar point regarding the link between personality development and interpersonal commitment. The fundamental premise of attachment theory is that the innate tendency of infants to seek out the mother and to become distressed if separated from her serves the evolutionarily adaptive purpose of keeping the infant close to the mother, thereby keeping the infant safe from potential environmental threats. Additionally, however, attachment theory proposes that the quality of the attachment bond between the child and his/her mother is an important determinant of the child's psychosocial development (Ainsworth, 1967; Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Ainsworth & Wittig, 1969) and is instrumental in shaping the child's

personality (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985; Simpson, 1990). Furthermore, Bowlby (1969) noted that the nature of the attachment bond between mother and child may have profound implications for the child's capacity to commit subsequently to personal relationships.

Generally speaking, commitment is implicit in the child's attempts to maintain proximity to the mother. Upon being separated from the mother, children may be observed crying, searching for, and crawling after the attachment figure in an attempt to restore contact. Such behavior is purposive and goal-directed and may thus be regarded as a reflection of the child's commitment to his or her mother. Moreover, Bowlby (1969) suggested that children who experience successive losses of primary attachment figures are less likely to commit to subsequent relationships and are more likely to become increasingly self-centered as they mature than children who do not experience such losses.

Based on observational studies of mothers and their children, Ainsworth and her colleagues expanded on Bowlby's theoretical propositions by suggesting that variations in mother-child interaction patterns yield three forms of attachment. Specifically, mothers who are responsive and warm in their interactions with their children and who allow them to explore freely tend to produce individuals who are *securely* attached; mothers who are inconsistent in their attentiveness to their children or who interfere with their children's desired activities produce individuals with *ambivalent/anxious* attachment styles; and mothers who are rejecting of their children tend to produce individuals who display an *avoidant* attachment style. Individuals with differing attachment styles can be distinguished on the basis of their orientations toward intimate relationships. Thus, people with secure attachment styles tend to view others as accepting, reliable and trustworthy, whereas anxiously attached individuals regard

others as being unreliable and unwilling to commit to relationships, and avoidant individuals view others as unreliable and overly willing to commit to relationships (citations).

Commitment and Personality: Empirical Evidence

Although the connection between personality and the capacity to commit to interpersonal relationships has been proposed in diverse theoretical writings, only a few studies have endeavored to explore this link empirically[5]. For example, the higher divorce rate among individuals who cohabited before marriage compared to those who did not has been explained in terms of dispositional differences between the two groups of spouses (Bennett, Blanc, & Bloom, 1988; DeMaris & Leslie, 1984). Specifically, couples who choose to live together before marriage may be part of a select group of individuals who are either disinterested in traditional orientations toward marriage or are somewhat less inclined to commit to long-term relationships than couples who do not cohabit premaritally.

Personality has also been implicated in commitment-relevant issues of dual-career couples (Glickauf-Hughes, Hughes, & Wells, 1986). In particular, it appears that members of dual-career couples have a highly developed sense of achievement motivation and a strong desire for personal success, an inclination toward independence, and a tendency to respond more to external than internal validation (Rice, 1979). According to Salzman (1973), these traits increase the difficulty dual-career couples have in committing to their relationship because marriage is less likely to provide the kinds of rewards and guidelines for success than one's career. That is, tangible achievement needs and external validation are more likely obtained from one's

career than from one's relationship, making it more likely that a spouse will devote more time and energy to career pursuits at the expense of the marriage.

Much of the evidence suggesting that certain dimensions of personality are related to the capacity to commit to personal relationships derives from clinical case studies. For example, Counts and Reid (1986) describe the "marriage phobic" as an individual who makes tentative commitments that are quickly revoked when the individual becomes bored, disappointed, or angry with his/her partner. The inability of these individuals to make firm commitments is believed to be the result of strong narcissistic tendencies. A similar personality profile is described by Grand (1982), who considers the "uncommitted personality type" to derive from "the [compulsive reenactment of the] destructive, disappointing infantile mother fixation, as well as the oedipal struggle, through a series of sexual relationships" (p. 283). Clinical observation also supports the notion that individuals diagnosed with anti-social, borderline, narcissistic, and schizoid personality disorders are deficient in their ability to commit to interpersonal relationships. Based on the infrequency with which such individuals enter into treatment, however, it is difficult to compare individuals with personality disturbances and clinically normal individuals on variables of interpersonal relevance.

Despite the relative lack of research on personality correlates of commitment in close relationships, investigations in which commitment is examined in other contexts lend support to the notion that commitment may have dispositional causes. For example, commitment is considered to be an integral component of hardiness and resiliance (Bland, Sowa, & Callahan, 1994; Kobasa, 1979). In this context, commitment refers to "the ability to believe in the truth, importance, and interest value of what one is doing, and the willingness to exercise influence or control in the

personal and social situations in which one is involved" (Kobasa, 1982, p. 708), and is an important predictor of peoples' ability to resist the psychological and physiological effects of stress (Kobasa, Maddi, & Courington, 1981; Kobasa, Maddi, & Kahn, 1982; Kobasa & Puccetti, 1983). Moreover, commitment has been associated with other personality traits, including achievement motivation (Robinson, 1987), a high sense of responsibility for the outcomes of personal decisions (Singer & Singer, 1986), conscientiousness (Barrick Mount, & Strauss, 1993), and an orientation toward Type A behavior (Schaubroeck & Williams, 1993).

The notion that commitment is itself an individual difference variable also has been addressed in psychometric studies by Brickman (1987), Dube' and her colleagues (Dube', Jodoin, & Kairouz, 1994; Dube' & Kairouz, 1994), and Stanley and Markman (1992). Brickman's (1987) measure of generalized commitment reflects an orientation toward the enthusiastic pursuit of a desired course of action (e.g., "I give everything I have to whatever I do") and dutiful persistence in a chosen course of action (e.g., "Even when I am unhappy, I hardly ever quit until things are finished"). The General Disposition to Commitment measure (Dube' & Kairouz, 1994) also assesses the attraction (e.g., "I am an enthusiastic person") and perseverance (e.g., "I make sacrifices for things I believe in") dimensions of commitment but also contains a scale that reflects the capacity to integrate the positive and negative aspects of one's life (e.g., "I usually manage to find meaning even for activities that seem insignificant"). Further, the Meta-Commitment Scale of the Commitment Inventory (Stanley & Markman, 1992) reflects the extent to which an individual is likely to follow through on his/her commitments (e.g., "Following through on commitments is an essential part of who I am"). Although these measures appear to possess adequate psychometric properties, they have not yet enjoyed widespread use in research on commitment

between spouses. Nonetheless, they indicate one way in which commitment may be reflective of underlying dispositional characteristics.

Purpose of the Present Study

As the preceding review suggests, prior theory on personality development asserts that the tendency to commit to personal relationships is at least partly a function of dispositional characteristics. Empirical evidence supporing this position, however, is sparce and largely indirect. Indeed, no concentrated efforts have been directed toward examining which aspects of personality are predictive of commitment to close relationships. Thus, the goal of the present research was to explore the contribution of dispositional characteristics to the expression of commitment by romantically involved partners. Three studies were conducted to address several general issues regarding the role of personality in the experience of commitment in close personal relationships. Study 1 sought to determine whether a basic association exists between interpersonal commitment and various dimensions of normal and deviant personality. Study 2 examined the relationship between current marital commitment and attachment history, paying particular attention to consistent patterns of interpersonal dynamics over a broad range of relationships. Further, this study sought to determine whether attachment history accounts for unique variance in commitment when relationship satisfaction is taken into account. Finally, Study 3 attempted to provide evidence for a "committed personality" by exploring the degree to which individuals are committed to diverse interpersonal and professional relationships and institutions.

Study 1

Method

Participants

Two samples of married individuals (total N = 287) participated in the present study. Sample 1 consisted of 47 males (mean age = 38.8 years) and 77 females (mean age = 37.3 years), most of whom were Caucasian (95.8%), college educated (83.9%), and had at least 1 child (69.4%). On average, participants had been married for approximately 15.9 years. Participants comprising Sample 2 were 55 males (mean age = 37.2 years) and 106 females (mean age = 38.4 years). This sample was similar to Sample 1 on ethnic composition (95.1% Caucasian), education level (74% had at least some college education) parental status (73% had at least 1 child), and length of marriage (15.6 years).

Instrumentation

Dimensions of Commitment Inventory (DCI; Adams & Jones, 1995). The DCI is a 45-item measure that assesses the three dimensions of interpersonal commitment. The *Commitment to Spouse/Partner* subscale reflects the attraction component of commitment, in which an individual remains in a given relationship because he/she is devoted and dedicated to his/her partner; the *Commitment to Marriage/Relationship* subscale reflects a person's intention to remain in a relationship because of moral, social normative, or religious beliefs; the *Barriers to Dissolution* subscale reflects a person's intention to persist in a relationship because of concern over incurring social, emotional, and/or financial penalties upon relationship dissolution. The DCI has been extensively validated and has demonstrated considerable utility in previous research (Adams & Jones, 1996).

The NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The NEO-PI-R is a 240-item measure of normal personality based on the five-factor model of personality. Scale items are combined to form 30 facet scores which are, in turn, combined to form the five global domains of normal personality: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, and Agreeableness. Costa and McCrae (1992) report indices of internal reliability (alpha) ranging from .86 (Agreeableness) to .92 (Neuroticism). Reliabilities for the 30 facet scores vary from a low of .56 (Tender-Mindedness) to a high of .81 (Depression). The NEO-PI-R has been extensively validated (See Costa & McCrae, 1992, 1988).

PROFILE (Jones, 1986). PROFILE a 186-item measure of deviant personality as defined by Axis II of the DSM-III-R. PROFILE consists of 15-item measures of each of the 11 personality disorder dimensions: antisocial, avoidant, borderline, compulsive, dependent, histrionic, narcissistic, paranoid, passive-aggressive, schizoid, and schizotypal. In addition, PROFILE contains three response bias scales: a 10-item scale to assess socially desirable responding, a five-item measure of infrequency or random responding, and a five-item measure of "faking bad." Previous resarch indicates that PROFILE scores are internally consistent and have been found to correlate significantly with scores from the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (Millon, 1983) and with therapists ratings of Axis II disorders (Jones, 1989).

Results

Internal consistency estimates were computed for each of the DCI, NEO-PI-R, and PROFILE subscale scores. Values of coefficient alpha for the three DCI subscales ranged from .84 to .91 with corresponding mean inter-item correlations ranging from .27 to .41. For the 30 NEO-PI-R facet scores, coefficient alpha ranged from .35 to

.83 with mean inter-item correlations ranging from .06 to .38. Coefficient alpha for the 11 PROFILE subscale scores ranged from .62 to .78 with corresponding mean inter-item correlations ranging from .10 to .19. In general, these results indicate adequate reliability for most the measures; however, particularly low reliabilities for the Actions (alpha = .35), Achievement-Striving (alpha = .57), Modesty (alpha = .55), and Tender-mindedness (alpha = .47) facets requires interpreting results involving these scales with caution.

Correlations between the DCI subscales and the measures of normal and deviant personality are presented in Table 11. As may be seen, several significant associations were obtained. In particular, commitment based on a sense of dedication and devotion to one's partner (Commitment to Spouse) was positively related to personality traits reflective of positive emotional expression, interpersonal sensitivity, and personal integrity, and inversely related to such traits as vulnerability and an orientation toward sensation-seeking. Not surprisingly, Commitment to Spouse also was inversely related to several characteristics reflective of social deviance, including antisocial, borderline, dependent, narcissistic, paranoid, schizoid, and schizotypal tendencies.

Similar associations were obtained between the personality measures and commitment based on one's sense of moral duty and respect for the institution of marriage (Commitment to Marriage). Although the magnitude of the correlations was slightly lower for Commitment to Marriage than for Commitment to Spouse, Commitment to Marriage was positively related to a personal sense of competence and duty, and was negatively related to vulnerability and activity orientation. Unlike Commitment to Spouse, Commitment to Marriage tended to be unrelated to positive feelings. In addition, Commitment to Marriage was uniquely related to the traits Openness to Ideas and Openness to Values.

Table 11

Correlations between the Dimensions of Commitment and Measures of Normal and Deviant Personality.

Measures	Dimensions of Commitment CS	CM	BD
NEO-PI-R			
Neuroticism			
Anxiety	-.07	-.01	-.02
Angry-Hostility	.04	-.02	-.00
Depression	-.18	-.01	.06
Self-Consciousness	-.13	-.01	.08
Impulsiveness	-.08	.11	.15
Vulnerability	-.31**	-.23*	-.08
Extraversion			
Warmth	.07	.08	-.03
Gregariousness	-.09	.04	.02
Assertiveness	-.05	-.08	-.08
Activity	-.06	-.19	-.26**
Excitement-Seeking	-.14	.16	.23*
Positive Emotions	.21*	.11	-.01
Openness			
Fantasy	-.03	-.02	-.07

(Table 11 continues)

(Table 11 continued)

Measures	Dimensions of Commitment CS	CM	BD
Aesthetics	-.07	-.14	-.08
Feelings	.21*	.05	-.06
Actions	-.34***	-.33***	-.13
Ideas	-.02	-.27**	-.14
Values	-.08	-.43***	-.36***
Agreeableness			
Trust	.10	.12	-.09
Straightforwardness	.15	.10	.08
Altruism	.19	.16	.14
Compliance	.12	.09	.14
Modesty	-.06	-.04	-.10
Tender-Mindedness	.25**	.02	-.15
Conscientiousness			
Competence	.36***	.22*	.05
Order	.28**	.09	.01
Dutifulness	.34***	.29**	.23*
Achievement-Striving	.18	-.04	-.15
Self-Discipline	.19	.03	-.03
Deliberation	.19	-.06	.01

(Table 11 continues)

(Table 11 continued)

Measures	Dimensions of Commitment CS	CM	BD
PROFILE			
Antisocial	-.36***	-.27***	.05
Avoidant	-.05	.05	.16**
Borderline	-.17**	-.13	.03
Compulsive	.20**	.34***	.27***
Dependent	-.16**	-.03	.11
Histrionic	.17**	.13*	.08
Narcissistic	-.16**	-.01	.14*
Paranoid	-.22**	-.19**	.02
Passive-Aggressive	-.09	-.01	.11
Schizoid	-.34***	-.32***	-.12
Schizotypal	-.23**	-.21**	-.06

Note. *p<.10. **p<.05. ***p<.01.

Note. CS = Commitment to Spouse; CM = Commitment to Marriage; BD = Barriers to Dissolution.

Finally, commitment experienced as constraint (Barriers to Dissolution) tended to be inversely related to activity orientation and openness to personal values, and positively associated with excitement-seeking and dutifulness. With regard to deviant personality traits, Barriers to Dissolution was related to tendencies toward social avoidance, compulsivity, and narcissism.

Discussion

In general, these results suggest that the three dimensions of interpersonal commitment are related differentially to particular personality traits and hint at the possibility that certain clusters of traits may influence the way commitment is experienced by spouses. For example, people who reported being highly devoted and dedicated to their spouse also described themselves as prone to experience positive feelings and as being emotionally expressive, tender-minded, and generally conscientious. Further, personally committed individuals were less likely to describe themselves as being vulnerable, open to actions, and socially deviant. This pattern of traits seems to reflect an overall positive orientation toward social relationships that characterizes high quality interpersonal experiences of various types.

Individuals who scored high on commitment to the institution of marriage tended to describe themselves in a fashion similar to those scoring high on commitment to the spouse. In addition, though, people who reported being highly committed to their marital relationship also indicated that they have fairly well-defined values to which they adhere firmly. In fact, highly maritally committed individuals were less open to alternative experiences in general than individuals with high scores on the other dimensions of commitment. This finding may indicate that spouses who are more

committed to their marriage also have a more rigid moral standard than individuals who express less commitment to the marriage.

The personality profile of individuals who score high on the constraining dimension of commitment seems to reflect an individual with somewhat rigid moral and/or ideological standards as well as an orientation toward activity and excitement-seeking. While individuals who feel trapped in their marriage described themselves as being high on excitement-seeking, they also indicated that they do not lead very active or fast-paced lives. One possible explanation for this apparently contradictory finding is that whereas the Activity facet of the NEO-PI-R consists of items that reflect *actual* behaviors (e.g., I usually seem to be in a hurry), the Excitement-seeking facet contains a large number of items that reflect more *internal* experiences (e.g., I often crave excitement) or *imagined* behaviors (e.g., I wouldn't enjoy vacationing in Las Vegas). Thus, individuals who feel trapped in their marriage may desire to engage in various activities (including, perhaps, the pursuit of an alternative relationship) but do not actively follow through on these desires, possibly because of concern over the potential negative consequences of such pursuits (e.g., upsetting one's spouse).

Two sets of correlations involving the measure of deviant personality are particularly noteworthy. First, tendencies toward compulsivity are positively related to each of the dimensions of commitment. Although compulsivity is considered a deviant personality trait if the compulsions interfere with normal daily functioning, tendencies toward compulsivity may be adaptive in some situations. In the present context, compulsivity may be related to spouses' intention to persist in their marriages and to work at edifying their mate in the face of inevitable declines in satisfaction or increases in stressful events. The interpretation of the positive relationship between compulsivity and feelings of entrapment in marriage is somewhat less clear, but the association may

reflect distressed spouses' intention to maintain the status quo of the marriage. In this regard, one can imagine a wife trapped in an abusive marriage taking great pains to avoid engaging in behaviors that might upset the abusive husband. Such efforts, it would seem, would be well-served by a tendency toward compulsivity.

The second set of correlations involved the Narcissism subscale. The inverse relationship between narcissism and commitment to one's spouse seems to be fairly easily explainable in terms of the self-focus that characterizes narcissism. Excessive self-love seems to preclude the other-directedness required to commit to another individual. Again, however, the relationship between narcissism and feelings of entrapment is less readily interpreted. It is possible that being constrained to remain in an unsatisfying marriage may produce increasingly self-focused thoughts as the individual attempts to justify his/her decision to remain in the relationship. In what might be referred to as a martyr's reaction, a person who feels trapped in an unhappy relationship may ruminate over why he/she must endure unjustified mistreatment by his/her spouse. In this regard, the tendency toward narcissism might serve an esteem-maintaining function. Obviously, these conclusions are highly speculative; future research which addresses these issues more specifically is clearly called for at this point.

Study 2

The goal of Study 2 was to move beyond the identification of significant associations between specific personality traits and the three dimensions of commitment by exploring the role of more globally defined personality profiles in the experience of commitment. Toward this end the present study examines how attachment style helps to explain variations in interpersonal commitment. Based on the theoretical writings of Bowlby (1969, 1973) and Ainsworth (Ainsworth, 1967), as well as recent research on

attachment processes in adult romantic relationships (e.g., Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987, 1994; Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994; Simpson, 1990), we expected to find reliable group differences among securely, anxiously, and avoidantly attached adults on (a) perceptions of their childhood relationships with parents, (b) perceptions of their early dating experiences, and (c) current marital satisfaction and commitment. Further, it was expected that self-reported attachment history variables would be predictive of current marital commitment even when marital satisfaction was taken into account.

Method

Participants

Participants were 250 married individuals (86 males, mean age = 35.4; 164 females, mean age = 36.8) who had been married an average of 14.3 years. Like the individuals who participated in Study 1, most of the participants in the present study were Caucasian (92.8%), well-educated (79.2% had at least some college experience), and had at least one child (69.4%).

Instrumentation

In addition to the Dimensions of Commitment Inventory (Adams & Jones, 1995), participants completed the following measures.

Attachment measures. Four measures of attachment were adapted from Hazan and Shaver (1987). A single-item measure asked respondents to indicate which of three descriptions of relationship styles (written to reflect secure, anxious/ambivalent, and avoidant attachments) best characterizes the respondent's feelings about interpersonal relationships. The second measure consisted of 15 positive (e.g., warm) and 15 negative (e.g., unresponsive) adjectives which respondents rated on a 5-point scale to indicate the extent to which each adjective described the respondents' mother and father

while the respondent was a child. A third attachment measure (Collins & Read, 1990) was derived from Hazan and Shaver's (1987) trichotomous index of attachment style. Specifically, 15 items were written on the basis of the Hazan and Shaver descriptions so that attachment style could be assessed as a continuous variable. Finally, *The Parent Attachment Scale of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987)*, was included to assess the extent to which trust, communication, and alienation characterized the relationship between the respondent and his/her parents when the respondent was a child. Because the IPPA was designed to be completed by pre-adolescent and adolescent children still living with their parents, participants in the present study were instructed to respond to the items based on their recollection of their parental relationship.

The Relationship Awareness Scale (RAS; Snell, 1988). The RAS consists of 18 items written to reflect three underlying components: relationship consciousness, (e.g., "I am very aware of what goes on in my close relationships"), relationship monitoring (e.g., "I usually worry about the impression my relationships have on others"), and relationship anxiety (e.g., "I am more anxious about intimate relationships than most people").

The Dating Experiences Scale (DES; Hindy & Schwarz, 1984). The DES uses 33 items to measure individuals' experience of obsessive, unrequited, and turbulent love in an important dating relationship.

The Marital Satisfaction and Commitment Scales (MSCS; Jones, Adams, Monroe, & Berry, 1995). The MSCS is a 25-item measure of global happiness and commitment in marriage. The measure has demonstrated both internal and longitudinal stability and concurrent validity. Results of analyses designed to assess the construct

validity of the MSCS indicated that the commitment subscale measures the attraction (Commitment to Spouse) dimension of the construct.

Results

Coefficient alpha and mean inter-item correlations were computed to assess the reliability of the attachment and relationship measures. Across all measures, coefficient alpha ranged from .64 to .91, and mean inter-item correlations ranged from .23 to .50. Only two measures were found to have questionable reliability: the Relationship Consciousness subscale of the RAS (alpha = .64) and the items written by Collins and Read (1990) to assess the anxious/ambivalent attachment style (alpha = .68). Analyses involving these measures should be interpreted with caution.

Two hundred thirty one participants responded to the trichotomous attachment item written by Hazan and Shaver (1987). Of these, 162 (70%) classified themselves as securely attached whereas 27 (11.7%) identified more strongly with the anxious/ambivalent attachment style and 42 (18.3%) identified more strongly with the avoidant style. Although securely attached individuals were slightly overrepresented in the present sample, the distribution of individuals across the three attachment categories is proportional to distributions obtained by other investigators (see Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

The first set of analyses examined group differences among securely, anxiously, and avoidantly attached adults on the quality of their early parental and dating relationships. Results of oneway analyses of variance on the relevant variables are presented in Table 12. As may be seen, participants representing the three attachment styles could be differentiated reliably on the basis of the quality of childhood and early adolescent interpersonal relationships. For example, securely attached adults were more likely than either anxiously or avoidantly attached adults to describe their mothers

Table 12

Comparisons of Securely, Anxiously, and Avoidantly Attached Adults on Parental Characteristics, Early Parental Relationships, and Early Dating Relationships.

	Attachment Style				
Attachment Variable	Secure	Anxious	Avoidant	F	p
Mother Characteristics					
Loving	4.48[a]	4.00[b]	4.18	4.64	.01
Responsible	4.33[a]	3.59[b]	4.08	7.60	.001
Reliable	4.29[a]	3.59[b]	3.98	6.50	.002
Warm	4.20[a]	3.97[b]	4.10	3.51	.03
Helpful	4.14[a]	3.67[b]	3.88	3.55	.03
Sympathetic	4.11[a]	3.44[b]	3.73	6.98	.001
Soothing	4.02[a]	3.44[b]	3.60[b]	5.68	.004
Patient	3.85[a]	3.26[b]	3.65	3.86	.02
Confident	3.84[a]	3.11[b]	3.60	6.54	.002
Intrusive	2.68[a]	2.78	3.30[b]	5.16	.006
Punishing	2.48[a]	3.15[b]	2.93	6.06	.003
Short-Tempered	2.34[b]	3.48[a]	2.63[b]	12.42	.001
Unhappy	2.05[a]	2.85[b]	2.70[b]	9.44	.001
Unfair	2.04[a]	2.63[b]	2.68[b]	8.72	.001
Rejecting	1.87[a]	2.37[b]	2.05	3.07	.05
Unsociable	1.85[a]	2.37[b]	2.08	3.55	.03

(Table 12 continues)

(Table 12 continued)

Attachment Variable	Attachment Style: Secure	Anxious	Avoidant	F	p
Disinterested	1.81[b]	2.56[a]	1.88[b]	7.91	.001
Unresponsive	1.77[b]	2.56[a]	1.95[b]	8.73	.001
Cruel	1.48[a]	1.93[b]	1.80	5.26	.006
Father Characteristics					
Loving	4.18[a]	4.04	3.70[b]	3.39	.04
Reliable	4.13[a]	3.75	3.53[b]	5.47	.005
Humorous	3.91[a]	3.75	3.38[b]	4.53	.01
Warm	3.70[b]	3.79[b]	3.10[a]	5.58	.004
Soothing	3.45[b]	3.67[b]	2.95[a]	4.29	.01
Distant	2.26[a]	2.38	2.80[b]	3.16	.04
Unfair	2.20[a]	2.38	2.73[b]	3.72	.03
Disinterested	2.14[a]	2.13	2.60[b]	2.94	.055
Unhappy	2.09[a]	2.25	3.58[b]	3.27	.04
Cold	1.86[a]	1.96	2.43[b]	5.23	.006
Cruel	1.70[a]	1.92	2.23[b]	4.81	.009
Trust[a]	38.6	35.1	35.8	3.29	.04
Communication[a]	35.5	32.1	33.3	2.74	ns
Alienation[a]	18.2[a]	23.2[b]	21.2[b]	8.58	.001

(Table 12 continues)

(Table 12 continued)

	Attachment Style				
Attachment Variable	Secure	Anxious	Avoidant	F	p
Unrequited Love[b]	25.3[a]	29.9[b]	28.8[b]	5.58	.004
Obsessive Love[b]	37.5	39.4	36.0	1.88	ns
Turbulent Love[b]	31.6[a]	35.0	35.8[b]	3.59	.03

Note. Parental characteristics were adapted from Hazan and Shaver (1987). Mean values range from 1 (Very Uncharacteristic) to 5 (Very Characteristic).

Note. [a]Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; [b]Dating Experiences Scale (Hindy & Schwarz, 1984).

Note. Means with different superscripts are significantly different at alpha = .05 (Tukey).

as being confident, warm, soothing, reliable, patient, sympathetic, helpful, loving, and responsible. Likewise, securely attached adults were more likely to describe their fathers as being reliable, humorous, warm, soothing, and loving than either anxiously or avoidantly attached adults. Interesting differences between adults with anxious and avoidant attachment styles also may be seen. For example, anxious adults were more likely to indicate that they had mothers who were short-tempered, unresponsive, and disinterested than either secure or avoidant adults. Avoidant adults, on the other hand, rated their fathers lower on humor, warmth, and ability to soothe than did anxious and secure adults.

Group differences also were obtained on more global evaluations of the parent-child relationship. Specifically, adults with a secure attachment style were less likely than respondents with anxious or avoidant attachment styles to report feeling alienated by their parents during childhood. Securely attached adults also reported that their parents trusted and communicated with them more than did anxious and avoidant adults, but these differences did not reach statistical significance.

In addition to differences in early parental relationships, adults in the three attachment categories also differed in their descriptions of early dating relationships. In particular, securely attached adults were less likely than either anxiously or avoidantly attached adults to report experiences of unrequited love, and were less likely than avoidantly attached adults to report having turbulent love experiences. Anxiously attached respondents obtained higher scores on the measure of obsessive love than did respondents in the other attachment categories, but this difference was not statistically significant.

Comparisons among the three attachment groups on measures of current marital satisfaction and commitment are shown in Table 13. Significant group differences

Table 13

Comparisons of Securely, Anxiously, and Avoidantly Attached Adults on Commitment and Satisfaction.

	Attachment Style				
Measures	Secure	Anxious	Avoidant	F	p
Commitment to Spouse[a]	63.8	62.6	57.5	8.49	.001
Commitment to Marriage[a]	51.8	52.0	49.0	1.01	ns
Barriers to Dissolution[a]	39.8	41.5	39.5	.38	ns
Marital Satisfaction[b]	60.6	54.1	53.3	14.9	.001

Note. [a]Dimensions of Commitment Inventory (Adams & Jones, 1995); [b]The Marital Satisfaction and Commitment Scales (Jones, Adams, Monroe, & Berry, 1995).

were obtained for commitment to one's spouse and marital satisfaction, with securely and anxiously attached individuals reporting greater commitment to the spouse than avoidantly attached respondents, and secure adults reporting greater marital satisfaction than either anxious or avoidant respondents. Contrary to expectations, commitment to marriage and feelings of entrapment did not differ as a function of attachment style.

In order to determine the nature of the relationship between attachment history variables and current level of marital commitment, the attachment variables were regressed onto the three DCI subscale scores after controlling for marital satisfaction. Results of these analyses are summarized in Table 14. As may be seen, marital satisfaction accounted for a substantial proportion of the variance in Commitment to Spouse (R^2 = .42), and a much smaller share of the variance in and Commitment to Marriage (R^2 = .04) and Barriers to Dissolution (R^2 = .02)[6]. Importantly, though, certain attachment variables explain additional variance in the three dimensions of commitment. For example, once marital satisfaction was taken into account, having had a cold mother was found to have a negative influence on current commitment to the spouse (beta = -.146) whereas having had a reliable father (beta = .131) and an obsessive love experience in an early dating relationship (beta = .103) were positive predictors of commitment to the spouse. Together, these variables accounted for an additional 5% of the variance in Commitment to Spouse scores. Several parental characteristics also were found to be significant predictors of Commitment to Marriage scores once satisfaction level had been statistically controlled. Specifically, having had a mother who was respectful, demanding, and unresponsive, and having had a confident father, accounted for 17% of the variance in Commitment to Marriage. Finally, having had an intrusive father and a respectful mother accounted uniquely for

Table 14

Regression Analyses Showing the Contribution of Attachment Variables to the Prediction of Interpersonal Commitment.

Commitment to Spouse				
Variable	B	Beta	R^2_{change}	F_{change}
Satisfaction	.53	.54	.42	154.8
Mother Cold	-1.31	-.14	.02	7.1
Father Reliable	1.06	.13	.02	5.8
Obsessive Love	1.55	.10	.01	4.0
			Adjusted R^2 = .47	

Commitment to Marriage				
Variable	B	Beta	R^2_{change}	F_{change}
Satisfaction	.18	.18	.04	9.4
Mother Respectful	4.02	.38	.07	16.1
Mother Demanding	1.90	.22	.04	10.3
Mother Unresponsive	2.12	.21	.03	6.4
Father Confident	1.67	.17	.03	6.5
			Adjusted R^2 = .21	

(Table 14 continues)

(Table 14 continued)

Commitment to Spouse				
Variable	B	Beta	R^2_{change}	F_{change}
Barriers to Dissolution				
Variable	B	Beta	R^2_{change}	F_{change}
Satisfaction	-.16	-.15	.01	4.2
Father Intrusive	2.02	.22	.04	10.0
Mother Respectful	2.03	.19	.03	7.6
			Adjusted R^2 = .08	

7% of the variance in Barriers to Dissolution once marital satisfaction was taken into account.

Discussion

Previous research has found that the nature of early attachment relationships appears to have profound effects on an individual's close relationships as an adult. Whereas children who develop secure attachments to their mothers tend to characterize their adult love relationships as being more friendly, trusting, and happy, children who develop anxious/ambivalent or avoidant attachment styles tend to report having adult relationships characterized by distrust, extreme emotional expression, and dependence. Although this research has addressed important questions regarding the effect of early attachment patterns on the *quality* of adult love relationships, no research has yet examined the possible effects on the *durability* of these relationships. The present study tested the relationship between individual's early attachment patterns and their subsequent commitment to their intimate partners in adulthood. Consistent with previous research, significant differences were found in the early parental and dating relationships of securely attached adults as compared to either anxious or avoidant individuals. Further, the results indicated that compared to individuals with an avoidant attachment style, securely attached and anxiously attached adults reported being more committed to and satisfied with their current partners. No group differences were found for commitment to the marital relationship or for feelings of entrapment in marriage. Collectively, these findings support the notion that one's recollections of interpersonal experiences during the formative years of childhood and adolescence are predictive of satisfaction and commitment in romantic relationships formed during adulthood.

These results suggest two broad conclusions. First, the various attachment styles are associated with fairly consistent patterns of relating at various stages in an individual's life. Accordingly, securely attached adults report not only having had a warm, satisfying relationship with their parents, but also that their relationships with early dating partners and with their current spouse were/are similarly rewarding. Likewise, individuals with insecure attachment styles report that most of their relationships were and are frustrating, anxiety-provoking, and unsatisfying. These findings are consistent with Bowlby's (1973) notion that continued interactions with one's primary caregiver when one is an infant result in the development of a particular mental model of relationships. These mental models, or "representational world" (Sandler & Rosenblatt, 1962) consist of feelings and beliefs about the ways in which close relationships are supposed to function and affect both perceptions and expectations about such relationships. To the extent that one accepts the role of attachment in personality development, these results could be interpreted as suggesting that consistently positive or negative patterns of relating are the result of certain personality traits emergent from variations in the quality of infant attachment. Of course, the correlational nature of these results preclude any meaningful discussion of causality; nonetheless, the present results are consistent with the notion that certain dispositional characteristics covary reliably with relationship outcomes.

A second conclusion is that spouses' current level of marital commitment is predicted by certain attachment history variables independently of relationship quality. This effect is particularly noteworthy for commitment to the spouse, which tends to be highly saturated with feelings of contentment and happiness with one's partner. Perhaps not so surprising is the fact that attachment history variables (primarily parental characteristics) accounted for a much greater proportion of the variance in

Commitment to Marriage than did marital satisfaction. As has been argued elesewhere (Adams & Jones, 1996a), Commitment to Marriage, as compared to Commitment to Spouse and Barriers to Dissolution, appears to be most reflective of basic personality given its apparent foundation in moral integrity and social responsibility. Parental characteristics also explained more variance in feelings of entrapment than did satisfaction, but neither type of variable was particularly effective in predicting this dimension of commitment.

Study 3

Studies 1 and 2 yielded some evidence to support the idea that certain components of personality and elements of attachment history are useful predictors of the experience of commitment in marriage. The goal of Study 3 is to extend current thinking about interpersonal commitment by proposing that the tendency to commit to personal relationships is indicative of a more global orientation toward committed behavior that has roots in personality structure. To the extent that commitment may be regarded as a personality trait, individuals high on this trait should report displaying persistent behavior across a broad range of experiential domains. Thus, for example, individuals who report being highly committed to their spouse and to their marriage would also be likely to indicate that they are firmly committed to their jobs, political ideologies, religious beliefs, and so forth. The present study was designed to explore this possibility.

Method

Participants

One hundred-four married respondents (38 males, mean age = 32.1 years; 66 females, mean age = 36.5 years) participated in the present study. Most of the sample

was Caucasian (85.6%), well-educated (80.5% had at least some college education), and had at least 1 child (65.4%). On average, participants had been married for 13.2 years.

Instrumentation

Goal Commitment. Twelve items reflecting the extent to which an individual is committed to attaining personal goals were adapted from several measures of goal commitment as reported in Tubbs and Dahl (1992). Sample items include "I am committed to attaining my personal goals" and "I derive a considerable amount of satisfaction working toward my personal goals." These items were combined to yield a global measure of goal commitment.

The Familism Scale (Heller, 1976). The Familism Scale is a 15-item measure of the extent to which an individual feels obligated to and responsible for the welfare of both his/her immediate and extended family (e.g., "Children owe it to their parents to put family interests above their own personal interests"). Apparent int he wording of the items is the duty-bound inclination of individuals to sacrifice personal goals for the sake of the family unit.

The Family Involvement Scale (FIS; Yogev & Brett, 1985). Family involvement was measured with 11 items reflecting the personal desire to be involved in the activities and developmental process of one's family. In contrast to the Familism Scale, the FIS emphasizes the enthusiastic pursuit of family goals (e.g., "I would be a less fulfilled person without my role as a parent").

The Goal Orientation and Planfulness Scale (GOP; Frese, Stewart, & Hannover, 1987). The GOP consists of 15 items reflective of the extent to which an individual is oriented toward future accomplishments and seeks to meet personal goals

through planning and foresight. Sample items include "I am often motivated to work by thoughts of long-term outcomes" and "I like making plans for the future."

The Internal-External Religiosity Scale (IERS; Hoge, 1972). The IERS uses 28 items to distinguish between internal religiosity (which involves the incorporation of one's religion into one's life and deriving personal meaning from it) and external religiosity (pariticipating in religious observances for social reasons or as a means to personal comfort). Sample items for internal and external religiosity, respectively, include "My faith involves all of my life" and "A primary reason for my interest in religion is that my church is a congenial social activity."

The Organizational Commitment Scale (OCS; Porter, Steers, Mowaday, & Boulian, 1974). The OCS is a 15-item measure designed to assess the degree of commitment one has to his or her place of employment (e.g., "I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this organization").

The Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale (GESS; Fibel & Hale, 1978). The GESS asks respondents to estimate the likelihood that 30 possible future events will occur in their lifetime. The events listed involve expectations for succes (e.g., "In the future I expect that I will be a good parent") and failure (e.g., "In the future I expect that I will have problems working with others").

The General Commitment Scale (GCS; Brickman, 1987). The GCS is a 30-item measure of global commitment that assesses two experiences associated with maintaining consistent lines of behavior: Enthusiasm and Persistence. Commitment that is manifested in enthusiasm is reflected in items which emphasize the meaningful pursuit of a goal (e.g., "I see my life as having a definite purpose and meaning"), whereas items reflecting persistence commitment connote the experience of endurance (e.g., "Even when I am unhappy, I hardly ever quit until things are finished").

The Problem-Solving Inventory (PSI; Heppner & Petersen, 1982). The PSI consists of 35 items designed to assess one's cognitive orientation toward problem-solving behavior. Sample items include "I am usually able to think up creative and effective alternatives to solve a problem" and "Many problems I face are too complex for me to solve."

The Self-Efficacy Scale (SES; Sherer, Maddox, Mercandante, Prentice-Dunn, Jacobs, & Rogers, 1982). The SES measures an individual's beliefs about his or her generalized sense of competence in life. Items reflect both attitudes about one's competencies (e.g., "There is some good in everybody") and behaviors that derive from one's sense of self-efficacy (e.g., "When I make plans, I am certain I can make them work").

Results and Discussion

Reliability coefficients (i.e., alpha and mean inter-item correlations) were computed to assess the internal consistency of all comparison measures. All of the measures were found to possess adequate internal consistency: alphas ranged from .74 (Familism) to .93 (Self-efficacy, Internal Religiosity, and Goal Orientation), with corresponding mean inter-item correlations ranging from .16 to .51.

Correlations between the DCI subscales and each of the comparison measures are presented in Table 15. As may be seen, meaningful associations were obtained between most of the comparison measures and the three dimensions of commitment. Specifically, a high degree of commitment to the spouse as a valued person was positively related to goal commitment, family involvement, goal orientation, internal religiosity, organizational commitment, problem-solving ability, self-efficacy, expectations for success in life, and a generalized orientation toward committed

Table 15

Correlations between Commitment in Marriage and Other Measures of Domain Specific Commitment.

	Dimensions of Commitment		
Measures	CS	CM	BD
Goal Commitment[a]	.44***	.07	-.30***
Familism[b]	.01	.39***	.50***
Family Involvement[c]	.43***	.33***	.13
Goal Orientation[d]	.21*	.14	-.02
Internal Religiosity[e]	.31***	.35***	.18
External Religiosity[e]	-.06	.09	.20*
Organizational Commitment[f]	.30***	.12	-.11
General Commitment[g]	.39***	.09	-.15
Problem-Solving[h]	.25**	.06	-.06
Self-Efficacy[i]	.25**	.17	.03
Perfectionism[j]	-.07	.20*	.39***
Expectations of Success[k]	.35***	.04	-.16

Note. CS = Commitment to Spouse; CM = Commitment to Marriage; BD = Barriers to Dissolution; [a]Goal Commitment (derived from Tubbs & Dahl, 1992); [b]The Familism Scale (Heller, 1976); [c]The Family Involvement Scale (FIS; Yogev & Brett, 1985); [d]The Goal Orientation and Planfulness Scale (GOP; Frese, Stewart, & Hannover, 1987); [e]The Internal-External Religiosity Scale (IERS; Hoge, 1972);

(Table 15 continues)

(Table 15 continued)

[f]The Organizational Commitment Scale (OCS; Porter, Steers, Mowaday, & Boulian, 1974); [g]The Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale (GESS; Fibel & Hale, 1978); [h]The General Commitment Scale (GCS; Brickman, 1987); [i]The Problem-Solving Inventory (PSI; Heppner & Petersen, 1982); [j]The Self-Efficacy Scale (SES; Sherer, Maddox, Mercandante, Prentice-Dunn, Jacobs, & Rogers, 1982)

Note. $^{*}p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

behavior. Further, significant associations were obtained between commitment to the marital relationship and familism, family involvement, internal religiosity, and perfectionism. Finally, the experience of entrapment in marriage was associated with familism, external religiosity, and perfectionism, and inversely related to goal commitment.

In general, these results are consistent with the notion of the "highly committed individual" by demonstrating that individuals who report being highly committed to their spouse and to their marriage tend also to report being committed to personal goals, to family involvement, and to their places of employment. Furthermore, there was a tendency of highly maritally committed individuals to indicate that they believe themselves to be efficacious, good problem-solvers, and likely to achieve success in various domains of their life. In short, these results suggest that commitment is a global orientation toward other people and toward life in general that may usefully be described as a dispositional characteristic. This conclusion is similar to one drawn by Brickman (1987) in his discussion of the type of commitment experienced as enthusiasm or "flow." From this perspective, commitment is regarded as a global approach toward life that is pervasive across a wide variety of situations and which is manifested in the energetic pursuit of goals. For individuals who possess this orientation and who thereby engage in consistent lines of behavior, commitment may properly be regarded as a fundamental component of the individual's character.

It is also possible to possess certain traits that make it more likely than an individual will begrudgingly persist in certain courses of action. Indeed, the present results suggested that such an individual is likely to be perfectionistic and to feel a great sense of obligation toward others, especially family members. Such individuals,

however, tend not to be committed to goals, suggesting that for them, commitment is more a reaction to events rather than a proactive orientation.

General Discussion

Overall, the results of three studies were consistent with the thesis that commitment between spouses is explainable in part by personality factors. In Study 1 simple associations between three dimensions of interpersonal commitment (commitment to the spouse, commitment to the marriage, and barriers to dissolution) and indices of normal and deviant personality established a basic link between these constructs. This link was augmented in Study 2 by showing that not only is commitment in marriage predictable by more global indices of personality (i.e., attachment style), certain attachment history variables accounted for unique variance in commitment even when marital satisfaction was statistically controlled. Finally, the results of Study 3 yielded preliminary evidence supporting the idea of a global orientation toward commitment across several experiential domains. While these data did not firmly establish that a particular cluster or clusters of personality traits are responsible for the capacity to commit, they do indicate that people who are committed to their spouses and to their marriages also report being committed to beliefs and convictions, vocations, and other people. Together, these results seem to suggest that in addition to cognitive and situational factors that have been used to explain committed behavior, commitment is also affected by particular features of one's character.

These results have potentially important implications for subsequent research on interpersonal commitment and close relationships in general. First, the dispositional perspective on commitment adapted in this chapter represents a departure from cognitively oriented exchange models (e.g., Rusbult, 1980, 1983; others) which

currently dominate the commitment literature. At first glance these approaches appear to be inconsistent; whereas the dispositional perspective embraces the notion that committed behavior, indeed the capacity to commit, is rooted in basic personality, exchange models emphasize the cognitive processes by which people arrive at the decision to make or break their commitments. It may be argued, however, that the dispositional and cognitive approaches are complimentary insofar as cognitive style may itself be a function of dispositional characteristics (Bradbury & Fincham, 1988; Sabatelli, Dreyer, & Buck, 1983). For example, Murstein and his colleagues (Murstein & MacDonald, 1981) have explored "exchange orientation" and its relationship to interpersonal staisfaction and stability. In this context, exchange orientation is a trait-like characteristic that reflects the extent to which individuals evaluate the reward and cost value of daily interactions, the availability of alternative partners, and so forth. In at least one empirical study (Murstein & MacDonald, 1981), exchange orientation was found to be inversely related to interpersonal happiness and longevity. While this result reveals a fundamental limitation to exchange theories of interpersonal commitment (see Adams & Spain, 1996), a more relevant issue to the present discussion is that exchange orientation reflects a merging of cognitive and individual difference factors into a higher-order conceptualization of interpersonal functioning. Future research on commitment in close relationships would benefit from testing models that attempt to integrate multiple processes.

More generally, the finding that personality is implicated in the experience of marital commitment underscores the importance of dispositional characteristics in explaining the dynamics of interpersonal functioning. Indeed, Hogan (1983) has argued that personality is foremost and fundamentally an interpersonal phenomenon. In his socioanalytic theory of personality, Hogan asserts that the recognition of differences

in personality traits and the incorporation of trait names into the language of a culture reflect the value these traits have for the survival of the society. Certainly, some traits (e.g., conscientiousness, intelligence, extraversion) will be valued over others in a given society, and the individuals who possess these traits will likely obtain higher status and be more successful in the groups with which he or she associates. By contrast, individuals who are recognized by others as being slothful, insolent, or antisocial will be relegated to a lower social status and will likely be shunned by the members of the group. Since group membership is of such great importance to most people (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), it is easy to see why "good personalities" are so valued in contemporary society.

Although Hogan's theory sought to explain the importance of personality in social organization, it is reasonable to apply the logic of his argument to dyadic relationships as well. Accordingly, Jones (personal communication) has suggested that the primary function of personality is the formation and maintenance of close personal relationships. In this way, certain personality traits are more likely than others to facilitate interaction between strangers, attract others, and contribute to the success of conflict-resolution situations. For example, extraversion and warmth are much more conducive to successful relationships than are intraversion and emotional detachment. Similarly, it seems that a dispositional tendency toward commitment also would be beneficial to the success of long-term relationships.

Caveats and Directions for Future Research

While these findings are suggestive of the potential influence of personality on commitment, it is clear that the conclusions drawn above need to be tempered by consideration of several limiting factors. First, because these analyses are

correlational, no firm statements may be made regarding directional causation. While it is unlikely that high commitment to one's spouse determines whether one possesses a particular personality trait, the present results are insufficient to conclude that personality traits cause one to be personally committed to his or her spouse. Specifically, the potential influence of an unaccounted-for third variable cannot be assessed with the present data. Thus, future research should explore further the possibility that commitment is an individual difference variable by employing experimental designs to assess the extent to which individuals with different personality traits engage in various domain-specific committed behaviors. Second, several results, while statistically significant, were of only marginal utility. The results of the regression analyses presented in Study 2 are especially noteworthy in this regard, and replication of these basic findings is called for at this point in order to assess the strength of the relationship between personality and commitment. Finally, as indicated previously, the present research addressed only issues regarding the ability of personality factors to explain variations in interpersonal commitment. While this link needs to be demonstrated in additional samples of married and unmarried couples, future research ought also to employ statistical modeling techniques to examine both the unique and shared contributions of personality, cognitive, affective, and demographic factors on the experience of commitment.

CHAPTER 5

INCORPORATING TIME: THE DYNAMICS OF INTERPERSONAL COMMITMENT AND THE ISSUE OF SALIENCE

To this point, commitment has been examined at the level of the construct, with particular emphasis placed on issues of conceptualization. In this regard, results of a qualitative review of the literature as well as a series of empirical studies indicated that despite variations in the ways in which commitment is described, virtually all definitions and conceptual models are consistent with a three-component conceptualization that distinguishes among the attraction, moral/normative, and constraining dimensions of commitment. Also, conceptualizations of commitment based on the principles of social exchange theory were reviewed and critiqued and an alternative conceptualization based on an individual difference perspective was tested. Collectively, these efforts have helped to clarify the conceptual boundaries of interpersonal commitment.

While the preceding analyses have answered a number of important questions regarding the construct fidelity of interpersonal commitment, they have raised others which also need to be addressed in order to come to a more comprehensive understanding of the ways in which commitment functions in close relationships. For example, it will be recalled that the results of analyses performed in Chapter 3 yielded much stronger effects for Commitment to Spouse and Commitment to Marriage than they did for Barriers to Dissolution. Specifically, factor analytic treatments of items written to reflect the various definitions and conceptualizations of commitment found in the literature tended to yield strong factors corresponding to the attraction and moral/

normative dimensions, but a rather weak factor corresponding to the constraining dimension. Efforts to embed the three dimensions of commitment within a broader network of theoretically relevant variables resulted in a similar pattern of results. Whereas Commitment to Spouse and Commitment to Marriage tended to correlate strongly and unambiguously with conceptually similar variables, Barriers to Dissolution showed a much weaker degree of association with variables believed to be reflective of external constraints. Thus, across samples and empirical strategies, Barriers to Dissolution proved to be a much less reliable component of commitment than either Commitment to Spouse or Commitment to Marriage.

A different set of results was obtained, however, when respondents were divided into groups reflecting relatively high and relatively low levels of marital satisfaction and the same analyses were performed on the two groups. In general, the predictive utility of Barriers to Dissolution improved for participants whose relationship was less satisfying and deteriorated for the more satisfied couples. These findings were interpreted to mean that Barriers to Dissolution are salient only for couples whose relationship is relatively unsatisfying and when the desire to remain in a marriage because of devotion to one's spouse is likely to have eroded. More generally, these results suggested that the relationship among the three dimensions of commitment is dynamic, and that the importance of these dimensions may wax and wane over the course of a marriage as the couple experiences the inevitable changes that occur with the passage of time.

As has been suggested by several theorists (e.g., Ballard-Reisch & Weigel, 1996; Kelley, 1983; Levinger, 1965, 1979a, 1983; Johnson, 1991; Rusbult, 1980, 1983), it is important, given the dynamic nature of close relationships, to regard commitment as a process rather than a static construct. In this way, the most

appropriate index of commitment is not its level or amount at a given time, but rather the degree of variability in commitment over time. Unfortunately, research in this area has not advanced beyond the exploration of variables that seem to enhance or undermine interpersonal commitments. What is needed at this point are programs of research which focus on the ways in which the various dimensions of commitment interact, both with one another and with other relevant factors, over the course of a relationship to promote relationship stability. The goal of this chapter is to explore more fully such a developmental perspective on interpersonal commitment.

As a first step, the literature bearing on the dynamic nature of interpersonal commitment will be reviewed. The goals of this review will be to summarize current thinking about the processes involved in the development and dissolution of interpersonal commitments and to call attention to the paucity of research in this area. On the basis of this review, a salience model of commitment will be advanced that seeks to explain how marital satisfaction, exchange thinking, and personality interact with the attraction, moral/normative, and constraining dimensions of commitment to promote or undermine relationship stability. Finally, a research agenda will be advanced that will help focus empirical efforts and possibly lead to more integrative theories of commitment and relationship stability.

Commitment as a Dynamic Process

The changing nature of commitment in close relationships is an integral component of many theoretical statements bearing on the development of intimate pair bonds. For example, according to Kelley (1983), commitment must be examined from the perspective that individuals in close relationships are embedded in a causal system comprised of conditions that either promote relationship maintenance or dissolution.

Causal conditions which promote stability are aspects of the partner or of the relationship that draw a couple together, including love, sexual satisfaction, and enjoyment of shared activities; causal conditions which promote relationship dissolution serve to push partners apart, including the experience of costs in the relationship (e.g., anxiety, effort put into conflict-resolution, etc.), attractive alternative relationships, and so forth. These conditions are equivalent to concepts described by other theorists (Johnson, 1973, 1991; Levinger, 1965, 1976, 1979; Rusbult, 1980, 1983).

Of particular importance to the present discussion is Kelley's assertion that the causal conditions which promote relationship maintenance and dissolution differ in magnitude and importance over the course of a relationship and that, accordingly, the nature of the entire causal system is subject to change over time. For example, whereas the frequency of sexual interactions may be a powerful causal condition promoting stability at the beginning of a relationship, the importance of the sexual aspects of a relationship may wane over time. Likewise, relationship costs and social conditions change, affecting a couple's perception of the difficulties that are likely to be encountered should they end their relationship. Given the fluid nature of this causal system, it is imperative, according to Kelley, that changes in the relevance of conditions which affect relationship stability be incorporated into theoretical treatments of interpersonal commitment.

Several investigators have addressed this issue by arguing that commitment is affected by the average degree to which the causal conditions promoting relationship stability outweigh the causal conditions promoting relationship dissolution (Berscheid & Walster, 1978; Rusbult, 1980, 1983). For example, Rusbult (1980, 1983) has argued that commitment is a positive function of the outcome of the relationship (the number of rewarding elements minus the number of negative elements) and the number of

investments made in the relationship, and a negative function of the attractiveness of available alternatives. Commitment should be high, according to this scheme, to the extent that the average outcome level and degree of investment are high over time, and the average attractiveness of alternative partners is low. In Berscheid and Walster's (1978) view, commitment is determined by the extent to which the outcomes one obtains in his or her current relationship compare to the probable outcomes available from alternative relationships. This perspective is synonymous with that proposed by Thibaut and Kelley (1959), who referred to the two outcomes as Comparison Level and Comparison Level for Alternatives, respectively. Again, commitment is assumed to be high to the extent that the average level of positive outcomes from one's relationship stably exceeds the perceived positive outcomes available from other relationships.

While these approaches have merit as accounts of the degree of adherence to a relationship, Kelley (1983) argues that taking account only of the average difference between the "pros" and "cons" of relationship membership yields an incomplete picture of commitment processes; one must also consider the variability in this difference. In other words, one cannot fully understand commitment by examining only its mean value; one must also take note of its standard deviation. The central issue in this account of commitment concerns the temporal and cross-situational consistency with which the pros outweigh the cons of relationship membership. In this regard, a relationship may remain stable in several ways. For example, the average pro-con difference may be small but the variability of this difference also may be small, making it unlikely that the difference will shift in the direction of greater instability. Similarly, the variability in the pro-con difference may be large, but the average level may be so large that again the difference never becomes negative. The parallel between this

conception of commitment and statistical assumptions regarding the means and variances of distributions of scores is apparent.

From this perspective, the process of commitment is governed by factors that influence the nature of the relationship between the average level of the pro-con difference and its variance. In particular, stability is encouraged by factors which (a) decrease the variance in the pro-con difference without decreasing also the average level, (b) increase the average pro-con difference without increasing also the variance in this difference, or (c) both increase the average pro-con difference and decrease the variance of this difference. In describing some of the factors that promote relationship stability, Kelley (1983) invokes a statistical metaphor by noting that "the effect on the variance of the pro-con difference that results from adding new causal factors is complex inasmuch as it depends on the correlation between the preexisting sources of variation and the new ones" (p. 296). Accordingly, increasing the number of pro-con factors which affect the stability of the relationship will increase the variance of the total set of factors unless (a) the added factors have constant variance over time, or (b) the variance of the added factors is inversely related to the preexisting factors. Examples of factors which promote relationship stability and which are relatively invariant over time include specific, time-limited events (e.g., the wedding ceremony and entering into joint contracts) and social and interpersonal networks that have a stake in the long-term stability of the relationship (e.g., mortgage companies, the church, family members, etc.). One presumes that these factors will exert invariant pressure on the couple to remain married. Examples of factors with variance that is negatively related to the variance in factors which encourage relationship dissolution include a variety of "corrective" systems, including the devaluing of attractive alternatives, increasing rewarding behaviors, and so forth.

Other theoretical statements have been derived from interviews with married couples. Rather than focusing on the elements of social exchange theory, these accounts provide more general descriptions of the experience of increasing and decreasing commitment in marriage. For example, Brewer (1993) proposed a developmental trajectory of commitment which may be summarized with respect to three distinct stages: The Naive Marital Commitment Stage, the Marital Commitment Test Stage, and the Seasoned Marital Commitment Stage. In each stage, the nature of the commitment seems to be qualitatively different and the progression from one stage to the next appears to be irreversible and developmental.

The Naive Marital Commitment Stage originates premaritally and continues until the first few years of marriage. The most dominant feature of this stage is the partners' idealism about their marriage, whereby commitments are founded in individual hopes and expectations for a marriage in which conflict is minimal, bliss is high, and individual difficulties are eliminated. Further, spouses in the Naive Marital Commitment Stage expect the marriage to be a source of excitement and to bring new and interesting challenges to each spouse. In short, naive commitment is based on unrealistic expectations about the future course of the marriage and a misjudgment (or, more accurately, a failure to consider) the possible difficulties the spouses are likely to encounter.

The Marital Commitment Test Phase begins when the couple experiences its first major obstacle or crisis, which exposes the egocentric and unrealistic nature of the spouses' naive commitment, and continues until the weaknesses of the commitment are addressed and corrected or until the commitment of one or both partners falters and the relationship dissolves. The tests of spouses' commitment may derive either from external circumstances (e.g., interferences from one's in-laws) or internal struggles

(e.g., concerns over one's own rights and privileges and those of one's spouse). A common reaction to the testing of one's commitment is re-assessing the meaning of the commitment and translating the terms of the previous, naive commitment into a more mature version that is couple-oriented rather than self-oriented. During this stage, spouses are likely to engage in negotiations regarding their conceptions of commitment and the structure of their commitment hierarchies.

The Seasoned Marital Commitment Stage is the final stage of development in a couples' progression to a mature, integrated marriage. This stage begins when a more realistic and well-tested commitment appears. Couples who reach this stage have negotiated successfully the conflicts that arose in the Testing stage and have come to appreciate the value of the duration of their marriage. Further, the spouses recognize the conjoint nature of their commitment and have embraced the fundamentally interdependent nature of their relationship. In general, couples with a seasoned commitment feel much more secure in their marriage than do couples in either of the preceding stages, feel free to express their individuality without fear of alienating one another, and feel confident in their ability to weather any crises that might arise in the future.

Another stage theory proposed by Kersten (1988) emphasizes the effects of marital decline (or "disaffection") on the experience of commitment. According to Kersten, the disaffection process begins when couples first have doubts about the partner as a person and about the "rightness" of the marriage. Often these doubts are triggered by turning points in the marriage brought about by perceived changes in the spouse's behavior (such as the spouse becoming controlling, irresponsible, and emotionally unavailable). The most dominant feelings associated with these turning points are anger, hurt, and disillusionment, and the thoughts of the spouses tend to

focus on issues of fairness and equality. As the disaffection process continues, the feelings of anger increase and thoughts turn more frequently to weighing the relative risks and benefits of ending the relationship. As will be discussed in greater detail subsequently, these thoughts consist primarily of evaluations of the potential barriers to and consequences of leaving the relationship. The disaffection process commonly ends with the dominant feelings of the partners being anger and the most frequent thoughts involving the termination of the marriage.

Two other influential accounts of developing and dissolving commitments are provided by Levinger (1979a, 1979b) and Johnson (1991). For example, according to Levinger, relationship progress may be understood in terms of stages of development. In early stages, romantic partners are consumed by their attraction for one another and usually can see only the positive aspects of the relationship. This attraction may lead the couple to make their relationship more formal through marriage, where they may live out their lives in wedded bliss. For some time the couple may indeed coexist in a state of great happiness and experience a considerable degree of commitment to one another. Not surprisingly, neither partner is likely to give serious thought to the prospect of separation or divorce. Eventually, however, the initial attractiveness of the relationship may begin to decline, as the partners become more familiar with one another or as diverging paths of individual development begin to undermine the integrity of the pair. At this point, when satisfaction is lower and the couple may no longer experience their relationship as progressing effortlessly into the future, personal commitment may be impacted and one or both spouses may begin considering such factors as the relationship's reward value, the amount of time and energy one has invested in the relationship, the availability of attractive alternatives, and so forth. In other words, when the attraction forces that brought a couple together begin to decline

or lose their potency, the couples will become more aware of other forces that contribute to pair cohesiveness.

This dynamic is also described by Johnson (1991), albeit in a slightly different way. As will be recalled, Johnson proposed that commitment has three phenomenological bases: *personal commitment* reflects spouses' personal desire to see their relationship continue; *moral commitment* reflects spouses' intention to maintain their relationship because of feelings of moral obligation; and *structural commitment* refers to spouses' intention to remain in their relationship because of external constraints. Each of these dimensions may keep an individual from leaving his or her relationship, but which dimension is salient at a given point in time determines how relationship maintenance is experienced by the partners. Like Levinger (1979a, 1979b), Johnson assumes that the early stages of relationships are characterized by a high level of personal commitment from both partners. Johnson also notes, however, that structural commitments may develop outside the awareness of the relationship participants, as when the couple's social networks become enmeshed or, as time passes by, the couple invests more energy into the relationship. Thus, even though the couple may indicate that their motivation to remain together derives from their personal desire for union, structural commitments may also be growing around the relationship, forming a barrier against dissolution. In Johnson's view, structural commitments do not become relevant to relationship participants, and thus are not implicated in decisions to maintain the relationship, until personal and/or moral commitment decline. The mechanism by which structural commitments increase in salience is a shift in partners' awareness context (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which may be described as the range of possible interpersonal features toward which one's attention is directed at any particular moment. When a relationship becomes relatively less satisfying, and one or

both partners no longer desire to maintain it, then the partners' awareness context shifts and they begin to consider other reasons for staying in the relationship.

Despite the theoretical relevance of fluctuations in commitment over time, very little research has been done in this area. Indeed, only one program of research has endeavored to explore in detail the development of commitment leading to marriage. Surra and her colleagues (Surra, 1985; 1987; Surra, Arizzi, & Asmussen, 1988) have conducted a series of studies designed to assess the various trajectories to marriage taken by dating couples, the reasons given for changes in commitment leading to marriage, and the relationship between reasons for commitment and marital outcomes. In each study, married couples were asked to reconstruct the course of their courtship on a graph that began with the first date and ended with marriage. For the points between these two endpoints, the couples identified specific events that either increased (e.g., first kiss, first sexual intercourse, etc.) or decreased the probability of marriage (e.g., social network interference, negative attributions, etc.). The resulting graph was then examined and compared with the graphs of other couples on such dimensions as the slope of the line, the ratio of upturns to downturns in the probability of marriage, and so forth.

This research yielded several important findings regarding the sinuous course taken by partners' commitment as their relationship progresses toward marriage. For example, Surra (1985) found that for most couples increases in commitment are accompanied by increases in feelings of togetherness, affection, instrumental and leisure activities, and a gradual pulling away from other members of the social network; however, the rate and "smoothness" with which couples experience these indices of increased commitment seem to differ. Based on the shape of the Probability of Marriage Graphs for different couples, Surra identified four distinct courtship types:

Accelerated types move rapidly and smoothly to marriage; Accelerated-Arrested types move rapidly and smoothly to the engagement point, but level out as they approach marriage; Intermediate types are somewhat less direct in their trajectory toward marriage and have more turbulent paths through courtship (i.e., more upturns and downturns); Prolonged types have unusually long courtships with a long period of time spent seriously dating and proportionately less time engaged. Surra explains these differences in terms of both dispositional and situational influences on the couple; whereas couples in the Accelerated type are likely to have strong personal inclinations to marry and to not have major impediments to the development of their relationship, couples in the other courtship types, for one reason or another, experience greater doubts or encounter greater pressure not to marry. The primary implication of these findings is that one's commitment to marry is affected by various forces, both internal and external to the couple, that influence the path of courtship leading to marriage.

Studies by Surra (1987) and Surra, Arizzi, and Asmussen (1988) extended these findings by exploring specific reasons for upturns and downturns in the chance of marriage for couples in each of the courtship types. These reasons were grouped into four categories (taken from Surra, 1987): *Intrapersonal/Normative* reasons make an explicit or implicit reference to one partner's or the other's normative beliefs about the appropriate time or circumstances for marriage to occur, the appropriateness of the partner or the relationship for marriage, or the desirability of marriage itself; *Dyadic* reasons make direct reference to interaction between partners or are attributions about the nature of the partner or the relationship; *Social Network* reasons make reference to interaction with, anticipated interaction with, or attributions about third parties such as kin, friends, other dating partners, and significant others; finally, *Circumstantial* reasons are anticipated or unanticipated events over which the person had little or no

control and that stem from institutions or forces external to the person or their relationships with others. In general, the results of these studies supported the prediction that partners in relationships with different courtship trajectories would give distinctly different reasons for changes in commitment. For example, whereas couples in Accelerated courtships reported the largest number of intrapersonal/normative reasons for turning points in their developing courtship, couples occupying the Prolonged type were more likely to give circumstantial reasons for changes in commitment.

Summary and Conclusions

Common to each of the preceding theoretical statements is the notion that commitment is not simply a state in which romantically involved partners find themselves as their relationship becomes more intimate. Rather, commitment is a dynamic construct that evolves over the course of a relationship and appears to change in character as spouses grow closer together or farther apart. Moreover, similarities may also be seen among the statements in their implication of marital quality in fluctuations in commitment. For Kelley (1983) and Rusbult (1980, 1983), commitment is impacted by the degree to which pro-relationship factors (rewards) outweigh con-relationship factors (costs); for Berscheid and Walster (1978), commitment varies as a function of the level of satisfaction experienced in one's marriage relative to the perceived satisfaction that could be experienced in some other relationship; for Kersten (1988) commitment inevitably declines during the disaffection process, whereas for Brewer (1993), reductions in satisfaction do not necessarily lead to dissolution and may in fact enhance commitment; finally, Johnson (1973, 1991), Levinger (1979a, 1979b), and Surra (1985, 1987) speak of the ways in which declining satisfaction alters a

couple's awareness context, undermines pair cohesiveness, and influences the trajectory to marriage.

Despite their points of connection, these statements differ in a number of ways. For example, whereas the exchange-based models of Berscheid and Walster, Kelley, and Rusbult focus on micro-level cognitive processes involved in spouses' decision to remain in or leave their marriage, Johnson's approach and the phenomenologically derived stage theories of Brewer and Kersten focus predominantly on the more global experiences of spouses as they are confronted with changes in their relationship. Further, each theorist conceptualizes commitment differently. According to Kelley, commitment reflects the tendency to endure in a relationship, whereas other definitions focus on feelings of attachment (Rusbult), dependence (Berscheid & Walster), and estimates of the probability of marriage (Surra). By contrast, Brewer, Johnson, and Kersten highlight the multidimensional nature of commitment. Finally, the approach taken by Surra and her colleagues differs from all of the others in its focus on the development of commitment leading to marriage rather than commitment within the context of marriage itself, and in its consideration of the possibility that certain dispositional characteristics may influence the course of commitment leading to marriage.

Individually, these theoretical perspectives have been valuable in advancing knowledge regarding the dynamic nature of interpersonal commitment. However, a comparison of the perspectives indicates that although some degree of overlap exists in the types of processes specified in the development and dissolution of commitment, there is also a considerable amount of uniqueness among the perspectives. Given this, it seems reasonable that a more complete model of interpersonal commitment would be one that not only emphasizes the similarities among competing models but which also

would accommodate their differences. Consistent with this notion, the goal of the following section is to outline a model of interpersonal commitment that emphasizes the changing nature of commitment and which seeks to integrate theory and research on marital satisfaction, exchange processes, personality, and the attraction, moral/ normative, and constraining dimensions of commitment. At the heart of this model is the idea that the experience of commitment as an enthusiastic pursuit, a moral imperative, or a sense of entrapment is influenced by the salience of various factors to relationship partners during the course of their marital interaction. Further, the salience model presented here suggests that exchange thinking is a dispositionally linked cognitive process that is invoked in periods of indecision, distress, and conflict, not a ubiquitous feature of couples' perception of their marriage.

A Salience Model of Interpersonal Commitment

The following account of developing commitment in marriage borrows liberally from the theoretical perspectives described above. Thus, many of the basic elements of the salience model will have parallels in previous writings. However, the salience model is unique in two respects. First, it provides a more integrated perspective on commitment processes by accommodating the diverse set of explanations provided in previous models. Second, the salience model incorporates personality as an important factor in the maintenance of interpersonal ties. These contributions represent potentially important extensions of current thinking about commitment in marriage.

The Phenomenological and Structural Contexts of Developing Relationships

Intimate relationships may properly be regarded as developing within both phenomenological and structural contexts. With respect to the former, the process of

making initial contact with another person, becoming attracted to him or her, and setting into motion the sequence of events that lead to the strengthening of affectional bonds and to an increase in interdependence has as its foundation the unique perceptions and emotions of the relationship partners. Almost invariably, the beginning of an intimate relationship is characterized by intense feelings of attraction, excitement, and a longing to be with one's partner (Berscheid & Walster, 1974b; Hatfield & Rapson, 1987; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986b). As the relationship grows, so also do intimacy (Altman, 1973; Altman & Taylor, 1973; Jourard, 1971), love (Baum, 1972; Braiker-Stambul, 1975; Braiker & Kelley, 1979; Cunningham & Antill, 1981), and the degree of commitment felt toward the partner (Johnson, 1991; Levinger, 1983). Further, the thoughts of each partner typically involve the other, and the development of a sense of "we-ness" represents a pleasant extension of one's identity (Cunningham & Antill, 1981; Rubin, 1973). Some scholars also have argued that the early stages of romantic relationships are characterized by a pervasive sense of optimism borne from highly idealistic views of the partner and the relationship (e.g., Brewer, 1993; Waller, 1938). In this regard, the phenomenological context may be said to reflect a highly biased perceptual system whereby partners see only the positive characteristics of one another and downplay or reinterpret negative behaviors (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996).

The phenomenological context in which most intimate relationships develop may be summarized by Csikszentmihalhi's (1975) notion of flow. Happily married couples are completely absorbed by their marriage, and their primary focus is on the features of the partner and of the relationship that are pleasing and exciting. Furthermore, all potentially intruding stimuli are actively barred from entering awareness, including the self-consciousness and self-focus that pose a threat to the

sense of "we-ness" felt by the couple. This phenomenon is reflected in the finding that happily married couples have some difficulty explaining why they remain married (Brewer, 1993; Robinson & Blanton, 1993); for many spouses, the degree of commitment they have for one another and the stability of their marriage are foregone conclusions.

Couples who experience their marriage as flow do not indicate that the stability of their marriage is based on external constraints or feelings of obligation. Rather, commitment to the spouse seems to be most salient during the early stages of marriage. It is important to point out, however, that simply failing to recognize or acknowledge the relevance of barriers to relationship dissolution does not mean that they do not exist (Johnson, 1991). Indeed, once a couple has made the public declaration to marry, a potent constraint has been set in place insofar as the spouses would have to both acknowledge their failure to keep the promise of marital permanence and admit to their family and friends that they had made a mistake, should they choose to divorce. Further, as the relationship develops, each partner is likely to invest heavily in the relationship, both emotionally and financially, and to develop enmeshed social networks that would suffer if the marriage were to end. Thus, although spouses may indicate that the foundation of their commitment is personal devotion and dedication to one another, other factors also exist which would make leaving the marriage difficult should the couple's personal commitment falter. These barriers represent the structural context in which relationships develop. As will be described in greater detail subsequently, the changing nature of commitment may be explained in part by changes in the salience of the structural context.

Reductions in Marital Quality and the Invocation of Exchange Thinking

Whereas it is reasonable to assume that nearly all voluntary marriages begin with high levels of satisfaction, personal commitment, and great expectations for the future, an abundance of data on marital dissolution rates indicates that approximately half of all marriages end in divorce, and that a great majority of divorces occur within the first 7 years of marriage. Thus, it seems clear that the love and commitment newlywed spouses have for one another and the resultant optimism they share about the permanence of their marriage are not adequate to guarantee the long-term stability of the marriage.

Numerous studies have identified a long list of factors that contribute to reductions in marital satisfaction, including differences in age (Bentler & Newcomb, 1978), race and/or religion (Burgess & Locke, 1953), personality (Cattell & Nesselroade, 1967), and marital expectations (Jaffe & Kanter, 1979), the presence of children (Renne, 1970; Houseknecht, 1979), disturbed interaction patterns (Gottman, 1994), and role strain (Belsky, Lang, & Huston, 1986). It is easy to see why such factors have a deleterious effect on couples' general level of happiness; they all involve interpersonal stressors of some type. However, some investigators have found that marital satisfaction shows a linear decline with the simple passage of time (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Pineo, 1961), suggesting that more passive processes, such as increased familiarity and predictability of the spouse or boredom, also may be involved in the reduction of happiness. Regardless of the precise causes, it seems clear that most married individuals are likely to experience at least some decline in the quality of their relationship over time.

Of particular relevance for the present discussion is the fact that changes in the quality of marriage are nearly always accompanied by a change in the ways in which

spouses think about one another. This point has been demonstrated in a variety of ways. For example, changes in marital quality have a profound effect on spouses' attributional style (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990; Fincham, 1985a; Fincham & Beach, 1988; Fincham & Bradbury, 1987a; Fincham & Jaspars, 1980). In particular, happily married spouses differ from distressed spouses in the manner in which positive and negative behaviors are interpreted. Whereas happily married couples attribute positive behavior to internal, stable, and global causes, distressed couples commonly attribute one another's positive behaviors to external, unstable, and specific causes. In this way, satisfied partners interpret each other's positive behaviors as deriving from "the goodness of their heart," whereas dissatisfied partners interpret such behaviors as deriving from temporary, situationally determined factors. The reverse is true for negative partner behaviors; whereas happily married couples make external, unstable, and specific attributions for such behavior, distressed couples make character-based attributions.

There is also good evidence that a reduction in marital quality triggers exchange thinking in some spouses. Specifically, empirical support for the notion that concern with reward and cost balance, the extent of investment in the relationship, and the availability of attractive alternatives comes primarily from two bodies of research. First, research on communal and exchange relationships indicates that romantically involved couples can be distinguished on the basis of the extent to which they are concerned with immediate and equal reciprocity of rewards. In general, exchange relationships are characterized by the participants' constant evaluation of what they are putting into the relationship and what they are getting out of it. The focus in this type of relationship is on what each participant believes he or she deserves to receive from the other. In communal relationships, the participants believe that there will be mutual

give and take and that the relationship will be beneficial in the long run. Consequently, daily records of which partner has contributed more to the relationship are not kept. In several studies, Clark and her colleagues (Clark, 1984; Clark & Mills, 1979, 1993; Clark, Mills, & Powell, 1986) have found that with respect to participants in exchange relationships, participants in communal relationships report not distinguishing between their own work and the work of their partners, focusing predominantly on the needs of their partner, and experiencing more positive affect when helping their partner.

Of particular relevance are findings that show exchange orientation to be inversely related to satisfaction with relationships in which communal interactions are expected. For example, Clark and Mills (1979) found that individuals who desire a communal relationship with another person report being less attracted to that person if a tit-for-tat exchange protocol is imposed on the couple. A similar pattern of results was obtained by Murstein, Cerreto, and MacDonald (1977), who found that participants in non-exchange oriented marriages expressed greater happiness with their relationships than participants whose marriages are characterized by a tendency toward exchange-orientation. Likewise, Cotterell, Eisenberger, and Speicher (1992), in their assessment of reciprocation wariness (a construct that reflects a general fear of exploitation in interpersonal relationships and is consistent with the definition of exchange orientation described above), found that individuals who scored high on a measure of this construct were rated by others as being unapproachable, hesitant in developing close relationships, and unresponsive to the needs of others. The authors concluded that excessive concern over the fair distribution of interpersonal rewards appears to inhibit the establishment and strengthening of close relationships. Finally, Jones and Vaughan (1990) found that a communal orientation enhanced satisfaction in older adults' best friendships whereas exchange orientation was unrelated to satisfaction.

Some research also supports the idea that exchange-orientation differs as a function of the degree of intimacy between relational partners. Specifically, it appears that whereas more intimate pair bonds may be characterized by a communal interaction style, individuals engaged in less intimate relationships tend to operate according to the norm of quid pro quo exchanges of interpersonal resources. For example, Clark, Mills, and Corcoran (1989) found that not only are people more likely to keep track of a friend's needs than they are the needs of a stranger, but they also are more likely to keep track of the stranger's inputs into a joint task. Further, Murstein (1976) has argued that exchange orientation is most likely to exist at the beginning of virtually all relationships because acquaintances have not accumulated shared experiences that would foster a sense of intimacy in the pair. In this circumstance, exchange orientation may serve a protective function by imposing somewhat rigid rules for exchange on the interaction until greater intimacy is achieved.

Additional evidence that exchange thinking is invoked when the quality of the relationship falls below some threshold may be found in the autobiographical accounts of partners' commitment to one another. In particular, it appears that relatively satisfied couples describe commitment in fairly global, positive terms, whereas the accounts of relatively dissatisfied spouses are characterized by more specific descriptions of barriers to relationship dissolution, feelings of entrapment, and so on. For example, Brewer (1993) found that when asked to describe what commitment means to them, most spouses responded by indicating that their commitment involved dedication, love, and faithfulness. In addition, these respondents noted that commitment also involves keeping one's promises and holding the institution of marriage in high regard. Particularly noteworthy was the fact that only one respondent made reference to remaining married for the sake of the children or for the good of

society, indicating that for these couples, external barriers did not enter into their personal conceptualization of commitment.

The qualitative study by Robinson and Blanton (1993) illustrates nicely the relationship between marital satisfaction and the salience of exchange terms as applied to marital commitment. The couples in this study commented primarily on the positive dimension of commitment and noted that commitment seems to be rooted in intimacy. However, the respondents also noted that the character of the commitment may change as the relationship itself changes or as different extra-relational circumstances arise. For example, as they experienced marital difficulties and a subsequent decline in satisfaction, many of the respondents in this study noted that they contemplated separating from their spouses, but that thoughts of parental responsibilities, financial considerations, and concerns over social reactions dissuaded them from taking action.

Finally, some research indicates that the reasons for remaining married provided by spouses filing for divorce tend to be characterized by concerns over the emotional and financial expense of divorce. For example, Cupach & Metts (1986) found that when confronted with the prospect of marital dissolution, spouses tend to become preoccupied with issues of fairness and loss. In particular, spouses report lamenting the loss of investments made in the relationship (particularly the loss of time) and worrying about what the reaction of friends and family members will be to the divorce. Other concerns include being able to find another partner or, if another partner is not available, having to contend with loneliness and isolation.

The Mechanism of the Salience Shift

The fundamental conclusion to be drawn from this body of theory and research is that changes in the manner in which spouses think about one another and about their

relationship seem to coincide with changes in the quality of the relationship. To illustrate this point it was shown that when spouses experience less satisfaction with their marriage, attributions for their partner's behavior shift in such a way that positive behaviors, which once were attributed to the spouse, are now attributed to other factors. Likewise, whereas negative partner behaviors were formerly attributed to situational factors, they are now attributed to stable, internal causes. It was also shown that reductions in satisfaction are associated with a shift in couples' experience of commitment. When satisfaction is high, Commitment to Spouse is dominant and potential barriers to relationship dissolution are not recognized as legitimate sources of marital cohesion. By contrast, lower satisfaction seems to be associated with the initiation of exchange thinking and the redefinition of commitment in terms of the ratio of rewards and costs, the evaluation of interpersonal investments, the consideration of the availability of attractive alternatives, and so forth.

In general, the underlying nature of this cognitive shift seems to involve a change in which elements of the interpersonal context have become more salient to the spouses. When a couple is newly married, spouses' perceptions of one another often are colored by idealistic impressions through which each spouse's behavior is interpreted and within which one's overall characterization of the marriage is embedded. In this state, what is most salient to each partner is the happiness and well-being of the other and an accompanying willingness to make personal sacrifices for the other and to behave in ways that both edify and uplift the partner and protect the relationship from outside threats (e.g., devaluing attractive alternatives). In short, the awareness context (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is all that is positive and good about the relationship; commitment is based on dedication and devotion to the spouse and

thoughts about the possible termination of the relationship are either never entertained or are actively repressed.

With the passage of time, however, the formerly positive feelings of one or both spouses are likely to diminish somewhat in intensity or, more extremely, to turn into feelings of dissatisfaction with the partner, the relationship, or both, as personal, circumstantial, interpersonal, and/or chance factors create a more stressful marital environment. At the same time a shift in the awareness context of the partners is likely to occur, such that what was formerly irrelevant to spouses' perceptions of their marital stability has now become more salient. Specifically, when the bonds of personal dedication are weakened by interpersonal stressors, situational stressors, or the passage of time, partners may search for alternative reasons for remaining a couple. One alternative reason is embodied in the notion of Commitment to Marriage. If spouses are inclined to divorce or separate because their relationship is no longer rewarding (as social exchange theory would predict), then each spouse's sense of obligation to one another or their beliefs in the sanctity of the marital relationship might be sufficient reason for them to remain together. Another reason is reflected in Barriers to Dissolution. Whereas commitment to the institution of marriage might be adequate to support an unrewarding marriage for some spouses, others may not value the institutional meaning of marriage or have strongly held moral standards that endorse marital stability. For these individuals, it seems likely that in the face of declining satisfaction, the elements of exchange will become salient and subsequently be factored into spouses' reasons for remaining together.

It should be clear that this description of the cognitive shift that occurs with changes in marital satisfaction is similar those provided by Johnson (1991) and Levinger (1979a, 1979b). Missing from each of these accounts, however, is a more

detailed examination of the mechanisms involved in this cognitive shift. Specifically, neither Johnson nor Levinger explained why reductions in satisfaction might give rise to the type of evaluation and assessment processes that seem to characterize unhappy spouses. Thus, it is proposed here that the initiation of cognitive processing coincident with the reduction in marital satisfaction is a product of the spouses' awareness that the quality of their relationship has deviated from an expected positive baseline level. Given the considerable amount of optimism, love, satisfaction, and personal commitment experienced by the spouses at the beginning of their relationship, the onset of dissatisfaction is likely to result in the spouses attempting to interpret these changes within the context of their prior idealized vision of their marriage.

One way of understanding this process is with respect to research indicating that negative events are much more significant to individuals than positive events. Across a variety of experiential domains, investigators consistently find that people are affected much more strongly by negative experiences than they are by positive experiences. For example, people tend to remember more accurately messages that have negative content than positive content (Fiske, 1982) and are impacted more by negative interaction styles than by positive ones and by problem-solving encounters that are characterized by negative voice tones than by positive voice tones (Adams & Moore, 1996; Gottman, 1979, 1994; Levinson, 1989). One explanation for this set of findings is that most people expect positive outcomes in their lives (Fischoff, Slovic, & Lichtenstein, 1977; Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Swann, Hixon, Stein-Seroussi, & Gilbert, 1990; Swann & Read, 1981a,b). Indeed, the lives of most people are not characterized by the constant bombardment of negative events. Thus, when negative events do occur, they stand out against the background of relative positivity, are attended to more directly, and thereby become more salient than the expected positive outcomes.

Once alerted to the difference between expected and obtained marital outcomes, spouses who are experiencing less satisfaction may become "primed" to perceive negative intentions behind the actions of their spouse. By being hypervigilent to the possible negative interactions and threats to esteem, emotional balance, and so forth, dissatisfied spouses may be much more likely than satisfied spouses to evaluate the various aspects of their marriage with a critical eye toward keeping score of offenses committed by the spouse, considering one's own investments in the relationship, and evaluating the field of possible alternatives to the relationship. In other words, the negative state of the marriage my foster a hypervigilence to negativity that makes a greater number of relational elements salient to the distressed spouse. In this way, distressed spouses may be more likely than nondistressed spouses to take the multiplicity of exchange terms into account when examining their marital commitment.

Although the preceding examples suggest that exchange thinking is a result of reductions in marital satisfaction, it is also possible to consider exchange thinking to be a cause of dissatisfaction. As was noted previously, the rules of social exchange seem to govern the interactions of individuals who differ markedly in status and/or degree of intimacy (Clark, Mills, & Corcoran, 1989; Murstein, 1976). It may be that exchange thinking is aversive to couples and disruptive of their relationship because by adopting an exchange orientation with one's spouse, one is implicitly reducing the relationship to one of lower intimacy and the partner to the level of acquaintance. In this way, exchange orientation seems to have its primary effect on the status of the relationship and the nature of the relationship between spouses. It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that the relationship between satisfaction and exchange orientation is bi-directional; both variables affect and are affected by the other.

The Role of Personality

While the preceding discussion has argued that waning marital satisfaction triggers a shift in spouses' thinking about their relationship, and that this thinking may in turn intensify negative feelings between the spouses, it is important to point out that the impact of this shift on spouses' commitment and, subsequently, on their reactions to the change in marital quality, differs from couple to couple. Specifically, it is clear that some couples respond more favorably to threats to their relationship than others, and that some spouses appear to be more willing than others to stay in an unsatisfying marriage. Social exchange theory explains the latter scenario in terms of the relative lack of attractive alternatives; couples may persist in unsatisfying marriages for a considerable amount of time if they perceive that suitable alternatives to the marriage do not exist. While this explanation is not unreasonable, similar predictions about spouses' reactions to distress may be made from the perspective of personality. This alternative approach is explored more fully below.

As will be recalled from Chapter 4, the tendency to persist in one's marriage and the accompanying experience of this persistence (i.e., as dedication, moral obligation, or entrapment) reflect, to some extent, underlying features of the individual's character. Although the studies described in Chapter 4 were designed only to establish the link between personality characteristics and the three dimensions of commitment, the results of these studies suggested the interesting possibility that highly committed individuals may be described with respect to a unique cluster of traits that do not characterize their less committed counterparts. Of particular relevance in this regard is the finding that highly personally committed individuals seem to have a global orientation toward personal effectiveness, expectations of success, and competence

(Study 3), suggesting that committed behavior is affected in part by an individual's sense of optimism and control over the events in his or her life.

These findings are consistent with research exploring the mediating effects of personality on reactions to stress. Kobasa and her colleagues (Kobasa, 1979, 1982; Kobasa, Maddi, & Courington, 1981; Kobasa, Maddi, & Kahn, 1982; Kobasa & Puccetti, 1983) have suggested that the ability of some individuals to resist the physical and mental symptomology that often accompanies the occurrence of stressful life events has roots in a particular set of traits which predispose the individual to resilience. In particular, they posit that the *hardy personality* is a constellation of three central traits: commitment, control, and challenge. Commitment, in this context, is defined as the extent to which an individual believes in the veracity and utility of his or her actions, and may be contrasted with the debilitating sense of alienation that results from feelings of powerlessness and resignation in the face of stressful events. Control and challenge refer, respectively, to beliefs in one's ability to bring about changes in one's life and the conviction that such changes are necessary for growth.

Together, these traits influence the way people perceive, evaluate, and respond to stressful life events. For example, hardy individuals tend to consider the onset of stressful events as opportunities for decision-making and for the exercise of personal initiative (Kobasa & Puccetti, 1983). Further, because such individuals tend to possess a broader perspective on life that enables them to set long term goals and to plan for the future, they are able to interpret the incidence of negative events in a life-long context that minimizes the significance of any given negative event. Moreover, individuals with an orientation toward hardiness employ effective coping strategies when faced with personal and professional challenges, including the utilization of a variety of interpersonal and material resources to manage stress and solve problems. In short,

hardiness represents the tendency to adopt a proactive and efficacious stance in the face of difficult life events and appears to have several beneficial effects on an individual's physical and psychological well-being.

By applying the hardiness paradigm to the salience model of interpersonal commitment, one begins to see how dispositional characteristics may affect the relationship between fluctuations in satsifaction and persistence in the marital relationship. For example, spouses who are dispositionally oriented toward commitment are likely to be relatively impervious to the effects of stressors to the marital relationship, either because the spouses do not attend to the stressors or because they do not perceive them to be disruptive to the marriage. In this way it may be argued that the effects of negative influences on the marriage, whether they be antagonistic behaviors of the spouse or environmental stressors such as financial difficulties, are minimized as they are filtered through the committed spouse's perceptual system. The mechanisms of this minimization are likely to involve the awareness that immediate problems are not neccessarily indicative of a souring marriage and that such problems can be solved through personal effort. One implication of this is that individuals who are dispositionally oriented toward commitment may not experience the salience shift often seen following a decrease in satisfaction. For these individuals, the well-being of the partner and the value of the marriage may remain salient even as marital quality is reduced. Correspondingly, one could argue that such individuals would be more likely to maintain partner- and/or relationship-oriented thoughts and actions and less likely to engage in exchange thinking during times of indecision, distress, and conflict. In either case, the main point to be made regarding the committed personality is that certain trait-like

characteristics may buffer an individual from the effects of satisfaction-threatening circumstances or events, thereby altering the salience shift described previously.

The concept of the committed personality may also be invoked to account for differences in behavioral responses to dissatisfaction (Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986; Rusbult & Verette, 1991; Rusbult, et al., 1991). To the extent that the preceding arguments regarding the buffering effects of the committed personality are true, it is reasonable to conclude that dispositionally committed spouses would be more likely to overlook or downplay the shortcomings of their mate or the occurrence of stressful life events or respond constructively if such shortcomings or events cannot be overlooked. Again, if negative elements do appear in one's marriage, they are likely to be perceived and interpreted by highly committed spouses within a long-term (even eternal) context. From this perspective, momentary dissatisfactions can be ignored and negative events can be worked on in light of anticipated future benefits.

Summary and Conclusions

Like most other variables of interpersonal relevance, commitment is a construct with dynamic properties. As such, commitments may be made and broken or the manner in which commitment is experienced may fluctuate over the course of a relationship. Changes in commitment necessarily involve corresponding changes in other factors, including relationship quality and the ways in which spouses think about and interact with one another. Thus, perhaps, ironically, commitment is a fluid construct that evolves over time and has the capacity to change its meaning through its evolution.

The salience model presented above was developed in the spirit of the dynamic nature of commitment and sought to identify some of the factors that seem to be

involved in the development and dissolution of commitment in marriage. In this regard it was argued that for many couples, fluctuations in commitment or changes in its character result from a shift in cognitive orientation that accompanies reductions in marital quality. In particular, this cognitive shift is invoked when spouses become aware of deviations from baseline levels of satisfaction. Whereas the stability of the marriage was previously regarded to be self-contained and therefor an unattended aspect of the relationship, the occurrence of negative events or other, more passive processes which impact marital quality give rise to conscious consideration of commitment and, consequently, of marital stability. For many, this cognitive shift is characterized by an increase over the fair distribution of interpersonal rewards, ruminations over the amount one has invested in the relationship, or even the active comparison of one's marriage with imagined alternatives (either another partner or a life without the current spouse). In short, from the perspective of the current model, negative deviations from baseline levels of marital quality affect the salience of the factors that support marital stability, such that before satisfaction is compromised the well-being of the spouse and the inherent value of the marriage are most salient in the partners' experience of commitment, whereas after satisfaction has been compromised, external factors become more salient.

The model also suggested, however, that the way in which deviations from baseline levels of satisfaction affect the experience of commitment is influenced by the spouses' personality. In particular, it was argued that individuals who possess traits that are consistent with committed behavior may be more resilient to the various threats to satisfaction that often set the cognitive shift into motion. Although an exhaustive list of traits that might reasonably be expected to account for a "committed personality" was not generated, feelings of personal efficacy, control, and confidence coupled with

a long-term outlook and an orientation toward problem-solving seem to be especially useful in buffering the effects of negative marital events. Individuals who possess these traits also are likely to expend more energy working to improve the relationship, believing that their efforts are likely to have mutually beneficial outcomes.

The salience model does not take into account all of the variables involved in fluctuations in commitment, nor does it explain all of the mechanisms that may be responsible for triggering these fluctuations. However, the model does have utility in its attempt to integrate existing accounts of commitment. Rather than arguing against social exchange theory (for example) as a useful account of how commitment operates, the salience model embraces the notion of exchange thinking while concurrently indicating the range of circumstances in which exchange processes seem to be most functional. Further, the salience model is unique in its effort to incorporate personality in the development and maintenance of interpersonal ties. Again, the goal was not to use personality explanations of commitment to supplant existing theoretical models. Rather, an attempt was made to demonstrate that personality and cognition are intimately related, and that, accordingly, certain dispositional characteristics are associated with particular cognitive orientations. In short, the salience model represents one approach to embedding a single psychological construct such as commitment within a broader phenomenological context.

Directions for Future Research

The overarching goals of this dissertation were (a) to impose some degree of structure on the literature on interpersonal commitment and (b) to provide direction to future developments in the field. The first goal was accomplished by articulating a three-factor conceptualization of interpersonal commitment, organizing the extant

literature around this conceptualization, and demonstrating empirically its validity. The second goal was approached initially by highlighting the dynamic nature of commitment in a salience model designed to integrate several theoretical and empirical literatures. While this model appears to have some utility as a description of the development and dissolution of interperonal commitment, the true test of its usefulness will be its ability to generate subsequent research. This concluding section seeks to identify areas of inquiry that will advance current knowledge about interpersonal commitment and lead to richer models of commitment processes in close relationships.

First, future research should extend the basic findings of this dissertation by expanding the range of interpersonal associations in which commitment might be expected to play an important role. For example, whereas fairly extensive literatures currently exist for marital and organizational commitment, very little is known about the importance of commitment in the development of family relationships, friendships, or more formal relationships such as those which esit between students and teachers, doctors and patients, and therapists and clients. Moreover, it would be instructive to know whether interpersonal commitment ends with the termination of a relationship through death or divorce, or whether it is possible to be committed to individuals with whom one has an antagonistic relationship (e.g., enemies or adversaries).

A second area in need of further exploration is cross-cultural differences in interpersonal commitment. Some interesting work being done in this area has begun to identify the various ways in which spouses from differing cultural and ethnic backgrounds conceptualize and experience commitment. For example, Shieh, Lewis, and Altergott (1995) have noted several similarities between American couples and Taiwanese couples on the variables considered most relevant to interpersonal commitment, whereas Singh and his colleages (Singh & Kanjirathinkal, 1996; Singh &

Khullar, 1989) note that East Indian couples value the marital relationship more than their American counterparts. Future investigations would shed light on the normative processes involved in making and breaking interpersonal commitments.

Clinical studies also are needed to examine the utility of appealing to commitment in treating distressed couples who are contemplating divorce. Some research has shown that the level of marital commitment experienced by spouses before they enter marital therapy predicts success in therapy, at least for females (Beach & Broderick, 1983). Future research may wish to examine whether making commitment a central issue in marital therapy yields positive therapeutic outcomes.

Viewing commitment as a dynamic process and taking note of the ways in which commitment changes throughout the course of a relationship have potentially important implications for future research and theory in this area. Indeed, such a longitudinal perspective may bring into sharper focus the interplay of affective, cognitive, dispositional, and situational factors that affect, and are in turn affected by, interpersonal commitment, thereby providing a means for integrating the diverse set of findings comprising the commitment literature. For example, greater attention needs to be devoted to examining the ways in which the three dimensions of commitment mediate or moderate relationship enhancing or relationship weakening behaviors. Such an approach could be integrated with the rapidly growing body of research on couple interaction patterns, yielding a more complete picture of healthy and unhealthy couple functioning.

Current knowledge of interpersonal commitment also would be enhanced by employing statistical modeling techniques to explore more thoroughly the range of predictors and outcomes of interpersonal commitment. Combining these procedures with longitudinal designs would move researchers closer to an understanding of the

causal pathways involved in the development, maintenance, and dissolution of intimate relationships. Future research employing structural equation modeling could follow three paths. First, confirmatory factor analyses which test the adequacy of the three-factor model of commitment would provide an important source of evidence on the conceptualization of interpersonal commitment. Second, the three-factor model could be tested with respect to gender and relationships of different types to determine whether this conceptualization holds across different categories of relationship and partner pairings (e.g., homosexual versus heterosexual, highly satisfied versus highly unsatisfied, etc.). Finally, the three dimensions of commitment could be incorporated into more complex model of relationship success and failure and the role of the three dimensions in satisfaction, stability, and interaction patterns could be addressed.

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Notes

Page 105, Note 1. This cutoff point for factor loadings is arbitrary, but was set at .30 in order to retain more items in the analysis.

Page 117, Note 2. This method for creating extreme groups was employed rather than the more common median split because we wanted to maximize the difference between the groups. Because most scores in a distribution cluster around the median, differences in these scores are exaggerated in percentile transformations (Anastasi, 1988).

Page 128, Note 3. The parents were approached first in order to obtain their consent to have family members rate them on their level of commitment.

Page 141, Note 4. It was decided to collapse the 48 items comprising Johnson's (1978) measure into their respective subscales and include only the subscale scores in the principle components analysis. This decision was based on prior factor analyses with Johnson's measure which showed that the items comprising the Difficulty of Termination Procedures and Unattractiveness of Alternatives subscales tended to cluster into their own independent factors.

Page 179, Note 5. To the best of our knowledge, only two studies have focused explicitly on commitment as an outcome variable predictable by personality variables. Coming from an attachment perspective, these studies found that compared to anxiously and avoidantly attached adults, securely attached individuals were more committed to their relationship and had partners who also were more committed (Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994; Simpson, 1990). More common are studies that examine the ways in which personality affects relationship stability, a dichotomous outcome variable reflecting whether a relationship is intact or not. For example, Kim, Martin, and Martin (1989) found that compared to spouses in unstable marriages, stably married

individuals tend to be more tender-minded, trusting of each other, enthusiastic, and genuine. Additionally, marital stability is related to higher levels of self-esteem (MacDonald, Ebert, & Mason, 1989), dyadic attachment, intrinsic motives for being in the relationship, and expressiveness (Kurdek, 1991). By contrast, members of unstable romantic relationships tend to be more neurotic (Cramer, 1993; Kelly & Conley, 1987), narcissistic (Counts & Reid, 1986; Counts & Sacks, 1986), non-conforming and risk-taking (McCranie & Kahan, 1986), and impulsive (Kelly & Conley, 1987; McCramie & Kahan, 1986) than their more stably married counterparts. While this research has contributed significantly to our understanding of the factors involved in the dissolution of interpersonal relationships, it is important to point out that relationship stability and commitment are not synonymous, and many questions remain about the numerous variables that mediate couples' decision to terminate their relationship.

VITA

Jeffrey Michael Adams was born in Baltimore, Maryland on January 14, 1967. In 1972, he and his family moved to San Jose, California, where he began his elementary education. Jeff graduated from El Camino High School in Sacramento, California in 1985, and entered California State University, Sacramento the following September. After two years, he transferred to the University of California at Los Angeles, where he received his B.A. in Psychology in 1989. In August, 1989, he returned to California State University, Sacramento, Where he received his M.A. in Psychology in the summer of 1992. Jeff was admitted to the Ph.D. program in Experimental Psychology at the University of Tennessee in April, 1992, and received his doctorate in May, 1996. At the time of this writing, he is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at High Point University, High Point, North Carolina.