

**The Relationship between social anxiety, attachment  
styles and the quality of friendships and romantic  
relationships**

**Sarah Livesey**

**x15363591**

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# **Submission of Thesis and Dissertation**

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**Name:** Sarah Livesey

**Student Number:** x15363591

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## Abstract

This research aims to examine if social anxiety and attachment styles including secure, fearful-avoidant, preoccupied and dismissing attachment predict the quality of friendships and romantic relationships. Participants from the general population (n= 105) aged 18-23 completed questionnaires online including the Social Interaction Anxiety Scale-Short Form, the Friendship Quality Scale, the Feeling Close and Intimate Scale and the Attachment Style Questionnaire-Short Form. Secure attachment predicted better quality friendships and romantic relationships. Secure attachment predicted better quality romantic relationships more strongly and to a statistically significant level ( $\beta = .34$ ,  $p = .014$ ). Fearful-avoidant attachment predicted poorer quality friendships and romantic relationships but this was not statistically significant. Preoccupied attachment predicted better quality friendships and romantic relationships but this was a very weak prediction specifically for friendship quality and was not statistically significant. Dismissing attachment predicted poorer quality romantic relationships only but was not statistically significant. Higher levels of social anxiety predicted poorer quality friendships only but this was not statistically significant. Overall, the model in this study was stronger and statistically significant in explaining romantic relationship quality (Adjusted  $R^2 = .21$ ,  $P = .005$ ). The main implications of this study include supporting the implementation of and benefitting psychological interventions.

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## **Introduction**

### The importance of the quality of relationships

The quality of friendships is important from an early age, specifically good quality friendships for healthy development and well-being. Good quality friendships can be characterised by high levels of intimacy, prosocial behaviour, and other positive features, low levels of rivalry, conflict, and other negative features (Berndt, 2002). Feeling socially isolated can affect psychological health in adolescents. From a sample of 4,746 adolescents, social isolation was related to greater depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem for boys and girls. It was also associated with a greater risk of suicide attempts. The relationship between social isolation from peers and psychological health remained strong even after controlling for protective factors such as family, school connectedness and academic achievement, suggesting the importance of good quality peer relationships for adolescent's psychological health (Hall-Lande, Eisenberg, Christenson & Neumark-Sztainer, 2006). Considering this study used only one item to measure social isolation, which asked, "Do you have one or more close friends you can talk to about your problems?" could have led to a less accurate measure of social isolation, but other research has found similar findings including that social isolation increases the risk of suicidal thoughts, specifically for adolescent females (Bearman & Moody, 2004). This study also suggests the importance of good quality friendships for adolescent's psychological well-being. A longitudinal study found that peer rejection in childhood leads to adolescent internalising problems such as increased depressive moods and loneliness (Pedersen, Vitaro, Barker & Borge, 2007). This also provides evidence for the importance of good quality friendships from an early age as poor peer relations including being rejected by peers can lead to problems involving mental health and well-being at later ages.

Good quality friendships remain important as individuals get older too. Across six universities of 1<sup>st</sup> year students, both questionnaires and in-depth interviews found a positive relationship between the quality of friendships and adjustment to university. New friendships were related to attachment to university and academic adjustment. Interviews provided information on how these friendships helped with adjustment to university which included providing advice, emotional support and a sense of belonging. This study suggests the importance of new friendships in helping individuals adjust to new social environments (Buote et al., 2007). Similar to this study, other research has found that having a close relationship with a high school friend in the first week of college is beneficial in terms of academic, social, emotional and institutional attachment. Later in the first semester, having a close relationship with a new friend is more beneficial for adjusting to the new environment (Swenson, Nordstrom & Hiester, 2008). This study further suggests the importance of new friendships helping with adjustment to new social environments. Furthermore, positive qualities in friendships were found to be strongly associated with self-esteem in early adulthood and negative qualities of friendships were related to higher clinical symptoms (Bagwell et al., 2005). This study suggests the importance of good quality friendships in early adulthood for positive self-esteem and decreasing the risk of clinical symptoms involving psychological health. Similar to this finding and with the inclusion of social competence which involves the capability to participate in social interactions and interpersonal relationships, including expressing and controlling verbal and nonverbal communications (Friedman et al., 2003) has not been thoroughly researched in early adulthood. One study found that young adult's social competence is related to higher self-esteem and lower psychological symptoms and criminal behaviour. Also, it is related to emotional well-being as presented by high self-esteem and low psychological distress (Larson, Whitton, Hauser & Allen,

2007). Although further research is needed with larger sample sizes, this study still provides evidence suggesting the importance of the role of social competence in close friendships for young adult's well-being. Absence of social competence may lead to poorer quality interactions and therefore, poorer quality friendships which can have negative consequences for well-being as suggested by these research studies.

The quality of romantic relationships can also influence development and well-being. Qualities such as emotional security and companionship have been found to be the strongest features of romantic relationship quality, which also predict happiness (Demir, 2008). Individuals in happy relationships reported experiencing greater levels of subjective well-being compared to individuals in unhappy relationships. Individuals in more committed relationships also reported higher subjective well-being (Dush & Amato, 2005). Although other variables which were not considered in this study could influence individual's subjective well-being, other research has found similar findings. College students in committed romantic relationships experience greater well-being and fewer mental health problems than single college students (Braithwaite, Delevi & Fincham, 2010). Romantic relationship quality was found to predict happiness in emerging adults also. Romantic relationship quality could be a protective factor of best friendship conflict whereas, friendship quality did not influence the negative impact of romantic relationship conflict suggesting that romantic relationship quality may be more important than friendship quality in the happiness of young adults (Demir, 2010). These studies suggest the importance of the quality of romantic relationships for young adult's well-being and happiness. Furthermore, among adolescents up to the age of 19, those who were not involved in a romantic relationship had higher levels of social anxiety than those in a relationship. Negative qualities of these romantic relationships predicted depressive symptoms even when best

friendship qualities were considered. This study suggests that romantic relationship qualities make a unique contribution to depressive symptoms in adolescents (La Greca & Harrison, 2005) which was also similarly found for young adult's well-being (Demir, 2010). Likewise, depressive symptoms have previously been found to have a negative association with relationship quality (Segrin, Powell, Givertz & Brackin, 2003). Overall, research provides evidence which suggests the importance of the quality of friendships and romantic relationships for adolescents and young adult's development and well-being. Good quality friendships are suggested to be important for adolescent's mental health and well-being and for helping young adults adjust to new social environments. Good quality romantic relationships are suggested to be important for young adult's mental health, well-being and happiness. Different factors may influence the quality of these relationships but this research study will focus specifically on social anxiety and attachment styles and their relationship to the quality of friendships and romantic relationships.

### Attachment styles

Attachment theory originated in the 1950's by John Bowlby. Bowlby (1969) believed that attachment is an emotional bond between two people. The relationship between a child and their mother is very important for children's emotional, cognitive and social development. Also, early relationships with the mother can affect children later in life. Bowlby proposed the evolutionary theory of attachment which suggested that children are biologically programmed to create attachments with others as this can help them to survive. Also, early relationships will be a model of future social relationships (Bowlby, 1958). In the 1980's, Cindy Hazan and Phillip Shaver began applying attachment theory to adult relationships. Hazan and Shaver mainly studied adult romantic relationships and found that adults usually feel safer and more secure

when their partner is near and responsive. This way partners may be used as a secure base to explore the environment (Hazan & Shaver, 1990). Hazan and Shaver proposed that individual differences in adult attachment styles were similar to the three behavioral patterns observed in infant-caregiver relationships. These included secure, anxious and avoidant attachment styles. Attachments remain guiding and shaping close relationship behavior throughout one's life. As individuals create new relationships they may partially depend on earlier expectations about how others may behave and feel towards them (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Further studies investigated adult attachment styles in relation to family and peer relationships and a new model of attachment styles was proposed which included secure, fearful-avoidant, preoccupied and dismissing attachments. Secure individuals scored high on intimacy, coherence, balance of control in friendships, self-confidence, involvement in romantic relationships and warmth. Dismissive individuals scored low in emotional expressiveness, frequency of crying and warmth. These individuals also scored lower than secure individuals in closeness of relationships. Preoccupied individuals were almost the complete opposite of dismissive individuals and scored high on emotional expressiveness, reliance on others and caregiving. These individuals scored lower on balance of control and coherence in friendships. Lastly, fearful-avoidant individuals scored lower than secure and preoccupied individuals on intimacy, self-disclosure, level of romantic involvement and reliance on others. They also scored low on self-confidence (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Research has examined these attachment styles in relation to friendships. Adolescent best friends were put into pairs according to attachment styles. This included both secure, one secure or both insecure, both fearful or dismissive, one fearful or dismissive or neither fearful nor dismissive. Results found that when both friends had a secure attachment, they behaved in ways

that promoted connection in their friendship while having intimate conversations compared to those who were insecure. No differences were found for the fearful or dismissive groups (Weimer, Kerns & Oldenburg, 2004). This study suggests that secure attachment can promote connection in friendships. As this study found no differences between the fearful or dismissive pairs, this may have been due to the small sample size and a very small number of friendships involving both fearful or dismissive individuals compared to the secure pairs which had a larger sample. However, other research has found an association between secure attachment and higher intimacy in friendships. Among college students, secure attachment strengthened intimacy in friendships. Intimacy characteristics included self-disclosure, responsiveness and feeling cared for which were all higher for individuals with secure attachments (Grabill & Kerns, 2000). Similarly, secure attachment was related to increased intimacy in young adult's friendships also. Furthermore, dismissive attachment was found to be associated with decreased intimacy in close friendships and preoccupied and fearful attachments were related to negative expectations in close friendships (You & Malley-Morrison, 2000) suggesting that secure attachment has positive associations within friendships whereas, dismissing, preoccupied and fearful attachments have negative associations within friendships. Further research involving college students found that anxious/preoccupied and specifically avoidant individuals reported lower companionship with close friends. Also, higher conflict levels were reported by avoidant individuals and specifically by anxious/preoccupied individuals in their close friendships when compared to securely attached individuals. Anxious and avoidant attached individuals reported higher friendship quality with same sex friends when compared to opposite sex friend whereas, securely attached individuals reported comparable friendship qualities in same and opposite sex friends (Saferstein, Neimeyer & Hagens, 2005). This study further suggests that securely attached individuals have

better quality friendships than preoccupied and avoidant attachments. Also, this study examines avoidant attachment and not fearful and dismissing attachments separately, but other research examining these avoidant attachments separately have found similar findings. Dismissive, fearful and also preoccupied attached individuals have lower satisfaction in friendships and less prosocial maintenance behaviours as reported by friends when compared to securely attached individuals (Bippus & Rollin, 2003). Furthermore, fearfully attached young adults display less self-disclosure, hope and relationship satisfaction in their friendships compared to securely attached individuals but also when compared to dismissive and preoccupied attachment styles too. Securely attached individuals display higher levels of these qualities in their friendships (Welch & Houser, 2010). Therefore, research suggests that secure attachment is related to better quality friendships and preoccupied, fearful and dismissing attachments are related to poorer quality friendships.

Earlier research focuses on attachment styles and romantic relationships, specifically secure attachment styles. A longitudinal study found that securely attached young adults including both males and females displayed higher levels of trust, interdependence, commitment and satisfaction in their romantic relationships. Securely attached individuals had more frequent positive emotions in their relationships whereas anxious and avoidant individuals had more frequent negative emotions in their relationships (Simpson, 1990). This study suggests that secure attachment is associated with more positive qualities in romantic relationships compared to anxious and avoidant attachment. Similarly, secure attachment is associated with more trust in relationships compared to anxious and avoidant attachment. Anxious and avoidant attachment is also related to more ambivalence in relationships than secure attachment (Brennan & Shaver, 1995) further suggesting that secure attachment is associated with more positive qualities in

romantic relationships. More recent research examines preoccupied and avoidant attachments in romantic relationships. Among late adolescents in romantic relationships, those who were preoccupied/anxiously attached perceived more conflicts in their relationships, less satisfaction/closeness and less optimism about the future of their relationships. Avoidant individuals reported supportive events in their relationships to be less positive for them (Campbell, Simpson, Boldry & Kashy, 2005). Similarly, a meta-analysis concluded that anxious/preoccupied attachment was positively associated with conflict in relationships compared to those with avoidant attachment. Avoidant attachment was also negatively associated with satisfaction, support and connection in relationships (Li & Chan, 2012). Highly avoidant individuals are less likely to seek support in their relationships but when these individuals do seek support, it is in the form of hinting and sulking (Collins & Feeney, 2000). This is consistent with earlier studies on attachment which suggests that the attachment system is activated under conditions of stress and individuals high in avoidant attachment are more probable to divert their attention away from their partners (Fraley & Shaver, 1998). These studies suggest that avoidant attachment is associated with lower quality romantic relationships due to lack of support seeking, perceived lower support and connection in relationships and anxious/preoccupied attachment is associated with lower quality romantic relationships due to more frequent conflict. Although secure attachment findings are from earlier research and recent research focuses on avoidant attachment instead of specific types of avoidant attachment such as fearful and dismissing attachment, they still provide evidence that secure attachment is related to better quality romantic relationships and avoidant attachments which include fearful and dismissive attachments are associated with poorer quality romantic relationships.

There is very limited research on psychotherapies examining changes in attachment styles over time, but one of the first studies to examine this found that time limited dynamic psychotherapy (TLDP) did have changes in individual's attachment style from pretreatment to posttreatment. Individuals changed from insecure attachment styles including preoccupied, fearful and dismissive to secure attachment styles (Travis, Bliwise, Binder & Horne-Moyer, 2001). Although further research is needed with larger and more representative samples, this study still provides evidence of psychotherapy changing individual's attachment style over time. Similar findings examining psychotherapy and attachment styles have been more recently found. Psychotherapies involved in this study included psychodynamic and CBT. Decreases in anxious and avoidant attachment were found specifically, decreases in anxious attachment and there was an increase in secure attachment from pretreatment to posttreatment. For individuals in romantic relationships, this change was still evident at follow-up compared to other relationships which decreased by follow-up but small effects were still apparent (Kirchmann et al., 2012). Furthermore, group interventions involving psychotherapy treatments have been found to have significant improvements for secure and fearful attachment styles. There was improvements for preoccupied and dismissing attachment styles but these were not as large (Kinley & Reyno, 2013). These findings are similar to the findings of the previous study but with some contradicting findings also involving preoccupied attachment. This may be due to the sample or the type of psychotherapy used. Therefore, further research may still be needed to identify psychotherapies that are effective for different attachment styles. However, these studies still provide evidence that psychotherapies such as psychodynamic therapy and CBT can decrease insecure attachments and increase secure attachment. Therefore, psychological interventions can

be implemented for individuals with high levels of preoccupied, fearful and dismissing attachments which could improve the quality of friendships and romantic relationships also.

### Social Anxiety

In social situations, individuals with social anxiety create a mental representation of themselves as seen by others and negatively focus their attention on threats in their social environment (Rapee & Heimberg, 1997). Furthermore, individuals with social anxiety have a number of social fears which can cause impairments in social functioning (Ruscio et al., 2008). Adolescents with higher levels of social anxiety have reported less acceptance and support from peers, specifically girls. Individuals high in social anxiety also reported feeling less romantically attractive to others. This may lead to individuals missing out on important socialisation experiences and cause impairments in social functioning. Girls with greater levels of social anxiety reported having close friendships that were low in companionship, intimacy and emotional support compared to less socially anxious girls. This finding was not as strong for boys, but boy's social avoidance was associated with perceived less support in their close friendships (La Greca & Lopez, 1998). This study suggests that higher levels of social anxiety have a negative influence on the perceived quality of friendships, specifically for girls. Although further research using longitudinal methodologies may be needed for stronger, causal findings, this study still provides evidence of the influence that social anxiety can have on the quality of friendships. More recent research has also found similar findings for social anxiety on the quality of friendships in older adolescents also. Three motivations for constrained warmth in friendships were examined in responses to favours and these included negative reactions, positive reactions and expectation of tit-for-tat behavior. Social anxiety was directly related to negative reactions to favours which moderated the relationship between social anxiety and impaired friendship quality

(Fernandez & Rodebaugh, 2011). This study suggests that social anxiety leads to negative reactions in friendships and therefore, impairments in the quality of friendships. Furthermore, two epidemiological datasets including the NCS-R (National Comorbidity Survey- Replication) and the NSAL (National Survey of American Life) were examined and found that social anxiety was the only diagnosis related to perceived friendship quality above other mental disorders. Individuals with social anxiety reported more impairments in friendship quality (Rodebaugh, 2009). A more recent re-examination replicated these findings and found social anxiety disorder to be the only significant predictor of friendship quality. Individuals with social anxiety had more impaired friendship quality. Social anxiety disorder also continued to predict friendship quality into adulthood, (Rodebaugh, Fernandez & Levinson, 2012) even though social anxiety disorder has been found to be more common in younger ages (Ruscio et al., 2008). Therefore, these studies suggest that social anxiety does have an impact on the quality of friendships in adolescents and into adulthood also which leads to poorer quality friendships.

Higher levels of social anxiety have been found to be associated with lack of assertion (avoidance) and overreliance (dependent) on others in close relationships, including friendships and romantic relationships. This can lead to impairments in these relationships. Lack of assertion was also associated with stress in these relationships (Davila & Beck, 2002) suggesting that social anxiety can affect interpersonal styles in close relationships which can lead to impairments and stress and therefore, poorer quality friendships and romantic relationships in older adolescents. Similarly, social anxiety was found to be associated with avoidant and dependent interpersonal styles in romantic relationships in young adulthood also. Social anxiety was related to a type of interpersonal dependence called preoccupied attachment which is maladaptive in relationships (Darcy, Davila & Beck, 2005). As previously mentioned, this attachment is also

associated with less satisfaction and closeness in romantic relationships (Campbell et al., 2005). This study also provides evidence of social anxiety influencing interpersonal styles in relationships which can negatively impact the quality of romantic relationships. Social anxiety has also been found to be associated with a limited amount of self-disclosure in romantic relationships for females but not males. The association between higher levels of social anxiety, lower support and greater conflict in relationships was mediated by this lack of self-disclosure in women's romantic relationships (Cuming & Rapee, 2010). This study suggests the importance of self-disclosure for better quality relationships, specifically for women and social anxiety is important in this association. More recently and consistent with these findings, women with greater levels of social anxiety reported less self-disclosure in their romantic relationships. Women with higher levels of social anxiety were also associated with receiving and providing less support in relationships. Furthermore, for both males and females, higher levels of social anxiety was associated with perceived less emotional intimacy in romantic relationships for late adolescents (Porter & Chambless, 2014) suggesting that social anxiety can lead to poorer quality romantic relationships. Similarly, males and females with social anxiety have reported less emotional expression and intimacy when compared to a control group. Social anxiety was also associated with less self-disclosure but there was no significant gender differences found in these reports (Sparrevoorn & Rapee, 2009). As this finding has previously been found to be stronger for women, not finding a significant gender difference in this study could have been due to the smaller sample size. Overall, research suggests that social anxiety is associated with poorer quality romantic relationships for adolescents and young adults.

Psychological interventions such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) have been found to be effective for treating social anxiety disorder. A review of meta-analysis found CBT

to have a medium effect in treating social anxiety disorder when compared to a control group (Hofmann, Asnaani, Vonk, Sawyer & Fang, 2012). Although further research is suggested comparing CBT to other treatments, a more recent systematic review found individual CBT, group CBT, exposure and social skills interventions to be effective for treating social anxiety disorder when compared to a control group. Individual CBT was found to have the largest effect over other psychological interventions such as psychodynamic psychotherapy, mindfulness and supportive therapy. Individual CBT was suggested to be the best intervention for early treatment of social anxiety disorder (Mayo-Wilson et al., 2014). Furthermore, group CBT has been found to be effective when compared to other psychological treatments such as mindfulness based stress reduction. Group CBT also improved quality of life for individuals with social anxiety (Koszycki, Benger, Shlik & Bradwejn, 2007). Similarly, group CBT was found to be effective for treating social anxiety but when social skills training was also applied with CBT, the effectiveness of the treatment was significantly greater (Herbert et al., 2005) suggesting that group CBT is effective but with the addition of social skills training, it becomes much more effective for treating social anxiety disorder. Overall, research suggests that CBT is effective for treating social anxiety specifically, individual CBT but, group CBT can also be effective particularly with the addition of social skills training. Therefore, psychological interventions can be implemented for those with higher levels of social anxiety which could improve the quality of friendships and romantic relationships also.

## Rationale and hypothesis

As the majority of recent research involving attachment styles and romantic relationships focuses mainly on preoccupied/anxious and avoidant attachments, this study will take into account the role of secure attachment in the quality of romantic relationships and the use of four attachment styles will be considered. This will include secure, preoccupied, fearful-avoidant and dismissing attachment styles instead of focusing on just one overall avoidant attachment. Furthermore, the majority of research examining social anxiety and friendship quality uses a global friendship quality measure. This study will focus on specific friendship quality such as a best friend as measuring global friendship quality may contain biases about friendships if the individual only focuses on their less satisfying friendships. Measuring specific friendship qualities should be a more accurate measure of friendship quality. Also, much research examining social anxiety and friendship quality focuses on adolescents. This study will include older adolescents and young adults also to examine if the findings of social anxiety on friendship quality persists into early adulthood. There is practical importance in examining social anxiety and attachment styles and their relationship to the quality of friendships and romantic relationships as findings can support the implementation of and benefit psychological interventions. If higher levels of social anxiety and preoccupied, fearful and dismissive attachments are negatively associated with friendship and romantic relationship quality as suggested by the literature, then psychological interventions can be applied to treat social anxiety and change attachment styles to more secure attachments which could improve the quality of friendships and romantic relationships. Successfully improving relationship qualities can lead to improved mental health and well-being as suggested by the literature. Therefore, the main research aims of this study include to examine if each of the attachment styles predict the quality

of friendships and romantic relationships while controlling for social anxiety, age and gender. The second aim of this study will be to examine if social anxiety predicts the quality of friendships and romantic relationships while controlling for attachment styles, age and gender. Hence, the hypotheses of this study include 1a: Secure attachments will predict better quality friendships and romantic relationships, 1b: Preoccupied, fearful-avoidant and dismissing attachments will predict poorer quality friendships and romantic relationships. 2: Higher levels of social anxiety will predict poorer quality friendships and romantic relationships. When examining these hypotheses variables including gender, age, Secure, preoccupied, fearful-avoidant and dismissing attachments and social anxiety will be predictor variables. Friendship quality and romantic relationship quality will be the criterion variables.

## Methods

### Participants

The sample consisted of 21 males and 84 females (20% male, 80% female) aged 18-23 ( $M= 20.25$ ,  $SD= 1.47$ ). This sample included 67 individuals that were currently in romantic relationships and 38 individuals that were not currently in romantic relationships (64% in a relationship, 36% not in a relationship). A convenience sample was used to recruit participants from the general population. A total of 109 participants took part in the study but ( $n= 105$ ) was used for the purpose of this study.

### Materials

A short demographic questionnaire was used to collect participant information including age, gender and current relationship status (see appendix 1). The Social Interaction Anxiety Scale-Short Form (SIAS-6) (Peters, Sunderland, Andrews, Rapee & Mattick, 2012) is a 6 item measure of anxiety when interacting with others using a 5 point likert scale where 0= not at all true of me, 1 = Slightly true of me, 2 = Moderately true of me, 3 = Very true of me and 4 = Extremely true of me (see appendix 2 for more detail). Higher scores indicated higher levels of social anxiety. A good internal consistency has been found for the SIAS-6 in undergraduate and clinical samples ( $\alpha= .84$ ,  $\alpha= .72$ ) respectively (Carleton et al., 2014). The reliability of this scale for the current sample of this study was ( $\alpha= .86$ ). The Friendship Quality Scale (Berry, Willingham & Thayer, 2000b) is a 5 item measure of a specific friendship quality for e.g. a best friend using a 9 point scale where 1= not at all and 9 = very much (see appendix 3 for more detail). Question 1, 2 and 5 measured closeness in friendships and question 3 and 4 measured irritation in friendships including conflicts. Therefore, question 3 and 4 were reversed scored so

that higher scores indicated better quality friendships. Internal consistency for closeness and irritation measures were  $\alpha = .82$  and  $\alpha = .84$  respectively (Berry, Willingham & Thayer, 2000a). The reliability of this scale for the current sample was ( $\alpha = .66$ ).

The Feeling Close and Intimate Scale (Campbell, Lackenbauer & Muise, 2006a) is a 5 item measure of closeness and intimacy in romantic relationships using a 7 point scale where 1 = not at all and 7 = very much so (see appendix 4 for more detail). Scores for each item were averaged and higher scores indicated better quality romantic relationships. A good internal consistency has been found for this scale ( $\alpha = .81$ ) (Campbell, Lackenbauer & Muise, 2006b). The reliability of the scale for the current sample was ( $\alpha = .91$ ). The Attachment Style Questionnaire- Short Form (ASQ-SF) (Chui & Leung, 2016b) is a 15 item measure of four attachment styles including secure, fearful-avoidant, preoccupied and dismissing attachment using a 5 point likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree (see appendix 5 for more detail). Item 1-3 measured secure attachment. Item 4-8 measured fearful-avoidant attachment. Item 9-11 measured preoccupied attachment and item 12-15 measured dismissing attachment. Item 11 was reverse scored and higher scores for each attachment style indicated that the participant had higher levels of that attachment style. Good internal consistency has been found for each of the attachment style measures. Secure  $\alpha = .77$ , fearful-avoidant  $\alpha = .87$ , preoccupied  $\alpha = .81$  and dismissing  $\alpha = .71$  (Chui & Leung, 2016a). The reliability of each of the attachment measures for the current sample of this study was (secure  $\alpha = .69$ ), (fearful-avoidant  $\alpha = .85$ ), (preoccupied  $\alpha = .79$ ) and (dismissing  $\alpha = .68$ ).

### Design

A quantitative, cross-sectional design was used for this study as self-report measures of social anxiety, attachment style and the quality of friendships and romantic relationships was

used. For the hypotheses of this study, two multiple regression analysis were conducted. In the first regression analysis, the predictor variables included gender, age, social anxiety, secure attachment, fearful-avoidant attachment, preoccupied attachment and dismissing attachment. The criterion variable of this regression was friendship quality. The second multiple regression analysis included gender, age, social anxiety, secure attachment, fearful-avoidant attachment, preoccupied attachment and dismissing attachment as the predictor variables also. The criterion variable for this regression analysis was romantic relationship quality.

### Procedure

Each of the questionnaires were created on google forms along with instructions for each questionnaire, an information sheet, consent form and debrief form. The link to these questionnaires on google forms was posted on social media websites such as Facebook, requesting individuals to take part in the study and complete the questionnaires. The questionnaires were completed online by participants on their own personal laptops, phones, tablets or other devices in their own time and setting. Before completing the questionnaires an information sheet which included all of the information about the study was provided. This included information such as what was going to be examined in the study and how it was going to be examined. Furthermore, participant's rights were explained which stated that participation in the study was voluntary and that the data would be anonymous and kept confidential. Contact information and the approximate length of the study was also provided on the information sheet which stated that the questionnaires should take about 10 minutes to complete. Finally, it was informed that data could not be deleted after submitting questionnaires as the information is anonymous and therefore, impossible to link any of the data back to one individual (see appendix 6). Continuing from the information sheet, a consent form was provided which reiterated the

information about the study and participants rights. Participants were then asked to tick a box as evidence of consent to taking part in the study (see appendix 7 for more detail). A tick the box was used as an alternative for a signature to keep the anonymity of the participant. After consenting to take part in the study, participants continued to answer each of the items on the questionnaires on google forms. Instructions on how to answer each item were provided at the beginning of each questionnaire. The questionnaires involved participants to indicate on a likert scale the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each question. Before completion of the Feeling Close and Intimate Scale, participants were informed that if they were not currently in a romantic relationship they did not have to complete the questionnaire and could move onto the next section.

After participants submitted the completed questionnaires, the data was collected and stored on google forms responses. Lastly, a debrief form was provided after submission of completed questionnaires which thanked individuals for participating in the study and provided further contact information if any problems or concerns arose that participants wished to address after the study (see appendix 8). When a sufficient amount of participants took part in the study, in this case 109 participants, responses to questionnaires were no longer accepted and the data was converted to SPSS where statistical tests were conducted to examine each of the hypotheses of the study. Ethical considerations were taken into account in this study which have been mentioned and these considerations included obtaining voluntary consent from participants aged 18 and over, data was kept anonymous and confidential, the information sheet and debrief form provided participants with full information about the study and contact information if any problems or concerns needed to be addressed by participants after taking part in the study.

## Results

### Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics for all continuous variables are presented in table 2. Preliminary analysis indicated that the data was relatively normally distributed as the means and medians for each variable were similar. Friendship quality and relationship quality were slightly negatively skewed with most individuals having good quality friendships and relationships. Given the nature of these measures, this was expected. There was a very small number of outliers present for these measures which were retained for the purpose of this study and because each individual will have differences in the quality of their friendships and romantic relationships. Secure attachment and preoccupied attachment were also slightly negatively skewed indicating most individuals to have a secure attachment but, many individuals in this sample had a preoccupied attachment also. Secure attachment contained 2 outliers which again were retained for the purpose of this study and because individuals will differ in their secure attachment style. The 95% confidence intervals for each variable were quite tight suggesting that the sample mean represents the population mean. The standard error mean for each variable was also quite small further suggesting the generalisability of the sample and replicating the same findings. The standard deviations for social anxiety, friendship quality and fearful-avoidant attachment were quite high indicating a variability of scores from the mean for each of these variables.

Table 1. Frequencies for all categorical variables (n=105)

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	21	20.0
Female	84	80.0
<b>Relationship Status</b>		
Currently in relationship	67	63.8
Not currently in relationship	38	36.2

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for all continuous variables

	Mean (95% Confidence Intervals)	Std. Error Mean	Median	SD	Range
Age	20.25 (19.96-20.54)	.15	20	1.47	18-23
Social Anxiety	9.90 (8.74-11.07)	.59	9	5.98	0-24
Friendship Quality	35.73 (34.51-36.96)	.62	37	6.30	13-45
Relationship Quality	5.54 (5.16-5.91)	.19	6	1.52	1-7
Secure attachment	11.66 (11.18-12.15)	.25	12	2.50	3-15
Fearful-avoidant attachment	15.01 (14.00-16.01)	.51	15	5.17	5-25
Preoccupied attachment	10.96 (10.31-11.65)	.34	12	3.44	3-15
Dismissing Attachment	14.50 (13.88-15.13)	.31	15	3.18	6-20

## Inferential Statistics

Table 3. Pearson Product-moment Correlations between predictor and criterion variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Friendship quality	1								
2. Relationship quality	.35**	1							
3. Social anxiety	-.18	-.04	1						
4. Secure attachment	.19	.37**	-.46***	1					
5. Fearful attachment	-.18	-.24	.43***	-.38***	1				
6. Preoccupied attachment	-.08	.14	.30**	-.51	.40***	1			
7. Dismissing attachment	.07	-.25*	-.31**	.01	.02	-.25*	1		
8. Age	.03	-.20	.17	-.16	.08	-.13	.22*	1	
9. Gender	.08	.24	.13	.03	.10	.10	-.16	-.09	1

Note. Statistical significance: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 4. Multiple regression model predicting friendship quality (n=104)

	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>β</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>CI 95% (B)</b>
<b>Model</b>	.07				
Gender		.11	1.75	1.64	-1.50/5.00
Age		.08	.34	.47	-.59/1.28
Social anxiety		-.10	-.11	.14	-.39/.17
Secure attachment		.11	.27	.30	-.33/.86
Fearful-avoidant attachment		-.12	-.15	.15	-.45/.16
Preoccupied attachment		.03	.05	.21	-.38/.48
Dismissing attachment		.04	.08	.23	-.38/.54

Note. Statistical significance: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine how well friendship quality could be explained by seven variables including gender (being female), age, social anxiety, secure attachment, fearful-avoidant attachment, preoccupied attachment and dismissing attachment. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. The correlations between the predictor variables and the criterion variable included in the study were examined (see Table 3). None of the seven predictor variables were significantly correlated with the criterion variable. The correlations between the predictor variables were also assessed with  $r$  values ranging from .01 to .51. These results indicate that there was no violation of the assumption of multicollinearity and that the data was suitable for examination through multiple regression analysis.

Since no a priori hypotheses had been made to determine the order of entry of the predictor variables, a direct method was used for the analysis. The seven predictor variables explained 7.1% of variance in friendship quality scores ( $F(7, 90) = .98, p = .450$ ). None of the seven variables were found to uniquely predict friendship quality to a statistically significant level (see Table 4).

*Table 5. Multiple regression model predicting romantic relationship quality (n=66)*

	<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>β</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>CI 95% (B)</b>
<b>Model</b>	.21**				
Gender		.19	.73	.44	-.15/1.61
Age		-.08	-.08	.13	-.34/.17
Social anxiety		.13	.03	.04	-.04/.11
Secure attachment		.34*	.20	.08	.04/.37
Fearful-avoidant attachment		-.26	-.08	.04	-.16/.01
Preoccupied attachment		.21	.09	.06	-.02/.21
Dismissing attachment		-.11	-.05	.06	-.18/.07

*Note.* Statistical significance: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine how well romantic relationship quality could be explained by seven variables including gender (being female), age, social anxiety, secure attachment, fearful-avoidant attachment, preoccupied attachment and dismissing attachment. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of

normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. The correlations between the predictor variables and the criterion variable included in the study were examined (see Table 3). Two of the seven predictor variables were significantly correlated with the criterion variable and these significant effects ranged from  $r = .25$  (dismissing attachment) to  $r = .37$  (secure attachment). The correlations between the predictor variables were also assessed with  $r$  values ranging from .01 to .51. These results indicate that there was no violation of the assumption of multicollinearity and that the data was suitable for examination through multiple regression analysis.

Since no a priori hypotheses had been made to determine the order of entry of the predictor variables, a direct method was used for the analysis. The seven predictor variables explained 21% of variance in romantic relationship quality scores ( $F(7, 55) = 3.35, p = .005$ ). One of the seven variables were found to uniquely predict romantic relationship quality to a statistically significant level: secure attachment ( $\beta = .34, p = .014$ ) (see Table 5).

## Discussion

### Attachment Styles

The first aim of this study was to examine if attachment styles including secure, fearful-avoidant, preoccupied and dismissing attachment predicted the quality of friendships and romantic relationships while controlling for gender, age and social anxiety. Hypothesis 1a was that secure attachment will predict better quality friendships and romantic relationships. The results of this study found secure attachment to positively predict the quality of friendships indicating that individuals with higher levels of secure attachment have better quality friendships. However, this was not statistically significant. Secure attachment positively predicted the quality of romantic relationships also suggesting that individuals with higher levels of secure attachment have better quality romantic relationships. This was the strongest predictor even after controlling for social anxiety, gender and age and it was statistically significant suggesting that secure attachment is important for the quality of romantic relationships. This prediction was also stronger than the prediction of friendship quality further suggesting the importance of secure attachment for the quality of romantic relationships. Therefore, hypothesis 1a of this study was accepted as secure attachment predicted better quality friendships and romantic relationships for adolescents and young adults. This finding is also consistent with existing research as mentioned in the introduction. Secure attachment has been found to promote connection (Weimer et al., 2004) and enhance intimacy in friendships including increased self-disclosure, responsiveness and being cared for (Grabill & Kerns, 2000; You & Malley-Morrison, 2000). Additionally, securely attached young adults have been found to have higher levels of trust, commitment and satisfaction in their romantic relationships and more frequent positive emotions (Brennan & Shaver, 1995; Simpson, 1990). This research is similar to the findings of

this study as secure attachment predicted better quality friendships and romantic relationships. Interestingly, this study also found secure attachment to be an important predictor for the quality of romantic relationships which has not been examined in previous research. Also, this study provides a more recent finding of secure attachment predicting better quality romantic relationships as the majority of previous findings for this are from earlier studies.

Secondly, hypothesis 1b involved fearful-avoidant, preoccupied and dismissing attachments to predict poorer quality friendships and romantic relationships. The results of this study found fearful-avoidant attachment to negatively predict the quality of friendships indicating that individuals with higher levels of fearful-avoidant attachment have poorer quality friendships. Although this was not significant it was the strongest predictor out of the other attachment styles suggesting fearful-avoidant attachment to be important in the prediction of poorer quality friendships compared. Fearful-avoidant attachment also negatively predicted romantic relationship quality indicating that individuals with higher levels of fearful-avoidant attachment have poorer quality romantic relationships but again, this was not statistically significant. Fearful-avoidant attachment was a stronger predictor of poorer romantic relationship quality than friendship quality suggesting it to be important for romantic relationships. These findings are similar to previous research as mentioned in the introduction. Fearful attachment was found to be associated with negative expectations in close friendships (You & Malley-Morrison, 2000). Individuals with fearful attachment were also found to show less hope, self-disclosure and relationship satisfaction in their friendships (Welch & Houser, 2010) and have lower satisfaction and less prosocial maintenance behaviours (Bippus & Rollin, 2003). As fearful-avoidant attachment is a type of avoidant attachment, these findings are also similar to existing research involving avoidant attachment. Avoidant individuals have been found to report

supportive events in their romantic relationships to be less positive (Campbell et al., 2005) and avoidant attachment is negatively associated with support, satisfaction and connection in romantic relationships (Li & Chan, 2012). Therefore, the findings of this study are similar to previous research findings but, this study contributes to the existing literature as it examines fearful-avoidant attachment specifically which previous research has not focused on.

Preoccupied attachment in this study was a positive predictor of friendship quality indicating that individuals with higher levels of preoccupied attachment have better quality friendships but, this was a very weak predictor and it was not statistically significant. It was also the smallest predictor out of the other attachment styles suggesting preoccupied attachment to not be as important in predicting the quality of friendships in this study. Preoccupied attachment positively predicted romantic relationship quality also indicating that individuals with higher levels of preoccupied attachment have better quality romantic relationships but, this was not statistically significant. The findings of preoccupied attachment in this study are not consistent with previous research as mentioned in the introduction. Preoccupied individuals have been found to report greater conflict in friendships (Saferstein et al., 2005) and have negative expectations about their close friendships (You & Malley-Morrison, 2000). Also, preoccupied individuals have been found to have more frequent negative emotions in their romantic relationships (Simpson, 1990) and have reported larger numbers of conflicts in their romantic relationships (Campbell et al., 2005; Li & Chan, 2012). These negative emotions and greater conflict levels in friendships and romantic relationships found in previous research is not consistent with the findings of this study. This may have been due to random error caused by individual differences in participant's perception of the quality of their friendships and romantic relationships as the majority of participant clustered around the high end of the friendship quality

scale and feeling close and intimate scale indicating better quality friendships and romantic relationships. Hence, there may have been some biases when completing these questionnaires leading to a positive association between preoccupied attachment and better friendship and romantic relationship quality. Furthermore, research has found that males report lower satisfaction and more negative experiences in their relationships when females have higher levels of anxious attachment whereas, when males provide more closeness and intimacy in relationships, females report increased satisfaction and more positive experiences (Collins & Read, 1990). As there was more females than males in this study, this could have affected the results if males and females differ in their response to anxious attachment.

Lastly, dismissing attachment was found to positively predict friendship quality in this study indicating that individuals with higher levels of dismissing attachment have better quality friendships but, this was a weak predictor and it was not statistically significant. Dismissing attachment negatively predicted romantic relationship quality indicating that individuals with higher levels of dismissing attachment have poorer quality romantic relationships. This was not statistically significant but, it was a stronger predictor than in the prediction of friendship quality suggesting that dismissing attachment is more important for the quality of romantic relationships. However, it was the weakest predictor out of the other attachment styles for romantic relationship quality suggesting that it is not as an important predictor of romantic relationship quality compared to the other attachment styles. The finding that dismissing attachment predicting better quality friendships is not consistent with previous research as mentioned in the literature. Dismissing attachment has been found to be associated with a decrease in intimacy in close friendships (You & Malley-Morrison, 2000) and lower satisfaction and less prosocial maintenance behaviours in friendships (Bippus & Rollin, 2003). The positive prediction between

dismissing attachment and friendship quality in this study may have been due to random error caused by individual differences in perceptions of friendship quality and again, there may have been some biases when completing the friendship quality scale leading to this finding. Furthermore, the finding that dismissing attachment predicted poorer quality romantic relationships is similar to previous findings involving avoidant attachment as dismissing attachment is a type of avoidant attachment. Avoidant individuals have been found to have more frequent negative emotions in their romantic relationships (Simpson, 1990) and avoidant attachment is related to more ambivalence in romantic relationships (Brennan & Shaver, 1995). Also, avoidant attachment is negatively associated with support, satisfaction and connection in romantic relationships (Li & Chan, 2012). The findings of dismissing attachment in this study contribute to the existing literature as this is a type of avoidant attachment that was examined specifically.

As both dismissing and fearful-avoidant attachments are types of avoidant attachment, it was interesting to find that fearful-avoidant attachment predicted poorer quality friendships and romantic relationships whereas dismissing attachment only predicted poorer quality romantic relationships. This suggests that there are differences between the types of avoidant attachment specifically, in the prediction of friendship quality where dismissing attachment did not predict poorer quality friendships. Also, fearful-avoidant attachment was a stronger predictor of both poorer quality friendships and romantic relationships. Dismissing attachment was a weaker predictor suggesting fearful-avoidant attachment to be more important in the quality of friendships and romantic relationships. As a result of these findings hypothesis 1b can only be partially accepted as fearful-avoidant attachment did predict poorer quality friendships and romantic relationships for late adolescents and young adults but preoccupied attachment

predicted better quality friendships and romantic relationships which is inconsistent with previous findings and does not agree with the hypothesis and mixed findings were found for dismissing attachment.

### Social Anxiety

The second aim of this study was to examine if social anxiety predicted the quality of friendships and romantic relationships while controlling for gender, age and attachment styles. The second hypothesis was that higher levels of social anxiety will predict poorer quality friendships and romantic relationships. Results found that social anxiety negatively predicted friendship quality indicating that higher levels of social anxiety is associated with poorer quality friendships but this was not statistically significant. Social anxiety was a positive predictor of romantic relationship quality suggesting that higher levels of social anxiety is associated with better quality romantic relationships but, this was also not statistically significant. Therefore, hypothesis 2 of this study could only be partially accepted as social anxiety did predict poorer quality friendships and this is consistent with previous findings as mentioned in the introduction. Adolescents with higher levels of social anxiety report low intimacy, companionship and emotional support in their friendships (La Greca & Lopez, 1998) and individuals with higher levels social anxiety report more impairments in the quality of their friendships (Rodebaugh, 2009; Rodebaugh et al., 2012). These findings add to the existing literature but with the inclusion of specific friendships only which should have eliminated any biases in the friendship quality measure. These findings also suggest that the association between higher levels of social anxiety and poorer quality friendships persists into early adulthood as the majority of previous findings focus on adolescent friendships only.

The finding that higher levels of social anxiety predicted better quality romantic relationships is not consistent with previous research as mentioned in the introduction. Social anxiety has been found to be associated with little self-disclosure in romantic relationships which can lead to lower support and greater conflict in relationships (Cuming & Rapee, 2010; Sparrevohn & Rapee, 2009) and it is also associated with less emotional intimacy in relationships (Porter & Chambless, 2014). The positive prediction between social anxiety and romantic relationship quality found in this study may have due to biased information given by individuals when completing the Feeling Close and Intimate Scale about the quality of their romantic relationships. Furthermore, women with social anxiety were found to feel closer to their partners when they withheld the expression of negative emotions. In contrast, expressing negative emotions led to a decrease in relationship closeness and greater differences between the present and desired level of relationship closeness. Women who were less socially anxious reported greater relationship closeness when they expressed negative emotions (Kashdan, Volkmann, Breen & Han, 2007). This could be another aspect to consider in the finding of this study as individuals with social anxiety and their relationship quality could be influenced by how an individual expresses their negative emotions to their partner. Although this was a female sample, the sample in this present study was largely female and therefore, could have influenced the findings. This could be considered in future research also.

Furthermore, findings for gender and age in this study were both weak predictions of the quality of friendships and romantic relationships suggesting that these are not important in the prediction of the quality of friendships and romantic relationships after controlling for social anxiety and attachment styles for those between 18 and 23. Age positively predicted friendship quality indicating older individuals in this study had better quality friendships. Gender positively

predicted friendship quality also suggesting that being male as opposed to female is associated with better quality friendships. Age negatively predicted romantic relationship quality indicating that older individuals in this study had poorer quality romantic relationships. Gender positively predicted romantic relationship quality and suggesting that being male as opposed to female is associated with better quality romantic relationships. Overall, the regression model in this study that explained the criterion variable more strongly and statistically significant was the model for romantic relationships. Even though there was a smaller sample size due to only some of the participants currently being in romantic relationships, the model was still stronger in predicting the quality of romantic relationships. The regression model predicting friendship quality did not as strongly explain friendship quality and it was not statistically significant. Therefore, this suggests that attachment styles specifically predict more strongly the quality of romantic relationships as secure attachment was a significant predictor of romantic relationship quality.

### Implications

One of the main implications of this study includes its support and benefit to psychological interventions. As higher levels of social anxiety and attachment styles including fearful-avoidant and dismissing attachment have been found to predict poorer quality friendships and romantic relationships, this information can be used to support the implementation of psychological interventions to treat social anxiety and help individuals to gain a more secure attachment style. As this study focused on the quality of friendships and romantic relationships, psychological interventions should aim to improve this aspect for individuals also. If interventions aim to improve the quality of friendships and romantic relationships for these individuals, this can then benefit mental health and well-being also as suggested by the literature. As the regression model predicting romantic relationship quality was stronger than predicting

friendship quality, this can be a consideration for psychological interventions. Also, secure attachment was the only significant predictor of better quality romantic relationships which can also be of consideration for psychological interventions such as helping individuals with more avoidant attachment styles to become more secure in their attachments and this could be important for improving the quality of romantic relationships. The strongest predictor of poorer quality friendships and romantic relationships was fearful-avoidant attachment which could be an important focus in psychosocial interventions. Furthermore, as differences between the attachment styles have been found in predicting the quality of friendships and romantic relationships, psychological interventions could improve approaches for treating individuals with different attachment styles.

### Limitations

There are some limitations to consider in this study. Firstly, there was a limited sample size due to the specific age range of 18-23 years. There was also a smaller sample size for participants in romantic relationships as not every individual who took part in the study was currently in a romantic relationships. Furthermore, this limited sample size may have led to the smaller predictions and the non-statistically significant findings. Also, there was a larger percentage of females to males in this study which could have affected results slightly if males and females differ in their perceptions of friendship and romantic relationship qualities. This was a cross sectional study therefore, no causations can be made from the findings of this study. Lastly, the friendship quality questionnaire used in this study only measured two aspects of friendship quality including closeness and irritation. This may not have been sufficiently accurate to measure an individual's overall friendship quality. Also, participants were asked to provide information about a best friend on this friendship quality measure therefore, better

quality friendships could be expected from this and could also explain positive associations between some of the predictor variables and friendship quality found in this study.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of this study found secure attachment to predict better quality friendships and romantic relationships specifically, romantic relationships as this was the strongest and the only statistically significant predictor. Fearful-avoidant attachment predicted poorer quality friendships and romantic relationships more strongly than the other attachment styles. These findings are consistent with previous research and contribute to the existing literature. Preoccupied attachment was found to predict better quality friendships and romantic relationships which is inconsistent with previous research and could have been caused by any biases in information given. Dismissing attachment predicted poorer quality romantic relationships only. Also, higher levels of social anxiety predicted poorer quality friendships only. These findings were consistent with research and contribute to the existing literature. Higher levels of social anxiety predicted better quality romantic relationships which is inconsistent with existing research and future studies could consider how individual differences in dealing with social anxiety such as emotional expression could have different effects on the quality of romantic relationships. Furthermore, the main strength of this study which can also contribute to the literature is the finding that the regression model explaining romantic relationship quality was stronger and statistically significant suggesting that the predictor variables explained the quality of romantic relationships more strongly. Although this regression model had a smaller sample size than the friendship quality model, it was still a stronger model. This further suggests that the model is important for predicting romantic relationship quality. Another strength of this study is the finding that secure attachment was the strongest and only significant predictor of

romantic relationship which contributes to existing literature. In relation to future research, further examining the difference between friendship quality and romantic relationship quality should be considered to examine if the same findings can be replicated. Also, larger sample sizes should be used and the percentage of males to females should be considered. More accurate measures of friendship quality could be considered in future research also but overall, there are some strong findings in this study that contribute to existing literature.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### Demographic Questionnaire

1. Age? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender? Male  Female
3. Current relationship status? In a relationship  Not currently in a relationship

### Appendix 2

#### Social Interaction Anxiety Scale- Short Form

Please indicate the degree to which you feel each of the following statements are true of you on a 5-point scale.

0 = not at all true of me, 1 = slightly true of me, 2 = moderately true of me, 3 = very true of me, 4 = extremely true of me.

1. I have difficulty making eye-contact with others
2. I find difficulty mixing comfortably with the people I work with
3. I tense-up if I meet an acquaintance in the street
4. I feel tense if I am alone with just one other person
5. I have difficulty talking with other people
6. I find it difficult to disagree with another's point of view

### Appendix 3

#### **Friendship Quality Scale**

Please answer the following questions about a specific friendship for e.g. a best friend using a 9 point scale. 1 = not at all, 9 = very much.

The higher the number, the more strongly you feel about the question.

1. Compared to other friendships you've had, to what extent do you consider yourself to be close to your friend?
2. Compared to other friends you've had, how important is this friendship to you?
3. How much does your friend 'get on your nerves'?
4. Compared to other friendships, how much conflict do you have with your friend?
5. How important to you is it that the two of you remain close friends?

### Appendix 4

#### **Feeling Close and Intimate Scale**

Please indicate your answer for each statement using a 7-point scale.

1 = not at all, 7 = very much so. The higher the number, the more strongly you agree with the statement.

*Note:* if you are not currently in a relationship you do not have to complete this questionnaire and can move onto the next section.

1. My partner and I are very close and intimate in our relationship.
2. My partner knows me better than anyone else.
3. My partner and I share our thoughts, feelings, and aspirations with one another.
4. My partner often knows what I am thinking or feeling before I say anything.
5. My partner and I can accurately predict each other's behaviour in different situations.

Appendix 5

**Attachment Style Questionnaire- Short Form**

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement on a 5-point scale.

1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree.

1. I trust other people and I like it when other people can rely on me.
2. I feel at ease in intimate relationships.
3. I think it is important that people can rely on each other.
  
4. I would like to be open to others, but I feel I can't trust other people.
5. I would like to have close relationships with other people, but I find it difficult to fully trust them.
6. I'm afraid that my hopes will be deceived when I get too closely related to others.
7. I am wary to get engaged in close relationships because I'm afraid to get hurt.
8. I feel uncomfortable when relationships with other people become close.
  
9. I often wonder whether people like me.
10. I am often afraid that other people don't like me.
11. I don't worry whether people like me or not.
  
12. It is important to me to be independent.
13. I prefer that others are independent of me, and that I am independent of others.
14. I like to be self-sufficient.
15. I don't worry about being alone. I don't need other people that strongly.

## Appendix 6

### **Information sheet**

Researcher: Sarah Livesey

I am a third year psychology student at the National College of Ireland and I am conducting this research as part of my final year project.

You are being invited to take part in a research study which aims to examine the relationship between social anxiety, attachment styles and the quality of friendships and romantic relationships. Dr. Philip Hyland (can be contacted at philip.hyland@ncirl.ie) will be supervising this research study which has been approved by the Psychology Research Ethics Committee.

As part of this study, you will be asked to complete questionnaires on the topics being researched. The questionnaires are not very long and will take about 10 minutes of your time.

#### **PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS-**

You may decide to stop taking part in the research study before submitting your data. After submission of the questionnaires, data will not be able to be deleted as it will be impossible to identify each participant as it is anonymous.

You have the right to refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you without consequence.

You have the right to have your questions about the procedures answered. If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, you should contact the researcher at x15363591@student.ncirl.ie.

Participation in this study involves completion of a social anxiety scale which is routinely used as a preliminary screen for clinical conditions involving social anxiety. Scores from this test would not be sufficient basis for clinical decisions or diagnosis and cannot be used for diagnostic purposes in this study. It is not possible to provide feedback of individual scores to participants.

**\*\*Your participation in this study is voluntary.**

#### **\*\*CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY-**

The data collected will not contain any personal information about you except your age and gender. No one will be able to link this information or data you provided back to you. The data you provide will be used as part of this study, which will be submitted in a report as a final year thesis to be examined by the Psychology department in the school of business at the National College of Ireland. Also, the results found from this data will be presented at the National College of Ireland's research conference in early April 2018. Individual participants in the study will not be identifiable.

## Appendix 7

### **Consent Form**

In agreeing to participate in this research, I understand the following:

The method proposed for this research project has been approved in principle by the Departmental Ethics Committee, which means that the Committee does not have concerns about the procedure itself as detailed by the researcher. It is, however, the researcher's responsibility to adhere to ethical guidelines in their dealings with participants and the collection and handling of data.

If I have any concerns about participation, I understand that I may refuse to participate or withdraw my data before submitting without consequence.

I have been informed about the general nature of the study and agree to participate voluntarily.

I am aware of the risks involved in this study, as I will be completing questionnaires involving social anxiety and the quality of my friendships and romantic relationships.

All of the data from the study will be treated confidentially. The data from all participants will be analysed, and submitted in a report to the Psychology Department in the School of Business. No participant's data will be identified by name at any stage of the data analysis or in the final report as all of the data is anonymous.

By ticking the following box I am aware of the nature of this study, I am aged 18-23 and I agree to voluntarily take part:

I consent to taking part in this study

## Appendix 8

### **Debrief Form**

I would like to take this time to thank you for participating in this study.

All data provided by you is anonymous and kept confidential. After submitting your results, your data will not be identifiable and therefore will not be able to be deleted on request.

If you have any more questions about the study or the final results of the study you can contact the researcher by email at x15363591@student.ncirl.ie or Dr Philip Hyland at philip.hyland@ncirl.ie

If you have any problems or concerns please contact the researcher or the supervisor of this study. If you do not wish to contact one of these you can free phone the Samaritans at 116 123 for 24 hours a day emotional support or GROW info line at 1890 474 474 which help with mental health problems.