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# INTIMACY IN FRIENDSHIP AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS: IMPLICATIONS FOR EGO DEVELOPMENT IN WOMEN AND MEN

By

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ABSTRACT

INTIMACY IN FRIENDSHIPS AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS:
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This study examined the relationship of intimacy in friendships and romantic relationships to women's and men's ego development. It was argued that sex differences in parent-child relationships, children's interactional styles, and societal norms would affect the amount of intimacy in relationships and subsequently ego development in adulthood. Specifically, it was proposed that there would be greater gender differences in intimacy levels of friendships than of love relationships. It was also argued that intimacy in friendships, not love relationships, would best predict women's ego development; the converse was expected for men. Interview data revealed that women were more intimate in love relationships and friendships and that individuals display similar levels of intimacy in their romantic and friendship relationships. The data also indicate that intimacy in romantic relationships is the best predictor of ego development for men and women. The results are interpreted as reflecting a developmental process.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS


| | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| LIST OF TABLES | | vii |
| I. | INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| | Intimate Relationships | 2 |
| | Romantic or Love Relationships | 6 |
| | Friendship | 8 |
| | Developmental Changes in the Meaning of Friendship | 13 |
| | Developmental Shifts and Gender Differences in Close Relationships | 14 |
| | Friendships and Romantic Relationships for Women and Men | 26 |
| | The Functions of Relationships for Men and Women | 28 |
| | Relationships and Ego Development | 31 |
| | Ego Development/Personal Growth | 37 |
| | Research on Ego Development and Close Relationships | 44 |
| | Hypotheses | 49 |
| II. | METHODS | 51 |
| | Participants | 51 |
| | Procedures | 52 |
| | Measures | 53 |
| | Intimacy Interview | 53 |
| | Friendship Interview | 56 |

The Washington University Sentence Completion Test 57

Analyses 62

III. RESULTS 63

Additional Analyses 66

IV. DISCUSSION 71

Gender and Intimacy in Friendship and Love Relationships 71

Intimacy and Age 74

Intimacy in Friendship and Love Relationships and Ego Development 75

Future Work 78

V. APPENDICES

A. Friendship and Romantic Relationship Interview 80

B. Sentence Completion Tests for Women and Men 83

VI. LIST OF REFERENCES 85

LIST OF TABLES


| Table | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Young Adults' Intimacy Scores in Relationships | 64 |
| 2. | Mean Intimacy Scores for Women and Men by Age Group | 67 |
| 3. | Young Adult Intimacy Scores by Marital Status | 70 |

# INTRODUCTION

Human beings are social creatures and enjoy close, intimate relationships. Two types of intimate relationships are commonly recognized, romantic relationships and friendships. Both can be described in terms of "depth". While romantic relationships are generally expected to be deeper evidence suggests that the differences between romantic relationships and friendships on this dimension are more dramatic for men than for women.

Relationships provide the first forum for ego development. The more a relationship fosters the expression of independent thoughts, perceptions, and feelings, the greater its contributions to ego development. Thus, the more intimate the relationship, the greater its contribution to ego development. Gender differences in close relationships suggest that for men, romantic relationships are more important for ego development. For women, however, friendships may be equally, if not more, important than romantic relationships for ego development.

The proposed study will examine differences in the level of intimacy in young adult men's and women's friendships and romantic relationships. It will also look

at the implications of these relationships for men's and women's ego development.

## Intimate Relationships

Intimacy has been variously defined. Typically, intimacy refers to being close to another person psychologically and sometimes physically. It is grounded in trust and honesty (Mitchell, 1976) and involves sharing ideas and feelings. In a philosophical essay, McMahon (1982) argues that intimacy involves the sharing of things "most within" us, the mental contents most sacred to the self.

According to Erikson (1963, 1968, 1974), the primary psychosocial crisis of the young adult is the achievement of intimacy. Erikson (1963, p. 263) defines intimacy as "the capacity to commit (oneself) to concrete affiliations and partnerships and to develop the ethical strength to abide by such commitments." In addition to the capacity to commit to a relationship, Erikson (1968) stresses other dimensions of intimate relationships. These include "love as mutual devotion", "genital maturity" (the development and enjoyment of mutually satisfying sexual relationship with a partner), and sharing private thoughts and feelings.

Orlofsky, Marcia, and Lesser (1973) developed a model elaborating five resolutions to Erikson's intimacy versus isolation stage. The resolutions fall along a continuum ranging from intimate to isolate. An intimate individual

develops close relationships and friendships which involve sharing of personal matters by both persons, engaging in mutually satisfying sexual relations, and the sharing of inner thoughts and feelings with the significant other. The intimate individual is characterized by the ability to make commitments, awareness of self in the relationship, a sincere interest in others, and the absence of significant defensiveness. Preintimate individuals are predisposed to be intimate. However, they have not engaged in intimate sexual relationships despite being able to form close friendships. They may be ambivalent about commitment and the risks involved in intimate sexuality. Even so, they are also characterized by a knowledge of self, an interest in others, and a lack of defensiveness. An individual in the stereotypical relationship stage never gets past a superficial level in dating or companion relationships. Although this individual may engage in sexual relations, they are more interested in what he can get from others than building mutually satisfying relationships. A pseudointimate individual engages with friends and a significant other at a superficial level as well. The pseudointimate individual, however, differs in that they have made a commitment to one partner. Lastly, the isolate is characterized by a lack of connection, an absence of enduring relationships. Social contacts are anxiety provoking for this individual.

Orlofsky et al.'s (1973) conceptualization of levels or depth of intimacy has a built-in confound in that it confuses the type of relationship (friendship or romantic) with the individual's capacity for intimacy, e.g. the preintimate individual. To more accurately assess the capacity for intimacy, the model should emphasize how the person relates to the significant other, whether friend or lover, for example, how does the other person communicate with or understand their partner. In fact, in most research, investigators have combined the preintimate and intimate groups. This system also does not adequately handle with the possibility that the level of intimacy in friendships and romantic relationships may differ widely for the same individual.

Orlofsky et al. (1973) found that identity achievement was associated with higher levels of intimacy as predicted by Eriksonian theory. This finding was replicated in Raskin (1985) and Kacerguis and Adams (1980). However, research using Orlofsky's measurement of intimacy should be interpreted cautiously given the previously stated difficulties.

White, Speisman, & Costos (1983), in building on Orlofsky et al.'s (1973) work, further articulated the intimacy construct by specifying levels in a person's understanding of or orientation toward their partner. White et al. (1983) describe three basic orientations: self-focused--the partner is seen as an extension of self or a

means to an end; role-focused--the partner is understood to have needs and feelings, but descriptions lack detail or depth; individuated/ connected--the partner is understood as a complex individual and is understood within the context of the relationship. White et al. see orientation as influencing what they believe to be the other components of intimate relationships--concern, commitment, sexuality (in romantic relationships), and communication.

In contrast, Werebe's (1986) and Jourard's (1964) discussions of intimacy focus on the communication aspect of close relationships. They assert that self-disclosure is a measure of the love or confidence that two individuals share. The development of intimate communication has been described in terms of reciprocal processes (Jourard, 1964), exchange theory (Kelley, 1979; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Milardo & Murstein, 1979), operant processes (Altman, 1963; Altman & Taylor, 1973), and equity theory (Walster et al., 1977). In interpreting the differences between women's and men's friendships and romantic relationships and their implications for ego development, it is especially important to note that these processes begin at different times for girls and boys. Fischer (1981) found that girls tend to have open relationships sooner and to a greater degree than boys.

In summary, the concept of intimacy describes the closeness that human beings experience in romantic relationships and friendships. Orlofsky et al. (1973) and

White et al. (1983) have attempted to operationalize this concept. Others (e.g. Walster et al. (1977) have attempted to describe the process of becoming intimate.

## Romantic or Love Relationships

How can one capture the essence of a romantic relationship and put it into words? Numerous psychologists, philosophers, and writers have tried to define this highly desired form of intimate relationship.

There are common themes emphasized in descriptions of romantic relationships. Research by Cancian (1987) and Hazan & Shaver (1987) indicates that romantic relationships involve the expression of affection, acceptance, and positive feelings. Philosophers (Mellen, 1981), clinicians (Branden, 1980), and researchers (Berscheid & Walster, 1978) agree that this is an intense emotional experience. According to Cancian (1987), romantic love entails a commitment to maintain the affection and assistance for extended periods despite difficulties that may arise; the loved person is given priority over others. Romantic relationships have a sexual component. Clinical experience (Arieti & Arieti, 1977), research (Berscheid & Walster, 1978) and philosophy (Branden, 1980; Fromm, 1956; Mellen, 1981) reveal a desire for complete union with the beloved; partners want to be sexually intimate and physically affectionate. Some argue that romantic love involves seeking completion, fulfillment through relationship with

another who possesses qualities one desires, but lacks (Arieti & Arieti, 1977; Berscheid & Walster, 1978; Reik, 1944). Similarly, Branden (1980) argues that love is a judgment that the qualities the other possesses are good and desirable for the lover's well-being. In a different vein, Hazan & Shaver (1987) have conceptualized romantic love as a reenactment of the attachment process that occurs in infancy (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall, 1978). Romantic relationships meet intimacy needs. They are a way of overcoming the separateness experienced by human beings (Arieti & Arieti, 1977; Branden, 1980; Reik, 1944). Romantic relationships involve psychological visibility (Branden, 1980; Reik, 1944), the experience one has when one truly communicates with another, when two conscious beings have accurately shared their experience of the world. This is an opportunity for self-discovery and identity growth (Arieti & Arieti, 1977; Branden, 1980). According to Branden (1980) the sexuality associated with romantic love flows from and celebrates psychological visibility. Sex is another forum in which the person can discover who they and their partner are. The polarity between the woman and the man enhances this awareness of self and other.

Although adequately describing romantic relationships is difficult, it is clear that romantic love is marked by a unique commitment to one person, a sharing of inner selves or depth, a desire to care for another, and a sharing of physical intimacies. Companionship often occurs in romantic

relationships as well as friendships; but because of the emphasis on open communication and mutual understanding, romantic relationships are likely to be characterized by greater "depth".

## Friendship

Friendships are usually considered intimate relationships, but what exactly is a friendship? Many philosophers and researchers have tried to define the concept of friendship. No one definition has been universally accepted. There is, however, some consensus about the key dimensions along which friendships can be described. As with romantic relationships, these include (but are not necessarily limited to) intimacy or depth, loyalty or commitment, and companionship.

In summarizing literary accounts, psychological theories, and results from his research interviews, Reisman (1979) concluded that friendships are relationships in which people engage in mutually satisfying activities and share interests, ideas and feelings. Anthropological and psychological study indicates that there is a reciprocity or complementarity in the exchange of ideas, goods, or rewards (Berscheid & Walster, 1978; Reik, 1944). Friends are equals. Neither partner in the relationship is superior and the ideas and wishes of both friends are treated with equal respect. The equality of status enhances sharing and the building of trust (Babin, 1967; Brain, 1976; Reisman, 1979;

Thomas, 1987). The bond of mutual trust is solidified by self-disclosure (Reisman, 1979; Thomas, 1987). Friends are not family members and they do not engage in sexual relations (Reisman, 1979). They are peers, companions. Friends spontaneously or voluntarily seek out each other. Friends choose, consciously or unconsciously, to be in the relationship (Reisman, 1979; Thomas, 1987). Friendship is marked by a mutual feeling of fondness or affection. Friends know each other and acknowledge their friendship to themselves and others (Berscheid & Walster, 1978; Brain, 1976; Reisman, 1979; Thomas, 1987). A friendship is also characterized by loyalty and a desire to avoid hurting the other person (Babin, 1967; Reisman, 1979).

Friendships, like romantic relationships, can be characterized along a continuum of depth or degree of intimacy. Depth, a concept derived from Orlofsky et al. (1973) and further articulated by White et al. (1983), includes two essential dimensions of intimacy, orientation and communication. Orientation describes an individual's ability to view their partner as a complex person and to appreciate their feelings and perspective. Communication refers to a person's level of self-disclosure and openness in the relationship. At the low end of this continuum, friends are seen primarily as an extension of self or a means to an end. Little self-disclosure is required. Friendships based on doing things together, convenience, or utility would be common at this level (Block, 1980). At the

high end, a person is aware of their friend as a unique and complex individual and reveals a great deal about him/herself to them. Friendships centering around the sharing of ideas, interests, and feelings, in addition to activities, would be common at this level.

Several writers have commented on the loyalty of friends (Block, 1980; Brain, 1976; Reisman, 1979). Loyalty refers to the commitment a person makes to a friendship. Commitment reflects the extent to which persons invest themselves and their emotional, social, and physical resources to the other person. An individual may make a commitment to a friendship based on perceptions of personal gain or on role-related obligations, e.g. "friends are forever". Or, they might commit themselves to the friend as a unique individual, responding to the unique qualities--personality, wants, needs et cetera--of that individual.

Block (1980) describes different kinds of friendships that he derived from 2063 responses to questionnaires and 500 interviews. The friendships fall along a continuum of commitment and intimacy. Commitment and intimacy in his system are somewhat confounded in that they are inextricably linked to each other and to the function of the friendship. Block described the following friendship types: special interest friend--a friend with whom one discusses or engages in a single activity or area; convenience friend--an accessible person to engage to do things, e.g. a neighbor; business friend--a coworker or associate with whom some

personal information is shared; crisis or milestone friend--an individual who will become close and offer physical and emotional support in times of need; and an intimate or mentor friend--one with whom private thoughts and feelings are shared.

Not all friendships meet each of the criteria outlined above. The nature of many friendships is determined by their function. Aristotle (1976) described friendships of utility, pleasure, and virtue. He contended that friendships of utility are grounded in a desire to obtain things from that person despite some fondness for them. Friendships of pleasure, according to Aristotle, were grounded in companionship. In this case, a friend was a person with whom one could have fun. Lastly, in friendships of virtue, the individuals became friends because they recognized and reveled in the virtue and goodness of the other. These types of friendships loosely correspond to White et al.'s (1983) description of self-focused, role-focused, and individuated/connected orientations.

Similarly, Reisman (1979) postulates three types of friendships, reciprocal, associative, and receptive. Reciprocal friendships exemplify the qualities of "true" friendships. Reciprocal friendships involve loyalty and commitment between two persons who view each other as equals. Associative friendships arise from convenience, e.g. living near each other or working in the same office. Participants in associative friendships are not very

committed to preserving the bond. Receptive friendships describe an unequal relationship in which one person is primarily the giver to the other. Both partners in the friendship recognize the status differential.

Although there is variation in romantic relationships, Western society has clear cultural expectations about marital and romantic relationships. In contrast, friends largely determine the nature of their relationship. Friendships differ considerably according to intimacy, commitment, and function. The differing classification systems reflect the increased variability inherent in this situation. Even so, an intimate friendship is very much like a romantic relationship without the sexual intimacies. An intimate friendship involves the sharing of ideas and feelings. Like a romantic relationship, it is also characterized by trust, honesty, a desire to help the partner, commitment, and acceptance.

The previous definitions of friendship do not adequately capture its richness. Every person has a different experience of friendship--for some friendship is deeper and more committed than for others--making a universally acceptable definition unrealistic. Putting the subjectivity question aside, attempts to define friendship and enumerate its functions have failed to consider the possibility of developmental changes and differences between men and women. As such they imply that friendship means the

same thing at all ages and the same thing to members of both sexes.

Developmental Changes in the Meaning of Friendship

Intuitively, one recognizes that the nature of friendship should change according to developmental level. The literature provides some basis for this intuition. In a series of studies, Berndt (1986) examined children's conceptions of friendship, the actual features of friendships, and how they change over time. Berndt found that among kindergartners, third graders, and sixth graders being a playmate was critical to the definition of friendship. However, the emphasis on intimacy and trust increased significantly with age. In a second study focusing on actual friendships, 48 girls and 48 boys in the same grades (K, 3, & 6) as the children in the first study reported features that the other children had felt were important in defining friendship. In a third study examining changes over time, Berndt interviewed 90 children drawn evenly from the fourth and eighth grades about their friendships. A nomination procedure was used to pair each child with their "closest" friend in the same grade. Children were interviewed in the Fall and in the Spring. Eighth-graders mentioned intimacy more often than fourth-graders indicating that sharing thoughts and feelings becomes a part of friendship as children mature. Depth appears to increase with age. One of the only sex

differences revealed by the interview was that girls mentioned the intimacy of their friendships more often than boys, a finding that is also supported by Berndt & Perry (1986). Girls also rated their friendships as being more intimate than boys'. In addition, better friends reported higher ratings for prosocial behavior, intimacy, and similarity. In a fourth study involving 120 children from the second, fourth, sixth, and eight grades that focused on friends as a source of social support, Berndt (1986) replicated the finding that intimacy increased with age.

What constitutes a friendship changes from childhood to adulthood. Childhood friendships center around doing things together. Later, the communication of thoughts and feelings becomes a greater part of friendship. However, from commonly recognized stereotypes about men's and women's friendships, one may infer that male friends and female friends communicate about different things. These intuitive differences about what women share and what men share also suggest that relationships develop differently for each sex.

## Developmental Shifts and Gender Differences in Close Relationships

Sex differences in intimacy of friendships appear in various forms during the childhood years. There are distinct differences in boys' and girls' friendships. Eder and Hallinan (1978) examined the exclusiveness of children's dyadic friendships. Using five classrooms of 25 to 35

students in each (age range 9 to 12 years), Eder and Hallinan (1978) studied how pairs of best friends responded when a third child enters the picture, e.g. another child wants to be the friend of one or both of the members in the dyad or a member of the dyad wants to become friends with another child. Dyads were reevaluated every six weeks for a total of 7 times over the course of the school year. Twice as many female dyads were exclusive, totally ignoring the third child. Nonexclusive triads were considerably more common among boys. Unlike boys, when girls try to form triads, one girl will typically approach both members of the dyad. Over time, however, girls' friendships remained exclusive. After contact with a third person, girls are more likely to return to an isolated dyad regardless of who initiated contacted with the third child. In addition, both boys in a dyad are likely to respond to an outsider's overtures whereas only one girl in a dyad tends to respond if at all. Clearly, girls and boys have different patterns of interacting. These patterns have definite implications for the interactional skills the children develop.

Participating mainly in dyads, girls learn to focus their attention on understanding one person well and finding enjoyable activities that can be done within the context of a dyad. This situation promotes self-disclosure, the development of listening skills, and the development of other skills engendering intimacy. On the other hand, boys discover the benefits of admitting another into a dyad.

This probably leads to further increases in group size. Participation in group activities requires the development of group decision making skills, leadership skills, and organizational skills. Group activity is less likely to foster self-disclosure or other skills that promote intimacy.

Rotenberg's (1986) findings add support to the notion that girls' friendships foster a greater degree of intimacy than boys'. Rotenberg (1986) contends that friendships are grounded in trust. He asserts that the more intimate the friendship is, the greater the trust, and the greater the amount of self-disclosure occurring. To evaluate trust, intimacy, and sex differences in children's friendships, Rotenberg (1986) gave 18 boys and 18 girls (mean age 10 yr, 2 mo.) questionnaires focusing on secret-sharing and secret keeping behaviors with classmates. Teachers also reported on the children's friendship interactions. Rotenberg found that children shared more secrets with same-sex peers than with opposite-sex peers. Children also perceived that opposite-sex peers failed to keep secrets more often than same-sex peers. Rotenberg (1986) found that boys shared fewer secrets with same-sex peers than girls did. This is consistent with the idea that girls' same-sex friendships are more intimate.

In childhood, then, females and males have different friendship experiences. Little girls learn to interact in dyads. They develop skills that permit them to get to know

someone intimately, to know a person's private thoughts and feelings. In contrast, boys learn to interact in groups. They develop organizational skills, skills needed to work in groups. They are less often in situations where they need to get to know about a person's inner life. Consequently, they are less likely to acquire skills that promote intimacy.

The aforementioned developmental differences in males' and females' interactional styles suggests that the level of intimacy achieved in their relationships will differ. The intimacy literature reveals consistent sex differences with respect to the level or depth of intimacy in adult women's and men's relationships. Typically, women describe their same sex-friendships as being more intimate than men report theirs to be. Platonic friendships between women and men appear to be more intimate than male-male friendships, but less intimate than female-female friendships. Caldwell & Peplau (1982) had forty-nine female and forty-nine male undergraduates complete a questionnaire examining the quantitative aspects of friendship e.g. frequency of interaction, the degree of intimacy, and the type of interaction. Sex differences were not evident on the quantitative dimensions of friendship, but men and women did differ significantly in how they interacted with friends. Female friends talked more often and reported discussing more personal topics than males. In contrast, male friends

spent their time engaging in activities and talking about them.

In a study of sex roles and intimacy in same-sex and opposite-sex relationships, Fischer and Narus (1981) found that men scored lower on intimacy than did women. (Intimacy was defined as the product of sharing personal concerns and information, accepting the partner, and giving assistance, encouragement, and constructive criticism. Intimacy was assessed by self-reports about these behaviors.) Moreover, they found that female-female relationships were more intimate than female-male relationships which were more intimate than male-male relationships.

In another study, Fischer (1981) examined the close relationships of males and females between 15 and 20 years old (180 college and 177 high school students). College women were significantly more likely to be involved in friendships that were high on intimacy and friendliness. Males of all ages and females in high school were most likely to have friendships low on intimacy and friendliness. These findings suggest that women develop more intimate relationships earlier than men. Notably male-male relationships were most likely to be low on friendliness and intimacy. Female same-sex relationships were equally distributed along the continuum of low intimacy, low friendliness to high intimacy, high friendliness. Although this finding and Fischer and Narus (1981) are in good agreement with Reis, Senchak, and Solomon (1985), the data

in both studies are confounded because intimacy in female-male friendships and romantic relationships was not looked at separately.

In studying the supportive relationships of 249 female and 103 male undergraduates, Buhrke & Fuqua (1987) found that women described their same-sex relationships as closer than men's. The women were also more satisfied with that closeness. Men reported that their cross-sex relationships were closer than their same-sex relationships. Women's relationships were also more complex than men's; women engaged in a wider variety of activities with each other and the relationships served more functions. In addition, women reported knowing other women better and being known better by other women than men did with respect to other men. This finding is consistent with Rubin's (1985) hypotheses about women's friendships and romantic relationships.

Another sex difference in women's and men's friendships has been reported along instrumental and expressive dimensions. Fox et al. (1985) developed an interview focusing on three components of friendship: empathy (emotional closeness, sharing of feelings), altruism (mutual helping), and companionship (enjoyment of shared activities). (Gibbs, Auerbach, and Fox (1980) found that women and men sought these qualities in same-sex friendships.) They interviewed 6 females and five males between 18 and 22 years, five females and five males aged 35 to 55 years, and five females and five males aged 65 to 75

years. Young men's instrumental view of friendship was revealed in how they met their friends, what they talked about, and what they did, e.g. games, school. Young women focused mainly on sharing thoughts and feelings with their friends. In contrast to the young males, the women described being highly altruistic and placing great importance on friendships. Also, young women reported many activities that suggested empathy. Although older cohorts of both sexes experienced friendships as deeper, more complex, and more important than in younger cohorts, older women and men still differed along instrumental and expressive dimensions. For example, both sexes said that a friend was someone you could talk to about anything. Even so, men indicated that anything meant sports, politics, and business. Women indicated that anything meant feelings and problems. While intriguing, these results are not empirically rigorous. Fox et al. (1985) relied heavily on clinical interpretation in scoring the interviews and do not report reliability. These findings suggest that men's and women's same sex friendships differ along instrumental and expressive dimensions over the lifespan.

Similarly, in interviewing 101 women and 65 men about their friendships, Bell (1981) found that women concentrate on issues from their inner worlds in friendships whereas men focus on the external world in their friendships. He noticed that women were more willing to share with friends and subsequently had a greater amount of intimacy in their

friendships. He found that women's friendships, in contrast to men's, were dyadic and usually longer lasting. Women also had more friends on average than men. The men tended to be group and activity oriented. They interacted according to roles. Men communicated about less intimate topics and rarely discussed feelings, needs, or wants. Bell (1981) speculated that the lack of intimacy in men's relationships was associated with fear of homosexuality, power differentials and competitiveness in the work world, and a need for control.

Bell's findings are consistent with Fox et al. (1985) and Rubin's (1985) research. Rubin interviewed 300 men and women between the ages of 22 and 55 from varied educational backgrounds. The sample was 22% upper middle class, 40% middle class, and 38% working class. However, Rubin (1985) hypothesizes that the differences in men's and women's friendships are because men and women are socialized differently. She contends that men bond to men as opposed to forming intimate relationships; activity based companionship seems more important for them. She believes that in doing things with other men, men develop a nonverbal connection; they learn about the other through actions. According to Rubin, these male-male friendships are not designed to deal with the realm of emotions.

The literature also suggests that women and men differ in what they perceive as the scope and purpose of friendship. McGill (1985) distributed 3500 intimacy

questionnaires at national conferences for different groups. 737 men (mean age 38 yr) and 646 women (mean age 34 yr) returned the questionnaires in a complete and useable form. Using Likert scales, the questionnaire explored what topics the individual discussed and how much they disclosed to specified family members, friends, and coworkers. The questionnaire also ascertained how long an individual knew the person in question. Demographic data on sex, age, and income were collected. Of the 427 participants who were willing to be interviewed about their intimate relationships, 70 men, 70 women, and 20 heterosexual couples were interviewed. McGill found that men and women approach friendships differently. Men described their friendships as limited in scope and belonging to a certain time or place. In contrast, women viewed interaction across time and setting with a friend as broadening the relationship. Men wanted friendships to have a purpose and to be focused around shared interests. Women felt that getting to know the other person well was reason enough for friendship. Men reported being more likely to disclose what they are (e.g. physician) as opposed to who they are (e.g. what they value, how they think). Men stated that different same-sex friends were privy to certain parts of their lives, but that no single friend was allowed to know all. McGill contends that this is why men, unlike women, do not turn to friends for help in times of need. Like Fox et al. (1985), McGill found that men discussed sports, politics, weather, and current

events. When discussing people, men reported focusing on achievement, competence, and performance whereas women described discussing character and motivation. The survey also revealed that men valued their friendships less, reported less depth and less self-disclosure in them. These findings are in good agreement with Fox et al.'s (1985) observations.

In a similar vein, Miller (1983) interviewed 1000 men in the United States and Europe about their friendships. Most were well educated and middle to upper class. Miller found that the men seemed to have given up on male friendship. The men reported few, if any, male friends. Many respondents reportedly asked if male friendship referred to homosexual relationships. Miller found that when men described friendships they often were with mentors or childhood companions.

There is also evidence to suggest that women's and men's different experiences of intimate relationships affects how they feel about being intimate with others. In particular, men seem uncomfortable in situations or relationships calling for intimacy. Using projectives, Mark and Alper (1985) found support for the notion that women tend to be more intimate and that women view intimacy more positively than men. They argued that the stories told in response to TAT like pictures were the product of the individual's past interpersonal experiences. In a study of 156 women and 99 men, men were significantly less likely to

relate an intimacy story. Women's intimacy image stories were significantly more likely to have a positive outcome. As in Fischer and Narus (1981), no relationship was found between masculinity and intimacy. They also found that withholding confidences was related to low self-esteem for women. Mark and Alper's (1985) findings are also consistent with Mazur and Olver (1987) who examined the impact of structure on intimacy imagery using TAT cards with a sample of 33 female and 42 male undergraduates. Structure was defined as an external normative system of rules and roles that brings individuals together in functional interdependence of behavior. In contrast, unstructured situations are those in which behavior is dependent on the individuals' characteristics and exist for no explicit instrumental reason. Structure limits people's social behavior. It was hypothesized that more males than females would show fear of intimacy and negative imagery in response to unstructured and potentially intimate situations. Given cards presenting interpersonal situations lacking structure, males were significantly more likely to relate stories with negative and defused imagery. Women were significantly more likely to incorporate positive contacts in their stories. For women, adding structure significantly decreased the amount of contact in the stories. Women also described significantly more mutual relationships involving support and reciprocity. These findings suggest that men view same sex relationships as dangerous, feel threatened by intimacy,

and use structure as a barrier to intimacy. In contrast, females do not seem threatened by intimacy with other females; they seem to enjoy a close, interpersonal environment. According to the authors, the content of the stories also suggested that men view intimacy as a threat to autonomy and that women define their identity in terms of relationships.

Clearly, the nature of friendship changes from childhood to adulthood. Childhood friendships are based on doing things together whereas adult friendships are grounded in communicating thoughts and feelings. However, how friendships develop and what is shared differs for males and females. The dyadic format characterizing females' friendships facilitates the development of intimacy and the sharing of feelings and thoughts about people and relationships. The group style typically adopted by males does not foster emotional closeness, but does facilitate large, organized activities. Consequently, male friendship centers around doing things and discussing the external world--business, sports, politics et cetera.

In summary, women tend to be more intimate in relationships. The most intimate type of relationships appear to be between two women. The second most intimate relationship is between a woman and a man. The least intimate friendship is between two men. These findings are consistent with the previously mentioned differences in the nature and development of friendships for women and men.

However, it should be cautioned that the research has not differentiated between cross-sex romantic relationships and cross-sex friendships. It may be that cross-sex romantic relationships are more intimate than cross-sex friendships, but this can not be determined from the literature.

## Friendships and Romantic Relationships for Women and Men

Given the dyadic nature of women's friendships, they appear to develop a greater capacity for intimacy earlier on. They have been socialized to enjoy and to want to explore feelings and new dimensions of themselves and others. Men, socialized in groups, have less opportunity to develop the skills to be very intimate or psychologically close to another person to the same extent as women. Consequently, men and women enter romantic relationships with different skills, needs, and expectations. The logical corollary is that friendships play different roles and meet different needs in the lives of men and women. For men, their romantic relationship may be their prime opportunity to be intimate. For women, possessing greater skills and desire to be intimate, their relationship with a lover may be only one intimate relationship among many. Having different skill levels and desires for intimacy, men may find their intimacy needs are satisfactorily met in romantic relationships. Women, on the other hand, may find that a romantic relationship does not satisfy their intimacy needs as well as it does the male partner's especially given that

men are less capable of enjoying indepth relationships. Therefore, women's friendships, in many instances, may be more intimate than men's and perhaps compensate in some ways for the lesser intimacy in their romantic relationships. Women's friendships may also be more committed given their role in meeting women's intimacy needs.

Although researchers have generally not distinguished between friendships and romantic relationships in studying intimate relationships, it is clear that both relationships can be intimate. The studies cited above (e.g. Caldwell & Peplau, 1982) dealt primarily with friendships. From their findings one can infer that women, tending to be more intimate, come to a romantic relationship with greater skills and a greater capacity for intimacy. Therefore, at least in the early years of a romantic relationship one would anticipate that women would have a greater capacity for intimacy than their male partners. White, Speisman, Jackson, Bartis, and Costos (1986) studied 31 married couples in their late twenties. On average, the couples had been married three to four years. Although there were no significant differences in the level of intimacy achieved by husbands and wives, the women's means were slightly higher. The spouses' levels of intimacy may not have differed for several reasons. White et al. (1986) suggested that the lack of difference reflected the principle of homogamy; the women may have chosen partners of similar skill level. Another viable explanation is that during the time that the

couples have been together, the husbands have learned the skills needed to be intimate from their wives. This possibility is consistent with results reported by Fischer (1981) who found that girls learned intimacy from girlfriends and then "taught" their boyfriends. A related possibility is that older men catch up (without speculating how) so that sex differences only appear during the high school and college years. These other possibilities should be tested empirically before concluding that homogamy is at work.

## The Functions of Relationships for Men and Women

Several writers have tried to understand the different functions of friendships and romantic relationships for women and men. Rubin (1983) contends that boys and girls are socialized differently and have different problems in intimate relationships. Rubin (1983, p. 95) states,

> For men, who come to define themselves in terms of the denial of the original connection [to mother], the issue of unity is most pressing. The problem that plagues their emotional relationships is their difficulty in allowing another to penetrate the boundaries sufficiently to establish the communion, the unity, that's necessary for a deep and sustained intimacy with another.

> For women, it's the other way around. Because they come to define themselves by affirming that original connection [to mother], the problem of separation is in the forefront. Their more permeable boundaries and greater relational concerns make women less certain that they can maintain the hard won separation, even that they want to maintain it. The possibility of merger with another, therefore, remains both a threat and a promise - a persistent strain in their relationships as they move ambivalently from the fear of violation and invasion of the hunger for that old symbiotic union.

Rubin (1985) acknowledges the importance of friends as transitional objects facilitating the separation-individuation process for both men and women. However, given a woman's more intimate interactive style, she contends that friendship plays a greater role in defining a woman's identity. For men, who learn not to share feelings, Rubin says work provides much of their identity. Friends enable a woman to develop many parts of herself and still maintain the unity of all of them. They can affirm new roles and mirror wishes and dreams of who the person can become. She also views friends as a source of corrective emotional experiences. Rubin argues that a woman's friends help her to maintain her sense of self in a marriage; preventing her from losing her identity to "we-ness" with her spouse. Striving for separateness and work prevent men

from losing the self by merging with spouse. Rubin believes that a woman's female friends can be intimate while still respecting boundaries that lovers do not. Rubin contends that a woman's female friends provide support when her husband can not and facilitate the woman's acceptance of her marriage's limitations. Rubin (1985) also asserts that "For a woman, relating to a woman friend seems in some important ways, like relating to self - a continuation of her early identification with mother." (p.136). While Rubin believes that relating to a woman also provides a man with an experience of mother, it is something that a female friend, but not a husband can provide for a woman.

Bell (1981) points out that while lovers and friends both want to do things for their partner, it is critical that friends share ideas and interests. Bell contends that lovers need not care about the same issues for there are deep physical and affectional bonds that will maintain the relationship. If this is true, friends may permit women and men to explore interests that their lover does not share. However, several studies suggest that males may not avail themselves of this opportunity (McGill, 1985; Miller, 1983)

Gouldner & Strong (1987) argue that for a woman one of the main differences between her friendships and her spousal relationship is sex. They also contend that a woman's friendship with another woman differs in that a man can not truly understand the experience of being a woman.

From the perspectives presented above, it would appear that romantic relationships and friendships may have different meanings and functions for men and women. Women's friendships and romantic relationships meet similar intimacy needs. For men, romantic relationships may offer an experience of connectedness, of intimacy, which may compensate for or balance out the separateness marking their friendships. These differences may impact on women's and men's psychological development.

## Relationships and Ego Development

The present study will assess the differential implications of friendship and romantic relationships for women's and men's ego development. Loevinger (1976) postulates four lines of development--ego, physical, psychosexual, and intellectual development. According to Loevinger, "ego" refers to a process that strives to master and to integrate or to make sense of experience. There is a certain coherence and stability to the ego. The ego is a structure in a state of equilibration. In a Piagetian manner, it attempts to accommodate and assimilate information. At any given point in ego development, there may be an optimal stimulus for spurring further assimilation and accommodation. The ego may not be able to integrate stimuli that are too different from its current frame of reference. This stability and consistency fosters a habitual way of looking at self and the world. Loevinger

agrees with the Sullivanian notion that the ego originates through relationships. She asserts that the ego arises to make sense of the infant's world, e.g. the me vs not me and subsequent object relations. To the extent that interpersonal relations are part of the individual's world, they will contribute to ego development. At the same time, however, Loevinger sees the ego as an integrating process for all experiences. Experiences outside the realm of interpersonal relationships also play a significant role in ego development.

Loevinger (1976) asserts that the frames of meaning/reference fall along a continuum. Loevinger hypothesizes that a person's perception of self, the social world, and the relationship of their feelings and thoughts to those of others will become more differentiated with ego development. This continuum of ego development reflects a sequential process incorporating seven stages and three transitional phases. Each stage is characterized by changes along four dimensions: impulse control, conscious concerns, and interpersonal and cognitive styles. According to Loevinger, the earliest stages of ego development typically belong to childhood. Generally, the earliest stages are characterized by impulsive, exploitive, or dependent styles. At the middle levels, ego functioning is typified by conformist thinking and what White et al. (1986) refer to as role-focused relationships. Higher levels of ego functioning are characterized by cognitive complexity, self-

awareness, autonomy, and interpersonal styles emphasizing mutuality and respect for individual differences.

More specifically, the seven stages, in order, are: Autistic/Symbiotic (I-1), Impulsive (I-2), Self-Protective (Delta), Delta/3, Conformist (I-3), Self-Conscious (I-3/4), Conscientious (I-4), Individualistic (I-4/5), Autonomous (I-5), and Integrated (I-6). During the initial part of the I-1 stage (not measured by Loevinger's Sentence Completion Test), the infant is only aware of need gratification. The infant's task during this period is to construct a model of reality, a world of stable objects. The infant must distinguish between self and inanimate objects. Next, the infant must differentiate self from mother. It is only then that the infant can have a true attachment to the primary caregiver. Loevinger asserts that language is critical to the infant's moving beyond a symbiotic relationship with its mother. During the (I-2) stage, the infant is governed by impulses that are essentially unregulated. The infant understands his actions and/or impulses as good or bad solely in terms of the consequences. The infant has a strong need for others, but relationships are of a dependent or exploitive nature. Conscious concerns focus on the present, the gratification of immediate physical needs. Cognitive functioning at this level involves stereotyping and conceptual confusion. During the Self-Protective stage, the child is moving toward impulse control. They begin to anticipate positive and negative consequences. They obey

rules and social norms bringing immediate advantages. To get what they want, they will violate prohibitions if they think they will not be caught. They externalize blame. They are guarded and manipulative in their interpersonal relationships. Morality is a matter of expediency. Conscious preoccupations surround concrete aspects of sex roles, control, self-protection, and physical causation of events. Conceptualizations are simple and stereotyped.

The Conformist stage, (I-3), is next. At this stage, the child begins to associate his welfare with that of the group. He obeys rules because they have been agreed on by the group. Guilt and shame are experienced when rules are not followed. Interpersonal style is characterized by striving for belonging, helping behaviors, and superficial niceness. Others are understood by how they act, not in terms of motives. Conscious preoccupations center around appearance, social acceptability, and material possessions. Feelings are experienced in a stereotypical way. Cognitive functioning remains simple and stereotyped. During the Conscientious-Conformist transition phase (I-3/4), the individual realizes that appropriate standards may be relative to the situation. There is also a beginning ability for self-criticism. Individuals at this stage continue to act in a helpful manner, but are becoming more interested in interpersonal relations. There is an increasing awareness of the self as separate from the group. They also recognize the psychological causation of events.

In the cognitive realm, there is a decrease in egocentricity such that individual differences in attitudes, abilities, and interests are recognized in a general way. Thus, the person becomes aware of alternative solutions to problems and different views of a situation. This stage is the modal level for adults in this society.

The Conscientious stage (I-4) signals the beginning of "post-conformity". At this level, the person operates on the basis of internal standards and self-criticism. The person acts responsibly and set long-term goals. They seek mutuality, and strive for clear, open communication. They have a more differentiated understanding of their own feelings and motivation behind behaviors. Conscious thoughts center on ideals, traits, and achievements. Thinking is conceptually complex. It includes recognition of patterns. The Individualistic stage (I-4/5) includes the features of the Conscientious level. The individual now respects individuality in making decisions in addition to self-evaluated standards. The person is struggling with issues of dependence and is moving toward autonomy. They have developed the capacity to cope with internal conflict. Interpersonal relationships are deeply valued. They are often preoccupied with conveying ideas and feelings. They have the ability to understand and tolerate paradox. They attend to processes and change as well as outcome. In the next stage, the Autonomous stage (I-5), the individual is cognizant of and actively coping with conflicting inner

needs and ideals. They value autonomy in self and others as well as the interdependencies entailed in relationships. Conscious preoccupations include attention to feelings, understanding the physiological and psychological underpinnings of behavior, seeking self-fulfillment, and role differentiation. Cognitive processes are increasingly complex and of a broader perspective. There is increased objectivity and greater tolerance for ambiguity. The highest level in this continuum (I-6) is the Integrated stage. In addition to the features of the Autonomous stage, this level is characterized by the reconciling of inner conflicts and the renunciation of unattainable goals. There is also a cherishing of individuality and a concern with identity.

Loevinger (1979) reviews the literature, including some previously unpublished work, concerning the construct validity of the Washington University Sentence Completion Test (SCT), the instrument used to measure ego development. She finds support for the content validity, structural validity, sequentiality, and external validity of the SCT. Loevinger (1979) contends that while the research shows that ego development is correlated with age, intelligence, SES, and verbosity, it is a separate concept. When confounding factors are controlled for correlations still exist. She concludes that there is substantial evidence of construct validity, but that there is no conclusive evidence of

sequentiality. In addition, she asserts that the validity is sufficient for research, but not clinical use.

## Ego Development/Personal Growth

What are the consequences of relationships for development of the individual? Several theorists argue the nature of relationships is a consequence of personal growth. Erikson (1963) views intimate relationships as a natural sequelae of identity achievement, he does not speculate how this occurs. Blos (1967) and Wolf, Gedo, Terman (1972) also argue that consolidating a sense of individuality, autonomy, responsibility, and purpose is needed for participation in mutually satisfying intimate relationship. However, they argue that adolescent friendships facilitate this process. Jung (1961) like Erikson (1963) believed that relationships were an outgrowth of the developing person.

It has also been argued that relationships give rise to personal growth or identity. Rogers (1961), asserted that growth was facilitated by relationships with a person who was genuine, accepting, and empathic. To the extent that these elements are included in friendships and romantic relationships, they should foster growth in the participants. Arieti & Arieti (1977) and Branden (1980) also argue that for women and men romantic relationships are an opportunity for personal growth and identity development. By sharing one's world in a romantic relationship, the individual also engages in self-discovery.

Bell (1981) and Duck (1983) argue that friendships serve as psychological resources and promote psychological growth for both sexes. From his research, Duck concludes that friendships provide a sense of belonging and an opportunity for emotional integration and stability. It is an opportunity for identity development. He also notes that friends serve as a basis of comparison for opinions. Bell stresses the importance of friendship for self-confirmation, self-worth, and personality growth. Both agree that friends allow a person to meet a basic human need to communicate information about oneself, to be intimate. Consequently, friends can be sources of psychological assistance and assurance of worth and value.

Bowlby (1969, 1973) hypothesized that an infant forms representations of herself, her caregiver, and the environment within the context of the infant-caregiver relationships. According to Epstein (1973), the representation of self or self-theory consists of a hierarchy of major and minor postulates (e.g. I am loveworthy is a major postulate.) into which later experiences are assimilated. Although Ricks (1985) asserted that this self-theory largely determines how the person will engage in close relationships. Main & Goldwyn (1984) assert that this self-theory can be altered through relationships. They suggest that within the "safe" environment provided by a confidant, a person can rework past relational experiences that have hindered the formation of close love

relationships. From this perspective, friendships can foster self-growth that promotes close love relationships.

Cancian (1987) noted that the function of romantic relationships and the nature of romantic love, changes in response to culture. She described a move in American culture toward a more androgynous, less sexually stereotyped style of love. In so called androgynous love, loving the other person and self-development are mutually reinforcing; one grows as a person as well as growing as a couple. The partners are interdependent, not two independent people using the relationship selfishly.

George Herbert Mead (1934) asserts that relationships give rise to the mind and the self. Early man and the animals, Mead contends, only responded to the other's gestures and attitudes. This process required an awareness of the other, but not thought, e.g. in a dog fight, stances are continuously readjusted without thought. The response gives meaning to the gesture. Over time, human beings' biological intelligence evolved to the point where they could understand the connection of their gesture to another's response. When a person used a gesture knowing it would elicit a certain response in the other, he or she was effectively using symbols. Knowing what one wants to convey by a gesture and how the other will probably respond allows one to modify a gesture before making it. Now, being able to take the position of the other, human beings were able to think and communicate. Rational thought, however, requires

that one's own organism, e.g. one's abilities, be factored into a decision. This requires the ability to take the self as an object. Being able to take another's perspective, individuals then learned to take themselves as objects by seeing him or herself as others would. In this way, the self is defined with respect to the attitudes of others and society. In this way, an individual may internalize social expectations about the sexes. Mead termed the organized set of attitudes the individual assumes from others the "me". The "I" according to Mead was the individual's response to these attitudes. The I as an active integrator and evaluator, responder, could introduce novel ideas and responses.

Several theorists have explicitly addressed how relationships may differentially affect women's and men's personal growth. Chodorow (1978) and Gilligan (1982) argue that women, in particular, learn to develop, maintain, and redefine their sense of self through connectedness with other people.

Chodorow (1978) asserts that societal structures and not biology have led men and women to develop certain interactive styles and familial arrangements. The societal and family environments have fostered differences in the development of object relations for men and women. These differences influence how men and women define themselves and form relationships. During the preoedipal period, Chodorow (1978) contends that girls and boys have an

intense, exclusive, symbiotic relationship with their mother. A son and mother begin to separate as the relationship increasingly focuses on issues of possessing the mother and sexual polarities. The boy separates further when he identifies with his father during the oedipal period. In contrast, a mother perceives her daughter as more like and continuous with herself. Consequently, she maintains the preoedipal relationship with her daughter far longer. While a boy begins to form boundaries and define the self through separateness, a girl remains in a world lacking clear ego boundaries. For a girl, the issues are individuation and dependence.

The oedipal period sets the stage for heterosexual relationships in adulthood. In contrast to boys who keep a woman as the love object, Freud (1925) argued that girls take the father as a love object and reject the mother. Chodorow (1978) has argued that girls add the father as an object rather than reject the mother. She contends that girls turn to the father because: 1. they need to differentiate from the mother and 2. they love the mother. In the first case, the father represents independence. By forming a relationship with him, the daughter can begin to separate from the mother. In the second instance, the daughter loves the mother and wants to possess her. She fails, in part, because of her mother's heterosexual orientation. When her mother rejects her, she turns to her father to obtain the love her mother could not give. She is

attempting to make the mother jealous. In this way, the daughter relates to two objects. She defines herself in relationship to mother and to father.

Chodorow (1978) argues that even though the daughter now sees the father as important, there is no absolute change of object. The father-daughter relationship forms in response to and is in competition with the mother-daughter relationship. It is not a substitute for the preoedipal style relationship with mother. Chodorow (1978) contends that the father-daughter relationship is less influential because fathers, in this society, are usually physically and emotionally less available to their daughters than mothers. Thus, while the daughter may take a male as her primary erotic object, relationships with males remain emotionally secondary or equal to the maternal tie. Closely tied to her mother, the girl continues to grapple with two issues a) merging with and separating from mother and b) uniting and identifying with a same-sex object, the mother.

According to Chodorow (1978), boys, having separated earlier, engage in more individuation and defensive firming of ego boundaries. Girls, in contrast, are not compelled to define themselves by denying preoedipal relational modes. Consequently, Chodorow (1978) contends that women are less differentiated, experience more continuity with the external object world, and are differently oriented to the internal object world. A girl's resolution to the oedipal period leaves her with empathy incorporated into the self.

Unhindered by a boy's defenses, she is better suited to being intimate, to experiencing another's needs and feelings.

The quality of a person's relationships should be reflected in their level of ego development. If development occurs in the manner Chodorow (1978) describes, a woman (lacking a man's defenses and possessing a richer object world) is more likely to engage in differentiated relationships. These relationships should foster autonomy (within the context of the relationship) as well as care and promote continued ego development and differentiation. Being able to engage in differentiated, and in depth relationships reflects the ego's mastery of a rich world of object relations. The more differentiated and in depth the relationships, the higher a woman's level of ego development should be.

Following Chodorow's (1978) and Gilligan's (1982) lead, Rubin (1985) has argued that friendships, preceding romantic relationships developmentally, are critical for a woman's personal growth. Men, however, are socialized by separation and achievements in the world of action. Socialization in this way limits the implications of friendships for men's ego development. Typically, men look outside of the interpersonal realm for ego and identity development. Given social norms and men's apparent discomfort about being intimate with a male friend (Mazur & Olver, 1987), if a man is capable of demonstrating autonomy and caring

simultaneously, he will use his romantic relationships as a place to be intimate. Consequently, a the intimacy of a man's romantic relationship should be correlated with his ego development (Rubin, 1985).

## Research on Ego Development and Close Relationships

Although there is much theorizing about how ego development is related to relationships, research in this area has been limited. The data, however, suggest that the nature of a relationship is related to the level of ego development. It also appears that this connection between ego development and the nature of the relationships is stronger for women than for men. The research suggests that ego development may occur somewhat differently in males and females.

Dubow, Huesmann, and Eron (1987) explored the relationship of family socioeconomic status, parent child-rearing variables, and childhood and adolescent behavior to ego development using a longitudinal design. Subjects initially were all third graders from a semirural county in New York. Of the original 871 participants, 206 women and 192 men completed the study. Data were gathered when the participants were 8, 19, and 30 years old. At age 8 yr, the children completed the following measures: Peer Nominations of Aggression, Peer Nominations of Prosocial Behavior, and the Child's Identification with Parents. IQ was evaluated using the California Mental Maturity Scale. Parents were

interviewed about SES and childrearing practices. They also filled out a questionnaire about punishment and a modified form of the Child's Identification with Parents questionnaire. At age 19, subjects completed the Peer Nominations of Aggression, Peer Nominations of Prosocial Behavior measures and a questionnaire about occupational aspirations. At age 30, subjects completed Holt's (1980) shortened version of the SCT. Females scored significantly higher than males on the SCT so data for men and women were analyzed separately. SES and IQ significantly predicated adult ego development only for women. For women, there were significant negative correlations between the child-rearing variables characterized by rejection and authoritarian punishment and ego development and low levels of identification with both parents and high ego development. For men, authoritarian punishment was significantly negatively correlated with ego development. Hierarchical regressions reveal that social behavior at ages 8 and 19 was a better predictor of adult ego development than IQ, SES, or family variables (individually or combined). Specifically, prosocial behavior, not nonaggression at ages 8 and 19, predicted women's ego development. However, nonaggression, as opposed to prosocial behavior at ages 8 and 19, predicted men's ego development. These findings suggest that having close, positive relationships with parents and peers is more important for a woman's ego development. These results are consistent with Chodorow (1978) and Gilligan (1982). The

finding for males is also consistent with Chodorow's (1978) and Gilligan's (1982) assertion that men's development is associated with learning to control and to suppress their aggressive behaviors. The authors, however, argued that parental expectations for boys are different. They contend that boys are reinforced for assertive or aggressive behavior such that mastery of aggression is a significant task for the ego.

Hansell (1981) has found evidence indicating that girls have more complex friendship networks and that these networks are more important for women's ego development. He specifically examined the relationship of ego development and the reciprocity of friendships. Reciprocity was defined as a concrete behavioral equity in the relationship and did not refer to intimacy. Hansell hypothesized that individuals in the conformist range of ego development would make the greatest number of reciprocated friendship choices. In this range, Hansell asserted that individuals have a great desire to be social, need support from peers, and abide by social norms. Hansell says that reciprocated friendships are normative. At lower levels, individuals would be too egocentric to recognize the value of reciprocity in a relationship. At higher levels, a person should be able to discriminate the friend's reciprocal behavior from the friend's feelings and motivations. He suggested that girls at high levels of ego development might serve as liaisons between cliques. He argues that cross-

clique friendships will be less reciprocal. Subjects were 254 students in grades nine through twelve at a private high school where mixed-grade courses were offered. Students completed the 12 item form of the SCT and provided the names of their 3 closest friends at the school. SCT scores were grouped as high, medium, and low. A sociomatrix was developed to determine the cliques and the patterns of the students interactions. Girls scored significantly higher on the SCT so analyses were run separately for males and females. Girls made significantly more reciprocated friendship choices even when the number of choices was controlled. Hansell found the anticipated curvilinear relation between ego development and reciprocated relationships for females only. Girls at low levels of ego development limited their cross-clique friendships to girls in the same grade whereas girls at high levels did not. For boys, the medium ego development group showed significantly greater reciprocity than the high, but not the low, ego level group. For the boys only, reciprocated friendships within cliques were negatively correlated with unreciprocal friendships between cliques. These findings suggest that girls are more concerned with reciprocity in a friendship and that the nature of females' same-sex friendships is more strongly related to ego development than boys.

Hauser, Powers, Noam, Jacobson, Weiss, and Follansbee (1984) examined how family interactions might promote (enable) or hinder (constrain) a child's ego development and

autonomous functioning. These enabling and constraining behaviors may operate on the cognitive/attentional and the affective/relational levels. Cognitive enabling included focusing, problem solving, curiosity, and explaining. Affective enabling consisted of demonstrating acceptance and empathy. Cognitive constraining behaviors included distracting, withholding, and indifference. Affective constraining included excessive gratifying, judging, and devaluing. Hauser et al. also explored the function discourse change, how a family member responds to the interventions of another family member in a discussion. Subjects were 61 adolescents from two parent homes. 27 were in treatment at a psychiatric hospital. The remaining 34 were drawn from 230 volunteers from a local high school's freshman class. Participants were 14 - 15 years old and matched for age, gender, and social class. The majority were from upper-middle-class families. The only significant difference between psychiatric and nonpsychiatric adolescents and their families, on any of the variables, was that the psychiatric adolescents had significantly lower ego scores. The adolescents and their parents independently completed Loevinger's Sentence Completion Test and the Kohlberg Moral Judgment Interview. Then, each family discussed their responses to the moral interview and developed a consensus opinion. Parent enabling behaviors (accepting, problem solving) explained a significant amount of the variance in adolescent ego development. Parent

enabling was also associated with higher levels of adolescent ego functioning. Parental enabling behaviors had a significant positive correlation with the adolescent's ability to develop and to argue their viewpoint effectively. The opposite was true of parental constraining behaviors. Parental constraining behaviors were associated with lower levels of adolescent ego functioning. These findings suggest that familial behaviors at cognitive and affective levels may foster or hinder adolescent ego development. Enabling behaviors may help the adolescent experience more complexity. They enable the adolescent to elaborate on and explore their perceptions, ideas, and feelings. Doing so promotes more differentiated ego functioning. It is interesting to note that these enabling behaviors seem to characterize intimate friendships and romantic relationships. Furthermore, applying Hauser et al.'s (1984) ideas about constraining and enabling behaviors, it appears that female same-sex friendships foster more affective enabling than male same-sex friendships.

The present study will test the following hypotheses.

## Hypotheses

1. There will be more pronounced gender differences in the level of depth or intimacy young adult men and women describe in their same-sex friendships than in the level of intimacy they report in their romantic relationships. Specifically, it is hypothesized that a) women will achieve

deeper levels of intimacy in their same-sex friendships than men whereas men and women should report more similar levels of intimacy in their romantic relationships and b) women's friendships will be as intimate or more intimate than their romantic relationships whereas men's friendships will be less intimate than their romantic relationships .

2. More of the variance in women's ego development should be accounted for by the level of intimacy in her friendships than from the level of intimacy in her romantic relationships. Moreover, because friendships are viewed as having a prior influence in women's ego development, controlling for intimacy in friendship should diminish the association between intimacy in women's romantic relationships and their ego development. In contrast, more of the variance in men's ego development should be accounted for by the level of intimacy achieved in the romantic relationship. Hence, controlling for intimacy in men's romantic relationship should eliminate the association between intimacy in friendship and ego development.

# METHODS

## Participants

Seventy-two males and seventy-eight females were selected randomly from the 1970-71, 1973-74, and 1979 graduation lists of a midwestern high school located in a predominantly white, middle class community. At the time of the interviews, the mean age of those in the earliest graduation cohort was 29.5 (SD = .86, n = 50), in the middle cohort the mean age was 26.6 (SD = .62, n = 49), and the mean age was 23.5 (SD = .78, n = 51) for those in the most recent cohort. Each cohort contained roughly equal numbers of men and women. The mean age (at the time of the interview) was 26.4 yr (SD = 2.6 yr).

Men and women did not differ in terms of education and on average had completed some college ($t(148) = 1.46$, n.s.; means were 2.53, SD=.75 for men and 2.35, SD = .77 for women where 2 = college graduate and 3 = some college). Men held significantly higher status positions (e.g. administrative and professional positions) than women (e.g. clerical/ technical positions) as measured by Hollingshead's 7 point index (1957) (where lower values equal higher status, means

were 4.27 (SD = 1.99) for women and 3.61 (SD = 1.82) for men; $t(148) = -2.1$, $p<.05$).

The investigators asked a young adult to participate only if the individual's parents were living together and lived no more than a 2 hour drive away from their child. 65% (150 young adults) of those asked agreed to participate. Half of the participants were married, 7 were divorced, and 44 were parents. All were white and the majority grew up in middle class households. Most fathers were upper level managers, owners of medium sized businesses, or professionals and typically had completed some college (the fathers' average occupational and educational levels were 2.6 (SD = 1.3) and 2.9 (SD = 1.8) respectively (Hollingshead, 1957)).

## Procedures

This study involved the use of an existing data set.

Two different interviewers met with each participant on separate occasions. One interview concerned the young adults' relationships with parents; the second focused on other aspects of life including friendships, intimate relationships and work. The Young Adult/Parent Relationship Interview was not be used in the present study. The order of the interviews was counterbalanced to avoid possible biases. The majority of interviews took place in the young adults' homes. Fourteen trained interviewers (7 male, 7

female) administered the Friendship and Intimacy interviews to a young adult of the same sex.

## Measures

### Intimacy Interview

The Intimacy Interview (Orlofsky et al., 1973) is a semi-structured interview exploring the subject's dating experiences, for example, if she is dating or has ever dated one person exclusively. Questions about specific relationships (the closest friendship/romantic relationship) examined feelings of openness, closeness, jealousy, possessiveness, degree of commitment, sexual activity, the capacity to express and to work through angry feelings, insight into the young adult's own needs and their partner's needs, as well as problems in the relationship.

Orlofsky et al.'s (1973) coding system has been used in studies of college students (e.g. Levitz-Jones & Orlofsky, 1985; Orlofsky, 1978). The system defines five levels of intimacy ranging from isolate status (low intimacy) to intimate status (high intimacy). Each level is determined by the degree of depth and commitment. White et al., (1986) revised this coding system to make finer discriminations when examining young adults' romantic relationships. White et al. used a sample of married couples to define self-focused, role-focused, and individuated/connected levels of intimacy maturity. These distinctions are based on Loevinger's (1976) cognitive developmental theories of ego

development. These levels of intimacy maturity form a continuum of interpersonal styles where egocentric styles of relating to others are at the low end, role-based styles are in the middle part, and empathic, reflective,and interdependent styles are at the high end. White et al. enumerated six stages of intimacy maturity (two at each level).

White et al. also coded commitment and depth. Unlike Orlofsky et al. (1973), however, White et al. (1986) individually coded the relational components that constitute depth (ie. communication, orientation, closeness and caring, and sexuality). White et al. reported moderate to high correlations among these components of depth. Subsequently, Frank & Jacobson (1989) simplified the coding system and focused on two dimensions: depth and commitment. White et al.'s coding system permits half stage distinctions thereby creating an eleven point scale. Frank and Jacobson attained better reliability using a six point scale.

Frank and Jacobson's (1989) coding system was used to code depth in the young adults' close friendships and romantic relationships. Depth reflects two aspects of relationships: (a) orientation, referring to the individual's ability to understand the partner as a complex person and to appreciate the partner's feelings and viewpoints and (b) communication referring to an individual's level of self-disclosure and openness in the relationship. Three broad developmental levels--self-

focused, role-focused, and individuated-connected--characterize depth. The self-focused individual (stages 1 & 2) thinks and feels in global, undifferentiated terms. Their orientation toward their partner is egocentric and concrete. The partner is perceived as either helping or hindering attainment of personal goals. Self-focused respondents view the partner as an extension of themselves and usually understand them in concrete, behavioral terms. Given a strong emphasis on self, this individual does not share the inner thoughts and feelings with the partner. Rather, they will focus on concrete or noncontroversial topics. At the role-focused level (stages 3 & 4), individuals have a basic understanding that their partner has needs and feelings too, but their description of the relationship lacks complexity and depth. Descriptions typically use images of the stereotypical marriage and lack introspection. Their orientation toward their partner is grounded in the role that person fills. Although they may respect their partner's views, they do so because it is part of being a good partner and maintaining the stability and comfort of the relationship. In describing their partner, they focus on the roles the partner fills, their needs, and behavior. At this level, communication between partners is considered important and occasionally involves sharing feelings. However, communication still primarily concerns concrete subjects. Individuals at the highest level are termed individuated-connected (stages 5 & 6). They freely

choose to be close to their partner, rather than pursuing closeness out of need or convenience. They recognize and appreciate their partner's individuality and talents and enjoy enhancing their partner's development. Great importance is placed on the emotional and spiritual dimensions of their relationship. Individuated-connected persons go beyond what their partner has told them and have an intuitive understanding of the person's views and feelings. They understand their partner as actively growing and changing within the context of the relationship. These individuals emphasize communication about concrete matters, affective topics, and relationship-centered issues. They make a great effort to ensure good communication.

Friendship Interview

The Friendship Interview (also adapted from Orlofsky) is a semistructured interview examining the presence or absence of close interpersonal relationships with peers as well as the degree of openness, closeness, responsibility, mutuality, and commitment in the participants' closest relationships. The interview focuses on the young adult's relationship with their best same-sex friend. The interview explores how close the young adult feels to that friend; the nature of the communication and sharing in the relationship; the individual's understanding of their friend (orientation); and the meaning of friendship.

Frank & Jacobson's (1989) coding system was used to code depth in the Friendship Interview. The primary coder

initially learned the coding system by scoring romantic relationship protocols. Then, the primary coder and senior investigator coded 15 protocols jointly. 33 interviews were used to assess reliability. The interrater reliability coefficient was .87. Periodic spot checks were done every 25 interviews to minimize coder drift.

The Washington University Sentence Completion Test

Separate forms (version 11-68) of the Washington University Sentence Completion Test (SCT) were used to measure the ego development of women and men. The SCT is a standardized instrument (Loevinger, 1970). The test has been used with a variety of populations including college students (Carlozzi, Gaa, and Liberman, 1983; Redmore, 1976), adolescents (Lorr & Manning, 1978; Redmore & Loevinger, 1979; Sullivan et al., 1970), and nurses (Sturm White, 1985).

The test consists of 36 "stems" which the participant completes to make a sentence. (28 items are comparable on the male and female forms.) A stage score is assigned to each response (e.g. the response to item one falls at the conformist level) and a total protocol rating is derived based on a probability curve. Individuals are classified as being at one of nine stages or transitional phases (Impulsive, Self-Protective, Ritual-Traditional, Conformist, Self-Conscious, Conscientious, Individualistic, Autonomous, and Integrated).

Ogive rules or the borderline rules may be used to determine the total protocol rating. The ogive rules are fixed and will automatically generate a total protocol rating. The borderline rules allow an experienced rater to exercise some judgment. Before using either set of rules, a frequency distribution of the subject's individual item scores must be made. The rules specify cutoff points which determine whether the frequencies of the subject's scores are consistent with a given level of ego development. The ogive rules (Loevinger, 1970) were developed by examining large samples of patterns of scores from protocols rated at each level of ego development.

In the present study, two scores were derived from Loevinger's Sentence Completion Test. The first score, the ego score, was the total protocol rating generated using the ogive rules. The second score was the sum of the individual item scores on the SCT and will be referred to here as the "egosum score". The mean egoscore was 4.13 (n = 66, SD = 1.05) for men and 4.42 (n = 73, SD = .896) for women. There was a trend suggesting that women's ego scores were higher than men's ($t(137) =$ $-.75$, $p<.08$). Mean egosum scores for men (174.2, SD = 17.98, n = 66) and women (177.95, SD = 15.99, n = 72) did not differ significantly ($t(136) = -1.29$, n.s.).

I will briefly address the validity of the SCT. Content validity requires that the responses categorized as a given ego level make sense and that the order of the

stages be logical. To meet the first criterion, the scoring manual (Loevinger & Wessler, 1970) classifies responses by the structure of the response as opposed to the content. The theory also appears to meet the second criterion of being reasonable and making intuitive sense. Loevinger (1979) also argues that interrater reliability is evidence of the communicability and hence the underlying coherence of the construct.

The SCT has internal consistency. Coefficient alpha for the SCT was .91 (Loevinger & Wessler, 1970). A principal components analysis yielded a primary factor with an eigenvalue of 8.8 and a secondary factor with a value of 1.2. The secondary factor appears to be a chance deviation from unity. Scaled scores generated from the primary factor, correlated almost 1.0 with the sum of the item ratings. These findings suggest that the test measures a unitary construct. Loevinger (1979) also reported that subsets of items did not measure different aspects of ego development.

Sequentiality implies that the stages occur in a defined order, that stages can not be skipped, and that progress is not reversible. There is abundant evidence of sequentiality from studies of age differences (Loevinger & Wessler, 1970; Sullivan, McCullough, & Stager, 1970), distributions of stage usage (Loevinger & Wessler, 1970), longitudinal research (Redmore & Loevinger, 1979; Redmore &

Waldman, 1975), change following intervention (Sturm White, 1985), and asymmetry of comprehension (Redmore, 1976).

Loevinger's concept of ego development is a broad construct. Consequently, to examine external validity, one must assess the relationship SCT scores to a number of other theoretically relevant constructs and measures. Vaillant and McCullough (1987) examined the external validity of the SCT as part of a prospective study that began in 1940 with 204 male college students. Ego level correlated positively, but not significantly with the maturity of the ego defenses. The lack of significance may reflect differences in how ego was defined and operationalized.

Evidence of external validity may also be derived from correlations with other traits. In Loevinger's model, the different ego levels are characterized by different ways of thinking and acting. Certain traits are dominant at one stage, but minimized or absent at another. Although Redmore and Waldman (1975) found no relationship between ego development and personality, Carlozzi et al. (1983) and Lorr and Manning (1978) found that personality traits were strongly related to the level of ego development in a manner consistent with Loevinger's descriptions

How ego development correlates with other developmental constructs also provides evidence of external validity. Sullivan et al. (1970) found that greater ego development was associated with greater moral development and conceptual

complexity in an adolescent sample (even when controlling for age).

A final source of evidence of external validity comes from behavioral correlates and membership in certain groups. Although there is no one to one correspondence between ego level and behavior (since a given behavior may occur for many reasons), Loevinger's model does suggest that certain kinds of behavior are more likely to occur at certain levels of ego development. Hauser (1978) found that adolescent females exhibited behavior consistent with Loevinger's ego stages.

Attempts have been made to establish norms for the SCT. Holt (1980) gave the male and female short forms of the SCT to 966 young people between 16 and 26 years old. Subjects were drawn randomly from a random national sample of college and noncollege young adults. The modal ego level for the combined and the college/noncollege subsamples was Self-Aware. Sullivan et al. (1970) attempted to develop norms for the complete 36-item SCT. Sullivan et al. gave the SCT to 120 teenagers, 40 12 year olds, 40 14 year olds, 40 17 year olds. The mean for the twelve year olds was the transition between the Self-Protective and the Conformist stages. The Conformist stage was the mean level for 14 year olds. The mean level for the 17 year olds was Conscientious-Conformist Transition.

In summary, there is evidence pointing to the validity of the construct and the SCT. At this time, however, validity is sufficient for research, but not clinical use.

## Analyses

2 X 2 (Sex x Type of Relationship) repeated measures anovas were used to compare the levels of intimacy that women and men achieve in their friendships and their romantic relationships. Follow up analyses consisted of between groups t-tests and paired t-tests.

To evaluate the second hypothesis, ego development was regressed on sex, the level of intimacy in friendship, the level of intimacy in a romantic relationship, and the interaction of sex and intimacy in the two relationships. Follow-up analyses included separate hierarchical regressions for women and men.

# RESULTS

There was a relatively low, but significant, correlation between occupation and intimacy in men's love relationships ($r$ = -.35, $p$<.01); greater intimacy was associated with holding a higher status position. Education and occupation were not significantly related to men's intimacy in friendship or women's intimacy in friendship or love relationships. Women and men did not differ in terms of ego development or age at the time of the interview. Age was not significantly related to any of the variables in the study.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that women would exhibit greater levels of intimacy than men in their same-sex friendships but that men and women would display similar levels of intimacy in their romantic relationships. Hypothesis 1 also predicted that women's friendships would be as intimate or more intimate than their love relationships whereas men's friendships would be less intimate than their love relationships.

Correlational analyses indicated that greater intimacy in friendships was associated with greater intimacy in love relationships ($r$ = .32, $p$<.001). Hence, hypothesis 1 was tested using a (2 x 2) repeated measures Anova (Sex x Type

of Relationship). There was a significant main effect for Sex ($F(1, 138) = 6.23$, $p<.02$), but the main effect for Relationship Type ($F(1, 138) = 1.78$) and the Sex by Relationship Type interaction ($F(1, 138) = .27$) were not statistically significant. Follow-up t-tests indicated that women were more intimate than men in friendships ($t(139) = -2.42$, $p<.02$) and in love relationships ($t(139) = -1.93$, $p<.05$), see Table 1. However, as was indicated by the non-significant relationship type and sex x relationship type interaction effects, both men and women were as intimate in their friendships as they were in their romantic relationships.

Table 1 Young Adults' Intimacy Scores in Relationships

| | Women | Men |
|---|---|---|
| Friendship | | |
| Mean | 3.09 | 2.85 |
| (*SD*) | (.65) | (.52) |
| (*N*) | (72) | (69) |
| Romantic Relationship | | |
| Mean | 3.26 | 2.90 |
| (*SD*) | (.99) | (1.16) |
| (*N*) | (72) | (69) |

Hypothesis 2 predicted that more of the variance in women's ego development would be accounted for by the level

of intimacy in their friendships than by the level of intimacy in their love relationships. In contrast, it was predicted that more of the variance in men's ego development would be accounted for by the level of intimacy in love relationships.

The ego and egosum variables were regressed separately on sex, intimacy in friendships and intimacy in love relationships; the interaction of intimacy (cross product) in love relationships and sex, and the interaction of intimacy in friendship and sex were then entered into the analyses on the next step. The regression equation was significant ($R^2$ = .11, $F$ = 5.09, $p$<.01) and accounted for approximately 11% of the variance in ego level. Of the first three independent variables (sex, intimacy in friendships, intimacy in love relationships) entered into the equation, only the level of intimacy in love relationships predicted a significant amount of the variance (beta = .30, $p$<.002). The interactions were nonsignificant and did not significantly increase the proportion of the variance accounted for by the three main effects.

When egosum was regressed on the same set of variables in the manner described above, the regression equation was significant ($R^2$ = .10, $F$ = 4.53, $p$<.005). Again, only the level of intimacy in love relationships accounted for a significant proportion of the variance (beta = .26, $p$<.005) in egosum scores. The interactions were nonsignificant and did not significantly increase the amount of variance

accounted for by the regression. Contrary to the hypothesized relationship, these data indicate that intimacy in love relationships influences ego development in a similar manner for women and men. However, even though the interaction effects were nonsignificant, separate analyses for men and women indicated that the association between intimacy in love relationships and ego development was somewhat (albeit not significantly) stronger for men than for women. In particular, love relationships predicted ego stage as well as the egosum scores for men (betas were .34 ($p<.01$) and .28 ($p<.05$) respectively); however, beta's for the association between women's love relationships and both ego stage (beta = .23) and egosum (beta = .25) scores were nonsignificant.

## Additional Analyses

Additional analyses examined the possibility that age might moderate the association between gender and intimacy. A repeated measures Anova was used to test for a possible Sex x Age interaction on the level of intimacy in friendships and love relationships. Approximately 1/2 (52.1%) of the subjects were 26 or younger and roughly half (47.9%) were older than 26. This division served as the basis for creating young and old age groups (Table 2). Results indicated a significant sex x age group interaction effect ($F(1, 136) = 9.27$, $p<.01$) (as well as a significant main effect for sex ($F(1, 136) = 5.46$, $p<.03$).

T-tests were used to analyze the sex x age group interaction (see Table 2). Whereas men and women over 26 did not differ significantly with respect to level of intimacy they achieved in their same-sex friendships ($t(65) = .66$, n.s.) or in their love relationships ($t(66) = .20$, n.s.), younger women were significantly more intimate than younger men both in friendships ($t(72) = -3.34$, $p<.01$) and in love relationships ($t(71) = -2.88$, $p<.01$).

Table 2 Mean Intimacy Scores for Women and Men by Age Group

| | Friendship | | Romantic relationship | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Women | Men | Women | Men |
| Age Group | | | | |
| Young | | | | |
| Mean | 3.29 | 2.78 | 3.46 | 2.75 |
| (SD) | (.68) | (.61) | (.95) | (1.16) |
| (N) | (41) | (32) | (41) | (32) |
| Older (>26yr) | | | | |
| Mean | 2.84 | 2.92 | 3.00 | 3.08 |
| (SD) | (.52) | (.44) | (1.00) | (1.16) |
| (N) | (31) | (36) | (31) | (36) |

Post-hoc analyses were also conducted to assess whether differences in marital status would affect the previous

findings. A repeated measures Anova was used to examine the relationship between marital/family status and intimacy in friendship and romantic relationships status and more importantly to assess whether marital/family status interacted with gender in accounting for differences in intimacy (see Table 3). The marital/family status groups were single, married, and married with children. Seven divorced individuals were excluded from the analyses. In addition to significant main effects for marital/family status ($F(2, 127) = 3.2$, $p<.05$) and for relationship type ($F(1, 127) = 13.25$, $p<.001$), there was a significant interaction between marital status and relationship type ($F(2, 127) = 12.72$, $p<.001$). One way anovas were used to identify the nature of this interaction. (The Student-Newman-Keuls Multiple Range Test was used to control for spurious findings generated by conducting multiple comparisons.) No significant differences were found among the marital groups with respect to the level of intimacy achieved in friendships ($F(2, 131) = .95$, n.s.). Significant differences in the marital/family group means were found with respect to the level of intimacy in love relationships ($F(2, 131) = 9.22$, $p<.0001$). Single individuals were significantly less intimate in their love relationships than were married persons or married individuals with children ($p<.05$). Although married individuals with children reported somewhat less intimacy

than married persons without children, this difference was not statistically significant.

Although gender did not interact with relationship type or with level of intimacy, because of the focus on gender differences, one way Anovas were also run separately for women and men. These analyses showed that the level of intimacy exhibited in friendships did not differ as a function of marital/family group for women ($F(2, 65) = 1.5$, n.s.) or men ($F(2, 63) = .99$, n.s.). In addition, a one way Anova revealed that women's intimacy in love relationships did not vary as a function of marital/family status ($F(2, 65) = 1.64$, n.s.). However, as can be seen in Table 3, men exhibited significantly different levels of intimacy in love relationships as a function of marital/family status ($F(2, 63) = 7.81$, $p<.001$). Single men exhibited significantly less intimacy in their love relationships than either married group ($p<.05$); this difference remained significant when age was entered into the analyses as a covariate. These findings suggest that marital/family status may be more closely associated with differences in men's intimacy level in love relationships than women's.

A final set of analyses reexamined the effects of age on intimacy controlling for marital status. Results were the same (i.e. the sex x age group interaction was still significant) as in the analyses not including marital/family status as a covariate.

Table 3 Young Adult Intimacy Scores by Marital Status

| | Friendship | | Romantic relationship | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Women | Men | Women | Men |
| **Single** | | | | |
| Mean | 3.30 | 2.89 | 3.11 | 2.60 |
| (*SD*) | (.54) | (.53) | (.85) | (1.04) |
| (*N*) | (27) | (35) | (27) | (35) |
| **Married** | | | | |
| Mean | 3.00 | 2.93 | 3.63 | 3.79 |
| (*SD*) | (.75) | (.62) | (.83) | (.89) |
| (*N*) | (19) | (14) | (19) | (14) |
| **Married w/ Children** | | | | |
| Mean | 3.05 | 2.69 | 3.36 | 3.25 |
| (*SD*) | (.65) | (.48) | (1.18) | (1.07) |
| (*N*) | (22) | (16) | (22) | (16) |

# DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was two-fold. Firstly, it sought to examine gender differences in the level of intimacy in women's and men's same-sex friendships and romantic relationships. Secondly, it explored the contribution of intimacy in friendships and in love relationships to ego development and evaluated whether gender might moderate the nature of these relationships.

## Gender and Intimacy in Friendship and Love Relationships

Data analyses indicated that women were more intimate than men both in their friendship and love relationships. Women's greater intimacy in friendships was consistent with hypothesis 1 and with other research exploring sex differences and intimacy in friendship (Buhrke and Fuqua, 1987; Fischer & Narus, 1981). Women's greater intimacy in romantic relationships, however, was contrary to hypothesis 1 and to White et al.'s (1986) finding that husband and wife pairs exhibited similar levels of intimacy.

Although the level of intimacy in friendships and in love relationships varied according to gender, gender did not moderate within-individual differences in intimacy across different types of relationships. Individuals,

regardless of gender, displayed similar levels of intimacy in their friendships and in their love relationships. This finding was consistent with predictions concerning women, but not with hypotheses concerning men. It was anticipated that social norms and a developmental emphasis on forming dyadic rather than group friendships would allow women to achieve equal levels of intimacy in friendship and love relationships. In contrast, it was thought that social stereotypes/norms and men's greater participation in group friendships would limit their intimacy in friendships, but not in love relationships. Displaying similar levels of intimacy across relationships suggests that some feature of the individual, and not relationship type, is responsible. Seemingly, people develop an orientation or customary way of understanding and responding to others which they then use in all relationships.

Women's greater intimacy in friendship and romantic relationships is consistent with two complementary explanations. First, as has been argued elsewhere, women may have developed very good intimacy skills through participation in dyadic friendships during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. In addition, as reviewed earlier, Chodorow (1978) has asserted that a female's resolution to the Oedipal crisis leaves her with a greater empathy, a greater capacity to understand the needs and feelings of another person.

The discrepancy between the present study's and White et al.'s (1986) findings as to comparable levels of intimacy in men's and women's love relationships may reflect differences in sample composition. Both studies used similar systems to code intimacy. However, the present sample included single, married, and divorced individuals, but not their partners. In contrast, White et al. (1986) interviewed only married persons and their spouses. It was the single subjects in the present study who accounted most for gender differences; single women were significantly more intimate than single men in love relationships, but married women and married men did not differ. These analyses provide partial support for hypothesis 1 (which anticipated that men and women would exhibit similar levels of intimacy in romantic relationships) and appear consistent with White et al.'s (1986) data.

White et al. (1986) asserted that husbands and wives report similar levels of intimacy because of homogamy (partners picking partners with similar intimacy skills). The current findings about married subjects, as group data, do not directly address White et al.'s (1986) hypothesis. However, similarity in the group means for married men and married women suggest that marital partners would be well matched on the level of intimacy and that they would be more intimate than dating partners. In contrast, the group means for the single women and single men suggest that as dating partners single women and single men would often be

mismatched in terms of intimacy. Taken collectively, these findings suggest a process of relationship development. It may be that men catch up to women in their capacity for intimacy and that this occurs through marriage. Therefore, the similar levels of intimacy that husbands and wives described in White et al. (1986) may not be the product of like picking like (homogamy) initially, but rather the product of a growth or equalizing process.

## Intimacy and Age

Young women were significantly more intimate in their friendships and in their love relationships than young men. However, older men and women exhibited similar levels of intimacy in their friendships and love relationships. These findings held true even when controlling for marital/family status.

The increase in men's intimacy with age is also consistent with a developmental model. Young women have many opportunities to develop intimacy skills in dyadic friendships during childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. They also have been reinforced for monitoring and responding to emotions. Furthermore, if Chodorow (1978) is correct, the mother-daughter relationship is such that the child develops a greater empathy and more complex object relations that would facilitate greater intimacy sooner. In contrast, young men have had primarily group as opposed to dyadic friendships. It is only when they start dating in

adolescence that they begin to learn many of the skills needed for intimate dyadic relationships. Young men also have not been reinforced for being responsive to emotions and being intimate. In addition, the parent-child relationship encourages males to be separate and discourages connection with others (Chodorow, 1978). Consequently, men enter their early twenties having had less experience in close dyadic relationships and fewer opportunities to develop intimacy skills. It follows then that young men would be less intimate than young women. Over time, however, men may have more opportunities to engage in dyadic relationships and to develop the skills needed to be more intimate. For many men, this may mean learning intimacy skills from female friends and lovers.

Changes in women's intimacy levels may also partially account for the finding that women and men display similar levels of intimacy with age. There were data indicating that women are somewhat less intimate in their relationships as they get older. Although this might reflect a loss of intimacy skills, it is more likely that women are just not able to devote as much time and energy to relationships because of more extensive family and work commitments.

## Intimacy in Friendship and Love Relationships and Ego Development

It was hypothesized that intimacy in friendships, and not intimacy in romantic relationships, would be the best

predictor of a woman's ego development. In contrast, it was anticipated that intimacy in romantic relationships and not intimacy in friendships would account for more variability in men's ego development. The data showed that intimacy in love relationships, but not intimacy in friendships, predicted ego development for both men and women. The predictive value of intimacy in love relationships and the lack thereof for intimacy in friendships challenges hypotheses rooted in Chodorow's (1978), Gilligan's (1982), and Rubin's (1985) ideas. It was argued that friendships (and relationships in general) play such a critical role in women's identity development that they would also have an important role in ego development. In particular, very intimate friendships were thought to provide more opportunities for ego and identity development. These data, however, do not directly address the identity issue and no firm conclusions can be made about it. In addition, these data do not rule out the possibility that friendships may play an important, but transitory role in ego development.

The present findings may be interpreted from a developmental perspective. The skills needed to be intimate in romantic relationships and the ego functioning achieved in adulthood can be understood as the products of developmental processes. As such, it is possible to envision a developmental process whereby love relationships come to predict ego development. This process would

necessarily reflect the ego's continuing development through new types of relationships.

Mead (1934) and Loevinger (1976) have hypothesized that the ego first develops in relationship with the parents. When the ground work for basic ego functioning has been established through interaction with parents, friendships may become the next major arena for children's ego development. Friendships may foster development through what Loevinger terms the conformist stage of ego development. Hansell (1981) found a link between friendship and ego development in childhood. The complexity of girl's friendship networks and reciprocity (operationalized as concrete behavioral equity) in the girls' friendships were related to ego development. For girls, there was a curvilinear relationship between ego development and reciprocity. Girls in the middle range of ego development exhibited the highest levels of reciprocity. Reciprocity in friendships and ego development were linked for boys, but not in a curvilinear manner. (For details see the literature review.)

Friends may only serve a transitional role in ego development. In particular, advancing development from preconformist to conformist levels of ego development. Learning to understand and relate to friends would promote ego development and prepare the individual to explore the new realm of love relationships. Puberty and social norms about forming romantic attachments might also push

adolescents to establish love relationships. Exploration of this new arena would further ego development and in particular facilitate movement into postconformist stages. With growth, the individual discovers the desire (sexual/emotional) to form close, committed romantic attachments to another person. Consequently, the person spends much time and energy learning about their partner, themselves, and their relationship. It may be through this investment that the love relationship becomes central to ego development. In effect, the love relationship becomes the primary relational arena for ego development once the individual has basically mastered friendships.

## Future Work

A limitation of the present study is its use of an intrapsychic definition of intimacy. Intimacy was defined in terms of the person's understanding of the partner and their communication with the partner. Other studies have operationalized intimacy in terms of behavior (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982; Fischer & Narus, 1981). It would be fruitful to explore the connection between intrapsychic and behavioral manifestations of intimacy. It would also be advisable to ascertain how behavioral manifestations of intimacy affect ego development.

The current study did not explore intimacy in couples by interviewing both partners. Although White et al. (1986) have begun to examine this question in terms of romantic

relationships, no research could be located that examined intimacy in friendship by interviewing both partners. This might be another area for exploration.

The present study raises an interesting question. The findings, in combination with Hansell's (1981) work, suggest the possibility of a developmental process in which friendship contributes to ego development during childhood and love relationships become increasingly important for ego development during adolescence and young adulthood. The relationship of friendships to ego development in childhood and the implications of the hypothesized transition to love relationships for the highest levels of ego development should be explored.

# APPENDIX A

# APPENDIX A

Friendship and Romantic Relationship Interview

1. Do you have friends with whom you're especially close? How close do you feel? What makes you feel close?

2. What does being close to someone mean to you?

3. What kinds of things do you have in common with these friends?

4. What kinds of things don't you have in common? How do you feel about these differences?

5. What kinds of things do you talk about with him/her? Ex?

6. In particular, what kinds of personal things do you talk about?

7. Can you discuss problems with each other? What kind of problems do each of you discuss?

8. What makes you discuss your problems with this particular person in the first place?

9. Are there any matters you couldn't or wouldn't share with him/her about yourself? What makes you avoid sharing those things? Would you share those things with someone else? What makes the difference?

10. Do you find that you go out of your way to help each other out? In what ways? What makes you do these things?

11. Do you generally prefer to be with friends or by yourself? What makes you feel this way?

12. The friend you spend the most time with - What in particular do you like about him/her?

13. What in particular do you dislike about him/her?

14. How would you define friendship? In what way does your friendship include those things?

Romantic/Love Relationship

If subject is married, skip to 21.

15. Do you date much?
    a. If no, have you ever dated (or spent time with one girl/guy)?
    b. Would you like to date more? Are there any particular reasons why you haven't dated much up to now?

16. Have you ever dated one girl/guy exclusively?
    a. If NO, how often do you date?
    b. How long do you see a particular girl/guy?

17. What kinds of things about a girl/guy would or do prompt you to ask her/him out again?

18. Do you usually date several girls/guys at the same time? For what reasons do you date several girls/guys?

19. In the course of your dating, have you ever met a girl/guy with whom you would like to have an enduring or long-term relationship? What happened and how did you feel about that? What caused the break up?

20. If dating one girl/guy exclusively: How long have you been seeing each other? (Use past tense if necessary)
    Do you see her/him often?
    Do you ever date other girls/guys? Why is that?

21. How close do you feel to steady/spouse? (Are you open with each other? Share worries and problems? Can the other come to you with his/her problems?)

22. What in particular do you find attractive about him/her? (How would you describe him/her?)

23. What are things about him/her that you dislike?

24. Are you able to discuss this with him/her?

25. Do you ever fight? What kinds of things do you fight about? (If never: How do you account for that?)

26. In what ways do you function well as a couple? (eg. working together or playing together)

27. In what ways do you function less well as a couple?

28. What do you see as the main problem you two have to work out as a couple? In what ways could your relationship be improved?

29. Tell me about the sexual side of the relationship. What is it like?

30. What role does sex play in the relationship?

31. Is one of you more involved in the relationship than the other?

32. Which of you is more jealous or possessive in general? How do you feel about that?

33. In what ways are you committed to the relationship? Where do you want it to go in the future?

34. What relationships with other men/women did you have before you were married? How does this relationship compare with previous ones? What makes for the difference?

35. How crucial is this relationship to your present and future happiness? In what ways?

36. What is a meaningful or good relationship as you see it?

37. In what ways does your relationship include the characteristics listed above?

38. What kinds of characteristics would you like to see in the way you relate to others?

# APPENDIX B

Sentence Completion Test for Men
Instructions: Complete the following sentences.

1. Raising a family
2. When a child will not join in group activities
3. When they avoided me
4. A man's job
5. Being with other people
6. The thing I like about myself is
7. If my mother
8. Crime and delinquency could be halted if
9. When I am with a woman
10. Education
11. When people are helpless
12. Women are lucky because
13. What gets me into trouble is
14. A good father
15. A man feels good when
16. A wife should
17. I feel sorry
18. A man should always
19. Rules are
20. When they talked about sex, I
21. Men are lucky because
22. My father and I
23. When his wife asked him to help with the housework
24. Usually he felt that sex was
25. At times he worried about
26. If I can't get what I want
27. My main problem is
28. When I am criticized
29. Sometimes he wished that
30. A husband has a right to
31. When he thought of his mother, he
32. The worst thing about being a man is
33. If I had more money
34. I just can't stand people who
35. My conscience bothers me if
36. He felt proud that he

Sentence Completion Test for Women
Instructions: Complete the following sentences.

1. Raising a family
2. A girl has a right to
3. When they avoid me
4. If my mother
5. Being with other people
6. The thing I like about myself is
7. My mother and I
8. What gets me into trouble is
9. Education
10. When people are helpless
11. Women are lucky because
12. My father
13. A pregnant woman
14. When my mother spanked me, I
15. A wife should
16. I feel sorry
17. Rules are
18. When I get mad,
19. When a child will not join in group activities
20. Men are lucky because
21. When they talked about sex,
22. At times she worried about
23. I am
24. A woman feels good when
25. My main problem is
26. My husband and I will
27. The worst thing about being a woman
28. A good mother
29. Sometimes she wished that
30. When I am with a man
31. When she thought of her mother, she
32. If I can't get what I want,
33. Usually she felt that sex,
34. For a woman a career is
35. My conscience bothers me if
36. A woman should always

# LIST OF REFERENCES

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