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A Study of the Relationship Between Fear of Intimacy and Gender

Amy Regina Anderson

A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FEAR OF INTIMACY AND GENDER

Amy Regina Anderson, B.A.

An Abstract Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Lindenwood College in Partial Fulfillment of the
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the similarities and/or differences in intimacy for males and females in a close intimate relationship. The Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS), a 35 item self report questionnaire measuring past and current intimate relationships, was administered and general demographic data was obtained including: sex, age, race, marital status, and educational level. Out of 111 packets distributed, data from 60 participants (males = 30, females = 30) between the ages of 19-39 was collected and analyzed. Results indicated there was no significant difference of fear of intimacy between males and females, a conflicting finding in comparison to the review of the literature. Further research is needed to determine the influences of ethnicity, career and role changes for men and women in today's society, and its effects on intimacy.

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COMMITTEE IN CHARGE OF CANDIDACY:

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Associate Professor, Pamela Nickels, Ed.D.
Program Director

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Chapter I

Introduction

"Intimacy may be considered a more fundamental goal than love in a relationship because intimacy is, in fact, necessary for the existence of love" (Weaver, 1987, p. 121).

Research indicates that even though most people long for intimacy, not everyone is capable of achieving it (Weaver, 1987). The purpose of this study was to examine the differences between male and female intimacy within the context of a close heterosexual relationship. The review of the literature suggests that men in the American culture fear intimacy, more so than their female counterparts (Coupland, Giles, Wiemann, 1991; Fast, 1991; Greeley, 1973; McAdams Lester, Brand, McNamara, & Lensky, 1988; McCarthy, 1987; and Newman & Newman, 1995).

There are numerous articles and books documenting the challenges and problems associated with intimacy for men and women in close intimate relationships (Deal, Wampler, & Halverson, 1992; Downey & Feldman, 1996; Dryden, 1990; Emmons & Colby,

1995; Gabardi & Rosen, 1992; Giddens, 1992; Hatfield, Sprecher, Traupmann, Pillemer, Greenberger, & Wexler, 1988; Horst, 1995; Jurich & Polson, 1985, Lobitz & Lobitz, 1996; McAdams et al., 1988; Morrison, Goodlin-Jones & Uriquiza, 1997; Pine, 1992; Prager, 1989; Stauffer, 1987; Van den Broucke, Vandereycken, & Vertommen, 1995; and Weaver, 1987). Stauffer (1987) has cataloged some of these challenges and problems related to intimacy to include anxiety over feelings of being trapped or possessed, fear of being vulnerable, hurt or lonely, fear of exposing weakness and imperfections to another, mistrust, fear of attack, fear of abandonment, and fear of loss of control.

These features are described within a variety of developmental, familial, and societal relationships; which are further explored through fears, faulty cognitions, and other issues related to intimacy. Childhood experiences are influential in the development of intimacy for males and females (Goldner, Penn, Sheinberg, and Walker, 1990; Kaftel, 1991; McAdams et al., 1988; and Silvestri, 1992). One's family background and their reaction to it affects past,

present, and future relationships (Goldberg, 1987). Additional influences such as culture and society are known to affect intimacy for males and females, by teaching and imposing an elaborate set of rules, values, and myths about what is expected of males and females in intimate relationships (Carnes, 1992).

When reviewing the literature, intimacy must not be interpreted as an either or question, but as property of many aspects (Van den Broucke et al. (1995). A conceptualization of intimacy encompasses a multitude of perspectives, most of which have been supplied in the review of the literature. One's capacity for intimacy then must be determined by the interaction of personal and situational influences of one's experiences (Van den Broucke et al., 1995).

The following review of the literature identifies theoretical explanations for why individuals might get stuck in their intimate relationships. Several arguments are supplied in support of differences between males and females capacity for intimacy, most of which revealing that females are more intimate than males (Coupland et al., 1991; Fast, 1991, Greeley, 1973; McAdams et al.,

1988; McCarthy, 1987; and Newman & Newman, 1995).

The present study explores the differences in fear of intimacy between males and females who are in a close heterosexual relationship. The Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS) was used to delineate fear of intimacy for these two groups.

The purpose of this research was to compare the fear of intimacy experienced by males with fear of intimacy experienced by females in a close intimate relationship. The null hypothesis states there is no significant difference in levels of fear of intimacy between males and females in a close intimate relationship.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

The term "intimacy" triggers a multitude of associations. Research has illustrated the complexity of this construct by providing several theoretical frames and empirical research on this phenomenon (Descutner & Thelen, 1991; Stauffer, 1987; and Van den Bourke et al, 1995).

Erikson (in Horst, 1995) described intimacy as the capacity to commit to, "concrete affiliations and partnerships and to develop the ethical strength to abide by such commitments, even though they may call for significant sacrifices and compromises" (p. 274). Behavioral scientists and clinicians noted that intimacy incorporates a mutual caring which is translated into commitment, sharing freely with one another, communicating with openness and depth, and valuing the relationship enough to "imbue" it with vulnerability and trust, tenderness, and working at the relationship (Masters, Johnson, & Kolodny, 1994).

Furthermore, other theorists have described intimacy simply in terms of external categories of relationship status (e. g., married, unmarried); by the degree of physical (sexual) proximity; or by the level of verbal disclosure of (personal) topics of discussion (Van den Broucke et al., 1995). Whitbourne & Ebenmeyer, (1990) viewed intimacy as the capacity of negotiating issues of control and resolution conflict, while Stauffer (1987) (intellectual realm) viewed intimacy as the ability to achieve acceptance and healthy interdependence. Greeley (1973) found intimacy incorporates the sexual sharing between a male and female, and the ability to communicate these feelings about sex.

Since relationships exist by the grace of the individuals who build and sustain them, several theorists have attempted to explain this phenomenon through theory and empirical research (Van den Broucke et al., 1995). The following review of the literature explores a multitude of theoretical frames, fears, faulty cognitions, and other issues related to intimacy, in hopes of providing a more complete understanding for this complex construct.

Childhood and Developmental Programming

Childhood experiences are influential in the development of intimacy for males and females (Goldner et al., 1990; Kaftel, 1991; McAdams et al., 1988; and Silvestri 1992). One's family background and their reaction to it largely shapes their personality style and relationships outside the family (Goldberg, 1987). This is because family members develop a family paradigm; a perspective of the external world. This perspective shared by the family members influences relationships with others outside and inside the family nucleus (Deal et al., 1992).

Bowlby asserts that children develop mental models of themselves based on their relationship to their attachment figures (Downey & Feldman, 1996 and Morrison et al., 1997). This relationship concerning the availability of attachment figure, or lack of it, is constructed slowly during the years of infancy, childhood, and adolescence (Morrison et al., 1997). Dutton, Sanders, Starzomski, and Bartholomew (1994) held that whatever

expectations are developed during those years persist relatively unchanged throughout the rest of life In effect, these internal workings models of attachment, function as, "laden social schemas and guide expectations about future relationships" (Morrison et. al., 1997, p. 57).

Morrison et al. (1997) underlined that security of attachment is directly associated with past, present, and future relational satisfaction. Individuals become warped and disturbed in relationships outside the family when warmth and approval are nonexistent during childhood (Dryden, 1990). This capacity for intimacy develops as early as nine months with the sharing of three mental states (joint attention, sharing attention, and sharing affective states) with one's caretaker (Kaftal, 1991).

Arguably, when caretakers meet their child's needs with rejection, the child most likely will develop insecurities, anxieties, and sensitivity towards future relationships (Downey & Feldman, 1996). This anxiety then becomes a determinant for negative and destructive patterns of communication (Morrison et al., 1997). Such

anxieties lead to, "patterns of coercive withdrawal, feelings of guilt and hurt, and low expression of understanding" (Morrison et al., 1997, p. 59). Predictably, these patterns contribute to avoidance of intimacy, because expressing such needs related to vulnerabilities is too anxiety provoking (Downey & Feldman, 1996). In addition, Dutton et al. (1994) found other emotions such as anger and rage following unmet attachment needs produce powerful emotional responses such as terror, grief, rage, and jealousy.

Erikson addressed interpersonal intrapsychic issues related to intimacy and isolation, by focusing on the importance of people fusing, bonding, coming together, and forming relationships (Horst, 1995). He observed that in order for one to develop the capacity to be in a close committed relationship, the crisis of intimacy vs. isolation must be resolved (Prager, 1989).

The goal of the intimacy vs. isolation crisis involves balancing the tensions between separation (isolation = negative polarity) and connection (intimacy = positive polarity), so that intimacy can be achieved (Horst, 1995 and Stauffer, 1987). According to theory, the

crisis occurs between adolescence and the beginning of young adulthood (Newman & Newman, 1995). Arguably Horst (1995) believed adolescents and young adults in today's society are not mature nor responsible enough for the level of depth and commitment required for an intimate relationship as defined by Erikson (Horst, 1995).

Whatever the age, intimacy requires a deep level of maturity and responsibility. Partners must be prepared to make a concrete commitment to people not ideas, and to the components of depth and commitment which are necessary for intimacy (Van den Broucke et al., 1995). Compromise is an everyday process. It challenges couples to commit to concrete affiliations and partnerships in conjunction with the ethical strength to abide by such commitments even under demands of significant sacrifices (Horst, 1995). In sum, the intimacy crisis involves the fusion of individual identities who deeply care for one other, and who are committed to putting the relationship first (Prager, 1989).

The crisis of isolation includes the development of the ego, and

the development of clear boundaries (Newman & Newman, 1995). "The more fully developed the ego becomes, the more it is characterized by clear boundaries" (Newman & Newman, 1995, p. 555). However, when boundaries are inadequate intimacy is avoided. This may be due to the intense fear one experiences when feeling their identity has being erased due to fusion (Stauffer, 1987).

The negotiation of identity issues (separateness and connectedness) has two components: the experience of the crisis and making the commitment to growth (Van den Broucke et al., 1995). During this struggle an individual is challenged to develop a coherent sense of oneself, distinct from others, and to evaluated such on one's own terms; yet at the same time to develop the fidelity, which comes from balancing identity and identity confusion (Horst, 1995). Fidelity is an important component, because it integrates the ability to sustain loyalties to one's partner by freely pledging to another despite the inevitable contradictions in each others value systems (Horst, 1995). By developing appropriate coping skills such as owning and taking responsibility for one's behaviors, dangerous

reactions often expressed through projection, blame, and boundary confusion can be avoided. In exchange, a clearer sense of self may evolve and the acquisition of intimacy can be experienced (Stauffer, 1987).

In achieving this, Weaver (1987) emphasized the importance of changing a clients negative self-centered identity to a positive other-directed identity. Erikson (in Weaver) contended that without a firm sense of identity an individual can become "extremely preoccupied with how they appear in the eyes of others..." and therefore may be "frightened by the thought of intimacy or commitment, because a firm sense of identity is a prerequisite for the intimate giving of self and others" (p. 114). Unfortunately, unless this identity crisis has been resolved and a sense of self has emerged intimacy is difficult (Stauffer).

Prager's (1989) study, which was conducted on 49 couples using the Individual Analysis on the Jourard Self-Disclosure Questionnaire (JSDQ), supports Erikson finding that successful intimacy crisis resolutions of young adulthood have resulted in an increased

capacity for intimacy. In addition, the JSDQ revealed that the resolution of the crisis contributed to adaptive behavior and subjective satisfaction in one's closest couple relationship.

Horst (1995) argued that this may be true, but there is a definite inconsistency in Erikson's intimacy vs. isolation crisis. This is due to the fact that women develop their identity through marriage, while men develop their identity before addressing intimacy issues. This argument reflects a masculine bias supporting a separateness from others rather than a connectedness to others. For women the identity and intimacy tasks are fused, therefore causing women to be dependent on connectedness with others and relatedness rather than separateness (Horst, 1995).

Freud (in Silvestri, 1992) believed childhood trauma was a precursor for late adult neurosis. A trauma includes a negative experience (ie. abandonment, neglect, or abuse) which leaves an emotional scar on the development of intimacy (Silvestri, 1992). Gabardi and Rosen (1992) observed that children who witnessed parental marital conflict evidenced doubt regarding attitudes toward

intimacy and marriage. This is compounded when parental figures use their children as friends to disclose personal negative issues relating to their own marriage. In effect, these children might be predisposed in developing a negative one sided image of the institution of marriage, therefore confusing the development of intimacy (Gabardi & Rosen, 1992). It is not surprising that negative communicational patterns experienced by young adults from divorced or intact families differ in their beliefs and behaviors related to intimacy, from those coming from healthy communicational patterns from divorced or intact families (Garbardi & Rosen, 1992).

Kaftal (1991) believed intimacy for men was developed through the relationship between father and son. In this study Kaftal (1991) discovered that when father and son failed to recognize one another, they risked developing a shared rupture, a situation in which poses a threat to personal continuity. In effect, the son could develop a false self in response to that rupture (Kaftal). Depression compounds this issue, thus making intimacy a challenging

experience (Silvestri, 1992).

Van den Broucke et al. (1995) stated that in order for a couple to reach intimacy and function as a unit, they must achieve a separation from their family of origin, specifically the relationship with their parents (Van den Broucke et al., 1995). An individual's particular make-up is shaped largely by family background and reaction to it, namely whether it has been conformed to or rebelled against (Goldberg, 1987). Therefore, family theorist decided that parents must grant their adolescent children with the opportunity to become emotionally involved in relationships with others by encouraging autonomy.

Societal Programming

Intimacy is affected by the belief system we hold. A belief system includes any elaborate set of rules, values, and myths created by the family and culture, by which behavior is judged (Carnes, 1992). Culture is said to play a major role in that it teaches children to like and dislike certain smells, respond to certain kinds of humor,

and get use to a certain level peace and hysteria (Fisher, 1992).

Behavioral theorist argued that it is important for an intimate couple to have similar backgrounds (Deal et al., 1992). They believed that when both partners shared similar needs for intimacy and privacy, a harmonious relationship is likely, whereas widely differing needs lead to serious disagreements (Goldberg, 1987). Therefore as couples begin to fuse similar individual value systems, goals, and perspectives, a new family nucleus develops where differences are minimized over time (Deal et al., 1992).

A person's need for intimacy and the way they obtain it is culturally influenced (Fisher, 1992). These imposed expectations can be so strong, that they can limit a person to who they can and cannot be with (Stauffer, 1987). Often times these effects are more detrimental for males than for females (McCarthy, 1987).

According to Giddens (1992) and Waehler (1995) during the Victorian period, males' intimate relations with other males was limited to sports or other leisure pursuits, or in the participation of war. In contrast, females' intimate friendships with other females

involved the exchange of personal and social information about their lives (Giddens, 1992). Most males' friendships were not as deep, because society conditioned them to avoid that level of communication; whereas women were conditioned to communicate personal feelings (Derlega & Chaikin, 1975).

Psychologists (in Fisher, 1992) discovered that men viewed intimacy different from women. The gender variation was believed to stem from ancestry in that women regularly seek to feel included, connected, and attached, while men regularly seek to enjoy space, privacy, and autonomy.

Masters et al., (1994) argued that males are capable of intimacy, but are less programmed to use it; whereas women are programmed from birth to be more verbal, open, and expressive with such feelings (Garbardi & Rosen, 1992 and McAdams et al., 1988). McAdams et al., (1988) summarized:

> Women may understand ethical dilemmas in their lives in a concrete communal manner as choices to be made about specific responsibilities to others embedded in social network. Men, on the other hand, tended to conceive ethical dilemmas in terms of personalized laws or abstract rights, as choices to be made about disputes among autonomous agents (p. 398).

Although research suggests that men are programmed to understand intimacy differently from women, it is inaccurate to say they are incapable of it (Masters et al., 1994). Males do yearn for intimacy, but are accustomed to suppressing such feelings due to feminine connotations associated with such feelings (Fast, 1991). On the other hand, women are taking on perceived masculine roles in society such as work and career. Such roles offer a greater opportunity for women to develop and "cultivate an agentic orientation of life" which often comes at the expense of interpersonal intimacy (McAdams, 1988, p. 398).

Giddens (1992) stated that intimacy for males is only experienced through a relationship with a female, therefore men rely on women to express intimate feelings in a relationship. Greeley (1973) argued that men fear opening up and showing sensitivity toward the expression of intimacy, because if rejected their masculinity might come into question. Oddly, even though men tend to depend on women for intimacy, men are conditioned to be the aggressor in the relationship; whereas women are socially expected to remain docile

(Carnes, 1992).

Traditional sexual socialization concerning sex roles and stereotypes can be destructive to the growth of the real self (Hatfield et al.,1988). In fact, the stereotype holding, real men should be able to sleep with any women, is detrimental because it enforcing men into thinking that real men need nothing but sexual gratification from women (McCarthy, 1987). In addition, Carnes (1992) believed that when a man feels bad about himself in his family, he loses confidence that any woman would want to be with him, therefore he uses sex to hurt women first (Carnes, 1992). Pornography enforces this belief by portraying women as merely objects of satisfaction, and therefore non threatening in nature (Giddens, 1992).

Men learn that to become a man he must first separate himself from his emotional self (Kaftal, 1991). In effect, men strive for emotional autonomy by repressing feelings and emotions, instead of communicating and expressing them (Giddens, 1992). Unfortunately, men who hide from their real self are incapable of becoming autonomous within an intimate relationship (Giddens,

1992).

Farrell (in Carnes, 1992) summarized males socialization:

> Men learn to protect themselves from the hurt of rejection by turning women into sex objects. It is easier to accept rejection by an object than by a human being. If we can turn women into objects and sex into a game, talking about how far we got and whether we scored, it helps us avoid looking at why we were rejected. It helps to gain the courage to try even harder the next time (as we would in fulfilling an athletic role...). Each time a woman does not share in the initiative in obtaining the type of sexual involvement she wants, she is contributing to the use of herself as a sex object. Each time a man gives a women negative feedback when she takes the initiative, he is contributing to his own frustration, to his anger and contempt for women (as objects that need to be persuaded to enjoy themselves), and to his need to use a woman as a sex object to protect himself from the very vulnerability he is reinforcing. Many women complain about men not being in touch with their feelings. It is dysfunctional for a man to be in touch with his feelings if he is going to be opening himself up to experiencing the pain of rejection (p. 117).

In contrast, Colman and Gangong (1985) disputed the sex role socialization argument, and felt social scientist and avowed feminist who perpetuate this belief are grossly inaccurate. Even though men are and women have different yet similar experiences, it is just as dangerous to overemphasize sex differences as it is to under

emphasize them (Horst, 1995).

Research (in Coleman and Gangong, 1985) identified there exists a contradiction in cultural beliefs, therefore finding that men were more romantic and concerned with love than women. In fact, men are "more easily attracted to the other sex, more apt to show interest in the initial encounter, more likely to report recognizing love earlier, less realistic and more romantic, more idealistic in their orientation to love, and closer to their romantic self" (Coleman & Gangong, 1985, p. 170).

Fears, Faulty Cognitions, and Other Issues Related to Intimacy

While most people long for intimacy, not everyone is capable of achieving it (Weaver, 1987). Intimacy as previously reported has influences stemming from family and society. When an individual is a product of "bad" programming, they run the risk of developing fears, faulty cognitions, and other confusing relational issues related to intimacy.

Van den Broucke (1995) viewed intimacy as a motive reflecting

one's preference or readiness to experience closeness, warmth, and communication. Thus, when individuals demonstrate low motivation some of the symptoms evidenced include lower levels of self disclosure, less positive nonverbal behaviors, less trust for their partner, and less enjoyment in their relationship (Stauffer, 1987 and Weaver, 1987).

Couples are prone to achieving intimacy at superficial levels when one or both partners display most positive sides while suppressing and hiding their fears and weakness (Stauffer, 1987). Van den Broucke et al. (1995) argued that honest communication is a prerequisite for achieving and maintaining intimacy. It is the first basic step toward intimacy, therefore one's avoidance of communicating fears and weaknesses inhibits one's ability to initiate and maintain intimacy (Weaver, 1987).

Self disclosure by definition is the intentional or unintentional process of making oneself known to another by revealing personal and sometimes vulnerable information (Van den Broucke et al., 1995 and Prager, 1989). As couples become comfortable in their

relationship, they in turn become more vulnerable and intimate (Weaver, 1987). At the same time intimacy is a gradual process, and too much self disclosure too soon can sabotage a relationship (Stauffer, 1987).

Greeley (1973) contended:

> Indeed the fear of appearing ridiculous is one of the more powerful obstacles to human intimacy. I suspect that the reason why so little of the potential of most marriage, both genital and psychic is developed is that the fear of having everything taken away or being made to look ridiculous keeps risk taking at very safe and cautious levels (p. 19).

Fears concerning self disclosure include fear of exposure, abandonment, angry attacks, loss of control, fear of vulnerability, rejection, and betrayal. Paradoxically, the harder one tries to control the presentation of oneself, the less likely intimacy will be achieved (Weaver, 1987).

McCarthy (1987) believed that men did not view vulnerability as a bridge to greater intimacy. Woititz (1985) explained that vulnerability can generate feelings of being out of control. Sometimes these feelings associated with being vulnerable can be more terrifying than the actual act itself (Woititz, 1985). In fact,

Derlega and Chaikin (1975) asserted that some individuals have the tendency to withhold information or past truths, because the acknowledgment of such truths might be too painful. Such truths could perpetuate a loss of the self, including powerlessness from preventing negative situations from happening (McCarthy, 1987).

Emmons and Colby (1995) suggests that rejection sensitive individuals will nonconscious avoid threatening information. Individuals who are highly sensitive to rejection are prone to interpret their partners negative behavior (ie. distancing, or inattention) as motivated by hurtful intent such as a lack of love, dislike, or lack of consideration of needs (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Downey and Feldman's model suggests that people who are predisposed to anxiously expect rejection from their significant other are likely to:

> (a) perceive intentional rejection in their partner's insensitive or ambiguous behaviors, (b) feel insecure and unhappy about their relationship, and (c) respond to perceived rejection or threats of rejection by their partner with hostility, diminished support, or jealous, controlling behavior. When unjustified and exaggerated, these behaviors are likely to erode even a committed partner's satisfaction with the relationship (p. 1328).

One of the most important foundations necessary for disclosing information and vulnerabilities is trust (Masters et al., 1994). Trust is the feeling, state, or condition learned early in life that the another person is for you (Goldberg, 1987). Since information revealed in a relationship may vary in its affective value and degree of confidentiality, its important for partners to maintain honesty, fidelity, and loyalty to one another (Van den Broucke, 1995). When trust erodes in the relationship partners might be prone to engage in charged disagreements in attempt to seize control (Goldberg, 1987). Other distancing techniques used when the relationship erodes include the refusal to discuss certain topics; deliberately turning one's partner off sexually, and communicate in ways that generate tension and conflict (Stauffer, 1987).

Just as relationships exist by the grace of the individuals who build and sustain them (Prager, 1989), so to does the need or level of intimacy vary for individuals within a relationship (Stauffer, 1987). Goldberg (1987) held that some individuals seek constant closeness with loved ones, while others are most comfortable holding the

world at arms length. Other factors such as different stages of one's life cycle or internal and external life events (relocation, new job, child) contribute as well to one's differing needs for intimacy (Stauffer, 1987).

It is that combination of individual intimacy status which impacts each partner' feelings and behavior within the relationship (Prager, 1991). Being comfortable with a partner involves maintaining a balance between the desire to achieve and to avoid intimacy (Van den Broucke et al, 1995). Genuine intimacy occurs when these polarities of fusion and differentiation are resolved (Stauffer, 1987).

Kaftal (1991) asserted that for intimacy to be real, each partner must be aware of their own boundaries. Some relationships are disengaged, characterized by infrequent contact and less care; where others are enmeshed characterized by an over-involvement in one another in which individuality is met with resistance (Newman & Newman, 1995). In both cases, the undifferentiated self is poorly developed, such as individuals are either self-absorbed or absorbed with others. In effect, they cannot rationally separate the self from

their perception, and they have a low tolerance for differences (Kudson-Martin, 1996). Table 1 shows this model developed by Kudson-Martin (1996, p. 192).

Table 1

Diversity Within Development of Self

Separate Self	**Integrated Self**
Self-containment	Mutual giving and taking
Command of impulses	Sharing of self
Personal agency	Development of shared reality
Sense of private world	Capacity for problem solving
Construction of own authority	Openness to differences
Capacity for independence	Orientated to reciprocal obligation
Distinction	Capacity for emotional expression
	Interdependence
Undifferentiated Self	**Connected Self**
Emotional fusion	Capacity to orient to another
Enmeshment/disengagement	Attending to other's response/ needs
Self-absorption/absorption with others	Empathy
Cannot separate self from perceptions	Ability to change in response to another
Low tolerance for difference	Imaginatively holding onto another
High levels of anxiety	Self embedded within relationship
Emotional volatilability and/or distancing	Recognition of dependence

Internal working models from origin contribute to the relationship of a couple. Issues that must be worked out between the combined working model include the emotional availability and reliability of the other person and self; the level of comfort usefulness in expressing emotional experience; the way disappointment are to be handled; and everyday communication and problem solving in the relationship (Morrison et al., 1997). With all these dynamics taking place, it is not surprising that partners may have a capacity or motive to achieve intimacy, but fail to attain it in their relationship (Van den Broucke et al., 1995).

Perception of the relationship identifies one capacity for intimacy. Pines (1992) found that when people view their mate and relationship in a positive and realistic way, they in return begin to feel better about themselves. Hall (in Jurich & Polson, 1985) contends that our emotions, including our feelings, thoughts, and ideas are learned informally and comprise a major portion of our informal knowledge use.

Ellis (in Dryden, 1990) stated that individuals who love

unhealthily or in self destructive ways, do so in a demanding, insistent, commanding, and highly absolutistic manner. In effect, they are inclined to develop unrealistic expectations that their mate should: act exceptionally well and impressive, love them completely, devotedly, and lastingly, and in return love their beloved in a thoroughly, intimate and deep and everlasting manner (Dryden, 1990). These "tyranny of the shoulds" set unrealistic expectations of relationships causing one to possibly react with intense anxiety, jealousy, and feelings of worthlessness when these needs are not met (Dryden, 1990). In order to avoid the tyranny of the shoulds one must challenge and surrender these irrational beliefs about intimacy (Stauffer, 1987).

For McCarthy (1987) relationships have three focuses for increasing intimacy: comfort, self disclosure, and the range of emotional and sexual expression. Lobitz and Lobitz (1996) disputed stating that as couples become more intimate, they lose their intense sexual desire and arousal once felt for one another in the beginning of the relationship. Newman and Newman (1995) disagreed stating

that a loss in sexual desire matched with physical withdrawal from the partner ultimately results in a loss of intimacy not a strengthening of intimacy. On the other hand, Garbardi and Rosen's (1992) study found that students who had low expectations of intimate relationships, had their needs met alternately through sexual activity.

In addition to Garbardi and Rosen's (1992) study it was found that gender was a significant predictor of sexual involvement, desire, and experience, with men desiring and experiencing greater sexual activity than women. Hatfield et al, (1988) and Wexler (1988) contended it is not that men desire greater sexual activity than women, but that men desire activities that focus on arousal (ie. more partner initiative, more variety), while women desire activities that demonstrate love and intimacy.

Women desire more loving behavior before and after sexual intercourse, especially by giving complaints about the amount and type of foreplay (Hatfield et al., 1988). Yet if women complain about a lack of loving behavior, men complained about the women's

lack of initiative in making sexual advances (Hatfield et al., 1988).

Gender seems to be a predictor concerning the degree of sexual intimacy in a relationship (Garbardi & Rosen, 1992). If sex is going to build in quality or even remain functional men need to improve their comfort level with the expression of sexual activities that demonstrate love (McCarthy, 1987). One the other hand, women need to overcome their sexual double standard which legitimizes sex for men and not for them, so that they can become more sexually expressive (Jurich & Polson, 1985). In sum, as couples become more communicative and comfortable with their relationship they must also work on sexual compatibility, passion, and cooperative lovemaking (Lobitz & Lobitz, 1996).

Developing Intimacy

Intimacy is process involving a constant state of growth (Giddens, 1992). It requires a deep understanding of one's self and another, with the elements of vulnerability, trust, and unconditional love (Greeley, 1973). A healthy environment matched with the

allowance for healthy criticism are instrumental in this growth process (Norwood, 1985). More importantly all steps toward intimacy or in vain if the real self is not present (Derlega & Chaikin, 1975).

The willingness for partners to share vulnerabilities are often difficult, but without shared vulnerabilities and emotional risk taking intimacy cannot be achieved (Woititz, 1985). Shyness among other factors are known to inhibit intimacy by providing behavioral, cognitive, and emotional barriers (Weaver, 1987); but as Derlega and Chaikin (1975) found through consistent studies that when one partner beings self disclosing intimate information, it leads to the reciprocation of self disclosure in the other partner.

Even though self disclosure is an important factor in the development of intimacy, research has supported that when partners entering in a new relationship reveal too much information about themselves, the relationship is at risk of ending prematurely (Fisher, 1992 and Stauffer, 1987). Even though self disclosure is important, relationships take time and should not be forced (Derlega & Chaikin,

1975). Since emotional vulnerability is important to the development of intimacy, partners should share personal information little by little in a reciprocal exchange (Fisher, 1992). Over time the results will strengthen the bond of intimacy, and deeper understanding and trust for one another will develop (Stuaffer, 1987).

Self disclosure can be anxiety provoking for some (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Emmons & Colby, 1995; Lobitz & Lobitz, 1996; Prager, 1989; and Weaver, 1987). Circumstances contributing to anxiety include feelings of being trapped or possessed; the avoidance of being vulnerable, hurt and emptiness commonly associated feelings of possible loss; still other reasons for avoiding intimacy include: fear of exposing weakness and imperfections to another, mistrust, fear of attack, fear of abandonment, and fear of loss of control (Stauffer, 1987). Unfortunately, when a partner employs distancing techniques, it puts the other partner at risk for misinterpreting information resulting in dangerous mind reading (Woititz, 1985).

One important issue that has to be resolved for the partner employing these distancing techniques is, What is this achieving? People tend to avoid troubling issues at all costs; " when they feel hurt or emptiness they quickly protect themselves regardless of how much pain their defenses may bring them. (Stauffer, 1987, p. 183)" The process for change cannot be one sided. In fact, Pines (1992) emphasized that when both partners are involved in trying to disrupt the destructive pattern in the relationship, positive change is more likely to occur, become more visible for both mates, and more likely to endure the test of time.

As earlier stated, through self disclosure a bonding process takes place, where knowledge of the self and of the other is expressed (Coupland et al., 1991). Usually through this bonding process, the intentional information shared by partners can be so deep and complex that confidentiality is necessary (Prager, 1989). In effect, trust is one of the most important foundations for intimacy. In an intimate relationship, "trust comes from the underlying assumption that neither person intends to hurt the other. (Masters el al., 1994, p.

20)" Trust means that partners are being honest with their own thoughts and feelings, and are not abusive to the feelings of the other partner (Woititz, 1985). Trusts encourages comfort in the relationship for the expression of emotional and sexual needs (McCarthy, 1987).

In order for partners to get past fears and hesitation towards intimate growth, they must learn to be comfortable with themselves and to develop appropriate boundaries within the relationship (Weaver, 1987). Clear boundaries, psychologically speaking, involves determining what belongs to whom (Giddens, 1992). It is the balance of openness, vulnerability, and trust that is developed within the relationship, by which "governs whether or not personal boundaries become, divisions which obstruct rather than encourage such communications" (Giddens, 1992, p. 94). Collectively, couples can determine what those boundaries mean for the relationship (Goldberg, 1987).

Piaget's theory on the real self was an accommodation and assimilation in which adults changed their identities to match their

experiences (Whitbourne & Ebenmeyer, 1990). Having a good identity means having a good sense of worth, and having at least one significant other affirm that sense of worth. Furthermore, identity is the discovery of what partners do not know about each other, and what partners do not know about themselves (Morrison, Goodin, & Uriquiza, 1997). The real self requires healthy expectations of one's self and others, and shares in the commitment of achieving those expectations (Woititz, 1985).

Arguments

Men are perceived through therapeutic literature and ubiquitously in the opinions of others to have greater problems with intimacy than their female counterparts (Coupland et al., 1991; Greeley, 1973; McAdams et al., 1988; McCarthy, 1987; and Newman & Newman, 1995). Numerous studies have been conducted to find some answers to this posing question. Following are a few arguments for and against this myth.

According to studies by McAdams et al. (1988) on male and

female capacity for intimacy, women were more intimate than men. These studies revealed that women spend more time thinking about intimacy, and in effect were more ready for intimacy then men. Jourard (in Coupland et al., 1991) supported McAdams (1988) study and determined that men tend to disclose less information than women, and therefore men were less psychological and physically healthy as a result. Newman and Newman (1995) disputed this theory stating that even though men demonstrated more competitiveness, less agreement, and lower levels of self disclosure than women, their levels of self disclosure was not related to physical or mental health.

McCarthy (1987) argued that sexual socialization had a significantly higher negative impact on men than for women. In this study, the majority of the male participants had difficulty in trusting their partner and seeing them as intimate friends and confidants. Carnes (1992) disagreed stating women felt they were more affected especially due to society's double standard. In his study, it was evident that men perceived women as being in charge of the sexual

relationships, while women perceived men as being incapable of intimacy and untrustworthy. Women felt shorted in the relationship, because they felt that men are incapable of displaying intimacy due to societal programming.

Chapter III

Method

Subjects

Participants were non-randomly selected from one county in a major metropolitan area (St. Louis) during the months of January and February, 1998. The questionnaire packets (demographic information and Fear of Intimacy Scale, FIS) were distributed, and a sample of 60 was returned.

Data was gathered at a time convenient to the researcher. The sample was solicited through friends, coworkers, and counseling professionals in the St. Louis area.

The sample consisted of 30 males and 30 females. The age of the males ranged from 20-37 years with a mean age of 29.5 years. The age of the females ranged from 19-39 with a mean age of 28.4 years.

Procedure

During the months of January and February 1998, one hundred and eleven friends, coworkers, and counseling professionals were

administered the Fear of Intimacy (FIS) along with demographic information sheet including age, race, marital status, and education of the participants.

It was explained to the participants that the researcher was conducting the study on male and female intimacy for her Masters in Counseling at Lindenwood College. Confidentiality was maintained, and the data was not read until all questionnaires had been collected.

Instrument

The Fear of Intimacy Scale is a 35 item self report scale developed by Descutner and Thelen (1991) to measures one's fear of intimacy in current and past relationships. According to the scale, fear of intimacy is defined as, "the inhibited capacity of an individual, because of anxiety, to exchange thoughts and feelings of personal significance with another individual who is highly valued" (Descutner & Thelen, 1991, p. 219). The scales observe three features which coexist with one another: content (communication of

personal information), emotional valence (strong feelings concerning personal information exchanged), and vulnerability (high regard for the intimate other).

Each item is presented on a 5-point likert scale ranging from *not at all characteristic of me (1)* to *extremely characteristic of me (5).* Thus, the higher the score on the FIS, the greater the fear of intimacy exists. The scale (1-30) allowed for the assessment of fear of intimacy in current relationships, even with people who are not presently involved in a relationship. The final part of the scale (31-35) measured past relationships in relation to fear of intimacy. The FIS is easily scored by summing individual item responses for a total score. Items 3, 6-8, 14, 17-19, 21, 22, 25, 27, 29, and 30 are reversed scored.

The reliability of the FIS is excellent. The internal consistency measured with an alpha of .93; and stability, with a one-month test-retest, measured with a Pearson correlation of .89 (Descutner & Thelen, 1991).

Correlational analysis indicated good empirical evidence for the

construct validity of the FIS. This held true for measures that should and should not be correlated with the FIS. These included positive correlations with the UCLA Loneliness Scale, and negative correlations with the Jourard Self-Disclosure Questionnaire, Miller Social Intimacy Scale and Need for Cognition. Overall, the FIS correlated significantly with social desirability (Descutner & Thelen, 1991).

A posttest design was used. The t-test was chosen to determine if there was a significant difference between the mean FIS scores for gender.

Chapter IV

Results

Of the 111 participants in this study only 60 completed the requirements, representing a 54.5% return rate. Two questionnaires, of the number returned, had not completed the Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS), therefore they were deleted. The remaining 49 had not been returned to the researcher.

Of the sample collected, an even 30 respondents were representative for gender (male = 30, female = 30). The mean age of the 30 males was 29.53 years with a standard deviation of 4.13 years. The mean age of the 30 females was 28.36 years with a standard deviation of 5.03 years.

Table 2 reveals the frequency and percentage of demographic data of the respondents according to gender. The female sample had a greater amount of diversity with n =33.33% being African American and n = 66.67% Caucasian, than the males at only n = 3.33% African American, n = 90% Caucasian, and n = 7.67% other.

The marital status percentages for each class was found to be

quite similar. Of the males participants n = 56.67% were single, n = 33.33% were married, and n = 10% were divorced; and the female participants n = 63.33% were single, n = 23.33% were married, and n = 13.33% were divorced.

Table 2

Frequency and Percentage of Demographic Data of the Respondents

	Males		Females	
	n	%	n	%
Ethnicity				
African American	1	3.33	10	33.33
Caucasian	27	90.00	20	66.67
Other	2	7.67	*	*
Marital Status				
Single	17	56.67	19	63.33
Married	10	33.33	7	23.33
Divorced	3	10.00	4	13.33
Education				
High School	8	26.26	10	33.33
Bachelors	20	66.67	10	33.33
Masters	2	7.67	2	7.67
Doctorate	*	*	1	3.33
Other	*	*	7	23.33

There was a greater percentage of males with an educational level above a bachelors degree at 74.34%, than females who reported 44.33%. This figure is not representative of the females, because

23.33% selected "other" which does not indicate whether this is above or below a bachelors.

All 35 questions of the FIS were calculated on a given measured tract for males and females. A t-test for the difference between means was selected (Table 3). Table 3 indicates the results of the t-test of the independent variable gender, and the dependent variable total scores of the FIS. The null hypothesis being tested was there is no significant difference of the FIS scores between males and females in a close intimate relationship.

The 30 male respondents in the study had a mean of 73.7, with a standard deviation of 16.48, and a standard error (SE) of the mean at 3.01. For the female respondents in the study the mean was 73.1, with a standard deviation of 19.04 and a standard error (SE) of the mean at 3.48.

The Levene's tested the null hypothesis to see if in the population the variances of the two groups were equal. Since the observed significance level for the Levene's test ($p = .4410$) is larger than the alpha level of .05, the null hypothesis was not rejected that

the two variances are equal. Therefore, the equal variance t-test for homogeneity was used.

Table 3

T-test for Independent Samples of Males and Females by FIS Scores

Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
Males	30	73.7	16.48	3.01
Females	30	73.1	19.04	3.48

Mean Difference = .600
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F = .7489 p = .4410

T-test for Equality of Means

Variances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	CI for Diff 95%
Equal	.1305	57	.8966	(-8.608-9.808)

The observed significance level associated with the t-value .1305 is .8966. There is an 89.7% chance that the t-value falls between the 95% confidence interval (-8.608 - 9.808) for the population of the mean difference. Therefore, the null hypothesis can be accepted that there is no significant difference in FIS scores between males

and females in a close intimate relationship.

Chapter V

Discussion

The 54.5% return rate for the questionnaire was lower than expected by the researcher. The non-response bias must be considered as a factor when analyzing the results. It may be that the 45.5% who did not return the questionnaire hold different information and opinions than the respondents.

The hypothesis was not supported, while the null hypothesis was, finding there was no significant difference between FIS scores for males and females in close intimate relationships. These findings refute theory from Coupland et al. (1991), Fast (1991), Greeley (1973), McAdams et al. (1988), McCarthy (1987), and Newman & Newman (1995) stating that men in the American culture fear intimacy, more than their female counterparts.

In this study there appeared to be a difference in the ethnic background of the participants. The sample of men was not very diverse, therefore suggesting a cultural bias in the results. Further research might want to compare FIS of intimacy with ethnicity and

again through gender.

It became clear to the researcher that there was a need for further understanding of whether males or females fear intimacy to the level the review of the literature suggests. This study came to the conclusion that there was no significant difference in the FIS scores between males and females in a close intimate relationship.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is that the sample was a relatively homogeneous group of Caucasian, professional adults. Even though the sample size met the criterion for analysis, a larger more diverse sample might have shown a difference in FIS between males and females. In addition, the men and women selected for the study were friends, coworkers, and counseling professional acquaintances of the researcher, and were selected to participate per the convenience of the researcher. A more diverse sampling might have made the population parameters more certain.

Thirdly, the participants in study were between the ages of 19-39

old. One cannot generalize these findings outside this age group. A broader range of age diversity might have contributed to a different result in FIS scores.

In addition, the non-response bias must be considered as a factor when analyzing the results. It may be that the 45.5% who did not return the questionnaire hold different information and opinions than the respondents.

Lastly, there was a limitation due to the strong reliance on self-report measures. Although respondents appeared to be genuine in their response, there is a need to verify results of this study with multiple source data.

Suggestions for Further Research

There are several different directions for future research that can be done with this type of subject matter. A larger sample is needed to compare the levels of fear of intimacy in males and females who are in a close intimate relationship. A multiracial and multiethnic comparison of fear of intimacy could also be done. This would give

counselors information on how to work more effectively on intimacy issues with different types ethnic groups.

In order to generalize these findings to other groups, additional studies need to focus on adolescence, young adulthood, middle age, and elderly toward fear of intimacy. These findings could help identify how the various generation groups are socialized into understand intimacy.

Lastly, the role reversal of the 90's should be explored more in depth. The researcher believes that as women are assuming new roles (careers along with higher levels of education) their capacity for intimacy consequently might be changing. So too, as men are becoming more in touch with their "feminine side" their capacity for intimacy could be changing as well. Future studies should explore these differences and similarities across cohort groups and in comparison with past and present roles. Also, longitudinal studies are needed to determine how intimacy develops and changes across the individual lifespan. These findings could help define how intimacy has changed, and what therapists can do to help their

clients become more intimate.

APPENDIX A

Demographic Information: Please place a check mark or fill in the following blanks as they apply.

1) Gender: Male ___ Female ___

2) Age: ___

3) Ethnicity: Afro-American ___ American Indian ___

Asian ___ Caucasian ___ Hispanic ___

Other ___

4) Marital Status: Single ___ Married ___ Divorced ___

5) Last Completed Educational Level:

Grade School ___ High School ___ Bachelors ___

Masters ___ Doctorate ___ Other ___

APPENDIX B

Part A Instructions: Imagine you are in a close, dating relationship. Respond to the following statements as you would if you were in that close relationship. Rate how characteristic each statement is of you on a scale of 1 to 5 as described below, and put your response in the space to the left of the statement.

1 = Not at all characteristic of me
2 = Slightly characteristic of me
3 = Moderately characteristic of me
4 = Very characteristic of me
5 = Extremely characteristic of me

Note: In each statement "O" refers to the person who would be in the close relationship with you.

___ 1. I would feel uncomfortable telling O about things in the past that I have felt ashamed of.
___ 2. I would feel uneasy talking with O about something that has hurt me deeply.
___ 3. I would feel comfortable expressing my true feelings with O.
___ 4. If O were upset I would sometimes be afraid of showing that I care.
___ 5. I might be afraid to confide my innermost feelings to O.
___ 6. I would feel at ease telling O that I care about him/her.
___ 7. I would have a feeling of complete togetherness with 0.
___ 8. I would be comfortable discussing significant problems with 0.
___ 9. A part of me would be afraid to make a long-term commitment to O.
___ 10. I would feel comfortable telling my experiences, even sad ones, to O.

___ 11. I would probably feel nervous showing O strong feelings of affection.
___ 12. I would find it difficult being open with O about my personal thoughts.
___ 13. I would feel uneasy with O depending on me for emotional support.
___ 14. I would not be afraid to share with O what I disliked about myself.
___ 15. I would be afraid to take the risk of being hurt in order to establish a closer relationship with O.
___ 16. I would feel comfortable keeping very personal information to myself.
___ 17. I would not be nervous about being spontaneous with O.
___ 18. I would feel comfortable telling O things that I do not tell other people.
___ 19. I would feel comfortable trusting O with my deepest thoughts and feelings.
___ 20. I would sometimes feel uneasy if O told me about very personal matters.
___ 21. I would be comfortable revealing to O what I feel are my shortcomings and handicaps.
___ 22. I would be comfortable with having a close emotional tie between us.
___ 23. I would be afraid of sharing my private thoughts with O.
___ 24. I would be afraid that I might not always feel close to O.
___ 25. I would be comfortable telling O what my needs are.
___ 26. I would be afraid that O would be more invested in the relationship than I would be.
___ 27. I would feel comfortable about having open and honest communication with O.
___ 28. I would sometimes feel uncomfortable listening to O's personal problems.
___ 29 I would feel at ease to completely be myself around O.
___ 30 I would feel relaxed being together and talking about our personal goals.

Part B Instructions: Respond to the following statements as they apply to your past relationships. Rate how characteristic each statement is of you on a scale of 1 to 5 as described in the instructions for Part A.

___ 31. I have shield away from opportunities to be close to someone.
___ 32. I have held back my feelings in previous relationships.
___ 33. There are people who think that I am afraid to get close to them.
___ 34. There are people who think that I am not an easy person to get to know.
___ 35. I have done things in previous relationships to keep from developing closeness.

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