Gender Differences in Identity and Intimacy Development

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Abstract

The relationship between gender, identity and intimacy was studied in a sample of 301 college-aged students. Previous research demonstrated that male psychosocial development corresponds with Erik Erikson’s theory, where identity development influences intimacy development. Additional research based on Carol Gilligan’s ideas suggested that identity and intimacy development may be fused in females. Participants were asked to complete questionnaires pertaining to the concepts of identity and intimacy at two different points in time. Data were tested using Pearson’s correlation coefficient and cross-lag analyses. Results indicated that intimacy was a predictor of identity in males. There were no significant correlations found between identity and intimacy in females. Further examination is needed to determine whether the results are due to sampling error or simply a cultural shift in psychosocial personality development.
Gender Differences in Identity and Intimacy Development

The development of identity and intimacy are thought to be key psychosocial accomplishments for adolescents and young adults, respectively (Erikson, 1968). Successful maturation within the domains of identity and intimacy has been found to be related to self-esteem, cognitive and ego complexity, and moral reasoning (Craig Bray, Adams & Dobson, 1988). Research within this domain has focused on the relationship between identity and intimacy. These psychosocial developmental stages will be the focal point for the current study, with a specific interest in gender differences. The role of gender and how it applies to the relationship between identity and intimacy will be examined by considering past research within this psychological domain.

The majority of research in the areas of identity and intimacy has been based on the research and works by Erikson (1968). Erikson, who was undeniably influenced by Freudian theory, is considered to be a significant contributor to the area of lifespan development (Sdorow, 1998). Erikson originally published theory regarding the psychosocial development of personality across the life span, and has written specifically about the relationship between identity and intimacy (Sdorow, 1998).

According to his psychosocial theory, Erikson (1968) stated that individuals move through a series of eight stages of personality development, characterized by a pertinent crisis resolution at each stage. The first five stages occur consecutively in childhood, and are labeled as trust vs. mistrust, autonomy vs. shame and doubt, initiative vs. guilt, industry vs. inferiority, and identity vs. identity confusion (Erikson, 1968). The remaining three stages are thought to be characteristic of adult personality development, and have been named intimacy vs. isolation, generativity vs. stagnation, and integrity vs. despair (Erikson, 1968).
Erikson’s (1968) theory is based on his epigenetic principle, which states that anything that grows has a plan. This plan is characterized by its order of ascending parts, which will eventually arise to form a functioning whole (Erikson, 1968). Based on this principle, all stages of the psychosocial theory of personality development can be said to have an appropriate time of resolution within the lifespan of any given individual (Erikson, 1968). Also of importance is the fact that each stage is related to all others, and successful completion of one stage is dependent on the successful crisis resolution in each preceding stage (Erikson, 1968).

As previously mentioned, each stage requires the resolution of a crisis, which theoretically enables the individual to obtain the qualities necessary for moving on to the next stage of development (Erikson, 1968). A crisis can be defined as a turning point, or a period of increased vulnerability and heightened potential, meaning that it can be the source of both strength and weakness in one’s psychosocial development (Erikson, 1968). Crisis is more a turning point than a catastrophe. A crisis in this sense does not refer to a traumatic event, but a point at which one has the opportunity to grow mentally based on their ability to surpass the crisis at hand (Erikson, 1968). It is within this concept of crisis where the successful completion of Erikson’s (1968) stages can be understood.

In order for one to completely develop identity, one must experience the crisis pertaining to the domain of identity. According to Erikson (1968), identity can be defined as a process of change and increasing differentiation, signifying the transition from childhood to adulthood. Depending on the degree of identity development, Marcia (1966) defined four separate categories in which those in the process of identity formation could be placed (Craig-Bray et al., 1988). These categories were based on the presence or absence of a crisis, and the level of commitment to concepts such as occupation, religion, and politics (Craig-Bray et al., 1988).
In the first category, representing the lowest form of identity development, identity diffused youth have not experienced a crisis, and lack commitment to the concepts mentioned above (Marcia, 1966). Foreclosed individuals have made commitments in their lives, but have not yet experienced a crisis (Marcia, 1966). Those categorized in the moratorium status are said to be struggling with a crisis, and display unclear commitments (Marcia, 1966). Individuals in the identity achieved category, which is the highest level of identity development, portray successful crisis resolution and firm commitments to occupation, religion, and politics (Marcia, 1966). Although these identity types are thought to be independent of one another, it has been theorized that one typically progresses along these categories so that over time, identity achievement is the outcome (Kacerguis & Adams, 1980). Although it is important to understand the different levels of identity, this study will focus on those who are in the diffused and achieved categories. The reasoning behind this decision is that these two diametrically opposing identity solutions are the ones to which Erikson (1968) most clearly refers.

According to Erikson (1968), an individual who fails to resolve the crisis in identity development will experience identity confusion. This concept represents doubt in one’s identity and roles, and can often lead to psychotic episodes (Erikson, 1968). Identity confusion mirrors the aforementioned concept of identity diffusion. The experience of identity confusion inhibits the individual from moving forward to the next psychosocial stage (Erikson, 1968). It is those who have achieved identity who are thought to be entirely prepared to move on to the next stage of development, namely, intimacy vs. isolation (Erikson, 1968).

One is said to experience the stage of identity vs. identity confusion in the period of adolescence (Erikson, 1968). This is because prior to this point, an adequate level of maturation and responsibility that is required to develop the characteristics necessary for identity is said not
to exist (Erikson, 1968). In recent times, there has been increased emphasis on the concept of adolescence due to an extended period of time that lies between childhood and adulthood. Since adolescence has become a critical period of development for social beings, the process of identity development has been emphasized to correspond with views on which our culture places high importance (Erikson, 1968).

Although it is common to perceive that one has the ability to develop intimacy in adolescence, Erikson (1968) proposed that adolescents do not have the capacity to express and experience intimacy in its entirety until a later age. This is partially because Erikson (1968) theorized that intimacy development could not occur until the individual was nearing the completion of his identity formation. Erikson (1968) proposed that adolescent love is separate from true intimacy because it is merely an attempt to define one’s identity by projecting their self-image on to another. True intimacy, according to Erikson (1968), is defined as a fusing of identities that stimulates a harmonic relationship between these identities, while simultaneously retaining each person’s individuality. The intimacy vs. isolation stage, similar to identity vs. identity confusion, can have numerous levels of intimate connections.

According to Orlofsky (1976), the levels of intimacy can be broken down into five separate outcomes based on the presence or absence of close relationships. These categories range from low intimacy to high intimacy, and they include isolate, pseudointimate, stereotyped, preintimate, and intimate (Orlofsky, 1976). According to elaborations by Fitch and Adams (1983), those considered to be isolate lack the psychosocial development to have or maintain interpersonal commitment and intimacy. Pseudointimate individuals resemble the intimate in terms of having committed and intimate relationships, but they are motivated by underlying factors that differentiate them from those in the intimate category. Stereotyped individuals are
characterized by superficial relationships that are formed based on personal gains. The preintimate category portrays relationships based on responsibility and openness, but lack the commitment to intimacy. Further, individuals in the intimate category have the ability to communicate personal feelings with others, while having a clear awareness of themselves.

In Orlofsky’s (1976) categories, the isolate individual is most representative of isolation, which is considered by Erikson (1968) to be the result of improper crisis resolution at this stage. Isolation can be defined as inhibition in taking chances with one’s identity to experience true intimacy (Erikson, 1968). This failure to achieve intimacy is often a result of the fear one has of the consequences, such as commitment, that are considered to be essential elements of intimate relationships (Erikson, 1968). Those experiencing isolation, unlike intimacy, are limited in their psychosocial growth due to their inability to mature to the next stage of development (Erikson, 1968).

Unlike adolescents, young adults are said to have the genital maturity to experience true intimacy and love (Erikson, 1968). According to Erikson’s (1968) theory, it is logical that one would have to progress through the stage of identity vs. identity confusion before acquiring the ability to develop intimacy. Research in this area has shown that those who display the capacity to develop intimacy have indeed successfully progressed through the stage of identity vs. identity confusion (Bartle-Haring & Strimple, 1996; Craig-Bray, Adams & Dobson, 1988; Dyk & Adams, 1990; Fitch & Adams, 1983; Hodgson & Fischer, 1979; Kacerguis & Adams, 1980; Kahn, Zimmerman, Csikszentmihalyi & Getzels, 1985; Lacombe & Gay, 1998; Rotenberg, Schaut & O’Connor, 1993; Schiedel & Marcia, 1985).

To illustrate this point, a study conducted by Fitch and Adams (1983) examined the relationship between identity and intimacy with 78 college students. Fitch and Adams (1983)
found that there was an association between advanced identity status and higher levels of intimacy. Therefore, these data suggest that successful identity development plays a role in the development of intimacy.

Although there are many studies suggesting that identity regulates intimacy, there are some discrepancies in this research. For example, Adams and Archer (1994) contest that there are some cases in which identity does not predict intimacy, suggesting that this relationship is far from perfect. Based on the imperfection of this relationship, there has been recent speculation regarding the possibility of intimacy development occurring closer to and in relation with identity development. Specifically, research has suggested that the psychosocial stages for men and women are unique regarding their development of identity and intimacy (Dyk & Adams, 1990; Gilligan, 1982; Hodgson & Fischer, 1979; Kacerguis & Adams, 1980; Kahn et al., 1985; Lacombe & Gay, 1998; Schiedel & Marcia, 1985).

One study conducted by Hodgson and Fischer (1979) examined intimate relationships in a sample of 100 college students. They found that regardless of identity status, women had a greater likelihood of developing stable intimate relationships than their male counterparts (Hodgson & Fischer, 1979). Hodgson and Fischer (1979) suggested that this finding may be due to the fact that males tend to develop identity earlier than females. Therefore, Hodgson and Fischer (1979) concluded that the reason for the delay in females’ identity development is due to the more complex and conflicted pathways in which they develop. This research suggests that the typical progression from a diffused identity to an achieved identity may be more difficult for females than males (Hodgson & Fischer, 1979). However, the successful development of intimate connections may be easier for females than males (Hodgson & Fischer, 1979).
Another study done by Kahn et al. (1985) observed the relationship between gender, identity, and intimacy, with 166 college students. They found that the relationship between identity and intimacy varies between men and women (Kahn et al., 1985). This was shown through the participants’ likelihood of being married, which was considered to be representative of intimacy (Kahn et al., 1985). Specifically, it was discovered that women were just as likely to be married than not, regardless of their level of identity achievement (Kahn et al., 1985). However, when looking at males, they found that identity was a prominent factor in attaining intimacy through marriage (Kahn et al., 1985). In these circumstances, identity seemed to be an important factor in male intimacy development, although this relationship did not appear to hold true for females.

In the study conducted by Dyk and Adams (1990) with 142 college students, the relationship between identity and intimacy was examined based on Gilligan’s (1982) notion of a different voice between male and female identity development. Gilligan (1982) suggested the possibility of a fused relationship between identity and intimacy in females, meaning that identity and intimacy development may occur simultaneously. It was found that identity was a predictor for intimacy in males (Dyk & Adams, 1990). They also found that in females, identity predicted intimacy in those with a masculine sex-role orientation, but no relationship was found between identity and intimacy in females with a feminine orientation (Dyk & Adams, 1990). These findings suggest that sex-role orientation may be a factor in the identity and intimacy relationship (Dyk & Adams, 1990). However, the relationship between sex-roles and identity and intimacy may not be as strong as originally perceived.

Bartle-Haring and Strimple (1996) also studied the relationship between sex-roles and psychosocial development in a sample of 165 college students. They found that when sex-roles
were entered into the analysis of male and female psychosocial development, the significance of
the relationship between identity and intimacy was lessened (Bartle-Haring & Strimple, 1996).
Although previous research hints at a relationship between sex-role orientation and psychosocial
development, it does not explain how males and females differ in their identity and intimacy
development.

Some studies have suggested that there is no relationship existing between males and females and their psychosocial development. For example, Tesch and Whitbourne (1982) studied this relationship in a sample of 92 adults. They found no difference in intimacy status in masculine and feminine domains (Tesch & Whitbourne, 1982). Therefore, there was no support for gender differences influencing intimacy development (Tesch & Whitbourne, 1982).

However, their sample consisted of males and females in early and middle adulthood, meaning that it was likely for participants to display high intimacy development, solely based on their age. In fact, Whitbourne and Tesch (1985) conducted a study three years later with 159 college students and alumni, and found that identity and intimacy increased with age. Therefore, their argument against the relationship between gender and psychosocial development is not well supported.

Although the research suggests a relationship between gender, identity, and intimacy development, it remains unanswered as to how males and females differ in this respect. Erikson (1968) proposed that the reason females show a delay in the identity vs. identity confusion stage is because their identity development is partially based on their connection to a male counterpart. More specifically, he explained that a woman tends to define her identity through the selective nature that she uses to seek out a male partner (Erikson, 1968). Therefore, Erikson (1968) suggests that it is difficult for a woman to achieve identity without being in a relationship with a
significant other. Consequently, this viewpoint would suggest that a woman’s identity might be moderated by her intimate connections. Indeed, Gilligan (1982) actually argues that identity and intimacy are fused together for women because they are socialized in a relational and caring theme.

This perspective has stimulated a growth in the area of identity and intimacy research, and is the focal point of the current study. Erikson’s (1968) view has allowed researchers to hypothesize the reasons for variability in male and female psychosocial development. It has been suggested by Adams and Archer (1994) and Gilligan (1982), among others, that female psychosocial maturation exhibits a fusing of identity and intimacy development. In other words, identity and intimacy in females appear to be fused psychosocial constructs, where identity is partially based on the female’s attachment to a significant other (Adams & Archer, 1994).

Schiedel and Marcia (1985) examined the fusing of identity and intimacy in females in a study with 80 participants. They found that males and females did not differ in their levels of identity status (Schiedel & Marcia, 1985). However, considering their age it would be expected that most participants, regardless of gender, would be high in identity development. Their findings supported the theory that identity and intimacy are fused in women (Schiedel & Marcia, 1985). They explained that some women have the ability to overcome intimacy issues prior to identity issues, whereas men tend to display a developmental pattern mirroring that of Erikson’s (1968) stages, where they experience identity development first, followed by intimacy (Schiedel & Marcia, 1985). Therefore, it is possible that the consecutive stages of identity vs. identity confusion and intimacy vs. isolation in Eriksonian (1968) theory are not applicable to female psychosocial development.
The reason for this discrepancy between male and female development can be linked to a feminist perspective. It has been suggested that the Eriksonian (1968) standpoint of the progression through identity and intimacy represents a masculine bias that emphasizes separation rather than connection (Horst, 1995). In this sense, Erikson (1968) failed to recognize the nurturing and compassionate characteristics that are typical of females, which explains why identity and intimacy tend to be connected facets of a woman’s psychosocial development (Horst, 1995). Horst (1995) contended that male development emphasizes separateness, which is why it is typical for men to experience identity prior to intimacy. However, similar to Erikson’s (1968) proposal, women tend to define themselves through others, causing identity and intimacy tasks to be fused (Horst, 1995). In adhering to the theoretical explanations for female psychosocial development, Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer, and Orlofsky (1993) stated that it is commonly accepted for women to experience identity while simultaneously attending to their development of intimacy.

The present research will examine the viewpoint on male psychosocial development and its accordance with Erikson’s (1968) theory, which suggested that male intimacy development is influenced by their respective identity development. It will simultaneously focus on the perspectives that originated from Gilligan’s (1982) ideas regarding female psychosocial development, and whether or not identity and intimacy appear to be fused or merged constructs for females.

The goal of the current study is to assess the identity and intimacy development in males and females to determine the applicability of Erikson’s (1968) theory to male and female psychosocial development. Specifically, this study will consider the influence of identity on intimacy for males, and the potential fusion of identity and intimacy in females. The purpose of
this research is to establish a psychosocial theory of development that is representative of all persons, irrespective of gender. With constant alteration in our societal norms, it is significant to psychologists to develop a psychosocial theory of lifespan development that is indefinitely sound and representative of the population.

With regards to previous research, there are two specific hypotheses involved in the current study. First, it is expected that in males, identity development will be a predictor of intimacy development. Second, in females, it is expected that identity development and intimacy development will be fused, so that neither identity nor intimacy will predict one another.

Method

Participants

The current study consisted of a random sample of 301 college-aged students, with a female to male ratio of 60:40. The sample of students was Canadian, obtained from the University of Guelph between the years of 1994 through 1996. Due to the nature of the participants, their characteristics were primarily representative of Caucasian, middle to upper class students. The study began during the participant’s entering year of university and ended when the students entered their second year.

Apparatus

Identity and intimacy are typically assessed by measuring their constructs and establishing their correlated association (Adams & Archer, 1994). Therefore, the materials were created to measure the constructs of the variables of identity and intimacy via questionnaire format. This provided an adequate amount of information, which allowed the researchers to analyze any potential relationships between the two variables. The materials used in the present
study included two questionnaires (see Appendices A and B), and a computerized statistical 
program called SPSS.

The first questionnaire was developed to measure ego identity status, and it was named 
the Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (OMEIS). This questionnaire uses the constructs 
of the identity types suggested by Marcia (1966), and includes diffusion, foreclosure, 
moratorium, and achievement. For the purposes of the current study, foreclosure and 
moratorium will not be included in the analysis.

The original questionnaire, developed by Adams, Shea and Fitch (1979) had a total of 24 
items. The questions were in the format of a Likert scale, with six potential answers, ranging 
from strongly disagree to strongly agree. With the exclusion of the moratorium and foreclosed 
items, 12 items remained, six of which were achieved items and the other six were diffused 
items. The questionnaire has achieved solid reliability and validity statistics, and is a widely 
used tool within this domain of research (Adams, 1998).

The second scale, known as the Intimate Communication Scale, was generated to 
measure romantic intimate communication. The nine true or false items were drawn from 
various intimacy scales and assembled by Adams (1996). One of the items was reverse scored. 
The scale was constructed in this manner because there was no available intimacy scale that 
focused on a strong sense of closeness in a romantic relationship. Although there are scales 
available that measure the construct of intimacy according to the categories suggested by 
Orlofsky (1976), this scale has a specific focus on communication in romantic relationships, 
which is a concept that is thought to be highly representative of the intimate individual. Due to 
the limited information regarding the soundness and applicability of the Intimate Communication 
Scale, the current study will conduct reliability analyses using SPSS.
Procedure

The study was initiated by sending out a mass e-mail to the entire population of first year students, prior to the commencement of their first semester. This e-mail was designed to stimulate the student’s interest in participating in the study, while simultaneously acting as an informed consent. The contents of this e-mail are summarized in Appendix C. By agreeing to participate in the study, the participants were also acknowledging that they had read and understood the informed consent form. They were then handed copies of the OMEIS and Intimate Communication Scale questionnaires that measured the concepts of identity and intimacy. The participants were contacted one year after the completion of the first set of questionnaires, and were asked to complete the questionnaires for a second time. A longitudinal design was used to enable the researchers the ability to make conclusions about the predictive value of the concepts of identity and intimacy. There was no deception involved in the study.

Once the results were tallied, they were entered into SPSS where the descriptive statistics, correlations, and cross-lag analyses could be performed. T-tests were used to determine any significant differences in the scores between males and females on the levels of identity diffusion, identity achievement, and intimacy. Reliability analyses were performed to evaluate the consistency of the identity diffusion, identity achievement, and intimacy measures. Correlations were observed between identity at time one and identity at time two, intimacy at time one and intimacy at time two, identity and intimacy at time one, and identity and intimacy at time two. The cross-lag correlations were needed to observe the correlations between identity at time one and intimacy at time two, and intimacy at time one and identity at time two. Analyses were conducted separately for achieved and diffused males, and achieved and diffused females. This enabled the researchers to examine the potential influence of gender on identity
and intimacy. Therefore, there were four unique sets of correlations: diffused males, achieved males, diffused females, and achieved females.

The cross-lag analysis technique, developed by Kenny (1976) can only be used if all other correlations are significant (Adams & Archer, 1994). Once these requirements are met, the cross-lag analysis can be computed. The \( r \) values that result from the cross-lag analysis must be compared in order to determine the predictive value of one of the variables (identity or intimacy) over time. In other words, the ability to state that either identity or intimacy predict one another is dependent on the significant difference between the two cross-lag correlations.

If both cross-lag correlations are significant, a t-test must be computed in order to determine the significant difference between the correlations. Through transforming the \( r \) values into \( z \) scores, it is possible to conduct a t-test of correlations, as suggested by Edwards (1967). The results of the t-test will enable the researchers to verify any differences between the cross-lag correlations, which would create the potential to demonstrate directional dominance.

Therefore, if the results of the t-test are significant, the conclusion that either identity or intimacy is predictive of the other can be assumed. Another way to determine directional dominance is if there is one cross-lag correlation that is significant and the other one is not. In this case, whichever cross-lag correlation was significant would be the one holding predictive value.

Results

Figure and table captions can be found in Appendix D. The descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, t-tests and reliability analyses can be found in Table 1 (see Appendix E). Levene’s test for equality of variances found a significant difference between males \( (M = 5.96, SD = 2.10) \) and females \( (M = 7.07, SD = 1.72) \) on the intimacy measure for the first year students, \( F(218) = 6.83, p < .01 \). The t-test for the equality of means determined a
significant difference between males and females on the same intimacy measure, $t(114.38) = -3.87, p < .01$. The t-test for the equality of means also found a significant difference between males ($M = 23.86, SD = 4.73$) and females ($M = 22.58, SD = 4.04$) on the identity achievement measure for first year students, $t(298) = 2.46, p < .01$. No other gender differences were observed.

The reliability analyses determined the consistency of the identity diffusion, identity achievement, and intimacy measures. The Cronbach’s alpha for the identity diffusion measure was .81. For the identity achievement measure the Cronbach’s alpha was .62. The Cronbach’s alpha for the intimacy measure was .70.

**Diffused Males**

Correlations were performed to measure the relationship between identity and intimacy over time in hope of finding predictive value within the variables. The correlations for diffused males can be found in Figure 1 (see Appendix F). It was expected that the correlations between identity at time one and identity at time two, and intimacy at time one and intimacy at time two, would both be significantly positively correlated. The correlation between identity at time one and identity at time two was significant, $r = .66, n = 101, p < .01$, two tailed, so the identity measure is consistent over time. The correlation between intimacy at time one and intimacy at time two was significant, $r = .54, n = 58, p < .01$, two tailed, so the intimacy measure is also consistent over time. It was expected that the correlations between identity and intimacy at time one and time two would be significantly negatively correlated. Although the correlations were negative, they were not significant.

It was expected that the correlations between identity at time one and intimacy at time two, and intimacy at time one and identity at time two, would both be significantly negatively
correlated. It was also expected that the correlation between identity at time one and intimacy at
time two would be significantly stronger than the correlation between intimacy at time one and
identity at time two, suggesting that identity would be predictive of intimacy. The correlation
between identity at time one and intimacy at time two was not significant, suggesting that
identity is not predictive of intimacy in diffused males. However, the correlation between
intimacy at time one and identity at time two was significant, $r = -0.25, n = 69, p < .05$, two tailed.
This confirms the negative relationship between identity and intimacy and suggests that intimacy
is a predictor of identity in diffused males.

**Achieved Males**

The correlations for achieved males can be found in Figure 2 (see Appendix G). Similar
to diffused males, it was expected that the correlations between identity at time one and identity
at time two, and intimacy at time one and intimacy at time two, would both be significantly
positively correlated. The correlation between identity at time one and identity at time two was
significant, $r = .56, n = 101, p < .01$, two tailed, showing that identity is stable over time. The
correlation between intimacy at time one and intimacy at time two is the same for achieved
males as it is for diffused males, and is noted above. It was expected that the correlations
between identity and intimacy at time one and time two would be significantly positively
correlated. The correlation between identity and intimacy at time one was significant, $r = .26, n
= 70, p < .05$, two tailed, so identity and intimacy are positively related. The correlation between
identity and intimacy at time two was also significant, $r = .30, n = 65, p < .05$, so identity and
intimacy are consistently positively related.

It was expected that the correlations between identity at time one and intimacy at time
two, and intimacy at time one and identity at time two, would both be significantly positively

correlated. Following the pattern for diffused males, it was expected that the correlation between identity at time one and intimacy at time two would be significantly stronger than the correlation between intimacy at time one and identity at time two, suggesting again that identity would be predictive of intimacy. Similar to the pattern found in diffused males, the correlation between identity at time one and intimacy at time two was not significant, suggesting that identity does not predict intimacy in either diffused or achieved males. The correlation between intimacy at time one and identity at time two was significant, \( r = .36, n = 69, p < .01 \), two tailed, suggesting again that intimacy is a predictor of identity in achieved males, as well as diffused males.

**Diffused Females**

The correlations for diffused females can be found in Figure 3 (see Appendix H). It was expected that the correlations between identity at time one and identity at time two, and intimacy at time one and intimacy at time two, would both be significantly positively correlated. The correlation between identity at time one and identity at time two was significant, \( r = .70, n = 196, p < .01 \), two tailed, so identity is stable over time. The correlation between intimacy at time one and intimacy at time two was also significant, \( r = .52, n = 134, p < .01 \), two tailed, so intimacy is stable over time in females. It was expected that the correlations between identity and intimacy at time one and time two would be significantly negatively correlated. Neither of these correlations were significant.

It was expected that the correlations between identity at time one and intimacy at time two, and intimacy at time one and identity at time two, would both be significantly negatively correlated. Unlike males, it was expected that these correlations would not be significantly different from one another, suggesting that identity and intimacy is fused in females. Neither of
these correlations were significant, suggesting that there is no relationship between identity and intimacy in diffused females.

*Achieved Females*

The correlations for achieved females can be found in Figure 4 (see Appendix I). Following the trend of the previous predictions, it was expected that the correlations between identity at time one and identity at time two, and intimacy at time one and intimacy at time two, would both be significantly positively correlated. The correlation between identity at time one and identity at time two was significant, $r = .38$, $n = 196$, $p < .01$, two tailed, so identity is consistently stable over time across all variables in the study. The correlation between intimacy at time one and intimacy at time two is the same for achieved females as it is for diffused females, and is noted above. It was expected that the correlations between identity and intimacy at time one and time two would be significantly positively correlated. Similar to diffused females, neither of these correlations were significant.

It was expected that the correlations between identity at time one and intimacy at time two, and intimacy at time one and identity at time two, would both be significantly positively correlated. The predictions follow the same pattern as diffused females in that these correlations were not expected to be significantly different from one another, suggesting that identity and intimacy is fused in females. Similar to diffused females, neither of these correlations were significant, suggesting that there is no relationship between identity and intimacy in diffused females.

**Discussion**

The findings of the present study are incongruent with previous research on identity and intimacy development. The hypotheses derived from previous studies and theoretical viewpoints
were not confirmed for either males or females in this sample. Although there are numerous potential explanations, further research is required to examine the results and the implications of the results rendered by the current study.

*Males*

In the past, researchers suggested that identity predicted intimacy in males (Bartle-Haring & Strimple, 1996; Craig-Bray, Adams & Dobson, 1988; Dyk & Adams, 1990; Fitch & Adams, 1983; Hodgson & Fischer, 1979; Kacerguis & Adams, 1980; Kahn, Zimmerman, Csikszentmihalyi & Getzels, 1985; Lacombe & Gay, 1998; Rotenberg, Schaut & O’Connor, 1993; Schiedel & Marcia, 1985). The hypothesis for the current study corresponded to previous research and it was expected that identity development would be a predictor of intimacy development in males. However, the current study yields results proposing an alternate opposing theory in which intimacy is a predictor of identity in males.

In both diffused and achieved groups of males, intimacy was a stronger predictor of identity than identity was of intimacy. Therefore, a male who was intimately connected to a partner was likely to be less diffused, or more achieved, in their identity development one year later. This is fairly strong evidence arguing against Erikson’s (1968) theory of psychosocial personality development. Instead of achieving identity prior to intimacy, this research indicates that males may achieve intimacy prior to identity. These results resemble the findings from previous research in female psychosocial development more closely than the findings from previous research in male psychosocial development. Therefore, male identity and intimacy development may be changing to resemble the female trend found in identity and intimacy development several decades ago, by researchers such as Gilligan (1982).
Females

Research on identity and intimacy has shown differing trends when examining female development. Schiedel and Marcia (1985) suggested that females have the ability to overcome issues regarding intimacy prior to their identity development. Adams and Archer (1994) and Gilligan (1982) contended that identity and intimacy were fused psychosocial constructs in females, where identity development depended partially on their connection with an intimate partner. The hypothesis in the current study mirrored that of Adams and Archer (1994) and Gilligan (1982), and it was expected that identity and intimacy would be fused in females. However, the current study reports results disconfirming the hypothesis formed from those studies, as well as the previous research examined in the area of identity and intimacy development in females.

There were no significant correlations found between identity and intimacy in females. This finding remained consistent over both diffused and achieved categories. Therefore, the results suggest that female intimacy development is not influenced by their level of identity development one year later. Similarly, female identity development is not influenced by their level of intimacy one year later. These results argue against Erikson’s (1968) psychosocial theory of personality development because they show no relation between identity and intimacy in females. Not only do these results dispute Erikson’s (1968) research, but they quarrel the theories of fused constructs previously suggested by Schiedel and Marcia (1985), Adams and Archer (1994), and Gilligan (1982). Instead of achieving identity and intimacy simultaneously, this research suggests that in females, identity and intimacy may not be related constructs, meaning that one cannot be used to predict the other.
When examining the means between males and females, there were two areas in which they were significantly different. The first was the intimacy measure for first year students. Females scored significantly higher on the intimacy scale than males in their first year. This finding would correspond with previous research, suggesting that females are more capable of developing early intimate connections than males (Schiedel & Marcia, 1985).

The second area was identity achievement in first year, where males scored significantly higher than females. This finding also corresponds with previous research suggesting that females develop identity later than males, meaning males would have a higher level of identity achievement at a younger age when compared to their female counterparts (Schiedel & Marcia, 1985). Although the results of the t-test acquiesce with prior studies, they are not conducive to the predictive ability of either identity or intimacy. Since the differences in means between males and females were not consistent over time, they could not account for the influence of either identity or intimacy on one another.

Explanations

One possibility for the current findings is the occurrence of a fluke. It could be that the sample was flawed and therefore could not yield results consistent with previous research. Another explanation would be the presence of spuriousness. It is possible that there are other variables interacting with the identity and intimacy variables that are causing a shift in the trend of identity and intimacy development.

A third possible explanation is that the scales used in the present research may need modification or reexamination. The items being measured may be more applicable to male psychosocial personality development than female psychosocial personality development, or vice
versa. Perhaps gendered scales, consisting of separate scales for both males and females, would deliver results similar to those found in the past.

Another possibility is maturation and a change in psychosocial personality development over time. It may be that adolescents and young adults in today’s North American society feel pressured into developing intimate connections with their partners more so than previous generations. Also, youth today have more opportunity to form intimate connections because of increased access to others via the Internet and other such advanced technologies. As communication techniques increase in number and popularity, so do our respective social circles, resulting in increased opportunity and likelihood to meet potential partners. Therefore, individuals in modern society may place greater emphasis and focus on intimacy development than identity development.

It is also likely that the level of maturation and responsibility that is required to develop identity may not exist, or may be delayed in adolescents and young adults. This could be because of their prolonged commitment to school and other such domains that have lengthened the stages of adolescence and young adulthood. Therefore, the theory of males developing intimacy prior to identity in our study may be explained by their inability to develop identity prior to focusing on other desirable goals, such as intimate connections, education, and vocational needs.

Along with the change in psychosocial personality development, the definitions of identity and intimacy may not be suitable in today’s culture. If intimacy is occurring prior to identity in males, then Erikson’s (1968) definition of intimacy may not be applicable in current times. Erikson (1968) recognizes intimacy as a fusing of identities resulting in a harmonic relationship between these identities. Therefore, Erikson’s (1968) definition of intimacy requires
individuals to have already formed their identities. Since intimacy is occurring prior to identity
development in our study, Erikson’s (1968) definition of intimacy may have to be adjusted to fit the current pattern of intimacy development.

Limitations

Although there was a large sample size used in the current study, a sampling bias exists that may have influenced the findings. For one, the Canadian sample may have generated results different from previous studies conducted with American samples. Second, the sample was based on self-selection to some degree. The participants involved in the current study may have yielded results different from an entirely random sample. However, most studies conducted within the field of psychosocial personality development utilize the self-selection process. Therefore, the current sample should not yield results different from previous research solely due to the self-selection process.

Further, the data in this study were taken from a sample of participants that completed the identity and intimacy questionnaires for a separate study ten years ago. The time elapsed between the data collection and the data analysis may prevent the current results from being applicable to modern society.

Future Research

Research should be done using both Canadian and American samples in order to determine whether or not there is geographical or cultural influence on identity and intimacy development. Further, researchers should examine the possibility of spuriousness within the constructs of identity and intimacy by experimenting with other variables, such as age, level of education, etc. It is possible that identity and intimacy are independent of one another and can be moderated by other variables.
Future research should be conducted using random sampling, as opposed to self-selection. This will enable researchers to examine any differences between the two types of sampling. It will also allow for an expansion in the demographics of the sample, which currently tends to consist of college-aged, middle to upper class students.

Future researchers should also retest the current study with a similar sample and research design to determine whether or not the results from the current study are merely a fluke. Further, modifications should be made to the scales used for measuring identity and intimacy development in case of a tendency for the scales to favor certain characteristics over others. Similarly, the definitions of identity and intimacy should be analyzed to determine whether or not they are appropriate for use in current identity and intimacy research.

**Conclusion**

Although the findings of the current study are not consistent with previous research, further examination of identity and intimacy development should be conducted prior to making permanent conclusions. There are some limitations to the sample and design of the study, but the results should not go unnoticed. The findings from this study could potentially be representative of a cultural shift in the development of personality constructs such as identity and intimacy. Therefore, previous research and theories may not be applicable to youth and young adults in modern day culture. Psychosocial personality development theories, such as Erikson’s (1968), may need to be explored and modified in order to develop a new psychosocial personality theory that is applicable to our changing society.
References


Appendix A

Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status

Read each item and indicate to what degree it reflects your thoughts and feelings. *Circle the number that best describes your own view using the following scale:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Moderately Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Moderately Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. I haven’t really considered politics. They just don’t excite me much. 1 2 3 4 5 6
2. I might have thought about a lot of different things but there’s never really been a decision since my parents said what they wanted. 1 2 3 4 5 6
3. When it comes to religion, I just haven’t found any that I’m really into myself. 1 2 3 4 5 6
4. My parents had it decided a long time ago what I should go into and I’m following their plans. 1 2 3 4 5 6
5. There are so many different political parties and ideals. I can’t decide which to follow until I figure it all out. 1 2 3 4 5 6
6. I don’t give religion much thought and it doesn’t bother me one way or the other. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7. I guess I’m pretty much like my folks when it comes to politics. I follow what they do in terms of voting and such. 1 2 3 4 5 6
8. I haven’t chosen the occupation I really want to get into, but I’m working towards becoming a……until something better comes along. 1 2 3 4 5 6
9. A person’s faith is unique to each individual. I’ve considered and reconsidered it myself and know what I can believe. 1 2 3 4 5 6
10. It took me a long time to decide but now I know for sure what direction to move in for a career. 1 2 3 4 5 6
11. I really never was involved in politics enough to have to make a firm stand one way or the other. 1 2 3 4 5 6
12. I’m not so sure what religion means to me. I’d like to make up my mind but I’m not done looking yet. 1 2 3 4 5 6
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Moderately Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Moderately Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I’ve thought my political beliefs through and realize I may or may not agree with many of my parents’ beliefs.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>It took me awhile to figure it out, but now I really know what I want for a career.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Religion is confusing to me right now. I keep changing my views on what is right and wrong for me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>I’m sure it will be pretty easy for me to change my occupational goals when something better comes along.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>My folks have always had their own political and moral beliefs about issues like abortion and mercy killing and I’ve always gone along accepting what they have.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>I’ve gone through a period of serious questioning about faith and can now say I understand what I believe as an individual.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>I’m not sure about my political beliefs, but I’m trying to figure out what I can truly believe in.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>I just can’t decide how capable I am as a person and what jobs I’ll be right for.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>I attend the same church as my family has always attended. I’ve never really questioned why.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>I just can’t decide what to do for an occupation. There are so many that have possibilities.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>I’ve never really questioned my religion. If it’s right for my parents it must be right for me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Politics are something that I can never be too sure about because things change so fast. But I do think it’s important to know what I believe in.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B
Intimate Communication Scale

In this section “partner” refers to one person with whom you now have (or have had) an intimate relationship, whether a dating partner, spouse or a friend with whom you are (or have been) romantically involved. Please read the following instructions carefully before responding to statements in this section.

- If you are now involved in an intimate relationship, respond to the following statements in terms of that relationship.
- If you are not currently involved in an intimate relationship, but have had one or more within the past twelve months, then respond to the statements in this section in terms of the single most significant of those relationships. Remember, respond in terms of the same relationship throughout this section.
- If you do not currently have a “partner” and have not been involved in an intimate relationship during the past twelve months, please go to the next section.

Decide whether each of the following statements is True (usually true of you) or False (usually not true of you). Indicate your answer by placing a T or F in the blank provided.

T : True       F : False

___ 1. My partner and I regularly discuss or make plans on how we will spend our time together.

___ 2. Within the past twelve months I have successfully resolved a major disagreement with my partner.

___ 3. I have helped my partner achieve a personal goal that she/he had established.

___ 4. I frequently feel as if my partner’s successes are also my successes.

___ 5. My partner and I frequently talk about what each of us is seeking from our relationship.

___ 6. Almost everyday I tell my partner things that I don’t tell anyone else.

___ 7. I am usually on guard about what I say and do around my partner in order to avoid upsetting or displeasing him/her.

___ 8. Sharing my innermost thoughts with my partner is the thing I value most in our relationship.

___ 9. My partner and I have agreed upon the limits to be placed on our physical relationship.
Appendix C

Informed Consent

The informed consent for this study simply asked each student for his or her participation in the research project. It briefly outlined the area of research that they would be involved in. It explained that the students had the right to ask questions and/or withdraw at any time before or during the study. It also explained the right to confidentiality, ensuring that their results would in no way be linked to any personal identification.

There was no debriefing for the study. However, there was contact information on the informed consent in case of any questions that were to be directed to the researchers.
Appendix D

Figure and Table Caption

* - correlation is significant at the .05 level, two tailed

** - correlation is significant at the .01 level, two tailed
Table 1

**Descriptive Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Diffused</th>
<th></th>
<th>Achieved</th>
<th></th>
<th>Intimacy</th>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>Time 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>20.41</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>23.86</td>
<td>4.73</td>
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<td>23.34</td>
<td>4.52</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>2.1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.47</td>
<td>2.15</td>
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<td>Females</td>
<td>21.09</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>20.56</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>22.58</td>
<td>4.04</td>
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<td></td>
<td>22.95</td>
<td>4.45</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7.07</td>
<td>1.72</td>
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<td>7.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
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<td>t-test</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.01**</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.00**</td>
<td>.10</td>
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<td>Cronbach’s alpha</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.70</td>
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</table>
Appendix F

Figure 1

*Correlations for Identity Diffused Males*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time 1</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.66**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- .13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>Intimacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.54**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- .25*</td>
<td>- .19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: ** indicates significance at the p < .01 level.*
Appendix G

Figure 2

*Correlations for Identity Achieved Males*

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Time 1} \\
\text{Identity} \\ \\
\uparrow .26^* \\
\downarrow .21 \\
\text{Intimacy} \\
\end{array}
\quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{Time 2} \\
\text{Identity} \\ \\
\uparrow .30^* \\
\downarrow .36^{**} \\
\text{Intimacy} \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Identity} & \rightarrow .56^{**} \\
\text{Intimacy} & \rightarrow .54^{**} \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Identity} & \leftarrow .26^* \\
\text{Intimacy} & \leftarrow .21 \\
\end{array}
\]
Appendix H

Figure 3

*Correlations for Identity Diffused Females*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time 1</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.52**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>.70**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* ** denotes significance at the .01 level.
Appendix I

Figure 4

*Correlations for Identity Achieved Females*

\[
\begin{array}{c|cc|c|cc}
\text{Time 1} & \text{Identity} & .38^{**} & \text{Identity} \\
\hline
.10 & .09 & .07 & .02 \\
\text{Intimacy} & .52^{**} & \text{Intimacy} \\
\end{array}
\]