

INTIMACY : A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

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This study develops an empirically based taxonomy of closeness in personal relationships that is applicable for both genders across the life course for English- and Xhosa-speaking inhabitants of Grahamstown, South Africa. The intent was to confront certain problems of theoretical incoherence and hence of fragmentation in empirical research have beset the still relatively new area of interpersonal closeness, or intimacy, in academic psychology. To this end the author has sought to develop an analytical delineation of the parameters of intimacy in general through a comprehensive and unbiased research strategy.

A rigorously random sample of 200 inhabitants of Grahamstown was divided equally by gender, ethnicity, and five age groupings. The subjects replied to an open-ended questionnaire of 56 items, many of which required them to name an individual (or individuals) whom they would choose in a series of closeness contexts. Life histories were also gathered. All answers were coded, with relationship responses divided into the three age-, ethnic- and gender-neutral categories of "family," "friends" and "other."

The null hypothesis that intimacy is a single factor was disproved by a count procedure to measure homogeneity/heterogeneity of response. Although no one mentioned the same person in response to all the questions, neither were the responses widely dispersed. Thus one might conclude that the phenomenon of closeness is multi-dimensional, rather than either completely homogeneous or totally heterogeneous.

On the basis of the ratio between family, friend, and other responses, a nonparametric "goodness-of-fit" test (confirmed by Cramer's V) compared the pattern of responses on each question to that of every other. The method then clustered together response ratios that fitted closely with at least two others in the group. This procedure identified eleven dimensions of closeness, nine of which form a Closeness Continuum ranging from those with a high ratio of family responses (Ascribed category) to those in which the family-friend ratio is more nearly equal (Voluntary category). This division enables a researcher to distinguish between "familiar" and "friend-like" close relationships without making a formal kin/nonkin dichotomization. The two dimensions which fall outside the Closeness Continuum deal with the Practical areas of finances and personal services, respectively.

The balance of the study looks at the three independent variables -- age, ethnicity, and gender -- as regards

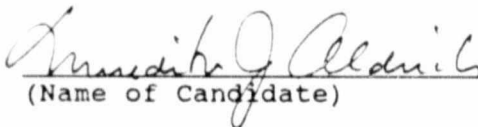
both their homogeneity/heterogeneity of responses and their correlations with the dimensions of closeness. Most interesting with regard to age is the finding that children and middle-aged adults scored proportionally higher on Ascribed closeness while young adults were highest on the Voluntary dimensions. Young adulthood, and to a lesser extent adolescence and senior adulthood, are each in their own right periods of transition in close relationships. Quantitative results agreed with a careful hermeneutic analysis of the qualitative life history material. The findings raise serious questions about studies of closeness based upon samples of college students.

Xhosa and English-speaking networks of closeness were totally segregated from each other (an artefact of institutionalized racism). Although black South Africans listed more close others at the outset of the interview, their range of mentions on the questionnaire was no greater than that of the white English-speakers. On the Closeness dimensions, blacks mentioned somewhat more family than did the whites, especially on the Ascribed end of the Continuum, but the differences were not so great as might have been expected, given studies on working class personal relationships. Striking differences were noted, however, with regard to discursive idiom about relationships.

With regard to gender, male and female family/friend mentions on the Closeness Continuum did not differ significantly. In terms of whether respondents mentioned males or females, however, significant differences emerged. In the Ascribed dimensions, females mentioned males and females about equally, thus not rejecting the null hypothesis, whereas males mentioned females two to three times as often, an asymmetry matched by an imbalance of division of labour in the Practical category. In the Voluntary dimensions, same-gender mentions predominated. Further, where males mentioned females or females mentioned males, the mentions were almost exclusively family members (except for the young adult group). The implications of these findings for contemporary feminist psychological theory are discussed at length in the text.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.



(Name of Candidate)

The thirtieth day of July, 1988.

To My Mother
and
In Memory of My Father

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Finally and certainly of central import are the contributions of my husband and children, without whom the thesis would have been written twenty years ago earlier but with whom the topic and content have taken on a radically different character.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The impetus and motivation for this study have grown out of the author's conviction, based on her experience as a woman, daughter, wife, mother, erstwhile student of literature and educator, that one of the most difficult and neglected fields in the scientific study of human behaviour is that of close personal relationships. Feminist scholarship of the past two decades has insisted that the personal is political and therefore that the intimate and private sphere cannot be ignored if we are to understand public life.

For too long, such scholars argue, the spheres of politics and production have been the primary subjects of social scientific study. Reproduction, however, is much more than merely biological. It is more even than the provision of those domestic services which bring the worker, male or female, each morning to the factory gate -- or the executive or politician to the committee room. There is not only the need for nurture in early childhood and for socialization and education en route to adulthood. There is also a need for ongoing nurturance, reassurance, identity-maintenance and emotional fulfillment that would seem essential to normal on-going human functioning. That too is part of the reproductive processes which underlie productive public lives.

Yet even in psychology, except in the clinical sphere, which has to deal with failure in this reproductive area, the academic study of interpersonal closeness has been a singularly neglected area until late. The major thrust even of social psychology has been cognitive (cf. for example, Mower White, 1982), rather than emotional or even interactional (but cf. now Duck, 1986). Scientific psychological researchers have until recently turned their attention away from intimate human relationships. The reasons have been many, no doubt. For one, close relationships reach so deep into the human psyche that they tend to be overlooked, taken for granted. Their highly charged emotional content tends to render them invisible to the staunchly rational scientist. Further, in the modern, industrialized West, the domain of relationships has tended to be associated with women, whereas the great breakthroughs in psychology have been strongly male dominated. Thus close relationships have been both ignored and trivialized. Even where they have been acknowledged as an important area of inquiry, their very personal and confidential character has left them until recently very largely the preserve of psychotherapists (and artists, of course).

The highly private nature of interpersonal closeness has also impeded empirical work that has been undertaken. Much experimental work has been confined to captive populations of the researchers' university students. Surveys have typically made use informal networks for

introductions to the respondents, or on voluntary mail-in replies to widely distributed questionnaires. Finally, clinical studies have tended to rely on psychiatric cases. Obviously all these techniques lead to inherently biased results.

With those problems in mind, this study has attempted to discover with as little bias as possible who are the deepest intimates for people at various stages in the life course, and thereby to develop an analytical delineation of the parameters of intimacy in general. The concern here is to investigate relationships as they exist not in theory nor in the laboratory but in real life, and to examine the impact upon close relationships of three major variables -- age, gender and ethnicity/ social class. Before setting out the methods and results of the investigation, however, it is necessary to place this study more precisely within the rapidly burgeoning field of social and personal relationships.

1.2 STATE OF THE FIELD

1.2.1 Academic Psychological Work Before 1980

When this study was conceived in 1981, the psychological literature on relationships generally, let alone close relationships, was thin indeed. In fact, the very term "close relationships" was itself not in general psychological use -- hence the "intimacy" in the title to

this work. Throughout this study the words "intimate" and "close" are used interchangeably. "Closeness" is defined in terms of subjects' own definitions of closeness, however, as opposed to the more behavioural usage of Kelley, et al (1983), for whom "closeness" consists of a high degree of interdependence as measured by an outside observer. The procedure here is more naturalistic in that subjects were simply asked first to list close others and then to name specific individuals in response to a series of questions.

The notion of "close relationships" developed by Kelley, et al (1983) is derived from "equity theory" (Homans, 1961, Thibaut & Kelly, 1959, Walster et al., 1978), which is one of the models for relationships which was available in academic psychology in 1980. Others included Byrne's (1971) "attraction paradigm," Jourard's (1964) work on "self-disclosure," Altman and Taylor's (1973) notion of "personal interpenetration," Winch's (1958, 1963) theory of "complementary needs" (supplemented by Kerkhoff and Davis' (1962) findings on "value consensus"), and Levinger's (1974) rather tentative and untested "three-level approach to attraction."

All these models tended to be rigorously hypothetico-deductive, and many of them had been empirically tested with mixed results. Most of them dealt with initial interpersonal attraction, and none of them looked at

ongoing personal relationships across the life-span. Indeed, they tended to generalize from non-random samples of college students. Huston (1974) and Duck's (1977) collections and Berscheid and Walster's (1978) survey summed up the state of the art at this stage.

From the point of view of the intent of this study -- which was to investigate close relationships as multi-dimensional processes of interaction across the life-span, controlling for gender and ethnicity/social class -- the literature was exceedingly sparse. As Kerkhoff (1974) had pointed out, the current literature ignored the social setting of relationships. As Duck and Sants (1983) suggested later, it tended to reify personal attributes in its additive conception of interpersonal processes. In fact, as Hinde (1980:ch.1) was to argue, it was theoretically incoherent because it drew upon various theoretical paradigms from mainstream psychology (eg. reinforcement) or sociology (eg. equity) without developing theoretical (or even descriptive) models of its own. Such theoretical incoherence went along with a methodological dogmatism as much aimed at respectability in general psychological circles as at devising methods appropriate to problems in the area of personal relationships as such.

1.2.2 Psychotherapeutic Studies

The situation in academic social psychology began to change gradually with the publication of Hinde's (1979) pathbreaking overview and Duck and Gilmour's (1981a & 1981b) important series of collected articles on personal relationships, and finally with the founding of the Journal of Social and Personal Relationships in 1984. In 1981, however, for the purposes of this study (although the questionnaire did include several rather abortive questions relating to equity), psycho-therapeutic work, with its stress on personal development and family relationships, seemed much more promising as a theoretical starting-point. This was particularly the case if one took seriously modifications of Freud's work stemming from Ian Suttie (1960/1935) and his and Melanie Klein's successors at the Tavistock Clinic (especially Winnicott, 1965, Bowlby, 1971/69 & 1975/73, and Parkes, 1975/72), Erik Erikson (1977/50 & 1959), and the feminist psychoanalytic insights of Dinnerstein (1976) and Chodorow (1978).

Freud categorizes primary affective relationships as narcissistic or anaclitic, that is, stemming either from love of oneself or from attachment to an emotional descendent of one of those individuals who met one's earliest and most basic needs. According to the narcissistic type, a person may love:

- a. what he is himself (actually himself)
- b. what he once was
- c. what he would like to be
- d. someone who was once part of himself

There is also object-choice of the anaclitic or attachment type:

- a. the woman who tends
- b. the man who protects,
and those substitutes which succeed them one after another. [Freud, 1963/1914:71]

Freud goes on to insist that these are analytical distinctions only, that people cannot be neatly divided into two distinct groups. Rather, both kinds of object choice are available to each person, although one mode may be preferred to the other.

He postulates a primary narcissism for everyone, that everyone originally had two sexual objects -- himself and his caretaker. Of course, the new-born infant fails to make any distinction between the two to begin with. It is crucial, according to Freud, that the child's first love-object will be the mother. The ultimate unavailability of the mother eventually gives rise to the Oedipus complex, which will be differently resolved for male and female children and in so doing will create some differential gender characteristics. Thus, for Freud, "the loves of normal people... are derived from the infantile fixation of tender feelings on the mother, and represent one of the consequences of that fixation" (Freud, 1977/1910:235). Hence, it is in the nexus of the nuclear family and inherent and instinctual self-interest

that a person's psycho-social roots are laid down.

It is this stress on the fundamental importance of family relationships in the formation of a properly functioning self that characterizes psycho-analysis. Analysts at the Tavistock Clinic in London have followed Ian Suttie (1960/1935) in rejecting the biological and individualistic assumptions of Freud's theory by insisting that human beings are fundamentally social. This sociability is rooted in the child's ability for tenderness towards the mother (the first love-relationship) and its anxiety about losing her. Thus:

The expression of emotion has little or no biological value except as a means of communication....expression is essentially a social process, and, though it may serve the interests of the individual, it also establishes rapports that are intrinsically pleasurable.... All the elements of expression... are intuitively apprehended together as one meaningful word. That word is love, and it signifies to the mind, not the anticipation of organic pleasures to come, but a sense of security and companionship which is pleasant in itself, and which certainly plays a part in life from very early days, even if it is not truly instinctual. And it might very well be a true instinct... [Suttie, 1960: 55-56, italics omitted].

Indeed, for Ian Suttie, social relationships generally are substitutes for the mother's and child's mutual enjoyment of caresses in play. As he says:

I think that play, cooperation, competition, and culture-interests generally are substitutes for the mutually caressing relationship of child and mother. By these substitutes we put the whole social environment in the place once occupied by mother....A joint interest in things has replaced the reciprocal interest in persons; friendship has developed out of love. True, the personal love and sympathy is preserved in friendship; but this differs from love in so far as it comes

about by the direction of attention upon the same things (rather than upon each other), or by the pursuit of the same activities even if these are not intrinsically useful and gratifying... [Suttie, 1960:13, italics omitted].

Bowlby (1971/69 & 1975/73) follows the same general tradition as Suttie in his voluminous writings on attachment and loss, but with somewhat more biological emphases. He sees the child's ties to its mother/caretaker as an instinctive response that serves to ensure survival.

A person's reaction to the loss of a loved one, as evident in a state of mourning, would give further corroboration of the essential role of intimate others in our lives. Two excellent studies, one by Parkes (1978) on bereavement in adult life and another by Furman (1974) on bereaved children, employ the psychoanalytic framework to investigate the process of decathexis and reintegration into the ego of a lost love-object. Furman's book gives ample evidence that object representations as well as the mental capacity to mourn vary according to developmental stage.

Harry Stack Sullivan (1953) also breaks from the Freudian perspective in making an analytical distinction between eroticism and intimacy. Although there is often a collusion between genital sexuality and a need for intimacy, he says, they are by no means synonymous. In fact, Sullivan says that sexuality, while often a good barometer of the state of one's interpersonal

relationships, is secondary rather than primary in the analysis of human development and interaction (1953:294-296).

Whereas Sullivan locates a need for intimacy in early adolescence, Erik Erikson (1977/50) sees a crisis of intimacy occurring in young adulthood, following upon the adolescent insistence on identity. The literature influenced by Freud is most generally important to this study because it situates close relationships within a general theory of affective development. Psychotherapeutic approaches to close relationships, however, have combined their great theoretical strength with distinct evidential weaknesses. They tend to rely upon individual case studies whose analysis allows great insight but whose generalizability is quite moot. Bowlby's studies of attachment, which seem to have greater reliability, dealt only with the early years of childhood. Their extension to later years had not been adequately tested by 1980, except for bereavement studies.

In a more empirically based modification of the psychotherapeutic approach, David Elkind (1970) used Piaget's model of cognitive development to locate affective development. (In this respect, see also Kohlberg, 1974/66, Likona, 1974, and Selman, 1981.) Such studies tend to be limited to childhood and the early years of adolescence, however, whereas emotional

development continues throughout the life course and is clearly socially conditioned (see, for example, Dickens and Perlman, 1981).

1.2.3 The Origins of the Present Study

Thus when this study was formulated in 1981, it was set up with the express purpose of developing an empirically based account of close relationships, making use of a random sample of subjects across the life-course, controlling for gender and ethnicity/social class. A questionnaire which sought to incorporate some of the notions then current in academic psychology and the psychotherapeutic approach, was drawn up by the author. She relied also on her own intuitions about what was relevant to the study of close relationships. She deliberately kept the questionnaire open-ended so as to be sensitive to respondents' own perceptions, and gathered life-history material along with more formal responses in an effort to avoid imposing her own presuppositions.

The results were very dense, requiring careful codification and a large degree of secondary analysis -- and this in a period when the study of close relationships was starting to grow at an explosive rate.

No review of the literature would be complete without treatment of relevant aspects of recent developments in

the study of social and personal relationships. Such an overview must necessarily be selective from a wide range of studies in several disciplines. Topics have been selected for discussion on the grounds of their relevance to the present study. However, the reader should keep in mind that this dissertation was conceived as an effort to provide an empirically based mapping of the ways in which individuals at different life-stages and in different ethnic/class and gender groupings in one South African small town perceive their closest relationships. While theories of intimacy and close relationships have proliferated since the study was carried out, such an empirical mapping still seems a valuable contribution to the field.

1.2.4 Conceptual and Definitional Developments since 1980

There have been two major efforts to sort out conceptual and definitional issues in the study of intimacy since 1980. The first grows out of equity theory and was set forth in a major collection edited by H. H. Kelley et al. in 1983 (cf. also Ickes, 1985). The second stems from Jourard's self-disclosure theory, has borrowed also from the family therapy approach, and is most clearly set forth in the work of Cherlune and his associates and of Derlega (cf. Derlega, 1984).

Kelley et al (1983:20-27) set out what they believe is a

"scientific" and impartial "description of relationships" in order, they claim, to "enable current theory and data to be placed in relation to one another and...highlight the gaps in the current work." They seek to set forth in very general and universally applicable terms a framework in which close relationships may be analysed, and theory and methodology advanced. The model is restricted to dyadic relationships. Relationships are defined in terms of interdependence -- that is, that the behaviour of one person will effect the behaviour of another and vice versa. Indeed insistence on the dynamic nature of relationships is the major strength of this model. The authors stress the process of interaction between the elements of a relationship and its social and environmental context.

Kelley et al.'s conception of interdependence is explicitly behaviourist. They say (1983:13),

To be useful, relationship descriptors must ultimately be tied to properties of the interconnected activity pattern that can be recorded and agreed on by impartial investigators....A high degree of interdependence between two people is revealed in four properties of their interconnected activities: (1) the individuals have frequent impact on each other, (2) the degree of impact per occurrence is strong, (3) the impact involves diverse kinds of activities for each person, and (4) all of these properties characterize the interconnected activity series for a relatively long duration of time.

Closeness is thus a matter for the psychologist to decide. What the relationship means to the individuals involved, what they feel about it, is a separate issue.

Further, Kelley et al. make an epistemologically dubious distinction between "events and properties" (located in the individual) and "causal conditions, connections and links" (located in the interaction itself or its environment). The word "causal" is initially defined as indicating covariance, but the term easily slides over into a harder, more deterministic conception of "cause." The authors also make a sharp distinction between "description" and "explanation" that is very difficult to sustain, for description is never impartial. Some principle of selection (however intuitive) is necessarily involved -- even for visitors from outer space such as Kelley's metaphorical Dyas.

Like the equity theory from which it is derived (for a recent overview of equity theory as applied to relationships, see Hatfield et al., 1985; for a fascinating and sophisticated empirical study of relationships using a modified version of exchange theory, see O'Connell, 1984), the Kelley et al. framework is similarly deficient in that it is untestable. On the one hand, in purely behavioural terms, the restriction of interdependence to observed behaviour is insufficient, and so perceptual and cognitive factors have to be introduced as "causal conditions." As soon as this is done, the model loses the conceptual and methodological specificity which was claimed as its most important asset. (For an alternative critique of equity theory, see McClelland, 1986). Perhaps the central problem stems

from faith in the reliability of working in incremental fashion from the micro- (in many ways the most volatile) to the macro-level, instead of first defining the social and environmental conditions for close relationships, and then observing their dialectical development within and in interaction with this context. Kelley et al.'s work remains haunted by the individualist and voluntarist ghosts of attraction theory and the reductionist tendencies of behaviourism.

The great strength of the work of Chelune and his associates (1984) is that it seeks to delineate a multi-dimensional and interpersonally dialectical theory of intimacy as this is experienced by individuals (for an earlier contribution to this effort, see Waring, et al., 1980). In the words of Chelune et al (1984:11-12):

Relationships occur across a kaleidoscope of social-situational contexts, which also influence and are influenced by the relationships occurring in them. In short, aspects of enduring, close relationships are always emergent entities: that is, more than the sum of their respective parts.

This model thus shares the awareness of Kelley et al. that relationships must be viewed in dynamic terms. Where it advances on the behaviourist approach is in Chelune et al.'s stress on the importance of the "meanings" -- indeed, two levels of meanings -- communicated by intimates to each other. This stress on the cognitive and meta-cognitive content of relationships is borrowed from Bateson's "systems theory" (cf. Perlmutter & Hatfield, 1980, and, for a most interesting

account of a related aspect of "metacommunication" -- "transactive memory," see Wegner et al., 1985). Not only do Chelune et al. emphasize the cognitive, meaning-full aspects of intimate relationships, they also stress the multi-faceted components of intimacy. They name six qualities based upon "subjective cognitive appraisals" of those involved: (1) knowledge of the innermost being of one another, (2) mutuality, (3) interdependence, (4) trust, (5) commitment, and (6) caring (Chelune et al. 1984:28-29).

Although Chelune et al. insist that intimacy can be developed and sustained (and indeed dissolved) over time, their speculative model lacks any developmental life-course perspective. Furthermore, their conception of intimacy implies a level of self-conscious, psycho-therapeutic intentionality that is almost certainly culture-specific:

If metacommunication and interpersonal attributions remain solely at an implicit level or are not periodically updated via intentional metacommunication, "potent sources of attributional conflict and relational disturbance"...can arise, leading to a breakdown in the intimacy of the relationship. [Chelune et al., 1984:27]

Is this to imply then that "intimacy" is a phenomenon largely restricted to adult middle-class Westerners? If so, what are we to make of close relationships in those parts of the world not yet exposed to the gospel of psychotherapeutic discourse? Is intimacy coterminous

with bourgeois companionate marriage? Both the enduring, affectionate friendships described by Aristotle in his Ethics (Book 8) or the love discussed in Plato's Symposium would presumably not pass muster as "intimate" for Chelune et al.

Hatfield (1983 & 1984), working partly in the family therapy tradition, declares women more willing to be intimate than men, although men might be taught to be more expressive. Her work, like that of Chelune et al., focusses on quality and intensity in cross-gender dyads. Despite the undoubted interest of her work, her acceptance of the Jourard Self-Disclosure Questionnaire for measuring competence in intimacy is problematic. This instrument might just as well be measuring topics which interest persons as their willingness to disclose. Because intimacy is defined primarily in terms of self-disclosure about relationships and feelings, which the more dominant men may be less interested or practised in, Hatfield's conclusions may confuse issues of substance with what are really matters of interest. Indeed, claims that men are by and large incompetent in matters of intimate relationships may simply suggest a limited feminine superiority while at the same time masking the underlying issue of male structural dominance. This issue becomes much more salient when we turn to Lillian Rubin's work in the psychotherapeutic tradition originally set forth by Chodorow and Dinnerstein.

1.2.5 Recent Developments in Psychotherapeutic Study of Close Relationships

Two directions of recent work based on psychotherapeutic assumptions are of interest to this study. The first is Lillian Rubin's research on marriage relationships (1983) and friendships (1985). The other is work associated particularly with Robert Weiss (1982) which seeks to extend the insights of Bowlby's attachment theory to the entire life-course.

Rubin's (1985) work is important because it helps to ground the insights of Nancy Chodorow in interview material, albeit with adults, and to extend those insights to the large body of social scientific literature on friendships which has grown up in recent years. However her sample is far from random and comprises only American adults between the ages of 25 and 55. Although she claims to have broad social class distribution, she nowhere systematically deals with class differences in this more recent work. Predictably, given her theoretical predilections, she stresses gender differences (although she neglects to mention the gender make-up of her sample) and differences between single and coupled friends.

Such methodological objections may matter less in more psychoanalytic work, which supposes a measure of universality. More problematic from the perspective of

this study is her use of the terms "kin" and "friend." While chapter 2 of her Just Friends (1985) makes a very nice distinction between kinship and friendship, she sets these up as dichotomous categories and proceeds to discuss the latter. While recognizing the "kin-like" quality of many friendships, except in the conjugal dyad, her analysis overlooks the sense in which particular kin relationships may take on "friendship" characteristics -- despite the fact that she acknowledges at the outset the friendship of her daughter.

Having first distinguished between friends and kin, Rubin (1985) proceeds to deal with gender differences in friendship and with friendship as affected by marriage. With regard to the latter, Rubin describes very movingly the fact that marriage tends to disrupt previous friendships, which themselves have helped the adolescent and young adult to achieve distance from early family ties. After marriage, she says, friends in her sample tend to be "locked out" of the coupled relationship:

Whenever they marry, however, and whatever their class, the early stages of building a new family usually find the young couple jealously guarding their turf -- preoccupied with consolidating the new union, with reassuring each other and themselves that this new family comes first.
[Rubin, 1985:118]

As they move out again into friendships, these tend to be friendships with other couples, rather than older single friends (for a more subtle discussion of a similar point, see Milardo, 1982). For the married man in contemporary industrial society, the ongoing companionship of his wife

tends to be sufficient to meet his emotional needs. All he needs now is "augmenting relationships," that is to say

friendships with people whose conversation and companionship he enjoys. For the more intimate moments, for the emotional support he needs and wants, he looks to his wife. [For women, however,] intimate friendships with other women become important again [since]...friends provide the safety within which intimacy can occur without the violation of self [Rubin, 1985:136 & 135].

While Rubin briefly acknowledges the power factor here, she does not develop the matter, and on gender differences in general she follows the argument of Nancy Chodorow (1978), that because of different relationships to the mother and different Oedipal experiences, men develop harder ego-boundaries than women. For the latter, however, identification and empathy with others is easier and seemingly more natural. On the other hand, the young male's sharp emotional break with his mother, on this theory, makes him both more independent in public life and also less competent in intimacy (defined essentially in terms of self-disclosure and discussion of feelings -- but see on this point, Helgeson et al., 1987). Indeed, Rubin (1985:69-79) makes a firm distinction between "intimacy," which she says is typical of women's friendships, and "bonding," which is typical of males. The former implies a willingness to disclose oneself "in pain and vulnerability" (and in other lengthy discussions of personal relationships), whereas "bonding" implies a "primitive" sense of brotherhood. Thus

whereas female friends talk together, male friends do things together --or if they do talk, they talk about things rather than relationships.

Rubin's conclusions are not original; she is in fact summarizing and richly illustrating with her in-depth interview material the social science literature on gender differences in friendships (cf., for example, Sherrod's overview, 1987). In his recent, very useful article (Sherrod, 1987:221-2 & 217) states,

According to the research, men seek not intimacy but companionship, not disclosure but commitment. Men's friendships involve unquestioned acceptance rather than unrestricted affirmation. When men are close, they achieve closeness through shared activities, and on the basis of shared activities, men infer intimacy simply because they are friends...women sought a friend who could be a confidante, a friend who would help them "grow as persons." Men were more likely to seek a friend with similar interests, someone "to have fun with."

While Sherrod acknowledges the force of Chodorow's argument, he provides a rather more multi-faceted description of four different perspectives (including psycho-analytic, biological, socialization and historical-economic perspectives) on the different meanings of intimacy between men and women. Although he agrees in the end that male conceptions of intimacy, what he calls "the bonds of men," are sometimes inadequate, his account omits the therapeutic insistence on female proselytization of males in the intimacy sphere which is so characteristic of Rubin. Indeed he suggests at one point that perhaps male intimacy "should not be measured

in terms of self-disclosure" (Sherrod, 1987:220; cf. also Wright, 1982).

How then are we to explain that "inferred intimacy" which Sherrod believes is more typical of males? Some clues may be found in the work of Robert Weiss (1982; cf. also Marris, 1982) and Philip Shaver et al. (1987), which seeks to apply Bowlby's "attachment theory" to adult relationships. Both Shaver et al. and Weiss and Marris have much to say that is relevant by implication to gender differences in close relationships.

Weiss (1982:175) suggests in a very carefully worked out argument that

adults establish a bond to other adults that is, in essential respects, identical to the attachment that children make to their primary caretakers....this bond is not found in some degree in every emotionally significant relationship adults maintain but rather, just as is the case with attachment in children, it appears only in relationships of central emotional importance....[This] attachment in adults is an expression of the same emotional system, though one modified in the course of its development, as is attachment in children.

Note the care with which Weiss states that not all adult relationships are "attachments" in Bowlby's sense. There is place in his scheme for what he calls "affiliative" relationships. Indeed, Marris (1982:193-194) insists that adult attachments are themselves different from childhood ones, when he says:

I do not mean to imply that ties of love and affection in adult life are simply projections or transformations of childhood attachment, only that this experience of attachment provides a

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