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Friendship Intimacy, Identity Development, and Romantic Attachment among Emerging Adults

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FRIENDSHIP INTIMACY, IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT, AND ROMANTIC
ATTACHMENT AMONG EMERGING ADULTS

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in Psychology
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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationships between Friendship Intimacy, Romantic Attachment, and Identity Development. Previous studies reveal potential associations between Parental Attachment as an infant and Romantic Attachment as an adult; however, this is the first study to examine Friendship Intimacy and its association with the other factors at hand. It was predicted that Friendship Intimacy and Identity would contribute to the prediction of Romantic Attachment. College students ($N = 417$) in psychology courses participated in an anonymous online survey for course credit. Romantic Relationship Avoidance was significantly predicted by Identity Exploration, and Romantic Relationship Anxiety was significantly predicted by Peer Attachment and Identity Exploration. Findings also revealed that those in the Achieved Identity status scored significantly higher on Friendship Intimacy than those in the Diffused Identity status. Additional analyses and their theoretical implications are further discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

Within the period of late adolescence and emerging adulthood, a critical process known as *Identity Development* usually transpires, involving the ongoing formation of one's life roles, goals, values, and sense of purpose in the world (Erikson, 1950). Erik Erikson's (1950) theory of psychosocial development asserts that one's identity formation is assumed to be the product of both psychological and social influences. His model addresses the concept of intimacy as one's ability to create close connections that include commitment, sacrifice, and compromise with another individual (Erikson, 1968). This theory has since prompted research involving the relationship between Identity Development and Interpersonal Intimacy (Beyers & Seiffge-Krenke, 2010; Dyk & Adams, 1987; Johnson, Kent, & Yale, 2012; Pittman, Keiley, Kerpelman, & Vaughn, 2011). Erikson's theory of life-span development maintains that the full development of a healthy, mutual intimacy would be difficult without the foregoing establishment of identity (Erikson, 1968). Conversely, this study investigates intimacy as a foundation for one's Identity Development. Specifically, it explores Friendship Intimacy— a close peer relationship in which two individuals typically envelop qualities of openness, sensitivity, attachment, mutuality, common activities, trust, and loyalty (Sharabany, Gershoni, & Hofman, 1981) and its influence on identity formation. It focuses on emerging adults as the population of interest. Associations between Romantic Intimacy and Identity Development have been widely considered within the existing pool of research (Kerpelman et al., 2012; Weisskirch, 2018; Zimmer-Gembeck, Hughes, Kelly, & Connolly, 2012), and although closely related, the association with Friendship Intimacy contributes a new concept to the conversation of identity that has yet to be touched. Identity development is recognized as a central task in emerging adulthood, shown to influence one's

social functioning, psychological health, and self-image (Johnson, et al., 2012). Considering the mass population of emerging adults impacted by this process, investigating its extrapersonal influences would be of extreme value to psychological growth and maturation at a societal level.

Identity Development

A coherent, synthesized sense of identity is of critical value in the process of personal development and has the potential to affect one's overall well-being and mental health (Erikson, 1950). Individuals with a clear sense of who they are, and their direction in life, are more likely to have an optimistic introspection of their life and engage in healthy, enjoyable relationships, and less likely to involve themselves and others in harmful behavior (Schwartz et al., 2011). In contrast, a confused sense of identity is associated with potential negative internalizing and externalizing symptoms, including illicit drug use and sexual risk taking (Schwartz et al., 2011). This identity cultivation is often a matter of the young adult assembling the disjointed pieces of their life and understanding how they fit in the world. Individuals often seek identity in pre-established "molds" then soon come to realize that their path must be personally "tailored" in a way that varies from others (Widick, Parker, & Knefelkamp, 1978, p. 6). A common example relates to the process of paving a career path, in which emerging adults often establish based on the desires of their parents. Once an individual creates a path based on their internal desires aside from the prescribed "mold", a piece of commitment to their own identity is then constructed (Garbarino, 1999). Exploration throughout this process is deemed essential in determining one's desires, interests, and values in life (Erikson, 1950). A contemporary study (Schwartz, et al., 2015) supports the previously prescribed notion that more identity confusion (as measured by

Eriksonian measures of synthesis and confusion in both interpersonal and intrapersonal domains) is associated with low well-being and high risky behaviors. The profiles extracted were then compared to indices of well-being, internal symptoms, external symptoms, and health risk behaviors. According to the results, profiles that indicated high confusion were associated with low well-being, high internalizing, high externalizing, and high risky behaviors.

Marcia's Statures

James Marcia operationalized Erikson's concepts of ego-identity development through the construction of four statuses based on two dimensions: exploration and commitment (Erikson, 1950; Marcia, 1966). They include *Diffusion*, *Foreclosure*, *Moratorium*, and *Achievement* (Marcia, 1966). According to Marcia (1980) *Identity Diffusion* is ascribed to those who have yet to either explore or commit to any given identity. People are naturally born into the stage of Identity Diffusion and can extend until active exploration or commitment is commenced (Marcia, 1993). These individuals are often unable to incorporate a "sense of purposefulness or coherence," (Marcia & Josselson, 2013, p. 621). Individuals within the *Foreclosure* status are strongly committed to their identity without having explored various possible identities for themselves. These identities are uncritically adopted from authority figures and not developed from internal exploration (Marcia, 1966). People in foreclosure are often defensive when presented with change because their belief systems and cultures are firmly embedded from the time of childhood (Marcia & Josselson, 2013). Those in the *Moratorium* status are typically confused about themselves and their position in the world, known as the "Identity Crisis" (Marcia, 1980). These individuals are actively exploring various identities but have yet to

commit (Marcia, 1993). Those in this status may endure excessive guilt, depression, or anxiety in association to this period of internal developmental struggles (Marcia & Josselson, 2013).

Identity Achievement refers to the identity status of an individual who has explored various identities and has subsequently committed to one of those Identities (Marcia, 1966). These individuals are typically self-aware, possessing a strong relationship with their own personality, purpose, and position in the world (Marcia & Josselson, 2013).

Intimacy

Intimacy is defined as an interrelation in which two individuals share their personal lives, invest themselves in one another, share love and liking for each other, and establish reciprocal future commitments, all while maintaining a feeling of security about themselves (Dyk & Adams, 1987). Psychosocial Intimacy, defined by Erikson, is one's capacity to establish deeper, more devoted relationships, including reciprocity and a strong sense of oneself in the relationship (Erikson, 1980). According to English psychoanalyst John Bowlby (1980), humans developed this desire for intimate interpersonal relationships from thousands of years of evolution. He hypothesized that as a means of protection, humans developed an intense fear of being alone, particularly when sick, injured, tired, or in unfamiliar places. We learned to desire an individual who cared for our well-being and survival. In short, we as humans want someone who loves us, and this innate desire molds the foundation of our most salient interpersonal relationships (Bowlby, 1977).

Intimacy research is highly covered in terms of Romantic Relationships, Parental Attachment, and the association between those two constructs (e.g., Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters,

& Wall, 1978; Sternberg, 1997; Shaver & Clark, 1994). Previous studies reveal potential associations between Parental Attachment as an infant and Romantic Attachment as an adult (Dewitte & De Houwer, 2008; Edelstein et al., 2005; Shaver & Clark, 1994). Contemporary research (Doughty, Lam, Stanik, & McHale, 2015; Koestner, Poweres, Holding, Hope, & Milyavskaya, 2020; Sun, McHale, & Updegraff, 2019) provides new insight into the ways in which Family Intimacy indicates success in various life domains. Intimacy in regard to friendship, however, lacks current exploration in research.

Intimate Friendship

Ruth Sharbany (1994) defines friendship intimacy as “a configuration of diverse but coherently related quantitatively commensurate elements”, specified by the following eight dimensions:

1. *Frankness and spontaneity*: A form of one’s self-disclosure regarding the positive and negative aspects of oneself
2. *Sensitivity and knowing*: A sense of understanding and empathy for the other that is not necessarily achieved through verbal communication
3. *Attachment to the friend*: A feeling of closeness to the friend and missing the other when they are absent
4. *Exclusiveness in the relationship*: The presence of unique qualities within the friendship that cannot be identified in other relationships
5. *Giving and sharing with the friend*: The dedication of quality time to the friend and the sharing of material goods

6. *Imposition*: A degree of openness in which the individual is willing to accept the friend's help
7. *Common activities*: A joint interest in activities
8. *Trust and loyalty*: The degree in which a friend can be relied on to keep secrets, defend the other, and provide support

It is noted that these dimensions may vary in quality and quantity, but their sum reveals an individual's overall degree of Intimacy within that friendship. Sharbany's proposal of this eight-factor model has widely contributed to the development of the Intimate Friendship Scale, which is an assessment based on these eight dimensions that is used to identify one's level of Friendship Intimacy.

Aside from Sharbany's dimensions of an Intimate friendship, from other studies (Bigelow & LaGaipa, 1980; Claes, 1992; Wright, 1969), additional elements have emerged as important factors within an Intimate Friendship. Authenticity was reported as a friendship's most valuable trait, according to Bigelow & LaGaipa (1980), whereas loyalty, frankness, and trust were suggested by Claes (1992). Intimate friendship, according to Wright (1969), is best evaluated on the basis of four determining categories: Friendship strength, maintenance difficulties, utilitarian rewards, and self-referent rewards. Maintenance difficulties refers to the amount of time the pair is willing to dedicate in order to dissolve their issues. Utilitarian rewards refer to the amount of time and resources one is willing to sacrifice to achieve personal goals. Lastly, Wright's "Self-Referent" rewards refer to each friend's ability to understand the other's most valued attributes, in addition to expanding the other's knowledge and skills.

Furthermore, Ainsworth's attachment theory maintains that a secure foundation that encompasses love and acceptance with an attachment figure, in turn, facilitates trust and the ability to develop Intimacy in the future (Ainsworth, 1978). This notion gives reason to believe that once intimacy is developed, an individual has a confident base to explore their personal identity. A personal sense of Identity further assists in the ability to establish a secure romantic attachment. This would be consistent with the line of research in support of cyclical nature of identity. This idea is also suggested in Erikson's theory in the way that the first stage of "trust" builds to the fifth stage (intimacy) and is reflected in the sixth stage (intimacy).

Associations between Identity and Intimacy

Various theorists have developed their views on the associations between Relationship Intimacy and Identity Development. Some believe, such as Erik Erikson (1968), that identity development must precede the achievement of healthy intimacy with another individual. Others, such as Dyk and Adams (1987), assert that the two are independent processes and are closely linked but conform to no particular order. Vogt and Colvin (2005) reflect Erikson's theory and state that an accurate vault of self-knowledge places an individual in a position to make more fitting decisions in some of life's key domains—choosing a relationship partner being one of them. Harry Stack Sullivan (1953) suggested in his interpersonal theory of personality development that children typically cultivate a "chumship" (his term for "best friend" relationship) in middle childhood which sets the ground for the development of intimacy. This friendship intimacy would precede both of Erikson's adolescent stage of identity and his young adult stage or (romantic) intimacy.

Erikson (1968) maintains through his psychosocial stages of development that intimacy can relatively be secure only if coupled with a strong sense of identity. He claims that once identity is achieved, one is more easily able to amalgamate that identity with that of another to successfully establish a deep, requited intimacy. James Marcia agrees with Erikson's theory and asserts that a secure sense of self is necessary for one to risk the vulnerability that is ingrained in the formation of mutuality with another (Marcia, 1980). Arthur W. Chickering's (1969) "Seven Vectors of Identity Development" encompasses a combination of theories and is based on the idea that certain vectors of identity development require the ability to be intimate within interpersonal relationships. However, other stages also require a healthy independent relationship with oneself. In turn, he emphasizes the cyclical nature of the identity development process. Erikson extends this conversation of Psychosocial Intimacy beyond sexual and romantic relationships to focus on emotional companionship within peer relationships (Weisskirch, 2018). This expansion has subsequently led to the exploration of Friendship Intimacy.

Rationale

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between Friendship Intimacy, Identity, and Romantic Attachment. Although a reading of Erikson's stages implies that identity precedes Intimacy (Erikson, 1950), other theorists (e.g., Ainsworth, 1978; Bowlby, 1980; Chickering, 1969; Sullivan, 1953) have emphasized that adult Romantic Intimacy is also preceded by such things as Infant Attachment and Friendship Intimacy. Specifically, this study explores whether there is evidence that developmentally, Friendship Intimacy precedes Identity, and Identity precedes Romantic Attachment. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

- 1) Friendship Intimacy scores will predict identity exploration and identity commitment scores.
- 2) Those in the Achievement Identity Status will score highest in Friendship intimacy, followed by Moratorium, then Foreclosure, with those in Diffusion scoring lowest.
- 3) Identity exploration scores and Identity Commitment scores will predict Romantic Attachment scores.
- 4) Those in the Secure Romantic Relationship Attachment Style will score higher in Identity Commitment than those in the three Insecure Styles (Preoccupied, Fearful, & Dismissive).

METHOD

Participants

The current study included 417 participants. Participant ages ranged from 18 to 50 with a mean of 19.53 and a standard deviation of 3.89. The majority of the participants were female (65.6%), with 33.4% males, and 1 participant identifying as transgender and 3 participants identifying as other. Grade distribution included 66.4% freshmen, 13.9% sophomores, 12.2% juniors, 5.3% seniors, 1.4% other, and .7% non-degree seeking. The ethnic/racial distribution included 51.1% White, Non-Hispanic, 21.8 Hispanic/Latinx, 11% Asian or Pacific Islander, 8.4% Black, Non-Hispanic, and 7.4% mixed ethnicity or other.

Measures

A *Demographic Questionnaire* asked questions about participant gender, education, ethnicity, and age.

The *Intimate Friendship Scale*, developed by Ruth Sharbany (1994), is based on the following self-reported dimensions aimed to determine one's level of intimacy with their closest friend: (1) Frankness and Spontaneity (2) Sensitivity and Knowing (3) Attachment (4) Exclusiveness (5) Giving and Sharing (6) Imposition (7) Common Activities (8) Trust and Loyalty. Each dimension consists of 4 items, resulting in a total of 32 items to compose the entire questionnaire. Each participant is prompted to assign each of the 32 items a number on a scale of 1 to 7, where a 1 indicates that the statement is *Never True* and a 7 indicates that it is *Always True*. An example of a *frankness and spontaneity* item looks as follows: "I feel free to

talk to this person about almost anything.” A *sensitivity and knowing* statement: “I know how this person feels about things without this person telling me.” An *attachment* item: “I feel close to this person.” An *exclusiveness* statement: “The most exciting things happen when I am with this person and nobody else is around.” A *giving and sharing* item: “When something nice happens to me, I share the experience with this person.” An *imposition* statement: “I can be sure this person will help me whenever I ask for it.” A *common activities* statement: “Whenever you see me you can be pretty sure that this person is also around.” Lastly, an example within *the trust and loyalty* dimension looks as follows: “I know that whatever I tell this person is kept a secret between us.” The scale was proven to manifest reasonable content validity, along with reliability and internal consistency of dimensions. Among the four items comprising each of the eight dimensions, internal consistency was measured using alpha coefficients based on Guilford (1965: 463). In the initial study (Sharbany, 1974), children’s socialization patterns were compared between kibbutz and city communities, including approximately 900 children from fifth and sixth grades. Alpha coefficients were calculated separately for four subsamples: kibbutz boys ($n=194$) median =.76, range .71 to .81; kibbutz girls ($n=195$) median=.77, range .67 to .80; city boys ($n=262$) median=.72, range .69 to .78; city girls ($n=241$) median=.73, range .69 to .76. In conjunction with all four groups, medians ranged from .72 to .77. In this study the internal consistency, coefficient alpha, was determined to be .95.

The *Experience in Close Relationships Scale* (ECR) was created by Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (2000) consisting of 36 items measuring adult romantic attachment style. The statements are concerned with how individuals feel emotionally during romantic relationships, based on two dimensions: anxiety and avoidance. 18 items in the assessment evaluate anxiety, while the other

18 evaluate avoidance. An example of an anxiety-related item would be, “I am afraid I will lose my partner’s love.” An example of an avoidance-related item would be, “I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down.” Item answers form a 7-point Likert-type rating scale, ranging from 1 (disagree strongly) to 7 (agree strongly). Based on thoughts about oneself (anxiety dimension) and others (avoidant dimension), scores from the scale are used to categorize adults into four different attachment styles (Wongpakaran, & Wongpakaran, 2012). They include secure (low anxiety, low avoidance), preoccupied (high anxiety, low avoidance), fearful (high anxiety, high avoidance) and dismissing (low anxiety, high avoidance). The ECR appears to yield highly reliable and valid results when assessing adult attachment. The internal consistencies for the subscales of the short and original versions of the ECR include coefficient alphas of .92 (Anxiety) and .93 (Avoidance). The correlation between the Anxiety and Avoidance subscales was $r = .17$, reflecting that the two measures were indicative of reliable dimensions of attachment. In this study the internal consistency, coefficient alpha, was determined to be .69 for Relationship Avoidance and .91 for Relationship Anxiety.

The *Ego Identity Processing Questionnaire* (EIPQ) is used to identify one’s identity development based on two dimensions: exploration and commitment. It consists of 32 items that assess both dimensions in eight areas: occupation, religion, politics, values, family, friendships, dating, and sex roles (Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, & Geisinger, 1995). The EIPQ contains 20 positively worded and 12 negatively worded items. An example of a positive exploration statement looks as follows: “I have considered different political views thoughtfully.” Positive commitment statement: “I am very confident about what kinds of friends are best for me.” Negative exploration statement: “There has never been a need to question my values.” Negative

commitment statement: “I am not sure about what type of dating relationship is best for me.” Respondents indicate their level of agreement on a scale of 1 to 6, where 6 is representing the strongest degree of agreement (“strongly agree”) and 1 indicating the lowest degree of agreement (“strongly disagree”). Item scores are summed to acquire total scores of exploration and commitment independently, both ranging in possible scores of 16-96. For comparison purposes, to determine identity statuses of each participant, median scores of 66.5 for exploration and 62 for commitment were used. Respondents above the median for both dimensions are classified as *identity achieved*, and those below on both are classified as *diffused*. Respondents above the median on exploration but below on commitment are identified as *moratorium*. Those identified as *foreclosed* are above the median on commitment and below on exploration. Reliability estimates for internal consistency of all dimensions within this questionnaire are moderately high. Construct validity is supported by the majority of the personality variables, with the exception of the following: exploration is correlated negatively with authoritarianism only for males, and the main effects of identity status for authoritarianism and anxiety yielded only trends. The values of Cronbach's α for exploration and commitment were approximately .76 and .75. Test–retest reliability coefficients were .90 for exploration and .76 for commitment. In this study the internal consistency, coefficient alpha, was determined to be .75 for exploration and .70 for commitment.

Procedure

The project was submitted to the University of Central Florida’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. Following approval, participants were recruited through the UCF

Psychology participant recruitment system known as SONA. Students enrolled in courses that required research participation received credit for completing the survey battery. An alternative assignment was given to any students who do not want to participate but still wanted course credit. Through SONA, students could choose from a list of possible studies in which to participate. If they chose this study, they clicked on a link which brought them to an anonymous online survey in Qualtrics. Students were first presented with the IRB approved Exploration of Research form and after checking a box indicating that they read and understood the form, were presented with the survey battery.

RESULTS

Preliminary and Descriptive Statistical Analyses

The range, means, and standard deviations for all measures are shown in Table 1. A correlation matrix with all study variables was also constructed (see Table 2). With regard to Identity Status, 89 participants (21.3%) were in the Diffused Identity Status, 121 (29.0%) in the Foreclosed Status, 144 (34.5%) in Moratorium, and 63 (15.1%) were Achieved. With regard to Romantic Attachment Style, 115 participants (27.6%) had the Fearful Style, 74 (17.7%) had a Dismissive Style, 105 (25.2%) had a Preoccupied Style, and 123 (29.5%) had a Secure Style. A Bivariate Correlation was constructed for all measures with participant age. The only measure that significantly correlated with age was Identity Exploration ($r = .11, p = .03$). An independent samples t-test was conducted to test for gender differences for each measure/variable. Females had significantly higher scores of Friendship Intimacy ($t_{(410)} = 5.56, p < .001$), Relationship Avoidance ($t_{(410)} = -2.58, p = .01$), and Identity Distress ($t_{(410)} = -2.27, p = .024$).

To determine if scores differed by ethnicity, a ONEWAY Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The only measure to demonstrate any ethnic differences was Friendship Intimacy ($F_{(4, 411)} = 4.67, p = .001$). A Least Squares Difference (LSD) post hoc test revealed that on this measure, the mean for White participants was significantly higher ($p < .05$) than all the other groups except Hispanic, which had the second highest mean. The mean for Hispanic participants was only significantly different from the Asian participants,

whose mean was the lowest. Black, Asian and Mixed/Other ethnic groups were not significantly different from each other. A ONEWAY ANOVA was also conducted for grade differences. The only scale to show a significant difference was Identity Exploration ($F_{(3, 404)} = 2.62, p = .05$). An LSD post hoc analysis revealed that the mean for Exploration was significantly higher for the Juniors than the Freshmen ($p < .05$). The Sophomores and Seniors scored between these two groups and not significantly different than either of them.

Main Analyses

Hypothesis 1

To test Hypothesis 1 (Friendship intimacy scores will predict Identity Exploration and Identity Commitment scores), a stepwise multiple regression analysis was run with sex and age entered on Step 1, Friendship Intimacy score entered on Step 2, with Identity Exploration as the dependent variable. The resultant equation was significant ($F_{(3,406)} = 2.95, R^2 = .02$; Adjusted $R^2 = .01; p = .032$), however the only significant predictor was Age ($\beta = .11, t = 2.24, p = .026$). Friendship Intimacy was not a significant predictor of Identity Exploration. The regression was repeated with the same steps, but with Identity Commitment as the dependent variable. Once again the resultant equation was significant ($F_{(3,406)} = 10.46, R^2 = .07$; Adjusted $R^2 = .07; p < .001$), and this time the change on Step 2 was significant ($F_{\text{change}(1, 406)} = 30.15, R^2_{\text{change}} = .07, p < .001$) for Friendship Intimacy ($\beta = .27, t = 5.49, p < .001$). Thus, hypothesis one was supported for Identity Commitment, but not for Identity Exploration as predictors of Friendship Intimacy.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 (Those in the Achievement Identity Status will score highest in Friendship intimacy, followed by Moratorium, then Foreclosure, with those in Diffusion scoring lowest) was tested with a ONEWAY ANOVA with the mean Friendship Intimacy score for each Identity Status group as the dependent variable. There was a significant difference between groups ($F_{(3, 413)} = 11.63, p < .001$). An LSD post hoc analysis revealed that Achieved and Foreclosed groups scored significantly higher than the Moratorium and Diffused groups ($p < .05$), however, the Achieved and Foreclosed groups did not score significantly different from each other, nor did the Moratorium and Diffused groups did score significantly different from each other. Thus, this hypothesis was only partially confirmed in that the Achieved group scored highest and the Diffused group scored lowest. However, the middle two groups did not score as predicted.

Hypothesis 3

To test Hypothesis 3 (Identity exploration scores and identity commitment scores will predict romantic attachment scores) a stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted with Sex and Age entered on Step 1, Identity Exploration and Commitment scores entered on Step 2, with Relationship Anxiety as the dependent variable. The resultant equation was significant ($F_{(4,405)} = 7.30, R^2 = .07; \text{Adjusted } R^2 = .06; p < .001$), and the change on Step 2 was significant ($F_{\text{change } (2, 405)} = 10.82, R^2_{\text{change}} = .05, p < .001$) with the standardized coefficient beta reaching significance for Age ($\beta = -.12, t = -2.41, p = .016$) and Identity Exploration ($\beta = .22, t = 4.14, p < .001$).

The regression was repeated with the same steps, but with Relationship Avoidance as the dependent variable. Once again the resultant equation was significant ($F_{(4,405)} = 3.62$, $R^2 = .04$; Adjusted $R^2 = .03$; $p = .006$), and the change on Step 2 was significant ($F_{\text{change}(2, 405)} = 3.69$, $R^2_{\text{change}} = .02$, $p = .026$) with the standardized coefficient beta reaching significance for Sex ($\beta = .12$, $t = 2.39$, $p = .017$) and Identity Exploration ($\beta = .15$, $t = 2.72$, $p = .007$). Thus Hypothesis 3 was partially supported in that Romantic Attachment scores were significantly predicted by Identity Exploration, but not for Identity Commitment.

Hypothesis 4

To test Hypothesis 4, (Those in the Secure Romantic Relationship Attachment Style will score higher in Identity Commitment than those in the three Insecure Styles (Preoccupied, Fearful, & Dismissive) was tested with a ONEWAY ANOVA, comparing the mean Identity Commitment score for each Attachment Style group. There was a significant difference between groups ($F_{(3, 413)} = 2.65$, $p = .048$). However, an LSD post hoc analysis revealed that the only group difference that reached significance was that the Dismissive Style group scored higher than the Preoccupied Style group ($p = .012$). The Secure and Fearful Style means were in between these two groups, but not significantly different from them nor each other. Thus, this hypothesis was not confirmed.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between Friendship Intimacy, Identity, and Romantic Attachment. Specifically, it explored Friendship Intimacy and its influence on Identity Formation within emerging adults. Previous research revealed associations between Romantic Intimacy and Identity Development, but this study was intended to investigate Friendship Intimacy as a new factor in the realm of Identity Development.

To begin with, regarding Identity Status, our preliminary analyses showed that Moratorium was the status into which the most participants were categorized. Following this was Foreclosed, Diffused, then finally, Achieved. It is uncommon that emerging adults, specifically college students, have completely investigated and figured out their identity; in turn, it is not surprising that the Achieved Identity Status was the least populated among our research sample. It is also not surprising that Moratorium was the most populated among the groups, given college is the stage in which students are commonly exploring various Identities with no official commitment. With regard to Romantic Attachment, the most populated group among the sample was Secure, followed by Fearful, Preoccupied, then finally Dismissive. When running preliminary and descriptive analyses, the only measure that significantly correlated with age was Identity Exploration. This finding is expected when considering the difference in opportunity for one to thoroughly explore their identity depending on their age. It was also found that differences in gender emerged, revealing that females are significantly higher than males in levels of Friendship Intimacy, Avoidance, and Identity Distress. Ethnic differences in Friendship Intimacy revealed that those who are White and those who are Hispanic/LatinX scored significantly higher than all other racial/ethnic groups in Friendship Intimacy scores. Future

studies may want to follow up on this finding to see if it is replicated and to explore cultural differences that might account for this finding. Lastly, it was found that juniors scored significantly higher in Identity Exploration than freshmen. A potential explanation for this could be that as students continue their education and find more things they are interested in, they change their initial idea of themselves, and continue the exploration process further into college.

When evaluating the hypotheses, the investigation revealed that Friendship Intimacy is positively associated with Identity Commitment, meaning the more intimate an individual is within their friendships, the more likely they are to be more committed to their own identity. Possible factors involved in that may be outside social and emotional support when considering their own personal identity. Erik Erikson's research (1968) supports this notion with his psychosocial stages of development, maintaining that intimacy can relatively be secure only if coupled with a strong sense of identity. Findings also revealed that those in the Achieved Identity status scored highest in Friendship Intimacy, and those who scored lowest were in the Diffused Identity status. This association assumes that those who are more intimate within their friendships are likely to be highly committed to their Identity, and those who are least intimate within their friendships are likely to not even have explored their Identity. It is possible that one's ability—or lack thereof—to establish Intimacy and stable relationships with friends may influence their ability to do so with themselves. Erik Erikson and subsequent researchers (Schwartz, et al., 2015) supported the idea that Identity Confusion was associated with overall low well-being. As our findings indicate that those in the Diffused status, and therefore confused with their Identity, were lowest in Friendship Intimacy, it may be interesting to investigate a potential association between Friendship Intimacy and overall well-being. Relationship Anxiety

and Relationship Avoidance scores were significantly predicted by Identity Exploration but not Commitment suggesting the more an individual explores their Identity, the more likely they are to have Romantic Attachment difficulties. This is consistent with other studies (e.g., Berman et al., 2009) that have found that the exploration process can heighten feelings of anxiety, insecurity, and depression as one focuses on the uncertainty of not having a clear sense of direction and purpose. The weaker relationship between Identity Commitment and Romantic Attachment difficulties was somewhat surprising. A previous study (Kerpelman et al., 2012) contrasts these results by finding a significant negative association between Identity Commitment and Romantic Attachment difficulties. The present study also found a significant negative correlation between Commitment and Relationship Anxiety but not Commitment and Relationship Avoidance, and further, the association with Relationship Anxiety failed to hold up in the regression analysis. Kerpelman and colleagues found a significant negative correlation between Identity Commitment and both Relationship Anxiety and Relationship Avoidance. Their identity measure did not include a comparable Identity Exploration scale, so the finding of these two studies could not be compared on that dimension. Future studies may find it worthwhile to further investigate the relationship between these Identity and Romantic Attachment variables.

Erikson (1950) suggested that a coherent, synthesized sense of Identity is of critical value in the process of personal development. Individuals with a clear sense of who they are and their direction in life are more likely to have an optimistic introspection of their life and engage in healthy, enjoyable relationships (Schwartz et al., 2011). Our findings support this notion by the positive association found between Identity Achievement and Friendship Intimacy.

Limitations and Future Research

The Limitations of this study, as with all research, should also be recognized. Being an online, un-proctored survey, the accuracy of the data set cannot be fully verified. Future studies may find benefits in replicating this study in different formats to ensure validity (in person, interview format, proctored, etc.). Additionally, the responses were self-reported, and it is possible that a participant could have lacked deep self-introspection and reflection when submitting their responses. Collateral reports from friends, partners and/or family members might be helpful in this regard. It would also be helpful to have a larger and more diverse pool of participants. Future studies may be interested in evaluating a population of emerging adults who are not solely college students and include diverse ranges of life positions and aspirations. Finally, it is important to recognize that all analyses were correlational in nature, meaning no causal explanations should be assumed. Longitudinal studies would be extremely helpful in revealing such directional trajectories.

The results of our study, despite potential limitations, bring light to an additional factor in the area of study and contribute to knowledge in the field of Identity Development. These findings also open a path for future research involving the relationship between Friendship Intimacy and Identity Development.

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Institutional Review Board
FWA00000351
IRB00001138, IRB00012110
Office of Research
12201 Research Parkway
Orlando, FL 32826-3246

EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

March 13, 2020

Dear Steven Berman:

On 3/13/2020, the IRB determined the following submission to be human subjects research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Identity and Intimacy
Investigator:	Steven Berman
IRB ID:	STUDY00001569
Funding:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRB Berman 1569 Explanation of Research Document3.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • IRB Berman 1569 IRB application2.docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • Survey2.docx, Category: Survey / Questionnaire;

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made, and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please submit a modification request to the IRB. Guidance on submitting Modifications and Administrative Check-in are detailed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the IRB Library within the IRB system. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request so that IRB records will be accurate.

If you have any questions, please contact the UCF IRB at 407-823-2901 or irb@ucf.edu. Please include your project title and IRB number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

Kamille Birkbeck
Designated Reviewer

Appendix B: Background Questionnaire

Demographic Information:

SEX: Indicate your gender

- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- Other (explain)

AGE: Type your age

EDUCATION: Indicate year in school

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Non-degree Seeking
- Graduate Student
- Other (specify)

ETHNICITY: Select the ethnic/racial identifier that best describes you:

- White, non-Hispanic
- Black, non-Hispanic
- Hispanic or Latino/a
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Native American or Alaskan Native
- Mixed ethnicity or Other (Specify):_____

Appendix C: Intimate Friendship Scale

IFS- The following questions ask about you and your closest friend. Select the person that you feel you are closest to and answer the following with that person in mind. Please mark the number that best describes the extent to which the statement describes your relationship.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never True	Rarely True	Sometimes True	Moderately True	Often True	Mostly True	Always True

1. I stay with this person when this person wants to do something other people don't want to do.
2. I feel free to talk to this person about almost anything.
3. The most exciting things happen when I am with this person and nobody else is around.
4. I feel close to this person.
5. I know that whatever I tell this person is kept secret between us.
6. I tell people nice things about this person.
7. Whenever you see me you can be pretty sure that this person is also around.
8. If this person does something which I don't like, I can always talk to this person about it.
9. I know how this person feels about the people who are important to this person.
10. I can tell when this person is worried about something
11. I tell this person when I have done something that other people would not approve of.
12. If this person wants something, I let this person have it, even if I want it too.
13. I work with this person on some of this person's projects.
14. I do things with this person which are quite different from what other people do.
15. I can plan how we'll spend our time without having to first check with this person.
16. I speak up to defend this person when other people say bad things about this person.
17. I can use this person's things without asking for permission.
18. I talk with this person about my hopes and plans for the future.
19. I like to do things with this person.
20. When something nice happens to me, I share the experience with this person.
21. When this person is not around, I keep wondering where this person is and what this person is doing.
22. I work with this person on some of this person's hobbies.
23. I know how this person feels about things without this person telling me.
24. I know which kinds of books, hobbies, and activities this person likes.
25. I will not go along with others to do anything against this person.
26. I offer this person the use of my things (like clothes, possessions, food, or books).
27. It bothers me to have other people come around and join in when the two of us are doing something together.
28. If I want this person to do something for me, all I have to do is ask.
29. Whenever this person wants to tell me about a problem, I stop what I am doing and listen for as long as this person wants.
30. I like this person.
31. I can be sure this person will help me whenever I ask for it.
32. When this person is not around, I miss this person.

Appendix D: Experience in Close Relationships Scale

ECR - The following statements concern how you feel in romantic relationships. We are interested in how you generally experience relationships, not just in what is happening in a current relationship. Respond to each statement by indicating how much you agree or disagree with it.

A	B	C	D	E	F
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

58. I prefer not to show how I feel deep down.
59. I worry about being abandoned.
60. I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners.
61. I worry a lot about my relationships.
62. Just when my partner starts to get close to me I find myself pulling away.
63. I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.
64. I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close.
65. I worry a fair amount about losing my partner.
66. I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners.
67. I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him/her.
68. I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back.
69. I often want to merge completely with romantic partners, and this sometimes scares them away.
70. I am nervous when partners get too close to me.
71. I worry about being alone.
72. I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner.
73. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.
74. I try to avoid getting too close to my partner.
75. I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner.
76. I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner.
77. Sometimes I feel that I force my partners to show more feeling, more commitment.
78. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners.
79. I do not often worry about being abandoned.
80. I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.
81. If I can't get my partner to show interest in me, I get upset or angry.
82. I tell my partner just about everything.
83. I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like.
84. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.
85. When I'm not involved in a relationship, I feel somewhat anxious and insecure.
86. I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.
87. I get frustrated when my partner is not around as much as I would like.
88. I don't mind asking romantic partners for comfort, advice, or help.
89. I get frustrated if romantic partners are not available when I need them.
90. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.
91. When romantic partners disapprove of me, I feel really bad about myself.
92. I turn to my partner for many things, including comfort and reassurance.
93. I resent it when my partner spends time away from me.

Appendix E: Ego Identity Processing Questionnaire

EIPQ - For the following 32 statements, please decide how much you agree or disagree with each, using the following scale:

A	B	C	D	E	F
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

95. I have definitely decided on the occupation I want to pursue.
96. I don't expect to change my political principles and ideals.
97. I have considered adopting different kinds of religious beliefs.
98. There has never been a need to question my values.
99. I am very confident about which kinds of friends are best for me.
100. My ideas about men's and women's roles have never changed as I became older.
101. I will always vote for the same political party.
102. I have firmly held views concerning my role in my family.
103. I have engaged in several discussions concerning behaviors involved in dating relationships.
104. I have considered different political views thoughtfully.
105. I have never questioned my views concerning what kind of friend is best for me.
106. My values are likely to change in the future.
107. When I talk to people about religion, I make sure to voice my opinion.
108. I am not sure about what type of dating relationship is best for me.
109. I have not felt the need to reflect on the importance I place on my family.
110. Regarding religion, my views are likely to change in the near future
111. I have definite views regarding the ways in which men and women should behave.
112. I have tried to learn about different occupational fields to find the one best for me.
113. I have undergone several experiences that made me change my views on men's and women's roles.
114. I have re-examined many different values in order to find the ones which are best for me.
115. I think that what I look for in a friend could change in the future.
116. I have questioned what kind of date is right for me.
117. I am unlikely to alter my vocational goals.
118. I have evaluated many ways in which I fit into my family structure.
119. My ideas about men's and women's roles will never change.
120. I have never questioned my political beliefs.
121. I have had many experiences that led me to review the qualities that I would like my friends to have.
122. I have discussed religious matters with a number of people who believe differently than I do.
123. I am not sure that the values I hold are right for me.
124. I have never questioned my occupational aspirations.
125. The extent to which I value my family is likely to change in the future.
126. My beliefs about dating are firmly held.

Appendix F: Table 1-Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Friendship Intimacy	1.00	7.00	5.19	.86
Identity Exploration	34.00	93.00	64.10	9.95
Identity Commitment	31.00	90.00	62.34	9.56
Relationship Avoidance	1.56	5.22	2.95	.68
Relationship Anxiety	1.28	5.72	3.55	.92

Appendix G: Table 2-Correlation Matrix

Table 2

Correlation Matrix for Study Variable

	Friendship Intimacy	Identity Exploration	Identity Commitment	Relationship Avoidance
Identity Exploration	.06	-		
Identity Commitment	.26***	-.43***	-	
Romantic Relationship Avoidance	.18**	.19**	-.02	-
Romantic Relationship Anxiety	.03	.17**	-.11	.19**

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

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