

CLOSENESS WITH FATHERS AND FEAR OF INTIMACY
AMONG COLLEGE WOMEN

by

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ABSTRACT

The current study examined whether the father-daughter relationship predicts fear of intimacy among college women. The study consisted of 101 women enrolled in a university in the South. It was hypothesized that women who reported relatively close relationships with their fathers during adolescence would indicate less fear of intimacy. Second, it was hypothesized that women who spent more time with their fathers as adolescents would report less fear of intimacy. Third, it was hypothesized that women who said that they spent more time with their fathers would report increasing ease with self-disclosure. As predicted, Pearson correlations documented a significant negative relationship between closeness with fathers and fear of intimacy as well as time spent with fathers and fear of intimacy. Pearson correlations documented a significant positive relationship between time spent and self-disclosure. Father-daughter relationship is an important correlate of fear of intimacy among college women.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	v
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
Overview	1
Attachment Theory	1
Attachment in Adulthood	2
The Parent-Child Impact	3
Parent-Child Attachment and Romantic Relationships.....	4
The History of Fatherhood	7
Distinctions between Parent-Child Relationships	8
Father-Daughter Relationship in Adolescence	12
Fear of Intimacy.....	13
Purpose of Current Study	14
Hypothesis 1	15
Hypothesis 2	15
Hypothesis 3	16
CHAPTER II: METHOD.....	18
Participants	18
Measures	18
Procedure.....	21
Analysis	22

CHAPTER III: RESULTS	23
CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION	27
Time Spent with Fathers and Fear of Intimacy	28
Time Spent and Self-Disclosure	29
Supplementary Analysis	29
Limitations	30
Conclusions	31
Future Research	32
REFERENCES	33
APPENDICES	39
Appendix A: IRB Approval Page	40
Appendix B: Consent form.....	41

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics	23
Table 2. Correlations among Variables	25

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

The present study examines the relationship between the amount of time reportedly spent developing father-daughter relationships, the nature of father-daughter relationships, and fear of intimacy among college women. The study explores the manner in which the father-daughter dyad relates to women's romantic relationships with men (fear of intimacy). In the first section of the introduction, attachment theory is introduced. In the second section of the introduction, the importance of parent-child relationships is emphasized. Then, fathers' involvement with their daughters is related to later patterns of adult attachment in women as measured by fear of intimacy. Lastly the hypotheses are presented.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory was first conceptualized by John Bowlby. Bowlby (1988) contends that one primary feature of personality development and an indicator of mental health is the ability to form intimate bonds with others. However, many individuals may have difficulty developing intimate relationships. Scholars utilize attachment theory to understand intimacy processes (Collins & Feeney, 2004). According to Hazan and Shaver (1987), Bowlby's attachment theory was based on observations of the behavior of infants and young children who were separated from their caregivers. Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978) helped to conceptualize the nature of the infant/parent relationship. During their procedure entitled the Strange Situation, Ainsworth and colleagues identified three styles of attachments within the infant-caregiver dyad: secure,

anxious-ambivalent, and avoidant attachment. Secure attachment involved caregivers that were sensitive and responsive (Collins & Feeney, 2004). On the contrary, Collins and Feeney (2004) assert that anxious-ambivalent attachment involved caregivers who are weary of becoming close to others and worry that their feelings will not be reciprocated. Likewise avoidant attachment involved caregivers who were rejecting and unsupportive. Moreover, a child's early experience with a caregiver establishes a prototype for later relationships outside of the family (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Attachment in Adulthood

Although Bowlby (1988) primarily focused on the infant-caregiver dyad, he recognized the importance of studying attachment throughout the lifespan. According to Collins and Feeney (2004), most of the research on adult attachment has focused on adult romantic relationships. Adults develop a sense of security by establishing emotional bonds with a romantic partner (Hazan & Zeifman, 1999). Moreover, Collins and Feeney (2004) assert that the emotional well-being of adults will depend on having an attachment figure who can provide support at difficult times.

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) define four attachment patterns among adults. These attachment patterns originate from anxiety and avoidance. The attachment patterns among adults include secure, preoccupied, dismissing avoidant, and fearful avoidant. Collins and Feeney (2004) state that secure adults are comfortable with intimacy. Preoccupied adults have a desire for closeness and dependence, however they are afraid of being rejected (Collins & Feeney, 2004). On the contrary, dismissing avoidant individuals avoid intimacy in order to experience autonomy and self-sufficiency (Kilmann, Carranza, & Vendemia, 2006). Lastly, fearful avoidant adults desire close

relationships with others; however, their fear of being rejected interferes with their ability to seek intimacy (Collins & Feeney, 2004).

Fearful avoidant individuals view themselves in a negative light. In fact, fearful avoidant individuals often view themselves as emotionally distant and unloving (Collins & Feeney, 2004). In addition, fearful avoidant individuals tend to avoid close relationships. As a result, this decreases their ability to form intimate relationships (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Lutwak's (1985) study, *Fear of Intimacy among College Women*, identified the manner in which 107 college women responded to intimacy related questions. The questions were taken from the Sentence Completion Test (Loevinger & Wessler, 1978) and the This I Believe Test (Harvey, Hunt, & Schroder, 1961). Participants who received a high fear of intimacy score participated in a follow-up interview. The results of the study indicated that women who feared intimacy were afraid of taking risks and being hurt. As a result, they value independence and enter relationships with ambivalence. These participants also had trouble dealing with anger.

The Parent-Child Impact

Research supports the belief that the nature of parent-child relationships will relate to the social well-being of children, throughout their lives (Katorski, 2003). Thornton, Orbuch, and Axinn (1995) believe that the parent-child relationships are important because they begin in the first stages of life, continue throughout the life course, and are vital for the well-being of individuals. Scholars have conducted extensive research concerning the mother-daughter relationship and have concluded that the mother and daughter interaction is the most important parent-child relationship (Katorski, 2003). Because the mother has the ability to form a bond with the child during pregnancy and

birth, many scholars view the mother as being the most essential caregiver (Sharpe, 1994). Although there is an extensive amount of research concerning mother-daughter relationships, there are fewer studies concerning the importance of the interactions among fathers and their daughters (Perkins, 2001). For this reason the present study will examine the father-daughter relationship.

Parent-Child Attachment and Romantic Relationships

Research suggests that the development of romantic intimacy traits and qualities begins in early childhood (Del Toro, 2012). The quality of attachment that a child receives from the parent (e.g., parenting style) has been found to relate to the quality of daughters' attachment in romantic relationships (Collins & Read, 1990). John Bowlby (1973) asserts that parent-child relationship acts as a working model for close relationships in the future. The relationship between a young child and their parents helps the individual to develop a standard for close relationships such as friendships and romantic relationships. Moreover, the quality of parent-child relationships correlates with how individuals view and feel about relationships (Phillips et al., 2013).

Several studies have considered the influence of parent-child attachment on romantic relationships. Hazan and Shaver (1987) utilized an attachment framework to explain adult romantic relationships. The results of their study indicated that securely attached individuals were happier and more likely to report mutual intimacy in romantic relationships compared to individuals who experienced avoidant attachment in childhood. These participants developed higher and deeper levels of emotional distance and lower levels of commitment after maturing into adulthood. Similarly

individuals who were the products of anxious/ambivalent attachment as children were likely to use sexual activity as a means to satisfy their need for love and security.

Phillips et al. (2013) aimed to explore the relationship between young adults' fear of intimacy and their memories of parental care. This study utilized two samples of participants. The first sample consisted of 81 undergraduates (84% females) enrolled in Family and Consumer Science courses at a public university in the southeastern region of the United States. The participants grew up in various types of families: 69% nuclear, 24% single parent families, 7% step families or other family types (e.g., foster families or grandparents served as the head of the household). The first sample contained a limited number of participants. As a result, researchers enlisted a second sample of participants.

The second sample for the study included 279 undergraduate and graduate students in the northern, southeastern, and southwestern regions of the United States (Phillips et al., 2013). These participants reported growing up in the following types of families: 79% nuclear families, 12% single parent families, and 9% step families or other family types. Although there were two samples, the participants completed the same measures: Parental Bonding Instrument and Fear of Intimacy Scale. For Sample 1, correlational analysis indicated that there was a moderate relationship between maternal care and fear of intimacy ($r = -.35, p < .01$) as well as paternal care and fear of intimacy ($r = -.27, p < .05$). For sample two, correlational analysis displayed a moderate relationship between maternal care and fear of intimacy ($r = -.23, p < .001$) as well as paternal care and fear of intimacy ($r = -.33, p < .04$).

Analyses also showed that participants who had a caring relationship with at least one parent were less likely to experience fear of intimacy. Participants who received a

low score on the Fear of Intimacy Scale rated their mothers as more caring than participants who received high scores on the Fear of Intimacy Scale. Unfortunately, there was not a significant difference for the two fear of intimacy groups regarding parental care. At the conclusion of the study, Phillips et al. (2013) found that the nature of the parent-child relationship has the ability to affect the manner in which individuals approach future romantic relationships.

Simpson, Collins, Tran, and Haydon (2007) conducted a longitudinal study that aimed to explore how attachment experiences during the pertinent stages of development (i.e., infancy, early childhood, and adolescence) related to the expression of emotions with romantic partners in young adulthood. The participants consisted of 78 individuals who were studied from infancy into their mid-20s as part of the Minnesota Study of Risk and Adaptation from Birth to Adulthood. In the initial phase, the authors collected several measures at various stages of social development: infancy/early childhood, early elementary school, and adolescence. Simpson et al. (2007) utilized the Strange Situation to assess the parent-infant attachment relationship when participants were 12 months old. Once participants reached early elementary school age, peer competence was assessed for first through third grade. Following this, Simpson et al. (2007) utilized a comprehensive interview that assessed friendship security when participants reached the age of 16. Between the ages of 20-23, the participants and their partners (of at least 4 months) completed self-report measures regarding their relationship. The results of the study found that the experience and the expression of emotions in adult romantic relationships were correlated with attachment experiences during the various stages of social development (Simpson, Collins, Tran, & Haydon, 2007). Results concluded that the early

attachment of participants at 12 months of age correlated with their competence with peers during the early elementary school years. Similarly, peer competence during elementary school years correlated with the level of security displayed in participants' representations of close friendships at age 16 (Simpson et al., 2007). Although the study was correlational, the authors concluded that the results also suggest that pertinent developmental stages may have a strong and direct impact on the stages that follow them.

The History of Fatherhood

In the United States, fathers' roles in the family have changed since the country was founded. Sociologist Joseph Pleck (1997) stated that American fatherhood has developed through four distinct phases. These phases include the moral teacher of early Puritan and Colonial times, the breadwinner of the Industrial Revolution, the sex-role model of post-World War II, and the new, nurturing father of the mid 1970s (Pleck, 1997).

Michael Lamb (1986) wrote a definitive book about the father's role in the family. He mentioned that during Puritan and colonial times, the father was responsible for the moral oversight and moral teaching of the children. The father's role began to shift in the mid-19th century during the Industrial Revolution. During this time Lamb (1986) asserts that breadwinning became the most salient characteristic of fatherhood as the father served as the breadwinner of the family while the women typically remained in the home. In addition during the Industrial Revolution, fathers also played the authoritarian role within the family. Fathers were given the power of discipline and authority in the family (Sharpe, 1994). Authoritarianism eroded however, as a result of several events during the 20th century (e.g., Great Depression, New Deal, and World War II). Benokraitis (1996)

stated that World War II significantly changed work roles and family life. During World War II (1939-1945), many men were drafted and workers were scarce. As a result of this labor shortage, women were allowed to violate traditional gender roles and work outside of the home (Benokraitis, 1996). Women began to become financially less dependent on their husbands and gained more autonomy in the marital relationship. As a result of this, the husband-wife relationship moved towards an egalitarian pattern. The unquestioned power and authority of fathers changed again, with the rise in feminism that occurred during the late 1960s. Feminism in the United States challenged the patriarchal model (Benokraitis, 1996).

The new nurturing father emerged around the mid-1970s (Lamb, 1986). This phase of fatherhood consisted of fathers who nurtured their children and participated in child care (Lamb, 1986; Lewis & O'Brien, 1987). The changes in the fathers' role came about because the majority of mothers were working outside of the home. An article by the American Psychological Association (2013) agreed with previous information cited by Benokraitis (1996) when it asserted that women became less reliant on their spouses financially and attained financial power as a result of working outside the home. Thus, fathers have started to take on shared roles involving childcare and nurturance that are noticeably different from roles of previous generations (American Psychological Association, 2013).

Distinctions between Parent-Child Relationships

Victoria Secunda (1992) notes that the mother-daughter relationship and father-daughter relationship differ tremendously; the mother-daughter relationship represents a sense of *sameness*, and the father-daughter relationship represents a sense of *otherness*.

Secunda goes on to assert that the father primarily serves as his daughter's "first love" as he is the first male figure in which daughters develop a close bond. The father-daughter relationship is the first connection that a girl has with someone of the opposite sex. Because the father is in a position of power, this initial contact can positively or negatively impact the girl's perception of herself and men in general (Dock, 2009). The father-daughter dyad has the ability to influence a young woman's self-esteem, sexuality, emotional development, and romantic relationships with men.

In 2001, Perkins completed a study entitled *The Father-Daughter Relationship: Familial Interactions that Impact a Daughter's Style of Life*. The study group consisted of 96 college women enrolled in a general psychology course at a liberal arts college on the East Coast. The survey asked each participant to respond to the Adjective Check List (Gough, 1952) and the Father-Daughter Relational Questionnaire designed by Perkins following Secunda's model (1992). The Father-Daughter Relational Questionnaire described seven central themes in the father's personality: the doting father, the demanding/supporting father, the distant father, the domineering father, the abusive father, the absent father, and the seductive father. According to Secunda (1992), these themes are key elements in the father's character and have the ability to shape the father-daughter relationship. The doting father wishes to be the center of his daughter's life. The doting father closely matches the ideal father figure in the eyes of their daughters (Secunda, 1992). Unlike the doting father, the distant father has a passive presence within the family (Secunda, 1992). The seductive father tends to express his love in an erotic manner. The demanding father is very strict and may frequently engage in violence. The absent father is one who does not have a presence in his daughter's life. Unfortunately,

Secunda (1992) does not specifically describe the domineering father and the abusive father in her text. However abusive and domineering fathers are grouped together in her text.

Perkins (2001) study compared the participants' self-views with the participants' estimations of their fathers' views of them. The results revealed that participants with doting fathers shared four personality variables with respect to their views of their fathers' estimations: assertiveness, relational needs, cognitive ego states, and critical self-image. Participants who reported having a demanding-supportive father generally identified with and valued their fathers' views. Participants with distant fathers believed that they acquired assertive behaviors that differed from their fathers. Participants who reported having domineering fathers were emotionally disconnected from their fathers. Lastly, participants who reported having absent and seductive fathers described themselves as more assertive, alienated, and misunderstood in comparison to their fathers' estimations. Based on the results of the study, Perkins (2001) concluded that fathers are tremendously important and further research was warranted concerning the relationships that women have with their fathers.

In 1999, Scheffler and Naus conducted a study entitled *The Relationship between Fatherly Affirmation and a Woman's Self-Esteem, Fear of Intimacy, Comfort with Womanhood, and Comfort with Sexuality*. The participants consisted of 57 female students enrolled in an undergraduate psychology course at a university in southwestern Ontario. During the study, participants answered a questionnaire that consisted of five scales. These scales included Rosenberg's Scale of Self Esteem, Barrett-Lennard's Relationship Inventory, Fear of Intimacy Scale, Comfort with Womanhood Scales, and

Construction of Sexuality. The results of the study indicated that there was a positive relationship between fatherly affirmation and self-esteem and a negative relationship between fatherly affirmation and fear of intimacy. Moreover, the study also found that women who received affirmation from their fathers reported higher levels of self-esteem. Surprisingly, there was not a relationship between fatherly affirmation and comfort with womanhood. However, there was a slight relationship between comfort with womanhood and self-esteem. The authors concluded that fathers are important and further research is needed to determine the influence of fatherly affirmation on women's psychosexual development.

The father has the potential to influence his daughter's romantic relationships. Because fathers are the first masculine figures to appear in a woman's life, fathers can set a standard that women may want to emulate or avoid (Sharpe, 1994). Moreover, daughters who have frequent contact with their fathers learn how to interact with males by using the father-daughter relationship as a template (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). Sharpe (1994) contends that the experiences girls have with their fathers and brothers may be transferred to new relationships. Unfortunately, many women do not grow up with a paternal figure. After conducting interviews with 150 daughters and 75 fathers, Secunda (1992) asserts that women with absent fathers compared to doting, distant, demanding, and seductive fathers share a distinct psychological characteristic that they term fear of intimacy. Moreover, women with absent fathers find difficulty trusting and loving a man. Contrary to being able to develop trust and love, Secunda's (1992) interviews found that women with absent fathers ended up believing that permanent relationships with men

required unrealistic and improbable faith. As a result, women with absent fathers tend to test their romantic partners by finding flaws, starting fights, expecting to be abandoned, or looking for excuses to leave the relationship. Secunda (1992) concluded that in order for women to take part successfully in romantic relationships, they ought to resolve any lingering problems in their relationship with their fathers.

Father-Daughter Relationship in Adolescence

The adolescent years are a distinct period for the father-daughter relationship. This is the stage for some adolescents when problems that were rare in previous life stages begin to develop in the father-daughter relationship. The adolescent phase marks a time period in which the teen becomes influenced by external forces such as their peers, romantic relations, and the media (Arnett, 2012). In addition to being influenced by external forces, the female begins to experience puberty (which in turn affects the father-daughter relationship). During the puberty phase, females tend to become self-conscious. Cohen-Sandler (2012) asserts that fathers may become self-conscious as well. Fathers tend to find difficulty in seeing their daughters blossom into a sexually attractive young women (Cohen-Sandler, 2012). As a result of this discomfort, many fathers may avoid their daughters. Similarly, teenage girls are overly self-conscious and may feel uneasy around their fathers. As a result, the teenage girl may avoid the father (Cohen-Sandler, 2012).

Seiffge-Krenke, Shulman, and Kiessinger (2001) conducted a 6 year longitudinal study that analyzed early precursors to romantic relationships in young adults. The sample consisted of 72 adolescents that resided in West Germany. The participants took

part in an annual survey that assessed relationships with family members, friends, and romantic partners at the ages of 14, 15, and 17. The sample was then surveyed at the age of 20 years. This time the focus was on romantic relationships. In order to assess romantic relationships at this stage, the participants filled out the questionnaire. The results of the study concluded that the quality of parental relationships at ages 14, 15, and 17 correlated with the quality of romantic relationships at age 20. Moreover, the results of the study indicate that relationship characteristics such as closeness and basic trust with parents also relate to the sexual component of romantic relationships. More importantly, the results indicate that the characteristic of relationships with parents predicts the quality of romantic relationships at later stages of adolescence. On the contrary, the quality of relationships with friends during adolescence does not predict the quality of romantic relationships. Overall, the study supports the importance of past experiences with parents at the adolescent stage.

Fear of Intimacy

A number of studies have examined the fear of intimacy concept (i.e., a Psychinfo search of “fear of intimacy” resulted in 331 results). Moreover, studies have highlighted how an individual’s fear of intimacy is thought to relate to romantic relationships. Terrell, Terrell, and Von Drashek (2000) examined several emotions (e.g., loneliness and fear of intimacy) among adolescents who were instructed by their parents during childhood not to trust strangers. Participants consisted of 80 Caucasian students (40 men and 40 women) between the ages of 18 to 21 years old. Terrell et al. (2000) discovered that female participants who were instructed not to trust strangers during childhood were likely to experience greater fear of intimacy in opposite sex dating relationships.

Thelen, Vander Wal, Thomas, and Harmon (2000) conducted a study entitled *Fear of Intimacy among Dating Couples*. The sample consisted of 243 college dating couples at a Midwestern university. At the conclusion of the study, Thelen et al. (2000) found that couples who earned high fear of intimacy scores reported that they desired less intimacy in their current relationship. In addition, the study concluded that the level of fear of intimacy negatively correlated with the duration of the relationship. Women with a high fear of intimacy tended to end their relationships at the 6 month follow up. Interestingly, the fear of intimacy scores of the partners of the participants was unrelated to the tendency for these relationships to have ended (Thelen et al., 2000). These studies demonstrate that fear of intimacy goes well beyond father-daughter relationships.

Purpose of Current Study

Although researchers have examined the role fear of intimacy plays in romantic relationships, there is a lack of up-to-date research regarding potential links between father-daughter relationships and reported fear of intimacy of college women (i.e., the 1999 Scheffler & Naus study is the most current research found). Therefore, further research is warranted in this area. Previous studies that have examined father-daughter relationships focus on how fathers impact a woman's psychosexual development (e.g., self-esteem and sexuality). This study, however, primarily examines how daughters' time spent with fathers and the perceived closeness of their relationships with fathers relates to their daughters' fear of intimacy in romantic relationships. Below, each rationale and hypothesis is provided.

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis examines the extent to which the daughters' perceived closeness of their father-daughter relationships as assessed by the Father-Daughter Relationship Scale (Brown, Thompson, & Trafimow, 2002) predicts fear of intimacy in romantic relationships. As previously mentioned, the results of the Scheffler and Naus (1999) study indicated that if women received fatherly affirmation, they were expected to be less fearful of intimate relationships. It is anticipated that the current study will find a significant negative correlation between reported closeness of the father-daughter relationship and daughters' reported fear of intimacy for romantic relationships. Thus Hypothesis 1 predicts that college women who experience more distant relationships with their fathers (low scores on the Closeness subscale of the Father-Daughter Relationship scale) will report more fear of intimacy (high scores on the Fear of Intimacy scale) in romantic relationships compared to college women who experience closer relationships with their fathers. Hypothesis 1 will be evaluated with Pearson's r correlations.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis also examines the relationship between reported father-daughter interactions (as assessed by scores on the Time Spent subscale of the Father-Daughter Relationship Scale). This hypothesis is similar to the first in that it investigates how the reported amount of time spent with fathers predicts fear of intimacy in romantic relationships. Hetherington and Aratesh (1988) state that fathers who do not play a significant role in their daughters' lives for whatever reason (divorce, separation, death, or psychological distance) may contribute to their daughters' fear of intimacy by their lack of involvement. Thus, it is hypothesized that college women who do not report

spending a significant amount of time with their fathers (by lower scores on the Time Spent subscale of the Father Daughter Relationship scale) will report more fear of intimacy in romantic relationships (high scores on the Fear of Intimacy scale) than college women with involved fathers during adolescence. Hypothesis 2 will be evaluated with Pearson's r correlations.

Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis examines the relationship between daughters' reported time spent with their fathers during adolescence (as assessed by scores on the Time Spent subscale of the Father-Daughter Relationship Scale) and reported self-disclosure (as assessed by the Resistance to Self-Disclosure subscale of the Fear of Intimacy Scale). This hypothesis is similar to the first and second hypotheses in that it investigates how the amount of time spent with the father predicts scores on the Resistance to Self-Disclosure subscale of the Fear of Intimacy scale. As mentioned above, Hetherington and Aratesh (1988) suggest that fathers who do not play a significant role in their daughters' lives during adolescence for whatever reason (divorce, separation, death, or psychological distance) may contribute to their daughters' reluctance to engage in self-disclosure. Thus, it is hypothesized that college women who do not spend a significant amount of time with their fathers (by lower scores on the Time Spent subscale of the Father-Daughter Relationship scale) will report less self-disclosure (low scores on the Resistance to Self-Disclosure subscale of the Fear of Intimacy scale) than college women with involved fathers.

Additionally, Emmons and Colby (1995) conducted a study entitled *Emotional Conflict and Well-Being: Relation to Perceived Availability, Daily Utilization, and*

Observer Reports of Social Support. Rather than focusing on fear of intimacy as a broad concept, Emmons and Colby (1995) chose to focus on self-disclosure. Their results indicated that individuals who reported more fear of intimacy did not share personal information with intimate others as commonly as individuals who reported less fear of intimacy (Emmons & Colby, 1995). Thus the point of Hypothesis 3 is to test whether finding in Hypothesis 2 will generalize to self-disclosure. Hypothesis 3 will be examined with Pearson's r correlations.

It is anticipated that survey data will display a true relationship between lack of personal disclosure with intimate others (e.g., openness) and closeness of father-daughter relationships. Thus it is hypothesized that college-age women who report higher involvement with their fathers will report being more open and self-disclosing than college-age women who do not report close father-daughter relationships.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Participants

The participants in the current study were students enrolled in the general psychology course. All participants were women between 18 to 24 years old. There were 87 participants in the 18 to 20 age group and 14 participants in the 21 to 24 age group. Participants also reported their race. There were 52 Caucasians, 35 African American, 4 Asian Americans, 1 Hispanic American, and 9 bi-racial.

Measures

According to Barker, Pistrang, and Elliott (2005) self-reports directly provide researchers with participants' viewpoints. Self-reports provide researchers with information that is otherwise unobtainable (e.g., participants perception of themselves). Thus, Barker et al. (2005) assert that self-report measures can be used to gather information where observational data are not available (e.g., autobiographical collections). Thus, self-report measures are a reasonable measurement strategy for assessing variables such as fear of intimacy.

Fear of Intimacy Scale. The Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS) is a 35-item self-report measure designed to assess a particular variable (fear of intimacy) that impacts intimacy in a close relationship or at the onset of a close relationship (Descutner & Thelen, 1991). Descutner and Thelen (1991) used the Miller Social Intimacy Scale and the Intimacy Status Interview to help develop the Fear of Intimacy Scale. Descutner and Thelen (1991) assert that the fear-of-intimacy construct includes three significant component

(a) content (the communication of personal information), (b) emotional valence (strong feelings when personal information is being exchanged), and (c) vulnerability (high regard for the intimate partner receiving the information). Intimacy takes place when the three components coexist. The Fear of Intimacy Scale presents items on a 5-point Likert scale. A high score on the Fear of Intimacy Scale indicates a high fear of intimacy and a low score on the scale indicates a low fear of intimacy (Descutner & Thelen, 1991).

Ingersoll, Norvilitis, Zhang, Jia, and Tetewsky (2008) assert that the Fear of Intimacy Scale is suitable for research. The Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS) has several advantages over additional scales that assess intimacy such as the Miller Social Intimacy Scale (Miller & Lefcourt, 1982) and the Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships Scale (Schaefer & Olson, 1981). The FIS can be used to measure fear of intimacy despite the participants' current relationship status (Ingersoll et al., 2008). Moreover, the FIS is very brief and can be used cross-culturally to assess intimacy (Ingersoll et al., 2008).

Doi and Thelen (1993) conducted a study to analyze the validity of the FIS with a middle-age sample. The sample consisted of men and women (35 to 55 years) who were employees of a state psychiatric facility. The results of the study indicated that the psychometric properties (e.g., construct validity and internal consistency) for the instrument were similar to the psychometric characteristics found in the Descutner and Thelen (1991) study. The FIS Full Scale mean (79.58) and standard deviation (21.57) from their college-aged sample were similar to the Full Scale means and standard deviations

obtained by Descutner and Thelen ($M = 78.75$, $SD = 21.82$) with their middle-aged sample. In addition, significant correlations were found between the FIS and various aspects of attachment (emotional closeness, self-disclosure, and relationship satisfaction). These correlations were examined using Pearson product-moment correlations.

Sherman and Thelen (1996) validated the Fear of Intimacy Scale with 325 high school sophomores (158 males and 167 females) in a Midwestern town. The study utilized two versions of the FIS with the participants, but they did not report Full Scale scores. The first version (FIS-D) assessed close-dating relationships and the second version (FIS-F) assessed close same-sex friendships. The results of the study indicated that females reported a higher fear of intimacy for dating relationships rather than same sex friendships. Unlike females, males reported a higher fear of intimacy for same sex friendships rather than dating relationships. Likewise, the FIS-D mean (84.63) and standard deviation (19.62) were similar to the means and standard deviation obtained by the previous study. Also the FIS-F mean (85.35) and standard deviation (21.97) were similar to the means and standard deviation obtained by the Descutner and Thelen study (1991).

Resistance to self-disclosure was assessed by adding together responses to question numbers 1, 2, 3, 10, 27, 31, and, 32 and on the Fear of Intimacy Scale. Resistance to self-disclosure is the only subscale included in the Fear of Intimacy scale. Like the Fear of Intimacy Scale, the Resistance to Self-Disclosure subscale presents items on a 5-point Likert scale. A high score on the Resistance to Self-Disclosure subscale

indicates hesitation to disclose personal details and a low score on the scale indicates relative ease with self-disclosure (Descutner & Thelen, 1991).

The Father-Daughter Relationship Scale. The Father-Daughter Relationship scale (Brown, Thompson, & Trafimow, 2002) was designed to measure how women viewed their relationship with their father. The scale consists of two subscales, Closeness of the Relationship and Amount of Time Spent together. A high score on the Closeness subscale indicates that the individuals had close relationships with their fathers and a low score indicates that the individuals had distant relationships with their fathers. Moreover, a high score on the Time Spent subscale indicates that the individuals spent more time with their fathers and a low score indicates that the individuals did not spend a great deal of time with their fathers. According to Brown et al. (2002), this scale is highly reliable ($\alpha = .89$ for the total scale, $\alpha = .91$ for Closeness subscale items, and $\alpha = .89$ for the Time Spent Together subscale). In addition, Brown et al. (2002) assert that the scale can be helpful in understanding important factors in women's development including attitudes toward social confidence, sexual activity, drugs, and alcohol. Based on Brown et al. (2002) findings, the average mean (2.57) and standard deviation (1.36) for the Time Spent together subscale were taken from items 1, 3, 4, 6, and 8. The average mean (4.91) and standard deviation (1.94) for the Closeness subscale were taken from items 2, 5, 7, and 9.

Procedure

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB; See Appendix 1), the principal researcher compiled the measures into one survey. The survey was then

uploaded to SONA system and distributed to students. The data were analyzed using Pearson r correlations and descriptive statistics

Analysis

The first hypothesis was that college women who experience distant relationships with their fathers would report more fear of intimacy in romantic relationships compared to college women who did experience close relationships with their fathers. Hypothesis 1 was tested using Pearson's r correlations. Participants completed the Closeness subscale of the Father-Daughter Relationship Scale by Brown et al. (2002).

The second hypothesis examined how the reported amount of time spent with fathers predicted fear of intimacy in romantic relationships. The second hypothesis was be tested using Pearson's r correlations. Participants completed the Time Spent subscale of the Father-Daughter Relationship Scale (Brown et al. 2002).

The third hypothesis examined how the amount of time daughters spent with their fathers during adolescence correlated with self-disclosure in romantic relationships. The third hypothesis was tested using Pearson's r correlations. Participants completed the Father Daughter Relationship Scale.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The following data were collected for each participant during the Spring 2014 academic semester: gender, age in years, race, as well as raw scores for Fear of Intimacy, Time Spent with Father during Adolescence, Closeness to Father During Adolescence, and Resistance to Self-Disclosure. A general statistical analysis was performed to find the descriptive statistics (see Table 1). The sample size for the study was $N = 101$. All participants were females. For questions regarding Fear of Intimacy, $M = 80.14$ and $SD = 27.09$. For questions regarding Time Spent, $M = 11.12$ and $SD = 5.82$. For questions regarding Closeness, $M = 15.35$ and $SD = 7.70$. For questions regarding Resistance to Self-Disclosure, $M = 17.56$ and $SD = 6.01$.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

Scale	Range	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
Fear of Intimacy	103	35	138	80.14	27.09
Self-Disclosure	24	7	31	17.56	6.01
Time Spent	19	4	23	11.12	5.82
Closeness	23	3	26	15.35	7.70

Note. $N = 101$.

Reliability of the measures was determined using Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency. It was calculated for all four variables: Time Spent, Closeness, Fear of Intimacy, and Resistance to Self-Disclosure. The Time Spent variable ($\alpha = .873$), Closeness variable ($\alpha = .900$), and the Fear of Intimacy variable ($\alpha = .946$) had

excellent internal consistency. Similarly, the Resistance to Self-Disclosure variable had good internal consistency ($\alpha = .762$).

A paired samples t test was conducted to compare the Fear of Intimacy scores collected from the current study to the Fear of Intimacy scores collected during a previous study (e.g., Descutner & Thelen, 1991). The t test for the paired samples indicated that the fear of intimacy scores collected from the current study ($M = 80.14$, $N = 101$) and the fear of intimacy scores collected during the previous study ($M = 78.75$, $N = 129$) were quite similar, $t = 1.06$, $p = .29$.

Hypothesis 1 looked at the relationship between perceived closeness of the father-daughter relationship and how it related to fear of intimacy in romantic relationships. It was hypothesized that there would be a negative correlation between closeness of the father-daughter relationship and daughter's reported fear of intimacy for romantic relationships. Another way of looking at the same hypothesized relationship was that there would be a positive relationship between closeness of father-daughter relationships and confidence for intimacy in romantic relationships. A Pearson's r correlation was used to determine the relationship between the variables. It was found that there was a significant negative relationship between the variable which is consistent with the hypothesis ($r = -.337$, $p = .001$). Hypothesis 1 is supported.

Table 2

Correlations among Variables

	Fear of Intimacy	Self-Disclosure	Time Spent	Closeness
Fear of Intimacy	--			
Self-Disclosure	.892**	--		
Time Spent	-.250*	-.217*	--	
Closeness	-.337**	-.311**	.775**	--

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Hypothesis 2 looked at the relationship between time spent and fear of intimacy. A negative relationship was hypothesized in that college women who reported spending more time with their fathers during adolescence were expected to report less fear of intimacy in romantic relationships. A Pearson's r correlation was used to determine the relationship between the variables. The expected correlation was found. Thus small amounts of time spent with fathers correlated with large reported degrees of fear of intimacy and thus a negative correlation ($r = -.250, p = .015$). The two variables were significantly related. Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Hypothesis 3 looked at the relationship between time spent and resistance to self-disclosure. A negative relationship was hypothesized in that college women who reported spending a significant amount of time with their fathers during adolescence were expected to report less resistance to self-disclosure in romantic relationships. A Pearson's r correlation was used to determine the relationship between the variables. The expected correlation was found. A negative correlation was found ($r = -.217, p = .029$)

which indicates that the two variables were significantly related. Hypothesis 3 is supported.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The results confirmed Hypothesis 1, which stated that women who experienced distant relationships with their fathers (low scores on the Closeness subscale) would report more fear of intimacy. The findings of the present study are similar to the findings found in a study conducted by Scheffler and Naus (1999). Scheffler and Naus found that women who received fatherly affirmation were less likely to become fearful of intimate relationships. Moreover, Phillips et al. (2013) found interesting results regarding the relationship between family structure and fear of intimacy. In the Phillip et al. (2013) study, linear regression analysis was conducted in order to evaluate the amount of variance that maternal and paternal care contributed to fear of intimacy. Parental care contributed to 15% of variance in Sample 1; however, maternal and paternal care combined contributed only 12% of the variance in a second similar sample of college males and females (Phillips et al., 2013).

The results of the present study related to Hypothesis 1 are in contrast to research conducted by Dock (2009). For example, Dock investigated how the quality and quantity of the father-daughter relationship related to romantic attachment. Unlike the present study, the Dock sample consisted entirely of African American college women ($N = 185$). Two of the measures used in the Dock study were similar to the measures used in the present study. Those measures were the Father-Daughter Relationship Rating Scale (Brown, Thompson, & Traffimow, 2002) and the Fear of Intimacy Scale (Descutner & Thelen, 1991). Unlike the present study, Dock (2009) found that closeness to fathers during adolescence was not related to fear of intimacy in romantic relationships.

Time Spent with Fathers and Fear of Intimacy

As hypothesized in Hypothesis 2, women who reported spending greater amounts of time with their fathers during adolescence encountered fewer problems with fear of intimacy in comparison to women who did not spend as much time with their fathers. One potential explanation for this finding is that the parent-child relationship has the ability to affect romantic relationships. Research suggests that the quality of the father-daughter relationship sets the standard for future relationships (Sharpe, 1994).

The results of the present study are consistent with previous research. At the conclusion of their study, Seiffe-Krenke et al. (2001) reported that parental relationships (both with mothers and fathers) during the adolescent years were correlated with romantic relationships in young adulthood for males and females. Moreover, Secunda (1992) found that women with absent fathers indicated greater fear of intimacy compared to women with fathers present during childhood. Additionally, in comparing college women from intact families to college women from divorced families, Kilmann, Carranza, and Vendemia (2006) found that females from divorced families reported having less secure attachment to their parents and displaying more pronounced pattern of fearful avoidance.

The present study found that there was a significant negative relationship between time spent with fathers and fear of intimacy. In contrast to the findings of the present study, Dock (2009) found that the Time Spent subscale of the Father-Daughter Relationship Rating Scale was not associated with attachment in romantic relationships. Dock explained the lack of a relationship as possibly due to the lack of father-daughter relationship scales that specifically assess the father-daughter relationship as it relates to

African American women. Thus, Dock conjectured that the scale may have been unable to accurately assess the father-daughter relationship among African American women.

Time Spent and Self-Disclosure

As hypothesized in Hypothesis 3, women who reported spending more time with their fathers during adolescence reported fewer problems with self-disclosure in romantic relationships in comparison to women who reported spending less time with their fathers. Simpson et al. (2007) found that attachment experiences with parents, peers, and friends are correlated with the expression of emotions in romantic relationship. Similarly, the results of the present study indicated that there was a significant negative relationship between time spent and self-disclosure. Thus, the results of this study support Simpson et al.'s findings that attachment experiences with parents relate to an individual's expression of emotion in romantic relationships.

Emmons and Colby (1995) examined the relationship between emotional conflict (i.e., lack of self-disclosure) and the availability of emotional support from family members. Similar to the present study, Emmons and Colby (1995) found a significant negative relationship between the ambivalence of emotional expression and the emotional support from family members. Moreover, Emmons and Colby found that there was a significant positive relationship between ambivalence of emotional expression and lack of emotional support from family members.

Supplementary Analysis. The results of the present study displayed a strong, positive ($r = .892$) correlation between fear of intimacy and resistance to self-disclosure. Although the Resistance to Self-Disclosure scale is a subscale of the larger Fear of Intimacy scale, the correlation warrants discussion. The correlation was quite high because the

Resistance to Self-Disclosure scale is a subscale of the larger Fear of Intimacy scale. Therefore, higher scores on the Resistance to Self-Disclosure Scale indicated that the individual was more likely to have a strong fear of intimacy in romantic relationships. Similar to the present study, Emmons and Colby (1995) found that individuals with higher levels of fear of intimacy were more likely to find it difficult to disclose personal information or intimate feelings with individuals that were close to them. Currently, no studies have found results contrary to these findings. Thus, one may suggest that there is a connection between fear of intimacy and self-disclosure in romantic relationships.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. The first limitation of the study is sample size. The sample size consisted of 101 participants. Because of the relatively small sample size, there is a possibility that a larger sample size might alter the findings.

The second limitation of the study is the exclusion of participants that were raised by relatively distant paternal figures (e.g., uncle, grandfather, cousin, and stepfather). All of the participants in the study were required to have a relationship with their biological father during the adolescent years. Participants that did not have a relationship with their biological fathers during the adolescent years were excluded from the study. The principle investigator did not take into account that there are individuals who do not have a relationship with their biological father for various reasons (e.g., death or divorce).

The third limitation of the study also relates to the sample. The participants for the study consisted of female students enrolled in general psychology courses at Middle Tennessee State University. This ultimately may affect the generalizability of the study.

The fourth limitation of the study relates to the Father-Daughter Relationship Scale. The Father-Daughter relationship scale contained a closeness subscale that included five items. Five items may not be an adequate number of questions to assess a construct such as closeness. Bowlby (1980) asserts that the strongest emotions develop in the form of attachment relationships. Therefore, this study should have categorized the father-daughter relationship in the form of an attachment style. Rather than utilizing the Father-Daughter Relationship scale, one might be better advised to utilize an attachment measure (e.g., Hazan and Shaver, 1987) to assess the various forms of attachment.

Conclusions

The author concludes that the results of this study emphasize the importance of studying the correlation between the quality of father-daughter relationships and fear of intimacy among college women. Findings suggest that the amount of time spent with fathers is associated with self-disclosure. Findings also indicate that the amount of time spent with fathers is associated with fear of intimacy. At the same time, the present study found that women who reported closer relationships with their fathers would report lower levels of fear of intimacy in romantic relationships. The father-daughter relationship is quite complex. Thus, the present study has displayed that the father-daughter relationship is an important correlate of intimacy in romantic relationships; however, it is not the only correlate of intimacy in romantic relationships. Given these findings, researchers should continue to assess the relationship between father-daughter attachment and fear of intimacy.

Future Research

Prior to this study, research often focused on the nature of the father-daughter relationship as they relate to self-esteem and sexuality (i.e., Scheffler & Naus, 1999). There is a lack of research that describes how the relationship with a paternal figure relates to fear of intimacy among adult women. This study sought to help fill this void by assessing the correlation between closeness with fathers and fear of intimacy among college women. The findings did discover a strong relationship between closeness with fathers and fear of intimacy among college women. In the future, one would be advised to assess the relationship between father-daughter attachment styles and fear of intimacy in romantic relationships. Thus far, it is unclear if the level of attachment between fathers and daughters relates to a woman's level of fear of intimacy. Further research is warranted to better understand the relationship between father-daughter attachment and fear of intimacy.

This study excluded women that did not have a relationship with their father during the adolescent years. Previous researchers have investigated the attachment characteristics of college women from intact families in comparison to non-intact families (Kilmann, Carranza, & Vendemia, 2006). Further research should be extended to compare women who had a relationship with their fathers to women who did not have a relationship with their fathers during childhood and adolescence to determine if there is a significant difference between reports of fear of intimacy.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval Page

1/31/2014

Investigator (s): Crystal Armstrong and Dr. James Rust

Department: Psychology

Investigator(s) Email Address: ca3h@mtmail.mtsu.edu, james.rust@mtsu.edu

Protocol Title: Closeness with Fathers and Fear of Intimacy among College Women

Protocol Number: #14-205

Dear Investigators:

Your study has been designed to be exempt. The exemption is pursuant to 45 CFR 46:101(b)(2) Educational Tests, Surveys, Interviews, or Observations.

We will contact you annually on the status of your project. If it is completed, we will close it out of our system. You do not need to complete a progress report and you will need to complete a final report. It is important to note that your study is approved for the life of the project and does not have an expiration date.

The following changes must be reported to the Office of Compliance before they are initiated:

- Adding new subject population
- Adding a new investigator
- Adding a new procedure (e.g., new survey; new questions to your survey)
- A change in funding source
- Any change that makes the study no longer eligible for exemption

The following changes do not need to be reported to the Office of Compliance:

- Editorial or administrative revisions to the consent or other study documents
- Increasing or decreasing the number of subjects from your proposed population

If you encounter any serious unanticipated problems to participants, or if you have any questions as you conduct your research, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,
Kellie Hilker
Compliance Officer
615-494-8918

**Appendix B: Consent Form
Informed Consent**

Middle Tennessee State University

Project Title: Closeness with Fathers and Fear of Intimacy among College Women

Purpose of Project: The primary purpose of the study is to examine the extent to which daughters' perceived closeness of their father-daughter relationships predicts fear of intimacy in romantic relationships.

Procedures: The principle researcher will compile two measures into one survey using Qualtrics. The survey will then be uploaded to SONA system and distributed to students. The survey will consist of 44 items. SPSS will be used to conduct a statistical analysis once a sufficient amount of surveys are collected.

Risks/Benefit: Participants may feel uncomfortable answering questions pertaining to their fathers. At the conclusion of the questionnaire, students will be provided with a list of counseling resources. Students will receive 2 credits per hour by participating in the study.

Confidentiality: The anonymous responses will be downloaded and stored on a password protected computer.

Principle Investigator/Contact Information: Crystal Armstrong

email address: ca3h@mtmail.mtsu.edu phone number: 205-381-7217

Participating in this project is voluntary, and refusal to participate or withdrawing from participation at any time during the project will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled. All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private but total privacy cannot be promised, for example, your information may be shared with Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board. In the event of questions or difficulties of any kind during or following participation, the subject may contact the Principal Investigator as indicated above. For additional information about giving your consent or your right as a participant in this study, please feel free to contact the MTSU Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918.

Consent

I have read the above information and my questions have been answered satisfactorily by project staff. I believe I understand the purpose, benefits, and risks of the study and give my informed and free consent to be a participant.

Signature

Date