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CONGRUENCY OF IDENTITY STYLE IN MARRIED COUPLES

by

Jerry L. Cook

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Family and Human Development

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ABSTRACT

Congruency of Identity Style in Married Couples

by

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Utah State University, 1999

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This study assessed the importance that similar identity style plays in the relationships within recently married couples. To assess the congruency of similar and dissimilar identity style, three postulates were analyzed. These postulates included: (a) Is there a gender difference in reports of marital intimacy? (b) Is similarity of identity style related to marital intimacy? (c) Is there an interaction effect between gender and similarity of identity style in relation to reports of marital intimacy? A sample consisting of 84 couples completed a survey containing questions relevant to identity and marital intimacy. Demographic information was also requested in the survey. Analyses indicate that (a) males generally report greater marital intimacy than females, (b) couples with similar identity style tend to report greater marital intimacy than their dissimilar counterparts, and (c) females' reports of marital intimacy are more influenced (than males) by similarity of identity style.

(65 pages)

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Young adulthood is a time when one faces the challenge of intimacy. According to Erikson (1963), this is a time when one is eager and willing to “fuse [one’s] identity with that of others” (p. 263). Intimacy is often outwardly shown by the act of marriage. This new identity, where the “we” replaces the “me,” is not only a driving desire in many marital couples--it also appears to be a necessity for a successful marriage (Wallerstein, 1994).

The importance of the transition from identity to intimacy is highlighted by Erikson’s epigenetic notion that the resolution of psychosocial stages must precede the successful resolution of subsequent stages. One must have a knowledge of self (or “identity” in Erikson’s terms) before that knowledge can be shared with another (“intimacy”).

In studying marital intimacy, research with recently married couples is of great importance because of their higher risk for divorce. Research on failed marriages (Glenn, 1991) indicates that these marriages are often unable to create a strong marital framework that is able to cope with the constant stresses of life. Young married couples often face a double-jeopardy situation because of the difficulty in forming a marital identification (e.g., the fusion of identities or “intimacy”) and trends showing that the probability of divorce is highest during the earliest years of marriage (Thornton & Rodgers, 1987; Wallerstein, 1994). In other words, not only is divorce (often a reflection

of marital dissatisfaction) more likely in the earliest years of marriage--divorce is also more likely for those who marry at an early age.

Determining the nature of a successful resolution of identity that precipitates successful intimacy in recently married couples was beyond the scope of this study. Rather, the purpose of this study was to look at how recently married couples' marital intimacy related to similar (and dissimilar) *approaches* (or "styles") of identity formation. Although research has already shown that homogamous relationships are one of the greatest predictors of marital quality (Ickes, 1993; Kurdek, 1993; Larsen & Olson, 1989), no attempt has been made to examine similarity (or homogamy) in identity style among members of the marital dyad with marital intimacy. This void is surprising given large bodies of research for both marital intimacy and identity development. This study attempted to link marital intimacy to identity style similarity among recently married couples. Another purpose of this study was to determine how gender mediated the relationship. This study can provide a springboard for related research that will generate questions and answers for increasing marital intimacy among young married couples.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Marital Intimacy

A plethora of research has been generated that targets marital satisfaction, marital happiness, marital intimacy, marital adjustment, and marital quality. Because these marital variables have high correlations with each other, it is likely they are tapping into similar measurement constructs (see Heyman, Sayers, & Bellack, 1994; Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Sabatelli, 1988; Waring, McElrath, Lefcoe, & Weisz, 1981; Waring, McElrath, Mitchell, & Derry, 1981). Therefore, for the purpose of this review, these constructs will be treated synonymously and referred to as marital intimacy. This review of literature addresses the importance of marriage, how marital intimacy is typically measured, why recently married couples may be more likely to divorce and/or experience a lack of marital intimacy, and correlates of marital intimacy.

Importance of Marriage

Marriage may offer a great amount of support to individuals. This support can be social, emotional, physical, and mental. Most marriages have their ups and downs, but following the notion of social exchange theory (see Sabatelli & Shehan, 1993), when an individual perceives a marriage as more of an expense than a benefit, unhappiness may occur.

Measuring Marital Intimacy

Measures of marital intimacy have been created to enable professionals to identify correlates and predictors that may enhance one's marriage. These measures are usually self-administered questionnaires (SAQs), although interviews are also quite common. It is important, however, to recognize that there are two different types of intimacy addressed in existing research and intimacy measures. The first, "general intimacy," is referred to as the closeness that one feels with others (and sometimes with a significant other, also). Marital intimacy, in contrast, is the closeness that one feels with one's spouse. This distinction is important because a great deal of research has used "general intimacy" measures for marital dyads. Although the authors of these general intimacy measures suggest they are valid measures of marital intimacy (or this inferential leap has been made by other researchers), it cannot be assumed that intimate friendships are identical in nature or as intense as the intimacy that occurs in a marital relationship (see Van den Broucke, Vertommen, & Vandereycken, 1995).

Additionally, the variable that appears to be constructed in Erikson's (1963) work is intimacy with *one* significant other. Evidence for this conclusion stems from the prerequisites listed by Erikson (1963) for genitility, a dimension of intimacy. These are:

1. mutuality of orgasm
2. with a loved partner
3. of the other sex
4. with whom one is able and willing to share a mutual trust
5. and with whom one is able and willing to regulate the cycles of:
 - a. work
 - b. procreation
 - c. recreation

6. so as to secure to the offspring, too, all the stages of a satisfactory development (p. 266).

Marital intimacy among recently married couples. As previously mentioned, those who marry at an early age and recently married couples are at the greatest risk for divorce (see Bartz & Nye, 1970; Glenn, 1991; Thornton & Rodgers, 1987 for review). In addition to having difficulties forming a marital identity, these individuals may only recognize the *real* person they married ex post facto, or after the honeymoon is over and real life begins--one with responsibilities and where spouses are too tired to "put on" their dating facade every morning. Although many spouses may weather this storm ("You're not what I expected to marry!") and live "happily ever after," there may also be those who become highly dissatisfied with their marriages.

Having children early in the marital relationship may serve as an additional source of stress. Crohan's (1996) research showed that White and African American parents who had children within the first 2 years of marriage reported less marital intimacy (as compared to their childless counterparts) and more frequent conflicts after the transition than before. Spouses who became quiet and withdrawn during conflictual discussions reported greater marital intimacy than those who engaged in verbal attackings, then left the scene of conflict. This finding was consistent for both White and African American new parents.

In another study, Spaid and Barusch (1994) found that the greater the intimacy (or emotional closeness) between an older couple, the more likely caregiving would be provided by one spouse for the other. Perhaps marital intimacy needs to be developed in

the early years of marriage, so as to withstand the pressures and hardships of later life.

Although it is argued that measures of marital intimacy (rather than general intimacy) be used with marital dyads, it should be noted that intimate bonds before marriage may give a spouse the experience and skills to manage an intimate relationship *in* marriage. For example, general intimacy has been found to be related to psychological health (Sheffield, Carey, & Patenaude, 1995), empathy (Stevens & L'Abate, 1989), a decrease of depression (Feinauer, Callahan, & Hilton, 1996), and even humor (Hampes, 1994)--all of which are arguably healthy aspects for a healthy marriage.

Homogamy-- a predictor of marital intimacy. Several of the marital intimacy correlates can be grouped under one term, "homogamy." Homogamy suggests that individuals have the tendency to choose a mate similar to oneself (Burr, 1973). Larson and Holman's (1994) review showed that, among several homogamous variables, the following have received support in predicting marital intimacy: race, socioeconomic status, religious denomination affiliations, age, and external motives for being married. Moreover, in a study involving 57 couples married for more than 25 years, Kaslow and Robison (1996) found that similar values were also essential to marital intimacy. Additionally, research on social homogamy and marital compatibility (Houts, Robins, & Huston, 1996; Ickes, 1993) supports the notion that similarity in premarital and marital couples' role preferences and social homogamy is related to increased compatibility during marriage. Burleson and Denton (1992) found that *similar* (or homogamous) cognitive skills were a greater predictor of marital intimacy than *certain* cognitive skills. Houts et

al. (1996) also reported that an individual in their sample had a 1 in 28 chance that their dating partner will be similar in six attributes. Given the nature that individuals tend to marry whom they date, and that homogamy is strongly related to marital intimacy, this creates a dilemma. The conclusion given in the Houts et al. study was that the *more* similar (rather than similar per se) the couples were in leisure interests and role preference attitudes, the more compatible they were in their marriage. Likewise, Kurdek (1993) suggested that couples with *different* values or attitudes may have difficulties in their relationship because they appraise events from different perspectives. It is interesting to note that while opposites may sometimes attract, it seems that those couples who are similar are more likely to remain intact.

Additionally, social exchange theory (see Sabatelli & Shehan, 1993) suggests that perceptions of homogamy are more important than the actual similarity of a couple. Jones and Stanton (1988) found that the *actual* similarity of dysfunctional relationship beliefs among couples was not correlated with marital distress; however, the *perceived* similarity of these relationship dysfunctional beliefs *was* correlated with marital distress.

Other predictors and correlates of marital intimacy. Other predictors of marital intimacy include: communication (Snow & Compton, 1996) and lower levels of relationship-specific irrational beliefs (DeBord, Romans, & Krieshok, 1996). Additional variables that have been found to have a relationship with marital intimacy: a belief of importance for religion, traditional gender-role employed husbands with retired wives, specific coping skills, and closeness of ties between a child and both parents (Booth &

Amato, 1994; Sabourin, Laporte, & Wright, 1990; Snow & Compton, 1996; Szinovacz, 1996). Table 1 summarizes correlates and predictors of marital intimacy.

Table 1

Correlates and Predictors of Marital Intimacy

Correlates & Predictors (+) denotes a positive relationship; (-) denotes a negative relationship	Reference
Early age @ marriage (-)	Bartz & Nye, 1970
Recently married couples (-)	Thornton & Rodgers, 1987
Early childbearing (-)	Crohan, 1996
Homogamous variables (+): race, SES, religious denomination affiliation, age, external motives to marry	Larson & Holman, 1994
Shared values (+)	Kaslow & Robison, 1996
Similar role preferences & social homogamy (+)	Houts, Robins, & Huston, 1996; Ickes, 1993
Perceived similar beliefs (+)	Jones & Stanton, 1988
Communication (+)	Snow & Compton, 1996
Close ties between child & both parents (+)	Booth & Amato, 1994
Specific coping skills (+)	Sabourin, Laporte, & Wright, 1990
Traditional gender-role employed husbands with retired wives (+)	Szinovacz, 1996
Both spouses valuing the importance of religion (+)	Snow & Compton, 1996
Caregiving behaviors (+)	Spaid & Barusch, 1994

Gender differences. There also appear to be gender differences in reports of marital intimacy, with males typically reporting greater marital intimacy than females (Kurdek, 1993; Levy-Shiff, 1994; Shek, 1995). One reason for this may be because females tend to perceive more marital problems and blame them on the husband, while males tend to perceive problems as mutually derived (Eells & O'Flaherty, 1996).

Houts et al. (1996) found several results regarding gender's mediating effect with leisure interests and marital intimacy. They found that the less similar in role performance preferences, the more likely it would be that both males and females experienced high degrees of conflict. Women in couples with dissimilar role performance preferences also reported more ambivalence than women in similar role preference relationships. Additionally, men in couples with similar leisure interests reported greater marital intimacy than their female counterparts. Houts and colleagues' (1996) research, along with reports of men generally reporting greater marital intimacy than women, may suggest that men are more positively affected by homogamy than women, while women are more negatively affected by a lack of homogamy as compared to their male counterparts.

Summary of Marital Intimacy

In summary, research has shown that several measures for marital intimacy, marital quality, marital adjustment, marital satisfaction, and marital happiness tap into the same measurement construct. (This review has classified them under "marital intimacy"). Many of the correlates and predictors of marital intimacy can be categorized under the "homogamy" subgroup.

In regard to gender differences, females tend to report lower levels of marital intimacy than males. This may be because females tend to have a greater sense of finding and wanting to solve problems than males.

This study examined the relationship between another homogamous variable (e.g., identity styles) and marital intimacy. This study also analyzed the impact that gender played in this relationship.

Identity

History of Identity

Prior to addressing the concept of identity styles, it may be helpful to first look at Erikson's (1950) psychosocial theory and Marcia's identity statuses. Erikson (1950) believed that psychosocial development followed a planned course, where all individuals are guided by a universal pattern of growth that proceeds sequentially through eight stages. He maintained that each stage is accompanied by a crisis (or dilemma) that each individual must successfully resolve prior to confronting subsequent psychosocial crises.

Erikson has frequently warned that his stages do not suggest that either one or the other outcomes will result (as some may assume because of the "vs." in the stage names). Rather, he proposed a dialectical approach where the two forces meet and hopefully the child (or adult) will gain a greater amount of the positive than the negative (Marcia, 1993). It is important to note that each stage is actually a lifelong process, but each stage's theme is the most powerful force (at that time) guiding the individual. A short description for

each of the first five stages will be given. A discussion of how the first four stages influence the formation of identity will follow.

Erikson's stages 1 through 5: "Trust" through "Identity." The first stage, "Trust vs. Mistrust," is where infants gain trust by learning to rely on those who care for them. When the infant cries, he is attended to with food and nurturing. An infant must also learn to trust himself and his abilities to cope with urges. Erikson (1950, 1963) suggested that although nutrients for the infant are important, they are not as vital to the infant's sense of trust as the confidence that the parents portray in themselves.

Successful resolution of the first stage will assist the toddler in the second stage, "Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt." Erikson stated that toilet training "sets the stage for experimentation with two simultaneous sets of social modalities: holding on and letting go" (1950, p. 222). In other words, toddlers learn how to control their bodily functions, then they begin to gain mastery over other behaviors. Walking also sets the precedence for the child being able to become more independent. Although a small amount of shame and doubt may help the toddler recognize his necessary dependence on his caregivers, it is hopeful that the toddler will acquire a greater degree of autonomy than of shame and doubt.

The preschool child who has a sense of autonomy is preparing himself for the stage of "Initiative vs. Guilt." This is a time when a child "makes plans, set goals, and persevere in attaining them" (Crain, 1992, p. 254). Children in this stage undertake several adult-like activities, such as playing policeman, "house," fireman, or doctor.

“Industry vs. Inferiority” is the next stage for schoolage children. Here, they learn competence. This is a time when a child “becomes ready to apply himself to given skills and tasks, which go far beyond playful expression” (Erikson, 1950, p. 227) displayed in the previous stages. At this point the child “is in free possession of a surplus of energy which permits (him/her) to forget failures quickly and to approach what seems desirable . . . with undiminished and more accurate direction” (p. 255). The child learns to gain recognition by making or creating something. Industry is often displayed by children making tree houses, engaging in Scouting activities, and babysitting.

A sense of industry is vital to the next stage of “Identity vs. Role Confusion.” Adolescents in this stage now use skills and knowledge gained in the “Industry” stage to assist in defining oneself in social, sexual, and emotional interests. Erikson (1950) explained that this is a time when “all sameness and continuities relied on earlier are questioned again” (p. 227). This is a time when adolescents struggle to come to a realization and agreement between what they think of themselves and what others think of them. In other words, adolescents must strive to attain a sense of harmony between what they think of themselves and what they display outwardly in order to feel a healthy sense of identity. Although identity is a lifelong process, adolescence is the first time when these issues are faced head-on. Identity is the transitional stage between adolescence and entering the adult-world. Colleges and universities provide an excellent source for late adolescents to forge their identities. Universities provide opportunities that encourage adolescents to question (and redefine) their original values, orientations, and interests.

An adolescent or early adult in the identity stage depends on the skills acquired in the previous four stages. He must have *trust* in himself that he will find the answers to his questions (e.g., “who *am I?*”) and trust in others that they will supply some of those answers; *autonomy* to enable him to create a unique human being (himself); *initiative* to be willing to play out different roles in discovering his identity; and *industry* to gain the skills necessary for attaining one’s identity (e.g., university, technical or trade schools to become a doctor, carpenter, or engineer). This identity process can also be likened to an actor on a stage. He must have trust in his own abilities (that he *can* act), autonomy to master his behaviors on stage, initiative to imagine himself as the person he pretends himself to be, and industry to memorize his lines. All of these make the actor on stage *who he is*. One who cannot successfully utilize these characteristics will have trouble defining and accomplishing his role on stage. In Erikson’s terms, he will experience “Role Confusion.” Undoubtedly, this picture is simple compared to an individual’s true identity formation--as one must utilize all these prior skills in defining who one is in relation to others.

Erikson is often credited for providing a framework from which recent identity research was created. However, one dilemma in using Erikson’s theory is that there was generally not a consensus for which identity measures to use for research (see Jones, Akers, & White, 1994). Recent measures have built upon Erikson’s original notion of identity. By doing so, these measures have provided greater construct validity. Recently, theorists and researchers have hypothesized that rather than having more-or-less identity,

individuals likely have different *types* of identity. These types can generally be classified into two categories: statuses (developed by Marcia) and styles (developed by Berzonsky).

Identity Statuses

Marcia (1966) operationalized identity statuses using two of Erikson's dimensions: "commitment" and "exploration" (which is also sometimes referred to as "crisis"). Using these two dimensions, subjects are assessed on certain aspects of their identity as defined by Erikson (viz. occupation, religion, politics), and then categorized into one of four *statuses*. As shown in Table 2, Identity Achievers are characterized as having explored their options and having made meaningful commitments; Moratoriums are still searching or exploring options and have not yet made firm commitments regarding those options; Foreclosed individuals have made firm commitments but have not explored their options; and persons classified with a Diffuse identity make little or no effort in meaning exploration, nor have they made purposeful commitments.

A great deal of research has been conducted using the identity statuses. For example, relationships have been found between these statuses and locus of control (Marcia, 1980), levels of moral reasoning and interpersonal relationships (Craig-Bay, Adams, & Dobson, 1988; Podd, 1972, Whitbourne & Tesch, 1985), self-esteem, (Adams & Shea, 1979), levels of anxiousness (Marcia & Friedman, 1970), sexual behavior (Jones, King, & Flannery, 1993), and drug use (Jones & Hartmann, 1988). Although these statuses have shown relative stability in early adulthood (Marcia, 1976), they do not

Table 2

Characteristics of Commitment and Exploration among Identity Status (Marcia, 1993)

Characteristic	Achievement	Moratorium	Foreclosed	Diffused
Commitment	Present	Present, but vague	Present	Absent
Exploration	Present	In process	Absent	Present or absent

appear to be set in stone (Enright, Ganiere, Buss, Lapsley, & Olson, 1983; Fitch & Adams, 1983; Stephen, Fraser, & Marcia, 1992; Waterman, Geary, & Waterman, 1974). Similarly, Marcia (1980) stated that "the identity process neither begins nor ends with adolescence" (p. 160); therefore, it is not expected to be stagnant.

Identity Achievement is generally considered the most adaptive status. Individuals in this status are more likely to have higher attainment (as compared to other statuses) in a stressful task-related test (Marcia, 1966), an internal locus of control (Marcia, 1980), and are more likely to look from within rather than to external sources to determine values (Marcia, 1966; Streitmatter & Pate, 1989). Identity Achievers also have high levels of moral reasoning and are most likely to have deep commitments with same-sex friends and healthy heterosexual relationships (Craig-Bray et al., 1988; Whitbourne & Tesch, 1985).

Moratoriums also display a high level of performing under stress (Marcia, 1966) and look more from within to determine a value system (Marcia, 1966; Streitmatter & Pate, 1989). Individuals in this status are also more likely to be anxious because they have not yet made commitments (Marcia, 1980). Moreover, Moratorium individuals maintain

high levels of self-esteem and moral reasoning (Adams & Shea, 1979; Marcia, 1980) and are capable of forming and maintaining intimate relationships (Fitch & Adams, 1983). Those in the Moratorium status are also most likely to adaptively regress (Bilsker & Marcia, 1991). College and university students are often in this status, as they are often in a period of exploration.

Individuals in the Foreclosed status are likely to rely on authority figures to define their values and expectations (Marcia, 1966, 1967). They are also least likely to engage in risky, sexual behaviors (Jones et al., 1993). However, the downfall of this is that among all the individuals *who do* engage in premarital coitus, Foreclosures are least likely to use any type of protection (Jones et al., 1993).

Diffused individuals display low levels of commitment for anything of real importance. They also do not engage in meaningful exploration. Not surprisingly, diffused individuals are the least likely to have immediate or long-term relationships with either sex (Craig-Bay et al., 1988; Whitbourne & Tesch, 1985). Jones et al. (1993) found that Diffused were more sexually active than the Foreclosed or Achieved, and that the Diffused "were twice as likely as the Achieved and Moratorium, and five times as likely as the Foreclosed to engage in risky sex behaviors" (p. 13). However, among those who do engage in sex, individuals in the Diffused status are most likely to use contraceptives.

One may have the idea that, like misconceptions of Erikson's stages, it's "either-or" for Marcia's paradigm; either you are Achieved, or you are Diffused. However, identity is not as clear cut as this. A person may be Achieved in interpersonal

domains (viz. friendship, gender roles, dating, recreation) but still be Diffused in ideological domains (viz. occupation, religion, politics). There may even be variation within the domains.

Although one status may be viewed as more adaptive than another (Achieved vs. Diffusion), each status may serve a purpose in a person's life. Marcia (1980) stated, "There are both healthy and pathological aspects to each of the styles . . ." (p. 161). Even being in the Achievement status, if one becomes fixated on a commitment and is not willing to consider more positive options at a later date, could be considered psychologically unhealthy.

Berzonsky's Contribution to Identity Research

Berzonsky argued that individuals not only have different types of identity, but they also go about *forming* their identity in different ways. Different approaches to identity formation are called "identity styles." Berzonsky described three different styles of identity formation: information-orientation (where one actively seeks information to form one's identity), normative-orientation (where one adopts the standards given by authority figures), and diffuse-orientation (where one procrastinates identity formation). Although similar notions were voiced much earlier (Epstein, 1973), Berzonsky is the one who is often credited with creating a valid and reliable measure of identity styles.

Although there are many similarities between Marcia's (1966) statuses and Berzonsky's styles, most identity scholars agree that statuses are *outcomes*, while styles should be treated as *processes*. These processes or styles of identity formation have been

linked to distinct approaches to problem solving and decision making. In other words, the same style of approaching identity formation is thought to influence other problem-solving behaviors. Research has supported this assumption (Berzonsky, 1989). Perhaps because of the confusion between statuses and styles (and identity styles' strong association with problem-solving approaches), Berzonsky has also called these identity styles "cognitive styles."

In looking at the different problem-solving approaches, information-oriented individuals have an internal locus of control and actively seek out and evaluate information to solve problems; normative-oriented individuals display an external locus of control and rely on authority figures to solve problems for them; and diffuse-oriented individuals also display an external locus of control and procrastinate problem solving (Berzonsky, 1989; 1992a). However, diffuse- and norm-oriented individuals avoid problem solving for different purposes. Berzonsky's research (1992a) suggests that individuals with a norm-orientation avoid problem solving to maintain their structure (by not questioning authority figures), whereas individuals with a diffuse-orientation avoid problem solving just to get by.

Identity styles have also been linked to prosocial and antisocial behaviors. White and Jones's (1996) research on criminal behavior found that diffuse-oriented prison inmates displayed a greater history of criminal activity, while information-oriented inmates reported half as many total arrests and had fewer incidents of parole violation (compared to diffuse inmates). Normative inmates were characterized by their "relatively late

involvement with drugs and the criminal system” (p. 490). Jones, Ross, and Hartmann (1992) found identity styles to correlate with work- and alcohol-related problems among recently enlisted naval personnel. They found personnel with a diffuse orientation to have more (and more serious) work- and alcohol-related problems, where those with information and normative orientations were more likely to have more healthy behaviors. Although inmates and naval personnel comprise only a small percentage of the entire population, it may still be argued that certain identity styles may be more healthy than others in certain settings.

As mentioned previously, Burleson and Denton (1992) found similar cognitive styles to be a greater predictor of marital satisfaction than specific cognitive styles. Although Berzonsky has also called identity styles “cognitive styles,” it is important to recognize that Burleson and Denton’s notion of cognitive style is different than Berzonsky’s notion of the concept. Specifically, Burleson and Denton (1992) used a type of “*interpersonal* cognitive complexity” (p. 274; italics added by author), or cognitive skill that is necessary solely for socialization. In contrast, Berzonsky’s “cognitive style” measure appears to assess more of an intrapersonal construct, one that requires self-reflection, self-definition, and self-management.

Another interesting finding in Burleson and Denton’s (1992) study was that cognitive similarity was greatest during the earliest years of marriage, and declined the longer a couple had been married. This finding is intriguing because the exact opposite has been assumed up to this point--that couples become more similar in traits as the marriage

progresses. However, caution should be exercised toward Burleson and Denton's finding as the comparison was between groups at one time, and not within a single group over a period of time.

Measures of Identity

Several measures have been created for identity status research. Marcia (1966) created the Identity Status Interview to measure an individual's degree of exploration and commitment on religion, politics, and occupation. Other measures have been created that have added such dimensions as interpersonal issues (Grotevant, Thorbecke, & Meyer, 1982) and recreation (Grotevant & Adams, 1984). The most common method for determining the status of an individual is by using these objective (paper-pencil) measures, although interviewing methods are also used.

Summary of Identity

In summary, identity development plays a significant role in the lives of late adolescents and young adults. In general, this period of development represents a time of preparation before one embarks into the adult world of responsibilities. Additionally, it is also a very important component for men in order to achieve intimacy; while for women, identity appears to be intertwined with intimacy.

This study attempted to determine the relationship between identity styles and intimacy. Gender, as a moderating effect, was also analyzed in the relationship between identity styles and a couple's report of intimacy.

Intimacy--Erikson's Epigenetic Process Revisited

Erikson (1963) described intimacy as “commitment, significant sacrifices and compromises” (p. 263), and “solidarity of close affiliations” (p. 264). Although true intimacy is often accompanied with a sexual relationship, intimacy is not defined solely by a couple's sexual relationship. Rather, intimacy is a composite of the closeness of two persons in body, soul, and mind---or in Erikson's terms, *a fusion of identities*.

Importance of Prior-Stage Resolution for Intimacy Development

In reviewing the epigenetic process, Erikson's first five stages are vital to successful resolution of the “Intimacy vs. Isolation” stage. One must have trust in oneself to commit to another, as well as trust in one's partner that he or she will commit to them. A sense of autonomy provides a knowledge of “holding on and letting go” (p. 251), so that one's partner is not overwhelmed in providing for one's every need. A sense of initiative allows one to “forget [past] failures quickly” (Erikson, 1963, p. 255), so that one will not be held back when commitments are necessary in a relationship. A sense of industry allows the individual to actively contribute to one's relationship. This may be in the form of emotional (showing empathy), financial (being the breadwinner), and recreational (going on dates together). Although some activities and behaviors may be in question regarding its contribution to a couple's intimacy, it can be argued that all activities may have at least an indirect effect on a couple's level of intimacy. A sense of self, or identity, allows an individual to have substance of self from which to offer and

share with another. University and college settings may provide opportunities for late adolescents to form their individual identities and develop rich and meaningful relationships with male and female friends. Moreover, this is also a time when many late adolescents and early adults marry and, for perhaps the first time, create a strong and meaningful intimate bond.

Disagreements for the Psychosocial Process

In reviewing identity's importance to intimacy, there has been some confusion. This confusion generally stem from two issues: (1) the necessity of identity resolution preceding identity, and (2) gender differences. In review of the first, Waring, McElrath, Lefcoe, et al. (1981) reported that, although there was a small but significant relationship between the two variables, there is an "incompleteness of identity as a factor in the development of intimacy (operationally defined as a psychosocial process)" (p. 171). However, it needs to be noted that the method used by Waring, McElrath, Lefcoe, et al. for measuring identity appears to be quite flawed. For example, these authors used the Barron Ego Strength Scale (ESS; Barron, 1953) to measure identity. According to Barron (1953), the ESS was specifically "designed to predict the response of psychoneurotic patients to psychotherapy" (p. 327). Barron (1953) also argues that it may be used "in *any* situation where some estimate of adaptability and personal resourcefulness is wanted" (p. 327; italics added by author). Waring, McElrath, Lefcoe, et al. apparently felt that Barron's (1953) generalization justified using the ESS to measure identity. However, the validity of the ESS as an identity-measuring instrument needs to be questioned. Although

the research question by Waring, McElrath, Lefcoe, et al. was entirely different from mine (they wanted to look at an individual's identity where my study is looking at the similarity of a couple's identity styles in relating to marital intimacy), it is argued that if identity is to be studied, valid and reliable measures ought to be used.

In review of the second issue of confusion (regarding gender differences in the psychosocial sequence), Erikson's epigenetic notion appears to be supported when looking at males (Dyk & Adams, 1990; Fitch & Adams, 1983). In other words, identity resolution does appear to precede the intimacy stage. However, when looking at the intimacy process for females, there are mixed conclusions. Erikson (1968) stated "much of a woman's identity is already defined in her kind of attractiveness and in the selective nature of her search for a man by whom she wishes to be sought" (p. 283). Gilligan (1982) criticized Erikson by stating that the different patterns of identity and intimacy development were related to sex-role orientation, not gender. Dyk and Adams' (1990) study testing these theoretical assumptions lends the greatest support to Erikson's (1968) notion that identity precedes intimacy for males, and identity and intimacy are fused together for females. However, Gilligan's (1982) assumption was also partially supported in Dyk and Adams' study when sex-role orientation was included in the analyses. They found that higher masculine role orientations in females predicted identity-to-intimacy process, while feminine-oriented females were more likely to experience a fusion of identity and intimacy stages.

It is important to note that Dyk and Adams (1990) looked at (what has been

generally referred to in this study as) “general intimacy.” However, as explained earlier, general intimacy may be a correlate of marital intimacy. Therefore, it will be interesting to see if there is also a gender difference in reports of *marital* intimacy in this study.

Summary for Research Literature

Identity formation appears to play a substantial role in the development of intimacy. Given that homogamy is a predictor of marital satisfaction, it was expected identity similarity would be related to marital intimacy.

Gender also appears to play a role in the formation of identity and reports of marital intimacy. It was expected (regardless of individual identity style) that males would report greater marital intimacy, while females would report less marital intimacy. From the literature review, it was also expected that females from dissimilar identity style dyads would report lower marital intimacy scores than their male counterparts, whereas males from similar identity style dyads were expected to report higher scores than their female counterparts.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This chapter will provide information regarding the methodology for this study. Each heading will also provide supporting arguments for their usage in this study.

Hypotheses

Two hypotheses regarding identity and marital intimacy have been discussed in the literature review. These are:

1. Husbands will report greater marital intimacy than wives ($H_{a1}: \bar{X}_m > \bar{X}_f$).
2. Marital intimacy will be related to identity similarity ($H_{a1}: r \text{ will not } = 0$).

Design

This study consisted of a simple correlational design. The reason for this is because the hypotheses address relationships between a dependent variable (marital intimacy) and two independent variables (similarity of identity style and gender).

Sample

The sample consisted of (a) married students from an upperdivision undergraduate family and human development course at Utah State University, (b) these students' spouses, and (c) married couples known to the nonmarried students within said class. For purposes of this study, only those couples who had been married for 10 years or less

were included in the analyses. An $N = 168$ (84 couples) was obtained, along with demographic information including age (wife $\bar{X} = 23.33$, $SD = 3.27$; husband $\bar{X} = 25.85$, $SD = 7.06$), months of marital duration ($\bar{X} = 22.34$; range = 84), and months of premarital acquaintance ($\bar{X} = 26.27$; range = 182), and number of children (mode = 0, ranging from 0 to 5). Additionally, all 84 couples reported that this was their first marriage.

Measures

The survey administered to participants consisted of three sections (see Appendix): a short demographic questionnaire, the Identity Styles Inventory (Berzonsky, 1989), and the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS; Busby, Christensen, Crane, & Larson, 1995). Following will be a discussion on each measure.

Demographics

The following demographic variables were requested: gender, how long they have been married, length of courtship prior to marriage, number of children they have, if it is their first marriage, and date of birth.

Marital Intimacy

The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS; Busby et al., 1995) contains three subscales of marital satisfaction; namely, consensus (decision making, values, affection), satisfaction (stability, conflict), and cohesion (activities, discussion). Busby et al. (1995)

argue that the RDAS, consisting of 14 Likert-type items, is an improvement over the DAS (Dyadic Adjustment Scale; Spanier, 1976) for the following reasons: a) The construct validity is greater for the RDAS because several confirmatory factor analyses were conducted with more than one sample; and b) the convenience of a shorter, but equally powerful, measure at discriminating between distressed and nondistressed individuals.

One advantage the DAS has over the RDAS is stronger internal consistency. Minus the Affectional Expression subscale, the DAS and its subscales have yielded stronger internal consistency than the RDAS and its subscales (.96 vs .90; .90 vs .81 on the Consensus subscale; .94 vs .85 on the Satisfaction subscale; and .86 vs .80 on the Cohesion subscale, respectively). (The Affectional Expression subscale is not included in the comparison between the DAS and the RDAS because the RDAS does not contain this dimension). However, the convenience of using a shorter measure (especially because there is more than one measure being used in this study), its moderately high internal consistency, and its high construct validity warranted its use in this study.

Identity Styles

The second section of this survey consisted of Berzonsky's (1989) Identity Style Inventory (ISI). Berzonsky created the ISI by "decoupling the commitment and self-exploration components that are confounded in objective measures of identity status" (Berzonsky, 1992a, p. 776). The inventory contains 40 statements relevant to the domains of Marcia's (1966) original interview (e.g., college major, politics, and religion).

Responses are coded from a Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 ("very much like me") to 5 ("very much unlike me") to statements such as "I've spent a great deal of time thinking about what I should do with my life." As explained earlier, three distinct styles of identity formation have resulted from Berzonsky's research: information oriented (who actively seek out and utilize information); normative oriented (who try to maintain standards of problem solving set by authority figures); and diffuse oriented (who procrastinate decision making and problem solving).

The ISI's construct validity was assessed by Berzonsky (1989) through a study using the ISI and Grotevant and Adams' (1984) Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status. Berzonsky (1989) reports that the correlations between the statuses and the orientations were as expected; $r = .62$ for identity diffuse and diffuse orientation scales, and $r = .47$ for the foreclosed and the normative orientation scales. Identity achieved and information orientation scales were also positively correlated ($r = .25$). Berzonsky (1992b) also reports moderate internal reliability for the diffuse, normative, and information scales (consistency alphas = .73, .66, .62, respectively). In another study supporting the ISI's validity, Streitmatter (1993) found significant correlations between the statuses and the styles: achievement and moratorium statuses with information orientation; foreclosure with normative orientation; and the diffused status with the diffuse orientation.

Procedures

Undergraduate students were invited to participate in a study about identity and marital intimacy. Students were given oral instructions from a graduate student involved with this study. Students were given packets which contained two surveys. Married students were instructed to fill out one survey, and to give the other survey to their spouse to complete. Nonmarried students were instructed to find a married couple to fill out the survey. In each case, the students were strongly encouraged not to bias their spouse's or acquaintance's answers. Students were also asked to make certain both surveys were in the envelope and to return the envelope to the graduate student 2 days after the packets were passed out. Students who turned in packets were given extra credit.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the psychometric properties of the measures used in this study and also to report the results of the data analyses. In order, the psychometric properties will be discussed first, and then the hypotheses, analyses, and relevant findings will be addressed.

Psychometric Properties of Instruments

Identity

Cronbach alpha coefficients were calculated separately for the husbands' and wives' responses to the ISI. (As shown in Table 3: for husbands, information alpha = .75, normative alpha = .52, diffuse alpha = .66; for wives, information alpha = .63, normative alpha = .64, and alpha = .66 for diffuse). These estimates are comparable to those reported by Berzonsky (1992b; diffuse = .73, normative = .66, and information=.62) and Berzonsky (1989; normative=.52, information=.53, and diffuse=.59). As Berzonsky (1989; 1992b) did not specify the marital status of those individuals in his sample, future studies may want to pursue whether reliability estimates are consistent across gender, age, and marital status.

To support theoretical notions of the identity styles, correlations between styles should show a weak, positive relationship between information and normative styles, a

Table 3

Cronbach Alphas for Total RDAS, Its Subscales, and the Styles

Variable	Husband	Wife
Intimacy (Total RDAS)	.80	.82
Consensus	.67	.68
Satisfaction	.72	.78
Cohesion	.74	.69
Information	.75	.63
Normative	.52	.64
Diffuse	.66	.66

weak correlation between normative and diffuse (both lack exploration, but normative involves commitment), and somewhat strong negative relationships between diffuse style scores and information style scores (because of the polar extremes of identity searching and commitment). For wives, intercorrelations for the style scores appear to support this notion (see Table 4; $r = .17$ for normative-information, $r = -.23$ for information-diffuse, and $r = .05$ for diffuse-normative). The husband interstyle correlations are similar to those for the wives' intercorrelations ($r = .13$ for normative-information, $r = -.37$ for information-diffuse, and $r = .15$ for diffuse-normative).

Berzonsky (1992a) reported similar reliability coefficients and intercorrelations for the subscales. The reported reliabilities and correlations support theoretical notions of there being three distinct styles, and therefore, warrant the use of this measure in this study.

Table 4

Interscale Correlations for the RDAS Subscales and ISI Styles

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Intimacy	(.63)	.81	.78	.77	.26	.22	.04
2. Consensus	.82	(.44)	.41	.34	.08	.30	.06
3. Cohesion	.75	.37	(.62)	.47	.36	.02	-.03
4. Satisfaction	.73	.42	.38	(.62)	.18	.17	.10
5. Information	.25	.22	.30	.02	(.11)	.17	-.23
6. Normative	.10	.14	-.05	.12	.13	(.47)	.05
7. Diffuse	-.13	-.16	-.13	.03	-.37	.15	(.03)

Note. Above the diagonal represents the wives' correlations, while above the diagonal represents the husbands' correlations. Diagonal represents the correlation between husbands and wives scores for that variable.

Marital Intimacy

Psychometric properties were also examined for the RDAS. Cronbach alpha coefficients were calculated for the RDAS and its subscales by gender (see Table 3: for the wives, total RDAS = .82, consensus subscale = .68, satisfaction subscale = .78, cohesion subscale = .69; for the husbands, total RDAS = .80, consensus subscale = .67, satisfaction subscale = .72, and cohesion subscale = .74). Although the alphas in this study did not reach the high internal consistency reported by Busby et al. (1995; RDAS alpha = .90, consensus alpha = .81, satisfaction alpha = .85, cohesion alpha = .80), these alphas still provide support for the use of the RDAS and its subscales.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

“Males will report greater marital intimacy than females ($H_{a1}: \bar{X}_m > \bar{X}_f$.)” Given a dichotomous variable (gender) and four interval variables (marital intimacy--or Total RDAS--and its subscales, namely, consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion), four Spearman rho correlations were calculated. Results (see Table 5) demonstrated that males typically report greater marital intimacy, consensus, and satisfaction ($p = .60, .61,$ and $.69$, respectively). Females, however, were more likely to report greater cohesion scores ($p = .45$). With males typically reporting greater scores on three of four scales or subscales for marital intimacy, it is concluded that males report greater marital intimacy than females. Thus, the original hypothesis is supported.

Table 5

Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, Degrees of Freedom, and r Values for the RDAS and Its Subscales

Variable	Female		Male		df	p ^a
	\bar{X}	(SD)	\bar{X}	(SD)		
Total RDAS	56.90	(5.41)	57.29	(4.98)	82	-.60 ^b
Satisfaction	16.47	(2.06)	16.71	(1.73)	82	-.69 ^b
Consensus	24.39	(2.68)	24.63	(2.60)	83	-.61 ^b
Cohesion	16.07	(2.13)	15.94	(2.11)	83	.45 ^b

^a Males were coded as a 1, while females were coded as a 0.

^b All correlations were statistically significant ($p < .001$).

Hypothesis 2

“Marital intimacy will be related to identity similarity ($H_{a1}:r$ will not = 0).” Prior to addressing the analyses, it is important to give a brief description for determining similarity of identity style. First, each spouse receives a composite score for each identity style. Each composite score is then subtracted from his/her spouse’s corresponding style score. The absolute difference is taken for the couple’s difference in each style, totaled with the other style differences, and labeled as the cumulative identity style difference. An example may provide some clarity. If John scored 32 and Mary scored 38 on their information-orientation scale, they would have an absolute difference of 6. If the absolute difference of their normative scales is 5 and the difference for their diffuse scale is 6, their combined total (or difference in identity style) is 17. The greater the score, the less similar (or more different) the couple is in identity style.

To determine whether a relationship between identity similarity and marital intimacy exists, the sample was divided into three groups with equal N sizes, with each group representing a categorization of identity style similarity (viz., “very similar,” “somewhat different,” and couples with the “most difference in identity style”). A “very different” group was not included because of the ceiling effect for marital intimacy scores with this sample ($\bar{X} = 57.02$ out of a possible 60).

Results (see Table 6) were given in the expected (negative) direction, or that as marital intimacy scores increased, the difference in identity style decreased. Although all the correlates were similar in magnitude (coefficients ranging from $-.14$ to $-.19$), only the

Table 6

Groups of Similarity and Their Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and r Values for the RDAS and Its Subscales

	Couples with very similar identity style			Couples with somewhat different identity style			Couples with the most difference in identity style			r
	<u>X</u>	<u>(SD)</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>(SD)</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>(SD)</u>	<u>N</u>	
Total RDAS	56.96	(3.76)	26	56.84	(5.14)	25	55.73	(5.25)	24	-.19*
Cohesion	16.27	(1.83)	26	15.87	(1.51)	26	15.58	(2.20)	24	-.15
Consensus	24.69	(1.91)	26	24.44	(2.47)	26	23.94	(2.43)	24	-.14
Satisfaction	17.00	(1.05)	26	16.64	(2.03)	25	16.21	(1.81)	24	-.19*

*Correlations where statistically significance is reached ($p < .05$). All others are nonsignificant ($p > .05$).

satisfaction and total intimacy or RDAS score yielded statistical significance. Since all the correlates were in the expected direction and two scales yielded statistical significance, the hypothesis that marital intimacy would be related to similarity of identity style was supported.

Given the outcome of the hypotheses, further analyses were conducted to determine whether an interaction existed between gender and marital intimacy. With gender and similarity as independent variables and each RDAS scale and subscale representing the dependent variables, four 2x2 ANOVAs were conducted (cf., Table 7). For both the Cohesion and Satisfaction subscales, the difference between the similar and

Table 7

Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, F and p Values Given for Females and Males from Similar and Dissimilar Identity Dyads for Total RDAS and Each Subscale

Variable	In similar identity dyads		In dissimilar identity dyads		F	p
	Female \bar{X} (SD)	Male \bar{X} (SD)	Female \bar{X} (SD)	Male \bar{X} (SD)		
Total RDAS (Marital Intimacy)	57.88 (4.27)	57.63 (4.59)	55.30 (6.68)	56.56 (5.48)	.79	.19
Cohesion	16.35 (1.63)	16.14 (1.93)	15.65 (2.62)	15.53 (2.19)	.01	.46
Consensus	24.84 (2.03)	24.47 (2.49)	23.53 (3.31)	24.44 (2.75)	2.25	.07
Satisfaction	16.70 (1.67)	17.02 (1.81)	16.24 (2.44)	16.59 (1.65)	.00	.48

dissimilar scores for the females was larger than the difference between the similar and dissimilar scores for the male (.70 vs. .51 cohesion; .46 vs. .43 satisfaction). The data support the idea that females (or, at least, female scores) are more affected by similarity of identity style than are their male counterparts.

Summary of Results

Psychometric properties for the Identity Style Inventory revealed comparable results to previous research (Berzonsky, 1989, 1992b) using this measure. The

intercorrelations between styles were consistent with theoretical expectations. The RDAS and its subscales displayed strong reliability scores, as expected given previous uses (Busby et al., 1995).

Results demonstrated that husbands typically score higher than their wives on the RDAS and two of three subscales. It was also concluded that similarity is related to marital intimacy. The final analyses suggest that females are more affected by similarity than males.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Hypotheses

Results regarding gender differences in marital intimacy provide strong support for Kurdek (1993), Levy-Shiff (1994), and Shek's (1995) results where males scored higher on marital intimacy than females. In looking at the second research question, results showed that similarity may play an important role in determining marital intimacy, which includes cohesion, consensus, and satisfaction. This is comparable with previously cited literature (Burlinson & Denton, 1992; Houts et al., 1996; Ickes, 1993; Kaslow & Robison, 1996).

For the final analysis, results demonstrated that females reported higher marital intimacy and consensus scores in similar couples and lower scores in dissimilar couples than did their male counterparts. This provided support for Houts and colleagues' (1996) finding that females in dissimilar dyads report lower scores of marital intimacy than their male counterparts. However, Houts and colleagues also reported that males in similar dyads reported higher marital intimacy scores than their female counterparts, which contradicts my findings. Further investigation of how the husbands and wives differed in how they are influenced by a difference in identity style was evidenced by the correlation coefficients generated for females' and males' intimacy scores and the actual difference in identity style. An $r = -.25$ ($p < .05$) was obtained for the females' intimacy score with the

difference in identity style, whereas an $r = -.08$ ($p > .05$) was obtained for the males' intimacy score relationship with the difference in identity style. In other words, as differences in identity styles increase, females' marital intimacy is somewhat likely to decrease (and vice versa). The males' intimacy, however, did not appear to have a predictable pattern in conjunction with similarity of identity style. These correlations provide additional evidence that the females' reported intimacy is influenced more by similarity of identity style than are males' reports of intimacy.

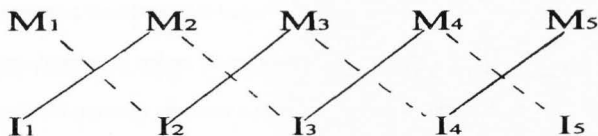
Limitations of This Study

Internal Validity

The strength of any design is the extent that the results are believable. In critiquing its truthfulness, factors that contribute to the design's "internal validity" should be noted. The most noted threat in this design is called "history." According to Kazdin (1992), this threat refers to any event, such as a change in job or family crisis, that occurs at or near the time of the study that may falsely attribute the results to the variable studied. In this study, there is definitely a historical factor that is likely to have influenced this sample - - - they just got married! This historical factor, in turn, may have created the observed ceiling effect on reports of marital intimacy. This is hardly surprising, *ex post facto*. Who would get married if they were not excited and happy to be fully committed to someone they already loved?

Although one may not be able to fully eliminate all threats to internal validity, there

are steps that can be taken to “control” them. For the threat of history in this design, there are several alternatives. One possibility is to obtain a sample with couples from all different age groups. This would allow for cross-cohort comparisons. The second alternative is to obtain a small sample (20 couples) who have recently wedded and track the change in and relationship between marital intimacy and similarity of identity style (Figure 1). Cross-lagged correlations between marital intimacy and similarity of identity style may indicate that similarity of identity style precedes change in marital intimacy if the I-M correlations signify a trend of being higher than the M-I correlations.



Note: “M” refers to a marital couple’s assessment of marital intimacy, whereas “I” refers to a marital couple’s assessment of identity style.

Figure 1. Cross-lagged correlations between marital intimacy and similarity of identity style.

External Validity

The second type of validity, called “external validity,” refers to the extent that the findings can be generalized (see Kazdin, 1992). Generality across subjects, or the extent the results can be extended to persons outside of the given sample, is a major threat to external validity in this study. In order to generalize to the population of recently

married couples, the sample must represent the population of study. Because the 84 couples were conveniently obtained (from one undergraduate family and human development class), and not randomly drawn from the population, the power to generalize is weak (at best). It was originally believed that this would not pose a problem, as it would seem that with a sample with similar traits the results would more clearly point to similarity as a mediating factor, rather than extraneous factors. However, it seems that the results may have provided a wider dispersion of scores (which may have provided a more detailed assessment of similarity of identity style and marital intimacy) if students with other majors and nonstudents had been more actively recruited. This may also control for the threat that family-oriented majoring students may report higher marital intimacy than students from other majors. If a narrow dispersion of scores results, it may be that the "recency" of marriage may have a stronger effect on marital intimacy than the presence or orientation of schooling.

Limitations of Measurement

Self-report measures are prone to be influenced by several factors. It has already been discussed how students majoring in family and human development may have higher marital intimacy scores than non-family and human development majors. Their scores may also be influenced if their spouses were in the room, if they just finished a religious course discussing how wonderful marriage is, if they enjoyed their family and human development class (on creating successful marriages), or if a spouse just purchased that special gift for him or her. Although these influences may exist, this survey does not

take these circumstances or events into account.

Another limitation for this measure may be the way the survey was structured. For example, it is possible that the first 40 questions (regarding identity and problem solving) required so much introspection, the final 14 questions are viewed as "I've only got a few left—I'll rush through these."

To summarize the threats to the validity of this study, the fact that the majority of these couples have just recently wed, and many of the spouses are family and human development majors, may mask the true relationship between similarity of identity style and marital intimacy. A longitudinal design tracking the nature and relationship of identity style and marital intimacy would control for this threat to internal validity. Because the sample was conveniently drawn, it is not likely that these results describe the relationship between similarity of identity style and marital intimacy for all recently married couples.

Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

It was mentioned earlier that the purpose of this study was *not* to determine what a successful resolution of identity was, but rather to examine the relationship between marital intimacy and similarity of identity style. However, whereas Erikson was vague in defining a successful resolution, this study demonstrated that "similarity" of identity style may serve as one method for assessing a healthy identity-intimacy resolution.

In providing suggestions for practice, it should be noted that because the external validity in this study is undeterminable, the following suggestions for practice are given

conservatively and should be interpreted in a likewise manner. Perhaps primarily in applying these results, it should be recognized that these results support existing literature regarding the importance of similarity of personality traits (Burlison & Denton, 1992; Houts et al., 1996; Ickes, 1993; Kaslow & Robison, 1996). These results suggest that although recently married couples experience high levels of positive emotion (regardless of similarity of identity style), potential negative effects may not manifest themselves until the couple is forced to work out their differences (i.e., determining if one or both spouses will work, how to discipline their children) when such differences may greatly hinder their sense of closeness with one another. In other words, family professionals and those interested in a young person's future may serve as a voice of warning for avoiding potential "clashes." Counselors, friends, and associates may influence those readying themselves for marriage (or who are just dating) to find others who think and approach problem solving similarly to themselves. This finding appears to be particularly useful for females, who are more influenced by similarity of identity style than are males. It would stand to reason that few would marry if they knew they would not be happy with that person in the future. Recognizing differences early, during or before a dating relationship develops, can help the person avoid heartache from a conflictual marriage in the future. It would also be wise to help young persons recognize that not only is a similar identity style helpful in creating marital intimacy, it may also be a necessary component for their own individual psychosocial health (i.e., successful resolution of identity).

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APPENDIX

IDENTITY AND MARITAL CHARACTERISTICS: A PERSONAL OPINION SURVEY

To whom it may concern:

The purpose of this project is to determine the relationship between Identity and Intimacy within marriage. Your choice to participate in this study is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the research project at any time without consequence---just return the unfinished survey when it is requested.

Your participation in this study will involve completing a brief questionnaire about Identity and Marital Satisfaction. Please complete this survey alone and where you will not be distracted. Also, please do not discuss your responses with your spouse until both of your questionnaires have been completed and returned.

Although we are not interested in identifying or contacting you, we need to know certain information for research purposes. Your name will remain anonymous. If you have additional questions about this study or your rights, or if any problems arise, you may contact Dr. Randall Jones (801-797-1553).

Your gender (male/female):

How long you've been married (years/months)?

How long did you know your spouse before you married (years/months)?

How many children do you and your spouse have?

Is this your first marriage? (Yes/No)

What is your date of birth? Month _____ Year _____

DIRECTIONS: This survey consists of two sections. You will receive separate instructions for each section. The first section contains statements regarding beliefs, attitudes, and decisions. For each of the following statements, please respond according to the scale at the top of the next page. For example, if the statement is **VERY MUCH LIKE YOU**, put a five in the space provided next to the item number. If the statement is **NOT AT ALL LIKE YOU**, put a 1 in the space provided. Use the 1 to 5 point scale to indicate the **DEGREE** to which the statement is uncharacteristic or characteristic of the way you see yourself.

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

1. _____ Regarding religious beliefs, I know basically what I believe and don't believe.
2. _____ I've spent a great deal of time thinking seriously about what I should do with my life.
3. _____ I'm not really sure what I'm doing in school; I guess things will work themselves out.
4. _____ I've more-or-less always operated according to the values with which I was brought up.
5. _____ I've spent a good deal of time reading and talking to others about religious ideas.
6. _____ When I discuss an issue with someone, I try to assume their point of view and see the problem from their perspective.
7. _____ I know what I want to do with my future.
8. _____ It doesn't pay to worry about values in advance; I decide things as they happen.
9. _____ I'm not really sure what I believe about religion.
10. _____ I've always had purpose in my life; I was brought up to know what to strive for.
11. _____ I'm not sure which values I really hold.
12. _____ I have some consistent political views; I have a definite stand on where the government and country should be headed.
13. _____ Many times by not concerning myself with personal problems, they work themselves out.

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

14. _____ I'm not sure what I want to do in the future.
15. _____ I'm really into my major; it's the academic area that is right for me.
16. _____ I've spent a lot of time reading and trying to make sense out of political issues.
17. _____ I'm not really thinking about my future right now; it's still a long way off.
18. _____ I've spent a lot of time and talked to a lot of people trying to develop a set of values that make sense to me.
19. _____ Regarding religion, I've always known what I believe and don't believe; I never really had any serious doubts.
20. _____ I'm not sure what I should major in (or change to).
21. _____ I've known since high school that I was going to college and what I was going to major in.
22. _____ I have a definite set of values that I use in order to make personal decisions.
23. _____ I think it's better to have a firm set of beliefs than to be open minded.
24. _____ When I have to make a decision, I try to wait as long as possible in order to see what will happen.
25. _____ When I have a personal problem, I try to analyze the situation in order to understand it.
26. _____ I find it best to seek out advice from professionals (eg., clergy, doctors, lawyers) when I have problems.
27. _____ It's best for me not to take life too seriously; I just try to enjoy it.
28. _____ I think it's better to have a fixed set of values, than to consider alternative values systems.
29. _____ I try not to think about or deal with problems as long as I can.
30. _____ I find that personal problems often turn out to be interesting challenges.

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

31. _____ I try to avoid personal situations that will require me to think a lot and deal with them on my own.
32. _____ Once I know the correct way to handle a problem, I prefer to stick with it.
33. _____ When I have to make a decision, I like to spend a lot of time thinking about my options.
34. _____ I prefer to deal with situations where I can rely on social norms and standards.
35. _____ I like to have the responsibility for handling problems in my life that require me to think on my own.
36. _____ Sometimes I refuse to believe that a problem will happen, and things manage to work themselves out.
37. _____ When making important decisions I like to have as much information as possible.
38. _____ When I know a situation is going to cause me stress, I try to avoid it.
39. _____ To live a complete life, I think people need to get emotionally involved and commit themselves to specific values and ideals.
40. _____ I find it's best to rely on the advice of close friends or relatives when I have a problem.

This next section has to do with you and your spouse (partner). Most couples have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occa- sionally Agree	Fre- quently Disagree	Always Disagree
1. Religious matters	5	4	3	2	1
2. Demonstrations of affection	5	4	3	2	1
3. Making major decisions	5	4	3	2	1
4. Sex relations	5	4	3	2	1
5. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)	5	4	3	2	1
6. Career decisions	5	4	3	2	1

	All the time	More often than not	Occa- sionally	Rarely	Never
7. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?	1	2	3	4	5
8. How often do you and your partner quarrel?	1	2	3	4	5
9. Do you ever regret that you married (or lived together)?	1	2	3	4	5
10. How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves"?	1	2	3	4	5

	Every Day	Almost Every Day	Occa- sionally	Rarely	Never
11. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?	1	2	3	4	5

How often would you say the following events occur between you and your mate?

	Never	Hardly ever	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Once a day
12. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas	1	2	3	4	5
13. Work together on a project	1	2	3	4	5
14. Calmly discuss something	1	2	3	4	5

That's the end of this questionnaire. Thank you for your time and your participation!