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Friendship in young adult heterosexual romantic relationships

Billy Kidd
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Walden University

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

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Billy Kidd

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2008

ABSTRACT

Friendship in Young Adult Heterosexual Romantic Relationships

by

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M.S., Portland State University, 1999

B.S., Portland State University, 1995

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Psychology

Walden University
December 2008

ABSTRACT

Friendship is one of the pillars that supports satisfying, long-term, romantic relationships and marriage. Yet little is known about how romantic friendship is contextually experienced. This lack of knowledge limits the options of researchers and therapists. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to further substantiate a romantic friendship construct. The research question asked how friendship is experienced in heterosexual romantic relationships. Participants in two West Coast metropolitan areas, ages 18 to 29, were selected by convenience sampling. As per Giorgi's phenomenological method, themes were abstracted from the transcripts of focus group and individual interviews. The themes were then shortened and entered into an Atlas.ti software environment. Finally, they were coded into psychological language and analyzed. A romantic friendship affiliation was shown to be the ideal style of relationship for future long-term partnering. Yet the participants' actual lived experiences in serious romantic-friendship relationships were quite limited. Instead, their focus was on establishing economic independence and a full sense of adult identity, as well as improving their communication skills. Therefore, individual cases could not be contrasted, and substantive conclusions were not reached regarding the actual behavioral expression of heterosexual romantic friendship affiliations. A contrast study in Birmingham, Alabama, with participants with high IQs, had similar results. Both studies were supported by psychoneuroendocrine, attachment, social constructionist, and system theories. An important implication for social change was that researchers must account for the participants' ambivalence concerning long-term partnering, their alternative life-course choices, and their desires for economic independence, when studying young, urban, mobile, single-adult romantic relationships.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research participants were willing to engage in honest, earnest, creative dialogues that provided invaluable information during the focus group and individual interviews. In the process, they redefined various behavioral issues and operational definitions within the language and framework of their peer group's perspective. They also provided important feedback concerning the first-pass analysis of the data. In essence, they each put their individual signature on this project.

Several other individuals and organizations lent me a helping hand in my research training and in carrying out this project. I would like to acknowledge the contributions of:

Magy Martin—editing, evaluation, vision, and support.
Bonnie Nastasi—methodology, editing, and support.
Paige Krabill—editing, evaluation, and feedback.
Mensa USA, Inc.—facilitation, participation, and support.
Frank Fox—methods.
Brett Rogers—editing and support.
Linda Seligman—editing, feedback, and support.
Don Stadius—editing, option analysis, and software.
Thomas Unthank—software and editing.
Walden University—creative engagement.
Nick Woolf—Atlas.ti software.

I am truly indebted. Saludos a todos.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| LIST OF TABLES | vii |
| CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Background to the Problem | 2 |
| Problem Statement | 4 |
| Purpose of the Study | 5 |
| Research Question | 6 |
| Methodological Framework..... | 6 |
| Supporting Theories..... | 7 |
| Assumptions..... | 9 |
| Definition of Terms..... | 10 |
| Significance and Limitations | 11 |
| Agency and Social Change | 13 |
| Summary of the Introduction..... | 14 |
| CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW | 16 |
| History and Evolution of the Research | 16 |
| Description of the Literature Search | 17 |
| Friendship Relationships..... | 18 |
| Components of Friendship..... | 18 |
| Cross-Gender Friendship | 19 |
| Natural Selection and Friendship..... | 20 |
| Romantic Relationships | 21 |
| Love | 21 |
| Sexuality | 22 |
| Intimacy | 23 |
| Dating..... | 24 |
| Marriage..... | 24 |
| Satisfaction..... | 26 |
| Expressiveness | 26 |
| Heterosexual Romantic Friendship..... | 26 |
| Qualities of Heterosexual Romantic Friendship..... | 27 |
| Attachment and Developmental Models..... | 28 |
| Gender Stereotyping and Peer Marriage..... | 30 |
| Dyadic Coordinated Friendship Construct..... | 31 |
| Romantic Attachment Bonds | 33 |
| Adult Romantic Attachment Styles | 34 |
| Unresolved Theoretical Issues | 36 |
| Postmodern Relationships..... | 37 |
| Hookups Versus Dating | 38 |
| Postmodern Functionalism..... | 41 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Theories Supporting the Psychological Framework | 42 |
| Systems Theory | 42 |
| Romantic Attachment Theory | 45 |
| Psychoneuroendocrine Theory | 46 |
| Social Constructionism | 48 |
| Phenomenological Research Methodology | 50 |
| Summary of the Literature Review | 52 |
| | |
| CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS | 59 |
| Description of the Methodology | 59 |
| Design of the Study | 59 |
| Operational Definitions | 62 |
| Interview Process | 63 |
| Focus Groups | 64 |
| Individual Interviews | 65 |
| Interview Protocol | 65 |
| Population and Sample | 66 |
| Protection of the Participants' Rights | 69 |
| Instrumentation | 70 |
| Data Collection and Recording | 71 |
| Data Analysis | 71 |
| Data Interpretation | 74 |
| Verification of Authenticity and Trustworthiness | 75 |
| Summary | 77 |
| | |
| CHAPTER 4: RESULTS | 78 |
| Overview | 78 |
| Assumptions | 80 |
| The Primary Study | 81 |
| Organization of the Results | 82 |
| Recruitment | 82 |
| Data Gathering | 83 |
| Participant Demographics | 84 |
| Interview Data Saturation | 87 |
| Emergent Definitions | 88 |
| Family of Choice | 88 |
| Friendship Network | 88 |
| Internet Danger Date | 89 |
| Romantic Relationship | 89 |
| Data Analysis | 89 |
| Underlying Social Cultural Environment | 90 |
| Marriage | 90 |
| Sexuality | 91 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Commitment | 92 |
| Friendship in Romantic Relationships | 94 |
| Focus Group Data Analysis | 94 |
| Individual Interview Data Analysis | 96 |
| Primary Study Member Check..... | 100 |
| Summary of the Primary Study..... | 101 |
| The Contrast Study | 103 |
| Research Problem, Question, and Purpose | 104 |
| Contrast Study Research Problem | 104 |
| Contrast Study Research Question..... | 104 |
| Purpose of the Contrast Study..... | 104 |
| Organization of the Results..... | 105 |
| Recruitment..... | 105 |
| Data Gathering | 105 |
| Participant Demographics..... | 106 |
| Emergent Definitions | 108 |
| Data Analysis | 109 |
| Underlying Social Cultural Environment | 109 |
| Marriage..... | 109 |
| Sexuality | 111 |
| Commitment | 113 |
| Friendship in Romantic Relationships | 113 |
| Contrast Study Member Check..... | 115 |
| Summary of the Contrast Study..... | 115 |
| General Summary | 117 |
| | |
| CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS | 123 |
| Interpretation of the Results..... | 125 |
| Heterosexual Romantic Friendship..... | 125 |
| Tentativeness and Ambivalence in Romantic Relationships | 129 |
| Implications for Social Change..... | 131 |
| Recommendations for Action | 134 |
| Social Scientists and Clinicians | 134 |
| Religious and Family Oriented Organizations..... | 135 |
| Human Relations..... | 136 |
| Dissemination of the Results | 136 |
| Recommendations for Further Study | 137 |
| Reflections on the Research Process..... | 137 |
| Discovery Process Limitations | 139 |
| Conclusion | 140 |
| | |
| REFERENCES | 145 |

| | |
|--|---------|
| APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL..... | 164 |
| APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT..... | 165 |
| APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL..... | 168 |
| APPENDIX D: DISTRESSED PARTICIPANT PROTOCOL..... | 171 |
| APPENDIX E: LETTER OF COOPERATION MENSA U.S.A, INC. | 172 |
| APPENDIX F: INVITATIONS TO PARTICIPATE..... | 173 |
| APPENDIX G: REVISED RESEARCH PROTOCOL..... | 175 |
| APPENDIX H: SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT..... | 177 |
| APPENDIX J: DEMOGRAPHIC FACT SHEET | 182 |
| CURRICULUM VITAE..... | 184 |

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Primary Study Focus Group Demographics.....85

Table 2. Primary Study Individual Participant Demographics.....86

Table 3. Primary Study Focus Group Demographics.....107

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In this fast-paced postmodern age, emergent sociocultural change has complicated our ability to understand romantic relationships. Job instability and career uncertainty make it so that many of today's young adults simply cannot meet the economic expectations required to enter into marriage before they reach age 30 (Clarkberg, 1999; Hughes, 2003, 2004; Paul, 2002). With the deinstitutionalization of marriage, bonds of love are seen as what binds two people together rather than the marriage contract (Coontz, 2006). Yet the resultant in-love passionate romantic style of coupling often leads to serial marriage, divorce, and blended families.

Considering these circumstances, researchers struggle to describe, let alone explain, the realities of postmodern heterosexual romantic relationships. Seemingly, the communal landscape is changing so fast that by the time a research article appears the milieu has transformed and the contextual romantic experience is undoubtedly different (Gergen, 1999; Rosa, 2003).

Facing this reality, researchers see that romantic relations are so complex that attachment theory and evolutionary psychology cannot fully account for their many facets (Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Miller, 2001). For this and other reasons, a multitheoretical approach needs to be used to capture the essence and reality of today's heterosexual romantic relationships. It is also apparent that some of the 20th-century psychological models for studying romantic relationships are too narrowly focused or

simply may be outdated. It follows that new models of affiliative relationships are needed to replace them (Duck, 1994).

One emerging model, the friendships style of heterosexual romantic relationships, is seen by young and middle-aged adults as one of the most admired approaches to coupling (Grote & Frieze, 1994; McCarthy, 2001). It is seen as being on par with, if not surpassing the popularity of, the traditional in-love passionate romantic model of partnering (Fehr & Russell, 1991). Unfortunately, the relational understandings and meanings that support the friendship model of coupling are not understood by researchers, are not clearly defined in the literature, and are not well discussed in marriage and family textbooks (Fricker & Moore, 2002; Grote & Frieze). In this situation, therapists and researchers can only conjecture about what contextual factors support the friendship style of cross-gender romantic relationships. It follows that one can only speculate how those factors relate to couple formation, stability, and dissolution in today's postmodern socioeconomic environment.

Background to the Problem

Companionate love is a 20th-century understanding that is conceptually related to the idea of friendship as it occurs in heterosexual romantic relationships. The concept of companionate love assumes that shared activities and marital satisfaction go hand-in-hand (Burgess & Cottrell, 1939). The concept supporting the original theory of companionate love, however, appears to be unfounded, or perhaps simply does not apply to today's lovers, especially women (Crawford, Houts, Huston, & George, 2002).

Yet a friendship style of romantic relationship does appear to exist (Berscheid, 2006; Schwartz, 1994). In supporting this conception, Hendrick and Hendrick (1993)

found that among college students the friendship quality of a relationship is often developed concurrently with the romantic component or precedes it. Berscheid and Meyers (1996) found that almost three quarters of the people they interviewed associate partners they are in love with as also being their friends. Additionally, Schwartz (1994), a sociologist, found that in marriages where both partners were committed to a process of fairness and equity they also saw each other as best friends. Unfortunately, the romantic-friendship bond has never been fully investigated in its own right as a lived-experience within the field of psychology.

Instead, investigators generally turned away from research participants' subjective experiences and focused on studying love styles via survey methods. Establishing early predominance in this area, Lee (1973, 1977) envisioned six love styles that represent attitudes concerning relational assumptions and expectations that guide romantic interactions. The styles included both a friendship-based approach to cross-gender romance and an in-love passionate style of romantic relationship behavior. Lee's styles, however, lack sufficient operational definitions and have overlapping boundaries, and each style accounts for state and trait variables in a different fashion (Davis, Kirkpatrick, Levy, & O'Hearn, 1994; Murthy, Rotzien, & Vacha-Haase, 1996).

While Lee's (1977) scales for measuring personal love styles do not appear to make a fair assessment of people's preference for the friendship style of loving (Levy & Davis, 1988), a friendship style of cross-gender partnering clearly exists (Grote & Frieze, 1994). It simply has not been fully researched and articulated. This problem appears to be somewhat related to the deductive methodologies used to investigate love styles. For instance, the Friendship-Based Love Scale that Grote and Frieze developed was

deductively constructed and based on a selective reinterpretation of earlier deductively-derived, love-style scales, including Lee's (1973).

Considering that each of these various love scales is based on different constructs (Masuda, 2003), it is not surprising that researchers do not agree on what constitutes a relationship built on cross-gender romantic friendship. Nor do they agree on what constitutes the primary motivators and goals of a friendship approach to heterosexual romantic relationships. In combination, these issues call for a study that uses phenomenological-based methods (Giorgi, 1985) in order to discover how people subjectively experience friendship in the context of their cross-gender romantic relationships.

Problem Statement

There have been very few psychological studies that pertained to the role of friendship in heterosexual romantic relationships. A literature review showed no evidence of a published qualitative study in this area that used phenomenological methods. It also appears that a couple's friendship relationship, in a fashion similar to that of their love relationship (Daly, 2003), is neither taken into account in clinical assessments nor as a part of treatment planning for couples therapy. Yet the literature pointed to a satisfying romantic relational construct based on friendship (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1993; Grote & Freize, 1994). In fact, friendship is one of the pillars on which satisfying, long-term marriages stand (Gottman, 2004).

There is, however, no clear agreement on what factors comprise a friendship-based, cross-gender romance. Nor is there an understanding of how people contextually experience this type of relationship firsthand (Masuda, 2003). It is also not known how

relational friendship complements passionate love relationships (Grote & Freize, 1994), or how companionate love combines with passionate love to create higher levels of dyadic sexual satisfaction (Schwartz, 1994; Sprecher & Regan, 1998).

This lack of a fully developed conceptual understanding of how friendship is experienced in cross-gender romantic relationships compromises current research on romantic attachment, impinges on the models that guide couples therapy, and hampers establishing a general public understanding of how an individual can name, vocalize, and discuss important relational issues with one's partner. A qualitative study using focus groups followed by individual interviews, coupled with the use of phenomenological-based grounded theory data analysis methods, was conceived in order to illuminate some of the unanswered questions regarding how friendship is experienced within heterosexual romantic relationships.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological-based study was to discover how friendship is contextually experienced in heterosexual romantic relationships. It was believed that if a substantial finding was made during the course of this investigation that it could impact how researchers approach the study of romantic relationships. It was also believed that a substantial finding would impact the practice of psychotherapy. This was suggested because friendship is not currently a construct that is regularly conceptualized within therapeutic models of couples therapy. In setting up this study, it was hypothesized that friendship within cross-gender romantic relationships is experienced and defined differently by different people. It was hypothesized, however, that the analysis of the data would disclose common themes for the lived experience of

heterosexual romantic friendship that would include the topics of trustworthiness, honesty, acceptance, and self-disclosure.

Research Question

Research questions are used to focus and guide a study. Qualitative methodology calls for stating the main research question in its broadest terms, rather than as a narrow hypothesis involving testable variables (Creswell, 1998). With that in mind, the following research question was proposed: How is friendship experienced within heterosexual romantic relationships?

Methodological Framework

The methodological framework supporting this study is based on the phenomenological perspective of the philosopher Husserl (1922/1980). In applying Husserl's ideas to psychological research methodology, Giorgi (1985, 1997) developed a method of theme abstraction through which the researcher creates abridgements of the transcript topic using the participant's own language. In explaining this method, Giorgi noted that the participants' descriptions of the process being studied must be acquired before discipline-specific hypothetical causes of the research participants' behaviors are speculated upon. This process avoids a top-down deductive template from being imposed onto the data, thereby allowing the participant's actual descriptions of their lived experiences to be heard.

This type of data gathering removes the blinders that might be imposed a priori by the researcher's theoretical orientation. In doing this, the phenomenological approach calls for setting aside, or bracketing, one's theoretical orientation and prior understandings, and then facing the study with a beginner's mind (Giorgi, 1985, 1997;

Suzuki, 1973). This helps the researcher to understand the perspective of the research participant with regards to lived experiences that take place within his or her natural environment.

In the current project, the researcher used Giorgi's (1985) method of theme extraction to obtain topic abridgments from the transcripts of focus group and individual interviews. A further step of abstraction was made from the abridgments rendering codes that were entered into an Atlas.ti.5.12 (Scientific Software Development, 2007) computer software environment. This was followed by code cross-referencing and condensation whereby conceptual categories were developed and a final interpretation of the themes related to heterosexual romantic-friendship relationships was made (Bromage, 2006; McCambridge & Sieger, 2004).

These same procedures were used for analyzing data from a contrast study focus group, which was held after the primary study was complete. The data for this study were gathered in a different region of the United States from where the primary study data were gathered. The results helped to demonstrate generalizability of the findings and a broader authenticity for the overall project.

Supporting Theories

No single theory adequately explains romantic relationships (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000) or the friendship relationship that often occurs within the context of a heterosexual romance (Levy & Davis, 1988; Masuda, 2003). Therefore, it was considered imprudent to overly limit the theoretical underpinnings for this study, which is why four theories were used to inform this study. These theories are reviewed below in the

following order: systems theory, romantic attachment theory, psychoneuroendocrine theory, and social constructionism.

Systems theory is an established teaching heuristic that can be used when studying organic behavioral structures (Anaf, Drummond, & Sheppard, 2007). Systems theory was used within the current study in order to bring light to the common characteristics that underlie the theories mentioned above, which would otherwise appear to conflict with each other. In this context, systems theory helped to establish that there is a common underlying environment from which the behavior under study arose. This allowed for bridging the gap in disciplinary viewpoints by focusing on commonalities within the systemic relationships that underlie romantic behavior. Systems theory was also used to establish a framework for conceptualizing individual and focus group data within a larger sociocultural environment (Anaf et al.).

Attachment theory lent support to this study because it proffers that internal working models form the basis of cognitive-affective templates that guide adolescent and adult expectations and behaviors concerning romantic relationships (Ainsworth, 1991; Tracy, Shaver, Albino, & Cooper, 2003). Attachment theory therefore helps to explain people's thoughts and feeling concerning their romantic relationships (Gross & John, 2003), as well as to clarify the underpinnings of relationship quality and satisfaction (Sumer & Cozzarelli, 2004).

Psychoneuroendocrine theory holds that affiliative social bonding experiences, stress regulation, social communication, and emotional reactivity are regulated by the interactions between neurological substrate structures and hormonal action (Fisher, 2000; Fries, Ziegler, Kurian, Jacoris, & Pollak, 2005). Psychoneuroendocrine theory therefore

lent support to the idea that the friendship relationship occurring between heterosexual romantic partners could be a behavioral expression of distinct neurophysiological processes (Bartles & Zeki, 2004; Guerrero & Chavez, 2005).

Social constructionist theory holds that social structures present the backdrop for all human interactions from which knowledge is defined, understood, and framed into meaningful contexts (Gergen, 1999). It also holds that knowledge is constructed by groups of people within epistemological niches. Therefore, there are no universal understandings of behavioral phenomena, only conceptions that have been constructed within the limits of the currently accepted methodologies (Gergen; Kvale, 1992). It follows that the ability to experience romance is embedded within and delimited by the narratives that take place within a cultural-historical niche (Curt, 1994; Watts & Stenner, 2005). Accordingly, it stands to reason that, in response to social and cultural change, many people, including partnered dyads, coconstruct their own personal understandings with regards to a friendship-like mutuality that is used to guide their romantic relationships (Coontz, 2004, 2006).

Assumptions

In addressing the tradition of phenomenological psychology (Husserl, 1925/1997) that supported the methodology used in this study, the researcher assumed that people can make sense out of their experiences and that they can express what their experiences mean to them (Dukes, 1984). It was further assumed that the participants would not confabulate but actually express their thoughts and feelings concerning romantic relationships in an honest fashion. Moreover, it was expected that themes would emerge and begin to show redundancy within the context of three preliminary focus groups

followed by individual interviews with 30 participants aged 18 to 30. It was further expected that there would be an extensive amount of data collected from the interviews and that this would represent a broad-based discussion of romantic relationships. An assumption was embedded within the research protocol that mixing categorical types of questions would confound the study (McClelland, 1986). The questions herein allowed participants to describe their implicit experiences without posing questions concerning the interviewees' evaluative ratings of those same romantic vignettes.

Definition of Terms

The working definitions for the terms and expressions used in this study follow below. Those terms included friendship, romantic relationship, and heterosexual romantic friendship. Other terms, which were redefined by the participants themselves during course of the research project, are discussed below (see chapter 4, Emergent Definitions).

For the purpose of this study, *friendship* was defined as a voluntary, mutual, flexible, and terminable relationship, which emphasizes equality and reciprocity, where each partner has an affective involvement with the other (Brown, 1981), and a desire to enjoy each other's company (Baumgarte, 2002). The ideal case of friendship was held to be where both parties implicitly accept this sort of criteria as evident in their relationship. But, as Matthews (1986) noted, the perception and definition is in the eye of the beholder. One person may consider another person a friend while the other person does not see oneself in that position.

For the purpose of this study, The World Health Organization (WHO) definition of romantic relationship was used. WHO defined a *romantic relationship* as “creating and

maintaining a relationship based on emotional and physical attraction” (WHO, 2001), where there is also a potential for a long-term intimate sexual relationship.

In this study, the expression *heterosexual romantic friendship* refers to an intimate amorous cross-gender relationship where the partners treat each other with a shared mutuality, and generally consider each other as best friends (Lee, 1973, 1977). The terms cross-gender and heterosexual were considered to mean essentially the same thing. The expression *romantic friendship* was used for brevity’s sake when it was already clear that the discussion pertained to a situation where there were co-occurring friendship and romantic relationships with a heterosexual partnership.

Significance and Limitations

This study focused on understanding how the friendship relationship between heterosexual romantic partners is experienced. Half the interviews involved young adults who were not currently in partnered romantic relationships. This was done in order to better understand the social changes that have pushed the average age of marriage back in recent years.

It was hoped by the researcher that if a postmodern model of friendship-based romantic relationship was discovered, the findings would help couples’ therapists to revise therapy methods so that they address the issue of romantic friendship. It was expected that this could be used to empower people undergoing couples therapy with a new vocabulary to better describe their experiences within heterosexual romantic relationships. In the long term, it was considered possible that this could help to stabilize family life. Moreover, in designing the study to analyze the background stage on which young adult relationships take place, the researcher expected he would be able to interpret

the results within the context of how young adults actually live their lives in today's rapidly changing sociocultural environment. It was expected that this information would also help researchers in framing new models of young adult romantic relationships.

Within this project, the researcher chose to take the view of an ethnographer approaching the research participants as people embedded in a unique, young, urban-adult, cultural niche (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Operating within this framework, the researcher allowed the participants to redirect the discussion at times, making it a relevant reflection of their peer group culture. It was hoped that in approaching the participants from this perspective the researcher could demonstrate how to adjust research methods to meet the demands of a society where the pace of life keeps increasing (Rosa, 2003).

As in any study, there are limitations due to technical abilities of the research instruments. In a qualitative study, the researcher is actually a research tool (Creswell, 1998), and his or her abilities put limitations on the potential significance of the findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). It follows that this study was limited by the capabilities of the interviewer, regardless of prior experience. This is because there are always some limits in hearing what was actually said or in making correct attributions and assumptions.

This discovery project was also limited in its generalizability because the findings are limited in applicability to the young urban adult population from which the sample was selected. The study is, however, accompanied by a thick description of the methods and findings. This process substitutes contextual detail for an attempt at proving generalizability (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Future researchers can make their own decisions about whether the findings from this study fit other situations in another times and places (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Social desirability also could have played a role in limiting the findings of this study. Some participants may have felt ashamed to talk about certain issues (Wayment, 2005), although there was no hint of there being such a problem. Otherwise, some participants may have felt a need to leave a good impression during the focus groups or interview activities. This too could have limited the significance of the findings.

Agency and Social Change

From the beginning, this study set out to discover and elaborate on how recent sociocultural change has impacted modern heterosexual romantic relationships. It was expected that any newly discovered themes regarding romantic relationships could influence how researchers and therapists approach their fields. It was also believed that if a friendship style of romantic relationship was elaborated upon, and then popularized through media dissemination, this might encourage people to move forward with abandoning the vestiges of the traditional, male-dominated romantic relationship and marriage systems. This, in turn, could have the affect of normalizing the concept of intergender cooperation within romantic relationships.

The research methods used herein were also selected with an intention of effecting social change. A descriptive, interactive, phenomenological methodology for theme abstraction (Giorgi, 1985) was used to study the full subjective experience of the research participant in terms of relationship interactions occurring within an immediate socio-ecological environment. The researcher also used a systems theory template to guide and resolve theoretical and interdisciplinary conflicts that arose within the study. In framing some of the issues under study within the context of systemic psychology and second order cybernetics, the researcher hoped to demonstrate a way to unite competing

disciplinary points of view at an underlying systemic level. It is expected that this could impact how future researchers approach the study of affiliative relationships.

Summary of the Introduction

In this postmodern technocratic age, emergent sociocultural change is reflected in the shifting styles of romantic relationships. Roles as well as partner expectations are in the process of being transformed. Responding to this situation, researchers have noticed that cross-gender relational friendship is often considered a prerequisite or a co-occurring part of heterosexual romantic engagements. The construct of cross-gender romantic friendship, however, is poorly understood and not fully described in the literature.

It follows that the purpose of this phenomenological study was to add new insight into understanding the romantic-friendship style of heterosexual partnering. It was expected that this would improve the romantic relationship vocabulary and discovery processes used by researchers and therapists. It was hoped that any new information that turned up regarding functional young adult romantic relationships could be disseminated to the general public through the media and thereby influence a large segment of the population.

As such, it was expected that this study could impact social change by demonstrating that heterosexual romantic couples who have a viable friendship relationship are better prepared to handle the exigencies of urban stress. It was also expected that social change would be impacted by demonstrating how a cutting-edge discovery process achieved significant, relevant results. That method, used herein, employs Giorgi's (1985) phenomenological-based methodology within the Atlas.ti.5.2.12

(Scientific Software Development, 2007) computer software environment to analyze data.

This first chapter is followed below by chapter 2, wherein the literature that was relevant to this study is reviewed. The literature review covers some of the major current and past conceptualizations regarding friendship and romance within the field of psychology. The review demonstrated the need for further research in the area of cross-gender romantic friendship. The methodology for obtaining interview data for this study, as well as the proposed methods that will be used for analyzing the data, is reviewed in chapter 3. The results are displayed in chapter 4, and the interpretations and conclusions are discussed in chapter 5. The appendixes are as follows:

- Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval,
- Appendix B: Informed Consent,
- Appendix C: Interview Protocol,
- Appendix D: Distressed Participant Protocol,
- Appendix E: Letter of Cooperation Mensa U.S.A, INC.,
- Appendix F: Invitations to Participate,
- Appendix G: Revised Research Protocol,
- Appendix H: Sample Transcript, and
- Appendix J: Demographic Fact Sheet.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

History and Evolution of the Research

A review of the literature provided a foundation from which to conduct the primary study concerning friendship as it is experienced within heterosexual romantic relationships. The overall goal of the review was to demonstrate the need for the study, including its relevance to the professional literature. It was also important to elucidate the concepts that frame heterosexual romantic friendship, along with the psychological and methodological theories that support the study itself.

The assumption at the beginning of this study was that there has been very little research dealing within the friendship relationship co-occurring with a couple's romantic relationship (Galley, 1996). The review demonstrated that the concept of a heterosexual romantic friendship has been investigated only in a few limited contexts. A gap in the literature was shown to be evident. There is a lack of a unified conceptualization and a general acknowledgement of the importance of cross-gender romantic friendship. With a few exceptions, there was a complete absence of literature concerning how friendship is subjectively experienced within romantic relationships. This noteworthy absence demonstrated the need for the proposed phenomenological-based study.

The results of the review also revealed that issues related to heterosexual romantic friendship have been discussed within the following contexts: friendship relationships, romantic relationships, cross-gender romantic friendship, romantic attachment bonds, and postmodern relationships. These issues will be discussed below.

As mentioned, search was also made for the most efficient theories that could be used to support, organize, and eventually help to explain the findings from this project. During the process of reviewing orientational and operational theories, it was discovered that a unified theory that explains intimate relationships does not yet exist (Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000). It was also discovered that systems theory is a known heuristic for organizing scientific studies of human relationships, as well as other living systems involving multilevel structures containing systems that function within systems (Bertalanffy, 1950; Capra, 1996; Jurich & Myers-Bowman, 1998; Nichols & Schwartz, 1991). This argued for using general systems theory as a heuristic to support the overall conceptual organization of the study.

The literature review also demonstrated that phenomenology is exceptionally useful for supporting qualitative psychological research aimed at discovering subjective meanings that arise within the context of human relationships (Giorgi, 1985). Because of this, phenomenology is also examined below. Preceding that discussion, there is an examination of the other psychological theories mentioned in chapter 1, which supported the contextual framework for this discovery project.

Description of the Literature Search

A review of the literature concerning heterosexual romantic friendship was performed within the libraries at Indiana University and Walden University. The databases that were used included PsychINFO and EBSCOHOST. The search terms that were used included: friendship and romance; romantic relationships and friendship; romantic friendship and friendship or romance or romantic relationships.

Friendship Relationships

The modern discussion of friendship began with Sullivan (1953), who legitimized the idea that it is within the context of close relationships that the personality develops. Following Sullivan, Rangell (1963) argued that friendship relationships should be brought to the foreground for clinical considerations. Rangell suggested that the state of patients' friendships was one way to measure the state of their mental health. Despite this opening of the discussion, the subject of cross-gender friendship was an almost forbidden research topic within the field of close relationships until recently (Goodwin & Cramer, 2002; McCoy, 1998).

Components of Friendship

Fehr (2004) argued that friends create a sense of intimacy through self-disclosure, as well as emotional and social support. People use these behaviors as the criteria by which they judge the state of their friendships. For example, if self-disclosure is on the wane in the relationship, then the friendship is considered to be deteriorating. For Mendelson and Kay (2003) the attributes of friendship involved what they called intangibles. The intangibles included stimulating companionship, help, intimacy, reliable alliance, emotional security, and self-validation. The presence of these characteristics leads people to have positive feelings about their friendships, which in itself, is considered to be a functional friendship benefit. The presence of these intangibles overrides any issues or concerns friends might have had about balance and equity within their friendships, such as who contributes what and how much to the relationship. Positive feelings did not arise from a rational calculation of net benefit from the

friendship relationship. But rather, positive feelings rose directly from intangible friendship functions.

In consideration of the above issues, it can be said that most people believe that self-disclosure and similarities between partners are the most important attributes of friendship. Yet research shows that it is the intangible benefits of friendship, including companionship, assistance, intimacy, secure alliance, emotional security, and self-validation, that give the relationship its most meaning, and that these cannot be replaced by tangible rewards. When contrasted with romantic relationships, these attributes that people expect from their friends are also expected from lovers, only more intensely. Friendship behaviors, however, guide romantic couples through periods of stress and help with the accommodation of partner change (Driver, Tabares, Shapiro, Nahm, & Gottman, 2003; Gottman, 2004).

Cross-Gender Friendship

People generally demand more from their cross-gender friends in contrast to their same-sex friends (Sprecher & Regan, 2002). People also attach more importance to cross-gender friends' social status, physical attractiveness, and intrinsic characteristics compared to that of same-sex friends. While these relational costs seem higher, the positive emotional support between cross-gender friends provides an atmosphere whereby friends can alleviate one another's stress (Guerrero & Chavez, 2005). In fact, Winstead, Derelega, Lewis, Sanchez-Hucles, and Clarke (1992) found that, in stressful situations, being accompanied by an opposite-sex friend provided research participants more social support than being accompanied by a same-sex friend. It also had a larger emotional calming effect when contrasted to being with a same-sex friend. Moreover, the

presence of opposite sex friends allows one to feel more confident. Winstead et al. concluded that opposite-sex friends' coping skills synergistically complement each other in situations where people bring their opposite-sex friend with them for social support.

Afifi and Faulkner (2000) found that half of the people in a sample of college undergraduates had had sex with an opposite-sex friend who was considered a casual sex partner rather than a committed romantic partner. Moreover, in a community-based study, Giordano, Cernkovich, and Holland (2003) found that a third of the 1,320 adolescent respondents had sex with a friend. Giordano et al. suggested that the motivation for these liaisons was that sex would be safer with a friend compared to casual sex with a stranger. These two studies seemed to attempt to normalize the idea of friends picking friends for casual-sex partners.

Natural Selection and Friendship

Cole and Teboul (2004) argued that exchange theory cannot account for the advantages of friendship. Friendship is not about a mere tit-for-tat arrangement among disinterested people. It is, rather, a coordinated effort by two people who strategize synergistically in a way that takes advantage of environmental opportunities. The synergistic effect of constructive coordination that exists between friends explains why natural selection favored people who were cooperative and friendly. Friends are more productive than people in nonfriendship relationships. They can anticipate each other's thoughts, feelings, and actions. Because of an evolved emotional capacity to have and enjoy friends, people experience the growth of a friendship relationship as a natural and indispensable experience. For Bleske and Buss (2000) this that means cross-gender

friendship appears to provide a fitness benefit that supports the survival of one's progeny within the context of the relational benefits outweighing the costs.

Romantic Relationships

Romance is one of the oldest topics found in literature of ancient civilizations. For instance, in the 9th century BCE, Homer (trans. 1990) wrote an epic tale about Helen of Troy, the wife of Menelaus of Sparta, who was abducted by Paris. More recently, Shakespeare's (1595/1997) tale of Romeo and Juliet is legendary because it embodies the classic conception of in-love passionate romance. The classic conception combines idealization of the lover with obsessive infatuation. In these and other stories, falling in love is seen as a gripping and overwhelming experience where one either forgets or rejects all prior commitments (Oatley, 2004). The various components of romantic relationships are discussed below.

Love

There is no one commonly accepted construct among researchers for what constitutes passionate love (Troy, 2005). The most common dimensions of love cited by researchers involve caring, sexuality, passion, intimacy, respect, commitment, and attachment (Yela, 2006). The state of falling in love, where there is a craving for emotional and sexual union (Tennov, 1979), is supported by distinct neurophysiological responses associated with the reward and motivational systems (Aron et al., 2005).

Becall and Sternberg (1995) claimed, however, that in-love romantic passion cannot be understood outside of its cultural-historical context. Others suggest that love is a universal that takes the same shape in all contexts (see Shackelford, Schmitt, & Buss, 2005; Schmitt, 2005). The problem with this latter approach is that it does not account for

male-female power differentials, or even sexual slavery that has taken place in many historical contexts, even today. Moreover, researchers sometimes ignore the fact that before the 20th-century, marriage was universally a means of transferring women and property across generations of male proprietors and that the focus of marriage was commonly on economics (Hunt, 1996). For that reason, love between partners was not a foundation issue for the typical marriage before the latter half of the 20th-century (Coontz, 2004, 2006).

Sexuality

Few researchers have studied the level of intensity of romantic passion or sex drive women and men generally expect from their partners (Regan, 2004). Sprecher and Regan (2002), however, did ask 700 men and women at a midwestern university what level of sexual passion they expected from casual sex, dating, and marriage partners. Men and women expected the same high level in all three types of relationships. Interestingly, warmth, kindness, expressiveness, and openness were valued more in all sexual relationships by both women and men when contrasted to wealth and physical attraction. This defies the classic evolutionary psychology criteria for mate choice where women supposedly are concerned about the relationship and support and men about beauty and sex. Sprecher and Regan argue that what this demonstrates is that people expect emotional support in all their relationships.

Many researchers claim that women generally have a lower sex drive in comparison to men (Baumeister, Catanese, & Vohs, 2001). It is possible that in the context of current social restrictions, gendered power prerogatives, and role assignments (e.g., single-parent childrearing) women may be less willing to accumulate sexual

partners or, in fact, have less interest in sex in comparison to men. Researchers may, however, only be skilled at measuring male, gender-specific sexual drive. They may not have perfected research tools that allow for reasonable measurement of women's sexual desire, which is less gender-focused on males as sex objects when contrasted to men's more gender-focused cravings (Lippa, 2006). It follows that complex gender issues may underlie the broader context of when women report sexual dissatisfaction.

The lack of desire and problems with orgasm are seen as the number one and two sexual drawbacks women face in their relationships (Basson et al., 2001; *Health & Medicine Week*, 2004). Sexual satisfaction, however, is associated with relationship quality for both men and women (Lawrance & Byers, 1995), and self-disclosure generally leads to higher levels of relationship satisfaction, which in turn leads to higher levels sexual pleasure among partners (MacNeil & Byers, 2005).

Intimacy

Researchers have noted that humans have a need for affiliation (McClelland, 1985), a need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), and a need for intimacy (McAdams, 1989). Of those needs, intimacy is considered by some researchers to be a core human necessity that motivates people to engage in close personal relationships (Ryan & Deci, 2000). McAdams and Bryant (1987) defined intimacy motivation as "a recurrent preference or readiness for experiences of warm, close, and communicative interaction with others" (p. 397). It is no surprise that intimacy is a constant concern of partners in romantic relationships, leading them to put a premium on trustworthiness and honesty (Wayment, 2005).

Laurenceau, Troy, and Carver (2005) noted that everyone has their own level of intimacy that they expect from their romantic relationships. When intimacy goals are not met, people experience sadness and rejection, which are key components of unrequited love (Troy, 2005). The expectations for intimacy underlie people's decisions, standards, and judgments concerning possible and ongoing romantic relationships (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Consequently, romantic love and intimacy are inextricably linked (Troy). Yet romantic partners may not share the same intensity level intimacy needs, and thus, their goals may conflict.

Dating

People have cognitive constructs that play a role in relationship satisfaction and relationship outcomes (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996). For instance, people generally rate current dating partners with whom they feel a commitment as more open-minded, stable, conscientious, and feel closer to them in comparison to their past partners (Geher et al., 2005). The idealization of one's partner also affects one's level of interest in one's romantic relationship (Geher, 2000). Cognitive perspective-taking is also evident when people move from thinking about their individual selves to beginning to think dyadically in regards to their partners they date (Aron, Norman, & Aron, 2001). In a similar vein, extradyadic affairs outside of a serious dating relationship are negatively associated with the strength of the partner's belief in the sex-love-marriage typology and positively associated with a game-playing romantic love style (Wiederman & Hurd, 1999).

Marriage

Among all types of personal relationships, marriage is the relationship within which the greatest number sexual activities take place. It is here that partners negotiate

their sexual, parental, and worker roles (Christopher & Kisler, 2004). The authoritarian model of the male decision-maker that was evident up through the 1950s in the United States has been retired, but it has not been replaced with a new standard model for postmodern marriages (Schwartz, 2002). Today's partners piece together or negotiate whatever form of a marriage arrangement they can, along with the accompanying roles, knowing that they must rely on their own resources and creativity for their happiness and satisfaction.

Twenty-first-century marriage relationships generally reflect a fractured sense of partner equity (Schwartz, 2002). Regarding certain issues, each partner may share equal responsibility for managing the outcome. On other issues, there is a trade-off, where one partner performs a role or obligation in exchange for the other partner performing another role or obligation that is of unequal importance or of unequal status. While both traditionalists and people from liberal backgrounds negotiate their own marriage arrangements, people from the two ideological groups define the terms of equity, equality, and responsibility differently. Interestingly, representatives from all ideological groups, who believe their marriage is functioning smoothly, claim their partner is their friend, yet each ideological group defines friendship in different terms (Schwartz, 1994).

It follows that there is unequal power in the majority of today's marriages (Schwartz, 1994). This arises from the fact that the work requirements of today's economic world makes it easier to focus on one partner succeeding in the workplace while the other manages the rest of the couple's responsibilities. Schwartz (1994) called this the *territorialization* of marriage responsibilities. She claims that this is almost inevitable in today's world. Couples may seek fairness and desire to be best friends when

they marry, but they find it easier to manage a territorialized marriage which does not have the almost daily negotiations that are necessary to keep a marriage fair and just.

Satisfaction

In a prospective study of newlyweds, Karney and Frye (2002) found that people judge relational satisfaction against recent improvements in the relationships, rather than by overall longer-term quality. This led Karney and Frye to conclude that when people judge their marital satisfaction they examine the changes in the relationship that have taken place in the previous several months.

Expressiveness

Expressiveness in a romantic relationship relates to being compassionate, sensitive, and affectionate within a romantic relationship (Kollock, Blumstein, & Schwartz, 1994). Laughter could be considered a type of expressiveness also. The frequency of laughter is a measure by which individuals judge their own satisfaction with the expressive exchanges that take place with their marriage partner (Botwin, Buss and Shackelford 1997). As such, laughter is a relational consideration for establishing and maintaining long-term relationships (Simpson, Gangestad, Christensen, & Leck 1999).

Heterosexual Romantic Friendship

One of the earliest mentions of heterosexual romantic relationships that involved a friendship affiliation was in the Old Testament book Song of Solomon (5-16 RSV). Herein, Solomon is seen as satisfying his wife's need for friendship within marriage (Constable, 2007). Historically, there has been only a modest discussion of cross-gender romantic friendship. Writing in the eighteenth century, Wollstonecraft (1792/1985) noted that women would have to be given equal rights and allowed to be educated before they

would have the status in a marriage that would allow them to emotionally invest in a friendship relationship with their partners.

At issues here is the concept of unequal eligibilities for spouses and the acting out of gender-typed social roles inherent in the traditional marriage contract (Davis & Todd, 1982). Implied in this conception is that social scripts are simply different for friendship and marriage in traditional relationships. But the nature of marriage has changed (Coontz, 2006). Like friendship partners who have always defined the terms of their own relationships, postmodern, 21st-century marriage partners coconstructed their romantic relationships, too (Schwartz, 1994). Perhaps this is why Davis and Todd's argument concerning unequal romantic partner eligibilities seems to be outdated.

Qualities of Heterosexual Romantic Friendship

Researchers have reported various qualities related to heterosexual romantic friendship. For example, Cann (2004) found that research participants held the same expectations for kindness with potential friends as for potential romantic partners. Driver, Tabares, Shapiro, Nahm, and Gottman (2003) found that the quality of the marital friendship correlates positively with the ability of couples to manage the stressors that occur during the transition to parenthood. Driver et al. noted that the quality of the friendship relationship can be measured during the early months of the marriage and used to make a general prediction of a couple's ability to handle stress in the future. However, Neither Cann or Tabares et al. used qualitative methods to substantiate how the participants believed they experienced heterosexual romantic friendship.

Lauer, Lauer, and Kerr (1990) noted that marital success is associated with a friendship relationship in which one enjoys one's partner's company. Likewise, Galley

(1995) studied friendship in the context of married relationships and concluded that friendship is associated with marital quality. Galley concluded that successful romantic relationships require ongoing partner allowances for the each other's developmental growth within the context of a genuine friendship relationship. This is somewhat similar to Gottman's (2004) findings concerning the basic marital friendship relationship where simple everyday activities are what support marital quality. Galley's model of friendship allowed for growth; Gottman's allowed for anything and everything, where friendship provides the foundation on which a meaningful marriage is based. Fenell (1993) suggested that when all else fails in a marital relationship, the friendship can stand on its own. Gottman (1999) suggested that the friendship relationship is the core of a marriage, and that when the friendship fails, all else has indeed already failed.

Attachment and Developmental Models

Ainsworth (1991) discussed attachment in friendship relationships, suggesting there are close, enduring bonds, where each person is uniquely valued and not interchangeable with someone else. In illustrating this, she mentions army buddies who provide care and protection for each other. Within these friendships, separation or threat of separation causes anxiety, and loss causes grief. In less hazardous situations, friends stick together because they have formed representational models of the other and of themselves in relation to the other. Friends also depend on each other for understanding, reassurance, and for help when needed. Taken together, this allows the friendship bond to sustain over time and distance.

It would seem that there is nothing really that stops this model of attachment from applying to cross-gender friendships in romantic relationships. Ainsworth (1991) did call

for more research that seeks to understand how friendship attachments develop into affectional bonds over the course of a friendship. Yet a discussion of friendship bonds is nearly absent from the literature on attachment in cross-gender romantic relationships. One exception is Mitchell's (2002) argument that passion and friendship may engage similar instinctual forces.

In attempting to understand the adolescent developmental process of moving from same-sex friends to romantic partners, Connolly, Furman, and Konarski (2000) followed a group of 90 girls and 90 boys as they moved from 9th through 11th grade in a metropolitan school district. Connolly et al. found the likelihood of an adolescent being in a romantic relationship was associated with the size of one's cross-gender social network. It was also indirectly associated with the size of one's same-sex social group. Connolly et al.'s study suggests that peer group relations provide initial models for romantic relationship expectations and that experience within romantic relationships thereafter models future expectations. This supported Furman's (1999) hypothesis that the affiliative and sexual systems emerge first to create ties between adolescent partners and only later do the attachment and caregiving systems emerge.

In another discussion of developmental templates, Furman and Wehner (1994) questioned the idea of applying models of childhood attachment bonds to adolescent romantic relationships. Instead, they say that the focus should be on how adolescents learn styles of affiliation and a sense of equity within their friendship relationships and how this is carried forward as adolescents pursue romantic partners. This is a call to study how early adolescent companionate relationships develop into those of late adolescence, where the focus is on trust and support (Furman, 2002).

Gender Stereotyping and Peer Marriage

Schwartz (1994), a sociologist, argues that the public discussion of equitable cross-gender romantic-friendship relationships is suppressed via gender stereotyping, fear of change, and the acceptance of the relational status quo. In this context, rather than adopt a standard of friendship as a goal, couples adopt a standard that fits their current relationship. Schwartz argues that this allows couples to justify their current relationship within the context of the gender argument that says that men and women believe in different relational rules, and therefore, are not supposed to have truly intimate relationships. Arising from this defense of the status quo is the popular belief that egalitarian marriages are unnatural, boring, and sexually unfulfilling.

Schwartz (1994) interviewed couples who had an equity relationship profile that were gleaned from her study with a larger group of research participants. She discovered what she calls a *peer marriage* pattern that defies the boredom stereotype of the cross-gender romantic friendship. In these peer marriages, partners shared interests and claimed they always had something to talk about. In turn, Schwartz reported, sexual pleasure apparently did not arise out of the tension garnered from gender differences found in traditional marriages. Nor did sex follow the traditional script where the males initiate, and are in charge, while females either agree or decline to participate (Rose & Frieze, 1989). Pleasure arose instead out of a style of sexuality that is founded on mutual respect and mutual timing. In contrast, Schwartz notes, traditional male-initiated sex goes according to the male's schedule. It follows that a natural balancing of sexual timing never really materializes between partners. This lack of sexual synchronicity, founded on

the traditional concept of male initiation and control, may be what has given people the impression that women have a lower sex drive in comparison to men.

The problem with this lower sex-drive stereotype is that it does not allow for the accommodation of men and women's differential sex drive correlates and arousal patterns (Chivers & Bailey, 2005; Lippa, 2006). Moreover, the stereotype denigrates women's greater contextual response sensitivity (Baumeister, 2000), while overlooking gender-specific hormone cycles. Regardless, couples who have the intimacy of a strong romantic friendship have anything but boring sex lives because of their responsiveness, reciprocity, camaraderie, and sexual openness (Schwartz, 1994).

Schwartz (2002) speculates that couples who build their relationship on a friendship model that embodies empathy have less need to bridge their communication gaps with sexuality. Individuals within such couples, Schwartz speculates, go to each other when feeling insecure, seeking comfort and advice. This type of interaction occurs in an equity marriage based on friendship because partners know each other's history and needs. This description of a friendship-based, cross-gender romantic relationship sounds remarkably similar to what one would imagine to take place in a relationship where both partners are securely attached and have allowed themselves the freedom to communicate openly.

Dyadic Coordinated Friendship Construct

Cole and Teboul (2004) related friendship occurring within romantic relationships to evolutionary fitness. They argue that within the context of a friendships dyad, romantic partners have the advantage of providing for their offspring in a coordinated fashion. This enhances survival. This evolutionary model of the survival of the fittest for dyadic

friendship partners stands in contrast to the generally held model of differential roles for male and female mate selection advocated by evolutionary psychologists. The common evolutionary psychological model of mate selection has women looking for opportunities to enhance their resource base while men are looking for opportunities to enhance their chances of sexual opportunity with various partners (Miller, 2001). In contrast, the dyadic coordinated friendship model seems to argue for both an enhanced resource base as well sexual satisfaction as the goals for both partners (Swartz, 1994). This takes place without the traditional mating priorities as espoused by evolutionary psychologists. Instead, it would seem that men and women seek partners who are friendly.

The coordinated dyadic friendship model can support the hypothesis that people seeks partners who are have personal qualities similar to their own, especially in terms of ability to understand and to empathize with their partners' situations. Under these circumstances, partners seek to learn more about each other and attempt to coordinate their efforts with their partner (Swartz, 1994). What is unique about the dyadic coordinated friendship construct is that it takes away the model of female dependency that is implicit within the standard mate selection parameters that underlie the typical evolutionary psychological arguments based on warrior cultures.

Regardless of what model one uses to understand mate selection, the important construct is that the establishment of friendship dyads is basic to survival (Cole & Teboul, 2004). Cole and Teboul describe this formative process of dyadic friendship in terms of an unconscious process arising from a complex emotional base wherein the individual searches and screens for similarities between oneself and a potential friend. This unconscious searching and matching for similarities allows a friendship to evolve

when people discover they have something in common. Cole and Teboul posited that it is only when negative cases arise, and with them non-pleasurable emotions, that the efforts to establish similarities that might lead to coordinated activities comes to the conscious forefront.

When this construct is applied to romantic relationships, people can be seen as unconsciously signaling their interests (e.g., revealing facts about themselves and thereby establishing similarities) in the same fashion that is found at the beginning of a friendship relationship. This dyadic partnering can progress into a satisfying romantic relationship relative to prior relational skills and behavioral functionality. This search for similarities goes against the construct of people seeking those who have complementary yet different personal qualities and skills in order to fill their own deficits. Rather, people are seen as unconsciously searching for partners who share goals, values, and interests that might help in the pursuit of coordinated activities (Cole & Teboul, 2004).

Cole and Teboul (2004) argue that the dyadic coordinated friendship model of romantic partnering moves well beyond the exchange model of seeking a tit-for-tat payoff. This restructuring of relational concepts sees partner trust as arising from repeated successful strategizing efforts with one's romantic partner within the context of a friendly relationship. Ambivalence could be seen as resulting from hit and miss issues involving coordination. The feeling of loneliness could be seen arising from one's inability to play "coordination games" with a partner.

Romantic Attachment Bonds

Bowlby (1969, 1973) viewed attachment relationships as interpersonal connections wherein one person's emotional security is dependent upon another's

sensitive, care-giving, reassurance, and support. Bowlby believed that an infant is born with innate behaviors that engender an attachment relationship with a caregiver. The internal working models that guide children's close relationships are part of what Bowlby (1969) called the attachment system. This is a non-rational, innate, biobehavioral system that promotes the perpetuation of the species through the maintenance of social ties. Bowlby suggested that because of the need for human support in order to survive, natural selection has led to the instinctual preservation of these behaviors. Proximity-seeking behaviors not only elicit responses in others but increase the child's chances of survival. Bowlby (1988) believed, as did Ainsworth (1991), that attachment behaviors guide our personal relationships, including romantic ones, throughout the entire lifespan.

Adult Romantic Attachment Styles

The internal working models that emerge over the course of childhood and adolescence generalize in adulthood, such that they guide expectations of romantic partner behaviors (Bowlby, 1979). These general representations are thereby confirmed and upheld within adult affectionate relationships (Treboux, Crowell, & Waters, 2004). In adult relationships, romantic partners replace parents as the object of an individual's attachment expectations (Weiss, 1982; Ainsworth, 1991).

A method of classifying general attachment representations in adulthood that closely parallels infant attachment classifications was established by Main and Goldwyn (1994). Their attachment categories included secure, preoccupied, and dismissing attachment styles. The latter two categories are considered to be insecure attachment styles. Main and Goldwyn referred to another category, unresolved attachment, as applying to people who have ongoing issues with relational trauma in regards to their

attachment representations and consequently do not easily fit into the above-mentioned categories.

Adults can have a sexual relationship without activating their attachment systems and, consequently, a problem immediately arises when using attachment theory and attachment representations to frame romantic relationships (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). Some people involved in romantic relationships may not see their partners as a safe haven or as a secure base, and thus, may not seek their proximity for soothing purposes when anxious or feeling threatened. This conundrum arises in part because romantic relationship can involve any of several independent behavioral systems, including the sexual, the attachment, and the care-giving systems (Ainsworth, 1991). The care-giving and the attachment systems can interact, each building on the other. The sexual system is seen as establishing a less enduring bond. But once activated, it can lead to the activation of the other two systems (Ainsworth, 1991).

An obvious example of a sexual relationship without an attachment bond is the situation where a person adapts avoidant cognitive representations, such that one does not turn to one's partner when anxious or for reassurance. This avoidant behavior is learned during infancy when the child suppresses his or her attachment system as an emotional regulatory mechanism. This behavior may arise from interacting with a caregiver who is cold, rejecting, emotionally restrictive, and uncomfortable with close bodily contact (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Sprangler & Grossmann, 1993). When people with avoidant attachment styles reach adulthood they generally approach potential affiliative interactions using cognitive templates that keep their attachment systems from activating

whatsoever. They are sometimes successful at doing that by actively avoiding their partners when they feel distressed (Fraley & Shaver, 1997).

In a contrary fashion, adults who are regarded as having insecure-ambivalent attachment styles have highly activated attachment systems and prefer seemingly unrestricted closeness, commitment, and affection (Feeney & Noller, 1991). Their highly activated attachment systems can be seen as leaving them as more vulnerable to relational threats in comparison to avoidant or secure individuals. Moreover, this desire for unrestricted closeness puts people in a position of being dependent on their partner to fulfill their needs. It also makes them prone to hostility and heightened emotionality when experiencing frustration (Simpson, Rholes, & Phillips, 1996).

Unresolved Theoretical Issues

Several problems have been noted in the literature with regards to attachment theory. For instance, theorists cannot agree on where attachment theory fits within family systems theory, or considering its dyadic emphasis, if indeed it is independent of it (Kozłowska & Hanney, 2002). Moreover, it is not clear whether attachment bonds represent clear categories or whether the underlying internal working models can only be measured dimensionally (Furman & Simon, 2004).

There is also the issue that infants can hold different attachment relationships with mothers in contrast to their fathers (van Ijzendoorn & De Wolff, 1997). This holds for adolescents also (Furman & Simon, 2004). Moreover, problems arise when applying the child-parent model of attachment to that of romantic partner attachment. For instance, Furman and Simon (2004) contrasted individual adult participants' attachment styles for their mothers with that of their style of attachment for their fathers. Overall, there was a

68% concordance for mother-father attachment styles among the participants. This lack of a full, unitary attachment style leaves considerable unexplained variance, along with the unanswered question concerning how a variegated attachment relationship to one's parents is associated with attachment to romantic partners (Dickstein, Seifer, St. Andre, & Schiller, 2001).

Another confounding issue of concern is that attachment theory relates to approaching another person if one is anxious or wants to be reassured or soothed. It would be a different relational phenomenon to approaching a partner because of a strong romantic desire or because of sexual interest (Gonzaga, Keltner, Londahl, & Smith, 2001). This issue here is that attachment, in-love passionate romance, and sexuality clearly engage different biobehavioral systems (Fisher, 2000; Fisher, Aron, & Brown, 2006). To judge a romantic relationship by an attachment style probably misses two-thirds of the biobehavioral picture.

Postmodern Relationships

As societies evolve, so do cultural styles of romantic relationships. When the economic and technological changes advance rapidly, accommodating alterations in normative styles of romantic relationships can take place so fast that the research literature barely keeps up with them (Gergen, 1999). Such appears to be the case with the research concerning adolescent and young adult relationship behaviors. The new partnering behaviors, including hookups and casual sex with friends, might seem shocking to the researcher bound by traditional cultural values. Yet these new behaviors may be a compensation for the fact that 18-to-30-year-olds are preoccupied with fulfilling a host of new types of postmodern developmental tasks that are required for establishing

a sense of full adulthood (Arnett, 2004; Smith, C., 2007). Young adults may also be unable to maintain a traditional relationship for financial reasons. They help to explain why 28% of today's young adults report not being interested in committed, long-term relationships (Rainie & Madden, 2006).

Considering that the new young adult lifestyle focuses on being single rather than being in a relationship, and that this may be leading young adults away from the traditional sex-love-marriage belief system. These new behaviors were examined in order to understand what young people are referring to when these new patterns of sexuality come up in focus group or interview discussions. Moreover, it is within the context of these new sexual behaviors that the research topic, friendship as it is experienced in romantic relationships, will ultimately be expressed as it occurs within the postmodern young adult social context. Therefore, hookups, sexual friendships, and the postmodern functional model of relationships will be discussed below.

Hookups Versus Dating

Hookups are casual, generally one-time romantic interactions that take place between young males and females, often at a party. A hookup involves one or more of the following behaviors: flirting, kissing, drinking, drug use, manual sexual stimulation, oral sex, or intercourse (Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000). Of significance, the traditional concerns about sex outside of non-committed relationships are simply ignored (Lambert, Kahn, & Apple, 2003). Paul and Hayes (2002) reported that approximately 75% of the college students claim to have participated in a hookup of one nature or the other.

Adolescents and young adults say that the general guiding rule for a hookup is that the partners communicate as little as possible during their interactions (Paul &

Hayes, 2002). Apparently, they do not discuss sexual or relational expectations beforehand either. A central feature of hookups is the gossip and bragging rights associated with them. Apparently, adolescents and young adults spend hours talking about what happened at social events where hookups take place, including who did what with and to whom. Much of this is associated with a person's cell phone and text messaging network, wherein the gossip is passed along instantaneously and continuously, even between students during class sessions. Within the context of social status relating to the size and esteem of one's gossip alliance, one is not supposed to report that a hookup did not go well, or at least to minimize a problem (Lambert, Kahn, & Apple, 2003).

Often a hookup does not go well. Forty-eight percent of the college women who have had a hookup report what appears to be forced sex but they did not report it as rape or sexual assault, and often did not call it that (Lambert, Kahn, & Apple, 2003). Another reason a hookup does not go well is that both partners may become so drunk that they forget to use sexual disease preventative measures. Or one might have been *team played*, had sex with a friend of a friend, just to go along with the crowd, when it was contrary to what one really wanted to do (Lavinthal & Rozler, 2005).

Moreover, one's feelings might have felt tangled up afterwards because of a desire to see the person again while knowing that was contrary to the hookup code. The unacknowledged problem, however, was noted by Paul and Hayes (2002) as follows: "We observed that there is little that is causal or emotionally uninvolved about casual sex" (p. 656). Despite the common dissatisfaction with hookups, however, there is a glorified college norm that positively overestimates the excitement and satisfaction found

in these one-time sexual interactions. As noted by Paul and Hayes, the reality is that for men and women hookups do not go well approximately half the time.

Young women generally do not report sexual assault or classify it as rape when abuse takes place during a hookup is because they often feel that they are responsible for having lost control of the situation through the heavy use of alcohol (Kahn, Jackson, Kully, Badger, & Halvorsen, 2003). A more cynical approach to this issue was taken by popular book market writers Lavinthal and Rozler (2005), who spoke of drinking heavily so that one could have an excuse for what one did during a hookup. While describing their experiences, Lavinthal and Rozler argue that, in today's world, functional romantic relationships are hard to establish and maintain. As a result women decide to still have sex but without all the relational entanglements. This helps explain why only 49% of the single 18- to-30-year-olds report having been on more than one traditional date in the previous three months (Rainie & Madden, 2006).

Theoretically, the hookup fits into the relational models proposed by Bowlby (1969) and Fisher (2000). Each described a three-part system to account for romantic relationship. Both researchers accepted the lust system as an evolutionary viable method that forced females and males to come together. Each proposed a separate attachment system for bonding, such that sexual partners would stay together and have a better chance at passing on their genes through the dyadic support of the children. The hookup flaunts the lust system in the face of the attachment and care-giving systems with rules that forbid bonding, commitment, and concern for one's casual sex partner. People are not supposed to discuss what they are doing and are not supposed to meet for another

hookup or a traditional date. The hookup flies in the face of the caregiving system also by denigrating emotional involvement.

Hooking-up, however, may be the new substitute for dating for people who are stuck in limbo and unable to fit into traditional gender and occupational roles. To be asked on a date is considered by some young people to be cute or precious but not worth the hassle or embarrassment for someone stuck in the 10-to-15-year gender-role limbo that often occurs today between adolescence and adulthood (Arnett, 2004; Denizet-Lewis, 2004). As the gap between reality and traditional gender role expectations increases, and the transition from adolescence to full adulthood becomes even more dramatic or pronounced, the young adult limbo gender-role will undoubtedly become traditionalized, as did the concept of adolescence, which is about a hundred years old (Hall, 1907).

Postmodern Functionalism

Duck (1994) argues that any broad, postmodern functional model of personal relationships must consider the social context wherein the relationship takes place, as well as the relational culture that has been coconstructed between the individuals involved. Moreover, a functional model would conceptualize a relationship as a continually negotiated activity (Duck, 1994). Further, a model that accommodates modern lifestyles in simple attachment terms (e.g., secure, preoccupied, dismissing, and fearful; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) would not be adequate. Within the attachment context, the ongoing relational coconstruction process that takes place within an evolving social environment is missed. Any model that captures the coconstructive process of an evolving, coordinated relationship between partners, seen in terms of its functional adaptability within a changing socioeconomic environment, needs to consider the sexual,

the caregiving, and the attachment biobehavioral systems combined, as well as the friendship component (Berscheid, 2006).

Theories Supporting the Psychological Framework

The literature review demonstrated that no single theory could support a discovery investigation of the topic friendship as it is experienced in heterosexual romantic relationships (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000; Levy & Davis, 1988; Masuda, 2003). The subject is simply too complex. Therefore, several theories were used to establish the theoretical framework wherein the research discussion herein took place. Those theories are systems theory, romantic attachment theory, psychoneuroendocrine theory, and social constructionism.

Systems Theory

Systems theories are heuristic templates for organizing and studying relationships, associations, and behavior, as well as for creating new theories (Ball, 1978). The focus is on the interrelatedness and interdependency of the parts of a system such that they work together in unison to accomplish an organic, whole process. Systems theory is often contrasted with positivist research methods that focus on precise categories studied in isolation. Such a narrow focus is not always effective for studying interactive human behavior that takes place within evolving systems or changing socioeconomic environments (Ball, 1978). Because of its focus on interactive processes, systems theory can be used to establish a common ground for interdisciplinary research studies.

Many theories refer back, however, to the general systems theory ideas of biologist Bertalanffy for their foundational tenets. Bertalanffy (1951) noted that living systems continually interact with their environment, acquiring new properties as they

evolve. Within those living systems, synergistic interactions take place that allow the whole organism to respond in ways that cannot be accounted for by summing the parts or studying them in isolation. For this and other reasons, Bertalanffy held that the closed systems model of traditional science, constructed from the laws of physics, cannot always be effectively applied to living systems and the sciences of human behavior. Living systems are open, not dissipating and entropic in the fashion of closed physical systems. They grow, interact, gain momentum, and evolve on an ongoing basis.

Within the field of systems theory, Weiner (1955) created cybernetics when he focused on the idea of positive and negative feedback loops. Feedback loops are the processes that allow systems to readjust to and learn from their environment. Like job reviews, feedback loops allow behaviors to be initiated that affect future possibilities and actions. Second-order cybernetics, in turn, endorses the concept of human teleonomic motivational feedback, that is, goal-directed feedback loops. This is pertinent to romantic relationships because inter-partner feedback affects and coordinates couple behaviors. The couple's interactions, of course, must be seen in systemic terms in order for this to be fully appreciated. It follows that systems theory is particularly well-suited for attempting to understand relationships that are in continual negotiation (Ball, 1978), such as that which is found in many postmodern romantic relationships and marriages (Coontz, 2006).

In relying on postmodern organic-change concepts, including evolution within cultural niches, systems theory allows for a social science perspective where there can be two or more competing modes of behaviors that, in their own ways, resolve the same problem within the larger sociocultural environment (Anaf, Drummond & Sheppard,

2007). Within such a framework, psycho-social processes, such as romantic and friendship relationships, are not seen as static, but as dynamic, open-ended behavioral responses to evolving socioeconomic contexts. From this perspective, knowledge is perceptive and relative to a particular environmental niche (Bailey, 1994).

Family systems theory can be used to incorporate the social ecology at the intersection where the family meets the community (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), particularly with regards to the influence of peer group and friends on romantic relationships. The first complete elaboration of family systems theory, now called Bowen theory (Bowen, 1961, 1965, 1978), allowed for both the effects of the attachment concept and the influence of friends, co-workers, and the community at large on a couple's behavior. In fact, within the broader purview of Bowen's thinking, humans are seen as having an emotional bonding system that functions within the general evolutionary biological system that, in essence, transcends even the systems of history and culture (Walsh & McGraw, 2002).

Systems theory heuristics could support research that is focused on discovering whether the friendship relationship within a heterosexual romance functions in a homeostatic or balancing role and thereby compensates for today's continued breakdown of the multigenerational family, as well as the erosion of the nuclear family (Bhattacharya, 2001). Also, a system theory perspective lent support for the case of questioning how a friendship relationship within a heterosexual relationship might ward off stress and thus guard against unnecessary emotional fusion between partners (Bowen, 1965). Finally, systems theory was also used to establish a systemic framework for

conceptualizing individual case and focus group data within the larger sociocultural environment (Anaf, Drummond, & Sheppard, 2007).

Romantic Attachment Theory

Attachment styles have been shown to develop from children's interactions with their environment, particularly in relation to their primary caregivers' responses to their immediate needs in infancy (Bigelow & DeCoste, 2003). As caregivers respond to the infants' needs, a predictable pattern of interaction-style develops between them. Childhood internal working models of attachment, containing purpose and meaning, arise from these early bonding experiences and generalize across the lifespan. These internal working models form the basis of cognitive-affective templates that guide adolescent and adult expectations and behaviors concerning romantic relationships (Ainsworth, 1991; Tracy, Shaver, Albino, & Cooper, 2003). Romantic cognitive templates can be conceptualized in terms of secure, preoccupied, dismissing, and fearful attachment styles (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Attachment theory thus provides a lens through which to view and interpret the dynamics of the intrapsychic cognitive-affective templates that guide individuals' expectations of their lovers' behaviors. It also offers a functional model for interpreting inter-individual behaviors in the context of affectional relationships. Therefore, attachment theory helps to explain people's thoughts and feeling concerning their romantic relationships (Gross & John, 2003), as well as to clarify the underpinnings of relationship quality and satisfaction (Sumer & Cozzarelli, 2004). Moreover, it has been used to demonstrate the underlying roots of conflicts in romantic relationships and the

vagaries of conflict management (Treboux, Crowell, & Waters, 2004), as well as explain relational anger and grief (Bowlby, 1963, 1969, 1980).

Of concern herein is that the affectional bonds of friendship that occur within the context of heterosexual romantic relationships have not been effectively described and enunciated in terms of general attachment models. Romantic attachment theory, however, supports several concerns that need developing. One of these is whether there is a feeling of safety and security that is unique to friendship-based, romantic relationships in contrast to traditional in-love passionate romantic relationships? It is also of concern to understand what relational qualities and interactions are necessary for a secure, friendship-based, attachment bond to be experienced in a heterosexual romantic relationship.

Psychoneuroendocrine Theory

Psychoneuroendocrine theory holds that affiliative social bonding experiences, stress regulation, social communication, and emotional reactivity are regulated by the interactions between neurological substrate structures and hormonal action. Working within that conceptual framework, Fries, Ziegler, Kurian, Jacoris, and Pollak (2005) studied how early childhood social experiences set regulatory limitations on children's affiliative neurohormone systems which thereby impacted their future relational interactions. It was shown that the pattern of neuropeptides release of oxytocin and vasopressin, two affiliative bonding proteins, is set by infant experiences, thus establishing a baseline for future interpersonal interactions.

Within the same neuroendocrine framework, Bartles and Zeki (2000) explored the neurocorrelates of personal relationships. Magnetic resolution imaging (MRI) scans were

made when adult research participants viewed photographs of their lovers in contrast to photos of friends who were the same sex and near the same age as their lovers. Neuronal activations were discovered that were specific to viewing one's lover that were not found when viewing a friend. In another experiment, Bartles and Zeki (2004) used fMRI imaging to capture the neuronal response when mothers viewed pictures of their own and as well as familiar children, their best friend, and adult acquaintances.

The results were compared to the results from an earlier study of romantic. The studies of attachment to lover and to one's child showed neuronal activations specific to each, as well as some overlapping regional activations deemed to be part of the common attachment reward system involving oxytocin and vasopressin receptors. Scans of neuronal activations involving both one's lover and one's child demonstrated a common deactivation with neuronal regions involved with negative emotions, social judgment and the assessment of other people's intentions and emotions. Because they could subtract out the effects of friendship in both studies, Bartles and Zeki (2004) argued that there appears to be neuronal circuitry specific to friendship.

Fisher (2000) and her colleagues (Fisher, Aron, & Brown, 2006) studied neurohormonal as well as neurotransmitter systems correlates that frame close relationships. They argued that there are three independent behavioral systems related to mating and parenting. Each is supported by a separate brain architectural structure. They each can act independently of the other, but they often act in unison with each other. These are (a) the sex drive system, associated with estrogens and androgens; (b) the attraction system, also called the in-love passionate romance system, associated with dopamine and norepinephrine; and (c) the attachment system, associated with oxytocin

and vasopressin. Fisher suggests that the sexual drive system evolved so that people seek sexual gratification. In contrast, the attraction system allows for the focusing upon one individual in the context of experiencing a craving for an emotional union. This impels people to select between potential partners. The attachment system, in turn, evolved to allow for affiliate associations, close proximities, social comfort, and feelings of calmness and emotional union.

Gonzaga, Turner, Kiltner, Campos, and Altemus (2006) demonstrated that the neurohormone oxytocin is associated with a desire to affiliate as expressed through physical gestures, but not necessarily a feeling of romantic love or sexual desire. This supports the idea that affiliative relationship occurring between heterosexual romantic partners could be a behavioral expression of an independent neurophysiological process, perhaps indicating a friendship interaction.

Social Constructionism

According to social constructionist theory, social structures provide the stage on which all human endeavors are acted out. Therefore, social structures present the backdrop for all human interactions from which knowledge is defined, understood, and framed into meaningful contexts (Gergen, 1999). Moreover, current scholarly epistemological theory and interpretations, as well as common folk understandings of psychological accounts of human behavior, are constructed within the confines of a particular histo-cultural time and place (Kvale, 1992). Knowledge, then, is constructed by groups of people within epistemological niches, and therefore, there are no universal understandings of behavioral phenomena, only conceptions that have been constructed within the limits of the currently accepted methodologies (Gergen, 1999).

Given all the different histo-cultural niches presented within the time frame of human existence, the psychology of human behavior is therefore multivariate and chronologically constructed across historical periods in the context of an ever-changing knowledge base. Psychological understandings are thus improvised under historical bound paradigms, accompanied by changing scientific and folk understandings of human interactions. It follows that the very foundations of a meaningful romantic relationship can be seen as socially constructed and embedded within and delimited by the narratives that take place within a particular cultural-historical niche (Coontz, 2004, 2006; Gergen, 1999; Schwartz, 1994, 2004).

Considering this, Berger and Luckmann (1967) held that no knowledge exists outside of that constructed by a particular community or social group. Berger and Luckmann noted further that the important point is not that groups construct their own knowledge, but *how* communities construct their knowledge base, and in essence, construct their reality. Following this understanding, the issue for social constructionist research methodology is to examine how people create reality, institutionalize it, and establish it as a tradition. Foucault (1978) formalized this methodological understanding by demonstrating that power within a society is held by those who manage the social dialogue. The established stakeholders create the rhetoric within which the public debates will take place. This management of the dialogue reinforces the status quo and puts into place the concepts that people internalize. The meanings of these internalized concepts are used to by individuals to interpret their reality and to construct their self-identities.

In discussing these issues, Gergen (1999) contended that the world is in such a rapid state of flux that the social phenomena being studied can change before the research

findings are distributed. When this occurs, psychological research becomes a process of forever looking backwards to something that existed previously but does not exist now. This may be happening with research on romantic relationships. The framework for reviewing this type of relationship in some of the literature is based on concepts and understandings that have limited applicability in the 21st-century postmodern young adult relationships. This is because the young urban mobile single adult population is experiencing the full force of the social-cultural and economic global systems shifts that are taking place today in rapid succession (Arnett, 2004; Rosa, 2003).

Of concern here is that, in response to social and cultural change, many people may have coconstructed new understandings that guide their romantic relationships in ways that more successfully fulfill their changed roles. That is to say, for example, that adolescents and young adults may have constructed understandings that motivate non-traditional romantic and sexual behaviors within postmodern, urban sociocultural niches. If this is true, researchers studying romance within a particular sociocultural niche must attempt to understand how interviewees co-construct their universe together with the significant people in their lives, rather than approaching participants in order to test hypotheses generated from outdated or universal concepts (Gergen, 1999).

Phenomenological Research Methodology

The project used phenomenological methods of abstraction (Giorgi, 1985) within an Atlas.ti.5.2.12 (Scientific Software Development, 2007) computer software environment to obtain themes from the interview transcripts. Psychological phenomenology arose out of the philosophical phenomenology of Husserl (1980/1922), and later, that of Merleau-Ponty (1962). Husserl posited that the cause of a phenomenon

and its associated meanings can only be understood in the context of its surroundings.

Therefore, he suggested that the essence of an experiential phenomenon could be discovered by investigating the research participants' lived experiences. This allows the research participants to be seen as coconstructors of the discovery process (Creswell, 1998). There is an essential assumption embedded in this focus on the participants' conscious experiences that humans construct their knowledge base, as well as their epistemological understandings through the discourses that take place within their communities (Piantanida & Garman, 1999).

Giorgi (1985) noted that the first essential characteristic of this methodology is that any analytic appraisal that is to be made must take place after the research participants' naïve descriptions of their experiences have been recorded. To accomplish this, the researcher must bracket, or set aside, his or her previous understandings of the phenomenon being described by the participants. This includes setting aside one's theoretical orientation and assumptions about the literature. Later, in the presence of these descriptions, the researcher attempts to interpret the data in terms of how the participants actually relate to the world. Using this method, the researcher attempts to convey the essences of the experiences described by the participants.

Giorgi (1985) reported that the phenomenological approach assumes that consciousness is a motivated and directional behavior. Therefore, the consciousnesses of the research participants will always be directed at something; and like everyone else, the participants will have an operative intentionality that is implicit within their lived experiences. This operative intentionality, which is dynamically motivated in the context of lived experiences, is what must be discovered within the data. Giorgi argued that this

information, garnered through open-ended interviews, is pre-reflective, and cannot be captured by other methods, such as surveys.

In demonstrating modern phenomenological methods, Giorgi (1997) thematized examples of a particular phenomenon as it appeared within the plain spoken language of the participants' descriptions of their lived experiences. This research process begins with an attitude of reduction, of the researcher being fully present to the participants' descriptions of the phenomenon, while setting aside one's prior knowledge concerning the material. This approach is a descriptive technique, one of describing the meanings of the participants' subjective, lived experiences using their own style of language. Abstractions are then made. These are transformed into themes using a process of reflection and imaginative variation, such that they are understandable within the language of psychology (Giorgi, 1985). Conroy (2003) described this challenging method as making "an interpretation of participants' interpretation" (p. 11) of their experiences.

Summary of the Literature Review

The literature review demonstrated that there is a paucity of research articles pertaining to cross-gender romantic friendship as a lived experience. The review, however, did reveal that the issues relevant to romantic friendships have been discussed within the following formats: friendship relationships, romantic relationships, cross-gender romantic friendship, romantic attachment bonds, and postmodern relationships.

The literature review also demonstrated that no single theory can adequately explain romantic relationships, yet alone support a research investigation of the friendship experience that might occur therein (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000; Levy & Davis, 1988; Masuda, 2003). It follows that several major theories were used to support

this study. Those included systems theory, romantic attachment theory, psychoneuroendocrinology, and social constructionism. Systems theory was shown to be a helpful heuristic for supporting the psychological discussion. It can be used as a template for integrating the underlying systemic concepts brought in and used together from seemingly conflicting psychological theories. Systems theory was therefore chosen to be used as a framework for integrating this research project and its findings into the psychological literature.

The literature review also demonstrated that phenomenological methods can be employed for discovering the subjective understandings and implicit meanings that research participants have concerning cross-gender romantic friendship. As outlined by Giorgi (1985, 1989), this approach allows for recording the participants' naïve descriptions of a phenomenon. This is done without the researcher making any prior judgments or appraisal that might restrict his or her ability to understand how the interviewees attribute meaning to their world. Using the phenomenological method (Giorgi, 1985), the interviewees' descriptions are first abstracted and abridged within the confines of their own language. Only thereafter are the themes analyzed from a psychological perspective and integrated in to the literature.

It was revealed that, while romance is a complex topic, certain conceptions appear to be well agreed upon. Intimacy, for instance, is so inextricably intertwined with romance that it always plays a part in men's and women's concepts and actions regarding romantic approach, avoidance, conflict, relational evaluation, and resultant mood states. Interestingly, the legendary aspects of romance, being in love and craving for sexual and emotional union, is supported by a distinct reward-based neurophysiological response

system that sustains evolutionary fitness and gene survival through dyadic bonding which enhances commitment and childrearing proclivities (Dugatkin, 2002; Fisher et al., 2006). Friendship behavior also has an independent psychoneuroendocrine biobehavioral system that supports affiliative activities within a romantic relationship (Berscheid, 2006).

The literature review demonstrated that the attributes of friendship include similarity of experiences, interests, communication styles, behaviors, and activities. Self-disclosure is fundamental to the unconscious search for similarities among prospective friends and for expansion of a friendship relationship. When people evaluate a friendship relationship, the intangibles are what count, not necessarily the benefits and rewards as it might be conceived through the lens of exchange theory (Mendelson & Kay, 2003). The intangibles support coordinated, productive activities which increase evolutionary fitness and gene survival through intimate group networks (Brewer & Caporael, 1990).

The review of the literature demonstrated the concept of companionate love (Burgess & Cottrell, 1939) may be an outdated concept. Shared activities do not necessarily lead to marital satisfaction as previously hypothesized (Crawford, Houts, Huston, & George, 2002). Rather, it is the quality of interactions and activities that bring marital satisfaction. Relational quality is founded on expressiveness in dyadic communication, as well as intimate sexuality, where caring exists and the relationship is based on the values of a good friendship (Schwartz, 1994, 2004; Coontz, 2006).

The literature review demonstrated that cognitive attachment templates guide romantic bonding behaviors (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Thus, it is within an attachment relationship that one person's emotional security can be dependent upon another's sensitive reassurance and support. Of note is that people can

attempt to completely avoid bonding to their sexual partner (Berscheid, 2006). This a common practice among people who practice a game-playing style of romance, as well among those who find themselves living outside the traditional emotional boundaries of concerning commitment in sexual relationships. The literature review revealed that a few stumbling blocks arise in applying attachment theory to adult romantic bonding.

Attachment is defined in terms of bonding styles with primary caregivers. Infants, however, attach differently to their individual parents, and it has not been fully demonstrated that adults do indeed have a unitary attachment style that holds up in all situations and will all people, including romantic partners. Moreover, attachment behavior is defined in terms of coping responses to anxiety and stress, but romantic behavior is generally seen in terms pleasure-seeking behaviors involving sexual passion, expressive communication, and satisfying intimacy

The literature review demonstrated that the traditional discussion of friendship in cross-gender romantic relationship held to the concept that the friendship role and the romantic relationship role follow different social scripts. This idea was supported by the understanding that sexual relationships occur within the parameters of commitment and marriage. Traditionally, of course, women were controlled by men, and the power differential favored men in such an extreme fashion that women were seen as property. Friends, in turn, had basic similarities and equal eligibilities. Yet men and women were defined by their differences, which precluded a public friendship relationship except under extenuating circumstances.

Today, marital roles and the social scripts that support them have changed. With the changing times, men and women in romantic relationships often see each other as

best friends. Friendship, however, may be defined differently by different people. Today, issues of equity and equality are often negotiated by each couple, and this model has replaced the traditional male-dominated model of marriage (Coontz, 2006). This does not preclude the fact that some people hang onto traditional thinking and attempt to practice the historical gender-role understandings where men are the dominating and instigating figures in romantic and sexual relationships. Nor does this discount the fact that men and women appear to hang onto figments of traditional gender typing even in best-friend romances. Gender typing was shown to attenuate role confusion and allow for the territorialization of the relationship, thereby easing the couple adjustment to economic challenges. This territorialization eliminates the daily negotiation of task assignment within the relationship that is sometimes found in egalitarian marriages.

The literature review also revealed that the quality of a romantic couple's friendship relationship correlates positively with their ability to manage stress (Gottman, 2004). The quality of the friendship also correlates with the prospective length of time that their romantic relationship will endure. A viable friendship also allows romantic partners to accept each other's maturation and emotional growth. It follows that friendship is seen by some researchers as the foundation on which a satisfying marriage rests. Moreover, a quality friendship relationship is seen as correlating positively with sexual satisfaction for married couples.

Another revelation from the literature review was that it is the intangible, emotional rewards that arise from the friendship relationship that drive thoughts of role inequity between romantic partners to the background of the relational discussion. This

was an important finding as it put the two types of relationship, romance and friendship, into an understandable context.

Gender stereotyping, however, may prevent an open discussion of the friendship relationship that occurs between romantic partners (Schwartz, 1994, 2004). This means that if the relational discussion turns to making quality friendship the goal of the romantic partners, men and women may become overwhelmed by the urban myth that romantic passion will be lost if the romance is based on friendship. That is because this may elicit a stereotypical “boring-marriage” conceptualization rather than the emotionally rewarding and sexually satisfying, non-zero-sum, cooperative-gains, heterosexual, romantic-friendship relationships referred to by some researchers (Schwartz, 1994, 2004). Thus, the reality is different from the myth, and individuals within egalitarian dyads generally report satisfying sex lives. Moreover, the dyadic coordinated friendship model of romantic partnering makes more resources available to sustain a family because of non-zero-sum cooperative construction. This, in turn, helps the couple to manage stress and to have more time to tend to personal, relational, and family needs.

The literature review also revealed a variety of non-traditional postmodern styles of sexual relationships. Some of these may seem shocking when contrasted to what was considered normative behavior 25 years ago. These behaviors must be reviewed within the context of the current study, however, as they may point the direction that adolescent and young adults are taking with regards to romantic and sexual behaviors. Current functional postmodern styles of behaviors are a reflection of an evolving technocratic, socioeconomic environment (Rosa, 2003). These behaviors appear to be a compensation for the fact that young adults are so busy, so economically challenged, so mobile, and so

concerned about life course choices that many of them do not attempt to maintain committed relationships (Arnett, 2004, 2007).

Another observation also concerned postmodern sexual and romantic relationship styles. While both hookups and sexual friendships are widely practiced, friendship-based sex might be a functional alternative to the attachment-suppressed, sexual liaisons which young adults traversing transitional adulthood sometimes embrace (Arnett, 2006; C. Smith, 2007). This judgment needs to be verified, of course. Regardless, transitional adulthood, which appears to be a new developmental stage (Arnett, 2004), seems to be associated with much of the normative relational changes that are taking place within the young urban mobile single adult population. Considering that the literature review revealed that there is almost a complete lack of subjective studies of the young adult lived experience of cross-gender romantic friendship, the purpose of the research project appeared to be justified. An explanation of how the research was undertaken will be discussed in the next chapter on methods.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

Description of the Methodology

The purpose of this study was to describe the essential relational structures and associated meanings that encompass friendship as a lived experience occurring within young adult heterosexual romantic relationships. The initial research problem that was addressed was a lack of information concerning this topic. It follows that the initial purpose of this study was to gather information that would add to the knowledge of heterosexual romantic-friendship relationships. The research question for this discovery project was: How is friendship experienced within heterosexual romantic relationships?

The following sections convey the details of the research design, provide an overview of the population and the sample, and account for how the participants' rights were protected. The instrumentation, as well as the data collection, analysis, and interpretation procedures for both the primary study and the contrast study are also reviewed. Following sequentially is an accounting for how authenticity and trustworthiness were established.

Design of the Study

This discovery project used phenomenological-based (Giorgi, 1985) qualitative methods and procedures to investigate a main research question. Focus groups were held on the West Coast study and in the southeastern United States. Invitations to participate in the West Coast study were placed in two local Portland, Oregon, biweekly newspapers,

as well as in two local university newspapers (see Appendix F). Replies were taken by telephone and email. An initial focus group was held in Portland, Oregon. Word of mouth led to a snowballing effect, which allowed for the recruitment for a focus group, which took place in Santa Rosa, California, near San Francisco. Information discovered during the focus group process was used to revise the interview protocol (see Appendix G) prior to the start of four individual interviews held in Portland, Oregon. After an initial data analysis, a third focus group was held in Birmingham, Alabama. This occurred at the Mensa U.S.A. 2007 annual gathering with young adult members. The data were analyzed separately so that they could stand as a contrast to that of the West Coast study and thereby add trustworthiness to the study.

Before each focus group began, the researcher asked participants to fill out demographic information forms. The material from the focus groups and individual interviews was recorded on a reporter's grade digital recorder and then transcribed. The themes from the first two focus group sessions were abstracted from the transcripts using Giorgi's (1985) phenomenological method of theme abstraction. The data from this process was then entered into an Atlas.ti.5.2.12 (Scientific Software Development, 2007) software environment following procedures outlined by Giorgi (1985) and reviewed by Bromage (A. Bromage, personal communication, May 26, 2006). The data from the first two focus groups was then analyzed topically across-groups because of the small size of the data base (Eisenhardt, 1989; Schensul, 1999). Summaries were established that explained various topics raised by the research questions. Four individual interviews were

then held, and the data were analyzed across cases using methods similar to those used to review the focus group data.

After the second focus group, a member check was made, whereby the researcher contacted a participant to see if she believed that the discussion was conducted in a fair manner that allowed participants to say everything they felt needed to be said on the topic. The participant said that the experience had been interesting and that as far as she knew everyone who participated, including herself, had spoken freely and had fully stated their own cases concerning the research topic and other personally relevant issues. Later, a member check was made with one of the individual interviewees. The participant verified that the abstracted themes reflected what she had said and what she believed.

Data saturation (Miller & Brewer, 2003; Trotter & Schensul, 1998) concerning participants' views on heterosexual romantic friendship was reached early during the course of the project. Redundancy appeared in the course of the second focus group and among the initial four individual interviews. A phenomenological (Giorgi, 1985) analysis of the data within an Atlas.ti.5.2.12 (Scientific Software Development, 2007) computer software environment verified that there was an across-participant, homogenous perspective concerning heterosexual romantic friendship. The analysis also demonstrated the participants were speaking about their conceptions of an ideal, future relationship style of partnering, not about actual lived experiences involving romantic friendship. This was because only 2 participants had significant experience in this area. This low level of participant experience with the behavior being studied seemed to rule out following the original plan of comparing heterogeneous findings regarding 30 individual interviews.

Yet a fundamental part of the research design was to reveal information that would explain the background stage on which young urban adult romantic relationships take place. It was expected from the beginning that this information would be absolutely necessary for understanding and interpreting the results, even if the null hypothesis were demonstrated from a lack of participant experience with the targeted behavior.

This proved to be correct when the data also demonstrated that there was an across-participant agreement concerning a significant emergent research problem. This involved the transitive nature of young adult romantic relationships and the fact that the traditional guidelines for romance were seen as dysfunction within the young urban mobile single adult culture. It followed that the research participants reported that they generally held ambivalent feelings concerning committed romantic relationships, including marriage, at this point in their lives.

To test the generalizability of the findings, a third focus group was held in another region of the United States. It was expected that the findings from this focus group from the Birmingham, Alabama study, when contrasted with the West Coast material, would add trustworthiness to the overall research project. The same phenomenological-based (Giorgi, 1985) methods used in the first part of the study was followed for analyzing the data from the focus group held in southeastern United States.

Operational Definitions

Operational instructions consist of explaining how to measure a concept (Bernard, 1995). This was a discovery project, however, and it was not meant to measure any preconceived understandings or definitions held by the researcher. Rather, the intent here

was to discover and define the implicit subjective understandings that emerge within a coconstructed dialogue with the research participants concerning friendship and romance (Gergen, 1999; Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). To that end, the researcher formulated preliminary definitions in order to set up the study (see chapter 1, Definition of Terms). After that, he let the participants define their conceptions in terms of peer group understandings.

It followed that by comparing terms across groups and individuals, the researcher was able to discover objectively observed, commonly held peer group understandings (White, 2005). This information was used to formulate final operationalized definitional referents that would probably be understandable to many young urban mobile single adults in the United States. These definitions were included in the findings this study (see chapter 4, Background Themes).

Interview Process

The researcher did all the interviewing himself. He emphasized that there are no wrong or right answers concerning the research topic (Turner, 1985). When he asked for clarification about what a participant meant, it was never done in order to contest the interviewee's ideas. Nor were attempts made to impose the researcher's own opinion. To that end, the researcher held that it was important to remember that participants had different ways to find and express meaning (Ochs & Binik, 1999). Therefore, the researcher encouraged cross-participant focus group dialogue to take place so that all of the individuals present could express their own thoughts on any given topic if they so wished.

Focus Groups

For the West Coast study, there were two focus group meetings of approximately 90 minutes in length that initiated the data-gathering process for this project. For the southeastern study, there was one 95-minute focus group, which constituted the entire data-gathering process. The researcher was the focus group leader, and in that role used open-ended questions and probes in order to elicit extended responses and vignettes. The focus groups were managed and directed with purposive intentions. This was done in order keep the discussion on topic and to build intragroup trust, identity, and responsiveness, while encouraging full participation from the group members (Schensul, 1999). Yet the participants were encouraged to speak and interact freely. They were encouraged to reveal how their views are constructed and expressed (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). They were asked to not talk about anything by which they might embarrass themselves. They were also informed that they could opt out of answering any question without giving an explanation, as well as leave at any time.

It turned out to be impossible to balance the composition of the focus groups with equal numbers of females and males that might be representative of the entire 18-to-30 year span of the population under study. It also proved to be too intrusive of a procedure to prescreen focus group members according to committed, long-term relationship status. That was because it simply proved to be difficult to recruit people to participate who currently were in such relationships. It was also discovered that young urban adults attribute a high value to their experiences regarding romantic relationships. Therefore, they generally expect to be paid according to the going rate that is given to participants in

medical experiments. Considering these issues, the researcher felt that putting too many restrictions on group composition would limit the trustworthiness of the results.

There was also no attempt made to balance socioeconomic status of the participants or to make other attempts at guaranteeing a representative sample of 18-to-30-year olds. This setup was in keeping with the fact that this was a discovery project, and that the purpose herein was to uncover an understanding of how friendship is subjectively experienced in heterosexual romantic relationships among young urban adults. While it was believed that socioeconomic factors could arise out of the data, the purpose of this study was not to prove or disprove how socioeconomic status affects a heterosexual couple's friendship relationship.

Individual Interviews

According to the original proposal, there was an expectation to have 30 in-depth individual interviews using open-ended questions from the interview protocol, with follow-up queries for clarification and interpretation (Kvale, 1996). That was changed when it became obvious that data saturation (Miller & Brewer, 2003) was achieved quite early in the project. With regard to the age of the participants, individuals in good mental and physical health between 18-to-30 were allowed to participate. While it was hoped that a balanced number of females and males would participate, there were 3 females and 1 male who participated as individual interviewees within the primary study.

Interview Protocol

A single interview protocol was used for both focus groups within the primary study (see Appendix C). This was revised before the individual interviews were held

(see Appendix G). This revised protocol was also used for the final focus group. The questions for the original interview protocol were derived from concerns associated with the research question and the supporting theories for the research project (Johnson, 2002; Warren, 2002). The primary questions of the interview protocol evoked vignettes of the participants' real life experiences concerning cross-gender romantic relationships, as well as the background stage on which their romantic relationships are played out.

The researcher posited the interview questions in a framework that asked *what* or *how* an activity takes place. This was because this type of question is more likely motivate the participants to fully engagement with the researcher in a discussion of actual behaviors. This is opposed to the approached that uses *why* questions, which tend to elicit opinions and intellectualizations (Kvale, 1996). This is important to understand because good qualitative discovery project research interview questions attempt to elicit participants' descriptions of specific situations and actions sequences rather than opinions.

Population and Sample

The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 29 years. Males and females were included regardless of romantic relationship history. As it turned out, half the participants in the primary study were involved in romantic relationships at the time of the study. None of the Southeastern contrast group participants were involved in a relationship. It was assumed that individuals who would volunteer for this project, and who were at least 18 years of age, would be able to successfully verbalize their thoughts, feelings, intuitions, and experiences with regards to romantic relationships.

This study did not interview two individuals together in the context of gathering data from a dyadic couple. The research was focused instead on discovering what concepts and concerns are of general interest to young adults in regards to friendships as it occurs within the context of a romantic relationship. Basic profile data regarding the number of past serious relationships, as well as current serious relationships, was obtained from the participants in order to study the overall demographic profile of the participants. Because of the limits on time and resources, individuals who identified as being homosexual or bisexual were not invited to participate in this project.

Convenience sampling methods were used to gather 4 participants for the first group meeting. The second focus group formed by itself in response to a snowballing, word-of-mouth effect that led to its formation. The third focus group, which involved the Southeastern study, also used convenience sampling methods. These groups were composed of individuals who are not involved in the individual interviews. For all the focus groups, as well as the individual interviews, there appeared to be a self-selecting bias in that the participants seemed to all come from middleclass backgrounds that honored education and social-economic advancement (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). This bias was problematic, however, in that it raises the specter that the results will not generalize to various sectors of the young adult population.

Regardless of the possible social economic status biases within this study, one purposive attempt by the researcher to ensure intra-focus group homogeneity involved inviting Mensa Y-Gen members to participate in the contrast study. This was done with the approval of the Mensa U.S.A. Research Committee (see Appendix E). The

researcher's expectations were that the participants might immediately establish trust between each other and thereafter have a lively discussion that provided substantive data for a contrast study.

At first appearance, it would seem that the inclusion of a Mensa group would produce skewed results and thereby limit the generalizability of the contrast focus-group findings. This possibility might have occurred because young adults admitted into Mensa fall within the second percentile at the top of the intelligence range as assessed by most of the standard IQ measures. The purpose of having focus groups, however, is to elicit ideas not necessarily found in the current literature, and it was expected that all three focus groups would do just that, including the focus group involving young adult Mensans.

Moreover, it was hypothesized that Mensa group members have many of the same problems and concerns with regards to psychological, social, and economic issues that affect their romantic relationships as do people who fall into other intelligence profiles. This reflects on the fact of a cosmopolitan European and American social structure that arises out of a shared economic structure (Barlow & Probert, 2004; Vidmar-Horvat, 2005). It was believed that the Mensa members would perhaps be more lucid in their explanations of how friendship is experienced within romantic relationships. But because of the apparent universality of this issue, it was not expected that the Mensa group would necessarily produce themes that might be markedly different from those found within the other focus groups. In consequence to the composite expectations of the researcher, it was hypothesized that because of a possible broadening effect, the participation of Mensa members might actually increase the generalizability of the findings of the final report.

Protection of the Participants' Rights

Before the researcher began recruiting participants for the focus groups and individual interviews, this research proposal was reviewed by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A; approval number 12-19-06-0020029). This established that the project met the ethical guidelines for humane treatment of research participants as established by the U.S. Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), as well as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). In keeping with American Psychological Association Standards (APA, 1992) standards, the participants' identifying information has not been and will not be disclosed to anyone.

There was also an informed consent process, with an accompanying form (see Appendix B), used to specify participants and researcher expectations and responsibilities. The informed consent form noted asked the participants not reveal any information by which they might embarrass themselves. Before each interview stated, participants were again asked not to reveal anything by which they might embarrass themselves or make them feel uncomfortable. Focus group members were also asked not to reveal what they heard about other members outside of the focus groups. All participants were verbally asked if it was all right to record the session before the beginning of each interview.

An understanding was also established with each participant that he or she could quit the research project at any time, including walking out of the focus groups or individual interviews. It was made evident that this would have no bearing on their

relationships with Walden University. Participants from Mensa were assured that none of their personal information would be released to that organization.

Data recordings for this project were kept securely locked up when not being transcribed. Afterwards, copies of the voice recordings were destroyed. Access to the computers involved with data recording and analysis was password protected. There was a protocol established to handle the unlikely situation where a participant might become subjectively distressed while talking about his or her romantic experiences (see Appendix D). No one, however, reported any distress following an interview or focus group. Yet a local contact list for mental health care was kept in place during each interview and focus group in order to help assuage any stressful situation that might have arisen. There were a few debriefing questions at the end of the interviews and focus groups (see Appendix B), where participants had the opportunity to express lingering thoughts or emotions, including anxieties (Kvale, 1996).

Instrumentation

In contrast to positivistic methodology, the researcher in a qualitative study is considered to be the main tool for the collection of data (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The naturalistic researcher, in the role of phenomenological investigation instrument, seeks to sharpen his or her judgment-making skills while teasing out distinctions and idiosyncrasies that occur contextually within the participant's environment. The researcher is not passive, but in learning to understand the interviewees' tacit meanings, the researcher must use techniques that cause the participants' to explain and then to clarify what it is like living in their world (Giorgi, 1985).

Guba and Lincoln (1981) argued that another important researcher function is to report one's reactions to the environment being investigated. To that end, the researcher has noted herein how he was affected by the research process (See chapter 5, Reflections on the Research Process). Beyond the researcher and the data analysis memos, instrumentation for this project included an interview portfolio and a demographics sheet which were created by the researcher.

Data Collection and Recording

With regards to machinery, the focus groups and individual interviews were recorded into a digital audio recorder. From there the data were transferred to a computer. The recorded data were then transcribed by the researcher using a computer word-processor software program. It was then entered into the Atlas.ti.5.2.12 (Scientific Software, 2007) software platform for theme abstraction and further analysis.

Data Analysis

The researcher did not expect that the information that would be necessary for him to answer the main research question would be explicitly present within the interview transcripts (Kvale, 1996). He believed that the transcripts from interviews would have to be analyzed and interpreted for actual thematic content. This is because the transcripts are records of lived, dialogic, co-created experiences involving the researcher and the research participants (Kvale, 1996).

In order to implement the analysis of the interview data using phenomenological methods, the software program ATLAS.ti.5.2.12 (Scientific Software Development, 2007) was used. This software is especially appropriate for qualitative research data

management where it is necessary to show the relationships between the parts and the whole (Bromage, 2006). To operationalize Giorgi's (1975a, 1975b, 1985) method of data analysis, a process of theme abstraction and abridgment was used as a coding process. This was followed by a code cross-referencing and condensation process whereby conceptual categories were developed and a final interpretation was made (Bromage, 2006; McCambridge & Sieger, 2004). Bromage (2006) described the steps involved with this method as applied to an Atlas.ti.5.2.12 computer software milieu as follows:

1. The transcriptions of the participant interview data are broken into granular, natural units, cut as small as conceivably possible, while still carrying a fundamental understanding.
2. These natural units are then compressed into shorter overriding themes.
3. Memos are attached to the theme files as a method of developing conceptual categories.
4. After reflection upon and revision of the themes and conceptual categories, an interpretation of the perceived patterns of the phenomena within the interview data can be developed into a model that represents the participants' social reality.

In applying Bromage's (2006) method to the primary study data, the fully transcribed interviews were imported into Atlas.ti.5.2.12 (Scientific Software Development, 2007) as individual primary documents (P-Doc files). They were labeled in the order of the focus group or individual interview occurrence (P1, P2, etc). The transcripts from the primary study were dealt with as one *hermetic unit* (HU), that is, as

one computer file which contained transcriptions pertaining to a single study. Another HU was created for separately analyzing the transcript data from the contrast study.

Within each document (P1, P2, etc.) contained by an HU file, blocks of text, called quotations (Quote files) were used to delineate meaning units that occurred sequentially within the text of the transcript. In order to abridge the quotations, memos (Memo files) were attached to each of the quote files. Abridged versions of the content of the theme of each quotation (block of transcript) were put into the memos. These memo files were written in a way that reflected the common-language used by the participants.

In the next step of the abridgment process, codes were created in the Code Manager for each of the memo files. Each code succinctly described the individual concepts within the abridged text unit (Memo file). These codes were hyperlinked to the original Quote files from whence they arose. This allowed the researcher to review the process of abridgment and code-making after the initial analysis of the primary study data was completed.

For the next level of analysis of the primary study data, the entire code list was first reviewed in the Code Manager. The codes that were pertinent to heterosexual romantic friendship were copied into a Network work page within the Atlas.ti.5.2.12 (Scientific Software Development, 2007) data analysis platform. Each code was represented in text box. Through this process, the text boxes could be rearranged on the Network page in a fashion whereby their relationship to each other could be better understood.

This information that arose from this analysis is discussed in the results chapter (see chapter 4, Primary Study, Friendship in Romantic Relationships). The analysis process used across-case data, rather than limiting the analysis to single cases, which is the procedure followed by Giorgi (1985). This shift in methods was justified because this procedure for displaying the results best fit the evolving nature of this qualitative discovery project (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This same method was used to analyze the background stage on which the participants' romantic relationships take place.

Data Interpretation

During the interpretation of the results, the researcher sought to understand and describe the participants' lived experiences. He focused on the meanings and understandings that were particular to the participants' young urban mobile single adult cultural niche. This led the researcher on a zigzag course of analysis and hypothesis testing (Creswell, 1998). This was quite evident from the very first focus group when the participants informed the researcher that some of the operational definitions relevant to the literature from the last century did not apply within today's acceleration society (Rosa, 2003), where the rules of romance are non-existent.

The interpretations of the findings concerning heterosexual romantic friendship and the background stage on which the participants' romantic relationships take place are discussed in the results chapter (see chapter 5, Interpretation of the Results). Within each section, those topics are supported by psychological theories and relevant research. The results within those same categories are framed as participant lived experiences within a peer group culture, as a function within a larger Western cultural context.

Verification of Authenticity and Trustworthiness

The traditional concepts of reliability and validity are applicable to qualitative research if one allows for alternative definitions and method such that legitimacy and authenticity are established (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For example, credibility can be seen as an alternative for demonstrating internal validity. Transferability is a proxy for external validity. Dependability represents a stand-in for reliability. Confirmability is used in place of objectivity. These criteria were used to establish the study's trustworthiness (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1999).

For the purposes of this study, credibility was established in several ways. One method was thought demonstrating that general quality of the craftsmanship within the discovery process (Kvale, 1996) met normative standards, such that the analysis of the information from the interviews was shown to reasonably represent the themes that make a difference in the participants' lives (Isaac & Michael, 1995). One way of achieving this was the detailed description of the method of the data analysis process, such that the reader can see that it is orderly, thoughtful, and viable.

This, of course, showed that the methodology was repeatable in a general sense. This was demonstrated and confirmed within the use of a contrast study that allowed for participant examination and affirmation of the results produced by these methods. That latter issue of participant affirmation represented triangulation (Creswell, 2003), which in this case demonstrated external validity by examining the project from many directions. Also, the use of participant post-interview and post-data analysis feedback should

reasonably demonstrate that the findings make sense as a coherent whole and appear to be dependable (Isaac & Michael, 1995).

A further attempt to demonstrate trustworthiness was made by the inclusion of the relevant material that turned up during the data discovery process, including negative cases and conflicting ideas (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness was also demonstrated through the transparent approach taken within the write-up, thereby demonstrating, via example, how the various conclusions were reached. There was also a review of the researcher's reflective processes that attempted to bring transparency to the final report and transmission of the findings. Trustworthiness was also established through Appendix and archival evidence that makes the overall research process evident to other researchers. Judgment as to whether the results are credible and trustworthy must ultimately be established, however, by the verdicts made by the reviewers and readers, who agree or disagree that the techniques just mentioned were properly used to insure the quality and integrity of the overall process and findings (Isaac & Michael, 1995).

Within this study, descriptive explanations substitute contextual detail for the process of attempting to prove generalizability in the positivistic sense of the term. This descriptive method substantiates the aim of a discovery project, which from the beginning is to discover unique material, not necessarily provide material which can immediately be generalized to other situations (Piantanida & Garman, 1999). It follows that in the end, it is the reader who decides whether the process appears trustworthy and whether to use the discovered material in other contexts (Giorgi, 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1981). If the findings of this study motivate the reader to take action, that is, apply the

findings to another situation, the pragmatic validity of this report will be further demonstrated (Kvale, 1996; Patton, 1980).

Summary

The research methodology used in this study was explored within this chapter. The design of the study was outlined, and a description was made of the population and sample of participants from that population. Other issues concerning participant rights, instrumentation, data collection, recording and analysis were discussed. Issues of verification of authenticity and trustworthiness were presented. The next chapter describes the results of this study.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Overview

The results of the study are discussed in this chapter. The research problem that was addressed was a lack of information concerning how friendship is experienced in heterosexual romantic relationships. A review of the literature showed that there is no clear agreement on what emotional, behavioral, cognitive, or motivational factors support friendship within a cross-gender romantic relationship. Yet surveys suggest that a friendship style of partnering is one of the most admired styles of romantic relationship (Grote & Frieze, 1994; McCarthy, 2001). It is on par in popularity with or surpassing the passionate model of romantic partnering (Fehr & Russell, 1991). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to gather information that would add to the knowledge of such relationships.

The research question for this discovery project was: How is friendship experienced within heterosexual romantic relationships? By asking *how* friendship is experienced, the researcher signaled his intent to seek personal narrative elaborations from the research participants concerning their subjective experiences in this area (Creswell, 1998). The researcher expected that by analyzing the resultant interview data with phenomenological methods (Giorgi, 1985) he would be able to write a narrative regarding the participants' lived experiences with heterosexual romantic friendship.

With this in mind, the researcher began holding focus group and individual interviews on the West Coast of the United States with young adults aged 18 through 29. The data reached a saturation level (Miller & Brewer, 2003) seemingly quite early. This was because the participants generally spoke of their ideal, future, serious romantic relationships and how these would embody the mutuality of a best-friends relationship. Yet the participants had few actual lived experiences involving heterosexual romantic friendship within a serious relationship.

It follows that there was not enough data to substantially compare and contrast individual case narrative descriptions of this phenomenon as per the phenomenological-based research design (Giorgi, 1985). This was supported by an analysis of the data that demonstrated across-case homogeneity of the findings. Taken together, these issues argued for the null hypothesis, that heterosexual romantic friendship was not necessarily a substantive, and thus, a describable part of the participants' usual romantic experiences.

Therefore, data gathering was halted sooner than had been planned, as it is not productive to gather data in a repetitive fashion (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Yet, as proposed in the design of this study, the data were still analyzed to obtain other substantive content concerning the background stage on which the participants' romantic relationships took place. Without that background information, the results could not be fully interpreted within the context of today's young urban mobile single adult culture.

During the process of examining the transcripts of the interviews, the phenomenological-based descriptions of the findings concerning key issues from the primary study were summarized in two groupings: individual interview and focus group

themes. After the findings from the primary study had been reflected upon, a contrast focus group was set up with participants from the Southeastern United States. This was done to help substantiate the findings by seeing if they would generalize beyond the sample of young single West Coast adults that had been studied thus far. It was expected that the comparisons of the results of the two studies would bring a higher level of authenticity to the overall research project.

The results are discussed below in three major sections. The first section displays the results of the primary study that took place on the West Coast of the United States. Within that section, grouped phenomenological descriptions of the findings related to heterosexual romantic friendship from the primary study are presented. In the next major section the results from the contrast Southeastern United States study are presented. Within the third major section, the general results of the two studies are compared and contrasted.

Assumptions

An assumption was made from the beginning of this project that the psychological literature had not kept pace with the emotional-behavioral reality of modern, urban life (Gergen, 1999). This follows from the fact that society is changing at an ever increasing pace (Rosa, 2003), and that subgroups within cultures experience the same behaviors differently in different eco-environmental niches within the overall larger society (Mannheim, 1952/1927). This assumption was held to be particularly true for today's young adults aged 18 to 30. The young-adult, peer-group social environment itself was assumed by the researcher to be one in which many people would be somewhat self-

absorbed in generational-specific behaviors, values, and definitions. This was expected to relate to approaches to sexuality and modern communication and entertainment technologies, as well as education, economics, and employment.

The researcher believed he would have to uncover how these background issues impacted the participants' affiliative relationships before he could fully understand how the research topic, heterosexual romantic friendship, played out in their lives. In presupposing this, the researcher believed he had to approach the young adult culture as an ethnographer entering a sub-culture that he or she does not fully understand (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

The researcher assumed further that in order to abstract trustworthy and responsible themes from the interview transcripts he would have to bracket out his personal perspective and fund of technical knowledge so that he might be able to view the phenomenon described by the interviewees from a naïve perspective (Husserl, 1980/1922; Riemen, 1998). The researcher thus believed that he would need to obtain descriptions from the research participants that pertained to their lifestyles, motivations, goals, and beliefs if he were going to understand the wrap-around social environment that supports 21st-century young adult romantic relationships.

The Primary Study

The primary study took place on the West Coast of the United States. This occurred during the fall of 2006. There were no outside stakeholders involved in this part of the study, and there was no active recruitment of participants in college classrooms. The results of the primary study are detailed below.

Organization of the Results

The results of the primary research study are discussed in sections concerning the following: (a) recruitment, (b) data gathering, (c) participant demographics, (d) interview data saturation, (e) emergent definitions, (f) data analysis, (g) underlying social-cultural environment, (h) themes concerning friendship in romantic relationships, and (i) primary study member check.

Recruitment

Announcements for the research project were placed in weekly and daily local papers within the Portland, Oregon, greater metropolitan area. They ran for 4 weeks in two major weekly papers, while intermittently appearing in two university student papers. During the first contact interaction by telephone or e-mail, the potential participants were screened for age and ability to attend, as well as for good physical and mental health. They were informed about the nature of the research project and what their function as participants would be. After initial contact, each potential participant was e-mailed a detailed explanation describing the project and interview process. An executive office was rented for the purpose of having interviews. A \$30 gift card for either of two national-brand stores was offered each interviewee in exchange for his or her participation. Despite the project being open to any healthy and mentally stable heterosexual adult between ages 18 and 30, no one who was married volunteered to participate.

An initial focus group was held and was attended by 4 interviewees. A snowball effect took place, such that by word of mouth people familiar with the project contacted

others who volunteered to be participants. In following this lead, the researcher traveled to Santa Rosa, California, to attend another four-person focus group. Thereafter, four individual interviews were held in Portland, Oregon. There were a total of twelve participants recruited for the primary study, which involved the eight members of the two focus groups, as well as 4 individual participants.

Data Gathering

When meeting with the participants, the researcher gave a short review of the interview process. The participants filled out the demographic data and consent forms. The participants were then reminded that they could leave at any time for whatever reason during an interview. Everyone was also reminded that they did not have to talk about anything with which they were uncomfortable. Before starting, the participants were always asked if it were all right to record the session.

The 12 open-ended questions (see Appendix C) from the interview protocol were followed in order for both the focus group and individual interviews. Exceptions occurred when participants moved ahead on their own. For the primary study, the focus group and individual interviews averaged approximately 85 minutes each. The range of these interviews was from 71 minutes to 98 minutes. This divergence from the 90-minute proposed structure for interviews was in keeping with the open-ended formulation of the interview process and with the establishment and maintenance of positive rapport.

Two focus groups were held. Then, the interview protocol was revised for use in individual interviews (see Appendix G). In doing this, the researcher reformatted a few of

the questions so that they would more closely address the research topic by using the colloquial language and epistemological understandings of participants (Kvale, 1996).

Participant Demographics

A demographic fact sheet (see Appendix J) was distributed and filled in by the participants immediately before the focus group and individual interviews took place. The data for the 12 participants of the primary study are listed in Table 1 and Table 2 according to focus group and individual interview participation.

Table 1

Primary study focus group demographics

| | <i>Group 1</i> | <i>Group 2</i> |
|--|------------------|------------------------|
| Residence | Portland, Oregon | Santa Rosa, California |
| Gender | | |
| Women | 3 | 3 |
| Men | 1 | 1 |
| Age Range | 23 to 29 | 23 to 28 |
| Mean Age | 25 | 26 |
| Modal Age | 25 | 26 |
| Highest Degree or Diploma | | |
| HS | 1 | 0 |
| AA | 1 | 0 |
| BA/BS | 2 | 4 |
| MA/MS | 0 | 0 |
| Current Education Status | | |
| In School Now | 4 | 1 |
| Not In School | 0 | 3 |
| Employment | | |
| Employed | 2 | 4 |
| Unemployed | 2 | 0 |
| Annual Income | | |
| \$0-25,000 | 4 | 1 |
| \$25,001-50,000 | 0 | 2 |
| \$50,001-75,000 | 0 | 1 |
| \$75,001-100,000 | 0 | 0 |
| Living Situation | | |
| Alone | 0 | 2 |
| Roommate(s) | 4 | 2 |
| Lover | 0 | 0 |
| Spouse | 0 | 0 |
| Parent(s) | 0 | 0 |
| Children | | |
| None | 4 | 4 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Currently in a serious romantic relationship | | |
| Yes | 1 | 3 |
| No | 3 | 1 |
| Lifetime serious romantic relationship | | |
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 1 | 1 |

Table 2

Primary study individual participant demographics

| | <i>One</i> | <i>Two</i> | <i>Three</i> | <i>Four</i> |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Residence | Portland, OR | Portland, OR | Portland, OR | Portland, OR |
| Gender | | | | |
| Women | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Men | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Age | 23 | 19 | 29 | 24 |
| Highest Degree or Diploma | | | | |
| HS | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| AA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| BA/BS | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| MA/MS | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Current Education Status | | | | |
| In School Now | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Not In School | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Employment | | | | |
| Employed | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Unemployed | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Annual Income | | | | |
| \$0-25,000 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| \$25,001-50,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| \$50,001-75,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| \$75,001-100,000 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Living Situation | | | | |
| Alone | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Roommate(s) | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lover | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Spouse | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Parent(s) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Children | | | | |
| None | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Currently in a serious romantic relationship | | | | |
| Yes | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| No | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Lifetime serious romantic relationship | | | | |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |

Interview Data Saturation

During the interview process, it became obvious that the accumulated data had reached saturation levels (Miller & Brewer, 2003) within the primary study. The participants were speaking in common terms concerning heterosexual romantic friendship and giving it similar attributions. For instance, the participants consistently spoke of heterosexual romantic friendship as the ideal case for future long-term romantic relationships. They believed that within best-friends relationships their own individual emotional and career development would be supported by their partners. Their current life issues, as well as the need to make important life-course choices, however, outweighed concerns about serious romantic relationships, long-term partnering, and marriage. Subsequently, the interview process was halted, as it is not considered to be productive to gather data in a repetitive fashion (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The participants reported that their past experience with sexual and romantic relationships had generally been of a transitive nature. Some spoke of the need to be free at this time of their lives, during their *decade of freedom* between ages 18 and 28, to participate in activities that would promote career development and worldly understanding, as well as emotional maturity. Thus, when speaking about heterosexual romantic friendship, they generally were not discussing their lived experiences in this area. Only 1 of the 12 participants in the primary study was involved in a heterosexual romantic-friendship relationship at the time of the interviews. Only one other reported any lived experiences in this area. This seemed to advocate for the null hypothesis, that romantic friendship is not generally experienced in the context of serious young urban

mobile single adult relationships. Interviews within the primary study were halted and the apparent lack of data concerning participant lived experiences involving heterosexual romantic friendship was reviewed (see Data Analysis below).

Emergent Definitions

From the beginning, the possibility was left open that the research participants would help to define some of the operational terms used in the study in ways that would be relevant specifically to their peers (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). The emergent concepts are defined below as seen from the eye of the participants in the primary study.

Family of Choice

The young adult participants spoke of having intimate relationship with their close friends which have a quality of bondedness such that the friends are considered to be like family members. These friends are described as one's family of choice, and are considered to be an acquired family. They constitute the inner circle of one's friendship network. A family of choice provides attachment experiences in which stressful situations are reframed and normalized, thereby relieving anxiety.

Friendship Network

Contrasted to a family of choice, a friendship network is a larger group of friends, generally cross-gender, who provide a social-support network for each other. This involves planned and unplanned activities. This *hanging together*, the going with the flow of the group in a casual fashion, often substitutes for individual dating experiences. This

is because introductions and hookups are often made within the social context of group activities, and cross-gender acquaintances are often invited to participate.

Internet Danger Date

An Internet danger date involves meeting someone for the first time in an intriguing, strange, or unusual place in order to hook-up, pursue a romantic interest, or for the sheer thrill of doing something out of the ordinary. Potential partners often meet on a bridge at midnight with a bottle of champagne. Alternatively, this can be described as meeting someone who is “crazier than you” in a strange part of town just to see what happens.

Romantic Relationship

The participants agreed that there is no accepted peer group definition of a romantic relationship. This was expressed in the context of the 20th- century romantic relationship vocabulary becoming outdated in a rapidly changing young urban mobile single adult social niche. Therein, the “blind are leading the blind” in adapting to the new global technocratic socioeconomic environment.

Data Analysis

Giorgi’s (1985, 1997) phenomenological approach to topic abridgment was used as the avenue for abstracting the themes from the transcripts of the focus group and individual-participant interviews. This was done in the context of applying Bromage’s (2006) adaptation of Giorgi’s methodology to the Atlas.ti.5.12 (Scientific Software Development, 2007) qualitative software environment. Following Bromage’s method, the researcher (a) divided the transcripts from each focus group and individual interview into

meaning units (Quote files). Thereafter, (b) the meaning units were abridged into shorter abstractions using the participants' own language. This operation was done by attaching Memo files to the Quote files. Then, (c) these units were translated into more common psychological language. Subsequently, (d) these latter units were shortened and entered as codes into the Atlas.ti.5.2.12 Code Manager. This was done in the context of two hermetic units (HU), one for focus groups and one for individual interviews (see chapter 3 for details).

Underlying Social Cultural Environment

The underlying social environment in which the participants' romantic relationships took place was investigated. This was a fundamental part of the original research design because the researcher believed that the findings concerning heterosexual romantic friendship could not be effectively interpreted without this information. This sociocultural background information was analyzed using the same phenomenological methods as described above. Major themes arising from the data included marriage, sexuality, and commitment. These are discussed below.

Marriage

The research participants reported having different generational understandings concerning marriage when contrasted with their parents' generation. They believed that there were so many alternative options for people in their 20s, and a need to prepare for life course choices, that they were ambivalent about marriage. A graduate degree was seen as a certificate of economic liberation for the young adult female participants. This was contrasted against a participant's grandmother's marriage certificate that was seen as

having been acquired after she learned how to play the role of a wife for a male professional. The participants agreed that women's roles have changed dramatically, and the role of simply being a wife was not considered an option.

The participants said that, after young adults have tested their options and gained real-world experience, they become more interested in long-term romantic relationships. This interest begins around age 26 and was described as increasing up through age 34. This pushes back traditional relationship timelines and milestones. Several female participants voiced their belief that they would be able to have a first child near the age of 30 without any major problems.

In this environment, the participants were uncertain about what pathway leads to marriage. Thus, they felt that they are on their own in discovering a motivated intentionality within themselves to pursue the marriage option. Rather than put their trust in eventually having an in-love passionate relationship that would lead to marriage, they were interested in acquiring intimate communication skills and the emotional maturity that was seen as lacking in many of their parents' marriages. They were also concerned about sharing a common goal with a partner. Some of the participants questioned the function and purpose of marriage. All the participants agreed that cohabitation was an acceptable alternative to marriage for young adults.

Sexuality

The participants stated that young urban mobile single adults often have casual attitudes about sexuality. For young women, there is also a sense of sexual empowerment. It is simply a given that a woman is supposed to be in control of her own

body. The participants felt that the sexual liberation fight had been won and now the salient issue was female economic liberation. It follows, then, that for the participants the battle of the sexes has been conceded and a truce invoked, at least over this issue. One learns about sex by doing it, and to have a fulfilling sexual relationship during marriage, one must be prepared for it. This exploration of one's sexuality might take place through exclusive monogamous relationships or through casual encounters.

In consideration of the freedom found in singlehood, the participants reported that dating itself is sometimes seen as a hindrance to autonomy, especially for those who simply do not have the economic resources to date in the traditional fashion. Sex is not necessarily an issue here. That is because sex can occur within casual encounters when young adults are out on the town with their friends. The participants noted, however, that there are social and economic status differences, as well as regional, ethnic, and religious differences, that motivate some young adults to take other approaches to marriage, cohabitation, sex, and dating.

Commitment

The word commitment was seldom used by the young adult participants. If the researcher tried to elicit a conversation about it, the word was generally not repeated by the participants. This arises from the idea that a committed relationship is something that takes hold as young adults move into middle adulthood. Until then, the concept of a *serious relationship* is used. The participants said that this is where there is that a spark of romance coupled with a desire to do something special for a romantic partner, as well as a sense of exclusivity.

The word commitment can have negative connotations. For example, in an instance where the researcher tried to elicit a discussion about commitment during a focus group, the following conversation ensued:

Researcher: After reading all this literature, which had a way of defining a relationship centered around commitment—

Participant 1: Commitment to what? I won't f*** other people?

Researcher: Well, I suppose that—

Participant 2: That's it!

Participant 1: So basically if I screw someone this night, I was monogamous. But I'll sleep with someone else the next day. I'm still monogamous because I'm not in a relationship with them. We're [my peers] very capable of committing to that, it's true, but our definition of a long-term relationship [is that] when you commit to someone, you're marrying their credit report, their job history, their personality. Are my friends going to like them?

Participant 3: And family—

Participant 1: Oh, god, yeah! So I'm definitely capable of having a serious relationship, but I have real—

(group pause)

The participants were also quite aware of the traditional issues regarding romantic relationships, but they said that their world is different from that of their parents.

Therefore, they believed they had to take approaches to issues regarding traditional values in the context of surviving in a young urban mobile single adult environment.

Thus, they reported that the young adult world is so different that people in middle and older adulthood have to take a keen, fearless emotional interest in young adult culture before they can understand the behavioral and cognitive strategies that are necessary for

successfully coping in it. Interestingly, the young adult participants mentioned several times that the world is changing so rapidly that they do not understand young adolescent coping measures, and that some of the things they see and hear are upsetting to them.

Friendship in Romantic Relationships

The results from the primary study show that the participants viewed a best-friends relationship within a romantic partnership as the ideal case for a long-term heterosexual affiliation. It must be understood, however, that the participants were generally speaking about their conceptions of the ideal case or style of romantic affiliation for long-term relationships. They were not necessarily speaking about their lived experiences with heterosexual romantic friendships. Of the 12 participants in the primary study only two had experience with this style of partnering within a serious relationship. Thus, there was a dearth of analyzable themes across participant interviews. This argued for the null hypothesis, that romantic friendship was not generally experienced in young adult relationships. That conclusion follows from the fact of the insufficiency of the data gathered within the context of the methodology as set forth in the proposal for this project.

Focus Group Data Analysis

None of the participants in the first two focus groups told vignettes concerning their own lived experiences involving a serious romantic relationship where the partners were best friends. Yet the participants hoped that in any future, serious, long-term relationship they would have a mutual best-friend affiliation with their partners. The participants reported, however, that partners in serious romantic relationships should be

able to put their relational issues back on the table for renegotiation at any time. This is simply a fact of modern romance. The participants generally agreed that a best-friends relationship between partners would help this process happen in a successful fashion.

Instead of being seriously concerned about finding the ideal partner, however, the participants in the primary study focus groups reported that their immediate concern centered on the fact that the traditional milestones and guidelines for romance are a dysfunctional fit for their peer group environment. Thus, the participants reported that the road to a serious romantic relationship is one without guideposts or milestones. Considering this issue, the participants mentioned that young adults often make conscious decisions to simply stay single until they are in a stable economic environment, have thoroughly explored their life course options, and have dealt with their own emotional problems.

It also emerged from the focus groups that non-partnered, cross-gender friendship takes place outside of what the participants considered to be the established traditional gender role models. Yet non-romantic, cross-gender friendship relationships allow men and women to have low-stress interactions, whereby neither person is controlling or expecting sex. Supported by a network of mixed-gender friends, young men and women can learn about each other, do activities together, and sustain each other in an affiliative fashion. This allows a person to obtain emotional support without giving up the dearly held options of gaining an education, establishing a career, traveling, or simply trying out a new social identity. The social skills learned in a friendship networking environment were believed to be transferable to future romantic relationships.

Individual Interview Data Analysis

Similar to the focus group interviewees, the individual participants were quite aware of a cohort consensus among their peer concerning issues involving sex and romance. They also held that heterosexual romantic friendship was the ideal style of affiliation for future long-term relationships and marriage after one has achieved full adulthood status. They were also ambivalent regarding serious romantic relationships and marriage for the same reasons as the focus group participants.

Yet one of the individual participants was able to reveal information concerning current lived experiences involving heterosexual romantic friendship because she and her partner had a friendship bond. She said the friendship relationship allowed for frank and sometimes brutally honest discussions about their relationship. She said this took a high level of emotional maturity. She believed that very few of her peers had a best-friends relationship with their romantic partners because the level of maturity for such a relationship is daunting. One other participant mentioned having had been involved in a romantic relationship with a friend. She said that this allowed for a closeness and intimacy she had not experienced before or after this relationship. The relationship with a friend, however, did not have the same level of passion as her romances built on in-love passionate romance. She also said that this type of romantic relationship was rare among her peers.

There was a general belief among the individual participants that friendship in heterosexual romantic relationships appears to take on bipolar dimensions when approached from a functionalist point of view. On the one hand, the individual

interviewees spoke of best-friends relationships as being required for meaningful future, long-term, romantic partnerships. On the other hand, friendship would not be required at all for an in-love passionate romantic relationship that tended toward partner sexual exclusivity. Several of the participants described this latter style of relationship as an intense experience involving falling in love without really getting to know the romantic partner. They said it was within the parameters of the in-love passionate style of romantic relationship that the customs concerning traditional marriage were set. The resulting lack of closeness, however, is generally what led to their parents' divorces or their decades-long arguments concerning non-substantive issues.

Friendship was also seen as not being required for experimental, learning-based, or thrill-motivated, sexual liaison. Several of the individual interviewees spoke of a certain leniency among young adults that allows for the case where sexual liaisons, cohabitation, and trial marriages can be considered as experiential learning encounters. In such cases, sexual contact exists without an unequivocal need for prior friendship or a need for emotional intimacy. Emotional intimacy, rather, was seen as a wait-and-see proposition. It might develop over time while partners cohabite or in other such learning situations where either partner can leave at any time.

The individual interviewees conveyed in their own separate ways that this sort of functionalist approach to romance arose among their peers from seeing so many of the marriages within their parents' generation end in divorce. The individual participants, like those in the focus groups, generally held the ideal committed relationship is not achievable until after age 30. That is when careers are established and the initial stages of

adult emotional development have been reached. But they indicated that life still goes on. This acceptance of a lack of intimate communication in experimental or trial relationship appears to be a conception that runs as a counterpoint to the bar being set very high by young adults for their peer group conception of an ideal marriage. Yet an underlying purpose of these short term relationships was to develop communication skills.

In contrast, the purposive avoidance of friendship mutuality and intimate communication is the common approach to sexuality and romance among a subgroup of the participants' peers. They primarily socialize in bars and avoid intimacy in sex and romance. For these individuals, singlehood is often equated with partying and having fun, rather than learning relationship skills. So if a young adult becomes bound to a lover, one dishonors the glory of young urban mobile singlehood code that life is all about experimentation, having fun, and testing one's limits and boundaries. The participants reported that this type of behavior is generally considered as acceptable among most young adults until a person reaches age 26.

It is noteworthy that the individual interviewees believed that a friendship affiliation would allow romantic partners to give each other a certain leeway and variegated perspective-taking within their relationship. Friendship mutuality was seen as helping partners to more readily understand each other's emotional needs. This was seen as lacking, and partners' perspectives were seen as being more rigid, when a friendship relationship did not exist between romantic partners who only had a tie through intense in-love passionate romance.

When partners have both a friendship affiliation and an in-love passionate romance, they might experience a mutuality that seeks parity between partners regarding decision-making power and individual fulfillment. Parity represents an agreement between partners to share responsibilities and power in a relationship, where each partner has one's own domain of special preference within the relationship. Yet the female participants were currently more focused on their own economic liberation. This economic liberation was given precedence over long-term relationship commitment by all the female participants. They simply refused to allow the balance of power in their relationships to be set by their partners' income.

The individual interviewees were aware of what kinds of intimate relationships interested them and under what circumstances they would pursue those interests once elicited. One participant noted that a person generally knows immediately what one's goals are when meeting someone who elicits a spark for pursuing one's interest further. The spark of desire can motivate one to pursue either an exclusive partnership or an immediate sexual relationship. If one yearns for an immediate sexual encounter, one is also aware that, in today's young adult world, it may go no further than a onetime liaison. On the other hand, in-love passionate desire for selective partnering is considered to be of a different interpersonal "chemistry," one that merits a different response. A general friendship response is seen as having a third type of chemistry, and therefore offers a third relationship option.

The individual participants also knew what their own standards were for all three types of relationships. From a motivational perspective, these types of choices could be

seen in terms of having specific markers for approach and avoidance that directs affiliative behavior into four categories: sexual relationship, in-love passionate romance, friendship, or choosing to avoid or ignore a romantic or affiliative relationship altogether. The interviewees saw the costs of these possible adult relationships as weighted differently. They knew that affiliation at any level is expensive in terms of the participants' time, resources, health risks, and stress tolerance. But much can be lost through avoidance. They were also aware that they generally approached these relational choice issues differently when contrasted with their parents.

Primary Study Member Check

In order to check the validity of the abstraction method, one of the individual interviewees was contacted by telephone. She was selected because she seemed to be very precise in her ability to define what specifically she meant in answering the follow-up questions during the research interview. She also appeared to be reasonably assertive and expressive with regards to her personal concerns. During the telephone call-back session, she was read each of the phenomenological-based, abstracted themes (Giorgi, 1985) in which the researcher attempted to summarize all the major concepts which this participant had mentioned during her individual interview. The participant agreed that all 20 of the abstractions represented what she had said and what she believed was true at the time of the phone call. During this process, she asked to have one word changed in order to better represent a finer aspect of her thinking on a particular subject matter.

One other member check was made. In this check, a member of a focus group was contacted by email. This person was asked if in the intervening two weeks since the

group was held whether anything had come to mind that she felt was left unsaid or if there was anything she had changed her mind about. She said she felt that the focus group had sufficiently covered the basic issues of young adult romantic relationships and that she could not think of any additional information that might help the researcher to understand her cultural niche.

Summary of the Primary Study

The purpose of this study was to fill the gap in the psychological literature concerning a lack of understanding of the friendship relationship that occurs between partners within a heterosexual romantic relationship. To that end, a primary study was instigated involving young adults between the ages of 18-to-30 years from two West Coast metropolitan areas. Focus group and individual interviews were held. The researcher used Giorgi's (1985) phenomenological method to abstract themes from the transcriptions of these interviews. The themes were coded and analyzed within an Atlas.ti.5.2.12 (Scientific Software Development, 2007) software environment.

Data saturation was reached relatively early. Thereafter, the analysis of the data demonstrated that the participants in the primary study held clear generation understanding regarding friendship, romantic, and sexual relationships. Thus, there was a homogenous perspective among them concerning heterosexual romantic friendship relationships. The mutuality of a best-friends relationship was considered the ideal case for a future, serious, long-term romantic relationship. The participants, however, were generally not speaking about lived experiences of such relationships. Of the 12 participants in the primary study, only two had any experience with a heterosexual

romantic-friendship relationship. The participants generally saw their past relationship as learning experiences in which they might acquire the communication skills and emotional maturity necessary for having a serious romantic friendship relationship in the future.

It follows that the data gathering process was stopped earlier than had been planned. This was because it had proved to be impossible to abstract from the interview dialogues enough substantial themes relevant to the characteristics that define heterosexual romantic friendship as a lived-experience such that narrative descriptions might be compared and contrasted. The participants attributed their lack of experience with the ideal style of romantic relationship to the fact that, among their peers, singlehood takes precedence over serious romantic relationships at least until they reach age 26. Before that, traveling, pursuing higher education, and developing a career, as well as sexual and romantic experimentation, are generally considered more important than being involved in long-term romantic relationships.

Living in this social environment, the participants reported that casual sexual experiences and hooking up for a one time sexual activity was generally accepted without judgment within their peer group. Counterintuitively, the participants reported that the bar to marriage has been raised high. This is a result of the fact that marriage competes with a plethora of social, behavioral, and lifestyle options that young adults have to pursue, as well as a perceived need to establish meaningful, intimate marriage partnerships that are not based simply on passionately or blindly falling in love.

It follows that the participants reported they were ambivalent at this time in their lives about finding the ideal partner, pursuing a long-term relationship, and getting

married. This ambivalence was associated with the fact that there were no coherent and functional guidelines among their peers that promote meaningful romantic relationships.

This problem exists to such a degree that the participants generally reported that at this point in their lives they could not readily imagine ahead of time what direction they might take with regards future relationships. They expected things to be more stable, however, sometime after they had reached 30 years of age.

The participants saw themselves as a segregated population group, cut off from the older generations' models and traditions, due in part to having grown up in a rapidly evolving technological environment. Therefore, the participants reported feeling like "the blind were leading the blind" in a brave new social world. Even those individuals who were partnered at the time they participated in the study expressed their frustration with the apparent tentativeness and limited expectations for their current relationships due to this lack of a peer group common ground governing relationship expectations and milestones. It follows that when the participants spoke of their ideal case for long-term serious partnering they were not necessarily speaking about their lived experiences with such a relationship.

As mentioned, a contrast study was made in a different region of the United States. This was done in order to add authenticity to the overall project by placing these findings into a larger national context. That second study is discussed below.

The Contrast Study

A contrast study focus group was held in Birmingham, Alabama. The contrast study was justified as a tool to augment the trustworthiness of findings of the overall

discovery process in this research project. The phenomenological methodology from the primary study was used to analyze the transcript.

Research Problem, Question, and Purpose

The intent of the contrast study was to test the relevance and generalizability of the results of the primary study in another setting. It was believed that this would add authenticity to the overall results.

Contrast Study Research Problem

The research problem from the primary study was accepted as the problem for the contrast study. That problem concerned lack of studies concerning how friendship is experienced in heterosexual romantic relationships. The lack of a fully-developed conceptual understanding of how friendship is experienced in cross-gender romantic relationships compromises current research on romantic attachment, impinges on the models that guide couples therapy, and hampers an individual's ability to name, vocalize, and discuss important relational issues with one's partner.

Contrast Study Research Question

Research questions are used to focus and guide a study (Creswell, 1998). With that in mind, the following research question was proposed within the original study:
How is friendship experienced within heterosexual romantic relationships?

Purpose of the Contrast Study

As a follow-up study, the purpose of the contrast study was to support, broaden, or restrict the findings of the primary study in a fashion that would add authenticity to the overall findings of the entire research project.

Organization of the Results

The results of the primary research study will be discussed below in the following sections: (a) recruitment, (b) data gathering, (c) participant demographics, (d) emergent definitions, (e) data analysis, (f) underlying social-cultural environment, (g) themes concerning friendship in romantic relationships, and (h) contrast study member check.

Recruitment

As discussed in detail the methods section (chapter 3), Mensa USA became a stakeholder in the contrast study by allowing the researcher to interview young adult Mensans in a focus group at the Mensa 2007 Annual Gathering held in Birmingham, Alabama. Before the annual meeting took place, there was an announcement concerning the focus group on the Mensa Annual Gathering web site as part of the event's activities.

Data Gathering

Four Mensa members between the ages of 18 and 29 came to the hotel meeting room at the time that was listed in the 2007 Annual Gathering schedule. The researcher discussed the purpose of the study with them along with the various issues related to informed consent. The participants were told that they could leave at any time for any reason. They were informed as to how the focus group would proceed. They were encouraged to contribute to the dialogue on romantic relationships as they each saw fit. It was explained that there were no wrong or right answers. They were also cautioned about not saying anything that might embarrass them, and they were informed that they did not have to discuss sexual issues. Thereafter, the participants signed the informed consent form (see Appendix B) and then filled out a demographic fact sheet.

The 12 open-ended questions (see Appendix G) from the revised interview protocol were followed in order as much as possible. Exceptions occurred when the participants moved ahead on their own. This divergence from the planned protocol structure was in keeping with Glaser and Holton's (2004) conception that the researcher should not try to force the research process into preconceived parameters. The time that elapsed during the contrast focus group was 95 minutes.

Participant Demographics

The demographic fact sheet was distributed and filled in by the participants immediately before the focus group began. The participants were interviewed together in Birmingham, Alabama. Table 3 shows the demographic information for the 4 participants of the contrast study.

Table 3

Contrast study focus group demographics

| | <i>Group</i> |
|--|---|
| Residence | Georgia, Virginia, Texas, New Hampshire |
| Gender | |
| Women | 2 |
| Men | 2 |
| Age Range | 18 to 29 |
| Median | 23 |
| Highest Degree or Diploma | |
| HS | 1 |
| AA | 2 |
| BA/BS | 1 |
| MA/MS | 0 |
| Current Education Status | |
| In School Now | 3 |
| Not In School | 1 |
| Employment | |
| Employed | 2 |
| Unemployed | 2 |
| Annual Income | |
| \$0-25,000 | 2 |
| \$25,001-50,000 | 0 |
| \$50,001-75,000 | 1 |
| \$75,001-100,000 | 0 |
| Not Declared | 1 |
| Living Situation | |
| Alone | 2 |
| Roommate(s) | 2 |
| Lover | 0 |
| Spouse | 0 |
| Parent(s) | 0 |
| Children | |
| None | 4 |
| 1 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 |
| Currently in a serious romantic relationship | |
| Yes | 0 |
| No | 4 |
| Lifetime serious romantic relationship | |
| 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 2 |
| 2 | 1 |
| 3 | 1 |

Emergent Definitions

As mentioned previously, there was a cross-participant agreement in the primary West Coast study regarding the operational definitions of certain peer-group social constructs. The researcher intended initially to use the emergent definitions from the primary study at the start of the contrast study. The participants in the contrast study, however, began defining their own terms immediately after the focus group started. Interestingly, they used definitions and expressed understandings of certain important peer group social constructs that mirrored the emergent definitions from the primary study.

It follows that the participants in both studies questioned the same traditional terms concerning romantic relationship. For example, the contrast focus group mirrored the first primary study focus group by questioning the definition of a romantic relationship. That contrast study dialogue began with the following question:

Researcher: Are the rules of romance clear for your generation, or is everyone at a loss as to what's next, what one's choices are?

Participant 1: Romance is a slippery term. Because you have the Hollywood version of romance, where everything just falls into place, and it's magical and it works. And then there's—well, I think it's very unclear the differences between romance and dating and relationships. Is it all the same thing? Is it different facets to the same piece? What is appropriate and what is not—it's very confusing.”

Participant 2: I know that for me there aren't any clear rules to dating. Even much less for all the other relationships. There's not really any set of guidelines.

Other issues concerning the operational terms are discussed as they arise within the discussion of the results.

Data Analysis

Taking a course similar to that used in the primary study, the researcher used a method based on Giorgi's (1985, 1997) phenomenological approach to topic abridgment as the avenue for abstracting the themes from the transcripts of the contrast focus group. This operation was performed within the qualitative software program Atlas.ti.5.2.12 (Scientific Software Development, 2007). During this process, the themes appeared as codes in the code Atlas.ti.5.2.12 Code Manager.

Underlying Social Cultural Environment

The participants' underlying social milieu was investigated. This was part of the research design because individuals' implicit understandings, attributions, and behaviors cannot be understood in a comprehensive fashion unless the environmental context in which they live is comprehensible to the researcher (Mannheim, 1957/1927). The themes involving contrast study participants' concerning marriage, sexuality, and commitment will be discussed below. A discussion of the contrast study results concerning friendship in romantic relationships follow after this section.

Marriage

None of the participants in the contrast study focus group were involved in a romantic relationship at the time of the study. The participants gave mixed responses with regards to the overall concept of marriage. A male participant saw marriage as a significant, meaningful objective that honored a trusting and caring romantic relationship. Contrarily, a female participant said the inequity represented in the marriage traditions had stopped her from considering marriage as a viable possibility. The participants

agreed, however, that the general acceptance of cohabitation, single parenting, and childbearing outside of marriage restrained young adults' interest in marriage as a relational, institutional, or legal entity. They said that these possibilities had changed young adults' options and the priorities they attributed to the traditional relationship milestones of their parents generation.

The participants expected to maintain an I-ness, not a we-ness, sense of self after marriage. They did not expect to have martial partners who would be emotionally dependent on them. Rather, those participants who could imagine being married spoke of intimate sharing in supportive and positively-balanced relationships, where partners had mastered a basic level of intimate communication skills and had reached a minimum level of emotional maturity. Envisioning such relationships, the participants said that partners without a strong sense of self cannot effectively communicate their needs and desires, and thus, functional communication between partners breaks down.

It follows that the participants said that couples need to maintain their friendship networks and to keep in contact with their cross-gender friends after they marry. In other words, marriage does not end one's need for a friendship support network. This did not mean the devaluation of the marriage partner. Life is too complex, they said, for one person to be the sole provider of one's emotional support. Moreover, they believed that meaningful marriages required partner development in many social contexts.

For those who could imagine marriage within their futures, heterosexual romantic friendship was viewed as the ideal relationship. It was also a given that a successful and meaningful marriage required a deep level of commitment where partners supported each

other's personal development and spiritual growth. The participants said they could not imagine picking a marriage partner by simply falling in love the way their parents did. That generally leads to serial marriage and divorce.

Sexuality

The contrast study participants had relaxed attitudes concerning sexual behavior. They reported that there is no firm concept or guidelines for dating or sexual relationships among their peers. Therefore, it is easy for an individual to become confused on how to approach a potential partner or what steps to take within a developing relationship.

This is one reason why, the participants agreed, it is almost a necessity to have a friendship network for obtaining feedback regarding each other's behaviors and choices surrounding romance and sex. The males and the females within the study were in full agreement that friends within their peer group generally stand together for emotional support as they face the exigencies of an evolving socioeconomic world. In that context, the participants mentioned that friends turn to each other for romantic and sexual relationship advice. One participant said that he would rather have his friends choose his sexual partners than do it himself. He said they understand him better than he understands himself.

The participants also noted a peer group high tolerance for many styles of relational behaviors. The discussion about gender started at an early age, generally in middle school. Single parenting and single motherhood, as well as cohabitation, sexual hookups, and online romance, were simply seen as part of the modern social environment. Sexual relationships, however, require mutual respect and trust because of

the danger of sexually transmitted diseases. Therefore, the question for sexual encounters, as one participant put it, is “not about prevention, but who will bring the condoms.”

The participants agreed that yesterday’s concept of gender rivalry had been replaced by one of gender equality. In these circumstances, male expression of emotional feelings was simply a given, as was female discussion of sexuality. The participants accepted the fact that they cycle through romantic and sexual relationships at a faster pace when compared to their parents. It follows that they see their relationships as learning experiences. The participants noted, however, that some young adults are not adept at successfully coping in the modern social environment. The new anything-goes social environment could confuse anyone.

It was also noted that a sizable minority of young adults simply are not interested in intimate romantic relationships and the expression of feelings between sexual partners. Rather, they seek emotionally detached sexual encounters that are often of a one-time nature. The participants saw this avoidance of attachment between partners as a way of coping with the transitive and ambiguous nature of romance. The resultant emotional distance between partners was seen as a method of avoiding emotional pain.

This contrasts with the participants’ general coping strategy of developing social skills within a friendship network. Current relationships were seen as learning experiences in which people can discover what is important for future long-term, serious heterosexual romantic partnerships. It stands to reason that cross-gender emotional and sexual intimacy was a common goal among the participants in the contrast study.

Commitment

The participants said commitment within romantic relationships was a complex issue. It was not something that they wanted to take on until they have passed through various sexual and romantic experiences that lead towards emotional maturity. They said that there was no one standard approach or definition for a committed relationship that held up for their cohort. People have their own timelines and prerogatives, but the traditional model of romance followed by their parents did not appeal to them.

It follows that there is a search for something that feels real, meaningful, in relationships, as well as in life. Yet the actual word *commitment* only came up one time during the dialogue about serious or long-term relationships. Instead of focusing on commitment, there was an understanding that a person has to know oneself and established a full sense of adulthood before taking on a long-term, serious relationship. As one participant said, “You have to complete yourself first.” None of the participants in the contrast study were currently in a relationship, and it did not seem that any of them were in any hurry to establish one or were actively seeking a long-term partner.

Friendship in Romantic Relationships

For the participants in the contrast study, the concept of romantic friendship was an ideal style of romantic affiliation for future romantic relationships. They saw their past experiences as learning experiences that would help them gain the maturity to try to meet those ideal expectations. Thus, they were not generally speaking about heterosexual romantic friendship as a lived-experience involving a serious romantic partnership. This,

of course, lent support to the null hypothesis because of the lack of vignettes and descriptions of lived experiences as necessitated by a phenomenological research design.

Regardless, the researcher explored the subject of the ideal case for romantic relationships with the participants. The idea of heterosexual romantic friendship evoked thoughts concerning intimacy. Intimacy meant being vulnerable and allowing oneself to be known by your partner. It meant not forcing a template on the relationship such that it would be a “cookie-cutter romance.” Emotional vulnerability was what the participants expected from a future long-term partner or future spouse. Moreover, they said, vulnerability involves trust and is an important aspect of romantic friendship. Because of the danger of sexually transmitted diseases, there is a demand for trust from a partner both for emotional and physical protection. The participants suggested that it is within a couple’s friendship relationship that this kind of trust develops.

The contrast study participants believed that their past relationships were learning experiences that were teaching them how to eventually actualize intimacy, trust, and friendship within a romantic relationship. They, of course, could not say for sure that this would ever happen. After all, they simply could not envision what the future beheld because there are no guidelines to romance or sexuality that their cohort has to go by. Their concern was that adolescents and young adults would take sexual liberation in the opposite direction of intimacy and trust, and thereby move social behavior further in the direction of sexual anonymity. They reported that this is what the bar crowd was doing in emphasizing casual sex and the avoidance of attachment.

Contrast Study Member Check

The researcher met with a member of the contrast study focus group who reviewed the themes that had emerged from the analysis of the focus group transcript. The group member agreed that the themes adequately portrayed the salient issues from the group discussion. The participant also mentioned that this information explained his social reality in a cogent, demonstrative fashion that captured the essence of the affiliative relationship interactions that take place among his peers.

In verifying the researcher's results concerning the family-of-friends concept, the participant spoke of shared values holding friendship networks together. He also said, "Friends are invaluable. Not just valuable. You cannot survive without them." Then he spoke of the emotional support and intimate communications that take place between young adult friends, wherein they promote each other's maturation and development. The participant called this "intimacy in action."

Summary of the Contrast Study

For the contrast study, a focus group with 4 participants was held in Birmingham, Alabama. A phenomenological-based method was used for abstracting the themes from the focus group data, which was analyzed within an Atlas.ti.5.2.12 (Scientific Software Development, 2007) computer software environment.

It was noteworthy that the contrast study participants held to the same generational understandings regarding friendship, romantic, and sexual relationships as those professed by the primary study participants. Thus, they noted that in the ideal case a couple's heterosexual friendship relation would take precedence over their romantic or

the sexual relationship. The key issue here is that friends were seen as being able to support and accept each other's emotional development over time. In contrast, partners bound simply by a passionate in-love romantic tie may not be able to make such adjustments and provide support for each other's developmental changes. The participants, however, were talking about the ideal case for serious romance, not about their lived experiences in serious heterosexual romantic-friendship relationship.

The participants in the contrast study also reported what can be described as a reality orientation to romance, rather than an escapist orientation, or an ongoing search for the one-and-only soul mate. This helps to explain the participants' focus on expressive communication between romantic partners within dynamic relationships that promote the personal growth and emotional maturation of both partners. It follows that the contrast study participants expected that their future long-term partners will have dealt with their own personal emotional problems before joining them in a serious long-term romantic relationship.

The participants gave mixed responses with regards to the overall concept of marriage. A male participant saw marriage as a significant, meaningful milestone that honored a trusting and caring romantic relationship. In contrast, a female participant saw marriage as a legal relationship that embodied inequity, limiting a woman's rights and freedoms. The participants agreed, however, that the general acceptance of cohabitation, single parenting, and childbearing outside of marriage restrained young adults' interest in marriage as a relational, institutional, or legal entity.

The participants expected to maintain their friendship networks and to keep in contact with their cross-gender friends during any future serious romantic relationships and after marriage. The participants did not see this as devaluing the marriage or as demonstrating a lack of interest in a long-term romantic partner. Life is too complex, they said, for one person to be the sole provider of one's emotional support. The participants also noted that their peers had high tolerances for many styles of relational behaviors. Thus, single parenting and single motherhood, as well as cohabitation, sexual hookups, and online romance were simply givens, a part of the modern social environment.

It was noted that a sizable subgroup of young urban mobile single adults simply are not interested in intimate romantic relationships. Rather, they seek emotionally detached sexual encounters that often are of a one-time nature. It was posited that this avoidance of attachment between partners is a way of coping with the transitive and ambiguous nature of romance. The resultant emotional distance between partners is seen as a method of avoiding emotional pain.

General Summary

This qualitative discovery project set out to investigate the problem of a lack of information concerning how friendship is experienced within heterosexual romantic relationships. It involved a primary study and a contrast study. Phenomenological-based methodology (Giorgi, 1985) was employed for abstracting themes from participant focus group and individual interviews. The sample population for the primary study involved young adult participants between the ages of 18 and 29 years from two West Coast

metropolitan areas. The contrast study involved participants from the Southern and Eastern United States from the same age range.

A data saturation point was reached early within the primary study, and the interview process was halted in order to examine the thematic content of the transcripts. That examination showed that the participants agreed that heterosexual romantic friendship was the ideal case for future long-term relationships romance. As such, it was a goal they were working towards as they cycled through romantic affiliations. Therefore, when they spoke of heterosexual romantic friendship they were not necessarily speaking about their lived experience but the ideal case or style of romantic affixations. Only two of the 12 participants in the primary study had any experience within heterosexual romantic friendship relationships. The paucity of data regarding actual lived experiences supported the null hypothesis. It follows that more individual interviews were not held. That was because the researcher did not believe there would be enough data to write narratives concerning participants' lived experiences in serious heterosexual romantic relationships, as per the phenomenological methodology used in the study.

Interestingly, there was a consistent general understanding across participants in both studies concerning romantic relationships. When describing the ideal case or style of for future relationships, the participants said it would involve heterosexual romantic friendship. They expected that the mutuality of a best-friends relationship within a heterosexual romantic affiliation would allow for frank, intimate communication, as well as equity in partner power. They imagined that the resultant non-controlling attitudes

would allow partners to encourage each other's developmental growth, emotional maturation, and career enhancement.

The key issue here is that friends were seen as being able to support and accept each other's emotional and career development over time. On the other hand, partners bound simply by a passionate in-love romantic tie might not be able to make such adjustments and provide support for each other's lifespan changes. It follows that friendship mutuality between partners was seen as allowing both partners to adapt to a rapidly evolving urban, technocratic environment. Yet the transitive nature and the lack of common functional guidelines for romantic relationships led the participants to express feelings of ambivalence towards long-term relationships and marriage.

Within both the primary and the contrast studies, the participants acknowledged that relationships involving falling head-over-heels with passionate love had a different spark to them when compared to romantic relationships stabilized by the mutuality of heterosexual romantic friendship. But the participants in both studies said they had watched their parents use the in-love passionate romance model to pick marriage partners, and they believed that this seemed to always lead to chaotic, emotionally-immature relationships. The participants, none of whom were married, did not want to use the same in-love passionate romantic partnering model for starting serious long-term relationships, especially relationships that involved childrearing.

The participants in both studies believed that a meaningful long-term romantic partnership occurs only after several steps have been taken on one's life course. For both men and women, those steps included feeling secure economically in one's own right. A

person must have also finished one's relational experimentation. This occurs sometime after age 26, or even age 30 and beyond. This is when the lessons learned from experimental romantic and sexual relationships are applied to a relationship that was expected to last for the long-term. This is also when many of the emotionally-supportive bonding skills learned within friendship networks can be adequately applied to a relationship with a long-term romantic partner.

The participants in both studies also agreed that in major urban centers singlehood has become a cultural phenomenon in its own right. Having fun is a central aspect of the singles' culture, group activities. Within the singles' culture, there is a subgroup of young adults who purposively avoid intimacy. They were said to not expect each other to act with any more maturity than what is expected from adolescents, at least not before age 26. The participants in both studies noted that this subgroup of peers was devoted to casual sexual encounters. They reported, however, that a larger group of young adults appears to be attempting to learn the social skills necessary to have mature, committed romantic relationships sometime in their futures. While they refine their social skills, the participants said that romantic relationships are viewed upon as learning experiences.

The young adult participants in both the primary study and the contrast study referred to their friends as their *family of choice*. It follows that the participants hoped that their future romantic partners would be accepted by their friends, perhaps even come from their friendship networks. This makes sense, most all the participants agreed, given that friends generally provide mutual emotional support in a world of changed social milestones and timelines. Given that the friendship network is the family of choice, it is

common to invite potential romantic partners to tag along during friendship group activities instead of inviting them on formal dates. This is especially true in today's postmodern low-wage environment where traditional dating has been replaced with dress-down activities.

It follows that the interview data from both the primary and contrast studies suggested that the fulfillment of the need for familial emotional support among the participants was increasingly displaced onto and satisfied by peer-group friendship networks. It is here one turns for intimacy until one is ready to tackle the search for a long-term partner. It is the participants' friendship support networks, in other words, that are the interface with the world for dealing with ambivalent feelings concerning the transitivity of modern urban romantic and sexual relationships. Peer-group friendship networks are thus the *modus operandi* for negotiating the stressful odyssey inherent in the transitional adulthood developmental period (Arnett, 2004).

In sum, the concept of heterosexual romantic friendship evoked discussions concerning the ideal case or style for future romantic partnering. There was, however, a paucity of data concerning actual lived experiences and vignettes involving heterosexual romantic friendship within serious romantic relationships. This lent support to the null hypothesis. It was not possible to show that romantic friendship is a basic component in young urban adult relationships due to their transitive and ambiguous nature of such affiliations. In all reality, the participants expressed ambivalent feelings regarding serious romantic relationship. In the participants' lived reality, there was instead an emphasis on friendship networking. Friendship networks provide emotional support to young adults

during a time in their lives when tentative romantic relationships do not provide the emotional support that their parents' generation generally found within nuclear families and spousal relationships. The next chapter focuses on the interpretation and meaning of these results.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

This discovery project included a primary study and a contrast study. Both studies used phenomenological methods (Giorgi, 1985) to explore how friendship is experienced within heterosexual romantic relationships among young adults. A review of the literature revealed that there is no expert agreement as to what emotional, behavioral, cognitive, or motivational factors support between-partner friendship relations within a heterosexual romantic relationship. Yet surveys had shown that a friendship-style of partnering is the one of the most admired approaches to romantic relationships (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1993).

It follows that the purpose of the primary study was to discover how friendship is contextually experienced in heterosexual romantic relationships. It was expected that this knowledge might help researchers in building new dynamic models of romantic relationships and would aid couples therapists in developing new treatment strategies.

For the primary study, focus groups and individual interviews were held on the West Coast of the United States with 12 young adult participants between ages 18 and 29. Data saturation was reached very early within the primary study. This was verified by an analysis of the data within an Atlas.ti.5.2.12 (Scientific Software Development, 2007) computer software environment. This analysis showed that there was an across-participant agreement that the friendship style of romantic partnering was the ideal case for future long-term relationships. But the participants were generally not discussing their

lived experiences from having actually participated in serious partnerships based on a heterosexual romantic friendship. Instead, this was the ideal they hoped to achieve with a serious partner at about age 30. This general lack of lived experiences within the targeted research area, heterosexual romantic friendship, negated the possibility of using phenomenological methods, as originally proposed in this study, to write and compare narrative case descriptions.

Regardless, the data were analyzed, and thereafter briefly summarized, regarding the background sociocultural stage on which the participants' romantic relationships took place. This was done in accordance with the original proposal. Therein, it was assumed that without a discussion of the participants' cultural niche the primary findings could not be interpreted or displayed in a contextually meaningful fashion. This proved to be quite true because the young adults reported expectations that were at variance with the expectations of previous generations.

For instance, the primary study participants felt ambivalent about serious long-term relationships, marriage, and childrearing at this point in their lives. Their feelings of ambivalence were related to the transitive nature of young urban mobile single adult romantic relationships and the lack of generational guidelines and milestones that might lead to stable long-term relationships. Moreover, they generally believed that there were so many important life-course choices to be made during their 20s that attempting to form a long-term romantic partnership before age 30 would be untenable.

The participants did focus, however, on learning intimate communication skills, which they develop as they cycle through relationships and as they lend emotional

support to their immediate peers within their friendship networks. Yet without agreed upon guidelines for romance, the participants reported that they felt as if the “blind are leading the blind” within a postmodern urban technocratic socioeconomic environment. When coupled with the participants’ feelings of ambivalence towards long-term relationships and marriage, these emergent issues described a vivid picture of the background dynamics of the participants’ sociocultural niche.

Subsequently, the researcher set up a contrast study focus group in the Southeastern United States. This was done in order to further authenticate the findings. The 4 participants, who were aged 18 to 29, generally held similar views as the participants in the primary West Coast study. The significance of these findings will be discussed within the following sections: interpretation, implications for social change, recommendations for action, recommendations for further study, the researcher’s reflections on the research process, discovery process limitations, dissemination of the results, and the conclusions.

Interpretation of the Results

The interpretations of the finding for this project are discussed below within two subject categories: heterosexual romantic friendship and tentativeness and ambivalence in romantic relationships.

Heterosexual Romantic Friendship

This project showed that companionate love is a conception that is somewhat outdated or simply may not apply to the social environment wherein the young adult participants live. The participants did not report much current interest in long-term

coupled partnerships wherein a couple engaged in exclusive, shared activities. Instead, participants in both studies spoke of friendship networks and the need for romantic partners to get along with each other's friends. It follows that activities with romantic partners are often conceptualized as a couple participating together in an inclusive friendship network activity, at least at the beginning of a relationship. This is consistent with what Crawford, Houts, Huston, and George (2002) reported. Crawford et. al showed that exclusive-partner shared activities are not necessarily associated today with marital satisfaction, especially for women.

It follows that for the participants, the concept of heterosexual romantic friendship embodies a much more meaningful relationship when contrasted with Burgess and Cottrell's (1939) original conception of companionate love. As the ideal future romantic relationship style, heterosexual romantic friendship coupling would involve romantic in-love passion coupled with the intimacy and mutuality of a best friends' relationship. The participants believed that mutuality of best-friends affiliation represented a stronger bond when compared to simply participating in activities together. It included, rather, sharing concerns about each other's emotional fulfillment and worldly successes. Partners would know each other so well that they could anticipate each other's likes, dislikes and needs. It would also involve holding of each other with positive regard, such that partners would help each other move further towards emotional maturity and developmental fulfillment.

This ideal best-friends affiliation was considered by the participants to be separate from a couple's sexual and romantic relationships. Friendship mutuality was seen as the key that opened the door to meaningful long-term romantic relationships, marriage, and

childrearing. Therefore, the participants considered the heterosexual romantic friendship style of partnering as the ideal case for future long-term relationships, especially those that included childrearing. Until they approach age 30, however, they believed they would cycle through romantic relationships at a faster pace when contrasted with their parents' generation. These tentative, temporal relationships were seen as learning experiences, and they rarely embodied the mutuality of a best-friends relationship.

The participants in both studies contrasted heterosexual romantic friendship, the ideal future relationship construct, with marriages based on an in-love passionate romantic relationship. They saw this latter type of affiliation as leading to mutual partner misunderstanding and divorce. They did not always shun those relationships that start with the spark of in-love passionate romance. But unlike their parents, they reported not having heightened expectations that such relationships would lead to long-lasting partnerships and marriage. Moreover, in-love passionate romantic relationships, like friendship and sexual relationship, were often seen as the product of cognitive choices, not something that a person simply fell into. This sort of choosing an approach to take regarding a potential romantic or sexual relationship is considered to be an essential aspect of emotional survival when living in a postmodern young urban mobile single adult culture.

The functional ability of the participants to cognitively appraise relationships in terms of degrees of friendship mutuality, sexuality, and in-love passionate romance presupposes that there are individualized co-occurring types of relationships that can combine or take place separately. This reinforces biobehavioral psychoneuroendocrine

systems theory. That theory suggests that different underlying neurohormonal physiological behavioral systems govern romance, sexuality, and friendship in separate yet complementary fashions (Bartles & Zeki, 2004; Fisher, Aron, & Brown, 2006; Levine, 2005).

This is reminiscent of Bowlby's (1969) biobehavioral systems theory. Bowlby proposed three such psychoneuroendocrine systems: the attachment, the caregiving, and the sexual systems. Bowlby noted, as have others (Berscheid, 2006; Fisher, Aron, & Brown, 2006), that each of the separate yet interacting biobehavioral systems has different casual conditions for activation, along with distinct associated behaviors and targeted motivational objectives. Meanwhile, each system has a distinct neural physiological base, a learned adaptive component, and cognitive-behavioral feedback loops whereby a person can self-monitor outcomes (Bowlby, 1980; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2006).

These distinct biobehavioral systems conflict somewhat with Lee's (1973, 1977) six love styles, one of which included a friendship style of romantic relationships. Lee saw these styles as being cognitively regulated and adaptable to fit one's situation. Lee's six love styles, however, combine state and trait dimensions in categories, with overlapping, non-distinct boundaries, that may simply reflect attitudes (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986) or preferences (Murthy, Rotzien, & Vacha-Hasse, 1996), not necessarily people's behaviors (Neto, 2005). Therefore, they are not reflective in a physiological or morphological sense of the bottom-up, biobehavioral systems addressed by Bowlby (1969) and Berscheid (2006).

As a result, it is Berscheid's (2006) psychoneuroendocrine biobehavioral theory, wherein she mentions both the friendship and the romance systems, that is best suited to use as a template for reviewing and interpreting certain aspects of the current study. The object of the original inquiry for this project, co-occurring friendship and romantic relationships, can be seen as the product of physiologically and behaviorally distinct systems that are independently activated, yet can function in unison. It follows from this template that when the participants speak of the ideal heterosexual romantic-friendship relationship, they are speaking of the case where both their in-love passionate romantic and their friendship biobehavioral systems would be motivated and engaged in positive fashions.

Tentativeness and Ambivalence in Romantic Relationships

The participants in both the primary and the contrast studies believed that there are no clear and functional guidelines for romantic relationships that are generally accepted within their peer groups. Moreover, they believed they would be compromising their understanding of reality if they attempted to apply their parents' template for romantic relationships to the postmodern urban technocratic socioeconomic environment in which they live. This generally left the participants feeling that their romantic relationships were, for the most part, tentative and temporal. This resulted in feelings of ambivalence concerning serious long-term partnerships, marriage, and childrearing.

Other researchers have had similar emergent finding during the course of studying young adult behavior. For instance, Popenoe and Whitehead (2002a) found that young adults cannot agree on what comprises romantic and marriage relationships. This is not

mere semantics. The traditional guidelines where romance and dating lead to marriage are passing, just the way courtship and the practice of calling on a young lady at her family's home have become outdated (Willets, 2003). The participants in the current study reinforced these very same issues. Thus, it appears that there is a common generational understanding among urban young adults about romantic relationships, albeit it, one that involves coping with ambivalence.

There also appears to be a new developmental stage, emergent adulthood, which arose in response to a changing globalized technocratic environment (Arnett, 2004; 2007). This stage was culturally-created (Smith, C. & Denton, 2005), like the concept of adolescence during the last century (Hall, 1904). Young adults, between ages 18 and 30, living in an emerging cultural niche that supports emerging adulthood, experience emotional instability and feelings of being in limbo. They often have an impression that they are in a transitional stage that gives them a sense of all-is-possible and hope, coupled with feelings of anxiety, confusion, self-obsession, drama, ambiguity, and disappointment (Smith, C., 2007). These contentions were supported fully by the results of the current study, which embodied the participants' descriptions of their lived experiences surrounding these issues.

While living among those who are in fact traversing transitional adulthood, the participants reported interpreting their reality quite differently from their parents' perception of it. This fits within Gergen's (1999) conception of the social construction of knowledge. He noted that people in this type of transitional position attribute their own meanings to their lived experiences. Within cultural niches, people create their own

language and epistemology as they construct, through interactive dialogue, what the changing world means to them.

Implications for Social Change

Several basic understanding arose from the findings of this research project that have important implications for social change. The traditional model of basing a long-term relationship on in-love passionate romance generally did not apply to the young urban mobile single adults involved in this study. Most of them looked forward, rather, to relationships, starting at about age 30, that would be founded on a more substantive base. They believed that this would involve a style of partnering grounded in the mutuality of a best-friends relationship. The participants were not, however, living that ideal, and therefore, had little actual experience with serious relationships founded on heterosexual romantic friendship. But this is what they eventually expected to achieve. This explains why both males and females emphasized learning cross-gender intimate communication skills. Researchers need to take this into account when studying romantic relationships in the context of the postmodern urban environment. This suggests that young adults are attempting to find a style of relationship bonding that is more meaningful and mutually fulfilling when contrasted with traditionally-accepted, long-term relationship protocols.

Another important implication involved the rapid nature of sociocultural change. When contrasted with the literature review, the results show that the young urban mobile single adult culture has come into being, and has evolved so fast, that researchers do not yet understand its dynamic factors. This persists despite various projects that have

attempted to capture the essential elements of this new cultural niche (e.g., Settersten, Furstenberg, & Rumbaut, 2005).

The current study demonstrated that the problem of not fully understanding young adult culture arises, in part, because researchers sometimes use a vocabulary, as well as survey questions, that are more applicable to social and psychological issues of the last century. It follows that, because of the outdated vocabulary, some survey-based studies circulated in university classrooms fail to capture the evolving styles of behavior taking place within the young urban mobile single adult cultural niche. This reflects the fact that the young urban mobile single adult culture had evolved very rapidly as an adaptive response to the changing globalized socioeconomic environment.

All this raises the following questions concerning social change:

1. How rapidly is social change occurring?
2. How much of the psychosocial change within the young urban mobile single adult culture is occurring beyond the purview of the research community?
3. How can research methods that worked reasonable well for capturing incremental psycho-behavioral and sociocultural change be redesigned to capture rapidly-changing, postmodern styles of affiliation that take place within today's acceleration society?

Beyond these questions, it is significant that this project confirmed that the guidelines and milestones for marriage have changed for a substantial portion of young urban adults. This is not a minor change, and researchers in the social sciences need to understand this and make adjustments. This, of course, might be difficult to accept

because it is natural to hold on to what is familiar in times of stress. But regardless of people's hopes and wishes, the socioeconomic order of the last century has evolved, and the some psychological understandings from that era regarding affiliative relationships do not always apply in a compelling fashion to today's young urban mobile single adults.

Yet the generational paradigmatic divide between the older researcher and the youthful participant will increase if the speed of socioeconomic change keeps increasing. This is why some researchers in the social sciences might well benefit by identifying as ethnographers (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999) who are exploring the young adult and adolescent world. This point of view allows the participants to automatically be the experts on their own culture. The researcher in the current study found that adopting an ethnographer's viewpoint created a research advantage for working with the young adult participants. Most importantly, it allowed an immediate sense of rapport to arise and jell. This made the research interviews very productive.

The fact that it was demonstrated that friendship groups act as a major emotional support mechanism for young urban adults also has important implications for social change. What is most significant is that attachment bonding has been displaced from potential marriage partners onto a group of peers as a *modus vivendi* for not having committed romantic partners until age 30 or beyond. This bonding acts as a device to control stress and normalize ambivalence towards marriage. The friendship group is also a social mechanism wherein the participants reported learning the art of intimate communication. The participants expected to apply the skills they learn in their friendship groups to building intimate relationships with future long-term romantic partners.

The depth of the participants' sincerity concerning the issues of communication, intimacy, and friendship was quite impressive. Also impressive was the idea that the participants are part of a global urban cohort of young adults who continue to problem-solve such contradictory issues as intimacy versus avoidance in romantic and sexual relationships. They are also developing methods of intimate communication that maximize the potential of new technologies. The telecommunication technology is one of the tools wherein the vocabulary of the young urban mobile single adult culture becomes established. That vocabulary, in turn, has helped to formalize their generational identity.

Recommendations for Action

The institutions and professions that could benefit from the recommended actions are social scientists and clinicians, religious and family-oriented organizations, and public and private human relations (HR) experts. Those recommendations follow below.

Social Scientists and Clinicians

It is recommended that social scientists reexamine and update their vocabulary and conceptualizations concerning young adults. Last century's concepts do not always apply in a meaningful fashion to their behaviors. Many young adults communicate within and think in terms of virtual realities across globalized human networks, including intimate friendship networks. Social scientists and clinicians would also benefit from becoming more familiar with the major shift that is taking place in the Western romantic relationship paradigms. Movement appears to be away from the in-love passionate romance style of partnering and towards an intimate communication style involving cautious commitment.

When setting up projects involving young adult populations, attachment researchers would benefit by acknowledging the friendship network bonding process. As discovered herein, friendship-network emotional support is often substituted for that of romantic partners. This appears to contradict Erikson's (1968) lifespan model of development. Friendship network bonding, however, is a key aspect of the young urban mobile single adult culture wherein some individuals are ambivalent about long-term romantic partnerships and marriage.

It is also recommended that social science researchers study the possibility of using systems theory to discover underlying areas of agreement between competing theoretical approaches to studying human behavior. This allows the researcher to support discovery projects from multiple theoretical perspectives, as was the case within the current study.

Religious and Family Oriented Organizations

It is important for religious and family-oriented organizations understand that young adults are not rebelling against family values by waiting to marry at an older age. They have merely changed the timelines by which young urban adults organize their lives in order to effectively establish functional families.

It is hypothesized herein that the friendship relationship between partners is what allows them to feel comfortable enough with their relationships so that they consider marriage as an option in a rapidly changing, high-stress postmodern environment. It follows that family-oriented organizations would benefit by taking this into account. This is because friendships may be the tie that binds young urban adults together into long-

term romantic partnerships and commitment to childrearing, more so than in-love passionate romance.

Human Relations

Those in the field of both private and public HR would benefit from understanding the important socioeconomic and psycho-behavioral issues that concern young urban mobile singles. An understanding of young adult lifestyles issues involving decision-making along the road to having an adult sense of personal agency should be incorporated into HR training. The friendship network model of emotional support also needs to be better understood for what it might offer for increasing workforce creativity, productivity, and emotional wellbeing.

Dissemination of the Results

The researcher expects to give presentations concerning the issues relevant to romantic relationships that were turned up during this study. The researcher also expects to disseminate the results via media outlets. This would involve submitting short essays written in everyday language to popular publications that are open to publishing information about modern young adult culture. The results could be included in a book concerning romantic relationship. The researcher will also present a final version of the findings to the stakeholder, Mensa USA, Incorporated. This stakeholder was so kind in allowing the researcher to initiate a focus group using Mensa young adult participants at the 2007 Annual Gathering.

Recommendations for Further Study

Young urban mobile single adult culture is not well described in the psychological literature. The research has not kept abreast with the rapidly evolving nature of developmental, identity, and socioeconomic issues that young adults face within today's global technocratic environment. This includes new styles of affiliative interactions involving friendship, romance, and sexuality, as well as ambivalence towards long-term partnering. One solution to this problem would be to employ more phenomenological-based studies to make a full accounting for the behaviors relevant to affiliative relationships, lifespan development, and identity formation within the young urban mobile single adult cohort. Such studies would benefit from employing the research perspective of an ethnographer entering a foreign culture.

Such exploratory investigations might include ones that make a thorough investigation of the impact of friendship networks on the maintenance of young adult wellbeing. If stress is reduced through friendship affiliation, so should depression and anxiety. If this hypothesis were to hold up under closer scrutiny, then clinical psychological assessments of client mental health might someday include an understanding of the type and limits of the emotional support that young adult consumers receive from their friends.

Reflections on the Research Process

In carrying out this discovery project, the researcher approached the participants as an ethnographer approaching a new population. Despite that cognitive template, he had to make an emotional adjustment when he found that the participants' cultural

environment was much more different from his own than initially expected. This included generational differences in behaviors and the attributions placed on affiliative behaviors, including difference approaches to commitment, marriage, and childrearing.

The entire process pushed the researcher to examine his personal values, as well as his beliefs about the subject under study, friendship in heterosexual romantic relationships. He had expected that he would find that young adults had well-developed friendship relationships with their lovers. Yet none of the volunteers were married, and they turned to their friendship networks for emotional support when under stress. Thus, attachment bonds within friendship groups appear to function in a similar fashion to attachment bonds previously delegated to primary caregivers and long-term romantic partners. This seemed to be a result of the participants' turning away from the in-love passionate romantic style of partner selection used by their parents.

The researcher perhaps might be biased and overstating the case for these changes. Yet he was somewhat startled with the similarity of the results from the contrast study undertaken in a different region of the United States. In all appearances, the young urban mobile single adult culture has a coherent structure across urban areas within the United States and even across national borders in the Western World. Moreover, it is startling to realize that young adults may have left some of the traditional prejudices and prejudices of Western culture behind as they adapted to a globalized technocratic social-cultural environment.

The idea that the 20th -century milestones and customs regarding romantic and sexual relationships are being replaced by guidelines discovered within friendship groups

and by individual personal choices was a lot for the researcher to cognitively accommodate. Yet it is interesting that the participants said that their values may not be much different than those of their parent but that their methods of acting on those values have changed.

Finally, the researcher saw that an important research issue is the ethical promotion of values, including human dignity, diversity, choice, as well as informed consent and freedom from harm (APA, 1992). For example, the critical research methods used herein let the participants be coconstructors of the results of the project. It follows that, if these results are accepted by the research community, then the participants can be seen as charting their destiny by helping to frame the discussion concerning their generation's behaviors within the literature.

Discovery Process Limitations

The results are limited in their generalizability due to an apparent self-selection process among the participants. The participants all appeared to be informed, educated, and to identify with upward mobility or professional-career orientations. Being clear about issues related to their young urban mobile single adult peer group lifestyle, the participants all seemed to want to contribute to the psychological research literature. Other young adults from different sociocultural backgrounds may not experience the young adult world the same way as the participants did. Moreover, other young adults may not be as expressive or adept in their communications concerning social conventions and psychological ideas.

Furthermore, other young adults may not live within the young urban mobile single adult cultural niche from which the participants were drawn. Thus, they may not have experienced transitional adulthood, where the transition to full adulthood is a lengthy process and one's choices govern the development of one's identity (Arnett, 2004). Because of being in or having traversed transitional adulthood, the participants may therefore only be representative of no more than 40% of the young adult population within the United States (Fussell & Furstenberg, 2005). These issues, all of which arose during the discovery process, placed unforeseen limits on the generalizability of the results.

The results would also need to be tested with a larger number of research participants in order to more fully establish their reliability. This could include the use of survey methods, provided that a researcher was careful to use the vocabulary and understandings relevant to the young urban mobile single adult culture.

Conclusion

This qualitative discovery project used phenomenological (Girogi, 1985) methods to investigate the problem of a lack of information concerning how friendship is experienced within heterosexual romantic relationships. For the primary West Coast study and the Birmingham, Alabama, contrast study, focus groups and individual interviews were held with single young urban adult participants between the ages of 18 and 29. Data saturation was reached early. The participants in both studies viewed heterosexual romantic friendship as the ideal partnering style for future long-term romantic relationships, marriage, and childrearing. The mutuality of a best-friends

relationship between romantic partners was seen as allowing for frank, intimate communication, equity in partner power, and non-controlling attitudes that encourage partner developmental growth and emotional maturation.

In referring to the ideal future relationship style, the participants were not speaking about their lived experiences involving heterosexual romantic friendship within serious partnerships. Only two of the 16 participants reported any lived experiences and vignettes in this area. Therefore, the null set was supported. Heterosexual romantic friendship was not a basic component of the participants' relationship because of the transitive and ambiguous nature of such affiliations. Thus, it was impossible to follow the proposed guidelines for this phenomenological study and present narratives of lived experiences involving heterosexual romantic-friendship relationships when there was a dearth of such experiences reported.

However, it was noteworthy that the participants believed that in the ideal future romance a friendship affiliation should take precedence over a couple's romantic or the sexual relationship. The key issue here is that friends would be expected to support and accept each other's emotional development over time. On the other hand, partners bound simply by an in-love passionate romantic tie were not seen as being able to provide support for each other's developmental and emotional changes.

Regardless of the null hypothesis being supported, the data regarding the sociocultural stage on which the participants' romantic relationships were played out was analyzed. This was a key ingredient within the original proposal because it was

anticipated that, regardless of the findings, this information would be necessary for interpreting the results.

A key issue arising from that background data was that the lack of common functional guidelines and milestones for romantic relationships led the participants to have ambiguous feelings concerning long-term relationships, marriage, and childrearing. As a consequence, the fulfillment of the need for familial emotional support among the participants was increasingly displaced to and satisfied by peer-group friendship networks. It is here one turns for intimacy until one is ready to tackle the search for a long-term partner. As reported by the research participants, this is a common cohort phenomenon for today's young urban mobile single adults.

Prior research (Arnett, 2004, 2005, 2007) has shown that in 21st-century postmodern urban environments, there are no set milestones for establishing a full subjective sense of adulthood. The researcher in the current study found, however, that the mastering of intimate communication skills was the one developmental process that the participants did recognize that was necessary for the establishment of long-term relationships. It follows that the participants reported learning intimate communication skills as they cycle through romantic relationships. They expected to employ these skills in future long-term romantic relationships.

They also reported learning intimate communication skills within their friendship networks. It appeared that such skills, and the ability to successfully support oneself economically, is what the participants believed eventually marks them off as having achieved the status of full adulthood. As others have found (Rosa, 2003), this cycling

through relationships at a faster pace, in contrast to previous generations, was reported as being a major component of the speeding up of social, economic, technological, and cultural processes that has been evident since the mid-18th century.

The participants also reported feeling ambivalent about the in-love passionate romance style of relationships that is popular with their parents' generation. They were unable to define explicitly a new model that is replacing the old one. They said they were in the process of discovering it. They did know, however, that they were working towards intimate communications, and that they expected any long-term partners and future spouses to treat them with the mutuality of a best friends' relationship.

This evolving model of romantic relationships, tentatively called an *intimate communication style* of romantic partnering, grew out of a rapidly changing, increasingly globalized, technocratic socioeconomic environment. Successful and meaningful living in this environment requires new affiliative and technical skills. Therefore, it is logical that some young people living in this sociocultural niche would not necessarily bother to master the relationship styles nor attempt to fulfill the social milestones and priorities of their parents' generation.

The participants acknowledged that the research vocabulary of the 20th-century cannot fully account for the behaviors of young urban mobile single adults. Some words have new meanings and others are not longer used. This argues for the use of new qualitative discovery methods for studying young urban mobile single adult romantic and sexual relationships. It is only by speaking with young adults that the new, evolving vocabularies can be understood.

In regards to young adult romantic relationships, studies need to begin with the question: How do you define a romantic relationship? This discovery project appears to have established that this question cannot be answered by reviewing the literature. Psychologists simply do not know the answer because young adults are currently in the process of establishing two conflicting styles of romantic relationships: an intimate communication style as well as an avoidant style of partnering. The avoidant style emphasizes sex without attachment or romantic involvement. Alternatively, the intimate communication model is based on the understanding that *intimacy in action* is the new hope for the young urban mobile single adult population.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

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Subject: Billy Kidd - Notification of Approval to Conduct Research
From: research@waldenu.edu
Date: Tue, December 19, 2006 11:00 am
To: bkidd001@win.waldenu.edu
Cc: lseligma@win.waldenu.edu ([more](#))
Priority: Normal
Options: [View Full Header](#) | [View Printable Version](#)

Mr. Kidd:

This email is to serve as your notification that Walden University has approved your dissertation proposal and your application to the Institutional Review Board. As such, you are approved by Walden University to conduct research.

Please contact the Research Office at research@waldenu.edu if you have any questions.

Congratulations!

Jeff Ford
Research Coordinator
Walden University

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APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

Friendship in Romantic Relationships

You are invited to participate in a research study that explores how romance is experienced in heterosexual romantic relationships. Your input is important for the successful completion of this project. This study relies on firsthand information from participants like you who are aged 18- to 30-years old. It is hoped that new understandings will arise from this investigation that will help psychologists to better understand romantic relationships. There are no wrong or right answers. What you think and feel is what is important.

In order to participate in a 90-minute individual or group interview for this study, it is necessary that you read and sign this form. Your name will appear in no other place within this study or within the published results. Participants' identity will not be disclosed to anyone. The audio recordings made of discussions will be transcribed and then erased. Information that could be used to identify participants will be deleted from the transcripts. The records of this study will be kept in a locked file and will be available only to the researcher. Small quotations of the interview dialogue may be used in the write-up and subsequent reports to demonstrate the methods used in analyzing the conversation data.

Your participation is voluntary. You may change your mind about participating. If you experience stress or anxiety during the interview, say something. You may ask for a

break or leave at any time. Quitting this project will not affect your relationship with Walden University. You may refuse to answer any question.

There are no foreseeable risks from participating in this project. Participation is voluntary, and participants will not be paid. There will, however, be the opportunity to express yourself and share your thoughts and feelings concerning romance. *Please do not discuss issues that you feel would embarrass you or make you feel uncomfortable* You are under no obligation to discuss your personal sexual history.

If you have questions concerning this project, please contact the following people.

Questions that you have right now can be answered by the doctoral candidate, Billy Kidd, who is conducting this project. He can also be reached later at P.O. Box 9099, Portland, OR 97207. Dr. Linda Seligman is the faculty supervisor for this project and can be reached at lseligma@WaldenU.edu. The research participant advocate for Walden University is Leilani Endicott. She can be reached at 1-800-925-3368 or at IRB@WaldenU.edu.

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered. I consent to participate in this study.

Check here if it is all right for the researcher to call you one time to review and clarify the ideas you talked about today. If you check this box, please leave your phone number here: _____

Printed name of participant: _____

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

A copy of this form should be made available to you when you sign it. Thank you for your participation. Billy Kidd, Walden University doctoral student.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

I would like to thank you for coming today. I believe it is important for people to have a better understanding of romantic relationships, and I am hoping this project will help to clarify some issues concerning romance. This interview will last about an hour and a half. If you feel stressed, need a break, or want to leave, do not hesitate to say something. It will not affect your relationship with me or with Walden University. What we discuss here today is completely confidential. Your name and any information that might reveal who you are will be deleted from the transcript of the audio recording of this meeting. I'm hoping that you can discuss your personal experiences involving romantic relationships, how they happen, what you felt, what you expect to happen in the future. There are no wrong or right answers. What is important is how you think and feel. If one of my questions does not make sense given your reality, or you think I'm missing the point completely, please feel free to tell me your thoughts. I am here to learn. Do you have any questions before we start?

1. What sorts of problems do young adults have today regarding romantic relationships their parent's generation did not have?
2. From your experience, how have the rules of romance changed?
3. How has money, employment, education, and housing issues affected your romantic relationships?

4. Can you describe a situation where a dating or married couple seemed like they were best friends?
5. Can you describe a situation where you felt your romantic partner was your friend?
How does this sort of relationship come about?
6. Can you describe a situation when your partner did not feel like your friend? How does this sort of relationship come about?
7. How does friendship affect communications and decision making within a romantic relationship? Can you give an example?
8. When you feel like your partner is your friend, how does that affect your emotional relations—you know, the affection, sense of security, jealousy, and anger?
9. How are the understandings and meanings of the relationship different when romantic partners are friends?
10. Can you tell me what the advantages are of being friends with your romantic partner?
What about disadvantages?
11. How do romantic relationships end when romantic partners are friends? Can you give an example? Or when they are not friends? Can you give an example?
12. Is there anything we missed that might help me to understand romantic relationships as they occur in your world?

Debriefing:

I would like to thank you for participating in this discussion. You do not have to just get up and go. If you would like to stay for a few minutes and discuss your lingering thoughts

or feelings, please feel free to do so. What's going on? Do you feel okay with how this turned out? How do you feel about the process you just experienced?

APPENDIX D: DISTRESSED PARTICIPANT PROTOCOL

The protocol that will be followed in the unlikely event that a research participant becomes emotionally distressed will be the following:

1. The participant will not be left alone.
2. If the danger is not immediate, the participant will be furnished with a local contact for mental health care. There will be a referral list ready to hand out if necessary.
3. If there seems to be immediate moderate stress that can be dealt with in a dialogic and rational fashion, the local crises center will be called in order to engage the participant.

Local contact numbers are available nationwide through the National Hopeline Network (1-800-SUICIDE, 1-800-784-2433).

4. If the researcher is concerned for the participant's immediate safety, emergency services will be called to the site immediately via 911.
5. Walden University's research office will be notified.

APPENDIX E: LETTER OF COOPERATION MENSA U.S.A, INC.

Irv Freeman
Chairman, Research Review Committee
American Mensa, Ltd.
irvfreeman@irvfreeman.com
412-235-1734
412-235-1735

Mr. Billy Kidd
P.O. Box 9099
Portland, OR 97207
Sent via e-mail attachment to: bkidd001@waldenu.edu

RE: Friendship in Heterosexual Romantic Relationships

Dear Mr. Kidd,

I am very pleased to advise you that the Research Review Committee of American Mensa, Ltd., has approved the above-captioned research study, as submitted.

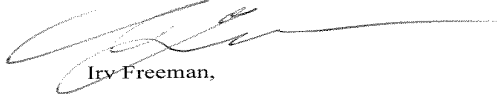
The approved research protocol contemplates recruitment of Mensans into a focus group during the Regional Gathering (RG) in Los Angeles in February 2007. Please note that although approval by the Research Review Committee was a necessary pre-condition for that research activity, this approval does not compel the local organizers of the RG to permit the research activity to occur as part of their RG. In order to actually undertake the research, you must also obtain the approval and cooperation of the local group that sponsors the Regional Gathering. In connection with that, please note the suggestion by one Committee member that the focus group be scheduled as late as possible during the RG in order to minimize any negative effect of participation on participants' enjoyment of the RG.

During our e-mail consideration of your project, some Committee members offered comments or suggestions concerning your project (and one offered a detailed critique). These comments are enclosed for your information.

Please note that this approval is contingent upon the continued accuracy of all of the materials that you submitted as attachments to your e-mail message to me of December 28, 2006. Any revisions to those materials must be reviewed and approved by the Committee in order for this approval to remain valid.

Please accept my best wishes for success in this research project and for the ultimate approval of your dissertation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Irv Freeman,

cc. Jean Becker, AMC Liaison
Jill Beckham, Staff Liaison
Desiree Sagray, RG Chair, Greater Los Angeles Area Mensa
Eugenia Schneider, Local Secretary, Greater Los Angeles Area Mensa
Greg Timmers, Director of Science and Education

APPENDIX F: INVITATIONS TO PARTICIPATE

Individual Interviewee--Portland Weekly Paper Bulletins:

Research Project on Romantic Relationship

This is a research project exploring the dynamics of heterosexual romantic relationships for a dissertation in clinical psychology. Individuals are invited to discuss their ideas concerning romance within the context of an interview format. Participants must be between the ages of 18 to 30. They will meet with the researcher for a single 90-minute individual interview to discuss issues regarding the relationship between friendship and romance. The research parameters require that participants must be in good physical health and have no current major medical or mental health issues. Participation is voluntary, and there is no payment or remuneration.

This study will provide participants with a chance to express their thoughts and feelings regarding romantic relationships. The findings of this study are expected to help people understand how to add more depth and meaning to their romantic relationships.

Please call the Research Project at 503-473-3824 if you are interested. All information will be confidential, and your identity will not be revealed to anyone.

Focus Group—Mensa and Portland Weekly Paper Bulletins:

Research Project on Romantic Relationship

This is a research project exploring the dynamics of heterosexual romantic relationships for a dissertation in clinical psychology. Individuals are invited to discuss their ideas concerning romance within the context of a focus group discussion. Participants must be between the ages of 18 to 30. They will meet as a group with the researcher for a single 90-minute meeting to discuss issues regarding the relationship between friendship and romance. The research parameters require that participants must be in good physical health and have no current major medical or mental health issues. Participation is voluntary, and there is no payment or remuneration.

This study will provide participants with a chance to express their thoughts and feelings regarding romantic relationships. The findings of this study are expected to help people understand how to add more depth and meaning to their romantic relationships.

Please call the Research Project at 503-473-3824 if you are interested. All information will be confidential, and your identity will not be revealed to anyone.

APPENDIX G: REVISED RESEARCH PROTOCOL

Is it okay to record this? You can leave at any time. Don't say anything that will embarrass you. Your name and any information that might reveal who you are will be deleted from the transcript of the audio recording of this meeting. There are no wrong or right answers, and people will disagree on what we talk about. All points of view need to be expressed. Don't hold back. Do you have any questions before we start?

1. Are the rules of romance clear for your generation, or is everybody at a loss about what's next? What one's choices are?
2. How are young people's romantic relationships more friendly or less friendly today in comparison to their parents' romantic relationships?
3. Do you have to choose between hanging with friends, having fun, being single, or having a long-term lover? You know, in terms of the demands that your lover makes on you conflicting with the demands of your friends?
4. Imagine sometime in the future. You are best friends with your lover. Is this the ideal that people in your generation strive towards, or does this miss the point of an ideal romantic relationship?
5. Are there simply too many options about what to do with your life that you really can't take romance too seriously?

6. Has the bar been raised so high that young people almost can't get married? You know, in terms of what you'd expect from your partner as well as the circumstances, like jobs and income?
7. Whatever happened to marriage and commitment? What does the idea of commitment mean today anyway?
8. How does caring about your lover—about each other--fit into all this?
9. What sorts of problems do young adults have with romantic relationships that their parent's generation did not have?
10. What did we miss? Is there anything new or different or changed that stands out about romantic relationships today that I need to know in order to explain them in a research paper?

Debriefing:

I would like to thank you for participating in this discussion. You do not have to just get up and go. If you would like to stay for a few minutes and discuss your lingering thoughts or feelings, please feel free to do so. What's going on?

Do you feel okay with how this turned out?

How do you feel about the process you just experienced?

Those want to get up and go can do that now.

If someone has questions about the research project, the field of psychology, or doing a PhD, stick around and we can also talk about that.

APPENDIX H: SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT

Focus Group Three

Four participants and the researcher (pp. 13-18 of 48 pages).

Researcher: Can you tell me more about this circle of friends? How they're involved in your life, and your decisions, and your spare time, or your things, and— I mean, is it a type . . .

Participant 1: It's the family I choose as opposed to the family I grew up with.

Participant 2: Exactly.

Researcher: You too?

Participant 2: Yeah, there's a very familial feeling, definitely. I actually get along with my family fairly well, but still, you know, like your friends are exactly the family you choose.

Researcher: A familial feeling, I like that. A familial feeling with friends . . .

Participant 2: And I think—even though I get along with my family, that's a . . . Maybe... I don't know if it's a generational thing, or as you get older, I look at family more as an idea than a concrete set of people, and I really offended my cousin . . .

Participant 3: Oh, yes!

[laughter]

Participant 2: ...when I said that. Because I live three thousand miles from my family, I was developing a family where I lived. Apparently, she took this to mean I like them better than I like her.

Participant 1: But it's not. It's different!

Participant 4: It's not! There's this feeling of mutual support, and . . .

Participant 3: Yes!

Researcher: Go ahead.

Participant 2: Oh, I'm done.

Participant 4: For me, it's been a lot of the emotional support I don't get from my family, even though they care about me, and we do things together. But my parents don't have emotional intimacy. They don't. My dad still doesn't know what to get my mom. My mom still doesn't know what to get my dad. For the holidays or birthdays or anniversaries or anything. They keep shooting in the dark. That's a model like a book. I mean, it's like, my mom will be like, "I don't know what to get dad. Maybe I'll get him a tool." And it's like . . .

[laughter]

Participant 4: It's like, "Come on!"

Participant 3: Yeah!

Participant 4: They do to that to me. But intimacy is what I crave.

Researcher: They're both able to avoid each other?

Participant 4: Absolutely, they do. They've got it down to a science. Thirty seven years worth.

Participant 2: For my mom's birthday, my dad gave me money, and said, "Can you go pick out a card for me?"

Participant 4: Yeah! Dad will do that to us to for mom!

[laughter]

Participant 2: And like, there's only so much for me. It's not only emotional intimacy, but it's physical proximity. I'm three thousand miles from my family . . .

Researcher: Yeah.?

Participant 2: It's hard to give a hug through the telephone.

Participant 1: Right.

Participant 4: I left home at 16 to go to college early. So I did a lot of my growing up, you know, seven hours from home. So I would only like see my family once every like

two months. So it was really . . . the familial feeling was the community of students around me, you know?

Researcher: Do you think there's also more emphasis on developing this alternative? Our friends, our familial friends becoming family, because you know you're really not rushing into having, creating a family of your own?

Participant 4: Well, that's interesting.

Participant 2: You don't have to . . .

[at same time] You don't have to . . .

Participant 3: Yes, you do! It's lonely if you don't have friends to support you.

Participant 1: Yeah!

Researcher: It's lonely if you don't?

Participant 3: I remember growing up, my mom saying, "Don't worry about getting married before you're thirty." She had gotten married before she got out of college. She was engaged in her senior year. She said, "Spend your twenties finding yourself." And I really liked that. And I guess part of what I'm trying to divide is that I was...that mom and dad always programmed parts of my childhood growing up. There was always activities. There was always stuff to do. There's always been the push for me to constantly stay busy. And to me it's kind of like, that's not what I want in a relationship. I don't want to force it. It's one of the reasons why speed dating to me seems so foreign. It's like you trying to force something. It's like I've already jam packed my schedule. I don't want to do that. I'm trying to get stuff out of my schedule, and that's so...I don't even know where I was going with that!

[laughter]

Researcher: That's okay.

Participant 2: You really don't like speed dating!

Participant 3: Well, I don't, but it's that kind...it's the forcing, or the bar scene, or something like that. It's like I'd rather bump into someone in an activity I enjoy doing. If I find a relationship along the way, great!

Participant 2: Your friends are the people who, unlike your family, will go out with you to a diner at two in the morning . . .

Participant 1: Yes!

Participant 2: Because you call and say 'Do you want to?'

Participant 1: Yes!

Participant 2: And I guess maybe in a way it's because our generation lives on a different clock than our parents?

Participant 4: Yeah.

Researcher: That's really interesting.

Participant 2: And that's why you need friends because it's different all around . . .

Researcher: Can you explain . . . ?

Participant 2: Another clock? Can I explain it? No!

Participant 1: Yeah! Absolutely!

Researcher: You went right over my head here.

Participant 2: Oh, I can. I love the concept of flex work. I love the concept of flexible hours. Don't say I have to be to work from nine to five. Tell me I have to get x amount of stuff done prior to this deadline. Tell me what I have to do to get there, and then let me figure it out.

Participant 1: Yeah.

Participant 2: Let me schedule my time because maybe one day I'm going to sleep in 'til noon and then I'm going to work until 6am.

Participant 1: Let me do my online discussion for class at two in the morning . . .

Participant 4: Yeah.

Participant 1: Rather than having to sit in a class room for four hours a week.

Participant 3: Yeah!

Researcher: And you can—online?

Participant 1: That's what I'm doing now, actually. I'm taking a couple of online classes.

Researcher: Well, good for you.

Participant 1: And I do all my homework in the middle of the night because . . .

Researcher: That's wonderful.

Participant 1: It's so much easier because everybody else is asleep!

Participant 4: Our world is so virtual. We can really do anything we want to, any time we want to.

Participant 3: Yeah.

Participant 2: There are no time zones. There's no even watching the sun come up or set for some people. You fall into a natural rhythm with your friends, and it's really weird how it works. It's not something that's forced. It's not like I'm only going to talk to you if you're up between these hours. Because sometimes I'm a morning person, and sometimes I don't go to bed until noon the next day. It just really depends sometimes on how those two collide.

Participant 3: Right! And . . .

Participant 4: It's just the idiosyncrasies, and some of my friends get it and some of them don't. But we still just kind of fit because there's a respect there of it, and it's like, 'Well that's just him...'

Participant 2: Yeah, it's like if you're studying for finals and you call a friend at two o'clock in the morning, and say "Do you want to go out and get some coffee?" Usually there's somebody that's going to be there and be awake and want to go. Whereas my parents don't want to go out and get coffee at two in the morning.

Participant 4: No. No. It's less rigid than our parents.

Participant 1: Yes.

Participant 2: I don't see relationships being less rigid for us. I like the way that you say rules are too confining. Guidelines would be nice, of kind of what's appropriate and inappropriate.

APPENDIX J: DEMOGRAPHIC FACT SHEET

The information provided here will be used to help me describe the background dynamics of overall group of people that I interview. Leave blank any question you do not want to answer. The information provided here will be kept completely confidential. Please do not put your name on this sheet.

What is your age? _____

What is your level of education? Circle one: 8th 9th 10th 11th 12th/HS/GED AA BA
MS/MA PhD MD Other _____

Are you in school now? Circle one: yes no

Are you employed? Circle one: yes no

If you work, what kind of work do you do? _____

What is your individual income range? (\$) 0-25,000 25,001-50,000 50,001-75,000

75,001-100,000

Who do you live with? Circle one: alone roommate(s) lover spouse parents other

Comments: _____.

How many children do you have? Circle one: 0 1 2 3 4 5

Comments: _____

Are you currently involved in a serious romantic relationship? Y N

Comments: _____

How many serious romantic relationships have you been involved in? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

7 or more.

Comments: _____

CURRICULUM VITAE

Education

Portland State University: M.S. Counseling (1999)
Portland State University: B.S. Psychology (1995)
Psychiatry Department, Oregon Health Sciences University: Addiction Counseling
Diploma (1994)

Certificates

National Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRCC 00038599)
National Certified Addictions Counselor II (NAADAC 012975)
Oregon Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor (CADC III)
Oregon Professional Counselor Supervision Certificates I, II, & III

Clinical Work Experience

Psychologist in Training/Practicum: Homestreet-Banyan Tree, Beaverton, OR.
Community-based mental health clinic. Outpatient adult population with chronic mental illnesses.

Duties: Psychological evaluations including neuropsychological screening, treatment planning, and therapy for clients presenting with complex, multiple diagnoses. Consultation with psychiatrists, supervisors, and case managers (6/06 to 12/06).

Behavioral Health Therapist: CareMark Behavioral Health (Legacy and Adventist Hospitals, Portland, OR). *Hospital-based mental health clinic.*

Duties: Inpatient and outpatient adult and adolescent chemical dependency assessment, treatment planning, group and individual therapy. Adolescent family-client behavioral contracts, plus couples and family counseling. Educational lectures. (8/01 to 2/04).

Assistant to Clinical Supervisor: Portland State University Graduate Education Counseling Clinic. *University-based mental health clinic.*

Duties: As a masters-level employee, provide feedback to practicum students at on-campus mental health clinic (9/99 to 6/01).

Dual Diagnosis Therapist: Psychiatry Department, Oregon Health Sciences University, Behavioral Health Clinic. *University-based mental health clinic.*

Duties: Intake, evaluation, treatment planning, group and individual therapy for dually-diagnosed and chronically-mentally-ill clients. Counseling clients with chronic pain, gambling addiction, cluster B personality disorders, and other special needs. Also, couples and family counseling. Teaching group therapy to interns. Anger-management program manager. Coordinator for the Occupational Drivers License Program. (9/93 to 6/99).

Methadone Maintenance Counselor: Allied Health Service, Portland, OR. *Community-based methadone maintenance clinic.*

Duties: Individual and group counseling, as well as assessment and treatment planning with clients in a methadone maintenance program 6/94 to 10/94).

Social Service Related Experiences

Program Evaluation: Reed College Health & Counseling Center, Portland, OR, 1996. Part of team that designed, implemented, and wrote program evaluation to support 1997 budget request.

Honor Societies

Member Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society for Psychology Students

Scholarships

USA Funds Scholarship Winner 2006

Presentations

Mensa USA Annual Gathering (7-7-2007), Birmingham, Alabama. Romance: Decoding the Mystery. A discussion of how to move away from being confused about romantic behaviors.

Mensa Georgia Regional Gathering (9-22-2007), Atlanta, Georgia. Putting Magic into Romance. A discussion of how psychoneuroendocrine biobehavioral systems control physical arousal and psychological interest in sex and romance. Plus information was presented concerning how a person can impact those systems by changing behaviors.