The relationship between Family Cohesion and Intimacy in Dating Relationship: A Study Based on Attachment and Exchange Theories

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Abstract

This study aims at studying the relationship between family cohesion and intimacy in dating relationship among dating couples in Hong Kong. It also examines the gender differential in the relationship in a dataset including 22 pairs of dating partners. Existing researches tend to use attachment theory to explain the relationship. This research examines the relevance of exchange theory to the relationships as well. Comparison of the effect of two theories on the relationship is included in the study. It is expected that attachment has a positive effect on the relationship while exchange factors have negative ones. Results of current study showed the preliminary effects among the variables. Gender differential was found in the relationship. Unexpected findings denoted that the relationship was stronger among male respondents. Results indicated that an indirect effect existed among female and this perhaps due to the intimacy in female can be influenced by many factors. All in all, it is found that exchange theory provides a better explanation for relationship than attachment theory. Additionally, the different nature between family and dating relationship was found. It is suggested that time spent together is essential in romantic relationship. The findings are applicable to related programs such as premarital counseling to raise program effectiveness.

Introduction

There is always a saying that family influences the development of its children. Children learn everything in family when they grow up. Interpersonal skills, social rules and ways of problem solving, are learnt from parent and family interactions. In other words, family socialized children's behaviors and values that exerting great impact on their later romantic relationship. In contrast, poor family relationships may cause unwanted behaviors among children. This kind of social learning can also apply to intimate dating relationship. Researchers have discovered that relationship between parents and children is significantly associated with adult romantic relationship. According to a study done in 2011, parent-child relationship and parenting style significantly influenced satisfaction with romantic relationship. It suggested that there is a relationship between the high quality parent-child relationship and high quality romantic relationship (Liu and Mao 2011). Nevertheless, a study stated that parental divorce is positively related with divorcement in offspring's marriage. It is shown that family indeed has a huge influence on children's intimate relationship. As a result, it is expected that a more in-depth understanding of the relationship among family and intimacy in dating relationship could be achieved through present study.

The current study is going to examine the relationship between family cohesion and intimacy in dating relationship, and to discover the influences of family cohesion on intimate dating relationship.

Research Questions

There are three research questions in this study:
1. Does family cohesion have an influence on intimate dating relationship?
2. Does gender make a difference in the relationship between family cohesion and

intimate dating relationship?
3. What are the relationships between attachment, time strains, family cohesion and intimacy?

Objectives
There are two objectives in this study:
1. To examine the relationship between family cohesion and intimate dating relationship in Hong Kong
2. To investigate whether there is any gender differential between family cohesion and intimate dating relationship

Literature Review

Family Cohesion
Family can be broadly defined as the degree of togetherness and emotional bonding that family members have towards one another (Vandeleur *et al*. 2009). It refers to the intergenerational relationship between family members whether there is warm, close and emotional support among members. Green and Werner (1996) suggested that family with high cohesion should include nurturance, warmth, time spent together, consistency and physical intimacy. It indicated that if a family has high cohesion, there is high frequency of contact between family members, emotional and affective support will figure within family to create a loving environment for a long time.

In addition, the relationship with family members is a quite important experience for an individual's development in later social interaction and interpersonal skills. A family provided a safe place for individuals to try to develop emotional and physical closeness with others (Roming and Bakken 1992). This kind of development is important for individuals in other social interactions, especially in romantic relationship.

Intimacy in Dating Relationship
The term "intimacy" is a subjective word in dating relationship. Different individuals may have their own interpretation of the word owing to their background, gender or educational level. Some may think that intimacy is describing the affection between the couple; some may view it as trust. As this term has multiple definitions, a number of researchers tried to give a definition to it. Some researchers defined intimacy as "close association or friendship involves informal warmth, openness, and sharing" (Eshleman and Clake 1978 cited Moss and Schwebel 1993) and "the feeling of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness in loving relationship" (Sternberg 1986).

However, these definitions were criticized as unclear and lacking in operational clarity (Moss and Schwebel 1993). After conducting some literature reviews and researches, Moss and his colleague (1993) suggested that intimacy in a romantic relationship is determined on the positive affective, level of commitment, physical closeness and cognition that they experiences with the partner in a mutual way. Five components were emphasized on the definition: commitment, affective intimacy, cognitive intimacy, physical intimacy and mutuality (Moss and Schwebel 1993).

In addition, some researchers defined intimacy in a similar way. Four components proposed by Hook *et al*. (2003). They are love and affection, personal validation, trust and self-disclosure (Hook *et al*. 2003).

Pervious researches on the influences of family cohesion in intimacy
Family served as a socialization agent
According to functionalism, one of the functions of family is to socialize their members. Miller and his colleagues (2009) proposed that families have great influences on individuals' value towards dating, mate selection and norms of dating behaviors. Vandeleur *et al.* (2009) also reported that in the development of interpersonal skills and social bonds, experiences of relationships with family members plays an important role. Social learning is one of the processes that lead to socialization. According to social learning theory, it is suggested that learning happened within a social context. Individuals are able to learn from observing and imitating others' behaviors (Engler 2008). Through watching and imitating, individuals learn new skills and behaviors. The experiences individual observed among family members, such as the way of problem solving, and the way they communicated in childhood, will serve as "a template for the nature and quality of later relationship" (Gray and Steinberg 1999). Based on the experiences, individual learns from family members, and retrieves those techniques or relationship styles when handling new relationships.

Kager and his colleagues (2000) proposed that people who have lower family cohesion are more likely to have lower quality of life and subjective well-being, and having more problems in social relationships. The result may imply that individuals who have lower family cohesion learned ineffective communication or interpersonal skills in their family. The skills thus affected individual's social interactions with others and hence caused problematic social functioning and relationships.

The daily interactions or nurturance of parents served as a mechanism shaping individual's interpersonal skills and their personality (Feldman *et al.* 1998). Researchers found that individual who grows in a cohesive family environment with authoritative parenting, which included high warmth, autonomy and suitable control, is relatively competent, psychologically healthy, and having good interpersonal skills and higher self-esteem in adolescence (Feldman *et al.* 1998). They are expected to set up and maintain a warm relationship later in life (Gary and Steinberg 1999).

The closeness and involvement among family members also advanced the interactions and relationships in other social contexts. High closeness and involvement in families usually processes mutual social support (Giordano *et al.* 2005). The socialized reciprocal support facilitated individual's relationship with others, which has a positive impact on dating relationship. Apart from social support, the socializing of responsibilities and obligations among family also affected the involvement and interaction within dating relationship (Giordano *et al.* 2005). This showed that family becomes a role model in affecting individuals' interactions with dating partners.

Moreover, family provided the expectation to individuals about what they might encounter in the society. The relationship of parents offered a template for individuals to learn intimacy. Through observing the interactions among their parents, individuals develop their expectation about the intimacy relationship. These expectations influence individuals' later romantic relationship with their partner. Some supportive findings have shown that individuals who perceived their parents to be happier had more positive attitudes toward their own marriages (Feldman *et al.* 1998).

To conclude, family serves as a socialization agent. The above findings indicate that individuals live in high cohesion family, which comprises warmth, autonomy and close emotional bonding between family members, are able to learn and develop good interaction and interpersonal skills within family. The socialization by family

developed their expectations about intimacy and facilitates individuals' social skills and psychological being, which they are able to evolve gratification from their later romance relationship (Feldman *et al*. 1998).

Gender Difference

The gender differential in intimacy is not a new issue nowadays; nevertheless, researchers didn't have a consistent conclusion.

Some studies proposed that a similar level of intimacy was found in both male and female in a relationship (Lang-Takac and Osterweil 1992). However, others suggested that the male and female have the same level of intimacy, yet the focus is different. For example, according to Steinberg study (1989), it stated that the focus of the female is on the emotional needs while the one of the male is about the shared activities or in terms of the time together. A similar result was also found in Roming and Bakken's study (1992). The result showed that there were gender differentials in family cohesion among adolescents. It proposed that adolescent girls with higher family cohesion were associated with larger desire for intimacy relationships with others and the time spending together with them. Although adolescent boys who satisfy with the cohesion within family reported having an association with increasing desire for affection in the above relationships, yet, the influences were quite little (Roming and Bakken 1992). The family cohesion among adolescent boys also has little influence on intimacy experienced from other relationships. In other words, family cohesion does not seem to have a strong influence on male's intimacy.

The inconsistent findings suggested that there are still areas to study on the gender differential in intimacy.

Although there are some studies indicating the relationship between family cohesion and its influences on children's further dating, most of the works were conducted from psychology perspectives. Many studies focused on only attachment theory or social learning theory. It may only provide a preliminary understanding of the topic. There are scant studies examining the situation from sociological perspective, which perhaps provide an alternative insight and angle for to understand the situation. The current study replicates previous research based on attachment theory and compares it with a sociological theory, exchange theory. By adding exchange theory, it is expected to provide a more comprehensive vision to understand the relationship between family cohesion and intimacy in dating relationship.

Moreover, research rarely recruits dating couples as participants. It is valuable to explore more insights among couples. In addition, research usually focuses on western countries and its findings seldom apply to Asian regions such as Hong Kong. For example, Rice and Mulkeen (1995) mentioned that the major limitation in their study was non-generalizable. Their study only can apply to Caucasians who mainly came from middle-to upper middle-class. In a different culture, the meaning of intimacy may differ.

Theoretical Framework

Attachment Theory

In existing literature, attachment theory served as a dominant theoretical model in explaining adolescent dating and romance (Furman *et al*. 1999). Attachment theory, proposed by Bowlby (1969), emphasizes the influences of parent-child communication and relationships on children's later relationships. The theory

suggested individuals developed their own attachment style based on the early relationships with parents or caregivers. The experiences in early relationships of an individual altered and shaped attachment systems and individuals later formed a foundation for their attachment style throughout the whole life. This kind of style not only applied within the family context, but is also able to transfer to other relationships such as romance relationship (Mikulincer and Shaver 2007). The system helped individuals to form their own view whether they are worthy to be loved and be cared by another or not, and whether their loved ones are trustworthy to meet their deeply emotional needs.

The theory proposed that attachment style will transfer to other social relationships, close relationship for example. It is suggested that when an individual received care, secure and trust from their parents, the person is more likely to have a secure attachment style (Dinero *et al.* 2008). As mentioned before, the attachment style influenced an individual's self-image and communication with others. Having a secure attachment style means the people are more likely to feel secure and trustful of their intimate partners as well. Hence, there is relatively high intimacy between individuals who have secure attachment style.

Although some researchers suggested that the influence of attachment on romantic relationship is an indirect effect and depends on other factors. Fraley (2002) proposed an opposite view. He suggested that family of origin in the individual's early experience serves as a prototype of their later attachment patterns. In other words, individuals who live in a highly cohesive family, having trust, care and support between family members, will more likely to develop a secure attachment style. Based on this kind of style, they have the same reactions in the later romantic relationship with their partners. It is suggested that they may have high intimacy in romantic relationship than those who have less attachment.

The attachment theory focused on the early parent-child relationship. When the relationship provided enough security to an individual, they developed their own attachment style. These styles serve as a model for their later relationship with others, especially romantic partners. Higher cohesion family provided more secure and trust to individuals and developed a more secure attachment model, which facilitates later romantic relationships. To conclude, higher family cohesion lead to have higher attachment and resulted in higher intimacy in dating relationship.

Social Exchange Theory

In social exchange theory, there are three basic principles. They are motivation, marginal utilities and alternatives. The first principle proposed that people are rationally motivated. They will evaluate the cost and benefits in the exchange. Yet, these types of exchange usually not very specifically stated (Allan 2010). The second principle is marginal utilities. It suggested that individuals have satiation towards services or goods. Goods or services decrease value if they are highly predicted and have certainty. The last principle, which is important to this study, is the alternative principle. It is very essential in exchange relationships (Allan 2010). The theory states that individuals only have limited resources. If individuals spend these recourses in one relationship, then it would deny involvement in other relationships. In the context of this study, as individuals only have limited time, if they spend many times with family members, it is obviously less time for staying with dating partners.

In applying the theory to this study, it is suggested that individuals in a family with higher cohesion has more time spent together. Based on this principle of alternatives, the time spent with partner will decrease. As a result, individuals feel

time strain between family and dating relationship. Thus, time strain will reduce the intimacy among dating relationship.

Due to the time strain, social exchange theory indicated that high cohesion in family may have a negative effect on intimacy in dating relationship, it holds a point of view opposite to the first and second theory. It is curious that to examine which theory will have a greater effect among family cohesion and intimacy in dating relationship.

Based on the above theories, a conceptual framework evolves (Figure 1). According to this framework, it comes up with four hypotheses:
1. One who has higher family cohesion will have a better relationship with the intimate partner.
2. Family cohesion has a higher influence on the female in intimacy.
3. Attachment to family mediates the relationship between family cohesion and dating relationship.
4. Time strain mediates the relationship between family cohesion and dating relationship.
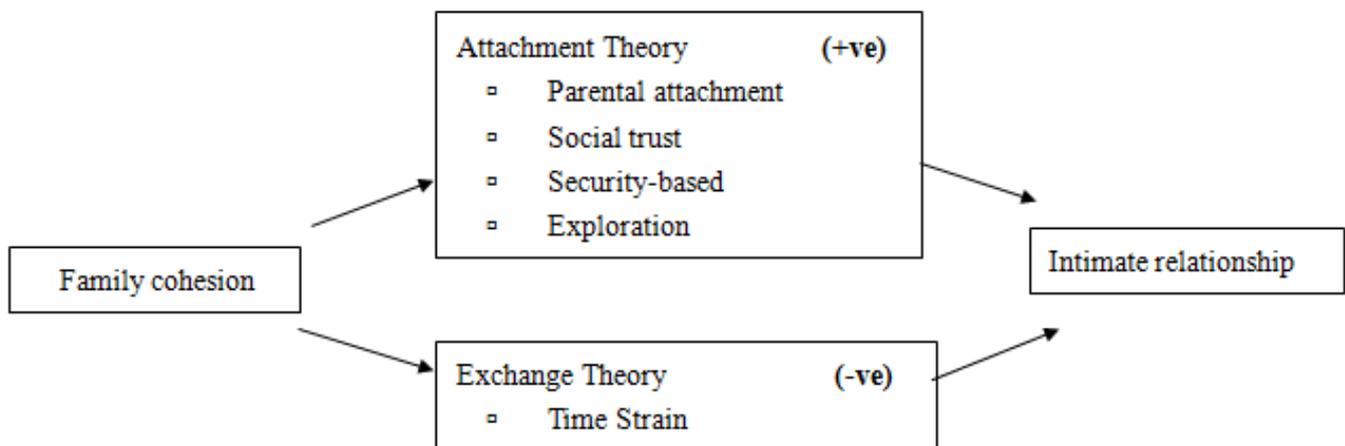

Figure 1. The mediating relationship of attachment and exchange theory on family cohesion and intimacy

Methodology
A quantitative survey study was used in this research. The variables such as family cohesion and dating intimacy were measured through a questionnaire. Non-probability sampling such as convenience sampling and snowball sampling was used in this study.

Sampling
As the focus of this study is the influence of family cohesion on dating couples, the target of sampling is non-married couples. Moreover, the sampling was focused on the heterosexual dating couples. There were totally 22 pairs of dating couples recruited in this study.

Procedure

The data were collected among 18th March to 31st March 2012 within different time slots and varied places in Hong Kong. The respondents were sought from convenience sampling and snowball sampling. It means that participants were selected from cases that were conveniently available and some of the participants were asked to recruit additional participants among their acquaintances. When the sample met the criteria, which were engagement in a relationship, they were invited to join this study. Respondents were informed about the aims and the confidentiality of the study before participating in the study. All participation in this study was voluntary. Respondents were asked to fill in a self-report questionnaire aimed to examine family cohesion and intimate dating relationship. The questionnaire lasted within five minutes. After filling in the questionnaires, respondents handed in the questionnaires to researcher and able to leave. Some of the respondents were asked to fill in questionnaire online. They were required to send the questionnaire back via email to the research after they finished the questionnaire.

Design

Measures of family cohesion, level of intimacy, attachment and time strain were placed into different sections in the questionnaire. There are totally five parts in the questionnaire. To reduce the repeated response bias, both positively and negatively phrasing were applied to those statements among the first four sections. Respondents rated 1 to 5 to the statements according to their point of view. 1 refers to rarely happened whereas 5 represents always happened.

Family Cohesion

In the first part, it was aimed to measure the level of family cohesion. Respondents were asked about the interactions between family members in the recent year. Statements were provided and participants were required to rate those statements. Some of the statements were modified from the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales Fourth Edition (FACES IV). The measure had twelve statements. Statements such as "My family members share their personal things" and "My family members ignore each other at home" were asked in the questionnaire. The composite reliability coefficients were .78.

Intimacy in dating relationship

In the second part, it was aimed to measure the level of intimacy in dating relationship. Respondents were asked about interactions with partners during the recent month. The scales were modified from the Intimacy Scale (Corcoran and Fisher 2000) and Triangular Theory of Love Scales (Tzeng 1993). Statements were provided and participants were required to rate those statements. The measure had thirteen statements. Statements such as "My partner is important to me" and "I am doubtful about this relationship" were shown in the questionnaire. The composite reliability coefficient was .807.

Attachment

In the third part, it was aimed to measure the level of attachment of the participants within the last three months. Based on attachment theory, four indicators were developed to measure overall attachment. The four indicators are parental attachment,

secure, exploration and social trust among friends. Several statements were asked based on the indicators. Parental attachment refers to the respondents' attachment to their parents and whether their parents were trustworthy and did not abandon them. Statements such as "I worried that my parents would abandon me" were provided. The secure style meant that the respondent felt secure or anxious in his/her surroundings. Statements such as "I worried about things and people around me" were shown in this part. Exploration refers to the willingness to do certain kinds of exploratory activities. Statements like" I'd like to try various kinds of new things" were asked in this part. Social trust mainly focused on their interaction with friends. It aimed to notice whether respondents able to trust their peers. Statements such as "My friends are trustworthy" were shown here. The scale had nine statements in total. The internal consistency was rather low in this scale. The composite reliability coefficients were .644. .497, 310, and .453 respectively.

Time strain

In the fourth part, it was aimed to measure time strain between family members and the dating partner in the last two months. Statements were provided for participants to rate. Statements such as "I feel pressure on how to divide time for my family members and partner" was asked in this part. This measure included six statements. The composite reliability coefficient was .775.

In the last part, it was intended to collect demographic data on the respondents. Personal characteristics such as gender, age, family size, and length of dating were asked in this part.

Pilot test

A pilot test was conducted before the questionnaires were distributed. The aims of pilot test were to test the feasibility and whether there was any misunderstand wording in the questionnaire. The pilot test was conducted between 15th March to 17th March and five questionnaires were released. Respondents reported that the wording in the questionnaire could be understood easily and none of them were confused by the wording. Moreover, they appreciated the short length of the questionnaire that only needed less than five minutes to complete.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed through the SPSS 17.0. Reliability tests were used to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire. Items that affected reliability were deleted to ensure that the measures had high reliability. Moreover, correlation and regression analyses were also used to examine relationships among variables.

Results & Findings

In this part, the five hypotheses are examined to test whether they have met statistically accepted conditions.

Demographic Data

In Tables 1 and 2, the characteristics of the respondents such as age, educational level, length of dating and family income are shown. The details of the respondents are as follows. There were totally 44 respondents participating in this study. The respondents were aged from18 to 28 and 27.3% of them are 24 years old. The proportions of males and females were equal and homosexually couples were not included in this study.

The length of dating ranged from 2 to 96 months. Over half of them (56.8%) were studying for bachelor's degrees and totally 89% of respondents were enrolled in higher education. Moreover, 57.1% of them came from the higher-income group. The division of higher and lower group of educational level and family income were based on the result from Census 2011. According to the census 2011 (Population Census 2011, 2012), the average education was senior high school. Those respondents who study below senior school were grouped under lower education. The average family income was $20,500. Respondents who reported family income lower than $20,500 were grouped as lower income group as well. Moreover, 88.6% of the respondents were living with their fathers, 93.2% lived with mother, and 79.5% of them lived with siblings.

Table 1. Demographic Data of respondents

	Range	M	SD
Age (N=44)	18-28	22.9	2.31
Length of dating (N=44)	2-96	34.9	27.9

Table 2. Demographic data of respondents

	Frequency
Gender (N=44)	
Male	22
Female	22
Education (N=44)	
Lower education	5
Higher education	39
Family Income (N=35)	
Lower income	15
Higher income	20
Living inmate (N=44)	
Family members	41
Lived alone	3

Table 3. Mean score of four scales

	Attachment	Time strain	Family cohesion	Intimacy
Mean score	3.67	2.25	3.73	4.1

Hypothesis Testing
The first hypothesis is that "One who has higher family cohesion will have a better relationship with the intimate partner". A correlation test was conducted to find out the relationship between family cohesion and level of intimacy. From Table 4, the result indicated that there was a significant relationship between family cohesion and intimacy. Thus, it is concluded that there was a statistically significant weak to moderate positive relationship between family cohesion and intimacy (r=.267, p<.05). The positive relationship indicated that the higher cohesion in family, individuals will have higher intimacy with their romance partner. Hypothesis one is supported by the data.

Table 4. Correlation between family cohesion and intimacy

		Intimacy	Family cohesion
Intimacy	Pearson Correlation	1	.267[*]
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.040
	N	44	44
Family cohesion	Pearson Correlation	.267[*]	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.040	
	N	44	44

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

To further examine the relationship between family cohesion and intimacy, multiple regression analysis was conducted. All the variables and demographic factors were included in the test for controlling purpose. From Table 5, results showed that there was not a statistically significant relationship between all the variables and intimacy. This means that none of the above factors was a significant predictor of intimacy. Although the variables were not an effective predictor of intimacy, the beta is providing some insight on the effect of variables. Among those factors, there were two of them, namely exploration and family cohesion, having a relatively large predictable power and small significant level. (exploration, β=-.353; family cohesion, β=.192). A more direct relationship was shown in the linear regression analysis. Exploration was negatively related to intimacy (β = -.389, p< .05) and family cohesion was positively related to intimacy (β = .267, n.s.). As the beta of family cohesion for predicting intimacy was nearly .2, which suggested that the effect of family cohesion on intimacy is valuable to examine.

The second hypothesis is that "Family cohesion will have a higher influence on female in intimacy." In order to compare the gender differential in family cohesion and intimacy, regression analysis was conducted independently for female and male respondents. Results showed that the relationship between family cohesion and intimacy was stronger among male respondents. Family cohesion strongly predicted dating intimacy (β = .409) in the male while the relationship is rather weak in the female (β =.1). The above result rejected the second hypothesis which suggested the relationship was stronger among female respondents.

Table 5. Standardized effects on Intimacy

Predictor	Intimacy
Parental attachment	-.043
Social rust	-.024
Secure	.004
Exploration	-.353
Time Strain	-.192
Family cohesion	.192
Gender	-.021
Length of dating	-.113
Age	.331
Education Level	.277
Family income	-.092
R^2	.388

The third hypothesis is that "Attachment positively mediates the relationship between family cohesion and intimacy". To test the hypothesis, regression analysis was also conducted. In the first part, it first examined the relationship between attachment and intimacy. In Table 5, results show that the effects of all the four indicators of attachment were not significant. This finding rejected Hypothesis 3 as it did not meet the statistically significant level. Yet, only exploration had a relatively large beta (-. 353). This suggests that the exploration had a certain effect on intimacy.

Table 6. Standardize effect on parental attachment

Predictor	Parental attachment
Family Cohesion	.386*
Gender	.136
Length of dating	-.015
Age	.063
Educational level	.449**
Family cohesion	.132
R^2	.418*

* p< .05; ** p< .01

The second part is to analyze the relationship between family cohesion and attachment. Regression analyses were conducted among four indicators of attachment. Parental attachment was the first variables to test. The result was under a significant condition. According to Table 6, family cohesion was shown that having the highest effect on parental attachment ($\beta =. 386$) among all factors. The second indicator is social trust. Result in Table 6 showed that the above factors were not a significantly predictor of social trust. Still, parental attachment had a comparatively higher predictable power among all tested factors ($\beta = -.419$) and close to the significant conditions. The third indicator was security. Results showed that all the tested variables did not have a larger effect on security. The parental attachment did not have predictable power on secure. The last indicator was exploration. Among all the variables, parental attachment had having the largest beta and was the most predictable ($\beta = -.297$).

Table 7. Standardize effect on social trust, secure and exploration

Predictor	Social trust	Secure	Exploration
Family Cohesion	.241	-.141	.047
Parental attachment	-.419	-.113	-.297
Gender	.129	.104	-.048
Length of dating	-.111	-.415	-.076
Age	-.174	.176	.033
Educational level	.315	-.029	.030
Family income	-.035	-.211	-.011
R^2	.222	.235	.082

The last hypothesis is "Time strain negatively mediates the relationship between family cohesion and intimacy". First, it was to examine the relationship between time strain and intimacy. Table 5, showed the power of variables for predicting intimacy.

Results of time strain was not statistically significant. As a result, Hypothesis 4 was rejected. Yet, the beta of time strains was nearly .2 (.192) which showed that time strain had a certain effect on intimacy. Nevertheless, it was the relationship between family cohesion and time strain. Results showed in Table 8 that there were a significant relationship between family cohesion and time strain. Family cohesion was a significant negative predictor of time strain. The beta was -.475 and p-value was smaller than .05. Family cohesion and time strain showed a significantly negative relationship. It was concluded that although time strain was not a significantly predictor of intimacy, a certain effect on intimacy existed.

Table 8. Standardized effects on time strain

Predictor	Time strain
Family cohesion	-.475*
Parental attachment	.110
Social rust	-.033
Secure	-.113
Exploration	.047
Gender	.373
Length of dating	-.142
Age	.219
Education Level	.167
Family income	-.263
R^2	.281

*p< .05

Discussion

Based on the result, a revised conceptual framework was suggested (Figure 2). The indicator, security was deleted from the attachment scale. As the beta between parental attachment and security was not large enough, the inter-correlation was weak. This suggests that security and parental attachment did not have a high relationship.

Therefore, security was removed from the framework. From the new framework, it is shown that family cohesion has a positive relationship with parental attachment, while parental attachment having negative relationship in both social trust and exploration. It indicated that the higher parental attachment, the lower social trust and exploration were. Exploration also had a negative relationship with intimacy. Nevertheless, family cohesion had a negative relationship with time strain. It indicated that the higher the family cohesion, the less time strain occurred. Time strain also had a negative relationship with intimacy, which showed that higher time strain resulted in lower intimacy in dating relationship.
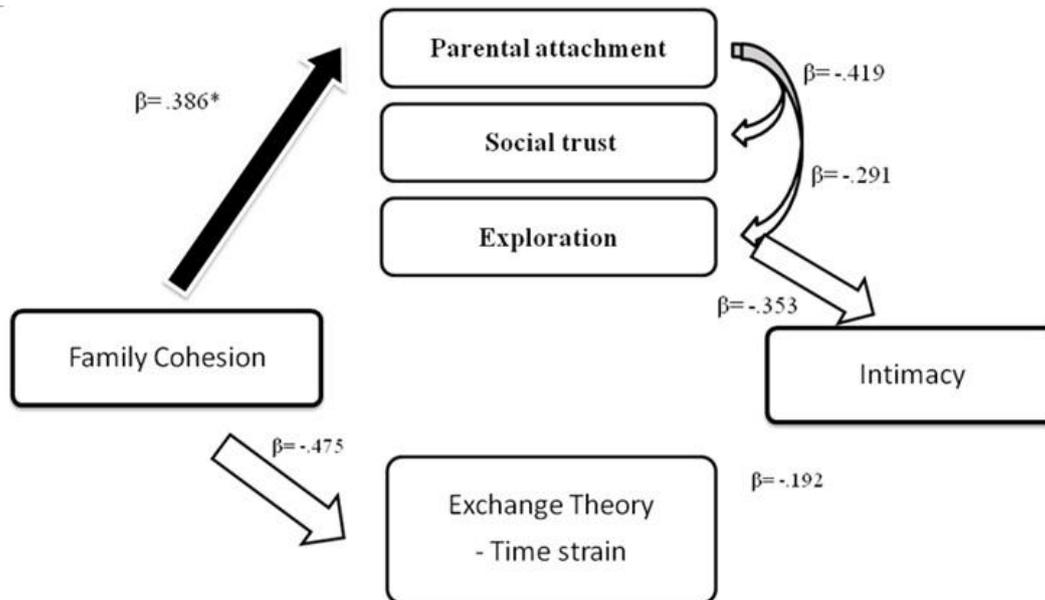
Figure 2. Revised conceptual framework

About the effect of attachment

From the framework, family cohesion and intimacy did not show a significantly strong relationship. In addition, attachment did not mediate the relationship between family cohesion and intimacy. The findings suggested that family cohesion only had an indirect effect on intimacy. First, family cohesion shaped the parental attachment. Parental attachment affected the exploration, and finally influenced the intimacy.

For the elaboration of the relationship, the data of male and female respondents were examined separately. Results showed that the relationship of two variables was very weak among female respondents ($\beta = .1$). In contrast, the result for male respondents supported previous studies which indicated that family cohesion have big influences on intimacy ($\beta = .409$). It showed that the indirect effect between family cohesion and intimacy is only found among female respondents. The indirect effect to intimacy among female indicated that intimacy among women was affected by many factors. Research showed that the intimacy among female can also be affected by other factors, social support and negative network reactions, for example (Bryan *et al*. 2002). Since intimacy was affected by many other factors, the influences of family cohesion are reduced. Thus, an in-direct effect was found among women in the relationship between family cohesion and intimacy.

Moreover, the relationship among the attachment indicators was unexpected. A result was shown contradictory to attachment theory proposed by Bowlby (1969). This theory proposed that attachment to parents facilitates exploratory activities. Individuals with high parental attachment are less anxious or distressful and are more willing to trust their friends and people around them (Campa *et al*. 2009). Yet, the findings are not consistent with the theory and show that parental attachment has a negative relationship with social trust and exploration.

In order to find out whether the relationship is able to apply to both sexes, regression analysis was conducted for male and female respondents separately. Findings indicated that the above negative relationship only existed in men. Women's result matched and supported the framework of attachment theory, in which parental attachment has a positive effect on social trust in peers and exploratory activities

(Campa *et al*. 2008). Results of men are the same as the revised framework. In addition, the negative relationship among indicators was very strong. From Table 7, it is shown that the betas of parental attachment for predicting social trust and exploration were -.857 and -.742 respectively. It is indicated that higher parental attachment led to lower social trust and exploration among men.

The negative relationship of parental attachment with social trust and exploration is likely the situation of a zero-sum game. The zero-sum game suggests that conflict exists between two parties. When one of the parties gains, another party must lose. There is either a gain in all the profit (sum), or they get nothing (zero). Men with high parental attachment immersed in the relationship with parents, which makes them unable to get into other relationships. It reflects that attachment to parents for the male is one of the reasons eroding intimacy relationship. In contrast, empirical findings seem to support that men have higher social trust and exploration and have lower attachment to parents. Laible *et al*. (2000) suggested that peer attachment is more important than are parents during late adolescence. They developed trust among friends and reduce attachment with parents. Although researchers suggested that all adolescents would experience this kind of change in attachment, the findings of this study only showed that men seem to have this attachment change. The result provided some insights of the characteristics of men. From this result, men seem to display more one-way thinking, which either being with friends or parents, and not able to manage both sides.

Gender socialization can also explain the interesting result. From the processes of socialization, individuals learn different rules, values and beliefs about the society, and they also learn the roles and different expectations related to their gender (Stockard 2006). Some rules and behaviors should perform in a specific sex. Those expectations emerge according to sociobiological theory (Stockard 2006). The theory defines the different behaviors using neo-Darwinian views suggesting the different behaviors help people to survive in the dangerous environments in long time ago. For examples, women should rear and nurture the children while men should protect the family. The expectations provided some roles for men and women to affect their performed behaviors. Moreover, the biological differences also alter the behaviors among men and women for example, nurturance and aggressiveness (Stockard 2006, Epstein 2006).

Derived from these theories, men are more aggressive and independent. Women, in contrast, are more dependent and thus are more connected to others. Research indicated that women have higher connectedness as compared to men (Lang-Takac and Osterweil 1992). It stated that the connectedness is important during the development of women. Moreover, the study described women as more communal and united (Lang-Takac and Osterweil 1992). The characteristics suggested that women are always connected with others and had good relationships within those social groups. As being communal and connectedness, women need to be sociable and are able to harmonize the relationship of both parents and friends. They also reported having higher emotional intimacy. It reflected that they have more needs for the relationships with difference groups of people. Getting support from different social groups encourages them to explore. As a result, the results in female respondents supported attachment theory.

However, men are opposite to women. They are described as more separate as compared with women. They are not getting into many relationships as women do. As a result, they may focus on certain relationship only. Adding up with the changing form of attachment in adolescents, men become more independent and they reduced

the dependency on their parents. Thus, there are negative relationship between parents and friends among men.

About the effect of time strain

The findings indicate the negative relationship between family cohesion and time strain. The result is quite interesting as it is opposite to the assumption suggested by the alternative principle in exchange theory.

Before showing the reason, it is necessary to compare the three variables. In Table 3, the means were shown. Both family cohesion and intimacy were relatively high (M=3.73, M=4.1). As family cohesion and intimacy were high, it can eliminate the possibility that respondents focused on one relationship while ignore the other one. From the observation, it is suggested that respondents were able to manage two things quite well. (However, it is possible that some students had very high family cohesion but low intimacy, whereas some other students had very high intimacy and low family cohesion.)

The situation is explained by demographic factors. 41 out of 44 respondents, nearly 93% lived with their family members, either father or mothers or both of them. It is expected that they have much time to spend together within family. As a result, respondents may not feel stressed regarding the allocation of time. Yet, the effect of this assumption still needs further examination.

Another explanation is that time spent with family is only one of the factors that facilitate family cohesion. As aforementioned, high family cohesion comprises several components such as physical intimacy and warmth in a family relationship. Time together is just one of the components facilitating family cohesion. Time spent together encouraged communication between family members and enhanced the understanding among them. Therefore, a warm, caring and supportive family environment was built. The explanation was consistent with the study done by Zabrikie and McCormick (2001). It suggested that leisure time that family spending together offered chances for family members to interact with each other, and facilitating family development (Zabrikie and McCormick 2001). With the development of a highly cohesive foundation in family, there is high understanding and warmth among family members, even though time spent together reduces, and it will not have a big effect on family cohesion. Thus, time strain did not raise conflict between spending with family or partners among highly cohesive family.

Time strain also has a negative relationship with intimacy. The result is consistent with the assumption that suggests high time strain among family members and partners will reduce intimacy in dating partner. Unlike the relationship among family members, the result indicated that dating intimacy needs more time to develop and to cultivate. The nature of relationship in family and in dating intimacy seems different. Some researchers supported the idea that time spent with dating partners improved intimacy. Hill (1988) tested the shared leisure time spent together among 280 married couples. The result showed that time spent together is a strong predictor of marital stability. He also found that shared leisure time has the strongest association with the probability of dissolution in marriage (Hill 1988). Orthner (1975) found the similar result regarding intimacy and time spent together. He found that time spent together in the married couple is significantly associated with marital satisfaction.

According to Hill (1988), time spent together enhance the development of attachment among the couples, which made they feel closer and encourage them to remind themselves of their long marriage. In addition, as time spent together includes communication between couples, shared activities require mutual support, and these

components deepen the intimate relationship and enrich commitment and pleasure with dating partner. Thus, the more the time that the dating couple spends together, the higher the intimacy in the couple would be.

Comparing attachment theory and exchange theory
In comparing the effects of two theories, exchange theory seems more able to explain the relationship among family cohesion and intimacy.

One of the possible reasons is that attachment theory is proposed for early relationships with parents or caregivers influencing their later social relationships. The theory suggested that children observe and learn interactions between parents and reacted similarly to other relationships such as the romantic relationship. The early experiences should be measured during childhood and early adolescent stages. In contrast, this study measured the attachment of respondents within the recent three months. The measures may not be pertinent.

Limitation and Implication
There are some limitations of this study. First of all, the study used convenience and snowball sampling, which are not a kind of random sampling. The respondents mainly were the researcher's friends and it is possible that the sample shares similar characteristics. This affected the representativeness of the study. As a result, the result may only reflect the situation within some groups of people. Second, the sample size was not big enough. As the sample was small, it may be one of the reasons that the data did not meet statistically accepted conditions. Thus, the study may not have enough representativeness and thus affect the generalizability of this study. Finally, the study measures recent attachment among respondents. As mentioned before, the measurement is slightly different from the theory suggested. Thus, the result may be affected by the scale.

In this study, the gender differentials in intimacy and in family relationship are apparent. The result can be applicable to related programs and training such as family life education and premarital counseling to facilitate and improve existing contents. As aforementioned, the existing research stated that the parent-child relationship has fundamental influences on their later romantic relationship (Fraley 2002, Steinberg *et al*. 2006), and this study finds that this relationship is profound among males. High parent-child attachment is found that lead to low social trust and exploration among men. It is suggested that family life education programs should have a different approach to males. Existing family life programs provided by different organizations (Social Welfare Department 2012) hold the same approach to all participants, no matter if they are male or female. Yet, from the finding of this study, it is suggested that these programs should be careful when dealing with male adolescents, overemphasized on parent-child attachment may affected their later development as results show that the relationship between family cohesion and later romantic relationship is stronger in the male.

Moreover, according to the findings in exchange theory, it is suggested that the focus of family life education programs should be on encouraging the communication and understanding among family members. As suggested by Zabrikie and McCormick, (2001) which leisure only provided a chance for family to develop cohesion, it may not be necessary to insist on the amount of time spent together, because it is only one of the factors that facilitate family cohesion. In contrast, premarital counseling should encourage couples spending more time together as the study and existing research suggest that time together champions intimate relationship, especially in women (Hill

1988).

Moreover, it provides another explanation among the relationship between family cohesion. Although the measurement of attachment may have some effect on the result, exchange theory seems to have a better explanation of the relationship than attachment theory. Moreover, the result in gender differential among relationship provided a new insight for other related research. Further research is suggested to examine more intensely on the above areas and to reconfirm the effect found in this study.

Conclusion

The relationship between family cohesion and dating intimacy is a popular research topic. Yet, this study adds exchange theory to explain its effect. In addition, it compares the relevance of the two different theories to the relationship and provides a more comprehensive and alternative vision to understand the relationship. Attachment theory is the theory that researchers always use to explain intimacy. By contrast, exchange theory has rarely been involved in research related to neither family nor dating relationship.

Although some of the results did not meet the accepted significant condition due to the small sample, and it leads to rejection of the hypotheses. Still, the result showed that there are certain effects among the variables. Although the effect may have errors, the study did provide preliminary insights and direction for further research to examine. A summary of findings is as follows.

The study suggests that family cohesion and intimacy have a direct effect only among men. The relationship among women is shown to be indirect. It is suggested that women's intimacy is affected by many factors. Besides, it is suggested that attachment did not mediate the relationship among both sexes. Due to gender socialization, men and women showed results contradictory to the attachment model. Moreover, time strain shows a negative relationship with family cohesion and this suggested that it did not reduce cohesiveness among family. In addition, the study finds that the nature of relationship is different between family and intimate relationship. It is suggested that time spent together has a strongly positive relationship with intimacy. Lastly, exchange theory seems more able to explain the relationship between family cohesion and intimacy.

Biographic Note

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