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Change and Consistency in Social Participation During Early Adulthood

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This article reports a longitudinal study of the social interaction patterns of college students and adults. Adults ($N = 113$) from 26 to 31 years old who had participated in similar studies in college kept detailed records of social activity for 2 weeks. Three hypotheses were supported. First, from college to adulthood, opposite-sex socializing grew, whereas same-sex, mixed-sex, and group interactions decreased. Second, intimacy increased in adulthood, whereas satisfaction did not. Contrary to theories that focus on the formation of primary intimate relationships in early adulthood, intimacy increased in all interaction categories. Sex differences in the development of intimacy were also noted. Third, correlations revealed marked consistency over time in several variables. Implications of these findings for social development during early adulthood were examined.

Social interaction occupies a position of considerable importance in the lives of young adults. Much waking time is spent participating in and thinking about social activity with friends, family, and romantic partners (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984; Robinson, 1977). Satisfying social bonds are a primary source of psychological well-being and happiness (Argyle, 1987), and through the vehicle of social support, have been shown to benefit physical health (Cohen, 1988; Reis, 1984). Moreover, the absence of desired levels of social contact and closeness with friends and relatives typically produces distress, ranging from mild loneliness and dysphoria to extreme depression and suicidal tendencies (Peplau & Goldston, 1984; Reis, 1990; Veroff, Kulka, & Douvan, 1981). Retrospections by older persons about sources of satisfaction during their lifetimes also assign a preeminent role to warm relationships with both family and friends (e.g., Sears, 1977; Vaillant, 1977).

Not surprisingly, therefore, most theories of life span development discuss the nature and development of relationships from infancy to old age. These theories commonly describe young adulthood as a period in which the social patterns of adolescence are replaced by a focus on primary close relationships. We review several models in the following section. The purpose of this research was to provide empirical evidence about changing patterns of social interaction during this period. More specifically, we report the results of a longitudinal study examining continuity and change in social activity from the college years to adulthood.[1]

Models of Relationship Development in Early Adulthood

In a review of gender differences in children's friendships, Maccoby (1990) discussed two widely supported findings. One is gender segregation, or the tendency of children and adolescents to socialize mostly with same-sex others. A second tendency Maccoby noted is for friendships among girls to be more intimate than friendships among boys. This latter difference has been shown in many studies, with subjects ranging from fifth graders (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987) to junior and senior high school students (Blyth & Foster-Clark, 1987; Fischer, 1981) and adults (Dindia & Allen, 1992; Reis, in press). Gender differences (which are discussed later) notwithstanding, both sexes begin to value intimacy as a basis for friendship during early adolescence (Berndt & Perry, 1990; Steinberg, 1989). The centrality of intimacy to close friendship continues to grow through late adolescence (J. L. Fischer, 1981). Moreover, although intimacy first emerges within same-sex friendships, as Sullivan (1953) noted, intimacy also becomes important in cross-sex friendships, as they become more prevalent during adolescence.

Few developmental studies of friendship patterns have been conducted during young adulthood. In a broad review of normal development, Arnstein (1984) described the development of intimacy as one of five major life tasks facing young adults. This view is consistent with many models of life span development, which assert that the period from roughly 18 to 30 years of age is preoccupied with finding, establishing, and stabilizing adult patterns of social interaction. To Erikson (1950), this age range is critical for resolving the crisis of intimacy versus isolation—whether or not one forms a meaningful, intimate bond

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[1] For convenience, we label the period spanning from college to approximately age 30 as *early* or *young* adulthood. We also refer to the former time as *college* and the latter as *adulthood* for simplicity. Even first-year college students, half of our sample, should be considered adults, but it will be clearest to use this label to describe the data we collected around age 30.

with another person. Much research on intimacy status, while not necessarily concurring on the particulars of this process, supports the timeliness of these issues within this period (see Orlofsky, 1988, for a review). Similarly, Levinson (1978) and Neugarten (1969) portray the interval from 22 to 28 years of age as a time for choosing adult peer and love relationships. Even Sullivan's (1953) interpersonal theory, which mostly focuses on childhood and adolescence, asserts that the nature of close relationships, particularly regarding intimacy and companionship, continues to mature into adulthood. That adolescent social behavior evolves into young adulthood may not be surprising, given that, in 1986, the median age of first marriages in the United States was 23.0 years for women and 25.1 years for men (*Statistical Abstracts of the United States,* 1990).

These general concepts notwithstanding, little direct evidence exists concerning the manner in which maturation of social goals and personality is reflected in everyday socializing. Particularly in terms of intimacy, for example, most theories concern the desire for a primary (and single) intimate relationship, but it would be important to show how this focus is manifested in ongoing social activity. Existing literature tends to be based on cross-sectional studies, global indicators of social activity (e.g., shyness or marital status), or self-summarized retrospective reports, often spanning lengthy time periods. As Reis and Wheeler (1991) have discussed, retrospective accounts are not reliable indicators of actual social activity, because the cognitive and motivational processes involved in event selection, recall, aggregation, and interpretation frequently alter recollections. The present research was designed to fill this gap with longitudinal comparisons of daily social activity reports collected with the Rochester Interaction Record (RIR), a diarylike procedure that provides contemporaneous accounts of social participation. The benefits of the RIR procedure are described later.

Our reasons for studying continuity and change in social activity during early adulthood go beyond the logic of "critical-period" maturation. Having graduated from a residential college, the sample we studied has encountered one of the most abrupt and complete transitions in life: Social networks, work and financial arrangements, and physical settings all change at once, necessitating new adaptations. It remains to be demonstrated whether college students will socialize similarly in the very different environments they face in later life. This point has implications for the various theories cited earlier, which use traitlike constructs in a manner that implies, if not requires, substantial continuities over the life span. Other theories, such as that of Lewis's (1982), suggest that the determinants of social activity are to be found in the structure of the individual's social system. And still others, such as Main, Kaplan, and Cassidy (1985), propose that possibilities for changing mental models of relationships (and hence social behavior) are greatest during major life transitions. If so, the many differences between a university dormitory and independent adult life (e.g., privacy, opportunities for spontaneous contact, shared tasks, physical proximity, common eating and bathing facilities, and scheduling constraints) should engender considerable differences in social activity.

Hypotheses

The specific purpose of this research was to determine whether the age-related changes in social relationships posited by many life span theories would be manifested in everyday socializing. A second purpose was to determine whether interaction patterns would show consistency from the college years to adulthood. We conducted this study with a sample of 113 adults between the ages of 26 and 31 who kept the RIR for 2 weeks. All had taken part in prior RIR studies as college students, half during their first year and half as seniors.

The first hypothesis concerned changes in the frequency and distribution of social interaction. The various theories described earlier suggest that adult subjects should have established, or be in the process of establishing, primary intimate heterosexual relationships. Accordingly, we predicted that opposite-sex interactions, notably those involving primary opposite-sex partners, would be more common in adulthood than in college. At the same time, we expected that interaction with same-sex others and in groups would decrease. This derives from Maccoby's (1990) description of the lessened significance of same-sex contact during adolescence, which may continue into adulthood. Also, if social needs are met through increasingly intimate, opposite-sex relationships, reliance on same-sex partners may decrease. We further expected that group interactions would decrease, because it is often speculated that social interaction in late adolescence is group-focused.

Hypothesis 2 dealt with two subjective variables: perceived intimacy and satisfaction. Based on the notion that intimacy is a fundamental concern during early adulthood, we expected that interaction intimacy would increase from college to adulthood. This hypothesis was offered not only for opposite-sex interaction but also for all other types of interaction. Our earlier research (e.g., Wheeler, Reis, & Nezlek, 1983) suggests that intimacy appears in traitlike fashion; that is, persons who interact intimately in one relationship also tend to interact intimately in other relationships. Also, if the increase in opposite-sex intimacy represents a preference for more meaningful social contacts, it would be reasonable to expect generalization to other relationships. It is not clear whether increases in intimacy ought to be accompanied by increases in satisfaction, and we therefore had no predictions for this variable.

An interesting sidelight of Hypothesis 2 concerns sex differences in the timing of the predicted gains. In a cross-sectional study, J. L. Fischer (1981) found that although college students of both sexes reported more intimate interactions than high school students did, women were more advanced in this characteristic than men were. This trend is consistent with peer friendship results obtained by Buhrmester and Furman (1987) with fifth and eighth graders and by Blyth and Foster-Clark (1987) with high school students. In all of our previous studies, women have been found to interact more intimately than men do, particularly with same-sex others (Reis, in press), a finding consistent with Dindia and Allen's (1992) meta-analysis of 205 self-disclosure studies. It is possible, however, that what appears as a sex difference in college students is actually a developmental difference: Women may attain intimacy sooner than men. Comparisons of first- and senior-year data, as well as

comparisons of both years with mid-adulthood data, may shed light on this issue. J. L. Fischer (1981) also found that men's intimacy developed sooner in opposite-sex than in same-sex relationships, whereas for women there was no difference. Our data should also be useful in determining whether this pattern is replicated in adulthood.

Hypothesis 3 concerned stability in interaction patterns from college to adulthood. To the extent that everyday social activity is influenced by environmental factors, relatively little within-individual consistency should be found. On the other hand, if traits and capacities determine social activity, then relative consistency should be evident despite variations in the social environment.[2] Several longitudinal studies have demonstrated stability of interaction style (e.g., Caspi, Bem, & Elder, 1989) and personality traits and values relevant to socializing, such as sociability, need for affiliation, and the value placed on affection (Bakteman & Magnusson, 1981; Block, 1969; Costa, McCrae, & Arenberg, 1980; Haan, 1977; Jessor, 1983). Focusing on actual social activity offers a somewhat more stringent test of developmental consistency, because these data examine behavioral manifestations of social traits rather than the traits themselves. Very few longitudinal studies have done so, however, and these span a period of less than 1 year. Shaver, Furman, and Buhrmester (1985) found evidence of continuity from the summer before college to the end of the first year of college, and two previous RIR studies have demonstrated continuity within a single college year (Nezlek, in press; Wheeler & Nezlek, 1977). Based on these studies, as well as on our belief that interaction patterns derive from relatively stable mental representations of past relational experience (Main et al., 1985), we hypothesized that social participation in adulthood would be correlated with college social participation, over and above general developmental shifts.

Why Focus on Social Activity in Everyday Life?

The RIR is a fixed-format diary procedure that requires subjects to complete a short record after every interaction lasting 10 min or longer. These records include standard descriptors and rating scales, from which summary indexes are computed. This approach offers three advantages over standard questionnaire or interview methods. First, the RIR deals with voluntary social activity in its natural, everyday context. Researchers have recently become interested in the nature of daily experience as a complement to traditional paradigms that focus on major life events or global perceptions of relationships (see DeVries, 1992; Tennen, Suls, & Affleck, 1991, for overviews). Rather than focusing solely on primary relationships or highly salient social behavior, the RIR considers all social activity within a given period.

Second, standard questionnaire and interview methods require that subjects first recollect, then evaluate, and finally summarize many events, often over lengthy periods. Such accounts possess substantial possibilities for error attributable to cognitive and motivational processes (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Nisbett & Ross, 1981; Schwarz, 1990). Although retrospective self-reports of social activity provide useful data about interpretations of social life, they are not as accurate as contemporaneous accounts are. (In fact, the discrepancy between retrospective summaries and contemporaneous diary accounts has been used to study the biasing impact of personal theories on recollections of past experience; Ross, 1989.) The RIR minimizes these complications by having subjects describe each interaction separately rather than in aggregation and by obtaining reports soon after the interaction has occurred.

Third, perceptions of social experiences are often imprecise and undifferentiated. Retrospective questionnaires typically ask subjects to simultaneously estimate several features of social interaction (e.g., frequency or degree of closeness) across many separate events or many different partners. Although lay impressions may be nonspecific, social interaction theories are nevertheless precise about their constituent processes. Consequently, it is important to distinguish the various types and features of social activity from one another.

Method

Subjects

Adults eligible to participate in this research were drawn from three separate studies conducted while they were college students at the University of Rochester. Two of these studies were conducted during their first year of college—academic years 1974–1975 and 1976–1977. (Data from these studies were published in Wheeler and Nezlek, 1977, and Reis, Nezlek, and Wheeler, 1980, respectively.) The third study was conducted during the students' senior year, 1979–1980 (Reis et al., 1982). In all three samples, subjects were recruited through posted flyers or advertisements in campus newspapers. Subjects were paid a small amount for participation. Adult data were collected during 1985–1986, when participants were between the ages of 27 and 31. Consequently, freshman–adult comparisons span 9 to 11 years, whereas senior–adult comparisons span 6 years. We discuss this possible confound later.

The two freshman-year studies included multiple assessments. Wheeler and Nezlek (1977) collected data twice, during the latter half of the fall and spring semesters. Nezlek (1978) used four assessments, roughly during the 5th and 13th weeks of the fall semester, and the 3rd and next-to-last weeks of the spring semester. These data were averaged across time periods. Assessment intervals varied from 1 week to 2 weeks, depending on the study. All quantitative indexes were adjusted to equate for this variation.

Two hundred and nine individuals had participated in the previous studies. We located 167 (79.9%), of whom 114 (68.3%) agreed to take part in this research. Forty-one percent resided in New York State; the remainder were dispersed widely throughout the United States. Data from 1 subject was discarded because of failure to follow instructions, leaving a sample of 113 individuals (56 women and 57 men). Rates of failure to locate subjects and refusals varied less than 3% between men and women. Given response rates typical in such research, we believe our efforts were very successful.

Sixteen persons (12 women and 4 men) participated in both the second first-year study and the senior study. Including their data in both groups would have confounded the analyses, because unadjusted dependencies can affect between-groups comparisons unpredictably (Kenny & Judd, 1986). Accordingly, this group was split randomly, such that half (6 women and 2 men) was assigned to the first-year group and

[2] Of course, this alternative encompasses the notion that traits lead individuals to choose particular social environments.

half to the senior group. There were no significant differences between these two subgroups.[3]

Procedure

A letter describing the study's general purposes and specifying what would be required of participants was sent to all potential subjects. Addresses were obtained from several sources: university records, alumni mailing lists, the New York State Motor Vehicles Bureau, and from other subjects. In addition, a recruitment letter was sent through the Social Security Administration to all individuals not otherwise contacted.

Those individuals expressing interest were contacted by telephone and scheduled for the 2-week RIR period at a point of mutual convenience. Intervals were selected that avoid major holidays, vacations, or prolonged atypical personal circumstances; we wanted a representative 2-week slice of life. Subjects were scheduled in staggered intervals ranging from June 1985 to June 1986, although the majority participated during September–October 1985, January–February 1986, and April 1986.

Shortly before they were to begin the RIR, subjects were mailed a package of forms along with detailed instructions (described later). They were also telephoned by the coordinator, who reinforced the instructions and answered questions. At the end of the 2 weeks, subjects were called again and interviewed, as well as probed for potential problems or inaccuracies. On receipt of completed RIRs, we sent subjects $50, along with a thank-you letter.

Rochester Interaction Record. The record form used for the adult data is shown in the Appendix. One record was completed for every interaction lasting 10 min or longer. *Interactions* were defined as any encounter with another person(s) in which the participants attended to one another and adjusted their behavior in response to one another. For example, sitting next to someone in a lecture was not appropriate, whereas talking during the lecture for 10 min was. A more detailed description of the RIR procedure may be found in Reis and Wheeler (1991). Subjects were instructed to complete the RIR immediately after each interaction or as soon afterward as possible. In all instances, records were to be completed no less than once or twice a day. A scratch sheet was provided to facilitate memory. Throughout the study, a collaborative, nondeceptive atmosphere was maintained, which we believe aided the gathering of valid data. Confidentiality of the records was emphasized and was closely guarded throughout.

The RIR has evolved since the three college-student studies from which our subjects were drawn. The two first-year studies used a similar form, except that there were only two rating scales (intimacy and pleasantness). The senior study used virtually the same record as that shown in the Appendix, except that there was no social integration scale. Because the forms varied, the analyses reported in this article are necessarily limited to variables that were included in all three studies and whose format remained essentially identical. These variables include the following:

1. *Daily interactions:* mean number of interactions per day.
2. *Length:* mean reported length of interactions. To minimize skew, we set the maximum length for any single interaction at 360 min.
3. *Time per day:* mean number of minutes per day spent in social interaction.
4. *Intimacy:* mean level of perceived intimacy across all interactions. Intimacy was defined as "the personal meaningfulness of an interaction. It does not refer to sexual behavior, because sexual interactions may or may not be meaningful."
5. *Satisfaction/pleasantness:* mean level of perceived pleasantness across all interactions. (The pleasantness scale was titled Satisfaction in the two freshman studies and Quality in the senior and adult studies.)
6. *Number of different others:* number of different interaction partners. These data were adjusted to equate the number of days the RIR was kept.
7. *Nature:* percentage of all interactions falling into each of several descriptive categories. The early RIR had three additional categories: Sharing thoughts and feelings, which was combined with Conversation presently; and Party and Date/Party, which were combined with Date. Pastime was an interaction whose primary aim was to "pass time without any particular goal or focus."

As is standard in RIR studies, each of these variables was computed according to the sex composition of the encounter: *same sex*—interactions including up to three other persons of the same sex; *opposite sex*—interactions including up to three members of the opposite sex; *mixed sex*—interactions including up to three others, at least one of each sex; and *group*—interactions including more than three others. *Total* measures incorporated all interactions.

Each of the RIR indexes was also calculated for interactions involving the subject's same-sex best friend and opposite-sex best friend. Because the original Wheeler and Nezlek (1977) research used a behavioral criterion for defining best-friend status (the subject's most frequent interaction partner), we were constrained to use the same criterion.[4] The appropriateness of frequency to define closeness has been discussed earlier (Wheeler & Nezlek, 1977). In their sample, 93% of respondents named one of the three most frequent interactants as their best friend. Also, in Berscheid, Snyder, and Omoto's (1989) model of closeness, frequency of contact is one of three criteria defining closeness.

Some categories contained no observations for a few subjects. These entries were coded as zero for daily interaction and time per day and as missing data for all other variables.

It should be noted that we excluded interactions classified as work from the RIR data sets. *Work* was defined as any interaction mandated by job requirements: meetings, interviews, appointments with patients and clients, and so on. (Interaction that takes place at work but that is not central to the work itself was coded in one of the other categories and is included in our analyses.) We sought to exclude those interactions that were mandated by work assignments and that did not pertain to voluntary social activity. Also, because the vast majority of subjects did not work as college students, including adult work interactions would have compromised interpretation of longitudinal comparisons.[5]

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[3] Although this sample is too small to permit valid inferences, these data may be useful in verifying the results to be reported with a fully longitudinal (i.e., three-wave) sample. The results of these analyses largely corroborated the full-sample findings. For space reasons, they are not presented in the article. Readers who are interested can obtain copies of these analyses from Harry T. Reis.

[4] It would have been better to have subjects identify their best friends and spouses in the adult interaction records. Unfortunately, because such information was not collected in the college data, longitudinal comparisons would not have been possible. In other studies, we have found that married persons' opposite-sex best friends are almost always their spouses. Also, we wanted to maximize confidentiality in the present records.

[5] The decision to drop work interactions was based on our desire to focus on voluntary social activity. Psychotherapists or receptionists are required by their jobs to interact in very different ways than novelists or computer technicians. Including these data would have distorted the meaning of the obtained indexes. Student jobs were also excluded, but classwork-related interactions were not deleted in either data set. Past research indicates that few in-class interactions achieve the 10-min criterion. We felt that the social nature of course-relevant activity outside of class was indeed discretionary in a way that work is

Reliability. To check on the assumption that 2 weeks would provide stable and generalizable estimates of social activity, we computed split-half intraclass correlations for representative variables. Separate composites were calculated for even and odd days and were then correlated. The following correlations were obtained: daily interactions, .85; mean length, .85; intimacy, .89; and satisfaction, .76. Thus, the internal consistency of the RIR indexes appears high.

Interview

The following questions were designed to probe for difficulties in recording interactions, inaccuracies, or misunderstandings of the instructions. (a) How difficult was the recording process (1 = *not difficult at all,* 7 = *very difficult;* M = 3.41)? (b) Did the recording process become easier as the study progressed (1 = *easier,* 2 = *no change,* 3 = *harder;* M = 1.65)? (c) How accurate does the subject consider her or his records (1 = *very accurate,* 7 = *very inaccurate;* M = 2.46)? (d) What percentage of interactions would the subject guess were not recorded (M = 5.94%)? (e) Were there any regular or ritual interactions that were not recorded (0 = *no,* 1 = *yes;* M = 0.02)? (f) How many interactions lasting less than 10 min were recorded (M = 1.03)? (g) Did accuracy change over the course of the study (1 = *decreased,* 2 = *no change,* 3 = *increased;* M = 2.11)? (h) Did the record keeping interfere with interactions (1 = *not at all,* 7 = *a great deal;* M = 1.40)? (i) Did such interference change over the course of the study (1 = *decreased,* 2 = *no change,* 3 = *increased;* M = 2.01)? There were no significant sex differences on any questions.

These data indicate that subjects perceived their records to be largely accurate and that they generally followed instructions. They also reported little interference of the record keeping with social activity. The moderate degree of difficulty reported apparently did not compromise the self-perceived accuracy of their reports. We have obtained similar interview means in prior research. Although these self-reports are not objective measures of accuracy, we would expect them to have reflected any substantial problems.

Results

Comparability Analyses

We first sought to ensure that the adult sample was representative of the college samples from which they were drawn. We conducted analyses of variance (ANOVAs) within each of the three samples, comparing college interaction records of subjects who took part in the adult study with those who did not. These analyses consisted of 2 (followed/not followed) × 2 (sex) ANOVAs on the central RIR variables of this study.

In general, the rate of significant differences (i.e., main effects or interactions with sex) was only slightly greater than chance (7.7%). In one group of first-year students, 14 out of 130 effects (10.8%) were significant at $p < .05$. In the other first-year group, 7 out of 130 effects (5.4%) were significant, whereas in the senior group, 9 out of 130 effects (6.9%) were significant. In no instance did any RIR variable reveal a significant difference between followed and nonfollowed subjects in more than one of the three original samples. These results suggest that the sample studied presently was largely representative of its college cohort.

Longitudinal Analyses

Quantity of interaction. We conducted 2 (college year) × 2 (sex) × 2 (time) ANOVAs, with repeated measures on the last factor. Separate analyses were conducted for each composition category, because our aim was to highlight consistencies and differences. We focus on time main effects and interactions involving time; sex main effects and interactions are noted in the tables. We are particularly interested in College Year × Time interactions, because they indicate differential change over time of the first-year and senior groups and therefore may reflect changes that occurred between the first and senior year of college.

Table 1 shows means and F values for the average number of daily interactions. Although there was a highly reliable drop from college to adulthood in the total number of interactions (from 6.93 to 5.08, $p < .001$), as predicted in Hypothesis 1, the composition categories revealed a more differentiated pattern: Same-sex and group interaction decreased, mixed-sex interaction was unchanged, and opposite-sex interaction increased significantly. Separate analyses of interaction with same-sex and opposite-sex best friends, not shown in Table 1, revealed the same general trend, namely, that interaction with same-sex best friends decreased over time (from 1.50 to 1.06), $F(1, 109) = 13.55$, $p < .001$, whereas interaction with opposite-sex best friends became more common (from 1.16 to 1.91), $F(1, 109) = 23.71$, $p < .001$. In only one instance was the time trend qualified by a significant interaction with sex or college year: The decrease over time in group interactions was greater for first-year students than for seniors but was significant for both groups.[6]

Analyses of time per day spent socializing, reported in Table 2, supported these results. There were highly reliable decreases overall (from 340.6 min to 277.5 min per day) and in same-sex, mixed-sex, and group interactions. In contrast, time per day in opposite-sex interaction increased significantly. Best-friend analyses, not shown in Table 2, confirmed the increase in opposite-sex socializing (from 71.9 to 128.0 min per day), $F(1, 108) = 27.51$, $p < .0001$, but the drop for same-sex best friends was not significant (70.4 to 61.8 min), $F(1, 109) = 1.17$, *ns.* There were no significant interactions involving time.

We also examined two other measures of interaction quantity. First, the average interaction increased in length from 51.4 min during college to 56.7 min during adulthood, $F(1, 109) = 5.78$, $p < .02$. This increase was evident in opposite-sex interaction (49.6 min to 54.9 min), $F(1, 109) = 2.95$, $p < .10$; mixed-sex interaction (47.8 min to 69.6 min), $F(1, 103) = 20.93$, $p < .001$; group interaction (71.6 min to 92.3 min), $F(1, 95) = 10.07$, $p < .005$; same-sex best-friend interaction (47.8 min to 58.9 min), $F(1, 109) = 6.80$, $p < .01$; and opposite-sex best-friend interaction (60.8 min vs. 69.3 min), $F(1, 108) = 4.15$, $p < .05$. No other effects were significant in this analysis.

Second, the number of different interaction partners also decreased significantly. Subjects reported more same-sex others (22.7 vs. 14.4), $F(1, 109) = 72.26$, $p < .001$, and opposite-sex others (16.2 vs. 9.8), $F(1, 109) = 66.90$, $p < .001$, as college

not. Furthermore, such activities were coded as *tasks,* and we could not distinguish coursework tasks from other tasks.

[6] Unless otherwise noted, all tests after significant interactions used Winer's (1962) simple effects procedure.

Table 1
Number of Interactions Per Day

	All interaction		Same sex		Opposite sex		Mixed sex		Group	
Group	College	Adult	College	Adult	College	Adult	College	Adult	College	Adult
Men										
1st yr	6.44	4.71	3.26	1.79	1.11	1.79	0.63	0.75	1.45	0.38
Seniors	5.82	4.45	2.63	1.72	1.54	1.68	0.52	0.68	1.13	0.37
Women										
1st yr	8.00	5.81	3.27	2.03	2.36	2.41	0.98	0.92	1.40	0.46
Seniors	7.48	5.37	3.56	1.84	2.08	2.41	0.72	0.64	1.12	0.48
Time F	56.07**		65.22**		3.93*				137.45**	
Sex F	12.68**				19.20**		3.72			
Year F							4.17*			
Sex × Time							2.96			
Year × Time									4.45*	

Note. Degrees of freedom are 1, 109.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

students than as adults. The latter decrease was moderated by sex, however, $F(1, 109) = 23.09$, $p < .001$. Whereas as college students, women had more opposite-sex interaction partners than men did (19.8 vs. 12.5), as adults, men and women did not differ (both $M = 9.8$).

Let us briefly summarize these findings. When compared with their experiences as college students, adults interacted less frequently for less time with members of the same sex and in groups. Interaction with opposite-sex others, and in particular with their opposite-sex best friend, increased during this interval. The decrease in group interaction was greater for first-year subjects because group interactions had already become less prevalent by their senior year. Adults' interactions lasted longer than college students' did. Finally, the number of different interaction partners decreased from college to adulthood, with women showing a larger drop than men in the number of opposite-sex partners.

Subjective quality of interaction. The two subjective variables, intimacy and satisfaction, were examined in separate 2 (college year) × 2 (sex) × 2 (time) ANOVAs, with repeated measures on the final factor. As documented in Table 3, perceived intimacy levels were consistently and significantly higher in adulthood. This was true overall and in three of the four composition categories (in group interaction, the increase was not significant, $p < .14$). There were parallel increases in intimacy with same-sex best friends, $F(1, 109) = 9.30$, $p < .005$, and opposite-sex best friends, $F(1, 108) = 5.23$, $p < .05$. Hypothesis 2 therefore received strong support.

The time effect was qualified by several interactions with college year. College Year × Time interactions were significant (*p*s < .01) in the total and same-sex categories. As shown in Table 3 and confirmed by simple effects tests, the rise in intimacy was greater for the first-year group (across all interactions, from 3.44 to 4.10) than for seniors (from 3.91 to 4.09). Inspection of Table 3 indicates, however, that this effect stemmed mostly from women. Senior women reported significantly higher intimacy levels in all categories than first-year women did (simple effect *p*s < .02); in contrast, senior and first-year men differed significantly only in mixed-sex interaction. Moreover, intimacy levels reported by senior women in no instance increased from college to adulthood, whereas for senior men, all means rose from college to adulthood (although

Table 2
Time (in Minutes) Per Day Spent Socializing

	All interaction		Same sex		Opposite sex		Mixed sex		Group	
Group	College	Adult	College	Adult	College	Adult	College	Adult	College	Adult
Men										
1st yr	329.0	263.5	143.6	86.2	53.5	89.3	32.2	53.0	100.8	34.8
Seniors	299.5	232.0	109.7	63.0	90.4	94.2	22.3	48.9	79.3	26.7
Women										
1st yr	390.7	332.6	131.2	86.6	118.8	145.4	41.4	58.8	91.7	41.7
Seniors	344.3	283.2	135.7	67.3	104.6	134.9	32.8	39.9	70.2	40.9
Time F	23.57***		42.04***		6.52*		17.16***		87.02***	
Sex F	9.62**				14.02***					
Year F	4.59*		3.92*				3.44		3.90	
Sex × Time									3.44	

Note. Degrees of freedom are 1, 109.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 3
Intimacy

Group	All interaction		Same sex		Opposite sex		Mixed sex		Group	
	College	Adult	College	Adult	College	Adult	College	Adult	College	Adult
Men										
1st yr	3.47	4.10	3.36	3.93	4.00	4.31	3.74	4.10	3.27	3.43
Seniors	3.48	3.95	3.41	3.61	4.17	4.41	3.15	3.83	2.74	3.08
Women										
1st yr	3.41	4.11	3.47	4.21	3.73	4.22	3.11	3.99	2.72	3.18
Seniors	4.34	4.22	4.49	4.25	4.48	4.44	3.97	3.85	3.47	3.25
Time F	25.26***		10.48***		6.01*		18.52***			
Sex F	4.48*		13.08***							
Year F	3.09				4.64*					
Sex × Time										
Year × Time	8.68**		12.06***							
Sex × Year × Time	3.81						10.11**		3.11	

Note. Degrees of freedom vary from 1, 96 to 1, 109.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

the rise was significant only in total and mixed-sex interaction). Therefore, it appears that for men, intimacy increases occurred largely after college, whereas for women, they tended to occur between the first and senior years of college.

There was an interesting divergence from this pattern in best-friend interactions. As shown in Table 4, for same-sex best friends, the three-way interaction was significant and similar to that described earlier (namely, all groups increased from college to adulthood except senior women). However, with opposite-sex best friends, only the College Year × Time effect approached significance ($p < .07$). Inspection of the relevant means suggests that this is because senior men's intimacy was somewhat higher than that of first-year men, resembling the pattern shown by women. Our speculation is that age-related intimacy increases for men may reveal themselves earliest in this category of interaction.

Satisfaction revealed only one significant effect involving time: College students found opposite-sex interaction (M = 5.15) more pleasant than adults did (M = 4.99), $F(1, 108) = 8.54$, $p < .01$. In all other categories, satisfaction decreased over time, but the drops were small and nonsignificant. The absence of time effects on satisfaction ratings also has useful methodological implications. Because reported satisfaction did not increase over time, the rise in intimacy described earlier should not be attributed to global increases in positive feelings about social interaction or to longitudinal changes in socially desirable responding.

Table 4
Intimacy With Best Friends

Group	Same-sex best friend		Opposite-sex best friend	
	College	Adulthood	College	Adulthood
Men				
1st year	3.50	3.81	3.99	4.43
Seniors	3.42	3.94	4.27	4.40
Women				
1st year	3.43	4.12	3.68	4.22
Seniors	4.39	4.30	4.66	4.63
Sex F	6.03*			
Year F	3.40		6.00*	
Time F	9.30**		5.23*	
Year × Time F			3.59	
Year × Sex × Time F	4.56*			

Note. Degrees of freedom vary from 1, 108 to 1, 109.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Nature of interactions. Overall, the percentage of interactions classified as pastime increased from 16.4% in college to 20.2% in adulthood, $F(1, 109) = 4.35$, $p < .05$, whereas the percentage of conversations decreased from 66.3% to 61.3%, $F(1, 109) = 5.78$, $p < .02$. This pattern was evident in all categories except same-sex interaction, yielding F values from 2.07, $p < .16$ to 21.77, $p < .001$ (8 of 12 tests exceeded the .05 criterion). In all cases, significant College Year × Time interactions moderated these effects (F values ranged from 4.78, $p < .05$ to 11.84, $p < .001$). Simple effects tested revealed that the growth in pastimes at the expense of conversations was consistently stronger among first-year students than seniors, who showed no significant differences between college and adulthood. There were no interactions with sex.

Consistency Across Time

To determine whether relative interaction patterns were consistent from college to adulthood, we computed a series of simple correlation coefficients between the two time periods for the five major variables of this research.[7] These correlations

[7] Simple correlations were used rather than intraclass correlations because the latter do not adjust for mean and standard differences. We were interested here in examining relative consistencies across time, that is, consistencies over and above the general changes already noted. The reader is also reminded that first-year to adult correlations span 9 to 11 years, whereas senior to adult correlations span 6 years.

Table 5
Correlations Between College and Adult Interaction

Type of interaction	No. of interactions	Time per day	*M* length	*M* intimacy	*M* satisfaction
All interactions					
1st yr	.47***	.42***	.28*	.16	.27*
Seniors	.38**	.32*	.31*	.59***	.52***
Difference				<.01	<.12
Same sex					
1st yr	.23	.08	.13	.21	.14
Seniors	.23	.11	.03	.54***	.46***
Difference				<.05	<.07
Opposite sex					
1st yr	.22	.32*	.15	.13	.21
Seniors	.24	.23	.35**	.49***	.58***
Difference				<.05	<.05
Mixed sex					
1st yr	.35**	.35**	.19	.28*	.17
Seniors	.32**	.22	.33*	.51***	.24
Difference				<.16	
Group					
1st yr	.39**	.36**	.06	.26	.32*
Seniors	.21	.10	.11	.46***	.11
Difference		<.17			
Same-sex best					
1st yr	.03	−.04	.10	.04	.18
Seniors	.30*	.08	.13	.51***	.18
Difference	<.15			<.01	
Opposite-sex best					
1st yr	.22	.34**	.17	.16	.09
Seniors	.24	.12	.05	.49***	.43***
Difference				<.06	<.06

Note. First-year correlation *n*s vary from 50 to 57; senior *n*s vary from 49 to 56. All significance tests are two-tailed. If no *p* value is listed, *p* was greater than .20.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

were computed separately for the first-year and senior samples, so that differences, which might give evidence of the establishment of stable interaction patterns during college, could be evaluated. The sample was not large enough to permit further breakdown into female and male subgroups; however, visual inspection showed few consistent sex differences in the pattern of correlations.

Table 5 lists these correlations. Looking first at the total number and time of social interaction, significant college-to-adult correlations were found in both groups. Correlations within the separate composition categories were more variable. Among first-year students, significant correlations with adult interaction were obtained for opposite-sex, mixed-sex, group, and opposite-sex best-friend interaction. Among seniors, only time per day in mixed-sex and same-sex best-friend interaction correlated significantly. However, the correlation differences between groups were not significant. For these two measures, then, the most general finding appears to be the significant correlation across time in total interaction.

Perceived intimacy produced striking results. For seniors, correlations between college and adult interaction were uniformly and highly significant. For the first-year group, the comparable correlations were positive but significant only in mixed-sex interaction. The senior and first-year correlations differed significantly (*p*s < .05) in total interaction and in three of six specific categories. Thus, intimacy levels reported in the senior year of college showed greater long-term stability than intimacy levels reported in the first year of college.

Correlations for reported satisfaction, shown in the final column of Table 5, revealed a similar pattern, although less definitively so. Over all interactions and in the same-sex, opposite-sex, and opposite-sex best-friend categories, seniors showed strong and significant correlations over time, whereas first-year students' correlations were significant overall and in group interaction. Once again, seniors' correlations tended to be greater than those of first-year students, although the difference was significant only for opposite-sex interaction.

The mean length of all interactions was significantly correlated in both groups. Within composition categories, although all correlations were positive, only two were significant, and none of the group comparisons approached significance. Finally, for seniors, the number of same-sex, $r(56) = .41$, $p < .005$, and opposite-sex, $r(56) = .28$, $p < .05$, partners were significantly correlated over time. For first-year subjects, the comparable correlations, rs(57) = .22 and .17, were not significant but did not differ significantly from the seniors.[8]

[8] We also computed these correlations for the 16 subjects for whom all three data points were available. Because this subsample is small and includes only 4 men, we believe these results are best viewed as speculative. Nevertheless, the magnitude of correlations obtained in these analyses were generally similar or larger than those found for the

Do Marriage and Parenthood Qualify These Results?

Two obvious potential qualifications to our results are marital status and parental status, given that these factors might substantially alter a person's social environment. Unfortunately, this information was available for only 96 subjects. Only 5 subjects had children, so this factor was not examined further. Forty subjects were married (24 women and 16 men), whereas 56 were not (24 women and 32 men). Using marital status as a fourth between-groups factor (cell *n*s varied from 8 to 16), we repeated the prior analyses for number of interactions, time per day spent socializing, the number of different partners, intimacy, and satisfaction.

For the number of different partners, intimacy, and satisfaction, marital status produced no significant effects. Consequently, for these variables, none of the prior results can be attributed to the special characteristics of marriage. Opposite-sex best-friend intimacy means were nearly identical for married ($M = 4.40$) and unmarried ($M = 4.41$) adults.[9]

An important qualification did emerge for interaction quantity, however. In the opposite-sex and opposite-sex best-friend categories, there were significant Marital Status × Time effects for the number of interactions, Fs(1, 88) = 15.37 and 16.48, respectively, both ps < .001, and time per day, Fs(1, 88) = 6.85 and 7.69, respectively, both ps < .01. In all opposite-sex interactions, married subjects showed large increases from college to adulthood, whereas means for unmarried subjects were virtually unchanged. With opposite-sex best friends, both groups increased the number and time of interactions, but the gains by married subjects were significantly greater than those of unmarried subjects. Only one other category produced an effect for marital status: time per day spent socializing with same-sex others. Although both married and unmarried subjects showed significant decreases ($p < .02$), the married subject drop was significantly greater than the unmarried subject drop, Marital Status × Time $F(1, 88) = 5.19$, $p < .05$.

Thus, with the exception of opposite-sex interaction, the changes in interaction patterns described earlier generally did not depend on marital status. Even among unmarried subjects, however, opposite-sex interaction became proportionally more common in adulthood—whereas all other categories decreased in prevalence, opposite-sex interaction remained steady.

Discussion

We begin by summarizing findings relevant to our three hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 proposed an increase in the frequency of opposite-sex socializing along with a decrease in other categories. This hypothesis received strong and consistent support for both measures of social contact: number of daily interactions and time per day spent socializing. Moreover, these effects were usually not qualified by sex or college year, with one exception: The decrease in group interactions (more than three others present) in adulthood was significantly greater for first-year students than seniors. This may mean that group interactions are most representative of late adolescents' social behavior and begin declining during college. It may also be that students adjust to their new social environment by relying on group interactions.

These results indicate that the ecology of social participation shows a marked shift from college to adulthood. That opposite-sex interactions, including those involving best friends, became more prevalent in adulthood is consistent with trends that begin during adolescence (cf. Maccoby, 1990). Of course, many theorists characterize adult social behavior in terms of its focus on primary heterosexual relationships. It is interesting to note, however, that this increase occurred at the expense of same-sex interaction. Indeed, the decrease in the number of same-sex interactions (1.34 per day) was more than three times greater than the increase in opposite-sex interactions (0.30 per day). There is no particular reason why increases in one category necessitate decreases in another category (aside, perhaps, from time constraints), and the drop in same-sex socializing is therefore psychologically interesting. In Sullivan's (1953) interpersonal theory, same-sex friendships are the foundation of identity and intimacy development during adolescence. This is because the benefits of shared world views are most available with similar, same-sex others. As people mature, and as they become more comfortable with the opposite sex, they may have less need to limit their social contacts in this manner. In fact, adults had roughly equal levels of same-sex and opposite-sex socializing, suggesting that the preference for same-sex partners ends in adulthood.

Two results demonstrated greater reliance on close relationships in adulthood. Adult interactions were significantly longer than college interactions, and adults reported more than one third fewer different partners than college students. Although adults might have fewer partners because of differences in their social environment (i.e., fewer opportunities for spontaneous contact), the drop might also reflect adults' desire to focus their social time on a smaller number of good friends. This is consistent with the greater length of adult interactions.

Hypothesis 2 proposed intimacy increases from college to adulthood across all interaction categories. This hypothesis was supported by a strong main effect in total interaction and by main effects in four of six specific composition categories. Most theories, including Erikson's (1950), speak about early adulthood in terms of the establishment and growth of a primary intimate relationship. Our data suggest that age-related intimacy gains occur in a far less differentiated fashion. Increases in intimacy were not limited to a single heterosexual relationship but rather were evident in all categories. The increase of intimacy in early adulthood may therefore mark a developmental shift in social preferences, goals, or abilities. In the future, it might be profitable to conceptualize intimacy as a global interaction style variable with traitlike characteristics and not just as

full sample. For example, between first-year and adult data, the following correlations were obtained: number of interactions, $r = .66$, $p < .01$; time, $r = .57$, $p < .05$; average length, $r = .60$, $p < .05$; intimacy, $r = .45$, *ns;* and satisfaction, $r = .19$, *ns.* For seniors, the comparable *r*s were .65 ($p < .01$), .49 (*ns*), .43 (*ns*), .61 ($p < .05$), and .58 ($p < .05$), respectively. These results generally support the findings obtained with the full, more representative sample.

[9] Because of the procedures used to ensure confidentiality, we do not know the initials of subjects' spouses and therefore cannot identify interactions that occurred between subjects and their spouses. However, we believe it is highly likely that most married subjects' opposite-sex best friends were their spouses.

a characteristic of single relationships. That is, people who prefer to interact intimately with one partner may prefer to do so with many partners and across varying contexts.

This general trend was qualified by a three-way interaction with college year and sex, significant in two categories and marginally significant in two others. Inspection of the means in Tables 3 and 4 plainly shows that for senior women, intimacy remained unchanged from college to adulthood. The time effects noted earlier apparently derived from first-year women and all men. By their senior year of college, women seem to have attained adult levels of interaction intimacy, whereas men did not do so until after college. Rather, men's interaction intimacy was essentially stable during college but increased from senior year to adulthood in all interaction categories except opposite-sex best friend. Thus, the developmental trends discussed earlier may take place somewhat earlier for women (between ages 18 and 22) than for men (between ages 22 and 30). (These trends may relate to the uniqueness of a college environment, which is discussed later.)

The different trajectory in intimacy development shown by men and women is consistent with J. L. Fischer's (1981) finding that although both sexes increased their interaction intimacy from high school to college, women did so earlier than men. It remains to be seen whether this sex difference continues into middle adulthood. Some researchers, such as Lowenthal and Haven (1975), suggest that it does, whereas others, such as Guttman (1987), believe that people become more androgynous in later life, so that sex differences should abate. This distinction has important consequences for our understanding of personality and aging, and it suggests that further longitudinal studies would be valuable.

Just why intimacy increases during this interval is not indicated by our research. One set of possible reasons relate to maturation. Previous studies examined intimacy gains during adolescence, and ours is the first to show continued advances in early adulthood. Certain forms of cognitive development that occur during early adulthood may be essential for true adult intimacy. K. W. Fischer, Hand, and Russell (1984) proposed that the capacity to relate several aspects of two or more abstractions to one another may not emerge until age 19 or 20 (Level 9) and that people's ability to form general principles by systematically coordinating various aspects of two or more abstractions may not develop until approximately age 25 (Level 10). Personal understandings of relationships between people qualify as abstractions in their model, and it seems likely that intimacy would be facilitated by these cognitive skills (Chelune, Robison, & Kommor, 1984; Reis & Shaver, 1988). It would be interesting to directly verify the role of these cognitive skills in close relationships with subsequent studies.

It is also possible that intimacy changes from the first year of college may be due to the instability of friendships during this transitional period. Although we cannot rule out this explanation, we believe it is unlikely for several reasons. First, for men, intimacy increased from the first to senior year in only one category—opposite-sex best friend—and then not significantly. It would therefore be necessary to posit that instability applies only to first-year women or that men's social networks remain unstable for all 4 years of college. We see no particular reason to support this logic. Second, Shaver et al. (1985) examined various social network variables at four points during the college year. Their data indicate that network involvement and satisfaction had stabilized by the winter quarter. Our freshman-year data averaged across multiple assessments, at least half of which occurred after the equivalent of winter quarter on a semester system. Moreover, the original analyses of our data sets revealed no significant differences in intimacy as a function of assessment time (Nezlek, 1978; Wheeler & Nezlek, 1977). A recent study by Hendershott-Frame (1992), conducted with first-year students at the same university, also showed very little change in intimacy-related friendship variables from mid-first semester to mid-second semester. Third, note that quantitative measures of social participation in college, which should also show first-year instability, correlated equally well with adult data, regardless of college year.

We also found, as J. L. Fischer (1981) did, that regardless of age, men's socializing with other men was less intimate than both their socializing with women and women's socializing with either sex. This pattern has been shown in many prior studies (Dindia & Allen, 1992; Reis, in press). Consequently, the quantitative changes discussed earlier—that adults have more opposite-sex interaction and less same-sex interaction—may hold considerable intimacy benefits for men but little advantage for women (cf. Reis, 1990).

Hypothesis 3 was concerned with consistency of interaction patterns from college to adulthood. Substantial across-time correlations were found for the amount of socializing and for mean levels of intimacy and satisfaction. Caspi et al. (1989) described two consistency processes that may have contributed to these findings. Interactional consistency occurs when an individual's interaction style repeatedly evokes similar responses from others. Cumulative consistency, in contrast, stems from the individual's choice of similar social environments at various points in the life cycle. In both cases, social behaviors, such as the variables we studied, reflect stable preferences and capabilities for interacting in particular ways. In turn, these interaction styles arise from personality traits, idiosyncratic needs, and cognitive representations (such as schemas and prototypes) relevant to socializing. Evidence for the longitudinal stability of such dispositional variables has been provided elsewhere (e.g., Caspi et al., 1989; Costa et al., 1980; Main et al., 1985), and Nezlek (in press) has shown that interaction patterns tend to be consistent within a single college year. The present research is unique in demonstrating consistency over a considerable time span in one product of these dispositions: everyday social behavior. This consistency was evident despite extensive differences in social environments. Interaction patterns apparently transcend differences in social networks and opportunities (cf. Lewis, 1982), consistent with the notion that people are active producers of their social experience.

For intimacy, correlations between adult and senior-year socializing were significantly greater than between adult and first-year socializing. This difference has important implications for understanding age-related trends in the development of intimacy. One explanation is that, at age 18, the traits and skills necessary for interacting intimately have not yet developed fully. By age 21, in contrast, enduring styles of interaction had apparently emerged, such that notwithstanding the general developmental shift among men noted earlier, those who inter-

acted more or less intimately were likely to continue doing so at age 30. Future research is needed to identify the nature of the traits and skills that become established during this interval and the manner in which they affect daily interaction.

Two alternative explanations for this difference are plausible. One stems from the previously noted instability of first-year students' social networks. Although we cannot discount this possibility, we believe it is unlikely for the reasons discussed earlier. A second alternative concerns a confound in interpreting differences between the first-year and senior samples. As noted earlier, adult data were collected from the first-year group between 9 and 11 years after their college data, whereas the senior group was studied only 6 years later. (Because seniors were older than the first-year group, there are no appreciable age differences in their adult data.) Thus, the longitudinal analyses span a longer interval for first-year students than for seniors. This discrepancy might account for several of our results, notably the lack of mean intimacy increase among senior women and the higher across-time correlations for intimacy and satisfaction. We think this explanation is unlikely, however, for three reasons. First, if correct, similar results should have appeared for all variables, and they did not. Only intimacy consistently yielded significantly greater correlations for seniors than first-year students. In fact, across-time correlations in the amount and distribution of interaction were actually somewhat larger for first-year students than for seniors. Second, we believe that 4 years of college are generally a time of significantly more meaningful psychological and personal change than 4 years around age 30. Finally, there were no consistent differences in the college–adult comparisons between the two groups of first-year students for whom the time interval differed by two years (9 vs. 11 years). Thus, had we waited another 4 years to follow the senior group, we think it unlikely that our findings would have been noticeably different. Nevertheless, this remains a possibility that cannot be dismissed.

Conclusion

Three additional limitations of this research warrant note. First, the sample was composed of graduates of a single university, who may not be representative of university graduates in general or individuals who do not attend college. It will be particularly important to determine whether noncollege samples show similar developmental trends, because it is possible that the unique characteristics of residential college life were to some extent responsible for our findings. Such a study would also provide a more definitive test of the first-year instability alternative explanation. Second, because our study spanned the postgraduation transition, it was not possible to distinguish changes attributable to development and maturation from changes caused by differences in social environment. It would of course be important to separate these influences.

A final limitation concerns our reliance on a single method, namely the RIR structured event-sampling approach. Corroboration of these findings with other paradigms, particularly those that involve direct observation of interaction patterns, would be desirable. Structured diaries may be less prone to systematic errors and biases than are global questionnaires (Reis & Wheeler, 1991), but their subjective indexes inherently involve self-assessment. For example, our data showed age-related increases in self-perceived intimacy; it would be valuable to determine whether independent observation of conversational behavior would show similar results. Although event-sampling methods have their own limitations, they offer a unique complement to traditional methods (Tennen et al., 1991).

In conclusion, we think it is important for research of this sort to continue. Future studies should examine longitudinal changes later in life, as well as changes brought on by specific life events (e.g., birth of a child, retirement, or relocation). Structured event-recording procedures such as the RIR make it possible for researchers to examine in some detail how changing life circumstances affect everyday activity. This perspective offers a useful complement to paradigms focusing only on the most significant relationships or on global impressions of one's social involvement. After all, it is in everyday social activity that people spend most of their conscious time, energy, and thought. The data reported in this article describe several key differences in the manner that college students and adults socialize. Given the importance of social activity in human functioning and well-being, our findings suggest that early adulthood may be a fruitful period for developmental research.

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Appendix

Rochester Interaction Record (Adult Data)

Date _____ Time _____ a.m. _____ Length: _____ hr _____min
p.m. _____
Initials: _____ _____ _____ If more than 3 others:
Sex: _____ _____ _____ No. of females _____ No. of males _____

Intimacy: ..... superficial	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	meaningful
I disclosed: ..... very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	a great deal
Other disclosed: ..... very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	a great deal
Social integration: did not feel like part of a group	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	felt like part of a group
Quality: ..... unpleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very pleasant
Satisfaction: ..... less than expected	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	more than expected
Initiation: ..... I initiated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	other initiated
Influence: ..... I influenced more	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	other influenced more

Nature: Job Task Pastime Conversation Date

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