2000

Death Anxiety in Young Adults: The Predictive Role of Gender and Psychological Seperation From Parents

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DEATH ANXIETY IN YOUNG ADULTS:
THE PREDICTIVE ROLE OF GENDER AND
PSYCHOLOGICAL SEPARATION FROM PARENTS

by

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Psychology in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in General Psychology

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

December 2000

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Acknowledgements

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my advisor, Dr. Randall Russac, for

the guidance and advice given to me in order to complete this thesis. I also would like to

thank my second reader, Dr. Maury Nation for his extremely helpful comments and

suggestions. I must mention Dr. John Wall for his invaluable help in clarifying the

statistical analyses. I wish to thank my husband for his unwavering support during the

last two years. Last, I give my very deepest thanks to my mom and dad for giving me the

confidence to pursue impressive educational goals and the opportunity to fulfill them.

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Abstract

This study examined the predictive role of gender and psychological separation in the death anxiety of young adults. A total death anxiety score and eight psychological dependency scores, four for mom and four for dad, were obtained from male and female participants between the ages of 17 and 26 years old. Females were found to have significantly higher total death anxiety than were males. Females also had significantly higher emotional dependency on mom than did males. Regression analysis revealed that gender and emotional dependency on mom account for 14% of the variance in total death anxiety. Additional results with males and females data separated revealed significant correlations between total death anxiety and conflictual dependency/dad and conflictual dependency/mom for females and emotional dependency/dad, emotional dependency/mom, and functional dependency/mom for males. An explanation for the differences in dependencies found between the males and females is given.

Death Anxiety in Young Adults:

The Predictive Role of Gender and Psychological Separation from Parents

Interest in the fear of death can be found in some of the original research in the field of psychology. As early as 1896, Scott surveyed research on general anxieties and revealed that the inevitability of death was a source of anxiety for thousands of people. In his extended essay "Thanatophobia and Immortality" (1915) Hall described the fear of death as the "greatest fear that ever oppressed the human race" (p. 561).

What do we fear when we fear death? The loss of the self, pain and suffering while dying, the unknown beyond death, lost opportunity for atonement and salvation, and the welfare of surviving family members are just a few of the sources of the fear of death (Wong, Reker, & Gesser, 1999). Neimeyer (1997) defines death anxiety as a "shorthand designation for a cluster of death attitudes characterized by fear, threat, unease, discomfort, and similar negative reactions." Neimeyer explains that this imprecise definition is in accord with the way in which the term "death anxiety" is used in actual research.

Although the definition of death anxiety has remained quite ambiguous for over 100 years, that has not prevented researchers from examining the causes and correlates of death anxiety. Neimeyer (1997) notes that in the just the past forty years, death anxiety research has generated more than 1,000 published articles. Although this research has revealed scores of factors related to death anxiety, two variables consistently stand out as significant predictors of death anxiety: gender and age.

The Gender Discrepancy

In study after study, women score significantly higher on measures of death

anxiety than do men. Martin, Wilee, and Voorhees (1978) examined the relationship between death anxiety and self-esteem in college students and found that female students had significantly higher death anxiety than male students. Jones and Jacobs (1984) found gender to be the second best predictor of death anxiety in a study examining the relationship between area of study in graduate school and death anxiety. In a study examining exposure to client death, training in death and dying, and death anxiety, Hunt and Rosenthal (1997) also found gender to be one of the three best predictors of death anxiety. Results of a study examining the effects of divorce on adolescents showed that the girls had significantly higher levels of death anxiety than did the boys, even though divorce status had no effect on the mean death anxiety scores (Brubeck & Beer, 1992). In a study exploring death anxiety in the military, Koob and Davis (1977) found that the wives of military officers had significantly higher death anxiety scores than did the officers.

In a study exploring the relationship between religiosity and death anxiety, Thorson and Powell (1990) divided their sample into the 40% who scored highest in death anxiety and the 40% who scored lowest in death anxiety. The high anxiety group had 62% women, whereas the low anxiety group had only 45% women.

White and Handal (1991) investigated the relationship between death anxiety and psychological adjustment. Results showed that individuals with high death anxiety were significantly more distressed and significantly less satisfied with life than individuals with low death anxiety. This relationship was especially significant and reliable for females. White and Handal suggest that women high in death anxiety lack the adaptive amounts of denial and repression that control the expression of death anxiety in

individuals with low death anxiety.

Davis, Bremer, Anderson and Tramill (1983) explored the relationship between ego strength, self-esteem, death anxiety and gender in college students. Female students had significantly higher death anxiety scores than male students. However, the female students also had significantly lower self-esteem and ego-strength scores than the male students. The authors suggest that the lack of self-esteem and low ego-strength in the females is the likely source of their elevated death anxiety.

Results of a study examining the relationship between death anxiety and marital status (Cole, 1979) revealed that married women with children had the highest level of death anxiety when compared to married men with children, married men without children, and married women without children. Cole states that because women are "typically other-oriented in relation to death anxiety" it seems plausible that women with children will exhibit greater death anxiety than men because of their concern for the well-being of their children and spouse.

In a comment regarding several studies conducted in Arabic countries, Templer (1991) suggests that the large gender difference in death anxiety levels within Arabic cultures is due to the extreme sex-role divisions present. In a study examining sex-role stereotypes in the United States, Robbins (1989) found that "femininity" as measured by the Bem Sex-Role Inventory was a better predictor of death anxiety than sex. That is, participants with a feminine or interpersonally oriented sex-role orientation have higher levels of death anxiety than participants with a masculine sex-role orientation. Templer, Lester, and Ruff (1974) also found an association between femininity and death anxiety. Twenty female and 35 male college students were administered the Femininity Scale of

Gough and the Collett-Lester Fear of Death Scale, which measures death anxiety in the following four domains: fear of own death, fear of own dying, fear of death of others, and fear of dying of others. For females, scores on the Femininity Scale were correlated with fear of dying of others ($r = .34$). For males, scores on the Femininity Scale were correlated with fear of own death ($r = .34$) and fear of dying of others ($r = .33$).

Templer, Ruff, and Franks (1971) explored the levels of death anxiety in three diverse populations. The participants included: 283 residents of an upper-middle class apartment building (19 to 85 years old), 125 low-income aides in a state hospital (18 to 61 years old), 137 heterogeneous psychiatric patients, (17 to 59 years old), 743 high school students students, (13 to 21 years old), and 569 fathers and 702 mothers of the above students (31 to 74 years old). In all the groups, females had higher death anxiety scores than males. This finding was statistically significant (p<.001) for the apartment house residents, the adolescents, and the parents of the adolescents. Further investigation of the relationship between the death anxiety score of the adolescents and the death anxiety scores of their parents revealed a significant correlation (p<.001) between fathers and sons ($r = .51$) , mothers and sons ($r = .39$), fathers and daughters ($r = .34$), and mothers and daughters ($r = .41$). The death anxiety scores of both male and female adolescents correlate most highly with the scores of the same sex parent. The difference between the correlation with the same sex parent and the correlation with the opposite sex parent was found to be significant for both male adolescents ($t = 1.66$, p<.05) and females adolescents ($t = 3.31$, p<.01). Templer et al. explain that the substantial correlation between death anxiety scores of parents and adolescents indicates that the source of death anxiety is not dependent on early childhood experiences and basic personality structure.

They state that "death anxiety is not so much a fixed entity as a state that is sensitive to environmental events in general and to the impact of interpersonal relationships, in particular" (p. 108).

In summary, women have been found to have higher levels of death anxiety than men across age, marital status, level of religiosity, divorce status of parents, area of study in college, or level of exposure to death in the workplace (Brubeck & Beer, 1992; Cole, 1979; Hunt & Rosenthal, 1997; Jones & Jacobs, 1984; Martin et al., 1978). Women have also been found to have higher levels of death anxiety than do men in Arabic countries as well (Templer, 1991). Although the tendency for women to have higher levels of death anxiety than men is one of the most consistent findings in the field, a comprehensive theory of the gender discrepancy in death anxiety has not yet been introduced. Templer (1991) hypothesizes that sex-role divisions are the source of elevated death anxiety in women. At least two studies (Robbins, 1989; Templer, Lester, & Ruff, 1974) have shown that "femininity" is a better predictor of death anxiety than gender. Templer, Ruff, and Franks (1971) found evidence that the source of death anxiety for both men and women is due to an interaction of the impact of interpersonal relationships and environmental events, such as developmental tasks.

The Importance of Age

Age, when used as a continuous variable in death anxiety research, has yielded conflicting results. Many studies have shown that as age increases, death anxiety decreases (i.e., Kane & Hogan, 1985; Stevens, Cooper, & Thomas, 1980; Thorson, Powell, & Samuel, 1998). However, numerous other studies have found no relationship between age and death anxiety scores (i.e., Dickstein, 1978; Lester, 1972, 1985; Loo,

1984; Templer, Lester, & Franks, 1971). When age is not used as a continuous variable, and instead, participants are arranged into age groups based on developmental theory, age no longer produces conflicting results.

In a study exploring meanings of death and death anxiety, Thorson and Powell (1988) divided 599 participants into the following age groups: 16 to 19 years, 20 to 29 years, 30 to 59 years and 60 years and over. Overall, there was a general tendency for younger participants to have higher levels of death anxiety than older participants ($r = -.35$). When age groups were compared, the youngest group scored significantly higher than the oldest group on 13 of the 25 items on the instrument. The researchers concluded that "there are broad differences in meanings of death, and age differences in constructions of death orientation imply that these meanings may be developmental" (p. 699). In a study examining death anxiety and religiosity, Thorson and Powell (1990) divided 346 participants into similar age groups: 18 to 20 years, 21 to 36 years, 37 to 67 years, and 68 to 88 years. The results revealed that the two younger groups had significantly higher death anxiety scores than the two older groups. When the sample was divided into the 40% who scored highest in death anxiety and the 40% who scored lowest, the high anxiety group had a mean age of 36.4 years and the low anxiety group had a mean age of 49.7 years. Thorson and Powell suggest that the decrease in death anxiety as an individual ages is a "result of the life-long developmental process of solving one's existential problem" (p. 389). In a subsequent study examining belief in an afterlife and death anxiety, Thorson (1991) found that the participants 30 years old and above had significantly lower death anxiety scores than the participants under 30 years old ($p<.01$). Thorson briefly explains these results as a consequence of the "life review process", a

developmental task faced during middle age.

Koocher, O'Malley, Foster, and Gogan (1976), surveyed 75 junior high-school students (ages 10 to 15 years), 111 senior high-school students (ages 15 to 18 years), and 38 adults (ages 19 to 45 years). The senior high-school group had a significantly higher level of death anxiety than the junior high-school group. The difference between the senior high-school group and the adult group approached significance. The researchers state that the high level of death anxiety in the older adolescents is not surprising. They explain that "death becomes all the more worrisome at this stage since it takes on a new and final meaning which the adolescent can relate to himself/herself for the first time" (p. 227).

In a substantial developmental study investigating death anxiety, Keller, Sherry, and Piotrowski (1984) divided their sample of 874 participants into the following age groups: young (18 to 23 years old), adult (24 to 29 years old), early middle (30 to 37 years old), middle (38 to 44 years old), late middle (45 to 59 years old), and old (60 to 87 years old). Keller et al. found that the young group and old group had significantly higher levels of general death anxiety than the early middle, middle, and late middle groups. However, the old group exhibited significantly less death anxiety related to the self than the younger groups. In their discussion, Keller et al. suggest that older individuals may have accepted the inevitability of their own death, but remain anxious about death in general because of their many experiences with death. Since young adults are just getting started with careers and families, death is perceived as an interference.

Reker, Peacock, and Wong (1987) explored the relationship between death acceptance and meaning in life. Death acceptance was defined as "the absence of fear or

anxiety about death". The researchers divided the sample into the following age groups: young adulthood (16 to 29 years), early middle-age (30 to 49 years), late middle-age (50 to 64 years), young-old (65 to 74 years), and old-old (75 years and over). Each age group consisted of 30 men and 30 women. The results indicated that death acceptance increased as age increased. This relationship was significant at the .001 level. Reker et al. state that the increasing acceptance of death by late middle-aged and elderly adults supports Erikson's model of development. In his discussion of the final stage of psychosocial development, ego integrity vs. despair, Erikson (1950) suggested that the elderly person who developed a sense of ego integrity would not fear death and would be generally satisfied with his life. In contrast, the individual who failed to resolve this crisis would be characterized by a fear of death and a general dissatisfaction with his life.

Further support for a developmental explanation of death anxiety in the elderly was found by Flint, Gayton, and Ozmon (1983). In a study of life satisfaction in elderly adults (mean age of 68 years), a significant positive correlation between death acceptance and life satisfaction was found. This relationship was significant for both males and females, although it was strongest for females. In a study involving three groups of individuals over the age of sixty, Nehrke, Bellucci, and Gabriel (1978) also found some evidence of a developmental explanation of death anxiety. Forty participants were from private nursing homes, forty were living independently in the community and forty were living in public housing. Only the individuals in public housing showed a significant, positive correlation between life satisfaction and death anxiety. Individuals in nursing homes were the least satisfied with life, but also the lowest in death anxiety. Individuals living in the community were moderately satisfied with their lives, but had high death

anxiety. Because Erikson's ego integrity solution does not adequately explain the different levels of death anxiety in this study, the authors suggest two other factors that may make these results meaningful: level of independence in social and financial matters and physical health. The authors conclude that although psychosocial development partially explains death anxiety in the elderly, quality of health and level of independence are most likely important factors, too.

Several researchers have directly tested the relationship between psychosocial development and death anxiety in adults. For example, in a study of 196 participants ranging in age from 18 to 80 years, Rasmussen and Brems (1996) predicted that as psychosocial maturity and age increased, death anxiety would decrease. Psychosocial maturity was measured with the Constantinople Inventory of Psychosocial Development, a 60-item inventory assessing the Eriksonian stages of development. The results showed that psychosocial maturity is a significant predictor of death anxiety, accounting for 6.5% of the variance (p<.0001). Age added to the predictive power, accounting for an additional 2.0% of the variance (p<.05). However, the meaning of the total psychosocial maturity score, as reported in this study, is unclear. Erikson (1950) described eight stages that all individuals will experience within their lifetime, but Rasmussen and Brems fail to mention what stages their participants were in or if the death anxiety scores of individuals in various stages were different.

In another attempt to conduct a developmental study of death anxiety, Richardson and Sands (1987) surveyed 74 middle-aged women ranging in age from 30 to 49 years old. The developmental concerns, based on Erikson's stages, were identity, intimacy, generativity, and integrity. Identity was assessed with the statement "I am trying to

figure out who I am." Intimacy was measured with the item "I am interested in developing an intimate relationship with someone." Generativity was assessed with the statement "I am interested in giving of myself." And integrity was measured with the item "I am concerned about the meaning of life." The results from the regression analyses revealed that integrity and generativity were more predictive of general Death Concern than age. These two factors accounted for 16% of the variance. For Death as an Interpersonal Loss, identity and intimacy were significant predictors and accounted for 13% of the variance. Age was not a significant predictor. However, the lack of a valid or reliable measurement of four developmental issues warrants cautious interpretation of these results.

In a more substantial developmental study, Sterling and Van Horn (1989) tested the hypothesis that identity status is related to death anxiety in young adults. According to Erikson (1950), the developmental task of adolescence is the formation of an identity. This requires the adolescent to commit to an occupation, a set of religious beliefs, a set of political beliefs, a sex role, and a sexual orientation. The failure of this stage is role diffusion. Although Erikson envisioned this stage as occurring right after puberty, these are the issues that most college students struggle with while attending college. Sterling and Van Horn measured identity status in 63 male college students and found that those participants who had achieved strong sense of personal identity had the lowest death anxiety scores and those participants who were currently experiencing an identity crisis had the highest death anxiety scores. The researchers explained that as an adolescent is struggling to form an identity, many uncertainties, including death, are noticed and examined by the young adult. In contrast, the formation of an identity insulates the

young adult against uncertainties such as death because the young person has resolved the issues of occupation, religion, politics, and sexuality. Although these results are valuable, Sterling and Van Horn excluded females from their study, making it impossible to generalize these findings to all young adults.

In summary, the tendency for adolescents and young adults to score higher on measures of death anxiety than middle-aged and older adults is one of the most consistent findings in death anxiety research. Several well-designed studies have provided evidence that the low death anxiety exhibited by the elderly is due to the accomplishment of a sense of ego integrity, the developmental task of old age (Flint et. al, 1983; Nehrke et. al, 1978; Reker et. al, 1987). Thorson and Powell (1990; 1991) have suggested that the low death anxiety found in middle-aged adults is due to the completion of the "life review process", the developmental task of middle age. However, the studies examining the relationship between the high death anxiety in young adults and the developmental tasks specific to that age group have been inadequate (Rasmussen & Brems, 1996; Richardson & Sands, 1987; Sterling & Van Horn, 1989). What is especially lacking is a clearly defined developmental task that is unique to young adulthood, which can be measured with a valid, reliable instrument. The task of psychological separation from parents is a clearly defined developmental task unique to young adults. It also has a valid, reliable instrument with which to measure it.

Separation-Individuation in Late Adolescence

One of the most influential paradigms that has come out of psychoanalytic theory has been the concept of separation-individuation (Hoffman, 1980). The process of separation-individuation requires an individual to psychologically separate from his of

her parents in order to gain a sense of identity as a separate person. Mahler (1974)

created the term separation-individuation to describe the process by which an infant

differentiates itself from its mother and becomes an autonomous person. Separation

refers to the infant's "emergence from a symbiotic fusion with the mother", while

individuation refers to "those achievements marking the child's assumptions of his own

individual characteristics" (p. 89). Two interdependent changes take place during the

process of separation-individuation. One change is behavioral and occurs when the

infant achieves independent behavioral activity. The other change is cognitive and

occurs when the infant can differentiate between self and object representations. These

two changes occur during the first three years of a child's life and are described by

Mahler in four phases. The infant's first awareness of mother as a separate person,

occurring between 5 and 10 months, signals the *differentiation* phase. The infant

tenatively explores his or her environment, while staying close to mother. Between 10

and 15 months, increased locomotion leads to extensive exploration. During this

practicing phase, mother is used as a "home base" for emotional refueling throughout the

day. It is not until the *rapprochement* phase, occurring between 15 and 20 months, that

mother is experienced as a separate person. Such recognition brings a sense of great loss

to the toddler, apparent in regressive behavior such as clinging to mother throughout the

day and crying upon her departure, even from a room. The resolution of separation-

individuation occurs during the third year, in the *libidinal object constancy* phase. The

achievement of object constancy implies that the child's intrapsychic incorporation of

both the good and bad parts of the mother image allows the child some physical distance

from the mother of reality and sets the foundation for an intrapsychic structure that will

be the basis for identity. The mother's behavior during the last two phases is critical. If the mother provides adequate loving care while gently encouraging the toddler toward independence, psychological separation will occur smoothly and the toddler will incorporate the mental representation of the mother image. If, however, the mother is ambivalent, anxious, or hostile and regards her child's psychological separation from her as rejection, individuation will not be smooth and the mental representation of the mother image may be incomplete.

Blos (1962) proposed that individuation is recapitulated in adolescence. The adolescent must shed family dependencies by loosening his or her ties with the internalized parent. This disengagement from the internalized parental representation allows the maturation of the adolescent's own ego. Before adolescence, the child has been able to make legitimate demands upon the parental ego, which has often served as an extension of its own less developed ego. It is through ego maturation that a firm sense of self emerges, a self that is different from that of the parents and more capable of self-support. Blos states that the individuated adolescent "takes increasing responsibility for what he does and what he is, rather than depositing his responsibility onto the shoulders of those under whose influence and tutelage he has grown up" (p.168).

Following Blos's lead, and extrapolating from Mahler's description of separation-individuation in infancy, Hoffman (1984) defined four separate aspects of the process of psychological separation during late adolescence (17 to 23 years old). Hoffman explains that the efforts of the infant to act independently may be reflected during adolescence as the ability to manage and direct one's personal affairs without the help of his or her mother or father. This definition is labeled *functional independence*. The infant's

differentiation between the mental representations of the self and other may be reflected during adolescence in the differentiation of attitudes, values, and beliefs between the adolescent and his or her parents. This is defined as *attitudinal independence*. Hoffman states that the emotional dependency of the infant on the mother is a highly complex and broad domain that may reflect positive feelings of closeness as well as negative feelings resulting from conflict. Therefore, this domain is divided into two aspects labeled *emotional* and *conflictual independence*. *Emotional independence* is defined as freedom from an excessive need for approval, closeness, togetherness, and emotional support in relation to the mother and father. *Conflictual independence* is defined as freedom from excessive guilt, anxiety, mistrust, responsibility, inhibition, resentment, and anger in relation to the mother and father. In this conceptualization, psychological separation of an adolescent from his or her mother is differentiated from separation from father. Hoffman states that this distinction is important because separation from one parent as opposed to the other may have critical implications for personal adjustment. Hoffman (1984) then created the Psychological Separation Inventory (PSI) to measure these types of independence in young adults. The PSI consists of the following eight subscales: functional independence/mom, functional independence/dad, attitudinal independence/mom, attitudinal independence/dad, emotional independence/mom, emotional independence/dad, conflictual independence/mom, and conflictual independence/dad.

To test the hypothesis that greater psychological separation of male and female adolescents from their parents is related to better personal adjustment, participants answered two questions in the areas of love and work. The statement "I have problems

with my academic courses" assessed problems in the domain of work and the statement "I have problems with my love relationships" assessed problems in the domain of love. For males, significant correlations were found between the PSI scale of conflictual independence/dad and problems with academics question ($r = -.29$), between conflictual independence/mom and dad and the problems with love relationships question ($r = -.25$ and $r = -.37$), emotional independence/mom and dad and the academics problems question ($r = -.33$ and $r = -.32$), and attitudinal independence/mom and dad and the love relationships question ($r = .28$ and $r = .30$). For females, significant correlations were found between conflictual independence/mom and dad and the love problems question ($r = -.38$ and $r = -.33$), between emotional independence/dad and love problems question ($r = -.28$), and between emotional independence/mom and dad and the academics problems question ($r = -.30$ and $r = -.25$). Thus, it appears that for both males and females, greater emotional independence from their parents is related to better academic adjustment, whereas greater conflictual independence is related to better adjustment in love relationships. Also, for males, attitudinal similarity with both parents is related to better adjustment in love relationships.

In a follow-up study, Hoffman and Weiss (1987) used the conflictual independence and emotional independence scales of the PSI and the Inventory of Common Problems (ICP) to assess the relationship between psychological separation and presenting problems in college students. The ICP assesses six areas: depression, anxiety, interpersonal problems, academic problems, physical health problems, and substance-use problems. For both male and female students, Hoffman and Weiss found that high conflictual dependence on both parents was significantly related to higher scores on the

ICP (for females, $r = .43$ for mother dependence and $r = .42$ for father dependence; for males, $r = .39$ for mother dependence and $r = .39$ for father dependence). No significant correlations were found between the emotional independence scales and the ICP. These results indicate that high conflictual dependence (relationship burdened with guilt, anxiety, mistrust, and anger) on both parents is related to many of the problems male and female college students report.

In a similar study, Lapsley, Rice, and Shadid (1989) examined psychological separation and college adjustment utilizing all four scales of the PSI and the College Adjustment Inventory (CAI). The CAI assesses four areas: academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and goal commitment attachment. For women, significant correlations were found between personal-emotional adjustment and functional independence from mother ($r = .27$), conflictual independence from mother ($r = .22$), conflictual independence from father ($r = .26$), and emotional independence from mother ($r = .24$). For men, significant correlations were found between personal-emotional adjustment and functional independence from mother ($r = .35$), functional independence from father ($r = .19$), conflictual independence from mother ($r = .20$), conflictual independence from father ($r = .29$), emotional independence from mother ($r = .44$), and emotional independence from father ($r = .17$). Thus, it appears that for both men and women, conflictual independence from both parents is related to better personal and emotional adjustment in college. It also appears that for both men and women, functional independence (ability to manage practical and personal affairs) and emotional independence (freedom from an excessive need for approval, closeness, and emotional support) from the opposite-sex parent is important for personal adjustment to college.

Other interesting results gathered from this study included gender differences in the scores on the PSI. Women scored significantly higher on functional, attitudinal, and emotional dependencies on the mother scales than did men (p<.01 for all three). On the father scales, women scored significantly higher than did men on emotional dependency only (p<.01). The Z transformation procedure was conducted to determine if the pattern of dependencies was related to poorer adjustment to college for women. No significant differences emerged between men and women in the correlations between psychological separation and adjustment to college. This indicates that although women showed more psychological dependencies on parents than did men, this did not translate into poor college adjustment.

In a study examining the relationship between depression, psychological separation, college adjustment and gender, Lopez, Campbell, and Watkins (1986) found similar gender differences in PSI scores. Eighteen men and 24 women from intact families participated in the study. The results revealed that women scored significantly higher than did men on the emotional dependency scales for both mother and father. Although this did not affect college adjustment scores for women, it did affect their depression scores. Significant negative correlations were found for women between depression scores and emotional independence from their mother ($r = -.40$, p<.05) and conflictual independence from their father ($r = -.58$, p<.01). Similar results were not found for men. These results show that for women, as separation increases, depression decreases. However, increased separation is also related to lower college adjustment. Lopez et al. note that separation does not seem to have a noticeable influence at this stage in male development. The authors suggest that future studies should include more

participants overall, students from all levels in college (their participants were

underclassmen) and students from divorced families.

In summary, the findings of the research examining psychological separation and

adjustment to college are conflicting and confusing. At first glance, it appears that

emotional and conflictual independence from the parents for both male and female

students is important to successful college adjustment. However, Lapsley et al. (1989)

found that although women were generally more dependent on both their mother and

father, it did not negatively affect their college adjustment. Lopez et al., (1986) found

that, for women, increased psychological separation lowered college adjustment.

Overall, more research is needed to gain a clearer understanding of how psychological

separation affects college students in general and how psychological separation

differentially affects males and females, in particular.

Psychological Separation and Death Anxiety

McCarthy (1980) suggests that death anxiety in the adolescent is a natural

consequence of the separation-indivduation processs. The adolescent's struggle to let go

of the powerful protection given by his or her parents in the face of his or her own flimsy,

emerging sense of self and identity leads to anxiety and depression. McCarthy explains

that "the end of childhood, with its necessity for more fully establishing a sense of self,

insures an adolescent turmoil in which separations may become quite painful and

concerns about death predominate" (p. 67). McCarthy adds that for the middle-class

adolescent, leaving home to attend college typically brings these separation issues to the

forefront.

Swanson and Byrd (1998) tested the hypothesis that separation-individuation is

related to death anxiety in young adults. Seventy undergraduates between the ages of 19 and 30 participated in the study. Psychological separation was assessed with Christensen and Wilson's (1985) measure of separation-individuation conflict. The results revealed a significant correlation between separation-individuation conflict and death anxiety ($r =$ .41, p<.01). Thus, young adults struggling with the process of separation-individuation had higher death anxiety scores than young adults not struggling with separation-individuation. However, these results are somewhat vague because the researchers did not include any information on the instrument used to measure separation-individuation nor gave a definition of separation-indivduation as used in this study.

Our pilot study (Chelgren & Russac, 2000) examined more thoroughly the relationship between separation-individuation and death anxiety in young adults. Fifty undergraduates ranging in age from 19 to 27 years old completed the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence (SITA; Levine, Green, & Millon, 1986) and the Revised Collett-Lester Fear of Death Scale (Lester, 1994). The Revised Collett-Lester Fear of Death Scale contains the following four subscales: fear of death of self, fear of death of others, fear of dying of self, and fear of dying of others. A total death anxiety score may also be calculated. The SITA consists of six subscales that are meant to represent the dimensions of the separation-individuation process: Nurturance-Symbiosis, Engulfment Anxiety, Separation Anxiety, Need Denial, Self-Centeredness, and Healthy Separation. Results revealed that women had significantly higher total death anxiety scores than did men. However, there were no significant differences in death anxiety scores between age, race, year in college, or living with/without parents. Also, no significant correlations were found between any of the four subscales of the Revised

Collett-Lester scale and the subscales of the SITA. Instead, total death anxiety scores were found to correlate significantly with the following three subscales of the SITA: Nurturance-Symbiosis ($r = .46$, p<.01), Separation Anxiety ($r = .41$, p<.01), and Healthy Separation ($r = -.41$, p<.01). Individuals scoring high on the Separation Anxiety subscale have strong fears of losing emotional or physical contact with an important other. Individuals scoring high on the Healthy Separation subscale have made significant progress toward resolution of the conflicts associated with separation-individuation. Individuals scoring high on the Nurturance-Symbiosis subscale have strong dependency needs and anticipate gratification of those needs. This scale includes questions regarding the adolescent's relationship with his or her parents. Thus, it appears that young adults with high levels of death anxiety fear losing emotional or physical contact with important others and have strong dependency needs within their close relationships, including the relationship with their parents. Conversely, young adults with low levels of death anxiety have achieved a healthy psychological separation from their parents.

Another finding worth mentioning is a regression analysis that was run with gender, Nurturance-Symbiosis, Separation Anxiety, and Healthy Separation as predictors of total death anxiety. Gender was eliminated from the best model and the three subscales accounted for 33% of the variance in total death anxiety.

Unfortunately, the SITA does not differentiate between the relationship with the mother and the relationship with the father. For example, one statement assessing engulfment anxiety is, "Sometimes my parents are so overprotective I feel smothered". As seen in the results of the studies that used Hoffman's Psychological Separation Inventory, young men and women respond to the psychological separation from each

parent in different ways. The process of psychologically separating from one's parents is much too complex not to address the relationship with each parent separately.

Summary

In conclusion, a considerable number of studies examining variables related to death anxiety have shown that gender and age group are consistent predictors of death anxiety in adults. Women report higher levels of death anxiety than do men across age, marital status, level of religiosity, divorce status of parents, area of study in college, or level of exposure to death in the workplace (Brubeck & Beer, 1992; Cole, 1979; Hunt & Rosenthal, 1997; Jones & Jacobs, 1984; Martin et al., 1978). Even in other cultures, women have higher levels of death anxiety than do men (Templer, 1991). However, the few studies that have closely examined gender in relation to death anxiety have found other factors, such as a feminine sex-role orientation and dependency in interpersonal relationships, to be more predictive of death anxiety than gender (Robbins, 1989; Templer et al., 1971; Templer et al., 1974). These factors are, in fact, characteristics found more commonly in women than in men.

Numerous studies investigating the tendency for young adults to report higher levels of death anxiety than either middle-aged adults or older adults have suggested that developmental issues can account for the differences in death anxiety levels. Research has adequately shown that the low level of death anxiety in the elderly is due to the accomplishment of a sense of ego integrity (Flint et. al, 1983; Nehrke et. al, 1978; Reker et. al, 1987). Thorson and Powell (1990; 1991) have provided some evidence that the low death anxiety found in middle-aged adults is due to the completion of the "life review process." Two studies have provided meager evidence that the high level of death

anxiety in young adults is due to separation-individuation, a developmental task specific to young adults (Chelgren & Russac, 2000; Swanson & Byrd, 1998). Both of those studies, however, failed to examine psychological separation from mother and psychological separation from father as different processes or to examine how these processes affect males and females differently, two trends that have been revealed in the research on psychological separation in college students. Hoffman and Weiss (1987) found that for both men and women, functional independence (ability to manage practical and personal affairs) and emotional independence (freedom from an excessive need for approval, closeness, and emotional support) from the opposite-sex parent is important for personal adjustment to college. Lopez et al., (1986) found that, for women, increased psychological separation lowered college adjustment, but that separation did not seem to have a noticeable influence at this stage in male development.

After the examining the results of the death anxiety research reviewed in this paper, it seems logical to investigate the relationship between death anxiety in young adults and psychological separation from parents. The source of low levels of death anxiety in the middle-aged and in the elderly has been found to be related to the accomplishment of developmental tasks, so it follows that the high levels of death anxiety in young adults could be related to the struggle to accomplish a developmental task. Since women have been found to have higher levels of psychological dependency on both their mother and father, it is also possible that psychological separation could be related to the gender difference in death anxiety among young adults, as well.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to, (a) investigate the extent to which psychological

separation from the mother and the father is related to the occurrence of death anxiety in young adults and, (b) investigate the extent to which psychological separation from the mother and the father is related to the tendency for young women to have higher levels of death anxiety than young men.

Since considerable research has shown that women report higher levels of death anxiety than do men, it is predicted that women will have significantly higher total death anxiety scores than will men.

The only consistent gender differences found in the research examining psychological separation has been the tendency for women to score higher in emotional dependency on both their mother and their father. Hence, it is predicted that women will score significantly higher than will men in emotional dependency on both the mother and father scales.

Considering the trend in the psychological separation research for emotional dependency to be related to lower college adjustment and the results of three studies (Chelgren & Russac, 2000; Robbins, 1989; Templer, Lester, & Ruff, 1974) that found other factors to be more predictive of death anxiety than gender, it is predicted that emotional dependency will be more predictive of total death anxiety than will gender.

Method

Participants

One hundred and twenty-five undergraduate and graduate students at the University of North Florida were recruited to participate in the study. The participants were required to be under 27 years old, unmarried, and with no children. These requirements were enforced in an attempt to survey a young adult sample still in the

process of psychologically separating from their parents. All of the participants received class credit for completing the study.

Eight surveys were eliminated because the respondents exceeded the age limit and 4 surveys were eliminated because the questionnaire was not completed. Of the 116 participants remaining, 79 were female and 37 were male. Seventy-six percent of the participants were Caucasian, 13% were African-American, 4% were Asian-American, 4% were Hispanic, and 3% were of another race. Forty-one percent of the participants were freshmen, 22% were sophomores, 18% were juniors, 13% were seniors, and 6% were graduate students. Forty-seven percent of the participants lived with one or both parents. Thirty-one percent of the participants' parents had divorced. When the participants were asked if someone close to them had died, 73% answered "yes".

First, all participants were instructed to read and sign the Informed Consent (Appendix A). Next, they reported demographic and personal information relevant to the study (Appendix B). Then, the participants completed the Psychological Separation Inventory (Hoffman , 1984; Appendix C) and the Revised Collett-Lester Fear of Death and Dying Scale (Lester, 1994; Appendix D). After completing the study, each participant was given a "debriefing document" that explained the purpose of the study, the results expected, relevant articles for recommended reading, and the experimenter's e-mail address (Appendix E).

All participants were tested in groups, ranging in size from 5 to 15, in a quiet room with the experimenter present. No names were attached to any data that were collected. The results of this study are being used to satisfy a graduate level thesis.

Instruments

Death anxiety was measured with the Revised Collett-Lester Fear of Death and

Dying Scale (Lester, 1994). Lester (1994) reports that the original version of the Collett-

Lester Fear of Death Scale (1969) needed to be revised for two reasons: the subscales of

the original scale had an unequal number of items, and some researchers found the

subscales difficult to score. In the revised scale, the items are separated into four

subscales that Lester believes will help participants analyze their attitudes more

coherently and also simplify scoring for researchers. The four subscales are: Fear of

Death of Self, Fear of Dying of Self, Fear of Death of Others, and Fear of Dying of

Others. Examples of the Fear of Death of Self subscale include "The total isolation of

death" and "Dying young." Statements from the Fear of Dying of Self subscale include

"The pain involved in dying" and "Your lack of control over the process of dying."

Examples of the Fear of Death of Others subscale include "Losing someone close to you"

and "Never being able to communicate with the person again." Statements from the Fear

of Dying of Others subscale include "Having to be with someone who is dying" and

"Watching the person suffer from pain." Respondents are instructed to rate each item on

a scale from 1 (not at all disturbing) to 5 (very disturbing). They are also instructed to

answer each item quickly, and not to spend too much time thinking about each response.

To measure test-retest reliability, Lester administered the revised scale to 27

anonymous college students. Test-retest Pearson correlations were .85 for Fear of Death

of Self, .79 for Fear of Dying of Self, .86 for Fear of Death of Others, and .83 for Fear of

Death of Others.

To test internal consistency, Lester administered the revised scale to 22 adult men

and 51 women (mean age of 35.9 years) working at a developmental center for profoundly retarded men. For Fear of Death of Self, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was .91, for Fear of Dying of Self it was .89, for Fear of Death of Others it was .72, and for Fear of Dying of Others it was .87.

Based on the 73 adults employed at the developmental center, the total-item correlations for the items in the subscales ranged from .36 to .78. Lester notes that he modified two items that had particularly low item-total correlations. Factor analysis identified seven orthogonal factors greater than 1. Factor 1 had high loadings (>0.40) from 7 of the 8 items on the Fear of Death of Self subscale. Factor 2 had loadings from 9 of the 16 items on the two subscales concerned with others. Factor 4 had loadings from 6 of the items of the self-oriented subscales and one from the other-oriented subscales. The other factors were mixed. Lester concludes that the results of this factor analysis are not supportive of the content validity of the items on the subscales. Therefore, until other, larger studies assess the content validity of the four subscales, Lester recommends cautious interpretation of subscale scores.

Lester did, however, find adequate construct validity for the revised scale. The same 73 adults were also administered the short version of the Maudsley Personality Inventory. For women, neuroticism correlated significantly with all four subscales (p<.001 for all four correlations). For men, neuroticism correlated significantly with the Death of Self (p<.01) and Death of Others (p<.05) subscales. For men only, extraversion correlated with the Death of Self, Death of Others, and Dying of Others subscales (p<.05 for all three correlations).

Psychological separation from parents was measured with the Psychological

Separation Inventory (PSI; Hoffman, 1984). Based on Mahler's and Blos's descriptions of separation-individuation, the PSI contains the following four subscales: functional independence, attitudinal independence, emotional independence, and conflictual independence. Functional independence is defined as the ability to manage and direct one's personal affairs without the help of his or her mother or father. The differentiation of attitudes, values, and beliefs between the adolescent and his or her parents is considered attitudinal independence. Emotional independence is defined as freedom from an excessive need for approval, closeness, togetherness, and emotional support in relation to the mother and father. Freedom from excessive guilt, anxiety, mistrust, responsibility, inhibition, resentment, and anger in relation to the mother and father is considered conflictual independence. Each of the scales is divided into mother and father sections, thus yielding eight separate scores of psychological separation (emotional independence from mother, emotional independence from father, conflictual independence from mother, conflictual independence from father, etc.).

An example from the emotional independence subscale is "My mother/father is the most important person in the world to me." A statement from the conflictual independence subscale is "I blame my mother/father for many of the problems I have." An example from the attitudinal independence subscale is "My religious beliefs are similar to my mother's/father's." A statement from the functional independence subscale is "I wouldn't make a major purchase without my mother's/father's approval."

To develop the existing 138-item PSI, Hoffman (1984) surveyed 75 male and 75 female undergraduate college students between the ages of 18 and 22. All of the participants met the following criteria: the student must have been unmarried, the natural

parents of the student must have been living together, and the student must have been living with his or her parents while attending the university. The first version of the PSI, consisting of 334 items, was administered to the 150 participants. The 200 items with the highest correlations with their respective total scale scores made up the next version of the PSI. Factor analysis was then performed to provide an empirical check on the conceptual distinctions between the scales and to further reduce the total number of items. Four factors clearly emerged, with most items loading on the four factors in accordance with the conceptual scheme originally established. However, items with a factor loading of less than .35 on the functional, emotional, and conflictual independence scales and less than .60 on the attitudinal independence scale were eliminated. This resulted in a total of 138 items remaining, with 13 functional, 17 emotional, 25 conflictual, and 14 attitudinal items for each mother and father scale. The estimates of internal consistency for each of the scales, using Cronbach's coefficient alpha, ranged between .84 and .92.

Hoffman also tested the construct validity of the PSI with the 150 undergraduates by correlating psychological separation with personal adjustment in college. This part of the study was discussed in-depth earlier in this paper.

A separate sample of 26 male and 28 female participants meeting the same criteria was used to compute the test-retest reliability of the PSI. The participants were retested two to three weeks after the initial testing. Pearson product-moment correlations resulted in a median of .83 for males and a median of .83 for females.

Results

Due to the inadequate discriminant validity among the four subscales making up

the Revised Collett-Lester Fear of Death and Dying Scale reported by Lester (1994), a correlation matrix was run to assess the level of correlation between each of the subscales (Table 1). Many of the subscales were highly correlated with one another, indicating that they do not have adequate discriminant validity. Thus, the analyses for this study will include total death anxiety scores only.

Next, Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was run to check the error variance of the dependent variable, total death anxiety. The results ($F = .710, p = .901$) indicated that the error variance is equal across all groups (gender, race, age, level in college, living with/without parents, parents divorced/not divorced, and experienced/not experienced someone close to you die). To check the distribution of the data for the dependent variable, a Normal Probability Plot (Figure 1) and a Histogram (Figure 2) were completed. Both graphs indicate that the dependent variable data is normally distributed.

Next, a Univariate Analysis of Variance was run with total death anxiety as the dependent variable and the following factors as independent variables: gender, race, age, level in college, living with/without parents, parents divorced/not divorced, and experiencing/not experiencing someone close to you die. The only significant difference in death anxiety scores was found between males (mean score of 100.57) and females (mean score of 115.43), $F (1, 116) = 12.85, p <. 001$, indicating that women have higher total death anxiety than do men. This result supports the first hypothesis.

To test the second hypothesis that women are more emotionally dependent on their moms and dads than males, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance was run with emotional dependency/mom and emotional dependency/dad as the dependent variables and gender as the independent variable. A significant difference emerged between males

(mean score of 42.38) and females (mean score of 51.34) on the emotional

dependency/mom scale, F (1, 116) = 12.86, $p<.000$, indicating that women are more

emotionally dependent on their moms than are men. These results partially support the

second hypothesis.

To test the third hypothesis that emotional dependency is a better predictor of

death anxiety than gender, three regression analyses were run to determine the amount of

variance each of the independent variables contributed individually to total death anxiety.

The first regression analysis included total death anxiety as the criterion variable and

gender as the predictor. The results revealed that gender is a significant predictor of total

death anxiety, $F(1, 115) = 11.795$, $p=.001$, accounting for 9.4% of the variance. Next, a

regression analysis was run with emotional dependency/mom as the predictor. Emotional

dependency/mom is also a significant predictor of total death anxiety, $F(1, 115) = 12.120$,

$p=.001$, accounting for 9.6% of the variance. Then, a regression analysis was run with

emotional dependency/dad as the predictor. The results showed that emotional

dependency/dad is also significant predictor of total death anxiety $F(1,115) = 8.181$,

$p=.005$, accounting for 6.7% of the variance. Overall, these results do not support the

third hypothesis since gender is equally as important as emotional dependency/mom in

determining total death anxiety.

To understand how gender, emotional dependency/mom, and emotional

dependency/dad interact with one another and contribute as a unit to total death anxiety,

the backward method was used in a regression analysis. The backward method allows all

of the predictors in the first model and then removes the predictors that are not

contributing an adequate amount of unique variance, one by one. This method allows the

researcher to see how the efficiency of the model improves as inadequate predictors are removed. When gender, emotional dependency/mom, and emotional dependency/dad were entered as predictors and total death anxiety was entered as the criterion variables, the most efficient model retained gender and emotional dependency/mom, $F(2, 115) =$ 9.506, $p=.000$, accounting for 14.4% of the variance.

Additional Results

Due to the significance of gender revealed in the regression analyses, further exploratory analyses were run with male and female data separated. A correlation matrix was run for each sex to reveal significant correlations between total death anxiety and the psychological separation subscales (Tables 2 and 3). For females, significant correlations were found between total death anxiety and conflictual dependency/dad ($r =$ .36, p<.01) and conflictual dependency/mom ($r =$ .30, p<.01). For males, significant correlations were found between total death anxiety and the following variables: emotional dependency/dad ($r =$ .43, p<.01), emotional dependency/mom ($r =$ .42, p<.05), and functional dependency/mom ($r =$ .36, p <.05).

Discussion

The results of this study provide partial support for the hypotheses and reveal some interesting findings not predicted. As hypothesized, women had significantly higher death anxiety scores than did men. Women also had significantly higher scores on the emotional dependency on mom scale than did men, although it was predicted that women would also have significantly higher scores on the emotional dependency on dad scale. This finding may reflect a tendency for young women in this sample to have

traditional mother-daughter relationships that are emotionally enmeshed and traditional father-daughter relationships that are emotionally distant.

The third hypothesis, that emotional dependency would be more predictive of death anxiety than gender, was not supported. Instead, gender was found to account for the same amount of variance in total death anxiety scores as emotional dependency on mom. This finding indicates that emotional dependency on the parents does not explain the tendency for young women to have higher levels of death anxiety than do young men. In fact, the correlations between total death anxiety and psychological separation were more robust for the males than for the females (see last paragraph of results section).

It is the exploratory analysis with female and male data separated that reveal the most interesting relationships. For young women, conflictual dependency on mom and dad is related to death anxiety. In other words, young woman who have relationships with their parents that are burdened with guilt, anxiety, mistrust, resentment, and anger have higher levels of death anxiety than young women who do not have conflicted relationships with their parents. For young men, emotional dependency on mom and dad and functional dependency on mom is related to death anxiety. That is, young men who have an excessive need for approval, closeness, and togetherness from both their mom and dad and are unable to manage their practical and personal affairs without their mom have higher levels of death anxiety than young men who do not have these types of dependencies in their relationships with their parents.

Recall that McCarthy (1980) has proposed that death anxiety in young adults is a consequence of the struggle to psychologically separate from the parents and form an identity. From this viewpoint, psychological separation must occur in order for identity

formation to take place. At this point in the discussion, a theory explaining gender differences in identity formation can help us understand how the different dependencies in young men and young women as they struggle to psychologically separate from their parents are related to death anxiety.

Chodorow (1989) proposes that boys and girls, at a very young age, experience relationships and issues of dependency differently. For boys, separation and individuation are critically tied to identity formation since separation from the mother is essential for the development of masculinity. For girls, issues of feminine identity do not depend on the achievement of separation from the mother or on the progress of individuation. Since masculinity is defined through separation while femininity is defined through attachment, male identity is threatened by intimacy, while female identity is threatened by separation.

The finding that death anxiety in young men is related to functional and emotional dependence on mom supports McCarthy's hypothesis that the process of psychological separation and identity formation causes death anxiety. Chodorow's theory helps us understand that emotional and functional dependency on mom is disruptive to a young man's development because masculine identity is dependent upon separation from the mother.

The finding that death anxiety in young women is related to conflictual dependency on both parents further supports McCarthy's hypothesis. Again, Chodorow's theory helps us understand that conflictual dependency on the parents is detrimental to a young woman's development because female identity development occurs in the context of emotional attachment.

Overall, this study provides support for a developmental model of understanding death anxiety in young adults. Specifically, the results support McCarthy's hypothesis that the process of psychological separation from parents is related to death anxiety in young adults. The most illuminating results of this study were the ways in which the various aspects of psychological separation predicted death anxiety differently in men and in women. Death anxiety in young women was related to a tense, conflicted relationship with their mom and dad, whereas death anxiety in young men was related to an extremely close, emotionally involved relationship with their mom and dad and a dependency on mom to take care of their practical needs.

In conclusion, there are several weaknesses of this study worth mentioning. First, the sample size is small and the percentage of males is not adequate for a detailed examination of sex differences. Future research should include a larger sample and an equal percentage of males and females. Also, given the correlational nature of the study, causality could not be determined. It is possible that death anxiety in young adults (caused by biological or sociological events, for example) leads to disturbances in psychological separation from parents, or that a third, unidentified factor affects both death anxiety and psychological separation in young adults. Finally, the results of this study provide adequate evidence to pursue an investigation of the relationship between death anxiety, psychological separation, and identity formation in young adults. It would be exciting and valuable to determine the role that psychological separation plays in the formation of identity and the role that identity formation plays in the occurrence of death anxiety and, the way in which all three variables interact.

Table 1

Intercorrelations between Death Anxiety Subscales

	1	2	3	4
1. Death of Self		.726**	.544**	.532**
2. Dying of Self			.557**	.642**
3. Death of Others				.740**
4. Dying of Others				

**p<.01

Figure1

Normal P-P Plot of Regression

Dependent Variable: Death Anxiety Total

Observed Cum Prob

Figure 2

Histogram

Dependent Variable: Death Anxiety Total

Table 2

Correlations between Total Death Anxiety and

Psychological Separation Subscales for Females

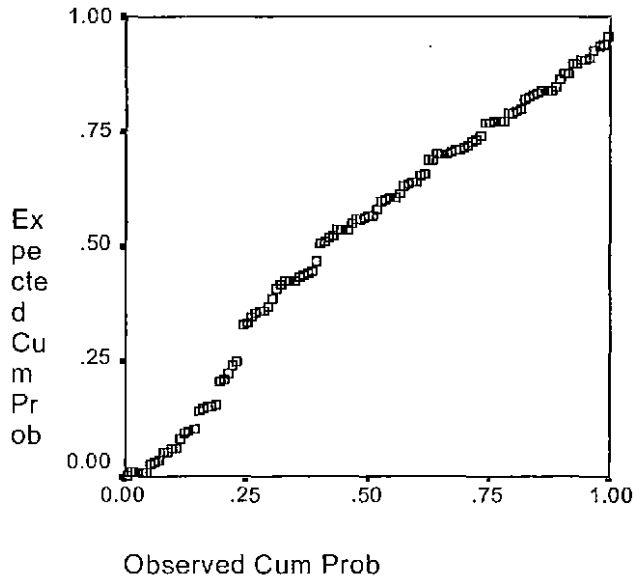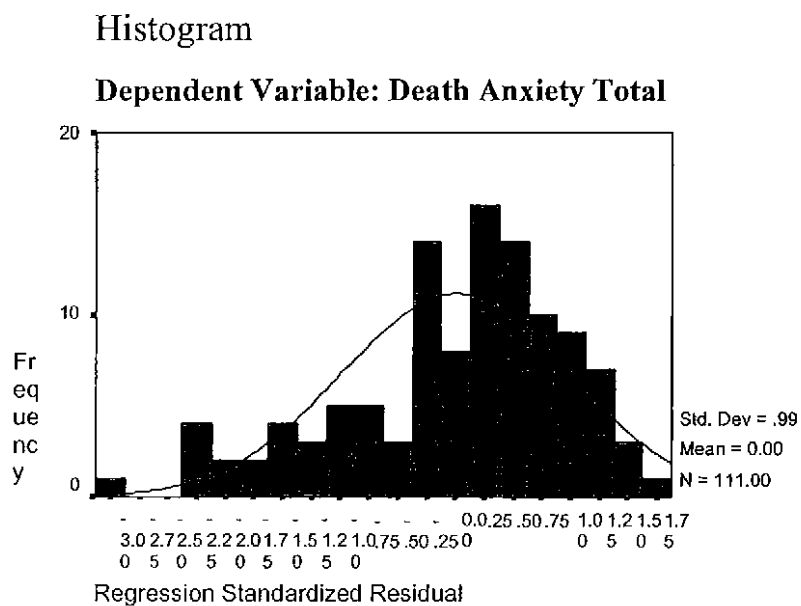| N = 79	Total Death Anxiety
1. Emotional/Mom	.170
2. Emotional/Dad	.141
3. Conflictual/Mom	.304**
4. Conflictual/Dad	.356**
5. Attitudinal/Mom	-.126
6. Attitudinal/Dad	-.187
7. Functional/Mom	.161
8. Functional/Dad	.063

**$p<.01$

Table 3

Correlations Between Total Death Anxiety and

Psychological Separation Subscales for Males

N = 37	Total Death Anxiety
1. Emotional/Mom	.418*
2. Emotional/Dad	.427**
3. Conflictual/Mom	.196
4. Conflictual/Dad	.099
5. Attitudinal/Mom	.109
6. Attitudinal/Dad	.128
7. Functional/Mom	.360*
8. Functional/Dad	.288

*p<.05
**p<.01

Appendix A

Informed Consent

Principal Investigator: Kimberly D. Chelgren
Project Title: "Psychological Separation and Concerns about Death"

1. This research project is being conducted through the department of psychology at the University of North Florida. Kimberly Chelgren can be reached concerning this study by e-mail at kimchelgren@hotmail.com. Dr. Randall Russac is the faculty advisor for this project and can be reached concerning this study by voice-mail at (904) 620-2807 or by e-mail at rrussac@unf.edu.

2. The purpose of this research is to gather information on the psychological separation from parents that young adults experience and their concerns about death. The study consists of questions regarding how similar or different your views and beliefs are from each of your parent's and your concerns about death and dying. The entire questionnaire will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. It is important that the information we receive is accurate. If, for any reason, you do not feel that you can answer honestly, please let the test administrator know.

3. The data from the study will be coded to assure **absolute confidentiality** and analyzed using standard statistical procedures. The results may be published in appropriate professional journals and/or professional conferences.

4. Participants will receive no compensation, monetary or otherwise, for participating in this study.

5. Participants will experience no discomforts or risks as a result of participating in this study.

6. Participation is greatly appreciated, but **completely voluntary.** A participant may withdraw at any time without penalty or prejudice.

7. A copy of this consent form can be made available to participants upon request.

I have read and understand the study as described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the study.

_____   _____
        Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____
        Signature of Investigator   Date

Appendix B

Demographic and Personal Information

Today's date: ____ / ____ / ____   Birthdate: ____ / ____ / ____
                  mon. day year   mon. day year

Gender: (circle)   male   female

Year in college: (circle)   freshman   sophomore   junior   senior
     graduate

Race: (circle)   African-American   Asian-American   Caucasian   Hispanic

         Other (please state) _____

1. Are you currently living with one or both of your parents? (circle)   Yes   No

2. **If yes,** which parent(s)? _____

3. Are your parents divorced?   Yes   No

4. **If yes,** how long have they been divorced? _____ years

5. Have you ever had someone close to you die? (circle)   Yes   No

6. **If yes,** on a scale from 1 to 5, how much did this death affect you (1 being "Not
   distressing at all"and 5 being "Devastating")? _____

Appendix C

Survey instrument deleted, paper copy available upon request

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Appendix D

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Appendix E

Debriefing Document

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between psychological separation from parents and death anxiety in young adults. In general, I'm predicting that the more psychologically dependent a young adult is on his or her parents, the higher the young adult's death anxiety will be. If you are interested in learning about psychological separation, start with the article "Family Dynamics and Presenting Problems in College Students", by Jeffrey Hoffman and Bahr Weiss in the *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 1987, volume 34, page 157. If you are interested in learning about death anxiety, start with the article "Correlates of Death Anxiety: A Review of Empirical Studies", by Jerrold Pollak in *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying*, 1980, volume 10, page 97. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please feel free to e-mail me at kimchelgren@hotmail.com.

Thank you for your participation!!!

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