

Intimate Friendship in *The Secret Garden*

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Abstract

The objectives of this qualitative study were to examine the friendship between two children characters namely Mary Lennox and Colin Craven, and to explore the variables of intimate friendship shown by the two main children characters in *The Secret Garden*. The concept of intimate friendship especially in intimate friendship variables introduced by Sharabany (1974) were relied on as the framework of the analysis. Those eight variables included frankness and spontaneity, knowing and sensitivity, attachment, exclusiveness and privacy, giving and helping, taking and imposing, common activities, and trust and loyalty. The results showed that the intimate friendship between the two studied characters was very close and this interpersonal relationship transforms both children into a desirable way. Moreover, all of the intimacy variables in the framework could be found from the narrative of their actions and conversational dialogues. Of the eight variables, three variables showing high degree of intimate friendship were common activities, attachment, exclusiveness and privacy. It was also found that there were some factors boosting this interpersonal relationship. Those factors included parenting style, their age, and their needs. This study confirms the importance of friendship and roles of parents in developing children's mental strength and desirable behaviors.

Keywords: Intimate Friendship, *The Secret Garden*, Frances Hodgson Burnett

1. Introduction

Human beings are social animals. Throughout one's life, he has to interact with people in the society he/she is living in, and this is what so called interpersonal relationship. According to Sullivan (1953 cited in Bagwell and Schmidt, 2011), interpersonal relationship can be developed in several stages of life from infancy, childhood, juvenile era, preadolescence, early adolescence, late adolescence, and adulthood. Moreover, in these different stages, the influential person(s) having impacts on interpersonal relationship on an individual is(are) also varied. For example, during infancy, interpersonal relationship is established only between mother or anyone who gives care and the infant. When the infant grows older and reaches childhood, child-parent relationship is developed. In juvenile era, the relationship is between a child and his/her playmates. Then, in preadolescence, interpersonal relationship between an individual and one friend is established, and in early adolescence period, the relationship is not limited to that between an individual and a single friend but an individual with several friends. In late adolescence, the last stage, specified by Sullivan, the most important interpersonal relationship is in a form of lovers. From the stages above, the relationship which is established outside the family and expands to almost the last stage is friendship

in which an individual learns intimacy with others. According to William K. Rawlins (2009), who is a scholar in the field of interpersonal relationship, stated that among various forms of relationship, friendship has some specific characteristics making it different from other forms of interpersonal relationship.

Of several theories and concepts about intimacy and friendship out there, one which identifies variables of intimacy thoroughly and appropriately to use for analyzing friendship is the concept of intimate friendship proposed by Ruth Sharabany (1974). Although it was introduced almost a half of century, the eight variables he proposed in his intimate friendship scale (IFS) at that time including attachment, common activities, exclusiveness and privacy, frankness and spontaneity, giving and helping, knowing and sensitivity, taking and imposing, and trust and loyalty are still valid and effective to evaluate intimacy in the aspect of friendship apparently and his IFS has been employed as an instrument to assess the degree of intimacy in friendship in a great number of research works approved by universities in many parts of the world such as Grime (2005), Allgood (2008), and Snir et al. (2020), to name a few. This can prove the effectiveness and popularity of his intimate friendship concept. Therefore, those variables are also relied on to examine intimate friendship in this study which is done to a classic literary work named *The Secret Garden* by an American author Frances Hodgson Burnett.

Frances Hodgson Burnett was born in England in 1849. She was considered a writer of Victorian period when the gap of rights between men and women was very big (Steinbach, 2019). Some scholars considered her a feminist writer because some protagonists or the main characters of her novels are female, and those characters take dominant roles in the stories (Bressler, 2003). Her popular novels include *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *The Little Princess*, and *The Secret Garden*, and in *The Secret Garden*, feminist idea is presented outstandingly. Apart from feminist idea, the plot of the story goes around the relationship between peers.

The Secret Garden is categorized a children's literature for children published in 1911 (having previously been serialized in *The American Magazine*). This pastoral story centers on a 10-year-old English girl named Mary Lennox, an orphan, who is sent to live with her rich uncle in Yorkshire. At the beginning of the story, she is selfish and disagreeable but she becomes a kind and caring girl. At her uncle huge mansion, because of her curiosity, she accidentally meets the garden which is kept secret by her uncle, and her cousin, Colin who immerses himself in a thought that he is sick and about to die soon. He thinks that his father does not love him, but it is not true. In fact, Mr. Craven loves Colin but seeing Colin reminds him of her wife who dies at the time Colin is born. After Mary spends time understanding Colin, she becomes his inspiration to become a better boy. This intimacy reinforces both of the children to be mentally strong and to learn to love others. *The Secret Garden* has been adapted for screen, television, and stage performances, and because of its heart-healing theme, it is considered a classic children's literature which is worth reading and studying.

As the focus of this study is the intimate friendship which is a kind of interpersonal relationship, to make the pathway of this study clearer and to specify the points to be studied, two research questions were established: 1) to what extent can the intimate friendship concept explain

the relationship of the two children characters?; and 2) what are variables of intimate friendship concept found the most? To respond the questions, the objectives were therefore 1) to examine the intimate friendship between Mary Lennox and Colin Craven in *The Secret Garden* by making use of the concept of intimate friendship introduced by Sharabany (1974), and 2) to explore the variables of intimacy shown by the two main children characters in *The Secret Garden*. To conduct this research, the six steps of thematic analysis introduced by Braun and Clarke (2006) are relied upon. The findings of this study were presented in descriptive form. The stimuli of this study were from firstly the conversational dialogues between the two studied characters and of the two characters with other characters and secondly the narratives of thoughts, feelings, and emotions of the two characters. Only those displaying intimacy between them were used to be the data for the analysis.

Even this study is conducted to a literary work which is imaginative and unreal, the findings of this study could be an illustration of friendship. Some may be unsure about the compatibility of artificial world with that of the reality, it at least shows some points of this relationship which people can understand someone who prefers socializing with others. Again, some people may argue that family is the most important society in one's life on which it should rather be paid attention. It may be true if the kinship among the family members is ideally perfect. However, it is not the only society we, human beings, are living in. If it is so, why have several psychologists and educators been paying attention to this interpersonal relationship as a key factor for individuals to live their lives happily? Why are many people in reality still looking for friends in the cyber world? This is because they need someone else outside their families to learn another form of interpersonal relationship. Consequently, the findings of this study can provide a point of view toward interpersonal relationship from the novelist which highlights the value of literature as a media to reflect the world even it is artificial or secondary.

2. Review of literature

Friendship

Newcomb and Bagwell (1995) stated that friendship is a kind of relationship which is different from other kinds. From exploring previous academic works investigating psychological perspective of friendship, it was found that Harry Stack Sullivan (1953 cited in Martorell, Papalia & Feldman, 2014) was the very first American psychiatrist who paid attention to different forms of interpersonal relationship. He introduced a theory of psychiatry which is now known as interpersonal theory to explain those relationships. His theory has been mentioned upon the present time, but it is more or less focusing on the relationships people have at different age ranges. In his theory, differently complexity of people's interpersonal relationship is developed in various stages as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Summary of development stages proposed by Sullivan (1953)

Stage	Age (years)	Significant others	Process	Subject matters learned
Infancy	0 to 2	Mother or care giver	Tenderness	Good or bad mother; good or bad me
Childhood	2 to 6	Parenting agents	Security through imaginary playmates	Language
Juvenile	6 to 8 ½	Playmates of equal status	Starting to have peers around	Competition, compromise, cooperation
Preadolescence	8 ½ to 13	Single chum	Intimate relationship	Affection and respect from friends
Early adolescence	13 to 15	Several friend of the same and different sexes	Intimacy and lust toward others	Balance of lust, intimacy and security
Late adolescence and adulthood	15 and over	Lover	Combination between intimacy and lust	Discovery of self and the outside world

From Sullivan's theory of interpersonal relationship, individuals are orientated to include others outside their kinship into their lives. Coincidentally, the focused children characters in *The Secret Garden* in this study, Mary and Colin both were created to be 10-year-old children are in this juvenile period (the age range is between 8 ½ to 13 years old) in which friendship is developed. Therefore, intimate friendship is the focus in the stage of life and also of this study.

Intimate friendship variables

Although friendship which is a kind of interpersonal relationship based on Sullivan's theory is emphasized as a part of relationship development, the elements of friendship in his theory are general but need in-depth psychological knowledge to evaluate. Those elements are the degree of closeness self-disclosure, reciprocity, similarity, and collaboration which is depended on how sensitive friends share with each other. There are some other scholars having been touching upon friendship such as Erikson and Rawlins (Bagwell & Smidt, 2011; Crowley, 2014) but one who has paid attention to examining friendship and its variables is Ruth Sharabany (1974). He developed a questionnaire called intimate friendship scale (IFS) consisted of eight variables to investigate the degree of intimacy among children. Those variables are 1) frankness and spontaneity, 2) knowing and sensitivity, 3) attachment, 4) exclusiveness and privacy, 5) giving and helping, 6) taking and imposing, 7) common activities, and 8) trust and loyalty (shown in Table 2). His IFS has been used by a several studies examining the degree of intimacy in young children (Grime, 2005; Allgood, 2008; Snir et al. 2020). Therefore, variables on intimate friendship were relied on in this study.

Table 2 Sharabany's intimate friendship variables (1974)

Variables	Explanations
1. Frankness and spontaneity	The state of openness (sincerely criticizing and showing emotions, feelings, and plans) of the people involved in the relationship shown to each other
2. Knowing and sensitivity	The familiarization (knowing facts, tastes, preferences, needs, emotions, and empathy) of the people involved in the relationship
3. Attachment	The disturbing feeling and discomfort when a party involved in the relationship is absent
4. Exclusiveness and privacy	The feeling of wanting to be together and exclude others
5. Giving and helping	Support (instrumental and material) the people in the relationship give to each other
6. Taking and imposing	The acceptance of solicited and unsolicited help and advice and feeling free to ask for help and advice from each other
7. Common activities	The feeling of enjoyment toward activities that the people involved in the relationship do together
8. Trust and loyalty	The confidence that the people involved in the relationship have in each other that he/she will not betray him/her, will keep his/her secret and promises, and will do the best for his/her interest when he/she is not around

3. Research method

Results

Based on eight variables of intimate friendship, the results are presented in relation to each variable as follows.

1. Frankness and spontaneity

There are a lot of situations in the story showing the variable of frankness and spontaneity between Mary and Colin. The first evidence is from the action and dialogue between Colin and Mary when Colin allows Mary to open the curtain which covers a picture of his mother which he has never allowed anyone to do so, and he releases his sorrow to Mary (Burnett, 1993, p. 105). Then, after Colin and Mary have had a dispute one afternoon, at the middle of the night Colin screams and it makes every awake. Mary knows that Colin just wants to make people busy, she rushes to his room and aggressively talks to him that "You stop! I hate you! Everybody hates you! I wish everybody would run out of the house and let you scream yourself to death! You will scream yourself to death in a minute, and I wish you would! If you scream another scream, I will scream too and I can scream louder than you can, and I'll frighten you, I'll frighten you!" (Burnett, 1993, pp. 134-135). This shows Mary's honest feeling that she does not want Colin to do undesirable actions that neither he like it.

2. Knowing and sensitivity

Some examples showing this variable are firstly the narrative of Mary's thought about Colin that "Somehow she was sorry for him and did not want him to like awake, so she leaned against the bed and began to stroke and pat his hand and sing a very low little chanting song in Hindustani" after Mary has talked to Colin and learned that he is so lonely and his loneliness causes him ill (Burnett,

1993, p. 106). This shows Mary's empathy for Colin and her understanding that Colin needs someone to share his grief. Secondly, after Mary knows that Colin has a hysterical hidden fear which causes him ill, Mary feels sorry for him when he has told her. Mary talks to herself "He always began to think about it when he was cross or tired, and he has been cross today. Perhaps—perhaps he has been thinking about it all the afternoon" (Burnett, 1993, p. 133). This situation shows that Mary understands Colin's emotion and feeling.

3. Attachment

Some evidences indicating Mary and Colin attachment are firstly from the dialogue after a long chat, Mary realizes that Colin is sleepy and she is about to leave; she says "I have been here a long time. Shall I go away now? Your eyes look sleepy." But, Colin replies "I wish I could go to sleep before you leave me." (Burnett, 1993, p. 106). Secondly, after Mary and Colin become familiar, Colin waits for Mary to visit him in the morning but Mary visits him a bit late. When Mary enters into his room, Colin frowns and says to Mary that "Come in. I've been thinking about you all the morning." Mary replies "I've been thinking about you, too." (Burnett, 1993, pp. 110-111). Thirdly, one morning Mary is too busy doing gardening with Dickon and returns home to visit Colin late, Martha explains to Mary that Colin is upset and feels disturbing. When Mary enters into the rooms, Colin frowns, condescends to look at her and says "I won't let that boy (Dickon) come here if you go and stay with him instead of coming to talk to me." (Burnett, 1993, p. 129). From the above evidences, it can be seen that Colin attaches to Mary very much. This is due to his loneliness and lack of chum to share his feelings and emotions. When Mary comes into his life, he thinks that she is the only friend he has and, together with his childish possessive thought, he does not want to share her with others.

4. Exclusiveness and privacy

This variable is found throughout the story but an obvious example is the one at the very beginning of their friendship. When Colin lies sick in his bed not liking to go out nor seeing others, Colin wants to spend most of his time with Mary can be seen from the narratives describing the situation that Mary knows that Colin likes listening to things of the world out there and she, herself, loves telling him new things she learns from others. So, the children spend time enjoying themselves and forget about the time (Burnett, 1993, p. 115). The rest of the story also reflects this variable but not very outstandingly; however, the readers can feel it when reading the whole story.

5. Giving and helping

There are two outstanding evidences showing this variable of intimate friendship between Colin and Mary. First, when Mary wants Colin to stop locking himself in his room and go outdoor but Colin keeps crying that he cannot go out because he is too ill to do so and saying that he is about to die soon, Mary encourages him that "You can't (see anything) if you stay in a room. ... How do you know (that you are going to die)?" And, "Don't let us talk about dying; I don't like it. Let talk about living" (Burnett, 1993, pp. 113-114). And, second is the time after Mary sees that Colin is getting better but his actions to others are quite rude because he has no one to teach him, she thinks that she needs to tell him his rude actions. This can be seen from the conversational dialogue between Colin and Mary that "I was thinking just then that it must have been very horrid to have had to be polite

for ten years to a boy who was always rude. I would never have done it. ...If you had been his own boy and he had been a slapping sort of man, he would have slapped you. (But) Nobody ever dared to do anything you didn't like – because you were going to die and things like that. You were such a poor thing. ... You are queer, very queer. But you needn't be cross because so am I queer. But I am not as queer as I was before I began to like people and before I found the garden.” After listening to Mary, Colin agrees and says “I shall stop being queer ...” (Burnett, 1993, pp. 175). These two evidences clearly show that Mary offers help to Colin with a hope that he will become a boy who is loved by everyone not just to be respected because he is the master of the mansion.

6. Taking and imposing

An example showing taking and imposing variable is when Colin feels stronger and wants to show everyone that he is not a cripple, he calls all servants to meet him. When he is unsure what to do or what to say, he asks Mary and Mary is willingly to instruct him. This evidence can be seen from Colin's action asking Mary the Indian custom to let the servant leave him “Mary, what is that thing you say in India when you have finished talking and want people to go?” And, Mary says “You say, ‘You have my permission to go” (Burnett, 1993, p. 156). This reveals that Colin is happy to receive Mary's advice. Again, as mentioned in the analysis of giving and helping variable, after Mary sees that Colin is getting better but his actions to others are quite rude because he has no one to teach him, she thinks that she needs to tell him his rude actions. This can be seen from the conversational dialogue between Colin and Mary that “I was thinking just then that it must have been very horrid to have had to be polite for ten years to a boy who was always rude. I would never have done it. ...If you had been his own boy and he had been a slapping sort of man, he would have slapped you. (But) Nobody ever dared to do anything you didn't like – because you were going to die and things like that. You were such a poor thing. ... You are queer, very queer. But you needn't be cross because so am I queer. But I am not as queer as I was before I began to like people and before I found the garden.” After listening to Mary, Colin agrees and says “I shall stop being queer ...” (Burnett, 1993, pp. 175). This not only shows that Colin willingly to receive advice from Mary; in return, it proves that Mary also loves to provide suggestion and advice to Colin even it is unsolicited.

7. Common activities

There are two activities both Mary and Colin share in common. They are chatting and going outdoor. This variable is an outstanding one because until the end of the story Mary and Colin love being together doing gardening and sharing their feelings about this and that all the time. The children characters are described spending their time together enjoying themselves and forgetting about the time (Burnett, 1993, p. 115). Here and there, there are narratives describing the times that Mary knows that Colin likes listening to things of the world out there and she, herself, loves telling him new things she learns from others seems to be clear. In addition to playing and chatting together somewhere in the mansion, Mary and Colin also enjoy spending time together playing and doing gardening.

8. Trust and loyalty

This variable is another implicated one which the readers can understand by themselves, but a distinct incident showing trust and loyalty between Colin and Mary is that after Colin realizes that

Mary has goodwill for him, he opens his mind telling her that he has never told anyone but Mary that most of his tantrums are out of his hysterical hidden fear (Burnett, 1993, p. 132). Apart from this situation, throughout the story, both children characters show trust and loyalty to each other. They promise to be good friends and help each other. They keep their garden secret.

Discussion

From the results of this study, Mary and Colin have a very close intimate friendship. The fostering factors of their friendship may be from 3 main reasons: 1) parenting styles, 2) stage of interpersonal relationship development and 3) basic needs.

For parenting style, both Mary and Colin are born in wealthy families but their parents do not give them affection and care. They are raised by servants. The care giving servants have to spoil them because they are in the lower status which offence against their masters is not allowed. Therefore, those servants employ permissive parenting style in raising them. This is agreeing with Baumrind's (1971; 1991), and Maccoby's (2000) explanation of permissive parenting that the parents are lax, inconsistent, and undemanding. At the same time, the servants are not their relatives, so they just perform their functions without bond and love; hence, they also are considered uninvolved parents who have not emotional attachment to the children. As a result, both Mary and Colin are deficient in care and affection from parents. When they are together spending time doing activities they similarly like such as chatting, planting and playing, they understand each other. They know and are sensitive to what the other want. As it can be seen that Colin learns many things from Mary. This is agreeing with the description of knowing and sensitivity variable specified by Sharabany (1974) that the friends with intimate friendship can sense the emotions, preferences, and needs through observation and empathy they share. Again, because of the similar parenting styles they are raised, they are immature and moody; also, they perform rejecting behavior and possess low self-control. From the beginning of the story, both Mary and Colin are disagreeable and rude, and their demanding is unlimited. After they spend their time together, they learn those undesirable behaviors are not good, so they transform themselves to be nicer ones. Mary frankly criticizes Colin when he behaves aggressively. This agrees with frankness and spontaneity variable of intimate friendship of Sharabany's intimacy. Consequently, parenting style is a booster of intimate friendship between Mary and Colin. This conforms to the findings of Pattana (2020) which stated the significance of parenting as a factor affecting children's behavior. In addition, the findings of this study are in agreement with that of Rizka & Bacotang (2018) which stated that parenting style and children's social skills are correlated.

In terms of interpersonal relationship development stage, both Mary and Colin are supposedly created to be 10-year-old children who are, according to Sullivan (1974), in the stage of preadolescence (aged 8 ½ to 13 years old). At this stage, the interpersonal process individuals develop is intimate friendship, and affection is a type of emotion individuals learn. In relation to the parenting style, both Mary and Colin are raised with permissive and uninvolved parenting styles in which affection and love from parents are missing. As a result, they have to seek for someone who they can rely on, but after Mary and Colin meet up, they find someone who can fulfill this gap of relationship. Although Sullivan's stages of development (1953) specified that children can develop

intimacy with single chum or a friend of the same sex, Mary, the girl, and Colin, the boy, have no one else in the same age to play with, to chat, or to trust. Consequently, intimate friendship is developed rapidly ever they are not the same sex. These two children characters show their attachment to each other which also reflects exclusiveness and privacy. They enjoy spending their time together doing a common activity which is building their own world in the secret garden. This also enhances trust and loyalty variable between them. Because Colin's father does not want to talk about or to see and keeps it secret locking it out his sight, after finding it, apart from Dickon (another character but not studied), she tells only Colin and hopes that Colin can keep it a secret between him and her. Colin, in return, knows that Mary wants to revive the garden and wants to keep it secret, Colin does not tell anyone about the garden that he and Mary are remaking. Therefore, the friendship between the two characters covers a lot of intimate friendship variables proposed in the analysis framework, and, as proposed by Berndt (1992) that friendship plays an important role in shaping attitudes and behavior of children.

In terms of need, both Mary and Colin need someone of the same age to play with and to enhance intimacy. Because Mary and Colin are created to be 10-year-old children characters with physically weakness and deficiency of interpersonal relationship skill. According to Sullivan's stages of interpersonal development (1953), children at this age learn affection and respect from peers, but both Mary and Colin are introduced isolated from even a single friend. Mary has no friends of her age, so she lacks of socializing skill. What Mary needs are more physical activities outside of her limited space and development of interpersonal relationship. Like Mary, at the beginning of the story Colin immerses in the thought that he is going to die soon. This hypnotic thought causes him to avoid being out of his room and socializing with others. This isolation causes him aggressive, moody and physically ill. Like Mary, what Colin needs are physical activities and socializing with others who are out of his control. With neither peers nor feelings to play, both Mary and Colin are mentally and physically weak. The attributes which make Mary different from Colin are curiosity and critical thinking, and these two attributes are key factors driving the story to the heart-healing mode. Mary's curiosity leads her to find the secret garden and it brings her to meet Colin. After Mary is told by her care giver servant about the benefits of outdoor life, she wants to prove them. Once she finds that they are true, she tries to persuade Colin to be outdoor with her. This shows two intimate friendship variables (one is giving and helping and another one is taking and imposing). In the end, not only Mary and Colin are healthier both physically and mentally, but people around them are also happy especially Colin's father who has been immersing himself in grief from losing his wife for a very long time. This agrees with Berndt (1992) that friendship helps children to develop their behaviors and personality depending on the behaviors of the friends they are with.

4. Conclusion

From the analysis, it can be concluded that the intimate friendship between the two children characters, Mary and Colin, is very close. Moreover, all intimate friendship variables specified by Sharabany (1974) are found in their relationship. Of the eight variables, three variables including

1) common activities, 2) trust and loyalty, and 3) exclusiveness and privacy are found throughout the story but in an implicit way. The readers have to analyze and pay attention to the story so that they can find them. The rest variables can be found clearly from actions and conversations of the two studied characters. In addition, parenting, stage of interpersonal relationship development, and personal need are possible factors having impacts on friendship of the two children characters in *The Secret Garden*.

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