

**SEEKING THE HEARTS OF MEN:  
UNDERSTANDING MALE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT THROUGH  
FRIENDSHIP**

by

**JULIET VICTORIA KEMBLE**

**B.A., SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY, 1993**

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF**

**MASTER OF ARTS**

in the School

of

Communication

© Juliet Victoria Kemble 1996

**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY**

July, 1996

All rights reserved. This work may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy or other means, without permission of the author.



National Library  
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale  
du Canada

Acquisitions and  
Bibliographic Services Branch

Direction des acquisitions et  
des services bibliographiques

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0N4

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa (Ontario)  
K1A 0N4

*Your file* *Votre référence*

*Our file* *Notre référence*

**The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.**

**L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.**

**The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.**

**L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.**

ISBN 0-612-16947-2

**Canada**

**PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENSE**

I hereby grant to Simon Fraser University the right to lend my thesis, project or extended essay (the title of which is shown below) to users of the Simon Fraser University Library, and to make partial or single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or other educational institution, on its own behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for multiple copying of this work for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or the Dean of Graduate Studies. It is understood that copying or publication of this work for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

**Title of Thesis/Project/Extended Essay**

Seeking The Hearts of Men: Understanding Attributes of Male Emotional  
Support Through Friendship  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Author:**  
(Signature)

Juliet Kemble  
(name)  
July 29/96  
(date)

## APPROVAL

**NAME:** Juliet Kemble

**DEGREE:** MA

**TITLE:** Seeking The Hearts of Men: Understanding Attributes of Male Emotional Support Through Friendship

### EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

**CHAIR:** Donald Gutstein

William Richards  
Assoc. Professor,  
Co-Senior Supervisor, School of Communication

Patricia Hindley  
Adjunct Professor,  
Co-Senior Supervisor, School of Communication

Jerry Zaslave  
Professor,  
Supervisor, Institute of Humanities

Colin Browne  
Assist. Professor,  
External Examiner, Contemporary Arts

Date:

29 July 1996

## **ABSTRACT**

We presently live in a social climate that is eminently attuned to the needs and concerns of women. As a result many aspects of male behavior are viewed in a decidedly biased and critical light. Men's friendships, for example, are frequently underestimated. They are also hastily stereotyped as involving a minimum of verbal disclosure and essentially competitive, goal oriented activities that tend to undermine the potential for mutual offerings of emotional support. Precipitated by criticisms concerning men's apparent inability to provide demonstrative emotional support in relationships this research was initiated on the assumption that men, like women, desire and indeed offer effective expressions of emotional support in their platonic friendships.

This research adopts a hermeneutic approach and employs friendship as an ethnomethodological tool for unmasking men's verbal and non-verbal expressions of mutual support and intimacy in their platonic relationships as well as their intentions behind certain behaviors. Twenty-five heterosexual, middle class men ranging between the ages of twenty-three and seventy-two participated in extended interviews. Their responses function as primary indicators in examining the phenomenology of their friendships. The results of this research shed light on behavioral characteristics that are unique to men, are commonly misunderstood by women and have been known to lead to conflict between the sexes. Consider, for example, the popular assumption that team sports only represent opportunities for competition among men. Given the pervasive constraints on acceptable male social behavior, this research suggests that sports also represent an opportunity for men to express some deeply felt emotions, be they angry or affectionate, in a manner that is non-threatening to conventions of masculine protocol.

These findings also suggest a new definition of men's friendship that contradicts some commonly held myths surrounding men's capacity to offer a quality of emotional support that is different from that which is provided by women but just as valuable to interpersonal relationships.

## DEDICATION

To Adrienne, Roger, Lucio and Josh  
For loving, supporting  
and inspiring me

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It pleases me to take this opportunity to thank everybody who has helped me with my research. Thank-you to my committee: Bill Richards and Pat Hindley in the School of Communication, Jerry Zaslove in Humanities and external examiner, Colin Browne in Contemporary Arts. I wish to extend a special thank-you to Bill for his accessibility, patience, sensibility... and a sense of humor that frequently confounds me, but always lightens my tension. And, a special thank-you to Pat for her dynamism as a passionate speaker and teacher, and for igniting the spark that set me on my journey into friendship. Thank-you also to my friends in the School of Communication. Their encouragement and interest helped to sustain me throughout.

Finally, I must express my gratitude to the men and women I have discussed my project with and gotten valuable feedback from in the form of anecdotes and life stories. And to the men who spoke with me so candidly about their friendships. Their interest, willingness to participate and their openness helped to make my task an enriching one. I hope that our time together was as thought provoking for them as it was for me.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Approval.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	vi
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Men's Friendships: A Matter of Perception .....	1
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	13
A Brief Note.....	13
The Politics of Perception .....	13
Behind The Roles We Play.....	17
At Odds With Intimacy .....	21
Acknowledging Men's Own Style of Friendship .....	24
III. FRIENDSHIP AS A SUBJECT FOR ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH	27
Defining Ethnographic Research.....	27
Perceptions As Valuable Resources.....	29
Men's Friendships From a Feminist Perspective .....	33
IV. EXPLORING THE ROOTS OF OUR PERCEPTIONS .....	35
Defining Our Differences.....	35
Talking Vs Doing: Cultural Characteristics .....	39

Perceptions of Autonomy in Men's Lives .....	45
Competition, Humor and Conflict .....	49
The Unspoken Bond .....	57
<b>V. MEN IN A WOMAN'S WORLD.....</b>	<b>61</b>
Domestic Men .....	61
The Power of Perceptions.....	67
"Be A Man, Son!": Perceptions of Masculinity .....	69
Perceptions of Work in Men's Lives.....	72
Depending On Women .....	74
<b>VI. MEN'S FEARS IN INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS .....</b>	<b>80</b>
Perceptions of Intimate Behavior .....	80
Sex And Homophobia As Obstacles To Developing Friendships .	87
Men's Support Groups .....	94
<b>VII. CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>98</b>
Transcending Our Perceptions .....	98
Summary: Perceptions Revised.....	101
<b>APPENDIX.....</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>111</b>

## I. INTRODUCTION

### MEN'S FRIENDSHIPS: A MATTER OF PERCEPTION

I come from a family where, for several generations, women represent the dominant gender and the prevailing biases tend to consider feminine perspectives in a preferential light. As a result, a kind of unintentional female superiority prevails which is inclined to underestimate and even discredit the abilities of men to provide demonstrative and effective emotional support in interpersonal relationships. Growing up in this kind of environment, surrounded by opinionated sisters, grandmothers, aunts, nieces and best friends, it is not surprising that men, including my own father and brother, always seemed somewhat mysterious to me.

In North America, in the last twenty years, our collective attentions have focused increasingly on women's issues due largely to the feminist movement. Matters concerning women have become such a priority that it seems as if many aspects of our social lives are attuned to women's issues with very little objective attention being paid to the concerns of men. As women's concerns take priority in our collective consciousness, for example, in the workplace (i.e. affirmative action), in the courts (i.e. child custody and support), in the media and in the home, it appears that there is a general tendency to perceive men and their

capacity to involve themselves in interpersonal relationships somewhat negatively. When I consider the female oriented attitudes that prevail in my family it occurs to me that my family is perhaps illustrative, on a small scale, of a female bias that is growing and affecting women's perceptions of men today.

Living as we do in a society that has, in the past, considered men's issues of primary importance, our attention to women's concerns is necessary and overdue. In light of a long history of women tolerating subordination in the workplace, domestic violence and fathers reneging on their paternal responsibilities (to name just a few of men's violations against women), it is justifiable that women's perceptions of men are somewhat cautious and even cynical. I would hope that few people would argue that women, being victims to men for so long, are not entitled to some measure of intense emotion such as frustration and anger. However, such emotions, which are frequently made evident in feminist proselytizing, lend themselves to misunderstandings. Therefore, as society is challenged by feminist doctrines to acknowledge women's issues, it is possible that the pendulum of female social concern has swung too far in favor of viewing male behavior in a light that is unfairly scrutinizing.

As I was growing up my parents assumed fairly traditional domestic roles and it was never expected that my father or brother would assume much domestic responsibility. At the time of my youth, in the sixties and seventies,

the great bastions of patriarchy had barely begun to be penetrated. Women were just beginning to embrace feminist doctrine and many were not quite ready to support the idea of men participating in household chores. Unlike the workplace, the home - especially the kitchen - was women's traditional domain and despite the growing desire of dauntless women, such as my mother, to surrender their marriages, attend university, take jobs and explore life outside the realm of their traditional roles, their moves were made genuinely but with a clandestine hint of resistance.

This resistance of women to their changing roles, never admitting to their reluctance to leave children and home, was subtle and insidious. But social change during this time was passionate, impulsive and rampant. With increasing divorce rates and family values in transition, feminist cynicism towards men was beginning to take hold of our collective consciousness. Women eagerly seized the opportunity they, themselves, created to get what they thought men had, notably autonomy and power. In the process, however, they never stopped to ask men what it really felt like to have control of the social and political reigns. If they had, perhaps they would have realized that, contrary to feminist myth, many men as well as women were feeling stifled and constrained by a punitive, condemning and inflexible patriarchal social order. Just as women did not feel listened to, neither did many men.

Growing up, I did not see how my own family environment might cause me to adopt some generally negative perceptions of men. Indeed, it was not until I became a mother to a son and an aunt to several nephews that I came to recognize the female bias in my family that, in my view, seems to emulate, on a small scale, a similar bias in North American society as a whole. For example, when I talk to women about their relationships with men and observe how men are depicted in the media, I see that many women's perceptions of men are fraught with misunderstandings and a general reluctance to accept, unconditionally, certain male behaviors. On the domestic front, especially, I can see how women frequently misinterpret male behavior.

As my son grows up, challenging me to acknowledge and appreciate his points of view, I realize that my perceptions of men are not always accurate, often leading to frequent misunderstandings. It is, therefore, my son who provides me with the greatest impetus for listening to men's voices with a more appreciative ear. It is also this microcosm of behavior, that which is represented by my own family experiences, that helps me to see how false perceptions and misunderstandings can interfere with the building of positive interpersonal relationships on a more general scale.

As a student of interpersonal communication I wanted to learn more about my own perceptions of men and the effect they have on my relationships. I was able to recognize a convenient and appropriate opportunity for investigating

some perceptions of men when I recently conducted a study of women's friendships and men's perceptions of women's friendships. Through talking to men about their perceptions of women's friendships I began to see that men share and demonstrate behavioral characteristics in their same-sex friendships that seemed to contradict some of my perceptions. It was through talking to these same men that it occurred to me that my perceptions were quite widespread among women in particular. Furthermore, upon doing the reading for this research, I found that much of the popular literature confirms these perceptions. Some of these perceptions are as follows:

- Men do not place a high value on their friendships with other men - not in the same way that women do. Therefore, friendships come and friendships go.
- Men are not physically demonstrative with one other in their friendships.
- Men rarely disclose verbal intimacies.
- Men are not particularly sensitive to sentiments that are communicated non-verbally. Emotionally charged issues must be communicated directly and verbally.
- Men are action oriented. Their friendships are centered around doing things together rather than talking.
- Men need to maintain a high degree of independence and autonomy in their interpersonal relationships.
- Men feel more comfortable seeking emotional comfort from women than from other men.

- it is easier for men to disclose to women than to men.
- Men jockey for power and control in interpersonal relationships through conflict.
- Men never feel subordinate to women.
- Patriarchal social structures are beneficial to men.

This thesis addresses the validity of these perceptions of men's friendships. It is my prior research, combined with my own experiences as a mother, that provoked me to take a closer look at some widespread perceptions of men in order that I could gain a better understanding of my own perceptions by talking to men about their friendships and listening to their stories with a more appreciative ear. As this thesis will show, some of my perceptions of men, as listed above, were confirmed and some were found to be inaccurate.

Men's friendships have long been depicted in films and in classical literature. However, an analysis of friendship in these genres goes far outside the scope of this thesis. I decided to look for literature that was related to the social sciences because I had previously drawn from this curriculum a considerable amount of material concerning women's friendships and I assumed that men's friendships had been similarly studied. I was surprised, however, to see how little was available concerning men's friendships. Nevertheless, I did uncover a few contemporary books that focus on men's friendships from a psychological or sociological perspective. Unfortunately, however, some of



these references tend to reinforce negative stereotypes of men by painting a rather shallow picture of male friendship, implying that the relationships are less intimate, less personal, and less rewarding than friendships between women. It is my hope, therefore, that my research will complement the existing literature with new findings that will cast an eye on men's friendships from a more appreciative perspective that seeks to gain a better understanding of men's capacity for emotional expression. I also hope that my research will help women understand the origins of their negative perceptions concerning men's capacity to offer a quality of emotional support that is just as valuable to interpersonal relationships as that which is offered by women.

My study employs descriptive and interpretive research methods, intended to examine attributes of men's friendships and women's perceptions of certain male behaviors. My research question is: How do some widely held perceptions of men's friendships compare with men's lived experiences of friendship? As a means for complementing the literature I conducted in-person interviews with twenty-five volunteer respondents over a four month period. The men were aged twenty-three to seventy, the average age being forty-one. These heterosexual men were predominantly middle-class<sup>1</sup> Caucasian<sup>2</sup> and educated.

---

<sup>1</sup> For the sake of my research I define middle class in very broad terms to represent someone who is, or strives to be, in the middle-income bracket, average to well educated with economic and political leanings that extend from the proprietary class (white collar) at one end of a scale and the working class (blue collar) at the other end.

<sup>2</sup> One Asian and one black were not excluded from the sample because the black was born in Canada and the Asian has resided here for several years. Both speak fluent English without any trace of an accent and their answers to the questions did not extend beyond the range of expected responses.

All of the respondents live in the greater Vancouver area. Eleven own their own homes and fourteen rent. Twenty-two of the respondents have a better than grade twelve education: one has a Ph.D., one has a law degree, and six have master's degrees. One respondent achieved education to grade seven only. He was not excluded from the sample because he has gained a relevant education through life experience and his answers, combined with those of another respondent, are representative of a working class ethic that is valuable to this study.

With only three exceptions, the jobs the respondents hold are indicative of their level of education. Fourteen have professional career positions and two are self-employed. Four could be called general laborers, though one works for the government. Five are full time students (some working part time) and two are retired. Sixteen respondents work full time, three part time, two are presently unemployed, one works seasonally, one works whenever he can get a job and two are not working at all (for the time being) because of their status as students. Six of the respondents' incomes are less than \$15,000 a year, with only one in the \$16,000 to \$25,000 range; four make \$26,000 to \$35,000; ten are in the range of \$36,000 to \$65,000; two make over \$66,000 and two make over \$81,000.

In regards to marital status, eleven of the respondents are married, five live in common-law relationships, and nine are single. Of those who are single,

five are presently in heterosexual, monogamous relationships. Fifteen of the respondents have children. Eleven respondents have children still living at home.

The respondents were recruited for this research by word of mouth through direct appeal, mutual friends, family and acquaintances. I considered it important not to know the respondents personally, though I had casual, work related contact with three of them prior to conducting the interviews. I made concerted efforts not to bias the sample with too many students<sup>3</sup> or with too many men presently participating in men's support groups<sup>4</sup>. Participation in this study was entirely voluntary. Introductions with the respondents were initiated by me over the telephone.

I presume that the respondents participated in this research for a variety of reasons including the following: (1) They felt obliged, or wanted to do the mutual contact a favor; (2) They had thoughts on friendship that they wanted to express; (3) They were curious; (4) Their honesty prevented them from devising a good excuse not to participate; (5) They felt the project was important and worthwhile; (6) They enjoyed the opportunity to talk about themselves. I suspect that some invitations that were rejected on the basis of lack of time

---

<sup>3</sup> As a student myself, accessing other students would have offered a convenient resource.

<sup>4</sup> One of my contacts is in a men's support group and it came as not surprise to me that his word of mouth regarding my research elicited an enthusiastic response from the men in his group.

were, in fact, polite refusals. Only one person forthrightly rejected my invitation to participate.

The interview guide contains forty-one questions (See Appendix ). The interviews ranged from twenty-five to eighty minutes long, the average being fifty-eight minutes. The respondents were given plenty of information pertaining to my research expectations prior to the interviews in my telephone preamble. They were also given plenty of opportunities to reconsider their participation. Their sincerity and commitment seemed evident because most considered their answers with thought and care. I, therefore, believe that all of the respondents participated in this research with honesty and good intentions. Only two of the respondents appeared to be nervous or uncomfortable with some of my questions.

Four key terms contained in the interview guide were purposefully not defined prior to interviewing the respondents. These terms are *friendship*, *close friend*, *support* and *special favor*. Special consideration was given to my selection of the term, *close friend*, based on my assumption that our general understanding of a more commonly used term, *best friend*, might be more relevant to women's friendships than to men's. I chose not to presume definitions for these words because I thought that they might be more relevant to my life experience as a woman than to the experiences of the men I was interviewing. Therefore, it came as no surprise when frequent clarification by the

respondents was requested. In all cases I encouraged them to define these concepts for themselves.

Given the intimate nature of some of the questions and the notion that my intentions could be misunderstood by respondents as concealing a more personal agenda, many of the interviews were conducted in public places such as neighborhood coffee bars or, weather permitting, a local park. However, meeting in frequently noisy and crowded coffee bars, while representing neutral ground, at times became a hindrance to privacy. Nevertheless, I believe that the response and participation was, on the whole, generous, forthcoming and supportive. Most of the men in this sample obviously enjoyed the opportunity to discuss themselves and their views.

The fact that I offer a picture of men's friendships from a female perspective does not, in my opinion, pose an inhibiting circumstance. Based on findings that I believe are enlightening it is my hope that my research will attract a feminist audience. I also hope that this research will be of interest to a male audience based on findings that are sympathetic to men's potential for expressing emotional support.

In order to provide a theoretical basis for understanding some of the information brought out in the interviews, chapter two offers a brief review of some frequently cited literature that describes some primary social and

psychological determinants of men's friendships. It also begins to offer insight, from a social science perspective, into the roots of some widespread perceptions of men's friendships that men as well as women hold. Chapter three describes the reasoning behind my methodology, providing definitions and rationale that are pertinent to understanding and accepting qualitative research that is, by nature, subjective and interpretive. Chapters four, five and six expand and develop the primary issues raised in the literature review, adding anecdotes from the respondents and descriptions of men's friendships intended to paint a picture of male behavior in a more appreciative light. These chapters also explore some popular stereotypes of men's friendships that are legitimate and some that are not. The main goal of this thesis is to present a view of men's friendships that correct some mistaken stereotypes. Finally, chapter seven concludes with a brief summary of the findings.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A BRIEF NOTE

This literature review is intended to emphasize a few main points that draw attention to some popular perceptions of men today. These points will be discussed in more detail in later chapters. It is also intended to draw attention to some popular books, that have received widespread attention in the media and by the public. It is the popularity of some of these books, notably those by Lillian Rubin (1985), and more recently, Deborah Tannen (1986 & 1990) and John Gray (1992), that have arguably contributed to some widespread perceptions of men's behavior in interpersonal relationships. It is precisely because of their popularity that I have considered them central to this discussion.

### THE POLITICS OF PERCEPTION

Friendships and our perceptions of how friendships are demonstrated are influenced by the same structural determinants that initiate broad social changes to our communities. The consequences of changing cultural, political and religious doctrines, which have a powerful impact on many aspects of our social

lives, are noticeable in the quality of our interpersonal relationships with each other and in our corresponding attitudes.

Social network theorist Barry Wellman (1992) explores some of these complex social relationships when he looks at how the movement of North American friendships, from public spaces to private homes, has affected the nature of friendship (p. 74). In order to explore this question Wellman looks at "how friendships among men fit within a man's personal community network of active relationships" (p. 74) by comparing them with other community ties such as women's friendships, cross-sex friendships, and ties with kin, neighbors and workmates (p. 74). From this point of exploration he describes a complex intermingling of social changes that have occurred over the past century, notably mass suburbanization and the feminist movement, as determining factors for what he describes as the, "domestication of community" (1992, p. 82), and the parallel "domestication of friendship" (1992, p. 101).

Wellman describes *domestication of friendship* in the context of a patriarchal tradition whereby men once sought male companionship with work colleagues after work hours and outside the home. Mass suburbanization, however, giving cause to a separation of work from leisure activities, has made men's private homes the meeting place for their social get-togethers instead of the traditional, public gathering places such as pubs, the barber shop or exclusive men's clubs. This geographic separation of men from their work,



combined with their increased involvement in child rearing and other household matters has resulted in men and women spending more time with each other at home (1992, p. 82). Furthermore, after commuting long distances from work couples are in no mood to go out (1992, p. 84). Therefore, friends are often like-minded couples who share similar family and financial circumstances (1992, p. 89). As a result men's friendships that were once demonstrated outside the home are now carried out inside the home (1992, p. 85).

As a consequence of men and women spending more time together in the home (1992, p. 82) in addition to men's increased family involvement, it is the women who take on the burden of maintaining friendships for their husbands as well as themselves (1992, p. 89). This is accomplished through their friendships with other women. Once friendship is established between women, it is frequently the case that their male partners are invited to join the original female dyad in order to expand the group for social gatherings in the evenings or on weekends (1992, p. 89). Interestingly, Wellman notes that, "as long as the wives like each other, mere toleration on the part of the men is all that is necessary" (1992, p.95). As a result of these home based social gatherings, romantic partners usually spend more time together, although this does not necessarily ensure that the time spent together is necessarily focused on each other (Wellman, 1992, p. 84).

Wellman also attributes changes in men's friendship patterns to the feminist movement which has played a big role over the past twenty years in motivating men to spend more time in the home. Men's roles were once defined and demonstrated almost exclusively outside the home. Now, however, the women in their lives expect at least partial, if not equal, sharing of household chores and child care (1992, p. 84). Therefore, with men involving themselves more at home and with more women in the workplace, the feminist movement can be credited for activating an intermingling and disarrangement of men's and women's traditional roles.

Despite men's presence in the home and their increased involvement in domestic issues, women still maintain their traditional role as "keepers of the domestic community" (Wellman, 1992, p.88). With only so many hours in a day to fulfill work and household duties, in addition to tending the romantic relationship and all that entails, it is more time efficient to engage in social gatherings with other couples in or close to home. Since women have long maintained their superiority in dealing with issues pertaining to emotional support and nurturing (Fillion, 1995, p. 76), men's friendships, which were once initiated on the job site and manifested in the local pub or coffee shop, are now primarily determined by availability of time and the women in their lives (Wellman, 1992).

As keepers of domestic communities, women are now defining the nature of men's friendships as well as their own (Wellman, 1991 & 1992) and men, restricted as they are by their bread winning roles and recent child rearing responsibilities, are inclined to consider their closest friends to be their romantic partners. Authors, Nancy Friday (1980, p. 15) and Mary Ingham, (1984, p. 223) even argue that men are dependent on women to provide a quality of emotional support that is not easily sought outside their romantic relationships because men, once a romantic union with a woman is established, do not experience a need to seek emotional support outside the relationship.

## BEHIND THE ROLES WE PLAY

A psychoanalytic perspective will argue that women's ability to offer emotional support is an outcome of their mothering instincts, ingrained as they are in women's psychological development. Feminist theorist, Nancy Chodorow, in her book The Reproduction of Mothering, argues that mothering is a social construct that reinforces young girls' childhood tendencies to identify with and experience feelings of attachment to their mothers (1978, p. 109; See also Fillion, 1995, p. 12). Women grow up feeling emotionally bonded to other women, beginning with their mothers. Therefore, it is not difficult to transfer their bonded feelings to other women in their friendships. As Chodorow says: "Because of their mothering by women, girls come to experience themselves as

less separate than boys, as having permeable ego boundaries. Girls come to define themselves more in relation to others” (1978, p. 93).

Boys, on the other hand, upon observing differences to their mothers, beginning with biological differences, must sever any evident psychological attachments and emotional bonds with their mothers in early childhood in order to identify more effectively with their fathers. As Chodorow also says: “For boys the major goal is the achievement of personal masculine identification with their father and sense of secure masculine self” (1978, p. 165). Giving up the original attachment to their mother is, therefore, an issue for boys (1978, p. 165) who experience early in their lives feelings of pain and anger, associated as they are with the loss of continuous emotional support such as that which can be got from their mothers (Fillion, 1995, p. 12).

This psychoanalytic perspective is subject to debate and only partially useful when attempting to identify the origins of some differences between men’s and women’s capacity to express emotion and offer support and our perceptions of these differences. Nevertheless, it is arguably useful in helping us to piece together the origins of some widespread perceptions pertaining to male demonstrative expression.

In order to explore the roots of some perceptions further, identifying socially based behavioral differences between men and women is also helpful.

For example, sociolinguist Deborah Tannen (1986 & 1990) and psychologist John Gray (1992) both describe how boys and girls grow up in worlds where they unknowingly play and use language in markedly different ways. For example, Tannen argues that girls tend to play in pairs or in small groups and in close proximity to each other. Illustrative of Chodorow's point that girls tend to define themselves in relation to others, differentiation between girls is downplayed while cooperation and intimacy, expressed through verbal confirmation, forms the foundation on which girls' best friendships are based (Tannen, 1990, pp. 43-44).

In contrast to girls' cooperative play, Tannen argues further that boys play is other-oriented and hierarchically structured. Differentiation is not downplayed in boys play as it is in girls and much jockeying for position through aggressive behavior and verbal conflict can be observed among boys during play time. Verbal one-up-manship, humorous stories and jokes serve to reinforce a hierarchy where there are winners and losers and competition for control of any given situation can be taken very seriously (Tannen, 1990, p. 43).

Gray, in his book, Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus (1992) and Tannen, in her book, That's Not What I Meant (1986) both subscribe to the notion that obvious behavioral differences between the sexes can be explained in much the same way as we differentiate people who come from contrasting ethnic cultures. Tannen uses the term *culture* to describe a "network of habits

and patterns gleaned from past experience” (1986, p. 125). Based on this description, she uses the term culture to illustrate why women and men are inclined to perceive each other incorrectly thus leading to unrealistic expectations in relationships. Gray is less specific in defining culture precisely and playfully popularizes the culture theme by attributing men's and women's origins to different planets, thus the title of his book.

This cultural analogy goes a long way in helping us recognize and understand the source of some of our most common and misinterpreted perceptions of sex based characteristics. As one example, Gray argues that men are goal oriented and are primarily motivated in relationships when they feel needed (p. 11). Feeling needed implies that they can offer some form of practical and tangible support. According to Gray, talk for men is a convenience, which they use to identify a problem before they seek a speedy and clear solution (1992, pp. 67 - 68; See also Tannen, 1990, pp. 78-79). According to Tannen, for men, talk is a means to preserve independence, negotiate and maintain status in a hierarchical social order (1992, p. 77). Perhaps these notions explain why some men fail to understand women's desire to talk things out as being a beneficial process in itself (Tannen, 1986, p. 16; Gray, 1992, pp. 62 - 67) because men see talk as a quick means to an end.

While men take pride in their abilities to seek an efficient solution to a problem, women use talk as a way of slowly processing and understanding the

problem (Gray, 1992, pp. 37-39). Women, according to Gray, are motivated by the need to feel cherished with frequent reminders from men that they are loved unconditionally (1992, p. 43). Therefore, conversation is not necessarily problem oriented and is often used by women as a way of simply spending time in the company of a man. The intent of women's conversation is not always evident to men; women are often said, by men, to talk too much (Tannen, 1990, p. 78). As a result and in an effort to feel purposeful and needed, men often intercept women's processing by offering their own quick solutions to a problem that may not even exist.

#### AT ODDS WITH INTIMACY

Kate Fillion, in her book, Lipservice: The Truth About Women's Darker Side in Love, Sex, and Friendship (1995, p. 18) and Robert Strikwerda and Larry May, (1992, p. 119) argue that intimacy is a defining feature and a vital component for maintaining friendship. Fillion, however, raises a question that pertains to how we define intimacy and challenges our most popular definition. Complementary to Wellman's theory concerning the domestication of friendship and based on women's inclination towards mutual self-disclosure, Fillion discusses how women's friendships have become the broadly accepted, "model for intimacy" (1995, p.18). Fillion, however, assigns her own description for widespread acceptance of characteristics of women's friendships as a social

norm which she calls the "feminization of intimacy" (1995, p. 18), thus identifying an apparent and contemporary social bias that values certain behaviors characterized by women over those that are characterized by men. She goes on to argue that this bias has contributed greatly to women's perceptions of men's behavior in interpersonal relationships.

The beginnings of this trend toward feminization of intimacy and friendship are mentioned in Lillian Rubin's benchmark book, Just Friends, The Role of Friendship in Our Lives (1985). She notes that until recently friendship was considered for men only and women's friendships were barely noticed because "men's friendships were taken to be the model of what friendship is and ought to be" (1985, p.59). She also notes, however, that feminist historians were instrumental in setting the record straight to describe the strength and importance of women's friendships (1985, p.60). It appears, however, that since these auspicious feminist beginnings women have adopted a defensive and self-righteous tone inclined to cast a deprecating light on men's expressions of intimacy.

My own research indicates that intimacy is no less desired by men than it is by women. But the ways in which men express intimacies in tender moments are different from those which are expressed by women. These differences, however, seem to be overlooked by women who expect men to communicate their emotional needs in the same way that they do. Indeed, contrary to some



women's perceptions, Rubin argues that men feel quite bonded to each other without "the kind of sharing of thought and feeling that is so much a part of women's friendships" (1985, p. 68). While women's intuitive capabilities must be acknowledged, they are more inclined than men to share their thoughts and feelings through talk. Men, however, will recognize demonstrations of intimacy at a very intuitive level and are able to acknowledge their intimate feelings quite effectively through non-verbal communication (Rubin, 1985, p. 73).

Fillion argues that intimacy, expressed through verbal self-disclosure, has become the benchmark for defining friendships (1995, p. 16). As a result, since verbal self-disclosure is not a frequently mentioned, defining feature of most men's friendships, men are deemed less capable of achieving satisfactory friendships. This notion, inclined as it is to discredit men's friendships as being inferior to women's, is illustrated by Fillion in her reference to an "exhaustive" (p.16) 1993 study conducted at the University of North Carolina (UNC) where the:

men were judged less adept at intimacy, because they failed to emphasize the personally disclosive talk characteristic of women's relationships. Not only were women dubbed intimacy experts, but men were alternately pitied and chided for their alleged shortcomings (p.16).

The UNC analysis shows how men can be criticized for their supposed quietude in relationships. Furthermore, authors such as Stuart Miller (1983, p. 67) and Robert Townsend (1985, p. 342) echo the UNC findings, stating that self-

disclosure, as it is defined by women, has come to be a most important measure of intimacy in relationships.

According to Fillion, an analysis of the origins of some defining features of men's friendships shows that male characteristics that were once revered, such as independence and autonomy, are now scorned because they are not deemed conducive to building effective relationships (1995, p. 7). Furthermore, she argues that men's tendency to express their feelings differently from women is considered by some women to be an indicator of psychological inadequacies and insecurity (1995, p. 7). Therefore, relative to women's friendships, which are founded on their adept and detailed articulation of feelings, men's friendships are commonly thought to be shallow and insignificant.

#### ACKNOWLEDGING MEN'S OWN STYLE OF FRIENDSHIP

Men have their own style of *doing* friendship. It is different from women's style but no less valuable or conducive to building relationships. Therefore, it is unfortunate that men are now having to measure their friendships against a feminized model that bears little relation to men's own social and biological influences. Just as women's friendships were once overlooked and criticized for being trivial and unimportant (Rubin, 1985, p. 59), now so are men's. As Fillion observes, it is "unfair to men" and certainly detrimental to women's

understanding and acceptance of men to "dismiss the masculine style of friendship as... shallow and superficial" (1995, p.36).

While varying degrees of self-disclosure are evident in men's friendships, companionship between men is not usually expressed through mutual verbal disclosure of feelings. Men's friendships are articulated through time spent in each other's company. *Doing* is defined as companionship that is often focused on a common interest rather than on one another. The stereotype, then, for men's friendships can be observed between men on the sports field, pursuing a friendship style that is not only active but often seemingly aggressive. It is often said that men's friendships are not demonstrated face to face, as is the case in women's friendships, but side by side (Inman, 1993, p. 105).

Verbal confirmation, that which is expressed through a mutual sharing of each other's feelings, is just one way of acknowledging each other in relationships. Indeed, some of the men in my sample describe times spent with friends in absolute silence. With this notion in mind, Strikwerda and May (1992) examine male friendship and intimacy in comparison to a feminized definition of intimacy and suggest that companionship is better described as "comradeship" and must be a "non-intimate form of friendship" (1992, p.110) relative to the feminized model. Nevertheless, they emphasize that intimacy among men includes an element of warmth in two dimensions, that of mutual caring receptivity and that of being comfortable (1992, p. 115). When these

dimensions are present words are not necessary to validate each other's presence and silence is not seen as an uncomfortable obstacle that inhibits friendship. These descriptions offer a broader definition of intimacy that transcends the stereotype of men as shallow, withdrawn communicators and reveals, instead, a relationship that can be mutually understood at a very deep and intuitive level.

In addition to shared companionship, whether in silence or on the sports field, Strikwerda and May maintain that trust is another aspect of primary importance in defining men's friendships. If trust is achieved in women's friendships through mutual self-disclosure, it is achieved in men's friendships through common interests and "some form of shared experience" (Strikwerda & May, 1992, p. 115). Usually the shared experience is imbued with some kind of special meaning resulting from growing up in the same neighborhood together, living in residence while attending university or traveling together. It is no surprise, then, that most of the men in my sample included among their closest friends men they had met in childhood and college, even if they had not seen them for many years.

A final important point concerns men's emotions that are commonly expressed through humor. When companionship is deeply felt the feelings of emotion are often threatening to men, unaccustomed as they are to expressing their feelings verbally. As testament to this notion Miller offers anecdotal

examples of men in relationships who would never express feelings of heart felt sentiment. In one example, his subject says simply "Men don't do that. It wouldn't seem right" (1983, p.14). Rather than offering sentimental words of support in circumstances where human foibles and vulnerability could be inadvertently exposed, my research shows that men are more inclined to make light of these situations by expressing themselves through humorous words and gestures. This manner of behavior often takes the form of making fun of each other. Therefore, unlike women, who are inclined to feel hurt and offended when people make fun of them and contrary to some popular stereotypes understating men's intuitive qualities, men have an intuitive understanding of the sentiments that are implied through humor without need for exact words.

### III. FRIENDSHIP AS A SUBJECT FOR ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

#### DEFINING ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

This research explores some popular perceptions of men's friendships and how they can inhibit the development of effective interpersonal relationships. It also looks at how men's friendships are played out on a day to day basis. From a theoretical perspective this study takes an ethnographic approach that looks at popular assumptions pertaining to men's friendships and allows for interpretation as a tool for exploring the parameters and attributes of men's capacity for giving and receiving support in their friendships with each other.

Ethnography is defined by characteristics that are both qualitative and subjective. It has four notable features: (1) it explores "the nature of particular social phenomena," (2) it tends to "work primarily with 'unstructured' data," (3) investigation focuses on "a small number of cases," and (4) it "involves explicit interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions." (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, p. 248). In order to provide a valuable, methodological base for this study of men's friendships and perceptions of men's friendships I situate it in the realm of ethnographic inquiry because it allows for "a uniquely humanistic, interpretive approach" (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, p. 249).

I also situate this research in the realm of the "ethnographic present" (Fabian, 1983, p. 80). Johannes Fabian's anthropological perspective is relevant here when he explains that the ethnographic present "'freezes' a society at the time of observation" (1983, p. 81). For the sake of my research I consider my sample of average, middle-class, heterosexual men as a *society*, meaning that through their participation in this study they represent a small community or fellowship of men. Furthermore, *observation* in this case is defined by my own inevitable participation in the interview process, thus exposing the respondents to all kinds of external influences, notably those that come from myself, as researcher. The personal interviews upon which parts of this study are based can, therefore, only represent a moment in time because it is probable that if the respondents were asked the same questions one week after the initial interviews, their points of view would likely be altered. I assume, however, that any such alterations of opinion, over time, on the topic of their friendships will not undermine or detract from this data since their opinions are subject to ever changing interpretations of one's lifetime experiences .

## PERCEPTIONS AS VALUABLE RESOURCES

Ethnographic research is characterized by its biased nature. Given its interpretive attributes it is inevitable that the researcher will bring to the subject

of inquiry a unique set of biases and interpretations (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). Bias is generally thought to inhibit validity, thus casting ethnographic research into a category that is deemed inferior to more seemingly objective methods. Virginia Olesen, however, claims that this need not be the case. She offers the example of qualitative feminist researchers who consider bias to be a misplaced term that can, in fact, be accepted as a methodological resource rather than as a hindrance (1994, p. 165). For example, she explains that if a researcher is sufficiently reflexive about their study, personal biases can be evoked as resources to guide data gathering and for understanding one's own perceptions through their interpretation of the research (p. 165). Norman Denzin complements Olesen when he states that: "In the social sciences there is only interpretation. Nothing speaks for itself" (1994, p. 500) .

While the focus of my research is on men, I do not hide the fact that I speak with a "female voice," one that is susceptible to defining "self in terms of connections and relationships" (Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991, p. 85). I mention this because I acknowledge the liberties I am taking when I, as a woman, interpret men's voices. This fact bears relevance to male authors writing about friendship in general terms that, given patriarchal privilege, have distorted women's experiences by omission of direct reference. The result, over centuries, has been, "a silencing of women's own voices" (Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991, p. 85) whereby it is sometimes assumed that women generally experience social circumstances in much the same way men do. In the case of my research, I do



not want to make a similar mistake by assuming that men's friendships are experienced in the same way that women's are.

Considering that our current social climate tends to favor feminist concerns, especially in regards to domestic issues, it is important that the voices of the men in this sample be heard. Therefore, in light of present social circumstances, it is expected that my female voice could be advantageous in gaining a sympathetic female audience interested in disassociating themselves from a kind of reverse sexism.

The data on which this ethnographic study of men's friendship is based originates with the respondents in the form of anecdotes which are subject to interpretation in order that individual relevance and meaning can be established. This concept of interpretation is central to a hermeneutical perspective (Josselson & Lieblich, 1993, p. 9) whereby meaning is constructed through an interactive process of interpretation that seeks to "understand the significance of human actions" (Bullock, Stallybrass & Trombley, 1988, p. 380), in this case men's friendship.

Our interpretations of other people's anecdotes are constructed on our perception, "that others experience the world basically in the way we do" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994, p. 263). We are generally inclined to assume that, disregarding evidence of extreme perspectives, our experience of the world, and

that of others, will fall within a normal range of behaviors that are determined by socially accepted doctrines. Therefore, based on a certain commonality of experience, it is through our interpretation of the telling of other people's life experiences that we create meaning out of our own experiences.

Recognizing this commonality of experience is just one way that we can gain a better understanding of our own experiences. However, it must be acknowledged, that while other people's experiences bear some similarity to our own they can also contribute to false expectations when individual differences are not taken into consideration. Therefore, it is this notion of expectation, that other people experience the world as we do, that contributes to some inaccurate perceptions of people's experiences.

Nevertheless, becoming aware of our perceptions with some degree of reflexivity can help us to see how our experiences are filtered through many interpretive screens, our own and others. As social science researchers it is this richness of interpretation that we depend upon as a source of data (Denzin, 1994). We not only extract information from the data, we contribute to it. In this way the researcher and the researched are intertwined by the necessity of their interaction. As a result the relationship that is developed between the researcher and the respondents becomes an intrinsic part of the research being conducted. In the case of my research, my interpretation of the respondent's anecdotes is expected to bear some familiarity to women whose perceptions of

men's friendships are similar to mine. Perhaps, then, other women will be alerted to the negative effect that some of their inaccurate perceptions have on their relationships with men, just as I have.

## **MEN'S FRIENDSHIPS FROM A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE**

Feminist research is generally marked by an epistemology that stresses gender, reflexivity and emotion (Denzin, 1994; Fonow & Cook, 1991). A "major feature of feminist epistemology is its refusal to ignore the emotional dimension" and "the notion that women care at both a practical and interpersonal level" (Fonow & Cook, 1991, p. 9). It grew out of women's need to recognize and address those areas where they have been marginalized and oppressed. To this end a feminist paradigm has enabled scholars to detect and analyze male bias in society (Acker, Barry & Esseveld, 1991). Once one has adopted a mandate to question dominant intellectual traditions, a methodology that borrows from feminist epistemology becomes appropriate to this exploration of perceptions in order to identify those areas of social practice where female bias predominates.

From a feminist perspective reflexivity is defined as, "the tendency of feminists to reflect upon, examine critically, and explore analytically the nature of the research process" (Fonow & Cook, 1991, p. 2). In the case of this study of

perceptions of men's friendships this definition of reflexivity is useful in order to emphasize the perspective from which I, as a woman researching perceptions of men's friendships, am likely to interpret the respondent's stories. For example, I contextualized this study in a framework that acknowledges some of my own personal perceptions in the Introduction because my own perceptions are arguably illustrative and relevant to some major attitudes being discussed here. As Norman Denzin observes, "interpretive research begins and ends with the biography and the self of the researcher" (Denzin, 1994, p. 510).

A feminist perspective is also considered relevant because women play a dynamic role in men's lives and in their friendships. Furthermore, my research acknowledges the differences between men and women, but it also acknowledges certain similarities. For example, in the past, male-biased researchers have tended to ignore female behaviors rendering them invisible. Unable to see beyond the strict patriarchal parameters of acceptable male behavior, they have also rendered male demonstrative behavior almost invisible. As a result, expressions of men's emotional support go unrecognized by men and women alike.

## IV. EXPLORING THE ROOTS OF OUR PERCEPTIONS

### DEFINING OUR DIFFERENCES

Friendship is a social construct that is shaped by our exposure to a variety of practical and thought provoking experiences. Friendship, influenced as it is by familial, cultural <sup>5</sup>, religious, political and economic considerations, cannot be defined in unequivocal and constant terms because everybody experiences their friendships differently. Therefore, generalizations that paint a broad picture of friendship are not adequate in helping to understand where some widespread perceptions of friendship, especially those related to differences between men and women, originate.

In order to examine some perceived attributes of men's friendship, such as those that I listed in the Introduction, it is advantageous to look at the roots of some commonly held assumptions from a perspective that explores how they are influenced by socially constructed determinants. With these thoughts in mind I will take a brief look at some differences between commonly held views of men's and women's friendships.

---

<sup>5</sup> I have already defined friendship as being socially constructed. Social construction includes cultural differences based on religion and ethnic origin. This research begs to be expanded to incorporate cultural differences. In the meantime, however, I make no assumptions that a broad definition of friendship, based on the literature I have selected, is relevant to cultures outside of that which is represented by my sample.

When asked if men's friendships differ from women's friendships twenty-one of the twenty-five respondents said that differences were clearly evident. For example, one respondent, age thirty-seven and an unemployed actor, said women's friendships are "more empathy driven" whereas men's friendships "seem to be more about sharing time and experience." He went on to say that, "to a large degree I would say men are more into experiencing the present together. Women are generally more open to emotional expression or talking about emotions." Another respondent said that "women tend to be in contact more often. Especially sort of direct, personal contact. They see each other more often and women's friendships get to be more physical. They hug more. "

At age seventy-two, retired and wise with experience, one respondent cited male inhibitions, defensiveness and ego as constraints to the way men express their feelings to each other in their friendships. He also observed: "I think there are many more close relationships between women than there are between men." Finally, and relevant to how feelings are articulated, another respondent pointed out that men's friendships are "more competitive and they are, to a large extent, unexpressed." His comment is particularly interesting because he mentions the emotional aspects of men's friendships that go unspoken because they are mutually and intuitively understood and accepted.

As one forty year old reflects pensively: "The life experience of men is very different than [that of] women for a whole variety of reasons." As a new father his comment is possibly a reflection of his role in the family being tested by all sorts of new expectations from his wife. Nevertheless, it suggests one reason why men's and women's behavior is different. It also suggests that the "processes by which we learn to play the roles our society has designed for us are powerful and effective forces in shaping human life" (Rubin, 1985, p. 90). Where men's and women's friendships are concerned, as previously stated, a frequently cited difference is often generalized by the notion that women conduct their friendships face to face, absorbed in each other. Men's friendships, on the other hand, are more instrumental and are conducted side by side (Inman, 1993, p. 105),

Rubin (1985) and Tannen (1990) both offer evidence of social determinants that begin to explore some of the most popularly perceived differences between men's and women's friendships. For example, Rubin argues that:

Boys are raised to be tough, active, independent and emotionally controlled, while girls are taught to be tender, passive, dependent and emotionally available. We know that boys are not supposed to cry even when they're physically hurt, while girls are permitted great leeway to express either physical or emotional pain. We know that boys are expected to be difficult and rebellious, while girls, it is believed, will be sweet and compliant. We know that girls are trained to nurture and boys assume that they will be nurtured (1985, p. 81).

Tannen, however, drawing from her background as a sociolinguist, pays special attention to verbal disclosure. She attempts to understand the circumstances that provoke men to express themselves verbally by examining their childhood experiences in contrast to those of women. She argues that boys achieve solidarity through persuasive commands, leadership and group loyalty (1990, p. 43). Furthermore, and as previously mentioned, boys are encouraged to play outside in large groups where hierarchy and status are obvious and important determinants. Since sports often form the focus of boy's play, their conversations tend to be brief and to the point. Instructions are established verbally but words are minimal for the sake of efficiency.

Where girls are concerned, Tannen argues that they tend to play in pairs or in small groups. Unlike boys, however, cooperation and verbal intimacy are the defining features of their groups. Therefore, in contrast to boys whose groups are hierarchically structured where winners and losers are frequently the subject of arguments (1992, p. 43), girls achieve togetherness through mutual emotional support that is made obvious in their talk (Tannen, 1990, pp. 43 - 44).

Tannen points to these differences, among others, in the social upbringing of boys and girls as the basis for her argument that men and women represent contrasting cultures. It is also these differences, popularized as they have been by Tannen and Gray and by the media in general, that have



contributed to some commonly held and somewhat limited perceptions of both women's and men's friendships. They have contributed to limited perceptions because, by emphasizing the differences between men and women, they have undermined the similarities.

## TALKING VS DOING: CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

Defining sex differences in cultural terms helps us to accept, in a manner that is simple and far reaching, differences between men's and women's relationship styles that can be distinguished by their contrasting language, coping mechanisms and values (Gray, 1992, p. 11). Gray identifies these characteristics, in particular, as being commonly misunderstood by men and women in relationships. Therefore, in order to gain a better understanding of sex based differences, he agrees with Tannen that men and women represent different cultures. This analogy is useful, to a point, because it helps us to consider the multiplicity of modes by which men and women can be effectively expressive in giving and receiving emotional support.

Simplistic as it may seem, the cultural analogy goes a long way in helping us to understand why women, for example, are inclined to *talk out* their feelings and men are inclined to *act out* their feelings. *Talking and doing* are just two contrasting examples of sex based characteristics that are popularly considered

to epitomize differences in men's and women's friendships. Popular perceptions of *talking* and *doing* are also a source of misunderstanding in relationships.

In order to illustrate the notion that men and women represent different cultures, Tannen argues that men and women speak different dialects which she calls "genderlects" (1990, p. 42). In the context of her discussion of social determinism she argues that "women speak and hear a language of connection and intimacy, while men speak and hear a language of status and independence" (p. 42). Furthermore, she maintains that "women and men have different ways of talking" (p. 79) and often "have very different ideas of what's important" (p.80). The real problem, according to Tannen, is the difference in what men and women think talk is for. For women talk is for interaction, but for men talk is for information (Tannen, 1990, p.81).

Gray agrees with Tannen that "men and women commonly misunderstand each other because they speak different languages" (Gray, 1992, p. 11). He makes the argument that while the words may sound familiar to both sexes, they have different meanings. Words also connote different emotional emphasis and interpretation, so the potential for misunderstanding is quite conceivable. For example, Rubin attempts to explain some men's apparent reluctance to translate their feelings into words as "a response to the fear that the [verbal] expression of emotion threatens to expose their dependency and vulnerability" (p. 97). Both Tannen and Rubin maintain that men's tendency to be verbally withdrawn is

necessary to the kind of play boys participate in, requiring them to be "tough, active, independent and emotionally controlled" (Rubin, 1985, p. 81), thus guarding their deepest felt vulnerabilities and dependency.

The words we choose, the specific meanings that we attach to these words, and how these words are interpreted, are just a few features that are pertinent to effective communication. Non-verbal communication, including *how* something is said and *when* it is said, or *not*, is also a very important feature (Stewart & D'Angelo, 1988; DeVito, 1992; Stewart & Logan, 1993). My previous research confirms, as Rubin argues, that men's friendships are not generally defined by intimate verbal disclosures (1985, p. 62). Instead my research indicates that non-verbal communication is an important aspect of men's friendships, a notion which is frequently misunderstood by some women who depend on words for expression and. Furthermore, Wellman argues that some women have difficulty accepting that men can "enjoy the sheer pleasure of being with each other [and] not talking much" (1992, p. 95).

This absence of verbal disclosure in men's friendships is emphasized by one respondent who illustrated the disparity between his friendships with women and men when he said: "A lot of my female friendships center around talking. A lot of my male friendships center around doing." Nevertheless, to say that *women talk* and *men do* in their friendships is an over simplification that only serves to reinforce stereotypes that inhibit one's ability to gain a clear

comprehension of men's capacity to give and receive verbal and non-verbal expressions of affection that are mutually understood (Wellman, 1992). As Wellman says: "It has become cliché to say that men prefer to do things with each other rather than say intimate things to each other" (1992, p. 96).

Therefore, in order to enhance our understanding and appreciation of men's intentions and feelings behind the *doing* of their actions, it is necessary that we put our emotionally biased assumptions aside.

Seemingly contrary to the popular perception that men do not share verbal intimacies, Stuart Miller (1983), quotes one of his respondents as saying: "The most important aspect of making a friendship is getting down<sup>6</sup>" (p. 67). Nevertheless, he goes on to say that: "It's hard to get men down. They want to stay on top, to avoid feelings, to avoid confrontation. They want to stay rational, professional, protected and important" (p. 67). I interpret his comment to mean that men do not like to feel vulnerable, which is often the case when feelings are articulated verbally.

Some men (and women) might feel vulnerable when verbalizing their innermost feelings. Nevertheless, forty percent of my respondents said *talk* was one activity that they frequently participated in with their closest male friends. Furthermore, when asked to describe what friendship meant to them, nine men responded that personal sharing through talk was an important aspect of

---

<sup>6</sup> *Getting down*, in this context, refers to sharing verbal disclosures.

friendship. Indeed, verbal self-disclosure was the most frequently mentioned activity. Eating out, going for coffee, hiking and walking, all activities that lend themselves to providing opportunities for talk about personal issues, were also mentioned by eight to ten respondents. A few respondents even said they preferred these activities over other activities precisely because they provided opportunities for sharing verbal disclosures.

When asked what they talked about with their closest male friends, seventeen respondents said that they confided their "personal thoughts and feelings." Furthermore, twenty-five percent indicated that they discussed personal difficulties in their romantic relationships and in their families, their romantic partners, and their children. These topics contradict some widespread perceptions among women that suggest that men do not talk about deeply personal issues among themselves. As one married respondent, age forty-one, said: "I've certainly had some evenings specifically appointed to go to the bar and talk about a friend's problems [in his relationship] and nothing about anything else. I mean it does happen."

The results of my study, therefore, contradict the popular perception that men do not disclose verbal intimacies in their friendships. The results also lead me to believe that the comments made by Miller's respondent above could be indicative of an internal struggle for some men who desire to initiate a social atmosphere that is more conducive to intimate disclosures in their friendships.

Furthermore, his comments indicate that sharing verbal intimacies might make some men feel uncomfortable because it creates an internal, psychological opposition with their more familiar and learned tendency to maintain an unemotional and controlled external demeanor.

Similar to Wellman, scholar Chris Inman looks beyond popular perceptions of men's friendships. His work draws attention to some mutual understandings that are rarely verbalized among men. For example, he acknowledges the ability of male friends to count on each other in a variety of circumstances (1993, p. 102). He also discusses how men trust and depend silently on each other to provide a quality of support in the guise of small services or favors (also in Wellman, 1992, pp. 96 - 97).

Inman also observes that, unlike women, men seldom engage in conversations that focus on the friendship that exists between them. Affection for each other is appropriately and discreetly expressed through "phrases, jokes, and gestures that carry subtle meanings of acceptance and understanding" (p. 103). However, this lack of talk about relationships is not perceived by men as an oversight. On the contrary, "male friends indicate that they assume and understand their relationships are important" (Inman, 1992, pp. 106 - 107). Inman refers to this as "the unspoken bond" (p. 107) and acknowledges that: "[it] does not require daily discussion or maintenance. Men know their

relationships are significant, and they believe they can count on their friends, even if they do not express those feelings verbally" (1992, p. 107).

There is an intuitive quality to men's friendship that is seldom recognized or given credence. In contrast to women who are generally regarded for their sensitivity to others, men are frequently admonished for their distinct lack of sensitivity. My research, however, supports Inman's and Wellman's work by indicating that men possess an intuition that may be less recognizable, and less talked about, than that of women but no less conducive to building mutual understandings in their relationships.

## PERCEPTIONS OF AUTONOMY IN MEN'S LIVES

When talking about intuition, Gray argues that women "feel an instinctive need to talk about what's bothering them" (1992, p. 11), thus drawing them towards people, particularly close friends. He also argues that, when troubled men tend to withdraw from their relationships and think in silence about what's bothering them ( p. 11). In friendship, this kind of behavior is frequently perceived by women to be anti-social and, therefore, detrimental to developing emotional bonds which are usually founded on self-disclosure. Tannen and Gray argue that it is also representative of men's need to maintain a high degree of independence and autonomy in interpersonal relationships.

Men's perceived need for independence and autonomy can lead to contradictory expressions of feeling in relationships that are easily misunderstood by women. For example, Gray argues that men want to experience intimacy, but when they get close they inevitably need to pull away (1992, p.11) which seems to offer evidence for some women's perception of men as being somewhat inconsistent and unreliable when called upon to express their feelings. Chodorow (1978) argues contentiously that this behavior begins in childhood relationships that men experience, notably in their families.

Chodorow's work pertaining to gender differences, as it is interpreted by Fillion, attempts to explain what some women perceive to be men's lack of connectedness from a highly debated and arguably outdated psychoanalytic perspective. In the most simple terms, she theorizes that a child experiences attachment and identification in their relationship with their mother, being the primary caregiver. She argues that it is not difficult for a girl to identify with her mother because from a very early age she is able to recognize the biological similarities between herself and her mother causing her to, feel emotionally connected (Fillion, 1995, p. 12). A boy, however, will soon recognize that he does not share the same biology which leads him to, "relinquish his attachment to and identification with his mother" (Fillion, 1995, p. 12). As a result and over time, "men are trained to find security in themselves" (Friday, 1980, p. 15). Boys' gender identity is, therefore, created by emotional separation from the



mother and, "they construct strong ego boundaries to repress and deny their feelings of loss, pain and anger" (Fillion, 1995, p. 12).

Chodorow's argument reinforces some popular misunderstandings about male behavior because she appears to disregard the role of the father in men's lives. Since her book was published in 1978, studies has been conducted (See Brian Jackson, 1983; H. S. Gill, 1991; C. Nydegger & L. S. Mitteness, 1991) that attest to the positive role that fathers play in their sons (and daughters) lives, offering a quality of attention and support that is complementary to that which is offered by mothers and vital to the identity development of boys. While I acknowledge that the role of fathers is an important issue, it is not discussed here because the role of fathers was not adequately discussed with the respondents in the interviews. Chodorow is cited because her theories continue to be offered in popular literature as possible explanations for behavioral sex differences even though they are hotly debated. It is possible, therefore, that while her arguments are thought provoking they also reinforce and perpetuate some negative stereotypes of both men and women.

I addressed issues pertaining to independence and autonomy with the respondents by asking them if they had ever asked a friend for a special favor. Based on my assumptions regarding men's need to maintain a high degree of autonomy and independence in their relationships, derived as they might be from popular literature, I expected that most of the men would say they rarely

asked their friends for special favors. This, as it turned out, however, was not the case.

Seventeen men recalled asking their friends for special favors. Their answers indicate that men will readily admit to relying on their friends for a quality of support that is not necessarily emotionally-based, but is tangible and of a practical nature, such as borrowing money or a vehicle which were the most frequent answers. Asking for help during a move, looking after kids, and rides to and from the airport were also frequently mentioned. Two respondents asked a friend for a special favor that involved their wives and another two needed temporary shelter. Other answers included needing bail money to get out of jail, loan of a house, and seeking assistance when looking for work. One respondent identified a special favor as asking a close friend to help with a family matter. Only one respondent mentioned his need to talk as being indicative of a special favor.

These examples appear to contradict some popular perceptions of men's need for autonomy and independence. Nevertheless, I draw attention to one respondent whose experience, upon recalling a particularly troubled time in his life when he chose to withdraw from his friends to work out his problems alone, appears to confirm the commonly held view that men prefer to work out their problems autonomously. His experience reveals some notable differences, however, when he discloses that for him, "it was a very scary time." He qualified

his remark by saying that, "it was only scary in the sense 'cos I wouldn't reach out. I wouldn't want anybody to know what I was goin' through."

This respondent's remark is worth noting because, on the surface, it appears to reinforce the perception that men prefer to work problems out for themselves. However, it also contradicts this perception when he suggests his internal desire to reach out for help even though his need to save face and avoid embarrassment prevented him from doing so. Although his remarks represent the sentiments of only one respondent in my sample, they are nonetheless thought provoking because they could also represent a similarity of thought and feeling in the minds of other respondents even though they were not specifically made apparent to me in the interviews.

## COMPETITION, HUMOR AND CONFLICT

Competition is another major theme that, according to Rubin, runs through men's relationships (1985, p. 82). Whether in the workplace, on the playing field or when vying for the attentions of a woman, competition and a kind of one-up-manship that is often displayed by men in the company of each other is commonly perceived by women to be an inhibiting but, predominant aspect of men's friendships. It is considered to be negative because it is not always consistent with popular perceptions of sincerity and trust.

Fillion argues that, contrary to popular opinion, women can be just as competitive as men in relationships (1995, p. 36). Competition among women, however, is easily disguised by other, more obvious, characteristics such as self-disclosure and emotional support, thus forming the basis of a misconstrued notion that women are more sincere and trustworthy than men. Fillion also argues that our stereotypical beliefs disregarding women's competitive behavior are another, inaccurate generalization that is, downright harmful - to both women and men (1995, p. 13). It is time, therefore, that we reconsider some popular perceptions (such as those listed in the Introduction) because they may be outdated, sexist and constraining to a fair understanding of some underlying factors that motivate individuals, in this case men, in interpersonal relationships.

One example of a misconception regarding male behavior is arguably apparent in the role that sports play in men's lives. For example, just as women's overt willingness to offer emotional support can serve to disguise their more competitive characteristics, one respondent, aged fifty-one and a banker, suggested while reminiscing about his early days as a rugby player, that sports can offer socially acceptable opportunities for men to express some deeply felt emotions. As he said:

I can see why men get caught up in that enterprise so much (referring to rugby). All the energy's there and it's incredibly emotional. And it's a vehicle in which you have permission, you know. You have social permission to be free with [your] emotions.

The male-oriented team sports that I can think of are played aggressively and with a physical intensity that is sometimes misunderstood by women who do not fully appreciate the role that team sports play in men's lives. We see the aggressive and sometimes violent physicality of men's sports on our TV sets all the time. What we don't always see, however, are the shoulder hugs, handshakes, bum-slapping and lighthearted, physical contact that demonstrates camaraderie, time well spent, fun and even affection among men. It is these moments of demonstrative and mutual physical expression of which the respondent above was surely remembering. As Ingham argues: "The extent of emotion males invest in their games and pastimes is most noticeable in sport. Nowhere do men express themselves so passionately - or allow themselves to unrestrainedly hug one another (1984, p. 142). Therefore, it is possible that sports, particularly contact sports, allow men an opportunity to experience some manner of demonstrative expression, be it angry or affectionate, that is generally acceptable and non-threatening to their heterosexuality which ultimately determines the status of their masculine roles.

Sports also offer men a reason for getting together and for simply having fun together. For one self-described stay-at-home father living on Bowen Island, field hockey is one of the few ways that he can sufficiently justify to his wife his need to spend time with his male friends. He explains that his wife was aware of the importance of field hockey in his life before they got married. As he says,

"[that's part of what she] fell in love with." Nevertheless, owing to her own feelings of isolation, due in part, to living on an island, she sometimes feels resentful of his once weekly trips into the city. It must be added that he claims to be very tolerant and understanding of her "grumbling" and encourages her to get off the island for her own social activities as much as life with two small children will allow.

Having fun, for men, need not be centered around sports. Sometimes male friends just enjoy 'hanging out,' 'chillin', or spending time that is 'completely effortless' (Inman, 1993, p. 105). This notion of *just hanging out* is expressed by one respondent who described his pleasure in "just sit[ting] around the living room." As he says: "There's something reassuring about being with a bunch of guys who've accepted you and [have] known you for years and they're like you. It's a security thing, I think, to an extent." As a student, unmarried and twenty-six years old, this young man has time for sitting around that older men feeling burdened with domestic and work responsibilities probably do not have.

As an adjunct to hanging out and having fun, humor and joking around also offer emotional outlets for expressing all kinds of intimate behavior among men. Humor, among men, is likely to be expressed in a variety of ways. For some it means just "sitting and joking around." The young, unmarried respondent mentioned above described how "somebody would start a joke and then it would echo. Not the same joke but variations on it? Sort of like this

perverse game of telephone." Another respondent describes the role of joking around in the context of having "the space to be yourself" and not having "to watch what you say." When asked to describe what he values the most about his close friendships with men, and, in contrast to his friendships with women, he said that "generally women don't have the same extent of playfulness when it comes to [expressing their sense of humor]." For this free-spirited, unmarried man, humor and playfulness just means "being stupid" sometimes. Humor and a "sense of the absurd" represent qualities that, he laments, women just don't have.

My research indicates that insults disguised as humor, derogatory jokes and incessant teasing is another way that men communicate their innermost feelings. Furthermore, my previous research of women's friendships (1993) indicates that women generally find this style of communication confrontational and a threat to the bond that exists between them. In men's friendships, however, the most intimate feelings can be expressed and understood through off-color humor that is mutually accepted and not considered to be confrontational or a threat to the relationship.

Twenty percent of the respondents identified *sense of humor* as being a characteristic that they admired in their close male friends. Twelve percent of the respondents cited sense of humor as one of their criteria for choosing a close friend. Furthermore, sense of humor (along with intelligence) was the

most frequently mentioned characteristic when the respondents were asked to describe the personality of their closest male friends.

Similar to the role of humor in men's friendships, is the notion of conflict. Many women commonly assume that men seek out or even enjoy conflict in their interpersonal relationships as a way of asserting their power over a given situation. Tannen offers insight into men's conflict when she says that "to many men conflict is the necessary means by which status is negotiated, so it is easy to be accepted and may be sought, embraced and enjoyed" (1990, p. 150). Given the emotional constraints that are imposed on men through social expectations, conflict might offer some men the only opportunity for involvement.

For example, conflict undoubtedly represents an opportunity for involvement for the only respondent in this sample who consented to be interviewed on the basis that he felt he did not presently have any close friends. As the interview progressed he began to expose the nature of his past friendships, which were indeed, fraught with conflict. Using words such as "abrasive," "controlled," "very much of a driver" and "someone who goes extremely hard towards goals," he characterized his past friends in much the same way that I felt compelled to describe him in my notes after the interview. He also said, in a very forthright manner, when asked how he manages conflict, that his style is to confront it. He explains his style in the following manner:



There's a kind of confrontation that goes on. It's always been a kind of confrontation, in your face, since I've been young. But I've learned to temper that with a little bit more awareness of what is going on around me so that I don't get everybody, including myself, into a lot of trouble.

Interestingly, this man's job as a loans manager in a bank requires that he deal with people on a regular basis.

Conflict is expressed through verbal and non-verbal actions and it is usually about jockeying for power and recognition (Stewart & D'Angelo, 1988; Stewart & Logan, 1993). In interpersonal relationships conflict is about asserting oneself over another and drawing attention to those aspects of the person, or the relationship, that are felt to be disconfirmed by the other (DeVito, 1992). As one unmarried respondent living in a communal house acknowledged: "Conflict is more of a process. It's all got to do with who's got power where and territory. It's like pissin' on corners. Doing little things to show that they control a particular territory. It's kind of silly. But it's very real."

This respondent's rather graphic comments are illustrative of the notion that conflict is sometimes necessary when claiming one's ground in relationships. Nevertheless, only three men asserted that, when managing conflict, they will argue a lot or give ultimatums. For one respondent in particular, he will only talk it through when his "back is up against the wall." Therefore, unlike the loans manager, and contrary to some women's assumptions that men seek out or enjoy conflict, forty-four percent of the men in

this sample indicated that they avoid, internalize, or do anything other than invite conflict into their relationships.

Seven respondents reported that they purposefully avoid conflict. One said that he internalized his feelings in the face of conflict and another stated that he was inclined to shut down emotionally. As a result, both respondents preferred to allow the issues to go unaddressed. Another respondent will wait for the other party to raise the issue. If it is not raised, he will not initiate any further discussion. These sentiments are also illustrated by the respondent who, as mentioned previously, lives communally: "I don't like conflict. I especially don't like it in my home. So in [many] situations I [will] just let it go." One respondent said that he would stop relying on the person he determines is the cause of the conflict. Another even said he would end the relationship if it meant avoiding potential conflict.

When asked how they managed or resolved conflict the remaining respondents were more proactive. Their answers ranged from the practical to the insightful. On the level of practicality, one respondent who is involved in a men's group, said that he would phone a support team member. Others try to determine the underlying causes of the conflict, try to "keep it about me," listen, give "space," and try to talk it through. Others seek positive negotiation. One respondent reflected, finally: "Hopefully you're going to avoid conflict. I mean who wants to have a friendship with someone you're in conflict with, right?"

## THE UNSPOKEN BOND

Reflective of the "unspoken bond" (Inman, 1993, p. 107) that was mentioned earlier in this chapter, attributes of reciprocity, trust and mutual respect are "high on the list [of] the unwritten rules of male friendship" (Kupers, 1993, p. 133). These attributes were mentioned by my respondents when asked what the term friendship meant to them. In this context, personal sharing, self-disclosure, reliability, trust and mutual respect were mentioned most frequently.

When these attributes are present in men's friendships, verbal assurances are considered unnecessary and the friendships are effectively reciprocated. However, when the unspoken bond is violated "men too often adhere to a tit-for-tat rule" (Kupers, 1993, p. 133), meaning that, when a gesture is not reciprocated, the relationship is cut off. This sentiment was reflected by one elderly and very sociable respondent who described his feelings of disappointment when he realized that a very close friend was not going to keep up his side of their long standing friendship during his frequent return trips to his homeland, Britain. He remembered that: "They were very close friends when [he] lived there." However, "we lost touch" because he "just didn't make the effort." He demonstrated that this situation concerned him. However, he never directly addressed his feelings of rejection to me, which I sensed as being

implicit in his non-verbal demeanor. Instead, he offered closure to his anecdote by saying simply: "If people won't meet me half way, to hell with it."

If reciprocity is what keeps a friendship growing on a practical level, trust is another attribute that contributes to the unspoken bond. Trust was mentioned by the respondents as a criterion for choosing a friend. It is also considered the basis for deciding what to discuss with a friend. When asked what friendship means to them, trust and dependability (i.e. that a friend will always be there when you need him) was mentioned by twenty percent of the respondents.

An example of dependability and how it is manifested in men's friendships was told by one of the youngest respondents, revealing evidence of an unspoken bond that exists between him and his friend. Central to his story is the fact that, for recreation, he enjoys exploring remote logging roads in his four wheel drive truck. Throughout the interview he proved to be a man of very few words. Nevertheless, he related, in animated detail, a time when his closest friend volunteered to *rescue* (my word, not his) him and his truck one time when he got stuck , twenty-four miles into the wilds behind Harrison Lake, late at night. He remembered his friend saying "I don't care how late, how dark, I would 'a come and got 'ya." He was clearly proud of this story and the tight bond between him and his friend.

Fillion discusses how widespread stereotypical assumptions tend to obscure men's need for attachments and dependencies. This is reinforced by the popular notion that unlike women who are intimacy experts, men are emotionally challenged (Fillion, 1995, p. 25). Women feel this way about men's friendships because they "do not call for high levels of self-disclosure" (Fillion, 1995, p. 15). Popular cynicism such as this only serves to reinforce outdated assumptions, making it difficult for men who want to liberate themselves from negative stereotyping. As Fillion points out, feminist ideology has invested a lot of energy into differentiating women from men. In the process male behavior is cast in a negative light. Furthermore, the notion that men and women share many similarities as well as differences is often ignored by rhetoric that only reinforces the status quo.

When asked what friendship means to them, descriptions that are usually associated with women's friendships were frequently mentioned by the men in this sample indicating, in agreement with Fillion, that men have a need for emotional intimacy and attachment just as women do, although it is expressed differently. A sense of warmth and non-judgmental caring, sharing a common history, honesty, sharing joys and sadness, unconditional acceptance and authenticity were all mentioned. Someone even suggested that a close friend is someone who knows you "inside out." Two other respondents submit that a close friend is someone you can bare your soul to.

Given the small size of this sample, this research can only suggest that men's friendships are much more complex and responsive than the popular assumptions imply. Nevertheless, it is insightful because it corrects and begins to offer some explanation for our perceptions that can lead to misunderstandings of men's behavior in relationships.

## V. MEN IN WOMAN'S WORLD

### DOMESTIC MEN

Twelve years ago, in her book Men, author Mary Ingham discussed the budding men's movement and observed that : "The men's movement has one rather huge credibility problem" (1984, p. 235). Her comment was intended to criticize the rationale behind the quiet and growing incidence of men's support groups that were concerned with "the pain and confusion experienced by many contemporary men" (Bly, 1990, front flap) at a time when, as she says: "men are not visibly oppressed" and should, it would seem, have few grievances to air (1984, p. 235).

The feminist movement has paid lip service to the notion that men as well as women can be negatively affected by the enduring institution of patriarchy (Ehrenreich, 1983; Fillion, 1995). Nevertheless, it ultimately has had little positive consideration for men in their role as complementary providers of emotional support in relationships. With this criticism in mind, feminists in the seventies eagerly seized the notion of women's superiority in light of their roles as intimacy experts (Fillion, 1995, p. 11). I assume that this attitude was adopted as a defense against men whose traditional roles as breadwinners already predisposed them to taking a peripheral role in family activities. Since

then, however, this attitude emphasizing women's excellence in relationships has been reinforced by certain feminists who believe that "women's ways of knowing, feeling and living are better: more life affirming, more environmentally friendly, more highly evolved" (Fillion, 1995, p. 11) than those of men.

I do not take issue with the belief that women are exemplary providers of emotional support and intuitive guides through the mysterious labyrinths of intimacy. Women are long overdue in garnering recognition for the contribution that they make to relationships with effective communication skills because, until the rise of feminist criticism, female behavior "had always been measured with a masculine yardstick that overvalued personal autonomy and public achievement" (Fillion, 1995, p. 11).

I do, however, take issue with the criticism that men are considered inferior to women in interpersonal relationships that could benefit from a complementary exchange of emotional support and intimacy. As a result of this pervasive criticism and based on a measure of feminine social behavior that is considered to be more acceptable than some male social behavior, it appears to me that women are now confronting men with the same ridicule and ostracism on the domestic front that they, themselves, once experienced in the workplace.

Men's traditional roles as providers of material means for survival, which can keep them away from home thus offering limited opportunities for family



engagement, can serve to disguise men's general desire for family involvement. Furthermore, the thought of men as complementary providers of emotional sustenance in interpersonal relationships is overshadowed by women's more prevalent efforts to assert a place for themselves in the workplace. Perhaps it is for these reasons, in part, that a feminist critique has failed to acknowledge the likelihood of power that women command over men going beyond mere provision of sexual favors. As Gore Vidal once suggested: "Once a man has a wife and two young children, he will do what you tell him to. He will obey you. And that is the aim of the entire masculine role" (Ehrenreich, 1983, p. 29). Although appearing to be somewhat overstated, Vidal's comment raises the notion that some men feel subordinate to women in their roles as husbands and fathers on the domestic front. This may come as a surprise to women who perceive men as never being subordinate, and unable to recognize the value of their roles in the lives of men.

In order to explore some of the structural determinants that define men's and women's roles, Wellman cites the industrial revolution, mass suburbanization and the feminist movement as the most notable contributors to recent social changes. Taking a historical perspective that depicts the pronounced separation between men's public worlds and women's private worlds, he argues that women wield a quality of power over men on the home front that they, themselves, are perhaps unaware of. Drawing from an example related to men's and women's roles in the nineteenth century, he draw to our

attention the notion that men took care of business and politics outside the home, while women devoted themselves to the life of the home (1992, p. 77). Therefore, women have had a great deal of time to gain confidence in their roles as overseers of domestic life. This, Wellman argues, has contributed to "the cult of domesticity" (1992, p. 78) which prevails on the homefront today.

According to Wellman, mass suburbanization is the cause of the separation of work from leisure time and the "separation of homes from the public community" (1992, p. 84), necessitating, for example, more commuting time to and from work. As a result, men are no longer inclined to linger after work with colleagues. Furthermore, not long after the onset of suburbanization the "second wave of feminism" (Fonow & Cook, 1991, p. 1) put pressure on patriarchal dogmas and women began to assert themselves in the workplace. As a result men were required to involve themselves more in household duties. Structural upheavals such as these contribute to changing roles and men and women are now spending more time in the home together. As Wellman argues further: "Husbands and wives spend nights and weekends with each other instead of the men going off to pubs. Men spend more time in housework and minding children, even if they still spend much less time than their wives" (1992, p. 84).

Wellman calls this slow but significant exchange of public (male) and private (female) domains, whereby women are working outside the home and

men are spending more time inside the home, "the domestication of community" (1992, p. 83). His critique reinforces the notion that a feminine yardstick is now being employed to measure acceptable behavior in place of the traditional "masculine yardstick" (Fillion, 1995, p. 11).

As "keepers of domestic communities" (Wellman, 1992, p. 89), women sometimes take on the burden of maintaining friendships for their husbands as well as themselves. Furthermore, now that men are spending more time in women's traditional domain, women sometimes assume the role of social secretaries for both, often extending their friendships with women to include their romantic partners. Therefore men's friendships, that were once conducted outside women's domain in public places, have now taken on some of the more private characteristics of women's friendships.

Men's friendships, functioning as they must inside the realm of women's authority, are vulnerable to feminine scrutiny. Because men are spending more time in women's domain, women now have an opportunity to observe male behavior and compare and judge it to their own behavior in a manner that traditional daily routines did not allow. One can argue that it is this tendency to compare behaviors, being in close proximity to each other, that has contributed to some women's commonly held perception that men are not as capable as women in offering emotional support. Therefore, where offering emotional support is concerned, men's friendships are deemed inferior to women's. In light

of this perception, it has come to be expected that men's friendships be defined as women's always have been - relations of emotional support, companionship and domestic services (Wellman, 1992, p. 101).

This notion of a *domestication of men's friendships* is carried to an extreme by one respondent who credits his common-law wife as being a major force in determining the nature of his friendships. In this case, she transcends her role as social organizer by selecting some of her husband's friends for him. Her role as social scrutineer is no doubt augmented by her parallel role as confidante to her husband. As he said, "[I] put a lot of weight on my partner to supply me with consoling and counseling and all the rest of it in my life." Nevertheless, his wife's apparent authority over his social life is illustrative of a profound influence that women can have over men's lives.

On a similar note, another respondent describes the role that women play in determining his friendships. However, because of his status as an unmarried man, it is not his romantic partners that are the determining influences, but the partners of his male friends. As he says:

The context in which your whole emotional life with other men is led, is impinged upon very strongly by the women in their lives. So, it's not as if men have the luxury of establishing how men will be friends with each other. I mean, how men are friends with each other, in very great part, depends on the kind of space they can negotiate with the women and, laterally, the children in their lives. I notice it particularly because I am

single and because I'm more sensitive, perhaps, and more willing to admit the influence of men's wives on them than the men themselves are.

## THE POWER OF PERCEPTIONS

When describing his familial relationships with women, one respondent generalized: "It's so easy to give our power away to women." This comment does not necessarily contradict my previous discussion regarding men's need for independence and autonomy in relationships. It simply emphasizes the complexity of men's lives today as they cope with their changing roles as partners and fathers when they try to meet traditional expectations as breadwinners outside the home in addition to women's expectations as active and consistent participants in their families. It also points to some women's perceptions of men that tend to disregard and, indeed, underestimate the role that women play in the lives of men as colleagues, friends and partners.

Ingham points out women's reluctance to acknowledge the power and control that they assume over men in the home. For example, in spite of feminist expectations that men contribute more to household chores, it is ironic when women resist men's invitations to help. As she says: "If women are honest with themselves, most of them feel highly ambivalent about men helping, especially in the kitchen. They yearn to lose the nagging burden..., but cling to the power and control" (1984, p. 54). Ingham argues that: "if women really want to

encourage men to change, they will have to climb down from the pedestal of moral impunity, and acknowledge some of the power they wield over men" (1984, p. 37).

Further to looking at men's and women's roles in the home, feminist social critic, Barbara Ehrenreich (1983) analyzes women's potential for wielding power over men from a political and economic perspective. She focuses her critique on the pressure for men to perform as perennial breadwinners in a capitalist, patriarchal society that is demanding and unforgiving.

From a breadwinning perspective, in the context of a punitive patriarchal society, Ehrenreich argues that traditional masculinity is a particularly strenuous act because it necessitates adopting a role of socially acceptable behavior that tends to disregard individual differences and undermine personal choice (1983, p. 170). From this perspective she observes that men are surprisingly compliant in their breadwinning roles (1983, p. 140).

Although men have tended to define themselves in terms of their work (Ingham, 1984, p. 12), Ehrenreich's remark seems to call into question some women's traditional perceptions that men can do whatever they please, whenever they please. However, her comment also implies that women's perceptions of men, as being able to do whatever they please, might be changing (thanks to feminism) now that women are personally familiar with

workplace-related-stress balanced against their desire to spend quality time at home. In this context of juggling work and home life, I assume that women are learning to understand, from their own experience, the social and emotional constraints that men have had to endure for a very long time as breadwinners in a capitalist, patriarchal society.

The results of my study confirm, as Ehrenreich suggests, that men are more compliant to their roles as breadwinners, fathers and husbands than feminist critiques and popular perceptions of men have allowed us to recognize. However, a question remains, concerning the benefits to men. As beneficiaries of patriarchy, a popular perception, what reason do men have to subordinate themselves to the whims of women? The answer is not complicated. They do it to ensure their social, psychological, sexual and emotional bonds with women. Men need women, just as women need men. As writer, Nancy Friday argues: "for women's sake, men give up closeness with their own sex,[and] learn to accept female rules and controls; [And] in marriage they take up the lifelong burden of economic support, often leading to an earlier death" (1980, p. 15).

## **"BE A MAN, SON!": PERCEPTIONS OF MASCULINITY**

**Men's friendships are inevitably dependent upon their relationships with women because men's traditional roles as family breadwinners make them**

partially answerable to women. Furthermore, men are subordinate to a definition of masculinity that, far from allowing for arbitrary self-centredness and indulgence in a world of consumerist temptations, is more liable to mean self-denial, repression and unsatisfied appetites (Ehrenreich, 1983, p. 110). Therefore, if complying to convention is a priority, maintaining a monogamous marriage and working at a socially acceptable job must take precedence over other more frivolous enterprises when it comes to behaving as a man should (Ehrenreich, 1983, p. 46).

I speculate that most young boys grow up with a pretty strong sense of what it means *to be a man*. For example, my own romantic partner remembers his father's exact words when chastising him for displaying seemingly childish behavior on a number occasions saying: "Don't be silly! Be a man!" Knowing my partner to be particularly attentive to appropriate masculine behavior and judging by the number of times I have heard this story I assume that his father's condescending and repetitive condemnations had a profound effect on him in determining exactly what it means to be a man. As one respondent theorized: "Our identity as men now, is so influenced by what we experienced being boys."

The pressure that some men feel *to be a man* was expressed by two respondents who were raised by women, with little influence from their fathers. Like my father and brother in my own family situation, these men had to get along in a female world inside the home, while also having to fit into a masculine



world on the outside. For two teenage boys seeking confirmation of their identities, I assume that their experiences created a variety of internal conflicts.

One of these respondents, a particularly soft spoken and sensitive man, describes himself as behaving "outside the mold" of normal male behavior. This man, like all of the respondents, is not homosexual. Therefore, I am not intending to imply any behavior that is perceived to be socially unacceptable. He does, however, gravitate to women for friendship which he attributes, in part, to the fact that he "was raised up in a female household." As a result he considers himself to be more attuned to sensitive behaviors which might be construed as feminine. In his mind this is not necessarily a bad thing. As he says: "The whole idea of, 'Be a man son,' is pretty much killing the feminine." He refers here to the notion that we all have masculine and feminine aspects to our personalities some of which are encouraged, through social conditioning, and others which are not.

The other respondent, also "raised by women, with not a lot of masculine influence," discussed his masculine role in terms of what he felt he was "supposed to do," relative to his family's conservative, middle class expectations. In his case, it was women who policed and reinforced the patriarchal status quo. As he said: "You've got this female point of view about what this male's supposed to be." Evidently, his experiences instilled in him some rather contradictory impressions of women which impact negatively on his relationships

with women, today. For example, he expects that women will require things of him that are hard, sometimes impossible, to live up to. As he said:

I was supposed to go and get a good job. I was supposed to buy a house with a white picket fence. And, I was supposed to have two and a half kids. I mean I was a workaholic. A part of me was saying I was being a parent and a husband. [But] who said I wanted a big car? Who said I wanted a bunch of furniture?

He laughs as he speaks, attempting to disguise his feelings with humor. But his sentiments are thought-provoking and indicative of the pressure he felt to stay within the parameters of socially determined, acceptable behavior in his role as a father and as a man.

## PERCEPTIONS OF WORK IN MEN'S LIVES

The above respondent's apparent obligation to work and his corresponding feelings of frustration are not unique to him, given the role of work in men's lives that is reinforced by a far greater social influence than some women's desire to adhere to a capitalist lifestyle. Work has come to exemplify widespread expectations of men in our materially oriented society. Work also represents status and identity. Furthermore, it is commonly assumed that it is through work that men validate themselves and gain confirmation as men and as worthwhile human beings. (This perception undermines the seriousness with

which men take on their roles as fathers, in particular. See Brian Jackson, 1983.) In short, the role that work is expected to play in men's lives is a large aspect of how we, society as a whole, define masculinity. It is for these reasons that, as Ehrenreich argues, for most men it is very difficult "to break with the responsibilities of breadwinning, without, somehow losing their manhood" (1985, p. 28).

From a practical perspective, the parameters of men's work determines largely how they spend their leisure time which must make allowances for their romantic partners and children. Given that most households today depend on dual incomes<sup>7</sup>, it is not unreasonable to expect that men as well as women contribute to household and child rearing duties.

The men in my sample are not unsympathetic to expectations of their partners and children wanting to spend time together. When asked who they would most be inclined to spend time with on a Friday evening, immediately after work, ten men said that they prefer to spend that time with their families, including their romantic partners and children. Fourteen said that they prefer to spend their Friday evenings with their romantic partners. It should also be noted that seven respondents prefer to participate in social activities such as eating out, dancing or going to a movie that include their romantic partners and friends.

---

<sup>7</sup> According to Statistics Canada, six out of ten (60.4%, to be exact) Canadian families depend on dual incomes. (Characteristics of Dual Earner Families, 13, 1994, p. 215.)

Lack of time, due to work and family responsibilities, inevitably puts men at a disadvantage when it comes to their friendships. Rubin quotes one of her clients as complaining: "I don't have time for friends. By the time the workday is done and the family attended to, there's little time or energy left for friends" (1985, p. 64). This sentiment is reflected in the comments of the respondent who, as I mentioned earlier, participated in the interview with the disclaimer that he did not have friends. As the interview progressed it became clear that one of the reasons he did not consider himself as having any close friends, was due to his workaholic attitudes and a particularly demanding job. Now, at age fifty-one, he laments his loss of friendship when so much emotional energy has been put into his job, his romantic relationship and raising a family.

## DEPENDING ON WOMEN

Previously in this chapter, I referred to a respondent who depends heavily on his romantic partner as his sole confidante and social advisor. Other respondents indicated that they also depend on their partners. Men, it seems, feel accustomed and quite comfortable confiding their most personal intimacies to women. As one respondent said: "I find it a lot easier to talk about a lot of intimacies with women." When asked who he confides his deepest personal thoughts and feelings to, another respondent replied: "Actually the person I

would share the most with is the woman I used to live with. We're not sexually intimate anymore, but we still have a really strong link."

Forty-eight percent of my respondents candidly included women (not necessarily their romantic partners) among their closest friends and confidantes. If women have traditionally depended on men for economic support, my results suggest that many men depend on women for emotional support over and above that which is provided through sexual intimacy. As a possible explanation for men's dependency on women I refer, once again, to Chodorow's argument that men's dependency on female nurturing is learned in childhood. As she argues, as infants and children little boys must depend on their mothers for love and support (1978, pp. 109-110).

As I previously discussed, it is commonly assumed that intimacies connoting dependency or vulnerabilities are not expected to be conveyed verbally in men's friendships. According to Rubin, sensitive issues such as emotional pain and deeply rooted fears are matters of the heart which, as men learn, are connected to women, not to their fathers and certainly not to other men. Verbal intimacies are, therefore, likely to be discouraged between men in friendship. While the mode of communication employed to convey discouragement might be subtle and indirect, the meaning is quickly understood. As one particularly forthcoming respondent said upon recalling some moments when he felt inclined to disclose his feelings to his closest friend:

I used to make tentative attempts to tell G.S., how I felt. I would say, for instance, that I considered him my best friend and it was always interesting for me because he wouldn't really say anything. He would sort of look uncomfortable and move on in a non sequitur kind of way.

These two men have been close friends for years, traveling to Europe together and sharing an apartment. Nevertheless, as a result of his friend's discomfort this respondent has learned to conceal his most sensitive feelings where this friend is concerned. As he said: "I still feel the same way but I just hesitate to express it because I don't think that he thinks it's really appropriate."

Another respondent had similar experiences with his close friends. Rather than suppress his feelings, however, he chose to join a men's support group. A truck driver with a grade seven education, this man did not fit my perceived picture of someone who joins a support group. (This raises another perception worth noting, although I will not be discussing it in further detail.) He joined the group in order to address a variety of difficulties that he was having in his life such as a long history of alcoholism and dysfunctional relationships. Among his variety of reasons, however, was also his need to articulate his sensitive side which was not allowed in his friendships with men. He remembers, for example, a singularly uncomfortable moment when a conversation with some male friends veered towards things that men in his circle just don't talk about. As he said: "I guess I've kind of scared them a couple of times. You know, talking about my feelings and stuff like that."

In light of some perceptions pertaining to men's need for autonomy and independence in relationships, as I discussed previously, for most men support groups do not represent a practical or agreeable option for venting their feelings. My research indicates that for some men, women provide a familiar, easily accessible and safe emotional outlet to express their more tender feelings that they are reluctant to verbalize because they infringe on their constrained sense of masculinity. Because of social constraints pertaining to acceptable masculine behavior, and given women's capacity for emotional nurturing, many men only feel safe talking about topics such as emotional pain and fear with women (Kupers, 1993, p. 1).

Women willingly offer men opportunities to express themselves in ways that do not infringe on their constrained sense of masculinity because they provide emotional familiarity. In this sense women are providers of much more than sexual favors and social contacts for men, thus challenging another popular perception that women hold when they feel that men only want to engage with them for sex. Furthermore, Ingham argues that women are less dependent than men on the institution of marriage because women do not depend on men for emotional support in the same way that men depend on women (1984, p. 222). As a result men will suppress their inclination towards autonomy and independence in order to seek the emotional (and sexual) security that marriage provides. With these notions in mind, Friday argues that:

men may resist, but in the end most do marry because they want women more than anything else; if responsibilities, mortgages, ulcers, child care and monogamy are part of the package they must buy to get women, they'll do it (1980, p. 15).

Only one respondent maintained that he did not confide his most personal issues to anyone - neither his friends nor his wife. Instead he prefers to work things out for himself. He can be identified as a lone stalwart in this sample because he is the only one whose tendency to work things out independently appears to reinforce the popular perception pertaining to men and autonomy. Nevertheless, my research generally demonstrates that most of the men in my sample do not feel obliged to keep everything to themselves, presumably because, "it is so much easier to turn to women" (Townsend, 1985, p. 346).

Eighty-four percent of my respondents are married, living common-law or, are single, but in monogamous relationships, thus offering them liberal access to women. As one married respondent declared: "I think the person I share most of my feelings with would be my wife." Another respondent, when emphasizing the importance of friendship in general, felt compelled to qualify his feelings with the notion that "my best friend in my life is my wife."

Finally, when asked who he confides his most personal thoughts and feelings to, a particularly reserved respondent, said briefly: "It would either be



my wife or I'd keep it to myself." Based on these responses it is likely that even for those men who might be somewhat reluctant to give due credit to women, it is probable that the women in their lives provide a good deal of emotional nurturing and intimacy.

## VI. MEN'S FEARS IN INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

### PERCEPTIONS OF INTIMATE BEHAVIOUR

In an attempt to understand the parameters of men's and women's intimate behavior, Fillion cites a recent study conducted at the University of Colorado that identifies self disclosure as the most frequent definition of intimacy by both men and women (1995, p. 17). The results revealed that, "contrary to popular opinion, self-disclosure and emotional expressiveness were at the top of men's lists" (Fillion, 1995, p. 17). These results could indicate that the ways in which men express themselves in interpersonal relationships is changing even though popular perceptions of men are not. My research agrees with the University of Colorado results revealing that men are, indeed, acknowledging self-disclosure to be an important aspect in building interpersonal relationships even though their friendships are not typically defined by self-disclosure. Nevertheless, while men will self-disclose in their friendships when circumstances feel comfortable, my research also indicates that they are more likely to demonstrate their like or affection for each other non-verbally, by doing things with or for each other.

According to Fillion, intimacy is now popularly measured, especially by women, with a feminine ruler (1995, p. 16). This implies that women expect men

to emote in the same manner as themselves, thus indicating that along with an apparent *feminization of friendship* there is also a trend towards a "feminization of intimacy," which, as Fillion argues, is now defined in terms that are more characteristic of ways that women relate to other women (1995, p. 18). In other words, women's verbal, emotional and empathic style has become the standard by which men's capacity for intimacy is now measured (Fillion, 1995, p. 18). Intimacy, however, can be felt and expressed without words (Rubin, 1985, p. 68). Indeed, there is a deeply felt connection between men in their friendships that is frequently unrecognizable to women because it is expressed through non-verbal physical actions. Therefore, the capacity of men to be intimate and to show emotional support should not be judged negatively simply because they seem less able than women to articulate their feelings verbally.

When asked to give an example of a friendship that he admired, one respondent cited the public and private friendship between Wayne Gretzky and Mark Messier. He recalled their friendship to illustrate how men frequently express their most intimate feelings and support when, upon accepting an award for most valuable player, Messier announced to the media, "This one's for you Gret!" This public comment impressed this ardent hockey fan because he felt it was indicative of a connection and feeling "that was allowed to flush to the surface" in a very public way. As he says both Gretzky and Messier "are real tough and intense men," so intimate gestures are expected to be constrained. He also noted that he's seen Messier cry several times which he thought very

touching because of Messier's reputation in the sport for being a "real warrior type."

What interested me about this particular respondent was the notion that he was impressed by his sentimental interpretation of Messier's exclamation and identified this quality to be a characteristic that he admired in men. As he said in reference to his own friendships with men: "There's often an unspoken sort of greater understanding and a bonding that doesn't necessarily come out through words."

A discussion of men's attitudes, those demonstrating intimacy and support in their friendships, was encouraged in the interviews through a variety of questions. For example, some intimate sentiments were revealed when I asked the respondents how they knew if their close male friends liked them. Of most interest was the response of forty-four percent of the men who said it was an unspoken understanding.

*How* the respondent's friends demonstrated their like and affection was specifically discussed, because I hoped to reveal how understated signs of intimacy and affection are understood, without words, through actions that are sometimes subtle and unrecognizable to people outside the friendship. Forty-four percent felt confident that they were liked because their close friends encouraged the friendship with reciprocal invitations and phone calls. A further

twenty percent cited shared history, longevity of the relationship and the notion that they can "pick up where they left off" after not having seen each other for a long time as indicators that an intimate security was present in their friendships. Other comments that demonstrated assurance of like and affection, included special favors, always feeling welcomed and evidence of a non-judgmental attitude. Perhaps the notion of feeling *liked* is epitomized best by two men who said separately and humorously that they felt confident that their close friends liked them because: "No one else would put up with me!"

Shared history, longevity of a friendship and "picking up where one left off" with a friend are not mutually exclusive. Based on the responses of five men in this sample these attributes are closely intertwined. In the words of one rather transient respondent: "If you have anything in common and spend any amount of time with [an individual] and something really serious happens, you will just end up knowing those people for a long time." Sometimes the most *serious* thing that will happen over time in a long term friendship is simply growing up together. Nevertheless, it is this continuity and shared history that is most important for confirming men's closeness (Inman, 1993).

The notion that close friends can "pick up where they left off" after a long absence was elaborated by one respondent who was particularly introspective on the subject of his friendships. He cites this attribute, in particular, as being one notable difference between men's and women's friendships. In this context

he observes that men, unlike women, are comfortable with what he calls "episodic intimacy." As he said: "Men can get together with a buddy and have a really, really satisfying emotional, deep conversation and then not see him for another month. I think that's harder for women to do."

Four other respondents discussed their own versions of "episodic intimacy" with close friends they had known since childhood and had shared some memorable experiences with, even though they hadn't seen them for several months or more. Their sentiments are represented by one man who said:

We have common interests and things like that. I've known him since high school, so there's a kind of history there. I mean I can sit down with him and, you know, having not seen him for six months and just take off the conversation right where we left off.

Another respondent, trying to put his sense of assurance that his closest friend liked him into words, said similarly: "If we haven't seen each other for a long time, which has happened, you know six months, a year or whatever, there's always a real, energy and connection. Like there's a spark." Finally, one more respondent sums it up best: "When male friendships do form, there's a lot of loyalty."

A further discussion of intimate and supportive attitudes, those which are expressed in times of crisis, took place when I asked the respondents what kind of support they would offer a close male friend experiencing a marital crisis or loss of a job. Pertaining to marital crisis, forty-four percent of the respondents said they would make themselves available to listen, whenever their friend gave them some indication of wanting to talk. Forty percent also said they would provide shelter to a friend in the midst of a marital crisis. These answers represent the most common responses. Other responses point to men's most diplomatic and solution-oriented demeanors. These answers included providing money, talking to their friend's spouse, making sure their friends were included in special occasions, sharing legal counsel, and assuming a neutral stance that doesn't take sides in the dispute.

Other responses are particularly thought-provoking because they indicate some effort on the part of these men to offer a quality of support that I, for one, would not expect men to offer. Based on my own experiences, I perceive this kind of support to be more typical coming from women than from men. For example, twenty percent said they would encourage their friend to seek professional counseling. One man even went so far as to say that he would accompany his friend to a counseling session. Another said he would point out his friend's responsibility in the crisis, in a sense playing the role of counselor himself.

In regards to supporting a friend who has just lost a job, the answers were more specific and practical. Seventy-two percent indicated that they would initiate verbal brainstorming or offer support by talking through the problem, in an effort to come up with some practical solutions. Thirty-two percent said they would do what they could to help their friend find another job. An additional thirty-two percent said they would lend money, if they could, and twenty percent would help them network. Twenty-four percent would offer shelter, if necessary.

Finally, sixteen percent said, "they would be there" for their friend as a listener, whenever necessary. One man said he would help his friend procure professional counseling, another said he would talk to his friend and hope that he could "get his friend out of feeling the victim." And, finally, one said he would make himself available to look after his friend's children so that he could go job hunting. These latter responses seem markedly different from the kind of responses I expected to hear. They also seem indicative of what men may have learned from women about relationships and point to inaccurate and hasty perceptions that some women have of male behavior.

On the whole, these responses indicate that male emotional support tends to be solution-oriented, where results are obvious and measurable. Furthermore, support is silently understood and accepted through an "ability to count on each other in a variety of circumstances" (Inman, 1993, p. 102). This



goes back to "the unspoken greater understanding" referred to previously by the hockey fan. As Inman states: "Friends perceive that they can depend on one another and know that support is always present" (1993, p. 102). Whether or not support will be offered when needed is not always something that requires discussion in order for a man to sense confirmation.

## SEX AND HOMOPHOBIA AS OBSTACLES TO DEVELOPING FRIENDSHIPS

In interpersonal relationships sentimental feelings that evoke affection are sometimes perceived by men to be representative of sexual attraction. When these feelings rise up and are not directed at a woman they can catch men off guard bringing them face to face with their own feelings of homophobia, defined as a fear of homosexual tendencies. For example, author Ian Brown describes his discomfort when faced with sentimental feelings of tenderness that were evidently shared among a group of men who accompanied him on a weekend fishing trip. As he said, upon reflection: "Tenderness was a dangerous and frightening thing to a band of men alone in the woods, and we did our best to scare it away" (1993, p. 217).

Brown is describing a very inhibiting factor for men in their friendships when feelings of affection are apparent. Whereas women frequently express their affection for one another through touch, such demonstrations expressed

among North American men are sometimes misunderstood. As Inman says: "homophobia is one reason some men may be less physically and emotionally expressive with each other; friends fear closeness may be misinterpreted as a sign of sexual involvement" (1993, p. 98). Because of this popular perception, physical signs of affection are not frequently demonstrated between North American men, especially in public.

Differences of meaning in communication, be it verbal or non-verbal, are a factor that greatly inhibits mutual understanding. For example, in some male circles, a discussion of intimacy in men's friendships can inadvertently convey some discomforting associations to sexual attraction. It was for this reason that I did not raise the question of homophobia in the interviews. Therefore, I was surprised when thirty-two percent of the respondents raised the subject voluntarily, indicating to me that it is an issue worthy of careful and conscious consideration in the minds of many men.

The fact that a discussion of homophobia was raised by the respondents, even though it was not directly addressed in the interviews suggests to me that sexual awareness, particularly homophobia, plays a dominant role in the minds of men. I do not mean to imply that men are obsessed with thinking about sex. Neither do I mean to imply that men necessarily and purposefully seek to manifest their sexual fantasies in their relationships. Men and women can have,

and indeed do have, ongoing, supportive, platonic cross-sex friendships that do not involve sexual attraction (Kemble, 1993).

The potential for sex arguably exists in all interpersonal relationships. This notion is reflected by one of Rubin's clients who says audaciously: "I suppose there's a sexual tinge to every human relationship of any depth or intensity" (Rubin, 1985, p. 105). He also suggests that this notion is very threatening to men who are "terrified" (p. 105) of this evident sexual tension, especially in their friendships with other men.

The *terror* that this man refers to, while sounding overstated, is sometimes felt by men in same-sex friendships as well as cross-sex friendships. However, it is not felt to be socially deviant or a threat to their masculinity to experience sexual attraction in cross-sex friendships, even when the feelings are not fulfilled.

The issue of sexual attraction in cross-sex relationships was raised by two respondents. For example, when asked if he has non-sexual friendships with women, one respondent, married for twenty-four years, replied that he did. However, he expressed his difficulty in accepting, with comfort and self-understanding, his feelings of sexual attraction that tend to inhibit his behavior. As he says: "I have found, over the years that whole sexual dynamic, for me

personally, gets in the way 'cos I start to prance and to fantasize that there's something more than friendship to it."

Another respondent raised the issue of sexual attraction upon remembering a close friendship with a woman that, "turned into a sexual relationship." He remembers this experience with a tinge of guilt, remorse and self-indignation. In his own words:

I've had a very close female friend in the past which turned into a sexual relationship. I never thought we would. Then, you know, one day too much wine or whatever and, "Bingo! Gee! Where'd that come from?" It really makes you question your whole concept of friendship when you have a sexual relationship with a female who you thought you were just really good friends with and you're feeling so smug and proud of yourself. Then, "Whoops! Ah Geez! I'm a pig after all.

This man, married and a father of two young children, is not remembering an adulterous relationship even though he is assuming a great deal of responsibility for actions that his female friend also took part in. Nevertheless, his words are somewhat wistful and chastising. They are also revealing of a certain behavior, namely their desire to experience intimacy through sex, that might make some men feel vulnerable in relationships with women.

My research indicates that while it is acceptable for men to discuss sexual attraction in their friendships with women, it is extremely difficult to discuss it in their same sex friendships. This is, in part, due to endemic social attitudes that condemn homosexual behavior. Therefore, the fact that men might crave

intimacy, especially in their friendships, is perceived by some men to represent a demeanor that is notably effeminate (Townsend, 1985, p. 342). Furthermore, this demeanor is sometimes misunderstood in the context of men's friendships because, as Townsend argues, "men's fear of being taken for lovers prevents them from becoming close friends" (1985, p. 343). Since we live in a culture that "honors rugged individualism and stoical behavior" (1985, p. 343) such as that which is commonly associated with a very conservative view of masculinity, this fear is rooted in concerns about what other people, especially other men, will think about the friendship (Townsend, 1985, pp. 343 - 344). For heterosexual men, intimate behavior in same-sex friendships is threatening because it causes them to come face to face with their own homophobia (Miller, 1983, p. 2; Rubin, 1985, p. 100; Townsend, 1985, pp. 343-344).

Homophobia is not just perceived to be a threat when friendship is demonstrated. My research suggests that, in the minds of some men a threat can be stimulated by mere suggestion. For example, Brown offers further insight into his own homophobia by describing his most disconcerting feelings upon visiting a gay bar for the first time. Brown is loudly heterosexual. Nevertheless, he visited this bar to indulge in some "true adventures with North American men" (Book subtitle, 1993). (His adventures counted as research towards his book). While standing around, trying to feel comfortable, he was inevitably eyed by a gay patron. At this point, he suddenly "realized, with a start that [he] was staring into the source of [his] own homophobia" (1993, p. 234). Furthermore, he says:

"It was a peculiar sensation being a straight man in a gay bar. Every time a man looked my way, my indignation rose. That wasn't supposed to happen... if only these sick pigs could control their..." (1993, p. 234). Though intended to be somewhat humorous, his comments point to certain behavioral characteristics that define men's sexuality and are expected to be rigidly adhered to in order to maintain acceptable, masculine, social protocol.

Masculine behavior is learned in young boys from a very young age. Furthermore, it is reinforced through verbal reminders that are often hurtful to young boys desperately and quietly coming to terms with their own sexuality. For example, one respondent who grew up in the southern United States remembers: "I know, for myself, growing up, [homophobia] was very, very pervasive. Anybody who stepped over the line was immediately referred to as a queer or something. It was just really brutal actually."

While homophobia may be an inhibiting factor in men's friendships, a quality of intimate behavior that is unique to men, although somewhat guarded and controlled in comparison to women's expressions, is indeed evident in men's friendships (Rubin, 1985, p. 62; Townsend, 1985, pp. 342 - 343; Strikwerda & May, 1992, pp. 114 - 119; Inman, 1993, p. 98). It is dissimilar to women's intimate expressions because, in realizing their need for intimacy, men must be acutely attuned to the potential risk for losing control that comes with making themselves feel vulnerable to another. In friendships, losing control of one's

feelings is equated with vulnerability which, in turn, is frequently associated with sexual behavior (Rubin, 1985, p. 100, Townsend, 1985, pp. 343 - 344; Inman, 1994, p. 98).

Based on my discussions with the respondents it occurs to me that some men might be acutely aware of the potential that their sexual feelings can have for determining certain qualities of their interpersonal relationships because intimacy is so closely associated with sexual attraction in some men's minds. This notion, combined with some perceptions of intimacy that are determined by attributes that are more characteristic of women's friendships, it is possible that a confusion exists in some men's minds about how intimate feelings should be acceptably expressed in their friendships. In light of this confusion, sometimes friendship and similarly intimacy, which is expected to be a component of friendship, are, as Townsend (1985, p. 343) and Kupers (1993, p. 135) argue, associated with homosexuality.

Rubin also argues that a common perception associates men's friendship with homosexuality (1985, p. 103). Furthermore, Miller offers an illustration of this perception that comes from his experiences while doing research for his book, Men And Friendship. He recalls that during this time he was frequently confronted with the misconception on the part of a number of inquiring people that if he was interviewing men about their friendships he must be researching homosexuality (1983, pp. 1 -3). In other words, people jumped to the

conclusion that his research of men's friendships was a smoke screen for writing about homosexuality. The frequency with which Miller says he encountered such misconceptions is indicative of the strict parameters of acceptable social expression within which men are expected to conform. My research indicates that while Miller's experiences happened well over ten years ago, issues surrounding men and sexuality, such as homophobia, are no better understood or accepted today, than they were then.

## MEN'S SUPPORT GROUPS

As I discussed previously, men are used to turning to women for emotional nurturing and support. Where, however, do men turn when women are not readily accessible? Where do men turn when they are at odds with women? And, where do men turn when they are filled with shame and their pride is crushed? Not wanting to burden others with their problems, Gray argues that most men will turn inward, withdrawing into the quietude of their own private "caves" to consider a solution (1992, p. 30). Some men, however seek solutions from each other in the form of men's support groups because sometimes there is a quality of support that only men can provide.

The issue of men's support groups was not specifically addressed in this research. However, four respondents who share several common



characteristics are actively involved in support groups. Three of the four men are in their late thirties; the fourth is fifty-two. All four are presently single. All four have survived messy divorces. All four have children with whom they have tenuous and inconsistent relationships, determined largely by their ex-wives. Three of the four revealed that drugs and/or alcohol had played a dominating role in their past lives. The fourth was not shy about disclosing the sexual abuse he experienced at the hands of his father when he was a very young child. Given these thought provoking commonalities, some mention, albeit brief and subject to conjecture, seems appropriate.

One other commonality that I consider to be very interesting, lies in my observation that all of these men are well acquainted with a vocabulary that seems more familiar coming from the mouths of women than from men. For example, one respondent talks about seeking a "balance between his male and female sides." Another referred to "his feminine side" and lamented the social pressure he feels to shut it away.

When I asked how these men were introduced to the support groups I was told that they met, initially, in intense weekend workshops. The support groups were formed so participants would have an opportunity to continue relationships that were begun in the initial workshop. They were also formed so that the concepts that were learned in the workshop could be remembered and reinforced through the mutual support offered by the men in the groups.

Based on my own experiences in workshops of this nature, it is probable that the vocabulary was first introduced to the men in the initial workshop. I confess that this is somewhat speculative on my part. Nevertheless, based on my experiences in conversations with men in general, sentiments that refer to "one's feminine side" and "giving one's power away" are not what I would normally expect to hear. Furthermore, one respondent gave me reason to speculate that women, ex-wives or girlfriends, provided significant motivation in getting their men to the first workshop. When asked how he got into "the network" this respondent had no trouble giving the credit to his ex-wife. As he says: "She had the tools and I chose to use them."

Regardless of their incentive for involvement these men shared personal evidence that solace and healing can be found in the company of like minded men when trying to find acceptance in a world that is arguably dominated by feminized attitudes. For example, one respondent related that his group offers him "an opportunity to share one's feelings, one's experiences and to be heard." Another described his experience in his group as "helping [him] grow." He claims that his group "sets [him] on track." Or, "sometimes just shows [him] direction back to the tracks." He also expresses comfort when he says that "it's a nice feeling just to know that there's somebody you can just tell almost anything too." For these men their groups represent a socially acceptable, non-threatening, non-judgmental avenue of expression for their feelings.

I believe that we live in a time that is acutely attuned to women's issues. We also live in a time where women's ways in relationships are considered by some people to be superior to men's and traditional masculine behavior is being challenged by feminist doctrine. Perhaps it is for these reasons, in part, that men seem to be more considerate of and attentive to women's issues even though, living as we do in a time of social transition, they are still expected to conform to a doctrine of autonomous, masculine behavior. These traditions, as they are challenged, seem to be creating some rather confusing times for men who sometimes receive mixed messages regarding what is expected of them. In times such as this, as one respondent observed diplomatically: "[Sometimes] women have to go to women and men have to go to men."

Given some contemporary social tendencies that show bias in favor of feminized behavior, women can take credit for teaching men support skills in relationships that, once heard, can now be tailored to suit men's unique needs and characteristics. As another respondent reflected: "You know, twenty years ago, a male would not be all that likely to go into a group and say, 'you know I was really torn up because my son yelled at me.'" One indicator of the attention that men have paid to women's ways of dealing with crisis is arguably apparent in men's support groups.

## VII. CONCLUSION

### TRANSCENDING OUR PERCEPTIONS

This thesis is about men's friendships and popular perceptions of men's friendships. It is also about the transitory nature of power in relationships and the notion that, where we expect power to be is not necessarily where power is. For example, the role that women play in determining important parameters of men's friendships is indicative of a quality of control that women have over men although it is frequently unrecognized given women's broadly inaccurate perceptions of men as beneficiaries of a patriarchal society.

it can be argued that feminist theory is not an appropriate methodological tool for identifying women's power over men because it was not intended to focus on male oppression. Nevertheless, by purporting to question dominant intellectual traditions (Acker, Barry & Esseveld, 1991, p. 133) combined with its refusal to ignore the importance of human emotional expression in relationships (Fonow & Cook, 1991, p. 9), I believe that feminist theory can be an effective means for revealing all manner of oppressive relationships, male and female.

Generally speaking, feminist theory has proven to be an effective theoretical tool for ferreting out biased power relations as it relates to the lives of

women. It recognizes the power that women possess in their friendships with each other and in their capacity for offering emotional support in interpersonal relationships. Feminist theory has also proven effective in, "[raising] the issue of how difficult it is for men to deal with feelings and to have any kind of expressive relationships with each other" (Rubin, 1985, p. 75). Unfortunately, however, merely identifying men's shortcomings in relationships is where traditional feminist theory stops short.

While accepting evidence of male bias in society, traditional feminist theory does not acknowledge female bias. Rather, it endorses an attitude that is judgmental and even condescending to men. Furthermore, where interpersonal relationships are concerned, a feminist critique consistently fails to acknowledge men's capacity for intimacy and emotional support that is different from that which is offered by women but no less vital to achieving balanced relationships in all aspects of social life. Consequently, feminist ideology relegates men to a peripheral role on the home front in much the same way that women are relegated to peripheral roles in the workplace.

In interpersonal relationships, women's power over men is difficult to recognize because of the persistent stereotype that women are generally cooperative, caring unconditionally and subordinate to men. It is this stereotype, entrenched as it is in traditional feminist ideology (as well as popular culture) that, in part, accounts for women's failure to acknowledge the powerful role that

they play in determining aspects of men's lives. My research shows that men do pay attention to women and to women's concerns. Nevertheless, feminists persist in fingering men for all kinds of social misdemeanors, paying little attention to the restrictions that patriarchal social expectations have on men.

Feminist ideology has also contributed to a contemporary confusion pertaining to equality implying that, "if the sexes are equal, it must mean that they are identical" (Friday, 1980, p. 11). The notion that *equal means identical*, has largely contributed to positive results for women in their desire to assert a place for themselves in the workplace. This notion also has meaning when examining women's expectations of men in domestic relationships. However, the results will be less positive if men's behavior is to be measured by a feminine ruler. Men and women should be treated equally. But, they are not identical. They have differences and they have similarities, both which must be recognized and understood in order to foster mutually beneficial relationships.

In order to identify women's and men's expectations in relationships, popular books such as those by Tannen and Gray have been useful. They deconstruct men's and women's behavior allowing us to recognize and understand differences that are difficult to accept at face value. However, once having acknowledged the differences, we must also accept the similarities. For example, it is in all our best interests to recognize that "men can be nurturing, cooperative, loving, giving and submissive" just as "[women] can be aggressive,

competitive, cruel, exploitative, and domineering" (Fillion, 1995, p. 36). To persist in undermining men's attributes in relationships by measuring them against female standards: (1) fails to recognize that in many ways women are freer than men, socially, to be emotionally expressive and, (2) only "helps to preserve gender stereotypes that are at best inaccurate generalizations and at worst downright harmful - to both women and men" (Fillion, 1995, p. 13).

An accurate description of men's friendship is contingent on making visible those aspects of men's lives where they feel subordinate to other people's expectations that are founded on social dogma and outdated stereotypes. We must allow ourselves to recognize how, as one respondent said: "[Men's] lives are full of lots of challenges these days from women." In the context of my research, his words take on a wishful tone. His words also bear ironic familiarity to words that have been said before by women.

#### **SUMMARY: PERCEPTIONS REVISED**

With this respondent's words fresh in our minds, it is appropriate to recall the perceptions that some women have of men's friendships, as they are listed in the Introduction, and revise them accordingly in the context of my findings.

Contrary to some women's perception that men do not place a high value on their friendships with other men, my research generally shows that friendships among men are valued and important. This perception may be derived from the fact that men's friendships are determined largely by domestic responsibilities, work schedules and strictly imposed expectations pertaining to acceptable social behavior that are more inhibiting for men than for women. In other words, men do not have the same freedom of expression that women do to express feelings, be they positive or negative. As a result of these social constraints, men's friendships are not expressed in the same way that women's are. For example, men may not get together as frequently as women do which might contribute to the perception that men's friendships come and go. My research indicates, however, that although men may not get together frequently, the sentiments of close friendship remain intact.

Furthermore, trust and loyalty are major characteristics of men's close friendships. Shared history, common interests and longevity represent meaningful benchmarks for friendships which are acknowledged over a lifetime even though the friends may not communicate on a regular basis. This so-called *episodic intimacy* does not weaken the friendship. In fact, longevity and common interests are valued as a foundation for trust and loyalty when friends can pick up where they left off even after not having seen each other for a long time.



My research also sheds new light on the commonly held perception that men rarely disclose verbal intimacies. Although, generally speaking, men do seem to be more inclined to express their regard for one another by doing things together rather than sharing verbal intimacies, thus reinforcing this popular stereotype, this is not always true. Therefore, it is an outdated stereotype to say that men do not self-disclose in their friendships. Men do disclose to each other in a language that is not necessarily recognizable to women given its non-verbal and intuitive characteristics. It is, however, mutually understood by close friends.

My research does not consistently support the perception that men need to maintain a high degree of independence and autonomy in their friendships. In the past men learned that in order to conform to strict masculine guidelines they should work out their problems independently. Therefore, some men, in order to reach an appropriate solution to a given problem, will withdraw emotionally for short periods of time. Such withdrawals are sometimes misunderstood by women who interpret this behavior personally. In friendships, however, men do offer each other practical advice that is understood to be supportive and illustrative of a certain bonding in friendship. It is also indicative of certain changes that seem to contrast with men's traditional ways of relating to each other. In this regard, it is possible that men have learned some supportive behavior, such as offering counsel in a manner that might be more characteristic of women's friendships, from women.

In men's friendships, an unspoken bond is respected and silence is comfortable. Therefore, to perceive that men are not particularly sensitive to sentiments that are communicated non-verbally is incorrect. Issues that are charged emotionally are subject to misinterpretation by individuals, regardless of their sex and it is hoped that in these situations everybody can communicate their feelings directly and verbally. My research indicates, however, that men might communicate things that are particularly difficult to disclose through humor. This may seem insulting and derogatory to an outsider, but it is mutually understood between male friends.

To say that men are not physically demonstrative with each other in their friendships is another inaccurate perception. Although, due to social constraints, men may not demonstrate their affection for each other physically in public, they will show their regard in the form of handshaking and hugs in situations where it is socially acceptable and expected to express such feelings of emotion. Furthermore, several respondents did mention greeting their male friends with hugs.

My research confirms the perception that men feel more comfortable seeking emotional support from women than from other men even though, as previously discussed, men will seek intimacy in their friendships with men in the form of non-verbal bonding. It is frequently more convenient, however, to seek

intimacy and emotional support from women, since men are used to turning to women, beginning in childhood with their mothers. For these reasons, men are arguably more inclined to disclose their personal feelings to women than to men. Furthermore, women, as mothers, sisters, girlfriends or romantic partners, are usually accessible to men when they want to self-disclose. Men seek intimacy with women through sex, but, more importantly, they depend on women for a quality of support that they know only women can offer.

My research contradicts some women's perceptions that men jockey for power and control in interpersonal relationships through conflict. With only one obvious exception, the men in my sample preferred to avoid conflict, either through avoidance of the issue or through negotiation, in their relationships rather than seek it out.

Furthermore, it is an incorrect perception that patriarchal social structures are beneficial to men. For example, masculinity as a social construct tends to be defined by more constraints than freedoms where socially acceptable expression is concerned. Therefore, women are allowed to be more emotionally expressive than men in society today and men must be observant of acceptable behavior that might not always and adequately represent their feelings in their friendships. I will argue that it is for this reason primarily that intimacy between men is difficult to pin down because it is frequently and popularly misunderstood as an

expression of demonstrative and emotional behavior that does not conform to our traditional expectations of masculine protocol.

Finally, it is also an incorrect perception that men never feel subordinate to women because we live in a time when male behavior is being judged by a measure that is more relevant to women than to men. For this reason, male demonstrative behavior that is sincere and well intentioned tends to be denied. It is unrecognized due, in part, to some broadly misguided perceptions of men that are founded in women's anger and frustration towards men. These perceptions are perpetuated through a punitive feminism that is prone to chastise men generally for their history of abuse towards women rather than recognizing and acknowledging them for contributing a quality of support that is complementary to that which is supplied by women in relationships. These perceptions are perpetuated through the media, through political decisions that currently favor women's issues and through family relationships where issues of power and control are emotionally charged.

## APPENDIX

### Men's Friendship Interview Guide

#### I Demographics

1. What is your age?
2. Where were you born?
3. Where do you presently live?
4. Do you own a house or do you rent?
5. What is your occupation?
6. Do you work full-time or part-time?
7. What is your income (approximately)?

0 - 15,000.	15,000. - 25,000.
26,000. - 35,000.	35,000. - 50,000.
50,000. - 65,000.	65,000. - 80,000.
80,000.- 100,000.	100,000. and over
8. What is your highest level of education?
9. What is your marital status?
  - 9a. If single, divorced or widowed are you in a long term monogamous relationship with a woman?
10. How many children are you responsible for?
  - 10a. What are their ages?
11. How many sisters and/or brothers do you have?
12. Who, in the family that you grew up in, do you keep in touch with the most?

## Friendship

13. Do you have one or more close friends?
  - 13a. For easy reference in forthcoming questions, please give me the initials of your close male friends.
14. Are/is your close friend(s) male or female or both?
  - 14a. How many are women?  
How many are men?
  - 14b. (If the answer is female) Is this friend also a sexual partner?
  - 14c. (If the answer is male) Do you have non-sexual friendships with women?
15. What does the term "friendship" mean to you?
16. What is the difference between a close friend, a casual friend and an acquaintance?
17. What are your criteria for choosing a close friend?
  - 17a. Do you use the same criteria when choosing all of your friends?
18. Have you ever asked a close male friend for a special favour?
  - 18a. Give me some examples.
19. Briefly, will you describe the character or personality of your closest male friend/s? (You can describe more than one friend, if necessary)
20. What characteristics do you admire most in your close male friends?
21. How often do you get together with your closest male friends?
22. What kinds of things do you do with your closest male friends?

23. What kinds of things do you talk about with your closest male friends?
- 23a. Do you confide your personal thoughts and feelings to your close male friends?
- 23b. If not, then, to whom?
24. Where your male friends are concerned, how do you decide what to discuss with whom?
25. What do you value the most about your close friendships with men?
26. How do you know that your close male friends like you?
27. Describe the kind of support that you would be prepared to offer to a close male friend experiencing a marital crisis.
28. Describe the kind of support that you would be prepared to offer to a close male friend experiencing a loss of job.
29. On a Friday afternoon, immediately after work, are you inclined to:
- a) spend time with a close male friend?
  - b) spend time with your romantic partner?
  - c) spend time with your family and kids as a whole?
30. Does your answer to #28 above say anything about how you feel about these people?
31. Does the time that you spend with your male friends ever cause friction in your relationship with your romantic partner?
- 31a. If yes, how do you deal with the problems that arise?
32. Generally, do you feel that you have enough time to spend with your close male friends?
33. Has there ever been a time in your life when you did not have a close male friend with whom you interact regularly?
- 33a. If yes, what were the circumstances that prevented you from having a close male friend?

- 33b. If yes, during this time did you miss having a close friendship with a man?
34. Since childhood, have you always had one or more close male friend/s?
35. How do your friendships with men today differ from the friendships you had when you were younger? (Describe more than one friendship, if necessary)
36. Is there anyone who is presently part of your life who you are in frequent conflict with?
- 36a. If yes, what is your relationship to this person?
- 36b. Why is this the case?
- 36c. How do you manage or resolve the conflict?
37. Do you trust your close male friends? (Probe: to keep personal secrets? to do the things that they say they will do for you?)
38. Give me an example, if you can, of a friendship from real life, TV, cinema, politics or literature that you admire?
39. Why did you choose this particular friendship?
40. Based on your observations and experiences, do you think there are differences between men's friendships and women's friendships?
- 40a. If so, what do you think some of the differences are?
41. Since we've been discussing friendship for about an hour and now that we're at the end of this interview, what does the term "friendship" mean to you?



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### WORKS CITED

- Acker, Joan, Kate Barry & Johanna Esseveld. (1991). Objectivity and Truth: Problems in Doing Feminist Research. In Mary Fonow & Judith A. Cook (Eds.) Beyond Methodology/ Feminist Scholarship As Lived Research (pp. 133 - 153). Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Atkinson, Paul & Martyn Hammersley. (1994). Ethnography and Participant Observation. In Norman Denzin & Yvonna Lincoln (Eds.) Handbook of Qualitative Research (pp. 248 - 261). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Aukett, Richard; Jane Ritchie & Kathryn Mill. (1988). Gender Differences in Friendship Patterns. Sex Roles 19, 57 - 65.
- Brown, Ian. (1993). Man Overboard/ True Adventures with North American Men. Toronto, Ontario: MacFarlane Walter & Ross
- Bullock, A., O. Stallybrass & S. Trombley (eds.). (1988). The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought. London, GB: Fontana Press.
- Chodorow, Nancy. (1978). The Reproduction of Mothering. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Denzin, Norman. (1994). The Art and Politics of Interpretation. In Norman Denzin & Yvonna Lincoln (Eds.) Handbook of Qualitative Research ( pp. 500 - 515). Thousand Oaks. California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara. (1983). The Hearts of Men. New York, NY.: Anchor Books Doubleday.
- Eichenbaum, Luise & S. Orbach. (1989). Between Women. New York, NY.: Penguin Books.
- Fabian, Johannes. (1983). Time and the Other. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Fillion, Kate. (1996). Lip Service: The Truth About Women's Darker Side in Love, Sex and Friendship. Toronto, Ontario: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.

- Fonow, Mary & Judith Cook. (1991). Beyond Methodology/ Feminist Scholarship As Lived Research. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Friday, Nancy. (1980). Men In Love. New York, NY.: Dell Publishing Co.
- Gill, H. S. (1991). Internalization of the Absent Father. International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 7, 243 - 252.
- Gray, John. (1992). Men are from Mars. Women are from Venus. New York, NY.: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.
- Gubrium, Jaber. (1988). Analyzing Field Reality. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications.
- Holstein, James & Jaber Gubrium. (1994). Phenomenology, Ethnomethodology and Interpretive Practice. In Norman Denzin & Yvonna Lincoln (Eds.) Handbook of Qualitative Research (pp. 262 - 272) Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Ingham, Mary. (1985). Men. London, Great Britain: Century Publishing.
- Inman, Chris. (1993). Friendships Among Men: Closeness in the Doing. In Julia T. Wood (Ed.). Gendered Relationships (pp. 95 - 111). Chapel Hill, NC.: University of North Carolina Press.
- Jackson, Brian. (1983). Fatherhood. London, GB.: George Allen & Unwin Publishers Ltd.
- Jayaratne, T.E. & A. J. Stewart. (1991). Quatitative and Qualitative Methods in the Social Sciences: Current Feminist Science and Methodology. In Mary Fonow & Judith Cook (Eds.). Beyond Methodology/ Feminist Scholarship As Lived Research (pp. 85 - 106). Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Josselson, Ruthellen & Amia Lieblich. (1993). The Narrative Study of Lives. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications.
- Kemle, J. (1991). Intimacy in Women's Friendships: The Power and the Rewards. Unpublished.
- Kemle, J. (1992). The Friendship Study/ An Examination of Women's Friendships and Their Intimate Relationships with Men. Unpublished.
- Kupers, Terry A. (1993). Revisioning Men's Lives. New York, NY: The Guilford Press

- Miller, Stuart. (1983). Men and Friendship. Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Nydegger, C. & L.S. Mitteness (1991). Fathers and Their Adult Sons and Daughters. Marriage and Family Review, 16, 249 - 256
- Olesen, Virginia. (1994). Feminisms and Models of Qualitative Research. In Norman Denzin & Yvonna Lincoln (Eds.) Handbook of Qualitative Research. (pp. 158 - 174). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Roiphe, Katie. (1994). The Morning After: Sex, Fear and Feminism. Toronto, Canada. Little, Brown & Company.
- Roiphe, Katie. (1993, June). Date Rape's Other Victim. New York Times Magazine. pp. 26 - 68.
- Rubin, Lillian. (1985). Just friends: the role of friendship in our lives. New York, NY.: Harper & Row.
- Stewart, John & Carole Logan. (1993). Together: Communicating Interpersonally. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, Inc.
- Stewart, John & Gary D'Angelo. (1988). Together, Communicating Interpersonally. New York, NY.:Random House.
- Strikwerda, Robert & Larry May. (1992). Male Friendship and Intimacy. Hypatia 7, 110 - 125.
- Tannen, Deborah (1986). That's Not What I Meant. New York, NY.: Ballantine Books.
- Tannen, Deborah (1990). You just don't understand. New York, NY.: Ballantine Books.
- Townsend, Robert. (1985). The Texture of Men's Lives. In Alice Sargent (Ed.) Beyond Sex Roles. St. Paul, Minneapolis: West Publishing Company.
- Wellman, B. (1991). Men in Networks: Private Communities, Domestic Relationships University of Toronto. Centre for Urban and Community Studies.

Wellman, B. (1992). Men in networks: private communities, domestic friendships. In Peter Nardi (Ed.) Men's Friendships (pp. 74 - 114). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications

## WORKS CONSULTED

Aries, E. & F.L. Johnson. (1983). Close Friendships in Adulthood: Conversational Content Between Same Sex Friends. Sex Roles, 9, 1183 - 1197.

Aukett, R., J. Ritchie, K. Mill. (1988). Gender Differences in Friendship Patterns. Sex Roles, 19, 57 - 65.

Baker, Russell. (1987). About Men. New York, NY: Posiedon Press

Berman, Morris. (1988). The Reenchantment of The World. New York, NY: Bantam Books.

Berzoff, J. (1989). The Therapeutic Value of Women's Adult Friendships. Smith College Studies in Social Work, 59, 267-279.

Bly, Robert. ( 1990). Iron John/ A Book About Men. New York, NY.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.

Browne, Colin.(writer, director and narrator). (1994). Father & Son. [video] National Film Board of Canada.

Christian, Harry. (1994). The Making of Anti-sexist Men. New York, NY.: Routledge.

Cornwall, Andrea & Nancy Lindisfarne. (1994). Dislocating Masculinity Comparative Ethnographies. New York, NY: Routledge.

Denzin, Norman & Yvonna Lincoln. (1994). Handbook of Qualitative Research. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.

DeVito, Joseph. (1992). The Interpersonal Communication Book. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers.

- Enright, D.J. & D. Rawlinson (1992). The Oxford Book of Friendship. Oxford, Great Britain: Oxford University Press.
- Fischer, C.S. & S.J. Oliner. (1983). A Research Note on Friendship, Gender and the Life Cycle. Social Forces, 62:1, 124 - 132.
- Faludi, Susan. ((1991). Backlash/The Undeclared War Against American Women. New York, NY: Anchor Books.
- Handel, Warren. (1982). Ethnomethodology/ How People Make Sense. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Hite, Shere. (1981). The Hite Report on Male Sexuality. New York, NY.: Alfred K. Knopf, Inc.
- Keen, Sam. (1991). Fire In The Belly. New York, NY: Bantam Books
- Kelman, Suanne. (1992). Instant Intimacy. Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.
- Kimmel, Michael S. (1987). Changing Men/ New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinity. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications.
- Klein, Edward & D. Erickson.(Eds.) (1987). About Men/ Reflections on Male Experience. New York, NY: Posiedon Press.
- McMahan, C.R. (1991). Evaluation and Reinforcement: What Do Males and Females Really Want To Hear? Sex Roles, 24, 771 - 781.
- Miller, Stuart. (1985). Men and Friendship. In Alice Sargent (Ed.). Beyond Sex Roles. St. Paul, Minneapolis: West Publishing Company.
- Moir, Anne & David Jessel. (1989). BrainSex. Great Britain: Mandarin.
- Moore, Gwen. (1990). Structural Determinants of Men's and Women's Personal Networks. American Sociological Review 55, 726 - 734.
- Nardi, Peter M. (Ed). (1992). Men's Friendships. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications.
- Paglia, Camille. (1992). Sex, Art and American Culture. Toronto, Ontario: Random House, Inc.
- Rouner, Leroy S. (Ed.). (1994). The Changing Face of Friendship. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.

- Seidler, Victor. (1994). Unreasonable Men. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Tannen, Deborah. (1984). Conversational Style: Analyzing Talk Among Friends. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corp.
- Tong, Rosemarie. (1989). Feminist Thought. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
- Valverde, M (1985). Sex, Power and Pleasure. Toronto, Ontario: The Women's Press.