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Men and Friendship: An Exploration of Male Perceptions of Same-sex Friendships

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Men And Friendship:
An Exploration Of Male Perceptions Of Same-Sex Friendships

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Counselor Education

by

Gerard A. Williams

B.G.S., University of New Orleans, 2004
M. Ed, University of New Orleans, 2007

May, 2015

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the best Friend a man could ever have,

My Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And

My three most precious gifts-

Gretchen, Justen and Meagan

Life would not be complete without you.

And

Jessica

I'm happy to call you family.

And

Calvin and Margaret

Always missed.

Acknowledgment

I acknowledge the exceptional graduate faculty who formed my dissertation committee:

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Thank You will *never* be enough.

You have truly blessed my life.

Dr. Barbara Herlihy, Methodologist

Your patience, encouragement and smile

Made this process so much more bearable.

Dr. Zarus Watson

Thank You for speaking into my life what I never knew existed.

It began with you and now ends with you.

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Abstract

Differences between female and male same-sex friendships have been the subject of numerous studies. Additionally, male same-sex friendships have been studied independent of the differences related to female same-sex friendships. Despite these studies, a comprehensive, agreed on definition of friendship remains unclear or ill-defined. The manner in which men perceive, express and experience same-sex friendships can be viewed as learned behaviors based on gender schema and sex typing. Men's friendships, as viewed through the gender schema theory, are shaped through the association of gender based male identity and male behaviors. This phenomenological study investigates male perceptions of same-sex male friendships.

The broad research question for my study was how do men experience friendship? Literature reviews indicated areas for investigation including the components of friendship, the social expectations of friendship, and men and counseling. Through interviews with eight men, data were collected, analyzed by case to produce themes, and then cross case analyzed to produce super-ordinate themes. The resultant super-ordinate themes were the basis for responding to the main research question and the sub questions for my study.

Findings from my study allowed for the identification of specific components important to the participants. Social expectations indicated that for some men, physical touch is allowable, but only under certain conditions. Implications taken from my study revealed that although men are generally assumed resistant to counseling, they look upon counseling favorably. For counselors and counselor educators, a better understanding of the way men experience friendship could ultimately be a resource for better practice in the way men are attracted to and perceive the counseling practice.

Keywords: Friendship; Male friendships; men; males; same-sex

Chapter I

Introduction

As I approached my late 40s, I began to be more aware of the changes in my relationships with other men. Many of the differences in my relationships could be reasoned away due to aging or change in lifestyle. Previously, my conversations with other men involved sports, females, cars and numerous other issues; however, now our conversations are centered on ailments, medications, children and work. In our discussions, we would decide we simply could not do things as we once did and, in many cases, would not even if we could! As I reflected on my changing relationships with my male friends, the most distinctive change was the diminishing number of close friendships I enjoyed. As I continued to reflect on this matter, I began to question what had led to the reduced number of my friendships. Was this reduction a result of the aging process? Are diminishing, close friendships a common occurrence or particular to my own experience? Ultimately, based on my own reflections and observations, I began to casually examine male friendships.

I engaged my friends in conversations about their experiences and estimations of male friendships. Curiously, patterns similar to those that I had personally reflected on began to emerge. As I continued to engage other men in conversations, I realized many male friendships are complicated and extend beyond superficiality, contrary to what is widely portrayed in media and generally accepted as true. Additionally, I realized the men I engaged in conversations placed a high value on the importance of establishing and maintaining their closest friendships. What was not as apparent was how these men navigated their friendships or the value they placed on the preservation of their friendships. My curiosity sparked a variety of questions. How are men experiencing their closest friendships? How are their friendships formed and

maintained? Why are male friendships often perceived as shallow and superficial? How would men define male friends? Why is any of this important?

After much reflection on my part, I questioned whether there are specific components that constitute exactly what is a male friendship. Whether there are components within an established male friendship is a question not easily answered. One could conjecture that many issues including, but not limited to, socio-economic status, religious beliefs, age, ethnicity and marital status that could influence the development, intensity and duration of male friendships. Finally, gender can and does play a large role in determining what defines a male friendship. Gender is the issue that surfaces as the driving force behind the research for this study.

This chapter will include sections on the background for the proposed study, the conceptual framework for the study, the problem statement and the purpose statement. Additionally, this chapter includes the research questions, limitations and delimitations of the study, as well as assumptions of the study. The final section of this chapter is a list of key terms and definitions used in the study.

Background

Male Friendships

Characteristics of human friendship have been well documented and widely studied. For example, many studies investigated friendship disregarding gender. Leone and Hawkins (2006) studied friendship in terms of self-monitoring behaviors. Oswald, Clark and Kelly (2004) used the perspective of maintenance to examine friendship. One characteristic studied by Felmlee (1999) was the exploration of behavioral norms and rules existing within friendships. In studies using gender as the central element, a comparison of female friendships to male friendships was the goal. Felmlee (1999) looked at behavioral norms existing within same-sex friendships. To

compare gender differences and similarities, Harkless and Flowers (2005) studied relational boundaries, Hirokawa and Yagi (2004) researched communication and coping skills, and Laner and Russell (1998) studied social connectedness. Research comparing gender differences and similarities addressed the issue of friendship existing between heterosexual males, but in broad terms such as gender identity (Migliaccio, 2009), cultural differences (Greif, 2007) and intimacy (Fehr, 2004).

Specific to males, a brief review of literature identified shared interests, shared events and doing things together as important components in friendships among men (Strikwerda & May, 1992). Guthman (1997) referred to the ideas of sharing common interests and events and spending time together as male bonding. Guthman further explained that men may need and desire times with other men, exclusive of female participation in their relationships. The literature also suggested self-disclosure, an element considered vital as a component of deep friendship, was seen as a low priority for men (Bowman, 2008). Sprecher and Hendrick (2004) identified self-disclosure as an important component for communication in most relationships. Additionally, they described self-disclosure as a systematic process of revealing personal information about oneself that moves from the breadth of disclosure to a greater depth of disclosure. According to a study by Fehr (2004), women are more prone to self-disclose and value self-disclosure more than men. Although, Monroe, Baker and Roll (1997) concluded that men disclosing to anyone, male or female, could be linked to homophobia and intimacy and be perceived as a threat by men. However, Roy, Benson, and Lilly (2000) argued that the quality of friendship is not based on disclosure alone. They suggested that the need for emotional closeness in relationships was more important for women than men and that homophobia was a consistent theme as a barrier for developing male friendships. Strikwerda and May (1992)

argued that homophobia is not an insurmountable obstacle in male friendships; however, it may be a deterrent. Rather than self-disclose on personal issues, men more often chose to focus their interactions on more impersonal topics such as sports (Tognolli, 1980). Although, self-disclosure and confiding in others was linked to having health benefits (Young, Alvermann, Kaste, Henderson and Many, 2004) and is considered a vital component (Bowman, 2008), men seem to avoid self-disclosure.

Additionally, various studies probed into distinct characteristics within male relationships. The focus of du Plessis and Corney's (2011) study was trust and respect. Singleton and Vacca (2007) examined interpersonal competition. Separate studies by Greif (2009) and Hatch and Bulcroft (1992) viewed male friendship in participants' later years. Some studies conducted within the last several years sought to take a closer look at male friendships; however, much of the research investigated homosexual relationships (Harkless & Flowers, 2005; Monroe et al., 1997; Morman & Floyd, 1998).

Counseling Males

Males and male relationships have been somewhat overlooked by the counseling profession, although a need exists for more of a research focus given to this population. White's (2009) study indicated that men were less likely to seek mental health counseling, even when the need exists; men were four times more likely to commit suicide than women; 22% of men were heavy alcohol consumers; and drug dependence rates were three times higher in men than in women. Additionally, the prison population consisted of a 17:1 ratio of male to female. Of that population, 9 out of 10 males exhibited behaviors recognized as psychological in nature (White, 2009). McKelly (2007) reported that men most in need of psychological help were those least likely to pursue help. Furthermore, McKelly cited the unwillingness of men to seek needed

psychological help as important and under-recognized by the counseling profession. White (2009) also confirmed the under-recognition by pointing out the American Psychological Association formed 50 divisions within its organizational structure before devoting one to men.

Men perceive counseling as something to be approached with caution; are suspicious of counselors; use discretion with self-disclosure in sessions (Smith, 2003); and identify counseling as a feminine construct to avoid for fear of being seen as feminine, weak or helpless (White, 2009). Additionally, many men feel less independent, less successful and less in control while undergoing mental health assistance in comparison to their need for independence, success and control which are identified as important aspects of the male persona (McCarthy & Holliday, 2004). The reality remains men are more underrepresented in counseling, but more in need of psychological help when compared to women. Rather than attending counseling sessions, men turn to alternative methods to deal with the prevalent stressful issues of everyday life. White (2009) posited three strategies men turn to alternatively; avoidance-choosing to ignore the issues facing them; displacement-reacting in outbursts of anger; and discussion-talking with confidants and family. The first two options are negative behaviors, typically yielding poor results. The third strategy, talking with family and friends, specifically friends, holds promise for positive results and the focus of this study. When working with men, therapists may find assisting males in how to develop and use their male friendships as a valuable coping tool could increase positive outcomes in therapy. In order to do so, a better understanding of how men perceive, express and value their male friendships is essential.

Conceptual Framework

The present research study will be approached from Sandra Bem's gender schema theory. Her theory views human development from a gender specific perspective based on sex typing

(Bem, 1981). Sex typing is a process in which society identifies males and females as masculine and feminine, respectively. Male and female behaviors, attitudes and identities are defined and enforced by societal norms, which are instilled in children, becoming the lens through which they view themselves and others and continues throughout adulthood. As social norms become the lens to view the world, information is processed by individuals based on their pre-existing knowledge, allowing new incoming information to fit into their existing schema.

Bem (1981) explained schema as a cognitive structure used to organize and guide individual perceptions. As personal gender schemas are formed, incoming information is processed through the preconceived notions of sex typed associations individuals already hold within their self-identity and self-esteem. Through personal schemas, individuals are able to make sense of the world as it is encountered. Bem (1981) proposed “that sex typing results, in part, from the fact that the self-concept itself gets assimilated into the gender schema” (p. 355). As children continue to develop, they associate behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, and emotions with a particular sex and within their interpretations of self. In so doing, individuals learn to tailor behaviors to match their corresponding beliefs of what masculine and feminine means. In other words, as masculine and feminine definitions are internalized by an individual, the resulting behaviors, attitudes, emotions and beliefs reflect the internalizations which become self-fulfilling.

In differentiating individuals’ gender from their sex, the World Health Organization (2011) indicated that sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women. Whereas, gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, emotions and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. Hesse-Biber and Carger (2000) agreed that gender is determined socially; it is the societal meaning

assigned to males and females. “Each society emphasizes particular roles that each sex should play, although there is wide latitude in acceptable behaviors for each gender” (p. 91). Gender is used to describe those characteristics of women and men, which are socially constructed; whereas, sex refers to features which are biologically determined. Learned behaviors make up gender identity and determine gender roles (World Health Organization, 2002). Bem’s theory is reflective of one’s sex, the determinant in fulfilling gender expectations.

Early childhood is a critical component in Bem’s theory. Gender schema theory is predicated on the development from childhood. Bem (1981) said that a child learns to apply schematic selectively when choosing only those attributes applicable to the child’s sex. Additionally, Bem stated a child learns content specific information, which is linked to sex. Nihlen and Bailey (1988) found children organized their worlds based on gender schema relative to the gender systems in a larger context; such as development of gender schema which has been linked to parental roles, underscoring modeling as a vital process in children’s development. Heilbrun, Wyrda and Friedburg (2001) found that gender schemas were learned through the same process of modeling as sex role behaviors and that stronger gender schema occurs when individuals closely identified with their fathers than with their mothers. In their study, the association between stronger gender schema and parental sex held true for both male and female participants.

In addition to the usage of gender as a means of self-description and self-identification, Bem (1981) asserted gender is used in evaluating others. Skitka and Maslach (1996) confirmed the evaluation of others in identifying biological sex as one of the first things noticed and encoded in social interactions. As a result, the observed sex becomes linked to a vast array of gender related interpretations relative to one’s own self-description and self-identification of

masculine or feminine, which is used in evaluating others. Harper and Schoeman (2006) suggested gender can be used as a means to rectify social ambiguity in that those persons using gender as a means of interpreting strangers used the same standards in relating to family, friends and acquaintances.

Gender schema theory can be used as a lens to view male friendship by approaching the concept of friendship as a specific sex typing perspective of learned behaviors that come from males' schema. Throughout the course of men's lives, what friendship is "supposed" to look like, is shaped by their perceptions. For men, the association of the masculine identity and typically male behaviors, thoughts, emotions and perceptions to friendship shapes the norms of how males experience friendship. Bem (1983) explained gender schema and sex typing self-concepts and behaviors as being influenced by one's gender more than any other factor. Through this association of male identity to male behaviors; the way men perceive, express and value friendships will have many commonalities, both conscious and unconscious.

Problem Statement

Friendship is interwoven into many aspects of life experiences and is widely recognized as an integral component of life. Men and women share friendships between and among genders. Findings from the literature suggested that men gain support from their friendships in multiple capacities including affirming gender identity (Migliaccio, 2009), embracing cultural differences (Greif, 2007), creating relational intimacy (Fehr, 2004) and as a coping strategy (White, 2009). However, research affirmed that friendship experiences, particularly same gender relationships, differ for males and females. Studies on male friendship indicated both men and women prefer same-sex friendship over opposite sex friendship (Baumgarte & Nelson, 2009) and that men and women select same-sex friends who are similar to them (Coutinho, 2007).

Findings in the literature identified shared interests, events and doing things together as important components in friendships among men (Strikwerda & May, 1992). Guthman (1997) referred to sharing common interests and events and spending time together as male bonding and indicated men may need and desire times with other men, exclusive of female participation. Walker (1994) declared that a debate is unnecessary to determine that men characteristically engage in shared activities as a key component in relationships with other men. Strikwerda and May (1992) supported the idea of activity as a central component of men's friendship, suggesting doing things with other males is crucial to friendship.

Despite the confirmation by research of the differences in male-female friendships, an understanding of how men perceive, express and value same-sex male friendship remains unclear. Given the importance of the relational connection in men's lives to other men and the void in literature relating male friendship to helping men in counseling, a further investigation of the importance of male-to-male friendship is warranted. The lack of understanding of the male friendship phenomenon may be attributed to: (a) a need for an agreed upon definition of heterosexual male friendship, (b) a description of what are the components of male friendship, (c) a lack of understanding of social expectations associated with male friendship, and (d) a void in knowledge of how male friendship is expressed.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the present study was to examine heterosexual males' perceptions and lived experiences of their male-to-male friendships through a phenomenological lens. Through participants' personal, life-time experiences, a definition of male friendship, the components of male friendship, the social expectations of male friendship, and the expression of male friendship were examined.

Research Questions

Using a phenomenological research design, the central research question in the present study was addressed is: How do men experience same-sex friendship? The sub-questions were addressed are:

1. How do men define same-sex friendship?
2. What are the components of male friendship as identified by men?
3. What social expectations do men have regarding friendship?
4. How do men express friendship with other men?
5. How do men perceive friendship could assist them during the counseling process?

Limitations and Delimitations

Qualitative research is interpretive in nature (Creswell, 2007). A limitation for this study is that analysis of qualitative data is based on the researcher's ability to identify significant statements, phrases and quotes from transcribed interviews and interpret or translate those into themes. Data analysis in the present study was interpretative and not definitive based on the present researcher's interpretations. A different researcher reading the same data could make different value judgments regarding themes that may emerge.

A second limitation in the present study was from both the sampling strategy and the sample itself. The sampling strategy was snowballing. Snowballing is a sampling strategy that depends on referrals from participants in the study (Creswell, 2007). Identified participants were chosen from a collection of men already having a male friendship, though not friends with the researcher.

Earlier in this chapter, counseling was identified as a process most men choose to avoid. Although this study did not consist of counseling sessions, getting the participants to open up and

reveal themselves was a very real challenge which could have been a third limitation in the data collected in this study. Englar-Carson and Kiselica (2013) cited the fact that men consistently hold to traditional male stereotypes such as having little ability to express emotions. Garfield (2010) identified communication, partially defined as sharing feelings, as an aspect of friendship with which men struggle. As a result, participants' responses could be either more lucid than expected or more guarded than expected.

A final limitation was that the sample was drawn from men with whom I have some acquaintance, but who were not friends. This sample could have further limited communication between the participants and the researcher.

The delimitations for this study centers on the demographics and selection process for participants. The identified demographics are heterosexual men, living in the greater New Orleans area. I have chosen the New Orleans area due to travel constrictions. Men living in cities and cultures different from New Orleans could have dissenting views from those found here in the Greater New Orleans area. Many other factors besides sexuality and locale may influence the formation of friendship, as well as the experience and value of friendship to participants in this study. A second delimitation is the demographics of participants and whether participants' responses can be generalized to all males. The question at hand is that of generalizability. However, generalizability, according to Shank (2006) is not the aim of qualitative research. Qualitative research seeks to take samples that are less typical in an attempt to move from breadth to depth. Shank cited qualitative study designs are intentionally broad and seeks samples that are more fertile and less typical.

Assumptions of the Study

According to Creswell (2009), an assumption is “an assertion presumed to be true but not actually verified” (p. 109). The assumptions connected with my study are inherently personal pertaining to my views of friendship, my view of the way men are perceived and the way men experience male friendships. These assumptions are critical in the sense that they lie at the very heart of why this research study is important to me.

My view on friendship is that within the very day-to-day functioning of most human beings, friendships are of great importance. Over the course of one’s lifetime, relationships vary, dissolve and/or deepen. Few relationships become lifelong, true, deep friendships. These friendships are not necessarily dependent on length of time for their existence, but a connection that occurs at a heartfelt, emotional level. My assumption is that, not only men, but all people place value on having and maintaining true friendships.

I believe that the general consensus regarding men is that we are tough, hard-hearted macho types who experience little or no positive emotions. I firmly and resolutely disagree with the notion that the majority of men fit into this stereotype. As a result of my disbelief about the way men are generally perceived, my assumption is that many men experience positive emotions, but the way we express those emotions are often dismissed because the stereotype exists that we are tough, hard-hearted macho types who experience little or no positive emotions.

Finally, I believe men experience male friendship in a way that is often misleading. Quite often I believe men not only experience, but express friendship in ways that may not look like friendship at all. Quite often, male friendships are portrayed as brutish, sometimes obnoxious, crude or even childish relationships. My final assumption is that participants in male

friendships experience friendship in ways that are misunderstood and not always apparent to observers.

Definition of Terms

Gender schema is “gender based schematic processing from a generalized readiness to process information on the basis of sex-linked association” (Bem, 1981, p. 354).

Gender emphasizes the socially constructed differences between men and women that give rise to masculinity and femininity (Short, Yang, & Jenkins, 2013, p. 93).

Intimacy is referred to “In the psychological research literature [as] ... the disclosure of personal information, such as problems, feelings, and concerns” (Reisman, 1990, p. 65).

Male bonding used in this study, is “common parlance in the United States as a shorthand description of male camaraderie” (Gutman, 1997, p. 393).

Purposeful sampling is “the concept used in qualitative research in which the researcher selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2007, p.125).

Schema is defined as “a cognitive structure, a network of associations that organizes and guides an individual's perception. A schema functions as an anticipatory structure, a readiness to search for and to assimilate incoming information in schema-relevant terms” (Bem, 1981, p. 355).

Self-disclosure is “an important aspect of communication in close relationships involving the process of revealing personal information about oneself to another” (Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004, p. 858).

Sex Typing is the process by which a society transmutes the allocation of adult roles on the basis of sex and the anticipation of this allocation in the socialization of a society's children of male and female into masculine and feminine (Bem, 1981).

Sex refers to “the biological distinctions between males and females, most often in connection with reproductive functions” (Short et al., p. 93).

Chapter II

Literature Review

Introduction

Included in this chapter is a review of literature on the topic of male friendship. The review is used to gain insight into an understanding of how male friendship is defined in the current literature and identify possible components specifically related to male friendships. Additionally, social expectations in male friendships are examined, as well as, how friendship might be expressed in male same-sex friendship. An overview of the theoretical framework is included to provide an understanding of the lens through which the study will be viewed. Finally, an overview of men and counseling is reviewed.

Defining Friendship

Historically, research has been well documented and plentiful regarding male friendship from many aspects (Kluger, 2006; Leone & Hawkins, 2007; Peterson, 2007; Rybak & McAndrew, 2006). For example, Weisz and Wood (2000) examined male friendship from a social identity perspective; Stansell (2011) wrote about male friendship from a Biblical perspective and Petersen (2007) discussed male friendship as not being bound by geography or limited by racial differences. Harkless and Flowers (2005) investigated male friendship specifically within homosexual relationships and Benson and Christakos (2003) investigated friendship as an entity not distinguished by gender. In a similar fashion, Bunnell, Yea, Peake, Skelton and Smith (2012) studied friendship in general as being influenced by and a function of geography. Coutinho (2007) said friendships provide help, advice and access to potential mates. Whereas, McDougall and Hymel (2007) found that friendships serve a variety of functions; such as providing protection, validating a sense of self, providing affection, intimacy and a basis for romance.

Throughout the literature, the term friendship is widely used to describe close relationships and is recognized as an integral component of life (Bushman & Holt-Lunstad, 2009; Fehr, 2004; Perlman, 2007; Ryback & McAndrew, 2006). Zamarripa, Wampold and Gregory (2003) studied gender role conflict, depression and anxiety in men. The findings in their study implied that the conflict within interpersonal relationships might cause anxiety in some men. Specifically, the authors found that restricted affection between men caused a higher level of anxiety. Similarly, a research project conducted by Oswald et al., (2004) revealed interpersonal relationships are a core human need. Their research showed that those who have trouble establishing or maintaining relationships often suffer negative effects, such as mental distress and physical ailments. The researchers added that friendships play an important role in social support and mental health clinicians would be wise to investigate the difficulties clients have in maintaining friendships. Men and women share friendships between and across genders; however, in same gender relationships, the perception, expression and value of friendship differs.

Despite the volume of research available, no generally accepted definition of friendship exists (Ryback & McAndrew, 2006). So complicated and common is the word friend, that a simple word search of *friend* using *Google* yielded 2,620,000,000 results. Dictionary.com offers the definition of friend as: One who is attached to another by affection; one who entertains for another, sentiments of esteem, respect and affection, which lead him to desire his company, and to seek to promote his happiness and prosperity (“Friend”, 2011).

Components of Male Friendship

Ryback and McAndrew (2006) said a large part of the reason friendship remains undefined is due to the inclusion of terms within the definition of friendship like intimacy and closeness. Intimacy also is a word that can be defined in different ways (Roy et al., 2000), which

adds to the confusion in the definition and discussion surrounding friendship. Citing Dictionary.com the definition of intimate includes the terms of innermost; inward; internal; deep-seated; hearty, near; close; direct; thorough; complete (“Intimate”, 2011).

Lillian Rubin (as cited by Walker, 1994) addressed intimacy in male to male friendships when she indicated,

“... men bond through shared activities, whereas women share intimate feelings through talk. She ascribes these differences to two phenomena. First, socialization of children encourages attention to relationships for girls and competition among boys and men. Second, the psychic development of girls leads girls and women to develop permeable ego boundaries and relational, nurturing capacities that encourage them to seek intimacy within friendship with other females. Boys and men, on the other hand, are threatened by having close, intimate friendships. Intimacy threatens their sense of masculinity because it touches that feminine part of their psyche that they were forced to repress in early childhood. According to Rubin, shared activities and competition are compensatory structures for men that prevent them from becoming too intimate.” (p. 247).

In a study conducted by Parks and Floyd (1996), a group of 270 college students, male and female, felt that intimacy could only be applied to relationships that had a physical and sexual component. In defining intimacy, Roy et al. (2000) identified elements that may be useful, which include warmth in caring and comfort, a mutual relationship and a deep mutual knowledge of self and the other person. The understanding of one’s self and the other person in a relationship is inclusive of knowing and defining the characteristics of an individual and is connected to devotion and enjoyment of that person. In contrast, Reisman (1990) examined intimacy in same-sex friendships and found that women experience closeness with other women

through talk. Although men experience a similar degree of closeness, intimacy resulted from sharing activities. However, results in Reisman's study indicated that friendships with a low degree of self-disclosure were also low in closeness and satisfaction. Reisman (2007) referred to the lack of self-disclosure in men's friendships as a possible reason why their friendships seem less intimate. He also stated that it was not clear whether men experience their same-sex relationships as less intimate as those with females.

In an attempt to identify issues related to intimacy; Monroe et al., (1997) conducted research using a random sample of 75 male heterosexuals. Their use of several different questionnaires revealed that not only is a fear of intimacy prevalent among men, but the fear is often accompanied by homophobia. Findings also suggested self-disclosure, an element considered vital as a component of intimacy, was seen as a low priority for men. In a study conducted by Walker (1994), she found that men shared their feelings more than previous literature suggested. Furthermore, the author made a connection between socialization of children and intimacy in friendships. In Walker's opinion, she thought that boys are taught to repress emotions and, as a result, tend to fear intimacy because emotions were seen as a threat.

Since women's friendships are generally identified as being more intimate, males tend to shy away from intimacy in relationships because intimacy does not fit with the perceived image of masculinity. According to Garfield (2010), many men avoid responsibility for emotional intimacy, even though intimacy is a longed for element in their relationships. Instead, men look to their female partners to fulfill that need. Although Garfield indicated that men look to female partners for intimacy, the discussion of the feminization of males is a common issue. Roy et al. (2000) believed that research indicating women have better same-sex intimate friendships

compared to men were misleading. The authors framed intimacy not as an indicator of quality of friendship, but more as a way of communicating, which differs in same-sex friendships.

Lorentzen's (2007) study on love and intimacy found that the focal point for men, regarding love and intimacy, is primarily the family. However, he agreed with other findings that indicated friendship is the new form of intimacy in contemporary theory. He also suggested that the ability to establish friendships was important to maintain intimacy and continuity in relationships. Strikwerda and May (1992) agreed that intimacy is an indicator of the strength of a friendship, and added that intimacy is important for friendship. Although, they believed that every friendship for a man did not need to be intimate; however, every friendship for a man could not be devoid of intimacy. The lack of any intimate same-sex friendships could lead to a life that is emotionally impoverished and unsatisfying. Furthermore, the authors argued that intimacy can happen in male same-sex friendships, but the element of intimacy will develop across the span of time. The way that men begin working on the developing intimacy in their relationships is to actively enjoy their friendships by sharing in common interests and doing things together. One study found that the need for closeness and intimacy outside the family environment is often fulfilled through friendship (Johnson, Brady, McNair, Congdon, Niznik, & Anderson, 2007).

Common Interests in Friendship

Emergent in the literature as a common thread in male friendships were shared interests, events, activities and doing things together (Strikwerda & May, 1992). Guthman (1997) described sharing in common interests and events and spending time together as male bonding. Further examination by Guthman, indicated that men may need and desire times with other men, exclusive of female participation. Common interests for men, Walker (1994) declared were

unnecessary because men characteristically engage in shared activities as a key component in relationships with other men and saw that engagement as a given. Swain (as cited by Karbo, 2006) created the term “closeness in the doing” to describe the importance of shared activities among men. In support of the idea of closeness in the doing, Strikwerda and May (1992) suggested that activities are a central component of men’s friendship, doing things with other males is crucial to friendship. In Greif’s (2007) study that investigated male friendship in older men, the theme of doing things together remained consistent. Male participants responded that they continued to enjoy watching and participating in sports, traveling, movies, dining and joint outings with families. In his study, common interests, shared events, and shared activities together were identified as strong components in male same-sex friendships.

In comparing same-sex relationships to cross-sex friendships, Baumgarte and Nelson (2009) identified a common stereotype; relationships between women tend to be more expressive and intimate; whereas male relationships tend to be solidly founded on shared activities and companionship. Findings in their research affirmed the stereotype that male participants preferred engaging in some type of activity with other men.

Communication in Friendship

In part of a study by Grief (2006), men were questioned about the importance of friendship. Participants felt male friends were important when one was going through hard times and they felt that sometimes things can only be discussed with another man. Self-disclosure, the ability to discuss personal and private matters with a male friend was seen as a valuable component in male friendships. Felmlee (1999) agreed that self-disclosure was an important element in friendship. Monroe et al. (1997) defined self-disclosure as “verbal communication of information about oneself to another that allows one to become known by the other person” (p.

26). Similarly, Bowman (2006) defined self-disclosure as “the open sharing of information about the self” (p. 316). But, Monroe et al. (1997) stated that men are as less likely to self-disclose about matters pertaining to high levels of intimacy. According to Bowman, self-disclosure can have a positive or negative effect on relationships and either strengthen or weaken friendships. Most men, according to Bowman, remain hesitant to self-disclose with other males along many topics, including sadness and fear.

In a study that focused specifically on disclosure in male same-sex relationships, men were reluctant to self-disclose in their friendships (Bowman, 2006). Findings in his study indicated that gender orientation played a substantial role in the unwillingness of men to self-disclose, especially regarding negative information. Additionally, Bowman’s research revealed self-disclosure was more probable when a feeling of closeness between men existed. However, whether self-disclosure resulted from closeness or if closeness was the key to self-disclosure was not determined in the study. Reisman (1990) agreed that men are less self-disclosing in their same-sex friendships when compared to female same-sex friendships. Reisman believed that the lack of self-disclosure is not because men are not capable of self-disclosing, but because men may prefer to be less self-disclosing with their male friends.

In a study that examined African-American men and friendship, researchers found that men who were more likely to openly discuss issues and share advice had a more positive view of their friendships (Mattis et al., 2001). Hodgetts and Rua (2010) found that when men communicate and share in activities, they share emotions and personal information and that sharing time together was an acceptable way seen by men to express their emotions and ideas.

Kaplan’s (2005) study examined how male friends communicated intimacy in public places. Communication was viewed as vital, though not always an obvious indicator of

experiences like intimacy between male friends. Results of his study revealed that men communicate in ways that are indicative of closeness and exclusivity; such as using special expressions, nicknames, contradictory messages, curses, insults and aggressive humor. Kaplan reasoned that men's speech which seemed offensive to a casual observer was really a situation that men interacted with one another by responding to comments from friends. The reactions were often punctuated by facial expressions, laughs or other indicators that signal what was being said, no matter how offensive it sounded, was intended to be a joke.

In Kierski and Blazina's (2009) research, the pressure that men face was identified as an adaptation to hiding their fears as circumstances change. The more common ways men do not communicate and hide their fears are gender specific and involve joking and aggression, as well as, over compensating. The authors suggested that tactics such as joking, aggression, and over compensating; were a means of maintaining traditional gender role expectations. Whereas, Williams (2008) found men used humor as a way to enjoy the company and communication with other men, share experiences of social change, hide embarrassment and affirm gender identity.

A sense of humor for gender identity was considered an inherent quality of being a man and that men use humor as a means of competitive banter. Dykstra (2009) said that men also use humor as a means to communicate and approach topics that are sensitive issues, difficult to discuss, and as a means to maintain humility among male friends. Humor also is a means to inoculate other men from the harshness of the world that men and boys encounter regularly.

Anecdotally, O'Neill (1996) stressed that scathing insults, aimed at other males, are viewed as a gift to each other. He argued that some of the benefits from a good, well timed insult were humility, membership of a group, participation in sports and declaration of independence. O'Neill continued by offering rules to keep the insult game with men from

turning into a brawl, which included: (a) secrets were not to be exposed, (b) habits were fair game, but a man's heart was not, (c) usage of tonal inflection to suggest no harm was intended, (d) only someone that could defend himself was fair game, and (e) participants must be able to take insults from others as well as they could give insults.

Singleton and Vacca (2007) completed a study examining competition in friendships, which indicated a negative effect on intimacy. As a means of communication of competitive banter, men use humor (Williams, 2008). Men tell jokes that are racist, sexist, objectified others and exploited disabilities, using humor as a competition. Their findings also indicated that although competition is a common element in male same-sex friendships, competition may inhibit formation of closer relationships and may be a cause in the breakdown of communication and dissolution of male friendships.

Expressions of Friendship

Kaplan (2005) analyzed several studies involving men and various aspects of their relationships. Of these studies, he concluded that the dominant perspective was that male relationships are less expressive when compared to female relationships. However, Kaplan pointed out that men do express their friendships with gestures such as embracing, back slapping and hand shaking and even punching one another. Karbo (2006) wrote that some physical expressions men use, such as razzing and backslapping, could be interpreted as expressions of affection.

A study conducted by Morman and Floyd (1997) revealed that affection between men was considered appropriate in three distinct settings. The first setting in which displays of affection were considered appropriate was between brothers and friends. The second setting was

with male college-aged participants who also recognized emotionally charged situations as an appropriate setting. Finally, public contexts were deemed appropriate.

Loyalty, Trust and Dependability in Friendship

Walker (1994) conducted 53 in-depth interviews across working and middle class men and women in an effort to identify what friendship was for each gender. His findings indicated that trust was a key element in men's opinions about friendship. Also, dependability, being able to rely on a person, surfaced as vital to men. Also, a significant step in developing friendship is mutual trust (Strikwerda & May, 1992). Mutual trust is typically built through a shared experience that requires people to spend time in each other's company.

Wall, Pickert and Paradise's (1983) interviews with men of various ethnic groups, marital statuses, education levels and ages indicated that participants felt trust and interpersonal qualities were two specific qualities sought in friends. Their findings supported the hypothesis that the number of friends decrease with age. In a 2006 study conducted by Greif, men were asked to identify what is friendship. Various participant responses included intrinsic values like honesty, trustworthiness, dependability, loyalty and confidentiality. Other participants identified a sense of humor as a valued trait in friends and others said friendships were formed over a long period of time, contradicting other participants that felt friendships could be formed with new acquaintances. Also, most participants agreed that mutuality was an important aspect of male friendship.

Oswald et al. (2004) regarded maintenance of friendship as behaviors that occur from the inception of a relationship and conclude with the closing of the relationship. The behaviors can be intended to keep the friendship in existence or to keep the friendship at a particular stage. Other behaviors within the relationship serve various functions such as keeping the relationship

in a satisfactory level or keeping the relationship in a state of repair. These behaviors are important to be aware of to understand how relationships remain intact and are dependable. Felmlee (1999) cited maintaining or disregarding cultural norms as a reason for friendships either lasting or terminating.

Social Expectations

Homophobia

In a study by Tognoli (1980), the author suggested that as males develop role identification, intimacy with other males is not permitted which is also linked to men's fear of being homosexual. As a result, strength and independence become virtues overpowering any need for help. Tognoli (1980) said this may be the prime factor for keeping men emotionally apart from one another. Separate studies by Wall et al. (1983); Strikwerda and May (1992) and Monroe et al. (1997) asserted homophobia is the greatest obstacle in men developing meaningful friendships with other men, suggesting that the need of emotional closeness in relationships is more important for women than men. The lack of what might be called deeper friendships for males could be attributed to homophobia. Strikwerda and May (1992) argued that although homophobia is not an insurmountable obstacle in male friendships, the fear of being viewed as homosexual may be a deterrent to closer relationships for males.

Homophobia was addressed by Dykstra (2009) as a confounding social expectation for men in close, same-sex friendships. Dykstra observed that men inherently have a fear of appearing feminine and avoided doing so in their closest relationships with other men. Dykstra also found that men did not want to appear dependent, vulnerable, queer or gay. Therefore, men maintain a constant vigilance and sometimes conscious defense against any such appearance.

West and Zimmerman (1987) discussed accountability as an individual's actions, which are often designed with the thought of how those actions might be perceived. The intention is that behaviors and actions will not be characterized as being outside the realm of acceptable in social settings; men would not want their behaviors to be seen as feminine. Oddly, the feminization of the male is a common issue discussed in the literature regarding male friendships. In comparison, Peter Tragos (2009) argued men have been feminized while yearning for the return of traditional male representations. He continued by citing usage of the word "metrosexual" as a term to describe "a straight urban male who is eager to embrace and show off his feminine side" (p. 545). Romano and Dokupil (2010) said the use of "retrosexual" is a suitable replacement for metrosexual, indicating contemporary men's need to assert their masculinity. As far back as the early works of Tognoli (1980), fear of being characterized as homosexual is listed as a prime factor for keeping men emotionally apart from one another. Research by Wall et al., (1983); Strikwerda and May (1992); and Monroe et al. (1997) indicated that homophobia is the greatest obstacle in men developing meaningful friendships with other men.

Kehler (2007) found agreement with the assertion that homophobia is a barrier in male friendships. Kehler cited homophobia as a fear that prevents more intimate relationships among men and prevents men from touching each other in less than socially accepted situations. Kehler also identified homophobia as a "powerful mechanism" that may be used to punish those that seek to operate outside of the normally accepted view of masculinity (p. 271). Garfield (2010) described a therapeutic exercise in which men belonging to a men's group are asked to schedule a time where they can get together with another man in the group outside of the normal meeting.

According to Garfield, the exercise was tough for men. The act of being with another man for social reasons only is a source of resistance, specifically, related to homophobia.

Developmental Socialization of Friendship

Previous studies indicated several trends in friendships among men. One such trend in men's friendships is defined by the male sex role and the socialization process. Essentially, the way men relate to other men is a learned behavior. Monroe et al. (1997) asserted males learn to be males by inquiring and internalizing the values, attitudes and behaviors associated with masculinity, which are defined by society. Additionally, males take on these characteristics in an attempt to conform to societal norms and appease parental expectations. The male sex role can be attributed to a socialization process in which males learn to be males as distinct from being female by acquiring and internalizing values, attitudes and behaviors associated with masculinity (Monroe et al., 1997). In Walker's (1997) study, results confirmed that men and women both described friendship in terms of cultural norms and social expectations. In addition, participants acknowledged acceptance of stereotypical behaviors, even though their own behaviors contradicted the stereotypes. Walker (1997) observed that although some behaviors in friendships do not conform to social expectations, aspects are borne out that are more normative.

Bem's (1981) theoretical perspective addressed the concerns of males through her most basic tenet which stipulated that an individual learns behaviors, attitudes, emotions and beliefs based on gender interpretations. As seen by Bem, interpretations are reinforced by cultural norms, thus, the way men interact within friendships is based on the involved individuals' perceptions of what friendship between men looks like. Furthermore, interpretations are shaped by experiences that individuals use to readily identify friendships. Even as new experiences occur, involving new people, relationships are filtered through the schema already in place. Bem

concluded, as a result of prior interpretations, male friendships tended to look alike and individuals within the relationships behaved in ways reflecting cultural norms.

Bem (1981) argued that individuals learn to regulate their behaviors to reflect the culture's ideal of what constitutes maleness and femaleness. Sex typing is the process that individuals use to acquire sex appropriate preferences, skills, personality attributes, behaviors and self-concepts (Bem, 1983). According to Bem, sex typing does not make one more male or more female. Rather, sex typing is identified by the extent to which an individual's self-concepts and behaviors are linked to gender.

Gender and sex, as defined by Short et al. (2013) need clarification because the words are often used interchangeably, especially in health research. The authors made the distinction between sex and gender in that one, sex is a biological construct, while the other, gender, is a social construct. Sex was defined as the biological distinctions between male and female, closely connected to reproductive functions. Contrasting sex to gender, the authors defined gender in terms of social constructs connected to masculinity and femininity that can be applied to "individual difference, as well as cultural, institutional and structural difference" (pp.93-94). Separate studies by the World Health Organization (2011, 2002) and Hesseman et al. (2000), agreed that sex refers to features which are biologically determined, while gender is determined by social constraints related to roles, behaviors, activities, emotions and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. Bem (1983) associated sex and gender by arguing that a child learns society's gender expectations and, as a result, learns the attributes linked to his or her sex and ultimately to themselves.

In a study by Rubini and Antonelli (1992), that investigated social information processing, the authors found that individuals used Bem's gender schema to process information

about themselves and make decisions about their social world. This study confirmed that the presence of gender schema not only affects individuals' self-perceptions, but also the schema aids in individuals' perceptions of the world. An individual's perceptions of the world is what Bem (1981) referred to as personal schema. An individual's personal schemas allow that person to understand the world in which he or she lives. For those that are sex typed, all new, incoming information is processed through existing schema, resulting in behaviors that are gender appropriate.

In a separate study undertaken to assess academic behavior and social norm adherence (Grabill et al., 2005), the authors pointed out that many of the attributes considered to be important for academic success at the university level were identified as feminine by participants, as well as socially unacceptable by male participants. These same participants viewed academic success as being important when it followed the more masculine gender schema of natural ability without academic planning and preparation. In a manner similar to social expectation, Tognolli (1980) wrote that men suffered from role restrictions and were unable to ask for help when needed or to honestly express anger with one another. The role restriction Tognolli referred to was the subtle idea that men are required to remain more distant from one another than women.

Similar to Dykstra's (2009) study, Kierski and Blazina (2009) wrote that the fear of being considered feminine raises the awareness for men to adhere to gender normative behaviors. The adherence to gender normative behaviors can lead men into a state of dissonance whenever experiences outside of the norms occur. Results of their study confirmed the fear of femininity as a real concept that could be easily identified.

A different type of social expectation or learned behavior was identified in a study where Greif (2007) found that many men were influenced by their fathers and their father's expectations of what friendship looked like. Men in Greif's study either identified with their fathers having more or fewer friendships. Men who did not emulate their fathers, in most cases, sought to develop more and longer lasting friendships. Greif posited that men learn from their fathers on many levels and declared that often male behavior is based on the idea of toughness and competitiveness. Based on the perceived toughness and competitiveness that men believe they must exhibit, men are socialized to minimize building enduring friendships.

In identifying gender expectations regarding friendship in a study by Migliaccio (2009), 98 male participants completed an eight page survey that consisted of rating variables having to do with friendship and behavioral expectations. Findings indicated that male same-sex friendship is based on masculine expectations and that the way men interact with friends is a reflection of expected masculine behavior. Because this interaction between expectations and behavior exists, men make adjustments within the friendship to appropriately display expected masculine behavior. However, Bukowski and Mesa (2007) found friendship varied in conceptions and expectations.

Additional studies further expanded the vastness and variety of perspectives from which friendship has been studied. According to Coutinho (2007), friendship when studied across genders, revealed that men and women select same-sex friends with similar characteristics to themselves. Similarities of personality traits in same-sex friendships include intelligence, attractiveness, status, dominance, education, age, and mate value. Vigil (2007) identified similarities of traits as reciprocal that are based on a mutually beneficial relationship. Strikwerda and May (1992) identified mutuality or reciprocity as a key component of friendship. In the

discussion of friendship following an investment model, Branje, Frijns, Finkenauer, Engels and Meeus (2007) characterized friendship as a voluntary, equal, symmetric, and mutual liking with reciprocity of the partners in the dyad.

Men and Counseling

Mental Health

Three studies indicated that men are less likely to seek out mental health counseling, despite their apparent need for counseling (Kierski & Blazini, 2009; Kemple, 2009; McCarthy & Holliday, 2004). In fact, McKelley (2007) said that men's lack of use of mental health services is one of the more consistent findings in literature. Four times more men than women commit suicide, 22% of men are heavy alcohol consumers and drug dependence rates are three times higher in men than in women. The prison population consists of a 17:1 ratio of male to females. Of that population, it is estimated 90% exhibit conditions recognized as psychological in nature (White, 2009). McKelly (2007) reported that men most in need of psychological help are those least likely to pursue help. He continued from the viewpoint that the lack of help seeking by men was important and under recognized. White confirmed the under recognition by pointing out the American Psychological Association formed 50 divisions within its organizational structure before devoting one to men (2009).

Although friendship could be used as a support system for mental health counseling, Kemple (2009) found that men were more unlikely to discuss their problems with friends or family than women were. In fact, men are more likely to look to their partners for support. Additionally, men who identified with more stereotypical and traditional views of masculinity were more likely to disregard counseling as being in direct opposition to their personal views of masculinity. As a contrast, counseling could be seen as a feminine construct and men avoid

counseling for fear of being seen as feminine, weak or helpless (White, 2009). Kierski and Blazini (2009) recognized that many men fear being seen as feminine and suggested that therapists account for the male fear of feminine as they work with male clients. Additionally, many men feel less independent, less successful and less in control while undergoing mental health assistance. Independence, success and control are identified as important aspects of the male persona (McCarthy & Holliday, 2004). In fact, Good, Dell and Mintz (1989) found that the relationship between seeking help and male roles was closely related. The authors found that factors associated with the traditional male were directly related to avoidance of seeking professional counseling for fear of being seen as feminine. Also, the authors speculated that the attitudes toward traditional male roles and the resulting gender conflict could have an effect on the counseling outcome.

Men perceive counseling as something to be approached with caution, are suspicious of counselors, and use discretion pertaining to self-disclosure in sessions (Smith, 2003). McCarthy and Holliday (2004) wrote that men are under a high amount of stress as they try to live up to societal standards and the distress of failing to live up to the standard could lead to problematic behaviors. Men have been taught to be independent and responsible for their own growth. Engaging in the practice of counseling would be seen as a contrary choice since counseling requires reaching out to others for help (McKelly, 2007). In accordance with Bem's (1981) gender schema, the idea of making a choice contrary to one's cognitive structure is also contradictory. Bem posited that an individual will match preferences, attitudes and behaviors to agree with stored prototypes. In other words, the individual will regulate behavior to match culture's expectations of male or female.

Men's learned social barriers to seeking counseling underscore a great need for men to seek counseling, but the reality remains that men are more underrepresented, yet more in need of psychological help when compared to women (McKelly, 2007). Rather than attending counseling sessions, men turn to alternative methods to deal with the prevalent stressful issues of everyday life. For example, among African-American men, in times of crisis or adverse personal conditions, assistance is more likely to be sought from social networks than from professional sources (Mattis et al., 2001). White (2009) posited three strategies men turn to alternatively from counseling; avoidance-choosing to ignore the issues facing them; displacement-an outburst of anger; and discussion-with confidants and family. The first two options are negative behaviors, typically yielding poor results. The third strategy, discussion with family and friends, specifically friends, holds promise for positive results.

Despite evidence that indicated men avoid help seeking behaviors, McKelley (2007) indicated that much is unknown as to the reasons why men avoid seeking help for mental health issues. However, those men that do seek help often have outcomes at least as positive as women. Kemple (2009) suggested that therapists should consider the way men prefer to seek help. Furthermore, Kemple found that men prefer exercise rather than talking to feel better. The idea that men prefer doing things has already been shown to be the norm to which men naturally default. Since most therapists embrace cultural norms, Berger (1979) suggested that therapists practice value clarity in an attempt to better understand their own perspectives and not force their beliefs on male clients. Berger indicated a better understanding of the therapist's own values would improve the possibility of delimiting or devaluing the male client's behavior. In a study completed by Kierski and Blazini (2009), clarity of a therapist's own issues, values and prejudices were indicated as important to establishing respect for male clients.

In two studies, observations pertinent to men, friendship and mental health were revealed. First, Greif (2009) posited that in order to extend men's lives and improve their quality of life physically and emotionally, the establishment of friendship might be an important factor. In a separate study, Garfield (2010) said "Close male friendship can be a valuable resource for men for their own personal health and in supporting intimacy in their marriages" (p. 120). However, McKelley (2007) noted that men typically are less attracted to therapy that focuses on feelings. Instead, more men favor strategic, problem solving approaches to therapy. The incorporation of more men's groups as interventions could prove to be beneficial for men by appealing to their need to feel in control, be helpful to others and address the need to share male friendships (McCarthy & Holliday, 2004). The idea is that helping other men is a more positive aspect of therapy as opposed to being the one that needs help. The authors reported that involvement in a men's group has proved to be successful for men by allowing them the atmosphere to share with other men and develop emotional connections (McCarthy & Holliday, 2004).

Summary

The majority of literature reviewed placed heavy emphasis on defining friendships according to common components across a spectrum for men. Additionally, similarities and differences in same-sex relationships were of interest. Also, important in the reviewed literature were the influences that guide men's friendship. Finally, a discussion related to whether men allow any form of intimacy to exist in their friendships was a common factor in the research. Much remains to be studied, understood and clarified, including, but not limited to the value and depth of existing friendships. Therapists may find using a man's friendships as a valuable coping tool to increase the outcome of therapy. In order to do so, a better understanding of how men perceive, express and value friendship is essential.

Chapter III

Methodology

Introduction

Chapter three consists of the following sections: (1) purpose statement, (2) research questions, (3) qualitative research design, (4) participants, (5) data collection plan, (6) data analysis plan, (7) validation procedures and (8) researcher's biases. In the first section, the purpose statement is reiterated. The primary research question and the five sub-questions are presented in the second section. In the third and fourth sections, a description of the qualitative research design is provided, followed by a description of the participants and sources of data for the sample population. In the fifth section, the data collection procedures are discussed. In the sixth section, the data analysis is described. The seventh section discusses validation procedures. Finally, the role of the researcher in phenomenological research and this researcher's personal biases are identified.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my phenomenological study was to examine heterosexual males' perceptions and experiences of their male-to-male friendships. Participants' reflections on their personal life experiences were analyzed to develop a definition of male friendship, the components of male friendship, the social expectations of male friendship, and the expression of male friendship.

Research Questions

The primary research question for this study was: How do men experience same-sex friendship? The sub-questions addressed were:

1. How do men define same-sex friendship?
2. What are the components of male friendship as identified by men?

3. What social expectations do men have regarding friendship?
4. How do men express friendship with other men?
5. How do men perceive friendship could assist them during the counseling process?

Qualitative Research Design

The major factor in rejecting a quantitative approach for this study was its underlying philosophical assumption, which Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009) identified as the belief that humans inhabit a world that is measurable, understandable, and can be generalized. Quantitative researchers posit that the world and the natural laws which govern the world can be static and explainable. Quantitative researchers seek to understand what an idea or subject is, whereas qualitative research offers a different approach that seeks to understand why the idea or subject in question is the way it is and how it is perceived. For example, an iceberg, studied by a quantitative researcher, might yield details about many of the attributes of the iceberg, such as its temperature, height, age, projected path, and other measurable data. A qualitative researcher might look to find the deeper meaning of the iceberg that lies beneath the water's surface.

The approach chosen for this study was qualitative, utilizing the phenomenological tradition. According to Creswell (2007), the purpose of qualitative research is not to broaden the application, but to highlight and examine the specifics of the application. Gay et al. (2009) contended that qualitative researchers seek to gain a deeper insight into the phenomenon and a better understanding of “the way things are, why they are that way and how the participants in the context perceive them” (p. 12). Additionally, Creswell (2007) cited the need for understanding a complex issue, the need to write using a more flexible style, and the desire for more insight into the context of an issue in determining the appropriateness of qualitative research. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) suggested the experience being studied either has

happened or is happening. A study involving men and friendship would, in all likelihood, contain both of these elements. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) also explained that a phenomenological study expands insight of the audience into the lived experiences of the participants. Creswell (2009) confirmed this thought, establishing the lived experiences of participants as a crucial component in phenomenology. A phenomenological design was best suited for my main research question and sub-questions because it allowed me “to understand several individuals’ common or shared experiences of a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). I believed a qualitative design would get beneath the surface of what friendship means to men by allowing men to describe their lived experiences of friendship. The aim of my proposed research study was to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of male friendship, as experienced by male participants.

For data analysis, I used a specific qualitative psychological approach, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), which allowed me to focus on males’ insights and how they made sense of their lived experiences within their male-to-male friendships. IPA was used to examine how participants make sense of their personal and social worlds, by looking for meaning in their particular experiences (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). IPA allows the researcher to assume an active role in the research process. IPA is a two-stage interpretation process in which participants attempt to make sense of their worlds while the researcher attempts to interpret and make sense of participants’ struggle to understand their own interpretations (Smith & Osborn, 2007). This two-stage process of interpretation is identified as double hermeneutics. According to Smith (2011), double hermeneutics speaks to the process of the researcher trying to understand participants in the research project simultaneously as the participant is seeking a better understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. Shank

(2006) identified three distinct characteristics of IPA. First, IPA is idiographic; only a small number of participants are involved. Second, IPA is inductive in that it is flexible enough to allow new themes to emerge as the data are reviewed. Finally, IPA is interrogative; meaning greater depth of insight into the participants' view is achieved by the researcher taking a questioning stance.

Participants

According to Smith and Osborn (2007), to achieve a detailed interpretative account of a phenomenon experienced by participants involved in a research study, a small sample is preferred. Smith and Osborn further suggested that a reasonable sample size for a dissertation is three to six. Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) specified that in IPA, a smaller number of participants is preferred in order to gain greater depth; however, they suggested a sample size of four to ten for dissertation studies. The size of my sample was based upon saturation of the data. I used Shank's (2006) definition of saturation as the point a researcher reaches after having studied in a particular setting long enough that no new findings in the data are uncovered. The sample size for my study was eight participants.

Participants met the following criteria for inclusion in the study: (1) heterosexual males, (2) at least 21 years old, (3) living in the New Orleans area, and (4) able to identify their own male friendships. Heterosexual males were chosen so that same-sex friendships would not be clouded by relationship issues that may occur between couples. Specifying the age of 21 eliminated the need for parental consent and allowed for a fuller range of development to occur within friendships.

To obtain the sample, I created a list of 18 men I knew, but who were not personal friends. These men were men with whom I was acquainted, but who were not included within

my own personal circle of friends. I contacted each man individually. All participants were contacted by phone. In each case, I briefly explained the study and gauged their interest level for participation in the study. Each participant was given a copy of an introductory letter that contained details of the study (see Appendix B). Of the initial list, 12 were contacted and eight agreed to participate. A time to meet with each who agreed to participate was scheduled. At the scheduled meeting time, I provided the informed consent document (see Appendix C) and conducted an interview.

Prior to the data collection, I obtained consent from the University of New Orleans Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix A). I obtained a signed informed consent document from each participant at the time of the scheduled interview, before the actual research commenced. Within the document, I informed participants of specific issues pertaining to the research study. Participants were made aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time, the purpose of the study, and the procedures I intended to use in the collection of data. Also addressed were the issues of confidentiality regarding identity of participants, any known risks associated with the study, and any possible benefits for the participants.

A component of the informed consent document was the Protection of Confidentiality which stated that the participant's identity would be kept confidential. Participants were informed that pseudonyms would be assigned to individuals' names and would be used in any potential publications. Additionally, participants were informed that every effort would be made to ensure confidentiality, but that absolute anonymity could not be guaranteed.

Participant Demographics

In Table 1, basic demographic information is displayed about the participants. The information is listed in the same order in which the interviews were conducted.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

	Darren	Gary	Jefferson	Alonzo	Kevin	Marshall	Alex	Kennedy
Age	30	31	38	33	31	26	61	35
Marital Status	Divorced	Single	Married	Single	Single	Married	Married	Divorced
Occupation	Service Rep.	Chef	Operations Director	Coach	Coach	Project Manager	Housing Agent	Personnel Manager
Ethnicity	AA	AA	AA	AA	C	C	C	AA
Years lived in New Orleans	30	31	38	4	4	2	61	35
Educational Level	B	B	Some College	B	B	M	B	B
Estimated years of friendship(s)	15	14	10	15-20	15	8	30-40	15

Note: Ethnicity: AA = African American, C = Caucasian; Degree: B = Bachelor's Degree, M = Master's Degree

Participant Profiles

In this section, participant profiles are presented to introduce the participants and provide descriptive information. The demographic information was compiled based on information collected on the interview protocol (see Appendix D) and during the interview using a field notes protocol (see Appendix E). A pseudonym was assigned to each participant to safeguard confidentiality. A group profile is presented to provide a broad perspective of the participant group, and then individual participants are described.

Group Profile

Eight self-professed heterosexual males were interviewed; the interviews were audio recorded. Ages of the men ranged from 30 to 61 years old. Five participants self-identified as

African American and the remaining three identified as Caucasian. Seven held at least a bachelor's degree; the remaining participant had attended college but did not earn a baccalaureate degree. Only one participant had earned a master's degree. Their marital statuses were varied: two were divorced, three were single, and three were married. The length of time that participants had lived in New Orleans varied from a low of two years to a high of 61 years. Finally, the duration of participants' personal friendship(s) ranged from 8 years to 40 years.

Darren. Darren is a 30-year-old, divorced African American who holds a Bachelor of Science degree. Darren is a native New Orleanian. He works as a representative of the military. The interview was conducted in a conference room at Darren's place of employment. The length of the friendship he discussed is 15 years. Throughout the interview, Darren appeared to be calm, relaxed, and welcoming, but he seemed cautious about his answers.

Gary. Gary is a 30-year-old, single African American who has earned a Bachelor of Science degree. Gary identified the average length of his closest friendships, which began while he was a college student, as having lasted about 14 years. Although Gary attended college outside the New Orleans area, he has lived in the New Orleans the majority of his life. Gary works in the HRT (hotel, restaurant, tourism) industry. Gary was talkative and seemed excited about talking about his friends. He was animated throughout the discussion and seemed to genuinely enjoy talking about his friends. The interview was conducted in a study at Gary's home.

Jefferson. Jefferson is a 38-year-old, married, African American. Jefferson is a father of two adolescent children. Jefferson indicated that he has some college experience, but that his most meaningful friendships have developed since leaving college. Jefferson is an operations manager and is a lifelong resident of the Greater New Orleans area.

Alonzo. Alonzo is a 33-year-old, single, African American with a Bachelor of Art degree. He works in higher education. The mood of the interview with Alonzo ranged from highly intense to light-hearted to insightful. His thoughts came through with conviction, evidenced by a furrowed brow when he spoke specifically about those males closest to him. Family and friendship were used almost interchangeably as he responded to the probes during the interview. Alonzo is a relative newcomer to New Orleans, having lived in the area for four years. His most significant friendships have lasted an estimated 15 to 20 years.

Kevin. Kevin is a 31-year-old unmarried Caucasian who holds a Bachelor of Arts degree. He is a recent resident of New Orleans, having lived there for only four years. Kevin moved to New Orleans to take a position in athletic coaching. His closest friendships have lasted nearly 15 years. Kevin's responses were thoughtful and confident and, at times, seemed measured.

Marshall. Marshall is a 26-year-old, married Caucasian who works as a project manager. Marshall is relatively new to the New Orleans area; he has lived here for only two years. Marshall has a master's degree. His perspective was different from most of the other participants in that he has lived in New Orleans the shortest amount of time and he was actively looking to establish new friendships.

Alex. Alex is a 61-year-old Caucasian. Alex has a Bachelor of Science degree and works as a housing director. He is married and has several children. Alex is a native New Orleanian and has lived in the New Orleans area his entire life. Alex's most enduring friendship has lasted over 40 years. He was the only participant over the age of 40.

Kennedy. Kennedy is a 30-year-old, African-American father of two. He is not and has never been married. He earned a bachelor's degree and has lived in New Orleans most of his

life. His time spent outside of New Orleans corresponds with his time in college. He works as a coach for college athletics. Kennedy was able to trace one of his friendships back to childhood, referring to a neighbor who lived across the street. Kennedy was the least talkative of all the participants, but in no way was he uncooperative.

Data Collection

Participant Interviews

The primary form of data collection consisted of in-depth interviews with each participant. Each interview took place in a location mutually agreed upon, and was a venue in which the interviewees were comfortable. The interviews were ultimately completed in either work offices or conference rooms at work sites. Although one hour was allotted for each interview, most of the interviews averaged 45 minutes.

I audio recorded and transcribed all the interviews. I followed an interview protocol (see Appendix D), which Gay et al. (2009) described as a guide or list of issues. I used a protocol to guide my observations and to provide a framework that aided in the organization and categorization of data. The interview protocol consisted of demographic information (i.e., name, age, marital status, occupation, and ethnicity) about the participants followed by 14 probes relevant to the research questions. The probes were used to keep me on track during the interview and elicit responses from the participants.

After the transcripts were reviewed and each participant's analysis was completed, the participants were contacted via phone. During the phone call each was asked if he preferred an electronic or hard copy be delivered to him. All requested an electronic version which was subsequently e-mailed for review. Participants were allowed five days to review the transcript of his interview, as well as the analysis of the transcript from his interview, for accuracy. The

participants were offered a follow-up interview to discuss any reflections or thoughts they wanted to add from the first interview. All declined the second interview. One participant pointed out that I had inadvertently used his friend's real name and requested that a quote be removed because he felt the quote would embarrass his friend. The friend's name was replaced by a pseudonym and the quote stricken from the analysis.

Field Notes

I used field notes to make notations during the interviews. Field notes, as described by Creswell (2005), are texts an observer records during an observation. In this case, the observations consisted of the interviews I conducted. Furthermore, field notes are used to describe all aspects of the situation to the best of the observer's ability. Gay et al. (2009) identified two types of information that field notes typically include. The first type of information is descriptive in nature and includes what the researcher saw and heard during the interview. The second type of information is reflective and is the researcher's personal reactions, thoughts, and experiences during the interview. Additionally, Gay et al. (2009) suggested the use of a protocol to aid with taking consistent field notes across multiple observations or interviews. I used a field notes protocol (see Appendix E). Field notes were used in my validation procedures to address possible researcher bias.

Photo-Language

Supplemental data collection was achieved using photo-language. Photo-language makes use of photographs to help the research participants better express themselves verbally (White, Sasser, Bogren, & Morgan, 2009). According to White et al., photo-language helps participants recall past experiences and bring those experiences from the subconscious to the conscious. Creswell (2007) referred to this method of data collection as "photo elicitation" (p. 129). Photo-

language or photo elicitation allows the use of photos, supplied by the researcher and/or the participants, to stimulate discussion of the research questions. In this study, only photos supplied by the researcher were used.

The use of photographs is a creative way to gain more insight into a participant's perceptions. Photo elicitation has been used successfully in multiple studies to extract information from participants (Hurworth, 2003). Hurworth cited studies in which farmers' attitudes toward modern implementations were studied, changes within towns were reviewed, and housing in American cities was investigated. Participants in these and other cited studies reported that the use of photographs in addition to interviews promoted deeper reflection. My intention in using photos was to broaden the possibility of participant reflection and potentially jar memories which would add to the richness of the collected data. The participants were able to recall stories or incidents that were foundational in their experience of friendships.

Participants were asked to supply pictures of their past and/or current same-sex friendships as an aid in discussion. Also, participants were asked to select pictures prior to the interview and have the pictures readily available for viewing and discussion during the interview. Although each participant was asked in advance to supply photos of himself with his friends and their pictures with them to the initial interviews, none of the participants supplied pictures or brought pictures to the interviews. Each participant told me that he simply forgot to bring the pictures with him to the interview.

I anticipated that participants might not bring photos and prepared for this by supplying images of my own. I performed an Internet search using the search engine GoogleTM for the term "male friendship" and selected seven images from the results and pasted those images into a document (see Figure 1). During the course of the interviews, when participants were asked

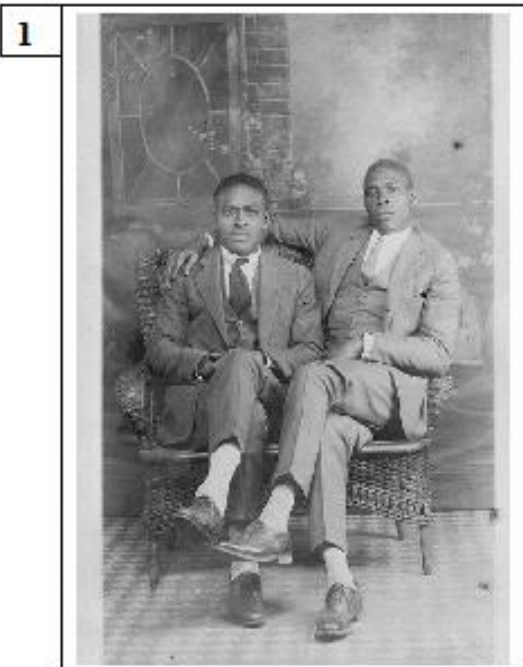
about photos, I presented the images to them and asked them to speak about the images that most appealed to them as representing male friendship. Specifically, I asked the participants to think of their closest friendship. Several of the participants spoke more in terms of groups of friends rather than a single friendship.

None of the images were identified as poor representations for male friendships, but participants consistently expressed preferences for which were better. Of the seven images used, image 1 was chosen the least frequently, with only one participant selecting that image as a good portrayal of male friendship. Image 2 was the most frequently selected photo, with five participants selecting that image as the best portrayal of male friendships. Images 3 through 7 were all selected as secondary or tertiary choices for good photo representations of male friendships.

Commonalities in responses included the participants' estimation that men depicted in image 5 might be fraternity brothers. Image 4 was equally appraised as either being overly childish and immature or as just a group of guys having fun. Both image 3 and image 6 received comments regarding the positions of the men. Some participants thought the photos accurately represented male friendships, while others thought the photos were inaccurate representations. The images of men embracing stirred positive and negative responses, with the predominant opinion that for some guys that would be okay, but it was not something that most guys would do. Overall, the images were useful in stimulating discussion. Specific comments and responses are included in each participant's profile in chapter 4.

Figure 1

Images of Male Friendship



Data Analysis

The analysis consisted of a systematic review of collected data. After interviews were conducted, I transcribed the tapes verbatim. The first step in the analysis was to read the transcripts to get a basic understanding of what each participant said. During the review of each individual transcript, I wrote notes to begin to identify themes (Rake & Paley, 2009).

Additionally, my thoughts, observations, and reflections were recorded as reactions to the text (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). My next step was to utilize the procedure suggested by Smith and Osborn (2007), that the left-hand margin was used for initial reactions at the first reading and the right-hand margin be used for subsequent readings to document emerging themes. In this step, my aim was to use the original notes to form concise phrases that captured the gist of what each participant actually said. During this process, I was able to link the emerging themes back to quotes from the original text (Pringle, Hendry, & McLafferty, 2011). The processes of reading, re-reading, labeling, and identifying themes were utilized for all interviews and transcripts.

The next step required grouping together themes that emerged from repeated readings of transcripts. Smith and Osborn (2007) suggested writing all identified themes from reviewed transcripts in a chronological order, in the sequence in which they occurred in the transcript. Once that ordering has taken place, a more analytical grouping or clustering of the themes from the texts can be undertaken. In this phase themes were connected, combined, eliminated, and collapsed. Also, in this phase I used the thick, rich quotes and phrases from the transcripts to connect and support the themes (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

According to Biggerstaff and Thompson (2008), the next step is constructing a master list or table of themes which are arranged into super-ordinate categories or sub-themes. These

authors indicated that repetition or frequency that a theme occurs should not be the only criterion used to designate it as super-ordinate category. Rather, the richness of the text, how the theme supports participants' accounts, and how the theme informs the participants' account should also be considered. Finally, I listed super-ordinate categories within a table based on the number of participants who discussed the category.

Validation Procedures

In demonstrating the academic rigor of a qualitative research project, the expectation is that the final study assures a level of trustworthiness or validity (Golafshani, 2003). Shank (2006) combined the elements of credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability to compose the concept of trustworthiness, based on the landmark study by Lincoln and Guba (1985). However, the individual elements have been interpreted differently, leading to some crossover and confusion (Creswell, 2007). Jackson, Drummond and Camara (2007) referred to the same terminology used by Shank (i.e., credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability), but applied slightly different meanings. Gay et al. (2009) also applied different definitions to the same terms. Creswell (2007) listed seven varying views when discussing validity in qualitative research indicating a wide range of terms used in qualitative studies. Despite these variations, Creswell (2009) concluded that validation strategies are important to check the accuracy of findings in a research project.

Reflexivity

One validation method is reflexivity, which addresses researcher bias. According to Johnson (1997), reflexivity is the researcher's process of actively and critically self-reflecting about potential biases, suppositions, predispositions, and prejudices. When the researcher makes transparent his or her position, beliefs, and biases at the commencement of the project, readers

can have a better understanding of assumptions that may impact the study (Creswell, 2007). Reflexivity is an important tool in establishing self-awareness and monitoring one's biases (Johnson, 1997). According to Padgett (2004), reflexivity is an important component in research because the researcher serves as the fundamental tool in qualitative research. Creswell (2007) referred to the use of bracketing as a component in reflexivity. Bracketing is the attempt of the researcher to disregard personal experiences and preconceived ideas about a topic to better understand the experiences of the participants.

Although it was impossible for me to totally suspend or bracket my personal experiences, I attempted to use and exercise reflexivity. I was cognizant that I do have biases and my awareness of these biases could add credibility to the study. Hopefully, through exercising awareness I avoided "finding what I wanted to find, then writing up the results" (Johnson, 1997, p. 283). I brought to the research study my own personal, underlying assumptions. The subject of friendship is of great personal interest to me and the study was inspired by my own experiences. Due to my personal interest in this topic, I needed to be mindful and consider my biases as I proceeded in my research.

First and foremost are my own interpretations and expectations of what friendship "looks" like, based on my own experiences. As a male who has been involved in many friendships, it was reasonable to assume that I had preconceived notions about characteristics of male friendships which included not only the elements that I believed comprised friendship, but the expectations placed on friendships. I believe men place a high value on friendship. Through conversations with friends, peers, and colleagues, I have heard that men do not nurture or work at building and maintaining friendships. I believe this to be untrue. As such, I expect that men place a higher value on their friendships than typically believed.

Also, I personally believe that most men do not fit the stereotypes popularly represented in media. In my opinion, movies and television shows that depict men's friendships as drunken revelry accented with debauchery and high school antics misrepresent the majority of male friendships. These types of behaviors may be true of some male friendships; however, I do not believe the representation of male friendships in popular media is accurate. I believe a deeper, more substantial quality of friendship exists among many men.

Member Checking

A second method of helping to ensure accurate and valid reporting of data is member checking. Member checking is designed to allow participants to review and critique the findings and interpretations of the interviewer, thus achieving greater clarity and accuracy in reporting the data (Johnson, 1997). Johnson described member checking as a means of avoiding miscommunication through the process of sharing interpretations with participants before completing the research. Baxter and Jack (2008) added an additional layer to member checking, by including the opportunity for participants to contribute new or additional information to the data collected.

To address member checking in my study, I e-mailed each participant my initial analysis and interpretation of the data for review. In addition to giving participants the opportunity to read transcripts, each participant was offered a follow up interview which afforded them the opportunity to ask questions, add new information and reflection, or challenge the results. Participants declined the second meeting and one participant asked for two corrections to his analysis. Both issues were addressed as the participant requested.

Peer Debriefing

The final validation strategy I used was peer debriefing. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) defined a peer debriefer as a “disinterested colleague who engages in discussions of the researcher’s preliminary analyses and the next methodological strategies in an emergent design” (p. 412). Creswell (2007) asserted that a peer debriefer is one who challenges the researcher’s methods and interpretations with the intention of maintaining honesty. Additionally, according to Creswell, peer debriefing may serve as an outlet for the researcher to express feelings and thoughts generated by the research study.

The peer debriefer I identified for my research project is a colleague who completed a qualitative research study to earn her doctorate in counselor education. We conversed after the data were collected and transcribed, to discuss my initial reactions. We conversed a second time after I analyzed the data. Finally we met to discuss themes and super ordinate themes. My analyses were made available to the debriefer for review, but the main emphasis in our meetings was to review processes and challenge whether my personal biases interfered with interpretation.

Summary

In summation, chapter three contains the methodology for conducting this research. A review of what was presented includes sections on the purpose statement, research questions and research design. Included in the research design is a description of how participants were chosen, how data was collected and analyzed, as well as, validation procedures and this researcher’s biases.

Chapter IV

Results

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine heterosexual males' perceptions and experiences of their male-to-male friendships. Participants' reflections on their friendships through their personal life experiences were gathered to explore a definition of male friendship, the components of male friendship, the social expectations of male friendship, and the expression of male friendship.

Chapter four includes a discussion of data analysis procedures, results of the within-case analysis, results of the cross-case analysis, and findings by research question. Finally a summary of chapter four is included.

Data Analysis Procedures

A systematic review of collected data was conducted after interviews were recorded and transcribed. I interviewed eight participants using open-ended interviews with a protocol to establish consistency across the interviews. I completed field notes immediately after each interview and transcribed interviews verbatim. I reviewed all of the transcripts to gain a thorough understanding of each of the participants' perspectives. I utilized the processes of reading, re-reading, labeling, and identifying themes for each interview and resulting transcripts. Specific quotes were selected to illustrate the essence of the participant's views and statements within each analysis of the transcripts.

In the first reading, I read a transcript for content and to gain a perspective on what a participant said. In subsequent readings, I recorded notes in the margins which consisted of my reactions, thoughts, and initial identification of thematic elements. I identified themes by both repetition and the strength with which the participant spoke. I narrowed themes by reviewing

and grouping of similar ideas. Additional readings led to the identification of themes and initial naming of themes for each participant. Quotes were identified within the context of a transcript to support the theme as identified.

After I identified themes for all transcripts, the themes were analyzed across participants and clustered into super-ordinate themes using a more analytical grouping. In this process, I connected, combined, eliminated, and collapsed themes into a master list or table of super-ordinate themes. The repetition and frequency of a theme, as well as the richness of the text, how the theme supported participants' accounts, and how the theme informed the participants' account were the criteria used to designate themes as super-ordinate.

Validation Procedures

I used validation procedures that were identified in chapter 3 in an attempt to ensure accuracy of reporting and the findings. Reflexivity, member checking, and peer debriefing were the validation procedures used.

I used reflexivity throughout the data analysis in an attempt to keep my personal biases, feelings, and experiences from affecting the manner in which I analyzed the data and reported the findings. My intended effect of reflexivity was to allow the participants' story to be relayed in their voices, free from my personal biases, feelings, and experiences.

I accomplished member checking by allowing each participant to review my analysis and report of his interview transcript. Participants were contacted via phone and asked whether they wanted an electronic version or a printed version of the analysis. All participants requested an electronic version which was subsequently sent via the participants' personal e-mail addresses. I followed a timetable for review and follow up with each participant. After three days, according to the arranged time schedule, I contacted and questioned each participant as to whether he felt

the transcript was accurately reported and whether there were any additions, deletions, or corrections needed. One participant requested that two corrections be made to his transcript. The first correction was the unintentional reference to his friend by his real name rather than the assigned pseudonym. The other correction was a request to remove a sentence that the participant thought was too personal in the description of his friend. Both corrections were addressed as requested. Each participant was also asked whether he would like to schedule an in-person follow up interview. All participants declined the second interview.

I used peer debriefing to challenge the methods used and the honesty of the writing and the findings. My peer debriefer reviewed my interpretations and analysis per iteration of the emergent themes. I was questioned as to whether the themes were appropriate and whether the analysis of themes reported what the participants stated. My personal biases, feelings, and experiences were challenged to encourage accurate reporting.

Within-Case Analysis: Themes

This section includes an analysis of each participant's transcribed interview and the themes that emerged from each interview. To support the themes, each participant's words are used to convey his perspective and meaning of the interview. As much as possible, direct quotes were used, with minimal editing only for the purposes of correcting grammar and making the document more readable. A total of 52 themes were derived from the within-case analysis of the eight participant interview transcripts. Table 2 depicts the themes by individual participant.

Table 2

Participant Themes: Within Case Analysis

Darren	Gary	Jefferson	Alonzo	Kevin	Marshall	Alex	Kennedy
30 yr. AA, BS	31 yr. AA, BS	38 yr. AA, none	33 yr. AA, BA	31 yr. C, BA	26 yr. C, MCRP	61 yr. C, BS	35 yr. AA, BIDS
Trust	Friends can confront each other honestly	Trust	Dependable in time of need	Being there with and for each other	Shared interests and experiences	Trust	Friends are like family
Limited display of affection	Trust	Someone I can confide in	Respect	Commitment	Friendship forms over time	Friendship lasts across time	Trust
Comfort	Has my back	Someone I can depend on	Friends confront each other honestly	Physical touch is limited	Friends are there through difficult times	Care and concern	Honesty
Friendship develops over time	Friends are like family	Shared spiritual beliefs	Bonding through shared experiences	Shared interests and experiences	Social expectations	Level of comfort	No pretense
Friends are like family	Pride	Similarities in lifestyle	Fear of appearing feminine	Friendships are difficult to maintain	Minimal physical contact	Differences between male and female friendship	Being there
Communicate without words	Selectivity of friends	A friend is like a brother	Different values can impede friendship	Taboos		The significance of male friendship	Physical contact
Careful not to appear feminine or gay	Women and money can come between friends	Expressing love		A different connotation			Friendships change over time

Note. Yr. = participant's age; AA = African American; C = Caucasian; BS = Bachelor of Science; BA = Bachelor of Arts; BIDS = Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies; MCRP = Master in City and Regional Planning

Darren. Darren is a 30-year old, divorced African American man who holds a Bachelor of Science degree and is a native of New Orleans. In his interview, he focused on a friendship he has had for 15 years.

After I transcribed and reviewed the transcript from the interview with Darren, I identified seven themes: *trust, a limited display of affection, comfort, friendship develops over time, friends are like family, communicate without words, and careful not to appear feminine or gay*. Each theme is discussed in the following paragraphs and is supported with direct quotes taken from the interview transcript. With minor corrections, the quotes are verbatim.

The first theme derived from Darren's transcript, *trust*, was an important factor for him in considering someone as a friend in his life, in comparison to others who would not be included in his circle of friends. He stated, "I guess I have a problem with trusting everybody. So, the ones I don't call a friend, it's not that I don't trust them, but I haven't gotten a chance to know them well enough to consider them my friend." When asked to define friendship, Darren's response was, "A friend is someone I can trust, I can tell something to and not be worried that it is going to get half way around the world. Someone that has my back in the time of need." The expression "has my back" was repeated as an example of trust when Darren stated, "I mean just, if something is going on in my family we are there for each other. I know he has my back."

Limited display of affection was the second theme. Darren commented that an observer might not see a physical display of affection between him and his friends. For Darren, an open display of affection is a rarity. He explained, "You may not see the display of affection except on special occasions, like birthdays, graduations, something going on with the family. Other than that you really don't see that type of interaction between two heterosexual men." When Darren viewed the images presented to him he indicated that image 4 reminded him of the way

he and his friends get along with one another. Image 4 depicts three men in what appears to be horseplay or a form of wrestling with one another. The men are interlocked with arms and one is in a headlock. I pointed out that there seemed to be a lot of physical contact, specifically touching, in that photo. Darren responded that the photo was indicative to him of close friendship for the reason that he and his friends sometimes engage in horseplay like the photo depicted.

For someone to be that comfortable with you and you put your hands on another guy, that to me is, um, I'm trying not to put words in your mouth. I'm trying to be careful how I say it, but...For me, since I'm shy, I wouldn't play around with just anyone like that. It would have to be someone that I'm very comfortable with to play around like that.

Experiencing a level of comfort is essential in the third theme, *comfort*. Darren explained, "To me, friends getting together for probably a beer, cards, a football game or basketball game. I would be very comfortable around that person. I'm shy, but I'm more open with my friends." For Darren, comfort is related to the previous theme of limited physical contact. As stated above, Darren limits physical touch to those with whom he has a level of comfort. He stated, "For someone to be that comfortable with you and you put your hands on another guy...it would have to be someone that I'm very comfortable with to play around like that."

A level of comfort was a factor in Darren's fourth theme, *friendship develops over time*. His friendships have been years in the making. He identified his friends as men whom he has known for a considerable length of time. "Most of my friendships have probably been about 15 years now since high school." Asked how he would come to identify someone as a friend, Darren responded, "It has to deal with the amount of time I've known the person, especially with

friendships. I just think it takes time for a person to become a friend, for you to become comfortable.”

The fifth theme identified in Darren’s interview was *friends are like family*. Based on Darren’s comments, friends and family are equally important. Darren succinctly expressed the value he places on friendship when he stated, “I consider my friends my family. Not blood brothers, but just like family. I value my friendships like I value my family.”

As Darren continued to speak, he made no distinction between family and friend. Although he was speaking about friends, Darren used the term “family” when he stated, “I mean just, if something is going on in the family we are there for each other.” On a different occasion, he gave a similar response; “You may not see the display of affection except on special occasions, like birthdays, graduations, something going on with the family.”

Darren expressed the belief that men, in general, do not communicate easily. He believes that his friends *communicate without words*, which constitutes the sixth theme. When asked how men communicate with each other regarding friendship, Darren responded, “I don’t think they communicate at all. It seems to be understood, that this is my friend. But from my experience, you never get men going into detail, expressing how someone is their friend.” He added that because he is close to his friends, communication can sometimes happen without words. Describing the relationship with his best friend, Darren stated, “We just have a closeness. I know they are in my corner when I’m dealing with something. My friends know me, they know when something is bothering me; they know if it’s something I want to say and I may not say it, they know if I’m biting my tongue. So it’s someone who really knows you.”

The seventh and final theme derived from Darren’s transcript was *careful not to appear feminine or gay*. He drew a distinction between how women and men communicate when he

stated that “women can say things to women, like ‘you look cute,’ but a man could probably never say that to another man, even if it is his friend.” He made it clear that the possibility of appearing feminine or being perceived as homosexual was unacceptable in his friendships. He alluded to the fear of appearing feminine when he stated, “I guess that two men can’t be close without having some other aspect or homosexual aspect involved. A lot of people are not comfortable with that.” Once again addressing how he and his friends express friendship, Darren commented, “Like I said, men generally do not express that very well. Maybe because of the fear of being viewed as homosexual.”

Gary. Gary is a 31-year-old, single, African-American man. He is a native of New Orleans with a Bachelor of Science degree. Gary works in the HRT (hotel, restaurant, tourism) industry.

The interview with Gary seemed highly energized and filled with excitement. It was obvious that Gary had given considerable thought to the relationships he identified as friendships. When asked about male friendship, Gary appeared eager to talk about his closest friends, two men to whom he consistently referred to throughout the interview.

After I transcribed and reviewed the transcript from the interview with Gary, seven themes were identified: *friends can confront each other honestly, trust, has my back, friends are like family, pride, selectivity of friends* and *women and money can come between friends*. The themes are discussed in the following paragraphs and each theme is supported with direct quotes taken from the interview transcript. With minor corrections, the quotes are verbatim.

The first theme to emerge from the interview with Gary was *friends can confront each other honestly*. For Gary and his friends, talking through difficult situations includes the ability to be confrontational. Gary related a time he was having trouble with a female in a relationship.

“It takes a real friend to tell you ‘we got to talk.’ I mean I’m going through a relationship thing; I was cheating on my girlfriend. [My friends told me] ‘Hey man, that’s a good girl. You either need to decide that’s who you want to be with or you need to leave her alone. But don’t string her along.’ So there is nothing that I’m afraid to talk to them about or tell them and nothing they are afraid to tell me either.”

Speaking later in the interview, Gary described a similar incident that underscored, for him, friends not only confront each other but they value each other’s opinions.

“Maybe coming from someone else I would react differently, but coming from them, I would be like, ‘damn, I have to look at myself now. For you to say something, I know something must be wrong or something I’m doing must be wrong.’ Whereas if someone else said it I would think, man, what are you talking about? You don’t know what you talking about ‘cuz I don’t even value your opinion. But theirs I do. I value their opinions a lot.”

Gary believed strongly that he could talk through difficult situations honestly with his friends and he expected the same from them.

So you know, even if things are hard to say, we say ‘it might hurt your feelings a little bit, but.’ So it may sound like we’re being hard on each other, but we are not. It’s like if I feel Errol (pseudonym) is tripping or doing something or whatever. We call and we can check each other. They have to do it to me, just like I have to do it to them. So being a friend is not always ha-ha and laughter and sometimes it get to you have to hear the truth and sometimes the truth hurts. But that’s a real friend.

The second theme to emerge from this interview was *trust*. Gary stated, “People may think they only have to have something in common to be their friend. I know people like that.

As long as we have something in common, we're cool. But that's not me. I have to know I can trust you and I have been in situations where I needed to trust somebody. If I can't trust you, I can't be around you." At a different point in the interview, he reiterated the importance of trust;

Someone who I know I can count on to be there for me, no matter what. No matter if I have a good job or not, no matter whether I have power in my hand or whatever.

Someone I can trust. Trust is the main thing. I have had people who I stopped dealing with them because I couldn't trust them. I've been in situations where I couldn't count on them and so you know. That's a big thing. If I can call on you and you're going to be there for me and I can trust you, then you know that's my friend.

For Gary, trust extends to relationships with wives and girlfriends. For instance, speaking about trust and loyalty, Gary related;

I can say that with my friend Errol; if he is not at his house, he'll say 'man, go in until I get home.' I go in and his girl is there cooking dinner and I'm watching TV. She's so comfortable with me that she would tell me, 'I'm going take a shower before Errol comes,' and she knows I'm not going to try anything, I'm not going to try and catch a peek or nothing crazy like that. Because believe it or not there are people like that. Things like that, that's when you know it's a friend. We trust each other around each other's wives and girlfriends.

Has my back was the third theme identified in Gary's transcript. Gary used the expression "has my back" as he spoke about his friends. When I asked him about the usage of that phrase, his response was lengthy and detailed.

Well, what it means to me is good or bad as it sounds, whether we've been in situations like this, I can be right or wrong and they are there for me. You know, so they will have

my back. I realized that certain people want to be around you for a certain reason, but when stuff gets thick, they're nowhere to be found. And, I know they had my back. We've been in situations when it was just us three and I was about to get into it with someone or about to have a fight...they were right there on the side of me and I know they are going to be. I know that if I call them right now, and something happens, you know they are there. My friend Errol told his girlfriend, 'I just don't know what it is, but we are so tight that if Gary says we had to do something and I might not know if it's a good idea and something may come of it – that's my boy and we got to do it.' That's just how it is. It could be anything, I mean, lending money, just talking if they are going through something. Just anything.

The theme that friends have each other's back was also expressed when Gary spoke about trust when he made the statement, "If I can call on you and you're going to be there for me and I can trust you, then you know that's my friend."

The fourth theme was *friends are like family*. Family is important to Gary and he values his relationships with his friends to the extent that he likens them to family members.

Ronald and Errol (pseudonyms) are like my brothers. They come around to family functions. They have a close bond with me. They held my little brother in their arms. So they know [him]. They met [him] the first time I did it. When I was at [university], when [little brother] was born, they came down with me. They held him right after I held him.

Gary alluded to family at a different point in the interview, explaining that "We are like one big family. They may not even introduce me as their friend. They say this is my brother. So much so that Errol has a younger brother that I met him when he was 10 or 11 and he introduces me as

his brother. Errol had a rough upbringing. He's said I see y'all more than my brothers, so really y'all are my brothers."

Throughout the interview Gary spoke about taking *pride* in his friends, which illuminated the fifth theme. When I asked Gary about his thoughts on participating in my study, he responded, "I feel like I have two real good friends already. I basically wanted to brag on my friends. I don't know what other people you were going to talk to, but I know the two people I'm cool with that's real friends." Gary continued to discuss his pride in his two friends, stating, "When you said male friendships, the first thing I pictured is my two best friends. It's just when I heard it and I heard about doing this with you I thought, man, I get to talk about my boys because everybody that knows us knows all about us. Their wives and girlfriends make fun of us because we are so tight."

The sixth theme ascribed to Gary, *selectivity of friends*, emerged from his description of people Gary said are not his friends. Gary made it clear that not everyone is allowed into his realm of friendship. He stated, "I've heard people getting hurt or killed by their own friends or people they thought was their friend. People we grew up with that this one did something to such and such. And I'm thinking, man, what could cause someone to do that to someone they grew up with or someone they called their friend. That's why I don't use that term loosely. I have a lot of associates and I don't have a lot of friends. When I was younger I thought I had a lot of friends, but as I got older, I realize I don't."

Equally important to Gary was the idea that his friends are true friends. Relating times when other men, whom he does not identify as friends, had come to him for advice, Gary said, "And I'll ask them, 'what about so and so' and they say, 'well I can't really talk to them about stuff like this.' And I'm thinking in the back of my head, if you can't talk about stuff like this,

well what's the point of even having friends, because that's what they are supposed to be there for?"

The seventh and final theme in the interview with Gary was *women and money can come between friends*. Gary was adamant that two primary issues have negatively affected his relationships with other men in the past: money, and women.

On one occasion, Gary noted that behaviors related to women can cause rifts in friendship, saying, "Girls get in the way of a lot because it's weird that you think somebody is your friend until. I know some people who tried to sleep with their friend's girlfriend, or go behind their back and do things like that or letting a girl drive wedges between friends. A girl will never drive a wedge between us, that's one thing."

Gary also discussed how money could be problematic in friendships.

I've seen a lot of backstabbing. I've seen money come between friends. I've had friends who were no good that did other things. Illegal things. They used to hustle or whatever to get it and I've seen money come between friends. Like money, women, but all the other stuff like lying and backstabbing, but I think money and women is the reason behind all of it. I've heard people getting hurt or killed by their own friends or people they thought was their friend.

Jefferson. Jefferson is a 38-year-old, married, African American parent. Jefferson has some college experience, but his most meaningful friendships have developed since leaving college. Jefferson is an operations manager and has been a lifelong resident of the Greater New Orleans area.

Throughout the interview, Jefferson was introspective, often taking time to consider his thoughts before articulating answers. It was evident that he had given thought to the value and

meaning of friendship in his life. Jefferson's responses often seemed philosophical. For instance, he stated, "In life you come across a lot of people, you meet a lot of people. A lot of time we hear the word used loosely, as far as this person is my friend, but I don't think everybody has the same value as far as friendship and I don't look at friendship the same way."

After I transcribed and reviewed the transcript from Jefferson's interview, seven themes emerged: *trust, someone I can confide in, someone I can depend on, shared spiritual beliefs, similarities in lifestyle, a friend is like a brother and expressing love*. Each theme is discussed in the following paragraphs with examples taken from the interview transcript. With minor corrections, the quotes are verbatim.

The first theme identified in the transcript of the interview with Jefferson was *trust*. Jefferson connected true friendship to trust when he stated, "To me a friend is someone that you feel you can confide in without that information going to anyone else unless it is information that could cause that person that's sharing that information with bodily harm. To me a friend is someone that you are able to trust."

Jefferson underscored the value he puts on trust when he stated, "You know from the responses that I've given, trust is one of the biggest things. So, you know, given that information, you realize that in order to maintain a friendship, trust is one of the biggest things men look for from a relationship standpoint."

The second theme that emerged from the interview with Jefferson was *someone I can confide in*. He described the importance of being able to confide in friends. "To me a friend is someone you are able to confide in. Someone you can talk to about certain things that you can't talk to anybody about. I think of friends and acquaintances. I think a friend is someone you would be able to share things with and an acquaintance you would be kind of mindful about what

you say and how you say it.” Jefferson spoke freely about the ability to confide in his friend regarding important life issues. He stated, “This is someone that whatever it is that I am going through I know without a shadow of a doubt that I can bring certain situations to him. Whether it is dealing with my marriage, whether it is dealing with my kids, whether it is a shortcoming from a natural standpoint, I know if he is able to help me, I know he would help.” For Jefferson, the ability to confide in his friends was related to the previous theme of being able to trust friends to keep information confidential: “To me a friend is someone that you feel you can confide in without that information going to anyone else.”

Someone I can depend on was the third identified theme. Jefferson said that he and his friend are a source of encouragement for each other, in that they are mutually supportive and can depend on each other in times of need. “So at any time if something was to happen with him or if needed or if he fell short with something, if I had it, he had it. If I ever fell short, if I needed help with something, he would do the same for me.”

Jefferson used the expression “going through something” on different occasions. For instance, “A friend is someone you can call on when you are going through something. Whatever it is that you are going through, something with your wife or something with your kids, you know someone that you can reach out to.”

Jefferson said that he knows he can depend on his friend to keep his word and that keeping one’s word is vital in friendship. “I think your word is everything. I think a lot of time men say we are going to do so and so or we will commit ourselves to things. My thing is don’t tell me you are going to do something and when it is time to do it, it doesn’t get done. If that happens too many times, then you are guessing whether or not if that person is truly a friend.”

Shared spiritual beliefs was the fourth theme drawn from Jefferson's interview.

Jefferson and his friend share strong spiritual beliefs. Jefferson related the spiritual bond by saying, "I think it is good to have a friend that can encourage you from a spiritual standpoint also. You know because sometimes we get caught up in trying to do things ourselves when we actually have a Greater Help. Sometimes we tend to forget, that we actually have to tap into that Greater Help. And having a friend that has that spiritual component, that's able to help you, and encourage you in that area is truly a blessing."

Jefferson and his friend had *similarities in lifestyle*, which constituted the fifth theme. Jefferson spoke about areas of their lives that he and his friend have in common, that enable them to bond. He indicated that both their wives and their kids are friends, and the families attend church together, which makes it easier for them to spend time together. "Due to the times that we spend together, I guess it is more that we are into the same things, as far as from a church standpoint. Our wives know one another; our kids play together, so me and this individual we are closer than other friends due to that fact." In the discussion of the photos that were supplied, Jefferson reiterated the idea of having things in common. Jefferson, reflecting on image 3, in which three men are standing, backs to the camera, with their arms around each other's necks, said, "Just looking at the picture, I see a couple of friends just hanging out. As far as they are into the same activities and they enjoy the same things in life."

A friend is like a brother was the sixth theme. Jefferson indicated that one of the photos (image 5) reminded him of fraternity brothers. Although he is not a member of a fraternity, Jefferson stated that fraternities exemplify brotherly love. The expression of brotherly love reminded Jefferson of his friend. "Most of the time with fraternities, that's a more brotherly

bond. That reminds me as far as I'm speaking of my friend, we are not actually brothers, but I consider him as a brother because of the type of relationship we have."

The seventh theme was *expressing love*. Jefferson addressed how he expresses his friendship with his friend. Without hesitation he stated, "Whenever we talk, about 50% of the time, I let him know that I love him as we are closing out a conversation or if we are parting ways. Just letting him know that I love him." I responded, "So, you verbally say, 'I love you'?" He simply responded, "Yes."

Alonzo. Alonzo is a 33-year-old, single, African American male. Alonzo earned a Bachelor's of Arts degree and works in higher education. Alonzo is a relative newcomer to New Orleans, having lived in the area for 4 years. His most significant friendships have lasted an estimated 15 to 20 years.

After I transcribed and reviewed the transcript from the interview with Alonzo, six themes emerged. The themes are: *dependable in time of need, respect, friends confront each other honestly, bonding through shared experiences, fear of appearing feminine and different values can impede friendship*. Each theme is discussed in the following paragraphs with examples taken from the interview transcript. With minor corrections, the quotes are verbatim.

The first theme identified in Alonzo's transcript was that friends are *dependable in time of need*. As he reflected on friends, Alonzo stated, "So a lot of those guys, I consider them my friends because we were constantly there for each other no matter what." He further described this component of friendship when he stated, "They basically know the ins and outs of the good and the bad that I have experienced. I don't throw the term friendship out loosely. When it comes to friendship, I know I can trust you and lean on you in time of need and vice versa."

When Alonzo spoke to the length of his closest friendships, he emphasized being dependable. “Within that short period of time leading up to now, I would say those are my true friends, like family to me because we have been there for each other in good and bad. Those are some of my close friends.” Alonzo used the phrase “has my back” to elaborate on what it means to be dependable. He explained, “It brings us closer together because they know when the times get hard and the times get tough, they always go back on that and are like, ‘man he really does have my back he wasn’t just along for the ride, for the good times.’”

The second theme to emerge was *respect*. On several occasions, Alonzo spoke about an expectation of mutuality, beginning with respect. “So just being able to have that respect, you know, for honesty. That’s the only way you get that respect is by being a party and stepping up and say, ‘hey what you are doing is not right,’ even if it costs you losing that friend.” He elaborated on respect in the context of confrontation when he stated, “At the end of the day, they will respect you more than you letting the thing that’s occurring continue to happen without saying anything. If it is stupid things that I’ve done, they would check me and if it’s stupid things they’ve done, I would check them. It’s a mutual respect that we have for each other.” Respect was the underlying theme in Alonzo’s comparison of friendship to family. He stated, “It creates that true bond when you talk about family in a friendship. That friendship turns into family because now that bond is stronger where all the doors are opened to where what’s mine is yours and what’s yours is mine. So, it just creates that bond; that respect level.”

For Alonzo, being able to confront friends when they do “stupid things” is not only a component of respect; it was also an element of the third theme, *friends confront each other honestly*. Being honest means that confrontation or the ability “to check one another” is not only acceptable, it is expected.

From the experiences I had been through, I always wanted someone in my life to be honest and up front with me, even if it hurts. So if I'm going on the wrong path, man, be able to tell me, 'Man what you are doing is not right' in spite of how I may feel because at the end of the day that's what I want someone to do for me and me for them. And so, when we talk about checking people and when I arrive to that, it's just, I want to be a better individual as a whole. By me being a better individual, I want the individuals around me in my circle to be better as well.

Alonzo described a time when confrontation was necessary when relating a specific story regarding a close friend. He explained, "It just came to a point where I had to tell him, 'Man what you are doing is not cool because you know if she finds out, it will be like all hell break loose.' So I had to check him, 'You have to and need to really watch what you are doing.' And I did that in spite of how he would have felt towards me because I know if I were in that same situation, I would want somebody to do the same for me." He elaborated on honesty and confrontation, stating that, "I'm an individual that always says that I want someone to be honest and upfront with me. Just always tell me the truth. Because either way it goes, you are going to hurt me. If you lie to me you are going to hurt me. If you tell me the truth you are going to hurt me. So either way it goes, you might as well tell me the truth."

For Alonzo, honesty is mutual. He values honesty from his friends, and he values being honest with his friends even when they may react negatively to what he tells them.

When we talk about those relationships and those friendships, just being honest and being up front with people, being able to lose something good, because I believe that when we lose something good, we are able to gain something greater. I'm just going to be upfront and honest with you. If I don't agree with it or don't like it, I'm going to let you know. I

don't care how you feel. I can, of course, come off kind of blunt and say it the wrong way, but hey, it is what it is. You know that's how it goes sometimes, so that's just how I live my life to this day."

Alonzo related a time when he felt compelled to share a hard truth with his friend. In speaking about the incident, Alonzo described the ability to speak openly with his friend. "So I say, let me be the one to speak up and say something because at the end of the day if you do those things and you speak up when things are not right, then in turn it's going to save you a lot of heartache."

The fourth theme that emerged was *bonding through shared experiences*. Asked about male friendship in a very general sense, Alonzo responded by stating, "From the standpoint of male bonding, having fun. When we are out just having fun and just talking about each other's experiences and enjoying what we've been going through throughout our lives." When asked for clarification, he added, "Male bonding is basically to me, things that we take interest in. If it's sports, if it's basketball, football, baseball soccer. If it's fraternity, going out to fraternity parties, clubbing, going to church, bible study – just spending quality time with each other from things we take interest in." Alonzo continued to speak about the activities and stated, "If we are on the same playing field for the things that intrigues us, from the standpoint of not getting into sports, but on relationships, or spirituality, or dealing with tough experiences in life."

Bonding through shared experiences included joking and laughing. Reviewing the photos, specifically image 2, Alonzo said, "That one. The reason why I say that is because that's your typical male bonding experience. Kicking back with a drink, telling jokes, joking around, got a lot of space. You are not in my area 24/7, so you know that's just your typical, kickback, we meet up, and let's just hang out and be the fellas. I feel that's what that symbolizes. You

know we literally clown around-a lot of joking and a lot of laughing.” After viewing image 4, he stated that an observer could distinguish between him and his friends or whether he’s with a group that isn’t friends. “But if we are laughing, joking and sometimes our hand around someone’s neck, just playing around, you know that it is genuine. But if it is dull, and still hey what’s up, then you know that’s my associates, But if we are joking and laughing non-stop, messing with each other, then you know it’s genuine.”

Even though Alonzo spoke about touch in the context of horseplay, touch that might be construed as appearing feminine is unacceptable to him. The fifth theme that emerged was *fear of appearing feminine*. Regarding the physical expression of friendship, Alonzo stressed the importance of being “masculine.”

I would say display friendship. It’s just a handshake hug. That’s it. Handshake. Nice, hard hug, laughing and joking, pushing, bumping. Being masculine. Don’t get me wrong, you can be soft at sometimes, but being soft when you show emotions, because they say a man is not supposed to show emotions. He is supposed to be masculine, strong all the time, but it’s an exception to that. When you are at your lowest point, a death in the family, you hit really hard times, being there to talk to them, embrace them, you know, a strong hug, that’s ok. But anything outside of that is not cool.

He elaborated at some length on his belief that appearing feminine is not allowed. Humorously, he said, “As a male, we’re not going out with a whole lot of girls. I don’t want to chill with a whole lot of girls. Social events. No. I don’t want to go to a baby shower. I don’t want to go to a girly concert. I don’t want to see a Beyoncé concert. We just don’t. Not at all, but those are things we don’t want to partake in.” Continuing in the same vein, Alonzo clarified, “But when it comes to social as long as it doesn’t cross the line of becoming masculine

to feminine. That's the only social aspect because a lot of things have come to a point where it's socially acceptable. But it crosses the line when it goes from masculine to feminine."

The sixth theme that was identified in Alonzo's interview was *differing values can impede friendship*. Alonzo discussed values, especially when not shared or held in common, as an impediment in male friendships. He noted that different values, world views, and opinions can be taxing on friendships. He stated,

I think different values are tough because as males, we believe in just a whole lot of different things. Man, from sports, to relationships to work to spirituality, it's just that we view things differently. You may have some males who make excuses for the environment they were raised in and some males do not make excuses for the environment they are raised in, and then you have a conflict. You may have some that believe certain spirituality and another any believe in a different spirituality. There you have different rifts, so just all the different things we believe in as far as our values, standards and morals can create a rift within those male relationships."

Kevin. Kevin recently became a resident of New Orleans. He is a 31-year old, unmarried, Caucasian man with a Bachelor of Arts degree.

I transcribed and reviewed the transcript from the interview with Kevin and seven themes emerged. The themes are: *being there with and for each other, commitment, physical touch is limited, shared interests and experiences, friendships are difficult to maintain, taboos, and a different connotation*. Each theme is discussed in the following paragraphs and is supported with quotes from the interview transcript. With minor corrections, the quotes are verbatim.

Kevin spoke freely about the first theme, *being there with and for each other*. He stated that he knows his friends will be there for him. "A friend is someone that is a confidant.

Someone you are comfortable with sharing your experiences with. You'd be there with them-a bare bones definition.” He expanded on the importance of having someone to talk with at any time, not just in times of need, when he stated, “I think it's good to have someone to talk to in times of need. But also, just to have a regular person to talk to about whatever. Not just work calls. Not just call because it's Sunday, but because it's Wednesday, you're bored and you want to do something. That's probably the most practical value, the one I get the most use out of.”

Kevin's second theme was *commitment*. Kevin emphasized that commitment is necessary for his friendships. “I'd say in a similar way then also just separating a friend from someone I know who is in a tough situation or a personal situation and I would offer encouragement, support, go above and beyond as opposed to just talking to you about my problems. You might say, I'm sorry to hear that, but a friend is going to go beyond and ask, what can I do to help? I think there is a bigger commitment from a friend.”

The third theme, about which Kevin spoke several times, was that *physical touch is limited*. When he was asked whether any of the photos were representations of male friendship, Kevin selected images 3 and 6. Referring to men in the photos who were either embracing each other or leaning on each other's shoulders, he offered, “I can't personally imagine me or anyone else that I know seriously posing for this picture, this picture or this one. That's just not something I would see.” He clarified by adding, “You know, I don't know if that is subconscious or what. But yes, a bunch of guys sitting around is not typically..... You know you'd do some poking fun at each other and bear hugs like that, but I can't see us posing for a picture where our arms are interlocked, in that regard. So it is not something that I would do.”

When Kevin reflected on what he thought might be the outcome of this study, he spoke again about the limitation on touch within male friendships. He stated, “It will definitely be

beneficial from the standpoint of understanding how our minds work, give us an idea of how to approach new friendships, how to maintain old ones. I think from that standpoint the commonality of the issue will also help. But I also think some of it is limited. Your study is not going to magically start making guys hug each other in the mall before they leave.”

The fourth theme to emerge from Kevin’s interview was *shared interests and experiences*. He and his friends have in common their backgrounds, shared interests and experiences, and spending time together. In discussing his closest male friends, Kevin described their similar backgrounds. “My closest male friends are all guys I went to high school with, I grew up with. We all are pretty similar. The one thing I’ve noticed is that the guys I was friends with in high school, we were all [from] two-parent homes, mom and dad both had jobs, we all pretty much came from the same walks of life. We just gravitated toward each other.”

Kevin recognized that shared experiences with friends helped them maintain their friendship. “A lot of your friendships are based on shared interests and shared experiences (be)cause when you grow up together, you are talking about the same old stories, that’s ten years’ worth of friendships because you are talking about the previous ten years.” Kevin also noted that, even when life circumstances change, friends remain the same. He reflected on spending time with one of his friends.

When I go to Indianapolis in July, I always stay with the same guy. It started out as I was actually staying with him and then, I’m staying with him and his girlfriend, and now with his wife. And so, our activities have always changed because we always went out. The three of us would go out together. Now it’s when he puts the kids to bed, then we’re sitting on the sofa at night talking. But I think the story part is that we’ve always been the same guys, we’re always doing the same stuff and we’re spending that time together.

Although Kevin's friendships have existed since his high school years, he noted that *friendships are difficult to maintain*, which constituted the fifth theme. He reflected, "But I think necessarily it gets harder the longer you go and the more people lives change. So like for me I noticed, like my parents, the core group of friends, there may be two or three that stay the same, but it has rotated four or five times just in my 30 years. So, I think with that maintaining friendships is hard. The changing of it, the maintaining of it becomes hard to deal with. It's really up to how strong your bond is and what your common goals are."

When I introduced myself to Kevin, I explained that I noticed how my circle of friends had gotten smaller and changed with the passing of time, and that those changes had sparked my interest in this study. Kevin responded by saying, "You said you started noticing that in your mid-40s. I'm at the beginning of that. I'm in my early 30s. All my friends are getting married, having kids, starting and careers." These changing life circumstances of Kevin's friends contributed to the difficulty of maintaining friendships.

Kevin recognized a number of *taboos* in male friendships, which is the sixth theme. When he expressed his thoughts about factors that might influence his friendships, he identified social climate and pressure.

It depends on where your moral compass is, where your, what you think is right or wrong. There are all kinds of stuff that you can't do on taboo deals. There are homosexual taboos, religious taboos, because some guys with their friends they got no problem sharing everything, including their girlfriends. There are some people that look at that and say that's wrong, you should never do that. There are definitely limits on socially what you can do, just on how people judge things.

Continuing, Kevin stated that even designating or categorizing friendships as “male friendships” could be an issue. He articulated his views that male friendships are different from other relationships; this constituted the seventh theme, *a different connotation*.

I think that male friendships have very different connotations than all your other relationships. It’s funny because when you categorize it as a male friendship, automatically you get a different connotation on it. Even though I almost always like 100% of the time, if I’m describing a friend, I’m describing a male. But I would never in a conversation make the distinction of ‘Oh, my male friend.’ So the term itself has connotation around it almost as if you’re separating it; almost as if I were in a gay relationship and I was separating my male friends from my male partner. But in reality, your male friendships are just your friends, the people you spend a lot of time with.

Marshall. Marshall is a 26-year-old Caucasian man. He has a master’s degree in City and Regional Planning. He is married and works as a project manager. Marshall has lived in the New Orleans area for only two years.

I transcribed and reviewed the transcript from the interview with Marshall which resulted in five themes. The themes are: *shared interests and activities, friendship develops over time, friends are there through difficult times, social expectations* and *minimal physical contact*. Each theme is discussed in the following paragraphs with examples taken from the interview transcript. With minor corrections, the quotes are verbatim.

Shared interests and activities, the first theme, emerged as Marshall spoke about sharing interests and activities as an important element in the makeup of his friendships. When asked what he thought about male friendships in general, Marshall said simply, “I think of watching sports, grab a beer, those two things.” Several times during the interview, Marshall mentioned

that he liked doing things with his friends. When asked to elaborate, he responded, “Yeah. So, if I’m hanging out with a friend, like, it’s always going to a show, going to a festival, going to a bar, watching a sports game, playing sports. Those are the activities pretty much that we do.”

The second theme was *friendships develop over time*. Marshall identified his closest friends as two people he had known for a long time, his younger brother and a man he has known since childhood. “So, my best friend is my brother. He is three years younger than me. He’s pretty different from me, but we have always been super close. Trying to get him to move to New Orleans right now. My other really good friend, I grew up and played soccer with, actually went to high school with. Went to college with. Joined a fraternity with. He is right there with my brother.”

Marshall said that since he moved to New Orleans, it had been difficult trying to establish new friendships. “Forming new friendships was tough for me here until I joined the soccer team. I was on it for six or seven months and made it a point to say like, ‘hey let’s hang out after the game’. I did that a few times and it really built, but it wasn’t instant. Maybe that’s my personality, but, I don’t know, I was at a loss as to how to treat a friend initially.”

I asked if he thought there might have been any other reason or reasons why he struggled initially. Marshall responded, “Breaking into cliques. People who grew up with her or have a strong circle of friends who grew up here, so they have their own clique established, so that’s not easy to break up or break into.”

The third theme was *friends are there through difficult times*. Marshall indicated that his friendships are important when life presents challenges. He said, “Learning things together, experiencing things together. Especially with my brother and the friend I grew up together. We’ve gone through the gut pains of life together. I had a pretty serious thing that

happened in my family when I was in high school. The first thing I wanted to do was call my friend Alvin (pseudonym). Now that I think about that, he had something significantly happen to him recently and he called me the same day.”

Marshall believed that when he needed help in difficult times, his friendships were beneficial. “For some men they probably see it as a weakness that they have to overcome, just admitting that they need help. Because some men; they might not have some perspective from their friends.”

The fourth theme was *social expectations*. Marshall stated that one has to be careful in the way friends are treated. His words indicated that certain behaviors can be detrimental, even within established friendships. Marshall stated, “There are social expectations that you have to be mindful of with friends. I’d say, yes. You can’t embarrass your friends. Talk bad or behind their back. Use friends for your personal gain.”

The final theme derived from Marshall’s interview was *minimal physical contact*. Marshall stated that physical contact is restricted pretty much to his brother and friend. When reviewing the photos I presented, Marshall chose images 2 and 4 as most representative of the way he envisions his friendships. Referring to image 2, Marshall spoke about what might be considered a norm with his friends. “This one is pretty typical – hang out with my friends. Looks like they are playing cards and drinking beer. I love beer and my friends do too. Enjoying a beer, expressing friendship. Obviously they are very close. So, I wouldn’t pose like that with anybody except my brother and my close friends.”

Alex. Alex is a 61-year-old Caucasian male who is married and has several children. He is employed as a housing director and has a Bachelor of Science degree. He is a native of New Orleans and has lived in the New Orleans area his entire life.

After I transcribed and reviewed the transcript from the interview with Alex, six themes emerged. The themes are: *trust*, *friendship lasts across time*, *care and concern*, *a level of comfort*, *differences between male and female friendship* and *the significance of male friendship*. Each theme is discussed in the following paragraphs and is supported with quotes from the interview transcript. With minor corrections, the quotes are verbatim.

The first theme to emerge from Alex's data was *trust*. As Alex discussed his closest friendship, he made it apparent that trust was a major element involved: "Well, I would define friend as someone that you can trust, that do not have to be omnipresent all the time. Could be someone that you call on a few times a year but you have a close relationship." Alex later added, "I think guy friendships are immeasurable. It's almost one of the most important things a guy can have. A friend that he trusts, can bounce things off, he can count on, he has dependence on." Within the same response, Alex indicated that trust involved comfort and not being judged. "You are on a different level. Like I said, trust, understanding, that you have a level of being comfortable with that you can be open to and not feel that you would be judged on whatever."

Alex extended his thoughts on trust as he spoke about the limited number of people he trusts. "People tease me about how many people I know. But I've got about three good friends that I would trust my kids with and trust my wife to."

As Alex continued to reflect upon his closest friendships, the second theme of *friendship lasts across time* emerged. As Alex reflected back to his childhood days, he connected his thoughts to the length of time he has had special people in his life that he calls friends. Alex indicated he has three friends he really trusts and he has known for a considerable amount of time, "They all have been developed and cultivated since I was in my early twenties." Speaking again to the length of time he's known his best friend, Alex stated, "A friend of mine that I have

known for 40 years. We have known each other before we were both married, when we were in our early twenties. Cutting up and partying and stuff and then we finally settled down.”

Alex spoke about the connection between him and his best friend. “Sometimes we go drink a couple of beers and talk about goofy stuff or just enjoy the evening together. And sometimes it gets really, really deep and that’s what I was really thinking. Man, I really am connected with him. We both have been married. We both have been divorced. We both have been remarried.” Alex stated that anyone observing him and his friend would be able to tell by their behavior that they were friends: “If you saw us interact, you would know that we have a long history.”

The third theme to emerge from the data was *care and concern*. Speaking about his lifelong and closest friend, Alex’s concern is shown in the form of worry. “I worry tremendously about him. I don’t know what he’s going to do when he gets older. I don’t know. He can’t work forever. I’m very worried but he’s in a relationship with someone that really cares about him because at least he’s not by himself.” Alex continued to discuss his concern about his friend. “I worry about him, because he works for himself, he doesn’t have the benefits that I have. So, actually I ask him personal things like, what are you doing about health insurance, what are you doing about social security, what about retirement? He has none of that.”

The fourth theme arose as Alex identified *a level of comfort* that exists between friends. Alex made mention that, because he has such a close bond with his friend, a level of comfort exists that is different from other relationships. When Alex viewed the images of friendship, he pointed to images 2 and 4, and spoke of comfort. He stated, “The first thing I pick up is that they are at ease with each other. They are comfortable. Nobody is standoffish or tense; they are very comfortable with each other. I just think that they are mirroring images of each other and that

tells me that they are comfortable. I think it is immeasurable. I think if a man does not have a male friend, how can I say this? A man by having male friends, kind of mirrors himself. I'm not saying I like everybody that's like me. But I think you, I'm trying to see – I'm having a hard time.”

The level of comfort that exists between Alex and his friend is illustrated by the manner in which they maintain contact. Alex said that although they stay in touch, sometimes the lapses in time between contacts are lengthy. Despite the elapsed time, he is able to pick up with his friend as though they had not been apart. Alex commented, “We talk on the phone at least once a month, go out to dinner at least once a month. Sometimes we sit and we don't say too much at all. We don't have to ask each other stuff, we communicate; I have to say subconsciously. Like I went out to dinner three weeks ago and we just couldn't stop talking to each other. We talked about intimate things. We talked about our relationships. We talked about how we felt about mortality.”

The fifth theme that emerged was *differences between male and female friendship*. Alex observed that women behave differently within the context of same-sex friendship. “My wife sees her girlfriends every day or every other day, or every other week. Does that mean that I'm less close than she is? No.” He returned to the topic later in the interview, stating “My wife would ask me, so what did you all talk about? I finally had something to tell her, but she couldn't understand as a woman, that I didn't have to sit and talk to him, on that depth of a level and not communicate with him. We can sit in a bar, and drink a few beers and bullshit. We are communicating. What I'm trying to say is that I consider one of my three closest friends, if not the closest, it doesn't have to be constantly in touch with him every day. Some women have to have that constant interaction. I don't have to have it.”

Again comparing the relationship differences between men and women, Alex related that, “In contrast, my wife’s friends that she grew up with are still her best friends today. You are talking about 60 years, since they were six years old. My childhood friend? I probably called him three times in the last 35 years.”

The final theme addressed *the significance of male friendship*. Alex places high value on friendship, as is illustrated when he stated, “I just think it is an incredible resource to have – male friends. What I’m trying to say is to look at the different values of it other than the fact as friendships are wonderful. People can’t survive without friendships. I think it is an important factor in your happiness and your survivability. I really mean that.”

Kennedy. Kennedy is a 30-year-old, African-American father of two. He is unmarried. He earned a bachelor’s degree and has lived in New Orleans most of his life.

After I transcribed and reviewed the transcript from the interview with Kennedy, seven themes emerged. The themes are: *friends are like family, trust, honesty, no pretense, being there, physical contact, and friendships change over time*. Each theme is discussed in the following paragraphs and is supported with quotes from the interview transcript. With minor corrections, the quotes are verbatim.

The first theme identified in the interview with Kennedy was *friends are like family*. Kennedy indicated that only a select few people are identified as his friends. “I don’t want to use the word friend because I really think people use that [word] friend very loosely. Just because you met someone and you talk to them in the hallway for 20 minutes I don’t think that’s a friend.” Making the connection between who he identifies as a friend and family, Kennedy announced, “Once I say you are my friend, I consider you family and that’s how much I value that friendship.”

Referring to his closest friend, Kennedy spoke about how their interactions have not changed since their childhood days, and he stated that his friend is like his brother. He explained, “Actually we grew up pretty much staying across the street from each other. One thing I remember is that we never locked the front door. He could come in and out like it’s his house and I’d do the same at his house. As we’ve moved into adulthood, it’s kind of the same way. He’ll come over. Door’s unlocked; he walks in, goes to the fridge and gets something to eat. It’s like he’s my brother. No boundaries. What’s mine is yours.”

The second theme that emerged for Kennedy was *trust*. Kennedy indicated that trust has a high value. “I put a high value on friendship. My biggest thing is trust. I’m not one that trusts everyone, so for me to consider and say you are a friend that means that I have some trust in you and I don’t take that lightly at all.” At another point in the interview Kennedy reiterated the importance of trust, stating, “I think trusting is big. I don’t think all men trust. Men can’t just walk up to people and trust and start being friends”

In addition to trust, *honesty* was an essential character trait for Kennedy to identify someone as a friend. Explaining what he meant, he stated, “Because with your friends, that’s somebody you can talk to. Somebody who understands the way you think. So you can talk to them. You can let them know things you can’t let other people know. They are not going to tell you something just to make you feel something. They are going to tell you the truth.” Kennedy continued to define friendship in terms of honesty, stating, “I think I would define a friend as someone that would be honest with you. Very honest, good or bad. Look out for your best interest. Didn’t have any agenda. They don’t have any agenda about being your friend.”

The fourth theme was *no pretense*. There is no pretense between Kennedy and his friend, as was evident when Kennedy spoke about social expectations. “I think there are social

expectations, but with your true friends, I don't think it even matters. If that's your friend y'all going to do what you do anyway. Whatever it is that you do, you are going to do that anyway, regardless of what people think. You are going to do that anywhere and anytime. I just think you don't worry about the expectation at all. How you are supposed to act around people. If that's a true friend you're just going to be you."

The fifth theme to emerge from the interview with Kennedy was *being there*. Kennedy expressed that "being there" is important for the people he identifies as friends. He tries to be there for his friends and he anticipates that they will do the same for him.

Try to be there for him, regardless of good times or bad times. Being there for them. For example, it's 2:00 in the morning, and they have a flat. You might not do that for everybody. But if that's your true friend, I'm going to get out of my bed and go.

Regardless of what it is, a flat tire, or you just need anything. Being there for me is like being a personal contact or a person to lean on in good times and in bad.

Physical contact was the sixth theme. As Kennedy referred to the photos I shared with him, he spoke about physical contact as an expression of friendship. Referring to image 4, which shows three men involved in horseplay, Kennedy stated, "I just go back to this picture, the one on the top right hand side. People may not want to see that, but that's what you all do as friends and you don't worry about what other people say or think. How you are supposed to act around people. If that's true friend, it's just going to be your friend."

Kennedy continued discussing physically embracing his friends: "Well, with a friend you might see them and shake their hand and give them the bro hug. You might do the bro hug and you wouldn't do that with everyone, but with your friends. Then you might see someone crying you might be there for them, but if your friend is crying you might put your arms around them."

Kennedy explained a bro hug as a combination of a handshake with one hand and a hug with the other arm. Being more specific about the image, Kennedy said, “This one is just seem like friends when they get together, the first they are going to do, they are going to wrestle with you. That something we would do when we get together. Yeah, sometime just to show that we are here. We do stuff like that sometimes.”

The seventh and final theme that emerged for Kennedy was *friendships change over time*. Kennedy was able to talk about several issues and challenges he feels could confound his friendships with other men or for men in general. As Kennedy spoke, changing responsibilities and obligations figured prominently as challenges and as illustrations of how friendships change over time. “I think when guys get older, they get married, [they] have kids and things like that, so they are a little more involved with their family. They can’t do all the things with their friends. You get caught up in your own thing, I guess. Your family and your kids and most of your focus is on that.”

As he spoke about changing responsibilities and obligations, Kennedy pointed out how changes in family obligations can impact friendship. He offered, “I just think men always have to be strong. They have to be the protector of their family so you just can’t bring anybody around your family. I really think you just can’t do that. Especially if you are married, you can’t just bring any guy in your house and call then your friend, especially if you’ve got a wife and you’ve got a daughter. That’s just something you can’t do because you are the protector. The man is the protector.”

Cross-Case Analysis

As described above, a review and analysis of the individual transcripts resulted in a total of 52 themes. The next step in data analysis was to compare and condense the 52 themes into super-ordinate themes. This process yielded nine super-ordinate themes, which include the following: (1) *being there/dependability*, (2) *openness and honesty*, (3) *trust*, (4) *friends are like family*, (5) *friendship lasts across time*, (6) *complications in friendship*, (7) *shared interests, experiences and values*, (8) *physical contact*, and (9) *emotions associated with friendship* (see Table 3). The participants and the individual themes associated with each participant are listed to indicate which of the themes were used to compose the resultant super-ordinate themes.

Table 3

Participant Super-ordinate Themes: Cross-Case Analysis

Super-ordinate Theme-# of occurrences - 52	Darren Themes - 7	Gary Themes - 7	Jefferson Themes - 7	Alonzo Themes -6	Kevin Themes - 7	Marshall Themes - 5	Alex Themes - 6	Kennedy Themes - 7
Being there/ Dependability-6		Has my back	Someone I can depend on	Dependable in time of need	Being there with and for each other	Friends are there through difficult times		Being there
Openness and honesty-5		Friends can confront each other honestly	Someone I can confide in	Friends confront each other honestly				Honesty
Trust-5	Trust	Trust	Trust				Trust	No pretense Trust
Friends are like family-4 Friendship lasts across time-4	Friends are like family Friendship develops over time	Friends are like family	A friend is like a brother			Friendship forms over time	Friendship lasts across time	Friends are like family Friendships change over time
Complications in friendship-6		Women and money can come between friends		Different values can impede friendship	Friendships are difficult to maintain	Social expectations	Differences between male and female friendship	
Shared interests, experiences and values-5			Shared spiritual beliefs Similarities in lifestyle	Bonding through shared experiences	Taboos Shared interests and experiences	Shared interests and experiences		
Physical contact-6	Careful not to appear feminine or gay			Fear of appearing feminine	Physical touch is limited	Minimal physical contact		Physical contact
Emotions associated with friendships-7	Limited display of affection Comfort	Pride	Expressing love	Respect	Commitment		Care and concern Level of comfort	
Themes not used - 4	Communicate without words	Selectivity of friends			A different connotation		The significance of male friendship	

Super-ordinate Theme One: Being There/Dependability

This super-ordinate theme, *being there/dependability*, reflects an important component of friendship for six of the eight participants and defined what a friend is as someone who can be depended on and “has my back.” The six themes that composed this super-ordinate theme were: *has my back, someone I can depend on, dependable in time of need, being there with and for each other, friends are there through difficult times, and being there.*

Gary spoke about “being there” in the sense of unflinching loyalty when he referred to knowing that “I can be right or wrong and they are there for me.” Gary pointed out, “I know they had my back.” Alonzo indicated that being there for each other was also a matter of consistency in that he and his friends “were constantly there for each other no matter what.”

Jefferson talked about mutual dependence between him and his best friend. “If I ever fell short, if I needed help with something, if he’s able to do it at that moment he would do the same for me.” In similar fashion, being there was a basic part of Kevin’s definition of friendship: “You’d be there with them-a bare bones definition.”

For Marshall, dependability meant that friends are there for each other through tough times, as when he spoke of how he and his best friend have “gone through the gut pains of life together.” Finally, Kennedy connected being there and being dependable to both good times and bad times when he said he would “try to be there for him, regardless of good times or bad times.”

Super-ordinate Theme Two: Openness and Honesty

Four of the eight participants identified *openness and honesty* as essential components of friendship. They described the manner in which they communicated with their best friends and shared their perceptions that open and honest communication was not only the norm, but was the expectation. Five themes were used to compose the super-ordinate theme: *friends can confront*

each other honestly (two participants had this theme), *someone I can confide in*, *honesty*, and *no pretense*.

For Gary and Jefferson, communication included confrontation. Gary spoke about being open and honest even when it hurts, stating that “You have to hear the truth and sometimes the truth hurts,” while Jefferson connected confrontation to speaking about shortcomings when he commented that “a friend is not afraid to let you know where you fell short.”

Alonzo spoke of being upfront and Kennedy related honesty to being free of ulterior motives. Alonzo related his expectation that his friends will be “honest and upfront with me.” Kennedy summed openness and honesty up in his statements that “a friend [is] someone that would be honest with you” and “don’t have any agenda about being your friend.”

Super-ordinate Theme Three: Trust

Trust was identified as an important component of male friendship by five of the participants; in fact, three participants used the term trust to define friendship. The word “trust” as a theme was used consistently for all five participants; thus, the same term was used to denote the third super-ordinate theme.

Trust seemed to be implicit in the definition of the word friend. Darren defined a friend as “someone I can trust,” as did Alex when he stated that he would define friend as “someone that you can trust.” Jefferson provided a similar definition he related that “a friend is someone that you are able to trust.” For both Gary and Kennedy, trust was the most important aspect of friendship. Gary stated that trust “is the main thing,” and Kennedy emphasized that he puts “a high value on friendship. My biggest thing is trust.”

Super-ordinate Theme Four: Friends are Like Family

The similarity between friendships and familial relationships was noted by four participants in the fourth theme, *friends are like family*. Emphasis was placed on friends being viewed as family. The four themes used to compose this super-ordinate theme were: *friends are like family* (for three participants) and *a friend is like a brother*.

Gary and Jefferson both perceived their close friends as being like brothers to them. Gary stated that “Ronald and Errol are like my brothers” and Jefferson said of his best friend that “We are not actually brothers, but I consider him as a brother.”

Darren, who also likened friends to family, indicated that friends and family had similar value to him. He indicated, “I value my friendships like I value my family.” Kennedy thought of his closest friendship in broad terms related to family. Kennedy stated, “Once I say you are my friend, I consider you family.”

Super-ordinate Theme Five: Friendship Lasts Across Time

The relationship between time and friendship was addressed by four of the participants in the fifth theme, *friendship lasts across time*. Although each of the four participants linked time with friendship, only one spoke to the condition that time is essential for forming friendships. The others addressed the time and friendship connection as an indication of how long their friendships have lasted. The four themes that composed this super-ordinate theme were: *friendship develops over time*, *friendship forms over time*, *friendship lasts across time*, and *friendships change over time*.

Darren was the lone participant to connect time to the formation of friendship. As Darren reflected on his friendship he stated, “I just think it takes time for a person to become a friend.”

The other participants connected time to friendship by relating the length of time they had known their friends. Speaking about his best friend, Marshall indicated, “I grew up and played soccer with [him], actually went to high school with [him].” Alex, when asked to identify a friend, thought of a friend that he had “known for 40 years.” In a similar manner, Kennedy identified his best friend by pointing out the length of time they have known one another: “Actually we grew up pretty much staying across the street from each other.”

Super-ordinate Theme Six: Complications in Friendship

The sixth super-ordinate theme addresses challenges and issues that might complicate or even threaten friendship, according to five participants was the theme *complications in friendship*. The six themes that composed this super-ordinate theme were: *women and money can come between friends, different values can impede friendship, friendships are difficult to maintain, taboos, social expectations, and differences between male and female friendship*.

In Gary’s estimation, the two issues of women and money comprised all of the complications between friends. Gary stated, “I think money and women is the reason behind all of it.” Alonzo thought that values, especially different values, could be troublesome in friendship, “just all the different things we believe in as far as our values... can create a rift.” Kevin indicated that life changes can make maintaining friendships difficult when he noted that all his friends “are getting married, having kids, and starting careers.” Kevin also thought certain taboos can complicate friendship: “There are homosexual taboos, religious taboos... There are definitely limits on socially what you can do, just on how people judge things.” Marshall addressed social expectations as well, reflecting that “You can’t embarrass your friends. Talk bad or behind their back. Use friends for your personal gain.”

Alex was the only participant who compared complications in male same-sex friendships to female same-sex friendships. As Alex compared his same-sex friendships to his wife's same-sex friendships, he highlighted a major difference in the way communication takes place. Alex explained that because his wife talked with her friends more often than he talked with his, she made the assumption that he was less invested in his friendship. Alex compared the frequency of contact with his friend to the frequency of contact his wife has with her friends, "Some women have to have that constant interaction. I don't have to have it."

Super-ordinate Theme Seven: Shared Interests, Experiences, and Values

Four of the eight participants indicated that *shared interests, experiences, and values* were important in their relationships with their friends. The overall meaning of the seventh superordinate theme was that commonalities served as a means to strengthen friendships. The five themes included in this super-ordinate theme were: *shared spiritual beliefs, similarities in lifestyle, bonding through shared experiences*, and *shared interests and experiences* (two participants).

Jefferson spoke about being "into the same activities" and enjoying the same things in life." More specifically, Jefferson related that he and his friend share spiritual beliefs, and that "Having a friend that has that spiritual component, that's able to help you, and encourage you in that area is truly a blessing."

Jefferson addressed shared interests and shared spiritual beliefs; whereas, Kevin spoke of friendships being "based on shared interests and shared experiences." For Marshall, both shared interests and shared values were important. When asked to define friendship, his response included "similar interests" and similar "view points and ethics and morals."

Alonzo focused on shared values. He commented that having shared values was a necessity for him to consider someone as a friend. “But when it comes to coming into my circle, you have to have those qualities because I feel it is very important with my family and my values that I have.”

Super-ordinate Theme Eight: Physical Contact

Issues of touch were addressed by five participants and form the basis for the superordinate theme, *physical contact*. The six themes that compose this super-ordinate theme were: *careful not to appear feminine or gay*, *limited display of affection*, *fear of appearing feminine*, *physical touch is limited*, *minimal physical contact*, and *physical contact*. Darren and Alonzo raised the issue fear of appearing feminine or being perceived as homosexual. Other participants spoke of limited touching with their friends but did not necessarily connect it to appearing feminine or homosexuality.

As Darren spoke about men physically expressing friendship, he indicated, “Men generally do not express that very well. Maybe because of the fear of being viewed as homosexual.” Darren further explained that, for him, physical touch was not prohibited, but it was limited to his closest friends, people “that I’m very comfortable with.” Alonzo spoke pointedly about physical touch, stating that “It crosses the line when it goes from masculine to feminine.”

Commenting on an image presented to him, Kevin stated, “I can’t see us posing for a picture where our arms are interlocked, in that regard.” Much like Kevin, Marshall reflected on an image and had similar thoughts. He remarked, “I wouldn’t pose like that with anybody except my brother and my close friends.”

Kennedy had a different view of physical touch. After stating that he and his best friend might occasionally wrestle with one another, he shared his perspective that “People may not want to see that, but that’s what you all do as friends and you don’t worry about what other people say or think.”

Alex expressed a lack of concern with the notion of being perceived as homosexual. Speaking about male friendship in very general terms, Alex addressed the issue of appearing feminine or being perceived as gay. “Well, the first thing you think of, and this may sound terrible – I mean, ‘What is this, are you gay or something like that? I mean that’s the first obstacle. ‘Ah, man he must be gay or something.’ That is not true. That is the farthest thing. I don’t give a damn if people think I’m gay or not.”

Super-ordinate Theme Nine: Emotions Associated with Friendships

Six of the eight participants described *emotions associated with friendships*. Seven themes were clustered to comprise this super-ordinate theme: *comfort, pride, expressing love, respect, commitment, care and concern, and level of comfort*.

Darren talked of a level of comfort that exists with his friends, and stated that a friend “would have to be someone that I’m very comfortable with.” Alex also spoke of a level of comfort with his friend. Alex stated, “You have a level of being comfortable with that you can be open to and not feel that you would be judged on whatever.”

Gary expressed pride in his friends. He saw the interview as an opportunity to “brag on my friends.” He was excited because “I get to talk about my boys.” Alonzo used the word respect, describing “a mutual respect that we have for each other.” “At the end of the day, they will respect you more” was another way Alonzo spoke about respect in his friendship.

Alex spoke about his friend in the context of caring, stating that “I worry about him.” A statement made by Jefferson illustrated how he expressed love for his friend. Jefferson asserted, “I let him know that I love him.”

Themes Not Connected to Super-ordinate Themes

Four of the identified 52 themes were not connected to a super-ordinate theme: *communicate without words, selectivity of friends, a different connotation, and the significance of male friendship*. Although each of the four themes was important to a participant, they were not repeated by any other participant or were not stated strongly enough to be included in a superordinate theme. The four themes were also not used to answer any of the research questions.

Findings by Research Question

The broad research question for this study was: How do men experience same-sex friendship? This question was answered through the cross-case analysis of all of the nine super-ordinate themes. The nine super-ordinate themes were used to answer the five specific research questions as follows: (1) How do men define same-sex friendship?, (2) What are the components of male friendship as identified by men?, (3) What social expectations do men have regarding friendship?, (4) How do men express friendship with other men?, and (5) How do men perceive friendship could assist them during the counseling process? For each specific research question, particular super-ordinate themes are identified and relevant examples of the chosen super-ordinate theme are provided with participants’ quotes that support the themes.

Specific Research Question One: How do men define same-sex friendship?

For research question one, the definition of friendship was identified through research question two. As defined by Webster’s dictionary a definition is “a statement that describes what

something is” and “components are elements of the meaning of something.” The components of friendship that was provided by participants defined male friendship as another male being there in the friendship; being open and honest; being able to trust each other; and being able to share similar interests, experiences and values.

Specific Research Question Two: What are the components of male friendship as identified by men?

Four super-ordinate themes were used to address the components of male friendship as identified by the participants: *being there/dependability*; *openness and honesty*; *trust*; and *shared interests, experiences and values*.

Being there/dependability was demonstrated by common phrases. Gary stated, “I know they had my back” and Kennedy related “being there for each other” was important in good and bad times. The theme being there/dependability was identified by three quarters of the participants and was identified as an important component in identifying who was ultimately labeled as a friend.

Openness and honesty were important components of male friendship and included confrontation and lack of pretense. Gary spoke about being open and honest even if “it might hurt your feelings a little bit” and Kennedy added a lack of pretense by noting that with a “true friend you’re just going to be you.”

Trust was viewed as a defining part of friendship. For example, Jefferson stated that a friend was “someone that you are able to trust.” Five participants spoke about trust in defining elements that were valued when discussing friends. Alex put it clearly when he offered, “I would define friend as someone that you can trust.”

Shared interests, values and experience were combined to identify a component of male friendship. Participants spoke of things they have in common as a means of expressing their friendship. Jefferson indicated that, besides a similar lifestyle as his best friend, they share similar spiritual beliefs. Alonzo used the term “male bonding” to describe the effect of shared interests. Alonzo commented that “Male bonding is basically to me, things that we take interest in – just spending quality time with each other from things we take interest in.”

Specific Research Question Three: What social expectations do men have regarding friendship?

Social expectations were answered through two super-ordinate themes: *complications in friendship* and *physical contact*. Complications in friendship that were indicated by participants were social expectations in a variety of ways including values, taboos, and the differences between male and female friendships. Kevin spoke of “homosexual taboos, religious taboos” as social restrictions that can negatively impact friendship. Marshall identified other social expectations that he thought could complicate friendship. Marshall stated, “You have to be mindful ... You can’t embarrass your friends...talk bad or behind their back. Use friends for your personal gain.” Alex compared his friendships to his wife’s friendships, specifically targeting frequency of communication, “Some women have to have that constant interaction. I don’t have to have it.”

A second social expectation that was discussed by two participants was related to physical contact and the fear of appearing feminine. Darren stated that “Two men can’t be close without having some other aspect or homosexual aspect involved.” Alonzo, speaking of interacting publicly with his friends, stated, “But when it comes to social as long as it doesn’t cross the line of becoming masculine to feminine.”

Specific Research Question Four: How do men express friendship with other men?

Four super-ordinate themes were used to answer this question: *friends are like family*, *friendship lasts across time*, *physical contact*, and *emotions associated with friendship*.

Family as an expression of friendship was a commonality among four of the participants. A strong connection to family was evident as the participants spoke about their friends and their family being interchangeable. Participants expressed their friendship by incorporating friends into their family. Both Gary and Jefferson referred to their friends as being like brothers. Gary stated, “They may not even introduce me as their friend. They say this is my brother.” In a similar vein, Jefferson stated, “I consider him as a brother because of the type of relationship we have.” Darren and Kennedy also used the term family to express how they viewed friendship. Darren stated that “I value my friendships like I value my family.” Kennedy asserted, “Once I say you are my friend, I consider you family.”

Participants expressed their friendships based on the longevity of the relationships. The length of time that participants had known their friends was an expression of friendship that spoke to an enduring bond that held value. Alex introduced his friend according to the length of time they have known each other, stating “A friend of mine that I have known for 40 years.” Marshall described his longtime friend as someone who “I grew up and played soccer with, actually went to high school with.”

For the majority of the participants, physical contact was an expression of friendship that is shared almost exclusively with friends. Darren stated, “I wouldn’t play around with just anyone like that.” Kevin and Marshall reacted to the images by stating, “I can’t see us posing for a picture where our arms are interlocked” and “I wouldn’t pose like that with anybody except my

brother and my close friends.” Confirming those opinions, Kennedy shared, “do the bro hug and you wouldn’t do that with everyone, but with your friends.”

Participants used feeling words to express how they experienced their friendships. Referring to feeling comfortable with their friends, Darren stated “I would be very comfortable” and Alex reflected, “They are comfortable.” Gary felt proud when referring to his friends, “I basically wanted to brag on my friends.” Alonzo talked of mutual respect when he responded, “It’s a mutual respect that we have.” Jefferson spoke of love and stated, “Just letting him know that I love him.”

Specific Research Question Five: How do men perceive friendship could assist them during the counseling process?

The discussion of friendship as related to counseling was addressed in three specific questions that I asked as part of the interview protocol. The questions were: What are your perceptions of counseling? What are your perceptions of men and counseling? How might the collection of information regarding male friendships be important or useful? Because these three questions related specifically to counseling, participant responses are analyzed separately. The responses to these three questions serve as the basis for responding to specific question five.

Perceptions of counseling. The first relevant interview question was, “What are your perceptions of counseling?” Two themes were identified in response to participants’ perceptions of counseling. The first theme was that *counseling is beneficial*. The second theme identified *characteristics of counseling*.

All the participants looked upon counseling favorably and saw *counseling as beneficial*. Darren stated, “I think counseling helps.” In a similar vein, Gary remarked that “I think it could be good,” Jefferson stated that his “perception of counseling is that it is healthy,” and Alonzo’s

response was “I think it’s important.” Alex’s thoughts were, “I think it is invaluable.” Although Alex had never experienced counseling personally, he saw the value in it. “I just think that it is a valuable resource that is available to all of us. I have male friends who I have recommended to go see a therapist.” Marshall responded saying that he had had a change of heart toward counseling. “I’m starting to be open to that as a normal thing.” Kennedy stated, “I think it is needed to help people out.” Finally, Kevin stated, “I have no problems or issue with it.”

Two of the participants expressed their belief that counseling was beneficial based on personal experience. Kevin and Darren had each received counseling. Kevin addressed his experience when he stated, “I had a lot of counseling. When my parents got divorced, for a year or two. And then sporadically, I did counseling for different stuff. I think it is good.” Darren offered that “I’ve had to do it with the military for PTSD. It is a way to open up about things that you hadn’t opened up before.” It appeared that counseling was a positive experience for both of them.

For the second theme, *characteristics of counseling*, participants identified characteristics that, in their perceptions, described the counseling process. Participants spoke about six features of the counseling process as non-judgmental, confidential, third-party involvement, someone to listen, expression of self, and self-knowledge.

Four participants described the first feature as counseling is non-judgmental. Darren reflected, “...you can speak to this person and not be judged, but that person is there to help you, so you can express things to them, they may guide you on the right path to fix whatever you need help with.” Jefferson offered a similar insight when he stated, “Speaking to someone as a counselor, someone that is not going to judge you from the information being shared, but trying to figure out why you feel the way you feel.” Kennedy stated that counseling “gives you an

outlet to talk and express yourself in a manner in which you are not judged.” Kevin shared, “Sometimes you need a complete stranger and you can just lay it all out, and they’re not going to be like your mom to tell you where you screwed up along the way.”

Kennedy spoke about the second feature of the confidential space in counseling. “You never know what a person is going through, but if they can sit down with someone and know that their business is not going to get out and get in the public – it is an outlet for them to deal with problems they might have.” Jefferson and Gary perceived the third feature as the counselor is “a third party” who could provide a different perspective. Jefferson commented, “That’s how a problem gets resolved as far as having a third party come and be able to dissect and being able to intervene. To show and redirect whatever is going on and show whatever is causing the problem that may be coming up, from a counselor’s standpoint.” Gary viewed a counselor as a third party in couples counseling when he commented that, “You can love someone and y’all just have some things and they aren’t clicking and you need a third party to get across to someone else. May need that third person to be like, ‘Do you hear what he’s trying to say?’”

For the fourth feature, Kevin believed that, for some men, all that was needed was for someone to listen. “In my opinion, the bare bones of it are that you are basically paying somebody to listen to you. Sometimes I think that’s all you need. It doesn’t necessarily mean that something’s wrong.” For the fifth feature, Kennedy spoke of the value of expressing oneself. “I think it can help to express things and then make other things better in your life. Any way you can express yourself through a counselor I think that can help.”

Finally, for the sixth feature, Alex commented on gaining self-knowledge through counseling. “You’re just learning about yourself in counseling. How you can make yourself a

better person. I really admire people who have to go to counseling because it shows me they really want to be better.”

Men’s perceptions of counseling. The second relevant interview question was, “What are your perceptions of men and counseling?” Two specific themes emerged from the responses to this question. Overall, the perception was that *men are resistant to counseling*. The second theme, related to resistance, was *male ego, pride, or control*.

Although the participants were in favor of counseling, six of them thought that, in general, *men are resistant to counseling*. Darren stated, “There may be some things you are dealing with that you don’t want to tell.” Gary’s viewpoint was that men “don’t need someone to tell them what’s wrong with them.” In a similar vein, Kennedy offered that “I think men think they don’t need it.” Jefferson believed that “most men probably would dislike the whole idea of going to counseling.” Alonzo thought men were resistant to counseling because “You have that stereotype that men don’t like to be bothered with it, because it is considered negative.” Kevin concurred, stating that “I would guess that all of them, well that’s pretty extreme, but most of them are against it.”

Five of the participants related male resistance to counseling in the second theme as *male ego, pride, or control*. For example Darren related ego when he said, “I think it’s a lot easier to open up, but even then you don’t want to be perceived as not being macho or not masculine enough and talking to another man about your problems.” Alonzo’s response also alluded to the male ego when he stated that “You are not the man that you need to be.”

Jefferson spoke about pride as a reason behind the reluctance of men to seek counseling. “I feel that for most men, it is a pride issue also, because most times we like to put on a façade as if everything is ok, even though we may be going through it.”

Another aspect of Jefferson's response alluded to needing to be in control. He stated, "Sometimes we just don't want anyone else to tell us what to do or how to do it." Alonzo addressed loss of control more directly when he stated, "It's a blemish, like you don't have everything under control. You are not the man that you need to be. You can't control the situation."

The majority, six of eight participants, thought that men are generally resistant to counseling and connected resistance to counseling with male ego, pride, or control. Additionally, the stigma that men are reluctant to ask for help was seen as a barrier that might deter men from seeking counseling.

Important and useful information. The third relevant interview question was "How might the collection of information regarding male friendships be important or useful?" Participants' responses to this question varied widely; however, they suggested information from the present research study would be helpful because the following eight factors could help men learn how to: (1) *express affection*, (2) *evaluate true friendships*, (3) *identify common patterns*, (4) *assist young men*, (5) *form and maintain friendships*, (6) *circle of friends decrease and the difficulty of forming friendship*, (7) *enhance friendship from watching others*, and (8) *maintain balance between family and friends*. Quotes are provided below to illustrate the participants' reflections. With minor editing, the responses are reported verbatim.

Darren recognized that straight men can *express affection* without being perceived as homosexuals. He thought a better understanding of male friendships could allow men to express affection toward one another. He stated:

A lot of people think about male friendships, they think about two men being standoffish.

I think it will bring a different light to it, that straight men can be affectionate with each other to an extent, without being perceived as homosexuals.

Gary thought that this research would be helpful for men to better *evaluate true friendships*. He commented that,

It can be useful mainly to me if someone can read this and determine if they have a true friend or not. If you read this and you are in a situation where you are thinking I wouldn't leave that dude with my girlfriend... [It would] help people evaluate if they have a true friend or not.

Jefferson suggested that *identifying common patterns* in men's friendships could be valuable for men to read about. Jefferson related,

I think collecting information on men and friendships is valuable for the simple fact that once that information is collected to see if there is a pattern. If you have 10 guys that interview and out of the 10 guys, you hear some of the same responses, then you know from the responses the biggest things, so you can put the information out for men to read.

Alonzo thought the significance in this research was an understanding that friendship can *assist young men* in the maturation process. He spoke of the younger generation of men and their limited number of friends. He said,

It can be useful because a lot of male young adults don't have a lot of male friends they can lean on. I feel just having a different male perspective can help a young adult mature and become a strong man. For the young generation, because right now the young generation is missing those male relationships. That male-bonding type of experience that can really help them mature into the man they need to be for the future.

Kevin's perception was that, by understanding friendship, men would know how to *form and maintain friendships*. He stated that, "It will definitely be beneficial from the standpoint of understanding out how minds work, give us an idea of how to approach new friendships, how to maintain old ones... the commonality of the issue will also help."

Marshall's insight was that through this research men could reason why their *circle of friends decreases and understand the difficulty of forming friendship*. He reflected on his own experience when he said... "for someone who has had a particularly hard time in making a friend group... Maybe figuring out why your friend groups are shrinking; why you're having a hard time creating friendships in the first place.

Alex felt that men could *enhance friendships from watching others* as a result of this research. "I think it will be extremely useful how other men view their friendships and how I can enhance my friendships with my friends by actually learning from others."

Kennedy realized that through a better understanding of friendship, men could understand how *maintain balance between family and friends*. He commented that,

I think it can help guys maintain friendships, understanding that even though you have a family you still have yourself and your friends are a big part of you. I think this kind of information can be used to shed light to help guys to understand that you can be there for your family full-time and still have your friend full-time as well. Help guys to understand you have to put balance in your life. Just help guys understand that your male friendships are still important and still needed.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented a discussion of the procedures used to analyze data collected from eight participant interviews. A within-case analysis of each participant's transcript and the

52 resulting themes was followed by a cross-case analysis of all participant themes. The cross-case analysis yielded nine super-ordinate themes. Finally, the nine super-ordinate themes were discussed and linked to the general and three specific research questions. The fourth research question pertaining to counseling was analyzed independently of the first three research questions. Four themes were identified that related specifically to men and counseling.

Chapter V

Discussion

Chapter five contains seven components: (1) the philosophical foundation for this research study is stated, (2) the purpose of this research study and the research questions are provided, (3) a summary of the methods and findings is provided, (4) a summary of the findings are linked to previous research, (5) the imitations and delimitations of the study are discussed, (6) the implications of the research study are detailed, and (7) recommendations for future research are discussed. The conclusion of chapter five contains my personal reflections as the researcher of this study.

Philosophical Foundation

The philosophical foundation for this research study was framed in the context of Sandra Bem's gender schema theory. The basic concept of gender schema theory is sex typing, which is the process that allows society to designate males and females as masculine and feminine, respectively. Through sex typing, norms are defined by society, resulting in sex roles which are reinforced throughout childhood. Behaviors, attitudes, and identities associated with masculinity and femininity are the result of that reinforcement and form the lens through which children understand themselves, others, and the world they inhabit. Social norms formed in childhood continue through adulthood. As an individual encounters new information, the incoming new information is processed and compared to pre-existing knowledge. The process of examining and comparing new information allow individuals to make sense of their world and fit the new information into their existing schema (Bem, 1981).

In the present study, gender schema theory was used as a lens to view male friendship by approaching the concept of friendship as a specific sex typing perspective of learned behaviors that come from males' schema. Through eight participants' views, the association of the

masculine identity and typical male behaviors, thoughts, emotions and perceptions of friendship were examined to better understand how males perceive and experience friendship.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine heterosexual males' perceptions and experiences of their male-to-male friendships. Through participants' reflections of their personal, life-time experiences, a definition of male friendship, the components of male friendship, the social expectations of male friendship, and the expression of male friendship were explored.

The primary research question for this study was: How do men experience same-sex friendship? The sub-questions addressed included:

1. How do men define same-sex friendship?
2. What are the components of male friendship as identified by men?
3. What social expectations do men have regarding friendship?
4. How do men express friendship with other men?
5. How do men perceive friendship could assist them during the counseling process?

Summary of Methods

Data Collection

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to examine heterosexual males' perceptions and experiences of their male-to-male friendships. Convenience sampling was used to identify eight participants for the research study. Data were collected until saturation was reached and no further participants were deemed necessary.

Data were collected from the eight participants via face-to-face interviews. The interviews were audio recorded. Eight self-professed heterosexual males, with ages ranging

from 30 to 61 years old, were interviewed. Five of the participants self-identified as African-American and three self-identified as Caucasian. Seven participants possessed a bachelor's degree or higher; the remaining participant had attended college, but did not earn a baccalaureate degree. One participant had earned a master's degree. Participants were varied in their marital statuses: two were divorced, three were single, and three were married. The length of time that participants had lived in New Orleans varied from a low of two years to a high of 61 years. Finally, participants' personal friendship(s) ranged from 8 to 40 years.

Data Analysis

After a within-case analysis of the transcripts, 52 themes were identified. Five of the participants had seven themes each, two of the participants had six themes each, and one participant had five themes. A cross-case analysis was conducted with the 52 themes which were combined into nine super-ordinate themes. The nine super-ordinate themes were: super-ordinate theme nine consisted of seven themes; super-ordinate themes one, six, and eight each consisted of six themes; super-ordinate themes two, three, and seven consisted of five themes; super-ordinate themes four and five each consisted of four themes; and the four remaining themes of the 52 themes were not applied to a super-ordinate theme. The super-ordinate themes were then used to address the primary research question, as well as the secondary research questions.

Summary of Research Findings

The most basic tenet of Bem's (1981) gender schema theory stipulated that an individual learns behaviors, attitudes, emotions, and beliefs based on gender interpretations. Furthermore, interpretations are reinforced by cultural norms; thus, the way men interact within friendships is based on the involved individuals' perceptions of what friendship between men looks like and

how it is experienced. Monroe, Baker and Roll (1997) asserted that males learn to be males by inquiring and internalizing the values, attitudes, and behaviors associated with masculinity as defined by society. Based on the responses and interpretations of the data in the present research, participants' perceptions of how they experience same-sex friendships were analogous to Bem's theoretical perspective of how males learn behaviors, attitudes, emotions and beliefs in their culture.

In the present study, the way males experience same-sex friendships was investigated by asking eight males to define male friendship, the components of friendship, the social expectations of friendship and how male friendship is expressed. Same-sex male friendships were defined and described as including several components: values, shared interests and experiences, communication in friendship, and expression of friendship. Also, participants believed that social expectations helped define and describe same-sex male friendships.

Components of Friendships

Values. Grief (2006) stated that, when men were asked to define and identify what is male friendship, intrinsic values like dependability, trustworthiness, and honesty were central components in their responses. Male participants in the present research study identified several components of male same-sex friendship consistent with what was reported in Grief's study.

Dependability or "being there for each other" and "having my back" were viewed as components and important to friendship. Being there or dependability was identified by participants as vital to friendship and they deemed dependability as a key feature in their closest friendships. Consistent with the theme of being there/dependability, males in Grief's (2006) study felt male friends were important when one was going through hard times. Men felt that

sometimes things can only be discussed with another man, as did participants in the present study.

As noted earlier, Grief reported males believed trustworthiness was critical to friendship, as did Walker (1994) who indicated that trust was a key element in men's opinions about friendship. Males' belief that trust was perceived as another component in friendship was indicated by the majority of participants in my study. Jefferson isolated what he thought was the most important aspect of friendship when he reflected, "In order to maintain a friendship you realize that trust is one of the biggest things men look for." Most of the participants indicated trust as the most critical component in their personal friendships. Truth, was so consistent that all participants identified it as a theme; resulting in a super-ordinate theme of the same designation in the findings of this study.

A third value that is important to male friendship is honesty. Much of the research regarding male same-sex relationships focused on self-disclosure. Self-disclosure was broadly defined in the literature as the ability to discuss personal and private matters with a friend (Grief, 2006). Bowman (2006), Felmlee (1999) and Monroe et al. (1997) identified self-disclosure as important in the sharing of information about self in friendship. Despite the purported importance of self-disclosure, both Bowman and Monroe et al. found that men are less likely to self-disclose than women, especially regarding matters relating to intimacy, sadness or fear. Also, confirmation that men are reluctant to disclose emerged from a study conducted by Reisman (1990). Reisman suggested that men prefer to disclose less than women. Although findings in the present study did not specifically indicate self-disclosure as something men avoided, because they did not use the term itself, participants did speak about the importance of being open and honest in their friendships. One participant related that as he struggled with

personal and life issues, his friend was “someone that I can confide in.” Additionally, openness and honesty was framed by participants within the use of confrontation with a friend. The ability to confront one another was an indicator of how participants communicated with their friends and was evidenced by those who felt confrontation was a necessary factor in being honest. These men spoke about being able to share “hard truths” and saying something, “even if it hurt.” This type of communication was identified as difficult, but it was important to be able to say what they were thinking and to be able to hear what their friend was telling them.

Shared interests and experiences. An additional component in the present study that was consistently identified as important to friendship was shared interests and experiences. Five of the eight participants spoke about sharing or having something in common with their friends. Guthman (1997) described sharing of common interests and events, as well as, spending time together as key to successful male friendships and saw sharing as a given in the existence of friendship. Strikwerda and May (1992) suggested that activities are part of sharing common interests and are a central component of men’s friendship. Doing things with other males is crucial to friendship. In a study that compared same-sex relationships to cross-sex friendships, Baumgarte and Nelson (2009) confirmed that a stereotype exists with males in that they prefer to engage in some type of activity with other men to experience and connect with their friends.

A specific component of sharing that had not been previously found in the literature, but reported in this study by one participant, was shared spiritual beliefs. One participant specifically identified sharing the same spiritual beliefs as a factor in both the formation and maintenance of his friendship. As a result of sharing spiritual beliefs, the participant realized the additional benefit of sharing activities with his friend and his friend’s wife and children.

Additionally, he recognized that he and his friend shared a similar lifestyle in that both were married; both were raising similarly-aged children and were attending church together.

Communication in friendship. Communication in friendship was viewed as one component of friendship in the literature and in the present study. Several studies, including Kaplan (2005), Kierski and Blazina (2009), Williams (2008), and Dykstra (2009) described one particular approach in men's communication: their use of humor or even insults in a humorous way. In the present study, Gary referred to humor as part of his communication with his friends. He thought the use of humor, specifically humorous insults, was acceptable, but only with his friends. "We make fun of each other. My mom even said, it's a good thing y'all like each other, the way you make fun of each other. That's when you know you've got somebody close. But then, don't let somebody else do the same thing. You know, because they don't know."

An area of communication found in the literature, but mentioned by one participant was a communication approach that did not involve words. Darren's perspective of communication, which was not integrated into a super-ordinate theme, was his description of how male friends communicate without words, but understand each other. Darren explained how he and his friends communicate without words when he said, "More so by actions, but that's just the connection that we have and every situation is different. I don't think a lot of men communicate that way." He believes that friends can communicate without words and still understand each other.

Expression of friendship. A final component of friendship mentioned in the literature was expression of friendship. Previous research suggested that men express friendship in different settings and ways. A study conducted by Morman and Floyd (1997) yielded results indicating that men are able to express affection when they are together with brothers and friends

and in a public context. In the present study, males said that they expressed friendship by calling their friends family members, such as calling a friend *brother* when their male friend was not biologically related. Use of the expressions like, “My friends are like family” when describing their friends to others and “My friend is like a brother” were strong indicators of the way that men in this study care about their friends and consider and express their friendship to others and their friends.

Morman and Floyd (1997) also found that men express how they feel about friendship in emotionally charged situations. Hodgetts and Rua (2010) found that when men communicate through sharing in activities, they share emotions and personal information. In the present study, sharing time and activities together was seen by men as an acceptable way to express their emotions and ideas. Also, the emotions that participants associated with friendship were somewhat different in comparison to Kaplan’s (2005) assertion that male relationships are less expressive when compared to female relationships. Participants spoke about being comfortable, how they expressed love to their friends, and how they cared and were concerned about their friend’s well-being.

Although Kaplan (2005) found that men were less expressive than women, he did find that men do express friendship through physical contact such as embracing, back slapping, and hand shaking. Findings in the present study also indicated males believe that touch is acceptable, albeit limited touch. Alex pointedly declared he did not care if someone misunderstood the relationship with his friend. His assertion was that he was unafraid and unashamed to display his friendship with his friend through actions and touch. Kennedy shared other examples that included wrestling with one another and greeting each other with “big bear hugs.” His idea was

that what happens within the context of a deep and strong friendship would happen regardless of the perceptions an outsider may hold.

Social Expectations of Friendship

One area sensitive to males, perceived as related to social expectations, was how physical touch was exhibited between two friends (Kehler, 2007). Certain physical behaviors were frowned upon and perceived as unacceptable in male friendships. How a male exhibits physical touch with a friend was described by many males as a fear of appearing feminine or gay. As participants addressed social expectations within the boundaries of their most important friendships, limited physical contact, especially in public, was a popular topic. Although physical touch was identified closely with the fear of appearing feminine or gay as was also cited in the literature, participants in this study readily admitted that physical touch is acceptable with close friends, under certain circumstances.

The discussion of appearing feminine is not new to the way men practice friendship. Separate studies by Tognoli (1980); Wall et al. (1983); Strikwerda and May (1992); and Monroe et al. (1997) identified the fear of being characterized as homosexual as a factor for limiting male friendship. Research by Dykstra (2009) indicated that men inherently have a fear of appearing feminine. Dykstra also found that men maintain a constant vigilance and sometimes conscious defense against the appearance of being perceived as dependent, vulnerable, queer, or gay. As noted earlier, Kaplan (2005) found that men do express their friendships with motions such as striking or pushing one another in jest. Karbo (2006) stated that physical expressions like razzing and backslapping are expressions of affection for some men, which was confirmed by Alonzo in this study. Alonzo explained how he and his friends greet each other when he stated,

“It’s just a handshake, a hug. Nice, hard hug, laughing and joking, pushing, bumping. Being masculine.”

Although participants in this study did allow for physical touch within the confines of friendship, it was done in a limited fashion. In their opinions, physical contact was acceptable in only certain circumstances. One participant described what he called a “bro hug” as a greeting that is part handshake and part hug. Another identified birthdays or funerals as appropriate times for embracing. Only with his brother or best friend would he ever be seen embracing another man is the way one participant described the acceptable, allowable condition for physical touch. One participant, referring to physical contact humorously stated, “I don’t want some random dude touching me, ‘dude get off me.’” To emphasize the general point that men wish to keep physical contact to a minimum, one participant made certain his view was understood. He pointed out, “Your study is not going to magically start making guys hug each other in the mall before they leave.”

Limitations and Delimitations

Creswell (2007) indicated that qualitative research is interpretive in nature. Additionally, the two-stage process of IPA adds to the interpretive nature of phenomenological research. The active role the researcher assumes the research process is underscored as participants attempt to make sense of their worlds while the researcher attempts to interpret and make sense of participants’ struggle to understand their own interpretations (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

A limitation for this study was that the analysis of the data was based on the researcher’s ability to identify significant statements, phrases, and quotes from transcribed interviews. As a qualitative researcher, my role was to gain a better understanding of the way and the context that participants perceive the phenomenon (Gay et al., 2009). Related to this difficulty of

identification was the interpretation and translation of the identified statements, phrases and quotes into themes and eventually into super-ordinate themes. The analysis was based on my interpretations. As a result, the interpretations are not definitive and the data could be interpreted differently by a different researcher.

A second limitation was the sampling strategy. The sampling strategy was by convenience. The participants were chosen from a collection of men I already knew, though I did not identify the participants as friends. Although the strategy can save time, money and effort, Creswell (2007) suggested those same benefits of convenience sampling limit information and credibility grounded in the researcher's perspective.

Although this study did not consist of counseling sessions, the participants were asked to open up and reveal personal views. The challenge to get participants to open up to discussion was a third limitation. As a result, participant responses may have been more guarded than expected. An understanding that communication may have been more guarded is not without support. Englar-Carson and Kiselica (2013) pointed out men have limited ability to express emotions and Garfield (2010) suggested that communication is an area in which men struggle.

The delimitations for this study centered on the demographics and selection process for participants. The demographics used to identify participants were heterosexual men, at least 21 years old and living in the greater New Orleans area. The study was limited to New Orleans area due to travel constrictions. The views of men living in cities and cultures different from New Orleans may be altered based on their location. Creswell (2007) cited multiple perspectives ranging across an entire spectrum as a good sampling strategy. Other factors in addition to sexuality, age and locale could have an influence on the formation of friendship, as well as the experience and value of friendship to participants in this study

In addition to the demographics of participants, a second delimitation is whether participants' responses are generalizable. The aim of qualitative research is not generalizability, (Shank, 2006). Shank indicated that qualitative study designs are intentionally broad to seek samples that are more fertile and less typical. As a result, qualitative research seeks to move from quantity of responses to quality of responses.

Implications

Men and Counseling

In the present study, each participant's perception of what might be gained through this research study gives insight to what could be useful in better understanding male friendship when counseling men. Their insights could be used to understand the meaning and value of male friendship from a male viewpoint and a counseling perspective. Perhaps Kennedy summed it up best when he stated, "Just help guys understand that your male friendships are still important and still needed."

Based on the findings in this study, eight men suggested that friendship is important to males and that friendship has benefits. They also felt that counseling is beneficial because of the characteristics within a counseling setting such as when a counselor is non-judgmental, holds information confidential, acts as a third-party who listens objectively, and allows expression of the client's self. Several ways were reported by participants in which the present counseling research and participating in counseling could assist males. Gary thought that this research could help men "evaluate [what is] true friendship." For Alonzo, the real meaning of this research was the understanding that friendship "can help a young adult mature and become a strong man."

Kevin's thought was that in helping males to understand friendship counselors could "give us an idea of how to approach new friendships, how to maintain old ones." Marshall's

insight was that through this research males could “figure out why your friend groups are shrinking and why you’re having a hard time creating friendships in the first place.” Alex felt that he could “enhance my friendships with my friends by actually learning from others” because of this research. Kennedy realized that through a better understanding of male friendship, this research study could “help guys to understand you have to put balance in your life.”

A general void exists in literature connecting male friendship to helping men in counseling. The literature does suggest several areas that might bring men to counseling and prove beneficial for men undergoing counseling. In a study on gender role conflict, Zampira, Wampold and Gregory (2003), found that depression and anxiety in men occurred because of conflict they were experiencing in their interpersonal relationships. More specifically, they suggested that restricted affection between men caused higher levels of anxiety.

Additionally, Oswald et al. (2004) found that those men who have trouble establishing or maintaining relationships often suffer negative effects, such as mental distress and physical ailments. Participants in this study placed value on the behaviors and emotions demonstrated between men and viewed those behaviors and emotions as beneficial. As several participants suggested, helping males evaluate and understand what friendship is, how to make friends, and how to maintain friends can help males, thus possibly resulting in less anxiety and conflict for males. Other studies found that friendships play an important role in social support and resulting mental health and those males without social support struggle in their relationships (Garfield, 2010; Greif, 2009; Kemple; 2009). Similar to these studies, participants had concerns with maintaining friendships and the diminishing numbers of their friends.

For Counselors

Bushman and Holt-Lunstad (2009), Fehr (2004), Perlman (2007), and Ryback and McAndrew (2006) identified the term friendship to describe close relationships and recognized friendship as an integral component of life. However, related to counseling, McCarthy and Holliday, (2004) believed that many men feel unsuccessful, less independent, and out of control while undergoing mental health assistance. Although males in the present study believed that men are resistant to counseling because of their male ego, pride, or need for control; counselors would be wise to investigate the difficulties male clients have in maintaining friendships when counseling men. Additionally, Kierski and Blazini (2009) recommended that counselors account for the male fear of being perceived as feminine, as was also described in the present study, when counselors work with male clients.

Overall, learning males' perceptions about what friendship is and what their friendships are like can benefit counselors in many ways when assisting male clients. Primarily, counselors who work with males and understand their friendships can be more informed about males and the social support they need and experience. Participants in this study discussed the challenges as well as supportive aspects of their friendships. Counselors, when working with males, can use the findings from this study to better understand why or why not other males play a more supportive role in male clients' relationships. For counselors, working with males who are questioning or trying to understand what they need in their relationships, such as not being able to make friends or losing friends, could assist counselors in being more helpful in the counseling process. This assistance may include being able to validate males' friendship experiences, as well as helping males process and make sense of what friendships are and what they want and need from their friendships.

For Counselor Educators

Counselor educators can use the insight gained from this research study to teach potential counselors in two distinct areas: human development and multiculturalism. Bem's (1981) earlier research links human development and the cultural aspects to males' experiences of friendship. She asserted that gender interpretations are reinforced by male's schema during their development and within their cultural norms. As a result of male development, she believed that male friendships tend to look alike and that men within those relationships behave in ways reflecting their cultural norms. Counselor educators can use Bem's conceptualization of male development when teaching a human development course to counseling students. Counselor educators can teach students how to apply Bem's theory to male human development and how males understand and experience male friendships within their culture.

Within multicultural classes, counselor educators can teach an inclusive approach to understanding male friendships. Research indicates that men expect certain behaviors to occur within friendship. Migliaccio's (2009) findings indicated that male same-sex friendship is based on masculine expectations and that the way men interact with friends is a reflection of their expected masculine behaviors within their social norms. Based on those expectations, men make adjustments within a friendship to appropriately display expected masculine behaviors. Also, Coutinho (2007) revealed that men and women select friends with similar characteristics to themselves such as intelligence, status, dominance, and age, among other various variables. As indicated by participants in this study, males chose friends whose values they respect and admire such as honesty, openness, and trust. Although, this study was not related to assessing if participants' values were similar to those of their friends, understanding these values and other

components of friendships described in this research and the literature could be concepts specifically taught to students about males and the culture in which they were raised and live.

Recommendations for Future Research

Many of the findings from the previous research were supported by findings in the present study regarding male friendships. However, this qualitative research gave specific focus to males' perceptions of same-sex friendship apart from variables such as male and female friendships, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and a myriad of other values that might have otherwise affected the outcome. As a result of the findings and based on participant responses, one area that could be researched further is if biological male friendships have different components in the definition of friendship. Several of the participants in this study likened their friends to family. Two of the participants specifically likened their friends to brothers. Interestingly, though, only one participant included his brother when referring to his best friend. The intent of this study was not to research familial relationships; however, it could be beneficial to study whether biological brothers add a different component and/or social expectation to friendship or whether the idea of a friend as a close brother is a romanticized idea.

Another area that could be further researched is the relationship between spirituality and friendship. Although only one participant mentioned a connection between spirituality and friendship, a link was indicated with male friendships and their need to share similar interests and in activities in the context of spirituality and religion. The idea that spirituality may play a part in the formation and maintenance of male friendship through religious activities and spiritual beliefs could be connected to or separated from similar interests and shared activities and an area to be researched.

A third area that could be further studied is the dynamics of men within groups of friends. Several participants referred to multiple friends or their group of friends. The dynamics that exist within a group of friends may be different or a contributing factor to the dynamics that exist in a dyad of two males. Further research could be conducted on the variables that surround and impact the dynamics of a male friendship within a group of friends.

Finally, the participants in this study all agreed that counseling is a viable resource and a pathway that could be beneficial for men. In spite of their belief that counseling is a worthwhile endeavor, they resolutely believed that men, in general are resistant to counseling. Perhaps another area beckoning for further research is how we, as counselors can make counseling more adaptive to men based on the study and use of friendship. As counselors seek to better understand men, their friendships and how friendship could be used in counseling, a better understanding of the friendships could further the investigation of males and how counselors can assist males in developing and maintain their male friendships.

Personal Reflections

Reflecting on my experience as a first time researcher, I find that it has been gratifying and eye opening. I feel a great deal of respect for the men who allowed me to examine their closest friendships. While not a complete stranger to most of the men in this study, I was only a passing acquaintance. In spite of this, these men opened up about their friendships and allowed me to peek, poke, and prod their understanding of what male friendship means to them. Their honesty was refreshing and I sought to tell their stories as accurately as possible. The final version as reported here involved countless hours of searching transcripts and notes and recall of every nuance to maintain the integrity of each participant. It is my sincere hope that I have captured and reported their stories with the same transparency the stories were told to me.

My very first interview lasted approximately 45 minutes, although it seemed longer. This may have been because it was my initial foray into interviewing for research purposes. Despite the newness of this experience, it was neither uncomfortable nor unpleasant. As I reflect, I realize the struggle I had to remain in the role of researcher. On many occasions, I wanted to continue the conversations and share my own stories with the participants. Nevertheless, the interviews progressed as planned and this study is the result.

I suspect my struggles to remain neutral and unbiased in this study were not unlike those of many other novice researchers. As stated in the opening chapter, this study was initiated by reflecting upon my own friendships. Hence, the study was personal and meaningful to me for my own personal benefit and interest. As I continue to age, my circle of friends grows smaller. My perception and evaluation of my own friendships with other males was a driving force to pursue this topic. As I struggled to isolate my personal interests from the participant's voices, the resounding statement that these men made was that friendship with other men is important. At least, to these men, and this man, it was- and is.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

IRB Approval letter

University Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research University of New Orleans

Campus Correspondence

Principal Investigator: Roxane L. Dufrene

Co-Investigator: Gerard A. Williams

Date: May 29, 2014

Protocol Title: "Men and Friendship; An Exploration of Male Perceptions of Same-Sex Friendships"

IRB#: 01May14

The IRB has deemed that the research and procedures described in this protocol application are exempt from federal regulations under 45 CFR 46.101 category 2, due to the fact that any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Exempt protocols do not have an expiration date; however, if there are any changes made to this protocol that may cause it to be no longer exempt from CFR 46, the IRB requires another standard application from the investigator(s) which should provide the same information that is in this application with changes that may have changed the exempt status.

If an adverse, unforeseen event occurs (e.g., physical, social, or emotional harm), you are required to inform the IRB as soon as possible after the event.

Best wishes on your project.
Sincerely,



Robert D. Laird, Ph.D., Chair
UNO Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

Appendix B

Introductory Letter

Introductory Letter

[Date]

[Address]

Dear _____,

My name is Gerard A. Williams and I am conducting my dissertation research pertaining to men and their experience of male friendships. I am currently a doctoral candidate in counselor education at The University of New Orleans. The purpose of my study is to examine heterosexual males' perceptions and experiences of their male-to-male friendships. I would like to interview you regarding my research. If you agree to participate in my study, we can schedule a day and time, at your convenience, to conduct an interview. At that time, I will have an informed consent document for your signature and approval.

I will conduct two interviews, each for approximately one hour in an agreed upon location of your choosing. I will use audio recording at each interview and I will make transcriptions from the recordings. I would like you to bring to the interview pictures of either another male you identify as a friend or pictures of you and an individual you identify as a friend. The pictures will be used to assist you in reflecting on your friendships and encourage dialogue during the interview.

The results from this study will be published in my dissertation. However, neither your name, nor any other identifying characteristics, will appear in the transcripts. This letter serves as your invitation to participate in my research study. I will contact you soon to assess your level of interest and to schedule a time to begin if you are interested. Thank you for your time, interest and support of my study.

Sincerely,

Gerard A. Williams, M.Ed., LPC, NCC
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix C
Informed Consent

Informed Consent

Title of Research Study: *Men and Friendship: An Exploration of Male Perceptions Regarding Same-Sex Friendship*

Principle Investigator: Roxane L. Dufrene, Ph.D., CISM, LMFT, LPC-S, NCC
Associate Professor, Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Foundations
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504-280-7434; e-mail: rdufren1@uno.edu

Co-Investigator: Gerard A. Williams, M.Ed., LPC, NCC
Doctoral Candidate, Counselor Education
504-343-1027; e-mail: gawilli1@uno.edu

Purpose: The purpose of my study is to examine heterosexual males' perceptions and experiences of their male-to-male friendships.

Procedures: You will be asked to complete an interview with the co-investigator for approximately one hour to one hour and a half, in which you will be asked to discuss your experience with a male friendship(s). The interview will be conducted in a setting that offers privacy, is conducive for audio recording, and is convenient and accessible to you. Such settings may include a library meeting room, your home, or your office. The interview will be audio recorded. You will be asked to complete a second interview, which will take approximately 30 minutes. You will be asked to review a transcript of our first interview and the analysis of the transcript for accuracy. The second interview will also be used for any reflections or thoughts you may want to add from our first interview. No alternative procedures will be used. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw consent and terminate participation at any time without consequences.

Potential Risks or Discomforts: The primary risk associated with this study is that you will be asked to share personal information regarding your friendships with other men, which may cause some unease. You do not have to answer any question(s) that you do not choose to answer, you may withdraw any answers at any time, and you can withdraw from the study at any point without consequences.

Potential Benefits to You or Others: Your participation in this research study may give you an opportunity to voice your concerns, opinions, thoughts, and ideas about male friendships. It is hoped that results will assist counselors in developing interventions to better serve the needs of men seeking counseling.

Protection of Confidentiality: Your identity will be kept confidential and will be maintained with an identifying pseudonym that is assigned or of your choosing. You will be asked to use this name (not your real name) to identify your responses to interview questions and to be used in publications. All identifying information will be stored separate from information collected for added security. Recorded interviews will be transcribed into Microsoft Word™ documents and saved with a password. Recordings and transcripts will be kept in a locked cabinet accessible only to the investigator and co-investigator. Recordings will be destroyed upon completion of data analysis and transcripts will be destroyed three years later. The researcher will use only a landline to obtain or provide information that may include sensitive or personal data. Likewise, either HIPAA compliant email or postal mail will be used to send information that contains sensitive or personal information. Your identity will be protected in the reporting of data to any publication. Although every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality, absolute anonymity cannot be guaranteed. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact Dr. Ann O'Hanlon at the University of New Orleans at (504) 280-5454.

I have been fully informed of the above-described procedure with its possible benefits and risks, and I have given my permission for participation in this study.

Name of Participant (Print) _____ Date _____ Participant's signature _____

Appendix D
Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Demographics:

Name _____ Age _____ Marital Status _____

Occupation _____ Ethnicity _____

How long in N.O.? _____ Education Level _____ How long friendship _____?

Explanatory lead-in/script: Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study.

You were given an introductory letter and an informed consent document prior to agreeing to participate in this research study. Within the content of those documents were explanations regarding what this study involves, the reason it is being conducted and the importance of it. To briefly paraphrase, I am a doctoral candidate and I am conducting this study for my dissertation. This study is important because it may lead to a better understanding of male friendships.

1. What were your first thoughts about being involved in this project?
2. Tell me what is a friend to you?
3. What thoughts come to mind when you hear the word “male friendship”?
4. Tell me about your closest male friendship(s).
5. How would you describe how you express your friendship to your friend?
6. How would you describe how your friend expresses his friendship to you?
7. What do you think about when you look at the photos you have?
8. Tell me about the value of friendship with other males in your life.
9. Relate a story about a male friend that underscores the closeness between both of you.
10. What obstacles do men have to overcome in the formation and maintenance of friendship?
11. Are there any social expectations that you can or cannot do with a friend, and if so what are they?
12. How might the collection of information regarding male friendships be important or useful?
13. What are your perceptions of counseling?
14. What are your perceptions of men and counseling?

Appendix E
Field Notes Protocol

Field Notes Protocol

Setting:

Interviewee:

Date/Time:

Start and end time:

Descriptive:

Who is being observed?

What is the physical setting?

What is happening during the interview?

Are there any disruptions/interruptions?

Reflective:

What is the tone of the interview?

What beliefs, attitudes, and values do I suspect as the interview proceeds?

What are the reactions of the interviewee?

Is there anything that appears odd, unusual or significant in some form?

VITA

Gerard Williams is a life time resident of New Orleans, Louisiana. Gerard earned a bachelor's degree in general studies (BGS) from The University of New Orleans in 2004. Gerard's master's degree (M.Ed.) was completed at The University of New Orleans in 2007. He embarked upon the pursuit of a Ph.D. in counselor education in fall of 2007. Gerard is a Licensed Professional Counselor (L.P.C.) and currently works in higher education.