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Man to Man: A Psychodynamic/ Developmental Understanding of Adult Male Same-Sex Friendship

Len D. McCoy

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Man-to-Man: A Psychodynamic/Developmental Understanding
of Adult Male Same-Sex Friendship

by

Len D. McCoy

Presented to the Faculty of the
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by

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Within psychology there has been a historic lack of literature on male development at the social, personal and intrapsychic levels. This is currently being remediated somewhat, but large voids still exist. Not only is male development under-represented, but there is even less research on the development and attributes of men’s same-sex friendships. This study describes typical strengths and deficits in male friendships. The areas of deficit include the lack of emotional closeness many men experience with each other and the decline in friends that many men experience post-adolescence.

An analysis of developmental and psychodynamic issues seeks to help illuminate the position many men are currently in: wanting or needing closer friendships with men but being unable to attain this. The theories of Freud, Erik Erikson, and Harry Stack Sullivan are used as foundational material in
understanding male development as it relates to the concept of friendship. The early separation/individuation period between mother and son, commonly referred to as "disidentification," is discussed, along with a brief review of the Oedipus Complex.

Theoretical conceptualizations are offered which seek to explain the barriers men face in their intimate, non-sexual friendships. These are grouped around the categories of fear and competition. Specific fears are outlined, including the fear of attachment, the generalized fear of other males due to the lack of intimate attachment with the father, the fear of loss of autonomy, and the fear of homosexuality, or homophobia. The fears of men in friendship are understood as emanating from, or being influenced by, the disidentification period of development. Competitive hindrances to friendship are described and include the issues of masculine identity, intrapsychic splitting, and loss.

Finally, critiques of the writer's ideas are discussed. Implications of this work are given and suggestions for future research are offered.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Men's studies, and men's friendships in particular, are new areas of interest in contemporary society as well as in the social sciences. This seems particularly odd since approximately half of the human race is male, but it is nevertheless evident from a review of the literature. Many variables contribute to this burgeoning interest, one of which is the increased overall interest in gender studies, and another being the continued influence of feminist scholarship in the United States and throughout the world.

A paradox exists related to men's studies within psychology, especially within psychodynamic and psychoanalytic theory. Many of these schools have studied and theorized extensively about male development, yet they almost exclusively describe it only through early childhood (Freud, 1900/1953, 1905/1938, 1924), or adolescence (Sullivan, 1953). Further, analytic and Object-Relations theorists write very little about the relationships between males, whether these are boys or men. One exception to this would be Freud, and his theories of the Oedipus Complex (1900/1953, 1905/1938, 1924). Freud's focus throughout the theory of the Oedipus Complex is more on the
mother-son relationship, however, than on father and son. Not only is this a deficit, but he does not explore in any depth the father-son relationship once the son progresses beyond oedipal issues. Neither Freud nor any other major psychoanalytic theorist explores the ongoing relationship between father and son beyond childhood, addresses developmental issues between boys, or considers ongoing relationships between adult men. It seems Freud never wrote a formal account of masculinity (Connell, 1994). Freud's understanding of human nature tended to focus on drives, instinctual behavior, and intrapsychic issues, while neglecting the more interpersonal relational themes. This understanding leaves a gap.

It is this gap that this work seeks to address. If the current vacuum in research with men's issues continues, then a large area of human behavior will continue to be ignored. The ramifications of this are academic as well as pragmatic; psychological theory will not develop further in illuminating men's relational styles, problems, and strengths. Also, the more that is understood about men's relationships, the more it will lead to increased understanding of men in general.

This paper seeks to examine strengths as well as weaknesses in men's same-sex friendships. The functional aspects of how men relate will be examined, as will the problematic elements. Within this framework, two particular problem areas in men's friendship will be examined. These include the lack of emotional closeness or non-sexual intimacy in men's friendships, and the
Adult Male

lack of male friends in many men's lives—particularly the decline in meaningful friendships that some men experience after adolescence.

This paper seeks to contribute to a future comprehensive psychological theory on male/male friendship. No such theory currently exists and, as Michaelis (1983) stated, "'...friendship between men is still one of the most important, least examined, relationships in America" (p. 8). The one major theorist who came closest to having a theory on men's relationships was Harry Stack Sullivan. Within his "interpersonal theory of psychiatry," he discussed the development of males from infancy through late adolescence. A particular area of the theory, which he termed preadolescence, specifically addressed the relationships between boys, not just their individual development (Sullivan, 1953). He placed significant emphasis on this stage of male development but failed to examine same-sex friendship in any depth past childhood and adolescent phases.

One main task in the development of a more comprehensive theory is integrating psychological and sociological aspects of men's friendships. The question is not whether they should be integrated but how. Psychodynamic and interpersonal issues are invariably intertwined in human beings. Men's early as well as later socialization significantly influences their relational styles in adulthood (Balswick & Peek, 1971; Rubin, 1986; Sternbach, 1990; Swain, 1988).
Organization of Dissertation

The dissertation consists of five chapters, including the present one which serves as an introduction to the topic. The literature reviews of male development and male friendship comprise chapters two and three. The focus in chapter two is exclusively on male development, as described primarily by major theorists, including Freud, Sullivan, and Erikson. Developmental issues have been narrowed somewhat by those issues which relate to later relationships. Some attention is also given to other contributors, including contemporary psychodynamic and developmental writers. My goal in this chapter was to answer questions such as the following: "How do men get where they are?" "What are their same-sex relationships like as boys and young men?" "How do past socialization and role expectations possibly affect men’s future relationships, especially friendships?"

Chapter three surveys pertinent literature on men’s friendships, including the benefits and problems associated with such friendships. Self-reports of male friendships will be analyzed, including those from academic as well as popular works. Another issue that is addressed is the similarity and difference between "male" and "female" styles of relating.

Chapter four describes this author’s theoretical contributions to the literature on men’s friendships. This chapter is an integration of developmental, psychoanalytic, and object-relations theoretical approaches and seeks to understand
men's friendships by looking at preoedipal and oedipal issues, particularly the "disidentification" (Greenson, 1968) phenomenon. Further psychodynamic variables are examined in men's same-sex relationships, particularly those which relate to fear and competition.

Chapter five is a multi-faceted chapter which focuses on implications of my theory, a brief exploration of possible critiques of my theory, and recommendations for further research.

As a final note, it is this author's belief that the lack of close friendship between adult males is not merely of interest to those in the social sciences. It is all too often detrimental pragmatically, to men as well as to all of society. Many men continue to miss out on the richness that deeper friendships with each other can provide. Because of fear, lack of awareness, and/or lack of skills, they miss a "field of adventure and satisfaction" that must be experienced to really be understood and appreciated. Consequently, I would suggest that this also has a "ripple effect" among others, including men's wives or romantic partners, their children, as well as their parents. Hopefully, this work will help to illuminate some of the problematic issues in men's relationships with each other, illuminate areas of strengths found in male friendships, suggest new ways of looking at male relationships, and further
the interest many men have in developing closer relationships with each other.
Chapter 2

A Review of Male Development

It is quite impossible to understand men and the characteristics of their adult relationships without understanding how they "got to be men." This is particularly relevant as it relates to same-sex friendship. The roots of, and attitudes towards adult friendships frequently correspond with early childhood issues or, in Freudian terms, preoedipal and oedipal issues.

Male development, like all human development, proceeds in stages that are sequential yet highly variable. There is often a large difference between what appears to be optimal development and what happens in reality in boys and men’s lives. As Mahler (1968) suggested, development proceeds out of a symbiotic attachment with the mother. There is no reason to believe that the strength of this attachment is any different in male versus female infants. It is simply attachment.

As several psychoanalytic writers have noted, masculine identity formation is generally more difficult for boys to achieve than girls (Greenson, 1968; Pollack, 1995b, Rubin, 1986). A more fragile developmental schema may underlay this. The boy must first attach to the mother to feel "safe" in the
world and, like his female counterpart, he will first understand
the world of the "other" in female terms. Theorists such as
Klein (1945/1975a, 1957/1975b) have referred to the "good
breast" and other terms which indicate the baby’s close physical
as well as emotional ties with the mother. Traditional
psychoanalytic theory, however, suggests that the boy must leave
this "orbit" of the mother if he is to attain a sense of male
gender identity (Forrest, 1967). It is the father, and often
other older men who "call him out" of this and to which he is
"hardwired" to respond (Dalbey, 1988; Keen, 1991). Greenson
(1968) coined the term "disidentication," and Lukton (1992)
described this process of emotional separation from the mother
as being fostered by the positive masculine identification with
the father. Lucente (1996) called this reattachment to father a
"hyperidentification" with masculinity.

It is generally agreed that this process does not happen
smoothly or easily, and that the process involves a certain
amount of psychic trauma (Pollack, 1995a), or as Rubin (1986)
stated, "...a profound upheaval in...inner psychic life"
(p.176). With some young boys, it fails to happen at all. It may
be too threatening to "leave" the mother emotionally; there may
be too much subtle reinforcement to stay aligned with the female
figure in the child’s life; or there may be no father figure
present to provide the "leverage" to leave the mother or female
caretaker.
Some contemporary psychoanalytic writers have challenged this traditional theorization of "disidentification" as a model of health for the developing male identity (Chodorow, 1989; Pollack, 1990, 1995b; Stevens & Gardner, 1994). They believe it to be traumatizing for the young male and a contributing factor in the lack of emotional safety and anger towards women which many adult men exhibit. Some have suggested that the developing male child need not be encouraged to disidentify with the female, but that the male caretaker identify with the male child from the earliest months (Pollack, 1995b).

Stevens and Gardner (1994) have developed a theory called the Umbilicus Complex to describe the abandonment fears that adult men more frequently exhibit as compared to women. They posit that male infants, particularly during the first two years of life, are prematurely encouraged to psychologically separate from the mothers. They contend that male infants typically have biologically-retarded development as compared to females, and that this factor, combined with a more pronounced encouragement to separate from the mother, lay the foundations for chronic fears of abandonment in adult males. Rubin (1986) agreed, stating that child generally feels like he has been left by the mother, not that he has left her. This topic of disidentification will be further discussed, particularly as it relates to adult male friendship, in the theoretical section of this work.
To return to the typical developmental patterns of contemporary boys, the process of male identification and alignment does seem to occur, in various ways and degrees, either with the father or some significant male figure in the child’s life. This is the first male affiliation that the young boy has and is very important. He starts to "absorb" masculinity from this figure. Again, according to traditional thought, everything in the healthy male child who has been raised in a "good enough" environment encourages him to "detach and re-attach," that is, to leave the female figure as his primary identification and safety in the world and to turn to the male figure (Greenson, 1968). This is the essence of the Oedipus Complex for males, as described by Freud (Freud, 1924).

The boy, through the male figure or figures, has gotten his first glimpses into the male world. This appears to be foundational for successful future male relationships (Forrest, 1967). Without some initial affiliation into "maleness," later authentic male friendship, that is, friendship based on equality and commonality of gender and attitude, is difficult.

Oedipal issues have been described since Freud by neo-Freudians and other psychodynamic theorists. What is most salient to this topic is not the exact theoretical details of the Oedipus Complex, but that the oedipal shift occurs--that the boy aligns with the father or male caretaker in a significant way.
As noted above, it is this alignment which sets the stage for later friendships with other males, in boyhood as well as adulthood. Typically, the beginning of the school years is the most common time for friendships to begin (Sullivan, 1953), though some writers have discussed peer interest as beginning in the earliest months of life (Rubin, 1980). Many tasks occur during the ages of 5-6 years old to puberty. This is a second crucible in which boys learn what it is to be a boy. Basic types of relating with both sexes occur during this time, for boys and girls, but most specifically with others of the same sex.

Contemporary as well as traditional gender studies emphasize the strong socialization processes that occur during these formative years (Gurian, 1996; Rotundo, 1993; Rubin, 1980; Sullivan, 1953). Many theorists currently believe that these powerful socialization forces are more potent in shaping gender than biological predispositions. Certainly both play a role.

The issues of competition and fear are both salient features in the young boy’s life during these school years. In American culture, external socialization predominantly encourages identity development through competition, that is, to be a boy one has to be "tough," a competitor with other boys (Rubin, 1986). Ingrained into his psyche, very early, is a "warrior" mentality (Keen, 1991). A common dictum of the 1960’s, according to Messner (1987), was, "a winner in sports will be a winner in life" (p. 193).
The degree to which males in our society are encouraged to compete against each other may be problematic, as described by some contemporary writers (Lewis, 1978; Messner, 1987). Competition in itself is not bad, but when it is emphasized as the primary way to achieve male identity, it may be a prelude to disappointment. Messner (1987) argued that what attracts many males to sports is an unconscious desire for closeness and intimacy with others. The sports arena is seen by athletes, albeit unconsciously, as a venue to have closeness and yet maintain boundaries and distance from others. Messner suggests that this desire for closeness is never satisfied completely through athletics, and that the aspect that sports can reliably deliver is often overlooked: fun.

Nevertheless, competition is highly valued and encouraged for boys and young men in our society, especially by parents and teachers of boys, as well as in media images directed towards them (Rubin, 1986; Sherrod, 1987). There is support for the position that this competition is generally positive in helping young males resolve identity issues (Hawley, 1993), and that it has positive as well as negative aspects (Rubin, 1986). However, the majority of contemporary writing emphasizes the deleterious effects of excessive competition and the effect it has on men remaining emotionally distant from each other (Berkeley Men’s Center, 1973/1974; Lewis, 1978; Pleck, 1975; Seidler, 1992).
Freud, in his psychosexual theories, identified this period of the early school years as the *latency* period (1933). He, as well as later analytic writers, said little about this period, giving more developmental importance to earlier as well as later stages. Latency, well understood as a stage of psychosexual development, appears to be an unfortunate term for a period that is so critical for boys in personality development.

These early school-age years are an important period of bonding between boys. Hierarchies are established, groups are formed, and masculine potential is actualized (Nicolosi, 1991). The formation of individual identity through group identification is one of the most important tasks of these years. As Gurian (1996) stated, "Boys need a tribe" (p. 57). It appears that boys that are unfortunate enough not to fit into a peer group suffer in identity now and later on in life because they were not a part of the "group" (Nicolosi, 1991). Sullivan (1953) described well the anguish of ostracism and its resulting loneliness for such boys.

Popular movies such as *Stand by Me* (Evans, Gideon, & Scheinman, 1987) illustrate some of the closeness as well as high levels of competition that develop in these all male groups. Intimacy, of an early, immature type, may develop, generally between best friends. As Rotundo (1993) illustrated, however, younger boys tend to feel an intimacy with friends based on loyalty and shared action, and may be less interested than adolescents in sharing feelings.
The issue of fear is most generally seen in the intensity of the drive to conform to group norms, to be part of the group. Two issues are of primary concern to these boys. The first is the fear, real or imagined, of not being a part of the group, of being ostracized. Ostracization is equated with loneliness (Sullivan, 1953). The second is to be labeled in some pejorative way. Distinctly different from the common "dissing" that boys give each other in friendly ways (Gurian, 1996), this involves obvious malevolence: verbal attacks that communicate that the other boy is not "man enough," and is not part of the boys' group. Rigid behavioral expectations are operant at this period in boys' groups. Diversity in expressions of emotion, thought, and behavior may not be appreciated or welcomed (Rotundo, 1993; Sullivan, 1953).

The beginning of puberty and adolescence is a time of upheaval in young men's lives. The biological factors associated with puberty are certainly very important. As some authors have written, it is a time when the other sex is first "seen" in an adult sexual light, this occurring because of an erotization of a longing for the "other," the mysterious person who is not "like me." Freud labels this period as the beginning of the last psychosexual stage, the genital stage. Puberty marks the beginning of maturity.

This period of time is interesting not only because of the emergence of opposite-sex relating, but because of changes in same-sex relating as well. Typically, this period might be
equated in some ways to the *practicing* and *rapprochement* phases of early development described by Mahler (1968). Young men, during much of adolescence, still are primarily at home with others of their sex. They venture out into the "world of women" periodically, with some fear as well as excitement, and come back to the "fold" of their peers for comfort, reassurance, sharing, and bragging. It is like the child who ventures away from the mother to explore the "world," and then quickly returns to the safety of mother for refueling and comfort.

Many theorists have described and enhanced our understanding of human development. Historically, development has frequently been described in androcentric terms or from an androcentric perspective (Erikson, 1968; Freud, 1924, 1905/1938, 1900/1953; Sullivan, 1953). Gilligan (1982) has criticized this trend, stating that the developmental literature has frequently failed to include women in its research and has basically developed theories of development based on males, for males.

According to other critics, this phenomenon is rather surreptitious, because developmental theories are described as applying to all humans, though they may fail to adequately explain female development. Interestingly, many earlier developmental theories are based on men, yet don't adequately explain male development. Of the three major theorists reviewed here, Freud, Erikson, and Sullivan, each appears to have largely neglected the topic of men and relationships. Freud and Sullivan both adequately described early personality development, but
failed to describe men’s adult development. Erikson comprehensively surveyed many of the stages that men go through during their life span, but didn’t significantly focus on how males relate to each other throughout life.

Sigmund Freud

Freud’s drive theory, especially the psychosexual stages of development, addresses competition, fear, and sexual instincts, among many other facets of personality (Freud, 1933). His emphasis on the Oedipus Complex brings together all three of these elements, focusing on the triadic relationship between child, mother, and father. Freud described a process not only of drive- and tension-reduction, but one of identity and identification. The young preschool boy, having already developed core personality issues, as evidenced by the earlier oral and anal phases, now is faced with pregenital sexual drives and fantasies.

It is these sexual drives which Freud (1924) described as being part of the essence of the Oedipus Complex. Freud described, for the male child, the strong primitive desire which emerged in relation to his mother or female caretaker: the desire to "possess" her, and the resulting tensions that ensued. The boy began to see his father as a rival and fantasized about murdering or castrating him. His subsequent emotion was fear, however, based on his observation that little girls lacked a penis, apparently had been castrated, and that his fate would likely be the same should he persevere in pursuing his mother.
According to Freud (1924), the boy is faced with a primary conflict between his narcissistic interest in his body (penis) and his libidinal cathexis or love towards his mother. In the vast majority of children, the narcissistic love wins out; the boy represses his feelings towards his mother, and he is spared, intrapsychically, the anxiety concerning castration. The repression of sexual feelings ushers in the latency period.

As Chodorow (1978) wrote, the boy not only avoids punishment because of this intrapsychic choice, but he receives the reward of masculine identification with the father. He is now aligned with what he perceives as the more powerful gender, and a new "psychic integration" appears in place of the Oedipus Complex: one in which the ego is transformed through the development of the superego (introjected paternal prohibitions) and a more general sexual orientation instead of a specific attachment to the mother.

Freud is rather confusing at times in his description of this complicated process, but he clearly believed that the resolution of oedipal issues is critical to the health of the developing person. Early in his discussion of the resolution, he described the repression of feelings towards the mother, but later stated

...the process we have described is more than a repression. It is equivalent, if it is ideally carried out, to a destruction and an abolition of the complex. We may plausibly assume that we have here come upon
the borderline—never a very sharply drawn one—

between the normal and the pathological. (Cited in Gay, 1989)

As Chodorow (1978) summarized, for Freud, oedipal issues constitute the ultimate formative causes for both health and neurosis.

**Erik Erikson**

Erik Erikson discussed human development in intricate, yet global ways. His philosophies of development, including the now-famous psychosocial stages, addressed development in rather generic terms, often failing to delineate what may be different in development between men and women. In this absence, his work through much of the century has been described as being normative for both sexes. This has been critiqued by feminist writers who charge that his model of development is one based on studies of boys and men, and must not be assumed to be accurate for women, or sometimes even for men (Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1991). Erikson generally does not specifically describe his theories as normative for men or women. His concepts must be carefully scrutinized in light of other information on male development and male/male relationships.

As Roazen (1976) stated, one of the central points of all of Erikson's work is that western psychology has failed to look at the full range of the life cycle. Erikson (1959) coined the term, *epigenetic principle*, to describe his belief that "anything that grows has a ground plan, and...out of the ground
plan the parts arise, each part having its time of special 
ascendancy, until all parts have arisen to form a functioning 
whole" (p. 52).

Throughout Erikson's work the concept of identity appears. He seems to be attempting to deal with the perennial question of men, and women: "Who am I?" In fact, Erikson (1968) summarized most of his eight psychosocial stages with brief comments about the self. For example, he summarized the psychosocial "crisis" in stage three by stating the following: "I am what I can imagine I will be" (p. 122); and in stage seven, "I am what survives of me" (p. 141).

Two concepts are woven through the work of Erikson and are readily observed in his psychosocial stages: relationship issues and "doing" issues. He denotes that people develop into mature human beings by relating with others and by developing individual skills.

It is difficult to single out parts of Erikson’s work as being more salient in discussing men and their friendships, but his work around adolescence and young adulthood illuminate many of the issues explored later in this dissertation. In the adolescent stage of life, his fifth psychosocial stage, Erikson (1968) described the conflict of "identity vs. identity confusion." He stated that young people are preoccupied with how they appear to be in others’ eyes, as compared to how they feel about themselves. Erikson described how the adolescent searches for important men (human beings) and ideas to have faith in, and
how important it is for them to be developing some sort of occupational identity. Social cliques are important in developing a sense of identity. Finally, he stated that adolescent love is not primarily sexual, but is identity oriented. He stated that the self is projected onto the other and is reflected back, thereby consolidating identity.

One factor that emerges out of this stage of Erikson’s is that the self, or identity, emerges and develops not in isolation, nor as primarily an internal, instinctual process, but develops out of interaction with important others. Erikson’s suggestion that adolescents look to "men and ideas" to have faith in is seen in many college and university settings at any given point in time. Adolescence is a time of idealism, a time when life seems endless, when optimism reigns supreme, when noble deeds are chosen over useful ones (Aristotle, ed. 1927). Life is like a "stage," one which seems to stretch on forever.

Entering this "stage" for young men is often accomplished through identification with other, older men. Erikson (1968) suggested that the self develops out of projection that is reflected back onto the person. This is often seen in young adolescent men who choose, consciously or unconsciously, older men whom they respect or admire. In choosing men they want to be like, they likely do project themselves onto them, then reinternalize the desired parts of the older men.

Erikson (1968) stated that cliques are often beneficial in helping individual adolescents develop identity, even though
they may be deleterious to those not in the "group." Again, he emphasized the necessity of others in identity formation. It is interesting to note that he emphasized two types of relationships here: peers as well as older authority figures. This will be discussed further in the review of Harry Stack Sullivan's work, but it seems likely that the young man is seeking reflected images of himself, not just images of those more mature than himself. In other words, he is seeking the "mirroring relationship" described by Kohut (1971), except with his same gender.

In Erikson's sixth stage, *intimacy vs. isolation*, he illustrated his belief again in the epigenetic principle by stating that intimacy can only develop, that is a "fusing of identities," when identity formation is significantly completed. This is the stage that he summarizes with "We are what we love" (1968, p. 138). He stated that when intimate social relations fail to develop in late adolescence/early adulthood, stereotypical interpersonal relations may develop, resulting in a deep sense of isolation.

This concept is quite similar to what Sullivan (1953) described for boys in the *preadolescent* stage. This will be further discussed later in this chapter. The most salient themes, however, in Erikson's and Sullivan's formulations include the following: identity precedes intimacy with others and, without both, there is loneliness and isolation.
The competitive response in males is a multi-factorial response, but Erikson illustrated one reason for the strength of this behavior in his discussion of distantiation. Distantiation, or what he calls the counterpart of intimacy, is "the readiness to repudiate, isolate, and if necessary, destroy those forces and people whose essence seems dangerous to one's own" (1968, p. 136). Paraphrased, Erikson seems to be stating not only that human beings have a very strong survival instinct, but that they have a strong need for intimacy with others. He suggested that distantiation is used to maintain intimacy with desired others and that if outsiders threaten this intimacy, they will be subdued or destroyed.

Distantiation is often seen in adolescent boys (as well as in many adults). The desire for identity and closeness with others is seen in the friendship groups that develop. This is well illustrated in the movie Stand by Me (Evans, et al., 1987) where life is lived in "the group" and all others not in the group are seen as outsiders and potential threats to the identity of each of those in the group. No insult or action is deemed too derogatory towards those who might threaten the group.

This movie also illustrated the non-sexual intimacy that can develop for young male adolescents. Unlike intimate conversations between many young women of this age, the intimacy is frequently expressed in derogatory terms/actions towards the other. More than words or actions however, it is the underlying
care and concern for the other, as well as the joking nature of the "insults," that distinguishes these relationships from those that are indeed hostile.

Harry Stack Sullivan

Harry Stack Sullivan, the founder of what is now known as the interpersonal theory of psychiatry, has much to say not only about the friendships of boys and young men, but about male development as a whole. These two facets make him quite unique among analytic theorists, especially those earlier in this century.

This focus is quite understandable, given the emphasis which Sullivan places on interpersonal interactions throughout the lifespan. Sullivan, theoretically, has a very unique way of elevating interpersonal interactions and their importance in the development and maintenance of personality, without discarding internal experience and processes. It is clear, however, that his bias lies towards the importance of interpersonal interactions, as indicated in statements such as that only interpersonal experience is truly scientific. All else, such as intrapsychic or archetypal imagery, is speculative (Chapman & Chapman, 1980).

Before looking specifically at what Sullivan says about male development, it is important to examine what he believed about human development. Like Erikson, Sullivan is "epigenetic," believing in orderly, sequential development—under optimal conditions. As Mullahy (1970) stated, Sullivan believed that
"each stage of development must prepare the personality at least for the principal development of the next era" (p. 144).

Sullivan rejected much of Freud's emphasis on drives, especially early sexual drives, but was still clearly influenced by early analytic thought. Like Freud, Klein, and others, he stressed the importance of early experience on the development of enduring personality characteristics. Using semantics similar to Klein (1945/1975a, 1957/1975b), he described the infant's experience of the "good" or "emotionally-comfortable" nipple, and the "bad" or "anxiety-producing" nipple. He stated that this is the child's first awareness that all his experiences throughout life will fall into one or the other of these two categories. Life experiences will either be emotionally comfortable or painful (Sullivan, 1953).

Sullivan, like Freud, believed that the oedipal period in a boy's life was very important, but described that importance differently:

Empathy seems to function in childhood to produce a linkage of male to male and female to female. The son comes to be to the father, and the father to the son, a sort of personality-extension, quite different from the linkage continuing between the mother and son. Similarly, there arises this new sort of linkage between the mother and daughter. (1972, p. 131)
Sullivan did not see the oedipal period as problem-free, however. Mullahy (1970) summarized his views, stating that if the same-sex parent of the young child is oversensitive to the growing antipathy of him or her, the so-called Oedipus hatred and guilt will appear.

The most salient contribution which Sullivan made to the study of men and their friendship is his theory concerning the development of *chums* or best friends, in the period he described as *preadolescence* (1953). Before this is addressed, however, it is noteworthy to briefly explore what he saw as the most important developmental period concerning overall personality. The *juvenile era*, or roughly what would be the early school years, is, in Sullivan’s conception, a period of potentially intensive socialization experiences. He described this as being two-fold in purpose: providing important experiences and lessons in learning how to relate to peers and authorities outside one’s family group, as well as providing corrective emotional experiences which are inevitably necessary to correct for faulty, flawed patterns of relating in the family of origin. Sullivan described the changes in relations with authority figures during this era as *social subordination* and the new relations with peers as *social accommodation* (1953).

Of particular importance within the concept of social accommodation are two experiences Sullivan believed to be essential in proper social development: competition and compromise. He saw those qualities as healthy in proper
"dosages," but potentially harmful if overdeveloped: "Both competition and compromise, while very necessary additions to one's equipment for living with one's fellows, are capable of being developed into outstandingly troublesome traits of the personality" (1953, p. 232).

According to Sullivan, if all proceeded optimally for the boy, the juvenile period resulted in the development of a social "consciousness," and laid the foundation for preadolescence: a brief stage of a few months to two or three years. This period could start as early as eight-and-a-half years of age or as late as eleven or twelve. Chapman & Chapman (1980) summarized this well, stating that the main characteristic of the juvenile period is "...a strong need for a close relationship with a non-family person of the same sex. There was a certain exclusiveness in this relationship; while it lasted it was the most important relationship in the late juvenile's life" (p. 70).

Sullivan termed these relationships *chums*. It represents a shift in two ways from the gregarious, group-centered sociality of the juvenile era; the primary focus became one other person of the same sex, and the relationship developed more along the lines of giving to the other rather than receiving. Sullivan believed that this stage in the boy's life was the beginning of learning to be intimate with other human beings, of learning and experiencing love for another.

Sullivan addressed the common misconception of that era (and today) of assuming intimacy and sexual involvement are
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one-and-the-same. He believed that intimacy consisted of much beyond genital contact; that "intimacy in this sense means, just as it always has meant, closeness...that type of situation involving two people which permits validation of all components of personal worth" (1953, p. 246). Sullivan placed a great deal of importance on this stage in predicting the future same-sex relationships among men, believing this intimate encounter to be essential in coming to "know" oneself through another's eyes, and in correcting autistic, unreal conceptions of oneself or others. He found, through clinical experience, many men who were tense and uneasy in their personal and professional relationships with other men, and they generally lacked this early intimate relationship with a chum.

Sullivan went one step further in formulating preadolescence, stating that frequently these two-groups united with other two-groups to form the often-observed preadolescent gang. He still viewed the dyad as primarily important, but acknowledged that this broader social group provided additional correctives for personality development, as well as additional opportunities for modeling and leadership.

Chapman & Chapman (1980) questioned the validity of many of Sullivan's conceptual formulations around preadolescence. They stated that many writers regard this stage, including the chum concept, as controversial, and that others, including themselves, find it generally invalid.
They offered two general critiques. The first is that empirical observations of youth have often failed to support the intensity or exclusivity of the chum concept. Psychotherapy with adults, they stated, often fails to reveal a clear-cut preadolescent phase of development. The second critique was that preadolescence, as defined by Sullivan, was likely more reflective of his personal history than of a common dynamic in young men in general. They offered a revised conception of preadolescence, which essentially acknowledged an increased need and intensity in peer-level relationships at the end of the juvenile period but before the beginning of adolescence.

This completes a brief survey of what some of the primary early analysts of this century have written concerning male development. The following briefly summarizes more contemporary writings.

Contemporary Contributions

The most in-depth, empirical study of modern male development would be that of Levinson (1978). His work is quite unique as compared with those above, in that he focused on adult male development, especially those years from late adolescence through age forty.

Levinson's concept of "life structures" is particularly salient here. In what he called "...the basic pattern or design of a person's life at a given time..." (1978, p. 41), he gave a paradigm for viewing men's lives and development as not only individualistic, dyadic, or familial, but also broadly social.
In what he termed *interpenetration*, he described the common interaction that the "self" of each man has on the world, as well as the world on the self. He candidly stated that this concept was not new, simply redefined by him as "The self is in the world, the world is in the self" (p. 46).

The word suggested by Erikson, *epigenetic*, fits well in describing Levinson's life structures also. In what he diagramed as "stair steps," the individual life of a man is seen as a series of uphill steps, with each stage of the man's life being built, optimally, upon the previous stages. It seems that Levinson is suggesting that men "build houses" at each stage of their lives, but that these houses are not isolated; they are connected to each other.

Throughout this discussion and in other parts of his work, Levinson discussed, directly and indirectly, separation-individuation issues that men struggle with throughout their lives. As Messner (1987) commented, this is the process of deciding "where he stops and where the world begins" (p. 197). This will be discussed later, but it is important to note the saliency of this issue to most men. Sometimes seen by other writers as primarily an issue of infancy and adolescence, K. E. Free (Personal communication, 1994) stated that the balance between autonomy and attachment is one that is never perfectly resolved throughout the lifespan, for men or women.

Levinson wrote little concerning male friendship, but he acknowledged the importance of it, stating "The important
choices in adult life have to do with work, family, friendships and love relationships..." (p. 43). He also stated that during "middle adulthood" (ages 40-60), men may develop a greater capacity for intimacy, and may integrate more fully the "feminine" parts of themselves, with the potential outcome being that they may be more responsive friends to men as well as women (1978).

Finally, the most recent writers are producing a rapidly growing body of literature that is frequently being referred to as a "new psychology of men" (Levant, 1996). These writers reflect a diversity of theoretical orientations but commonly share theses which challenge traditional conceptions of masculine development (Kimmel, 1987; Levant, 1996; Pleck, 1981; Pollack, 1990, 1995a, 1995b). These writers question the health of early socialization processes and analytic interpretations of young boys (Pollack, 1995b), question traditional norms of the male role, and see some of contemporary men's problems as byproducts of these roles (Levant, 1996). They see the traditional male roles, such as those described by Brannon (David & Brannon, 1976), as overly rigid. Most of these writers suggest that masculinity should be viewed more fluidly, not as a sex role but as a part of gender relations, and that both femininity and masculinity are evolving concepts and continuously intertwined.

This completes a brief review of the primary psychodynamic and developmental literature on masculinity. In the following
chapter, literature specifically related to men’s friendships is reviewed.
Chapter 3

Contemporary Men’s Friendships

A review of the literature on men’s friendships reveals quite a small bibliography. As Jacobus (1995) stated, an interest in friendship research emerged in the 1970’s, but much of this has concerned women’s same-sex friendships. Most of the current burgeoning body of literature on men’s studies concerns other issues related to masculinity, e.g. male roles and relationships with women (Keen, 1991), mythology (Bly, 1990), fatherhood (Cath, Gurwitt, & Gunsberg, 1989), father/son relationships (Dalbey, 1992), and homosexual issues (Isay, 1989; Nicolosi, 1991).

The majority of the contemporary body of literature on male friendship looks at it primarily from a "deficit" point of view. That is, the perceived deficiencies in men’s friendships, particularly as compared to women’s friendships, are noted. Several sections follow which summarize some of this literature. First, however, a review is offered of those who note significant strengths in current patterns of men’s friendships.

Strengths in Men’s Friendships

Jacobus (1995), in his study of long-term male friendships, stated that there has been too much focus in contemporary
literature on comparing the genders and their same-sex friendships. He believed it is more important to look at men’s friendships alone sometimes. His study reported on a limited number of men who had friendships from 11-35 years in length, and stated that talking and sharing were primary activities in the relationships, as compared to the more stereotypical activity orientation reported by others.

Jacobus (1995) challenged what he believed to be overly dichotomous presuppositions concerning men’s friendships, including the belief that self-disclosure is the fundamental aspect of "true" friendship, and that friendships involving a significant amount of activities are not really friendships. He proposed the idea that men’s friendships should be looked at more holistically and intricately; that some men mix activity and disclosure in a myriad of ways; and that true friendship involves a wide-range of satisfying factors, including fun. Acknowledging that his study sample was very small, he stated that he believes there are male friendships in existence that do involve a high degree of sharing and interpersonal focus, but that researchers have ignored or overlooked these. Finally, he challenged the dichotomous feminist perspective that women grow in relationship to others, while men grow through separation/individuation. He believes both to be an important part of male development.

Swain (1988) wrote that the "deficit model" of men’s friendships inadequately explores the depth of men’s
relationships. He challenged some previously held definitions of "intimacy," defining it in his study as "behavior in the context of a friendship that connotes a positive and mutual sense of meaning and importance to the participants" (p. 72). His study, consisting of a small sample of interviews with college men and women, supported the concept that many men base their friendships around external activities, rather than "just talking." However, Swain concluded from talking with the young men that they have "covert" forms of intimacy that are generally disregarded or not measured by other researchers. An example was provided by one of the subjects and his description of winning a sports championship. The college man described how the mutual looks between himself and his close friend at the end of the game, followed by hugs and congratulations, was very important to him emotionally, and as it related to their mutual friendship. Swain also described other ways that men express intimacy with each other, such as in joking behavior, and certain "masculine" physical gestures of affection (bear hugs, slaps on back).

Another writer who believes men's friendships have been judged inappropriately is Tavris (cited in Franklin, 1988), who stated, "Just because male friendships aren't like female friendships certainly does not mean that men don't have close friends or that their friendships aren't as good as those between women..." (p.40).
Pasick (Meth & Pasick, 1990) continued in this vein. He stated that many men have enjoyable friendships—even though they may not express intimacy as it is commonly defined. Activities are an important part of these friendships. He described older men in his family who have gotten together with other men weekly for activities such as bowling and golf. Of one such group he stated, "Even when their performance is hampered by injury, they do not want to miss the weekly get-together because they so enjoy the company of their male friends" (p. 114). Pasick also makes the point that not all men want more intimacy in their male friendships and may not want to share more about their personal lives. They are content in keeping the relationships focused more around external activities.

Rubin (1986) also expressed positives about men's relationships, even though she has written more on the deficits of such relationships. She believed that men do have emotional bonds with each other, such as with wartime buddies, even though they may frequently lack intimacy. She stated that it is important to distinguish between "bonding" and "intimacy," because men can be deeply bonded with each other without sharing aspects of themselves involved in intimacy.

This completes a brief survey of those who either believe men's same-sex friendships have significant strengths and have generally been judged by inappropriate or incomplete models, or those who see both weaknesses and strengths in male friendship. The focus now shifts to what the writer believes to me more
prevalent in men’s friendships: deficiencies as well as problems in relating. A summary of pertinent pieces of literature is provided in support of this.

**Lack of Friendship and Intimacy**

The first major problem area which I want to address concerns the "pragmatics" of men’s friendships. One problem which many men have is that they have few or no close male friends at all (Levinson, 1978; Lewis, 1978; Miller, 1983; Rubin, 1986). And for those that do have male friends, many of these are not characterized by warmth, self-disclosure, and/or non-sexual intimacy (Doyle, 1995; Lewis, 1978; Phillips, 1986).

Lewis (1978) discussed this lack of friendship and emotional intimacy in men’s lives. He stated "...most American males in adult life have never had a close male friend nor known what it means to love and care for a male friend without the shadow of some guilt and fear of peer ridicule" (p. 108). He focused on the difficulties which men have in disclosing themselves to one another, as well as extending affection to those they feel close to. In his review of the literature concerning self-disclosure, he reported that most men disclosed little or nothing about themselves in their friendships, and that they were much more apt to do this with their closest female friend than with their male friend.

Bell (1981b) reported similar findings. In his study of men’s and women’s friendships, he found that 10% of the men reported having no close friends, while none of the women
reported this. As far as levels of closeness, one-third of the men in his study stated that they would "reveal everything to at least one best male friend" (p. 81). However, two-thirds said there would be some personal insecurities they would not discuss.

Rubin (1986) interviewed 300 men and women between the ages of 25 and 55 (gender numbers unspecified), and reported that at every stage during those years women had more friendships than men, and that there were marked differences in the content and quality of the friendships. (These friendships did not include collegial or workplace friends.) She described a pattern of friendship that markedly differed between the sexes. Women's friendships tended to be rooted in shared intimacies, self-revelation, nurturance, and emotional support; and they had at least one important friendship, even if they worked outside the home. Rubin (1986, same 1985 data base) found that men's relationships revolved around shared activities, and that two-thirds of the men could not name a best friend.

Miller (1983), in a personal, middle-aged quest to find close male friendship, repeatedly reported difficulties. In his part-quest, part-study, he roamed America and Europe exploring male friendship. In his writing he repeatedly stated that he had to be the initiator with other men who seemed interested in being friends. Throughout the early part of his journey, a typical scenario repeated itself, consisting of Miller initiating a social event with another man, the other man
appearing interested in being friends, Miller initiating more events, and the other man failing to reciprocate. He reported several times that the friendships ended because he grew tired of always being the initiator.

Phillips and Goodall (1983) reported that men do not appear to have best friends, and that when such friends were discussed by men in their study, it was in the past tense. Phillips (1986) stated that men talk more about being in groups than in one-to-one relationships. Almost all of the respondents in his study talked about "fitting in" with groups of men. He goes on to discuss the importance of sports, competition, and team-work in men's relational lives. This is consistent with the views of Bell (1981b), who stated that men often interacted with each other in terms of roles. They saw the other man as a co-worker, tennis partner, and so forth. He carried his point further by stating that men often don't see people in general "as complete human beings, but as persons filling particular roles" (p. 78).

Rubin (1986) offered similar findings. She asked all of the men (and women) in her study (total $n = 300$, $n$ of males unspecified) "Do you have a best friend?" She found that few of the married men responded positively and, when they did, their best friend was their wife. Among single men, two-thirds stated they did not have a best friend and, of those who did, it was more often a woman. This phenomenon of best friend and mate being the same person is quite different for women. Rubin (1985)
stated "...they made clear distinctions between a friend and a mate in ways the men did not" (p. 65). Rubin (1986) stated that most of the men were unconcerned about their lack of close male friendship. She quoted the response of one man in summing up many of the men's attitudes towards close friendship: "Best friends are for kids" (p. 167). McGill (1985) and Phillips (1986) reported similar trends, stating that the men tended to see close one-to-one friendships as unnecessary for adults.

As stated above, the quantity as well as quality of men's friendships overall appears limited, even though many men appear unconcerned. In contrast to those authors mentioned earlier, some reports show men having a number of male friends--in some situations more than their female counterparts (Davidson & Duberman, 1982; Fischer & Oliker, 1983; Lewis, 1978; Pogrebin, 1987). Sherrod reported that "When all the categories of people--young and old, working and not working, blue collar and white collar--are taken together, men and women report roughly the same number of friends" (p. 215).

These reports seem incongruous; however, it is important to know how "friend" is being defined. Rubin (1985) found that men tend to use the word "friend" much more liberally than women do, including in it people such as co-workers, tennis partners, and neighbors. McGill (1985) discussed a similar phenomenon among the men he interviewed. He stated that men "tend to view friendships as purposeful, a means to some end" (p. 165). He continued by describing how men have friends in different
circumstances for different purposes. These friends may include church friends, neighbor friends, recreation friends, and so forth. He summarized his research by first posing the question "So what are friends for?" (p. 166). He answered with the following statement: "For men, friends are for competing, for joking, for talking about common interest, but friends are not for help or solace in times of personal crisis" (p. 166).

Some studies do not tend to support the above findings, particularly around self-disclosure. Davidson & Duberman (1982) cited the studies of Certner (1970) and Jourard (1971), stating that both men and women are more self-disclosing with a person of the same-sex than of the opposite sex. Hacker (1981) reported that the men in her study did not confide substantially more in women than they did in men. In fact, she reported greater disclosure in same-sex dyads. Likewise, Swain (1988) disputed the prevalence of the "inexpressive male," stating that the majority of studies on self-disclosure reveal "nonsignificant sex differences" (p. 72).

What is the character or nature of the relationships among men who have friends? Close friends? A substantial number of men report friendships based on activities of some sort (Bell, 1981b; McGill, 1985; Rubin, 1986; Swain, 1988; Wright, 1982). Michaelis (1983) chronicled the lives of seven pairs of men who were close friends. In many of the portraits, friendships are described as formed by, or involving common activities. The activities were as diverse as the men and included leisure as
well as professional pursuits, such as professional mountain climbing, sailing, naval service, and entertainment.

Swain (1988) commented on the importance of activities in men’s lives as well. He interviewed college males and asked "what was the most meaningful occasion spent with a same-sex friend, and why was it meaningful?" (p. 76). He reported that of a total of 26 responses, 20 involved activities other than talking. He described how these activities frequently drew men closer together emotionally. The importance of non-verbal communication as an expression of friendship and care was mentioned as an important aspects of these activities. One subject mentioned that women were more limited in their ability to communicate care through non-verbal means, so their options were restricted to verbal modes of sharing.

Not all studies report an exclusive reliance of male friendship centered on activity however. Wall, Pickert, and Paradise (1984) found differences based on marital status. In their study, 50% of younger single men (25-34) reported that the personality characteristics of another man aided them in forming friendships, while 75% of the older men (35-50) reported this.

Many writers have compared the predominantly "male style" of activity orientation with women’s generally more relational focus (Bell, 1981b; Davidson & Duberman, 1982; Wright, 1982). Nardi (1992) and Wright (1982) both described men’s friendships as "side-to-side" relationships; that is, the focus is on an external task or activity. The majority of women’s relationships
are described as "face-to-face," where the focus is more on knowing and relating to each other.

Studies focusing on the topics and style of men’s and women’s conversations tend to support these theses also. Davidson & Duberman (1982) studied the content of conversation in friendships. They divided "content" into three areas: topical, relational, and personal. Topical issues were external issues, such as politics and movies; relational issues involved discussions between the friends about the friendship; and personal issues involved the sharing of one’s private life. They reported that the male and female subjects were generally equal in the use of topical conversation, but the women used "personal" communication twice as much as the men, and used "relational" communication three times as much.

Lewis (1978) is not one who sees side-to-side relating as particularly healthy, nor does he see healthiness indicated by the numbers of friends men have. He described several barriers to non-sexual intimate relationships between men, including traditional sex roles such as pressures to compete, homophobia, aversion to vulnerability and openness, and a lack of adequate role models" (p. 108). Phillips (1986) concluded his study by stating that close same-sex friends are rare for men, but that intimacy with the opposite sex is rare also. He stated that intimacy for men is an ideal, not a norm, and that men often find material success, while failing to find emotional closeness.
The Degeneration of Friendship after Adolescence

A second problem area for many men involves not only the absence of friendship or close friendship in adulthood, but the loss of friendships. This "degeneration" of friendship refers to the diminishment in quantity and/or quality in men's friendships after they reach adolescence. As writers such as Rotundo (1993) and Sullivan (1972) have written, friendship is a normal and common part of boyhood and adolescence. Rotundo (1993) devoted an entire chapter in his book about American men to what he terms "boy culture," and friendship is woven throughout. He stated the following: "Friendship was certainly the most important relation between boys, and within their world it took on some distinctive qualities" (p. 38).

When late adolescents become young adults, middle-aged men, and finally old men, however, one often sees a decrease in friendship. Fischer & Oliker (1983) reported male subjects under the age of 36 as having 12.6 to 15.3 friends (means differed based on marital and child status). Between ages 36 and 64, the subjects reported 9.1 to 10.4 friends, and after 65 reported a mean of 5.6 friends. Wall, Pickert, and Paradise (1984) reported a similar trend. Thirty-six percent of the men in their study reported having the most friends during elementary school, 33% during high school, and 8-11% in college, graduate school, first jobs, or 10 years after college. Not only was there a decreasing trend in quantity of friends with age, there was also a decrease in satisfaction. Sixty-four to seventy-five percent of younger
men reported being generally satisfied with their current friendships, while only 25% to 43% of older men reported such satisfaction.

Miller (1983) wrote poignantly about the observations he made of middle-aged men and their lack of male friends: "What is it like not to have a close friend? Most men don't even notice" (p. 32). He discussed how it often may require crises in a man's life, such as divorce, to realize that he has few friends, or simply everyday experiences may finally "show" a man that he has no one in whom he can confide. Sherrod (1987) echoed these last remarks, stating the following:

Yet there are times when a man becomes aware that something is lacking. Inferred intimacy seems to work well until a disturbing problem demands more from the relationship than unquestioned acceptance. At that point, many men find themselves without the kind of friend on whom they can rely. (p. 222)

McGill (1985) also saw crises as being a precipitating factor in male views of friendship. He described a long-term friendship group of four men. These men's friendships were based around activities, yet there was little self-disclosure or personal closeness in the group. One of the men "came to grips" with this lack of closeness in his friends' lives, and his own, when one of the men committed suicide. The brief suicide note stated simply, "I'm sorry. There is no one to talk to" (p. 173).
Pasick (Meth & Pasick, 1990) believes that men in middle-age do notice their lack of close friendship. He stated that among the men he interviewed, most felt something was lacking in their friendships, but they weren’t exactly sure what that was. He said that many men between 30 and 50 years of age long for the type of friendships or buddies that they had in college or the military, but don’t understand why they have not made new friends which are as close as the old ones (p. 111).

It appears that the attitude of men towards friendship may be related to the decline of their friendships once they leave adolescence. Rubin (1986), whose earlier subject stated "Best friends are for kids" (p. 167), has perhaps illustrated one main reason that men’s friendships decline: they expect them to. Men’s lifelong socialization processes prepare them to be "lovers," "breadwinners," and "achievers." This decrease often coincides initially with the development of opposite-sex love relationships. As a young man begins to date seriously, and then marries, he frequently sees his male friends less and less, because this is "the way it is supposed to be." It is not simply an issue of quantity of time, however. He becomes less intimate with them. He begins to share his daily events, thoughts, and perhaps feelings more and more with the women in his life and less with the men.

Rotundo (1993) chronicled such an experience in his chapter describing youth and male intimacy in the nineteenth century. He described an intensely close relationship which developed
between Abraham Lincoln and a man named Joshua Speed. He described how the friendship was, at its height, the closest one each would have in his lifetime. However, Speed moved away, and when Speed married, Lincoln experienced a significant loss of intimacy and interest in the relationship. Apparently they still corresponded on business matters, and there were few negative feelings between the two, but the relationship fundamentally changed. Rotundo wrote the following: "Without doubt, however, their intimacy had come to a sharp and sudden halt when Joshua Speed married" (p. 88).

At this point, it may be helpful to do a brief comparative analysis with male friendships of other eras. Sherrod (1987) found two historical periods particularly important concerning male friendship: the Classical Age of Greek society, and the European Renaissance. One of the most frequently cited male friendships from the Renaissance/post-Renaissance is that of Michel de Montaigne and Étienne de la Boétie in the latter part of the sixteenth century. Montaigne (trans. 1963) described this close friendship in his essay on friendship, stating that he believed this friendship was brought about through a "decree" of Heaven. He described how he and Monsieur Boétie had been "looking" for each other before they even met. He continued by describing a relationship in which the two men's souls "traveled together," they "...saw into the very depths of each other's hearts..." (p. 99).
Montaigne described this friendship and other noble friendships as a "fusion of the wills." The idea that there is a loss of "normal" boundaries in an intimate friendships runs throughout his descriptions. He addressed the similarity between his ideas and what Aristotle had proposed hundreds of years earlier, that friendship is one soul dwelling in two bodies. Probably the most poignant statement which Montaigne made concerning the friendship is as follows: "If I were pressed to say why I love him, I feel that my only reply could be: 'Because it was he, because it was I’" (p. 97).

Another celebrated male friendship is that of David and Jonathan in the Bible. Some similar themes emerge in this relationship as in Montaigne's, particularly the notion of a "fusion" of separate selves. The first recorded account of the two men meeting each other stated the following: "After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself" (I Sam. 18:1, New International Version). The biblical passages go on to describe an emotional closeness, as well as commitment, between the two men. The passages are brief, but there is evidence of significant closeness between them, including the components discussed earlier of warmth, self-disclosure, and non-sexual intimacy. Hawley (1993) wrote specifically on King David and described how differently he saw him as compared to some modern men: "The figure of David stands in sharp opposition to the late
twentieth-century notion that forcefulness and intimacy are incompatible" (pp. 40-41).

Thoreau (1868/1963) did not describe a specific, personal friendship in his passages on friendship, but wrote an essay on the topic from a nineteenth century American perspective. His descriptions of friendship and of the importance of friendship in men's lives differed significantly from contemporary views. He stated the following: "No word is oftener on the lips of men than Friendship, and indeed no thought is more familiar to their aspirations. All men are dreaming of it, and its drama, which is always a tragedy, is enacted daily" (p. 224). He continued by describing friendships where there is love. Thoreau defined this as giving one's best, and receiving the best, between two friends.

Miller (1983) gave a perspective on contemporary, culturally different friendships. He discussed Vietnamese and Korean men and their interactions with each other during the respective wars in their country. He dialogued with an English homosexual man who had been in Hong Kong during the war, and who had knowledge of other oriental cultures around that time. The descriptions of the men, military as well as civilian, included affectionate, non-sexual interchanges between male friends, and an emphasis on friendship. Such behaviors including military men holding hands as they were walking down the roads together. Miller did not state whether these men were homosexual or
heterosexual, but the implication is that they were heterosexual.

This writer recognizes the limitations of examining only a few of these case studies, but they lend support to the "deficit models" which many of the earlier writers attested to in current American men's friendships. It seems highly plausible that there is something wrong or missing in current American men's friendships.

After reviewing the above literature, as well as many other pieces of material concerning men's friendships, it is apparent that the definition of intimacy is quite varied in the literature. Unless definitions are standardized to some extent, it seems that conclusions about men, friendship, and intimacy will continue to differ.

This writer also proposes that there is an important structural or topical deficiency in the literature. This is the lack of descriptive material on close, warm, intimate male friendships. Much of the literature describes the deficiencies in the relationships (Doyle, 1995; McGill, 1985), which is a necessary first step in the analysis of this subject. In addition, some literature goes one step further and offers solutions and/or suggestions for helping men relate to each other more effectively (Sternbach, 1990). However, there is a lack of specific case study material which describes on a personal level what these healthy relationships are like.
Classical literature, again, such as Montaigne (trans. 1963), does a better job than much of current literature in describing what close friendships are like. Montaigne described first-hand aspects of his friendship with Monsieur Boétie. He combined personal feelings and recollections about his friend with intellectual propositions concerning friendship. As stated earlier, it is the opinion of this writer that this is valuable in helping describe and define what close friendship is, instead of just what it isn’t.

One of the rare examples of modern literature which is descriptive of specific friendships is the work of Michaelis (1983). This work does not describe the author’s personal friendships but that of several pairs of men interviewed and/or studied. It does much to illuminate what close male friendships can be like. To the author’s credit, he profiled several different pairs of men, enabling the reader to note recurrent themes in the various friendships, notice how friendships can be composed of different personalities, and yet still be intimate. I would propose that the friendships each have their own "personality," that the total is equal to "more than the sum of the parts."

In the next chapter, discussion will shift from a descriptive focus of men’s friendships at the adult level to a theoretical proposal for understanding and explaining hindrances to such friendships. Two concepts, fear and competition, are explored in detail and shown to at times negatively impact
friendship. These hindrances are described from psychodynamic and developmental perspectives and form pieces of a theory that sees disidentification, abandonment, and preservation of the self as key factors in the study of male friendship.
A Theoretical Contribution Towards Understanding Male Friendship

As stated at the beginning of this work, there has been no comprehensive theory to date that addresses adult male friendship. Further, there has been little focus on the elements of these friendships that are rooted in early childhood issues. Although the following material cannot claim to be a comprehensive theory on men and friendship, it seeks to contribute to one. It will offer a descriptive exposition concerning the relationship between early fears (rooted in the disidentification process), the socialization of competitive elements of boyhood, and the manner in which these negatively affect the later health of adult friendships.

My goal here is to describe how early developmental struggles, such as disidentification discussed in chapter one, impact men’s adult lives. An a priori assumption is that despite there being healthy components to many contemporary men’s friendships and the existence of exceptional friendships that do not fit the "norm," many male friendships have significant limitations. Additionally, there is wide variation in personal awareness of these deficits, as well as varying degrees of related distress.
Throughout the following discussion of fear and competition in friendship is woven the concept of the "self." Again, an a priori assumption which I bring to this part of the work is that the self, or the psychological, instinctual drive to preserve the integrity of the self, is paramount to human beings.

The final section of the chapter will introduce the "challenge of friendship" as I see it: the challenge of balancing autonomy and attachment needs for each male in the friendship, or, as Stevens and Gardner (1994) wrote, balancing autonomy and homonymy.

Fear and Friendship

The following is an enumeration of how various fears impact male friendship. All of these fears are reenactments of fears first experienced through the process of disidentification in the young male child. This is not to say that these fears are solely rooted in disidentification issues, but they are strongly influenced by it. I am not using any technical definitions for fear, simply one signifying the emotion of dread or terror, or as Webster (1976) stated, "an unpleasant often strong emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of danger" (p. 419).

Fear of attachment/intimacy. As has been shown in the previous chapter, many men are quite comfortable in their friendships if primary interactions involve activities. However, they seem to have difficulty in more personal, relational interactions, whether this involves discussions of their own personal problems or feelings, or discussions about
the friendship itself. It seems likely that one factor in this reluctance is a fear of attachment or a fear of intimacy that was first experienced in the disidentification process. The man is reluctant to get close to another man emotionally because, unconsciously, he fears getting close to anyone after his premature separation and detachment from the mother. This has been well described by Pollack (1990, 1995b), specifically in adult males' reluctance to be intimate with their wives or lovers. What needs reemphasis, however, is that this is a transferential issue and potentially affects all of men's adult relationships, same-sex as well as opposite-sex. The psychic trauma of disidentification leaves men particularly fearful of being intimate with women, but it leaves unconscious protective mechanisms that inhibit intimate attachments with members of both genders. Rubin (1985, 1986) argued this point adroitly, stating that because of disidentification, men characteristically develop rigid ego boundaries that separate "self from other" and affect all intimate relationships.

The extrapolation of classic analytic thought to this argument would likely support the notion that men are afraid of "reattachment," but would suggest different unconscious motivations. Instead of a fear of abandonment, castration anxiety would be seen as the core etiology for men being emotionally distant. Fenichel (1945) stated that the boy in the phallic stage has identified his masculinity with his penis and that there is a strong narcissistic investment in it. This is
consistent with Freud’s (1924) formulation, which stated that
the phallic boy does not see the penis as a delineation between
male and female, but simply a division between those human
beings having a penis and those which have been castrated. This
line of thought would explain the reluctance of adult males to
get close to others, either male or female, because getting
close emotionally is a reenactment of the primitive closeness
with mother. The male is afraid of this because of the
intrapsychic fear of merger with a female, who happens, in his
limited understanding, to be a castrated person. The boy as well
as the man values his penis as the most discrete symbol of his
masculinity. To be feminine means to be castrated.

Though this argument of Freud’s has long-defined the
understandings of male identity and is thought-provoking, I
would agree with the neo-Freudians who believe that Freud over­
emphasized and over-extended the libido theory. Sullivan (1953)
was correct when he theorized that anxiety is caused by past and
present interpersonal relationships, and that it occurs when
something goes wrong in these relationships. What I am
suggesting here is that adult males, consciously and
unconsciously, resist getting close to other men because they
have developed a powerful defense against early abandonment
feelings. A powerful defense is needed to protect against this
primitive anxiety. As Sullivan noted, infantile anxiety is the
most intense anxiety a person can feel because there is nothing
he or she can do about it.
It appears that the adult male, in resisting male/male intimacy, is using what Sullivan (1953) referred to as a security operation. A security operation is an interpersonal activity or attitude which a person has developed to avoid emotional pain or anxiety, and to further emotional comfort or security. By resisting male intimacy, the man can ward off the unconscious feelings of dread associated with the primitive feelings of abandonment.

Fear of the unknown. I would suggest that men are reluctant also to be emotionally close with their friends because they are afraid of the unknown. The unknown which I am speaking to here refers to the "unknown" father. During the disidentification process, not only is the boy prematurely distanced from the mother, he is encouraged to identify with a father who is often physically and/or emotionally unavailable (Pollack, 1995b). Even in the midst of this distance, there is generally a "significant-enough" identification to solidify gender identity issues, but an insufficient development of intimacy to allow the father to be "known" and men to be experienced as trustworthy. This incomplete familiarity with the father resurfaces through transference processes with adult male friends because of their gender resemblance to father.

Freud (1924) was correct in emphasizing the importance of the resolution of oedipal issues in the health of men (and women), particularly with regard to the final pathway of the complex--identification with the same-sex other. However, he
placed too much emphasis on the competitive components of the process between father and son and too little on the intimacy achieved through a full and complete identification with the father figure. It is this lack of identification, particularly the internalization of trust achieved through familiarity with the father, which appears to limit male friendships. I am not referring here to the primitive, basic sense of trust in others which Erikson (1959) described, but a gender-specific trust.

This lack of trust in men hinders male friendships because of the instinctual fear which human beings have for the psychologically unknown. Again, a reenactment occurs not only because of the man’s fear of the unknown father, but because, primitively, he was encouraged to attach to the male figure after he was emotionally-separated from the mother. This separation is often premature in many men’s lives.

It appears that many adult men are trapped in a psychological "no man’s land" because of these early events. The powerful, primitive anxiety is primarily a response to the loss of physical and emotional security of early mothering. This primary anxiety is compounded by the all-too-often inadequate support, comfort, and security of the father. As Pollack (1995b) suggested, it is vital that the father engage with his young son during the earliest years.

Adult men frequently have been unable to resolve this early situation. They are psychologically isolated and alone because they are "trapped" between mother and father. There is an
internal, unconscious system of thoughts which has decided that the safest emotional place is being emotionally alone. Alternatives to this instinctively produce anxiety. One could move closer to women, but that would mean getting closer to the sex that abandoned them. Or, one could move closer to men, but that would mean getting closer to the sex who was unavailable to them when it was critically important. It appears that more than one Sullivanian security operation exists here for such men. A variety of protective mechanisms are used and form what Sullivan referred to as the self-system, or the "collection of security operations," which a person employs to protect himself against anxiety (1953).

**Fear of loss of autonomy.** The "invitation to intimacy" that close friendships often elicit may be threatening to a number of men because of their self-boundaries. The disidentification process encourages male children to define themselves not by what they are, but what they aren't. As Chodorow (1978) wrote, identity formation for girls occurs through an ongoing relationship with the mother, but for boys, the development of a masculine identity is often achieved by defining themselves as being different from the mother. This is frequently achieved through a "hardening" of unconscious ego boundaries.

These rigid boundaries later prove to be a double-edged sword for men because they not only maintain a sense of masculine identity, but they prevent intimacy from occurring. It is similar to a membrane which is not permeable: It keeps
things inside while keeping other things out. As noted in the previous chapter, a certain softening of the boundaries of the self is a component of most intimate male relationships, such as Montaigne's (trans. 1963) description of a "fusion of the wills" and Aristotle's (ed. 1927) "single soul dwelling in two bodies."

The perceived threat of loss of autonomy "triggers" a threat to the man's sense of masculinity, because masculinity rests in its separateness from femininity and from others in general. Perceived threat of loss of masculinity then triggers the threat of a complete loss of selfhood, secondary to the intimate connection between gender-identity and identity in general. It is still somewhat mysterious as to why the threat of loss of gender identity is more powerful in men as compared to women; that is, why the loss of masculinity would intrapsychically threaten the entire concept of the self in some males.

As stated earlier, I believe that Freud over-extended his concept of castration anxiety in males, but it does give a provocative starting-point for understanding this primitive dread in males. Whether one is Freudian, neo-Freudian, or some other orientation, most would agree that Freud was correct, at least in principle, in stating that the penis is important to the developing male child. As Chodorow (1978) stated, separation and individuation in young males is sexualized in a different way than it is for girls; phallic issues intertwine with the self-concept in unique ways.
Freud was correct in postulating a castration anxiety, but he overemphasized the importance of the actual organ. Certainly no boy would want to have his penis cut off, as it appears has happened with his female playmates, but the intensity of castration anxiety results from more than just a fear of being hurt or mutilated. It represents a fear of being overwhelmed by powerful adult figures. Fenichel (1945) described this well:

Castration anxiety in the boy in the phallic period can be compared to the fear of being eaten in the oral period, or the fear of being robbed of the body’s contents in the anal period; it is the retaliatory fear of the phallic period; it represents the climax of the fantastic fears of body damage. (p. 77)

Therefore, I am suggesting that the threat of loss of masculinity does indeed harken back, partly, to castration anxieties. The loss of masculinity correlates with the loss of the sense of self because of the primitive fear of being mutilated, but more importantly, of being overtaken by a more powerful adult figure. The young boy believes that women have not only been castrated, but have been overtaken by someone stronger than themselves.

This intrapsychic threat to the self is most powerfully rooted in early issues such as these, but not exclusively so. For those men who failed to find a chum when they were preadolescent, the conception of an independent self continues on into adolescence and adulthood. As noted earlier, group
identity for boys often defines how they see themselves as men. Group norms of boyhood not only collectively reinforce this rigidity, they exaggerate it. Boys overtly encourage the stereotypes handed them from their parents: boys don’t cry, they "conquer," they stick together as a group, and they don’t share their feelings, particularly vulnerable ones. Variations from these group norms are not welcomed or appreciated (Rotundo, 1993, Sullivan, 1953).

The presence of the Sullivanian chum plays an important role in remedying some of the more onerous characteristics discussed here. While some find the chum concept controversial, its importance should not be underestimated in the development of a more relational male self. The desire for a chum comes at a crucial point in the boy’s life (generally between eight-and-a-half and ten years of age). This desire emerges during a unique "window of opportunity," one in which certain cognitive and personality characteristics have developed, but where significant interpersonal and intrapsychic flexibility still exists. The boy has an important opportunity to not only enhance his self-image, but contribute to someone else’s. If a boy finds a chum, the two can begin to see themselves, through narcissistic reflection, as male relational beings who can relate to other male relational beings. The rigid, autonomous self-concepts of early childhood can be tossed aside, and replaced with more fluid understandings of oneself and others.
This time provides a potential foundation for later adult same-sex relationships.

Sullivan (1953) stressed the importance of the chum in teaching boys how to genuinely love others. He believed that this dyad provided the opportunity to switch the focus off oneself towards caring for another. I would concur with this, but would suggest that chumship also helps to alleviate the grandiose fear which has been discussed here: that if a male is intimate with another person, he will be "female," and therefore at risk of being mutilated and/or annihilated.

According to Sullivan, chums are not just friendly partners, they are intensely intimate emotionally. He stated "I would hope that preadolescent relationships were intense enough for each of the two chums literally to get to know practically everything about the other one that could possibly be exposed in an intimate relationship..." (1953, p. 256). If this does occur, then the impressionable young male, on an intrapsychic and interpersonal level, can see that one can be masculine as well as intimate. The fear that intimacy leads to psychic or physical annihilation will be quelled. The chum stage does not resolve gender and general identity issues completely, however. As Erikson (1968) has described, identity issues continue to be of prime concern in adolescence. Many of these identity issues relate to how the male "sees" himself through the eyes of females, but the importance of same-sex group norms must not be underestimated. The adolescent male's definition of self
continues to develop from the reflection of his fellow group members.

Group affiliation and personal relationships need not be mutually exclusive, however, for either the adolescent or adult male. The movie referred to throughout this work, *Stand by Me* (Evans, et al., 1987), illustrated the healthy mixture of dyadic and group friendship in two of the boys’ lives. It showed that open, personal disclosures can occur between two boys, without hindering the much more competitive and action-oriented milieu of adolescent group interactions.

**Fear of homosexuality (homophobia).** One aspect of the burgeoning body of literature on homosexuality is homophobia: the "fear of homosexuals or the fear of one’s being or appearing to be homosexual..." (Lewis, 1978, p. 112). Many contemporary writers have suggested that homophobia limits men’s abilities to be intimate, non-sexually, with each other (Lewis, 1978; Miller, 1983; Nardi, 1992; Rotundo, 1993; Rubin, 1986). They also have argued that this appears to be primarily a twentieth-century phenomenon, one that occurs during a time where there is a tremendous inability to distinguish between affection and sexuality. Lewis (1960) stated the following: "It has actually become necessary in our time to rebut the theory that every firm and serious friendship is really homosexual" (p. 60).

Theories of the etiology of homophobia range from psychodynamic to sociological in nature. I would suggest that two components of this homophobia involve preoedipal as well as
oedipal issues. For males faced with intimacy in friendship, confusion often arises over identity issues. This appears to harken back to a negative identity, that "I am a man because I am not feminine." Nardi (1992) added an important element here, stating that many men define themselves as men because they are "...not feminine and not homosexual" (p. 2).

The fear which appears in many heterosexual males in intimate situations is not only that the expression of feelings of tenderness or affection toward another man might indicate homosexuality, which is abhorrent to many males, but would also trigger fears of a loss of identity. In other words, the man unconsciously starts to fear that he will lose his identity, because his masculinity and identity are closely intertwined. To be homosexual means being feminine, which indicates a loss of masculinity and hence identity.

A second factor of homophobia also involves confusion between intimacy and sexuality, but advances one step further. Because potential intimacy in male friendships involve other males, not females, the primitive unconscious thought of sexual contact with one’s father may be evoked. This is a repulsive unconscious thought to the male, because it is quite clear to the oedipal boy that mother and father have sex, not son and father. During the oedipal years, the thought of son and father having sexual relations would leave the boy no choice but to see himself as feminine, and lose his sense of identity as a masculine person. This may be one factor in Freud’s (1924)
explanation of why the boy chooses to identify with his father—not to merge with him.

Later socialization experiences also reinforce homophobia and the hypersensitivity which many males develop towards feeling that they might be, or might be viewed, as homosexual. Through casual observation, this writer has seen the continuing place which homosexual insults have in boys’ and adolescent groups, either as friendly acts of derision that are really meant to show bonding and camaraderie, or as true derogatory remarks meant to alienate the other person because of his apparent weaknesses.

A third factor which is operant in homophobia is the presence of latent or overt homosexuality in one or both adult males in the friendship. Several writers, such as Moberly (1983) and Nicolosi (1991), have discussed the lack of emotional closeness many homosexual men experience with other men, either homosexual or heterosexual. This may be expressed as disinterest, avoidance, and/or fear. Moberly (1983) coined the terms defensive detachment and same-sex ambivalence to illustrate this. It appears that there are two phenomena present. For the overt homosexual, closeness may be limited because of psychodynamic issues such as those listed here. The man remains distant because of anxiety, fear, or hatred towards men. For the man with latent homosexual feelings, unconscious mechanisms encourage him to avoid intimate situations with other men because of the fear that his same-sex attractions will break
into consciousness, and he will be overwhelmed with anxiety. He defends against this by remaining emotionally distant from other men.

As in all human behavior and motivation, there are exceptions. Some homosexual men appear to have quite close friendships with other men. These friendships are non-sexual and contain a significant degree of personal disclosure and sharing. Miller (1983) aptly illustrated this in his informal study and personal search for male friendship. He stated that the "truest friendship" he found was between two European homosexual men who had a platonic relationship:

It annoys me unmercifully that the most serious male friendship I have so far encountered is between two homosexuals. It shames me and the other heterosexual men I have met. We need to do better. When it comes to friendship, we are unmanned. (p. 107)

This completes the discussion of fear and the power which it has to keep men emotionally distant from each other. The remaining discussion now focuses more specifically on competition, and how it also inhibits male same-sex intimacy.

Competition and Friendship

No theory seeking to understand males, their relationships, or their male friendships would be adequate without an exploration of competition. Competition between males is as old as history itself (i.e. Cain and Abel’s rivalry in the Old Testament scriptures), and as current as the day this is being
written (Winter Olympics XVIII). As has been described earlier, social science writers have written from a variety of perspectives on the topic.

In psychology, particularly among psychodynamic theorists, competition between men has historically been understood as emanating in oedipal issues, that is, the early competition which Freud described between father and son (1924). Other writers such as Lukton (1992) have suggested earlier, preoedipal origins. Lukton stated that differentiation, or disidentification from the mother, damaged the self-esteem of the young male and was a contributing factor in male competition. Another framework for understanding this topic has been through the work of Adler (1927-1928), and his conceptions of inferiority, striving, and compensation. Finally, writers such as Sherrod (1987) have discussed biological perspectives of competition.

This writer does not reject these etiological theories, but believes that, historically, too much emphasis has been placed on the oedipal rivalry between father and son as a source of explanation. This section will suggest other reasons for competition and its inhibition of male friendship, particularly in relation to the self and disidentification. A non-technical definition of competition is assumed here, such as Webster’s (1976) definition of compete: "To strive consciously or unconsciously for an objective (as position, profit, or a prize): be in a state of rivalry" (p. 230).
Competition and masculine identity. Competition and masculinity appear to be inseparably intertwined for many men in the American culture. It is beyond the scope of this work to explore all of the contributing factors of competition, but one salient aspect is the socialization process of young men. From birth, parents typically encourage their boys to be tough and competitive (Rubin, 1986), and not to be a "sissy," or as Brannon wrote: "No sissy stuff" (David & Brannon, 1976, p. 49). A second, closely related factor would be the strong emphasis on sports in this culture as a way of developing male identity (Messner, 1987, 1989).

When many males enter into friendships as adults, they approach the relationship in a friendly yet competitive way. This is the way they see themselves, and in many men it is more than just habit or norms; it represents the internalized self- and object-representations of contemporary object relations theory. The "softening" of boundaries which would require a reduction in competitiveness is a threat, generally unconscious, to the man's masculine identity because of his rigid ego boundaries. The threat is graver than this, however. To fail to be masculine means, according to disidentification theory, to be feminine. To be "feminine" for the man means, unconsciously, a "reattachment" with mother. This presumably would be intolerable for many men, not primarily because they intrapsychically fear the reattachment with her or have castration anxiety, but
because they cannot tolerate the idea of a second abandonment from her.

A secondary form of competitiveness also coexists here. Erikson's concept of distantiation, mentioned earlier (p. 18), is helpful in understanding the confusion, anger, and sometimes rage that men feel when they have an opportunity to be close to another man. This is not an innate desire to hurt the other man, but a desire to protect the health of the self. Even though the man may want to be close to other males, the expression of intimacy or affection from another man may be seen as a threat to the recipient's masculine identity. In order to protect the health of the self, he must become more competitive towards the other man, so as to maintain the stereotypical equilibrium.

These competitive elements cover a wide-ranging continuum. The intensity of the competition typically matches the intensity of the perceived threat to the self. An example of a mild response is illustrated in the movie *Bye Bye Love* (Goldberg, Hill, & Weisman, 1995), where, near the end of the film, the actor Paul Reiser dialogues with his friend (actor Matthew Modine). After a brief, rather intimate exchange about personal problems, Reiser mentions that the two never talk about personal problems. He asks Modine if he would like to discuss things like this more, and Modine quickly responds, "No." Reiser then quickly agrees, saying that he doesn't want to talk about those things either.
The opposite extreme of this continuum is illustrated by certain "hate crimes" that are perpetuated by heterosexual males against homosexual males. This sometimes occurs when a heterosexual man has been approached in some sexual way by another male. For many heterosexual men, this represents the ultimate threat to the sense of self and requires an extreme form of competition to maintain ego integrity. This was illustrated in the various 1996 news reports, and subsequent trial, of a man who appeared on the daytime television talk show, *Jenny Jones*. According to Ghatto (1996) and others, during the untelevised segment, a supposedly heterosexual man was told that he was going to meet a secret admirer. He was allegedly not informed that the admirer might be male, and apparently thought it would be a woman. In reality, the person whom he met was a male acquaintance and, unbeknownst to him, a homosexual admirer. Shortly thereafter, the admirer was found murdered by him.

**Competition and intrapsychic splitting.** Despite the focus of this discourse on competition, it should be made clear that this writer does not see competition only in a negative light. Quite to the contrary, competition appears to be endemic to men, and women (Rubin, 1986); has many healthy functions in developing the male self and male relatedness (Swain, 1988); and, for many men, provides for unique fun and excitement (Rubin, 1986). As one of Rubin’s interviewees stated "...there’s an excitement with men. I get out there on the basketball court with some of the guys, and I’m playing to win. I can show off
just how good I am and, maybe they don’t like to lose, but I get
respect for winning" (p. 173).

The assumption that competition has positive as well as
negative attributes is particularly relevant to the phenomenon
of intrapsychic "splitting" seen in many men around the concept
of competition. As stated by Kernberg (1980), splitting is the
"keeping apart of contradictory experiences of the self and of
significant others" (p. 6). It appears that some men have an
inability to "hold onto" or integrate differing parts of
themselves, namely the competitive as well as empathic or loving
parts, and use the splitting mechanism to keep these apart.
This is evidenced in the man whose friendships contain little
intimacy because competitive strivings win out. Consciously and
unconsciously, he sees limited options; he can be either
competitive or loving, but not both. Based on the previous
discussion, competition often wins out because of the intimate
correlations between competition, masculine identity, and sense
of self. If he allows himself to be empathic, affectionate or
loving, his sense of self is threatened.

The splitting phenomenon pertains not only to a male’s
sense of self but to his perceptions of other men as well. I
would suggest that the man who cannot integrate disparate parts
of himself generally cannot view other males as holistic or
integrated either. For this man other males are seen as either
"relational" or "competitive." The "competitive" man is
typically seen as more masculine, while the "relational" man is
seen as weaker and often more "feminine." For such a man, friends are generally chosen from the more competitive category so as to reinforce his self-concept. This self-concept equates competition with masculinity.

As stated earlier, competitiveness is often used by men to keep other men away emotionally. This occurs when the other person in the dyad seeks to be intimate or is perceived as doing so. The equilibrium in the friendship (primarily based on the sharing of activities or ideas) has been disrupted with the more relational element. The man who is threatened by intimacy may use splitting. He cannot see that the other man can be loving and still remain masculine. Because of this inability to integrate, competition is used to restore equilibrium in the friendship. More colloquially, the man may be silently saying the following to his friend: "If you don’t play by the ‘rules,’ if you continue to press the boundaries of expressiveness, then I will push you back where you should be by competing harder."

Competition then is used here as a tool of power to maintain distance in the relationship. This distancing is required, again, because of early disidentification issues, namely the fear of intrapsychic reattachment to a person of either gender because of the possibility of being "reabandoned."

**Competition and loss.** Competition and rivalry inherently involve winning and losing. The essence of the structure of most sports involves sets of rules which define parameters so the game can be scored. One person or team wins or loses. The
socialization processes that occur through sports begin very early in childhood games, and particularly so for boys. As Lever (1978) noted, 65% of boys’ games have been rated as competitive, as compared with 37% of girls’ games.

The relationship between early socialization around sports and a later masculine identity which emphasizes competitive relating is one well documented (Messner, 1987, 1989; Rubin, 1986; Sherrod, 1987). Lewis (1978) has described the common reluctance of men to "drop their guard" for fear of being hurt or taken advantage of by other men. This fear is an appropriate part of athletic competition, but becomes pathological when it is generalized to include all male-male relationships. In these situations the man’s chief concern is to protect himself from "losing" to the other man and from potentially being hurt. Traditional psychoanalytic thought here would suggest that this fear is a reenactment of the primitive fear of being castrated by the father.

I would propose that there is indeed a fear of loss in such men and that it is a primitive fear. However, rather than being afraid of actually losing the penis, such men are more afraid of losing "strength." They are afraid of feeling weak. For such men, losing to another man, either literally or figuratively, means they are weak and therefore feminine. Femininity is seen by such men, not only primitively but in an adult way, as a gender of relation, enmeshment, and symbiosis. As stated earlier, the possibility of enmeshment or symbiosis is a
reminder of the early symbiotic relationship with the mother. All situations that would unconsciously or consciously remind the adult man of this are instinctively avoided to prevent the possibility of further hurt and/or abandonment.

The fear of feeling weak is not the only fear however. For men faced with the possibility of "losing" to another man, other oedipal issues arise. Freud's (1924) conceptualization of the Oedipus Complex focused around the internal conflicts between drive and security issues in the young boy. The boy struggles with somehow integrating his love for the mother-object while maintaining security from the revenge of the father. I propose that the boy is concerned with more than just security, however, in relation to his father. He wants to be sure that his father not harm him and that he respect him as well.

This desire for respect is multi-faceted. One prominent reason the son desires respect from the father concerns his security, but not in the traditional analytic sense. The son is not just concerned about his own physical security, including freedom from castration, but is concerned about his emotional security in the world. He desires his mother but also unconsciously realizes, at some point, that he is not female like mother, and can only be understood as a male by another male. The son, in an immature way, realizes that he needs to be understood as a male so that he will have a "road map" on how to proceed in life.
The oedipal boy cares deeply about the impression his father has of him. As Freud (1924) described, he is concerned about not appearing too powerful and being castrated by the father. In addition though, he is concerned that he not appear weak to the father or male-caretaker. For if he appears weak, he is afraid that father will treat him like mother. If he is treated like mother then all outcomes will be negative. His innate desire for ambition and self-assertion as a male will be thwarted. He will be confused about his gender, neither feeling male or female.

Finally, I suggest that the boy, unconsciously, wants his father to respect him and view him as strong because he is afraid of sexual violation by the father. He is concerned that if he appears weak, his father will "confuse" him with mother and have sexual relations with him. He does not want to be taken advantage of.

These early scenarios are repeated in the adult male's same-sex relationships, whether personal or professional. He wants to be respected by other males so that he not lose his supply of narcissistic mirroring and camaraderie, and so that he not be taken advantage of by them. He is concerned that they not hurt him physically, emotionally or sexually.

**The Challenge of Friendship**

DeGolia (1973) summed up well what has hopefully been communicated in this chapter: "Men are kept isolated from each other through competition and fear" (p. 16). More specifically,
the theme that runs through much of the previous literature on male fear, competition and friendship is that the early identification and disidentification of son with mother plays a crucial role in determining aspects of men's adult friendships. Although writers such as Rubin (1985, 1986) have previously suggested this, the goal of this chapter has been to extend the understanding of this process in more specific ways. It appears that some elements of friendship, such as competition, may not be rooted directly in the disidentification process but are obliquely related. Above all, it is hoped that the reader has gotten a sense of the important role that the self plays in male friendships. Some of the most powerful components that limit men's ability to be intimate with each other seem to arise from a desire to preserve the self, accompanied with the fear that the self may be diminished, abandoned or annihilated.

The "challenge of friendship," as seen by this writer, is for men to be able to modulate their internal and interpersonal experiences so that they can maintain a balance in their friendships between autonomy and homonomy (attachment). This presents exciting as well as daunting challenges for those who seek it.
Chapter 5

Critiques, Implications, and Recommendations for Further Research

The development or extension of theories always present new possibilities as well as new critiques. The goal of this chapter is to briefly address both of these, as well as discuss implications of this work. Finally, suggestions for future research are provided and a brief summary of the dissertation is given.

Critiques

The biological argument. One argument which could be leveled at many of the theoretical ideas presented here might be referred to as the "biological argument." Competition between men has been described and understood culturally, since human history began, as being part of the essence of masculinity. Men have been expected to be warriors, thereby protecting not only themselves but their families, communities, and culture. The Bible illustrates this throughout the Old Testament Scriptures, and modern writers such as Bly (1990) and Keen (1991) have discussed it as well. Keen, in discussing the "warrior psyche," asked an important question here: "Is the story of Cain and Abel etched on our DNA?" (p. 36).
Keen referred here to the most negative side of competition, but his question brings up the biological factor that many would suggest explains male competition: it's "in the genes." Proponents of this view believe that men have always been competitive and always will be, because of genetics and the principles of Darwinian evolution, including "survival of the fittest." As Pleck (1981) stated, "It is generally accepted that aggression and sex differences in aggression are biologically based" (p. 161).

This argument cannot--nor should it be--easily dismissed. Historical analysis, including those predicated on certain evolutionary principles, strongly suggest that competition between males has always existed. What is most illuminating is to see that, like all other human characteristics, competition spans a wide continuum from being very destructive (e.g. maiming and killing), to very positive (e.g. the enjoyment of athletics). I would agree in part with the biological argument that competition among men may be partially accounted for by biologic, genetic and endocrinologic factors. However, this does not mean competition is always healthy or beneficial, for men or the species. Unlike animals, humans have greater capacity to understand and intentionally modify their behaviors. Even though I have suggested that many aspects of competition relate to core identity issues, it should not be assumed that these cannot be changed or remediated somewhat, even though the effort may be substantial or lengthy. Change would begin with individual,
interpersonal, and societal awareness. Long-standing issues related to gender roles, like other personality issues, are not easily shifted for the individual or society. It is reasonable to assume that it will take several generations for American society to continue the process of reevaluating male roles, particularly in light of the continued mechanization of our society and the changing roles of women.

The issues of fear between men might also reasonably be seen through the biological lens as well. It could be argued that fear between men facilitates diversity in the continuing human species; in other words, fear in men keeps them "on guard" against other potentially stronger males. This prevents what could be seen as an animalistic structure of human society, that is, one where a few dominant males mate with the females, while other "weaker" males are left isolated, incapacitated, or annihilated.

This argument "holds less water," particularly in the modern era. While fear does at times promote physical or psychological safety for men, human beings are not animals; cultures have standards of morality, including sexual mores. It seems more reasonable to assume that although fear is on a continuum like competition, fear more often negatively affects the continuation of the human species these days (e.g. nuclear proliferation).

What seems most important to refute in the biological arguments regarding fear and competition is the assumption that
human beings are primarily animals or animalistic. While we share characteristics with the animal kingdom, human nature seeks more than just maintaining itself as a species and has the capacity to more fully understand its problems and potential solutions. Maslow (1962) illustrated this well in his hierarchy of needs in human beings.

The socialization argument. A second potential critique of the current theoretical contribution may be described as the "socialization argument." This argument would consist of the claim that I placed too much emphasis on the contribution of early childhood issues to adult relationships among men. Proponents of this argument would suggest that I have inadequately emphasized the fear which men are taught throughout their lives to have towards each other.

This argument, like the biological view, has strengths. Most men are clearly socialized to be "on guard" around one another (Lewis, 1978; Pleck, 1975). This fear-based socialization, particularly during the school years, serves to keep men distant from each other. However, this does not appear to adequately explain the rigidity with which many men approach their friendships. I would posit that the most powerful unconscious drives in relationships are rooted in the earliest years of life, particularly because these fears involve identity issues, definition of self and, most importantly, the abandonment of the self. For the infant, abandonment equals annihilation because the child unconsciously realizes, at some
point, his complete dependency on others for survival. Though rarely mentioned publicly, males do show a greater proclivity towards feeling abandoned (Stevens & Gardner, 1994).

To summarize these two critiques, the biological and socialization perspectives are reasonable, useful perspectives in understanding male relationships and friendships in particular. However, like the theories I have proposed, they are incomplete in and of themselves. Like all human relationships, male friendships are complex and involve many variables.

Implications for Further Discussion

It is reasonable to assume that the implications of this work would be of most interest to those with psychodynamic or psychoanalytic expertise. However, it is hoped that developmental writers also will find this material useful in their work.

One implication of this work is that psychology has an insufficient understanding of male fears in general, particularly those concerning abandonment. The specific fears discussed in the previous chapter are all extensions of this basic fear of abandonment which many men have to one degree or another. Writings such as Stevens and Gardner’s (1994) have been very helpful in exploring this, but more work remains to be done. Object Relations theories could be quite useful in further research because of their understandings concerning separation/individuation and attachment. The attachment theories of Bowlby would also be salient. These theories could be
expanded for the purpose of enhancing our understanding of the unique masculine experience of attachment/abandonment.

Social implications naturally flow from the ideas presented here as well. Obviously, nothing can be done to change the fact that males are born to a parent of the opposite sex whereas females are not. Males will always have a somewhat more complex process, involving gender identity and masculine identification, because of this. However, as Pollack (1995b) has rightly suggested, there is a need for fathers to establish a parent/child relationship with their sons from the earliest months of life, not waiting until the child is "ready" to leave the mother. This would potentially correlate with revised patterns of motherhood, one where boys are not encouraged prematurely to separate psychologically from their mothers. There is much room here for multi-disciplinary discussion and education, including psychologists, psychiatrists, analysts, physicians, sociologists, educators, politicians, business people, coaches and, most of all, parents.

There are numerous implications of this work for adult men who are interested in friendships. For those who want to be close to other men, yet have found unexplained obstacles, hopefully this work will help to illuminate some further reasons why they or their friends are sometimes stymied. This does not imply that knowledge or awareness alone will cure these problems, but if it leads to a deeper understanding, then men hopefully can have more patience with themselves and with
Adult Male

others. Also, with increased awareness often comes increased motivation to take corrective steps, such as getting individual or group psychotherapy or joining a men’s support group. This desire for closer male friendships may lead to other creative venues that get men together. Anecdotal reports as well as academic and popular writings frequently support the notion that the "pay-offs" of increased male/male intimacy are well worth the effort.

The increased interest in men’s studies and men’s groups in the last decade is a very positive sign and provides new avenues for men to experiment with ideas and learn new definitions of what it means to be a man. Promise-Keepers, an ecumenical Christian movement, encourages men to belong to small "accountability" groups for the purposes of personal and spiritual growth. Groups such as these provide potentially powerful venues for corrective emotional experiences for men, particularly related to disidentification issues. I would suggest that the optimal group, from a psychological perspective, would be composed of men of a variety of ages. With similar-aged peers, the opportunity for narcissistic mirroring can develop. Some men need the narcissistic reinforcement of a best friend or chum, and never received that as adolescents. Some men need the more collective narcissistic mirroring of the entire group, having never experienced what Sullivan (1953) referred to as the gang. If an older man is present in the group and is emotionally available, corrective
father transferences also can potentially occur. The "unknown" father referred to previously can hopefully be altered with encounters with a surrogate father-figure.

Groups such as Promise-Keepers also can potentially alter men's views of masculinity. The intrapsychic splitting discussed in the previous chapter, through which men keep loving and competitive parts of themselves and others separate, can be altered in a safe environment where both are permitted. An example of this would be the multi-dimensioned nature which is encouraged in some of these groups. Men are encouraged to question each other about their shortcomings and weaknesses, sometimes in a fairly assertive way. In conjunction, listening, concern, empathizing and prayer for each member is emphasized. As stated earlier, it is most ideal if an older man is present and modeling such behaviors. If he is respected by the younger men, they can mature in their psychological perceptions of masculinity, and can internally grow in their ability to see competition and love as integrated parts of masculinity.

Men's groups, whether religiously or secularly based, provide an opportunity for the reduction of homophobia. As males learn to become more intimate with each other in a non-sexual way, homophobic feelings often are reduced. If a male is able to integrate his loving and competitive instincts, it is reasonable to assume that his fears of being homosexual or being around homosexuals will diminish. This occurs in part because the
Adult Male

instinctive desire to be a loving, affectionate man is no longer intrapsychically confused with being homosexual.

Finally, in summarizing this work and its implications, it is important to note that our understandings of masculinity and male same-sex friendship are inevitably shaped by our current generation and its societal forces. We cannot assume that these understandings fit completely with past or future generations of men. Each generation of men, including this one, has the opportunity of seeking out new truths related to masculine identity and masculine relationships.

Suggestions for Future Research

As stated previously, a comprehensive theory concerning male same-sex friendship does not exist. A preliminary suggestion would be that male friendship be examined more widely from a variety of psychological orientations. Most current writing and theory on male friendship has been done by either sociologists (Nardi, 1992), general writers (Miller, 1983; Michaelis, 1983), or social historians (Rotundo, 1993). Within psychology, psychoanalytic writers such as Pollack (1990, 1995a, 1995b) have addressed the topic of masculinity, but have not focused specifically on male friendship. Others, such as the developmental writer Levinson (1978), have also failed to specifically look at the development of men’s friendships.

Male friendship needs further analysis from all psychological perspectives, but particularly from those within the behavioral, humanistic, and family systems approaches.
These have been underrepresented and could provide some valuable alternate perspectives on the issue. Within the psychodynamic framework, it would be helpful if Object-Relations theorists would study this further. With its dual emphasis on both intrapsychic and interpersonal issues, Object-Relations theory would appear poised to offer a very comprehensive model of male friendship development.

Further theoretical work ultimately needs to be accompanied by further clinical research on male same-sex friendship. The style and goals of the research will obviously differ depending on the orientation of the psychologist, but it seems most logical that solid qualitative research be used initially. This research should be conducted as broadly as possible across the male life span, starting with small boys and ending with elderly males. We need to understand how men think, feel, and behave around friendship via broad-based and structured qualitative data. Two largely neglected target populations in males and friendship would be children and adolescents. Only a few writers such as Rubin (1980) have discussed children's friendships, and then the focus has not exclusively been on males. Adolescence is also an area "ripe" for further research, particularly because of its unique developmental milestones, including the close bonding of boys with each other, mixed with the onset of puberty and the awakening of opposite-sex attractions.

Finally, I would suggest that further empirical research be conducted with men. There is a fair amount of data in existence
which has focused on the descriptive aspects of friendship, such as how many friends men have, what they talk about, and whether they relate more around activities or personal sharing. What are lacking are studies which correlate family-of-origin issues with adult male friendship, particularly, studies that shed light on the early triadic relationships between mother, father, and son and correlate this with later friendships. It seems reasonable also to capitalize on the burgeoning interest in research around fathering. Studies such as that of Cook (in press), which studied correlations between father-son relationships and later same-sex friendships, are promising initial steps in furthering our understanding of this area.

**Summary**

This dissertation sought to explain, in specific ways, how the components of fear and competition negatively impact men’s adult same-sex friendships. Two literature reviews were presented as foundational material. The first reviewed pertinent psychodynamic, psychoanalytic, and developmental issues of boys and men and included the work of Freud, Erik Erikson, and Harry Stack Sullivan. The second review summarized the writings on adult male friendship. Male friendship was seen as having unique strengths, yet men were frequently noted as having difficulty developing intimate relationships with each other. A decline in friendship after adolescence was also noted and discussed.

The theoretical contribution of the current author examined specific roles which fear and competition play in limiting
healthy male relating. These components were described as being frequently rooted in the early separation and individuation phases of a boy's life, specifically in the detachment or disidentification of the young male from his mother. Fears in males were described as fears of attachment/intimacy, fears of the unknown, fears of loss of autonomy, and fears of homosexuality. Competitive hindrances to friendships were discussed also, and included masculine identity, intrapsychic splitting and loss.

The final chapter described two possible critiques: the biological and socialization arguments, and noted strengths and weaknesses in both. Implications of this work were also discussed, including an acknowledgment that there is a lack of research on male fears--specifically abandonment fears. Implications were discussed that suggested the need for revised roles in parenting that would reduce the premature psychological withdrawal of the mother and increase the early emotional involvement of the father with the male child. The importance of men's groups in providing corrective emotional experiences was discussed. Finally, suggestions for further research were discussed, including theoretical, qualitative, and empirical research on male same-sex friendships.
References


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Appendix A

Vita
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Education

George Fox University Graduate School of Clinical Psychology, Newberg, OR.
Graduate Fellow: For Dr. Wayne Colwell, Professor of Psychology in the Graduate
School of Clinical Psychology
Graduate Fellow: For Dr. Clark Campbell, Professor of Psychology in the Graduate
School of Clinical Psychology and current Chair of the Department of Psychology

George Fox College Graduate School of Clinical Psychology, Newberg, OR.

B.A., Business Administration (June, 1980).
Northwest Nazarene College, Nampa, ID.

Dissertation

Title: Man-to Man: A Psychodynamic/Developmental Understanding of Adult Male
Same-Sex Friendship

Doctoral Internship

CareMark Behavioral Health Services, Portland, Oregon. September, 1996 - August,
1997. Title: Psychology Intern. Primary responsibilities included performing inpatient
individual therapy, group therapy, and psychological assessment. Internship consisted of two
six-month full-time rotations at Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital and Adventist Health
Medical Center. Supervisors: Susan Schradle, Ph.D., and Craig Montgomery, Ph.D.

Practicum Experiences

Performed individual and couples therapy with adults, performed administrative duties, and
attended staff meetings. Supervisor: Valeria Lewandoski, L.C.S.W.

Personal Counseling and Development, George Fox College, Newberg, Oregon.
September 1992 - April 1993. Performed individual therapy with under-graduate
college students. Supervisor: David Arnold, M.A.

Employment Experience

Mental Health Partners, Inc., Portland, Oregon. October, 1995 - May, 1996. Title: Qualified Mental Health Professional (On Call). Responsibilities involved working with mentally ill clients at a short-term residential treatment center (*Ryles Center for Treatment & Evaluation*), and with chronically mentally ill individuals at a long-term care facility (*Faulkner Place*). Duties included brief individual therapy sessions, milieu therapy, and assisting with individual and group activities on the ward.


Teaching Experience

George Fox College, Newberg, Oregon. September, 1994 - April 1995. Title: Graduate Fellow. Responsibilities involved working with first-year graduate psychology students. Duties included supervision, growth-group leader, some didactic presentations, and a variety of administrative tasks.

Additional Clinical Training


“Suicide and Borderline Personality Disorder” by Keith Cheng, M.D. Legacy Emanuel Hospital, Portland, OR. January, 1997.


“Private Practice Sanity” by Janet Pipal, Ph.D. Clackamas Community College, Oregon City, OR. May, 1996.


“Disorders of the Self” by Ralph Klein, M.D. Providence Medical Center, Portland, OR. October, 1993.
Psychometric Experience

- Beck Depression Inventory
- Bender Visual Motor Gestalt Test
- Clinical interviewing & client feedback
- Developmental Test of Visual-Motor Integration
- Folstein Mini-Mental State Exam
- Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)
- Projective Drawings (House-Tree-Person; Kinetic Family Drawings)
- Psychiatric Diagnostic Inventory
- Rorschach Inkblot Test
- Rotter Incomplete Sentences Blank
- Screening Test for Luria-Nebraska Neuropsychological Battery--Adult Version
- Shipley Institute of Living Scale
- Thematic Apperception Test
- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Rev. (WAIS-R)
- Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Rev. (WISC-R)
- Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-3rd. Edition (WISC-III)
- Woodcock-Johnson Achievement Test

Professional Affiliations

- American Psychological Association--Student Affiliate