CONCEPTIONS OF INTIMACY: MEN IN RELATIONSHIPS

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the conceptions of intimacy held by men in on-going heterosexual relationships. Existing conceptions and theories of intimacy have traditionally focused on behaviors isolated from the context of the person. Furthermore, the principles guiding existing theory have not been substantiated. This study attempted to present the concept of intimacy within a natural context. To this end, a phenomenographical approach was employed to generate possible conceptions through the collection of statements and experiences of intimacy.

Eight men were gathered through a network of contacts to participate in semi-structured interviews. Statements and experiences, which described their conceptions of intimacy, were extracted from the interviews and validated by independent reviewers. The data was analyzed and categorized into dimensions and manifestations of intimacy.

Six dimensions emerged from the statements and experiences. Attunement, collaboration, distinctiveness, trust, empathy, and rootedness were found woven through the fabric of the conceptualizations of intimacy. Shared experience, acceptance/support, and specialness were three manifestations or ways in which intimacy was experienced. The manifestations provided a holistic context for the concept of intimacy.
Important aspects of intimacy were validated in this study. Intimacy was not characterized by one or more specific features, but rather involved a set of rich and complex elements. There appeared to be different facets of expression for these elements. Lastly, there appeared to be an interconnection between the state and process of intimacy. The findings of this study provided a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the concept of intimacy and validated the importance of understanding a phenomenon within a natural context.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Understanding intimate relationships between men and women has been the focus of philosophers, artists, and a myriad of writers since the times of ancient Greece. The notion of intimate relationships has been held close to our hearts and minds. Intimate relationships provide us with the feeling of belonging, a source of support during times of stress and feelings of comfort during our day to day routine. Without personal relationships we may feel lonely, isolated, and lacking a sense of meaning in our lives. As a society we are currently engaged in a struggle to answer the questions of how intimate relationships are created, experienced, and maintained.

The purpose of this study is to explore the conceptions and experiences of intimacy held by men who are in on-going heterosexual relationships. There are two aims for this study; first, to contribute to the understanding of intimacy within a natural context, and second to provide counsellors with more in-depth and tangible information regarding intimacy with a view towards facilitating clients experiencing relationship difficulties.

With the advent of the women’s movement, a reevaluation of traditional relationship qualities between men and women has occurred (Cancian, 1987). Historically, relationship
configurations were guided by defined polarized gender roles. Women have been characterized as nurturers and caregivers responsible for maintaining emotional intimacy in relationships, while men were viewed as agentic and self-sufficient (Bakan, 1966). Parsons (1966) argued that a role arrangement where the man is instrumental and the women is expressive set the stage for healthy family functioning. Women now appear to be crossing the gender boundaries as evidenced by their increasing economic power and limited access to the political decision making process (Steinmann & Fox, 1974). Past research reflects traditional attitudes by focussing on male developmental concerns such as autonomy and career. More recent theory such as "Self-in-Relation" and the works of Rubin (1983), Chordorow (1978), and Gilligan (1982) have attempted to correct this inequity by addressing contemporary views of the psychology of women. Although these theorists provide psychodynamic and feminist perspectives on relationships, a clear conceptual understanding of intimacy in adulthood is still lacking.

Intimacy is regarded as a central feature of adult development however our comprehension of intimacy appears to be limited. It seems that the focus of researchers of adulthood has tended to address individual developmental processes and capacities rather than relationships and individuals in natural contexts. In the past ten or fifteen years psychologists have exhibited a renewed interest in exploring the complexities of interpersonal relationships
with specific attention being paid to intimacy. An increase in marital and family enrichment programs, the "human potential" movement, and high rates of divorce have prompted researchers and therapist to examine the phenomenon of intimacy.

Individual and marital adjustment and satisfaction have been associated with relationship intimacy (Fehr and Perlman, 1987; Reis, 1984; Waring, McElrath, Mitchell and Derry, 1981). Intimacy problems have been correlated with loneliness (Weiss, 1973), depression (Brown and Harris, 1978; Walsi, 1977, cited in Sloan and L’Abate, 1985), suicide (Goldberg, 1976), and general psychological complaints made by clients seeking psychotherapy (Horowitz, 1979). However, a direct cause and affect relationship between intimacy and various social and personal problems has not been established. The operational definitions used by studies to measure intimacy often involve equating specific behaviors with intimacy, an association which has not been validated.

The dominant methodological approaches used in existing research have not provided information which illustrates the richness and complexity of the experience of intimacy. Isolating and quantifying variables within laboratory circumstances has tended to result in misleading accounts of the concept of intimacy. Employing a phenomenographical approach this study investigates the meaning of intimacy within a natural context. Conceptions were featured through
direct statements and specific experiences which may provide important information for enhancing clinical practice.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The overall aim of the following chapter is to present pertinent background information regarding various approaches attempting to explain intimacy in relationships. Definitions and conceptions of intimacy which appear to establish the basis for operational definitions used in research will be examined. Research investigating the nature and development of intimacy will also be presented. Finally, a review of literature and research concerned with intimacy and male adult development is discussed.

APPROACHES TO INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

The focus of this section is to review various approaches to understanding intimate relationships. Perlman and Fehr (1987) presented four general approaches to intimacy: Life-Span Developmental models; Motivational model; Equilibrium models; and Equity Theory. Two of these approaches, Equilibrium and Equity, present perspectives which do not provide clear or unique conceptions of intimacy. The Life-Span Developmental and Motivational models do present perspectives which include a more concise conceptualization.

The Equilibrium models which originate from Argyle and Dean's (1965) research asserted that couples have a
preference for a specific level of intimacy in their interactions. They point to certain verbal and non-verbal behaviors as ways to express intimacy. Furthermore, they propose that couples constantly attempt to maintain an optimum balance of intimacy. Paterson (1976) suggests that couples considered to have high levels of intimacy exhibit more intimate behaviors. Absent in the Equilibrium perspective is a clear understanding of what is actually being balanced. References to the maintenance of intimacy through verbal and non-verbal behavior are presented yet what is being maintained is not stipulated.

The Equity Theory also suggests that intimacy is provided through the fairness within relationships. The Equity theorists (Hatfield and Traupmann, 1981, cited in Perlman and Fehr, 1987; Walster, Walster, and Berscheid, 1978) suggest that individuals weigh the costs and benefits of their actions in an attempt to maintain or restore a balance of outcomes. Research employing the Equity theory addressed concerns such as the amount of personal resources, perceptions of relationship outcome, and assessment of exchanges in certain situations. Similar to the Equilibrium model, the Equity theory does not provide a conceptualization of intimacy. It appears to provide ways to adjust or maintain intimacy but does not present a clear understanding of intimacy.

The Life-Span Developmental approach underscored the theories of Sullivan (1953) and Erikson (1958) which
provided a developmental context for intimacy. Erikson's (1958, 1963) well known developmental stage theory proposed that after a person has established a sense of identity they are prepared to negotiate the next developmental crisis, intimacy versus isolation. Erikson conceptualizes intimacy as being in a relationship in which commitment and the "fusing of identities" (1968, p.135) is actualized. Furthermore, according to Erikson, intimacy, which is achieved during early adulthood, involves the capacity to achieve mutual orgasms through sexual interaction.

Sullivan's (1953) view of intimacy, on the other hand, is concerned with the need during pre-adolescence to develop a sense of "chumship" in response to staving off loneliness. He further distinguishes the need to develop an intimate relationship which involves "collaboration with some very special person" (p.267) and the need for release of genital tension through sexual acts. In addition, Sullivan (1953) suggests that mature intimacy establishes that the needs and wants of the other is just as important of one's own.

Some researchers have explored intimacy in the attempt to support various hypothesis developed from the Eriksonian framework. For example, Orlofsky (1976) categorized intimacy status on the basis of the possible outcomes of the intimacy crisis. The statuses are: isolate, stereotyped, pseudointimate, preintimate, and intimate. Subsequent research has attempted to find relationship between intimacy status and ego identity, sex role orientation and gender
Marcia, 1980; Orlofsky, 1977; and Schiedel and Marcia, 1985). The above research attempts to provide support for Erikson's developmental theory rather than being concerned with validating his definition or concept of intimacy.

Dan McAdams (1980, 1982) view of intimacy as a human motive was inspired from Bakan's (1966) concept of communion as a fundamental mode of existence. McAdams (1984) stated that "the intimacy motive is a recurrent preference or readiness for experiences of close, warm, and communicative exchanges with others" (p.45). In his research McAdams attempted to support his theory by showing that in fact individuals differ with respect to their tendencies to express levels of intimacy and measured those differences. He found that individuals with high intimacy motivation are characterized as more warm, open, sincere, and egalitarian than individuals who were low in intimacy motivation. Also McAdams and Contantain (1983) found that individuals with high intimacy motivation were more expressive regarding interpersonal relationships.

The above approaches to intimacy were developed from personality and social theory which employ differing conceptualizations of intimacy. Two models, Life Span Developmental and Motivational, propose that intimacy is a stable quality or capacity of the individual. While the Equilibrium and Equity approaches observe intimacy as a process and continual changing. It is important to note
that these approaches use definition of intimacy which have not been established by clear research evidence.

Two other perspectives worth noting include Object Relations Theory and Feminist Theory. Both approaches were focus on early childhood development and its affect on latter adult relationships. These approaches present somewhat more clear concepts regarding intimacy and will be discussed in more depth in the preceding sections. The aim of the next section is to present a variety of definitions and conceptualizations which have evolved from various approaches to intimacy and relationships.

CONCEPTIONS OF INTIMACY

The word intimacy is derived from the Latin word "intimus" meaning inner or innermost. Researchers have found it difficult to delineate a clear definition for intimacy as no general consensus of its components or nature has been established. Although intimacy is considered to be a dominant cultural value and is often noted in literature addressing relationships, its basis has not been clearly conceived (Schaefer & Olson, 1981).

As was noted earlier sexual behavior has been indicated as an important component of intimacy. Mcgill (1985), for example, suggested that men tend to equate sex with intimacy, while women see sex as an expression of intimacy. Psychodymanic theorists, Balint (1965) and Kernberg (1977), have also suggested that sexual intercourse is the central
element of intimacy. In contrast, Sullivan (1953) proposed that sexuality is a separate need that intimacy is characterized by feelings of warmth and closeness. To date no direct evidence has been put forth to substantiate the traditional icon of sex being a key component of intimacy.

Intimacy has been referred to as a developmental task or need (Erikson, 1950/1963; Sullivan, 1953) and as a human motivation (McAdams, 1982). It has also been viewed as an interactive process which involves both verbal and nonverbal behaviors (Argyle & Dean, 1965; Jourard, 1971). Intimacy has been considered an "intermediate cognitive construct" (Chelune, Robison, & Kommor, 1984, p.13) and as a consequence of specific relational processes (Wynne & Wynne, 1986). More recently, intimacy has been perceived as a complex phenomenon involving both behaviors and interactions which create intimacy and are expressions of intimacy in and of itself. Furthermore, intimacy has been considered to be an affective state which includes feelings of trust, connectedness, safety, comfort, closeness, warmth, and a feeling of being known and accepted (Snyder, 1991).

**Self-disclosure and Intimacy**

Perhaps the most common conception of intimacy is that of a process by which the experience of intimacy fluctuates in relation to self-disclosure (Derlega and Chaikin, 1977; Hatfield, 1984; Jourard, 1971; Wynne and Chelune, 1983). The act of self-disclosure is the process by which the
"innermost" of an individual becomes known to another. Derlega and Grzelak (1979) stated that "self-disclosure includes any information exchange that refers to the self, including personal states, dispositions, events in the past, and for the future" (p.152). Schaefer and Olson (1981) proposed that "intimacy is a process and an experience which is the outcome of the disclosure of intimate topics and sharing intimate experiences" (p.51). Derlega and Chaikan (1975) defined intimacy as self-disclosure of "aspects of the self that are unique and central and/or vulnerable" (p.104). Rubin (1983) proposed that intimacy is the "reciprocal expression of feeling and thought not out of fear or dependent need, but out of a wish to know another’s inner life and be able to share one’s own" (p.90).

Theorists have suggested that cognitive self-disclosure also appears to be a prominent factor for intimacy. Waring (1984) referred to cognitive self-disclosure as "the process of making ourselves known to others by verbally revealing personal thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions, as well as developing self-awareness" (p. 35). In addition to cognitive disclosure, Lewis (1978) included verbal and tactile expressions of affection in his conception of intimacy. Consistent with non-verbal forms of self-disclosure such as sexual or bodily contact as key features in the concept of intimacy (Morris, 1971; Wong, 1981). While self-disclosure has held a prominent position with
regards to the concept of intimacy it does not explain the actual experience of intimacy.

The disclosure of the private self appeared to be a salient feature of intimacy and was often noted in researcher's lists of characteristics of intimacy (Hinde, 1976; Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978; Chelune, Robison, & Kommor, 1984). Some investigators suggest that self-disclosure alone is insufficient and that expressed empathy (Wynne & Wynne, 1986) and acceptance and commitment (Gilbert, 1976, cited in Schaefer & Olson, 1981) are also necessary components of intimacy.

Trust, Empathy, Mutuality, and Intimacy

Lafollete and Graham (1986) noted that sensitivity and trust are major components of intimate encounters. They suggested that the person revealing information must be sensitive to the capacity and experience of the listener. Lafollete and Graham (1986) noted that one might communicate personal or intimate information to persons who are not trusted which may indicate more individual attributes such as frankness or openness rather than an experience of intimacy. In addition these researchers purport that if the trust of the listener is understood, the listener will not exploit the vulnerabilities of the revealer.

Givelber (1990), a proponent of the Object Relations theoretical framework, identified five components of "viable
intimacy"; separateness, mutuality, acceptance of self and other, empathy, and collaboration. Central to this concept of intimacy is the perceived influence of the parent-infant bond of early childhood. While the basis for the first four components originate from the parent-infant attachment, collaboration has its origins in the sibling and peer interaction. Shaver, Hasan, and Bradshaw (1988) concur that relationships are strongly influenced by the quality of the parent-child bond. They theorized that individuals' expectations of relationships are influenced by experiences of empathy and promotion of individuation during childhood development.

Developed from Object-Relations theory is the notion of "we-ness" experienced in relationships. Klein (1976) believed that the need for "affiliation" is included within one's identity along with the need for autonomy. He noted that through the relationship between a mother and infant, the infant "proceed from reaction to interaction, into a self that can both affirm and be affirmed by others" (p.228-229). In adult relationships the need to be recognized and affirmed is maintained and satisfied by self-objects (Kohut, 1977). Mutuality within relationships involves the capacity to be dependent while maintaining a secure sense of self. Furthermore, Jean Baker Miller (1987) (cited in Givelber, 1990) suggested that individual growth is promoted through mutuality in relationships'. Through experiences of fusion individuals learn new ways of being. Here mutuality is seen
as part of the concept of intimacy however what is missing is information as to the experience of mutuality.

Person (1988) proposed that through the process of fusion or mutual identification a couple develops a distinct identity. Person described mutual identification as an "authentic sense of the subjectivity of the Other, a knowledge of the Other’s point of view that assume equal importance with (one’s) own"(p.119). As a result of mutual identification. Person proposed that the self is also transformed by acting for the identified other which indirectly is acting for oneself.

Person’s view of mutual identification involved the individuals capacity to empathize with one’s partner. This theme is also found in Feminist theories of intimacy. Chordorow (1978), for example, suggested that women are more empathic than men because the mother-daughter identification is stronger during pre-oedipal stages of development. She stated "(girls) emerge from this period with a basis for "empathy" built into their primary definition of self in a way that boys do not" (p.167). Self-in-Relations theorists such as Miller (1976) also suggested that women have a stronger interest and greater capacity for intimate relationships than to men. These statements about men and their capacity for intimacy lack experiential substantiation. Furthermore, there is an implicit suggestion that men must experience empathy is the same way that women do in order to be considered empathic.
Goethal’s (1980) in his concept of intimacy described advanced relationships as those which involve changes in self and the "interpersonal field" which develops within an atmosphere of trust, acceptance and the valuing of a partner’s expressions. He also suggested that qualities such as attunement, empathy and commitment implicitly exist without conscious effort. Though these relationships are rare, according to Goethal’s, "mutative relationships" may occur in varying degrees. Goethal’s provides a more comprehensive conception of intimacy however he does not clearly explicate the experiences of the components he proposes to be part of intimacy.

Dahms (1972) proposed that there are three levels of intimacy; emotional, physical, and intellectual. According to Dahms the highest level, emotional intimacy, which incorporates four non-hierarchical themes; mutual accessibility, naturalness, non-possessiveness, and the awareness of intimacy as a process. Some writers have suggested that emotional intimacy is the most difficult level for men to achieve (Goldberg, 1979; Lewis, 1978; Pleck, 1975).

A more recent conceptualization of intimacy was proposed by Kathy Weingarten (1991). She argued that the popular views of intimacy which have been developed from social constructionist and feminist perspectives have not addressed the experience of intimacy but rather focus on individual or relationship capacities. According to these
theories individual capacities such as self-knowledge and acceptance are required for intimacy to be experienced. Lerner in *The Dance of Intimacy* (1989) defined intimacy as "being who you are" (p.3); implying that an individual must have a clear understanding of their boundaries and personal values. Oden (1974) also suggested that self-awareness and congruence must be present for intimate sharing. Weingarten however proposed that intimacy is created out of mutual interactions. She stated "Intimate interactions occur when people share meaning or co-create meaning and are able to coordinate their actions to reflect their mutual meaning-making" (p.294). According to this conception intimacy arises from shared understanding of experiences and the development of new manners of interaction through attunement. Weingarten further states, "Refraining from meaning-making and providing, imposing, rejecting, and misunderstanding meaning are associated with non-intimate interaction" (p.295). The view that intimacy is realized through experiences rather than individual capacities or qualities of relatedness is noteworthy as it calls into question conceptions of intimacy based on gender expectations which often diminishes male experiences. This concept of intimacy seems more helpful towards the understanding of intimacy as it focuses on experience rather than preconceived notions.

Conceptions of intimacy appear to fall into two categories; those addressing the individual quality or
capacity and those concerned with relationship interaction. Theories which explain intimacy from the perspective of the individual (psychodynamic, feminist, and developmental) focus attention on early childhood experiences. While theories concerned with aspects of relationship interaction (social exchange, equilibrium, and equity) emphasis various behaviors as indication of intimacy. Attempts to conceptualize intimacy appears problematic in part because no one theory fully captures or explains the phenomenon. Furthermore, a reductionistic approach to understanding the meaning of intimacy seems too nebulous. Self-disclosure, for example, has been held as a major indicator of intimacy. It might be suggested that this factor may be too restrictive as well as being vague and ambiguous. Men may experience intimacy by other means other than through verbal self-disclosure. They might also experience or express their personal selves via other avenues other than verbal self-disclosure. Finally, what is described as vulnerable or personal may vary between individuals. It appears that a more complete and inclusive definition is needed towards the conceptualization of intimacy.

INTIMACY RESEARCH

The research on intimacy has been approached from two different streams of inquiry. By far the most commonly adopted methodology is that of employing an "a priori" assumption about intimacy, and by making statements or
taking measurements based on the presupposition. Thus the focus of intimacy research has been on investigators' perceptions of external evidence rather than on what people are actually experiencing. Furthermore, this approach has often involved developing theories about intimacy which fit into existing social and psychological theoretical perspectives.

The less common orientation has been that of attempting to understand intimacy through people’s ideas or experiences. However, the goal of research investigating the experience of intimacy is ultimately directed towards the development of an operational definition as a basis for a measurement tool. Again the concern appears to be the understanding of intimacy from a non-naturalistic perspective. Few studies are directly concerned with the experience of intimacy as the main consideration.

**Operationalization of Intimacy**

The development of a collective definition and subsequent operationalization of intimacy is still in its infancy (Helgeson, Shaver, & Dyer, 1987; Perlman & Duck, 1987). Operational definitions have been too global, often using general relationship indices (i.e., marital satisfaction) or make assumptions that the understanding of intimacy can be captured by one or more behavioral, cognitive, or affectual construct (Snyder, 1991).
The most prevalent operational definition used in studies has focused on the communication qualities between relationship participants such as emotional expressiveness and self-disclosure (Balswick, 1988; Delegra and Grzelak, 1979; Derlega and Chaikin, 1975; Hatfield and Walster, 1981; Jourard, 1971; Jourard & Lasakow 1958; Lewis, 1978). One of the earliest studies of self-disclosure was conducted by Jourard (1971) in which he concluded that "the amount of personal information that one person is willing to disclose to another to be an index to the 'closeness' of the relationship and of the affection, love or trust that prevails between two people" (p. 429). Implicit in this conclusion (and other studies using self-disclosure as a variable) is the understanding that personal information includes anything which reveals the "self". Self-disclosure as a measure of intimacy is problematic as it assumes first that the inner self is clearly identifiable and capable of being understood and secondly, that the act of disclosure indeed leads to knowing the other or being known. Most research on self-disclosure has emphasized verbal expressions. There is, however, evidence that suggests that non-verbal exchanges are significant (see Paterson, 1984).

Some researchers suggest that personal and situational factors such as the need of intimate disclosure are important when addressing the significance of self-disclosure (Archer, 1983; Derlega & Grzelak, 1979; McAdams, 1984). According to a study conducted by Waring and
Chelune (1983) self-disclosure is not in and of itself accountable for reported intimacy.

The methodology used to gather information about intimacy has often involved the use of self-report questionnaires and restricted interviewing procedures. The data has been analyzed and compared to a preconceived definition of intimacy as in the research of a self report inventory constructed by Schaefer and Olsen (1981). This measurement tool was initially developed from presupposed dimensions elicited from statements made by family professionals about the nature of intimacy. The inventory emphasized aspects such as marital satisfaction, self-disclosure, cohesion, expressiveness, conflict and control, all of which appeared to be related to personal and relationship qualities rather than the experience of intimacy. Waring, Tillman, Frelick, Russell and Weisz (1980) conducted an exploratory study to investigate the concept of intimacy. They interviewed 50 adults asking about their concepts of intimacy and found that self-disclosure was essential element for intimacy. Other aspects associated with intimacy included sexuality, absence of anger, argument and criticism, awareness and acceptance of self and childhood experiences of intimacy. The study was limited in that information regarding their spontaneous responses was not expanded upon. Furthermore, this study was conducted towards the development of an operational
A structured intimacy interview of intimacy was constructed by Waring and Chelune (1983) to measure behaviors based on ten aspects of marital intimacy: affection, cohesion, expressiveness, compatibility, conflict resolution, sexuality, identity, autonomy and intimate behaviors. Consistent with previous studies self-disclosure was found to be a fundamental aspect of intimacy. Although this study utilized an interview style it addressed behaviors rather than experience.

McAdams (1982) conceptualizes intimacy as a motivational quality in the individual. He stated that intimacy motivation reflects the "individual's preference or readiness for experiences of closeness, warmth, and communication" (p.134). In his studies both verbal and non-verbal information gleaned from TAT and psychodrama studies were used to access intimacy motivation. In one study McAdams (1980) found that college students who rated high in intimacy motivation were characterized as more "warm," "loving," "natural," "appreciative," and "sincere" than those students who were low in intimacy motivation. McAdams further suggested that self-disclosure is a manifestation of intimacy motivation. McAdams research provides more information about the concept of intimacy as he uses experiential methods however he appears more concerned with
substantiating a formal theory of motivation rather than exploring the experience itself.

Nancy Snyder (1991) interviewed lesbian woman and heterosexual men and woman about their experiences of intimacy. She found primary themes of intimacy such as revealing the self, knowing and being known, acceptance, connectedness, trust, non-verbal disclosure, sex, and shared experiences. Less common themes included separateness, focused attention, playfulness, crossing boundaries and mutual respect. Snyder suggested that the themes cannot be equated with intimacy but are specific components. From the results of her research Snyder proposes that intimacy is both a process and a state. The process of intimacy involves expressive behaviors including shared experiences where by the self is revealed. She also proposes that the process invokes a state of intimacy as well as being experience as intimate in and of itself.

Snyder considers various affective states such as closeness, connectedness, trust, safety, comfort, warmth, and feelings of being known and accepted as the state of intimacy. She notes that closeness is an overriding theme of intimacy. Finally, she concludes that the state of intimacy is very similar to what Winnicott describes as a "holding environment" (1960/1965). What is relevant in this study is that the focus is primarily on the understanding the subjective experience of intimacy, rather than on
attempting to develop a systematic or generalizable conclusion about intimacy.

Summary

While numerous studies have been conducted on various aspects of intimate relationships, few have specifically addressed the issue of the experience of intimacy. In order to quantitatively measure intimacy researchers have conducted based on a-priori assumptions. The concept of intimacy as represented by experience is required. The complexity and depth of intimacy cannot be understood through inventories or questionnaires. Thus, this study employs an interview style methodology towards developing a more comprehensive understanding of intimacy.

INTIMACY AND THE ADULT MALE

A secondary interest of this study is concerned with the experience of intimacy by men in particular. It seems that their is popular notion that men are unable, unwilling, or ill-prepared to be intimate. Thus a discussion of theory and research concerned with men and intimacy is warranted. It is important to note again that the conceptions of intimacy used to study gender differences are based on a priori assumptions rather than actual individual experiences. Conclusions and arguments employed to support specific positions about gender differences do not provide greater understanding as well as miss leading.
Intimacy, according to various writers is one of the areas of personal relationships which men experience as elusive and confusing (Balswick, 1988; Booth, 1972; Rubin, 1983; Lewis, 1978). Most writers who consider self-disclosure as an index for intimacy, have found that men are less intimate than women (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982; Jourard & Lasakow, 1958; Lewis, 1978; McGill, 1985; Pleck, 1981; Rubin, 1983). Cancian (1987) argued that the definition of intimacy as self-disclosure and emotional expression is based on a feminized conception of love. She stated "we identify love with emotional expression and talking about feelings, aspects of love that women prefer and in which women tend to be more skilled than men" (p. 69). She suggests that this concept of love or intimacy is incomplete as it precludes masculine styles of behavior, such as providing instrumental help, joint activities, and physical contact.

Several writers contend, that as a result of polarized gender roles and child developmental features, men are unable to achieve intimacy (Chodorow, 1971; David & Brannon, 1976; Gilligan, 1982; Goldberg, 1979; Mussen, 1962; Rubin, 1983). Socio-cultural theorists propose that variations between male and female intrapersonal and interpersonal behavior are primarily a result of social and cultural conceptions of gender. Masculinity and femininity are believed to be concepts which are developed through political, economic and domestic conditions. Two theories,
"dispositional" and "structural", attempt to explain the difficulties men have with intimacy. Proponents of the "dispositional theory" focus on the process of early childhood socialization as the basis for gender differences in interpersonal behavior. From this perspective the internalization of cultural norms for appropriate behavior occurs during early childhood development. The parent-child interaction is regarded as the vehicle through which children internalize gender expectations.

Nancy Chodorow (1971) claims that the child-rearing structure in which women are designated the primary caregiver establishes the sex differences in behavior. She suggested that boys become confused and insecure when they must separate from their mothers in the process of identifying with their fathers. She argued that men learn to inhibit their identification with their mothers and consequently they repress their capacity for intimacy. Further, adult male intimate attachments are then founded on abstract role expectations rather than on emotional bonding. Women, on the other hand, are believed able to maintain their affective connections to others because they retain their identification with their mothers. These statements about intimacy and men are based on Feminist Theory which has yet to substantiate their claims.

Rubin (1983) extended Chodorow’s (1971) theory by suggesting that the male child psychologically defends against the pain he experiences as the consequence of
repressing his connection with the primary care-giver. Similarly, according to Rubin (1983), men are unable to be emotionally intimate because they have learned to deny their emotions. She states, "the development of ego boundaries that are fixed and firm-barriers that rigidly separate self from other, that circumscribe not only his relationships with others but his connection to his inner emotional life as well" (p.56). Woman, alternately, are viewed by Rubin as able to be intimate because they maintain their identification with their mothers and are therefore connected to their inner emotional worlds and are able to be more empathic. Both Chodorow (1971) and Rubin (1983) suggest that until changes occur in child-rearing practices (ie. men become more directly involved in child-rearing), cultural conceptions of masculinity and femininity will be perpetuated and males will continue to struggle with intimacy. Again, what is assumed is that men must experience intimacy in the same way women do. Further, assumptions about the experience of empathy and fusion are based on theory not recorded experience.

Rubin (1983) has some found support for her view through her research interviews. Rubin notes that she frequently heard statements made by women such as "he doesn't talk to me" and "I want to know what he's feeling" and men stating, "I don't know what she wants me to talk about" and "I'm not feeling anything"(p.65). Napier (1988) found similar statements made by women and men in their
collection of therapeutic encounters with couples. However, they suggest that unrealistic expectations of high levels of verbal intimacy is a result of being over involved with their mothers and have experienced emotional rejection from their fathers. Both the assumptions and conclusions made about these respondents statements in these studies can be construed as evidence that men are not fulfilling intimacy expectations is not validated.

**Men and Self-disclosure**

Research investigating cognitive self-disclosure and gender differences from a quantitative approach present conflicting results. Most findings support the contention that women are significantly more disclosing than men (Cozby, 1973; Deforest & Stone, 1980; Gitter and Black, 1976; Hendrick, 1981; Jourard & Laskow, 1958; Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974, cited in Snyder, 1991; Powers & Bultena, 1976). While some studies have found no significant gender differences with respect to self-disclosure, few have found that men exhibiting higher levels (Cozby, 1973; Hacker, 1981, Woodyard and Hines, 1973). In a study by Hacker (1981) men were found to disclose more to member of the opposite sex while women disclose more to members of the same sex. And Woodyard and Hines (1973) found that men disclose more to casual acquaintances while women disclose more in significant relationships.
Studies interested in the content of self-disclosure find that men tend to disclose information which involved an external references rather than about the "self" and affect (DeForest and Stone, 1980; Highlen & Gillis, 1978; Pleck, 1975). Rubin, Hill, Peplau & Dunkel-Schetter, (1980) (cited in Snyder, 1991) found that men tend to focused on topics such as politics, things they felt proud about, and partners positive attributes. Pleck (1975) found that 58% of the men in his study had not told their best friend that they liked them. While research evidence appears to support the conclusion that men are less disclosing and emotionally expressive than women, few studies have investigated the meaning of what is disclosed or expressed by men. For example, men may feel intimate through the process of disclosure rather than from specific content of disclosure. Finally it is important to reiterate that using self-disclosure as an operational definition for intimacy earlier may be imprecise as was discussed earlier.

Men and Empathy

Empathy, as discussed earlier, has been considered an important aspect of intimacy. Early research concerned with empathy involved measuring the degree to which individuals match emotional responses or exhibit sympathetic responses. In a review by Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) no evidence of sex differences was found in 29 papers. In another review, Hoffman (1977) concluded that on the basis of 16 studies females are more empathic than males. However, most of the
studies reviewed by Hoffman childrens levels of reflexive crying as the operational definition for empathy.

Finally, Eisenberg and Lennon (1983) found that females were more empathic when self-report methodologies were used to measure gender differences, while no differences were found when physiological or non-verbal measures were employed. They further argued that on the basis of the studies they reviewed a conclusion that females possess an innate capacity to be more empathic than men is not warranted.

In Snyder's (1991) study she did not find any gender differences with regard to primary themes such as self-disclosure and empathy. No significant differences were found in the type of language used or descriptions of events which respondents described as intimate. Furthermore, external raters (male and female) were unable to distinguish the gender of the respondents statements about their experiences of intimacy. Snyder caution the readers of her study to conclude that there are no gender differences given that her study does not address behavioral differences and the sample (30 female, 10 male) is small. Furthermore, the results of her study may not reflect the general population as 80% of the respondents had received some form of therapy as well as being motivated to participate in the study thereby being more open and disclosing.

Structural or situational theories address the interaction between the individual and context. Situational
Theorists (Gould, 1978; Levinson, 1978) emphasize the influence of environmental setting and adult developmental stage on adult behavior. Role theory suggests that males must attend to achievement tasks in order to fulfill the requirements of the male role (Balswick, 1988). Herein, males learn that to be masculine excludes the expression of emotions. Pahl and Pahl (1971) found that the father-provider role emphasizes drive and competition qualities which conflict with the interpersonal skills needed to maintain marital and family relationships.

Lewis (1978) also suggested that intimacy and competition are mutually exclusive. Therefore men who adhere to the masculine stereotype that men are to be winners, will be unable to attain intimacy. Fasteau (1974) added that men are socialized to avoid being vulnerable and must share their fears or doubts as these emotions are a liability in the male world.

Theories of adult male development also provide possible explanations for the difficulties men have with intimacy. Levinson (1978) found that there are specific tasks which need to be completed at different stages of adult development. He proposed that early adulthood is marked by physical separation and emotional differentiation from the family of origin. The differentiation of self is believed to involve the confrontation and challenge of parental value systems in the context of a young adult status (Bowen, 1978). The young adult is to confront
numerous false assumptions derived from early childhood 
(Gould, 1978). For example, Gould explains that the young 
adult male must realize that his parents are not omnipotent 
and he must take responsibility for his behaviors. If he 
does not resolve this assumption he may remain 
undifferentiated. Robinson (1981) claims that men who do 
not adequately differentiate from their parents will 
transfer their false assumptions to their female partners. 
Perhaps, in the case of being responsible for one's 
emotions, males may expect that their partners will take 
responsibility for the emotional milieu in their 

Erikson (1950) also viewed adult development as a 
series of stages in which particular tasks must be 
completed. In adolescence the individual must attend to the 
dichotomy of "identity versus role confusion." This process 
entails the adoption of attitudes and behaviors consistent 
with appropriate role models. Tolson (1977) notes that boys 
learn that their fathers are often absent, emotionally 
removed and disinterested in family functioning. Boys also 
learn that aggressive and competitive behaviors are expected 
role behavior.

Erikson (1950) claims that the transition to adulthood 
involves the confrontation and resolution of the intimacy 
versus isolation crisis. In order to successfully negotiate 
this stage flexible role behaviors are necessary. Authors 
also suggest that the rigid qualities of masculinity learned
in adolescents are inappropriate for this task (Mussen, 1962; O'Neil, 1981; Phillips, 1978). O'Neil (1981) proposes that boys are socialized to devalue feminine qualities including attitudes and behaviors related to intimacy. Thus, boys tend to avoid traditional feminine qualities as they risk disapproval from parents and friends (O'Neil, 1981). Men who maintain a rigid position with regards to masculine values adopted in adolescents will experience difficulties achieving intimacy (Goldberg, 1979; Lewis, 1978; O'Neil, 1981; Pleck, 1975).

The examination of socialization and cultural structures appears to have led to the conclusion that the experience of being a successful male is to adopt rigid and restrictive masculine qualities. Men experience intrapersonal and interpersonal problems which are related to, if not caused by, inexpressiveness and non-disclosing behavior (Balswick & Peek, 1971; Jourard, 1971; O'Neil, 1982; Phillips, 1978). It therefore appears that men may be trapped in a paradoxical situation. At this point in North American society's development, men are expected to exhibit qualities needed for intimacy even though these qualities have been excluded from the cultural definition of masculinity. Dosser, Balswick and Halverson (1986) contend that "society teaches the male to be masculine and inexpressive and, at the same time, expects him in intimate relationships to be affectionate and to express his feelings" (p.243). These arguments attempting to explain
why men are not intimate assume that self-disclosure and empathy as defined by studies previously mentioned are valid and accurate. As was mentioned before this conclusion is not based on experiences of men but on a-priori assumptions about intimacy which has guided most non-naturalistic research.

SUMMARY

Few studies have directly explored the meaning of intimacy for men. Most studies use self-report measures of intimacy for men and women which are based on preconceived definitions of intimacy. A major conceptual concern is the lack of general agreement for the operational definition of intimacy. Further, numerous studies have used definitions which hold a bias towards the acceptable feminine styles of behavior. Self-report questionnaires and intimacy scales are often designed to measure communicative qualities such as expressiveness and self-disclosure.

Other writers suggest that men have different orientations to intimacy than women and that men seek intimacy through other means than verbal communication (Caldwell & Peplau 1982; Gilligan, 1982). Physical contact and sex have often been viewed as the main characteristic of male intimacy with women (Reis, Senchak and Solomon, 1985; Rubin, 1983).

Most studies comparing male and female behaviors as a means to measure intimacy find that women are more intimate.
Wright (1982) suggests that there are possible behavioral measures which could be employed to explore gender and intimacy, that would show higher degrees of similarities. Hegelson et al. (1987) in a recent study attempted to identify a set of features which presented a more comprehensive conceptualization of intimacy. These researchers found that sex differences related to intimacy were consistent with previous research but that conceptual differences were also present. The results indicated that appreciation and affection were more important factors than self-disclosure with respect to intimacy.

Finally the interpretations made concerning quantitative results which find gender differences are not conclusive or valid. Wright (1988) points out that there is often variability within groups which are often overlooked. Parelman (1983) cited in Snyder, 1991, concludes that when adjustments for factors such as age and sex-role orientation are made gender differences regarding intimacy are diminished. Thus, conclusions claiming generalizations about homogeneous groups of men and women may not be valid as within group variability tends to be fairly high.

McCarthy (1981) notes that qualitative approaches to personal relationship research are emerging. Olson (1977) suggests that both objective and subjective realities need to be attended to for a more complete understanding of intimate relationships. Questions such as Is intimacy a
process or state? and To what degree does individual capacities or relational properties relate to intimacy remain unanswered. Questionnaires and self-report inventories appear insufficient to provide such information.

An interpretive approach attempts to provide information in terms of the participants' experiences. Thoughts, judgements, perceptions, and feelings about intimate experiences may present a deeper, more intensive understanding of intimacy. The aim of this study is to uncover the deeper meaning and nuances of intimacy for men. The conception of intimacy is better understood when based on the individuals experiences rather than on preconceived notions. This study differs from quantitative endeavors in that it seeks to find variations of peoples conceptions of intimacy rather than attempting to find generalizable components. Exploration into individuals implicit theory of intimacy will hopefully provide a more credible understanding of this phenomenon.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

This study examined the conception of intimacy as understood by men who are currently in a relationship with a woman. A naturalistic perspective was adopted as the underlying tenets of this perspective appear to be consistent with the ways in which the concept might be understood.

One of the underlying tenets of the naturalistic paradigm is that there are multiple ways in which reality is constructed and, therefore, prediction and control of a phenomenon, based on a single reality, is unlikely. Bakan (1972), for example, called for research directed towards the understanding of psychological phenomena as involving a process of interaction between cognition, affect, and volition, as the basis of the way we construct reality. In this regard, intimacy was assumed to be a constructed and very human phenomenon rather than an entity which could be subjected to the laws of the physical world. It would follow, therefore, that there are multiple ways that the concept of intimacy may be constructed and it would be appropriate to follow a naturalistic paradigm of inquiry.

One of the concerns for the field of counselling psychology is the elucidation of how persons construct their inner world. Counselling psychology, like the naturalistic
research paradigm, starts from the belief that individuals experience the world from a subjective position, that is, an individual’s conceptions of the world cannot be separated from the context of their experience. It is therefore appropriate to address intimacy from a naturalistic perspective as it is concerned with understanding a phenomenon from the position of the individual(s) reality.

Another epistemological tenet of the naturalistic paradigm suggests that there is an interactive relationship between the investigator and the participant under investigation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state, "The inquirer and the 'object' of inquiry interact to influence one another; knower and known are inseparable" (p. 94). This relationship between the researcher and respondent is viewed by the naturalist to be both valid and favorable. The naturalist, further, argues that so-called objective research, conducted from a positivist paradigm, also involves the presence of influences on a phenomenon under investigation. These influences include reactivity, indeterminacy, and interaction (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Rather than viewing the interaction between the researcher and participant as being a source of contamination the naturalist believes that this relationship imbues research of human phenomenon with deeper meaning and, thus, a richer and more complete understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.
In summary, three underlying tenets of the naturalist paradigm are supportive of the method selected for this study: 1) there exist multiple interpretations of human phenomena; 2) it is appropriate to understand a phenomenon from the individual’s perspective; and 3) it is acknowledged that there is an interaction between the researcher and participant that effects both the collection and interpretation of the data.

PHENOMENOGRAPHY

Existing investigations of intimacy, as noted in the literature, tended to take a position that intimacy could be understood by measuring a limited number of isolated variables. Furthermore, these variables were derived from a priori assumptions which in turn were based on unfounded or unsubstantiated theory or conjecture. The particular qualitative methodology chosen for this study, phenomenography, starts from a different epistemological position and is concerned with discovering meaning as it arises from the data rather than imposing unfounded a priori assumptions (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Phenomenography is concerned with understanding how individuals conceptualize different aspects of their world. Marton (1981) described a phenomenographic perspective as understanding the way "we orient ourselves towards people’s ideas about the world (or about their experience of it)" (p. 178). Reality, as construed by a person, is subject to
one's experiences and how one thinks about or finds meaning with respect to those experiences. Thus, this study was an attempt to uncover men's understanding of intimacy. Given that intimacy is a human and individually constructed reality, in-depth interviews were used to access tacit and inferential knowledge (Guba, 1981), both of which are essential aspects of peoples constructed realities.

Phenomenography is also concerned with exploring variations of conceptions of a particular phenomenon. Marton (1981, 1986) suggested that the unearthing of variations is germane to investigating different ways phenomena are conceptualized. Further, phenomenographic research strives to bring some order to differing conceptions through a process of categorization. Grouping of conceptions are then presented systematically, thereby, providing a blueprint for understanding the "outcome space" or relationship amongst conceptions, of a phenomenon under investigation.

Phenomenography acknowledges that conceptions held by individuals may be bound by contextual variations (Johansson, Marton & Svensson, 1985; Saljo, 1988, cited in Wilson, 1991). Thus, it is also relevant to understand and describe the context(s) in which one might find a particular conception(s).

This study has attempted to explore the phenomenon of intimacy from a phenomenographic research approach. The research question to be addressed is: What are the ways in
which men conceptualize intimacy? Using qualitative techniques, information was collected and analyzed towards providing a more meaningful understanding of men's conceptions of intimacy. The following sections will describe how this research was conducted.

DATA COLLECTION

Sample

Eight men, who were currently involved exclusively in heterosexual relationships, comprised the sample for this study. They came from caucasian, middle class backgrounds and, as such, typified those who might seek out counselling services to address difficulties in intimate relationships. They varied according to age, level of education, employment history, and family composition. Two individuals had at least a masters degree in psychology, one was a musician, another a janitorial custodian, one physiotherapist student and three men were employed in diverse businesses.

The criteria for the sample of men included a minimum age of 30, minimum of five years being in a current relationship, and that they were co-habitating at the time of the interview. The length of the participant's relationships did in fact vary between a minimum of five years to a maximum of twenty five years. The age and minimum relationship status were considered as an attempt to avoid individuals in earlier developmental stages and/or the
possible effect of the "honeymoon" stage of new relationships.

 Recruiting Participants

 The participants were gathered through a network of colleagues and friends and were contacted by telephone either at home or at their work place. If a participant fulfilled the requirements of the intended sample the researcher asked him if he wished to participate in the study. Those who were willing to participate were asked to attend an interview at a future time.

 Interview Procedure

 The interview procedure is the considered to be the basic technique to gather information when conducting a phenomenographic study (Marton, 1986). Interviews were conducted a manner that acknowledges that the process transpires as a shared experience between the interviewer and respondent. Mishler (1986) points out that the interview method involves questions and answers which are "contextually grounded and jointly constructed by interviewer and respondent" (p. 34). Thus, the interview could be more aptly described as a conversation of mutual discovery.

 Interviews occurred at a mutually agreed upon place and time, were taped, and lasted 50-75 minutes. Each interview began with an explanation of the purpose of the study and
asking each participant to sign a consent form which emphasized confidentiality (see appendix A). The researcher asked if there were any questions regarding the study. It was then suggested that the participant take a moment to begin thinking about experiences he had in which he felt intimate with his partner. A general exploratory question was then asked: "Describe experiences in which you felt close to your partner." The same question was asked of all respondents and was stated in an open-ended fashion allowing for flexibility and mutual understanding.

The researcher provided probes and reference points, such as, different life situations which could facilitate the respondent in the direction of the focus of this study. The use of probes and reference points arose from the feedback provided by two pilot interviews. Further clarification and the appropriateness of the use of probes and reference points also occurred in a round table format with psychologists and university educators previous to the commencement of this study.

Both the pilot studies and the round table gathering were helpful as they increased my awareness for my potential bias of preconceived notions about men and intimacy. Some of my assumptions regarding intimacy and men were consistent with the dominant societal discourse. For example, the very act of conversing with men about their ideas and experiences of intimacy appeared contrary to the popular assumption that men could not or would not engage in a discussion of this
nature. Thus, I needed to be aware of how I might assume to know what and how the men might or might not talk about in relation to the subject of intimacy.

Participants were, at times, asked to clarify words and phrases, or elaborate with examples, which provided greater mutual understanding. Flexibility within the interaction was important in trying to facilitate the expression of underlying meanings held by the respondent.

Feedback from pilot interviews suggested the additional use of the term "closeness" to represent the word "intimacy". Intimacy tended to be associated with the popular notion of sexual activity. It is important to note that participants were informed that the words would be used interchangeably.

DATA ANALYSIS

The information gleaned in this study was subjected to what is known as inductive data analysis. This approach is described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as "a process for "making sense" of the field data" (p. 202). Two general procedures were undertaken towards understanding the data, "unitizing" and "categorizing".

First, the information was "unitized" which is a process in which "raw data are systematically transformed and aggregated into units which permit precise description of relevant content characteristics" (Holsti, 1969, p. 94, cited in Lincoln and Guba, 1985). After the taped
interviews were transcribed in full, words, phrases or sentences, which related to the research question, were highlighted as potentially relevant "units of meaning." Specific quotes, which related to the theme of this study, were also identified and tagged. All units of meaning, which were extracted from the interviews, related in some way to the participant's understanding of the phenomenon of intimacy. Further, units of meaning were found in both direct statements about their understanding of intimacy, as well as imbedded within the descriptions of their experiences of intimacy.

Second, the units of meaning were sorted and grouped on the basis of having shared a similar underlying feature or meaning. A word or phrase was assigned to each grouping which represented a specific theme or essence held by each of the units in that group. This process involved returning to the transcripts on numerous occasions to ensure units of meaning were neither omitted or misunderstood within the context of statements or experiences. Furthermore, both my advisor and a member of my thesis committee scrutinized the categorization results to determine if the units of meaning shared similar enduring features. They also checked the suitability of the word or phrase which was assigned to describe each grouping. The transcriptions were presented to three independent reviewers who had backgrounds as professionals in the field of counselling psychology. They were asked to tag relevant units of meaning as well as to
provide a word or phrase which represented some aspect of intimacy addressed by that unit. This process provided both confirmation of units of meaning and a check on the criteria of the specific groupings.

The result of this process revealed two sets of categories: Dimensions and manifestations. The first category, dimensions, appeared to represent specific constituent themes of one conception, closeness.

A phenomenographic approach is typically concerned with discovering differing conceptions. In this study, however, the data emerged as having one overriding conception which incorporated six qualitatively different dimensions. The second category, manifestations, represented the arenas of life or ways in which intimacy was experienced. Three manifestations were found to provide the context where one could find the presence of the dimensions. The notion that dimensions would be found to vary in relation to differing experiences is relevant within the context of a phenomenographic approach to research (Johansson, Marton & Svensson, 1985; Saljo, 1988, cited in Wilson, 1991). The following chapter presents the findings of this project.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings gathered from the in-depth interviews of the eight participants regarding their conceptions of intimacy. Two hundred and fifty eight examples and statements were derived from the interviews with one overriding concern emerging, closeness. The concept of intimacy can be seen as conveying varying degrees of closeness, which range from connectedness to fusion or union. Six qualitatively different dimensions of closeness were determined from the interviews: attunement, collaboration, distinctiveness, trust, empathy, and rootedness. The dimensions represent different facets of closeness. Of secondary interest, three manifestations of closeness were identified: shared experience, acceptance/support, and specialness. The manifestations illustrate the ways in which closeness was experienced in the every day lives of the participants. They illustrate the experience of closeness as holistic, as a gestalt. The manifestations are meaningful in that they present a context for the dimensions and establish intimacy as a process as well as a state. The manifestations of closeness may involve one or more differing dimensions which reflect the interrelatedness between the state of intimacy and the process of intimacy.
The issue of process and state will be discussed further in the subsequent chapter.

DIMENSIONS OF CLOSENESS

Presented below are the six dimensions of closeness. These dimensions are the aspects of closeness which were explicated by the men’s direct statements and examples regarding their understanding of closeness.

Attunement

This dimension of closeness was expressed by the men in this study as "being in sync" with one's partner. Being in sync was illustrated by both statements and examples in which there was acknowledgment of the partners having shared thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and actions. Attunement suggests that the couple define issues and concerns in the same way. Hence, being in sync connotes a sense of relatedness or of being in harmony which transcends mere similarities.

The dimension of attunement was described by one man in the following way: "it [closeness] means that we’re in sync in a lot of ways, both of us are feeling pretty lazy around the house ....we’re feeling good that we were basically going in the same direction...you know, when we’re both thinking about the same other person or that we were planning a holiday and both thinking about it at the same moment and that sort of thing." This example exhibits this
couples basic compatibility. Another man experience of attunement was presented in the following statement: "we were discussing some of the people in the family and I feel particularly close to her at that point because we do have similar feelings about these people and experiences of we’re able to just agree on some things about the family."

Attunement is a sense of shared thought, being contained in the same psychological place as is described in the following example. "It’s nice to have a person that I can talk to about some of these things as opposed to a person who may have just saw the forest but didn’t see the trees...it’s sort of a gladness of spirit at that point in time." The sharing of the same thought process for this man appears to have provided a deeper, spiritual connectedness.

The sense of a harmonious relationship that is reciprocally experienced by the couple appears to be essential, regardless of the context. The rhythm of shared movement as described by one man’s experience is an apt metaphor conveying this sense of attunement. He stated, "it’s like we’re sharing a common movement and the music and the enjoyment of what we’re doing is... the feeling of connectedness."

The participants spoke of the importance of being in sync, going in the same direction, and sharing thoughts and feelings with their partners. Hence the experience of closeness appeared to emerge from being attuned to one’s
partner, like an effortless and natural harmony that emphasizes togetherness rather than separation.

**Collaboration**

Viewed by some men as a key component of feeling close in their relationships, commonalty or closeness was experienced in an active way, a shared striving. This dimension of closeness was exemplified by the partners’ directed or coordinated action toward achieving a meaningful goal.

This experience was depicted by one man’s intense feelings about his involvement as a collaborator in the creation of his child.

Accomplishing things together has given us a sense of being close and that is... one of the hallmarks of our marriage and one of things that I pride myself in.... The strength of our relationship is that we worked well together no matter what task it was... For example, the birth. ....I realized, "Wow, (partners name), you and I we just did another project." I mean we just accomplished something together it was just like a bombshell going off in my life... just the fact that we did it and accomplished it and I felt close about that.

Collaboration was also illustrated by men’s descriptions of specific actions taken to achieve a goal. One man described for example, the coordinated action that was required in buying a house.
The fact that we got the resources together, you know, we go through and choose it and we negotiate what we want and you know the anxiety and the waiting, making the offer, the counter offer and finally getting something you want... just being there as two adults....we go in to a bank manager and talk to him straight and not have different stories... having agreed what our goal is.

Finally, the following example presents the intensity of closeness elicited by their collaboration on a specific project.

We'd work for a couple of nights real hard and we'd really intensely go over (it)...sometimes it was just work or something and we'd have to argue about it and discuss it but it was very, very good stuff because we really work well together....I really feel a serious oneness in that kind of working together...central to our relationship that we can sit down and work together or plan together or think together or act together.

Implicit in the men's discussion about collaboration were the involvement of skills such as power sharing, problem solving, tolerance of frustration and anxiety, subjugating individual needs for a relationship goal, and adherence to certain rules or limits. Ultimately, feelings of satisfaction and accomplishment arose from both the completion of a goal and the acknowledgement that the pair worked well together.
Distinctiveness

In this dimension there is appreciation for distinction or autonomy within the relationship. There is acknowledgement, respect, and admiration for individual differences. Some of the men expressed their experiences of closeness through descriptions of being autonomous, of feeling free to be themselves. One man stated, for example, "the last eight years we've been together and living together, the parts of the relationship that really...kept it together is that we do have our own space."

For some of the men distinctiveness was emphasized in the way they viewed their partner's attributes or skills differing from their own. The accent seemed to have been on their perception of being in complementary partnership or they may have more directly affirmed their partner's specific traits or behaviors. One man described a situation in which he felt close to his partner as she performed a specific religious ritual.

I was certainly feeling proud that she was taking over and doing it and without discussing it with me and trying to get my approval. She doesn't need my approval anymore and that was great...I was feeling close to my wife at that time. I get a lot of pleasure when my wife does things like that. That she can do them on her own.

He went on to express his admiration of his partner's success in the work place.
There's a lot of responsibilities there and she's handling it very well, and she gets a lot of respect...on her own. I feel a lot of pleasure from it. I guess in a way it's closeness because for many years I thought she relied upon me to be her success.

In this dimension, distinctiveness also emerged in the analysis of conflict or acrimony. The men stated that they respected and appreciated their partners differing points of view. What appeared to be important in order for closeness to occur in disagreements, was that each partner understood and felt understood during and after a conflict.

Distinctiveness as described by the men in this study appears to contribute to the feeling closeness and well being of the relationship. Individual differences are seen as enhancing the relationship. The differing personality styles and skills are experienced as gratifying and valuable.

Trust

Trust was often illustrated by reciprocal feelings of reliance between the partners. Aspects such as openness, honesty, sharing, and support were seen to be part of this dimension. Often, trust emerged as a prominent dimension in situations of vulnerability.

So my vulnerability there, is that I moved emotionally. My emotions are there, they're open for her to see....I
feel trusting and we've had this closeness that I can let that be there without trying to stop....still not feeling entirely comfortable but feeling it's okay. It’s alright to be crying or to be moved emotionally... and in that feeling closer.

The passage suggests that this man trusts that his partner will accept the more intense emotions connected to his core inner self. Despite his feelings of being exposed he nevertheless felt safe enough with his partner to continue to express affect. Implicit in this notion of trust is the belief of this man that his partner has his best interest at heart and would not do or say anything to undermine him.

Trust was important in areas where various conflicts arose, especially in sensitive areas such as sexual functioning and finances. The following example illustrates one man's experience of trust when dealing with conflict.

If we're having some problem...say in an area like sex where we're not feeling... one of us may be feeling that... the other is not available...we'll talk about that...if [we're] not feeling very close to each other. Then the fact that we'll go out or just sit down at home and talk about it ...generally results in feeling very good about us again.

Suggested in this example is this man's confidence that conflicts with his partner can be resolved through trust they have for each other.
The men often spoke about feeling confident about trusting that their partners could be expected to stay in the relationship during periods of crisis. One man describes his experience in the following way.

At times we get very intense talking about the situation [conflict regarding fidelity] and she doesn’t pack her bags and leave...the fact that she doesn’t makes me feel closer.

Another man spoke about feeling close to his partner when he could rely on her loyalty.

I knew if push came to shove she would go with me, then, I felt very close and secure with her and also that [it] kind of gave her the power to negotiate our way out of it.

For this man the presence of trust not only accorded the feeling of safety but also provided the security required for him to be more agentic within the relationship.

Trusting that the one’s partner could be expected to provide unconditional support was also seen as an important part of feeling close. One man stated, "here’s a person that you can count upon to give you support. Like it wasn’t a grudging support." Another man spoke about a time when he and his partner were experiencing a prolonged period of stress, which resulted in their becoming closer, "While we were going through this period of integration I really felt that... I had only her to rely on and I’m sure my wife felt the same way."
Trust was also exemplified in the sense of reliance in the mundane day to day living experience. This ability to count on their partner and to experience comfort from predictable aspects of their intimate relationships appeared to deepen the men’s feelings of trust. To illustrate, one man stated the following.

In a day to day realm...things like managing the house and pure behavioral kind of stuff... knowing what is expected of each other...(to) kind of know the rules can mark the certain kind of closeness. Here it appears evident that there is an implicit trust that the partners share that things will get done during the day, and that specific agreed upon roles will be upheld. The man further commented.

There’s a kind of comfort, familiarity, trust if you like, in terms of how all that’s going to work out...all the ground rules are kind of laid out, and how we’re going to respond emotionally - she knows my patterns. I know her patterns and even if those patterns might conflict and hassle, we’re aware of that and can accommodate those bits of conflict.

Not only does this man trust that the partnership roles are understood but also that he trusts that they can resolve any difficulties that arise.

The men spoke of experiencing closeness when they acknowledged trusting their partners’ judgment. One man
described his experience of trust in relation to being on a nature hike -

it’s a bit of an edge kind of situation... if anything happened...from meeting a bear to falling off a cliff to spraining an ankle. Whatever it is, we have to rely on each other completely. And we’ve done all those things and I guess we trust each other and each others judgment."

Another example of trusting a partner’s judgment was evident in the area of receiving advice.

I was talking about my stuckness about my business thing right now. I was at the same time wanting to be willing to expose that weakness in myself to my partner because I trust her to give me some ...to reflect some certain things that I need to hear from her...some hard feedback and trust that you’re going to do that out of some sense of loving and caring for me.

This man may feel close because he trusts the support he will receive from his partner in spite of or perhaps due to his willingness to be vulnerable.

The experience of these men suggests that trust is a viable component of intimacy and appears to be manifested in the men’s experiences of acceptance and support. Other manifestations of trust such as honesty, openness, spontaneity, and risk taking were also evident. Trust appeared to be required for many experiences of closeness to occur. While the self-disclosure of fears, doubts, and
vulnerabilities were often involved in their experiences the emphasizes with regards to closeness is the state of trust experienced by the men.

**Empathy**

This dimension of closeness can be described as an element of the couples' affective interactions. In essence, it is the event where in a partner feels what the other is feeling. Empathy appears to involve a reciprocity in which a partner wants to understand while the other wants to be understood. In other words, a partner must reveal on some level what is happening to him or her self internally in order for the other partner to empathize. The men in this study illustrated empathy as the availability to share their emotions in order to feel closeness; feeling like one's situation was understood by the presence of support, and consideration for either partner.

Among these men empathy was often indicated as part of the process of supporting ones' partner. One man stated -

> When I’ve ...been done badly by some event the end of the day, when I get to go home and tell her and she says, " yeah, that was bad. You have the right to feel like that." I very much appreciate that feeling and I feel close to her when that happens. And also conversely, you know when she comes home...I listen to her.
This man appears available to share his experiences with the implicit understanding that he will be understood and supported.

Empathy was also apparent in the descriptions of the partner's awareness of the needs of the other. One man stated for example, that he felt close to his partner when acknowledging his partner's need for assurance. His desire to understand her feelings was evident in his comment - I felt she needed assurance that I was there with her. That she wasn't going to handle...deal with all this by herself and that we were going to be sharing this responsibility.

Awareness of the partner's needs was also evident in the ways in which consideration was expressed. One man stated,

When you're giving those things or sort of being instrumental in your partner's needs you feel a sense of closeness. But the big thing is recognizing the need without having to be requested to do something. Implicit in his statement is the recognition of her need, empathizing with the partners state, and responding from a place of knowing. Accurate understanding of the partners emotional state, often manifested through sensitivity to their partners needs, appears to be important dimension of closeness.

Empathy involves a partners ability to enter into the other partners feeling state without obscuring their own individuality and separateness. The feeling of closeness is
derived from the immersion into the others world. Most of
the men did not directly acknowledge that they were being
empathic. However, in order to attend to their partners
they exhibited motivation and ability to identify with and
take the perspective of their partners.

Rootedness

This dimension of closeness emphasizes a sense of
living as a couple who are firmly grounded in the history of
a relationship. Qualities such as commitment, togetherness,
constancy and predictability appeared to be integral to the
experience of closeness. Perhaps the strongest evidence of
rootedness could be found in the partners’ aspirations
regarding their futures.

The men stressed their awareness that they possessed a
history with their partners which was valued and special,
and that this relationship had a future. The past is linked
to the future, giving men a sense of being in an on-going
story of great value. Out of the past grows the future.

Just doing these things together, I mean, at any one
time. it’s just...one more straw on the pile that if
you take a look back at, I guess, the storehouse of
experiences that you’ve built up together, it’s getting
to be quite a size barn of hay right now... It’s the
time you spend together over the long haul... I have
still sort of slow building tsunami...the same thing in
a relationship. As time has gone on it becomes a real
moving force to say.."hey, we’ve got something here and I cherish it.

From this history, the future of this couple is developed and was anticipated.

We’re doing some future planning right now...naturally I feel closer about it because in that in and of itself is another one of these levels of togetherness that implies a higher belief or affinity to the relationship.

This man’s description seems to suggest that he experiences a deep sense of connection when thinking about his future with his partner, thereby reenforcing feelings of being rooted in the relationship.

A sense of constancy and predictability appeared also to result from knowing one’s the partner over a period of time; as described in this statement.

I think there’s a certain comfort between each of us knowing full well that we’ve come to a point in life where I don’t thing there’s going to be a radical change in my partner and that’s what she sees in me too.

Knowing that your partner is walking down the same path seemed provide the sense of stability. "We’re both heading in the same direction and that you know is very good and again that makes me feel close to my wife." Another man stated, "We have common goals that definitely makes us feel connected."
One man found that commitment in his relationship provided for feelings of closeness. "When things aren’t going so well, I think the closeness, the intimacy or whatever it is, is partly fuelled just by the commitment that we have for each other."

Another man describes being a central member in his family as a source of closeness. "The closeness was being part of a family...an important part of myself, part of my own being as a person and individual...is to be part of a family...what is really great for me is that there is three generations of us...I think a sense of continuity...this is wonderful...I guess we realize we’re doing it together and we have this closeness and there can be nothing else."

His sense of rootedness came from seeing his relationship as a constant, which has the foundation of being connected to a larger community.

Finally, one man presented a statement of his caring and commitment to his partner, which is a result of his feeling of rootedness. "It’s just that you really care about that person and you feel really close to them and you don’t know how the hell you would ever live without them."

Having a sense of history together, commitment, predictability, being a part of a socially endorsed position, and constancy are the ways the men felt rooted in their relationship. This dimension of intimacy, being
rooted in their special and unique relationship is intensely felt by these men.

In summary the six dimensions of closeness depicted exemplify the qualitatively different ways the men participating in this research conceived intimacy. These dimensions; attunement, collaboration, separateness, trust, empathy, and rootedness, are the shades of closeness expressed in varying examples. Attunement appeared to describe the men's feeling of "being in sync" with their partner, a compatibility which presents a basic fit between two people. Collaboration involved the ways the partners worked together and coordinated as a team. Distinctiveness suggested that closeness was experienced through the ways in which the couple maintained their autonomy. Trust within the relationship was underscored in many of the many experiences of closeness. Empathy, appearing as meeting needs, emphasized the ability to merge with the partners emotional or psychological state. Finally, rootedness presents the historical context of the relationship and appears to contribute to the cohesiveness of the relationship. These dimensions have emerged as distinct elements found in the ways in which the men experienced intimacy.

MANIFESTATIONS OF CLOSENESS
The ways in which closeness is experienced can be categorized into three general manifestations. These manifestations are determined through the process of condensing the men's examples of their experiences in which they described as being intimate. The three categories include shared experiences, acceptance and support, and specialness. These manifestations are the ways in which intimacy is experienced and the context of the various dimension.

Shared Experience

Shared experiences encompass activities in which there is participation between two intimates. Experienced in terms of the present rather than as a reflection on past events, doing things together tended to bring the two intimates to a feeling of closeness. For example, the couples might share nature in a walk, enjoy an intellectual debate about a movie, fight or make love. In each case, the couples actively did something together and focused on the immediate moment.

Shared acts with partners are relational exchanges which present the forum to express collective concerns. Behavioral acts of caring and concern were manifested through active involvement. Values, attitudes, affects, thoughts, and beliefs were imparted both verbally and nonverbally in these exchanges. As a result of shared acts, a partner experienced increased understanding of self or the
partner, a sense of accomplishment, and a sense of "we-

ness".

A range of intensities, from feelings of comfort and understand-ing to potent feelings of union are experienced through collaboration. There are degrees of coordinated action which may imply different intensities of involvement. A shared act may be as simple as a walk along the beach, making a meal together, being playful or reflecting on the day’s events.

Closeness is felt through physical presence, being together which occurs often by the sharing of the mundane, as when one man described his experience of going for a walk with his partner. "It was just nice, warm, a shared moment in time of strolling along, talking about whatever happens to come to mind. Enjoying the sights, not only of nature but the people." This example illustrates the simple act of sharing and enjoying each other’s presence in the moment. He feels close to his partner through engaging in an activity with her.

At times closeness was demonstrated through sharing that involved more deliberate planning such as in the enactment of religious rituals, planning an excursion, or buying a house. The dimension of collaboration figures prominently as the partners require the ability to work together towards an objective, to share control, to negotiate, to be fair, and to share investment in a goal or project. The couple performed as a team so as to attend to
obstacles, and closeness was experienced through their coordination of activity in overcoming those obstacles.

For other men closeness was found through activities in which the context of privacy was emphasized. Events such as taking time out of the day to share concerns, being on a secluded island or a Sunday drive were experiences presented by the men in which closeness was intensely felt. The element of privacy in which the men's attention was focused without distractions appears to provide an environment for the experiences of closeness.

Among the men, the degree of closeness increased as shared experiences involved deeper levels of confiding, more intense emotions, and feelings of vulnerability notably in the wake of a crises. At times when deeper, more penetrating exposure of inner selves was shared, closeness became more potent. The feeling which might be described as "oneness" seemed to encircle the intimates through various situations in which specific values and beliefs were acutely shared and in intimate experiences such as making love. Again, these activities excluded others underscoring the context of privacy. This point was exemplified by one man in the following example.

I guess the times of greatest intimacy...occur when I get rid of all these outside influences...when we get together, like I have a little summer cabin...and when we get over there and for an extended period of time and away from all the rest of the crap we
somehow...it’s just that somehow it seems more whole...there’s no distractions...it’s a feeling of being strongly connected with another of being alive rather than just being...existing. And really being rather than running around doing and it gives me a sense of wholeness.

This man feels close when he can stop his day to day routine and take the time to be with his partner. The concept of being together as noted by this man also leads him to feel alive and whole.

In summary shared experience or activities provide the vehicle of expression for the immediate feeling of closeness. The couple act in coordination and mutually share experiences in which a shared meaning is expressed. Further, closeness is felt in the moment of the joint action. The intimate pair successfully collaborate to attend to daily as well as extraordinary events in a way which contributes to an atmosphere of mutual respect and admiration. The partners lives mingle together through sharing of numerous experiences. Shared experiences is one of the manifestations of intimacy in which many of the dimensions noted in the previous section are apparent. Dimension such as attunement, collaboration and empathy are expressed within the shared experience.

Acceptance and Support
The essential element of this manifestation is the lack of criticism and positive regard either experienced or provided by the men. The experience of closeness derived from the experience of acceptance which ranges from a feeling of psychological safety wherein the self is not threatened to a feeling of affirmation of self. Feeling supported appeared to be an implicit expression of acceptance. This manifestation was understood with respect to the emphasis of the experience of acceptance and support found in the men's statements. While the context of a shared experience was present the accent was on the experiences of acceptance and support.

The experience of a non-critical and positive attitude seemed to involve a range or continuum of intensity. At one end of the continuum is an implicit or felt sense of acceptance with respect to specific behaviors, feelings and thoughts. At the other end of the continuum is a feeling of being actively appreciated by or appreciating the other.

Descriptions of incidents in which a partners thoughts, feelings or actions were both acknowledged and valued often emphasized the experience of acceptance. These events often suggested a sense of being understood and revered. Open communication in which ideas and feelings were freely expressed without fear of embarrassment or retribution, was emphasized as an important and ongoing indicator of feeling accepted.
It was noted that acceptance of differing views and beliefs were respected and valued by the men as positive additions to the richness of the relationships. One man provides an example which illustrates his value and respect for his partner’s career which differs greatly from his own.

At one stage I thought I would love to do workshops with her but I don’t have any training in that area so I can’t do it. But somehow to me that would give me an opportunity to experience her world a little more than I do know... that would increase the feeling of intimacy. The same when she’s interested in what I’m doing and I’m telling her about my work, my field....It makes me feel good to tell her (about my work)...but I also like it when she tells me some of her skills or some of her observations.

This man shows that he values his partner’s differing interests by wanting to become more involved. He also expresses his positive feelings when he is reciprocally involved in exploring each of their skills. The essence of his experience is his feeling of both acceptance and support for and by his partner.

More intense feeling of closeness were experienced by the men in this study in situations wherein vulnerability and/or sensitive feelings were concerned. Situations of vulnerability included events such as those triggered by sentimental movies or having made errors which lead to their feeling exposed and being personally out of control. One
man spoke about feeling free to express deep sadness when watching a poignant movie. He stated, "the end of the movie both of us were quite moved and I was tearing... I felt particularly close and felt like I was exposed to her. " It appears that sharing inner feelings, opening up, presented this man with his experience of being close with his partner. Implicit in this experience is a felt sense of acceptance.

Some men found closeness when they were not criticized for making mistakes. One example of this is found in a situation in which a man's extramarital affair was forgiven by his partner. "The fact that she basically accepted it, she accepted me after that. I felt very close to her... she wanted to know what happened, she was very concerned.. I was amazed she wanted to go through that because she wanted to understand." The focus for this man's closeness was on receiving acceptance from his partner in a situation where he was vulnerable to being rejected.

A potent level of acceptance was depicted in situations where a sense of pride or appreciation was elicited. These men felt intense closeness when they were able to affirm their partner's skills or specific extraordinary actions. For example, one man described feeling very close to his wife as she saw her providing support to him and his family when his father had died.

My father's death last year...that was pretty intense.

It was amazing. She was support for myself and a lot
of people and I felt extremely proud of her. Very close that she was able to comfort, be a rock of strength really. This feeling of being one with one (is how) I felt after the death...that was a particularly loving or a close kind of situation.

In this example this man felt a deep closeness to his partner through his admiration of his partner’s ability to deal with their family crisis. Another example of men’s affirmation experiences were found in their noteworthy description of their partner’s child-rearing practices.

There appears with some men a sense of reciprocity of acceptance and support in that closeness was experienced through a two-way exchange rather than one of a unidirectional nature. And yet, some men did focus more on events when they were receiving rather than providing support.

One man’s experience with receiving support from his partner was found in his description of the death of his child.

I felt really close to her, I sensed that she was more than being there bodily, she was there spiritually ... sort of propping me up spiritually as well as bodily. I was devastated... If she hadn’t been there and there wouldn’t have been (any reason to live)...it’s just like shared spirits...there’s a melding somehow on a different level.
This man’s description illustrates a potent expression of feeling supported which involves a deeper level of connectedness in relation to the theme of spirituality.

In summary, it appears that acceptance and support played a major role in the way these men experienced intimacy regardless of whether it was explicitly or implicitly expressed. The key experiences exemplifying acceptance and support as a manifestation of closeness included; open communication, lack of criticism, positive regard, validation, safety in expressing vulnerability, and the affirmation of their partner.

**Specialness**

Specialness evolves out of an entire history, a timeline dotted with special events which were a composite and inseparable from the special connection shared by the two intimates. Upon reflection of past events feelings of specialness were evoked. A sense of familiarity, consistency, and comfort developed from repeated rituals which demarcated both mundane and significant events.

Specialness was experienced in light of a shared history as seen in one man’s reflection during his twenty-fifth wedding anniversary celebration.

After twenty-five years... it was a matter of history... We had gone through so much and done so many things. We’ve had a lot of arguments and there were a lot of dissatisfactions but despite all that we were
still together and there were still things that we saw in each other that we wouldn’t want to give up or we couldn’t give up on.

This example suggests that the relationship carries a history of experiences. The specialness of having a history together shadows the significance of past negative experiences. Overall, there appears a recognition or knowledge of a lasting commitment in their relationship.

Intense feelings of aliveness and wholeness were elicited from events which involved peak life events. During stressful situations, an increased awareness could be seen to occur between two intimates. Some of the men for example, emphasized a special feeling of connectedness with their partner during occasions of child birth as illustrated by the following.

I guess in terms of behavioral things it was... just the look between us, the quick look between our eyes; me maybe having tears in my eyes and her, sort of her just closing and opening her eyes from being totally tired. And just sort of looking at each other. Just the sort of silent little demonstrations... from my end I felt connected and that we both knew what we meant. You know, when I know what I mean and when I don’t have to say it when I look, that’s when I know that I’m close.

This description evokes the sense that this man was feeling a high level of closeness which relates to his knowing that
his partner and he were in sync around something greater that the relationship; something that words could not do service. This event can be seen as an illustration of specialness in two ways. First, it is a significant event which involves the unique feeling of "we-ness." Secondly, this event will be an important part of their shared history.

The sense of "we-ness" is also found in situations where the intimates shared intense feelings in the face of adversity, re-iterating the importance of specialness. Here a man described how he felt part of a unified front while facing a conflict.

I knew if push came to shove she would go with me, then I felt very close and secure with her and also that kind of gave her the power to negotiate our way out of it...the fact that we were united on this front...we saw it in the same way, that’s what makes the closeness.

Here the couple faced a situation in which they shared the same feeling (being in sync) which in turn led them to feeling connected. This "we-ness" is the emotional foundation which contributes to a sense of specialness.

In summary, the sense of specialness elicited the feeling of closeness for these men. The experiences from which specialness emerges is the history of the relationship. Over the history of the relationship the intimates create a special meaning which is based on shared
goals, values, feelings, actions, and aspirations. The relationship history includes numerous events some which are noteworthy because they involve the intense feeling of "we-ness". From the couples history a joint life story follows and future chapters, rooted in the pairs mutuality, is anticipated.

The manifestations; shared experience, acceptance and support, and specialness, are the ways in which the men in this study experienced closeness. The dimensions of closeness are throughout these manifestations.

**CONNECTIONS BETWEEN MANIFESTATIONS**

The experiences conveyed by the men in this study often revealed a connection between differing manifestations of closeness. The significance of a manifestation was often related or depended on the presence of another. For example, at various points during a shared activity the experience of acceptance and support was also evident. Furthermore, certain special events or circumstances were more prone to evoke more intense feelings of being accepted and supported. Though feelings of acceptance may have occurred during the reflection upon specific events, more intense feelings seemed to take place during the moment of the actual event the men described experiencing. Closeness is manifested through the feeling of acceptance which occurs in the moment of the shared event. Another example of the
interrelatedness of the manifestations appears with regards to specialness and acceptance. What provides the experience of specialness may involve an intense feeling of acceptance and support. It appears, that though each of the manifestations can stand on their own, their interconnectedness is also important and necessary.

**RELATEDNESS BETWEEN MANIFESTATIONS AND DIMENSIONS**

As was noted earlier manifestations are the ways in which intimacy was experienced and dimensions are distinct qualities woven throughout the manifestations. One or more dimensions may be found within a manifestation. For example, the experience of child birth as this man describes involves specific dimensions,

The (intimate) experiences I recall best are those involved some kind of crisis... We were frequently dealing with problems with the children as they were born and the problems that we had to overcome. Especially with the second daughter who had developed epilepsy. These were the times where we were the closest. Where my wife was in need of a lot of support...It was very difficult for her I felt I had to do was just be there for her and to encourage...I don’t think I did anything encouraging but I was just present... the second pregnancy was also very difficult... again I felt very close...I felt she needed the assurance that I was there... that she
wasn't going to have to handle this by herself and we were going to share this responsibility.

Closeness was experienced at the time of a shared experience as well as in an atmosphere of acceptance and support. Within this experience is the presence of collaboration, empathy, trust, and the indication of rootedness. This example illustrates the connection between manifestation and dimensions of intimacy.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to attain an in-depth and meaningful understanding of the concept of intimacy through an exploration of men's perception and experiences. A phenomenographic approach was selected as the methodology for this study. This approach was considered appropriate given the aims of this investigation. The first aim of this study was to provide a deeper understanding of intimacy as a concept and to flush out possible qualitatively differing distinctions and interpretations. The second aim was to compare the various distinctions and understandings with current theoretical perspectives. A third aim was to provide counsellors with an increased understanding of the possible ways in which their male clients might experience intimacy.

Eight semi-structured interviews provided both personal conceptions and specific experiences of intimacy. Each interview was reviewed and various accounts and distinctions were extracted. These distinctions were categorized on the basis of sharing similar characteristics and meaning. Independent reviewers validated specific accounts and conceptual distinctions. Two types of categorizations were used to appropriately describe the results of this study. First, six distinct qualities or dimensions were found to
emerge from the statements and examples provided by these men; attunement, collaboration, trust, empathy, distinctiveness, and rootedness. These dimensions were woven throughout the experiences presented. A second level of categorization was warranted in order to describe the ways in which intimacy was experienced. Shared experiences, acceptance and support, and specialness were delineated as manifestations of intimacy.

LIMITATIONS

There are certain limitations that might be addressed concerning this study. Perhaps the most noteworthy limitation is that the results of this study may not be extended to the general male population given the small number of respondents. The concern of sample size is relevant in the context of a traditional statistical research perspective. For example, the results of the study cannot be generalized to a specific population in which a particular characteristic is the focus (i.e. age, cultural background, or any psychological/psychiatric concern).

Another limitation regarding the size of the sample is the potential number of qualitatively different distinctions that may have been generated. A larger group of men with varying backgrounds and circumstances could have potentially provided a greater amount of differing conceptions or modes of experiences. Therefore, the addition of more respondents
would have increased the levels of credibility and confidence in this study.

The results of this study may also have been limited by the degree or level to which the participants were capable of articulating their thoughts and experiences. While the interviews were conducted in a manner which attempted to facilitate clear articulations among the participants, their responses may have been limited by their willingness and capacities. Two of the participants appeared to be more articulate than others given their counselling background and training, which encourages self-disclosure and self-analysis. They appeared to able, to some extent, provide more direct statements about how they understood intimacy. Some interviews did indicate that other participants experienced difficulty providing clear verbalization of their thoughts about intimacy as opposed to their experiences. However, it is important to note that units of meaning emerged both from respondents statements and experiences.

Overall, participants were motivated to disclose their thoughts and experiences regarding intimacy, however, there may have been other conceptions and experiences which were not reported as these were not in their immediate consciousness. Perhaps lengthier and/or subsequent interviews would have provided additional and more concise conceptions and experiences of intimacy.
One final methodological consideration should be noted. Confidence, in this study, would have been increased had the participants been given the opportunity to ongoingly review the data and results. A "member checks" is an important operation to be used to increase the credibility of a study using a naturalist paradigm (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY

This study has attempted to explore the concept of intimacy as interpreted and experienced by men. This section will discuss the results of this study in light of existing theories and conceptions of intimacy. Particular attention will be paid to a recent study by Snyder (1991) as her approach to understanding intimacy was similar to the approach used in this study. Some general concerns regarding current theories and earlier research are worth noting at this time. Firstly, theorists have tended to approach intimacy from preconceived definitions and conceptions which have not been substantiated. Few studies have directly examined the nature of intimacy. Secondly, most studies have been conducted using operational definitions of intimacy which were based on a-priori assumptions regarding the components of intimacy. These operational definitions appear to have been developed from a positivist perspective which supports the notion that there independent variables which represent a single reality of a phenomenon. Thirdly, conclusions about gender differences
and intimacy have been based on unfounded theories and spurious research. Most psychodynamic theorists have suggested that intimacy is strongly associated with sexuality. Erikson (1963) proposed that intimacy and sexuality are inextricably linked. The findings of this study did not clearly support this assumption. Some men in this study did state that they felt intimate while involved in sexual behaviors, however, they did not describe their experiences in a manner which would support psychoanalytic theory. Some of the men in this study made reference to sexuality as a shared experience which involved the expression or development of trust within their relationships. Sexual experiences were also referred to within a context of being a more intense non-verbal expression of warmth and connectedness.

Consistent with the statements regarding sexuality in this study, respondents in Snyder’s study also found that sexual behaviors bestowed feelings of closeness.

Object Relations theorists Balint (1965) and Kernberg (1977) proposed that sexual orgasm provides the highest level of intimacy. The men in this study did not describe orgasm in intercourse as a conception or experience of intimacy. Givelber (1990), however, proposed an Object Relations theory of intimacy which included a broader view which does not focus on sexuality. This study did support some of his interpretations concerning the conception of intimacy and will be discussed later in this section.
Sexuality has been emphasized as a necessary or sole expression of intimacy by psychodynamic theorists. The findings of this study did not generally support this point of view. It is interesting to note that there exists a popular assumption that male intimacy is restricted to sexual activity. This notion of males' experience of intimacy was not supported in this study.

Intimacy has been viewed as an orientation which is maintained by the expression of particular behaviors. Men have often been viewed as not oriented towards intimacy as they do not exhibit specific behaviors. Quantitative research addressing intimacy has often attempted to support the idea that men are not intimate or that they are, at best, less intimate than women. Conclusions and generalizations about men's and women's orientations towards intimacy, based on measurements or ratings pertaining to one or more behaviors, is unfounded and unjustified. For example, in the "McGill Report on Male Intimacy" it was concluded that men were significantly less intimate than women. This conclusion was based on responses by men and women who had been given an intimacy self-report inventory questionnaire. This questionnaire was developed using Jourard's (1971) operational definition of intimacy which presumed that self-disclosure is equal to intimacy. The notion that self-disclosure is a valid measure of intimacy has not been substantiated by existing research. This illustrates the concern that conclusions about men and
intimacy has been based on research which used questionable a priori assumptions about intimacy. In any event, quantitative research does not appear to offer much in the way of conceptual clarification for the concept of intimacy.

Self-disclosure has been directly associated with the conceptualization of intimacy and has often been employed as an operational definition in primary research. No direct statement or experience relayed by the men in this study explicitly indicated self-disclosure as a quality or manifestation of intimacy. Implicit evidence of the sharing of self was found in experiences illustrated by the dimension of trust. Men described experiences where they felt vulnerable, were being themselves, and were being open to saying anything, which suggested that they were disclosing or revealing themselves. Snyder (1991) in her study suggested that these types of responses are associated with revealing the inner self which leads to knowing or being known. However, the emphasis or essence of the comments made by the men in this study seemed to suggest that their feelings of closeness were more related to their sense of trust than with the act or experience of self-disclosure. Although the men did not directly state that intimacy involved revealing their inner selves, one may postulate that their references to feeling vulnerable and revealing negative thoughts, feelings or behaviors, might be associated with having exposed deeper or more defended parts of themselves. Again, the men's references to this sort of
disclosure was in the context of trusting that no negative repercussions, such as rejection, would follow. One should not conclude from the results of this study, however, that the act of self-disclosure is a definition or central component of intimacy.

Some theorists and researchers have proposed that trust and/or the atmosphere of trust is an important component of intimacy. According to the experiences of the men in this study, trust was clearly woven into their sense of being intimate. Consistent with this study, Snyder (1991), also found that trust was a major theme in her respondent's experiences of intimacy. However, in her study, some of the respondents associated trust with revealing the self while others did not provide clear explanations of what they meant by trust. Hinde (1981) described a trusting attitude as one in which partners vulnerability would be accepted and not exploited. This understanding of trust is consistent with the experiences of some of the men in this study.

Attunement, the sense of being "in sync" with the other, was presented as one dimension of intimacy in this study. While this quality of intimate relationship has not been addressed in the existing literature in these terms, it appears that it may be closely linked to Snyder's (1991) theme of closeness. Her respondent's described being close emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Their statements about closeness revealed an acknowledgment of shared thoughts, emotions, and a sense of spiritual communion.
Attunement, as described in this study, suggested similar attributes. In fact, some of the language used by the men in this study which illustrated their sense of being in harmony with their partner, was paralleled with Synder’s respondents. Nonverbal components of closeness, as described by Snyder’s respondents, were also similar to the ways in which the men in this study exemplified the dimension of attunement. Whether a behavior involved a nonverbal act, such as a visual glance or sexual activity, the essence of "being in sync" was apparent. The dimension of attunement in this study was expressed in a variety of ways being often involving different levels of intensity.

Empathy has also been viewed as a major concern in conceptualizing intimacy. As was mentioned in the literature review, empathy has not been consistently defined. Traditionally, empathy has been defined as understanding the other’s point of view and further communicating this knowledge verbally. Emotional expressiveness has also been associated with empathy. Empathy, for the men in this study did not involve direct verbal communications of their awareness. Rather, they expressed their understanding and concerns through actions which involved meeting the needs of their partners or having their own needs met.

Existing theory and research as previously noted, has suggested that women are viewed as more empathic than men when deciphering the emotions of others by using verbal
descriptions. The results of this study suggest that men may empathize with others through actions rather than verbal responses. Unfortunately, as men have not seen to exhibit the set of behaviors prescribed which indicate the quality of being empathic and they have been viewed as inadequate in intimate relationships.

The dimension of distinctiveness suggested that men felt close when they appreciated and valued the differences between themselves and their partners. This dimension appeared to be similar to Snyder’s (1991) theme of acceptance. Her respondents noted that they felt intimate when their true selves were being accepted and valued by their partners. Implicit in their experience of acceptance was the validation of differences. Acceptance in this study, however, was viewed as a manifestation with one of the dimensions, distinctiveness, evidenced throughout experiences of being intimate. Distinctiveness may involve the notion of individuation or separateness as there appeared to be a focus not just on acceptance, but a more intense feeling of admiration for individual differences.

The dimension of distinctiveness also referred to a sense of separateness. Separateness was considered a unique or secondary theme of intimacy in Snyder’s (1991) study. Her respondents appeared to focus on the feeling of being independent within the relationship, which in turn led to a sense of personal freedom. One man in this study, similarly, spoke about appreciating having his own space and
being separate without feeling disengaged from his partner. The impression of separateness or autonomy as being connected to intimacy is also suggested in a Object Relations theory of intimacy (Givelber, 1990). According to this theory, in order to have viable intimacy each partner must have individuated sufficiently from their family of origin. Givelber stated, "In a marriage of two reasonably integrated people, differing character styles are complementary to one another and are experienced as pleasurable and valuable". The results from this study appeared to support Givelber’s theory given the men’s statements about their appreciation and admiration of their partner’s differences.

An active process, collaboration, was highlighted as a dimension of intimacy, wherein, the couple actively participated to achieve a specific goal. Few concepts of intimacy in the literature have included collaboration as a dimension or component of intimacy. One exception, Object Relations theory of intimacy as established by Givelber (1990), ascribed to the idea that collaboration is an important component of intimacy. He described collaboration as, "the act of working together and cooperating in a partnership" (p.177). Consistent with this theory, the men in this study described situations in which a variety of collaborative skills were employed in everyday living as well as in achieving a specific goal. The sense of working
well together was an important concern for these men's experience of intimacy.

The dimension of rootedness also appeared to be unique to the previous and current views of intimacy. Some of the qualities such as commitment and togetherness which exemplify rootedness are inferred in some of the statements made by the respondents in Snyder's (1991) study. However, the emphasis of their statements were associated with different themes of intimacy. In this study, the dimension of rootedness suggested that a quality intimacy involves a sense of a special relational composite, a portrait of two people together. The statements of the men in this study suggested that their intimate relationship was firmly grounded which allowed for feelings of comfort and closeness.

This study presented the ways in which intimacy was experienced, and further categorizing those experiences as manifestations. Acitelli and Duck (1987) noted that existing conceptions emphasized individual characteristics existing prior to or within current relationships. Furthermore, Weingarten (1991) in her critique of Social Constructionist and Feminist frameworks of intimacy, suggested that intimacy is found through creating experiences in which meaning is shared. These theorists suggested that research attention needs to shift towards locating intimacy in the interactions between partners. While this study did not directly focus on interactions, nor
were partners of the participants interviewed for the presence of shared meaning, the category of manifestation provided a relational understanding of intimacy.

Three manifestations of intimacy emerged from the interviews. These included shared experiences, acceptance and support, and specialness. Some characteristics of the manifestations are worth noting at this point. The experiences which illustrated the manifestations appeared to have varying degrees of intensity. Each experience was qualitatively distinct and meaningful in relation to the individual. The dimensions described earlier were found woven throughout the manifestations and contributed to the richness and meaning of the experiences of intimacy. For example, a shared experience such as a child birth event exhibited the dimensions of trust, empathy, and rootedness. These dimensions expressed qualities which clarify the meaning of the event. The manifestations will next be discussed in terms of their implications for the conception of intimacy.

In this study shared experiences emerged as an crucial way in which intimacy was experienced in the present. Doing things together, whether it be a special event or a mundane activity, were seen as ways these men experienced intimacy. The degree of intensity of feeling appeared to be related to the meaning of the event. For example, a shared experience in which a crisis was occurring often suggested intense feelings of intimacy. To the present, few theorists or
researchers acknowledge shared experiences as a valid conception of intimacy. Most researchers, in fact, appeared to diminish the importance of shared experience and tended to view it as an inadequate expression of intimacy. The respondents in Snyder’s (1991) study, however, did include shared experiences as a component of intimacy. While Snyder viewed shared experiences as a theme of intimacy, this study takes the position that shared experience is a manifestation which holds varying dimensions.

The feeling of intimacy expressed by the respondents in this study was experienced through the various ways acceptance and support were manifested. Acceptance, at one level, provided the context for being open and trusting. At another level, a deeper, more potent expression of acceptance was seen in situations where intensive support was needed. Acceptance was also expressed as the validation and affirmation. While numerous theory’s regarding intimacy have stressed revealing and knowing the inner self few of these theories emphasize the importance of acceptance and support of the self. When acceptance and support are noted in existing theories, the way they are described appears to be focused on verbal expressions rather than on instrumental behaviors. The men in this study felt supported more through actions and behaviors rather than generating verbalizations about how they accepted or felt accepted by their partners. Acceptance was clearly noted by the way
these men celebrated their value and appreciation for and by their partners.

Intimacy as manifested by the sense or experience of specialness is a particularly salient concern in this research. This concept does not appear to be addressed in past or current theories of intimacy. Yet for the men in this study it held a substantial position in their experiences and statements about intimacy. The experience of being in a special relationship was characterized as rich in form, texture, and possessing colors with differing hues and shades. Perhaps an apt metaphor is the notion of a portrait of two people which captures a connection that exists on many levels and through many experiences. The men also described special experiences in which a particular feeling of comfort and commitment was present. The experience of specialness was found arising from events in which life and death were of concern; situations which appeared to transcend the present. This concept of intimacy did not appear in existing theory or research.

Some of findings of this study supported and extended certain preconceived notions and theories of intimacy. The dimensions of attunement, trust, empathy, separateness and collaboration appeared in a variety of different theories, while one dimension, rootedness, appeared to be a novel component of intimacy. An important understanding which emerged from this study is that intimacy cannot equated with one behavior or position. Intimacy appeared to involve many
qualities not just one behavior such as self-disclosure or empathy. Furthermore, a quality or dimension of intimacy was expressed in a variety of forms and intensities which have not been evident in previous research. The reason for this discrepancy may be due to the lack of contextual considerations and the focus on measuring isolated variables.

Theorists concentrating on intimacy have considered the question of whether intimacy is a process or a state. Snyder (1991) in her study proposed a theory in which intimacy was viewed as both a process and a state. The themes which emerged from the results of her study were categorized as either a process, state, or having elements of being both a process and a state. Themes which she categorized as a state included experiences of feeling accepted, safe and warm. The process of intimacy was reflected in activities such as self-disclosure and non-verbal expressions which suggested the sense of doing, rather than being. She also pointed out that some of the respondents emphasized the combination of having the sensation of intimacy while also acting intimately. Acitelli and Duck (1987) distinguished a state of intimacy as being a "relatively static end product or goal" (p. 300), and the process of intimacy as being fluent and shifting over time.

The results of this study can be seen to support the theorization that intimacy is both a state and a process.
For example, intimacy appeared as a state when experienced in the moment of a shared event. Men spoke of feelings and thoughts of closeness during an activity with a partner. Intimacy was also seen as a process when viewing an experience which held, for example, the sense of rootedness. The description of a relationship with a special person which had a history and a secure foundation inferred the notion that intimacy occurs through a process which develops over time. An example where intimacy could be both a state and a process was found when a couple was collaborating. When working towards a shared goal intimacy was experienced both as a process and state. There is evidence that there may be a feedback loop involved in this concept of intimacy. The process of intimacy may be developed from experiencing various states, which in turn, lead to new states of intimacy. For example, an experience in which trust is highlighted may lead to a stronger sense of rootedness and more intense feelings of attunement. The theory of intimacy, in relation to being a state or a process or both, is a fairly new concept and deserves further consideration.

In summary, the results of this study expanded as well as disputed existing theories and conceptions of intimacy. The dimensions and manifestations found through a phenomenograpical approach provided a more rich and holistic understanding of intimacy. Dimensions such as separateness, collaboration and rootedness are not apparent in most theories. Further, intimacy has been theorized from
the approach of how it is manifested which has provided the characterization of intimacy as existing as a gestalt. Existing research has tended to isolate specific behaviors which has led to a superficial analysis of this phenomena.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE**

Intimacy has become an increasingly important area of concern in the practice of counselling individuals and couples. The concern of this study has been how intimacy is conceived and experienced in natural circumstances. The information gleaned from the interviews of the men in this study could provide more in-depth and meaningful understanding towards assisting counsellors in their clinical practices. Intervention in counselling is directed by particular theoretical perspectives. Current theories of intimacy appear inadequate in providing counsellors with an accurate understanding of intimacy. Psychological inventories and programs have been developed to assist counsellors towards enhancing intimacy in couples. From the outset, many of these programs base their understanding of intimacy on research which is based on pre-conceived notions of intimacy. Assumptions regarding intimacy have often focused on isolated variables rather than on the context of the whole person. Often programs emphasis enhancement of individuals or couples capacities for specific behaviors such as self-disclosure and empathy as means to increase intimacy. One difficulty with this approach is that it is
often assumed that if these behaviors are not present, intimacy is lacking. It is believed that focusing on increasing specific behavioral patterns is insufficient as well as unfounded.

Using a phenomenographical approach to explore intimacy has provided a more holistic depiction of intimacy. This study provided an expanded understanding of how intimacy is conceptualized and experienced which can facilitate counsellors in terms of helping clients who are concerned with intimacy.

This phenomenographical understanding invites counsellors to attend to intimacy through the eyes of the client rather than on prevailing societal discourse. Counsellors' understanding of a holistic portrayal of intimacy would help them understand a client's concerns within a personal context. Further, counsellors with an expanded knowledge of possible conceptions and experiences of intimacy will be able to support and facilitate exploration and empowerment of client skills.

The six dimensions of intimacy that have emerged from the results of this study suggest potential components of intimacy that clients might develop or enhance. The three manifestations that portray the ways in which intimacy is experienced provide possible avenues of exploration to enable a process of increasing and developing intimacy in natural contexts.
The counsellor might venture forth with engaging a client(s) in a discussion around identifying their conceptions of intimacy. It may be helpful to understand the origins of their understanding of intimacy in the context of their cultural belief systems. This approach will facilitate the counsellors’ conceptualization of the client’s schema of intimacy. Further, counsellors’ might identify whether the client may be experiencing self-deprecation in relation to not exhibiting specific behaviors which have been traditionally associated with intimacy. Male clients who have adopted an understanding that their ways of being in relationships is non-intimate may be susceptible to affects consistent with an attitude of worthlessness and inadequacy. It may be helpful for clients to have different understanding of aspects of their experiences and reframing their actions and experiences as meaningful ways of being intimate.

Within the context of marital counselling the results of this study could provide counsellors with a more holistic understanding which could help as guide through the domain of intimacy. Understanding conceptions of intimacy derived from experiences will help counsellors assist clients towards creating their own experiences. Often clients are bound by pre-conceived notions of intimacy. These assumptions about intimacy have been constructed from the dominant cultural discourse which in turn have been informed
by unfounded theories. Counsellors may help couples explore and clarify their own experiences of intimacy.

Counsellors will be able to view individual's experiences as intimate which would not have been considered valid by existing assumptions of intimacy. For example, a counsellor might call attention to a shared experience as a possible way that intimacy might be manifested. The counsellor may also highlight the presence of various dimensions such as collaboration, empathy and trust within the context of a shared experience.

A clinician might also support the couple in developing a plan for meeting each others differing ways of experiencing intimacy. For example, a man may need to engage in a collaborative activity with his partner as a way to experience closeness. Counsellors could also validate the differing ways dimensions are experienced. For example, the counsellor might help partners observe the different ways empathy or trust may be expressed. Understanding the natural context for intimacy appears to be a more fruitful way for counsellors to facilitate change. Helping people to become more aware of potential contexts will validate past and existing ways of being as well as facilitate the creation of new experiences.

With respect to research application this study could used to assist in developing a more comprehensive inventory which could be used to survey larger populations. It has been suggested that the use of questionnaires and self-
report inventories are problematic, in part, because they are often derived from theories and concepts which are not substantiated by concrete evidence. This study could provide a stronger foundation for the development of self-report inventories. An inventory which has been substantiated by qualitative research could provide a higher degree of credibility for a quantitative study of a larger population.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The purpose of this study, using a phenomenographical approach, has been to explore the conceptions of intimacy in a natural context. Existing theories and research have tended to focus on isolated variables which have not been substantiated as valid conceptions of intimacy. The contribution of this study has been to provide a more rich and meaningful understanding of the conception of intimacy. Given the small number of respondents, however, it is difficult to generalize the results to a larger population. It would therefore be valuable to conduct more studies using a similar approach to corroborate and expand the findings of this research.

New distinctions and experiences may be discovered by further research using a phenomenographical methodology. Further, studies might be conducted to explore each of the dimensions uncovered in this study. For example, the dimension of collaboration and its role in the experience
of intimacy might be elaborated and extended. Exploration of any one of the manifestations might also reveal more dimensions not found through this inquiry.

An exploration of different stages of a relationship would be informative. This study focused on men who were in the same relationship for a minimum of seven years. Future studies might explore the experiences intimacy in newer relationships. As the dimensions of rootedness and sense of specialness implicitly involved a historical context, it would be helpful to know if or how they affect intimacy in younger relationships.

It would be worthwhile to determine if intimacy is similarly and simultaneously experienced by both partners. Perhaps collecting reports of experiences from both partners and comparing the meaning for each partner would provide increased validation for the dimensions and manifestations of intimacy.

It may be beneficial to investigate the conception of intimacy for people who are experiencing difficulties in their intimate relationships. This study focused on men who were not in a clinical population. Information gained from individuals who consider themselves non-intimate may provide corroborating evidence for the findings of this study.

Finally, a phenomenographic study of intimacy focussing on diverse populations might informative. Research addressing groups which vary in age, socio-economic and
educational backgrounds, cultural origins, and sexual orientation might expand our understanding of intimacy.

**SUMMARY**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the conceptions of intimacy held by men in on-going heterosexual relationships. Existing conceptions and theories of intimacy have traditionally focused on behaviors isolated from the context of the person. Furthermore, the principles guiding existing theory have not been substantiated. This study attempted to present the concept of intimacy within a natural context. To this end, a phenomenographical approach was employed to generate possible conceptions through the collection of statements and experiences of intimacy.

Eight men were gathered through a network of contacts to participate in semi-structured interviews. Statements and experiences, which described their conceptions of intimacy, were extracted from the interviews and validated by independent reviewers. The data was analyzed and categorized into dimensions and manifestations of intimacy.

Six dimensions emerged from the statements and experiences. Attunement, collaboration, distinctiveness, trust, empathy, and rootedness were found woven through the fabric of the conceptualizations of intimacy. Shared experience, acceptance/support, and specialness were three manifestations or ways in which intimacy was experienced.
The manifestations provided a holistic context for the concept of intimacy.

Important aspects of intimacy were validated in this study. Intimacy was not characterized by one or more specific features, but rather involved a set of rich and complex elements. There appeared to be different facets of expression for these elements. Lastly, there appeared to be an interconnection between the state and process of intimacy. The findings of this study provided a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the concept of intimacy and validated the importance of understanding a phenomenon within a natural context.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A:

LETTER OF CONSENT

Title: Conceptions of Intimacy: Men in Relationships

Researcher: Grant Grobman (604) 270-3780

The purpose of this project is to explore the conceptions of intimacy held by men who are currently in relationships. This investigation will be done through the use of taped interviews. Statement and experiences of intimacy held by subjects will be taped and transcribed. Significant information will be extracted and used to identify conceptions of intimacy. All identifying information will be altered to provide confidentiality of the subjects. The tapes of the interviews will be destroyed.

The time needed from each interview will be one and a half to two hours. Approximately one to two hours may be requested for follow-up and debriefing of the interview.

This project represents the masters thesis which is part of the requirements for the completion of the Masters of Arts degree.

This project is under the supervision of Larry Cochran, who is my graduate advisor in the department of Counselling Psychology. He can be reached at 228-5259.

If you have any questions regarding this project please contact the researcher.

For any reason the subject may refuse to answer any question, participate in any way or withdraw from this project at any time.

The signature below signifies that the subject is consenting to participate in this research. The signature also signifies that the subject has received a copy of this consent form.

I ____________________________ consent to participate in this research project.

Date: _____________________