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THE IMPACT OF MEN'S PSYCHOTHERAPY GROUPS ON
INTIMACY AND CONNECTION IN HETEROSEXUAL MEN'S
RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER MEN

A Dissertation Presented

by

KENNETH D. MANNING

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May, 1992

Department of Psychology

THE IMPACT OF MEN'S PSYCHOTHERAPY GROUPS ON
INTIMACY AND CONNECTION IN HETEROSEXUAL MEN'S
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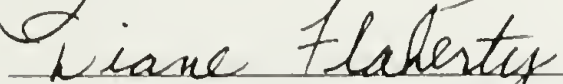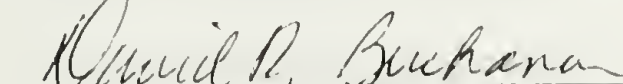
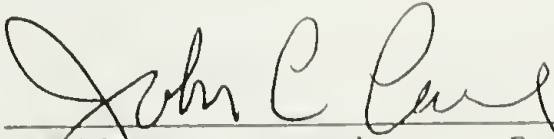KENNETH D. MANNING

Approved as to style and content by:

_____
John Carey, Chair

_____
Diane Flaherty, Member

_____
Dave Buchanan, Member

_____
Bailey W. Jackson, Dean
School of Education

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I am also indebted to the many men who have participated in groups that I have led, for through them I have learned, and continue to learn, about the richness of life.

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ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF MEN'S PSYCHOTHERAPY GROUPS ON
INTIMACY AND CONNECTION IN HETEROSEXUAL MEN'S
RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER MEN

MAY, 1992

KENNETH D. MANNING, B.A., BROWN UNIVERSITY

M.A., LESLIE COLLEGE

Ph.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS

Directed by: Professor Dr. John C. Carey

This study was an exploratory investigation into the
impact of men's psychotherapy groups on men's abilities and
experiences of relating intimately with other men. Ten men
who had participated in such groups for a minimum of six
months were interviewed about changes in their perceptions
of intimately relating with men within and outside their
groups. Drawing on two bodies of literature, one describing
gender role conflict, and the other describing close
relationships, it was hypothesized that men would experience
reduced gender role conflict if they were aided in
developing skill in intimately relating. "Self-in-relation"
theory, deriving from the women's development literature,
was discussed for its usefulness in understanding mutuality
in relationships and gender differences in orientations
towards relationships. A Mutuality Typology including the
steps, components and benefits of mutually relating was

developed and refined by this study, and used in the data analysis.

It was found that men's psychotherapy groups can have a significant impact towards helping men develop skills in relating mutually, experience mutuality with other men within the group, shift in their orientations towards valuing, pursuing and maintaining intimate connections with other men, and improve their relationships with men and women outside their groups. Results indicated that increases in the experience of mutuality and in abilities in relating intimately with other men contributed to reductions in relational avoidance, isolation, alienation and negative comparisons with other men and gender role norms and increases in self-esteem, self-acceptance and empowerment in relating with others.

The results suggested that there is a strong relationship between reported changes in the experience of mutuality and relational abilities and reported shifts towards greater connection with other men. The results also suggested that there is a strong relationship between reported changes in orientations and relational abilities and the stage of group development described by the men in the study.

Much data describing those events and conditions that facilitated changes in men's relational abilities and orientations was also reported. That data generated

numerous, potentially valuable implications for the forming
and running of men's psychotherapy groups. Implications for
further research were also discussed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study was how men perceive the
benefits of men's psychotherapy groups in terms of their
relationships with other men. Specifically, it investigated
the impact men's psychotherapy groups have on men's
experience of mutuality and connection in those
relationships. Many men in our society are suffering from
isolation, loneliness and inability to develop intimate
relationships. It was found that increased mutuality in
men's relationships with other men can address those issues,
increase self-esteem, and provide an important, often
missing sense of connection with others. This was an
exploratory study because little research had been done in
this area.

Contemporary society is currently going through a
gender role re-evaluation (O'Neil, 1981a, b) whereby men and
women are reassessing norms of masculinity and femininity.
Many aspects of traditional roles can be considered
dysfunctional, and both men and women have been realizing
the strain they have been under due to adherence to these
roles (Pleck, 1981). Numerous authors have pointed out how
traditional aspects of gender roles for men have conditioned
many men in our society to be individualistic and successful
in instrumental areas of life yet has left them unskilled in

relating interpersonally (Goldberg, 1976; Stein, 1983;
Pleck, 1981; O'Neil, 1981a,b). This condition leaves many of
these men isolated from other men and often unprepared for
the demands of intimacy in family life during adult years.
From this perspective, then, there is a need to understand
how men can be aided in overcoming the dysfunctional aspects
of gender role socialization that impede healthy
interpersonal relationships.

Much focus in the literature of psychology in the past
decades has increasingly turned toward relationships (Clark
& Reis, 1988), the relational aspects of the self (Surrey,
1985; Miller, 1976), and problems of developing successful
intimate relationships (Reis & Shaver, 1988). The growing
body of literature on social support has shown that
interpersonal relationships can be important in reducing
stress, improving health and self-esteem (Lin, Dean & Ensel,
1986) and that friendship and intimacy are important to
one's affiliative and relational needs (Isaacs, 1990). The
literature on gender differences of the last 20 years has
shown that men, because of gender role socialization and
expectations have greater difficulty than women developing
and maintaining mutuality in intimate relationships (Stein,
1983; Silverberg, 1986), and that that socialization
significantly impedes men's willingness and ability to have
close relationships with other men (O'Neil, 1981a,b). Other
authors describe how the absence of close relationships with

other men can lead to dysfunction in the areas of self-esteem, identity development, health, and in relationships with women (Garnets & Pleck, 1974; Aries, 1983; Franklin, 1986; Good, Gilbert & Scher, 1990).

Researchers and theorists studying intimacy and close relationships (Clark & Reis, 1988, for a summary and overview) have attempted to identify the important aspects of intimately relating, such as self-disclosure (Jourard, 1964; Morton, 1978; Fitzpatrick, 1987), reciprocity (Mills & Clark, 1982; Rook, 1987), social support (Coyne & Bolger, 1990; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Reis, 1990) and relationship awareness (Acitelli, 1988; Reis & Shaver, 1988). Writers in this area, drawing on work of the women's liberation movement, posit that women's development is contextually different from men's in that women's psychological development .occurs, for the most part, within a context of relationships and a sense of connection with others, whereas men's psychological development occurs within a context of individuality, separateness and disconnection (Surrey, 1985; Miller, 1986,; Bergman, 1990). Bergman (1990) suggests that men's relational orientation of disconnection is at the root of many of their interpersonal problems and suggests that the development of abilities in relating mutuality is an important step in their interpersonal and intrapsychic development. I fully agree with Bergman and feel that treatments need to be developed in the field of psychotherapy that can facilitates that development in men.

Clinicians in the field of psychotherapy have begun to address these specific male needs through the development of new methods of treatment. One modality of treatment, men's psychotherapy groups, has been reported to benefit men in the development of abilities in relating mutually (Stein, 1983; Silverberg, 1986). Though some anecdotal evidence is available, no one had formally researched this area of treatment or had systematically assessed what aspects of men's psychotherapy groups are most effective in helping men in this area. Writers in the field of women's psychological development (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver & Surrey, 1991), integrating previous research and theory on intimacy, describe the various steps, components and benefits of relating that comprise mutual relationships which give individuals a full sense of intimacy and connection. This study sought to codify that list, tailor it to men's adult relational development, and to refine and validate it from the data.

This study was an exploratory analysis of the impact of men's psychotherapy groups on men's experiences of mutuality and connection with other men. As will be shown in the next chapter, men are limited in their ability to relate mutually with others and fear intimacy with men due to gender role socialization that fosters independence, self-reliance, fear and avoidance of emotional expression, and competition,

control and power issues that further separate men from other men. Further, it will be shown how this socialization leads to low self-esteem, isolation and loneliness. The purpose of this study was to attempt to look, first hand, at how men who participate in men's psychotherapy groups perceive relationships with men in and outside of such groups, and how the group impacts them towards greater mutuality and connection in those relationships. An attempt was also made to understand what these men perceive happened in the group that facilitated those changes.

The experience of mutuality and connection in male same-sex relationships, as well as the value of men's psychotherapy groups have not been well researched. In seeking further knowledge in those areas, it was hoped that this study would make a contribution to two main bodies of psychological inquiry and knowledge: 1) that area of social psychology which seeks to understand intimate relationships and gender roles, and 2) that area of clinical psychology which seeks to understand the impact of group treatment on the phenomena of human experience. The ultimate goal of the study was to expand our understanding of men's relational development and provide information for group leaders working with adult men.

The method used in conducting this investigation was qualitative and phenomenological in nature and will be described in Chapter 3. Briefly, ten men who had

participated in men's psychotherapy groups for a minimum of six months were interviewed and given the opportunity to speak as freely and spontaneously as possible about their experiences in their groups.

There were a number of limitations to this study. First was its focus only upon male same-sex relationships. Male-female relationships in intimacy and marriage play an important role during men's adult development affecting their experience of mutuality and connection with others. Their effect may strongly influence men's willingness and ability in relating with other men. The study did not contribute to our understanding of these variables, however, the choice to focus on mens' relationships with other men was a deliberate attempt to support male same-sex relationships apart from women whom men usually rely heavily upon for all their relational needs.

Second, this study was limited in that it sought to understand men's inner perceptions and did not seek external validation from others as to those individuals' behavioral changes. Thus, the study did not contribute "hard" evidence of changes in male same-sex relationships. However, as noted above, much gender role strain is experienced intrapsychically as loneliness, isolation and low self-esteem. Thus, it is the inner experience of these men that was important to understand toward relieving those psychological problems.

Third, and potentially most limiting, is the qualitative nature of the design. The study attempted a thematic analysis of the experience of a small group of men. I believe that the limitation of non-generalizability was well outweighed by the rich data generated towards a greater understanding of the research topics.

Definitions of terms

Gender role -- refers to a the set of behaviors and
  characteristics widely viewed as (1) typical of women
  or men (stereotypes) and (2) desirable for women and
  men (norms). As such they are behaviors which are both
  prescriptive and descriptive. Norms are prescriptive in
  the sense that they are shared beliefs about what men
  and women should be. They are descriptive as
  stereotypes in being beliefs about what the genders
  actually are. (Pleck, 1981)

Gender role socialization -- is the process by which people
  in our culture are taught to conform to societal gender
  roles.

Gender role strain -- the psychological experience of
  conflict that arises as an individual attempts to meet
  the difficult, restrictive, and conflicting stereotypes
  and norms which gender roles require (Pleck, 1981)
  which can manifest in a the discrepancy between an
  individual's perception of his/her real self and
  his/her standards derived from gender-role norms.
  (Garnets and Pleck, 1979)

Mutuality -- encompasses diverse modes of social interaction
  which facilitate participation and growth through
  relationships. (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver &
  Surrey, 1991)

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Research on interventions that help men develop more
satisfying intimate relationships with other men has not
been widely undertaken. Therefore, this literature review
focuses on those aspects of male experience that have an
impact on intimate relationships and will be presented in
three main bodies. The first pertains to the current status
of men's gender role norms and stereotypes that affect men's
attitudes towards intimacy with others. This section of the
literature review will focus on men's gender role conflict
and theories that try to explain the psychological aspects
of gender role strain. One theory that sheds light on gender
role strain from the perspective of psychological
development, "self-in-relation" theory, will be explained in
depth. I believe that this theory holds much potential for
understanding men's difficulty with intimacy and can provide
keys for helping men overcome much of their gender role
strain through increased mutuality and connection with other
men and women. Gender role strain will then be reframed from
the perspective of this theory. Following this, a discussion
of the literature on those attempts that have already been
made to help transcend the limitations of gender roles will
be reviewed.

The second body of literature pertains to a review of literature and research on close relationships. This section will focus on those aspects of close relationships that are relevant to a discussion of mutuality: those aspects of intimacy that make up mutuality and those that are the consequences of mutuality in intimate relationships leading to a sense of connection with others. Included in this section will be a discussion of "self-in-relation" theory that describes different developmental orientations towards relationships where women are seen as more oriented towards connection and men are more oriented towards non-or dis-connection. An in-depth discussion of the components of mutuality will then be given as those components will form a guideline for the data analysis of this study.

The third section of the literature review focuses on the theory and research of men's psychotherapy groups with a specific focus on how such groups impact men's experiences of intimate relationships. Taken together, these three bodies of literature will provide the developmental and social context for the study of men's experience of intimacy and relational abilities, and what has been researched regarding men's psychotherapy groups to date.

Men, Intimacy, and Gender Role Conflict

Introduction

The areas of human relationships and male psychology are complex and multi-faceted. Presenting it in its entirety

would be a massive undertaking. This section is therefore
not intended to be a comprehensive presentation of all of
its aspects. Rather, it is a presentation of the current
understanding of those aspects most relevant to the cultural
forces affecting men's intimate relationships with others.
These aspects are men's gender roles, and the "self-in-
relation" theory which describes men's psychological
development as it relates to intimate relationships.

Contemporary society is currently going through a
gender role reevaluation (O'Neil, 1981, a,b; Pleck, 1987).
It has become clear that many aspects of traditional roles
are dysfunctional, and both men and women have been
realizing the strain they have been under due to adherence
to these roles. The literature on gender roles covers 1)
traditional perspectives on gender roles, 2) the gender role
strain perspective, and 3) writings that support
transcendence of conflict generating gender roles. This
section of the literature review covers those three areas.
As this research pertains to intimate relationships, I
concentrate on the relational aspects of gender roles.

The traditional perspective on gender roles

"Gender role" refers to a the set of behaviors and
characteristics widely viewed as (1) typical of women or men
(stereotypes) and (2) desirable for women and men (norms).
As such they are behaviors which are both prescriptive and
descriptive. Gender roles are prescriptive in the sense that

they are shared beliefs about what men and women should be.
They are descriptive as stereotypes in being beliefs about
what the genders actually are. (Pleck, 1981)

The traditional perspective on gender roles holds that
human beings are split into bipolar, complementary gender
roles. From this perspective, the traditional view of
masculinity is construed as a natural response to innate
biological and/or psychological need. Any variations from
the traits, attitudes, and interests socially determined to
be congruent with one's biological sex are thus considered
inadequacies, or insecurities and conceptualized in terms of
deviance. Pleck (1981) identified the basic paradigm upon
which psychologists and social scientists have based their
gender role research contributing to the traditional view.
Pleck calls this paradigm the Male Sex Role Identity
paradigm (MSRI). The main feature of the MSRI is its view
that gender roles develop from a natural intrapsychic
process rather than being the result of socio-cultural
pressures. From this perspective, health is conceptualized
in terms of adherence to dimensions of masculinity and
femininity. Achievement of an appropriate gender role
identity is seen as necessary for good psychological
adjustment.

Pleck outlined the major propositions of the MSRI
paradigm, to be: (1) gender roles are operationally defined
by sex role stereotypes and norms; (2) the proportion of
individuals who violate gender roles is high; (3) violating

sex roles leads to social condemnation and negative psychological consequences; (4) actual or imagined violation of gender roles leads individuals to over-conform to them; (5) violating gender roles has more severe consequences for men than women; (6) historical change causes gender role strain; and others.

Pleck further argues that the MSRI developed in the 1930's, 40's and 50's replacing the eroding traditional view held at the turn of the century. The older traditional role, still prevalent in today's working-class culture, holds that masculinity is validated through physical strength and aggression. What is more characteristic of modern middle class men is, instead, validation by economic achievement and organizational or bureaucratic power. Interpersonal skills and intelligence are now more highly esteemed insofar as they lead to the goals of mastering one' life. In both of these versions of masculinity, men feel the need to prove themselves in terms of what they can do and accomplish, and not in terms of who they are internally or how they relate to others.

Many sociologists and psychologists have described the masculine ideals that have been derived from these two versions of masculinity. Fasteau (1975) described the masculine ideal as "the male machine, never vulnerable, weak, sensitive, ambivalent, emotionally expressive, or dependent." (p.11) David and Brannon (1976) describe the "cultural blueprint

for manhood" with four areas or factors that summarize the various descriptions of the role: (1) No Sissy Stuff: the stigma of anything even vaguely feminine. (2) The Big Wheel: success, status, and the need to be looked up to. (3) Sturdy Oak;: a manly air of toughness, confidence, and self-reliance. (4) Give-'em-Hell: the aura of aggression, violence and daring.

O'Neil (1981b) has delineated the values of the "Masculine Mystique," including: (1) men are biologically superior to women; (2) masculinity is valued more than femininity; (3) men's power, dominance, competition and control are essential to proving one's masculinity; (4) vulnerabilities, feeling and emotions in men are signs of femininity and should be avoided; (5) masculine control of self, others, and environment are essential for men to feel safe, secure and comfortable; (6) sexuality is a primary means of proving one's masculinity (sensuality and intimacy are considered feminine and should be avoided); (7) vulnerability with other men is to be avoided; (8) men's work and career success are measures of their masculinity; and others. (p.16)

Studies have been done testing just how much these cultural prescriptions have influenced people's thinking. Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, and Rosenkranz (1972) interviewed over 1,000 men and women and found that men are expected to be very aggressive, not at all emotional, very

dominant, not hesitant, very competitive, rough, and unaware
of others' feelings.

These "blueprints" are the ideals against which men
have traditionally been measured, by themselves, other men
and women. One does not, however, need to achieve them all
in order to be considered a "real man." In addition,
differences in socio-economic class, race, age, ethnicity
and other factors, as well as with changing historical and
economic conditions produce varying requirements for men to
fulfill (Dubbert 1979, Pleck 1981, Moreland, 1980).

Gender role conflict perspective

The gender role conflict perspective is one that
originally critiqued the existing gender system in terms of
its status and power inequities (Botkin, 1986) and went on
to examine the strain gender roles had on men. The shift
from the traditional perspective to this one began with the
feminist movement as women began to question both the
"Masculine Mystique" and the psychological bases on which
women's traditional gender roles were justified. Women began
to conceptualize that their lower status (in such areas as
power, work, money) was due to the bias of a "patriarchal
society" rather than their lack of competence. Sociologists
and anthropologists began to recognize gender roles as
functions of societal pressure rather than intrapsychic
necessities. As a result, the attribution of "masculine" and
"feminine" psychological and behavioral traits to men and

women which had been accepted as appropriate and normal was no longer take for granted (Femiano, 1986). This change freed women to see how they have been exploited by traditional roles and to look for more fulfillment through work and achievement.

In the 1970's, the men's liberation movement (Farrell, 1974; Nichols, 1975) began to examine the strain the masculine mystique has on men as they attempt to meet the difficult standards imposed by traditional norms and stereotypes. One of the first to write about gender role strain was Pleck (1981). He offered the Sex Role Strain (SRS) paradigm as an alternative to the MSRI paradigm. The SRS does not see traditional roles as desirable nor their internalization as goals of psychological development, but instead views these roles as limiting and constricting.

Writings based on the tenets of the SRS paradigm have identified many strains and limitations of traditional gender norms and stereotypes. The bulk of these writings suggest that adherence to traditional gender roles results in imbalance as men suppress and repress their emotionality leading to withdrawal from and difficulty with non-business related interpersonal relationships and an over-emphasis on work and achievement for self-esteem. A fear of femininity, according to O'Neil (1981b), is at the root of this gender role strain and produces six patterns of gender-role conflict and strain including: (1) restrictive emotionality, (2) homophobia, (3) socialized control, power and

competition issues, (4) restrictive sexual and affectionate behavior, (5) obsession with achievement and success, and, (6) health care problems.

Gender role strain is manifested as low self-esteem in men when inflexible norms set standards that men cannot achieve or prevent men from expressing themselves freely. In both cases, men come to devalue themselves. Garnets and Pleck (1979) define gender-role strain as the discrepancy between an individual's perception of his real self and those standards derived from gender-role norms. The comparison of self with gender role ideals encourages men to treat themselves as objects, and to think of themselves, their abilities and achievements as being insufficient.

> "In forming conceptions of others' judgments of their behavior and appearance, men develop feelings of adequacy, pride, and self-esteem, or feelings of self-hatred, shame or other negative attributes of themselves. It is precisely at the point of a male's perception of others' judgments of him that much of the traditional male sex-role becomes dysfunctional. Since few men can achieve the demands of the traditional roles, men are thus "against themselves." (Franklin, 1984)

This gender role strain is most evident in the area of men's emotionality and intimate relationships. It is a natural human phenomenon to have a wide range of emotions including tender and vulnerable feelings. Traditional gender roles proscribe against their display in men. Good, Gilbert and Scher (1990) go as far as to say that

> "men are prohibited from 'giving voice' to that which is perceived as 'unmasculine,' such as fears, vulnerabilities and insecurities. Thus, for many men, normal life reactions are denied expression and perhaps

eventually even blocked from self-awareness. ... Hence,
interpersonal intimacy (relationship) and intra-
personal intimacy (self-awareness) become confused with
loss of invulnerability, autonomy and instrumentality."
(p.379)

In this way, many men become cut off from real intimacy with

others as well as from an intimate experience of their own

selves, particularly the emotional and affectional sides of

themselves. Cook (1990) describes men and women as living in

different worlds when it comes to interpersonal

relationships. "On a one-to-one level, intimate

conversations appear to be more central to relationships for

women, who tend to have more conversations with others than

men do about personal feelings and relationships. In

contrast, men's conversations tend to focus on work, sports,

and other issues external to the individuals." (p.373) Aries

(1987) described men's interactions as "more task oriented,

dominant, directive, hierarchical" and women's as "more

social-emotional, expressive, supportive, facilitative,

cooperative, personal and egalitarian." (p.170) Further,

with an over-emphasis on work and achievement, men have lost

much of their capacity for spontaneity, playfulness,

compassion, and for nurturance. (Farrell, 1974, O'Neil,

1981a,b; Silverberg, 1986).

Men suffering from gender role strain exhibit much

difficulty in their relationships with other men as well as

with women. Competition, focus on achievement, socialized

homophobia, power, and control issues, and adherence to the

gender role ideal of independence and self-reliance leads

men to fear vulnerable and intimate sharing with other men, to fear getting close to other men, and, in the end, to a deep sense of isolation and loneliness and an over-reliance on women for nurturant needs. (Silverberg, 1986) Men's friendships, when they exist, tend to be activity focused whereas women's friendships tend to be more emotionally intense, sharing and supportive. (Sherrod, 1987; Cook, 1990; Barbee, Gulley & Cunningham, 1990) Both sexes usually gain more support from friendships with women. (Aukett, Ritchie, & Mill, 1988). Many men rely exclusively on their wives for emotional discussion and support (Cook, 1990; Tschann, 1990). In the absence of personal feedback from other men, many men needlessly suffer from low self-esteem due to failure to meet unreasonable gender role prescriptions which would be ameliorated by such feedback that could normalize their self concepts and reduce their fear of other men (Stern, 1983; Silverberg, 1986).

Current research supports these concepts of gender role strain. Sapadin (1990), studied gender differences in friendship intimacy with a self-report questionnaire given to 156 professional men and women and found that women's same-sex friendships were rated higher for overall quality, intimacy, enjoyment and nurturance than friendships with men, and men rated their friendships with women higher that their friendships with other men, supporting statements that men have more difficulty and/or avoidance of intimacy with other men.

Tschann (1990) researched whether self-disclosure in adult friendships differs according to gender and marital status, interviewing 130 adult men and women. She found that married men's intimate disclosure to their friends was low while married women's was high, suggesting that men do tend to rely heavily, if not exclusively on their wives for emotional support. Tschann's study showed that unmarried men disclose to their friends as much as do married and unmarried women, but the study did not identify if those friends were women or men. It is likely that unmarried men disclose well with close women friends.

Barbee, Gulley and Cunningham (1990) asked male and female undergraduates to imagine discussing both task and relationship type of problems with friends of either sex and to discuss what types of behaviors these friends would exhibit. They found that men and women both preferred to talk with same sex friends yet males

"indicated that they would rather talk about task than relationship issues with their male friends and expected the male friends to use more dismiss behaviors in response to a relationship problem." (p.531)

In addition, women expected their male friends to use dismiss and escape behaviors in response to their problems. Thus, although men prefer to share with male friends, they expect no support in relational areas from other men. It is also likely they would not pursue and develop male supports in the area of relational issues, especially if women were available for such support.

Other research has been developed to assess current gender role conflict and identify its most salient characteristics. Based on O'Neil's six patterns of gender role strain (1981b, mentioned above), O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David and Snell (1986) developed two Gender Role Conflict scales to assess gender role conflict by asking men about their personal gender role attitudes, behaviors and conflicts and to self-rate their conflict or comfort in concrete gender related situations. Their results confirmed that men suffer from gender role conflict in the areas of: 1) restrictive emotionality; 2) restricted affectionate behavior between men; 3) obsession with success, power and control; 4) conflict between work and family relations; 5) homophobia; 6) lack of emotional responsiveness; and, 7) public embarrassment from gender role deviance. Thus, from men's own personal viewpoints, they are aware of being restricted in their emotionality and responsiveness and fear intimate closeness with other men, as well as in other areas.

Snell (1986), developed the Masculine Role Inventory (MRI) to assess whether men and women experience gender role conflict due to 1) restrictive emotionality; 2) inhibited affection and tenderness toward others; and, 3) success preoccupation. Results of the study with 291 male and 463 female college students found that men and women differed significantly on the first two areas but not the third, success preoccupation, thus pointing out that gender role

strain negatively affects men pertaining to emotionality and intimacy.

In summary, the theory and research on gender role strain points out men's significant difficulties with emotional expression, intimate relationships, avoidance and fear of other men, low self-esteem, and over-emphasis on work and achievement.

It is important, therefore, to understand the sociological and psychological roots of gender role strain in order to develop ways of addressing gender role strain to help men become aware of, and then to overcome it. Since I am focusing on the relational aspects of gender roles in adult life, I will not cover the literature on the development and acquisition of gender roles in childhood (Biller, 1967; Tooley, 1977; Wong, 1981; Schapiro, 1985; Femiano, 1986). I refer the reader for further reading on the history, nature of and study of gender roles to some of its well developed literature elsewhere (Brown, 1958; McKee and Sherriffs, 1959; Spence, Helmreich & Stapp, 1975; Broverman et al., 1970; Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974; Pleck, 1976; Deutsch and Gilbert, 1976; Block, 1984), and to excellent summaries of this literature as it applies to men (O'Neil, 1981b; Schapiro, 1985; Femiano, 1986; Pleck, 1987). Since the focus of this study is the relational aspects of men's lives, one theory that describes men's psychological development in this domain will be presented.

Some authors, in describing the roots of gender role strain, focus on the social pressures of gender role socialization. O'Neil (1981b) theorizes that it is men's fear of femininity that is at the root of gender role strain and that this fear is learned during early gender-role socialization in childhood. The fear of femininity is a strong, negative emotion in oneself or others associated with feminine values, attitudes and behaviors. What a man really fears, according to O'Neil, is that others will see him as stereotypically and negatively feminine (i.e., weak, dependent, submissive) rather than positively masculine. Because of the still wide spread acceptance of traditional norms and stereotypes in many parts of our society, the fear of appearing unmasculine is not so unreasonable since femininity is subordinated and deprecated and men who exhibit these traits are often considered effeminate or homosexual. This can lead to social censure, loss of esteem and even loss of jobs.

Besides the pressure to fit traditional stereotypes, Goldberg (1976) points out that gender role strain arises when traditional male roles conflict with the demands of other roles, such as being a nurturing father or an intimate lover. Moreland (1980) goes further suggesting that it is the conflict between these roles that forces men in adult life to give up or modify their adherence to traditional gender roles.

Other authors attribute intrapsychic processes that contribute to gender role strain in men. Goldberg, (1976) suggests that the attempt to portray and embody traditional masculinity is a defensive process whereby men try to repress and deny the feminine sides of themselves. Conflict arises, according to Goldberg, between men's traditionally defined feminine needs, such as nurturance and emotional support, and socialized male behaviors. Franklin (1984) suggests that the male self is a continuous process of the negation of feminine aspect of self, helping to create the illusion of enough distance from femininity.

Bergman (1990) suggests a theory of the psychological roots of gender role strain in the area of men's intimate relationships. He suggests that young boys, in the earliest stages of gender role socialization, turn away from intimacy and the experience of "being in relationship" and this turning away, combined with social pressures to fit traditional roles is at the root of men's difficulties with close relationships. As a result of this turning away, men become "selves-in-spite-of-relationships" rather than "selves-in relationship." As a result of this orientation, men grow up with a basic sense of disconnection from others rather than a basic sense of connection with others. It is this sense of disconnection, as Bergman describes it, that I believe is at the root of men's gender role strain. Because of the centrality of his theory in this research, a fuller discussion of it follows.

Male psychological development and "self-in-relation" theory

Bergman (1990), drawing on feminist theories of women's development, offers a theoretical perspective that can be useful in reframing gender role strain and in developing interventions that can be helpful to relieve it. He suggests that it is important to look at men's development in our culture as a turning away from the ongoing, in the moment, experience of being in relationships. "Men as well as women are motivated by a primary desire for connection," he suggests and theorizes that the source of much of men's misery "are in disconnections, violations, and dominances, and in participating in relationships which are not mutually empowering." (p.1) He suggests that men have a fundamental orientation towards relationships which is one of avoidance and disconnection whereas women have one that is based on maintaining connections with others. A review of some aspects of women's relational development and orientation can be useful in contrasting men's development and will be described briefly next.

Recently developed theories highlight the experience of relationship and connection as central to women's development (Gilligan, 1982, Surrey, 1985, 1987; Miller, 1976, 1986; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver & Surrey, 1991). Whereas men's individuated sense of self derives from separation from others, "women's sense of self becomes very much organized around being able to make and then to

maintain affiliation and relationships." (Miller, 1976 p.83)

Gilligan (1982) goes on to say that "women's experiences of connectedness to others lead to enlarged conceptions of self, morality and visions of relationship," and that men and women have two different modes of thinking about and describing the relationship between other and self. (p.1) Miller states that "women's sense of personhood is grounded in the motivation to make and enhance relatedness to others. ... women tend to find satisfaction, pleasure, effectiveness and a sense of worth if they experience their life activities as arising from, and leading back into, a sense of connection with others." (1986, p.1)

Surrey (1985) suggests that for women, "relationship is seen as the basic goal of development: i.e. the deepening capacity for relationship and relational competence." She suggests that "for women, the primary experience of self is relational, that is, the self is organized and developed in the context of important relationships," and thus, women's self is a "self-in-relation" as opposed to the conception described in most theories of development developed by men as a separate "self." Central to her "self-in-relation" theory is the notion that aspects of individuality and identity "emerge in the context of relationship, and there is no inherent need to disconnect or to sacrifice relationship for self-development." (p.2) Furthermore, from this perspective, the goal of development is the "increasing

ability to build and enlarge mutually enhancing relationships," (Surrey, 1987) and to develop a maturity based on interdependence rather than independence (Gilligan, 1982).

Bergman (1990) summarizes current theories of male psychological development as emphasizing the primary importance of the "self" and not a "self-in-relation," failing to take into account the place of relationships in the development of the self. "Freud suggests that men and women come into the world as isolated selves, with the primary drives of sex and aggression." (p.2) Erikson's theory (1963) suggests that intimacy is something that one can achieve only after the development of a secure personal identity. Kernberg (1976) and Mahler (1975) of object relations theory suggest the key to development is "separation/individuation," the hatching out of a matrix of embeddedness. Kohut (1977) and self psychologists suggest that we internalize objects to construct the self. Thus, in current theories the emphasis is on self-control and boundaries with the goal of "learning to be a separate, strikingly impermeable and static self. ... Little is said about people nurturing, empowering, or empathizing with each other, or building mutual relationships." (Bergman, 1990, p.3)

Bergman (1990) suggests that much of male development in the area of interpersonal relationships can be understood

using a relational model of connections and disconnections.
"It becomes clear that men themselves are fashioned by an
event that is profoundly different from that fashioning
women: the disconnection from the relationship with mother,
in the name of becoming a man." (p.2) There is much
evidence, such as that of Mahler (1975), to support the idea
"that men and women both come into the world not as isolated
selves, but as selves in relationship to others, especially
the mother. ... The first few years of male development are
probably quite similar to female, in terms of open emotional
connectedness and mutual responsiveness." (Bergman, 1990,
p.4)

Gilligan (1982) summarizes what happens differently for
boys and girls during gender identity development in early
childhood:

> "Given that for both sexes the primary caretaker in the
> first three years of life is typically female, the
> interpersonal dynamics of gender identity formation are
> different for boys and girls. Female identity formation
> takes place in a context of ongoing relationships since
> others tend to experience their daughters as more like,
> and continuous with, themselves. Correspondingly,
> girls, in identifying themselves as female, experience
> themselves as like their mothers, thus fusing the
> experience of attachment with the process of identity
> formation. In contrast, mothers experience their sons
> as a male opposite, and boys, in defining themselves as
> masculine, separate their mothers from themselves, thus
> curtailing their primary love and sense of empathic
> tie. Consequently, male development entails a more
> empathic individuation and a more defensive firming of
> experienced ego boundaries." (p.6-7, summarizing the
> work of Chodorow, 1978)

Bergman (1990) goes further saying that there is not
only a separating away from the mother but "there is a shift

in the 'relational context.' ...The break is not from 'the
mother'... but from a mutually empathic relationship, which
happens to be with mother - from the whole relational mode
of being." This break is "not only from connection, from
mutual authenticity, but also a break from being in the
process with a person, who happens to be a woman, and mother
at that. ... it is a disconnecting from the very process of
growth in relationship, a learning about turning away from
the whole relational mode." (p.4)

Bergman identifies the process of boys needing to focus
on differences - to declare themselves different from their
mothers as basic to the process of turning away from a
context of being in relationships. "The boy begins to see
that he is and must be different from mother. Difference
implies comparison. Comparison implies better than or worse
than, ... [and] this can open the door for the disparagement
of mother, and of the relationships with mother, and even of
relationship itself." (p.4)

This turning away from a relational, mutually empathic
and mutually empowering mode of being in relationship
occurs, according to Bergman, because of many forces in the
culture, particularly the traditional gender role
stereotypes described above. "Prompted by father and the
male image in the culture, the boy is heavily pressured to
disconnect to achieve maleness. Not only is he expected to
turn away from mother to do this, and not only is mother

told she has to support this, but it is bigger than merely

mother: A boy is taught to become an agent of

disconnection." (p.4)

Boys begin learning the gender role norms of emotional

disconnection after separating away from mother and trying

to identify or connect with their fathers.

> "There is a desperate need for the boy not to be
> different from someone, but to be like someone. Boys
> are supposed to be able to start to be like father, to
> connect with father, to have an empathic relationship
> with a strong and caring father. Yet the disconnection
> from empathic relationship is an injury from which the
> father himself is recovering. He too has learned not to
> listen, or to listen with a certain suspicion and if he
> does listen, not to respond. The thing that the father
> is often worst at teaching - and thinks he values least
> is movement in relationship. ... Father's role, often,
> is to show a son how to become a better agent of
> disconnection from relationship, especially from that
> with mother, to 'be a big boy,' and 'big boys don't
> cry'." (Bergman, 1990, p.5-6)

In addition to this modeling by fathers, they are often

distant or absent - removed from the ongoing mutuality of

family relationships. (Osherson, 1986)

When fathers are present and involved with sons, their

interactions are often heavily influenced by fathers'

subscriptions to traditional gender role stereotypes and

norms.

> "Fathers do have a special relationship with sons,
> teaching them how to be effective in the world, how to
> play fair, be a team member as well as a leader, how to
> uphold moral principles, as well as how to form deep
> bonds with other men and boys, bonds of friendship,
> loyalty, and love. Yet for all the strengths of the
> father-son relationship, it is less easy for fathers to
> interact around emotions, and the process of
> interaction is quite different from that of mothers and
> sons: less based on affective give-and-take,
> continuity, and working through conflict and difference

to mutual empowerment. Even when it works, it works in valuing independence and action, learning to do things out in the world. Often, it emphasizes 'success' as what a boy does not who a boy is, rarely who a boy is with others, and almost never who a boy is mutually with others." (Bergman, 1990, p.6)

The result of boys turning away from mutuality in relationships is that boys don't learn how to do it, how to be in the process with another and grow. Girls' relational development is grounded in the practice of attending and responding to others' feeling states while boys do not get much practice in empathizing this way. Without developing the knowledge and skill of empathizing and connecting, they become avoided and even devalued. Later "even its existence as a possibility [can become] denied." (p.4) Bergman sees that as development continues in "becoming a 'self-in-spite-of-relationship'" boys have less and less opportunity to practice relationship. As boys gain a developing sense of competence in the world, they develop a growing sense of incompetence in the process of relationship. This can lead to the feeling that oneself is not enough in relationships. This becomes a vicious circle - the sense of not being enough can become an impetus for further striving in non-relational areas, such as success and achievement. Over the course of childhood, "the yearning for both father and mother, and yearning for relationship in general, may become shut off, and denied. Men may wind up unaware of this yearning for connection, or left with only a dimly sensed yearning for this yearning." (p.6)

Giving up on mutually empathic and empowering relationships and the adoption of the gender role values of self-reliance and independence leads not only to a disconnection from valuing empathy but also the feeling states of others, and eventually one's own feeling states. This is likely to leave the boys less motivated to attend to, or try to find out about his own and/or other people's internal worlds - what Surrey (1987) calls the "interiority" of experience. "Over time, a boy's active curiosity about another person's feelings states may diminish. The sense of interiority itself may become devalued and denied." (Bergman, p.6)

For men, this development, carried into adult life, leaves men relatively inexperienced, unpracticed and unskilled in the kind of empathy and mutuality that satisfying intimacy requires. Men often have difficulty engaging with pleasure in the back and forth give and take of the ongoing process of relationships. There is little holding of the "relational moment" as Bergman phrases it. "While men feel connection in the moment, they often deflect it -joking, shifting their attention, physicalizing it - breaking the tension of connection, fragmenting the process temporarily." (p.7) The effort to maintain a sense of independence and self-reliance interferes with intimacy and true closeness, except, in many men's lives, during temporary lapses during sex, which may be experienced as

intimacy but not necessarily mutuality. As summarized by

Gilligan:

> "Since masculinity is defined through separation while
> femininity is defined through attachment, male gender
> identity is threatened by intimacy while female gender
> identity is threatened by separation. Thus males tend
> to have difficulty with relationships, while females
> tend to have problems with individuation." (1982, p.8)

Bergman describes a deep inner process within men which

is a further consequence of this development of a "self-in-

spite-of-relationship." He calls it "male relational dread."

This experience is a fear of what is about to happen as men

are presented with a relational moment that may be more

intimate than they are used to. It is a "deep sense of

dread, a visceral sense, literally in the gut or heart." It

is the result of men's repeatedly learning to avoid and

diminish the value of relationships. (p.8)

Because men are less skilled at attending to their

feelings and the feelings of others, in emotional

interchanges with women, men often have a different timing,

usually needing more time to sort out and express their

feelings. Bergman claims that men, when faced with women's

quicker pace and greater skill at identifying and expressing

emotions, experience relational dread. This interferes with

their staying with the "relational moment" and continuing

the interchange that could lead to a fuller sense of

mutuality. At this point in the interchange "invitation

starts to seem like demand; urgency and curiosity like

criticism." When relational dread begins to come up, "the

man's original feeling gets all mixed up with the feeling of being under pressure to respond." (p.8) This relational dread then leads to the fear and distrust of getting close to others, a sense of guilt that comes from the feeling of not being enough in relationships (from having not been enough in relationships in the past and having let others down before), a sense of incompetence and shame, and in the end paralysis in intimate situations (p.8-9).

Encountering relational dread, over and over throughout development and in adult life can deaden men's desire for relationship and even their curiosity about others. This leads to further and further isolation, less and less of one's emotional and nurturant needs being met, and the reliance on work, status, achievement and success for a sense of self-esteem. Men's relationships with each other often suffer the most. As men attempt to relate to each other, their mutual relational dread interferes with the process, neither of them being skilled at relating mutually and getting an intimate interaction started.

Gender role strain reframed with Bergman's theory

Bergman's theory of male development is useful for reframing the roots of men's gender role strain through the lens of connection and disconnection in the relational context. Bergman's theory articulates more fully Franklin's (1984) statements that the male self involves a process of negation of feminine aspects of the self and that this leads

to men being "against themselves." The traditional gender role prescriptions that a man never be vulnerable, weak, dependent, emotionally expressive or affectionate with other men can be framed as proscriptions against those behaviors and personality traits that foster and lead to emotional connections with others. Other prescriptions and norms, saying that men should be powerful, dominant, in control (of self and others), successful, looked up to, confident, self-reliant, independent, aggressive and even violent, all foster a gender identity that ignores the importance of relationships and in a number of ways precludes the possibility of mutuality in relationships. I do not wish to imply that I think all of these prescriptions and norms are inappropriate. It is just that they foster a mind-set in men that leads to men using power over others and themselves rather than developing mutuality that takes into account and enhances the emotional lives of themselves and others.

Competition, power and control issues further separate men from other men and generate fear that closeness will lead to the experience of loss. Relying only on oneself for emotional support further reinforces an orientation of disconnection leading to great emotional emptiness and lack of real fulfillment for many men. This chronic condition contributes to compulsive striving to achieve success and status to make up for perceived inner deficits and to fill the emptiness that results from not having mutual relationships.

Having learned to turn away from sharing their feelings with others and even themselves, especially feelings of inadequacy, distress or dependency, men can live for decades, or even their entire adult lives, suffering from low self-esteem that could be ameliorated through simple sharing and understanding that others share similar feelings and that they are based on unnecessary social stereotypes. Without sharing these problems with others, men become more and more isolated from others and this further contributes to a sense of personal inadequacy.

Many men rely on their one close intimate relationship with their female partners and in doing so often put an unfair burden on that relationship. Further, many men approach their partners in such a way that they unburden themselves of their emotional tensions without achieving the kind of emotional mutuality that can be empowering and deeply nourishing.

In summary, gender role strain in men can be more fully understood when men's inter- and intrapersonal orientation of disconnection is understood in the light of recent theory and research done on women's development that portrays women as more fundamentally oriented to foster and maintain mutuality in relationships. Therefore, understanding these recent developments in research and theory can help illuminate potential guidelines and interventions that can help relieve men's gender role strain by helping men achieve more connection and mutuality in their relationships with

themselves and others, particularly men. It is my belief
that enabling men impeded with relational gender role strain
to get over their fear of intimacy with other men is an
important place to start. As men begin to relate better with
other men, they can begin to feel less isolated and areas of
low self-esteem (due to comparison with gender role
stereotypes) can be addressed. One approach toward helping
men experience and develop more of an orientation of
connection with others would be to help men experience
mutuality in relationships and to develop the skills in
relating mutually. It is my hypothesis that men's
psychotherapy groups are an excellent opportunity for such
experience and development.

The next section of this literature review will look at
the literature on a changing role perspective which explores
how sociologists, psychologists and men in the men's
movement have tried to deal with gender role conflict to
date.

Changing role perspective

The changing role perspective began as men and women
recognized the difficulties of traditional gender role norms
and that they could grow beyond an acceptance of those
norms. For the last two decades, some men have been trying
to find new models of masculinity that are both less
oppressive to women and more fulfilling for themselves.
These new models of masculinity can be organized into three

categories that can be described separately: the liberated male, the androgynous male, and the anti-sexist male.

New models of masculinity that fall into the liberated male category began to arise as a result of men's liberation activities. Men began to redefine gender roles to free themselves to actualize their full potential as human beings (Baumli, 1985; Paine, 1985; Kipnis, 1991). For men, this meant freedom to integrate their emotional and feminine sides - and thus the ability to let go and experience weakness and dependency, to learn to relax and play, to be more connected to their bodies and nature, and to develop more intimate relationships with both men and women. This shift is heralded by numerous books that have appeared on therapy for men who need help in overcoming the limits of the traditional roles (Solomon & Levy, 1982; Silverberg, 1986; Fine, 1988) and by the thousands of led and unled men's gatherings that have been developed within the growing men's movement (Brooks, 1991).

The second area of new masculine models falls into the category of androgyny. As the limits of both men's and women's traditional roles became clearly identified, a new paradigm of mental health and social competence developed, that of androgyny. In transcending traditional roles, the androgynous individual ideally possessed a blend of masculine and feminine qualities (Bem, 1974). This resulted in men and women having the flexibility to call on what

traits or behaviors would be most appropriate in a given situation regardless of stereotypes and norms.

Because of the economic, political and social sanctions against individual transcendence of traditional roles, some authors (Stoltenberg, 1977; Schapiro, 1985) believe that men must go further than androgyny and become "anti-sexist" activists as well. Thus, new models of masculinity, in alignment with radical feminism, have been developed.

Psychologists focussing on gender roles have begun to focus on theories of gender role identity development which go beyond rigid adherence to polarized male and female roles. Some have identified gender role transcendence or androgyny as the highest stage or phase in this process. Pleck (1975), Block (1973) and Rebecca, Hefner & Oleshansky (1976) all proposed developmental models that apply to both men and women and involve three basic phases: (1) the acquisition or learning of traditional sex roles; (2) conformity to those roles; and (3) post conformity or sex role transcendence leading to liberation from the strains and limitations of traditional roles.

Brendan Liddell (1977) put forth the idea that men must develop what he calls "neo-masculinity" in order for an androgynous existence to be possible. He argues that men must define themselves, beyond what feminism asks of men, to reach a more authentic "Being-of-Self."

Schapiro (1986) criticizes theories of gender identity development whose end goals are autonomy and androgyny

saying that gender role transcendence (1) does not go far enough in describing how men must change if women are also to be liberated, and (2) does not consider the social changes necessary to make even androgyny itself a possibility because of the social/economic/political environment that may make it difficult if not impossible, for men and particularly women, to actually engage in a fully androgynous range of behaviors and roles. (p.65-66) In response to these considerations, Schapiro developed a model of gender identity development that goes beyond transcendence to include awareness of these societal issues and activism in creating a new society.

Though this literature points to emerging trends in thinking on gender role transcendence, little mention is made of men's difficulty with intimacy, or how to overcome it. Further, this literature says little about what it takes to develop an orientation of connection with others or how to become skilled at relating mutually.

In concert with new cultural attitudes regarding gender roles, a small body of literature suggests that men's attitudes towards intimate relationships with other men is changing and men are beginning to confide more intimately in these friendships. Isaacs (1990), interviewed adult men in mid-life (ages 37-47) about their friendships and found that their friendships assumed an important and gratifying but sometimes difficult place in their personal lives. Goldberg (1976) proposed a model of male friendship that progresses

through deepening levels of intimacy to the stage of "buddyhood." Garfinkel (1985) describes a type of male friendship called the "fifty-fifty friendship" characterized by healthy competitiveness, shared successes, trust and honesty, though he states that the attainment of this is difficult for most men. Farrell and Rosenberg (1981), in a study of 500 men at midlife, found that men at midlife increase their connections with other men and describe "genuine intimacy" in their friendships characterized by emotional expression and mutuality. In an autobiographical book on the development of one man's friendships, Miller (1983) discussed being motivated for more meaningful connections with other men, and that his own socialization and the American culture made close connection difficult. He also found a growing sense of optimism in himself and others about the state of male-to-male friendships. Though these authors point to a developing trend, again, little is said about what steps men can take to foster more of sense of the connection and mutuality they are seeking.

Summary

The above section has reflected on the literature regarding men's gender roles, their effects on men, and one theory that describes much of men's gender role conflict as rooted in an orientation to relationships based on disconnection and individuality rather than connection, interdependence and mutuality. There remains little question

as to the effect of gender role strain on intimate relationships with other men, their self-esteem and their experience of isolation and loneliness. Though there are a number of theories of gender role transcendence, and a small body of literature suggesting that men's attitudes towards close relationships with other men is changing, there is still a need to understand how men can develop more of a sense of connection with others and the abilities necessary for having relationships that are mutually empathic and empowering.

In the next section, a review of the literature on close relationships will be presented focussing on those aspects of relationships that lead to mutuality and a sense of connection with others.

Mutuality and Close Relationships

Introduction

Recent focus on the relational aspects of the individual has provided significant motivation for exploring the ways in which psychological well-being is enhanced by close relationships (Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1986). Within this literature and research, the role of mutuality in fostering relationship outcomes is emerging as an important topic for research (Clark & Reis, 1988; Genero, Surrey, Miller, Swift, & Arons, 1990; Genero, Miller, Surrey, & Baldwin, 1991). In order to provide a context in which to

understand better the experience of, and importance of, mutuality in relationships, this section will first undertake a review of the literature on close relationships in general. This review will focus on the importance of mutuality in close relationships in adult life only, as this is the specific era of developmental focus of this study. The aspects of close relationships relevant to mutuality that have been discussed include self-disclosure, social support, reciprocity and relationship awareness. Following this, a review of the literature and research on mutuality will be presented.

Close Relationships

Recent focus in psychological literature on the relational aspects of the self have pointed out the importance of intimacy in mental health, social support, and marital satisfaction. Horowitz (1979) found that the most commonly mentioned problem identified by people seeking outpatient psychotherapy is the inability to develop an intimate relationship. Other researchers have found that failure in developing intimacy in marriage is associated with the development of numerous emotional disorders (Hames & Waring, 1980), marital dissatisfaction (Waring, McElrath, Lefcoe, & Weisz, 1981) and psychosomatic symptoms (Waring, 1980).

As our understanding of intimacy has grown, its definition has evolved to a diverse set of interpersonal

processes. Central to a working definition of intimacy in current literature are the processes of self-disclosure and being responded to. Though others may define it differently, I will refer to Reis and Shaver's (1988) definition since it is somewhat comprehensive and ties into a later discussion of mutuality. They describe intimacy as process that begins as

> "one person expresses personally revealing feelings or information to another. It continues when the listener responds supportively and empathically. For an interaction to become intimate, the discloser must feel understood, validated, and cared for." (p.367)

Reis (1990) goes on to point out the mutual nature of this interaction, saying that

> "both participants' behavior depends on the others' behavior and response, as well as their own pre-existing or situationally determined motives, needs and goals." (p.16)

The concept of mutuality as described by Miller (1986) and Surrey (1985) elaborates intimacy more fully and will be described at the end of this section of the literature review. The above description will suffice for the following section.

Some authors have pointed out the benefits of having intimate relationships. Ries and Shaver (1988) argue that intimacy itself is intrinsically rewarding, that it "inherently entails lowering defenses and reducing self-doubts and self-reproach." (p.385) Erikson (1963) described how intimate relationships attained in early adult life promote creativity, productivity and emotional integration

later in life. Others have described the importance of intimate social support in mental health during stress (Lin, Dean & Ensel, 1986). The literature on loneliness suggests that, in our culture, most people's daily lives and social activity are filled with interactions devoid of intimacy and that surveys demonstrate that "when asked what they most want in their social lives, people generally mention close relationships of an intimate sort." (Ries & Shaver, 1988, p.386) In addition, rising divorce rates, single-parent families, increasing urbanism, greater geographic mobility, lesser reliance on extended families and growing career pressures all contribute to loneliness and the need for intimacy.

A growing body of literature on self-disclosure, the first step toward intimacy, and its importance will next be reviewed.

Self-disclosure. The writings of Jourard (1964) were seminal in calling attention to the importance of self-disclosure in the development of intimacy. He suggested that the disclosure of inner feelings to someone else fosters trust, caring and liking which then facilitate the deepening of closeness. Later writings elaborated on the topic of self-disclosure pointing out that it is a multi-dimensional process beyond the simple act of revealing personal facts. Morton (1978), studying married and non-married couples, found it important to differentiate between evaluative self-

disclosure (revealing personal feelings about topics) and descriptive self-disclosure (revealing self-relevant facts).

Ries and Shaver (1988) focus on the stylistic and non-verbal aspects of self-disclosure. Stylistic aspects of self-disclosure include verbal immediacy (speaking in the present and making "I" statements), relationship relevance, emotional openness and receptivity. Non-verbal aspects of disclosure include eye contact, tone of voice, body language and avoidance of intimate topics (p.373).

Research on self-disclosure has shown its importance in fostering and maintaining marital relationships. Chelune, Waring, Vosk, Sultan, and Ogden (1984) examined the relationship between marital intimacy and self-disclosure and found that self-disclosing behavior was able to account for 72% of the variance in intimacy ratings derived from a structured interview with both clinical and non-clinical married couples. Their results suggest that self-disclosure is a major covariant of intimacy but they could not identify whether it was a necessary antecedent or a consequence of intimacy. Waring, McElrath, Lefcoe and Weisz (1981) in a questionnaire study of married couples found that marital adjustment significantly correlated with expressiveness. Fitzpatrick (1987) found marital communication and satisfaction are more strongly influenced by the disclosure of feelings than by informational disclosure and Hendrick (1988) found that self-disclosure correlates positively with relationship satisfaction.

Another body of literature has focused on gender differences in self-disclosure. As mentioned above, Tschann (1990) and Sapadin (1990) found that men disclose less to their intimate friends than women, and that married men tend to disclose less to friends than unmarried men. A study by Schwartz, Sharpstein and Butler (reviewed by Clark and Reis, 1988) "found that males tend to respond to conversations about highly intimate topics by withdrawing non-verbally, whereas females tend to approach." (p.630) Summarizing current research, Hendrick (1988) reports that women are more self-disclosing than men, and women tend to disclose more personal feelings whereas men tend to disclose more about non-intimate topics. Acitelli (1988) found that married men do talk about their relationships with their wives in order to resolve conflicts but tend to not want to talk about their relationships when things are going well. Hendrick (1988) suggests that these gender differences may be due to a conflict between security and privacy needs and a need for intimacy. He suggests that "self-disclosure may foster intimacy and threaten security." (p.440) As described in the previous section on gender role strain and men's psychological development, the threat to security and privacy is likely a manifestation of men's relational dread and an orientation of disconnection in relationships resulting in avoidance of intimacy.

In addition to self-disclosure, theorists and researchers have begun to examine reciprocity in

relationship as an important element of intimacy and mutuality. The next section will review the literature on reciprocity relevant to this thesis.

Reciprocity. Some of the recent literature on interaction processes relies on equity theory that suggests that intimate relationships, "like most other kinds of relationships, are satisfying to the extent that participants' contributions (inputs) and outcomes (rewards minus costs) are perceived to be balanced." (Reis and Shaver, 1988, p.373) This focus on reciprocity has led some authors to suggest that social support contributes to one's well-being only in relationships characterized by equitable patterns of resource exchange and that an inability to reciprocate support can evoke feelings of indebtedness and/or guilt that can detract from the support received (Rook, 1987).

Rook (1987) interviewed 120 older women investigating the respondents' patterns of social exchange, the degree of reciprocity in their close relationships, and their satisfaction with those relationships. She found that exchanges that are not reciprocal between these women and their social networks were associated with greater feelings of loneliness. Those that under-benefitted and those that over-benefitted were less satisfied, and Rook suggests this is because "either [reflects] some degree of strain or lack of intimacy." (p.151) She also found that lack of

reciprocity between older women and their children was not correlated to increased or decreased positive feelings about their children, suggesting that the "meaning and importance of reciprocity are contingent on the role relations of the actors involved and on the content of their exchanges." (p.151)

The contingency on the role relations in the importance of reciprocity found by Rook was demonstrated in a series of experiments by Mills and Clark (1982) who assert that these exchange rules only apply in casual or economically oriented relationships. In a series of experiments, they showed that the type of relationship one expects with another affects one's attitudes and behaviors towards the other. Some subjects were led to believe that an attractive other was interested in being befriended (communal orientation) while others were led to believe the other was not available for a relationship (exchange orientation). When exchange conditions prevailed, subjects reacted favorably to immediate compensation for favors (Clark & Mills, 1979) felt exploited when their help was not reciprocated (Clark & Waddell, 1985) and kept track of individual inputs on jointly rewarded tasks (Clark, 1984). On the other hand, when communal relationships were anticipated, subjects did not keep track of individual inputs, and monitored the needs of their partners (Clark, Mills & Powell, 1986). In addition, those in a communal orientation did not feel exploited when there was no perceived opportunity for

reciprocation by the other (Clark, 1984). They were more likely to keep track of the other's needs and respond more readily with helping behaviors. Further, they found that in the communal orientation, "each person is concerned about the welfare of others and members assume each other does. Members follow a norm of mutual responsiveness." (Mills and Clark, 1982, p.123)

In summary, the literature on reciprocity suggests different norms are likely to be in effect when one's orientation toward a relationship is based on long-term mutuality or on short term exchange. Men's gender role norms of independence, self-reliance and suppression of vulnerable expression, along with an orientation of disconnection from interpersonal sharing, leads to an orientation of short term exchange in most of men's relationships with other men. Though this is changing in some areas, such as men's mid-life friendships, I believe that this orientation is still prevalent. This study is an exploration of how men's psychotherapy groups can help men shift to an orientation that is more "communal" and based on long-term mutuality.

Another section of the literature on close relationships has studied the psychological dimension of relationship awareness. The next section will review this literature.

Relationship awareness. Recent theorists suggest that verbal and non-verbal communications may be necessary for

the development of intimacy but are not sufficient to create intimate bonds. Chelune, Robison and Kommer (1984) suggest that an important next step involves "metacognition" arising from sharing information and experience that evolves into shared, reciprocal understanding - coming "to know the innermost, subjective aspects of another and [being] known in a like manner" (p.14). Genero, et al. (1991) suggest that the term mutuality not only "refers to the bidirectional movement of feelings, thoughts, and activities between persons in relationship," (p.1), but that "a growing body of work suggests that mutuality involves a shared sense of relationship that transcends the immediate and reciprocal gratification of needs."

Acitelli (1988), studied married couples' "relationship awareness" which she defined as "a person's thinking about interaction patterns, comparisons, or contrasts between himself or herself and the other partner in the relationship. It requires both self-awareness and a knowledge of the other,...[and] a metaperspective of the relationship." (p.186) The study found that both husbands and wives evaluated "relationship talk" as beneficial and likely to help resolve problems in conflictual situations, although, as stated above, men tend not to talk about the relationship when things are going well.

Reis and Shaver (1988), summarizing the literature and research in this area, propose that intimate relationships

involve a number of properties beyond immediate interchanges including:

1) "a temporal perspective, including a history and an imagined future;"

2) a sense of commitment;

3) "metaperspectives" on the relationships - "a sense of 'we-ness' that arises from a) "mutuality, in that each partner can, at least to some extent, share the other's experiences; and b) "recognition of common assumptions and understandings about the relationships";

4) mutuality in validation and caring and the expectation that partners will address each other's needs; and,

5) "relatively positive stable expectations and patterns of interdependence" developed from "a history of largely favorable experiences. (p.384)

Summarizing their understanding of intimacy they state "when partners sense that they mutually foster these feelings in each other [(being understood, validated and cared for)], they become more aware that their relationship is intimate and typically become more committed to it." (p.385) It is my hypothesis that this study will show that men's psychotherapy groups foster these experiences in men and that they do lead to men's deepening experience of intimacy in relationships with other men.

The next section of this literature review, before going on to a fuller description of mutuality, will focus on the importance of mutuality and social support.

Social support. The literature on social support has emphasized the association between social support and health

suggesting that social support is necessary for adaptation and that "people who fare badly under stress will benefit from an increase in social support." (Coyne & Bolger, 1990, p.148) Pennebaker and Beall (1986) found that "the failure to confide in others about traumatic events is associated with increased incidence of stress related disease" (p.274). Others have suggested a "buffering" model of social support in which a person's degree of integration into a large social network that has the interpersonal resources to respond to needs elicited by stressful events is directly related to the ability to handle stress. (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

Lin, Dean and Ensel (1986), in a large study on social support, life events and depression, found that the adverse effects of undesirable life events are "greatly reduced when an intimate and strong tie provides support during or after the event" in all age groups (p.334). In addition, psychological resources such as self-esteem and personal competence "do not mediate the effects of undesirable life events" as social support does. (p.334)

Reis (1990) differentiates among four different supportive functions of social relationships: esteem support, informational support, instrumental aid and social companionship; and states that intimacy pertains most clearly to the first two. He describes esteem support as "the belief that others see oneself as a valued, competent individual, and that interactions with them bolsters self-

esteem and self-efficacy." Further, "because people often expect that public disclosures of their deficiencies will produce losses in social esteem, as well as self-esteem, they are unlikely to reveal such needs unless a caring, sympathetic and helpful response is anticipated." (p.24) Informational support "refers to the provision of information, advice and guidance" and that "useful counsel requires knowledge of the recipient's needs, resources and personal situation." (p.24) Indeed, Lin, et al. (1986) found that it was the intimate and confiding relations and their instrumental-expressive functions that are the most important components of social support (p.334).

Other research suggests that "lack of mutuality in close relationships may preclude the active collaboration needed to cope with stressful situations, and limit opportunities for validation and positive interpersonal experiences that counteract depression." (Genero, et al., 1991, p.15) In addition, the "absence of mutuality may lead to shame, diminished self-esteem and a reduced capacity to cope." Genero, et al. (1991), developed a self-report scale yielding a quantitative measure of perceived mutuality between an adult and someone they are in an intimate relationship with, the Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire (MPDQ). Respondents (266 women and 79 men) were asked to complete the MPDQ and a questionnaire with measures of depression, social support, dyadic adjustment and a global measure of relational satisfaction. The MPDQ

has respondents rate two relationship, one with a spouse/partner and one with a close friend, from two points of view - her/his own perspective and that of the other person in the relationship. The results showed low mutuality was related to poor dyadic adjustment, low social support, relationship dissatisfaction and increased levels of depressive symptomatology.

Overall, the research suggested that higher levels of perceived mutuality correlated highly with higher levels of adjustment, satisfaction and support in close relationships, suggesting that "mutual participation in relationships may be associated with a wide range of positive mental health outcomes." (p.15) Their research also suggests that "lack of mutuality in one's closest relationships can have a highly negative psychological impact even if one is embedded within a larger network of social relationships." (p.16)

Summary. The above section has reflected on the importance of close relationships in individual well-being. It has also reviewed the importance of self-disclosure, relationship awareness, social support, one's expectations of the type of relationship one has with others, and mutuality in close relationships. The next section will explore the small and growing body of literature on the components of mutuality deriving from "self-in-relation" theory in order to delineate the context and content to be researched in this study.

Mutuality

Researchers and theorists of the Stone Center of Wellesley College, in describing "self-in-relation" theory, have proposed a relational perspective of psychological development which suggests that mutuality is based on a premise of participation in relationships which foster the growth of the relationship and that of the individuals involved. Thus, mutuality can be viewed as encompassing diverse modes of social interaction which facilitate participation in and growth through relationships (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991).

For many men, development proceeds individualistically and not in the context of relationships. As stated above, this leads to isolation, loneliness, low self-esteem and a host of other problems. Along with Bergman (1990), I believe that learning from women's orientation of growth through connection is important for men. It can help balance individuality and reduce the interpersonal aspects of gender role strain. This section will review "self-in-relation" theory's contribution to an understanding of mutuality and then suggest steps that men can take toward developing more mutuality in their relationships.

"Self-in-relation" theory and the components of mutuality. The relational perspective assumes the centrality of relationships in development and can help define the components and steps involved in developing mutuality.

Articulating these components and steps can help develop counseling strategies and interventions that will aid in fostering an orientation of connection rather than disconnection in men who have not developed these capacities.

Although the central relational processes that promote and maintain mutuality have not been clearly specified, some of its specific elements and outcomes have been outlined by relational theory and research. Genero, et al. (1991) identify six key elements of mutuality as being empathy, engagement, authenticity, zest, diversity and empowerment. Miller (1986) also cites the outcomes of greater self-knowledge, increased self-worth, a greater sense of connection and the motivation for more connection.

Empathy and engagement are activities necessary for mutuality to come about. Engagement is defined as "the focusing on one another in a meaningful way; it is characterized by shared attention, interest and responsiveness." (Surrey, 1985, p.4) Engagement can then lead to empathy.

Empathy is here defined as "a shared flow of thoughts and feelings, where each person is able to attune and connect with the other person's experience," and further that "the ability to be in relationship appears to rest on the development of the capacity for empathy in both or all persons involved." (Surrey, 1986, p.2) Kohut (1978) described empathy as "a fundamental mode of human

relatedness, the recognition of the self in the other; it is

the accepting, confirming and understanding human echo"

(p.704-705). Empathy, involves the ability to experience,

comprehend and respond to the inner state of another person.

"It requires an ability to build on the experience of

identification with the other person to form a cognitive

assimilation of this experience as a basis for response."

(Surrey, 1985, p.3) Jordan (1991a) breaks empathy down into

several components saying that "in order to empathize, one

must have a well-differentiated sense of self in addition to

an appreciation of and sensitivity to the difference as well

as sameness of the other. ... [It] begins with some general

motivation for interpersonal relatedness that allows the

perception of the other's affective cues followed by

surrender to affective arousal in oneself." In addition,

empathy involves surrender to feelings, active cognitive

structuring and flexible self-boundaries that allow

"temporary identification with the other's state, during

which one is aware that the source of the affect is in the

other." (p.69)

Engagement and empathy then can lead to mutual

authenticity and greater self-knowledge. Authenticity in

relationship "describes a process of coming closer to

knowing and sharing each other's experiences; recognizing

the other for who s/he is and being recognized for who one

is." (Genero, et al., 1991, p.4) This comes about from the

interplay of the full and clear expression of each person's

thoughts and feelings. Central to this interplay is the ability, on each person's part, to understand and articulate one's inner experience and to be able to represent it as it arises. As each person responds s/he is challenged to be understood fully, forcing him/her to understand and articulate his/her thoughts and feelings more fully and clearly. In the end, this results in each person having a more accurate picture of her/himself and the other person. (Miller, 1986, p.6) Surrey describes this as "the ongoing challenge to feel 'emotionally real.' This is the challenge of relationship which provides the energy for growth - the need to be seen and recognized for who one is and the need to see and understand the other with ongoing authenticity." (1986, p.9)

Out of the experience of shared authenticity comes increased zest. Zest "refers to the energy releasing quality of mutual relationships." (Genero, et al., p.4) Miller describes it as "an increase - as opposed to a decrease - in a feeling of vitality, aliveness, energy." (1986, p.7) She goes on to suggest that authentic mutual interchange leads to a basic feeling of being in emotional connection with the other person. As a result of this connection, each person gains in "courage - the ability to put forward her feelings and thoughts and to stand by them. Further, each person communicates caring and concern for the other by going through this process with them." (Miller, p.8) These increases in caring, concern, courage and connection all

contribute to an increased feeling of zest from the interchange.

An important component of an authentic interchange is diversity. Diversity "refers to the process of expressing and 'working through' different perspectives and feelings." (Genero, et al., p.4) A few aspects of mutual interchanges are not clearly articulated by these theorists, and I assume they are taken for granted. They are the components that make up the valuing of another's feelings and thoughts that leads to diversity. Valuing another's feelings and thoughts include the processes of recognizing them as different from or similar to one's own, accepting them as valid for that person, finding what is valuable and truthful in that perspective for that person, and then respecting it, at least as that other person's feelings and thoughts. These are activities that I have found one cannot take for granted with men (who struggle with competition, power and control issues) when they are sharing with each other. Perhaps it can be taken for granted more often with women, and perhaps this is one area in which men and women are different.

With respect, authenticity, and increase in zest, the individuals can experience themselves as more worthwhile, leading to an increase in self-esteem, not only because the content of their conversation may be empowering, but because they feel valued and worthwhile in the interchange itself. The responsiveness present in mutual authentic interchanges

conveys to each person a picture of him/herself as someone worthy of recognition and attention. Miller states:

"...we all develop a sense of worth only because another person(s) conveys attention to, and recognition of, our experience. In a basic sense, we must feel that others recognize our existence - and recognizing our existence cannot occur in the abstract. It means recognizing us as we are experiencing whatever we are experiencing as we go through life. Otherwise we cannot feel worthy at all." (1986, p.10)

Men have suffered countless wounds to their self-esteem just in the way they have been responded to by others, particularly other men. When their thoughts and feelings are not recognized, accepted, or even responded to, men come away labeling their feelings and thoughts as unacceptable or "bad." They feel they must hide and suppress what is occurring naturally inside, and this can lead to lowered self-esteem. The resulting avoidance of sharing oneself can lead to a global sense of being unrecognized and unseen by others, especially by other men. Through authentic and mutual interchanges with other men, men can learn that their feelings are among those felt by others and are acceptable and worthwhile.

Mutuality leads to empowerment - "a capacity for action whereby each person can have an impact upon the other and the relationship." (Genero, et al., 1991, p.5) In the responsiveness, caring and respect given in mutuality, each person is empowered to act in the immediacy of the moment by each other. "Action in the immediate interplay is an extremely valuable form of action and a form which is often

overlooked," according to Miller. "It is the key form of action in its consequences for psychological development because it is the way we affect each other. It is the way we play a part in augmenting or diminishing other people - and the relationship. ... as a result of the action within the immediate interplay [each person is] empowered to act in realms beyond." (1986, p.9)

Further, empowering support is much more easily received when individuals have been authentically known and responded to by those giving the support. Without this authenticity and mutuality, empowering support can be perceived as being condescending, humiliating, and/or infantilizing for men because of traditional gender role expectations, especially if that support is being given by another man.

Mutuality in relationships can lead to a greater sense of connection with others and the motivation for more connection. Increased zest, self-knowledge, self-esteem and the feelings of respect, caring and concern for and from others are experiences people generally want more of. Having found an arena to have these experiences - mutually empowering relationships - one tends to seek them out more. In individual relationships, the wonderful feelings of valuing and caring for another leads to heightened desire for more contact with that person. Then, as Miller points out, "the motivation for more connection becomes generalized to other people, beyond the person directly involved. ...

[One] way of thinking about the criteria for growth fostering interactions may be: Does this interaction lead to a greater sense of connection with the person(s) directly involved rather than less? And does this interaction lead to a motivation for more connection in general rather than the reverse - that is a decline in motivation for connection or a turn toward isolation." (1986, p.11)

Finally, Jordan (1991b) points out that not all interchanges are mutual in mutual relationships and that there is a need for sufficient mutuality in important areas so that all members feel that their need for mutuality is met. She suggests that members must take "mutual relational responsibility" where "both (or all) partners must put attention and energy into caring for the relationships as well as the individuals in it.

Steps in the development of mutuality in men. Integrating the above relational perspective with an awareness of men's gender role conflict makes it possible to identify steps toward greater mutuality in men with varying degrees of ability in relating. Since this paper is focusing on men's relationships with other men, particularly heterosexual white men in our society, I will limit my discussion to those relationships. Discussion of men's relationships with women would entail numerous other dimensions of interpersonal relating that are beyond the scope of this paper.

The beginning steps leading toward the possibility of mutuality outlined above are engagement and empathy. Given men's gender role conflict, there are a number of components and issues involved in achieving genuine engagement and empathy.

Surrey (1986) defined engagement as focussing on one another with shared attention, interest and responsiveness. In order for men to focus attention and interest on each other for the purpose of sharing inner personal information, men must first be willing to overcome some of their fear of other men and their relational dread. Overcoming this fear requires that men be willing to communicate about their inner experiences with some degree of authenticity and vulnerability. For those who have turned away from connection with their inner selves, becoming aware of one's own thoughts and feelings takes guidance and patience. Many men are able to identify their inner states given enough time, yet avoid doing so in the company of other men. Many men never learn that it can be safe to do so with other men without having experienced it in a safe structured setting where they are encouraged to take the time to articulate their feelings and thoughts and to express them with authenticity.

Because of men's avoidance of vulnerability with men, they often will deflect emotional communication with interruption, joking, discounting or ignoring behaviors. Because of men's conditioned competitiveness, they tend to

"self-listen" (Moreland, 1976). Self-listening is the process of listening to others for the purpose of sharing one's own experiences and reactions and not for the purposes of genuinely appreciating what the other is experiencing. Engagement for men caught up in these behaviors also requires that men learn to allow others to speak, hearing what they have to say without interrupting, and letting the other person know that they have been heard and understood.

Allowing others to speak and reflecting understanding back to them requires that men be able to take the other person's perspective, one of the important components contributing to empathy. In order to empathize with other men, individuals must be able to identify with the others' experiences, not only with others' perspectives but the feelings and meanings those perspectives have for them. This requires the ability to recognize differences and similarities between others' and one's own experiences, honoring and allowing individual diversity.

Because of gender role socialization, men have varying degrees of difficulty reaching empathy at the stage where honoring diversity is important. Because of competition, self-listening and a socialized need to be "right," men often do not take the time or effort to recognize differences, let alone accept or respect them, find the value in them and then validate that value for the other before going on to assert differences in perceptions. Men, at this stage of development, therefore need help in

learning to listen for differences, and then to recognize, accept and/or respect them, and finally, to validate them for other men.

Once this diversity is honored, individuals then can be encouraged to go another step towards empathy by taking the time to identify with the feeling and meaning of the other person's experience. This requires an assimilation of the other person's communication into one's own feelings and experience. For men who have turned away from connection with others as well as their own inner experiences, this is often a very difficult process that takes much guidance and patience in learning. It requires an environment and structure such as a men's psychotherapy group for concentration and attention to the development of these skills without other distraction.

The next step toward empathy requires a meaningful response to the other person which communicates understanding, identification, validation and a sharing of one's own feeling response. It is very easy for men, even if they have identified and empathized internally, to immediately respond by expressing their individual differences, giving advice or changing the subject. Learning to first reflect and validate the other person and to share one's own feeling reactions runs counter to gender role socialization that trains men to be instrumentally supportive and to avoid any expression of vulnerability or emotionality. It is often an event that is the hardest for

men as it becomes their first step in acknowledging and working toward connection, counteracting a very long-standing orientation of disconnection from other men.

Receiving this communication from other men is often even more difficult for the person who originally expressed themselves and is now being responded to. Men have been invalidated, humiliated, discounted and/or ignored by other men for so many years that many find it very hard to trust what they are hearing. The empathic response from the other is often completely missed, and they may go on speaking as if no one has responded. With guidance, men can learn to take in such feedback, and in the context of a structured safe setting, begin to learn to recognize and trust empathic feedback when it is given.

Summarizing the steps and components of developing mutuality between adult men, it is useful to sort them into three groups corresponding to 1) steps of engagement; 2) steps of empathy; and 3) further components of mutuality which I simply call the benefits of mutuality.

The first group of steps to mutuality comprising men's challenges in engagement include:

1) overcoming enough fear of men and relational dread to begin engaging with other men;

2) being able to or learning to articulate one's feelings and thoughts;

3) a willingness to communicate those feelings and thoughts to other men with authenticity;

4) genuinely listening to other men; and

5) communicating to the other person that they have been heard.

The steps necessary for empathy fall into the second group and include:

1) taking the other person's perspective;

2) identifying with the other person's experience;

3) recognizing and honoring the differences and similarities between the other person and oneself;

4) communicating respect, understanding, and validation of the other person's experience;

5) allowing oneself to be emotionally touched by the other's sharing;

6) sharing of one's own feeling response; and

7) receiving such empathic support from other men.

The third group includes other components of mutuality described above by relational theory combined with an understanding of men's gender role conflict. These are benefits that would develop as interactions move beyond the stages of engagement and empathy. They add additional motivation for seeking out and continuing such mutual interactions. The resulting components and benefits include:

1) increased authenticity: recognizing others for who they really are and being recognized for who one really is;

2) increased awareness of the vulnerable and emotional sides of other men;

3) increased self-knowledge and self-acceptance as a man;

4) increased zest: an increase in a sense of aliveness and vitality from the interactions along with feelings of caring and concern for and from other men;

5) increased self-esteem: men feel valued, respected and cared for through the interactions with other men and devalue themselves less as the unreasonable demands of gender role socialization become demystified;

6) empowerment: in the immediate relationships and in relating beyond the immediate;

7) less fear of other men in general and a decrease in relational dread with others, including women;

8) a greater sense of connection with other men, oneself and a desire for more connection beyond the immediate interactions; and,

9) increased willingness and desire to take responsibility for the mutuality in intimate relationships with other men and with women.

The above mentioned steps towards mutuality are complex and multi-faceted. They do not happen sequentially or in an ordered way. I have attempted to simplify them as much as possible, and further research will clarify other steps that need to be articulated. Men, at different levels of development and with different life experiences, are more comfortable with some steps of mutuality than others and more skilled at some than others. This research asked men who participated in men's psychotherapy groups how such groups have contributed to their development towards mutuality with men and if that development has generalized to other relationships beyond the men's group experience. In addition, this study sought to understand what men's perceptions were of what happened in such group that they feel contributed to greater mutuality and connection in their lives. This information can lead to a greater

understanding of what men find useful in men's psychotherapy groups and how leaders can more effectively run them.

<u>Summary</u>

This section of the literature review has looked at the importance of close relationships, their main aspects, and the components that make up mutuality in intimate relationships according to self-in-relation theory. Although this theory derives from theories of women's development, combining it with awareness of men's limitations in mutuality due to modern gender roles has led to the delineation of steps men can take toward greater mutuality in intimate relationships, particularly with men.

In the next section, I will review the literature on men's psychotherapy groups that have as one of their goals to help men overcome gender role socialization and achieve more mutuality with other men.

<u>Men's Psychotherapy Groups</u>

As awareness of gender specific issues increases, sociologists and psychologists are developing methods of addressing clients in individual and group counseling. The current goal of most traditional therapies has been to help men achieve the gender role stereotypes more effectively. Recently, new therapeutic approaches that take gender role strain into account are being developed (Scher, Stevens, Good, & Eichenfield, 1987; Good, Gilbert & Scher, 1990). An

excellent review of the research and literature on gender aware counseling in individual psychotherapy can be found elsewhere (Mintz & O'Neil, 1990).

With the emergence of the men's movement, numerous authors have focussed on men's alienation from other men and have suggested that men find ways of being together where they can 1) be emotionally honest and vulnerable with one another, share their grief and sorrow, and feel deeply connected with each other; 2) confront cultural myths that are constraining; and, 3) support each other in being primarily involved in fathering so that children can experience them as models of nurturance and support (Bly, 1982; Brod, 1987; Kimmel, 1987; Meade, 1989; Isaacs, 1990). To meet these needs, clinicians have begun developing and running men's psychotherapy groups which are all-male psychotherapy groups which have as one of their purposes to educate men about gender role stress and to help alleviate it rather than just helping men conform to traditional gender roles (Stein, 1982; Heppner, 1983; Silverberg, 1986; Rabinowitz & Cochran, 1987). Various authors have reported the numerous benefits of these groups (Wong, 1978; Washington, 1979, 1982; Heppner, 1981; Carney, Taylor & Stevens, 1986) and these benefits will be described below. This research focusses on men's individual experiences in men's groups and is not a study in group psychotherapy per se. As such, the literature on group psychotherapy including group outcome studies will not be reviewed. A summary of

current literature and research in this area can be found

elsewhere (McReynolds, 1981; Dies & MacKenzie, 1983; Kaul &

Bednar, 1986; Randall & Wodarski, 1989).

Many authors have described developmental stages in

group process (Tuckman, 1965; Schutz, 1973; Bennis &

Shepard, 1956; Bion, 1959; Banet, 1976). As this study is

not on group therapy per se, these theories will not be

reviewed here. However, one theory that specifically applies

to men's psychotherapy groups is relevant to this study as

it describes what men, struggling with gender role strain,

go through as such a group develops. Rabinowitz (1991),

citing the examples of men's psychotherapy groups described

by Rabinowitz and Cochran (1987), described a four-stage

developmental sequence that ongoing men's psychotherapy

groups usually progress through resulting in deepening

intimacy and mutuality.

> "The first stage is characterized by interpersonal
> anxiety, intellectualizing, and a desire to avoid
> conflict. The second stage is represented by
> ambivalence about self-disclosure, reliance on previous
> patterns of communication, and resistance to change.
> Once the group members feel more secure in the setting,
> the third stage is marked by interpersonal conflict
> based upon individual differences in style, attitude,
> and cultural background. Working through interpersonal
> and emotional conflict paves the way for changing long-
> standing maladaptive patters of interaction, ... The
> final stage involves an acceptance of individual
> differences, genuine displays of affection, and the
> generalization of emotional and interpersonal learning
> to relationships outside the group setting." (p.574)

The literature on men's psychotherapy groups describes

numerous purposes and outcomes (gleaned from verbal reports

of leaders and participants) that occur in such groups as
the following:

1. Such groups help members understand how many of the
problems involved in being a man are a function not of
intrapsychic phenomena but rather of traditional societal
roles which serve to keep men isolated and disconnected from
others and himself. (Stein, 1982; Silverberg, 1986)

2. Participation in such groups represents a statement
of non-traditional male values going against socialized
self-reliance and disconnection. (Stein, 1983) This is
often the first opportunity for men to affiliate with men of
similar values and to find out that their values, such as
valuing emotional openness and connection with other men,
are not unacceptable.

3. There is a breakdown of isolation with the discovery
that other men experience similar feelings, problems, fears,
anxieties, dreams and hopes. (Heppner, 1983; Silverberg,
1986)

4. Through the groups' acceptance of non-stereotypical
masculine feelings, the individual members gradually come to
accept the validity of such feelings, i.e. dependency,
sexual concerns, and other areas difficult for men to talk
about. (Heppner, 1982; Silverberg, 1986)

5. Men learn how their behavior with other men is
functional and dysfunctional, both with the men in the group
and with the significant men in their lives (Heppner, 1983;
Stein, 1983). Men get the opportunity to observe behaviors

and attitudes modeled by the group leaders and other members of the group and thus become aware of different and possibly more effective behavior patterns (Heppner, 1981). Thus, such groups provide a "sheltered workshop" (Wong, 1978) where men can experiment with new behaviors and attitudes and get immediate feedback, reinforcement and support for them. "For many men the group becomes a safe laboratory (and for some men the only safe place) to learn about themselves and to be vulnerable with other people." (Heppner, 1982)

6. It is also reported that these groups help men learn new patterns of relating to women. (Stein, 1983) Men explore non-traditional ways of relating with women, such as establishing relationships based on sharing rather than dominating or control, and relating to women not as sex objects but as human beings. (Silverberg, 1986)

7. These groups help men learn alternative ways of relating with other men that is more intimate including self-disclosure, introspection and vulnerability, leading to an alteration in the nature of male-male relationships by promoting caring, friendship and intimacy. Men tend to rely on women to express emotions and provide nurturance. In men's groups, men are forced to learn to express their own feelings and to care for, support and nurture others. (Stein, 1982; Silverberg, 1986)

8. Men learn more about other men and like them better as people. In the process they grow to like themselves more (Heppner, 1981). One participant commented after a group,

"It's a shame that all my life I've been taught that I could love only half of the human race, the female half. I'm really grateful that I'm now free of that limitation on my life." (Lewis, 1978, p.119)

9. Men get the needed support and empowerment to make changes they want to make in their lives. Sternbach (1987) describes the majority of men who have participated in his groups to "have been touched and moved in their inner process, in the quality of their relatedness, and in a number of real life choices and tasks."

Summarizing the non-research literature on men's psychotherapy groups through the lens of "self-in-relation" theory, this literature suggests that these groups 1) provide an environment where men must learn to engage and empathize with each other, 2) help some men learn to be more self-disclosing, caring supportive and intimate with other men, 3) help some men feel less isolated (more connected), more self-accepting, and more accepting of other men as a product of greater engagement and empathy, 4) help some men experience increased self-knowledge, personal empowerment and increased intimacy with men and women, and, 5) point out the role which gender norms have in perpetuating an orientation of separation and disconnection in men. This study will test some of these assertions and others relating to mutuality in relationships, and examine group members' perceptions of what enabled such changes to take place in such groups.

There is a small body of literature reporting research done on men's psychotherapy groups. The little that exists says little about the development of men's relational abilities or of mutuality in relationships. Rabinowitz (1991) describes a men's therapy group where men hugging each other seems to facilitate self-disclosure and interpersonal communication. Swenson and Elliott (1987) conducted a study of a nine man in-patient group (not focused on relieving gender role strain) and their results do not mention much about improvement in men's relationships. A thematic analysis of discussions during group meetings revealed that the men discussed conflicts centered around dependency, fear of aggression in interpersonal and sexual relationships, and the absence of a nurturing and sustaining father in their development. The group leaders focussed on self-assertiveness training and exploration of male-female relationships using transference interpretations. The leaders concluded that the men benefitted from the group because three of the men returned to school after long absences and two others resumed careers with less anxiety than they had before the group. This group did not directly address issues relating to the development of mutuality in relationships.

Sage (1983) did a phenomenological study of a men's psychotherapy group co-led by women using feminist consciousness and Jungian analytical psychology to structure and interpret the group process. The co-leaders used Jungian

interpretation of fantasy and dreams focussing particularly on the archetypes of the Anima and the Feminine. Using case reports of the participants, the study found that the issues of "Mother transference, intimate relationships, fathers and authority, and masculine development emerged as major subjects of the group dialogue." (p.i)

Reviewing the results of Sage's study, she reports that the group's impact upon its participants ranged from very little observable impact to significant traceable development, though no mention of why there was such a range was given. (p.178) "For some of the men, issues of relationship were resolved or clarified as they became more aware and expressive of their feelings." (p.178) Sage suggests that those men whose relationships were improved were able to identify and overcome irrational helplessness and control issues originating in their childhood "mother complex." This led to greater awareness of, and honoring of, the men's personal needs. They were then also "better able to honor the needs of [their] partners" leading to greater intimacy. These men, therefore, benefitted from this men's psychotherapy group with greater self-awareness, self-acceptance, and improved ability to perceive and be empathic with the needs of their partners. (p.179)

Some clinicians have researched short term men's psychotherapy groups aimed at a specific population or a specific set of learning content. These authors cite many of the benefits described above and will not be reviewed here

in this section on research since they were anecdotal
reports, were not formally researched, and did not
specifically address men's psychotherapy groups (Rosenbaum,
1986; Currie, 1983; Buckley, Miller and Rolfe, 1983, Adams,
1988, Taubman, 1986; Adams and McCormick, 1989; and Smets
and Cebula, 1987; on groups for male perpetrators of sexual
abuse or domestic violence; Wolf, 1987; on a group for bi-
sexual men; Kus and Bozett, 1985; on a gay man's self-
actualizing group; Lee, 1987; on a group training for
African-American males; and, Bruckner and Johnson, 1987; on
groups for male victims of childhood sexual abuse).

One recently published study of a workshop formatted
men's group bears some relevance to this study as it
describes how men can learn to become more emotionally
expressive as a result of a short term men's group. Moore
and Haverkamp (1989) studied measured increases in male
emotional expressiveness following a ten week multi-modal
group intervention based on Social Learning Theory
principles with 28 men between the ages of 30 and 50. In
this post-test only control group design, the men were
administered scales which measure 1) subjects' perceptions
of how often they experience love, hate, happiness, and
sadness, and, 2) the extent to which subjects report they
express those four emotions. In addition, a written
performance test was rated for expression of feelings in
response to reading descriptions of certain situations. In
response to seeing video tapes, a behavioral test of

emotional expressiveness was given where men were required
to express their feelings verbally. The results led the
authors to conclude that men can learn to be more verbally
expressive of their feelings and that awareness of emotion
is a "necessary but not sufficient condition for" the
expression of emotion. (p.516) Their study suggests that men
can learn to be more emotionally expressive in a group
environment yet need adequate structure and encouragement to
engage in intimate relationships with others outside their
group.

In summary, the small body of research literature on
men's psychotherapy groups reports that 1) one group that
did not confront gender role norms did not report
improvement in men's mutuality or connection with others; 2)
hugging can facilitate self-disclosure in men's
psychotherapy groups; 3) in a short term intervention men
can learn to be more emotionally expressive; and 4) in a
Jungian style men's psychotherapy group, men experienced
increased self-awareness, self-acceptance and improved their
abilities to perceive and to be empathic with the needs of
their female partners. Little has been researched about the
effects of men's psychotherapy groups on men's abilities in
relating mutually, or about any change in men's experiences
of feeling more connected with other men. There is therefore
more to be learned about whether men's psychotherapy groups
help men in a wide range of steps towards mutuality and
connection in relationships, particularly with men. More

should also be learned about what men perceive as occurring in such groups that promotes this change.

It is hoped that this study will supply additional data to the small body of literature on men's psychotherapy groups and their impact on men's relational abilities. An attempt will be made to understand the qualitative experiences of the individuals interviewed on this subject. Similar to the study by Sage which has yielded the most information on this subject to date, this study has been done using a phenomenological methodology allowing the individuals to speak for themselves about their experiences in men's psychotherapy groups.

Summary

The literature presented above provides evidence that suggests that men suffer from isolation, loneliness, low self-esteem and alienation from other men due to a relational orientation of disconnection from intimacy that is overly individualistic. Evidence has also been presented that supports the importance of close relationships in general, between men specifically, and the important role mutuality plays in those relationships. Further, some preliminary evidence suggests that men's psychotherapy groups can be effective in helping some men develop more mutuality in relationships. It appears that little is known about the specific focus of this study - what aspects of mutuality men's psychotherapy groups help to men develop and what men perceive helped that development in those groups.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to understand better the impact that men's psychotherapy groups have on men's experiences of mutuality and connection with other men. Some of the specific hypotheses to be researched included: 1) that such groups help men experience mutuality with other men and develop skills in doing so beyond the confines of the groups; 2) that an increase in the experience of and skill in relating mutually would correspond with a shift in men's orientations towards other men in the direction of desiring and pursuing more connection; and, 3) that those changes are more likely to occur in groups that reach the latter, more cohesive stages of group development. The study also sought to discover what happens in such groups that facilitates those changes.

Since little research had been done in this area, a methodology was chosen that would open up new questions and themes for further understanding and research, what Giorgi calls the "practice of science within the 'context of discovery' rather than in the 'context of verification'" (1985b, p.14). Thus, this study is an exploratory investigation of the topic to be researched.

The ideal in psychological research has been modeled after research methods of the natural sciences. Through

laboratory settings and quantification methods, the goal has been to articulate general laws which are universal and independent of specific contexts. Phenomenology proposes a philosophy counterposed to this quantitative view. Qualitative researchers believe that many important aspects of experienced phenomena are "either overlooked or severely distorted because the methods of the natural sciences were invented primarily to deal with the phenomena of nature and not experienced phenomena." (Giorgi, 1985a, p.1)

Central to this philosophy is the belief that there is no duality between people and their world, that the individual and his/her world "co-constitute" each other (Valle and King, 1978, p.8), and therefore one cannot strip context from research. As a listener, the researcher becomes an important context through which a research subject's experience can be described and understood. The purpose of phenomenological method is "to do justice to the lived aspects of human phenomena, and to do so, one first has to know how someone actually experienced what has been lived." (Giorgi, 1985a)

Qualitative methods enable us to explore concepts whose essence may be lost in other research approaches, such as one's sense of connection with others, and the methodology chosen allows this subject to be studied as defined and experienced by the men in the study (Bogdan & Bilken, 1982). It was my belief that the research would be most valuable if it 1) allowed each subject as much freedom as possible to

respond to the research area and to minimize the influence of the research method, 2) delved as deeply as possible into the thoughts, feelings, memories and experiences of the men in this study to understand their subtle shifts in experience, and 3) articulated the experiences of men as personally as possible.

The advantages of such a model of research for a study of the impact of men's psychotherapy groups on men's experiences of connection and mutuality are compelling ones. On a philosophical level, such an approach runs counter to the male gender role stereotypes of independence, distance and control implied in quantitative research. Furthermore, the topic to be researched required a degree of trust, self-disclosure and intimacy between men, which in themselves are stereotypically difficult, and consequently required a methodology which engendered trust, self-disclosure and intimate sharing. Also, I suspected that sharing openly about their deeper, more vulnerable and less socially acceptable feelings about other men was an unusual experience for the subjects and I wanted to provide as much safety as possible. As a psychotherapist and groups leader I have developed interviewing skills which allowed me to develop rapport and some sense of connection with the men in the study. It enabled me to get a qualitative sense of the data being presented through non-verbal communication. Last, and perhaps most important, this methodology is compatible with my own personal and professional philosophy.

Concerns about the reliability of qualitative research have been raised. Phenomenological research is an inter-subjective process in which the researcher is assumed to play an active role in the constitution of the actual data. Thus, "the interviewers can be influenced by what they would like to see and hear" (Neimeyer and Resnikoff, 1982). Others have criticized this method saying that subjects can be influenced by insights stimulated by the interview, and by their wanting to please the interviewer. The process is also limited by the ability of the subjects to recall accurately both their behaviors and thoughts.

The reliability of the data generated by qualitative research is judged by different standards as oppposed to the data generated by natural scientific method. Reliability is not dependent on whether the data can be exactly duplicated in another setting because the data are dependent on the context in which they occur. The judgment of reliability is based on the elements of the actual strategies for collecting, coding, analysis and presenting of the data. Thus, if any other researcher assumes the attitude described by the researcher he should be able to perceive and understand the same meaning even though he may not agree with the researcher's conclusions. Reliability is measured by how much one can "do justice to the lived aspects of human phenomena" and whether the basic themes described in the research can be understood and recognized by another researcher assuming the same attitude. (Giorgi, 1985b)

Concern about reliability regarding the accuracy of subjects' perceptions of past events are addressed by understanding that the methodology is not concerned with ultimate, objective truth but rather understanding the actual lived experience as perceived by the subjects. It is hoped that the researcher, developing rapport with the interviewees, will lessen the interviewees' inclination to provide socially acceptable information and provide the researcher with authentic thoughts and feelings about the research topic.

Questions about the reliability of this methodology also extend to the subjective role of the researcher and how he may bias the data. The qualitative researcher must be aware of distortion produced by his/her biases and presuppositions and s/he must be as clear as possible and unbiased with subjects and in interpreting the data. (Bogdan & Bilken, 1982). This is compensated for by the researcher's statement of subjectivity elucidating the researcher's biases and presuppositions so that they may be "bracketed" or put aside.

> "In order to bracket one's preconceptions and presuppositions, ... one must 'lay out' these assumptions so that they appear in as clear a form as possible to oneself." (Valle & King, 1978, p.12)

Therefore, a statement of my personal biases and presuppositions are included at the end of this section on methodology.

Design of the Research

In this exploratory study, the central purpose was the identification and description of a particular phenomena: the impact of men's psychotherapy groups on men's experiences of mutuality and connection with other men. As such, the methodology was qualitative and involved the in-depth interviewing of a small group of men who have participated in such groups. The design of the study adhered to phenomenologically based methods to generate rich descriptive data that can be coded and analyzed. Data was generated through semi-structured interviews of ten men who have participated in men's psychotherapy groups. The interviews were unstructured to some degree to allow the subjects to determine the flow of the interview, and structured with open-ended guiding questions to ensure that the topic of the research was adequately covered. The interviews were conducted in a fairly informal manner in order to enhance rapport with the subjects and to allow them to describe their experiences in their own terms.

The interviewees

The sampling was done by a purposeful method rather than by a random technique. Qualitative research must rely on "theoretical sampling" in which the researcher "studies individuals with certain characteristics and generalizes only to that population" (Neimeyer and Resnikoff, 1982,

p.78). Ten men were recruited for this investigation. They met the following criteria:

1) Caucasian and American-born. Variables that may have been potentially confounding, such as race and culture were avoided as much as possible. While this limited the sample and thus the generalizability of the results, homogeneity was desirable for the sake of clarity with such a small sample.

2) Heterosexuality. It is assumed that homosexual and bi-sexual men, due to the increased possibility of sexualization, may have less gender role strain regarding connection and mutuality with other men than heterosexual men in this culture. This criterion was imposed to lessen the likelihood of confusion that may have arisen between sexualized and non-sexualized types of mutual relating.

3) No mental health professionals. In order to tap the subjective experience of the interviewees as distinct from theoretical knowledge, the men should preferably be naive with respect to the theoretical biases of this study.

4) Interviewees have participated in an on-going men's psychotherapy group. The group will have had as one of its purposes to help men understand the effects of gender roles on their personal conflicts and will have met weekly over an extended period of time.

5) Interviewees participated in an on-going men's psychotherapy group for a minimum of six-months. My experience as a group leader for many years has shown me that the initial months of membership, for many men, reflect what Rabinowitz (1991) described as anxiety, intellectualizing and avoidance of conflict regardless of the stage of development the group as a whole has attained. I believed that a minimum of six months was needed for these men to fully participate in the other stages of group development characterized by dealing with differences, exploring maladaptive perceptions and behaviors and making changes in themselves and their relationships with others. Though many changes can occur in shorter time periods (as shown by Moore and Haverkamp in their study of emotional expressiveness) this study is also exploring any changes that may occur in men's orientation towards relationships and I felt that long-standing orientations take, on the average, at least six months to change.

Mode of Selection

The interviewees were found through a two step process. The first step was to contact clinicians who were currently running men's psychotherapy groups in the Boston area. They were asked if their groups meet the criteria of a men's psychotherapy group as described in this study and if they would recommend any present or past participants to the study that meet the criteria for interviewees mentioned above (see Appendix A). If the answers to those questions was affirmative, the clinician was sent a letter describing the study (see Appendix B) along with materials for prospective interviewees including 1) a letter for interviewees describing the study (see Appendix C), 2) the demographic information form (see Appendix D) to be filled out, and 3) a postmarked letter addressed to the researcher. The clinician was asked to forward these materials to group members who expressed an interest in participating in the study.

The second step involved contacting potential interviewees. Interviewees who returned the demographic form were contacted by telephone to see if there were any unanswered questions about the study, to assure the interviewee about the confidentiality of the interview, and to set up an appointment. The potential interviewee was also asked to reflect on the relationships with the men in his life, on his experiences in the men's psychotherapy group,

and what changes he felt had taken place in his relationships with other men as a result of the group.

The purpose of requesting such reflection prior to the interview was to encourage a fuller participation. In this way, interviewees were be asked to be co-researchers with myself, for as Colaizzi (1978) states, the best qualitative research

> "dispenses with researchers and subjects and takes place among co-researchers...[Moreover] the full participation in the dialogual approach engenders contacting the co-researchers, not as researchers but as persons." p.69)

The potential interviewees were also told in the letter that the interview would be approximately 1 1/2 hours in length and that it would be taped. He was told to expect another call within a week following the letter when a commitment to the interview would be requested and arranged if he was still interested.

The Interview

The interview began by my thanking the interviewee for his participation. I then restated the purpose of the research and asked the interviewee to read and sign an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix E) and answered any questions regarding confidentiality. The interviewees were informed that the interview was to focus on their own experiences and that I would be happy to share my own personal experiences if they requested I do so. In addition, they were informed that I would ask open-ended questions and

that I would respond as little as possible so as not to
overly influence what they would say.

These introductory statements helped the interviewees
feel at ease and ready for the interview and an air of
openness and vulnerability was be established early on in
most of the interviews. At that point, the tape recorder was
turned on and the interview began.

The interview style involved guided conversations in
order to elicit rich, detailed data for analysis. It began
with a statement and a specific open-ended question that
enabled the interviewee the freedom to structure his own
responses. The opening questions were general and non-
specific and enabled the interviewee to ease into the
interview and to allow the research topic to be
spontaneously discussed in whatever manner the interviewee
felt comfortable with. The initial statement and questions
were as follows:

> This research is aimed at understanding how men's
> psychotherapy groups impact men's perceptions of their
> relationships with other men.

> Can you tell me why you decided to join the men's
> group?

> What has been most valuable to you about this
> experience?

> Have there been any changes over the course of your
> participation in your men's psychotherapy group in your
> relationships with the men in the group or in your life
> outside the group?

Following these questions, the researcher listened
carefully, taking notes about changes that were mentioned.

At an appropriate pause in the interview, the researcher referred to his notes, and regarding the changes mentioned, ask the following question:

"Regarding ... [stated change] ... what occurred during the course of the group that contributed to that change taking place?"

An interview guide was developed in order to outline the general content areas to be covered in the guided interview (see Appendix F). The questions on the guide were asked if their content was not spontaneously given. The guide was not always followed in the actual process of the interview but acted as a checklist for the researcher, providing assurance that the subject was adequately addressed. As few notes as possible were taken during the interview so that the researcher maintained rapport with and responded empathically to the interviewee to foster the flow of information and deepen the sharing.

Upon completion of the interview, the interviewee was asked to comment on his experience of the interview and asked if there were any feedback about the interview or the interviewer that he would like express. This was done for two reasons: 1) to elicit any attitude or feeling from the interviewee that may have biased the interview data, and, 2) to further reinforce the two-way mutual nature of the research being done. I then assured the interviewee of confidentiality once again, and let him know that his transcript and the results of the study would be available to him if he so desired; that all names and identifying

information would be carefully deleted from the transcript;
and that the recording would be erased after the transcript
had been made. Thanking him for his participation, the tape
was turned off and the interview concluded.

The interview was piloted on three men to ensure that
the interview generated appropriate information for the
study, and that the interview guide was useful and
appropriate for the interview process.

Data Analysis

The goal of data analysis in qualitative research is to
"discover significant classes of things, persons, and events
and the properties which characterize them" (Schatzman &
Strauss, 1973, p.145). Giorgi (1985b) delineated four steps
in this process moving from the interviewee's own language
to the uncovering of themes and then the condensations of
themes into broader conceptual categories. These steps are
outlined below.

1) One reads the entire description in order to get a
   general sense of the whole statement.

2) Once the sense of the whole has been grasped, the
   researcher goes back to the beginning and reads
   through the text once more with the specific aim
   of discriminating "meaning units" from within a
   psychological perspective and with a focus on the
   phenomenon being researched.

3) Once "meaning units' have been delineated, the
   researcher then goes through all of the meaning
   units and expresses the psychological insight
   contained in them more directly.

4) Finally, the researcher synthesizes all of the
   transformed meaning units into a consistent

                    statement regarding the subject's experience.
                    (p.10)

     Because of the nature of this study, these processes

were tailored to the content areas of the research: 1) men's

perceptions of changes in their sense of connection with

other men; 2) men's perceptions of changes in their

experiences of mutuality with other men.

     Regarding the first content area - men's perceptions of

changes in their sense of connection with other men - a

number of steps were taken. Step one, the first reading

through of the whole transcript, provided a general sense of

the whole statement implying the interviewee's shift (if

any) in his basic orientation regarding relationships with

other men. Further steps in the analysis refined and

articulated how each interviewee experienced changes in his

orientation. In step two, a second reading of the transcript

was done and meaning units underlined in red to signify that

they were "orientational" meaning units. Statements about

what happened in the groups that affected those changes were

also underlined in red. Those statements were then grouped

by thematic content using the Data Analysis Guide (See

Appendix H). After this grouping was completed for each

interview, the data was collated with similar information

from other interviews. The psychological insights were then

identified analyzing the various orientations that men came

with to their groups and the reported shifts in those

orientations. This information was then described for each

individual in pre- and post-group profiles which included

information about orientations and two other content areas,

relational abilities and changes in relationships with men

outside their groups. Finally, a synthesis of those

insights was formed with statements reflecting the

categories of orientations found, shifts that are unique to

one or a few interviews, and events attributed to be causal

to those changes. This process resembled what Neimeyer and

Resnikoff (1982) described as "intensive case study design"

where the "intent is to understand whatever changes take

place in an individual's life ... with an attempt to connect

reported events with reported changes." (p.81)

The second content area - changes in men's experiences

of mutuality in relationships with other men - was analyzed

with more of a typological method. Neimeyer and Resnikoff

(1982) described this type of study as one where

> "the investigator begins with a tentative typology
> which she or he has inherited from a previous work.
> This schema is then expanded to accommodate new
> information and to provide a more detailed and complex
> understanding to the object of the study." Further, the
> results of this method "often result in expanding the
> typology in ways that enable it to accommodate a wider
> range of phenomenon, or to make finer discriminations,
> while still providing its function of reducing a very
> complex set of data to more manageable and meaningful
> proportions." (p.79)

The typology used in this study, entitled the Mutuality

Typology (see Appendix G) was made up of the components of

mutuality derived from "self-in-relation" theory as

described in the literature review. These components,

arranged in the categories of engagement, empathy, and the

benefits of mutuality, were investigated using the interview
guide.

To begin the data analysis for this content area, the
entire transcript of the interview was read a third time for
statements about changes in men's experiences of mutuality
and events attributed as causal to those changes. Those
statements were underlined in green. The psychological
insights, in this case, the steps, components or benefits of
mutuality described within each statement, were identified,
and those statements were then placed within the Data
Analysis Guide (see Appendix H, section 2) under the
appropriate item for each separate subject. Statements that
signified refinements or additions to the typology were
added under Question 6 of the guide and later used in
revising the typology (see Appendix I).

The first synthesis of this content area involved the
development of summary statements of each individual's
relational experiences and changes. Those summaries were
then added to the pre-and post-group profiles described
above. The second synthesis of this content area involved
the insertion of the statements about changes in relational
experience into the original typology. The typology was
refined to better fit some of those statements, and
additions to the typology were made in order to fit others.
The typology was then presented with revisions and the
rationale for those revisions.

Both content areas were then synthesized, with the changes in relational abilities for each individual organized according to the categories of orientations coming into the groups. Shifts in orientations were also described in this synthesis. Added to this synthesis were descriptions of how men in each category of orientation experienced changes (or didn't) in relationships with men outside their groups.

Once this synthesis was complete combining the psychological insights from the three content areas of orientation, mutuality, and outside relationships with men, an attempt was made to see if any relationships exist among three factors: 1) changes in relational orientation, 2) changes in mutuality, and 3) group developmental stage as perceived by the interviewees.

One hypothesis of this study was that the experience of increased mutuality would lead to an increased sense of connection with other men. This hypothesis was explored by comparing the psychological insights within individual transcripts between the two content areas, and the results reported in tabular and narrative form.

Another hypothesis of this study was that increases in men's perceptions of mutuality and/or connection were more likely to happen in groups that reached the latter stages of group development as described by Rabinowitz (1991). This hypothesis was explored by comparing the psychological insights derived from individual interviews in both content

areas with analyses of the level of group development reached in that group.

Finally, the reports of the changes in mutuality and orientation and group developmental stage reached were compared with the demographic data to see if any other relationships existed between sample characteristics and the results of the study.

Statement of Researcher's Subjectivity

My strong personal interest in this area of study derives from a lifetime of interest in my friendships with other men, over twelve years of involvement with men's groups of different sorts, and my work as a psychotherapist. Since my grade school years, I have always endeavored to have close male friends with whom to play and share my personal life. I have had a number of close friendships that involved much self-disclosure resulting in varying degrees of mutuality. In my early adult life, my ability to develop more mutual relationships with other men was hampered by a number of inner factors, most significantly, a general fear of other men, and a sense of personal inadequacy resulting from the perception that I did not match up well to the traditional stereotypes of masculinity in our culture.

In 1979, I was fortunate enough to be invited to join a leaderless men's support group that met every week. This turned out to be one of the richest and most nourishing experiences of my life. The men's ages ranged from the late

twenties to middle forties and we met weekly for five years. During this experience I came to realize that most, if not all men, struggle with personal issues, have hard feelings to face, and struggle with the masculine stereotypes of competition, success and self-reliance as I have. I learned that I could be loved and accepted for who I am without meeting those stereotypes, and that I could love and accept a wide range of men who both meet and don't meet those stereotypes. My fear of other men and my sense of personal inadequacy faded during those years significantly, though I admit I still get snagged by comparisons with others from time to time. I also learned that empathizing deeply with others is in itself nourishing to both others and myself, and that all the benefits of mutuality described above can be shared by men with very different backgrounds, orientations, lifestyles, ethnic heritages, goals and interests. The experiences in that group helped me reach a point where I currently enjoy a number of rich and satisfying mutual relationships with the men, from that group twelve years later, with other friends and within my family.

When I became a psychotherapist, I began to see that adult men were struggling with the same issues as I had, and, reflecting on my experience in my men's group, thought that providing such groups for these men would help them with their difficulties. I began to run men's psychotherapy groups for these clients and other men and quickly found

that such groups did indeed help these men (some more than others) in the same way that my men's group helped me. I found that the connections made in those groups released much love, acceptance and creative energy for many of the men for themselves and others. I have thus developed a keen interest in furthering our knowledge of how such groups are helpful and how to run them better.

Personal Biases and Presuppositions

Since the personal roots of my interest in this research topic are strong and long-standing, they imply strong biases and presuppositions which must be articulated and stated openly so that they may be "bracketed out" during the research. In regards to a study of the impact of men's psychotherapy groups on men's experiences of mutuality and connection with other men, the following are my personal biases with which I approach the research:

Personal Biases.

1. I believe that traditional gender roles in our culture create psychological and interpersonal strain for men because they tend to foster fear between men, competition, control and power issues that further separate men, and independence, self-reliance, fear of vulnerability and avoidance of emotional expression that support an orientation of disconnection from relationships.

2. I believe that all human beings develop with an innate sense of, and need for, connection with other human beings. Further, I believe that interference with, or suppression of this need leads to intrapsychic and interpersonal distress.

3. I believe that openness and mutuality between men is desirable, nourishing and healing. Further, I believe that such openness and mutuality is important for men's

development that leads to greater ease and success in men's abilities and comfort in relating intimately with women.

4. I believe that men's psychotherapy groups are an excellent opportunity for men to experience greater mutuality and connection with other men.

5. I believe that men can shift in their relational orientation from one of disconnection to one of connection and that men's psychotherapy groups provide one of the best opportunities for this to happen.

6. I believe that men will be aided in their struggle with isolation, loneliness and low self-esteem if they are educated about the limiting and stressful nature of our society's gender role norms.

Presuppositions. My presuppositions concerning men participating in men's psychotherapy groups resulted from my experiences as an American male, a ex-member of a men's group and my work as a psychotherapist.

1. I believe that men in our culture have been socialized to turn away from mutuality and connection in close relationships and that there is a yearning for them in each individual no matter how repressed or buried it may be.

2. I believe that adult men will continue to experience psychological strain and resultant concerns about emotional sharing with other men.

3. I believe that men seek men's psychotherapy groups because they want to achieve more satisfying relationships with other men.

4. I believe that men will come to men's psychotherapy groups at different levels of ability and development in relating mutually and will benefit from such groups to varying degrees.

5. I believe that many men will be ambivalent about discussing their real feelings about their relationships with other men with a male researcher.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results taken from the interviews. First, the demographic characteristics of the sample is described in tabular and narrative form. Following this, a brief profile of each of the ten men is presented focussing on their pre-group orientation towards men and the nature of the relationships they had with men before entering their respective groups. The pre-group orientations are then summarized and broken down into four categories. The typology used during the initial data analysis (see Appendix H) is then reviewed and revised using data from the interviews that indicate changes to be made. The next section describes the changes men reported in orientations, mutuality and relationships with men within and outside the men's groups. An analysis of the relationship between changes in mutuality and changes in orientation towards connection with other men is then discussed. Following this, descriptions of what happened in the groups that facilitated those changes are reported and organized with the help of the revised typology. The final section of this chapter discusses any relationships between changes in mutuality or orientation with either demographic data or with group level of development as described by the interviewees.

A Demographic Description of the Sample

The information gathered from the Demographic Data Form (Appendix D) is summarized and presented in Tables 1 and 2 (see pages 102 and 103 respectively). To preserve the anonymity of each man, their first names have been changed.

All the subjects were men between the ages of 26 and 46, two of them in their twenties, five of them between the ages of 32 and 35, and three between the ages of 42 and 46.

Occupationally, four of the men were white-collar professionals including one dentist, one architect, one teacher and one computer consultant. Other occupations included one human services worker, a cashier, an environmental engineer, a business owner, a chef and a business operations manager. All of the men held Bachelors Degrees, and three had Graduate Degrees. Five of the ten men were married and five were single. Of the five who were married, one had been divorced. Four of the married men had children, one having three children and the others having two.

Five of the men in the study described their ethnic heritage as Jewish, three as Welsh/Scottish/English, Irish/English and Irish, and two others described their heritage as Eastern European and Italian/Lithuanian.

The number of siblings ranged from 1 to 9 and all had brothers except for one. None of the men in the study were the oldest sibling except Ira, who had no brothers. Two of

Table 1: Personal Data

Subject	Age	Marital Status	Children	Occupation	Education
Adam	35	Single	No	Teacher, Artist	B.A.
Bart	32	Single	No	Business Director	B.A.
Charles	27	Single	No	Software Trainer	B.A.+1 sem. graduate work
Doug	46	Married	2 girls 13, 16	Architect	M.A.
Ely	32	Single	No	Environmental Engineer	B.S.
Fred	44	Married (Div. 1x)	1 girl 1 boy	Business Owner	B.A.
Gary	42	Married	2 boys	Juvenile Corrections	M.S.
Hank	26	Single	No	Cashier	B.A.
Ira	35	Married	2 boys 1 girl	Dentist	B.A.,D.M.D.
Jeff	33	Married	No	Chef	B.A.

the men had one younger brother only, three had only one older brother, one had two older brother, one had three older brothers, and the two others had one older and one or four younger brothers.

The length of participation in a men's psychotherapy group ranged from seven months to three years. Two men participated less than one year (7 and 11 months), six men

Table 2: Family Background and Group Participation

Subject	Ethnic/ Relig. Heritage	Sibs	Brothers	Birth Order	Length in Group	Still in at Interview	Time Since Left
Adam	Welsh, Scottish, English	4	2 older	3	1 year, 4 months	Yes	--
Bart	Jewish	3	3 older	4	1 year, 2 months	No	7 mo.
Charles	Jewish E.Eur'n.	3	1 older	4	1 year, 7 months	Yes	--
Doug	Irish/Eng. Protestant	2	1 younger	2	1 year, 4 months	No	11 mo.
Ely	E.Eur'n	9	1 older, 4 younger	4	7 months	Yes	--
Fred	Italian/ Lithuanian	2	1 older, 1 younger	2	3 years	Yes	--
Gary	Jewish	2	1 older	3	2 years, 4 months	Yes	--
Hank	Irish	2	1 younger	2	1 year, 2 months	No	7 mo.
Ira	Jewish	1	none	1	1 year, 6 months	No	9 mo.
Jeff	Jewish	3	1 older	4	11 months	Yes	--

participated between one and two years, one for 2 years and

4 months and the other for 3 years.

In summary, the men in the study represented a wide

enough range of men as was hoped for a sound study. The ages

ranged from 26 to 46, there was a good mix of married and

single men (five of each), and the occupational spread was

quite varied. The sample was more educated than the general

population, and this was to be expected in a population of
men involved in psychotherapy groups. The range of ethnicity
was small, thus limiting the generalizability of the study.
The range of length of participation in groups was well
distributed from close to the minimum criteria of 6 months
to three years. Those men no longer participating in their
group had left no longer than eleven months previously
suggesting that all the men in the study were accurately
able to recall their experiences.

Individual Subject Profiles: Pre-Group Orientation and Relationships

In this section, a brief profile is given on each
participant in the study focusing on the his descriptions of
his relationships with other men before the study and his
orientation towards connecting with other men before the
study. This is done in order to gain some appreciation for
the uniqueness of each subject, to gain an understanding of
the overall quality and range of relational abilities and
orientations presented by the sample, and to set the stage
for understanding changes these individuals described as
resulting from their participation in their men's
psychotherapy groups. Also described are their reasons for
joining a group as this will likely have influenced their
attitudes and motivation in benefitting from their group and
in relating with the other men in the group.

In general, each man interviewed was open, friendly and
generous with me in sharing his experience in his men's

group. All the men seemed to have a positive response to talking about their experiences and many expressed insight and value coming from the interview itself.

Pre-Group Profile 1: Adam

Adam is a 35 year old teacher and free-lance illustrator with a Bachelors Degree. He is single and in a long term relationship with a woman. Before joining his men's group, Adam reported that he had dealt with many issues pertaining to his masculinity and his family of origin with a female therapist. He described having always felt women were safer to express himself to and that it was difficult with men. His therapist recommended he begin trying to share those issues with men in the context of a men's psychotherapy group and he agreed that it was time.

Before the group Adam had "always been surrounded by men" such as in a college fraternity or in a college singing group that still continues to meet today, but that he "rarely talked about real stuff." Before the group, he described getting together with his friends as mostly watching TV and drinking beer. Occasionally, if there was a crisis such as the loss of a girlfriend, then "you would cut through ... and communicate more plainly."

Adam described a difficult relationship with one of his older brothers, a therapist, with whom he had a close relationship. He felt he was always dominated by his brothers' greater success and knowledge. He described his

relationship with a "remote" and unemotional father as being remote with little communication or warmth.

Adam's orientation towards connecting with other men before the group was "strongly affected by [his] father." There was previously "a sense of danger and negativity in [his] assumptions about another man."

In summary, Adam described himself as having many active relationships with male friends and family members, and I would infer that he was oriented towards maintaining a certain level of connection with other men though that level did not include being open about real feelings or issues. Connecting any further was influenced by a sense of "danger and negativity" about men.

Pre-Group Profile 2: Bart

Bart is a 32 year old single director of a service operation in downtown Boston. He described his relationships with his father and brothers before the group as "horrible" yet he had a number of lifelong friends with whom he felt deeply connected though none lived in his area. Bart is an avid sportsman and has pursued friendships with men through sports for a number of years. When he moved to this area about 7 years ago he joined a number of softball teams "just to try to make friends." "It took 2-3 years before [he] would socialize outside of the season" and then developed a "close clique" of friends, "some of which don't really get deep at all," but with others who are more "psychologically

minded, have some experience with therapy and can express emotion," he reported finding himself expressing himself more deeply. Bart claimed that a TV video with Robert Bly got him "inspired to really work at trying to connect with men" before the group.

Apart from his group of friends, Bart felt "very shy in social situations ... especially dealing with men who are ... in powerful positions," feeling intimidated and judging himself as inadequate next to them.

He joined a men's psychotherapy group after having been in and out of individual psychotherapy for over five years. After his male therapist recommended it, he felt that it would be an opportunity to get some regular therapy at a reduced cost.

From his statements, I surmise that, before his group, Bart was oriented to seek out and maintain connections with men from long before the group, and that a Robert Bly video reinforced that orientation. Regardless of this orientation, it seemed that Bart had "horrible" relationships with male family members, and felt inadequate and uncomfortable around other men that he perceived as more successful or powerful. His bonded friendships mostly revolved around sports, though with some that were "psychologically minded" he had some deeper emotional discussions.

Pre-Group Profile 3: Charles

Charles, a computer software trainer and support technician, is 27, single, and before the group, reported that he had warm, open relationships with women, friends, his father and his older brother though he "felt that there was some kind of hidden fraternity that [he] was missing out on" with men. Though he said he felt open and connected to many people, he felt a "sense of alienation" and that "regular guys" had it all "together," and that he didn't. "I felt a general sense of really having been isolated from other men and not really being able to talk very openly about a lot of issues that I had."

Charles joined his men's group after having worked with a number of male therapists and having come to feel he had reached a "cul-de-sac in [his] one on one therapy." He had discussed with his therapist feeling alienated from other men and "just wanted to connect with other men." Both agreed it would be a good idea. He found the group he joined on his own.

In summary, Charles was strongly oriented towards connecting with other men before his group experience, has close relationships with male family members and friends, yet, felt alienated from other men in a deeper emotional way. He felt that there was something "regular" men had that he was missing.

Pre-Group Profile 4: Doug

   Doug, at 46, was the oldest man in the study. He is an
architect, married and has two teenage daughters. Doug
described himself before the group as living out the
stereotypical male roles.

      "My perception of myself is usually, has been for
      years, one of the... the rugged individual, the person
      who put his own talent, energy, nerve, and sort of goes
      out and makes his way."

Though he reported he had social friends and close
relationships with his wife and family, he felt he was "just
out there flailing away on [his] own." This was evident in
his work as an architect, as he said he would do all the
aspects of his business on his own, feeling exhausted,
including "running around doing marketing, research,
development, [and] doing some construction management on the
side." In close relationships, Doug prided himself on being
a good listener and an empathic and supportive father and
family member.

   Doug joined his men's group after hearing that his
individual therapist was forming one. He wanted to get other
men's perspectives on marriage, family, work and what it is
like to approach middle age.

   From his statements, I inferred that Doug's orientation
towards connecting with other men was more one of
disconnection than connection in a way typical of
traditional male gender norms. When oriented to connect with
others, particularly with his wife and daughters, he prided

himself on being able to be quite mutual in those relationships.

Pre-Group Profile 5: Ely

Ely is a 32 year old environmental engineer, holds a Bachelor of Science Degree, and is in a long term relationship with a woman. He has the largest number of siblings in the sample, 9, with one older brother and 4 younger ones. He said he found it possible to relate intimately with women and has been sensitive to other people's feelings and desires,

> "but I never felt it was safe to express that [with] a lot men in my life ... I have sensed a connection that I wanted to make, that they wanted to make the same connection, but they didn't feel it was safe ... to come out and start that connection."

Ely's described his relationships with his younger brothers, for the most part, as not being close, and he characterized his relationship with his older brother before the group as his brother being abusive and domineering. He didn't have male friend before the group. When trying to establish friendships with men, he reported

> "I was trying to establish some sort of connection... to be intimate with someone and it never felt OK. When I started to head down that road with someone, it sort of fell apart."

At work, he described being very critical and judgmental of most men, seeing their coarseness and/or lack of emotional sensitivity as aspects he needed to stay away from. With men in general, he described a sense of competition, and he would often compare himself negatively to others.

He joined his men's group shortly after terminating with a female therapist. He had picked up Robert Bly's book Iron John and it excited him about doing some work with men. He then participated in a men's workshop, and when informed that the leader of the workshop had an opening in a men's group, he joined.

From Ely's comments, I surmise that his orientation towards connection with other men, before the his group experience, was somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, he reported wanting to connect with other men and on the other, never felt it was safe to, thus avoiding deeper connections. He seemed to have some intimacy with women, but with men he was distant and critical, and at other times competitive. He compared himself negatively to many men and had unsatisfying relationships with his brothers.

Pre-Group Profile 6: Fred

Fred, the second oldest member of the sample, is a 44 year old business owner in a suburb of Boston, married for the second time with a son from his previous marriage and an infant daughter from his current one. Of all the men in the study, Fred appeared to be the least oriented towards connection with other men before his participation in a men's group. He described himself as basically a "loner", presently, and when growing up. He described having no real desire for friendships, stating he "wasn't too crazy about people" and that when it came to having friends, "I wouldn't

want somebody to rely on me" and "maybe I don't want to disappoint you so let's not even get too close." He reported that he had no relationship with either of his brothers, and with men at work, he had no interest in talking about things.

Before joining the group, Fred had participated in numerous personal growth and intimacy workshops alone and with his wife. He described being open and feeling connected to the men in those workshops, particularly the week long workshops, feeling safe knowing they were "searching" and trying to heal themselves as well. He said that this openness or sense of connection never carried beyond the workshop, nor did he desire to establish it with others.

He joined his men's group after participating in a workshop given by the leader of the group he ended up in. The leader of the group called him to tell him that he was starting up a group, invited him to join, and Fred joined.

Before his group, Fred's orientation towards other men was one of disconnection without any active desire to seek connection. Given his feelings of not being "crazy about other people" and not wanting to be relied upon, his ability to relate mutually with other was unclear.

Pre-Group Profile 7: Gary

Gary is a 42 year old married father of two young sons with a Masters Degree working in the area of juvenile corrections. He described himself as quite skilled in

empathic and mutual relating with both women and men and credits both his wife and his years of work in human services for those abilities. He has had close, bonded male friends since childhood and they have always been important to him. He is a caring and involved father. Gary described his relationship with his father as warm, but before the group it was a "father-kid" relationship rather than an "adult-adult" one. He described his father as opinionated, obstinate and difficult to confront. Gary also described his relationships at work as not close. Being a boss, he felt it not appropriate to be too close to men working for him, and with his superiors, he felt himself sometimes too passive and unable to stand up for himself or what he thought important.

He joined his men's group for two reasons, first, his individual therapist whom he respects suggested it to him a number of times, and second, as in Doug's case, he wanted to get other men's perspectives on things, particularly how men handled day to day issues in relationships with the women in their lives.

From Gary's descriptions, it is clear that his orientation before his group was one of deeply valuing and maintaining connections with other men since childhood, and that from his marriage and years of work in human services, he was quite skilled at relating mutually. He had some issues to resolve regarding his self-esteem in comparison to

other men and his ability to assert himself with men he perceived as being more aggressive or powerful.

Pre-Group Profile 8: Hank

Hank, at 26, was the youngest man in the study. He is single, not currently in an amorous relationship and working as a cashier in a grocery store. Before his experience in the men's group, he described himself as "emotional" and tended to rely on emotional connections with others for self-esteem. He reported wanting emotional connections with men but found it difficult and frustrating because other men didn't want to share with him. On the other hand, he was afraid of other men and avoided them.

He described having some closeness with friends, one in particular with whom he could share some important things, but felt there was always something missing - talking about personal issues. He reported having difficulty relating with men at work because they would not discuss deep emotional issues. Hank identified some of his difficulty with, and judgment of other men as deriving from his close relationship with his mother who had negative attitudes towards men's lack of emotional openness. Hank described his father, who is a professor, as "very intellectual," unemotional and hard to relate to. He described his relationship with his brother before the group as close, but the closeness was interfered with by a sense of competition

within Hank, Hank feeling his brother more competent in the thing they enjoy together the most, music.

Hank joined his men's group in order to talk with men on a deeper emotional level than he had previously been able.

As in Ely's case, Hank appeared to have an ambivalent orientation towards connecting with other men. On one hand, Hank wanted very much to have more mutual connections with other men and was frustrated when they didn't happen. On the other hand, he was afraid of and critical of other men and avoided them. In relationships with other men he was distant and critical except with a few friends where deeper discussions did not happen, or with his brother where competition interfered with the closeness.

Pre-Group Profile 9: Ira

Ira is a 35 year old married dentist with three young children. Entering his men's group he considered himself a loving and involved father and was able to be open about his feelings and deeper concerns with his wife and other women friends. He credits his individual psychotherapy with helping him to get more in touch with himself, with his feelings and to be able to articulate his feelings.

Before participating in the men's group, Ira reported that he felt bound to live out the stereotypical male image of not being emotional or vulnerable with other men. He said that the desire to connect with other men has always been

there, but his "whole notion of what was OK for men to do" did not include that. He said he had a number of close male friends who were also involved fathers, but sharing deeper concerns or feelings did not happen. His described his perceptions of other men as also stereotypical, seeing other men as not emotional or insecure.

Ira joined his men's group at the suggestion of his individual therapist. He was looking for a forum to discuss deeper emotional concerns with other men and hoped to find other men "with similar aspirations and goals."

From Ira's statements about himself before the group experience, I infer that he, too, had an ambivalent orientation towards connecting with other men. He stated he always wanted to connect, but felt it was not "OK" for men to do so. He described being able to relate mutually with his children, wife and female friends, and that his relationships with men were limited to non-vulnerable, unemotional sharing.

Pre-Group Profile 10: Jeff

Jeff is a 33 year old married chef, the only married man in the study without children. He described a history of satisfying relationships with his wife and both men and women characterized by mutuality. He reported having bonded, satisfying relationships with male friends before the group, a close relationship with one older brother and his father was deceased. At work, he was the boss to a number of

younger men and Jeff described, at times, feeling strained with them.

He joined his men's group because of his long history with and interest in psychotherapy (he is currently in psychoanalysis) and thought of the group as an opportunity to hear how other men are with their children, himself preparing to be a father at some point in the near future.

It appeared, then, that before his group, Jeff was oriented towards establishing and maintaining emotional connections with other men and actively tried. His relationships with his male friends and family members were close and satisfying, and he described satisfying mutuality with both men and women.

Looking back over these profiles, it is clear that the men in the sample represented a wide range of relational experience, relational abilities and a wide range of orientations towards connecting with other men. The orientations towards connections with other men fell into four categories: 1) those whose orientations were of not valuing intimacy or connection with men (Doug and Fred); 2) those whose orientations were ambivalent - desiring deeper connections with men but feeling afraid to engage with men (Ely, Hank and Ira); 3) those who were oriented to connect with other men and had good relationships with other men that were not open emotionally (Adam, Bart and Charles); and, 4) those who were oriented to connect deeply with men,

did so, and had bonded, mutually satisfying relationships with male friends and family members (Gary and Jeff).

The two men in the study who appeared most traditional in having orientations of disconnection from other men, Fred and Doug, described very different levels of mutuality with others, Fred very little, and Doug quite alot with his wife and children. Three of the men in the study described ambivalence in their orientation towards connecting with other men. Ely and Hank both desired connections with other men but were afraid to engage with other men. Ira always wanted more connections with other men but felt that to do so was not "OK." Ely had tried connections with other men before his group but it tended not to work out for him in satisfying ways. Hank and Ira both had some male friends but those friendships were superficial in nature. All three described distant relations with male family members, a sense of disconnection from other men in general, and negative self-comparisons with other men.

Three of the men in the study, Adam, Charles and Bart, all came to their groups oriented towards connection with other men in actively desiring to have deeper friendships, yet generally experienced men as not safe or threatening. All three had some good relationships with male friends or family members, but felt afraid to open up about real emotional issues with them. Charles was close with his father and brother, had friends around, but felt there was some "hidden fraternity" he was missing out on and compared

himself poorly to "regular guys." Adam and Bart did not have
close relationships with male family members, but did have
many friends, most of whom they could not share deeply with.
All three appeared to have some intimacy with women, though
all three were single.

The other two men in the study, Gary and Jeff, were
both clearly oriented towards having and maintaining close,
bonded male friendships and had done so for many years. They
both had close relationships with their male family members
and wives, and Gary with his sons. Jeff was more comfortable
with, and used to, actively pursuing those connections with
other men than was Gary.

The next section presents a revised typology used for
understanding the relational abilities that make up mutual
relationships proposed in the literature review. The
original typology (see Appendix G) was useful for a
preliminary organization of the rich data from the
interviews. As the original typology was being used, it
became clear that some revisions were in order, as the data
clarified how some items needed to be revised, fine tuned
and/or edited.

The Revised Mutuality Typology

This section presents the revised typology with quotes
from the transcripts that elucidate and highlight the
importance of each item in the typology. Following this, the

rationales for the changes in the typology are given. The typology was instrumental in enabling the organization of the data about changes in men's lives and how the groups impacted those changes. A later section of the results presents those events and activities that occurred in the men's groups that men attributed as facilitating those changes. That later section is organized according to the revised typology that follows. Numerous benefits of participation in men's psychotherapy groups came to the fore during the interviews that could not be directly linked to an increase in mutuality per se. Therefore, a separate section describing those benefits deserves discussion, and this follows the section describing those benefits that directly relate to increased mutuality.

<u>The revised mutuality typology with supporting quotes</u>

<u>Engagement</u>.

1) overcoming enough fear of other men to begin engaging with other men;

"I was [afraid that if I was] emotional with other men or that I did have this emotional component that I would basically be teased a lot and be ridiculed a lot, that I wouldn't be accepted as one of the group." (Hank)

"I think I always was afraid to take the risk to open up to another man worrying, well, what is this person going to think... or are they going to take me seriously." (Ira)

2) being able to identify one's feelings;

"the group allows me to feel a lot of feelings that I can't feel in individual therapy. There is something about... other men who are sharing their feelings with

me that allows me to share my feelings... actually with myself and, therefore, them." (Jeff)

3) being able to differentiate between one's original feelings and feelings arising from a relational encounter;

"we would be talking about something and then pretty soon we would argue and get angry, ... and we would start to vent our anger when, in fact, who knows, we might be feeling afraid [or] abused. ... When ... everything is cooled down, and this person who is ... yelling [says it] 'is because he was reminding me of my mother', suddenly it gives a totally ... understandable explanation, it is easier for me to realize that he doesn't hate me... I stirred something up... and then I would tell him my story and he would understand my position better." (Adam)

4) being able to or learning to articulate one's feelings and thoughts;

"we are trying to learn how to talk and share our emotions and by talking about them, we are able to visualize them more." (Jeff)

5) a willingness to communicate those feelings and thoughts to other men with authenticity;

"[The group] has gotten me better about talking about my feelings immediately rather than waiting." (Adam)

6) genuinely listening to other men;

"I am definitely a better listener and attender to." (Adam)

"listen, truly listen, let it kind of sink in before you jump out and respond to it..." (Fred)

7) communicating to the other person that they have been heard;

Though there were no direct quote reflecting this item, it was implied throughout many of the transcripts, and certainly in the next section under empathy.

8) being aware that other men are communicating thoughts and feelings with authenticity;

"I see that they care because they trust me with their feelings, or at least they are trying to and that

allows me to, I think, allows me to relax a little bit more and to allow them to see my feelings." (Jeff)

9) being aware that other men are genuinely listening

"I felt that the members were listening and they were also sharing their failures as well as their successes, but they just seemed like very good listeners." (Ira)

Empathy.

1) taking the other person's perspective;

"They all have their individual ways of doing it and you have to sort of find a way of stepping back and letting them do their own thing." (Doug)

2) identifying with the other person's experience;

"In the men's group [I] to try to become more sensitive to other men's issues, what's going on for them, the pain that they all go through." (Fred)

3) recognizing and acknowledging similarities between
      self and others;

"I found people that were like me, first of all. That they expressed themselves in similar ways. That they had similar issues with the world in general." (Hank)

"I think that the group just sort of showed me that there were other men out there who had the same concerns as I did." (Ira)
4) recognizing and acknowledging differences between
      self and others.

"[The most valuable aspects of the group for me was] seeing the different energies that men have, ... we have very different personalities in the group from very aggressive to very passive to whatever. ... I have learned in this group ... to love some of the guys in the group who are very aggressive and have learned that there is a lot more to them than just their... aggressive type of behavior." (Gary)

5) communicating respect, understanding, and validation
      of the other person's experience;

"I learned that it is OK to recognize someone and to say I recognize what you are about and to acknowledge that and to validate that for them and give them whatever support and encouragement that they want." (Ely)

6) allowing oneself to be emotionally touched by the other's sharing;

"There were times that I almost allowed myself...to really feel someone else's pain when they were telling the story... instead of trying to come up to my head... I would just try to listen and kind of let it sink into me." (Fred)

7) sharing of one's own feeling response;

"It was just a nice feeling to say, wow, I can connect with you and feel the stuff that you are going through and it is almost like I will be part of that for that moment." (Fred)

8) being aware that others are taking own perspective;

"I like to be seen by men and recognized by them. I also like to see them and recognize them... and I never had that before... I mean, for the most part, I was afraid in the world and...I really feel open to recognizing new people and if I make that connection it is comfortable to recognize them and to have them recognize me." (Ely)

9) being aware that others are identifying with own experience;

"[I found that my issues were] something that everyone else there can in many cases identify with and that's very, very powerful." (Charles)

10) being aware that others are communicating respect, understanding and validation of own experience;

"[The most valuable part of the group for me was] a sense of like a validation with a lot of issues that I have had... in some cases, just to kind of put my issues on the table and know that these guys are not only accepting, but understanding of what is going on." (Charles)

11) being aware that others are moved by own experience;

"I finally shared [a deeply emotional] story in my group and I was really able to be openly sad and terrified by it... and I got support from people in the group who came around and put their arms around me and hugged me and said that it was really OK... and as that was happening someone else in the group, it touched something in him, it was like that catalyst effect and

he then went back and became deeply moved by some experience in his childhood." (Ely)

The Benefits of Mutuality.

1) increased authenticity in one's own self expression;

"[The group] has freed me up from seeing myself only as the images that I present, that I am just not the architect or the father or whatever... that there is something else going on in there and this is a particular expression of something that could have taking a number of forms." (Doug)

2) increased awareness of authenticity in others;

"I have become much more tolerant because of the group of superficial differences. I have realized that most of them are image posturing... I feel that I am seeing additional layers behind the surface of the presentation." (Doug)

3) increased awareness of the vulnerable and emotional sides of other men;

"[The most valuable aspect of the group was] seeing that other men had emotional lives with their own daily lives. That men actually did feel a lot and they can express themselves." (Hank)

"it helped me see that there is another emotional side to being a man and a man is just not a breadwinner and the final say in the family and the protector and all that stuff." (Ira)

4) increased self-knowledge and self-acceptance of oneself as a man;

"It helped me realize that it was OK for me to be emotional and be a man at the same time. That there wasn't something wrong with that." (Hank)

"The only way [men] could justify being that warm and sensitive was by being gay, and it was very disconcerting for me to think that I would have to change my sexual orientation to feel that comfortable with these guys ... I am more comfortable being strong and sensitive at the same time." (Charles)

5) increased acceptance of other men;

"Nowadays, I am not quite so immediately judgmental. ... I am more likely to get away from the guy and understand him a little better." (Adam)

6) increased self-esteem from being cared for,
   respected and validated by others;

"[My] self-esteem ... sky-rocketed since I joined the
men's group. I just feel so much better about myself.
To be validated and to be complimented by men, to be
appreciated by men. ... People heard me and they
understood and they actually validated it. It just
kind of like plugged in another piece of myself as
I...and I really felt that and I just had the greater
sense of self." (Ely)

7) increased self-esteem from devaluing oneself less as
   the unreasonable demands of gender role
   socialization become demystified;

"For a long time, my image of men, or man, or myself
was pretty much a stereotype ... you know one that sort
of makes it under his own ability, the typical western
image of the self-made professional, and I do feel very
much more relaxed with the fact that I am not going to
make the cover of TIME magazine and that I am not going
to set the world on fire ...I am really much more
comfortable with just being effective within the small
circle that I am." (Doug)

"I had an image that everybody had it together. [Now] I
basically [am] more accepting of me." (Hank)

8) increased self-esteem from realizing that one has
   more to offer others than previously was aware of;

"it was suddenly very eye-opening to see that there was
something valuable in the time I had been through that
I could share with them." (Doug)
"I was able to contribute a lot to the group on an
emotional level, feeling level, supportive level... so
I think that was probably the best thing that I got out
of the group... that even though on the surface I don't
measure myself up to the others in the group, but I did
have a lot to offer." (Bart)

9) empowerment: in the immediate relationship and in
   relating beyond the immediate;

"...feeling empowered by being in a men's group where
... I learned that I can relate to people, I can set my
boundaries and my limits and I can communicate with
people better." (Ely)

10) less fear of getting closer to other men in
     general;

"I used to be incredibly intimidated by... physically
large men or ... the conventionally macho men, you
know, the whole locker room mentality... and now
frankly it just doesn't really phase me the same way
anymore." (Charles)

11) feeling more adequate and/or confident in one's
     capacity to relate in the present moment;

"I am more confrontational ... all of a sudden I can
come in and really just say what is on my mind and ...
it's a nice way to just talk very real about a lot of
issues that have been very taboo in the past among
men." (Charles)

12) a greater sense of connection with other men and a
     desire for more connection beyond the immediate
     interactions;

"You feel this kinship, but you can also solve
problems, there is a very practical side to it too. I
learned pretty soon how satisfying that can be and then
I would go hang out with my other pals ... and I
[wanted to have] some of that depth there, and that's
what I have been doing, attempting to bring some of
that depth there." (Adam)

13) increased willingness and desire to take
     responsibility for the mutuality in intimate
     relationships with other men and with women.

"There was a piece missing inside of me as far as
connecting with more men friends in a different way and
the group has been very wonderful for that. ... but I
have more the tendency to just not to reach out and
say, hey, let's get together next week and go out for
dinner ... I am more assertive in that way. I do a
better job with a lot of my friends in initiating that.
That's good." (Gary)

14) increased relational awareness.

"There is more to it than just seeing how much money
you can make and trying to make the most effective
presentation. There is the relationship between
yourself and the person that you are talking to or the
planning board that you are making a presentation to.
So there is other level..." (Doug)

The Rationale for the Changes in the Typology

It was found that the first item of the original typology - overcoming enough fear of men and relational dread to begin engaging with other men - could be more useful if broken down into components parts. The data showed that it is important to differentiate between the fear of being open with other men because of what other men may think or do, and relational dread that comes from fear of what may happen during a relational encounter. Bergman (1990) described relational dread arising between a man and a woman when the man is faced with a woman's quicker pace and greater skill at identifying and expressing feelings. This interferes with staying in the "relational moment." A man fears his original feelings will get all mixed up with the feelings of being under pressure to respond. (p. 8-9) What arose in the interviews was that men, because of their history of being teased, humiliated, disregarded or disrespected when expressing their feelings, or because of gender role proscriptions against such expression, fear such treatment from other men. This is a qualitatively different kind of relational dread men experience in the company of other men. Therefore, the first item in the original typology was changed to more usefully read overcoming enough fear of other men to begin engaging with other men.

It was also found that the term "relational dread," as used in the original typology, should be broken down into components with some listed under engagement and others

listed under the benefits of mutuality in the revised typology. The items that pertain to engagement include being able to identify and express one's own feelings and to be able to differentiate between one's original feelings and those arising from the interaction with another man. Thus the next two items added to the typology are:

2) being able to identify one's feelings; and,

3) being able to differentiate between one's original feelings and feelings arising from a relational encounter.

Within the section on engagement, it was also found to be useful to add two new items to the new, revised typology. Since men have fear of other men's responses to them, many men's relational dread with other men manifests itself as failing to notice that other men are sharing authentically or responding positively to their emotional expression. Therefore the following two items were added to the engagement section of the typology:

8) being aware that other men are communicating thoughts and feelings with authenticity; and,

9) being aware that other men are genuinely listening.

There were two major changes to empathy section of the original typology. Some men in the study had important experiences involving similarities but not differences, while others experienced the converse. Others mentioned the importance of both. Therefore, it was found useful to differentiate between recognizing and acknowledging similarities between self and others and recognizing and

acknowledging differences between self and others in the revised typology.

The other major change to be made in the empathy section of the original typology involved the receiving of empathic support from others. Since men's relational dread manifest as failing to notice that others are empathizing, I found it useful to add increased awareness of each component of empathy by others to the list. Those components include: being aware that others are taking one's own perspective; being aware that others are identifying with one's own experience; being aware that others are communicating respect, understanding and validation of one's own experience; and, being aware that others are moved by one's own experience.

Under the section of the benefits of mutuality, it was found that the first item in the original typology, increased authenticity, is more useful when differentiated into increased authenticity in one's own self expression, and increased awareness of authenticity in others in the new typology.

In a number of interviews, different men described being relieved at being less reactive to the previously objectionable aspects of other men, being less critical of men in general, and being willing to try to understand and be more compassionate with them. Therefore the item increased acceptance of other men was added to the new typology.

It was found that increased self-esteem in the original typology needed to be differentiated into sub-categories. In the interviews, men described increased self-esteem from three different sources, a) from merely being accepted and cared for by others; b) from reduced gender role conflict resulting in less negative comparisons with others; and c) from realizing that they have more to offer other men than they were aware of. Thus, a new component was added to the new typology reflecting each source of increase in self-esteem.

In the benefits of mutuality section of the revised typology, the term "relational dread" once again needed to be made more specific. In this section on the benefits of mutuality, it is the fear and distrust of getting close to others and the sense of incompetence and shame from not being adequate in relationships before that one feels relief from. Thus, two new items were included in this section, less fear of getting closer to other men in general, and feeling more adequate and/or confident in one's capacity to relate in the present moment.

One last item was added to the revised typology, increased relational awareness. This item was most powerfully mentioned by Doug who had a profound shift from being a "rugged individual" to someone who is aware of, interested in, and caring for the relationships with everyone in his life in a new way.

It is important to mention that I do not believe that this is an exhaustive or complete list, but one that reflects those themes mentioned by the men in this study. One item, increased zest: an increase in a sense of aliveness and vitality, was not included in the revised typology because this theme was not clearly discussed by the men in this study. A number of men did mention that they felt energized by the group meetings but they did not say that this was the result of greater mutuality between members. Further research may uncover other important factors in men's intimacy or further differentiate the one's discussed in this typology.

The revised mutuality typology without supporting quotes can be found in Appendix I. The next section will discuss those benefits described in the data that do not fit the typology and are benefits secondary to increased relational abilities. Though the increased mutuality with men experienced in the group enabled these benefits to come about, it was felt that they also derived from other sources.

Other Benefits of Group Participation not Directly Related to Mutuality

A number of other benefits of being in a men's psychotherapy group were mentioned during the interviews. These benefits fall roughly into two categories: feeling less isolated or alone as a man; and, general support in the pragmatics of daily living.

A number of men mentioned the reasons for and importance of feeling less isolated or alone as a man. Bart and Fred who did not experience much shift in the relational abilities or experiences with other men said that this was one of the most important parts of the group for them. For Bart, Fred, and Doug as well, realizing that others go through similar stages and face similar problems and feelings contributed to that feelings of being less alone as a man. Gary found his group "a soothing communion with other males" that would sometimes function as a "vacation from the trials and tribulations of everyday life." Others, such as Adam and Charles experienced their groups as community with like minded men, and Jeff, Ira and Hank both found the group an opportunity to find men who shared their desire to relate on a deeper level.

Another area of benefit from the men's groups indirectly related to mutuality related getting support in the pragmatics of daily living. Gary found one of the two most valuable parts of his group to be hearing how other men dealt with problems in relationships and work. Others mentioned the value of practical problem solving and helpful feedback in dealing with difficult feeling or difficult situations. Others mentioned how valuable it was to see other men model different ways of acting, and Doug found it satisfying to be on the helping side of that process, feeling that he got a chance to be a mentor to younger men in the group.

Besides Bart and Fred, these benefits were not mentioned as the most important aspects of their experiences in the groups. the other members, for the most part, were more enthusiastic about and grateful for the increased engagement and mutual empathy they experienced with other men in their group and the benefits in themselves and their relationships with other men beyond the group.

The next section will discuss the changes the men in the study reported from their experiences in their men's groups.

Changes Attributed to the Group Experience

There were three main areas of change reported in the data: a) those pertaining to mens' orientations towards connection with other men; b) those pertaining to their abilities to relate mutually; and, c) changes that have occurred in their relationships with other men as a result of the group experience. After reviewing the transcripts summaries numerous times, it became clear that the degree of change of relational abilities among the men varied widely from very little to quite a lot, the changes in orientations towards connection with other men ranged from a slight change of awareness to very significant shifts, and there were many changes in men's relationships with other men outside their groups as a result of the men's group participation for most of the men in the study.

The data are organized according to the four sub-groups of men coming into their groups with different orientations as described at the end of the pre-group profiles. Those four sub-groups within the sample represented the following orientations: 1) those whose orientations were of not valuing intimacy or connection with men (Doug and Fred); 2) those whose orientations were ambivalent - desiring deeper connections with men but feeling afraid to engage with men (Ely, Hank and Ira); 3) those who were oriented to connect with other men and had good relationships with other men that were not emotionally open (Adam, Bart and Charles); and, 4) those who were oriented to connect deeply with men, did so, and had bonded, mutually satisfying relationships with male friends and family members (Gary and Jeff).

Changes described by men entering with an orientation of not valuing connection with other men

Of the two men who were least oriented to connect with other men before the group, Doug and Fred, the two oldest men in the study, reported that they came to their groups with different experiences with intimacy with others and with apparently different levels of ability in relating mutually. Fred came to his group having no friends and little sense of intimacy with other men though he had opened up with men in previous personal growth workshops. From his descriptions of his relationships outside his group, Fred appeared to have few relationships that had any degree of mutuality before his group. Doug, on the other hand,

described himself as quite skilled in being mutual in his family relationships though had not had much mutuality with other adult men, nor did he seem to value intimacy with men, referring to himself as a "rugged individual" before his group.

Fred and Doug reported very different degrees of satisfaction and benefit deriving from their groups experiences. Fred reported that his group experience helped him develop skills in engaging and empathizing with other men. He gave his group little credit for any changes in his experience of mutuality or connection with other men though his participation in a men's group was the longest, 3 years. Doug, on the other hand, seemed enthusiastic and pleased about his group experience having had a chance to use his skills engaging and empathizing with other men for the first time, and he reported many benefits coming from the mutuality he experienced there.

Fred mentioned some benefit in engaging with others, saying that he has become more aware of his feelings, a better listener and a better communicator, whereas before he was mostly responding quickly without really listening. He approached new levels of depth in his abilities to empathize, saying

> "There were times that I almost allowed myself...to really feel someone else's pain when they were telling the story... instead of trying to come up to my head... I would just try to listen and kind of let it sink into me and just kind of like... somehow there was some kind of connection there."

The main benefit he described from the group experience
was finding out that he was not alone with many of his
issues and the group provided a "forum" to talk about things
and not be judged. In terms of his abilities to be intimate
with other men, Fred stated,

> "I still find it difficult to have intimacy in a sense
> with men outside the group...it's like I have this
> stone wall that is built... that for some reason I like
> staying behind it ... It's amazing doing all of the
> work... it helps somewhat, but not a h___ of a lot....
> The only place it does is within my group... but take
> it out of that context and the effect is very low."

Doug, on the other hand, described being able to engage
and empathize with other adult men for the first time in his
men's group. This led to increased self-esteem and self-
acceptance as a man from finding out his past difficulties
were normal and finding out how much he had to offer others,
especially the younger men in the group with whom he felt
their mentor from time to time. He also reported increased
empowerment in his public speaking. Though he described
these shifts, they seemed to arise mostly from his increased
awareness rather than from reaching new levels of intimate
sharing with other men on an emotional level. Doug did not
describe any qualitative shifts in the depth of intimacy he
experienced with men outside his group except for his being
able to better identify with what other men must be
experiencing due to their stage of life and the
circumstances they are in.

One main benefit Doug mentioned from the group experience was in developing a deeper sense of authenticity in himself and other men.

"it has freed me up from seeing myself only as the images that I present, that I am just not the architect or the father or whatever... that there is something else going on in there."

Regarding others, he stated,

"I have become much more tolerant because of the group of superficial differences. I have realized that most of them are image posturing,... I feel that I am seeing additional layers behind the surface of the presentation."

Doug also mentioned that he benefitted from his group having developed greater self-esteem as he let go of some stereotypical role demands:

"I do feel very much more relaxed with the fact that I am not going to make the cover of TIME magazine and that I am not going to set the world on fire ...I am really much more comfortable with just being effective within the small circle that I am."

Doug placed much emphasis on coming to understand how his current life stage fits in the life cycle and how it relates to the stages younger and older men are in. This had a strong effect on his orientation towards connection with other men.

"It was a way of marking my place in life. I was in mid-range. I wasn't in the young 20's early 30's, I wasn't in the retirement age... I was guy who was right in the middle of, you know, midlife maturation. ... [It gave a] sense of being connected, that I wasn't just out there flailing away on my own...It was interesting to see how what I thought was a difficult time was really more or less a stage... it was something that everyone [goes through]."

This then carried over into his relationships with family and friends, now being more sensitive to their internal feelings and how external circumstances relate to their stages in life. He described how this new awareness contributed towards feeling more connected with other men and to enabling him to shift from a position of being a "rugged individual" to someone more relationally aware who cares for and fosters more of a "team spirit."

> "More recently, I have seen my role, not that I am all that good, is being more of a manager... that I don't have to do everything myself, that... especially in the professional work that I am involved in, but also in other things... that is more fun to be a member than to be the only solo performer."

Fred, on the other hand, described experiencing little shift in his orientation towards connection with other men, after his group, still claiming to be uninterested in relationships that may be close. With men at work, he reported no change in his desire to connect, nor did he develop any desire for friends.

The only change in orientation towards connecting with other men Fred mentioned pertained to his son and with other family members.

> "Now with my son, it allows me now to talk to him and talk about feelings with him. ... I can tell him I am upset... and I can tell him that we both kind of got a raw deal...I let him know that any feelings that he has are fine, they are OK... there is nothing wrong with anything you are feeling...I don't judge it."

He credits the change to the group, where he heard how disturbing it was for other men to have had painful or distant relationships with their fathers. With other family

members, Fred stated that he was more open to listening to their feelings and problems if they approached him, but feels no desire to reach out and connect himself, not really valuing intimacy with other men.

In summary, of the two men who entered their men's groups oriented to not value intimate connection with other men, one of them experienced a shift towards greater relationship awareness and a desire to foster better relationships with men though he did not experience or seem to desire deeper emotional connections with men. The other experienced no shift of orientation, still not valuing intimacy with men, though he reported being more open to it if others approached him. The first, Doug, experienced a number of benefits of mutuality in his men's group, including greater engagement and empathy with men, increased self-esteem, self-acceptance and empowerment in relating, whereas the second, Fred, only benefitted relationally in becoming a better listener, communicator and identifier with others' experiences. Neither had significant changes in the depth of their emotional connections with other men.

Changes described by men entering with an ambivalent orientation towards connection with other men

Three of the men in the study described ambivalent orientations towards connecting with other men before their groups, Ely, Hank and Ira. These men entered their groups desiring connections with other men but avoided intimacy with men. Ely and Hank described having had distant,

disconnected relationships with male family members and all described having some close friends without those friendships being emotionally open. Two of the three, Ely and Hank described significant shifts in their relational abilities, relationships with other men, and orientations towards connection with other men. Ira reported little change resulting from his group experience.

Both Ely and Hank were passionate about how much their groups helped them relate better with men. Each described himself as being sensitive to feelings in himself and others, and had a desire to connect with other men, but never felt it was safe to do so. Their groups gave them the opportunity to move past their fear of engaging with other men and to experience mutuality with men for the first time.

Ely reported that he derived great satisfaction from "recognizing" other men and being recognized by them. It gave him a "sense of community" which he felt was the most valuable part of the experience.

A critical incident for Ely happened early on in his group and characterized much of the learning in engagement and empathy he derived from the group:

> "I finally shared [a deeply emotional] story in my
> group and I was really able to be openly sad and
> terrified by it... and I got support from people in the
> group who came around and put their arms around me and
> hugged me and said that it was really OK... and as that
> was happening someone else in the group, it touched
> something in him, it was like that catalyst effect and
> he then went back and became deeply moved by some
> experience in this childhood, ... that happened just a
> few weeks into the group and ... I started to learn new
> things, new things that are OK to do."

Hank described himself as being very emotional and came to the group hoping to find other men who would open up emotionally with him. He reported that the group gave him a chance to engage emotionally with other men for the first time, and to better articulate his feelings. He was happy to find that his feelings were respected and validated. It was a revelation for Hank that other men also struggle with self-esteem, relationship and work issues because he "had an image that everybody had it all together."

> "I didn't even know that men struggled with their own work for the most part. Seeing other men in other situations like Bill, he hasn't finished his B.A. for example... some of the other guys have never been to college before... See, I never related to anybody like that before. I didn't know those people existed... they do exist."

He reported that having these men accept and respect his emotionality let him know that it is OK to be emotional and male at the same time, thus greatly increasing his self-acceptance and self-esteem.

Similarly, Ely reported developing more self-acceptance, greater self-esteem and feeling empowered in his abilities to relate within and beyond the group.

> "[My] self-esteem ... sky-rocketed since I joined the men's group. I just feel so much better about myself. [The men] heard me and they understood and they actually validated [me]. It just kind of like plugged in another piece of myself as I...and I really felt that and I just had the greater sense of self."

Within the group, he said he found himself more accepting of individual differences, being more willing and ready to empathize and be compassionate with others.

Both Ely and Hank reported that those changes led to changes in their relationships with men outside their groups. Both were highly critical of men who were not open emotionally before their groups. Being more accepting of other men's difficulty with being emotional, both reported feeling more willing to engage with men at work without the need for deeper emotional connection or understanding. Both reported feeling empowered by their groups to change their relationships with friends and family members. Ely described significant changes in his relationships with his brothers. Feeling empowered by the group, he said he ended the abusive relationship with his older brother, and with his younger brothers, he now feels much more open and accepting, regardless of whether they reciprocate or not. With his own brother, Hank said that his improved self-esteem has enabled him to feel less competitive and thus closer and more satisfied with the relationship. Feeling more empowered by the group in articulating and expressing his feelings, Hank reported being more assertive with and accepting of his intellectually dominating father.

Both Ely and Hank described a new level of mutuality in their friendships. Before the group, Ely described having no real close friends, and afterwards, he has developed new friends that are able to develop intimacy readily. With friends, Hank described being more accepting that they have difficulty opening up and that he has "lightened up" around them significantly.

Regarding their orientations towards intimate connections with other men, both reported shifting to unambivalently desiring intimacy with other men or a certain group of men. Summarizing the change in his orientation towards connecting with other men, Hank states that the group

> "really helped me just to let go of not having it to always be a very deep thing, that I could hang out and sort of just talk about whatever and not worry about it so much."

Ely commented,

> [I feel more connected to] "a piece of the male population . ... I felt connected to a community of men ... out there doing this type of work. The type of man out there like my brother, Jeff, or George Bush... I don't feel connected to ... there is a lot of men out there who are trashing men's work... and I don't feel connected to them as men. ... People like [my] brother[s], I feel much more accepting and can be more open with them whether they receive that or not and yet I don't feel a strong connection because... they aren't really part of my community."

Ira, on the other hand, did not give his group much credit for impacting his life. Before the group he said he felt he was an "involved, emotional" father, and had good, open relationships with women. He reported that the group showed him that relating mutually with men was possible and somewhat satisfying within the group, but there was little change beyond the group. The most valuable part of the experience for him was that

> "it was a place where the other members really listened and tried to understand all of the things that I was talking about. It was a comfortable place where I didn't feel like I was being judged or... it was just a safe place to air these feelings of fears that I have."

Ira reported that his individual therapy helped him be more open, and that the group was a "good experience in that [he] saw it could be done with other men." He seemed most impressed that the other men were really interested in listening and empathizing with him, though there was not much of an experience of mutuality in his group. Within the group, he mentioned only slight shifts in his awareness about himself and others.

> "it·helped me see that there is another emotional side to being a man and a man is just not a breadwinner and the final say in the family and the protector and all that stuff, but you know, I think I realized that beforehand. I think the group just sort of helped me along with the process."

Beyond the group, he reported little change in any of his relationships with family, friends or coworkers. With friends, he said he tried to "test the waters" but did not follow through in trying to deepen those relationships. With men in general, Ira described a shift in his perceptions towards seeing that other men are emotional and have a need to speak openly. Ira also stated that he has always been aware of a desire for deeper connection with other men. "It's just been my whole notion as to what is OK for men to do" has precluded it. The group, however, did

> "has raised an awareness. ... Often times I would think that if I can be so open and other men can be so open in this group setting, why can't I do it outside of the group and I wondered about it and so it raised my awareness as to the possibility that it can be done outside of the group, but there is still a part of me that doesn't feel ready for....I'm just scared to do it."

In summary, two of the men entering their groups with ambivalent orientations towards connecting with other men had significant changes in their orientation, relational abilities and levels of intimacy with other men. One of them experienced little change resulting from their group. Hank described much less ambivalence connecting with other men having let go of his need for those relationships to meet his emotional needs. Ely described developing an sense of community with other men doing personal growth work, feeling unambivalently willing to relate mutually with such men. With increased self-esteem, self-acceptance, skill in engaging and empathizing and empowerment in relating, they both significantly improved their relationships with male family members, friends and coworkers. Ira reported no change in his orientation, after his group still feeling it is not really safe to open up with other men, though he described an increased awareness resulting from his group experience, of the possibility and value of men being more intimate with each other.

Changes described by men entering with an orientation of
desiring connection with other men and having good
friendships that were not emotionally open

Three of the men in the study, Adam, Charles and Bart, entered their groups having had good relationships with other men that lacked in deep satisfaction or intimacy because of these mens' fears of opening up more emotionally. Two of them, Adam and Charles, reported deriving much

benefit from their groups in improved relationships with men within and outside their groups, in their relational abilities, and in shifting to more active and satisfying orientations towards connecting with other men. Bart reported deriving only little benefit from his group in all three areas.

Both Adam and Charles were enthusiastic and excited in speaking about their group experiences. Both described finding out for the first time that it was safe to really talk about and deal with real feelings with other men. Each described how their groups helped them become more skilled at engaging and empathizing and each benefitted from the mutuality in their groups with greater self-esteem, self-acceptance and increased empowerment in relating within and outside the groups.

Adam emphasized how the group helped him identify and articulate his feelings better, feel safer expressing them with other men, listen and attend to other men better, and experience other men listen and respond to his deep feelings for the first time. Adam described learning much about empathizing and "became practiced" at [it] in his group. He described how "temperatures" would rise in the group leading to anger and misunderstanding. When the facilitators helped he and others "cool down" and identify what they were feeling, Adam was able to learn the steps of perspective taking, recognizing similarities and differences, understanding and respecting the others' experiences and

hearing that the other men were doing the same for him. He
enthusiastically shared in the interview how new this was
for him and how special it was to do this with other men, to
"part friends and come back and do it again the following
week."

Charles stated that it was wonderful for him to find
that he could safely talk about very real things with other
men, that it was safe to identify and express his feelings
and to have them heard and responded to by other men. By
being exposed to other men this way, he reported having had
a chance to take other mens' perspectives and "realize that
each one of use had our respective... 'grass is always
greener' issues," and to "compare my issues which are at
once very different, at once very familiar to a lot of other
men." The most valuable part of the group for Charles was to
have other men identify with, respect and validate his
issues, and he expressed how new, important and self-esteem
building it was for him to experience that.

Adam and Charles reported that these experiences led to
numerous benefits within and outside the group. Within the
group, Adam found that being able to resolve tensions
through understanding led him to be more honest. From
feedback he learned how much he projects onto others, and
how he "could be very threatening" to others. He felt more
empowered in relating, more able to "tolerate rising
temperatures" and to be confrontive if necessary. "So now
when I feel the strength and courage to speak right up and

to not have all hell break loose, that to me is very noticeable." Charles also reported that he feels more empowered to risk being more confrontive and authentic with others. His self-acceptance greatly increased realizing that it is OK to "be strong and sensitive at the same time."

Beyond the boundaries of their groups, Adam and Charles reported many changes in other relationships. Charles said that he became more confident to say what is on his mind with family and friends and to stand up for what he wants leading to deeper, more honest and more open relationships. Adam described at length his attempts to "break down some of the wall" of his family, particularly with his "remote" father who would not listen to him, interrupting and cutting him off. For the first time now his father is listening and participating in conversations as Adam is confronting him and "gently insisting that they talk about some things." Feeling empowered by the group to identify and trust his own thoughts and feelings, Adam confronted his older brother who he experienced as more intelligent and domineering to establish a more equal and satisfying relationship.

Adam's experience of satisfying mutuality in his group changed his orientation towards his friends. Hanging out with his friends from college who were not open about themselves, Adam began to feel "the lack of depth" as "a bit of horror." He began to try to "bring some of that depth there," and reports that "they have been warming up to it."

In addition, his friends' female partners are very appreciative of his doing this.

Adam also reported a marked shift in the way he perceives men in general. Though he is still suspicious of other men, "I have learned that other men ... can be just as deep as I am.. no matter what they do... I know for a fact that I have underestimated men for many years." He now will

"cut them a little more slack. I will think a little better of them until I am proven wrong, until they do something that convinces me that they are dangerous, I won't assume that they are."

When it comes to men in general, Charles says that perceptions have changed.

"I don't really have the same sense anymore of this invulnerability that I used to perceive" in "regular guys." In addition, "I used to be incredibly intimidated by... physically large men or ... the conventionally macho men, you know, the whole locker room mentality... and now frankly it just doesn't really phase me the same way anymore... only in my [down] days does that really get to me like it used to."

Both Adam and Charles reported that the group experiences gave them a deeper sense of connection or community with other men. Charles came to his group having many good connections with other men yet felt there was a "hidden fraternity" he was missing out on. He reported that the men's group helped him find his "own place with men" and he describes many new experiences sharing engagement and empathy with other men as important in helping find that "place." Adam developed a feeling of "kinship" and deep satisfaction with the members of his group.

The third of the men in this sub-group, Bart, credited his group with only little change in his orientation, his relational abilities, and his relationships with other men. Bart claimed to be a sensitive person in relationships before the group and reported no changes in his abilities to engage or empathize with others. He said that sharing deep feelings with others was an important part of the group, but credits his individual therapy and the death of his mother with opening him up to those feelings. He did say, though, that the group helped him share at a deeper level with other men than he had before. Being able to engage with men at a deep level emotionally in the group setting was the main value he reported he got from his group:

> "Just hearing other men having the same feelings about certain things or having the same hang-ups about expressing these feelings. ... helped me open up about myself. ... the group was practice for connecting with men on another level than just competing."

Bart described two main benefits coming from the opportunity to share with men at a deeper level. One was that he came to feel that his "stuff was just as valid as anybody else's and you know, it needs attending to" after the other men listened to, cared for and respected him. The other main benefit was finding out

> "that even though on the surface I don't measure myself up to the others in the group, but I did have a lot to offer."

Though his self-esteem got a boost from this, he reported that he still feels he has low self-esteem due to judging himself harshly in comparison to other men who he perceives

as more successful or powerful outside as well as within the group.

Beyond the group, Bart described little change in his relationships with men. He described no change in his "horrible"

relationships with male family members, and that he came to feel "cheated," seeing what other men could have done for him that he missed in his family. He says he was oriented to connect with friends at a deeper level before the group since he saw a Robert Bly video, and in this arena, he credits the group with getting "a taste" of a deeper connection with other men that he now wants to have more of.

In summary, of the men entering their groups with friends who had difficulty going to deeper levels of intimacy, all three had the opportunity to relate with men more deeply than before, yet only two of the men, Adam and Charles, had powerful shifts in their orientations whereas Bart did not. Adam and Charles both described the deeper connections they experienced in their group as giving them a sense of "kinship" or community with other men for the first time, and Charles reported finding "his place" among men. Both described having less fear of engaging with other men within and beyond their groups, and more intimate relationships with male friends and family members due to their increased openness and willingness to initiate that deeper level of connection. Bart described no change in his orientation or behavior with other men as a result of his

group experience, but did report an increase in awareness of
the possibility of deeper intimacy with other men having had
a "taste" for it in his group. Adam and Charles reported
greater abilities in engaging and empathizing with other
men, increased self-acceptance, self-esteem and empowerment
in relating and many changes in relationships outside the
group. Bart described being able to empathize with men at
deeper levels but did not experience any change in self-
acceptance or empowerment in relating and only a small
change in self-esteem from finding out how much he has to
offer others. He reported being inspired to connect with men
before his group by a Robert Bly video and credited his
group with giving him a "taste" for deeper connection that
he wants more of.

Changes described by men entering with an orientation of connection with other men with mutuality

Two of the men in the study, Gary and Jeff came to
their groups already having bonded, mutual relationships
with male family and friends. They both reported that the
group experience gave them the opportunity to experience
that kind of connection with types of men they normally
wouldn't connect with and this enabled them to see the
possibility of that deeper connection with a wider range of
men than they thought previously possible. Jeff stated,

> "I always wanted to be able to connect with men on a
> much closer level and it is always hard for me to find
> men who are like that. And basically joining this
> group has plopped in a room with seven other guys who
> are like that. And that's very rewarding."

Gary described how the opportunity to be mutually empathic with this wider range of men helped him. The group enabled him to

"[see] the different energies that men have, ... we have very different personalities in the group from very aggressive to very passive to whatever. ... I have learned in this group ... to love some of the guys in the group who are very aggressive and have learned that there is a lot more to them than just their... aggressive type of behavior."

Besides this, the most valuable part of the group experience for Gary was to see how other men deal with relationship and work problems, go through their ups and downs and to

"hear their perspective and then also to share mine. It was a very large support for me within my own life."

Both Jeff and Gary reported that they found the group an opportunity to deepen their abilities in identifying and articulating their feelings and both reported experiencing intimacy at deeper levels than before their groups. Jeff, though quite skilled in engaging with others, described how his group helped develop the ability even more. The most valuable part of the group, according to Jeff, was that it allowed him

"to feel a lot of feelings that I can't feel in individual therapy. There is something about... other men who are sharing their feelings with me that allows me to share my feelings... actually with myself and, therefore, them."

Thus, he reported being better able to identify and articulate his feelings, and trust in the mutual empathy with the men in the group.

"It allows me to be more open with my own feelings, because I am seeing that these guys care ... I see that they care because they trust me with their feelings, or

at least they are trying to and that allows me to, I think, allows me to relax a little bit more and to allow them to see my feelings."

Both reported increased self-esteem, self-acceptance and empowerment in relating with men beyond their groups. Gary reported he gained some self-esteem from the caring and acceptance shown by others, and from putting himself down less in comparison to them.

"What I might have thought was abnormal or... some quality in me that wasn't some wire that wasn't hooked up right or whatever...I just realized... wait a second, this is much more of the norm."

For Jeff, there was a greater sense of self-acceptance that came from the fact that he felt accepted by the group. "I feel that I am accepted, welcome,...I am part of the club," giving him a similar feelings as mentioned by Charles who felt he had found his "place" among men. Jeff's self-esteem was given a boost by having his orientation towards connecting with other men affirmed.

"It's made me feel as though I am a better person.... Because now I don't feel so different in wanting to feel these feelings. ... I always felt comfortable with it, but I just wasn't getting enough response to it to make me feel... as though there are other guys who wanted this as much as I do."

Both Gary and Jeff reported improvements in their relationships with men beyond their groups. Both described a sense of empowerment to handle difficult situations with men at work more effectively. With younger men under his supervision, Jeff stated that

"the group has helped me in terms of those interactions and being able to guide them ... how to lay down the rules and yet how to be encouraging. ... to feel more comfortable with myself and to begin to recognize my

feelings when I am confronted so that when this guy at work... is challenging me, I am able to feel comfortable with my feelings when I want to respond. I am able to not take things personally."

Gary reported becoming empowered to be more confrontive and assertive in important ways with his superiors at work from identifying with the feelings and behaviors he observed by other, more confident and aggressive men in his group.

In addition, both reported improvements in their relationships with their fathers. Regarding his deceased father, Jeff said that the group helped him recognize and feel more comfortable with his feelings of hurt and disappointment, and Gary was able to confront his domineering father for the first time.

Both men experience changes in their perceptions of men in general. Jeff stated,

"I feel that there is more potential to be connected with the guy on the street. ... That the guy on the street will empathize with how I feel, he will acknowledge his connection with me. ... he is more likely to admit the fact that he feels the way I feel."

With men who he sees as more successful or intelligent, Gary said,

"I have learned from the men's group ... regardless of whatever a person's profession might be or status might be, whether they are extremely rich or extremely poor or whatever...there could be a connection there, a friendship, ... if one wanted to pursue it."

With his friends, Gary also now finds himself taking more responsibility for initiating his friendships with men:

"There was a piece missing inside of me as far as connecting with more men friends in a different way and the group has been very wonderful for that. ... I am

more assertive ... I do a better job with a lot of my friends in initiating."

In summary, Gary and Jeff came to their groups having had much success with mutual, bonded male relationships and both experienced greater skill and/or opportunity in engaging and empathizing with men, and developed greater self-esteem, self-acceptance and empowerment in relating with men within and beyond their groups. They both were affirmed in their orientation of desiring and maintaining mutual relationships with other men, and came away from their groups perceiving that there is a wider range of men they can connect with than they were previously aware of.

Summarizing the changes men reported resulting from their experiences in their mens' groups, the degree of change varied widely from very little to quite a lot in the areas of relational abilities, orientations towards connection with other men and in men's relationships with other men outside their groups. Many men reported greatly increased abilities in engaging and empathizing with other men such as Ely, Hank, Adam and Charles. Others, such as Gary and Jeff, who came to their groups with higher levels of relational abilities, also experienced improvements in engaging and empathizing with others. Ira, Doug and Bart, who reported having some skills in these areas, did not describe significant changes in their abilities to relate to others, and Fred, who appeared the least skilled (or interested) in intimacy, had some improvements in engaging

and identifying with others. Those six men who reported significant improvements in relating also reported many benefits of mutuality coming from their group experience, most notably, increased self-esteem, self-acceptance and empowerment in relating mutually. Doug reported many benefits of increased awareness in the area of relating, most notably an increase in relational awareness that led to a shift from living stereotypically as a "rugged individual" to being more of a "team member." The other three, Ira, Bart and Fred, reported only minor relational benefits coming from their groups.

Most of the men in the study reported significant shifts in their relationships with men outside their groups. Those who improved in their relational abilities and benefitted from increased mutuality transferred those skills to relationships outside their groups by engaging more deeply, being more confrontive and/or assertive with friends, family members and coworkers, and initiating deeper, more intimate connections with men. Doug shifted in his behaviors with men towards being more open and empathic, and more of a manager than a sole achiever at work. Ira, Bart and Fred described little change, if any in their relationships beyond their groups.

In their orientations towards connections with other men, of the two who came in with an orientation of not valuing intimacy with other men, Fred had no change and Doug shifted to being more aware and interested in relationships.

Of the three who came in with ambivalent orientations, two, Ely and Hank, shifted dramatically to overcoming their fear of engaging other men and valuing and pursuing deeper intimate connections with other men. The third, Ira, experienced only a small shift in awareness towards the possibility of doing so with other men. Of the three who came to their groups desiring connections with men, having friends but being afraid to open up emotionally, two, Adam and Charles, experienced significant shifts in overcoming their fears and initiating deeper, more intimate connections outside their groups. The third in this sub-group, Bart, reported that he got a taste for that deeper connection, but still had difficulty making it happen outside his group. The two men who entered their groups having successfully bonded in mutual friendships with other men came out of their groups experiencing greater openness and awareness to the possibility of sharing that kind of connection with a wider range of men.

The next section will discuss how this data can be organized to assess whether there is a relationship between men's stated changes in their experiences of mutuality with other men and stated changes in their orientation towards connections with other men.

Data Analysis I: Changes in Mutuality by Changes in Orientation

The above data was organized in tabular form in order to help see if there is any strong relationship between

stated changes in experience of mutuality with stated changes in orientation towards connection with other men (see Table 3, p. 160). This table is organized first by the type of orientation the men described themselves as having before the group. These orientations were categorized into the four categories described above, and described in the table as: 1) not valuing intimacy; 2) ambivalent; 3) connecting without emotional openness; 4) bonding with mutuality. The second column categorizes the men's descriptions of their orientation towards connection after the group experience using the same categories. The third column reflects the most central reported changes in men's experiences of engagement, empathy and the benefits of mutuality that they derived from their groups.

With the visual aid of Table 3, one can easily see that one of the two men moved from an orientation of not valuing intimacy to being more relationally aware, two moved from ambivalent to bonding with mutuality, two moved from connecting without emotional openness to bonding with mutuality, and the two who were already bonding with mutuality had some increase in awareness of the range of men they could connect with. Thus, there was a significant change in orientation for seven of the ten men whereas and there was no change or very little change for three others, one each with orientation of not valuing intimacy, ambivalent and connecting without emotional openness.

Table 3: Changes in Mutuality and Orientation

Subject	Orientation Before	Orientation After	Changes in Mutuality*
Doug	Not valuing intimacy	More relational awareness	Increased relational awareness, little change in depth of intimacy
Fred	Not valuing intimacy	Not valuing intimacy	No change
Ely	Ambivalent	Bonding with mutuality	A**
Hank	Ambivalent	Bonding with mutuality	A
Ira	Ambivalent	Ambivalent	B***
Adam	Connecting w/o openness	Bonding with mutuality	A
Charles	Connecting w/o openness	Bonding with mutuality	A
Bart	Connecting w/o openness	Connecting w/o openness	B and he found he had much to offer others, and connected on a deeper level
Gary	Bonding with mutuality	Open to a range of men	A
Jeff	Bonding with mutuality	Open to a range of men	A

* Only the most central changes are listed.

** "A" refers to: increased abilities in engaging and empathizing with other men, increased self-esteem, self-acceptance and empowerment in relating with other men in the group and beyond it.

*** "B" refers to: increased awareness of negative comparison with others, of the emotional sides of other men and little stated change in relational abilities or depth of intimacy

The three men who reported no change or very little change also reported little benefit from their groups in relational abilities or in their experiences of mutuality with other men. The two of these, Bart and Ira, changed in their orientation only in that they came to see the possibility of greater connection and intimacy with men than they were aware of before their groups. Both benefitted from their groups mostly in seeing that other men have vulnerable and emotional sides and in being more aware of how they judge themselves with other men negatively. Bart also found that he had much to offer the other men in the group.

Of the other seven men, six of them reported deep intimate connections with men in their men's groups that were either their first time doing so, deeper than they had experienced before, or were with types of men they had not done so beforehand. All six reported learning greater engagement and empathic skills, increased self-esteem, increased self-acceptance as a man and increased empowerment in relating with other men in and outside their groups. All six of these men had significant changes in their orientations towards connections with other men. Ely and Hank, who had originally felt ambivalent about being intimate with men, and Adam and Charles who had close friends but were afraid to share openly, all reported shifting to overcoming their fears of other men and currently pursuing, initiating, maintaining and enjoying satisfying emotionally intimate relationships with other

men. Two others, Gary and Jeff who already had bonded, mutual relationships with other men, found that their orientations were affirmed by the men in their groups and that they could connect and share deeply with a wider range of men than they would have thought possible before their group.

Doug also reported a marked shift in his orientation towards connection with other men though he did not describe shifting to desiring deep emotional connections with men, nor did he report experiencing them in his group. He described increased self-esteem, self-acceptance and empowerment in relationships through increased awareness of his and other men's places in the life cycle and that much of the difficulty he has experienced was "normal." His shift in orientation was from being a "rugged individual" to one who is relationally aware, though that awareness does not seem to include open emotional sharing.

Thus, the seven men in the study who were emotionally impacted by their men's group in experiencing greater self-esteem, greater self-acceptance as a man and empowerment in relating with other all had marked shifts in their orientations towards connections with other men. Six out of seven of these men experienced a deeper level of emotional engagement and empathy with the men in their groups, and these men reported the largest shifts in orientation towards wanting and having greater connection with other men outside their groups. Those that did not feel emotionally impacted

by their group without much significant change in self-esteem, self-acceptance or relational abilities reported little change in orientation if any. Therefore, I would conclude that there is a strong relationship between reported changes in men's abilities and experiences of mutuality with men in men's psychotherapy groups and reported changes in their orientations with other men within and beyond their groups.

The next section examines what happened in these men's groups that men attributed those changes to.

Group Events that Impacted Men's Relational Abilities and Orientations

This section discusses the events men described in their interviews as helping to facilitate the changes they attributed to their groups. As the main questions of this research involve the impact which men's psychotherapy groups have on mutuality and sense of connection men experience in relationships with other men, it focuses on those events that impacted men in those areas. It is organized according to the revised mutuality typology for simple reference. Since a greater sense of connection with men and a desire for more connection with men is listed as one of the benefits of greater mutuality, those events that impact men's experience of connection with other men are listed under the "benefits of mutuality" section below (see item #12). This section is not intended to be a comprehensive

list of the ways men's psychotherapy groups can facilitate mutual relationships but a report of what this sample of men attributed their changes to. The previous section has already included many reports of how increased relational abilities have contributed to improved relationships between the men in the study and the men in their lives in and outside of their group. They will not be repeated in this section. At the end of this section, however, other events, not already reported that influenced men's relationships with other men are described.

Group events that contributed to men engaging with other men
>   1) overcoming enough fear of other men to begin
>   engaging with other men;

Many of the men in the study reported overcoming their fear of opening up with other men and reaching new levels of intimacy. A number of them described that it was just the setting where men knew they were all there to talk openly and were committed to doing so that helped them begin. Others described realizing after awhile that they could talk about anything, such as Charles who stated,

>   "all of a sudden I can come in and really just say what
>   is on my mind ... It's nice to just talk very real
>   about a lot of issues that have been very taboo in the
>   past among men."

Others reported that it was the caring and empathy shown by other men that made their groups feel safer for them. Ira commented that it felt safe to him because

> "other members really listened and tried to understand all of the things that I was talking about. ... I didn't feel like I was being judged."

Hank described the empathy, support and increased self-esteem that came from them as facilitating his sense of safety in his group.

> "Just being around them and supporting the part of me that was important to me, the emotional component...That helped me bond with them essentially. It helped decrease the amount of fear. It helped me realize that it was OK for me to be emotional and be a man at the same time. That there wasn't something wrong with that."

A number of the men implied that the leaders of the group were quite instrumental in creating a safe atmosphere within the group. Adam credited his two group leaders with helping the group be a safer place by helping members differentiate between their inner feelings and their reactions to others in their group during arguments (see below).

2) being able to identify one's feelings;

Identifying one's feelings more fully and clearly was mentioned by a number of men in the study. Some of them mentioned how hearing others' feelings helped them get in touch with their own. Jeff stated,

> "the group allows me to feel a lot of feelings that I can't feel in individual therapy. There is something about... other men who are sharing their feelings with me that allows me to share my feelings... actually with myself and, therefore, them."

Others mentioned being pushed by the leader or other members of the group to identify the feelings behind certain reactions. Doug commented that just the fact that he was able to talk about feelings at all "[freed him] up to talk

about any kind of feelings." Jeff also commented that not

hugging or being otherwise physical with the men in the

group enabled them to better articulate their feelings:

"we are trying to learn how to talk and share our
emotions and by talking about them, we are able to
visualize them more ... hugging - it feels really
good, but it sort of cuts it off, [the identification
and verbalization of the feeling], it doesn't really
bring it out so that it is understood that you clearly
see what you are feeling." Hugging is very satisfying,
but why can't you get that same satisfaction from
communicating verbally. I think that by communicating
verbally one identifies with a much stronger way
because then you really know what you are longing for
and you really know what you are getting."

In addition, Adam mentioned how the setting and some of

the activities arranged by the leaders helped men get in

touch with their feelings:

"Some of the activities that we have done have pushed
for that. We have done some exercises and we have done
some guided meditations. They have gotten me in touch
with feelings on a deeper level."

3) being able to differentiate between one's original
    feelings and feelings arising from a relational
    encounter;

Jeff and Adam were the two most articulate about how

their groups helped them with this. Adam discussed how the

group leaders facilitated this differentiation:

"we would be talking about something and then pretty
soon we would argue and get angry, ... and we would
start to vent our anger when, in fact, who knows, we
might be feeling afraid [or] abused. ... When ...
everything is cooled down, and this person who is ...
yelling [says it] 'is because he was reminding me of my
mother', suddenly it gives a totally ... understandable
explanation, it is easier for me to realize that he
doesn't hate me... I stirred something up... and then I
would tell him my story and he would understand my
position better." (Adam)

Jeff, on the other hand, mentioned how, through discussion with other members of the group, he was forced to do the same:

> "in the group when I am reacting to something that is going on, in discussing it with the group, I have to sort of figure out what it is that I am reacting to. I have to... by going through the process of talking and communicating with the guys, what it is that is actually attacking me or what it is that is actually bothering me."

4) being able to or learning to articulate one's feelings and thoughts;

The men in the study reported that this came about through practicing and through observing others model the expression of feelings for them. Fred and Hank both discussed the value of talking about relationships with family members as a way of understanding and articulating feelings. Charles discussed how "there have been a lot of examples of how to vent certain feelings." Jeff pointed out how

> "we are trying to learn how to talk and share our emotions and by talking about them, we are able to visualize them more." (Jeff)

5) a willingness to communicate those feelings and thoughts to other men with authenticity;

Many of the group experiences that were listed under the first item above (overcoming fear of other men) fit under this category as there was a direct relationship between willingness to disclose and the degree of safety felt. In addition, Ira pointed out the importance of others modeling such a willingness:

"as people opened up more, it sort of gave me the
signal that was OK for me to do as well."

Jeff reinforced the importance of knowing that others really

care in being able to be more open with his feelings.

6) genuinely listening to other men;

Adam and Fred were the most articulate about learning

to listen better. Adam reinforced how the group was a

continual opportunity to practice listening. Fred learned

the difference between "self-listening" and really listening

to others from the feedback given him by other members of

his group:

> "a lot of times ... I would try to put in my two cents
> and sometimes I wasn't really listening... I was kind
> of like up in the head level... I wasn't letting stuff
> sink in... it wasn't a feeling communication... so as
> time went on, at the end a lot of times we will do
> feedback, how people would experience you... from that
> I learned to kind of slow down and kind of listen and
> let things sink in and not the minute you hear
> something... go... quick response... let it sink in,
> take it in, and maybe I might respond and I might
> not... but listen, truly listen, let it kind of sink in
> before you jump out and respond to it..."

7) communicating to the other person that they have
   been heard;

After learning to listen more fully, Fred was able to

communicate his sympathy for others better -

> "In the men's group [I] to try to become more sensitive
> to other men's issues, what's going on for them, the
> pain that they all go through, there are other men in
> separation, divorce,... just to try to empathize with
> them...[to have] some compassion for the pain that we
> are all in..."

8) being aware that other men are communicating
thoughts and feelings with authenticity;

Beside the fact that the groups are structured for this to occur and that the leaders facilitated being open and honest, some of the men commented on how the genuine display of emotion was most important to see in others. Jeff stated,

"I see that they care because they trust me with their feelings, or at least they are trying to."

9) being aware that other men are genuinely listening.

It was clear that many of the men in the study were impressed, for the first time, with how well other men listened. Some pointed out that it was other men's feedback and empathy that facilitated that awareness. In addition, Ira, who felt his group was not open and cohesive much of the time, felt that, although his group members were basically good listeners, sometimes what he said fell on "deaf ears."

In summary, there were many types of events that helped men engage more fully with other men. For some men, just the setting and the opportunity to engage with men for the first time enabled them to open up and develop more engagement skills. The leaders of the groups played important roles in creating an atmosphere of safety, offering exercises and activities such as guided meditations to identify and express feelings, and in actively intervening to help men identify, express and differentiate feelings and experiences. The other men in the groups played important roles as well. Their openness and willingness to express

themselves and engage with others modelled safety and
vulnerability for other members of the group. Some men were
able to get in touch with themselves more deeply by
identifying with the feelings and behaviors other men were
expressing. Further, the other men in the group facilitated
some individuals engagement through feedback that was
supportive, challenging or even confronting. One member of
the group also described how refraining from physical
closeness facilitated men in learning to identify, verbalize
and then engage with other men regarding affectionate
feelings.

Group events that contributed to men empathizing with each
other

    1) taking the other person's perspective;

    This item was most clearly described by Adam under item
4) above where the group leaders would intervene during an
argument, help things "cool down," and then have each member
try to really understand what the other person is reacting
to and feeling.

    2) identifying with the other person's experience;

    Fred described his inner process that helped him better
identify with others:

> "There were times that I almost allowed myself...to
> really feel someone else's pain when they were telling
> the story... instead of trying to come up to my head...
> I would just try to listen and kind of let it sink into
> me and just kind of like... somehow there was some kind
> of connection there."

Doug suggested that out of his desire to support the younger
men in his group, he would try to identify similar events in
his own life in order to "echo what they had been going
through." Besides these inner processes, a number of men
described how the group was "practice" at listening and
understanding what the other men were going through.

>   3) recognizing and acknowledging similarities between
>   self and others; and

>   4) recognizing and acknowledging differences between
>   self and others.

Almost all the men in the study said or suggested that
it was just the opportunity to be with men openly for the
first time and to hear the stories of their lives and
struggles that enabled them to recognize and acknowledge
similarities and differences between themselves and others.
Pertaining to recognizing and acknowledging similarities,
Doug benefitted from his group by finding that

> "the general concerns I have about growing older and
> being a professional and family member and so forth
> were echoed in different ways by what these people had
> been going through..."

Pertaining to differences he also said,

> "I have become much more tolerant because of the group
> of superficial differences. I have realized that most
> of them are image posturing,... I feel that I am
> seeing additional layers behind the surface of the
> presentation."

>   5) communicating respect, understanding, and validation
>   of the other person's experience;

Ely discussed how, through the openness and modelling
of other members of his group

"I learned that it is OK to recognize someone and to say I recognize what you are about and to acknowledge that and to validate that for them and give them whatever support and encouragement that they want."

6) allowing oneself to be emotionally touched by the other's sharing; and,

7) sharing of one's own feeling response;

A number of the men in this study implied that they were able to do these with other men facilitated by the sense of safety in the group, being able to articulate their feelings, by an atmosphere of openness about such expression, and by seeing others do so. In the "chain reactions" in his group, Ely described how sharing his sadness and grief and being supported by his group

"touched something in [someone else], it was like that catalyst effect and he then went back and became deeply moved by some experience in his childhood."

8) being aware that others are taking one's own perspective;

9) being aware that others are identifying with one's own experience; and

10) being aware that others are communicating respect, understanding and validation of one's own experience;

Though no one clearly stated what specific events happened that facilitated becoming more aware in these ways, many men described that their men's group experiences were their first opportunity to experience this with other men. Charles stated that

"[The most valuable part of the group for me was] a sense of validation with a lot of issues that I have had... in some cases, just to kind of put my issues on the table and know that these guys are not only

accepting, but understanding of what is going on."
(Charles)

11) being aware that others are moved by one's own
experience.

Adam, Charles, Ely and Jeff all described "chain
reactions" that happened in their groups, where one man
would get in touch with deep feelings and that would trigger
other men to get in touch with and express similar feelings.
Ely said,

"I finally shared [a deeply emotional] story in my
group and I was really able to be openly sad and
terrified by it... and I got support from people in the
group who came around and put their arms around me and
hugged me and said that it was really OK... and as that
was happening someone else in the group, it touched
something in him, it was like that catalyst effect and
he then went back and became deeply moved by some
experience in his childhood."

In summary, many of the types of events that supported
greater empathy among men in their groups were similar to
the events that encouraged greater engagement. The leaders
played active roles in creating safety with their presence
and interventions. Many found greater empathy than
experienced before with men just from having the opportunity
to do so in a setting designed to foster it. Just being with
other men in such a setting enabled men to discover
similarities and differences between themselves and other
men for the first time. Other members modelling openness,
caring, respect and validation enabled some men to
experience them for the first time and learn to do so
themselves. Some men specifically mentioned that it was
their increased abilities of engagement, such as being able

to identify and articulate one's feelings that facilitated greater empathy. A number of men also discussed "chain reactions" where one man would express an experience or a set of feelings that would trigger similar feelings and experiences in other members of the group. Those "chain reactions" were sometimes mentioned as critical incidents that deepened mens' abilities to empathize and took the sharing to deeper levels of intimacy than they had experienced before.

Group events that contributed to the benefits of mutuality

1) increased authenticity in one's own self expression;

A number of men mentioned different events that helped them be more authentic with others. Doug described his increased awareness of his real self behind the images that he has lived as greatly helping him be more authentic. Gary described the commitment and willingness of the members as important for him:

> "I think it's just men be willing to share themselves, men being willing to make a commitment to meet once a week, and to really go past the facade of who we are, who people think we are, and then get taken to another level, a higher level of who we really are, what are our fears, not just the successes or whatever."

Adam described a number of different things that enabled him to reach deeper levels of authenticity in his self expression: working through arguments and fears with other men, being with other men for "at least half a year," and finding out that others "invariably, to one extent or another have had the same experience or a similar one."

2) increased awareness of authenticity in others;

A number of men commented that it was "just the setting" -the fact that the group was organized for men to be authentic that helped them see others more clearly. In addition, Doug saw more authenticity in others as he began to see the real selves of the other men in the behind their "presentations" of themselves:

> "I have become much more tolerant because of the group of superficial differences. I have realized that most of them are image posturing... I feel that I am seeing additional layers behind the surface of the presentation." (Doug)

3) increased awareness of the vulnerable and emotional sides of other men;

As in a number of other items, many of the men experienced this increase merely by being able to spend time intimately with other men in such a group for the first time. Charles said,

> "I don't really have the same sense anymore of this invulnerability that I used to perceive."

Hank stated that one of most valuable aspects of his group was

> "seeing that other men had emotional lives with their own daily lives. That men actually did feel a lot and they can express themselves."

4) increased self-knowledge and self-acceptance of oneself as a man;

There were many ways by which men learned more about themselves and developed more self-acceptance. One of the main ways was to be able to be in a group and experience that it is acceptable to be sensitive and emotional and a

man. By having other men validate and respect the sensitive and emotional sides of themselves, Hank, Ely, Charles, Jeff and others were either affirmed that their orientation to want to connect with other men or their sensitivity to their feelings were good and valued by other men. Bart found that being empathized with and respected, he

> "learned that [his] stuff was just as valid as anybody else's and you know, it needs attending to."

Others learned important things about their personalities and how they relate interpersonally. Adam learned how threatening he could be and how much he projects onto others by being confronted by others in the group and encouraged to look at his behavior and the feelings behind it. Gary also described the important role feedback played in rethinking how to handle situations outside his group. Gary and Fred both described how just being able to tell others about a situation enabled them to identify important issues and patterns involved, as Fred stated "in telling the story comes the healing." Still others described an increase in self-acceptance through being accepted as a member of the group. As a result of being accepted by his group, Jeff stated that he felt "welcome, I am part of the club."

5) increased acceptance of other men;

A number of men described coming into their groups with critical, negative attitudes towards other men in general. Having had the opportunity to learn that other men can be "deep" (Adam), sensitive (Charles), or emotional (Ely, Hank

and others), these men found their general attitudes towards other men had shifted both within and outside the group to being less critical or negative. They described more willingness to engage with other men with the expectation that something positive would happen.

> 6) increased self-esteem from being cared for, respected and validated by others;

In terms of what happened in the groups that facilitated this increase is self-explanatory. As explicated by Ely,

> "[My] self-esteem ... sky-rocketed since I joined the men's group. I just feel so much better about myself. To be validated and to be complimented by men, to be appreciated by men. ... People heard me and they understood and they actually validated it. It just kind of like plugged in another piece of myself as I...and I really felt that and I just had the greater sense of self."

> 7) increased self-esteem from devaluing oneself less as the unreasonable demands of gender role socialization become demystified;

Many of the men in the study experienced a shift of this sort and credited it to finding out that other men are not stereotypically "all together," that other men are successful and powerful, or that it is useful to try to be. Hank never knew that there were many men that didn't have it "all together" before his group.

Some of the men described that it was the fact that they were accepted and valued by types of men they compared themselves negatively to that helped them judge themselves less. Gary commented that

"there are a few men in the group who are high energy, aggressive, very bright, successful, career-oriented men, you know, and I would put myself down with that group... well, I am not as successful or I am not as bright and ... they [would] connect with me... it has helped. So that piece was a very good piece to get rid of."

Charles described two group activities that helped him decrease the degree to which he judged himself against other men. First, he described how just talking about his self-comparisons with physically large, intimidating men with his group helped him feel no longer "phased" by them anymore. Second, he mentioned that he had always compared himself negatively to "regular guys" that appeared to have it "all together" and by being able to "pick the brains" of one of those "regular guys" in his men's group, he was able to see that he (and other such men outside the group) also have emotional issues and feelings of inadequacy.

8) increased self-esteem from realizing that one has more to offer others than previously was aware of;

This came about for some of the men in the study simply by being in a situation where they were called on to support other men and found that there was much they had to offer. Doug described how his earlier life had wisdom in it for others in his group:

"it was suddenly very eye-opening to see that there was something valuable in the time I had been through that I could share with them."

Though Bart's group did not benefit him much in other ways, he found he

"was able to contribute a lot to the group on an emotional level, feeling level, supportive level... so I think that was probably the best thing that I got out of the group... that even though on the surface I don't measure myself up to the others in the group, but I did have a lot to offer."

9) empowerment: in the immediate relationship and in relating beyond the immediate;

There were a few different ways the men in the study described being empowered by what happened in their groups. Adam and Ely both described how the actual emotional encounters that occurred within the group empowered them. Adam described how being able to work through intense arguments in the group helped him get over feeling intimidated by others in many ways.

"it helps me when I am shopping. ... I demand a little more satisfaction, you know, even if it makes the other person uncomfortable... if it is something I feel I am entitled to, I don't back off anymore. It hasn't turned me into an a_____, but it turns me into a person who stands up for his rights."

When Ely was asked in the interview what happened in his group that helped him confront his abusive brother and end that abuse, he said

"I confronted someone in my group in this way. One of the people in the group commented on how striking it was and how much of a limit that I set ... someone commented on what a strong presence I was when I set limits of what ... and where I was... and they were supportive of that ... and I then realized that, 'Gee, that was my relationship with my brother,' ... and so that changed."

Two of the men in the study commented on the role the leader had in empowering them. Fred pointed out that the leader of his group brought in much useful information on how to handle relationships that was empowering to him. Doug

mentioned how important and empowering it was for him that the leader of his group affirmed how valuable his comment were to the rest of the group.

Gary discussed how important the modeling by other members of his group was in empowering him outside his group. Both at work and with his father, Gary actively thought to himself how other men in his group would handle certain situations and he would then behave in those ways to overcome some of his timidity and passivity. He also said that in some cases there was nothing specific that was empowering,

> "just men be willing to share themselves, men being willing to make a commitment to meet once a week, and to really go past the facade of who we are, who people think we are, and then get taken to another level, a higher level of who we really are,"

that he found deeply empowering.

10) less fear of getting closer to other men in   gener
                                                      al;

A number of men in the study described having less fear of getting closer to other men after realizing that other men have more of a vulnerable and emotional side than they previously knew. Others described feeling more confident in themselves with higher self-esteem and self-acceptance and those feelings enabled them to engage with other men with less fear than before. Still others, such as Adam and Charles, found that their increased tolerance for "rising temperatures" and greater skill at engaging with other men

prepared them to have less fear of what might happen once an engagement with another man got started.

11) feeling more adequate and/or confident in one's capacity to relate in the present moment;

All of the men in the study described some increase in capacity to relate with others, as exemplified by all of the above mentioned changes in relational abilities, their subsequent benefits, and what happened in the groups that facilitated those increases in abilities. Charles also described how the safety he felt within the context of his group enabled him to feel more of that confidence and adequacy,

> "I am more confrontational ... all of a sudden I can come in and really just say what is on my mind and ... it's a nice way to just talk very real about a lot of issues that have been very taboo in the past among men."

12) a greater sense of connection with other men and a desire for more connection beyond the immediate interactions;

Besides being a benefit of increased relational abilities and greater mutuality with men, this change also reflects how men shifted in their orientation towards connection with other men.   Many of the men in the study talked openly about how the above benefits and increased abilities in relating gave them a greater sense of connection with other men. Adam most eloquently stated how he wanted to transfer that sense of connection within the group to his friends outside the group.

"You feel this kinship, but you can also solve problems, there is a very practical side to it too. I learned pretty soon how satisfying that can be and then I would go hang out with my other pals ... and I [wanted to have] some of that depth there, and that's what I have been doing, attempting to bring some of that depth there."

Describing what happened in his group that made him feel that way, he said,

"Once I started the men's group in the spring I just started to realize that I had a place to go to. People to talk with. ... They were also able to get in touch with their own grief and their own feelings and that came up and would start some chain reaction. It was wonderful. I felt like I was in communion. ... we came closer together and those nights when that happened... again it was that sense of community and a place to go that this can happen ... it just makes the world seem less dangerous and less desolate."

Most of the other men also commented that having a place to go where the men were there for the same reason, to share openly, increased their awareness that there are "other men out there" (Ira) who are afraid to talk about their feelings and probably would like to connect. For those who already had a sense that other men did want to connect, having men in their groups that they normally wouldn't connect with allowed them to see that those other men, be they more successful, powerful, aggressive, or "regular," may also want to be intimate and form some kind of connections with them regardless of their difference.

13) increased willingness and desire to take responsibility for the mutuality in intimate relationships with other men and with women.

All six of the men in the study whose orientation towards connection was described as level 4 or 4+ in the

previous section described how satisfying the connections in their groups were and how they wanted to experience that satisfaction with friends and male family members. Gary went as far as to say that that willingness was

> "a piece missing inside of me as far as connecting with more men friends in a different way and the group has been very wonderful for that."

Further he stated that this came with getting a taste for the "enjoy[ment of] being with other men and ... sitting down to talk. Exclusively with other men."

14) increased relational awareness.

In some cases, there was not a deeper sense of connection as much as there was just an increased awareness of the relationships between a man and other men in his group. This was most evident with Doug, whose orientation towards connection shifted only a little to include greater relational awareness and not as much of a deeper sense of emotional connection with other men. He commented on what happened in his group that contributed to his shift to greater relational awareness:

> "I [found I] could help [someone in the group].... I certainly cared about him. I think that the experience wasn't so much joined and connected as realizing who I was in relation to who he was... I saw the experience as somewhat universalized because of being there ... Mentoring was one of the most amazing experiences in that group... that really was something valuable and that I could share this with this person and that I could feel connected to him, not just in a mere empathetic way... Gee, I understand how you feel, that's really interesting... but here's a connectedness through the generations that I certainly never found when I was growing up."

Summarizing the above events that fostered the benefits of mutuality would be lengthy and difficult since many of these benefits lead to others and later ones then reinforce earlier ones at deeper levels. For instance, just the opportunity of being in such a group enables men to see the vulnerable and emotional sides of other men for the first time. This can lead to a greater sense of safety in engaging and empathizing with other men, leading to greater authenticity in one's self-expression and increased awareness of authenticity in other men. Increased awareness of others' authenticity, along with seeing the vulnerable and emotional sides of men can lead to greater acceptance of other men. With this increased openness and engagement, deeper levels of self-disclosure are likely to happen allowing others to respect and validate deeper expressions of self resulting in greater self-esteem, self-acceptance and empowerment in relating with others, not just men. This is what happened in the "chain reactions" described in the above section on empathy. Thus, there are countless combinations of experiences that contributed to the benefits of mutuality that I will not attempt to list, except to say that mutually empathizing with others leads to many, if not all of the above mentioned benefits.   Besides those interconnections, some more concrete events that occurred in the groups deserve mentioning as they provide guidelines for men's group leaders in running future men's psychotherapy groups. A number of men mentioned that there was an

increased sense of authenticity and empowerment that came from knowing others were committed to being in the group for a lengthy period of time. There was also a pragmatic, problem solving aspect to men's sharing problems and receiving feedback about their situations and their ways of handling them.

The composition of the group was very important for some men in the benefits they experienced. Some men developed greater self-esteem and self-acceptance not only because they were deeply respected and cared for, but those doing the empathizing were perceived as respectable, more powerful or successful, or otherwise highly esteemed. For others, the opportunity to talk to men that they would not ordinarily have the opportunity to talk to enabled them to overcome fears, let go of stereotypes and role demands, to devalue themselves less in the company of such types of men within and outside their groups, and to recognize the vulnerable and emotional sides of a wide range of other men.

The role of the leaders was mentioned by a number of men. Some men felt empowered from being affirmed by the leaders of the group in things they had to say. Others described the importance of the leaders ability to intervene during arguments. The ability to experience working through such arguments was then very empowering within and beyond the group in various ways.

Finally, there were many comments about an increased sense of connection with other men and a shift towards

wanting more of that connection beyond the group. The bulk of them involved having experienced such connection at a deeper level in the group, finding it satisfying, and seeing that they could be instrumental in fostering it with greater relational skills.

Other group events that contributed to improved relationships with men outside the men's psychotherapy groups

Besides improved relational abilities, there were a few other things that happened in the groups that men attributed to benefitting their relationships with men. Bart and Adam both mentioned that just the experience of being in a men's group provided important topics of conversation that took some of their relationships to deeper levels. Adam found that discussing men's issues that arose in his group with his "remote" father enabled them to engage more fully than they had before. Bart experienced a deepening of an old friendship through discussion about their individual experiences in their groups.

Hearing about other men's relationships with their fathers was reported as key to changing some of the men's relationships with their own family members. Jeff reported that hearing other men's feelings about their fathers helped him get in touch with his own feelings about his own deceased father and that helped him move on in his life. Fred stated how important it was for him to hear how deeply other men were affected by dysfunctional relationships with

their fathers. This helped Fred realize how important it is to be open and empathic with his son to help his son develop more healthfully.

A number of men discussed how transference furthered their relationships with family members. Jeff discussed seeing many of the men in the group as his father and having been able to work through feelings about his father. Adam described most eloquently how working through a transference he had with another member of his group changed his relationships with his own father:

> "I projected my father onto this guy physically because he very much physically resembled my father and acted like my father. He was one of the more quiet guys in the group, ... he almost made me wonder what's he doing here, ... but when finally asked to speak, he would ... share his wounds. Just the depths of his anguish or the pain of his father and problems at work and in his marriage. He would reveal a great deal. He gave me the feeling that when he was silent and does not say anything at all that he seemed just like my father and yet he speaks... and maybe the things that come out his mouth would come out of my father's mouth too if my father had whatever it is that he is missing... the courage, the whatever to speak. I might hear the same kinds of things from him... so that gave me the feeling that there really is a whole other side to my father that I have never seen and that side ...is really his best side. ... Relating to this one guy ... opened an eye towards my dad."

Finally, men reported that their groups acted as a laboratory where they could try out new behaviors that ultimately were used to improve their relationships with men outside their groups. For example, Ely discussed how he was able to try out setting limits within his group, and with encouraging feedback, he was able to end an abusive relationships with an older brother.

This section has reviewed the specific men's group events and experiences that men reported as having impacted their experiences of mutuality and connection with other men. The next section explores if there is any relationship between the level of group development reached and the degree of changes men reported in their levels of mutuality and connection with other men.

Data Analysis II: Stage of Group Development by Changes in Mutuality and by Changes in Orientation

One hypothesis of this study was that increases in men's perceptions of mutuality and/or connection are more likely to occur in groups that reach the latter stages of development as described by Rabinowitz (1991). This section explores whether such a relationships exist.

Rabinowitz (1991) described a four-stage developmental sequence that ongoing men's psychotherapy groups usually progress through resulting in deepening intimacy and mutuality. Those four stages are characterized with the following ways:

Stage 1: interpersonal anxiety, intellectualizing, and a desire to avoid conflict;

Stage 2: ambivalence about self-disclosure, reliance on previous patterns of communication, and resistance to change.

Stage 3: increased sense of security in the setting, interpersonal conflict based upon individual differences in style, attitude, and cultural background, and working through interpersonal and emotional conflict paving the way for changing long-standing maladaptive patterns of interaction.

> Stage 4: acceptance of individual differences, genuine
> displays of affection, and the generalization of
> emotional and interpersonal learning to
> relationships outside the group setting. (p.574)

During the interviews, if the level of group
development was not spontaneously described, it was inquired
about. Six of the men in the study, Adam, Charles, Ely,
Gary, Hank and Jeff, described their groups as having passed
through earlier stages of development and having reached
Stage 4. Those six men were also the same six men who
reported marked shifts in their relational abilities and in
their orientations towards other men. Adam and Charles both
mentioned how the group members often hug at the end of
their meetings after working through intense feelings and/or
disagreements. Both mentioned themselves and others making
significant changes in their lives outside their groups. Ely
described his group as very close and, though not stated
directly, many of the men in his group implied generalizing
changes to their outside lives. Gary described his group as
"very close" and "real tight knit." He went on to say that,
like Jeff's group, it is not affectionate physically, but "a
supportive and a caring group." He also described various
ways they worked through difficulties, accepted each others
differences and changes as a result of the group outside the
group. Hank and Jeff described their groups in the following
ways:

> "On nights when we were really very connected and you
> could really feel there was a tremendous amount of love
> going on." (Hank)

"I know that in two or maybe three cases, the guys have seen dramatic changes in their lives outside the group. Especially in terms of how they are channeling anger." (Jeff)

The other four men in the study did not report that their groups reached the latter stages of development. Ira described his group as having not moved on beyond Stage 1 much, if at all:

"The group was not overly emotional ... it was ... more intellectual. ... Most of the people I felt kept things very under control. At the end, we just shook hands and just sort of went our own ways. ... I didn't feel much connection There was a range of ages, of family-type situations, of occupation and lifestyle and it just seemed that the group was a real mish-mash. ... Sometimes I left very bored and thinking that this was a waste of time."

Bart described his group as having reached Stage 2, with some sense of emotional connection but relying on previous intellectual ways of relating:

"Most members I really did care for and even the one that I sometimes didn't, ... there were times when I did and part of the reason why I didn't care for them too much was that I was getting tired of just going on and on and on and on with all of this intellectual stuff and kind of skirting ... any real emotional issue ... There was really kind of an intellectual way of dealing with emotions."

Similarly, Doug described his group as having reached Stage 2, saying that it was an issue oriented versus a feeling oriented group without much emotional connection though the men did try to support each other.

Fred, the man in the study whose participation was the longest, 3 years, said that there was a high turn over of men in his group and that its level of development varied over that time. He described there not being an ongoing

sense of connection with the other men in the group, though
at other times conflicts were openly dealt with. There was
little physical affection described although the leader
sometimes introduced some physical contact exercises. From
these and other comments, it appeared that his group was
sometimes at Stage 2 and at other times at Stage 3 in its
development.

In order to see if there is a relationship between
group level of development and changes reported in mutuality
or in orientation towards connection with other men, the
above data has been organized in Table 4 (p. 192). This
table is a repetition of Table 3 with one added column for
group development. In that column, the number of the highest
stage of development their group was described as having
reached is listed for each man in the study.

As can be seen easily with the aid of Table 4, the six
men who described the most shift in relational abilities and
orientations also described their groups as having reached
Stage 4 of development. Those who experienced no change in
orientation, Bart, Ira and Fred, reported their group level
of development as 2, 1, and 2 - 3 respectively. Doug, who
described a shift from not valuing intimacy to being more
relationally aware, described his group level of development
as Stage 2. Ira, who described his group as having reached
only Stage 1, reported the least change of any man in the
study in relational abilities or changes in relationships
with men outside his group. Bart, Fred and Doug who reported

Table 4: Group Stage of Development and Changes in Mutuality and Orientation

Subject	Orientation Before	Orientation After	Changes in Mutuality*	Group Stage Reached
Doug	Not valuing intimacy	More relational awareness	Increased relational awareness, little change in depth intimacy	2
Fred	Not valuing intimacy	Not valuing intimacy	No change	2,3
Ely	Ambivalent	Bonding with mutuality	A**	4
Hank	Ambivalent	Bonding with mutuality	A	4
Ira	Ambivalent	Ambivalent	B***	1
Adam	Connecting w/o openness	Bonding with mutuality	A	4
Charles	Connecting w/o openness	Bonding with mutuality	A	4
Bart	Connecting w/o openness	Connecting w/o openness	B and he found he had much to offer others, and connected on a deeper level.	2
Gary	Bonding with mutuality	Open to a wider range of men	A	4
Jeff	Bonding with mutuality	Open to a wider range of men	A	4

* Only the most central changes are listed.

** "A" refers to: increased abilities in engaging and empathizing with other men, increased self-esteem, self-acceptance and empowerment in relating with other men in the group and beyond it.

*** "B" refers to: increased awareness of negative comparison with others, of the emotional sides of other men and little stated change in relational abilities or depth of intimacy

Stage 2 levels of development in their groups all reported some changes in relational abilities and in relationships beyond their groups.

This data suggests that there is a relationship between the degree of change men reported in their experiences of mutuality and their orientations and the level of development they described their groups as having reached. This research thus lends some support to the hypothesis stated at the beginning of this section that increases in men's perceptions of mutuality and/or connection are more likely to occur in groups that reach the latter stages of development.

This supporting data may be confounded, however, by the possibility that those men who came to their groups with skills in relating mutually or were able to develop mutuality in relating with other men may have been more likely to identify that their groups have reached the latter stages of development, whereas men without the skill in relating mutually may have been less likely to recognized and report those events that signify those latter stages of development. The four men who described the most growth and learning in relating, Adam, Charles, Ely and Hank, all reported their group as having reached stage 4. Gary and Jeff, the two men who appeared among the most skilled coming into their groups also reported that their groups reached Stage 4. The others who did not describe being intimate or mutual with men may not have been sensitive or open to

experiencing the more subtle events that contributed to mutuality in others. This possibility is backed up by the fact that Hank and Fred were in the same group and Hank described the group as having reached Stage 4 and Fred only Stage 2 or 3.

Men's orientations entering their groups may also have affected their perceptions of group development. Doug, Bart and Ira described their groups as having only reached Stages 1 or 2 and all three entered their groups with orientations of not valuing intimacy with men or avoiding and/or fearing deeper intimacy with men. Hank and Fred entered with different orientation, Hank yearning for emotional connection with men and Fred not really interested. Being in the same group, Hank described it as having reached Stage 4 and Fred only Stage 2 or 3. Therefore, there may be a functional relationship between men's orientations entering their groups and their perceptions of intimacy and mutuality during their groups. Conversely, their orientations may have been instrumental in holding the group development from flowing easily into the later stages of development and thus their perceptions of what happened (or didn't) may have been accurate. Supporting this idea is the fact that both Doug and Bart were in the same group and both described their group similarly as having reached only Stage 2.

In summary, thus far, it appears that there may be a number of factors affecting men's reports of their group level of development: 1) men's perceptions of group stage

reached may be skewed by their orientations towards
connection with men entering the group; 2) those perceptions
may also be skewed by their level of skill in relating
mutually entering their groups; 3) those orientations may
have had a strong effect on the group stage actually
reached; and 4) those levels of skill in relational
abilities may have had a strong effect on the group stage
actually reached. In addition, numerous other factors
probably also affected the level of group development that
was reached which this study did not explore, such as group
composition, amount of group turnover, leadership qualities
and styles, and others. Therefore, it is difficult to assess
the relationship between actual group development and
changes in men's orientations or relational abilities in
this study except to say that there is a strong
relationships between reported changes in orientations and
relational abilities and described levels of group
development.

The last section of results explores any potential
relationships that may exist between the demographics of the
sample and the reported changes in orientations or
mutuality.

Data Analysis III: Demographics by Changes in Orientation and by Changes in Mutuality

The data most relevant to the exploration of
demographics and reported changes is represented in Table 5

(p. 197). The data are organized by degree of change in the table. Those with the most change in orientation are listed at the top and those with the least at the bottom with their orientations before and after listed in the first two columns. The degree of change in relational abilities is listed in the third column. Age, marital status and length of time of participation are the last three columns in the table. There was little variation in educational level, so that was not included, and no relationships could be seen between changes stated and occupation, family composition, birth order or number of children.

As can be seen in Table 5, those with the most change in relational abilities and orientations ranged in length of participation from seven months to two years and four months. Those with the least change ranged in length of participation from one year and two months to 3 years. Thus, there does not appear to be a relationship between length of participation and degree of change reported except that a minimum length of participation may be necessary for men to experience a significant level of change.

The four men with the most change, Adam, Charles, Ely and Hank, whose orientations shifted from either ambivalent or connecting without emotional openness to bonding with mutuality, were all single and four of the youngest men in the study, Hank and Charles being the two youngest in the study. Gary and Jeff who also experienced significant changes in orientation and mutuality were married, Gary

Table 5: Demographics and Changes in Mutuality and Orientation

Subject	Orientation Before	Orientation After	Changes in Mutuality*	Age	Marital Status	Time in group
Ely	Ambivalent	Bonding with mutuality	A**	32	Single	7 mos
Hank	Ambivalent	Bonding with mutuality	A	26	Single	1y, 2 mos
Adam	Connecting w/o openness	Bonding with mutuality	A	35	Single	1y, 4 mos
Charles	Connecting w/o openness	Bonding with mutuality	A	27	Single	1y, 7 mos
Gary	Bonding with mutuality	Open to a wider range of men	A	42	Married	2y, 4 mos
Jeff	Bonding with mutuality	Open to a wider range of men	A	33	Married	11 mos
Doug	Not valuing intimacy	More relational awareness	B**	46	Married	1y, 4 mos
Bart	Connecting w/o openness	Connecting w/o openness	C**	32	Single	1y, 2 mos
Ira	Ambivalent	Ambivalent	D**	35	Married	1y, 6mos
Fred	Not valuing intimacy	Not valuing intimacy	No change	42	Married	3 years

* Only the most central changes are listed.

** "A" refers to: increased abilities in engaging and empathizing with other men, increased self-esteem, self-acceptance and empowerment in relating with other men in the group and beyond it.

** "B" refers to: increased relational awareness, some improved self-esteem and empowerment in relating, a greater sense of connection with men from increased awareness of his place in the life cycle.

Table 5 continued

** "C" refers to: little stated change in relational abilities or depth of intimacy, found had much to offer others, and connected on a deeper level than just competing.

** "D" refers to: increased awareness of negative comparison with others, of the emotional sides of other men and little stated change in relational abilities or depth of intimacy.

being one of the three men in their forties, and Jeff the fifth youngest at 33. Bart (single) and Ira (married) were the two other men in their thirties and they experienced little change. Fred and Doug, the two oldest men of the study in their forties, reported no or little change in orientation or relational skills.

From this data, I gather that there is no direct relationship between age and marital status and changes reported from the men's groups. There does appear to be the greatest change in younger, single men between the ages of 26 and 35 towards overcoming fear of other men, improved relational abilities and greater mutuality and connection with other men, although one other single man, 32 years of age, did not have the same benefits from his group.

No clear relationships can be found in the data between demographics and changes reported for the married men in the study except that the two oldest men, Doug (46) and Fred (44), were the only two who came with an orientation of not valuing intimacy with other men. Having the most traditional

gender role orientations, these men went through high school and college in the 1960's before feminism and the humanistic psychology movement became strong and popular in our culture. Further research may uncover whether men of that age group and older share their orientation more than men of younger age groups. Neither of these men reported changes in the depth of intimacy they experienced with other men, though both reported some shifts in relational abilities and relational awareness.

In summary, the data do not show significant relationships between the demographic information and stated changes in orientation or mutuality with men except that unmarried men in their late twenties and early thirties may be the most likely to benefit from men's psychotherapy groups, and that men over the age of 44 enter their groups with orientations of not valuing intimacy with other men though they may benefit from such groups to varying degrees.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This study was an exploratory investigation into the impact of men's psychotherapy groups on men's abilities and experiences of relating intimately with other men. Ten men who had participated in such groups for a minimum of six months were interviewed about their group experiences and the changes in their perceptions in the areas of intimately relating with men within and outside their groups. Speaking openly and thoughtfully about their experiences, those men provided rich data reflecting many individual differences and commonalities. The data provided much useful information regarding the nature of those men's difficulties in relating with other men; the steps, components and skills that make up mutuality in heterosexual men's relationships with other men; the relationship between increased mutuality and a sense of connection with other men; and the role men's psychotherapy groups play in helping men experience mutuality within and beyond those groups. This data provides an important beginning for understanding men's adult relational development and some interventions that can facilitate that development.

The preceding chapter attempted to present the results of this study in a manner that genuinely reflected the experiences of its sample. This final chapter presents a discussion of the major findings and limitations of the study and recommendations for practice and further research.

Major Findings

The purposes and results of this study are both theoretical and clinical in nature. It was hoped that contributions would be made to the literature on men's adult relational development and to an understanding of how men's psychotherapy groups can best facilitate that development. The specific areas this exploration studied included whether: 1) such groups help men experience mutuality with other men and develop skills in doing so beyond the confines of the groups; 2) an increase in the experience of and skill in relating mutually would correspond with a shift in men's orientations towards other men in the direction of desiring and pursuing more connection; and, 3) those changes are more likely to occur in groups that reach the latter, more cohesive stages of group development. The study also sought to discover what happens in such groups that facilitates those changes. The major findings of this study are broken down into the above four areas.

Men's psychotherapy groups' impact on mutuality in men's relationships with other men

The literature review suggested that men suffer from gender role strain with low self-esteem, loneliness, isolation and alienation from other men, and difficulty with intimate relationships. It also suggested that knowledge of women's development in the area of relating mutually could provide keys to understand how to help men relate more fully and that men's psychotherapy groups could facilitate that

development. In this section, I first describe the main
impact such groups had on the men in this study in relating
with other men and then relate that impact to the relevant
literature in this area.

All ten men reported at least some improvement in
relational abilities though not all described experiencing
greater mutuality with men within or outside their groups.
The men in the study who reported experiencing the greatest
increases in mutuality with other men within their groups
were also the ones who reported the most improvement in
relational skills. Those men also reported being able to
transfer those skills to relationships with men and women
beyond their groups increasing the degree of mutuality in
those relationships as well. Thus, this data supports the
first hypothesis that such groups can help men experience
mutuality with other men and develop skills in doing so
beyond the confines of the groups.

A closer look at the data elucidates the specific
changes and improvements the sample reported, the effects
those changes had on those men's gender role strain and the
variation in the degree of change they reported. Of the ten
men who participated in the study, all struggled with self-
esteem issues to some degree due to comparison with other
men or with gender role stereotypes and norms. Eight out of
ten men in the study described a sense of isolation and
alienation from other men and a fear of engaging with other
men emotionally. One man who, even though he had many close

relationships with male friends and family members, felt alienated from those men, feeling there was some "hidden fraternity" from which he was excluded. Only two of the ten men reported having male friends and family members who were emotionally supportive prior to their groups, and many reported difficult, disconnected and even abusive relationships with male family members and co-workers.

The four men who seemed to benefit from their groups the most developed greater abilities in engaging and empathizing with other men, and benefitted from their mutuality within the groups with greater self-acceptance, self-esteem and empowerment in relating in the moment and beyond the group. All four described overcoming their fear of engaging openly and emotionally with other men and they experienced mutual empathy with other men for the first time in their groups. Over the course of their group participation, all four came to value connection with other men in a deeper way and were empowered to assert themselves with male family members towards improving those relationships. All four described having deeper and more satisfying friendships with men outside the group as a result.

The two men who entered their groups already having bonded, mutual relationships with male friends and family members experienced many of the same benefits as those four men. Both were enhanced in their abilities to engage and empathize with other men. Both were able to engage with a

wider range of types of men than they had before and were able to identify and articulate their feelings and experiences more fully. Both reported greater self-esteem and self-acceptance as well as affirmation from other men of their desire to be close with other men. They reported feeling empowered to be more assertive and secure in their relating abilities beyond their groups. They reported improved relationships with their fathers and with men at work.

Thus, all six of the above men reported improved relational skills, deeper and/or broader experiences of mutuality with men within and beyond their groups, and reductions in gender role strain. The reductions in gender role strain took a number of forms: 1) increased self-acceptance as a man, as their emotional and vulnerable experiences were accepted and validated by the men in their groups; 2) less fear and increased acceptance of other men as gender role stereotypes became demystified and awareness was gained of the emotional and vulnerable sides of other men; 3) increased self-esteem from devaluing themselves less in comparison to other men or to gender role stereotypes and from finding out how much they have to offer other men; 4) decreased sense of isolation and/or alienation from other men in general; 5) improved intimacy with other men within and beyond their groups; and 6) reduced relational dread from reduced fear of other men and increased confidence in

their abilities to engage and empathize in the relational
moment with others.

The other four men in the study described having
derived benefit from their groups to lesser and varying
degrees. Two of these men, the two oldest in the study,
seemed the least interested in emotional mutuality with
other men before joining their groups yet described
benefitting in a number of ways. Both described their groups
as enabling them to engage and empathize with other adult
men for the first time. This helped improve their self-
esteem and self-acceptance and reduce their sense of
isolation as both found that they were not alone with their
issues or abnormal for having had many of the difficulties
in their current and earlier lives. These two men reported
differing degrees of change in their relational abilities
and in relationships beyond their groups. One reported
coming to his group able to be mutual with women though he
had not done so with men. The main changes he reported from
his group included deriving a greater awareness of the
emotional and vulnerable sides of himself and other men, a
greater sense of connection with other men from an awareness
of the stages of a man's life in the life-cycle, and a
powerful shift from being a "rugged individual" to being
someone much more relationally aware. Beyond his group, he
reported being more empathic with men socially and at work.
Through increased relational awareness, he changed the
nature of his work to be more of a team player with others.

Socially, he described being more ready to really listen to others' perspectives and a new willingness to take the time to identify with what they may be experiencing.

The other of these two men described himself as a loner before his group and was not interested in having male friends. He reported that he was, however, able to engage with other men and overcome some of his fear of disclosing his feelings. Further, he was quite articulate about how the group facilitated his learning some of the skills of engaging and empathizing with other men, particularly listening to others and expressing his feelings. Beyond his group, there seemed to be no interest in improving his relationships with men, yet he did say that he is more open to listening to men in his family if they approach him concerning emotional issues.

In both cases, though there was a report of a deeper experience of empathy with men, there was not a sense of emotional mutuality or bonding with other men within or outside their groups. For these two men, the group enabled them to reduce their gender role strain through decreased isolation and alienation from other men and improved self-esteem from reduced negative comparison with gender role norms. Though they both came with different levels of relational abilities, they both overcame some fear of engaging with other men and learned to engage and empathize with men more fully. That intimacy, however, fell short of a

deeper sense of mutuality and emotional connection with other men.

The other two men in the study reported not coming away from their groups experiencing much change in gender role strain or mutuality with other men. They reported coming to their groups quite skilled in identifying their feelings and being empathic with others, though they had only done this with women. Both had friends but did not report having satisfying mutuality in those friendships. Both reported that there was little mutuality in their groups and that there was little change for them beyond their groups. They did place value, however, in that their groups showed them that emotional mutuality was possible with men. Both described relating more deeply with men than they had before. One said that the group gave him the opportunity to practice engaging with men about emotional topics in new ways and that he found his group to be a safe place where others really listened without judging. The other found an opportunity to connect with men at a level more meaningful "than just competing." The opportunity to have other men empathize with him gave him a new sense that his "stuff is just as valid as anyone else's." Both men described becoming more aware of how they judge themselves in comparison to other men and gender role stereotypes but said that the group experiences did not really change those deep feelings of low self-esteem.

Thus for these men, there was little improvement in gender role strain, with no reduction of relational dread or increase in self-esteem or self-acceptance. Only one of those two benefitted by being able to connect more deeply with male friends beyond the group. This came about through being able to discuss common experiences in men's group, though not in reductions in relational dread or improvements in relational abilities.

Reviewing these findings, it has became clear to me that understanding both sets of literature, the one on gender role strain and the other on relational development, are crucial in understanding the needs of adult men in the area of intimacy and how therapeutic interventions can be of service.

The literature on gender role strain aids in understanding the specific issues and problems men come to men's psychotherapy groups with. The sample in this study came to their groups with many symptoms of gender role strain described in the literature - isolation, loneliness and alienation from other men (Pleck, 1981; O'Neil 1981a,b) and low self-esteem from comparison with gender role norms that are impossible to achieve (Garnets & Pleck, 1979; Franklin, 1984). Many of the men came afraid of and cut off from vulnerable and emotional intimacy with other men as described by Good, Gilbert and Scher (1990) and many other writers. Stern (1983) described how, because men lack close relationships with other men, they do not have the

opportunity to receive valuable social support and feedback that can normalize their self-concept and reduce their fear of other men.

The findings of this study support the assertions of the literature on men's psychotherapy groups suggesting that such groups can help resolve those issues. The findings affirm that in such groups there is a breakdown of isolation with the discovery that other men experience similar feelings, problems, fears and hopes (Heppner, 1983); there is an increased acceptance of non-stereotypical feelings and vulnerabilities (Heppner, 1982; Silverberg, 1986); men often experience, for the first time, that other men also value emotional openness and connection (Stein, 1983); men can learn new ways of relating with other men that is more intimate leading to deeper caring, friendship and intimacy (Stein, 1982; Silverberg, 1986); men learn more about other men, and come to accept and value them more (Lewis, 1978); and, men get the needed support and empowerment to make changes they want in their lives (Sternbach, 1987).

The literature on relational development complements the gender role literature in describing the relational abilities men need to learn to overcome their gender role strain in the area of relating with others. Bergman (1990), drawing on the "self-in-relation" theory of women's development (Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1986; Surrey, 1985), suggested that men develop with an orientation towards relationships which is one of avoidance and disconnection

whereas women develop with an orientation based on maintaining connections with others. In addition, men, as well as women, are motivated by a primary desire for connection, and that "much of men's misery comes from disconnections and violations, and from participating in relationships which are not mutually empowering." (p.1-2) Bergman suggested that men's relational orientation of disconnection is at the root of many of their interpersonal problems and suggested that the development of ability in relating mutually is an important step in their growth. The results of this study showed that many men come to their groups having experienced relationships with other men that were full of violation and disempowerment. Many of them were able to experience mutually empowering relationships with other men for the first time in their groups, and others became more aware that it is possible. Those that experienced mutually empowering relationships in their groups were profoundly affected with increased self-esteem, self-acceptance, empowerment and increased skill in relating. Improvements in their relationships with the other men in their lives was another profound affect.

To assess how men's psychotherapy groups can aid in the development of relational abilities, a list of the steps and components that make up mutual interchanges and relationships and the benefits that derive from such mutual interchanges was created, drawing primarily on the writings of Miller (1986), Genero, et al. (1991), Surrey (1985) and

Jordan (1991a,b). Bergman's theory of male "relational dread" (1990) was included as it contributed to an understanding of men's difficulties in engaging and empathizing with other men. This list was then edited and added to, accounting for men's gender role norms and it was eventually refined and revised with the data of this study (see The Mutuality Typology, Appendix I).

The results of this study affirmed the usefulness of the mutuality typology and reinforced that the steps and components described in the women's relational development literature also apply to men's relational development. In addition, men have additional issues pertaining to relational dread and gender role norms to struggle with in developing intimacy with other men. The typology proved useful in understanding individual relational abilities and difficulties, and helped identify those events and conditions of men's psychotherapy groups that can facilitate the development of those abilities.

One of the important findings of this study involved a more refined understanding of men's relational dread. Bergman (1990) introduced the concept and described it as a fear of what may happen as men are presented with a relational encounter that may be more intimate than what they are used to. He described relational dread as deriving from being (or feeling) less skilled than others at attending to, identifying and dealing with the feelings of oneself and others. This lack of skill then contributes to

failing to relate well with others, to fear and distrust of getting close to others, to a sense of guilt and shame at not being adequate to relate, and, in the end, to avoidance of intimacy. (p.8)

In the analysis of men's difficulties with other men in this study, it was found important to differentiate between relational dread in men that derives from an inability or inadequacy in relating, and relational dread deriving from a fear of other men because of gender role norms and stereotypes. Pertaining to the first (deriving from being unskilled in relating), men fear participating in the relational moment because of lack of skill in relating and from having been unsuccessful in relating in the past. Pertaining to the second type (deriving from gender role strain), men fear being emotionally open with other men, are afraid of being seen as weak, vulnerable or "feminine" and are afraid of being humiliated, rejected, or otherwise violated and/or disempowered.

The data showed that these two different areas of relational dread between men were manifested in different issues regarding engagement, empathy and the benefits of mutuality. The mutuality typology as first developed from the women's development literature reflected those skills and abilities that are important to learn to help men reduce the first type of relational dread and develop a sense of adequacy in relating. Regarding relational dread due to fear of men because of gender norms, it was found that men need

to overcome their fear of attending to other men in relational encounters, and that for many men, in order to overcome their fear, men need to see that other men can be authentic, emotional and vulnerable and can be caring, respectful and validating.

Men's psychotherapy groups' impact on men's orientations towards connection with other men

This study also sought to explore whether men's psychotherapy groups have an impact on men's orientations towards connection with other men. Bergman (1990) suggested that men's orientations towards intimate relationships were characterized by a sense of disconnection and a turning away from intimacy. He suggested that young boys, in the earliest stages of gender role socialization, turn away from intimacy and the experience of "being in relationship" and this turning away, combined with social pressures to fit traditional roles is at the root of men's difficulties with close relationships. As a result of this turning away, men become "selves-in-spite-of-relationships" rather than "selves-in relationship." Gilligan (1982) and Miller (1976) suggest that that orientation results in avoidance of intimacy and thus the failure to learn to, and become skilled at, relating mutually. This study, drawing on these ideas, sought to assess if men's psychotherapy groups have an impact on men's orientations towards connection with others, specifically men.

From the interviews, it was found that the men in the study could be grouped into four categories of orientations described as not valuing intimacy with other men, ambivalent, being connected without emotional openness, and, bonding with mutuality. Only the two men in the first category, not valuing intimacy, could really be characterized with an orientation of disconnection, all the others valued connection with other men. The men in the ambivalent and connected-without-emotional-openness categories wanted to have mutual relationships with other men but did not because of either or both types of relational dread (deriving from fear of other men or from lack of skill in relating). Though they may have learned to be "selves-in-spite-of-relationships," their desire to be more fully in relationships was alive.

Interestingly, the two men in the first category were the oldest, ages 44 and 46, whereas the range of ages of the rest of the sample was from 26 to 42. This fact highlights the possibility that Bergman's theory on men's orientations of disconnection may relate more to men who graduated high school and college in the early 1960's before the advent of feminism, humanistic psychology and the Vietnam war. Perhaps younger men who grew up with those influences, as well as the men's movements of the 1970's and 1980's, have orientations that are more desiring of connection with others, particularly men. Though the majority of men who attended high school and college in the late 1960's and

later may have more connected orientations, if this sample is at all representative, they do not possess the confidence or skill in achieving and maintaining those connections with other men. Further research could explore whether there is such a division between these two cohort groups and what approaches are best suited to treating their relational difficulties.

Those men who had the most shift in orientation were in the middle two categories where they desired connection with other men but were afraid to engage with or open up emotionally with other men. Two of the three men in each category were strongly impacted by their groups emotionally with many reported changes in relational abilities, decreased relational dread, less gender role strain and numerous changes in relationships within and outside of their groups towards satisfying mutuality with men. For these men, it was overcoming one or both types of relational dread that enabled them to experience greater mutuality with men and then to generalize and pursue their desires to connect with other men beyond their groups.

The two men with orientations of not valuing intimacy, the two oldest men in the study, experienced different degrees of change in their orientations. One who reported being not interested in having friends, described a shift only in being more open to listening to men in his family if they approached him to talk, and to having more of an empathic relationship with his young son. The other reported

a shift from being a "rugged individual" to someone much
more relationally aware and interested in cooperative,
supportive relationships with men. He described that shift
as deep and fundamental for him though there was not a sense
of more satisfying mutuality in his life with other men.
Thus, men in this study with orientations characterized
mostly by disconnection benefitted with some increased
awareness of relationships and/or some increase in
relational abilities without achieving a fuller experience
of mutuality or a deeply felt shift towards wanting it with
men.

The two men who came to their groups with bonded,
mutual relationships with other men found that their
orientations were validated and affirmed by their groups and
they both found that their orientations of connection could
be shared with a wider range of types of men than they
previously believed possible.

There was one man in each of the two middle categories
of orientations, ambivalent and connected without emotional
openness, who experienced little change, if any, in his
orientation. One man who reported little change in
orientation reported having a greater awareness of the
possibility of more open connection with other men, and the
other experienced connecting with other men at a level
deeper than just competing which fell short of mutuality.

Thus, it appears that men's psychotherapy groups can
have an impact on men with a wide range of orientations

towards connection with other men in shifting those
orientations towards increased relational awareness, a
deeper sense of connection and an increased desire to pursue
and maintain connections with other men. As well, it
appears that such groups may not impact men very much, or
not at all, whose orientations are characterized by
disconnection or fear of or avoidance of other men. Those
men who appeared to benefit the most were men whose
orientations were characterized by desiring connection with
other men but avoided intimacy because of fear of other men
and/or inability in relating mutually. Those men who
experienced the least shift in orientation, were the men who
experienced the least mutuality in their groups or who came
to their groups with orientation of disconnection and who
did not value open sharing between men.

The relationship between reported changes in relational
abilities and orientations

Another area of exploration of this study examined
whether an increase in the experience of mutuality and/or an
increase in skill in relating would correspond to a shift in
men's orientations towards other men in the direction of
desiring and pursuing more connection. Miller (1986),
speaking about women's relating, stated that mutuality in
relationships can lead to a greater sense of connection with
others and the motivation for more connection. Miller
(1986), Genero, et al. (1991), Jordan (1991a,b) and Surrey
(1985) all describe how the various skills of relating

contribute to mutuality that fosters that sense of connection. I believed that such development of skill and mutuality would lead to a greater sense of connection and a motivation for more connection in men as well.

In this study, it was found that the seven men who reported the greatest changes in relational abilities and mutuality with other men also reported the largest shifts in their orientations. The three who reported little change in relational abilities or mutuality with men described little to no change in their orientations.

The seven men who reported the most changes in both relational abilities and orientation also reported having been the most emotionally impacted by their groups. They all experienced greater self-esteem and self-acceptance and all were empowered in relating more fully beyond their groups. Six of the seven experienced a deeper level of emotional engagement and empathy with men in their groups, and these men reported the largest shifts in orientation towards wanting and having greater connection with other men within and outside their groups. The seventh in this sub-group of the sample did not have a deeper sense of intimacy with others, and his shift in orientation was only towards becoming more relationally aware and interested in cooperative relationships. The other three men in the study reported not feeling emotionally impacted by their groups with little change in self-esteem, self-acceptance or change in orientation.

This data appears to lend support to the idea that there is a strong relationship between reported changes in the experience of mutuality and relational abilities and reported shifts towards greater connection with other men. In addition, there appears to be a strong relationship between how deeply an individual was emotionally impacted by his group and the degree of shift in orientation towards connecting with other men. This data lends support to Miller's (1996) statements that mutuality leads to a greater sense of connection with others and an increase in motivation to connect further, and that this applies to men as well as women.

The relationship between reported changes in relational abilities and orientations and group stage of development

Another area this exploration focussed on was whether changes in relational abilities and orientations towards connections are more likely to occur in groups that reach the latter, more cohesive stages of group development. Out of numerous theories of group development, I chose Rabinowitz's (1991) since it described men's psychotherapy groups specifically. He described a developmental sequence of four stages that such groups pass through. The earlier stages are characterized by anxiety, intellectualizing, avoidance of conflict and resistance to change. The latter stages are characterized by increased sense of security, conflict about individual differences and finally in

Stage 4, greater coherence, emotional connection, and the generalization of learnings beyond the group.

The data of this study suggested that there is a relationship between reported changes in orientations and relational abilities and the levels of group development described by the men in the study. The six men who reported the greatest improvement in relational skills and mutuality and the greatest shifts in orientations also described their groups as having reached Stage 4 of group development. The other four men who reported less benefit from their groups described their groups as having only reached earlier stages of development. The man who reported no change in orientation or relational skills described his group a having reached only Stage 1. The other three reported some change in relational skills and only shifts of attitude regarding their orientations. These reports make sense intuitively, as Stage 1 reflects only defensive avoidance and intellectualizing and Stage 2 reflects greater engagement, ambivalence about self-disclosure and resistance to change.

The self-report nature of this study, however, limits the study's usefulness in confirming that such a relationship exists. The men in the study may have had their perceptions influenced by their level of ability in relating and/or their orientations towards intimacy with other men. Those with greater skill in relating may have been more sensitive to perceiving intimacy between men, whereas those

not as skilled in engaging or empathizing may have failed to
perceive levels of intimacy occurring in their groups. Men
more oriented towards valuing and pursuing intimacy with
other men may have responded emotionally to a greater degree
than men with less motivated orientations. That heightened
response may have skewed those men's perceptions towards
believing that the rest of the group was sharing their
feelings and experiences. Conversely, men not motivated to
be intimate may have interpreted the same group events as
less meaningful or connected. These possibilities are
supported by the fact that two of the men in the study were
in the same group and one described it as having reached
Stage 4 and the other only Stage 2 or 3. The one who
described it as reaching Stage 4 reported greatly increased
relational skills, an orientation highly valuing emotional
connection coming into his group, and a significant shift in
orientation resulting from his group. The other reported
little interest in intimacy with other men before or after
his group and only slight change in relational skills.
Therefore, there may be a functional relationship between
men's orientations and/or relational abilities and their
perceptions of what happened (or didn't) in their groups.

Conversely, it is also likely that men with greater
abilities in relating and with orientations characterized by
greater desire to connect would help facilitate their group
in reaching the later stages of development. Those without
relational skills and with orientations less motivated to

connect could impede group development. It is my belief that all of these factors played a part in men's perceptions of group development as well as the actual Stage reached. Further research may more conclusively support the hypothesis that there is a direct correlation between group development and changes in mutuality and orientation among men in groups.

Furthermore, the mutuality typology which delineates the skills and benefits of mutuality can be used to refine our understanding of the stages of group development in men's psychotherapy groups. It seems to me that during the initial stages men are struggling with safety and engagement issues. In the middle stages, men are working through engaging more openly and learning to empathize with each other. In the later stages, more of the benefits of mutuality appear and reinforce deeper sharing and empathizing.

Group events that facilitated mutuality and connection between men

The fourth and last area of major findings involved the pursuit of understanding of how such groups helped men develop relational abilities and/or experience mutuality and connection with other men. Rich and varied reports from the interviews described many types of events that reinforced the development of the steps, components and benefits of mutuality and events that helped men overcome conflicts and issues deriving from gender role strain.

A number of types of events facilitated men in overcoming their initial fear of opening up with other men and in the development of skill in engaging with other men. The leaders of the groups were credited with creating safety through their presence and through timely interventions that helped resolve conflicts. They were also described as having provided exercises and activities such as guided meditations that helped men begin to access and identify some of their feelings and inner experiences. They also intervened to help men identify, express and differentiate feelings and experiences which facilitated both safety and engagement with others.

Numerous men reported that just the setting of the group gave them their first opportunities to engage and empathize with other men and to experience other men do the same with them. This enabled them to open up, see other men model engagement and empathy, and to experience being listened to, cared for, respected and validated by other men for the first time. Many reported that it was seeing other men vulnerable and emotional in a safe context for the first time that made it safe for them to do the same.

The members of the groups were also reported as helping facilitate engagement in other ways. Some men were able to identify their own feelings more accurately after listening to and identifying with other men expressing their feelings. Feedback that was supportive, challenging, and even confrontive further encouraged deeper engagement and

empathy. One man described how refraining from hugging forced men to learn to identify and verbally express feelings more accurately.

An important type of event that a number of men reported as facilitating deeper empathy and eventually a sense of mutuality was described as a "chain reaction." One man would express deep feelings or an important experience that would trigger similar feelings and experiences in other members. Those chain reactions often took the sharing to a level deeper than men had experienced before.

As men began to experience greater mutuality among themselves and others, many of the benefits of mutuality were experienced. Those benefits then reinforced fuller experiences of safety, increased engagement and empathy, and eventually more of the benefits of mutuality. The "chain reactions" were good examples of this. Seeing the vulnerable and emotional sides of other men led to an increased sense of safety which allowed for deeper self-expression, increased awareness of authenticity in oneself and other men, and eventually being cared for, respected and validated in deeper ways than before. That empathy from others led to increased self-esteem, self-acceptance and empowerment in relating in the moment and outside the group, and that eventually led to even deeper levels of safety, vulnerability and self-disclosure which fostered deeper and more satisfying connections with other men. Having experienced deeper, more satisfying levels of connection

with other men in the groups, many men reported seeing that they could be instrumental in fostering that connection with the men in their lives outside the groups and became more motivated to try. In like fashion, other events and experiences of engagement and empathy led to the various benefits of mutuality which fed back to reinforce others.

Other events or conditions of the groups were reported as helpful in achieving some of the benefits of mutuality. Some men reported that there was an increased sense of empowerment and authenticity within the group from knowing that others were committed to being in the group for a lengthy period of time. Others described the pragmatic, problem-solving nature of some of the discussions and feedback that empowered them to solve problems outside the groups.

One important factor mentioned by a number of men contributing to their increased self-esteem and self-acceptance was the composition of the group. They reported developing greater self-esteem and self-acceptance because the men that were caring for and respecting them were men they perceived as respectable, successful or otherwise highly esteemed. For others, being able to talk with men with whom they normally wouldn't have the opportunity to, enabled them to overcome fears of those types of men. They also were able to let go of stereotypes and role demands, and to devalue themselves less in the company of such men outside their groups.

Other types of events were reported as having benefitted men's relationships with other men beyond the groups. Some reported that their participation in the group itself provided ice-breaking topics of conversation between them and male family members and friends. Some described how powerfully they were impacted by hearing about other men's relationships with their fathers towards getting in touch with their own feelings or finding new ways to relate with their own fathers and/or sons. Others described how transference with other men in the groups enabled them to change their relationships with their fathers and brothers. Seeing men who resembled those family members being open, available and emotional, enabled them to engage more fully with their own fathers and brothers. Finally, the groups functioned as laboratories where men could try out new behaviors that ultimately were used to improve their relationships outside their groups.

In summary, this study has added to a detailed understanding of how men's psychotherapy groups benefit men, help develop relational abilities, improve their relationships with other men within and outside the group setting, and foster orientations that value interconnections between men.

Limitations of the Study

There were a number of limitations to this study. One was its focus only upon men's relationships with other men. Men's relationships with the important women in their lives also have significant impact on men's orientations towards connection and intimacy and on men's relational abilities. This study did not interview men on the effects of relationships with women in their lives, nor did it examine the effects of group participation or change in relational skills on those relationships. After beginning the analysis of the interviews, I realized that it would have been more valuable to more specifically assess men's relational abilities in their intimate relationships with women before and after their group experiences. This would have given the data more detailed and accurate information about the changes in relational abilities men derived from their groups. Further research can address these issues.

The self-report nature of the study presents another limitation to the study. The study sought to understand the perceptions of the men which may have been skewed for various reasons or reported with exaggeration or diminution for various reasons, such as wanting to appear a certain way or to please the interviewer. External validation from others about changes in relationships or the individuals' behaviors was not sought, thus a valuable source of "hard" evidence was not obtained. In addition, the study is limited by the individuals' abilities to recall their behaviors and

insights accurately. Further, the intense emotional nature of the topics being studied may have strongly influenced men's memories or perceptions of actual events and their impacts. On the other hand, gender role strain, self-esteem, self-acceptance and a sense of empowerment in relating are all intrapsychic experiences and best understood when described from within the individuals involved.

The sample size and distribution present limitations of generalizability. The sample was small, and in some cases narrow. A wider range of ages, religions and ethnic backgrounds would make the study more generalizable. As it was done, the study is most relevant to heterosexual men with ethnic backgrounds that are Jewish, English/Irish, and/or Eastern European, and are between the ages of 26 and 44. In addition, all but one of the men in the study had participated in lengthy individual psychotherapy treatments before participating in their groups. The only one who had not was the man least interested or motivated to connect with other men and one of the least skilled in relating mutually. It is important then, to take into account the impact which individual therapy had in preparing this sample for the changes they experienced and reported in this study. A group of men unfamiliar with the principles, language and process of therapy may be impacted by men's psychotherapy groups in different ways, perhaps more like the one in this study who had not been in therapy.

Regarding the sample in the study, another weakness of the study was the manner in which the men were recruited. The men were recruited through contact with group leaders who were willing to distribute letters to group members. Thus, only group leaders who were willing to have their members participate helped whereas others did not. Not only did this bias the results, but only members who had some interest in furthering the research responded to the letter. A wider range of men in groups where leaders were not as open to recommending the study as well as men who chose not to respond to the letter may have significantly affected the results of the study towards different conclusions.

Another limitation of the study involved the weakness of the data regarding group level of development. Group level of development was ascertained by anecdotal reports of the men in the sample. Two men who participated in the same group described different levels of group development, raising important issues about the possible factors that may affects men's perceptions of group events. Thus, the study would have been stronger in this area if a specific questionnaire had been developed for men to fill out or for the leaders of their groups to fill out.

One other possible limitation of the study was the possibility that the subjects were influenced by insights produced during the interview or by wanting to please the interviewer whom the subjects knew valued the psychotherapy

process, psychotherapy groups and interconnections between men.

Beyond these limitation, I believe that the study produced valuable data and potential guidance for further research and practice. I feel that the understanding derived from this study pertaining to the steps, components and benefits of mutuality, orientations towards connections with other men, and the ways in which men's psychotherapy groups can impact those areas, can provide valuable information for clinicians and men and women who wish to understand men's issues pertaining to intimacy.

In conclusion, the study sought to understand men's subjective experiences and feelings and the importance which the men's group experiences had for them individually. I feel that the study reliably and accurately accessed, reported and analyzed the sample's authentic thoughts and feelings about the research topic which was the goal of the qualitative method used in this research.

Implications for Practice

This study has generated an abundance of implications for the forming and running of men's psychotherapy groups. I have broken this section down into four areas: group composition and the forming of a group; awareness of group stage of development; facilitating safety and engagement in the early stages; and, facilitating empathy and mutuality in the later stages.

Group composition and the forming of a group

Regarding the forming of a group, it is first important
to realize that men have different orientations towards
connection with other men that fall on a spectrum that goes
from being disconnected from others and not valuing
intimacy, to deeply valuing, pursuing and maintaining
connections with others. In addition, those orientations
will be affected by men's gender role strain and men's
relational dread. Some men fear intimacy with other men
because of gender role stereotypes and norms; some men fear
their inability to handle a relational encounter; and some
fear both. An assessment of their orientations and sources
of avoidance of other men can prove an important factor in
determining the composition of a group and whether an
individual would be compatible with an ongoing group.

Similarly, men have different levels of ability in
relating mutually, and have had different levels of
experience being emotionally open with other men. Again, an
assessment of these levels can help determine how men may
help or impede groups with certain compositions of other
men, or how those men may perceive and thus be affected by
other men in new or ongoing groups.

As the data pointed out, the composition of the group
also had value for the men in this study. There appears to
be value in having some degree of homogeneity to a group so
that men can relate with each other's feelings and
experiences, and some degree of heterogeneity to broaden

men's understanding of men in general and to see how they
fit into a broad range of male experience. Men experienced
greater self-esteem and self-acceptance when they were cared
for and valued by men they respected and esteemed. Thus, it
may be important for some men to be in groups with other men
they feel are more intelligent, assertive, successful,
aggressive, emotional and/or more imbued with other
qualities. Other men may need to be in groups with others
who are ready and willing to be emotionally open and
vulnerable to help them be more disclosing. Other men may
need to be with men of different ages. Some may get value
from being able to mentor other men whereas others may need
to hear from older men's wisdom and experience. Thus, given
men's different levels of relational abilities and
experiences, varied orientations, and widely varied
demographics, different types of groups can be organized
with different goals in mind, i.e., to teach relational
skills to those with little skill and a willingness and/or
desire to relate, or to improve self-esteem. In a group with
a varied population with varied orientations and abilities,
a group leader needs to be sensitive to the different needs,
goals and possibilities for the individual men in the group.

Awareness of group stage of development

Awareness of the stages of group development as
described by Rabinowitz (1991) can be a useful guide in
observing and understanding how the group as a whole is

operating and what would be helpful interventions that would facilitated movement to the later stages of development. Awareness of the defensiveness, resistance and avoidance characteristic of the early stages of group development can help a leader weather meetings that seems difficult and stuck.

It appears, from this study, that reaching the late stages of development in a men's group is important for giving men a strong emotional experience that will affect their experience of mutuality and connection with other men. The defensiveness and intellectualizing characteristic of the earlier stages can reinforce men's gender norms of disconnection, isolation and lack of safety if the group lingers too long in these stages.

Facilitating safety and engagement in the early stages

In the early stages of group development, it is important for group leaders to provide as much safety as possible for men to open up and engage with other men. The need to provide such safety may go on for the entire length of the group as well. Even after three years, one member of this study needed continual help in realizing that the men in his group were safe to share with. In service of providing that safety, certain interventions and/or exercises, such as guided meditations, can play an important role in creating that safety and in helping men identify inner feelings and experiences.

In helping men overcome their fear of engaging with other men, it is important to differentiate between relational dread that comes from fear of how other men may respond, and fear of one's sense of being unskilled or inadequate in relating with others. Each type of relational dread requires a different kind of intervention or group event to help the individual overcome it. When men fear the response they may get from other men, it is important to educate men on gender role norms and the types of violations and disconnections that are common between men in our culture. Further, if and when any of those violations happen within a group, they need to be named and stopped. In addition, men need to be helped to pay attention to when others are responding in positive and empathic ways lest avoidance of the relational moment cause men to miss others' attempts to connect. When fear of relating derives from lack of experience or ability in the steps of engaging or empathizing, the leader of the group can instruct the individual in the appropriate next step or model it for the individual. A preferred option, however, would be to have another member of the group do the helping or modelling as that would facilitate more connecting between members.

Facilitating empathy and mutuality in the later stages

The opportunity to engage and empathize with other men mutually cannot be over-estimated in its novelty and importance for most men. For many men, it will be a first,

and can have profound benefits that reach into all relationships in a man's life. Merely being able to observe other men participate, even when not participating themselves can have the same profound effects. Thus, it is important for group leaders not to assume that because a man is not engaging openly for a period of time, that little is happening for him in the group. Were a leader to make the wrong assumption, he might run the risk of devaluing that individual's experience or prematurely encourage engagement that would not be authentic.

In facilitating men to reach fuller experiences of empathy and mutuality with each other, group leaders have an important role in helping men to be clear about and resolve their inner feelings and conflicts arising from relational encounters. The understanding that comes from such differentiation and resolution provided much connection and safety for the men in this study. Further, the "chain reactions" described in this study can be facilitated by leaders by helping men attend to the inner responses they have as others speak and by helping speakers to be open and sensitive to the feelings produced in others by their sharing.

As described throughout this study, mutual empathy generates a sense of connection and the various benefits of mutuality which have been discussed. Those benefits then reflexively facilitate deeper sharing and empathy and provide more benefits. One important role a leader of the

group can have during this phase of men's relating is to highlight and validate those benefits openly and verbally. As the men in this study demonstrated, the articulation, verbalization and realization that others share in one's experiences were important steps in helping men acknowledge and value mutuality and its benefits. That mutuality and the benefits that derive from it, such as increased authenticity, acceptance of vulnerable and emotional expression, increased self-esteem and empowerment in relating, are most often new and delicate and may be overlooked or discounted if not reinforced in the company of other men.

As men begin to relate more fully with each other, men's psychotherapy groups can help men use transference to facilitate positive changes in relationships with male family members and friends. Men have the opportunity to see and experience men who resemble their fathers, brothers or other important men in their lives as more open or emotional. Role play or working through conflicts with such men in groups can help empower men to relate differently beyond the groups to resolve those relationships. The leaders and members of the groups can model or suggest new behaviors for men to try out and they can point out when they see old dysfunctional behaviors being used.

Finally, it is also important to keep in mind that men with different levels of ability in relating and/or with different orientations may differently perceive, experience

and gain from the same event at all stages of group development. Further, the overall impact the same group may have on different individuals can vary widely in terms of relational abilities and orientations. Keeping this in mind can enable a leader to remember to check out continually how the various men in any group are reacting to the group and what their individual needs are.

Implications for Further Research

The implications of this study for further research are many given the lack of research in this area. Since this study focussed on the impact of men's psychotherapy groups on heterosexual men's relationships with other men, there is ample opportunity for exploration of the impact of such groups on other populations of men, and on men's relationships with women and children.

The results of this study suggest that men's psychotherapy groups can have a significant impact in helping men develop skills in relating and in experiencing greater mutuality with other men. Combining the literature on gender roles and women's relational development highlighted how men's relational issues and difficulties are both similar and different from women's. Further research can explore the nature of men's intimacy with other men and the usefulness of the Mutuality Typology as an instrument for further research in men's and women's research. The

typology may also prove useful as an educational tool as well as a guideline in individual and group practice.

Research concerning men's orientations towards connection with other men is indicated. As this was the first study on this aspect of men's orientations to my knowledge, there is a wide range of areas worthy of being more fully understood. The results of this study suggest that there are two levels at which men's orientations towards connection with other men operate. On an intrapsychic level, men seem to value or not value intimacy with other men. On an interpersonal level, men operate with a spectrum of feelings and perceptions as to whether emotional openness with other men is safe and acceptable or unacceptable and terrifying. Further research can explore these two dimensions of men's orientations with other men, and how to facilitate their change if change is desired.

In this study, only the two oldest men came to their groups with orientations of not valuing intimacy with other men. It was suggested that the men in the study whose adolescence and early adult lives were spent during the late 1960's through the 1980's may have been influenced by the feminist movement, the men's movements, humanistic psychology and the Vietnam war whereas men in earlier generations were not. Those influences may have affected men's orientations towards connection with other men, and therefore, the literature on gender role norms and stereotypes and men's developmental orientations towards

connections with other men may be out of date. Further research can explore this area.

On a sociological plane, further research may explore whether relationships exist between men's orientations towards other men and their behaviors towards other men, women and children. Men's behaviors in business and politics which have powerful and far-reaching effects on the environment, war and the lives of millions of others may be directly affected by their orientations towards connection with others. Further research may explore such correlations, and if they exist, they may have vital implications for our society's choices of business and political leaders in the 21st century. Other research may identify what influence or role men's groups can have in the areas of business and politics.

The results of this study suggest that a group reaching the latter stages of group development facilitates greater changes in men's mutual abilities, self-esteem, self-acceptance and empowerment in intimate relating than a group reaching only the earlier stages. Further research may prove useful in identifying how men's orientations and relational skills affect group development, and what leaders can effectively do to facilitate group development with men at different levels of skill and/or orientation.

Further research can explore the most effective group composition for a men's psychotherapy group formed to further men's relational abilities and orientations. In this

study, single men between the ages of 26 and 35 who had some abilities in relating and who desired more intimate connections with other men benefitted the most from their groups and experienced the greatest shifts in orientations and abilities. It may be that a group needs at least a few men with those characteristics to help a group move to the latter stages.

Conclusions

This study was a phenomenologically-based exploratory investigation of the impact of men's psychotherapy groups on men's relationships with other men, their orientations towards those relationships, and men's abilities in relating mutually with other men. It also explored which events and conditions within such groups contributed to those areas impacted. The significant findings of the study follow.

First, it was found that men's psychotherapy groups can have a significant impact towards helping men 1) develop skills in relating mutually, 2) experience mutuality with other men within the group, 3) shift in their orientations towards valuing, pursuing and maintaining intimate connections with other men, and 4) improve their relationships with men outside their groups. It was also found that that increase in mutuality contributed to reductions in men's gender role strain and relational avoidance with increased self-esteem, self-acceptance and empowerment in relating with others and reduced isolation,

alienation and negative comparisons with other men and gender role norms.

Second, it was found that a list of the steps, components and benefits of mutual interchanges and relationships could be generated from the literature on relational development and that this list could then be revised using the data of this study to more specifically and accurately represent mutuality among men.

Third, it was found that men come to men's psychotherapy groups with different orientations and different levels of relational skill. Also, men experience shifts in orientation and develop new levels of skill in relating to various degrees from very little to very much.

Fourth, it was found that there is a strong relationship between reported changes in the experience of mutuality and relational abilities and reported shifts towards greater connection with other men.

Fifth, it was found that there is a strong relationship between reported changes in orientations and relational abilities and the level of group development described by the men in the study. Those men who were most emotionally impacted by their groups described them as having reached the latter stages of group development characterized by genuine affection and the generalization of learnings to relationships outside the group.

Sixth and last, this study generated rich data regarding those events and conditions that supported and

facilitated changes in men's relational abilities and orientations with other men. That data also generated numerous, potentially valuable implications for the forming and running of men's psychotherapy groups.

APPENDIX A

CRITERIA CHECKLIST

1) Caucasian and American born.
2) Heterosexuality.
3) Not a mental health professional.
4) Will have participated in a men's psychotherapy group for a minimum of six (6) months.

The above information will be checked with the recommending group leader and again checked at the time of the initial phone contact.

APPENDIX B

POSTED LETTER TO CLINICIAN

Dear

Thank you for your help in finding subjects for a research project investigating the impact of men's psychotherapy groups on men's relationships with other men. I am conducting this research as a final requirement of my doctoral program at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

I am interested in locating men who meet the criteria listed below and who are willing to be interviewed for approximately 45 minutes to one and one half hours. While the interview will be audiotaped for later transcription, confidentiality of the interviewees will be guaranteed.

1) Caucasian and American born.

2) Heterosexual.

3) Not professionally employed in the mental health field.

4) Has participated in an ongoing men's psychotherapy group for a minimum of 6 months.

If you know of a man (men) who fit(s) the general criteria outlined above, and who may be willing to participate, please let me know, or please forward the enclosed materials to him. My phone number is 508-371-0558.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Ken Manning

APPENDIX C

POSTED LETTER TO POTENTIAL INTERVIEWEES

Dear Men's Group Participant,

I am writing to ask your help in a research project investigating the impact of men's psychotherapy groups on men's relationships with other men. I am conducting this research as a final requirement of my doctoral program at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

I am interested in locating men who are: 1) Caucasian and American born, 2) heterosexual, 3) not professionally employed in the mental health field, 4) have participated in an ongoing men's psychotherapy group for a minimum of 6 months, and 5) are willing to be interviewed for approximately 45 minutes to one and one half hours. While the interview will be audiotaped for later transcription, confidentiality will be guaranteed.

If you fit these criteria and would like to participate, please fill out the enclosed demographic form and mail it in the attached stamped envelope to me. If you have any other questions about the study, please feel free to call me at 508-371-0558. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Ken Manning

APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FORM

Name:_____

Address:_____

Home Phone:_____ Work phone:_____

Date of Birth:_____

Marital Status:_____

Siblings: Brothers(Ages):_____ Sisters:(Ages)_____

Children: No_____ Yes_____ Number_____

Current Occupation:_____

Education: _____

Ethnic Heritage:_____

Date entered men's group (mo/yr) ____/____

Presently participating in the group? Yes_____ No_____

Date left the group if not still participating (mo/yr)
                                            ____/____

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I understand that the interview session with Ken Manning is part of a research project on men's psychotherapy groups and men's relationships with other men. This study is being conducted by Ken Manning to fulfill the dissertation project requirement of his doctoral program at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Data from this investigation my also be used for subsequent publication.

I understand that I will be interviewed for approximately 45 minutes to one and one half hours. The purpose of this session is to share my ideas, feelings and experiences regarding the topic at hand. I am aware that at the end of the interview, I will have the opportunity to discuss the interview if I so desire.

I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time, without prejudice; I also have the right to withdraw all interview materials from the study.

I understand that the interview will be tape recorded, that a transcript will be made from this tape, that all names and identifying information will be removed from the transcript and that the tape will then be erased. The information from this transcript will become part of the research material of this study. Ken Manning guarantees that my identity will remain confidential and will not be revealed in reports originating from this study, although direct but anonymous quotes may be used.

I understand that I will not be paid for participation in this study.

I realize that I may ask about various aspects of this study and that further information on the project will be provided at my request. Time will also be given to discuss my reactions to the interview. I understand that I may also contact the chairperson of Ken Manning's dissertation committee, Dr. Jay Carey (413-545-0236) with questions about the study.

I have read this Informed Consent Form and agree to be part of this research study.
Date:_____   Name:_____
                     Signature:_____

I, Ken Manning, agree to respect the above mentioned conditions of this research study.
Date:_____   Signature:_____

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW GUIDE

<u>Introductory Statement and Questions</u>

This research is aimed at understanding how men's psychotherapy groups impact men's perceptions of their relationships with other men.

Can you tell me why you decided to join the men's group?

What has been most valuable to you about this experience?

Have there been any changes over the course of your participation in your men's psychotherapy group in your relationships with the men in the group or in your life outside the group.

<u>Follow-up question</u>

Regarding ... [stated change] ... what occurred during the course of the group that contributed to that change taking place.

<u>Questions regarding Orientation</u>

These questions will be asked to explore any changes in men's orientation of connection or disconnection in relationships if the information is not spontaneously offered.

1) How would you characterize your close relationships with men before you joined the group, for example, your relationships with friends, family members and co-workers?

2) Have these relationships changed qualitatively as a result of anything that happened in the group?

3) Have your perceptions of men, in general, changed as a result of the group experience, and if so, how?

4) Do you relate with men that you don't know differently now, after your group experience?

5) Do you feel more connected to other men than you did before?

Mutuality checklist

Depending upon the response of the interviewees, some but not all of the following were asked about. It was assumed that the steps, components and benefits described below were in a rough sequential order such that if men did not engage in earlier ones, they were not likely to experience the latter ones. For example, some men discussed changes in one area, such as engagement, but not others such as empathy or the benefits of mutuality. When this happened, he was asked about some of the later steps just following the ones he spontaneously mentions, but not all of the rest. This procedure pulled for the components reflective of each interviewee's greatest capacity for mutuality. It also avoided, as much as possible, cuing the interviewee on what the researcher sought to find out.

The following list, taken from the literature review, comprised the steps, components and benefits of mutuality that the interviewees were questioned on if they did not spontaneously describe them.

I. Engagement

    1) overcoming enough fear of men and relational dread
        to begin engaging with other men;

    2) being able to or learning to articulate one's
        feelings and thoughts;

    3) a willingness to communicate those feelings and
        thoughts to other men with authenticity;

    4) genuinely listening to other men; and

    5) communicating to the other person that they have
        been heard.

II. Empathy

    1) taking the other person's perspective;

    2) identifying with the other person's experience;

    3) recognizing and honoring the differences and
        similarities between the other person and oneself;

    4) communicating respect, understanding, and validation
        of the other person's experience;

    5) allowing oneself to be emotionally touched by the
        other's sharing;

6) sharing of one's own feeling response; and

7) receiving such empathic support from other men.

III. <u>Benefits of mutuality</u>

1) increased authenticity;

2) increased awareness of the vulnerable and emotional sides of other men;

3) increased self-knowledge and self-acceptance as a man;

4) increased zest: an increase in a sense of aliveness and vitality;

5) increased self-esteem: feeling valued, respected and cared for and devaluing oneself less as the unreasonable demands of gender role socialization become demystified;

6) empowerment: in the immediate relationships and in relating beyond the immediate;

7) less fear of other men in general and a decrease in relational dread with others, including women;

8) a greater sense of connection with other men, oneself and a desire for more connection beyond the immediate interactions; and,

9) increased willingness and desire to take responsibility for the mutuality in intimate relationships with other men and with women.

<u>Questions regarding the developmental stage of the group</u>

If the information spontaneously supplied during the interview was not adequate for determining the group stage of development, some, or all of the following questions were asked to better determine the developmental stage reached by the group according to the perceptions of the interviewee.

1) Were the men in the group open in sharing about themselves?

2) Were conflicts and interpersonal differences dealt with openly in the group?

3) Was there open expression of affection between members of the group?

4) Did members express that their lives outside the group changed as a result of the group experience?

APPENDIX G

MUTUALITY TYPOLOGY (ORIGINAL)

I.   Engagement

1) overcoming enough fear of men and relational dread
   to begin engaging with other men;

2) being able to or learning to articulate one's
   feelings and thoughts;

3) a willingness to communicate those feelings and
   thoughts to other men with authenticity;

4) genuinely listening to other men; and

5) communicating to the other person that they have
   been heard.

II. Empathy

1) taking the other person's perspective;

2) identifying with the other person's experience;

3) recognizing and honoring the differences and
   similarities between the other person and oneself;

4) communicating respect, understanding, and validation
   of the other person's experience;

5) allowing oneself to be emotionally touched by the
   other's sharing;

6) sharing of one's own feeling response; and

7) receiving such empathic support from other men.

III. Benefits of mutuality

1) increased authenticity;

2) increased awareness of the vulnerable and emotional
   sides of other men;

3) increased self-knowledge and self-acceptance as a
   man;

4) increased zest: an increase in a sense of aliveness
   and vitality;

5) increased self-esteem: feeling valued, respected and
   cared for and devaluing oneself less as the
   unreasonable demands of gender role socialization
   become demystified;

6) empowerment: in the immediate relationships and in
   relating beyond the immediate;

7) less fear of other men in general and a decrease in
   relational dread with others, including women;

8) a greater sense of connection with other men,
   oneself and a desire for more connection beyond
   the immediate interactions; and,

9) increased willingness and desire to take
   responsibility for the mutuality in intimate
   relationships with other men and with women.

APPENDIX H

DATA ANALYSIS GUIDE

Name

Quotes from the transcript:

1. Why you decided to join the men's group?

2. Changes towards greater mutuality in relationships with
   men experienced during the men's group along with what
   happened in the group that facilitated those changes:

   The Mutuality Typology was inserted here.
                   (see Appendix G)

3. Changes in relationships with men as a result of the
   groups experience and what happened in the group to
   facilitate this:

   a. with family members.

   b. with friends.

   c. with coworkers.

   d. with men in general and men not known.

4a. Orientation towards connection with men before the
    group.

4b. Shifts in orientation towards connection with men
    during/after the group. (Also what happened in the
    group to facilitate those changes.

5. Comments about group level of development.

6. Statements that add to the typology.

APPENDIX I

REVISED MUTUALITY TYPOLOGY

I. <u>Engagement</u>

    1) overcoming enough fear of other men to begin engaging with other men;

    2) being able to identify one's feelings;

    3) being able to differentiate between one's original feelings and feelings arising from a relational encounter;

    4) being able to or learning to articulate one's feelings and thoughts;

    5) a willingness to communicate those feelings and thoughts to other men with authenticity;

    6) genuinely listening to other men;

    7) communicating to the other person that they have been heard;

    8) being aware that other men are communicating throughts and feelings with authenticity;

    9) being aware that other men are genuinely listening;

II. <u>Empathy</u>

    1) taking the other person's perspective;

    2) identifying with the other person's experience;

    3) recognizing and acknowledging similarities between self and others;

    4) recognizing and acknowledging differences between self and others.

    5) communicating respect, understanding, and validation of the other person's experience;

    6) allowing oneself to be emotionally touched by the other's sharing;

    7) sharing of one's own feeling response;

8) being aware that others are taking one's own
   perspective;

9) being aware that others are identifying with one's
   own experience;

10) being aware that others are communicating respect,
    understanding and validation of one's own
    experience;

11) being aware that others are moved by one's own
    experience;

III. Benefits of Mutuality

1) increased authenticity in own one's self expression;

2) increased awareness of authenticity in others;

3) increased awareness of the vulnerable and emotional
   sides of other men;

4) increased self-knowledge and self-acceptance of
   oneself as a man;

5) increased acceptance of other men;

6) increased self-esteem from being cared for,
   respected and validated by others;

7) increased self-esteem from devaluing oneself less as
   the unreasonable demands of gender role
   socialization become demystified;

8) increased self-esteem from realizing that one has
   more to offer others than previously was aware of;

9) empowerment: in the immediate relationship and in
   relating beyond the immediate;

10) less fear of getting closer to other men in
    general;

11) feeling more adequate and/or confident in one's
    capacity to relate in the present moment;

12) a greater sense of connection with other men and a
    desire for more connection beyond the immediate
    interactions;

13) increased willingness and desire to take
    responsibility for the mutuality in intimate
    relationships with other men and with women;

14) increased relational awareness.

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