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EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIPS
AMONG CONFORMITY TO MASCULINE NORMS, MUTUALITY, AND
SEXUAL BEHAVIORS IN GAY, BISEXUAL, AND QUEER MEN'S
SAME-GENDER FRIENDSHIPS

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Abstract

This study explored the relationships among conformity to masculine role norms, sexual behavior, and mutuality in gay, bisexual, and queer men's same-gender friendships. Participants included 215 adult men. Participants completed a demographics form, a Friendship Information form, the Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire (MPDQ), and the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI). A hierarchical cluster analysis was performed using Ward's method and produced three clusters that were named *Non-Conformity*, *Independent-Promiscuous*, and *Highly Conforming*. The next phase of analysis involved performing a two-step hierarchical multiple regression. Participant age and friendship duration were entered at step one and clusters were entered at step two. The regression indicated that the full model predicted significant variance in mutuality scores. The Non-Conformity cluster emerged as a statistically significant individual predictor of mutuality. An ancillary hierarchical multiple regression was then performed. Participant age and friendship duration were again entered at step one, and individual CMNI subscales were entered at step two. The full ancillary regression model also significantly predicted mutuality scores. Only the Emotional Control, Power Over Women, and Disdain for Homosexuality CMNI subscales emerged as significant individual predictors of variance in mutuality. The final phase of analysis examined whether history of sexual contact with a best friend produced differences in mutuality scores. An independent samples t-test was conducted and confirmed that significant differences in mutuality existed between those endorsing history of sexual contact and those who did not, with those reporting no contact having higher mutuality scores. The present findings suggest that overall non-conformity to

masculinity was predictive of greater mutuality in friendships. The implications of GBQ men's (non)conformity to masculinity norms and considerations for counseling with GBQ men are discussed.

Chapter One

Overview

The friendships literature in recent decades paints a discouraging view of men's same-gender friendships. In comparison to both women's same-gender friendships and men's cross-gender friendships, men's friendships with men have been found to be less close, open, intimate, self-disclosing, supportive, meaningful, satisfying, and mutual (Bank & Hansford, 2000; Bell, 1981; Fehr, 1996, 2004). Research findings are not entirely consistent, but, despite some controversy, the overall evidence that men experience diminished quality in their same-gender friendships is "robust and widely documented" (Bank & Hansford, 2000; p. 63). Theorists have argued against attributing these differences to male sex, per se (Addis & Cohane, 2005; Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Wright, 1982, 1991). Instead, many have interpreted the evidence as reflecting the impact of masculine gender role socialization processes (e.g., Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Bank & Hansford, 2000; Fehr, 1996; Levant, 1996).

Closer examination of the research reveals that very few of the studies in the literature on masculine gender role socialization and the studies of men's friendships have sampled—or identified within their samples—gay, bisexual, or queer (GBQ) men. Thus, less is known about the state of contemporary GBQ men's friendships. An exploratory study by Nardi and Sherrod (1994) supported sexual orientation as a potential moderator of friendships, and asserted that greater research attention should be focused on this important variable in friendship studies. Yet, a review of the empirical studies of men's friendships found that GBQ male participants were frequently underrepresented, folded into the broader male gender category (e.g., Bank and

Hansford, 2000), excluded from analysis (e.g., Reeder, 2003), or left unexamined/unreported in the demographic features (e.g., Aukett, Richie, & Mill, 1988; Demir & Orthel, 2011; Fehr, 2004; Grief, 2006; Morman & Floyd, 1998; Reis, Senchak, & Solomon, 1985; Reisman, 1990; Williams, 1985).

One can presume from this observation that the majority of the psychology literature on men's friendships likely reflects heterosexual men's friendships in particular (and heterosexist bias), despite this context going unstated. Thus, for the remainder of the present writing, the cited studies will be assumed to refer to heterosexual men's friendships, though it is important to acknowledge that the accuracy of this description is unverifiable for reasons stated above. Effectively, the bulk of available studies tell us little about GBQ men's same-gender friendships. For several important reasons that will be discussed later, the literature on heterosexual men's friendships does not necessarily generalize to the lives of GBQ men either.

The absence of this diversity in the literature, though a common complaint in the broader psychological research literature, is particularly important here for a few principal reasons. First, GBQ men in North America exist largely in social locations of marginalization. This marginalization is perpetuated by the omission of their experiences from formal research literature purporting to describe the lives of "men." Furthermore, the framing of this literature as reflecting all men creates a heteromasculine research bias in addition to promoting broader social biases of this sort.

Secondly, masculine gender role socialization theoretically, and most likely, impacts the lives of GBQ men as well as heterosexual men (Connell, 2005; Nardi, 1992, 1999; Nardi & Sherrod, 1994). Gender role socialization refers to the processes by

which individuals “learn gendered attitudes and behaviors from cultural values, norms, and ideologies about what it means to be men and women” (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; p. 7). It makes intuitive sense that such processes would shape the lives of both heterosexual and GBQ men, though the literature speaks primarily to its effects on the former. In a study with GBQ adolescents, Wilson et al. (2010) identified several normative aspects of dominant masculinity ideologies (i.e., socially constructed definitions of masculinity, rooted in a historical context, such as men should not share feelings, men should engage in sex without intimacy, men should treat sex as a conquest) that influenced participants’ gender socialization. Normative masculinity ideologies have been observed to carry messages that are outright homophobic or disdainful of GBQ identities as well (Levant, 1996; Levant et al., 1992; Mahalik et al., 2003; Wilson et al., 2010). This suggests that GBQ men encounter more contradictions and identity threats in their development as men, and may be more likely to emerge with distinct forms of masculinity ideologies as a result.

From his interviews and surveys with 161 gay men, Nardi (1999) described friendships as a central narrative for gay men, providing the principal structures for support and security in otherwise oppressive environments. He identified qualities such as reciprocity, self-disclosure, and mutual support that emerged as particularly valuable in the same-gender friendships of GBQ men. If it is true that masculine gender role socialization impacts heterosexual men’s friendships by inhibiting closeness, intimacy and quality, then it becomes particularly important to understand if this occurs for GBQ men. Improving the quality of their friendships carries implications for developing

therapeutic relationships with, enhancing the social support of, and generally improving the lives of GBQ men.

In his study of gay men's friendships, Nardi (1999) identified that gay men frequently reported having had sexual encounters with a close or best friend. Most gay men in the study, however, indicated that sexual relationships ceased once friendships were pursued. Nardi hypothesized that this was due to the influence of messages contained in hegemonic masculinities that encouraged sexual pursuits without intimacy, and discouraged conflation of the two. He found early support for this theory from his interviews with participants (Nardi, 1999). This finding suggests that sexual contact between gay men may actually facilitate intimacy and friendship for those who conform to traditional masculine gender role norms. That is, gay men who conform to the belief that men pursue sex without intimacy may have sexual encounters with unfamiliar men and later cease sexual contact as intimacy increases, in order to pursue friendships instead. In this scenario, casual sexual contact may serve as a gateway to friendships and facilitate these relationships where they may not otherwise have occurred. Such a process would reflect how masculine gender socialization may be negotiated in the lives and relationships of gay men.

It has been noted that better understanding and improvement of men's same-gender friendships would potentially benefit society more broadly. Many have observed that social privilege and power influence men's relationships (e.g., Connell, 2005; Nardi, 1992; Miller, 2003). Armengol-Carrera (2009) suggested that transforming men's friendships through promoting intimacy and love has the potential to foster greater egalitarianism and to reduce homophobia, sexism, racism, and other social and

class hierarchies. Because GBQ men's friendships inherently exist in resistance to forms of social oppressions, they are well-positioned to challenge such norms. Facilitating this resistance would have the effect of supporting greater social justice for many.

In order to contribute to the literature on GBQ men's friendships, the present study explored patterns of conformity to traditional masculine role norms and how this influenced the quality of same-gender friendships. This study utilized the Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) construct of mutuality as a measure of friendship qualities. Mutuality, in this model, is defined as the degree of bidirectional flow of thoughts, feelings, and activities between people in relationship (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991). Mutuality gives rise to the mutual empathy and empowerment fundamental to growth-fostering relationships (Jordan et al., 1991). Mutuality is particularly useful here because it encompasses qualities (e.g., reciprocity, empathy, and shared investment) identified as most salient and valuable in GBQ friendships. RCT also provides a coherent framework to account for both the process and impact of gender socialization as well as the manner in which friendships benefit psychological well-being.

Statement of the Problem

To summarize, early exploratory studies suggest that GBQ men's same-gender friendships are meaningful and of central importance in their lives, yet little research has been conducted on this topic. A large body of research suggests that heterosexual men do not engage in their friendships as openly or intimately as women due to masculine gender role socialization processes, and that they tend to report both fewer

and lower quality same-gender friendships as a result (reviewed in Fehr, 1996). Masculine gender role socialization is thought to impact the development of GBQ men as well (e.g., Connell, 2005; Nardi 1999), and some research evidence has supported this assumption (Wilson et al., 2010). However, the influence of masculine gender role socialization in the lives of GBQ men has seldom been examined, and the ways in which traditional masculinity ideologies influence the qualities of GBQ men's same-gender friendships remains untested. One example of such an influence emerges from the likelihood that GBQ men in same-gender friendships encounter sexual attraction. In his study of gay men, Nardi (1999) found that they had often had previous sexual contact with their best friends, but had tended to discontinue such contact in lieu of pursuing intimate friendship. Nardi suggested that, in this sense, gay men's sexual behavior may paradoxically facilitate intimacy in friendships while negotiating the hegemonic masculinity pressure to pursue sex without intimacy.

Many researchers have identified a need for more studies of masculinity ideologies with non-heterosexual populations (e.g., Addis, Mansfield, and Syzdek, 2010; Levant, 1996; Mahalik et al., 2003; Smiler, 2006). Others have also identified a need for further research exploration of how GBQ men's friendships are impacted by masculine gender roles (Connell, 1992, 2005; Nardi, 1992, 1999). Given these needs and the importance of friendships in GBQ men's lives, the purpose of the present study is two-fold: to enhance understanding of conformity to traditional masculinity ideologies as they exist for GBQ identified men, and to examine what influence these ideologies have upon perceived mutuality in their same-gender friendships. In order to

clarify the latter, this study examined whether sexual behaviors between GBQ friends affected mutuality.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Understanding the gendered experiences of gay, bisexual, and queer (GBQ) men requires a particular definitional clarity before proceeding. Clarifying the dimensions of gender is a complex task for many reasons. Not the least of this is gender's central location at the point where paradigmatic confusion, controversy, and personal significance collide—everyone experiences gender in powerful and different ways. Teasing masculinity from this entanglement without reifying false dichotomies (i.e., masculine versus feminine) or perpetuating heteromasculine assumptions (i.e., that masculinity is solely the purview of heterosexual men) becomes even more complicated.

First, *masculine* is frequently an ambiguously and inconsistently defined term, carrying general and specific connotations at both concrete and theoretical levels. In lay or popular culture usage, masculinity can broadly refer to all things associated with men, spanning consumer products, hobbies, attitudes, body types, and beyond. In medical literature, the masculine may refer solely to physiological features or qualities considered sex-specific to men. In sociological and psychological areas of study, however, masculinity is most often defined in terms of socially, rather than biologically, constructed characteristics associated with men. This social emphasis was not always the case for the social sciences, though.

Even the fact of an evolution toward a social understanding of gender adds new dimensions of complexity by suggesting that the features of masculinity are also historically and culturally delineated. This opens the definitional doorway to a

masculinity that varies depending on cultural identities, social locations, and the historic situation of the observer. In turn, it suggests the possibility of multiple, coexistent masculinities. As Connell (2005) asserted, “masculinity as an object of knowledge is always masculinity-in-relation” (p. 44). The result is that masculinity may look profoundly different for people of various geographic regions, upbringing, and historical periods, and may not always appear to be conceptually distinct from femininity, especially by contemporary western standards.

It is also useful to briefly address the complexities of sexual orientation and how they will be handled in this writing. Sexual orientation, as it is used here, is a category of identity rather than a representation of any particular sexual behaviors. Utilizing a person’s self-defined identity provides parsimony when contrasted against the complexities of inquiring about, and interpreting, specific sexual behaviors. In that case, the researcher must subjectively delineate behaviors and form categories of identity. Allowing participants to self-identify also acknowledges that there are social and political implications for the adoption of such an identity in heteronormative cultures. That is, GBQ identities often exist in conflict with traditional masculine gender roles, so the manner in which a person self-identifies has particular bearing upon an examination of the impact of gender ideologies. Likewise, normative ideologies help to create and define the identities that people adopt, so utilizing individuals’ own identifications may provide more accurate examination of these intersections. Finally, an argument could be made that interpreting sexual behaviors as reflecting sexual orientation is problematic in that it essentializes sexual identity (e.g., not everyone who identifies as a gay male has sexually engaged with other men and vice versa). Of

course, there are implications for approaching sexual orientation as a category of identity as well (e.g., for reasons of cultural oppression, some may choose not to identify as GBQ). Likewise, identities do not exist in isolation and intersections of identities may differentially impact experiences of both masculinity and friendships. These considerations will be addressed in the limitations section of the final study report.

Masculinities. The term *masculinity* as it is used in this study refers to sets of ideological constructs, based on normative social messages regarding what it means to be a male (Mahalik et al., 2003). As previously mentioned, varying arrangements and salencies of these messages arise across contexts, suggesting the existence of plural masculinities, a relatively recent perspective derived from gender role socialization paradigms (Smiler, 2004). The gender role socialization paradigm arose from advances from the Women's and Gay Liberation movements, and from social psychology trends toward psychological role theories (Connell, 2005; Smiler, 2004). The result of these trends provided a more complex explanation for heretofore sex-typed phenomena: the gender role. From this perspective, gender became the enactment of socially prescribed behaviors, attitudes, and expectations regarding what it meant to be a man or a woman (e.g., Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Levant, 1996; Mahalik et al., 2003; Smiler, 2004, 2006). This development in masculinity theory stands in sharp contrast to the biological essentialism of past theories. Masculinity in this sense no longer represents the natural product of biological sex, or traits associated with healthy male development. Instead, it is something external to the individual, an expectation to be satisfied, and the product of sociocultural influences. Rather than diametric opposites, masculinity is only

partially opposed to femininity and only because it is socially defined in this way (Smiler, 2004, 2006).

For the purposes of the present study, masculinity is defined by the gender role socialization paradigm as being a gender ideology, internalized through gender role socialization processes and adopted in varying forms based on individual and group differences (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Levant, 2011). Masculinity ideologies, viewed through the lens of role socialization paradigms, are primarily shaped by the normative messages arising from dominant cultures in North America (e.g., restrictive emotionality, homophobia, avoidance of femininity, toughness, achievement/status, aggression, self-reliance, and nonrelational sexual promiscuity; Levant, 2011; Levant et al., 1992; Levant & Richmond, 2007; Mahalik et al., 2003; Pleck, 1995; Smiler, 2006). Because normative messages about masculinity can be interpreted differently, multiple, coincident forms of masculinity ideology are possible and even expected (Mahalik et al., 2003).

Using the masculinity ideology framework is also beneficial in that there is a growing body of research in place that has examined correlates of conformity to, and endorsement of, masculinity ideologies. For example, Levant and Richmond's (2007) review of studies examining endorsement of traditional masculinity ideology found that endorsement was significantly, positively correlated with alexithymia; fear of intimacy; lower relationship satisfaction in heterosexual couples; and negative attitudes toward help-seeking, racial diversity, and women's equality. Other studies measuring conformity to normative masculinity ideologies have identified significant, similarly

maladaptive, correlates: higher health-risk behaviors, substance abuse, relationship dissatisfaction, and negative attitudes toward help-seeking (Parent & Moradi, 2009).

Very few studies overall have examined the influences of masculinity ideologies on gay, bisexual, or queer identifying men. In a study specifically sampling gay men, Simonsen, Blazina, and Watkins (2000) found significant, positive correlations between gender role conflict and anger, anxiety, and depression, and fewer positive attitudes toward seeking psychological help. In a qualitative study of gay, bisexual, and questioning adolescents, Wilson et al. (2010) found the adolescents experienced significant pressure to conform to many of the messages of traditional North American masculinity ideologies. Kimmel & Mahalik (2005) found that conformity to masculine role norms in gay men was significantly associated with body ideal distress.

Levant and Richmond's (2007) review of research using measures of traditional masculinity ideology reported findings from only three such studies with gay men. In one study, gay men significantly endorsed traditional male role norms, though significantly less so than heterosexual men (Massoth, Broderick, Festa, & Montello, 1996, as cited in Levant & Richmond, 2007). The other two studies produced contradictory findings regarding the correlation between endorsement of male role norms and gay males' experiences of social support and intimacy, one finding significant correlation and the other not (Campbell, 2000, & Grant, 2002, as cited in Levant & Richmond, 2007).

In short, there is a need for more research on masculinity ideologies with GBQ men. The need for further masculinities research with a broader diversity of populations, including diverse sexual orientations, is an oft-cited imperative in the

literature (e.g., Addis, Mansfield, & Syzdek, 2010; Levant & Richmond, 2007; Wilson et al., 2010). The scarcity of studies that have examined these issues provides little insight into, or even confusion regarding, the relational lives of GBQ men. As Connell (2005) pointed out, gay men develop ideologies around masculinity and sexuality, often with overlapping and contradictory results. Because opposition to homosexual behavior so frequently defines masculinity, GBQ men are subject to particular difficulties in negotiating identity processes. Furthermore, as reviewed previously, the literature on masculinity ideology suggests that even for heterosexual men, there are a host of ills significantly associated with masculine conformity. This further supports the importance of understanding how GBQ men experience contemporary masculinities and to what extent they experience the associated risk factors. Enhancing this area of study has important implications toward the provision of psychotherapy and social justice advocacy with GBQ men.

Men's friendships. To understand the nature and qualities of GBQ men's friendships, it is critical to first recognize the particular salience of friendships in their lives. To wit, there are distinct meanings and sociopolitical contexts operating on these relationships, which suggest that GBQ friendships are marked by specific differences from those of heterosexual men. These distinctions sometimes emerge as protective factors that appear to facilitate particularly strong social bonds, as will be described below (Nardi, 1999). Thus, to assume equivalence between heterosexual men's friendships and those of GBQ men is to enact heteromasculine bias in addition to faulty science. If the paucity of research specifically examining GBQ men's friendships further reflects such bias, then it is important to first review what the literature has

suggested about heterosexual men's same-gender friendships before clarifying what is actually said about those relationships between GBQ men.

It is also important to note that friendships, as described in the present study, are not limited to those between two GBQ men. Rather, references to GBQ men's friendships in the present study are defined by situations in which a GBQ man is in a friendship with another man, who may or may not identify as GBQ himself. Although Nardi (1999) found that most gay men reported having best friends who also identify as gay, this is certainly not always the case. In Fee's (2000) interviews with gay and heterosexual men in friendships, he observed that heterosexual-gay men's friendships were commonly described by participants as markedly different from those of heterosexual men's. Given these observed differences, inclusion of friendships between GBQ men and those with a potentially wide range of sexual identities was merited.

Heterosexual men's friendships. A substantial body of literature has developed identifying significant differences between heterosexual men's and women's same-gender friendships. Specifically, research has suggested that, when compared to women's same-gender friendships, men's demonstrate persistent, notable differences: men's friendships appear to be less intimate, personally self-disclosing, physically affectionate, other-enhancing, meaningful, and close, and are more oriented toward shared activity than personal conversation (Fehr, 1996; Nardi, 1999). The heterosexual men in these reviews reported spending less time and experiencing less satisfaction with same-gender friends than did women.

Research findings are not entirely consistent regarding the aforementioned conclusions, so the question of whether or not men's same-gender friendships are

actually less intimate drew considerable attention and controversy (Fehr, 1996, 2004). In addressing the controversy, Fehr (1996) summarized the explanations offered for the contradictory findings as follows: (a) men are as intimate as women, but only in their closest friendships; (b) men are as intimate as women, but they dislike the word; (c) men appear less intimate than women because intimacy is defined in a feminine way; (d) men are less intimate no matter the definition; (e) although men define intimacy in the same way, they have different thresholds for it than women; (f) men have and prefer less intimacy; and (g) men are capable of being as intimate as women, but choose not to be. Fehr reported that inconsistencies exist in the evidence for each of these explanations and that interpretation of sex differences necessarily simplifies complex matters. Nevertheless, the findings that men experience diminished quality in their same-gender friendships are “robust and widely documented” (Bank & Hansford, 2000; p. 63), and, in her evaluation of the possible explanations for these differences, Fehr (1996) provided a few conclusions:

[O]verall, the evidence seems to suggest that men’s friendships are less intimate than women’s. It is not the case that men are reserving intimacy only for their closest friends. It is also not the case that men simply are reluctant to use the word. Nor is it a matter of being evaluated by the wrong (i.e., feminine) metric or having a different threshold. Instead, it appears that men are less intimate than women in their friendships because they choose to be, even though they may not particularly like it. (p. 141)

This interpretation of the literature remains the most widely accepted (Fehr, 2004).

Fehr (1996, 2004) noted that intimacy is not the only measure of quality within heterosexual men's friendships. Yet, in a study of dimensions of relationship quality, Hassebrauck and Fehr (2002) found that, among dimensions of intimacy, independence, agreement, and sexuality, intimacy was the strongest, most consistent predictor of relationship satisfaction.

The conclusion that men desire intimacy and value it in friendships but choose to have less still begs the question of why this would be so. Answering this in part, Wright (1982, 1991) made the helpful distinction that it is not sex, per se, that seems to determine the gender differences in friendships, but the attenuating variables of sex, particularly *sex role orientation* (now commonly described in terms of gender roles, Smiler, 2006). Similarly, Addis and Mahalik (2003) have cautioned that reliance on a sex differences framework for understanding men's experiences risks reifying essentialist notions of gender and perpetuating stereotypes that serve to limit both men and women. They added that "sex differences studies are ill-equipped to account for within-group or within-person variability" (p. 6). To better explain the observed differences between men and women, they proposed that a role socialization paradigm offers greater explanatory power. Supporting this hypothesis, measures of masculine gender role socialization and intimacy have overwhelmingly found negative correlations between the two (e.g., Bank & Hansford, 2000; Levant, 2007; O'Neil, 2008). This suggests that inhibited friendship qualities are not the result of essential aspects of being male; rather, it is masculine gender role socialization processes that appear to be the culprit.

GBQ men's friendships. Given that friendships are culturally valued in North American cultures and that GBQ men are exposed to many of the same masculine gender role socialization processes (Wilson et al., 2010), it is likely that some friendship pattern similarities exist between those of GBQ and heterosexual men. However, as Nardi and Sherrod (1994) asserted, there are powerful theoretical problems with generalizing the studied friendship patterns of heterosexual populations to those of gay men and lesbians. These problems arise from overlooking the potential for different gender role socialization processes; the effects of identification with gay subculture; and the impact of political, social, and familial forces on interpersonal relationships (Nardi & Sherrod, 1994). Because of these factors, the friendships of GBQ men are likely to have distinct characteristics as well.

As previously mentioned, research specifically addressing GBQ men's friendships is scarce. A relatively recent and ambitious attempt comes from a mixed methods study by Nardi (1999), though even this work contained limitations, notably that the sample largely consisted of middle class, white, gay-identifying men with a median age of 40 years-old. Nevertheless, the findings reflect the nearest approximation of the current state of the science describing GBQ men's friendships. It is important to note that Nardi's study specifically addressed gay men, in contrast with the present study, which will recruit gay, bisexual, and queer identifying men. Arguably, the findings of Nardi's (1999) study regarding gay men may also have application for those identifying as bisexual and queer. For instance, Connell (2005) noted that, due in part to the influence of masculinities, society has allowed very little space for men to identify as bisexual. He noted that often men feel compelled to

identify as gay if any same-sex attraction is experienced regardless of concurrent opposite-sex attraction. Likewise, the use of the term *queer* as a category of sexual orientation is a relatively recent phenomenon (Hodges, 2008; Nardi, 1999) and may have been less likely to have been endorsed by members of Nardi's sample. In any case, each of these identities (i.e., bisexual, queer) exists in resistance to heteronormative North American culture, so friendship similarities are expected.

Nardi (1999) noted some important demographic trends in gay men's casual, close, and best friendships. Particularly, he found that the majority of surveyed gay men (i.e., approximately 80% of 161 respondents) reported having best friends who identified as gay, and that, across friendship levels, the majority of their friendships were with men. In addition, he found that gay men tended to report having best friends who were similar in many ways, including age, race, income, education, partnered status, report of past marriages, and rural versus urban living. This high level of homophily is consistent with the broader research on friendships, suggesting that people tend to develop closer friendships with others across similarities rather than compatibilities (reviewed in Fehr, 1996).

Except for participants reporting very few (i.e., less than 5 casual and 3 close) friends, the majority of the men reported being satisfied with the number of friendships, and demonstrated a significant positive correlation between satisfaction and closeness of friendships (i.e., best friends were more satisfying than close or casual friends; Nardi, 1999). The men reported a median of 6 best friends and 20 close friends in Nardi's study, numbers higher than those reported in past surveys of heterosexual men's friendships (e.g., Bell, 1981). The average quantities and closeness of friendships

reported by participants were consistent overall with past research (e.g., Bell & Weinberg, 1978; as cited in Nardi, 1999). Of those surveyed, having fewer (or no) best friends was correlated with being single, living in rural areas, having less college education, and older age. Identifying as being in a committed romantic relationship tended to decrease the number of friends as well.

In Nardi's (1999) qualitative interviews, he found that gay men tended to use words such as "sharing, trust, honesty, intimacy, mutuality, love, respect, similarity, and caring" (p. 130) to define their friendships and reported that these were similar to descriptions culled from the broader literature on heterosexual friendships. However, both Nardi (1999) and Connell (2005) have noted that reciprocity, mutual sharing, providing of support, availability, and earning of trust are highly emphasized in GBQ friendships. Nardi also found that personal disclosures were viewed as critical dimensions of friendships for gay men. In summarizing these descriptions, Nardi provided the following interpretation:

Overall, gay men defined friendship as a relationship with someone they both talked to and did things with; with whom they shared activities and emotions; who returned favors, and with whom they disclosed hopes. This all took place within the context of having companionship with those who could accept them for who they were..." (p. 132)

Nardi also observed, however, that descriptions of sex and sexual attraction frequently arose in gay men's definitions of friendship, highlighting another possible dimension.

The majority of participants (i.e., 80%) in Nardi's (1999) study reported that they had experienced some past sexual attraction to their best gay male friend. Half

reported current sexual attraction with the same person. Most of the surveyed men reported attraction and sexual contact with some of the people who became casual, close, and best friends, though less than one-third of the men surveyed reported ongoing sexual contact with established friends, even if sexual contact had occurred prior to friendship. Sixty percent indicated having had past sexual contact with their best gay male friend, though, again, that number dropped (i.e., to 20%) in regard to those with ongoing sexual contact with the friend. These findings should also be contrasted with the fact that very few of these men reported having had sexual encounters with the majority of their casual or close (as opposed to best) friends.

These results begin to suggest a recurring narrative. As Nardi (1999) has pointed out, it appears that many gay men may initiate relationships via sexual attraction and behavior, though most of these are soon relegated to the domains of friendship with sexual contact then ceased. Although many of these men ascribed definitional distinctions between lovers and friends, or held personal sanctions against sexual contact with friends, the fact that most experienced sexual contact with men who would later become best friends suggests a process is at work. Some have suggested this can best be understood as an intersection of masculinities and sexual orientation (Connell, 1992, 2005; Nardi, 1999; Wilson, et al., 2010). That is, GBQ men may simultaneously reiterate hegemonic masculine norms by engaging in sex without love/intimacy, and subvert hegemonic masculinity by doing so with other men. As Wilson et al. (2010) found, even GBQ and questioning adolescent boys identified strong messages that men should be highly sexualized, unemotional and unattached in sexual relationships, and adopt a conquest approach to sexual relationships. It is not difficult

to anticipate how this masculinity ideology could translate into tendencies for some GBQ men to engage sexually with other men in the early stages of relationship, and then remove the sexual dimension once intimacy and friendship is desired.

Understanding the friendships of GBQ men also hold particular importance due to sociopolitical climates. Nardi (1982) found that, when compared to those of heterosexual men and women, friendships for gay men and lesbians are often experienced as more imperative. He suggested this arises from the need to cope with the negative impacts of living in predominantly heterosexually-defined contexts, and experiencing the antagonism of systems of work, legal entitlements, and family tradition as they operate upon the lives of gay men and lesbians. Notably, Fehr (1996) reported that workplace and neighborhoods are generally two of the most common focal points for the development of friendships. However, findings suggest that gay men are far less likely to develop close or best friends in workplace settings, due in part to fears concerning repercussions from disclosure of sexual identity and the sparse legal protections against sexual orientation discrimination (Nardi, 1999). As Connell (2005) observed, for gay men who experience pressure to withhold their sexual identities, friendships offer “freedom and pleasure outside the severe constraints of the other departments” (p. 153) of life.

It is perhaps for this reason more than others that gay men’s friendships are often regarded as families of choice, constituted by powerful bonds formed in resistance to cultural oppressions and, at times, in lieu of meaningful connection to biologically-related family (Nardi, 1999). Although there are other implications to this framework—for instance, Nardi has noted that use of kinship terminology to describe friendships

varies across cultural identities and has been criticized as reifying hegemonic heterosexuality—it powerfully underscores the sense of permanence and commitment invoked in these relationships. Likewise, the family metaphor may help to explain the importance of mutuality and reciprocity in the friendships of GBQ men. How else could families containing such difference remain secure than through the mutual sharing, investing, and opening of themselves to one another?

Thus, it appears that friendships occupy a central, fundamental location in the lives of GBQ men. Nardi (1999) has suggested that gay men’s friendships also carry broader implications:

For gay men, friendship has the potential in this postmodern society of providing multiple narratives for the social reproduction—and not simply the social construction—of gay selves and of political communities in which hegemonic masculinity and gay masculinity blend to produce a new gendered order characterized by new relations of masculinities. Friendship is a personal process as well as a social one, and it’s at this intersection where the self and community are reproduced among gay men, that the power of friendship can be palpably experienced. (p. 7)

From this vantage, GBQ men’s friendships are an important aspect of their generative processes, at a range of levels from the individual to the societal, the enactment of which bears potential to impact the nature of gender construction, relations, and power structures.

In sum, friendships are important in the lives of gay men and tend to occur most often with other gay-identifying men. Although some similarities appear to exist

between heterosexual and GBQ men's same-gender friendships, shared experiences of cultural oppressions and the likelihood of encountering sexual attraction create particular characteristics for the latter. Some empirical evidence has emerged supporting theoretical assumptions that traditional masculinity ideologies influence friendships of GBQ men. The findings that sexual behaviors between GBQ male friends tend to occur in the early, pre-friendship stages and tend to influence whether or not one is considered friend, lover, or acquaintance would seem to support such an influence. Thus, understanding the factors that enhance and/or inhibit GBQ men's friendships may provide important opportunities to better support GBQ men, and as Nardi (1992) noted, these friendships carry implications for promoting greater societal well-being:

It is through the gay women's and men's movements that... 20th century constructions of gender are being questioned. And at the core is the association of close male friendships with negative images of homosexuality. Thus, how gay men structure their emotional lives and friendships can affect the social and emotional lives of all men and women. This is the political power and potential of gay friendships. (p. 119)

Relational-Cultural Theory. As noted in the literature review above, patterns of diminished intimacy, closeness, support, and other indicators of quality have been reported in the research on heterosexual men's same-gender friendships (Bank & Hansford, 2000; Fehr, 1996, 2004). Further, masculine gender role socialization has been identified as a significant and probable contributor to these relationships (e.g., Bank & Hansford, 2000; Fehr, 1996; Addis & Mahalik, 2003). Whether these patterns

exist for GBQ men, and whether masculine gender role socialization processes could be problematic in similar ways as found in heterosexual men, is still unclear (Connell, 1992; Nardi & Sherrod, 1994).

Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) offers a constructive framework to explore these patterns in GBQ men. RCT proposes that individual identity, growth, and well-being arise from and within meaningful connection to others (Jordan & Hartling, 2006). This is a relational theory, contrasted against prevailing theories of the development of self that assert the essential importance of individuation and independence in healthy growth (Jordan et al., 1991; Miller, 1986; Genero, Miller, Surrey, & Baldwin, 1992). Instead, RCT is rooted in the assumption that relationships are central to human development, that people naturally move toward greater connection in relationships, and that suffering comes from being denied authentic connection (Genero et al., 1992; Miller, 1986; Miller & Stiver, 1997).

More specifically, and bearing upon the purposes of the present study, RCT conceptualizes that healthy relationships result from *mutuality*, which gives rise to psychological well-being (Jordan & Hartling, 2006; Jordan et al., 1991; Miller, 1986). The theorized nature of mutuality is more complex than this might imply. Mutuality is not intended to reflect the more common *quid pro quo* social exchanges that typically define mutuality (Jordan et al., 1991). Rather, RCT conceptualizes mutuality as the degree of bidirectional flow of thoughts, feelings, and activity between people in a relationship that produces growth and satisfaction (Genero et al., 1992). Jordan et al. (1991) further described mutuality as mutual intersubjectivity, or an empathic holding of another's experience, and an open willingness to reveal oneself while valuing both

the sameness and difference of each other's experiences within the relationship. This process is characterized by respect, investment, and openness to influence (Jordan et al., 1991). Specifically, Miller (1988, as cited in Genero et al., 1992) clarified 6 theoretical dimensions of mutuality: empathy, engagement, authenticity, zest, diversity, and empowerment. These 6 dimensions were operationalized in a measure developed by Genero, Miller, Surrey, and Baldwin (1992), and used to demonstrate associations between mutuality and aspects of well-being. Studies have since found mutuality to be negatively correlated with depression (Genero et al., 1992; Sperberg & Stabb, 1998) and anger suppression (Sperberg & Stabb, 1998).

Research Questions

Based on this review of the literature, the research questions for this study are as follows: (a) What cluster patterns of conformity to masculine role norms are found in a sample of adult GBQ identifying men? (b) Do clusters of conformity to masculine role norms predict significant variance in mutuality in GBQ men's best same-gender friendships? (c) Do significant differences in mutuality exist between those who report and do not report sexual relationships with best friends?

Chapter Three

Methods

Participants. Participation was limited to men who identified as gay, bisexual, queer, or *other (non-heterosexual identity)*, aged 18 through 64. Although 282 individuals participated in the survey, the final sample size included 215 participants after cases in which participants exceeded the age limit or had significant missing instrument data were removed. The mean age was 37.6 (SD = 12.2) and ranged from 18 to 64 years old. Ninety-six point seven percent identified their gender as male ($n = 208$) and the remaining 3.3% identified as gender-queer ($n = 7$). Regarding sexual orientation, the current sample of men was comprised of 84.2% identifying as gay ($n = 181$), 7.9% identifying as bisexual ($n = 17$), 7% identifying as queer ($n = 15$), and .9% identifying as other (non-heterosexual; $n = 2$). The reported ethnicities of participants were 82.3% Caucasian or Euro-American ($n = 177$); 4.2% Asian or Asian-American ($n = 9$); 3.7% Black, African, or African-American ($n = 8$); 3.7% Biracial or Multiracial ($n = 8$); 3.3% Hispanic or Latino ($n = 7$); 1.9% American Indian or Native American ($n = 4$); and .9% other ($n = 2$).

The participants reported living in 34 different states within the U.S. with 32.6% in a metro area ($n = 70$), 25.6% in an urban area ($n = 55$), 25.6% in a city ($n = 55$), 12.6% in a small town ($n = 27$), and 3.7% living in a rural area ($n = 8$). The annual household incomes of the participants included 24.2% making under \$30,000 ($n = 52$), 27.5% making between \$30-59,999 ($n = 59$), 21% making between \$60-99,999 ($n = 45$), 24.2% making over \$100,000 ($n = 52$), and 3.3% who did not answer this question ($n = 7$). Employment consisted of 15.3% who said they were not currently employed (n

= 33), 17.7% part-time employed ($n = 38$), and 67% full-time employed ($n = 144$). The participants identifying as currently-enrolled students included 25.1% of the sample ($n = 54$) and the remaining 74.9% said they were not currently-enrolled students ($n = 161$).

A range of information concerning participants' relationships was also gathered for the present study. Regarding current romantic relationship status, 37.2% identified as single ($n = 80$), 28.8% identified as partnered ($n = 62$), 10.7% identified as being in a casual relationship of more than 1 year ($n = 23$), 10.2% identified as being in a casual relationship of less than 1 year ($n = 22$), 9.3% identified as married ($n = 20$), 2.8% identified as Other ($n = 6$), and .9% identified as in a civil union ($n = 2$). Responses to an item assessing the number of *close* male friendships indicated that 38.1% reported having 1-3 close friends ($n = 82$), 31.2% reported having 4-6 close friends ($n = 67$), 15.8% reported having 7-9 close friends ($n = 34$), 11.6% reported having more than 10 close friends ($n = 25$), and 3.3% reported having no close friends ($n = 7$). Responses to a similar item assessing the number of *best* male friendships indicated that 74% reported having 1-3 best friends ($n = 159$), 14% reported having 4-6 best friends ($n = 30$), 9.3% reported having no best friends ($n = 20$), 1.9% reported having more than 10 best friends ($n = 4$), and .9% reported having 7-9 best friends ($n = 2$).

Participants were asked to think of one of their best male friends and to refer to this person when responding to the remainder of the demographic items. The average age of best friends was 37.2 years old ($SD = 11.9$) and the average duration of these friendships was 11.4 years ($SD = 9.4$). Overall, the presumed sexual orientations of the participants' best friends' were 62.8% gay ($n = 135$), 32.1% heterosexual ($n = 69$), 4.2% bisexual ($n = 9$), .5% queer ($n = 1$), and .5% other ($n = 1$). Seventy point seven percent

reported never having had sexual contact with their best friend ($n = 152$) and 29.3% reported sexual contact ($n = 63$). Of those who had had sexual contact, the average age at first sexual contact was 29.6 ($SD = 10.3$) and the average duration of the sexual relationship was .6 years ($SD = 2.7$).

Instruments

The Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI; Mahalik et al., 2003) and the Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire (MPDQ; Genero et al., 1992) were administered to participants (see Appendices A and B, respectively). A demographic information form (see Appendix C) was also administered to participants in this study. A Friendship Information form (see Appendix D) was used to gather information regarding a best friendship including sexual behavior that may have occurred within it. This approach to gathering sexual behavior information has been utilized in previous studies (e.g., Nardi & Sherrod, 1994; Nardi, 1999).

Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire (MPDQ; Genero, Miller, Surrey, & Baldwin, 1992). Genero et al. (1992) developed a measure of mutuality from the RCT perspective, the Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire (MPDQ). The MPDQ is a 22-item, self-report rating scale measuring perceived mutuality in close relationships along 6 conceptual dimensions: empathy, engagement, authenticity, zest, diversity, and empowerment (Genero et al., 1992). Participants rate a relationship with a close friend from one's own perspective and the perspective of the other person. Items are grouped by two overarching frames, one that asks "When we are talking about things that matter to me, my friend is likely to..." and another that asks "When we are talking about things that matter to my friend, I am likely to..."

Participants then rate various characteristics for each (e.g., how much either member of the relationship shows an interest, picks up on feelings, respects the other's point of view) on a 10-point Likert scale. The MPDQ requires a total of 44 ratings (total score range = 44 – 440) with high scores indicating greater mutuality within the relationship.

Genero et al. (1992) found coefficient alphas for the MPDQ ranging from .87 to .93 across and between genders in a sample of college students and community health center patrons. Genero et al. also observed that mutuality was significantly correlated with typical measures of relationship quality: adequacy of social support, relationship satisfaction, and cohesion. Cronbach's Alpha for the present sample was .89.

Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI; Mahalik et al., 2003).

Mahalik et al. (2003), developed the CMNI as a 94-item, self-report inventory measuring attitudes, behaviors, and cognitions reflecting both conformity and nonconformity to 11 normative masculine messages, each of which comprise a subscale: Winning (10 items), Emotional Control (11 items), Risk-Taking (10 items), Violence (8 items), Power Over Women (9 items), Dominance (4 items), Playboy (12 items), Self-Reliance (6 items), Primacy of Work (8 items), Disdain for Homosexuality (10 items), and Pursuit of Status (6 items). Items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale (scored 0 – 3; total score range = 0 – 282) with higher scores indicating greater conformity to traditional masculinity ideologies. Items include, for example, “It is best to keep your emotions hidden” (Emotional Control Subscale) and “I hate asking for help” (Self-Reliance Subscale).

The original validation study demonstrated the validity of the CMNI by producing (a) differential validity between men and women, and between high and low

risk-taking men; (b) convergent validity with other measures of masculinity (i.e., the Brannon Masculinity Scale, Gender Role Conflict Scale, and Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale); and (c) significant subscale correlations with measures traditionally correlated with masculinity (e.g., psychological distress, social dominance, and desire to be more muscular; Mahalik et al., 2003). Further studies have since confirmed the factor structure (Parent & Moradi, 2009) and provided support for discriminant validity between the CMNI and measures of personality traits (Parent, Moradi, Rummell, & Tokar, 2011).

The CMNI pilot study produced a coefficient alpha of .94 for the total CMNI score and subscale alphas ranging from .72 (Pursuit of Status) to .91 (Emotional Control) in a sample of college undergraduate males (Mahalik, et al., 2003). For the present sample, Total CMNI produced a Cronbach's Alpha of .91, while the individual subscale alphas were as follows: Winning (.86), Emotional Control (.91), Risk-Taking (.80), Violence (.83), Power Over Women (.79), Dominance (.61; acceptable mean inter-item correlation of .29; Briggs & Cheek, 1986), Playboy (.86), Self-Reliance (.85), Primacy of Work (.85), Disdain for Homosexuals (.87), and Pursuit of Status (.73).

Procedures

The present study was approved by the OU-Norman IRB (see Appendix E) and data was collected via an online survey (i.e., Qualtrics) that was established and maintained by the researcher. A recruitment email was sent to men who met the inclusion criteria as well as to professional listservs with membership who were likely to meet the criteria. Additionally, flyers advertising the survey link were placed in businesses and public bulletin spaces. Recruitment information was also posted to

online social media websites (e.g., Facebook, Google+, Twitter, etc). Men who chose to participate were taken to an informed consent page where they were given the opportunity to either opt in or out of the study. Those who chose to participate completed the demographics page, Friendship Information form, MPDQ, and CMNI (in respective order). The full survey took approximately 15 to 30 minutes to complete. Participants who completed the surveys were given the opportunity to enter a drawing for one of three \$40 gift cards. To maintain confidentiality, drawing entrants were only asked to provide an email or physical address that was stored in a separate database, unconnected to survey responses. Winners were determined after data collection was completed, and notified via mail or email. Winners were asked to provide a mailing address at which to send the gift card and were discouraged from sharing any other identifying information.

Data Analyses

The complexities of GBQ men's friendships discussed previously suggest that GBQ men may interpret and conform to masculinity role norms differently than do heterosexual men. This study addressed this complexity by utilizing cluster analysis to identify subscale patterns of conformity to masculine role norms particular to this population. Cluster analysis has seldom been used in counseling psychology research though there are noted benefits, such as providing structure to heterogeneous groups while clarifying individual differences (Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1999). Borgen and Barnett (1987) noted that simplification of a data set can be an appropriate and effective use for cluster analysis, and that "it can be used to group objects when the use of human judgment would be tedious, subjective, or practically impossible" (p.

461). Last, some have observed a narrow scope of methodologies used in masculinities research and urged greater diversity of methodologies (Smiler, 2004; Whorley & Addis, 2006). The use of cluster analysis in this study attempted to address these points.

For the present study, a hierarchical cluster analysis was conducted on CMNI subscales using Ward's minimum variance method to agglomerate clusters based on the squared Euclidean distances between cases. Hierarchical clustering involves the creation of a dendrogram, with a hierarchy of clusters, and every data point or variable is ultimately nested within any given cluster solution (Hair & Black, 2000). The Ward's method agglomeration technique is designed to minimize the variance at each stage of clustering and is considered one of the most effective at identifying underlying data structure (Borgen & Barnett, 1987; Hair & Black, 2000). Agglomerative hierarchical cluster analysis, as compared to other cluster methods, is used most often in counseling psychology research (Borgen & Barnett, 1987). Due to differences in the number of items between CMNI subscales, subscale totals were standardized through conversion into z-scores prior to clustering (Hair & Black, 2000; Afifi, May, & Clark, 2005). K-means clustering, a nonhierarchical method, was then performed using the previously established number of clusters to confirm the final cluster solution, as has been suggested by the literature (Hubert, 2008; Tan, Steinbach, & Kumar, 2006).

After identifying CMNI cluster patterns, the clusters were entered as predictor variables in a hierarchical multiple regression. For the regression, significantly correlated demographic variables such as participant age and duration of friendship were entered at step one. The CMNI clusters were dummy coded and entered at step two. These predictor variables were regressed onto the criterion variable, MPDQ total

scores. In order to examine whether history of sexual contact created significant differences in best friendship mutuality, an independent samples t-test was conducted with MPDQ scores and item responses regarding the presence or absence of previous sexual contact.

Chapter 4

Results

Preliminary analyses. Preliminary analyses were conducted to examine relationships among the variables. First, the data was examined for violations of assumptions necessary to the analyses and all assumptions were met. Data from the continuous variables were assessed for correlation (see Table 1). Predictor variables were not highly intercorrelated, thus no multicollinearity was observed. Total MPDQ scores were significantly correlated with two relevant variables, participant age ($r = .19$, $p < .01$) and duration of friendship ($r = .2$, $p < .01$), though both were small to medium in size. Next, ANOVAs were conducted on demographic variables (i.e., ethnic identity, sexual identity, friend's sexual identity, city size, education level, employment status, and relationship status) to examine whether there were significant differences in MPDQ scores. The only notable finding was participants' current relationship status (i.e., single, casual romantic relationship of less than 1 year, casual romantic relationship of more than 1 year, civil union, married, partnered, or other) on MPDQ scores $F(6, 200) = 2.59$, $p < .05$. A Tukey's post hoc test indicated that those in partnered relationships scored significantly higher than those in casual romantic relationships of more than 1 year.

Next, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the MPDQ scores of those endorsing prior sexual contact with the friend. There was a significant difference in scores between those endorsing yes ($M = 178.79$, $SD = 19.56$) and no ($M = 180.52$, $SD = 26.17$; $t[91.42] = .47$).

Cluster analysis. To examine patterns of conformity to masculine norms in GBQ men, a hierarchical cluster analysis was conducted. The 11 subscales of the CMNI were converted into z-scores and used as clustering variables. As indicated, clusters were combined using the Ward's method agglomeration technique based on squared Euclidean distances, the distance measure recommended for this method by Hair and Black (2000). Published guidelines for determining the final number of clusters were followed, including noting when the agglomeration distance between clusters changes suddenly and balancing potential cluster solutions with theoretical bases and practical considerations (Afifi, May, & Clark, 2003; Hair & Black, 2000). As recommended, a K-means clustering method was also completed to confirm the cluster solution and help enhance distinctiveness between cluster groups (Hubert, 2008; Tan, Steinbach, & Kumar, 2006).

Based on these recommendations, visual examination of the dendrogram and multiple linkage plots (see Figure 1), and a review of distance changes noted in the agglomeration table, it was determined that a 3-cluster solution offered the best fit for the data. Follow-up K-means cluster analyses indicated patterns of differences between clusters that was most consistent with the hierarchical cluster analysis at a 3-group structure, providing some confirmation for this cluster solution.

Next, the specific CMNI subscale mean score patterns (see Figure 2) were examined to determine cluster labeling. Distinct patterns were identified in each cluster. The first cluster contained lower scores on Emotional Control, Self-Reliance, Violence, Power Over Women, Disdain for Homosexuality, and Playboy. As such, this cluster seemed to represent those identifying as least emotionally restrictive, least

endorsing of social hierarchy around gender and sexuality, and most inclined to seek help and intimacy in relationships. Overall scores in this group were the lowest measured when compared with the other clusters, so this cluster was named the *Non-Conforming* cluster. The second cluster had similar patterns except that the Emotional Control, Self Reliance, and Playboy mean scores were in the midrange of scores and notably higher. This group was named the *Independent-Promiscuous* cluster. The final cluster contained the highest scores on each of the subscales within the sample. This cluster was labeled the *Highly-Conforming* cluster.

Hierarchical multiple regressions. Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for all variables are shown in Table 1. The full hierarchical regression model, including both steps, produced a total R^2 of .16 [$F(4, 182) = 8.68, p < .001$; adjusted $R^2 = .14$], explaining 16% of the variance in mutuality. This is considered a medium effect size (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Age and the duration of friendship were both entered at Step 1. Neither produced significant individual contributions to the overall variance in mutuality although were significant in combination producing an R^2 of .05 ($F[2, 184] = 4.67, p < .05$; adjusted $R^2 = .04$). At the second step, the dummy coded CMNI clusters were entered, using the Independent-Promiscuous cluster as a constant. The CMNI clusters produced a significant contribution to the variance in mutuality, $\Delta R^2 = .11, \Delta F(2, 182) = 12.13, p < .001$, and accounted for an additional 11% of the total variance in mutuality. The significance was primarily attributable to the Non-Conformity cluster.

An ancillary hierarchical regression was conducted using the individual CMNI subscale scores to predict variance in MPDQ scores while controlling for participant

age and duration of friendship (see Table 3). The full hierarchical regression model was significant and produced a total R^2 of .24 [$F(13, 183) = 4.59, p < .001$; adjusted $R^2 = .19$], explaining 24% of the variance in mutuality (medium to large effect size; Cohen & Cohen, 1983). As before, age and duration of friendship were entered at Step 1 producing an R^2 of .05 ($F[2, 184] = 4.67, p < .01$; adjusted $R^2 = .04$), did not significantly individually contribute to MPDQ scores, but were significant in combination. At the second step, individual CMNI subscale scores were entered. The overall second step was significant, $\Delta R^2 = .19, \Delta F(11, 188) = 4.34, p < .001$, accounting for an additional 19% of the total variance in mutuality, controlling for the effects of age and friendship duration. Of those entered, the following subscales significantly individually contributed to, and negatively predicted, MPDQ scores: Emotional Control (4.2%), Power Over Women (1.7%), and Disdain for Homosexuality (2.2%).

Chapter Five

Discussion

The present study examined the relationships among conformity to masculine role norms, history of sexual contact, and mutuality in GBQ men's same-gender friendships. Although heterosexual men's friendships have received considerable research attention, a paucity of studies have addressed those of GBQ men. Moreover, no prior published empirical studies were found that explored the relationship between masculinity and mutuality in GBQ men's friendships. The present sample included men of a broad range of ages and U.S. regions, from both in and outside of college settings.

Conformity to masculine norms clusters. The hierarchical cluster analysis performed in this study produced 3 clusters of conformity to masculine norms patterns: Non-Conforming, Independent-Promiscuous, and Highly-Conforming. These findings suggest some interesting dimensionality to the ways in which traditional masculinity ideologies are internalized by GBQ men. First, it is useful to note that some commonalities emerged across the clusters and did not contribute to distinctions between groups. Mean scores for the Risk-Taking, Dominance, Primacy of Work, and Pursuit of Status subscales of the CMNI were in the middle range of possible scores and relatively similar across groups. That these masculine norms were endorsed consistently throughout this sample of GBQ men may reflect reactions to broader cultural influences related to power. That is to say, it may be that GBQ men place higher relative importance on norms involving risk-taking, dominance, work, and status-seeking due to their less powerful positions in society.

At the time of this writing, most U.S. states still lack same-gender marriage equality rights or legal protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation (“Gay rights,” 2012). These realities highlight the limited social acceptance that GBQ men experience and place them at relatively disempowered social locations. Additionally, Linneman (2000) noted that, given the persistence of homophobia in society, gay men regularly encounter a variety of risks in their everyday lives; seeking romantic relationships, seeking sexual encounters, publicly displaying affection for partners, and engaging in social change activism are fraught with risks of encountering hostility and resistance. Linneman asserted that simply coming out and claiming an identity as a sexual minority can be a form of activism with associated risks. Scholars have observed that hegemonic masculinities are often constructed around establishing and consolidating power (e.g., Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Levant, 2011), and, as such, GBQ men may internalize the necessity for risk-taking and dominance in order to achieve mastery over oppressive forces. Similarly, it may be that GBQ men orient to masculinity norms of valuing career and status because these serve to enhance social standing and power. That status and work were endorsed as important may also reflect changes resulting from recent U.S. social movements that have afforded sexual minority people further opportunities for visibility and status. In this light, career focus and social recognition become more viable options for countering power imbalances.

Differences between clusters also suggest important influences on the lives of GBQ men. The Non-Conforming cluster contained the lowest mean scores on most CMNI subscales. Thus, the Non-Conformity cluster of GBQ men seems inhabited by

those least conforming and, perhaps, most rejecting of traditional masculine role norms overall. Given that hegemonic masculinity has historically defined itself in opposition to homosexualities (Connell, 2000), it may be the Non-Conformity cluster reflects a subset of GBQ men with a more reactionary response to the whole of traditional masculinity. Historically, in U.S. culture, conceptions of masculinity have centered on heterosexuality and labeled GBQ men effeminate or deviant in efforts to exclude them from the male gender (Connell, 2000). Thus it may be that the Non-Conformity cluster represents GBQ men who have, in a sense, embraced exclusion by rejecting most masculinity norms.

There is, however, another possible explanation for this clustering of masculinity non-conforming GBQ men. This group may also include men who experienced vastly different male gender socialization and were, more or less, unaffected by the influence of traditional masculine role norms. For instance, GBQ men who have been raised, or significantly impacted by, positive and accepting messages related to GBQ sexual orientations might not experience the social pressures to conform and could conceivably develop masculinity ideologies largely uninformed by traditional masculine norms. Future research should examine the impact of GBQ-affirming experiences and racial, ethnic, regional, and cultural identities on non-conformity to masculine role norms in order to examine this possibility.

The Independent-Promiscuous cluster reflects a group of GBQ men who endorsed greater emotional restriction, self-reliance, and tendencies to engage in sexual activity with less intimacy and more partners. As Connell (2000) pointed out, homosexual sex, for GBQ men, is both a sexual practice and social process used to

define a social identity that is governed by gender. For those in the Independent-Promiscuous cluster, it seems, this conflation may be most salient. In fact, this cluster's most prominent feature is unattached, sexual adventurousness. That this would be accompanied by emotional withholding and less willingness to need others makes some intuitive sense; in order to sustain a casual approach to sexual relationships with multiple partners, qualities that support relational detachment would be important. Goode and Troiden's (1980) finding that emotional superficiality was associated with promiscuity in a sample of gay-identifying men corroborates this particular pattern.

The Highly Conforming cluster suggests a pattern of much higher overall ideological conformity to traditional masculine norms than the rest of the clusters, and one that is consistent with the overall pattern of means identified in the original CMNI sample of heterosexual men (Mahalik et al., 2003). This cluster may well be described by the masculinity Connell (2005) termed "A Very Straight Gay" (p. 143), in which the tensions between hegemonic masculinity and same-gender desire are negotiated via the adoption of hypermasculine ideologies that distinguish and minimize gay identity in favor of gender, despite social engagement with GBQ communities.

As scholars have noted, hegemonic masculinities are subverted by the very object-choice of same-gender sexual relationships (e.g., Connell, 2005). To conform more highly to traditional masculinity norms, then, is to accept to varying degrees the messages that homosexuality is deviant, effeminate, unmasculine, or wrong. In fact, the mean score for the Highly Conforming cluster's Disdain for Homosexuality subscale was the highest of the 3 clusters and over twice that of the next highest. This suggests Highly Conforming GBQ men may experience greater degrees of internalized

homophobia and, as such, may be at increased risk for depression and diminished relationship quality (Frost & Meyer, 2009).

The process of adopting a Highly Conforming pattern of masculinity ideology may, in part, be rooted in historical context. In Halkitis' (2000) qualitative study of masculinity and gay men who survived the AIDS epidemic, he recounted the historical evolution of gay masculinities and noted that as early as the 1950's in the U.S., a movement occurred in which gay subculture increasingly adopted the appearances of working class men in order to claim a masculinity of their own. Halkitis observed that, later, with the greater urbanization of the 1970's, gay masculinities increasingly idealized muscularity, power, and strength, a trend that was invigorated in the 1980's as the AIDS crisis ravaged gay communities and frail, sickly bodies came to represent a fearsome epidemic for GBQ men. Although the mean age of the present sample suggests many participants likely lived through the AIDS crisis, significant age differences did not arise between cluster groups. Nevertheless, the historical context of the evolution of GBQ masculinities remains important to this interpretation of trends in masculinity ideologies.

Conformity to Masculine Norms clusters and mutuality. Addressing the second research question of whether CMNI clusters predicted significant variance in mutuality, the results of the hierarchical multiple regression procedure indicated that the full model was significant. In addition, the conformity to masculine norms clusters as a whole accounted for significant variance in mutuality, attributable primarily to the significant individual contribution of the Non-Conformity cluster. The findings lend themselves to a number of possible explanations. First, these results suggest that

ideological conformity to traditional masculine role norms negatively impacts the degree of mutuality in GBQ men's same-gender friendships. A negative relationship between measures of masculinity and quality in heterosexual men's friendships has been observed in many studies (e.g., reviewed in Fehr, 1996, 2004; Levant, 2007; O'Neil, 2008). If the nature of masculine conformity is indeed inhibiting of the quality of friendships, it could be expected to occur in both heterosexual and GBQ men's friendships alike. Given that friendships play a central role in the lives and well-being of GBQ men (Nardi, 1999), the present study's findings suggest that conformity to masculine norms is critical to understand with this population.

It is notable that GBQ men in the current study produced CMNI subscale means lower than those in Mahalik et al.'s (2003) original CMNI study in 7 of the 11 subscales and equivalent means in 2 subscales. Moreover, the Highly Conforming cluster's means were nearly equivalent to the heterosexual male participants in Mahalik et al.'s study. These contrasts suggest that even the most highly masculinity-conforming GBQ men may only approximate a heterosexual man's average level of conformity.

Alternatively, it may be that the masculinity norms encompassed by the CMNI are inherently limited in their ability to categorize the masculinity ideologies of GBQ men. The CMNI was developed and validated with samples of predominantly heterosexual men. Thus, it is possible that, even though GBQ men will inevitably encounter these normative messages, the CMNI subscales alone do not adequately distinguish patterns of GBQ masculinity, reducing their predictive power.

Conformity to Masculine Norms subscales and mutuality. Three particular CMNI subscales emerged as significant, negative predictors of mutuality: Emotional

Control, Power Over Women, and Disdain for Homosexuality. The relationship between emotional restriction and mutuality found here is intuitive and consistent with the majority of previous literature demonstrating that affective sharing is a critical component of intimacy in friendships (see Fehr, 1996, 2004). Furthermore, the Disdain for Homosexuality subscale measures beliefs regarding heterosexual superiority, and, as noted previously, also likely measures internalized homophobia. Given the demonstrated association between internalized homophobia and decreased relationship quality, among other ills, this finding is also consistent with the extant literature (e.g., Fischgrund, Halkitis, and Carroll, 2011; Frost & Meyer, 2009).

The Power Over Women subscale examines beliefs about women's social status and gender equality, with higher scores indicating less egalitarian perspectives. A possible explanation for the negative relationship between Power Over Women and mutuality in GBQ men's friendships involves the stereotype of sexual minority men as effeminate, a label which has often been used to marginalize these men (Connell, 2000). That is, GBQ men who tend to regard women as inferior would likely want to avoid being perceived as feminine themselves. Similarly, it is possible that, in some GBQ men, internalized concerns regarding being stereotyped as effeminate produce rigid, negative attitudes toward femininity and women. Given that intimacy in friendships has often been considered a feminine form of engagement (see Fehr, 1996), it is possible that these GBQ men would avoid intimate or mutual engagement in their best friendships in an effort to avoid being considered effeminate. Conversely, those with greater belief in women's gender equality would, in this sense, encounter fewer inhibitions to mutuality.

Prior sexual contact and mutuality. The final research question addressed the relationship between prior sexual contact with the best friend and mutuality. Results indicated a significant difference in mutuality between those reporting prior sexual contact with a best friend and those reporting none. Those reporting no prior sexual contact evidenced higher mutuality scores than those who had. On the surface, such a finding would seem to confirm the prevailing fear reported by men in Nardi's (1999) study: sex with a friend will ruin the friendship. However, as Nardi pointed out, the dynamics of how sexual intimacy is negotiated between GBQ friends is likely more complex than that explanation implies. Although significant, the mean difference between the groups (i.e., sexual contact vs. no sexual contact) was small, suggesting that sexual contact with the friend did not sharply change the quality of friendships. Such a finding may add credibility to the idea that sexual behavior in GBQ friendships does not alone preclude friendship. However, the present data cannot confirm or refute the previously observed patterns of sexual behavior occurring mostly prior to, and exclusive from, same-gender GBQ friendships that was noted in Nardi's sample (1999).

Implications. The findings of the present study carry important implications for working with GBQ men. Community and social support for GBQ men, particularly the role that friendships serve in these, may be fundamental to their well-being (Nardi, 1999). Given their significance, it is important for counseling practitioners to recognize the function of these friendships and the factors that enhance or inhibit them.

The present results suggest that the more GBQ men conform to traditional masculinity ideologies, the less they experience mutuality in their best friendships. Such a conclusion has implications for therapeutic interventions aimed at improving

GBQ clients' social support and for enhancing the therapeutic relationship itself. That is to say, helping GBQ men to recognize how their beliefs about masculinity may limit their friendships could provide opportunities for them to improve their interpersonal effectiveness. Likewise, it stands to reason that a relationship as intimate as a therapeutic relationship could be inhibited by similar conformity to masculinity norms and would benefit from addressing this impact. Overall, these findings suggest that masculinity ideology is an important area for counseling practitioners to assess when working with GBQ clients.

Limitations and Future Research. The current study has some notable limitations. First, the men sampled were self-selected and identified predominantly as European-American or Caucasian, gay, college-educated, and presumably cisgender, impacting the generalizability of the results. As many have pointed out, the broader literature concerning men and masculinity has focused on convenience samples of undergraduate men with low inclusion of racial/ethnic minorities (e.g., Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Whorley & Addis, 2006) and has encouraged further research with these groups and non-heterosexual populations (e.g., Addis, Mansfield, and Syzdek, 2010; Levant, 1996; Mahalik et al., 2003; Smiler, 2006). Sampling from various other sexual, gender, and ethnic minority groups may illuminate important differences in patterns of conformity to masculinity ideologies and/or mutuality. Samter and Burleson (2005), for example, found significant differences in same-gender friendship variables based on ethnic group identity.

The present study did not assess the religious or spiritual affiliations of the GBQ men sampled. Religious affiliation can hold important meanings for GBQ men and

create complex internal conflict when it does not accept homosexuality (Haldeman, 2004). Future research should address whether religious or spiritual affiliation impacts mutuality in GBQ men's friendships.

As noted previously, the average age of the present sample is relatively older than that of previous studies examining the CMNI (e.g., Mahalik et al., 2003; Parent & Moradi, 2009; Smiler, 2006). The age range of the present study is both a strength and a limitation. Given the aforementioned need to examine populations outside of convenience samples, the age range of participants in the present study at least partially meets this challenge. However, this difference also limits the ability to discern qualities attributable to sexual orientation versus age. For example, as Adams, Blieszner, and de Vries (2000) found, definitions of friendship vary by age. Furthermore, relatively recent social changes surrounding the rights and visibility of gay men likely translate into profoundly different experiences between those with even small age differences. Sweeping cultural changes have occurred for sexual minority men in the past 40 years, moving them from social locations of considerable oppression and marginalization to increasingly more visible and politically powerful statuses. The mean age of participants in the present study suggests that many participants experienced these changes within their lifetimes. This age effect, itself, could create meaningful differences in the friendships of the presently sampled group of GBQ men. Further studies examining friendship age effects related to particular historical movements would be beneficial.

Another limitation to the present study may arise from its reliance on an internet-based survey. Although Gosling, Vazire, Srivastava, and John (2004) found

that online surveys were as diverse as other sampling methods, it is possible that self-selection into an internet-only study creates a form of class bias. That is, accessing an internet-based study requires access to a computer and internet connection. It is conceivable that as this access becomes less available or convenient, the likelihood of participation diminishes. Although the present study's demographics sampled a wide range of annual incomes, the education level skewed toward those with college educations. This suggests that those with lower incomes but employed in positions requiring less education may be underrepresented.

Given the finding that the mutuality in GBQ men's friendships differed significantly depending on whether or not prior sexual contact had occurred, future studies should further examine the relationship between sexual behavior and mutuality in friendships. In Nardi's (1999) study of gay men's friendships, he notes that they "as a whole, experience more than just two categories of lovers/friends. The diverse range of relationships is evident and includes, for some gay men, relationships in which sex and friendship coexist" (p. 78). Nardi notes, too, that for those gay men who maintain separation between sex and intimacy in relationships, it is possibly due to the recapitulation of hegemonic masculinities. Exploration of sexual behavior as a mediating or moderating variable in the relationship between conformity to masculine norms and mutuality may help to illuminate how complex gender role socialization processes are enacted by GBQ men.

Last, Addis, Mansfield, and Syzdek (2010) have urged that, for psychology to keep stride with advances in other disciplines' understanding of gender, greater focus on the contextual nature of gender socialization is needed. Furthermore Adams,

Blieszner, and de Vries (2000) observed considerable variability in friendship definitions as a result of age, region, and cultural differences. Thus, future research may seek to compare how masculinity ideologies differ for GBQ men by age, region, cultural identification, and setting, among others, and examine how these contextual factors interact with friendship effects.

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Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations of Age, Duration of Friendship, Total CMNI, and Mutuality

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4
Age	37.60	12.23	---	.55***	-.19*	.19*
Friendship Duration	11.36	9.44		---	-.11	.20*
Total CMNI	104.18	21.62			---	-.35***
Mutuality	180	21.70				---

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 2

Summary of Final Step of the Two-Step Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis for Cluster and Control Variables Predicting Mutuality

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1				.05*	
Age	.21	.15	.12		
Duration of Friendship	.31	.20	.13		
Step 2				.16***	.11***
Independent-Promiscuous vs. Highly Conforming ^a	4.63	3.88	.11		
Non-Conforming vs. Highly Conforming ^a	18.66	4.23	.40		
Non-Conforming vs. Independent-Promiscuous ^b	14.03	3.41	.301		

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. ^aThe cluster variables were dummy coded with the Highly Conforming cluster as the contrast variable. ^bThe cluster variables were dummy coded with the Independent-Promiscuous cluster as the contrast variable.

Table 3

Summary of Final Step of the Two-Step Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis for CMNI Subscale and Control Variables Predicting Mutuality

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1				.05*	
Age	.21	.15	.12		
Duration of Friendship	.31	.20	.13		
Step 2				.24***	.19***
Emotional Control	-.95	.29	-.24		
Power Over Women	-.89	.44	-.15		
Disdain for Homosexuality	-.90	.38	-.18		

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

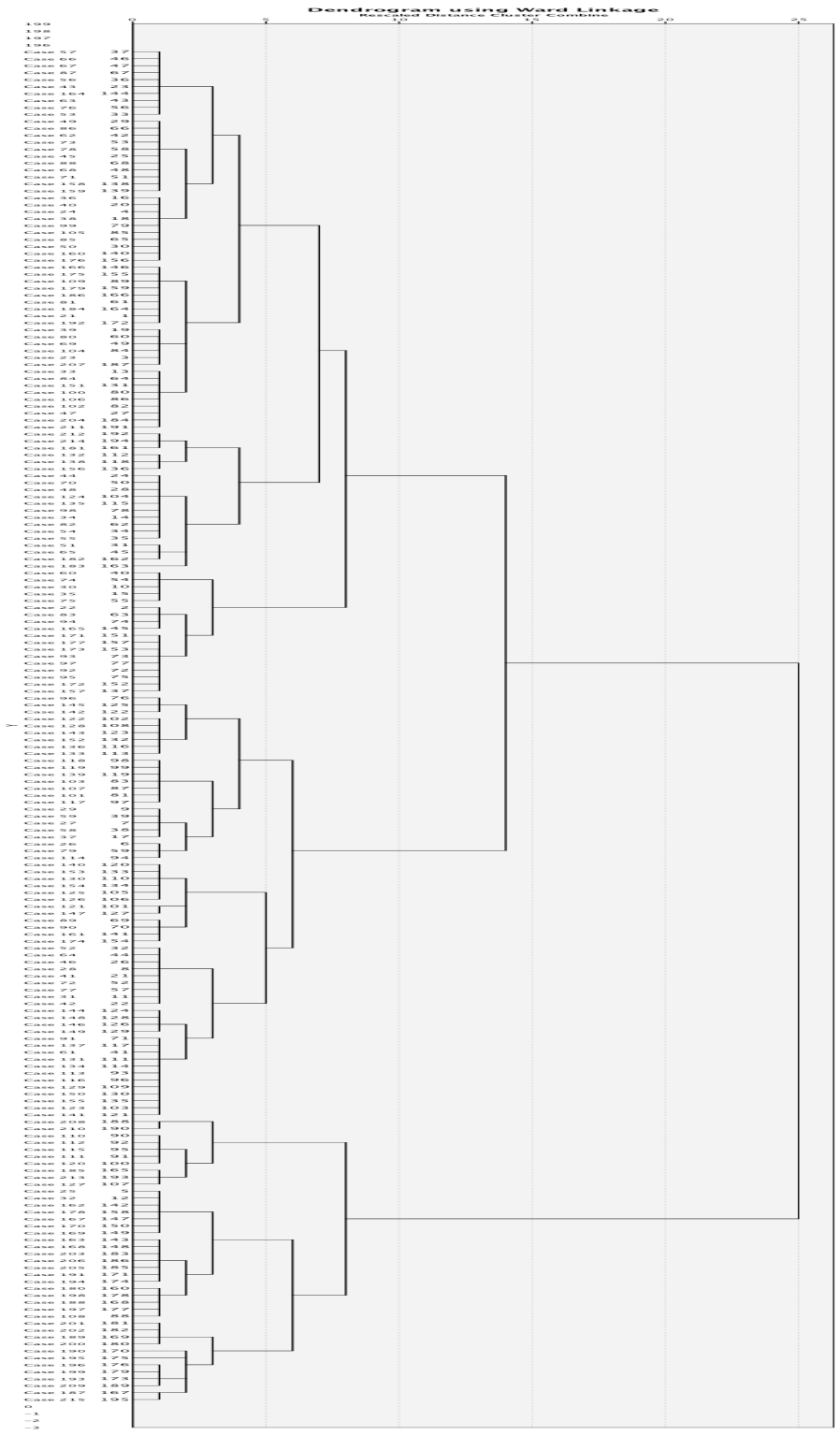


Figure 1. Dendrogram of the hierarchical cluster analysis for the 11 subscales of Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory.

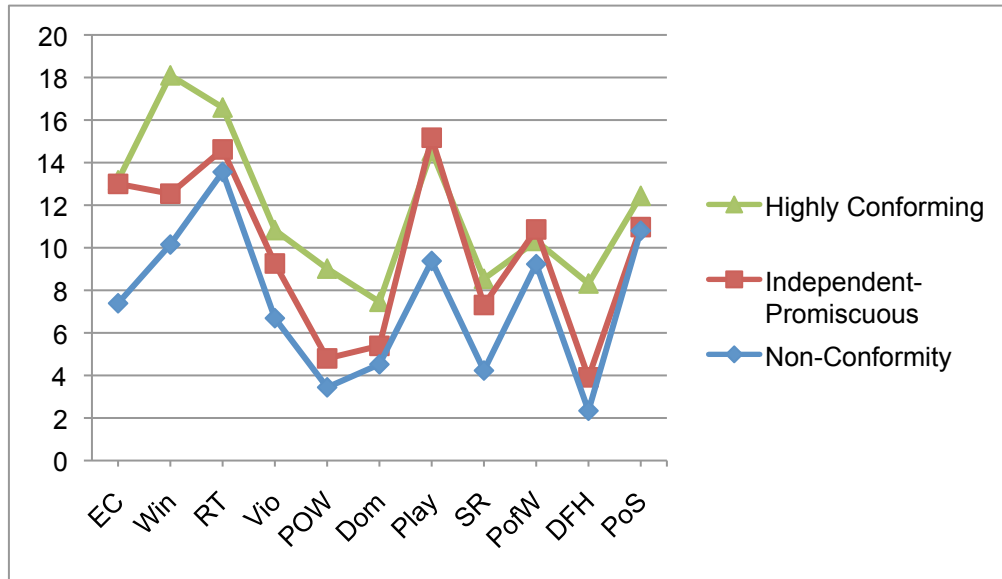


Figure 2. Mean scores on 11 subscales of Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory. EC = Emotional Control; Win = Winning; RT = Risk-Taking; Vio = Violence; POW = Power Over Women; Dom = Dominance; Play = Playboy; SR = Self-Reliance; PofW = Primacy of Work; DfH = Disdain for Homosexuals; PoS = Pursuit of Status

Appendix A

Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire (MPDQ)

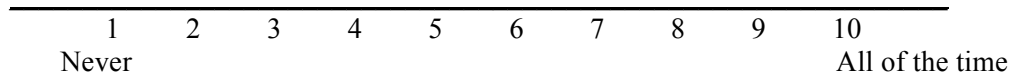
We would like you to tell us about your relationship with a best friend of the *same sex*. A best friend is a friend to whom you feel the greatest commitment and closeness; someone who accepts you “as you are,” with whom you talk the most openly and feel the most comfortable spending time.”

What is your friend’s age? _____

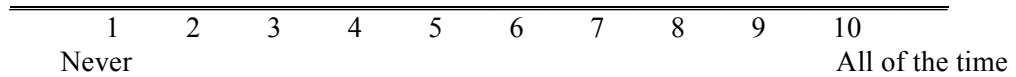
Instructions: In this section, we would like to explore certain aspects of your relationship with your friend. Using the scale below, please tell us your best estimate of how often you and your friend experience each of the following:

When we talk about things that matter to my friend, I am likely to

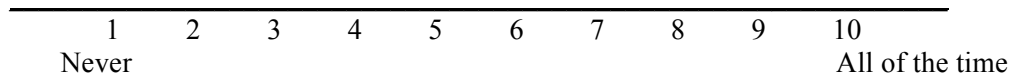
Be receptive



Get impatient

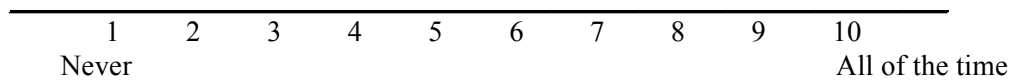


Try to understand

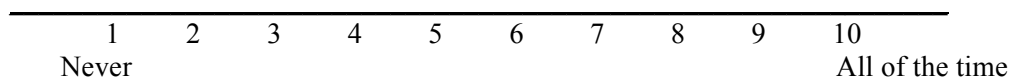


time

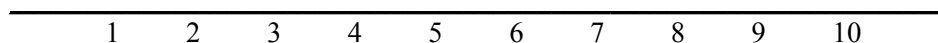
Get bored



Feel moved



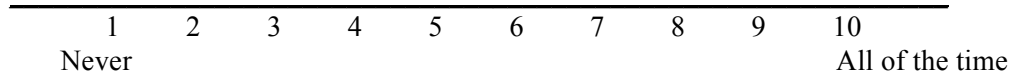
Avoid being honest



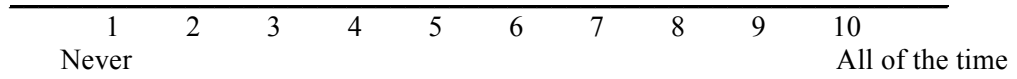
Never

All of the time

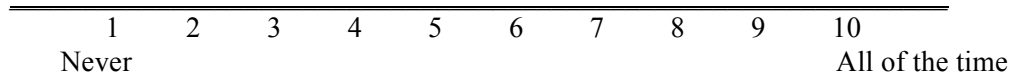
Be open-minded



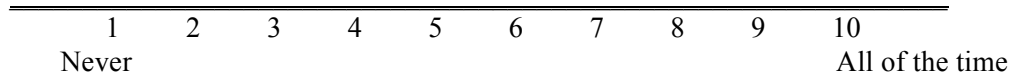
Get discouraged



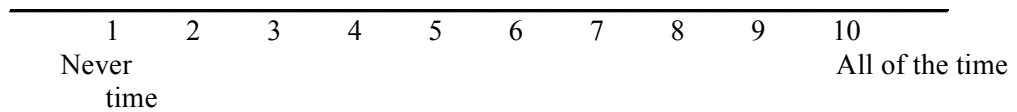
Get involved



Have difficulty listening

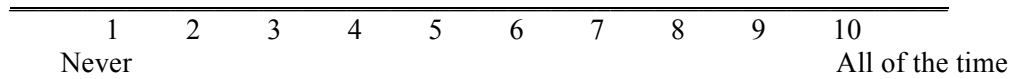


Feel energized by our conversation

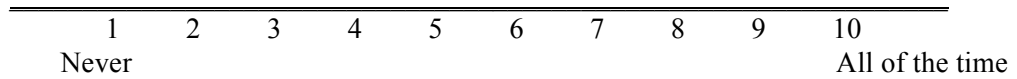


When we talk about things that matter to me, my friend is likely to.....

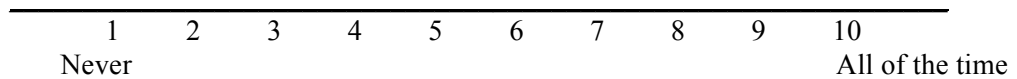
Pick up on my feelings



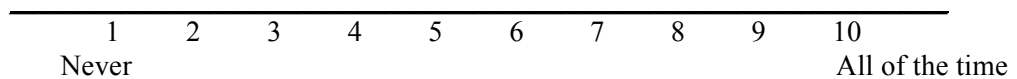
Feel like we're not getting anywhere



Show an interest



Get frustrated



Share similar experiences

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never All of the time

Keep feelings inside

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never All of the time

Respect my point of view

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never All of the time

Change the subject

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never All of the time

See the humor in things

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never All of the time

Feel down

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never All of the time

Express an opinion clearly

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never All of the time

Genero, Miller, & Surrey, 1992

Appendix B

Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI)

Ver#: 1-M

- 1 -

This is the SAMPLE CONFORMITY TO MASCULINE NORMS INVENTORY. It contains the directions given to persons completing the inventory, the format of the inventory, and some sample items. The full CMNI is 94 items and takes between 10-15 minutes to complete.

Instructions: The following pages contain a series of statements about how men might think, feel or behave. The statements are designed to measure attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors associated with both traditional and non-traditional masculine gender roles.

Thinking about your own actions, feelings and beliefs, please indicate how much **you personally agree or disagree with each statement** by circling **SD** for "Strongly Disagree", **D** for "Disagree", **A** for "Agree", or **SA** for "Strongly agree" to the left of the statement. There are no right or wrong responses to the statements. You should give the responses that most accurately describe your personal actions, feelings and beliefs. It is best if you respond with your first impression when answering.

- | | | | | | |
|-----|--|----|---|---|----|
| 1. | It is best to keep your emotions hidden | SD | D | A | SA |
| 2. | In general, I will do anything to win | SD | D | A | SA |
| 3. | If I could, I would frequently change sexual partners | SD | D | A | SA |
| 4. | If there is going to be violence, I find a way to avoid it | SD | D | A | SA |
| 5. | I love it when men are in charge of women | SD | D | A | SA |
| 6. | It feels good to be important | SD | D | A | SA |
| 7. | I hate it when people ask me to talk about my feelings | SD | D | A | SA |
| 8. | I try to avoid being perceived as gay | SD | D | A | SA |
| 9. | I hate any kind of risk | SD | D | A | SA |
| 10. | I prefer to stay unemotional | SD | D | A | SA |
| 11. | I make sure people do as I say | SD | D | A | SA |
-

Appendix C

Demographics

In order to successfully complete this study, I would like to know more about you. The information you provide will not be used to identify you in any way.

1. Age: _____
2. Gender:
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Transgender Female
 - d. Transgender Male
 - e. Gender Queer
 - f. Intersex
 - g. Other _____
3. State in which you live: _____
4. Ethnicity:
 - a. African or African-American
 - b. American Indian/Native American
 - c. Asian or Asian-American
 - d. Biracial or Multiracial
 - e. Hispanic/Latino
 - f. Caucasian
 - g. Other _____
5. How do you describe your sexual identity/orientation?
 - a. Bisexual
 - b. Heterosexual
 - c. Gay
 - d. Queer
 - e. Other (non-heterosexual): _____
6. What is your current romantic relationship status?
 - a. Single
 - b. Involved in a romantic relationship (i.e., less than 1 yr)
 - c. Involved in a romantic relationship (i.e., more than 1 yr)
 - d. Civil union
 - e. Divorced (same-gender relationship)
 - f. Married (same-gender relationship)
 - g. Partnered
 - h. Other: _____
7. How many children under the age of 18 do you have in the home?

- a. None
- b. 1-2
- c. 3-4
- d. 5 or more

8. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- a. Some high school
- b. High school
- c. Some college
- d. Vocational training
- e. Associate's degree
- f. Bachelor's degree
- g. Master's degree
- h. Doctorate degree
- i. Professional degree
- j. Other: _____

9. Are you currently a student?

- a. No
- b. Yes. If yes, what year of college are you in?
 - 1. Freshman
 - 2. Sophomore
 - 3. Junior
 - 4. Senior
 - 5. Graduate Studies
 - 6. Other _____

10. Do you currently work outside the home?

- a. No
- b. Yes, full-time
- c. Yes, part-time

11. Annual Household Income:

- a. Less than \$25,000
- b. \$25,000 – \$35,000
- c. \$36,000 – \$45,000
- d. \$46,000 – \$55,000
- e. \$56,000 – \$65,000
- f. \$66,000 – \$75,000
- g. \$76,000 – \$85,000
- h. Over \$85,000

12. My city/town is:

- a. Rural (less than 5,000 people)
- b. Small town
- c. City
- d. Urban (more than 100,000 people)
- e. Metro Area (very large cities like Los Angeles, New York, Boston, Atlanta, Chicago)

Appendix D

Friendship Information

For the following questions, a close friend refers to someone to whom you feel a sense of mutual commitment and continuing closeness; a person with whom you talk fairly openly and feel comfortable spending time.

1. How many friends do you consider to be your close male friends?
 - a. 1-3
 - b. 4-6
 - c. 7-9
 - d. 10 or more

For the following question, a best friend is a friend to whom you feel the greatest commitment and closeness; someone who accepts you “as you are,” with whom you talk the most openly and feel the most comfortable spending time.”

2. How many friends do you consider to be your best male friends?
 - a. 1-3
 - b. 4-6
 - c. 7-9
 - d. 10 or more

When responding to the questions that follow, you are asked to think of **one best male friend, who is not currently your spouse or partner**, and then refer to this friend when answering the questions.

3. How old is the friend you are thinking of? _____
4. How does this friend describe his sexual identity/orientation?
 - a. Bisexual
 - b. Heterosexual
 - c. Gay
 - d. Queer
 - e. Other: _____

5. How long have you been friends with him? (Please indicate the total time in years *and* months if applicable. If you have known him less than 1 year, please mark 0 next to Years and indicate the approximate length of time next to Months. If you have known him less than 1 month, please enter 0 next to Years and 1 next to Months.)

Years _____

Months _____

6. Have you ever had sex, or any sexual contact, with this male best friend?

- a. No
- b. Yes

6a. If you answered yes to Item 6, how long did the sexual relationship last? (Please indicate the total time in years *and* months if applicable. If the sexual relationship lasted less than 1 year, please mark 0 next to Years and indicate the approximate length of time next to Months. If the relationship lasted less than 1 month, please enter 0 next to Years and 1 next to Months.)

Years _____
Months _____

Appendix E

IRB Approval Letter



**Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Approval of Initial Submission – Exempt from IRB Review – AP01**

Date: June 29, 2012

IRB#: 0935

Principal Investigator: Mr. Brent P Horner, BFA

Approval Date: 06/29/2012

Exempt Category: 2

Study Title: Exploring the Relationships Among Conformity to Masculine Norms, Mutuality, and Sexual Behaviors in Gay, Bisexual, and Queer Men's Same-Gender Friendships

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed the above-referenced research study and determined that it meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review. To view the documents approved for this submission, open this study from the *My Studies* option, go to *Submission History*, go to *Completed Submissions* tab and then click the *Details* icon.

As principal investigator of this research study, you are responsible to:

- Conduct the research study in a manner consistent with the requirements of the IRB and federal regulations 45 CFR 46.
- Request approval from the IRB prior to implementing any/all modifications as changes could affect the exempt status determination.
- Maintain accurate and complete study records for evaluation by the HRPP Quality Improvement Program and, if applicable, inspection by regulatory agencies and/or the study sponsor.
- Notify the IRB at the completion of the project.

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the IRB @ 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Aimee Franklin'.

Aimee Franklin, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

Appendix F

Prospectus

Running Head: MASCULINITY, MUTUALITY, SEXUALITY IN GBQ FRIENDSHIPS

Exploring the Relationships Among Conformity to Masculine Norms, Mutuality,
and Sexual Behaviors in Gay, Bisexual, and Queer Men's Same-Gender Friendships

Dissertation Prospectus

Brent Horner

University of Oklahoma

January 2011

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Chapter One

Overview

The friendships literature in recent decades paints a discouraging view of men's same-gender friendships. In comparison to both women's same-gender friendships and men's cross-gender friendships, men's friendships with men have been found to be less close, open, intimate, self-disclosing, supportive, meaningful, satisfying, and mutual (Bank & Hansford, 2000; Bell, 1981; Fehr, 1996, 2004). Research findings are not entirely consistent, but, despite some controversy, the overall evidence that men experience diminished quality in their same-gender friendships is "robust and widely documented" (p. 63; Bank & Hansford, 2000). Theorists have argued against attributing these differences to male sex, per se (Addis & Cohane, 2005; Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Wright, 1982, 1991). Instead, many have interpreted the evidence as reflecting the impact of masculine gender role socialization processes (e.g., Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Bank & Hansford, 2000; Fehr, 1996; Levant, 1996).

Closer examination of the research reveals, however, that very few of the studies in the literature on masculine gender role socialization and the studies of men's friendships have sampled—or identified within their samples—gay, bisexual, or queer (GBQ) men. Thus, less is known about the state of contemporary GBQ men's friendships. An exploratory study by Nardi and Sherrod (1994) supported sexual orientation as a potential moderator of friendships, and asserted that greater research attention should be focused on this important variable in friendship studies. Yet, a review of the empirical studies of men's

friendships found that GBQ male participants were frequently underrepresented, folded into the broader male gender category (e.g., Bank and Hansford, 2000), excluded from analysis (e.g., Reeder, 2003), or left unexamined/unreported in the demographic features (e.g., Aukett, Richie, & Mill, 1988; Demir & Orthel, 2011; Fehr, 2004; Grief, 2006; Morman & Floyd, 1998; Reis, Senchak, & Solomon, 1985; Reisman, 1990; Williams, 1985).

One can presume from this observation, that the majority of the psychology literature on men's friendships likely reflects heterosexual men's friendships in particular (and heterosexist bias), despite this context going unstated. Thus, for the remainder of the present writing, these studies will be described as referring to heterosexual men's friendships, though it is important to acknowledge that the accuracy of this description is unverifiable for reasons stated above. Effectively, the bulk of available studies tell us little about GBQ men's same-gender friendships. For several important reasons that will be discussed later, the literature on heterosexual men's friendships do not necessarily generalize to the lives of GBQ men, either.

The absence of this diversity in the literature, though a common complaint in the broader psychological research literature, is particularly important here for a few principal reasons. First, GBQ men in North America exist largely in social locations of marginalization. This marginalization is perpetuated by the omission of their experiences from formal research literature purporting to describe the lives of "men." Furthermore, the framing of this literature as reflecting all men

creates a heteromasculine research bias in addition to promoting broader social biases of this sort.

Secondly, masculine gender role socialization theoretically, and most likely, impacts the lives of GBQ men as well as heterosexual men (Connell, 2005; Nardi, 1992, 1999; Nardi & Sherrod, 1994). Gender role socialization refers to the processes by which individuals “learn gendered attitudes and behaviors from cultural values, norms, and ideologies about what it means to be men and women” (p. 7; Addis & Mahalik, 2003). It makes intuitive sense that such processes would shape the lives of both heterosexual and GBQ men, though the literature speaks primarily to its effects on the former. In a study with GBQ adolescents, Wilson et al. (2010) identified several normative aspects of traditional masculinity ideologies (e.g., men should not share feelings, men should engage in sex without intimacy, men should treat sex as a conquest, etc) that influenced their gender socialization. Normative masculinity ideologies have been observed to carry messages that are outright homophobic or disdainful of GBQ identities as well (Levant, 1996; Levant et al., 1992; Mahalik et al., 2003; Wilson et al., 2010). This suggests that GBQ men encounter more contradictions and identity threats in their development as men, and may be more likely to emerge with distinct forms of masculinity ideologies as a result.

Furthermore, from his interviews and surveys with 161 gay men, Nardi (1999) described friendships as a central narrative for gay men, providing the principal structures for support and security in otherwise oppressive environments. He identified qualities such as reciprocity, self-disclosure, and

mutual support that emerged as particularly valuable in the same-gender friendships of GBQ men. If it is true that masculine gender role socialization impacts heterosexual men's friendships by inhibiting closeness, intimacy and quality, then it becomes particularly important to understand if this occurs for GBQ men. Improving the quality of their friendships carries implications for developing therapeutic relationships with, enhancing the social support of, and generally improving the lives of GBQ men.

In his study of gay men's friendships, Nardi (1999) identified that gay men frequently reported having had sexual encounters with a close or best friend. Most gay men in this study, however, indicated that sexual relationships ceased once friendships were pursued. Nardi hypothesized that this is due to the influence of messages contained in hegemonic masculinities that encourages sexual pursuits without intimacy, and discourages conflation of the two. He found early support for this theory from his interviews with participants (Nardi, 1999). This finding suggests that sexual contact between gay men may actually facilitate intimacy and friendship for those who conform to traditional masculine gender role norms. That is, gay men who conform to the belief that men pursue sex without intimacy may have sexual encounters with unfamiliar men and later cease sexual contact as intimacy increases, in order to pursue friendships instead. In this scenario, casual sexual contact may serve as a gateway to friendships and facilitate these relationships where they may not otherwise have occurred. Such a process would reflect how masculine gender socialization is negotiated in the lives and relationships of gay men.

It has also been noted that better understanding and improvement of men's same-gender friendships would potentially benefit society more broadly. Many have observed that social privilege and power influence men's relationships (e.g., Connell, 2005; Nardi, 1992; Miller, 2003, 2004). Armengol-Carrera (2009) suggested that transforming men's friendships through promoting intimacy and love has the potential to foster greater egalitarianism and to reduce homophobia, sexism, racism, and other social and class hierarchies. Because GBQ men's friendships inherently exist in resistance to forms of social oppressions, they are well-positioned to challenge such norms. Facilitating this resistance would have the effect of supporting greater social justice for many.

In order to contribute to the literature on GBQ men's friendships, the present study will attempt to explore patterns of conformity to traditional masculine role norms and how this influences the quality of same-gender friendships. This study will utilize the Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) construct of mutuality as a measure of friendship qualities. Mutuality, in this model, is defined as the degree of bidirectional flow of thoughts, feelings, and activities between people in relationship (Jordan et al., 1991). Mutuality gives rise to the mutual empathy and empowerment fundamental to growth-fostering relationships (Jordan et al., 1991). Mutuality is particularly useful here because it encompasses qualities (e.g., reciprocity, empathy, and shared investment) identified as most salient and valuable in GBQ friendships. RCT also provides a coherent framework to account for both the process and impact of gender

socialization as well as the manner in which friendships benefit psychological well-being.

Statement of the Problem

To summarize, early exploratory studies suggest that GBQ men's same-gender friendships are meaningful and of central importance in their lives, yet little research has been conducted on this topic. A large body of research suggests that heterosexual men do not engage in their friendships as openly or intimately as women due to masculine gender role socialization processes, and that they tend to report both fewer and lower quality same-gender friendships as a result (reviewed in Fehr, 1996). Masculine gender role socialization is thought to impact the development of GBQ men as well (e.g., Connell, 2005; Nardi 1999), and some research evidence has supported this (Wilson et al., 2010). The influence of masculine gender role socialization in the lives of GBQ men has seldom been examined, and the ways in which traditional masculinity ideologies influence GBQ men's same-gender friendships remains untested. For instance, GBQ men in same-gender friendships may have a greater likelihood of encountering sexual attraction. Nardi (1999) has suggested that, for gay men, sexual behavior may at times actually serve to facilitate intimacy in friendships while negotiating the pressures of hegemonic masculinities.

Many researchers have identified a need for more studies of masculinity ideologies with non-heterosexual populations (e.g., Addis, Mansfield, and Syzdek, 2010; Levant, 1996; Mahalik et al., 2003; Smiler, 2006). Others have also identified

a need for further research exploration of how GBQ men's friendships are impacted by masculine gender roles (Connell, 1992, 2005; Nardi, 1992, 1999).

Given the need for greater understanding of GBQ masculinities and the importance of friendships in GBQ men's lives, the purpose of the present study is two-fold: to enhance understanding of conformity to traditional masculinity ideologies as they exist for GBQ identified men, and to examine what influence these ideologies have upon perceived mutuality in their same-gender friendships. In order to clarify the latter, this study will also seek to examine whether sexual behaviors between GBQ friends impact the relationship between conformity to masculinity ideologies and mutuality.

This study will first identify cluster patterns of conformity to traditional masculine gender role norms in a sample of GBQ men. These cluster patterns will then be used to predict mutuality in men's closest same-gender friendship. To account for the impact of sexual behavior as a strategy for negotiating masculinity and intimacy in GBQ friendships, this study will include items that measure this influence and potentially incorporate them into cluster patterns.

Chapter Two

Definitions

Understanding the gendered experiences of gay, bisexual, and queer (GBQ) men requires a particular definitional clarity before proceeding. Clarifying the dimensions of gender is a complex task for many reasons. Not the least of this is gender's central location at the point where paradigmatic confusion, controversy, and personal significance collide—everyone experiences gender in powerful and different ways. Teasing masculinity from this entanglement without reifying false dichotomies (i.e., masculine versus feminine) or perpetuating heteromascline assumptions (i.e., that masculinity is solely the purview of heterosexual men) becomes even more complicated.

First, *masculine* is frequently an ambiguously and inconsistently defined term, carrying general and specific connotations at both concrete and theoretical levels. In lay or popular culture usage, masculinity can broadly refer to all things associated with men, spanning consumer products, hobbies, attitudes, body types, and beyond. In medical literature, the masculine may refer solely to physiological features or qualities considered sex-specific to men. In sociological and psychological areas of study, however, masculinity is most often defined in terms of socially, rather than biologically, constructed characteristics associated with men. This social emphasis was not always the case for the social sciences, though.

Even the fact of an evolution toward a social understanding of gender adds new dimensions of complexity by suggesting that the features of masculinity are also historically and culturally delineated. This opens the definitional doorway to

a masculinity that varies depending on cultural identities, social locations, and the historic situation of the observer. In turn, it suggests the possibility of multiple, coexistent masculinities. As Connell (2005) asserted, “masculinity as an object of knowledge is always masculinity-in-relation” (p. 44). The result is that masculinity may look profoundly different for people of different geographic regions, upbringing, and historical periods; and may not always appear to be conceptually distinct from “femininity,” especially by contemporary western standards.

Thus, the process of operationalizing the variables of interest in the present study will include an attempt to clarify their dimensions by situating them in terms of their scientific, cultural, and historical contexts. The review will then cover the literature on men’s friendships, with particular attention given to the contexts of GBQ men’s experiences. The literature review will conclude with the presentation of Relational-Cultural Theory as a framework by which to understand men’s friendships, along with a brief discussion of the gender and social justice implications of utilizing this frame.

It is also useful to address, briefly, the complexities of sexual orientation and how they will be handled in this writing. Sexual orientation, as it is used here, is a category of identity rather than a representation of any particular sexual behaviors. Utilizing a person’s self-defined identity provides parsimony when contrasted against the complexities of inquiring about, and interpreting, specific sexual behaviors; eventually, the researcher must subjectively delineate behaviors and form categories of identity. Allowing participants to self-identify also acknowledges that there are social and political implications for the adoption of

such an identity in heteronormative cultures. That is, GBQ identities often exist in conflict with traditional masculine gender roles, so the manner in which a person self-identifies has particular bearing upon an examination of the impact of gender ideologies. Likewise, normative ideologies help to create and define the identities that people adopt, so utilizing individuals' own identifications may provide more accurate examination of these intersections. Finally, an argument could be made that interpreting sexual behaviors as reflecting sexual orientation is problematic in that it essentializes sexual identity (e.g., not everyone who identifies as a gay male has sexually engaged with other men and vice versa). There are implications for approaching sexual orientation as a category of identity as well (e.g., for reasons of cultural oppression, some may choose not to identify as GBQ). Likewise, identities do not exist in isolation and intersections of identities may differentially impact experiences of both masculinity and friendships. These considerations will be addressed in the limitations section of the final study report

Evolution of the Psychology of Masculinities

The term *masculinity* as it is used in this study refers to sets of ideological constructs, based on normative social messages regarding what it means to be a male (Mahalik et al., 2003). As previously mentioned, varying arrangements and saliencies of these messages arise across contexts, suggesting the existence of plural masculinities, a relatively recent perspective arising from gender role socialization paradigms (Smiler, 2004). As a result, conceptualizing masculinity becomes complex. It is helpful to place the idea of masculinity at a point in the

evolution of its scientific understanding and, in defining what the term means, also clarify what it does not.

Developments in sociology, social and clinical psychologies, anthropology, history, and sociopolitical movements have all had hands in the shaping the current state of the western science of masculinity. Though a comprehensive review of these factors is well beyond the scope of the present writing (and has already been attempted with impressive coverage and success in Connell's 2005 text), this paper will summarize some of those contributions in an effort to more clearly delineate the contours of psychology's understanding of masculinities. Situating the knowledge of masculinities in multiple contexts better clarifies the limits of the present study as well.

Early Theories. Psychology's scientific understanding of masculinity has its earliest beginnings within clinical psychology and the work of Sigmund Freud. Connell (2005) pointed out that although Freud's intention was not a formal theory of masculinity, his theory of psychosexual development is among the first to suggest that gender is a process to be negotiated rather than the sole product of nature. He positioned the Oedipus complex as the central mechanism by which men develop a mature sexuality and gender, which, as Horney (1932, cited in Connell, 2005) later pointed out, is defined largely by its tension with femininity. Ultimately, Freud not only created the first enduring framework for understanding masculinity, but he paved the way for future analysis of gender.

Alfred Adler worked closely with Freud, emerging from the same school and movement. Like Freud, he conceived of masculinity and femininity as

polarities within human development. However, he diverged from Freud's psychoanalytic theory by asserting that social forces also impact personality development, most notably around gender. Adler spoke of masculinity and femininity as though they were the immutable products of sex, but was among the first in psychology to formally acknowledge that femininity is devalued and frequently associated with weakness in comparison to masculinity (Connell, 2005). He used this understanding to develop the concept of "masculine protest," which describes individuals who, when confronted by a sense of weakness, respond with the over-assumption of masculine qualities (reviewed in Murdoch, 2004). From a historical perspective, masculine protest may also represent the first instance of a theory of gender in which the enactment of masculinity could be considered problematic.

After Adler's masculine protest and Karen Horney's reframing of the Oedipal complex, Carl Jung's archetypal theory of masculinity represented, perhaps, the next significant sea change in psychological science's attempts to explain masculinity. In his theory, Jung identified a duality between a masculine "persona" and a feminine "anima," with both acting as unconscious, transpersonal forces that shape the selves we develop (Connell, 2005). His theory emerged, in part, to account for the presence of supposed feminine characteristics in men and did so by positioning masculinity and femininity as opposing forces seeking balance. The result was a masculinity based on universally stable qualities believed to have emerged with humanity's advent and, like Freud's theory, largely irrelative to sociocultural influence. Jung's theory of masculinity is similarly

defined by its dichotomous relation to femininity, a theme that would continue to pervade psychological research for the greater part of the 20th century.

Thus as clinical psychology cleared the path to the examination of masculinity, it also powerfully shaped the early course of the science. Though further developments in psychoanalytic theory would deepen the complexity of conceptualized gender processes and lay the groundwork for later gender identity theories, important limitations resulted from the rift between Adler and Freud. That is, psychoanalytical theories would avoid reconciling the effects of sociocultural influences on gender development for many decades, an absence that would be filled by social roles theories.

Spurred by reactions to women's emancipation movements, empirical research around the turn of the 20th century led to an emphasis on the supposed "naturally occurring" differences between the sexes, despite overall meager findings for such differences (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Connell, 2005). The assumptions of exclusivity and bipolarity between the sexes were most prominently called into question by the androgyny movements in gender research (Smiler, 2004). Theorists at that time shifted the emphasis from a single gender dimension, with male and female at opposing ends, to separate continua for masculinity and femininity (e.g., Bem, 1974; Spence & Helmreich, 1978). However, these perspectives still presented gender as stereotypical groupings of socially desirable personality traits inherent to the individual (Smiler, 2004). Thus, androgyny theories remained essentialist, positioning masculinity as fundamentally separate from social influence.

Gender Role Socialization Paradigms. Eventually these developments would dove-tail with the advances in theory arising from the Women's and Gay Liberation movements, and with social psychology trends toward psychological role theories (Connell, 2005; Smiler, 2004). The results would provide a more complex explanation for sex-typed phenomena: the gender role. From this perspective, gender becomes the enactment of socially prescribed behaviors, attitudes, and expectations regarding what it means to be a man or a woman (e.g., Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Levant, 1996; Mahalik et al., 2003; Smiler, 2004, 2006). This innovation in masculinity theory is striking because it stands in contradiction to the biological essentialism of past theories. Rather than masculinity representing the natural product of biological sex, or traits associated with healthy male development, it became something external to the individual, an expectation to be satisfied, and the product of sociocultural influences. Rather than diametric opposites, masculinity is only partially opposed to femininity and only because it is socially defined in this way (Smiler, 2004, 2006).

Gender Role Conflict Theories. The two most prominent psychological approaches within masculine gender role socialization paradigms are male role conflict and masculinity ideology (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). Of the former, Pleck proposed the male sex role strain theory, which asserted that gender roles embody some contradictory, dysfunctional elements and that conformity to these elements created difficulty and distress (Levant, 2011; O'Neil, 2008; Smiler, 2004). This theory, in particular, became the basis for some of the most popular masculinity-related measures used today. The development of measures operationalizing

Gender Role Conflict (GRC) theory, which emerged from sex role strain theory, resulted in a large body of literature demonstrating relationships between gender role conflict and a host of ills (e.g., depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, hopelessness, suicidality, interpersonal difficulties; O'Neil, 2008). Though role conflict theories have been instrumental in opening critical dialogues regarding the effects and function of masculinity, they have also received important criticisms. Particularly, others have pointed out that, despite allowing for some variation within individual development, gender role conflict theories rely on unitary constructions of masculinity (Levant, 1996, 2011; Levant et al., 1992; Smiler, 2004). That is, they hold dominant North American gender stereotypes as definitive and generalizable, thus limiting interpretation to a singular masculinity. Role conflict theories also inherently assume that the stress of masculine gender role socialization is consistently problematic across contexts. As researchers have pointed out, conforming to traditionally masculine role norms can be adaptive in certain situations (Mahalik et al., 2003).

Gender Role Ideology Theories. Masculinity ideologies approaches have sought to resolve these issues by parsing out specific, socially-originating, normative masculine gender role features and measuring individual endorsement of (e.g., Levant et al. 1992; Levant, 1996, 2011), or ideological conformity to (e.g., Mahalik et al., 2003), those qualities. From this framework, it is possible for multiple masculinities to emerge and to more fully illuminate variations across sociocultural points of difference. Though Mahalik et al. (2003), pointed out that dominant social groups powerfully shape gender role expectations and norms,

“group and individual factors... filter an individual’s experience of gender role norms” (p. 4), creating variations on these themes. Gender role ideology constructs also improved the clarity of examination by emphasizing measurement of conformity to masculinity ideology that is not necessarily viewed through a lens of distress and that has demonstrated divergent validity from measurement of personality traits (e.g., instrumental or expressive; Parent et al., 2011).

Present Study’s Framework. The above review of the science of masculinity brings us to the paradigm to be used in the present study. To reiterate, masculinity is defined in the gender role socialization paradigm as a gender ideology, internalized through gender role socialization processes and adopted in varying forms based on individual and group differences (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Levant, 2011). Masculinity ideologies as viewed through the lens of role socialization paradigms are primarily shaped by the normative messages arising from dominant cultures in North America (e.g., restrictive emotionality, homophobia, avoidance of femininity, toughness, achievement/status, aggression, self-reliance, and nonrelational sexual promiscuity; Levant, 2011; Levant et al., 1992; Levant & Richmond, 2007; Mahalik et al., 2003; Pleck, 1995; Smiler, 2006). Because normative messages about masculinity can be interpreted differently, multiple, coincident forms of masculinity ideology are possible and even expected (Mahalik et al., 2003).

From this perspective, the locus of masculinities moves to a point more external to the individual, emphasizing its socially constructed nature rather than reifying essentialist interpretations of gender differences. Many scholars have

urged the importance of avoiding the pitfalls of essentialist constructions of masculinity (e.g., Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Addis, Syzdek, & Mansfield, 2010; Connell, 2005; O'Neil, 2010; Smiler, 2004, 2006). Smiler (2006) noted that masculinity ideology paradigms are not intended to compare the sexes, thus making them less bound to gender bipolarity assumptions that promote essentialist interpretations.

Using the masculinity ideology framework is also beneficial in that there is a growing body of research in place that has examined correlates of conformity to, and endorsement of, masculinity ideologies. For example, Levant and Richmond's (2007) review of studies examining endorsement of traditional masculinity ideology found that endorsement was significantly, positively correlated with alexithymia; fear of intimacy; lower relationship satisfaction in heterosexual couples; and negative attitudes toward help-seeking, racial diversity, and women's equality. Other studies measuring conformity to normative masculinity ideologies have identified significant, similarly maladaptive, correlates: higher health-risk behaviors, substance abuse, relationship dissatisfaction, and negative attitudes toward help-seeking (Parent & Moradi, 2009).

Very few studies overall have examined the influences of masculinity ideologies on gay, bisexual, or queer identifying men. In a study specifically sampling gay men, Simonsen, Blazina, and Watkins (2000) found significant, positive correlations between gender role conflict and anger, anxiety, and depression, and fewer positive attitudes toward seeking psychological help. In a qualitative study of gay, bisexual, and questioning adolescents, Wilson et al. (2010)

found the adolescents experienced significant pressure to conform to many of the messages of traditional North American masculinity ideologies. Kimmel & Mahalik (2005) found that conformity to masculine role norms in gay men was significantly associated with body ideal distress.

Levant and Richmond's (2007) review of research using measures of traditional masculinity ideology endorsement reported findings from only three such studies with gay men. In one study, gay men significantly endorsed traditional male role norms, though significantly less so than heterosexual men (Massoth, Broderick, Festa, & Montello, 1996, cited in Levant & Richmond, 2007). The other two studies produced contradictory findings regarding the correlation between endorsement of male role norms and gay males' experiences of social support and intimacy, one finding significant correlation and the other not (Campbell, 2000, and Grant, 2002, cited in Levant & Richmond, 2007).

In short, there is a need for more research on masculinity ideologies with GBQ men. The need for greater masculinities research with a broader diversity of populations, including diverse sexual orientations, is an oft-cited imperative in the literature (e.g., Addis, Mansfield, & Syzdek, 2010; Levant & Richmond, 2007; Wilson et al., 2010). The scarce existing studies that have examined these issues provide little insight into, or even confusion regarding, the relational lives of GBQ men. As Connell (2005) pointed out, gay men develop ideologies around masculinity and sexuality, often with overlapping and contradictory results. Because opposition to homosexual behavior so frequently defines masculinity, GBQ men are subject to particular difficulties in negotiating identity processes.

Furthermore, as reviewed previously, the literature on masculinity ideology suggests that even for heterosexual men, there are a host of ills significantly associated with masculine conformity. This further supports the importance of understanding how GBQ men experience contemporary masculinities and to what extent they experience the associated risk factors. Enhancing this area of study has important implications toward the provision of psychotherapy and social justice advocacy with GBQ men.

Men's Friendships

To understand the nature and qualities of GBQ men's friendships, it is critical to first recognize the particular salience of friendships in their lives. To wit, there are distinct meanings and sociopolitical contexts operating on these relationships, which suggest that GBQ friendships are marked by specific differences from those of heterosexual men. These distinctions sometimes emerge as protective factors, as will be described below, that appear to facilitate particularly strong social bonds (Nardi, 1999). Thus, to assume equivalence between heterosexual men's friendships and those of GBQ men is to enact heteromascuine bias in addition to faulty science. If the paucity of research specifically examining GBQ men's friendships perhaps further reflects such bias, then it is important to review what the literature has suggested about heterosexual men's same-gender friendships and then to clarify what, if anything, the literature has specifically indicated about friendships between GBQ men.

It is also important to note that friendships, as discussed here, are not limited to those between two GBQ men. Rather, GBQ men's friendships in this

writing refers to situations in which a GBQ man is in a friendship with another man, who may or may not identify as GBQ himself. Although Nardi (1999) found that most gay men reported having best friends who also identify as gay, it is feasible that this would not always be the case. However, it is likely that, even in friendships between heterosexual men and GBQ men, a comparison of qualities with those found in friendships between two heterosexual men would produce differences, meriting inclusion.

Heterosexual Men's Friendships. A substantial body of literature has developed identifying significant differences between heterosexual men's and women's same-gender friendships. Specifically, research has suggested that, when compared to women's same-gender friendships, men's demonstrate persistent, notable differences: men's friendships appear to be less intimate, personally self-disclosing, physically affectionate, other-enhancing, meaningful, and close, and are more oriented toward shared activity than personal conversation (Fehr, 1996; Nardi, 1999). The heterosexual men in these reviews reported spending overall less time and experiencing less satisfaction with same-gender friends than did women.

Research findings are not entirely consistent regarding the aforementioned conclusions, so the question of whether or not men's same-gender friendships are actually less intimate drew considerable attention and controversy (Fehr, 1996, 2004). In addressing the controversy, Fehr (1996) summarized the different explanations for these findings as follows: (a) men are as intimate as women, but only in their closest friendships; (b) men are as intimate as women, but they

dislike the word; (c) men appear less intimate than women because it is defined in a feminine way; (d) men are less intimate no matter the definition; (e) although men define intimacy in the same way, they have different thresholds for it than women; (f) men have and prefer less intimacy; and (g) men are capable of being as intimate as women, but choose not to be. Fehr reported that inconsistencies exist in the evidence for each of these explanations and that interpretation of sex differences necessarily simplifies complex matters. Nevertheless, the findings that men experience diminished quality in their same-gender friendships are “robust and widely documented” (p. 63, Bank & Hansford, 2000), and, in her evaluation of the possible explanations for these differences, Fehr (1996) provided a few conclusions:

[O]verall, the evidence seems to suggest that men’s friendships are less intimate than women’s. It is not the case that men are reserving intimacy only for their closest friends. It is also not the case that men simply are reluctant to use the word. Nor is it a matter of being evaluated by the wrong (i.e., feminine) metric or having a different threshold. Instead, it appears that men are less intimate than women in their friendships because they choose to be, even though they may not particularly like it. (p. 141)

This interpretation of the literature remains the most widely accepted (Fehr, 2004).

Fehr (1996, 2004) noted that intimacy is not the only measure of quality within heterosexual men’s friendships. Yet, in a study of dimensions of relationship quality, Hassebrauck and Fehr (2002) found that, among dimensions

of intimacy, independence, agreement, and sexuality, intimacy was the strongest, most consistent predictor of relationship satisfaction.

The conclusion that men desire intimacy and value it in friendships but choose to have less still begs the question of why this would be so. Answering this in part, Wright (1982, 1991) made the helpful distinction that it is not sex, per se, that seems to determine the gender differences in friendships, but the attenuating variables of sex, particularly “sex role orientation” (now commonly described in terms of “gender roles,” Smiler, 2006). Similarly, Addis and Mahalik (2003) have cautioned that reliance on a sex differences framework for understanding men’s experiences risks reifying essentialist notions of gender and perpetuating stereotypes that serve to limit both men and women. They added that “sex differences studies are ill-equipped to account for within-group or within-person variability” (p. 6). To better explain the observed differences between men and women, they proposed instead that a role socialization paradigm offers greater explanatory power. Supporting this hypothesis, measures of masculine gender role socialization and intimacy have overwhelmingly found negative correlations between the two (e.g., Bank & Hansford, 2000; Levant, 2007; O’Neil, 2008). In short, this suggests that inhibited friendship qualities are not the result of essential aspects of being male; rather it is masculine gender role socialization processes that appear to be culprit.

GBQ Men’s Friendships. Given that friendships are culturally valued in North American cultures and that GBQ men are exposed to many of the same masculine gender role socialization processes (Wilson et al., 2010), it is likely that

some friendship pattern similarities exist between those of GBQ and heterosexual men. However, as Nardi and Sherrod (1994) asserted, there are powerful theoretical problems with generalizing the studied friendship patterns of heterosexual populations to those of gay men and lesbians. These problems, they described, arise from overlooking the potential for different gender role socialization processes; the effects of identification with gay subculture; and the impact of political, social, and familial forces on interpersonal relationships (Nardi & Sherrod, 1994). Because of these factors, the friendships of GBQ men are likely to have distinct characteristics as well.

As previously mentioned, research specifically addressing GBQ men's friendships is scarce. The most recent and ambitious attempt comes from a mixed methods study by Nardi (1999), though even this work contained important limitations: notably that the sample largely consisted of middle class, white, gay-identifying men with a median age of 40 years-old. Nevertheless, his study's findings reflect the nearest approximation of the current state of the science on GBQ men's friendships. It is important to note that Nardi's study specifically addressed gay men, in contrast with the present study, which will recruit gay, bisexual, and queer identifying men. Thus, care will be taken when reporting Nardi's findings to refer to gay men specifically, though there are implications for the broader spectrum of GBQ men. Arguably, the findings of Nardi's (1999) study regarding gay men may also have application for those identifying as bisexual and queer. Connell (2005) noted that, due in part to the influence of masculinities, society has allowed very little space for men to identify as bisexual. He noted that

often men feel compelled to identify as gay if any same-sex attraction is experienced, though bisexual may be a more conceptually precise label. Likewise, the use of the term *queer* as a category of sexual orientation is a relatively recent phenomenon (Hodges, 2008; Nardi, 1999) and less likely to have been endorsed by members of Nardi's sample, though the experiences of queer men may be similar to those of gay men. In any case, each of these identities exists in resistance to heteronormative North American culture, so similarities are expected.

Nardi (1999) noted some demographic trends in gay men's casual, close, and best friendships. Particularly, he found that the majority of surveyed gay men (i.e., approximately 80% of 161 survey respondents) reported having best friends who identified as gay, and that, across friendship levels, the majority of their friendships were with men. In addition, he found that gay men tended to report having best friends who were similar in many ways, including age, race, income, education, partnered status, report of past marriages, and living in rural areas. This high level of homophily is consistent with the broader research on friendships, suggesting that people tend to develop closer friendships with others across similarities rather than compatibilities (reviewed in Fehr, 1996).

Except for those reporting very few (i.e., less than 5 casual and 3 close) friends, the majority of gay men reported being satisfied with the number of friendships, and demonstrated a significant positive correlation between satisfaction and closeness of friendships (i.e., best friends were more satisfying than close or casual friends). Gay men reported a median of 6 best friends and 20 close friends in Nardi's study, numbers higher than those reported in past surveys

of heterosexual men's friendships (who tended to average 3 to 5 close friendships; Bell, 1981). The average quantities and closeness of friendships reported by gay men in Nardi's study were consistent overall with past research (e.g., Bell & Weinberg, 1978; cited in Nardi, 1999). Of those surveyed, having fewer (or no) best friends was correlated with identifying as single, living in rural areas, having less college education, and older age. Identifying as being in a committed romantic relationship tended to decrease the number of friends as well.

In Nardi's (1999) qualitative interviews, he found that gay men tended to use words such as "sharing, trust, honesty, intimacy, mutuality, love, respect, similarity, and caring" (p. 130) to define their friendships and reported that these were similar to descriptions culled by the broader literature on heterosexual friendships. Both Nardi (1999) and Connell (2005) have noted that reciprocity, mutual sharing, providing of support, availability, and earning of trust are highly emphasized in GBQ friendships. Nardi also found that personal disclosures were viewed as critical dimensions of friendships for gay men. In summarizing these descriptions, Nardi provided the following interpretation:

Overall, gay men defined friendship as a relationship with someone they both talked to and did things with; with whom they shared activities and emotions; who returned favors, and with whom they disclosed hopes. This all took place within the context of having companionship with those who could accept them for who they were..." (p. 132)

Nardi also observed, however, that descriptions of sex and sexual attraction frequently arose in gay men's definitions of friendship, highlighting another important possible dimension.

The majority of participants (i.e., 80%) in Nardi's (1999) study reported that they had experienced some past sexual attraction to their best gay male friend. Half reported current sexual attraction with the same person. Most of the surveyed gay men reported attraction and sexual contact with some of the people who became casual, close, and best friends, though less than one-third of the men surveyed reported ongoing sexual contact with people established as friends, even if sexual contact had occurred prior to friendship. Sixty percent indicated having had past sexual contact with their best gay male friend, though, again, that number dropped (i.e., to 20%) regarding those with ongoing sexual contact with this same friend. These findings should also be contrasted with the fact that very few of these men reported having had sexual encounters with many or most of either their casual or close (as opposed to best) friends.

These results begin to suggest a recurring narrative. As Nardi (1999) has pointed out, it appears that many gay men initiate relationships via sexual attraction and encounter, though most of these are soon relegated to the domains of friendship with sexual contact then ceased. Although many of these men ascribed definitional distinctions between lovers and friends, or held personal sanctions against sexual contact with friends, the fact that most experienced sexual contact with those who would later become a best gay male friend suggests a process is at work. Some have suggested this can best be understood as an

intersection of masculinities and sexual orientation (Nardi, 1999; Connell, 1992, 2005; Wilson, et al., 2010). That is, GBQ men may simultaneously reiterate hegemonic masculine norms by engaging in sex without love/intimacy, and subvert hegemonic masculinity by doing so with other men. As Wilson et al. (2010) found, even GBQ and questioning adolescent boys identified strong messages that men should be highly sexualized, unemotional and unattached in sexual relationships, and adopt a conquest approach to sexual relationships. It is not difficult to anticipate how this masculinity ideology could translate into tendencies for some GBQ men to engage sexually with other men in the early stages of relationship, and then remove the sexual dimension once intimacy and friendship is desired.

Understanding the friendships of GBQ men also hold particular importance due to sociopolitical climates. Nardi (1982) found that, when compared to those of heterosexual men and women, friendships for gay men and lesbians are often experienced as more imperative. He suggested this arises from the need to cope with the negative impacts of living in predominantly heterosexually-defined contexts, and experiencing the antagonism of systems of work, legal entitlements, and family tradition as they operate upon the lives of gay men and lesbians. Exemplifying this, Fehr (1996) reported that workplace and neighborhoods are generally two of the most common focal points for the development of friendships. However, findings suggest that gay men are far less likely to develop close or best friends in workplace settings, due in part to fears concerning repercussions from disclosure of sexual identity and the sparse legal protections against sexual

orientation discrimination (Nardi, 1999). As Connell (2005) observed, for gay men who experience pressure to withhold their sexual identities, friendships offer “freedom and pleasure outside the severe constraints of the other departments” (p. 153) of life.

It is perhaps for this reason more than others that gay men’s friendships are often regarded as families of choice, constituted by powerful bonds formed in resistance to cultural oppressions and, at times, in lieu of meaningful connection to biologically-related family (Nardi, 1999). Although there are other implications to this framework—for instance, Nardi has noted that use of kinship terminology to describe friendships varies across cultural identities and has been criticized as reifying hegemonic heterosexuality—it powerfully underscores the sense of permanence and commitment invoked in these relationships. Likewise, the family metaphor helps to explain the importance of mutuality and reciprocity in the friendships of GBQ men. How else could families containing such difference remain secure than through the mutual sharing, investing, and opening of themselves to one another?

Thus, it appears that friendships occupy a central, fundamental location in the lives of GBQ men. Nardi (1999) has suggested that gay men’s friendships also carry broader implications:

For gay men, friendship has the potential in this postmodern society of providing multiple narratives for the social reproduction—and not simply the social construction—of gay selves and of political communities in which hegemonic masculinity and gay masculinity blend to produce a new

gendered order characterized by new relations of masculinities. Friendship is a personal process as well as a social one, and it's at this intersection where the self and community are reproduced among gay men, that the power of friendship can be palpably experienced. (p. 7)

From this vantage, GBQ men's friendships are an important aspect of their generative processes, at a range of levels from the individual to the societal, the enactment of which bears potential to impact the nature of social gender construction, relations, and power structures.

In sum, friendships are important in the lives of gay men and tend to occur most often with other gay-identifying men. Although some similarities appear to exist between heterosexual and GBQ men's same-gender friendships, shared experiences of cultural oppressions and the likelihood of encountering sexual attraction, create particular characteristics for the latter. Some empirical evidence has emerged supporting theoretical assumptions that traditional masculinity ideologies have influence upon the friendships of GBQ men. The findings that sexual behaviors between GBQ male friends tend to occur in the early, pre-friendship stages and tend to influence whether or not one is considered friend, lover, or acquaintance would seem to support such an influence. Thus, understanding the factors that enhance and/or inhibit GBQ men's friendships may provide important opportunities to better support them, and carry implications for promoting greater individual and societal well-being.

Relational-Cultural Theory

As noted in the literature review above, patterns of diminished intimacy, closeness, support, and other indicators of quality are the best interpretations of the research on heterosexual men's same-gender friendships (Bank & Hansford, 2000; Fehr, 1996, 2004). Further, masculine gender role socialization has been identified as a significant and probable contributor to these relationships (e.g., Bank & Hansford, 2000; Fehr, 1996; Addis & Mahalik, 2003). Whether this is actually problematic for men gave rise to initial controversy over these findings, though most have since concluded that the interpretations of problems were valid (e.g., Bank & Hansford, 2000; Fehr, 1996, 2004). Whether these patterns exist for GBQ men, and whether masculine gender role socialization processes could be problematic in similar ways as found in heterosexual men, is still unclear (Connell, 1992; Nardi & Sherrod, 1994). Examining particular qualities of GBQ friendships and how they are influenced by masculinity ideologies would help to clarify what similarities and differences exist. Mutual support, personal disclosures, and reciprocity have been identified as particularly important qualities in gay men's friendships (Connell, 2005; Nardi, 1999). Therefore, it becomes important to measure aspects of friendships that also encompass these qualities in order to understand how masculine gender role socialization processes impact GBQ men's same-gender friendships.

Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) offers a constructive framework in all of these regards. RCT proposes that individual identity, growth, and well-being arise from, and within, meaningful connection to others (Jordan & Hartling, 2006). This is a relational theory, contrasted against prevailing theories of the development of

self that assert the essential importance of individuation and independence in healthy growth (Jordan et al., 1991; Miller, 1986; Genero et al., 1992). Instead, RCT is rooted in the assumption that relationships are central to human development, that people naturally move toward greater connection in relationships, and that suffering comes from being denied authentic connection (Genero et al., 1992; Miller, 1986; Miller & Stiver, 1997).

This theoretical structure arose from research with, and observations of, the lives of women who identified that their psychological health and growth seemed to occur as a function of their relationships with other individuals, groups, society, and themselves (Jordan et al., 1991). This framework has since been theoretically extended to apply to the lives of men (e.g., Bergman, 1996; Jordan & Hartling, 2006) and research with men utilizing RCT measures has followed (e.g., Frey, Beesley, & Newman, 2005; Frey, Beesley, & Miller, 2006; Sanftner, Ryan, & Pierce, 2009). To elaborate, Miller (2008) has explained that, from an RCT framework, people develop *relational images*, or constructs that carry the meaning, values, and expectations we hold for our relationships. If certain ways of engaging in important relationships are met with recurring outcomes, we learn to expect that outcome from others, which creates a relational image. Relational images can be positive/affirming/growth-enhancing (e.g., recognizing that inquiring about others' feelings makes them feel valued and leads to greater connection and meaning in relationships) or negative/devaluing/growth-inhibiting (e.g., having experiences in which inquiring about the feelings of an important person is received as intrusive, leading to feelings of rejection,

disconnection, and withdrawal from relationships). Relational images can foster greater connection or disconnection, and shape fears and hopes about future connections. Miller (2008; adopting the term from Collins, 2000) also described how societal messages about people of particular groups can create powerful *controlling images* that influence and shape expectations for relationships (e.g. a belief that women are more emotionally competent than men may inhibit women from engaging men about affective experiences due to diminished expectations, or men from engaging women about affective experiences due to insecurity and lack of experience).

If relational images or controlling images carry particularly discouraging expectations about connection in relationships (e.g. a belief that anytime one is honest about their feelings, she/he will face rejection), people may develop other methods of maintaining relationships (i.e., “strategies of disconnection”; p. 3, Miller, 2008) that are inauthentic and do not foster growth and well-being, but serve to keep another person invested in the relationship and maintain the illusion of healthy connection (e.g., frequently engaging in relationships with others by asking for help even when help is not needed or desired; Jordan & Hartling, 2006). Frequent experiences with restrictive controlling images and relational images lead to strategies of disconnection and what RCT calls the “Central Relational Paradox” (p. 3, Miller, 2008) the belief that one must keep authentic parts of herself/himself out of relationships in order to maintain some sense of connection despite a lack of full, authentic participation. Though strategies of disconnection may also operate at times as methods for psychological survival, the result of these

strategies and the Central Relational Paradox is often a sense of isolation and of not being “known,” fear of connection, and psychological distress (Miller, 2008). Conversely, experiences of mutuality in relationships are thought to counter restrictive controlling images, reshape negative relational images, and reduce the need for strategies of disconnection (Miller, 2008).

More specifically, and bearing upon the purposes of the present study, RCT conceptualizes that healthy relationships result from *mutuality*, which gives rise to psychological well-being (Jordan et al., 1991; Jordan & Hartling, 2006; Miller, 1986).

The theorized nature of mutuality is more complex than this might imply. Mutuality is not intended to reflect the more common *quid pro quo* social exchanges that typically define mutuality (Jordan et al., 1991). Rather, RCT conceptualizes mutuality as the degree of bidirectional flow of thoughts, feelings, and activity between people in a relationship that produces growth and satisfaction (Genero et al., 1992). Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, and Surrey (1991) further described mutuality as mutual intersubjectivity, or an empathic holding of another’s experience, and an open willingness to reveal oneself while valuing both the sameness and difference of each other’s experiences within the relationship. This process is characterized by respect, investment, and openness to influence (Jordan et al., 1991). From this, Miller (1988, cited in Genero et al., 1992) clarified 6 theoretical dimensions of mutuality: empathy, engagement, authenticity, zest, diversity, and empowerment.

These 6 dimensions were operationalized in a measure developed by Genero, Miller, Surrey, and Baldwin (1992), and used to demonstrate associations between mutuality and aspects of well-being. For instance, studies have since found mutuality to be negatively correlated with depression (Genero et al., 1992; Sperberg & Stabb, 1998), anger suppression (Sperberg & Stabb, 1998), and eating disorder symptoms and behaviors (Sanftner, Tantillo, & Seidlitz, 2004). Gerlock (2001) found that, among a sample of male batterers, mutuality was positively correlated with completion of domestic violence rehabilitation programs.

To bring RCT, and mutuality in particular, into the context of the present study, it is helpful to conceptualize how masculinity ideologies fit within the RCT model and potentially impact mutuality in GBQ men's same-gender friendships. Within the RCT framework, masculinity ideologies function as controlling images operating to create pre- and proscriptions for performances of masculinity. Because the messages embedded in traditional masculinity ideologies are often associated with inhibited intimacy, openness, and self-disclosure, i.e., qualities fundamental to mutuality, it is likely that men who conform to the controlling images of traditional masculinity ideologies would experience the Central Relational Paradox. This conceptualization suggests that men would withhold the fullness of their experiences, particularly those experiences in violation of masculinity ideologies, from important relationships due to fears of rejection and unworthiness. This withholding of authentic experience would likely diminish men's willingness to fully engage in mutual relationships and, if further reinforced

by continuing negative relational interactions, result in the development of pervasive, restrictive relational images over time.

For example, orientations toward power (e.g., dominance, achievement, status, power over women) are frequently identified as aspects of traditional masculinity ideologies (e.g. Levant et al., 1992; Levant & Richmond, 2007; Mahalik et al., 2003; Smiler, 2004, 2006). This orientation toward power may result in competition and/or power struggles with friends, which consequently inhibits connection, given that mutual empowerment is a necessary component of mutuality. Thus, the oft-cited findings that heterosexual men engage in side-by-side, instrumental, and shared activity forms of relating to one another (e.g. Bank & Hansford, 2000; Fehr, 1996) may actually reflect strategies of disconnection in friendships with other men. That is, it may be that men conforming to norms of achievement and power tend to engage in competitive activities or shared projects because this allows them to experience some form of connection without the risk of violating societal controlling images, or the resulting restrictive relational images. To engage with greater authenticity and openness would necessarily diminish power orientation and seem to risk the loss of the relationship.

RCT offers a useful lens through which to examine the qualities of GBQ men's friendships and explore the impact of intersecting identities on these qualities. For GBQ men, the controlling images of traditional masculinity ideologies likely intersect with controlling images regarding same-gender sexual orientations, causing different relational images to emerge (e.g., GBQ men who internalize traditional masculinity's emphasis on avoiding femininity may over-

emphasize other traditionally masculine qualities such as muscularity and limit social relations with other GBQ men to those who present themselves similarly). Understanding how GBQ men's conformity to aspects of traditional masculinity ideology impacts the mutuality in their friendships is an important consideration toward enhancing their ability to receive and provide social support. An RCT framework enhances this understanding by theorizing how mutuality functions in men's friendships and how conforming to masculinity ideologies could impact friendship quality, which then suggests possible modes of intervention.

Chapter Three

Methods

Participants. Participants will be men who identify as gay, bisexual, queer, or “other (non-heterosexually identifying)” and are between the ages of 18 and 64 in order to sample across different age groups. In recent masculinities literature, a frequently noted limitation has been raised concerning the excess of studies utilizing college student populations (Addis, Mansfield, & Syzdek, 2010). Due to the current paucity of research on GBQ men’s friendships, it is perhaps unwise to restrict sampling contexts, risk diminished sample variance, and thus lessen the generalizability. Therefore, the present study will recruit participants by publishing survey web links both inside and outside (e.g., local music stores, physician’s offices, grocery stores) college settings. Likewise, recent masculinities publications have promoted greater examination of male within-group differences in future research, particularly diverse populations (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Addis, Mansfield, & Syzdek, 2010; Connell, 2005; Smiler, 2004, 2006). Thus this study attempts to expand the masculinities literature base on male within-group differences by examining a marginalized group of men, GBQ men, across wide age ranges and in various settings. Because the present study will utilize a web-based survey and target a population that can be difficult to reach, snowball sampling will also be encouraged by asking respondents to share the survey link with 3 of their friends.

With regard to sample size, Demitriadou, Dolnicar, and Weingessel (2002) noted that there are no particular rules of thumb for determining minimum sample

size for cluster analysis. Instead, Borgen and Barnett (1987) assert that one of the most important considerations with cluster analysis is whether the rationale fits the procedure and that follow-up analyses are conducted to test the resulting structure. For a multiple regression procedure that will utilize clusters determined by the results of the study, the calculation of necessary sample size becomes problematic. Sampling a population that can be difficult to access also confounds this determination. The present study intends to sample at least 125-150 GBQ participants in order to ensure sufficient power to examine several variables as predictors. This range is also comparable to that of similar studies of men with marginalized sexual orientations (e.g., Nardi, 1999).

Instruments

The Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI; Mahalik et al., 2003) and the Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire (MPDQ; Genero et al., 1992) will be administered to participants. A Friendship Information form (see Appendix C) will be used to gather information regarding a best friendship including sexual behavior that may have occurred within it. This approach to gathering sexual behavior information has been utilized in previous studies (see Nardi & Sherrod, 1994). A demographic information form (see Appendix D) will also be administered to participants in this study.

Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire (MPDQ; Genero, Miller, Surrey, & Baldwin, 1992). Genero et al. (1992) developed a measure of mutuality from the RCT perspective, called the Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire (MPDQ; Appendix A). The MPDQ is a 22-item, self-report rating

scale inventory measuring perceived mutuality in close relationships along 6 conceptual dimensions: empathy, engagement, authenticity, zest, diversity, and empowerment (Genero et al., 1992). On the MPDQ, participants rate a relationship with a close friend from his own perspective and the perspective of the other person. Items are grouped by two overarching frames, one that asks “When we are talking about things that matter to me, my friend is likely to...” and another that asks “When we are talking about things that matter to my friend, I am likely to...” Participants then rate various characteristics for each (e.g., how much either member of the relationship shows an interest, picks up on feelings, respects the other’s point of view) on a 10-point Likert scale. The MPDQ requires a total of 44 ratings (total score range = 44 – 440) with high scores indicating greater mutuality within the relationship.

Genero et al. (1992) found coefficient alphas for the MPDQ ranging from .87 to .93 across and between genders in a sample of college students and community health center patrons. In this validation study of the MPDQ, mutuality was significantly correlated with typical measures of relationship quality: adequacy of social support, relationship satisfaction, and cohesion.

Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI; Mahalik et al., 2003). Mahalik et al. (2003), developed the CMNI as a 94-item, self-report inventory measuring attitudes, behaviors, and cognitions reflecting both conformity and nonconformity to 11 normative masculine messages: Winning, Emotional Control, Risk-Taking, Violence, Power Over Women, Dominance, Playboy, Self-Reliance, Primacy of Work, Disdain for Homosexuals, and Pursuit of

Status (see Appendix B). Items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale (total score range = 94 – 376) where higher scores indicate greater conformity to traditional masculine ideologies. Items include, for example, “It is best to keep your emotions hidden” (Emotional Control Subscale) and “I hate asking for help” (Self-Reliance Subscale). The CMNI pilot study produced a coefficient alpha of .94 for the total CMNI score and subscale alphas ranging from .72 (Pursuit of Status) to .91 (Emotional Control) in a sample of college undergraduate males (Mahalik, et al., 2003). Furthermore, this study demonstrated the validity of the CMNI by producing (a) differential validity between men and women, and between high and low risk-taking men; (b) convergent validity with other measures of masculinity (i.e., the Brannon Masculinity Scale, Gender Role Conflict Scale, and Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale); and (c) significant subscale correlations with measures traditionally correlated with masculinity (e.g., psychological distress, social dominance, and desire to be more muscular). Further studies have since confirmed the factor structure (Parent & Moradi, 2009) and provided support for discriminant validity between the CMNI and measures of personality traits (Parent et al., 2011).

Procedures

Data will be collected via an online survey (i.e., Qualtrics) that will be established and maintained by this author. Once the survey is prepared and online, a recruitment email will be sent to men who meet the inclusion criteria as well as to professional listservs with membership who are likely to meet the criteria or who serve individuals who would. Additionally, flyers advertising the

survey link will be placed in businesses and public bulletin spaces. Men who choose to participate will first be taken to an informed consent page where they will be given the opportunity to either opt in or out of the study. Those who choose to participate will complete the demographics page, Friendship Information form, MPDQ, and CMNI (in respective order) that will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. A link to exit the survey will be provided on each page to allow participants to withdraw participation at any time. Participants who complete the surveys will be given the opportunity to enter a drawing for one of three \$50 gift cards. To maintain confidentiality, drawing entrants will only be asked to provide an email address that will be stored in a separate database, unconnected to survey responses. Winners will be determined after data collection is completed, and notified via email. Winners will be asked to provide a mailing address at which to send the gift card and will be discouraged from sharing any other identifying information.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are as follows: (a) What cluster patterns of conformity to masculine role norms, as measured by the CMNI, are found in a sample of adult GBQ identifying men? (b) Do CMNI clusters predict significant variance in mutuality, as measured by the MPDQ, in GBQ men's same-gender friendships? (c) Do significant differences in mutuality exist between those reporting sexual relationships with friends, as measured by Item 5 of the Friendship Info Form?

Data Analyses

GBQ men maintain complex relationships with masculinities. In many constructions of dominant masculinity ideologies, sexual minority men are defined in opposition to what would be considered “masculine” (e.g., Levant, 1996; Levant et al., 1992; Mahalik et al., 2003). Yet GBQ men are also likely influenced by the pre- and proscriptions of dominant North American masculinities (e.g. Connell, 1992, 2005; Nardi, 1999; Nardi & Sherrod, 1992). These contradictions suggest that GBQ men may interpret and conform to different masculine role norms differently than do heterosexual men. This study will address this complexity by utilizing cluster analysis to identify subscale patterns of conformity to masculine role norms particular to this population. Cluster analysis has been seldom used in counseling psychology research though it has been noted as having benefits, such as providing structure to heterogeneous groups while clarifying individual differences (Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1999). Borgen and Barnett (1987) also noted that simplification of a data set can be an appropriate and effective use for cluster analysis, and that “it can be used to group objects when the use of human judgment would be tedious, subjective, or practically impossible” (p. 461). Last, some have observed a narrow scope of methodologies used in masculinities research and urged greater diversity of methodologies (Smiler, 2004; Whorley & Addis, 2006). The use of cluster analysis in this study is an attempt to address these points. Past sexual behavior may be entered into the cluster analysis if this variable is determined to be significant. A factor analysis will be conducted as a follow-up procedure to verify observed cluster structures.

After examining and identifying CMNI cluster patterns, the clusters will be entered as predictor variables in a hierarchical multiple regression. For the regression, significantly correlated demographic variables, if any, will be entered at step one. The CMNI clusters will be effect coded and entered at step two. These predictor variables will be regressed onto the criterion variable, MPDQ total scores. In order to examine whether past sexual engagement impacts mutuality in friendships, independent samples t-tests will be conducted with MPDQ scores and responses to Item 5 on the Friendship Form regarding sexual behavior.

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Appendix A

Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire (MPDQ)

We would like you to tell us about your relationship with a best friend of the *same sex*. A best friend is a friend to whom you feel the greatest commitment and closeness; someone who accepts you “as you are,” with whom you talk the most openly and feel the most comfortable spending time.”

What is your friend’s age? _____

Instructions: In this section, we would like to explore certain aspects of your relationship with your friend. Using the scale below, please tell us your best estimate of how often you and your friend experience each of the following:

When we talk about things that matter to my friend, I am likely to

Be receptive
time

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never All of the

Get impatient
time

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never All of the

Try to understand
time

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never All of the

Get bored
time

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never All of the

Feel moved
time

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never All of the

Avoid being honest

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Share similar experiences _____
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never All of the time

Keep feelings inside _____
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never All of the time

Respect my point of view _____
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never All of the time
time

Change the subject _____
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never All of the time

See the humor in things _____
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never All of the time

Feel down _____
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never All of the time

Express an opinion clearly _____
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Never All of the time
time

Genero, Miller, & Surrey, 1992

Appendix B

Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI)

Ver#: 1-M

- 1 -

This is the SAMPLE CONFORMITY TO MASCULINE NORMS INVENTORY. It contains the directions given to persons completing the inventory, the format of the inventory, and some sample items. The full CMNI is 94 items and takes between 10-15 minutes to complete.

Instructions: The following pages contain a series of statements about how men might think, feel or behave. The statements are designed to measure attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors associated with both traditional and non-traditional masculine gender roles.

Thinking about your own actions, feelings and beliefs, please indicate how much **you personally agree or disagree with each statement** by circling **SD** for "Strongly Disagree", **D** for "Disagree", **A** for "Agree", or **SA** for "Strongly agree" to the left of the statement. There are no right or wrong responses to the statements. You should give the responses that most accurately describe your personal actions, feelings and beliefs. It is best if you respond with your first impression when answering.

- | | | | | | |
|-----|--|----|---|---|----|
| 1. | It is best to keep your emotions hidden | SD | D | A | SA |
| 2. | In general, I will do anything to win | SD | D | A | SA |
| 3. | If I could, I would frequently change sexual partners | SD | D | A | SA |
| 4. | If there is going to be violence, I find a way to avoid it | SD | D | A | SA |
| 5. | I love it when men are in charge of women | SD | D | A | SA |
| 6. | It feels good to be important | SD | D | A | SA |
| 7. | I hate it when people ask me to talk about my feelings | SD | D | A | SA |
| 8. | I try to avoid being perceived as gay | SD | D | A | SA |
| 9. | I hate any kind of risk | SD | D | A | SA |
| 10. | I prefer to stay unemotional | SD | D | A | SA |
| 11. | I make sure people do as I say | SD | D | A | SA |
-

Appendix C

Demographics

In order to successfully complete this study, I would like to know more about you. The information you provide will not be used to identify you in any way.

5. Age: _____
6. Gender:
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Transgender Female
 - d. Transgender Male
 - e. Gender Queer
 - f. Intersex
 - g. Other _____
7. State in which you live: _____
8. Ethnicity:
 - a. African or African-American
 - b. American Indian/Native American
 - c. Asian or Asian-American
 - d. Biracial or Multiracial
 - e. Hispanic/Latino
 - f. Caucasian
 - g. Other _____
5. How do you describe your sexual identity/orientation?
 - a. Bisexual
 - b. Heterosexual
 - c. Gay
 - d. Queer
 - e. Other (non-heterosexual): _____
6. What is your current romantic relationship status?
 - a. Single
 - b. Involved in a romantic relationship (i.e., less than 1 yr)
 - c. Involved in a romantic relationship (i.e., more than 1 yr)
 - d. Civil union
 - e. Divorced (same-gender relationship)
 - f. Married (same-gender relationship)
 - g. Partnered
 - h. Other: _____
7. How many children under the age of 18 do you have in the home?

- a. None
- b. 1-2
- c. 3-4
- d. 5 or more

8. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- a. Some high school
- b. High school
- c. Some college
- d. Vocational training
- e. Associate's degree
- f. Bachelor's degree
- g. Master's degree
- h. Doctorate degree
- i. Professional degree
- j. Other: _____

9. Are you currently a student?

- a. No
- b. Yes. If yes, what year of college are you in?
 - 1. Freshman
 - 2. Sophomore
 - 3. Junior
 - 4. Senior
 - 5. Graduate Studies
 - 6. Other _____

10. Do you currently work outside the home?

- a. No
- b. Yes, full-time
- c. Yes, part-time

11. Annual Household Income:

- a. Less than \$25,000
- b. \$25,000 – \$35,000
- c. \$36,000 – \$45,000
- d. \$46,000 – \$55,000
- e. \$56,000 – \$65,000
- f. \$66,000 – \$75,000
- g. \$76,000 – \$85,000
- h. Over \$85,000

12. My city/town is:

- a. Rural (less than 5,000 people)
- b. Small town
- c. City
- d. Urban (more than 100,000 people)
- e. Metro Area (very large cities like Los Angeles, New York, Boston, Atlanta, Chicago)

Appendix D

Friendship Information

For the following questions, a close friend refers to someone to whom you feel a sense of mutual commitment and continuing closeness; a person with whom you talk fairly openly and feel comfortable spending time.

1. How many friends do you consider to be your close male friends?
 - a. 1-3
 - b. 4-6
 - c. 7-9
 - d. 10 or more

For the following question, a best friend is a friend to whom you feel the greatest commitment and closeness; someone who accepts you “as you are,” with whom you talk the most openly and feel the most comfortable spending time.”

2. How many friends do you consider to be your best male friends?
 - a. 1-3
 - b. 4-6
 - c. 7-9
 - d. 10 or more

When responding to the questions that follow, you are asked to think of **one best male friend, who is not currently your spouse or partner**, and then refer to this friend when answering the questions.

3. How old is the friend you are thinking of? _____
4. How does this friend describe his sexual identity/orientation?
 - a. Bisexual
 - b. Heterosexual
 - c. Gay
 - d. Queer
 - e. Other: _____

5. How long have you been friends with him? (Please indicate the total time in years *and* months if applicable. If you have known him less than 1 year, please mark 0 next to Years and indicate the approximate length of time next to Months.

If you have known him less than 1 month, please enter 0 next to Years and 1 next to Months.)

Years _____

Months _____

6. Have you ever had sex, or any sexual contact, with this male best friend?

c. No

d. Yes

6a. If you answered yes to Item 6, how long did the sexual relationship last?
(Please indicate the total time in years *and* months if applicable. If the sexual relationship lasted less than 1 year, please mark 0 next to Years and indicate the approximate length of time next to Months. If the relationship lasted less than 1 month, please enter 0 next to Years and 1 next to Months.)

Years _____

Months _____