Intimacy: Men's Understandings and Experiences

Atholl James Murray

Diploma of Teaching (Primary)*, Deakin University*

Bachelor of Education, *Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology*

Graduate Diploma of Psychological Studies, *Deakin University*

Postgraduate Diploma of Psychology, *Queensland University of Technology*

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

School of Psychology

Faculty of Health Sciences

Australian Catholic University

December 2016

Graduate Research

Australian Catholic University

PO Box 968

North Sydney NSW 2059

Keywords

Australian men, Ideographic, Intimacy, Masculinities, Men, Postqualitative, Qualitative data, Robert Kegan, Self, Subject Object Interview

Abstract

One of the problems faced by researchers of intimacy is that there is no widely shared understanding of how intimacy is defined. Although various definitions agree that intimacy is an experience associated with positive emotions, a smaller number of definitions suggest that intimacy can also be experienced in situations involving relationship conflict and abuse that do not involve positive emotions. Using Kegan's (1982) constructive-developmental theory of the evolving self, I argue that the diverse experiences described in these various definitions share a common source – the self. In offering an understanding of the self as evolving in predictable ways that are shared across human experience, a constructive-developmental approach also offers a means by which these diverse definitions can unified and understood in relation to one another as different expressions of intimacy.

Through qualitative analyses I examine the experiences of 12 men to identify how these men understood and experienced intimacy. Interviews with these men were analysed using a postqualitative lens, and by applying Kegan's (1982) constructive developmental stages. Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, Goodman and Felix's (2011) Subject Object Interview protocol was used to determine each man's evolution of self as portrayed in the interview, that is, his current means of constructing meaning. It was identified that these men's understandings of intimacy were diverse, as had been identified more generally in intimacy research. Further, these understandings could be organised in ways that demonstrated an increasing development of intrapersonal and interpersonal complexity. In terms of men's experiences of intimacy, analysis revealed that social expectations, expressed through roles and relationship ideals, constrained some experiences of intimacy, often in relation to other men, but facilitated others, often in relation to women. In addition, some men's experiences revealed ways in which unexpected and life-threatening events created temporary and permanent shifts in ways that men were able to experience intimacy with both men and women.

These findings suggest that a constructive-developmental approach, utilising the concept of subjectivity, provides useful ways in which to examine intimacy, both in terms of how intimacy is understood and in terms of how it is experienced. In addition, these findings suggest that the ways in which men's experiences of

intimacy are limited are also due to factors that reach beyond individual capacities, desires or understandings, pointing to the social construction of intimate experiences. This thesis provides insights regarding the ways in which social expectations create capacities for intimacy, but only in particular ways. In addition, this thesis identifies how social expectations regarding the portrayal of male roles in Australia have had limiting effects on men's experience of intimacy, particularly in their friendships with other males.

In proposing a new definition and model of intimacy, this thesis also offers some important contributions to an understanding of intimacy. Placing the self at the centre of an understanding of intimacy provides a means to unify diverse experiences and contexts of intimacy involving both positive and negative emotions. In addition, a focus on the self as evolving enables a developmental understanding of intimacy, constructed in qualitatively different ways across the lifespan. This thesis also offers important contributions to an understanding of men's experiences of intimacy, particularly with other men, by identifying that intra-personal, interpersonal and social factors contribute to the ways in which men's intimate experiences are constrained. These contributions also have important implications for public health and education, which need to be addressed through changes to the messages communicated to men about themselves and about relationships. At an individual level, these contributions have important implications in relation to therapeutic work involving men and men's relationships with men and with women. In addition, an understanding of the self as the source of differences in intimacy provides new ways in which to understand the difficulties created in relationships, as a result of those differences. As well as offering insights, this thesis identifies some specific areas for future research in order to extend these insights and examine them across a wider range of men's experiences.

Table of Contents

Keywords iii

Abstract iv

Table of Contents vi

List of Figures xi

List of Tables xii

List of Abbreviations xiii

Statement of Original Authorship xiv

Acknowledgements xv

Chapter 1: Introduction 1

1.1 Introduction to the Thesis 1

1.2 Importance of the Thesis 4

1.3 Philosophical and Theoretical Considerations 6
- 1.3.1 Thesis Aim and Themes 13
- 1.3.2 Application 14

1.4 Organisation of the Thesis 14

Chapter 2: Literature Review 17

2.1 Introduction 17
- 2.1.1 Chapter Overview 17

2.2 Understandings of Intimacy 18
- 2.2.1 Psychological Understandings of Intimacy 18
  - Intimacy capacity 22
    - Psychosocial development 22
    - Attachment theory 23
  - Intimacy as a relational experience 25
  - Intimacy as a relational process 28
- 2.2.2 Other Conceptualisations of Intimacy 30
- 2.2.3 Summary 34

2.3 Experiences of Intimacy 36
- 2.3.1 Domestic Relationships: Inclusive vs. Exclusive, Private vs. Public 37
- 2.3.2 Commercial and Professional Relationships: Private vs. Public 40
- 2.3.3 Summary 42

2.4 Men's Experiences of Intimacy 43
- 2.4.1 Summary 47

2.5 Chapter Summary and Working Definition of Intimacy 48

2.6 Chapter Conclusion 55

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework 57

3.1 Introduction 57
- 3.1.1 Chapter Overview 58

3.2 Concept of Self 58
- 3.2.1 Self and Intimacy 60
- 3.2.2 Summary 63

3.3 Evolutions of Self 64

3.3.1 Stage 1: The Impulsive Self 65
3.3.2 Stage 2: The Imperial Self 66
3.3.3 Stage 3: The Interpersonal Self 67
3.3.4 Stage 4: The Institutional Self 69
3.3.5 Stage 5: The Interindividual Self 72
3.3.6 Subject and Object 74
3.3.7 Summary 76

3.4 Meaning Making and Sociocultural Influences 77

3.5 Understandings and Experiences of Intimacy 82
3.5.1 Intimacy at Stage 2 83
3.5.2 Intimacy at Stage 3 85
3.5.3 Intimacy at Stage 4 87
3.5.4 Intimacy at Stage 5 90
3.5.5 Summary 92

3.6 Limitations to Kegan's Theory 94

3.7 Chapter Summary 100

Chapter 4: Method 103

4.1 Introduction 103
4.1.1 Chapter Overview 104

4.2 Data Creation 104
4.2.1 Interview Design 104
Interview 1 104
Part 1 of the Subject-Object Interview 105
Part 2 of the Subject-Object Interview 106
Interview 2 108
4.2.2 Recruitment 108
4.2.3 Interviewing 109
4.2.4 Recording and Transcribing 110
Recording 110
Transcribing 111
Naturalised vs. denaturalised 112
Transcription conventions 112

4.3 Use of Transcripts in Data Analysis 113
4.3.1 Use of Excerpts in Data Analysis 113
4.3.2 Participant Involvement 113

4.4 Ethical Considerations 114

4.5 Data Analysis 117
4.5.1 Analysis 1: The Subject-Object Interview (SOI) 118
Subject-Object Scores 118
4.5.2 Analysis 2: Understandings of Intimacy (Epistemologies of Intimacy) 124
Step 1: Making sense of the transcript 124
Step 2: Evolutionary analysis 125
Step 3: Collation of analysis 125
4.5.3 Analysis 3: Experiences of Intimacy (Ontologies of Intimacy) 126
Step 1: Understanding participants' experiences 126
Part 2: Thematic Analysis 126
Part 3: Interpretation 127
4.5.4 Final Considerations: Transparency, Trustworthiness and Reflexivity 128

4.6 Chapter Summary 128

Chapter 5: Participants' Epistemologies: The Subject-Object Interview 131

5.1 Introduction 131
5.1.1 Criteria for Selecting Analyses 132
5.1.2 Chapter Overview 132
5.2 Participant characteristics 132
5.3 Participants' Subject Object Scores 134
5.4 Selected Subject Object Interview (SOI) Analyses 134
5.4.1 Mark 135
Summary of relevant stages of Self 135
Interpretation and analysis of the transcripts 135
Summary 141
5.4.2 Neil 141
Summary of relevant stages of Self 141
Interpretation and analysis of the transcript 141
Summary 144
5.4.3 Daniel 144
Summary of relevant stages of Self 144
Interpretation and analysis of the transcript 145
Summary 151
5.4.4 Kevin 152
Summary of relevant stages of Self 152
Interpretation and analysis of the transcript 152
Summary 155
5.5 Chapter Summary 156
Chapter 6: Epistemologies of Intimacy: Men's Understandings of Intimacy 159
6.1 Introduction 159
6.1.1 Chapter Overview 159
6.2 Participants' Definitions of Intimacy 160
6.2.1 Intimacy at Stage 2 161
Summary 164
6.2.2 Intimacy at Stage 3 165
Summary 167
6.2.3 Intimacy at Stage 4 168
Summary 172
6.2.4 Intimacy at Stage 5 172
Summary 175
6.3 Summary of Analysis of Definitions 175
6.3.1 Links to Proposed Definition of Intimacy 180
6.4 Comparison of Participants' Subject Object Scores and Understandings of Intimacy 181
6.5 Chapter Summary 184
Chapter 7: Ontologies of Intimacy: Men's Experiences of Intimacy 187
7.1 Introduction 187
7.1.1 Chapter Overview 188
7.2 Epistemology Influencing Ontology 188
7.2.1 Masculinity, self and Intimacy with Men 188
Masculinity and self 188
Masculinity and intimacy with men 189
Crisis and intimacy with men 194
7.2.2 self and Intimacy with Women 195
7.2.3 Workplace Expectations, self and Intimacy 197
7.2.4 Romantic Ideals and Intimacy 200

7.2.5 Summary 202

7.3 Ontology Influencing Epistemology 203
7.3.1 Understanding of Others and Intimacy 203
7.3.2 Understanding of self and Intimacy 207
7.3.3 Summary 213

7.4 Chapter Summary 213

Chapter 8: Discussion 215

8.1 Introduction 215
8.1.1 Chapter Overview 216

8.2 Research Question 1: Understandings of Intimacy 216
8.2.1 General Understandings of Intimacy 216
8.2.2 Stages of Intimacy 218
Intimacy at Stage 2 218
Intimacy at Stage 3 219
Intimacy at Stage 4 219
Intimacy at Stage 5 220
Summary 221
8.2.3 Intrapersonal Intimacy 221
8.2.4 Evolutionary Differences Between Participants' Subject-Object Scores (SOSs) and Intimacy Definitions 223
8.2.5 Summary 224

8.3 Research Question 2: Experiences of Intimacy 225
8.3.1 Sociocultural Expectations Influence Experiences of Intimacy 225
Masculinity 225
Romantic relationship ideals 227
8.3.2 Life Experiences 229
Changes in understanding of self leading to changes in intimacy 229
Changes in understanding of others leading to changes in intimacy 233
8.3.3 Layers/Depth 234
8.3.4 Summary 239

8.4 Other Contributions 240
8.4.1 Understanding self vs. Self 240
8.4.2 Understanding the Process of Meaning Making 241
8.4.3 Participant Age and Education was Not a Determinant of SOS 243

8.5 Proposed definition of intimacy 243

8.6 Limitations 246
8.6.1 Design, Generalisability and Idiosyncrasies of Participants 246

8.7 Implications and Applications 247
8.7.1 Implications for Research 247
8.7.2 Implications for Therapeutic Practice 249
8.7.3 Implications for Public Health/Public Education 249

8.8 Another avenue that may be more fruitful in reaching a broader audience may be within the education system, targeting adolescents (of any gender) who are forming their understandings of masculinity and intimacy. Developing a program that helps young people to understand the contribution that socialisation makes to their understanding of themselves, as well as the limitations that may place upon connectedness in relationships may be an appropriate application of these findings.Conclusion 251

Afterword 253

References 255

Appendices 289

Appendix A Subject-Object Interview Introductory Statements 289
Appendix B Participant Information Letter 293
Appendix C Consent Form 295
Appendix D Interview Schedule: Interview 1 297
Appendix E Interview Schedule: Interview 2 (Version 1) 299
Appendix F Interview Schedule: Interview 2 (Version 2) 303
Appendix G Letter to Participants: Transcripts 305
Appendix H Interview 1 Summary Statements Provided to Participants 307
Appendix I Additional Interview Protocols: Interview Locations 315
Appendix J Pseudonyms Used in Transcripts 319
Appendix K Kegan's Evolutionary Stages 320

List of Figures

Figure 2.1. Prager's (1995) Model of Intimacy 19
Figure 2.2. Revised Model of Intimacy 21
Figure 2.3. Working definition of intimacy 54
Figure 3.1. Intimacy involving self/other and Self 61
Figure 3.2. Kegan's evolutions of Self 65
Figure 3.3. Subjects and objects for evolutions of Self. 77
Figure 8.1. Involuntary and unconscious forms of intimacy 229
Figure 8.2. Involuntary and conscious forms of intimacy 233
Figure 8.3. Conscious, voluntary and asymmetrical experiences of intimacy 234
Figure 8.4. Layers of self at Stage 4 236
Figure 8.5. Increasing depths of intimacy. 238
Figure 8.6. Working definition of intimacy 245

List of Tables

Table 3.1 *Expressions of Voluntary Intimacy at Various Stages of Kegan's Theory* 93
Table 4.1 *Overview of Analyses* 117
Table 4.2 *Subject Object Score Sequence* 119
Table 4.3 *Subject Object Scores and Kegan's Stages* 122
Table 5.1 *Participant Demographic Details* 133
Table 5.2 *Summary of Participants' Subject Object Scores* 134
Table 6.1 *Summary of Intimacy Definitions* 178
Table 6.2 *Participants' SOSs and Understandings of Intimacy* 182

List of Abbreviations

SOI	Subject Object Interview
SOS	Subject Object Score

Statement of Original Authorship

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No parts of this thesis have been submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics/Safety Committees.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Acknowledgements

My doctoral journey, which has inspired and driven this thesis, has been an opportunity to develop knowledge and skills but, more significantly, it has also been a journey of personal growth. It is this evolution of my person that has enabled the insights and new knowledge that are presented here. This evolution has not taken place in isolation; it has been supported by, as Kegan (1982) might say, my "culture of embeddedness" – the rich environment created by people around me who have met my needs as well as being a source of challenge to assist me to move beyond my limitations. Had this not happened, my thesis may have reflected my initial research proposal, representing what I already was aware of, albeit at some fuzzy level, rather than enabling me to engage with what I was not yet aware of—what was hidden within me, waiting to be brought to light.

This has also been a journey of change and struggle spanning six years, and I am grateful for the contributions of my supervisors, past: Dr Grace Choy, Dr Eric Marx, Dr Giac Giacomantonio, Dr Emma Harley and Dr Lyn Vromans. I am also grateful for the contributions of my current supervisory team, Dr Cathryne Lang, Prof Liz Forbat and Dr Cecily Jensen-Clayton, who have been highly significant in bringing this thesis into being. Cathryne, Liz and Cecily have provided insights from their own experiences and expertise that have inspired and challenged my own thinking. As well, I am immeasurably grateful to them for their willingness to trial a new collegial model, reconceptualising the supervision process, which has enabled an incredible development of thinking and an amazing level of productivity in the last two years. It was struggle that led Cecily and me to develop this model that has revolutionised both of our doctoral journeys. Not only did it provide a process of supervision that accelerated progress in each of our projects, but it also provided me with the opportunity to participate in Cecily's doctoral supervisory team. An unexpected, yet substantial benefit arose from the cross-fertilisation between these teams and I am also grateful to the other members of her team, Prof Patrick Danaher and Dr Stewart Riddle, who have also made important contributions to my thinking, directly and by osmosis. Challenge, support and inspiration have also come from my involvement with the PostGraduate Association (PGA) at ACU. My PGA colleagues have listened tirelessly to my developing understanding and the PGA has provided opportunities to share my

work as well as to engage in robust academic discussions. These groups, my PGA colleagues, Cathryne, Cecily and Liz, and Patrick and Stewart, have been my intellectual communities. Without them I would not have been able to develop the complexity of thinking that has led to this thesis and the clarity with which to express it.

My culture of embeddedness has also included the support of professional colleagues, friends, family and my partner Shane, who have encouraged me and believed in me. Their support has played a vital role in sustaining me throughout this journey. Not only have they taken a sustained interest in my work (which is no small thing) but they have also supported my commitment to this project; they too have been committed to my successful completion of this work.

Finally, I am indebted to the men who participated in this research project, and those who assisted me in recruiting them. As this thesis describes, white, Anglo-Saxon men, whose own culture of embeddedness is largely androcentric, must resist social norms in order to talk about intimacy. I thank them for their courage to trust me with their experiences and thinking and it is my hope that I have honoured them in the ways that their experiences have contributed to the thinking in this thesis. I am deeply grateful to them for their generous giving of themselves, without which this project would not have been possible.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Thesis

This thesis examines men's understandings and experiences of intimacy, and draws upon in-depth interviews with twelve Australian men. It incorporates an original study, utilising a postqualitative lens (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013) and Kegan's (1982) constructive-developmental evolutionary theory of self to develop a theoretical framework. This framework constructs an understanding of self that is both ontological and epistemological in that it gives rise both to ways of being in/experiencing the world (ontology) and to ways of making meaning in the world (epistemology). In this thesis, intimacy is understood as an experience (Prager, 1995; Prager & Roberts, 2004) that is inherently linked to a person's being, knowing and becoming (St. Pierre, 2013). As well, intimacy is viewed as inherently linked to a person's self and how that person experiences and understands themself[1]. This view recognises that a person's experiences and understandings are shaped by individual characteristics as well as by social forces, and draws upon understandings in psychology and the wider social sciences.

In this thesis, the conceptualisation of intimacy that I begin with is both epistemological and ontological, involving ways of knowing and ways of being, which together I refer to as "experiencing". (This reference draws on Rogers' (1967) notion of the fully-experiencing person.) Although I elaborate upon this conceptualisation of intimacy in Chapter 2 (in relation to relevant literature) and in Chapter 3 (linking it to Kegan's (1982) theory of self), in brief, my understanding of intimacy, coming into this thesis is as:

> a process of engagement with self, involving a person's experiencing of themself and/or of another resulting in this experiencing being expressed, confirmed or influenced (in constructive and destructive

[1] The use of singular pronouns is problematic, particularly in this thesis because it examines experiences from an ideographic or individual perspective. Previously, attempts to be inclusive have used "he or she", "him or her", "his or her", "his or hers" and "himself or herself". This usage has proved cumbersome in this thesis. To overcome this difficulty, the pronouns "they", "them", "their", "theirs", "themself" have been used. Traditionally, these have been plural, rather than singular pronouns. However, the use of pronouns is evolving and the use of these plural forms as singular forms has become more acceptable. For further reference see https://uwm.edu/lgbtrc/support/gender-pronouns/

ways). This expression can involve verbal or nonverbal behaviours or both.

My conceptualisation draws upon ideas that emphasise the importance of sharing one's inner world (e.g., Fisher & Stricker, 1982; Sexton & Sexton, 1982) and ideas that identify the importance of self-concept as central to intimacy (e.g., Erikson, 1963; Gilligan, 1982; Orlofsky, Marcia, & Lesser, 1973; Sullivan, 1953). Self-concept, as described by Erikson (1963), Gilligan (1992) and others is understood as synonymous with identity, that is, a person's conscious awareness of self. In relation to Kegan's (1982) theory of self, identity holds a particular meaning as one particular conceptualisation of self, amongst a number of conceptualisations, and so the term self-concept will be used, rather than identity. In relation to my conceptualisation of intimacy, self-concept and concepts of others (that is perceptions of others' identities) are the experiencing of self/selves in which intimacy takes place.

In addition, this conceptualisation of intimacy draws from understandings of intimacy as an interactional process involving perceptions of self-disclosure (both verbal and nonverbal), and the discloser's perceptions of another's response to that disclosure (e.g., Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998; Laurenceau, Rivera, Schaffer, & Pietromonaco, 2004; Reis, Clark, & Holmes, 2004; Reis & Shaver, 1988). In terms of the language I have used in my conceptualisation, self-disclosure refers to expression of the experiencing of self or of others.

This understanding of intimacy is not only about ways in which a person's experiencing of self or of others is expressed, or about others' responses to those expressions. It is also about ways in which a person's experiencing of self or others is challenged and influenced (consciously or unconsciously) in constructive and destructive ways. In order to clarify what I mean by constructive and destructive influences to a person's experiencing of self, it is important to provide some further background. From a postmodern perspective, perceiving an experience as constructive or destructive depends upon the epistemology by which meaning is brought to that experience. My ways of making meaning in relation to the self and experiencing align with humanistic ideas. In particular, constructive experiences, in relation to the self, facilitate a person's actualising tendency (Rogers, 1979), that is their movement towards growth. This concept of actualising tendency also aligns with Kegan's (1982) idea of evolutionary motion as synonymous with human being

(as a verb) and as a movement toward greater complexity. Thus, my own understanding of influences as being constructive or destructive is determined by the effect of that influence: respectively, to facilitate growth/complexity or to hinder growth/complexity.

In recognising that experiences of intimacy may influence self/other in destructive ways, this understanding of intimacy is also able to include situations involving violent behaviours. These behaviours may be a person's attempt to be understood (e.g., Kanuha, 2013) or may be a person's attempt to influence how others understand her or him, by exerting control or through manipulation. Although violent behaviours are not my focus in this thesis, developing a more inclusive, broader definition of intimacy is one of my wider aims. By developing a more inclusive definition of intimacy it is possible to recognise that experiences that would generally be regarded as destructive (such as interpersonal violence) can also be understood as intimate. Thus, in terms of an understanding of self/other, intimacy can be seen as a means of growth as well as a hindrance to growth. This idea is examined in more detail in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.3).

In applying a definition of intimacy focused on self, this thesis draws upon Kegan's (1982) understanding of the self as taking qualitatively different forms across a person's lifespan. These self forms are also understood as central to the personal construction of meaning, generating both a person's conception of themself, and of specific others. This understanding of self also recognises the influences of sociocultural meanings as both enabling and constraining a person's understanding of themself and of others (Kegan, 1982, 1994). Drawing upon this understanding of self enables an engagement with intimacy that incorporates both sociocultural and personal factors, as well as developmental factors. Thus, the framework used in this thesis (which draws upon Kegan's theory, as well as postmodern thinking and using a postqualitative lens) offers an opportunity to address the complexity of intimate experiences from multiple perspectives.

I also acknowledge that placing this definition so early in the thesis may seem to contradict some ideas regarding qualitative research, which I explore more fully in Section 1.3. However, in brief, this decision represents a temporary resolution of the tension between a desire to be conscious and explicit about the understandings of intimacy I bring to the thesis, and a desire to be open to the new ideas that may be found through engagement with participants' experiencing. My

resolution of this tension is to be transparent about my understanding of intimacy as I approach the data, as well as consciously attending to the ways in which the data contradict my understanding. In this thesis, I have attended to contradiction through personal reflexivity – noticing where things do not sit comfortably with my own ideas, as well as through careful attention to the reflections offered to me by my supervisory team, who do not necessarily share my ideas.

1.2 Importance of the Thesis

Intimacy is the focus of this thesis because it is an important experience in contemporary western experience. From the perspective of a western lived experience, intimacy is understood to contribute positively to human wellbeing. A number of studies identify that intimacy is linked to better physical and psychological wellbeing (e.g., Conlin, 1994; Hetherington, 2003; Lowenthal & Haven, 1968; Prager, 2000). Other studies highlight the importance of intimacy for mental health (e.g., Costello, 1982; Talmadge & Dabbs, 1990) and longevity (e.g., Hassebrauck & Fehr, 2002; Vaillant, 2002). However, the strongest association described by researchers has been between intimacy and relationship satisfaction (e.g., Boyd, 1994; Greeff & Malherbe, 2001; Hansen & Schuldt, 1984; Hassebrauck & Fehr, 2002; Levinger & Senn, 1967; Pallen, 2001; Schaefer & Olson, 1981; Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004; Tolstedt & Stokes, 1983). Conversely, in these studies, the absence of intimacy has been implicated in poorer wellbeing.

Although receiving less focus in research, intimacy has also been understood to contribute negatively to human wellbeing. For example, Hatfield (1984) identified that some people hold reasonable fears in relation to intimacy: fear of exposure of weakness or shameful ways of being, fear of abandonment, fear of loss of control in sharing personal information, fear of unleashing strong feelings, or fear of losing individuality or becoming engulfed by another person. Thus, because of its impact upon wellbeing, intimacy, and its absence is an important part of western human experience.

In undertaking an examination of intimacy, it is also important to understand how intimacy has been conceptualised. However, my examination (as presented in Chapter 2) reveals that a conceptualisation of intimacy, that will encompass the diversity and complexity of human experiencing I aim to address, does not appear to be available in the extant literature. This is not due to a lack of options. In psychology, a large proportion of the work directed toward conceptualising

intimacy occurred in the second half of the last century. This work has resulted in multiple conceptions of intimacy across multiple dimensions (e.g., intimate topics, intimate behaviours, intimate relationship, intimate experiences) but has also resulted in considerable diversity in terms of how intimacy is understood within those dimensions (Prager, 1995). This diverse range of ways of conceptualising intimacy points to the complexity of intimate experiences. Thus, there is a need to find a way in which these diverse conceptualisations might be unified and brought into relationship with one another.

There is also a need to examine the contemporary relevance of these understandings of intimacy. Across these diverse understandings, conceptions of intimacy have varied over time as social understandings of relationships have changed. Jamieson (1998) suggests that at least three different eras can be identified. Prior to the 19th Century, western societies placed an emphasis on communities and saw intimacy as the inevitable result of people "bound together by necessity and tradition" (p. 17). During the 19th Century and the early part of the 20th Century, social relationships focused on family, and in comparison to later times, "love and care between spouses was a more important dimension than knowing and understanding an inner self" (p. 18). In the later part of the 20th Century, western societies have placed an emphasis on couples and the "romantic marriage" and have ascribed to a "disclosing intimacy . . . [an] intimacy of the self rather than intimacy of the body" (p. 1). Jamieson's analysis of shifts in conceptions of intimacy across time, and in relation to social changes highlights that intimacy is not a fixed concept. At the beginning of the 21st Century, new contemporary understandings of intimacy are needed.

There is also a need to examine men's experiences of intimacy. This thesis is situated in an Australian context and examines men's understandings and experiences of intimacy. Research findings, although varied, have identified that men generally experience less intimacy than women (Fehr, 1996; Grabill & Kerns, 2000; Kaufman, 1992). Jamieson (1998, p. 9) also suggests that a dominant idea in western society is that "women seek intimacy [but] men seek sex". In addition, some studies examining heterosexual masculinity have identified aspects of men's understanding of themselves that opposes intimate experiencing. Some of these aspects relate to concerns regarding the belief that vulnerability is feminine and therefore that disclosing oneself to others threatens one's own and others'

perceptions of one's masculinity (e.g., Bank & Hansford, 2000; Patrick, Sells, Giordano, & Tollerud, 2007; Rogers, 2005). Other researchers have identified that many men fear others' perceptions that they may be homosexual and thus reject any semblance of homosexual behaviour, particularly between male friends (Anderson & McCormack, 2015; Connell, 2005; Elder, Brooks, & Morrow, 2012; Kimmel, 1994; Lewis, 1978). Researchers focusing on Australian contexts have also drawn similar conclusions (Drummond, Filiault, Anderson, & Jeffries, 2015; Waling, 2014; Webb, 1998). This thesis, in focusing on Australian men, provides an opportunity to examine the particularities of men's experiences of intimacy, which have been identified as being different or impoverished compared to those of women.

In summary, intimacy is an important part of western human experiencing. Work is needed to draw together the diverse understandings of intimacy into a new conceptualisation of intimacy; a conceptualisation that inclusively embraces these diverse understandings and provides a complex framework to explain the links between different understandings. Much of the work conceptualising intimacy is several decades old, and work needs to be undertaken to ascertain if these understandings reflect contemporary experiences of intimacy. As well, greater attention needs to be given to men's experiences of intimacy. Research findings suggest that men's experience of intimacy may be different to women's, at least in quantity, if not also in quality. Collective western understandings related to gender seem to be implicated in these differences and so any new conception of intimacy that seeks to embrace this diversity of experiences, also needs to include sociological considerations, as well as psychological ones. This thesis seeks to address these three concerns: consolidation, contemporisation and socialisation. I undertake this by utilising a constructive-developmental framework, applying postmodern thinking and examining experience through a postqualitative lens.

1.3 Philosophical and Theoretical Considerations

In order to explain the postqualitative lens I have applied in this thesis, it is necessary to describe my understanding of postmodern theory, upon which my postqualitative thinking builds. In research, postmodernism represents a diffuse range of views rejecting modernist ideologies. Definitions of postmodern "are pervasive, elusive and marked by a proliferation of conflicting definitions that refuse to settle into meaning" (Lather, 2007, p. 5). However, a consistent theme

linking postmodern thinking is the rejection of the singularity of truth and the rejection of any subscription to universal master theories of human experience (Drolet, 2004). Consequently, postmodernism acknowledges multiple truths. In postmodernist thought, constructivist ideas recognise that meaning, or truth (personal or collective), is constructed through a particular epistemology (Piaget, 1977). Thus, epistemology is central to an understanding of postmodern thought. In placing epistemology as central to meaning, postmodern thinking claims that different epistemologies are understood to construct different truths (Foucault, 1970/1966). Although postmodernism does not claim any one truth as universally true, it does assume, universally, that truth is constructed by epistemology. Therefore, taking a postmodern perspective, it is necessary to understand a person's epistemology in order to understand their experience: how it is that their way of knowing constructs their truth, or way of being. It is in this context that the constructive aspect of Kegan's (1982) constructive-developmental theory is situated. In line with a postmodern stance of recognising multiple truths, Kegan's theory embraces a multiplicity of epistemologies. For Kegan, these multiple truths arise from the shifts, over time, in the way a person resolves the tension between subjectivity and objectivity. Kegan's theory is also teleological in that it assumes a movement, in those shifts, toward greater complexity. However, poststructural aspects of postmodernist thought suggest that the developmental aspects of Kegan's theory are artificial. That is, developmental stages are not innate to human experience, rather they arise from the imposition of a particular framework of meaning. In this thesis, Kegan's developmental stages are applied, to the degree that they are useful, in order to offer *possible* insights regarding men's understandings and experiences of intimacy. However, Kegan's theory is not applied as a master theory that claims to reveal universal truth across all human experience. Thus, the insights offered in this thesis are idiosyncratically the result of the intersection of participants' experiences, my understanding of those experiences and my application of Kegan's theory. This thesis, therefore, does not offer truths that are necessarily held by participants, nor truths that are necessarily able to be applied to others. However, this thesis offers new possibilities for understanding and experiencing intimacy and a framework that embraces the multiple understandings of intimacy in the extant literature as well as adding to them.

In extending postmodern ideas, a postqualitative lens moves beyond being in knowing to embrace *becoming* (Lather, 2013) and "knowing in being" (Barad, 2003, p. 829). This approach returns the balance to ontology and being, rather than privileging epistemology and knowing, in recognition that "thinking and living are simultaneities" (St. Pierre, 2013, p. 655). Acknowledging that we are *becoming* raises the awareness of present as an experience of past, present and future and that human experience is one of "co-existing multiplicities of entangled relations of past-present-future-here-there" (Barad, 2010, p. 264). Within this having been-being-becoming is a heightened awareness of the interconnectedness of humanity (both individually, within oneself and collectively, within humanity) across space and time and a need for researchers to understand the impact of the past and the present on the future as "an ethical charge" (St. Pierre, 2013, p. 655). Although these ideas post-date Kegan's (1982) theory, the developmental aspect of his constructive-developmental theory is also about the process of becoming and its connections with past selves, present selves, future selves and the selves of others.

In addition, postqualitative thinking acknowledges the interconnectedness of humanity and materiality, recognising human relationships with non-human elements such as "things" and "places", as well as between humans (Jackson, 2013; Pickering, 1993). This approach liberates an understanding of "person" from being a "rational, individual humanist subject" and allows the conception of "a post-humanist body that exists as a complex network of human and non-human forces" (Mazzei, 2016, pp. 152-153). As I will describe later, this recognition of relationships with non-human elements enables a broader conceptualisation of intimacy. In this broader view, intimacy is understood as not only involving relationships between people but also between people and non-human forces, such as cultural institutions (e.g., cultural norms). That is, by applying a post-humanist, postqualitative lens, it is possible to recognise that the interaction between a person and cultural norms (that dictate how a person should be) can be understood as a relationship. As is elaborated below, this is a relationship that can have deep significance for how a person understands themself. This post-humanist conception resonates with Kegan's theory, which acknowledges that a person's experiences and understandings are constructed by their own agency, as well as by their subjectivity to collective understandings of being (i.e., sociocultural understandings and expectations). Kegan (1982, p. 116, italics in original) describes this by saying:

> there is never "just an individual"; the very word refers only to that side of the person that is individuated, the side of differentiation. There is always, as well, the side that is embedded; the *person* is more than an individual. "Individual" names the current state of evolution, a stage, a maintained balance or defended differentiation; "person" refers to the fundamental motion of evolution itself, and is much about that side of the self embedded in the life-surround as that which is individuated from it. The person is an "individual" *and* an "embeddual".

According to Kegan, a person's engagement with cultural expectations is highly personal. They are part of that person's experience of self. As an experience of subjectivity to embeddedness, it is also, largely, an unconscious experience. The working conceptualisation of intimacy, which is utilised in this thesis, incorporates these post-humanist, postqualitative ways of thinking by recognising that intimate experiences arise from the conscious and unconscious influence of humans (i.e., others) and non-human institutions (e.g., social norms or ideologies).

As was stated earlier, this thesis applies a postqualitative lens, giving focus to the importance of ontology and allowing posthumanist possibilities. As well, this thesis draws upon postmodern thinking, allowing different truths to be found, according to the epistemology through which experiences are understood. In this thesis, Kegan's (1982) constructive-developmental theory of the evolving self has been chosen as an appropriate theory as it offers possibilities for new insights regarding an understanding of intimacy and for understanding experiences of intimacy.

Kegan's (1982) theory encompasses a broad approach to understanding a person, including personal, sociocultural and developmental aspects. Thus, it offers a breadth that includes sociological as well as psychological factors. In doing so, it offers multiple understandings of self, which recognise multiple epistemologies and multiple ontologies, without privileging any one over another. Instead, it recognises that across a person's lifespan, different selves offer opportunities to develop important aspects of intra- and interpersonal functioning. In addition, Kegan focuses on the match of complexity between a person's meaning making capacity and the demands of their personal and social situations. Kegan's theory, together with the Subject-Object Interview (Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, Goodman, & Felix, 2011), facilitates an in-depth analysis of a person's ways of making meaning,

including how they understand themself and others. This offers an alignment with postmodern thinking by suggesting, inductively, the details of a person's epistemology.

As a theory of self, Kegan's (1982) theory is well positioned to be able to examine an understanding of intimacy, with self at its centre. As a developmental theory, it also offers the possibility of engaging with multiple understandings and experiences of intimacy. As a constructive theory, it enables an examination of the ways in which meaning is made, and in particular, how individual and collective meanings of intimacy are developed. As well, Kegan's theory offers a coherent picture of the links among different ways of making meaning by organising them according to their complexity. Thus, Kegan's theory addresses the particular concerns, identified earlier, of conceptualising intimacy in a way that allows for consolidation, contemporisation and socialisation. However, in order to situate Kegan's theory in relation to other psychological theories of self/personality, I offer the following brief overview.

Psychological theories that address personality, in general, have developed from Freud's psychoanalytic theories. Freud (1923/1961) offered an early intrapsychic model of self based upon a static structure of id, ego and superego, motivated by biologic drives. Object-Relations theorists, Fairbairn, Winnicott, Klein and others argued that the self was dynamic, rather than static, and motivated by relational need, rather than by sexual and aggressive drives (St Clair & Wigren, 2004). Kohut's (1977) Self-Psychology understood the structure of self as developing intrapersonally, rather than intrapsychically, with other people acting as objects rather than objects being internalised (as was described by Object-Relations theory). Bowlby (1969) also built upon Object-Relations theory, suggesting that early relational patterns establish internalised cognitive structures (working models) of self and other that determine styles of relationship formation. However, his attachment theory does not offer a framework of attachment development across the lifespan. Erikson (1950) also followed a psycho-social understanding of development (rather than Freud's psychosexual understanding) and his work offers a developmental stage model of individual functioning across the lifespan. However, his theory does not offer a structural model of self (as offered by Freud and others). Kegan (1982), in comparison, offers a structural model of self that is both intrapsychic (focused on evolutionary motion and its interaction with

biological development) and interpersonal (focused on cultures of embeddedness). His theory also offers a lifespan developmental framework and describes individual (epistemological) and interpersonal (relational) functioning at each stage of this framework. Thus, Kegan's theory offers the most comprehensive model of self available within the psychological literature, to address my purposes in this thesis. In establishing this position further, I provide a brief comparison between Kegan's theory and Bowlby's (1969, 1973, 1980) attachment theory and between Kegan's theory and Kohut's (1971) self psychology, as two alternative theories that represent dominant theories in psychological understandings of self in relation to other. As well, this comparison highlights further advantages of Kegan's theory, in terms of the purposes of this thesis.

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980) shares some similarities with Kegan's (1982) constructive-developmental theory. It also recognises that internal working models of self and other shape expectations and meanings attributed to experiences of self and other (Pietromonaco & Beck, 2015). However, in contrast to Kegan's theory, these internal working models are the result only of prior experiences with attachment figures (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998; Collins, Ford, Guichard, & Allard, 2006; Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000; Pietromonaco & Feldman Barrett, 2000) and are not subject to maturation or sociocultural factors (such as social norms or other forms of socialisation). As well, the attachment system is activated in situations of threat or perceived threat (Pietromonaco & Beck, 2015). However, Kegan's understanding of self is as continually generating meanings during threat and in the absence of threat. Whilst attachment theory may explain why a person may avoid experiences of intimacy (Collins & Feeney, 2004; Downing, 2008), it is limited in offering explanations for diverse experiences of intimacy or suggesting new conceptions of intimacy. As well, attachment theory does not offer developmental explanations for different experiences of intimacy.

Kegan's (1982) theory shares similarities with Kohut's Self Psychology (Kohut, 1971). In a comparative analysis, VanderPol (1990) identifies that both theories recognise the importance of other in the development of self; these others are called *selfobject* and *culture of embeddedness* by Kohut and Kegan respectively. As well, both theories describe the shift between poles of seeking inclusion (Kegan)/idealised parent imago (Kohut) and independence (Kegan)/the grandiose

self (Kohut). However, the theories differ in that Kegan offers, in comparison, a highly detailed description of development at each stage of his theory. This difference provides important advantages for intimacy in terms of enabling theoretical and analytical links to be made between Kegan's understanding of self and the men's conceptions and experiences of intimacy examined in this thesis.

In adopting a theory a priori, I am making an unusual move in a qualitative methodology. A postmodern perspective recognises that, as researcher, who I am and what I research are intertwined, and that it is not possible for me to take an objective stance in relation to what is being examined. As described previously, a postmodern perspective also implies mysubjectivity to an epistemology, in terms of how my own meanings are constructed and how I experience events (such as my experiences of participants during interviews). As well, a postqualitative approach recognises that it is through my being and becoming that new insights are developed. Kegan's (1982) constructive-developmental theory of the evolving self resonates with my own being and becoming, and as such it provides a helpful explication of my own epistemology. In this way, describing this theory also expresses part of my own subjectivity, and gives an account of myself (Butler, 2001). However, in the course of engaging with Kegan's theory, I have identified areas of ambiguity and uncertainty (evidence of some degree of objectivity in relation to this theory), and some of these ambiguities and uncertainties are addressed in this thesis. This has, in part, been facilitated by recognising, from a postqualitative stance, that ontology can precede epistemology, and consequently I have also been alert to mismatches and disharmonies between experiencing and attempts to construct meaning. As part of recognising my own subjectivity, I have actively engaged with aspects of participants' experiences and understandings that have not aligned with Kegan's theory and I have sought to examine how they might add to, or refine his theory. These areas that are not aligned have also been identified and addressed in this thesis. As well, I have been supported by a supervisory team who have also helped me to recognise my own areas of blindness.

Adopting Kegan's (1982) theory a priori has also enabled an examination of intimacy, both theoretically and as experienced by participants, using Kegan's understanding of self, his descriptions of stages and his understanding of the shifting relationship between self and other as lenses through which to examine intimacy. This has ultimately proved fruitful and has served the aims of this thesis.

1.3.1 Thesis Aim and Themes

In this thesis, I aim to examine intimacy in order to develop a broad and inclusive conceptualisation that considers sociocultural, personal and developmental aspects of human experience. I also aim to offer insights regarding the particularities of Australian men's understandings of intimacy and their intimate experiences. These two aspects—understandings (focused on epistemology) and experiences (focused on ontology)—form the two themes of this thesis. I acknowledge that according to poststructural thinking, this distinction is artificial and that experiencing involves the interaction of epistemology and ontology. However, this distinction provides useful ways of highlighting the individual contributions and epistemology and ontology offer to an understanding of intimacy.

The way that intimacy is conceptualised is important, not only, from a research perspective, as informing the way in which it is studied, but also from an experiential perspective, in how a person's understanding of intimacy informs their perception of intimate possibilities. That is, a person's experiences of intimacy can be limited or expanded by their perceptions of how intimacy may occur. In this way, epistemology informs ontology. My aim of developing a broader understanding of intimacy, by applying an understanding of self, is facilitated by my first research question:

> In what ways does a constructive-developmental approach offer new possibilities for understanding intimacy?

The second theme of this thesis focuses on experiences of intimacy, and particularly men's experiences of intimacy. This focus recognises that ontology can also inform epistemology (Barad, 2003), that is, experiences can change the ways in which a person understands themself, others and their experiences. This also addresses the aim of developing a broader understanding of intimacy, by identifying the ways in which experiences generate insights regarding a person's less conscious understanding of intimacy. Such a focus also creates opportunities to identify ways in which experiences can reveal more about a person's understanding of intimacy than can be articulated. My second research question addresses both the first and the second aims of this thesis, regarding the particularities of men's experiences, by asking:

How do the intimate experiences of a small number of men add to an understanding of intimacy?

Together these research questions provide me with a clear focus for the development of this thesis.

1.3.2 Application

It is hoped that the findings from this thesis will offer new ways of understanding intimacy and will add to the existing literature regarding men's experiences of intimacy. Developing a model of intimacy with qualitatively different experiences of intimacy offers diverse ways of understanding people's experiences. Rather than imposing one particular understanding of how intimacy is experienced, a constructive-developmental model of intimacy offers multiple understandings that allow a more inclusive (theoretical) understanding of people's experiences. It is also hoped that the findings presented in this thesis will also offer opportunities to extend these insights through further research to provide a more diverse examination of men's experiences of intimacy. A more inclusive (theoretical) understanding of people's intimate experiences also offers possibilities in therapeutic contexts, working with individuals, couples and groups. As well as enriching collective understandings of intimacy, a more inclusive understanding of intimacy call invite changes to the ways that people understand themselves and engage with others, described in policy or by institution. In this way, the findings in this thesis also offer possibilities for adding to collective understandings through education to enable a greater understanding of the limiting impact of social expectations upon experiences of intimacy.

1.4 Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis is presented in eight chapters, concluding with an afterword. Following this introductory chapter, in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 I describe the empirical, theoretical and philosophical contexts in which the thesis is situated, as well as the development of a methodology for this original research. The analyses of data are reported in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 and I discuss these in the final chapter, Chapter 8.

In Chapter 2 I examine past and current literature in the social sciences. I critically review research relevant to intimacy, both theoretical and empirical, addressing understandings and experiences of intimacy, leading to a narrower focus on literature related to men's experiences. Chapter 2 concludes by proposing a

working definition of intimacy for this thesis, elaborating upon the brief conception of intimacy I have offered in this chapter.

In Chapter 3 I introduce and interrogate Kegan's (1982) constructive-developmental theory of the evolving self. Chapter 3 presents a theoretical framework for understanding self and introduces a conceptual tool that also offers an analytical lens for later data analysis. The theory's five evolutionary stages of self are also described and applied to an understanding of intimacy. This understanding is also described in relation to the specific definition of intimacy proposed in Chapter 2. In addition, I also address ways in which this theory offers insights regarding the influence of sociocultural understandings of self.

In Chapter 4 I address philosophical and methodological considerations, including practical and ethical issues related to the recruitment of participants and the development of data through in-depth interviews. This chapter also details the analytical processes applied in order to develop new findings.

In Chapter 5 I report findings that address participants' epistemologies. These findings result from analyses employing the Subject-Object Interview protocols (Lahey et al., 2011). I offer detailed interpretations of participants' ways of making meaning, aligned with Kegan's (1982) theory. These analyses support later analyses in addressing the research questions identified in Section 1.3.1.

In Chapter 6 I report findings related to participants' epistemologies of intimacy, analysing their particular understandings of intimacy. I analyse these in relation to Kegan's (1982) evolutionary stages in order to identify patterns and to offer a cohesive means of organising diverse understandings of intimacy. These understandings are also evaluated in relation to participants' epistemologies, reported in Chapter 5, to identify ways in which these differences offer additional insights regarding an understanding of intimacy.

In Chapter 7 I examine participants' experiences and identify ways in which sociocultural norms related to self and relationships influence understandings of intimacy. In addition, my examination identifies ways in which significant personal experiences resulted in changes in understandings of self, and which also led to changes in experiences of intimacy.

In Chapter 8 I draw together the findings from Chapters 5, 6 and 7 to address the research questions that guide this thesis. This discussion highlights the

contribution that this thesis makes in providing new insights regarding an understanding of intimacy, and the benefits of a broader definition of intimacy. These ideas are also applied to develop an understanding of experiences of intimacy as being multilayered and as extending across the temporal boundaries of a single event. In addition, Chapter 8 identifies how this thesis adds to existing findings regarding the ways in which current western ideas about masculinity and romanticised ideas of intimacy limit the experiences of intimacy in everyday life. In Chapter 8 I also suggest that these narrower understandings of intimacy fail to acknowledge the potentially negative impacts of unwanted or unconscious intimacies. This final chapter also raises questions and offers clarifications and important extensions in relation to Kegan's (1982) theory. This thesis concludes by suggesting limits to these findings, but also how they may be applied in therapeutic contexts and ways in which they might be extended in order to be applied in public education/policy contexts. Finally, this thesis offers possibilities in terms of enriching men's experiences of intimacy.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I seek to situate this thesis in relation to the ideas and findings, regarding intimacy, that have been described by other researchers. This chapter is organised according to two main themes: scholarly understandings of intimacy, and research participants' experiences of intimacy. In this thesis, I view intimacy as involving the experience of deep intrapersonal and interpersonal engagement involving a connection to one's own or another's inner world (Fisher & Stricker, 1982; Sexton & Sexton, 1982). At the centre of this inner world is one's self. As Kegan (1994, p. 114) describes it, interpersonal intimacy involves "the self being near to another self", "near", not in a proximal sense, but in an ontological sense. In addition to providing a scholarly context, in this chapter I also seek to examine a new and inclusive definition of intimacy, building upon the conception of intimacy I presented in Chapter 1 (Section 1.1).

2.1.1 Chapter Overview

The examination of relevant literature begins with a focus on conceptual understandings of intimacy from psychology (Section 2.2.1) and from other social sciences (Section 2.2.2). This approach was taken to broaden the conceptualisation of intimacy, extending a psychological understanding, which has largely focused on within- and between-person (dyadic) factors. Adding to this, sociocultural factors provide an opportunity to develop an understanding of intimacy that incorporates interactions that are intrapersonal, and interpersonal, and sociological.

It is also important to note that much of the scholarly work focused explicitly on conceptualising intimacy took place more than two decades ago. As a result, much of the literature examined in Section 2.1 predates the current century. Although intimacy continues to be a subject of investigation, much of the current literature focuses on experiences, rather than on understandings of intimacy. Consequently, many of these contemporary studies draw upon older understandings. However, some studies examining experiences of intimacy provide opportunities to expand these older conceptualisations. It is these studies that I critique in Section 2.3, whilst studies that particularly examine men's intimate experiences are addressed in Section 2.4. In bringing this chapter to a close, I draw

upon the literature reviewed in this chapter to propose a new definition of intimacy (Section 2.5) to be used as a starting point for the analysis of the original data developed as part of this doctoral study.

2.2 Understandings of Intimacy

2.2.1 Psychological Understandings of Intimacy

After a brief introduction, the review of the psychological literature is grouped into three categories: understandings that focus on intimacy *capacity* or development, understandings that focus on relational *experiences*, and understandings that focus on relational *processes*. These categories have been chosen to demonstrate the breadth of approaches taken by psychology researchers in an attempt to understand intimacy, attempts which have not been without difficulty. As Chelune, Robison, and Kommor (1984, p. 13) describe:

> Almost everyone knows what intimacy is, but as soon as one must point to specifics, the concept becomes either elusive or bogged down in idiosyncratic trivialities.

As the following review of the psychology literature reveals, most of the research focused on conceptualising intimacy took place from the 1960s to 1990s. Much of this work is gathered in Prager's (1995) seminal work, which reviewed the existing research, and attempted to consolidate the diverse definitions used to describe intimacy. Prager identified that intimacy has been researched in multiple ways: to refer to the content of conversations (i.e., "we talked about intimate things"), to describe emotions (i.e., "I felt intimate"), to describe sex (i.e., "we were intimate with one another") and to refer to types of relationships (i.e., "we have an intimate relationship"). Consequently, she suggested that the concept of intimacy was too broad and that it encompassed diverse experiences, across which there were no elements that could be said as being universally true. Therefore, defining intimacy in a way that addressed all of these experiences was too complex. Instead, she examined this broad concept as two sub-concepts: intimate *interactions* and intimate *relationships*. Prager suggested that intimate relationships could be understood as characterised by intimate interactions; that is, people describe their relationship as intimate when they have a history of intimate interactions and also assume that intimate interactions are likely to continue in that relationship. Although intimate relationships can be characterised by intimate interactions, intimate interactions are not confined to intimate relationships. Therefore, she

suggested that a definition of intimacy should focus on intimate interactions as these are the building blocks for intimate relationships and describe other intimate experiences outside of intimate relationships.

In examining intimate interactions in greater detail, Prager (1995) suggested that intimate interactions could also be understood as having two components: intimate *experiences* and intimate *behaviours* (see Figure 2.1). Intimate experiences involve affective and perceptual components—affective in that they involve positive feelings of connectedness toward oneself and toward another, and perceptual in that they involve a sense of understanding or knowing "inner most" things about one another, and accepting each other.

Intimate behaviours are verbal or nonverbal actions that become intimate because they result in intimate experiences. That is, the meanings attributed to the behaviours are what determine their intimate nature, and it is intimate experiences that give those behaviours their intimate meanings. Thus, intimate experiences are at the heart of intimate interactions and, by extension, drawing on Prager's (1995) conceptualisation, at the heart of an understanding of intimacy.

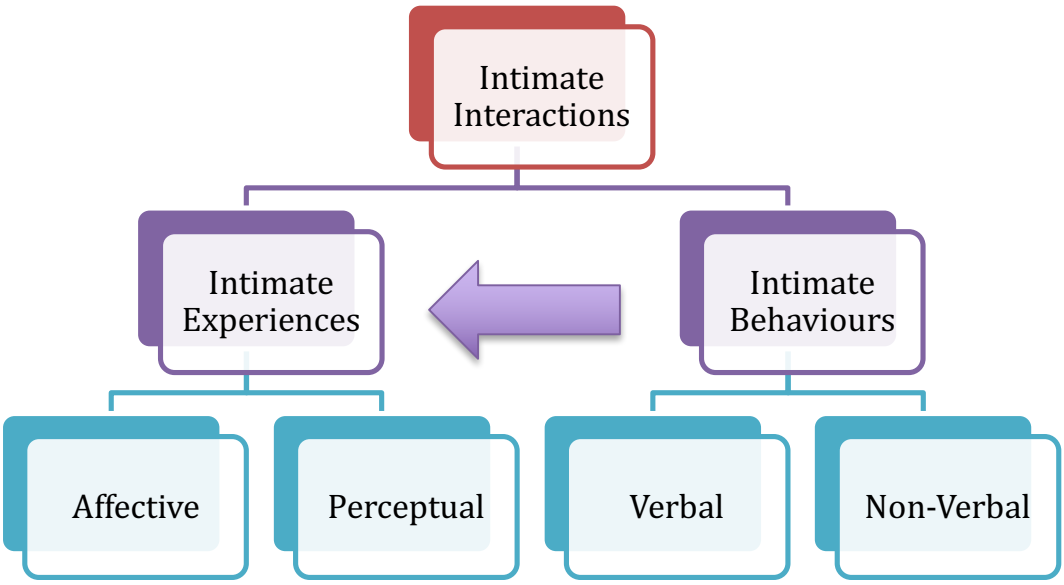


Figure 2.1. Prager's (1995) Model of Intimacy

In a later work, Prager and Roberts (2004, p. 45) described intimate interactions as distinct from other interactions in that they involve "three necessary and sufficient conditions: self-revealing behaviour, positive involvement with the other, and shared understandings". Taking this definition in relation to Prager's (1995) earlier understanding of intimate interactions, these conditions must also be

present in intimate experiences. However, I view these conditions as defining intimacy too narrowly. Prager and Roberts, in elaborating upon these conditions, suggested that self-revealing behaviours are intentional and freely offered. However, other literature suggests that intimate experiences may not be the result of "a willingness to drop defences and invite the other to witness and to know private, personal aspects of the self" (Prager & Roberts, 2004, p. 45). For example, Bennett (2011) described intimacy in nursing contexts where neither patient nor nurse entered their experience seeking to be known in private and personal ways, yet these situations were experienced as intimate.

In clarifying "positive", Prager and Roberts (2004, p. 45) referred to "a basic positive regard for the other" that "precludes attacking, defensive, distancing, or alienating behaviour". However, literature examining intimate partner violence suggests links between abusive experiences and intimacy (e.g., Lafontaine & van Lussier, 2005; Spitzberg, 2011).

In relation to the final condition, Prager and Roberts (2004, p. 45) described intimacy as "characterised by shared understandings of one another's selves. . . . a sense of knowing or understanding some aspect of the other's inner experience—from private thoughts, feelings, or beliefs, to characteristic rhythms, habits or routines, to private sexual representations". Although they suggest that *what* is known or understood can vary, in the following chapter, I suggest that *how* this knowing or understanding occurs also varies between people. As a consequence of these different ways of knowing, it is possible for one person to be privy to another person's inner experience, but presume different meanings for these experiences, compared to the other person's interpretation of their own experience. It is also possible to continue in these differences without realising they exist. This potential difference in perception (of the same event) challenges the presumption of mutuality, which Schnarch (1991) suggests is inherent in most understandings of intimacy. However, it may be that mutuality distinguishes intimate experiences from intimate interactions. That is, intimate interactions require each person involved to have an intimate experience. However, an interaction may involve only one/some of the persons (in the same interaction) having an intimate experience. Thus, although the individual's experience may be intimate, the interaction between people would not be considered intimate. Consequently, in this thesis I take the

view that intimate experiences need not be shared experiences; that is, they do not have to be part of an intimate interaction (see Figure 2.2).

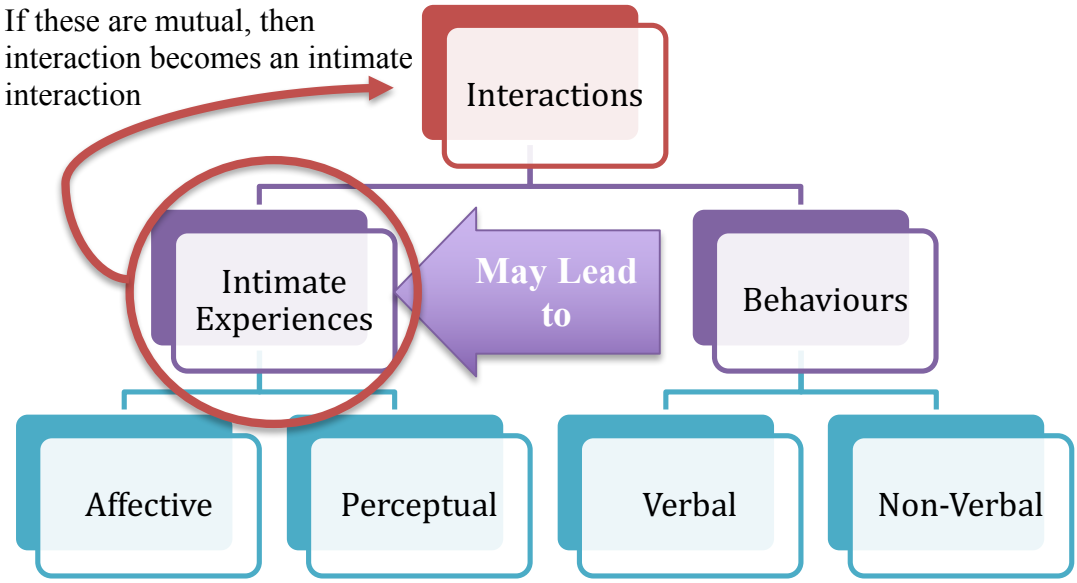


Figure 2.2. Revised Model of Intimacy

As a final criticism of Prager and Roberts' (2004) understanding of intimacy, their description does not incorporate ways in which a person might experience intimacy within themself. That is, ways in which, through a process of self-exploration, a person comes to a greater awareness of themself; in a sense, a revealing of self to self. Therefore, I also suggest that intimacy can be experienced *intra*personally (through engagement of self with self), not only *inter*personally (through engagement of self with others).

Despite these criticisms, Prager's (1995; Prager & Roberts, 2004) framing of intimacy is relevant to the purposes of this thesis in that it identifies *intimate experiences* as central to an understanding of intimacy, and that these involve *self*. This link between intimacy and self is elaborated in the next section and incorporated into the definition of intimacy I propose in Section 2.5. In addition, the way in which self is central to experience and understanding (i.e., constructing meaning), including intimate experiences and understandings, is examined in greater detail in Chapter 3. However, remaining with an exploration of scholarly understandings of intimacy, in the next sections I examine diverse ways in which intimacy has been understood in psychology as an individual capacity, as a relational experience and as a relational process. These understandings demonstrate an increasing complexity, from seeing intimacy as a capacity, to a set of specific interpersonal behaviours, to an internal experience occurring in a range of

relationship experiences, to a process involving interdependent perceptions. However, these understandings (as identified in Chapter 1) generally view intimacy as dyadic, and like Prager and Roberts (2004), as involving intentional self-revelation and positive involvement. Literature taking a broader view of intimacy, beyond dyadic, self-revelatory and positive experiences is examined in Section 2.2.2.

Intimacy capacity

Psychosocial development

Some psychology theorists have viewed intimacy as a capacity that becomes available once a person has achieved a certain level of development of self (e.g., Erikson, 1963; Sullivan, 1953). This view sees intimacy as an individual quality, attributable to a person, rather than as a relationship experience. Erikson (1963) suggested that in order to develop the capacity to be intimate, a person needed to have established an identity. In having established an identity, a person was able to engage with another person in a deep way without losing a sense of themself. This view was also held by Hatfield (1984) and by Levine (1991) who suggested that having developed a sense of self, a person was equipped to share that sense of self. However, others have challenged these ideas. Gilligan (1982) suggested that for women in particular, intimacy and identity are interdependent. Others have also debated whether identity facilitates intimacy or if, perhaps, intimacy facilitates identity, and that self-disclosure creates opportunities to reinforce or validate self-concept, identity or sense of self (Berger & Kellner, 1964; Derlega, 1984).

Orlofsky and colleagues (Levitz-Jones & Orlofsky, 1985; Orlofsky, 1976, 1993; Orlofsky et al., 1973) also followed Erikson's (1963) understanding of intimacy as a capacity which develops with psychosocial maturation. They contributed a large body of work across two decades, developing theoretical and empirical tools, such as the Intimacy Status Interview (Orlofsky et al., 1973). This interview was designed to assess the degree to which a person had negotiated Erikson's (1963) intimacy versus isolation crisis. Their findings offered explanations for differences in the depth of intimacy experienced in relationships (e.g., Orlofsky, 1976) and related intimacy capacity to other experiences such as mental health (e.g., Levitz-Jones & Orlofsky, 1985). A number of other studies have taken up this work (e.g., Lobitz & Lobitz, 1996; Raskin, 1985; Tesch &

Whitbourne, 1982). Thus, Orlofsky and colleagues' work has found support for the influence of identity formation on intimacy capacity.

From another perspective, Campbell and Fletcher and others (Campbell & Fletcher, 2015; Campbell, Simpson, Kashy, & Fletcher, 2001) have examined the idea of intimacy as a capacity in relation to the Ideal Standards Model (ISM) of close relationships (Fletcher & Simpson, 2000; Simpson, Fletcher, & Campbell, 2001). This model builds on previous theories of relationship processes such as Interdependence Theory (Rusbult, Arriaga, & Agnew, 2001; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) and Self-discrepancy Theory (Higgins, 1987). According to the ISM, ideal standards provide a means by which partners evaluate, explain and regulate their relationship experiences. In this way, intimacy is understood as a capacity that is present to a greater or lesser degree in an individual and thus, an attribute of a person rather than resulting from an interaction.

Although this view does not align with Prager's (1995) model of intimacy (see Figure 2.1), what is helpful about a conceptualisation of intimacy as related to psychosocial development, or aspects of self-development, is that it recognises that capacity for intimacy changes over the lifespan, and develops with psychosocial maturation. In addition, a psychosocial view of development recognises that both maturational factors (i.e., factors within the person) and social factors (i.e., factors within the person's social environment) play a role. Taking both a "psycho" and "social" view of development in relation to intimacy can recognise that a person's capacity for intimacy can vary as a result of changes in one's own understanding of oneself (i.e., the development of one's identity) that arise from personal growth and from social influence. However, Erikson's (1963) developmental view of intimacy takes a dichotomous view of intimacy—either a person has achieved a capacity for intimacy or they have not. In this thesis, I extend this idea by suggesting that self-development results in qualitatively different experiences of intimacy across a person's lifespan. This understanding of self-development is examined in Chapter 3.

Attachment theory

Attachment theory offers possible explanations for why some individuals may be successful in navigating Erikson's (1963) intimacy versus isolation crisis, and others may not. Bowlby (1980) proposed that a person develops internal working models of self and other based upon their early experiences of being cared

for. Consistently responsive care-giving leads to positive models of self and other which, in turn, leads to attachment security. However, *inconsistent* care-giving leads to negative models of self and to attachment anxiety. The *absence* of care-giving leads to negative models of other and attachment avoidance (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Brennan et al., 1998; Collins et al., 2006; Fraley et al., 2000; Pietromonaco & Feldman Barrett, 2000). Studies examining attachment and intimacy have found that attachment security is related to experiences of intimacy such that "more secure attachment facilitates feelings of closeness to others" (Grabill & Kerns, 2000, p. 375). Collins and Feeney (2004, p. 173) found that participants who were more secure were also more "comfortable with intimacy and closeness".

On the other hand, attachment anxious and attachment avoidant individuals experience less intimacy. Whilst individuals higher in attachment anxiety may disclose self-relevant information (Grabill & Kerns, 2000) they tend to experience less intimacy (Downing, 2008). Other findings indicate that these individuals have an overwhelming desire for intimacy, but tend to report a large discrepancy between the intimacy they desire and the intimacy they experience (Collins & Feeney, 2004; Reis, 2006). In contrast, individuals higher in attachment avoidance prioritise independence over intimacy (Collins & Feeney, 2004), tend to disclose less self-relevant information (Grabill & Kerns, 2000), experience less intimacy (Downing, 2008) and avoid intimate situations (Bartholomew, 1990; Reis, 2006).

Attachment theory offers a way of understanding the complexity of intimacy-relevant perceptions. Not only do these perceptions draw upon information specific to an intimate experience, they also draw upon a person's historical experiences of being cared for in consistent and responsive ways. Applying this to an understanding of intimacy can suggest that a person's perceptions of dyadic intimate interactions are shaped by their internally constructed models of self and of the specific other in ways that are connected to actual self and actual other, but not equivalent to them. This means that one person's experience of an intimate interaction can be quite different to another person's experience of the same intimate interaction, resulting from the particular construction of each person's internal working models. In this sense, an intimate interaction can be understood as occurring between a person's own internal working models; that is, between *representations* of people, rather than between *actual* people. In terms of couples,

Duck (1994) explains this asymmetrical experience of intimacy (i.e., when partners experience different degrees of intimacy within the same interaction) as being in two psychologically different relationships, that is, each person's experience of the relationship is constructed by a qualitatively different psychological context.

In summary, psychosocial development and attachment-related internal working models add to the revised model of intimacy (i.e., Figure 2.2) by offering some explanations for different experiences arising from potentially intimate interactions. These approaches—the developmental approach described earlier and the attachment approach described above—make some important contributions in understanding how development and prior relationship experiences contribute to understanding experiences of intimacy. However, these intrapersonal conceptualisations of intimacy can fail to recognise the interpersonal nature of intimacy; that is, factors that are dependent upon *other* people's capacities and conceptions of intimacy.

Intimacy as a relational experience

Another approach to intimacy, introducing interpersonal factors, has been to focus on intimacy as a dyadic experience involving the revelation of self to another person, described by early researchers as "encountering another" (e.g., Jourard & Rubin, 1968). Early work addressing interpersonal encounters focused on verbal behaviours such as self-disclosure (e.g., Hinde, 1979; Jourard, 1959; Jourard & Lasakow, 1958; Lewis, 1978) or nonverbal behaviours such as eye contact, smiling or physical proximity (Argyle & Dean, 1965). Jourard (1959, p. 428) proposed that "the amount of personal information that one person is willing to disclose to another appears to be an index of the 'closeness' of the relationship, and of the affection, love, or trust that prevails between two people". Jourard and Rubin (1968, p. 39, italics in original) also suggested that touch could also communicate this kind of encounter in a way that verbal and other nonverbal behaviours could not: "I know that you *exist* in a way that hearing or seeing you cannot confirm". These earlier researchers explored intimacy in multiple relationships, such as between work colleagues (e.g., Altman & Haythorn, 1965), between strangers (e.g., Jourard & Rubin, 1968), between friends (e.g., Lewis, 1978) as well as in couple relationships.

Unlike Prager's (1995) view that intimate behaviours could be identified as such because of the resulting intimate experience, these early understandings of intimacy tended to assume that intimate behaviours had some inherent quality that

made them intimate. Contrary to this assumption, Hacker (1981) found that not all self-disclosures led to feelings of closeness, either in same-sex friendships or in heterosexual married couples. Although these early behavioural understandings of intimacy were limited in that they assumed an equivalence between behaviours and experiences, they point to a diversity of behaviours, both verbal and nonverbal, that are involved in intimate experiences.

In addressing these limitations, other researchers examined different contexts in which people might experience intimacy and labelled these as different forms of intimacy. However, the occurrence of intimacy in these contexts was determined by the experience in these contexts, not by the contexts themselves. In this way, these researchers' understanding of intimacy supports Prager's (1995) structural understanding of intimacy, with intimate experience at it centre. These forms of intimacy were seen as diverse ways to experience interpersonal encounter. Drawing on clinical practice in marital therapy, Clinebell and Clinebell (1971, p. 29) identified emotional intimacy as "the foundation of all other forms of intimacy", and described it as "depth awareness and sharing of significant meanings and feelings – the touching of the inmost selves of two human beings". They suggested that emotional intimacy could be experienced in a number of forms: sexual, intellectual, aesthetic, creative, recreational, crisis, conflict commitment and spiritual. Schaefer and Olson (1977, 1981) also developed a similar inventory of forms of intimacy as a means to help couples understand one another's experiences of intimacy and to identify areas in which intimacy might be further developed. Similarly, Strassburger (1998) identified 11 forms of intimacy, adding to the variety of forms in which intimacy was understood to be experienced: expression of personal thoughts and feelings; intellectual intimacy; social intimacy; physical intimacy; sexual intimacy; familial intimacy; recreational intimacy; rites of passage; memories, hopes and dreams; helping intimacy; and doting intimacy.

Dahms (1972) also examined intimacy as occurring in different forms. He suggested that these different forms could be understood in a hierarchical way involving three levels: intellectual, physical and emotional. Rather than seeing all forms of intimacy as equally intimate, he suggested that intimacy could be experienced in ways that varied in depth according to the degree to which people projected, to others, an idealised view of themselves. More idealised projections were described as intellectual and involved "playing games" where a person is

"more concerned with the self one is conveying than with the self one is" (p. 22). Less idealised projections were described as physical, involving touching, hugging, caressing, and proximity. At the top of this hierarchy was emotional intimacy. Dahms described emotional intimacy as characterised by mutual accessibility ("complete access to one another, free from criticism", p. 38), naturalness ("people free to be themselves, to expose their frailties and strengths", p. 45), and non-possessiveness ("caring on the highest level, delight[ing] in the independence of others, not in the possession of them", p. 47). According to Dahms, the epitome of intimacy was a sharing of selves without pretence in a way that maintained the independence of individuals. In this way, Dahms' ideas share some commonality with Erikson's (1963) ideas: identity must be established in order to experience higher levels of intimacy.

In describing intimacy as occurring at different levels, Dahms (1972) suggested that intimacy can be experienced in ways that are qualitatively different. However, the way in which Dahms described these qualitative differences (i.e., more or less idealised projections of self) may overlook individual differences in intimacy capacity. That is, Dahms' ideas may assume that, whilst everyone is capable of emotional intimacy, some choose game-playing levels of intimacy rather than levels of intimacy that have greater integrity with self. What is missing from this understanding is a recognition of the way in which development may play a role in enabling a capacity for qualitatively different forms or levels of intimacy.

In summary, a focus on intimacy as a relationship experience points to an understanding of intimacy as occurring between two people, through a variety of behaviours, occurring in a range of contexts, and as an experience that involves connecting with another person at multiple levels, with the deepest being at the level of "innermost self". However, this understanding privileges intimacy as absolute rather than relative, characterised by ideals of openness and authenticity that involve "telling each other everything" (Parks & Floyd, 1996, p. 94). In doing so, it addresses the interpersonal nature of intimacy, but fails to recognise the contribution that developmental approaches to intimacy offer; that individuals might differ in their capacity to be intimate. It also fails to recognise that individuals might differ in their desire to be intimate, as was suggested by studies investigating the influence of attachment. However, what is also missing in these relational conceptualisations of intimacy is an acknowledgement of the interaction of

different people's perceptions. These understandings fail to incorporate how differing perceptions of the same experience interact and how these interactions can influence the experience of intimacy.

Intimacy as a relational process

In addressing how perceptions interact in intimate experiences, Reis and colleagues (Clark & Reis, 1988; Reis & Shaver, 1988) extended the idea of intimacy as a relational experience by examining the process by which this experience occurred. According to Reis and Shaver's (1988) dyadic process model of intimacy, the experience of intimacy depended upon two different but inter-related experiences: one partner's revelation of important self-related information or feelings, verbally or nonverbally; and the other partner's validation of that revelation through a warm and understanding response involving affective as well as verbal and/or behavioural elements. Their view was that, as an interactional process, intimacy "depends not only on one partner's self expression, but also on the other's response" (Reis & Shaver, 1988, p. 206). As a consequence of this process, the first partner feels understood, validated and cared for. Reis and Shaver (1988) suggested that this interaction led to a deepening of the relationship and motivated reciprocal support and affection. Additionally, they highlighted the importance of each partner's perceptions of the other's disclosure or response in facilitating this process. In contrast to earlier behavioural understandings of intimacy, Reis and colleagues (Clark & Reis, 1988; Reis & Patrick, 1996; Reis & Shaver, 1988) identified that intimate interactions depended upon the effects of behaviours (verbal and nonverbal) on those involved in the exchange, rather than upon the behaviours themselves.

Laurenceau, Feldman-Barrett and Pietromonaco (1998) provided empirical support for Reis and Shaver's (1988) model but emphasised the importance of the disclosing partner's perception of the quality of their partner's responsiveness. Partner responsiveness was found to be an important predictor of intimacy in subsequent studies (Laurenceau, Barrett, & Rovine, 2005) and partner responsiveness moderated the effect of self-disclosure on experiences of intimacy (Laurenceau et al., 2005; Reis et al., 2004). Laurenceau and colleagues also found that disclosures involving emotional information such as "private feelings, opinions and judgements" (Laurenceau et al., 1998, p. 1239) were more strongly linked to intimacy, compared to factual disclosures. In another study involving couples in a

laboratory situation, Castellani (2006) found that disclosure of emotion was strongly linked to post-interaction intimacy for both the discloser and the responder. Similarly, Lin (1992) found partner responsiveness and self-disclosure both predicted intimacy. These findings provide support to an interactional understanding of intimacy that is focused on perceptions, rather than behaviours. However, these findings also emphasise intimacy as experienced not only in disclosing to another person, but also in being disclosed to. As well, these findings suggest that self-disclosure occurs in two ways: directly, by what is explicitly revealed through the discloser's disclosure, but also indirectly, by what is implicitly revealed through the quality of the responder's responsiveness.

Reis and Shaver's (1988) process model of intimacy has had an important impact on the way in which researchers have investigated intimacy. By emphasising both disclosure and supportive response, an understanding of intimacy as a dyadic process has been firmly established. In addition, Reis and Shaver's model of intimacy has been widely used in the social sciences and is the most frequently cited theory in the past decade of scholarly work examining intimacy (e.g., Ackerman & Corretti, 2015; Bois, Bergeron, Rosen, McDuff, & Grégoire, 2013; Debrot, Cook, Perrez, & Horn, 2012; Debrot, Schoebi, Perrez, & Horn, 2013; Gore, Cross, & Morris, 2006; Huffman & Fernando, 2012; Kirk, 2007; Mitchell et al., 2008; Shelton, Trail, West, & Bergsieker, 2010). However, in becoming one of the most used theories, issues that are not directly addressed by this theory have tended to be obscured. For example, in focusing on the outcomes of intimacy as a sense of being cared for and validated, implicit aspects of vulnerability in self-disclosure (Roberts & Greenberg, 2002) and the way in which this may create a balance or imbalance of power (Murstein & Adler, 1995; Rubin, Hill, Peplau, & Dunkel-Schetter, 1980) are aspects of intimacy that have not been examined in as much detail. As well, a focus on intimacy as having positive outcomes may have moved attention away from intimate contexts that involve conflict or violence. Thus, intimate partner violence or situations involving rape have not generally been considered to involve intimacy. However, some researchers suggest that intimacy may occur in these contexts (e.g., Kanuha, 2013; Weston, Marshall, & Coker, 2007). For example, Kanuha (2013) found that some partners used violence to provoke a deeper, emotional response from their partner.

Another possible limitation of this theory is that it defines intimacy as the result of a discrete interaction – a single disclosure of self and a single supportive response. This does not examine the broader context in which the interaction occurs such as the relationship history and events leading up to and following the interaction, the impact of development upon identity or capacity to recognise the significance of another's self-disclosure or what a supportive response might involve, or the wider cultural norms that influence how partners perceive their relationship and their interactions. In addition, in viewing intimacy as a discrete process, ways in which intimacy occurs across longer periods of time that might involve temporal separation between disclosure and response may also be overlooked. For example, it is possible that a person may have an interaction that, at the time, is not experienced as intimate, but that later, with hindsight, may be perceived as having been intimate. This raises questions about how such a delayed experience of intimacy might be understood in terms of Reis and Shaver's (1988) process model.

This section has examined individual, intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of intimacy by identifying the influence of psychosocial development, internal working models of self and other as well as describing the process of intimacy as involving the perceptions of intimacy-related behaviours. The following section adds to this by considering the sociocultural context in which intimate experiences occur.

2.2.2 Other Conceptualisations of Intimacy

From a sociological perspective, Giddens' (1992, p. 6) followed a dyadic understanding in his theoretical conception of intimacy as occurring in "a pure relationship". Giddens saw that, as a consequence of modernity, understandings of intimacy had been transformed in a way that valued intimacy for its own sake as a source of personal fulfilment, rather than as by-product of a marital relationship. He described the kind of relationship, where intimacy was fostered for its own sake, as pure because it was entered into for the rewards it offered to those in it, rather than serving other purposes (such as maintaining social order or as a context for family). It was an understanding of intimacy based upon mutual self-disclosure that resulted in mutual self-discovery. Through genuine self- and other-discovery, Giddens saw intimacy as overcoming hierarchical understandings of gender and promoting greater equality between men and women. This understanding also saw

sexual intercourse as "a medium of self-realisation and as a prime means, as well as an expression, of intimacy" (p. 164).

In general, Giddens' conceptualisation of the "pure relationship" describes some similarities to ways intimacy has largely been described previously, that is, with a shared focus on self-disclosure. There are some more specific parallels of the pure relationship with Dahms' (1972) ideas of emotional intimacy as involving mutual accessibility, naturalness and non-possessiveness. Further, like Giddens, Dahms saw that intimacy was a means for reducing the gaps between people created by social norms. In addition, Giddens' understanding of intimacy seems to presume a developed sense of self in order to pursue personal fulfilment and self-discovery. This way of viewing intimacy also aligns with developmental ideas held by some researchers (e.g., Hatfield, 1984; Levine, 1991), that identity precedes intimacy.

Jamieson (1999), in a critique of Giddens' (1992) conception of intimacy, suggested that while hopeful, it was idealistic, and that little evidence supported the idea of intimacy as a means to resolve inequalities between men and women. In addition, she suggested that "empirically, intimacy and inequality continue to coexist in many personal lives" (Jamieson, 1999, p. 491). In a later work, Jamieson stated more emphatically that "practices of intimacy are not, in themselves, automatically democratising or dismantling of patriarchal arrangements" (Jamieson, 2011, Section 6.4). This point is also made by Hacker (1981), whose findings highlight that not all self-disclosure is oriented toward vulnerability and that different types of self-disclosures (e.g., disclosures of strengths vs. weaknesses) can reinforce inequalities between men and women, with men tending to disclose strengths and women tending to disclose weaknesses.

In a critique of Giddens' (1992) idea of "the pure relationship", Jamieson (1999, p. 490) suggested that for couples "embroiled in financial and material matters over and above the relationship" that "the pure relationship seems to be a near impossibility". Jamieson also suggested that for many couples, mutual self-disclosure is not the path to intimacy, but that "love and care expressed through actions" (p. 485) was a common way in which couples experienced the intimate quality of their relationships.

Jamieson (1999, p. 477) also challenged ideas that intimacy "involves opening out to each other, enjoying each other's unique qualities and sustaining trust through mutual disclosure". She suggested, drawing on other studies, that

many couple relationships (heterosexual and homosexual) maintain a sense of closeness, not through "an intense process of mutual self-disclosure and exploration but a shared repertoire of cover stories, taboos and self-dishonesty" (p. 487). This description of intimacy has similar qualities to Dahms' (1972, p. 22) understanding of intellectual intimacy as "concerned with the self one is conveying than with the self one is". However, as was previously suggested, this assumes there is a difference between these two selves (i.e., conveyed self and actual self). As will be examined in Chapter 3, Kegan (1982) suggests that at earlier points in development, the self is determined by social expectations which, from more developed points, may seem to lack integrity. However, from the point of view of the person who is at these earlier stages, these social expectations *are* how they experience themself. Although Jamieson's argument is that Giddens' (1992) understanding of intimacy is too narrow, both of these understandings of intimacy may be included in a view that sees intimacy (as will be described more fully in Chapter 3) as qualitatively different at different stages of development of self.

In examining other ways in which intimacy has been conceptualised, Marks (1998) provides a useful distinction between intimate experiences that are typically dyadic and exclusive, and intimate experiences that involve groups and are oriented toward inclusion. By exclusive, Marks refers to "the elaboration of private thoughts, feelings and experiences through acts of self-disclosure" (p. 44). This describes much of the literature reviewed to this point. This idea of exclusivity was also central to Simmel's (1908/1950) very early conception of an intimate relationship as defined as one in which particular self-relevant information was only shared within that particular relationship. In contrast, Marks saw inclusive experiences of intimacy as involving a "readiness to expand group boundaries to include anyone important to *any* of the members" (p. 43, italics added).

Marks (1998) was also critical of Giddens' (1992) conception of the pure relationship and suggested that the concept of self-disclosure presumes a "private sense of self – an individual, *enclosed* self" (Marks, 1998, p. 66, italics in original). Marks suggested that the women he studied "had neither the physical nor the emotional space to carve out [this] private sense of self" (p. 66). This led him to an "inclusive" understanding of intimacy that arose, not from "any joint exploration of internal processes" (p. 66) as Gidden's exclusive intimacy did, but from more widely shared experiences. Marks found that "closeness with dearest friends was

expressed through laughing and singing and exchanging stories in large, expansive, family-like gatherings, not through little, self-disclosing dyads" (p. 66). Marks understood these group experiences as constructing a shared self. In this way, Marks' understanding of inclusive intimacy as important for development of self aligns with ideas held by other researchers (e.g., Berger & Kellner, 1964; Derlega, 1984; Gilligan, 1982) who suggest that intimacy can precede any formation of an individual identity.

Marks' (1998) conception of inclusive intimacy also offers a way to recognise how self development influences intimacy. It is possible that Marks' ideas of exclusive and inclusive forms of intimacy express different stages in the development of self. (The way in which the self develops and the implications for intimacy are examined in Chapter 3.) In particular, Kegan's (1982) theory (also detailed in Chapter 3) describes both a private, individual, enclosed self (Stage 4) and an interpersonal, mutual, shared self (Stage 3).

From a family therapy perspective, Weingarten (1991) drew upon social constructionist and feminist ideas. For Weingarten, "intimate interaction occurs when people share meaning or co-create meaning and are able to coordinate their actions to reflect their mutual meaning-making" (p. 2). This idea of mutual meaning-making aligns with Marks' (1998) ideas of inclusive intimacy.

Weingarten (1991) also suggested that non-intimate interactions can be transformed into intimate interactions through changes in the ways that people construct meaning. This idea shares similarities with the idea that personal meanings determine intimate experiences, which was captured in Reis and Shaver's (1988) reference to the importance of perceptions in their process model of intimacy. In addition, Weingarten suggested that experiences of intimacy are also constructed by social norms and that these norms determined whether or not interactions are experienced as intimate. In taking a social constructionist view, she argued that the "self exists in the ongoing interchange with others" (Weingarten, 1991, p. 3) and that collectively through this interchange, people can transform these collective social expectations. Thus, Weingarten identifies that understandings of intimacy can change in qualitative ways, as a result of experiences with other people.

These ideas add some important aspects to an understanding of intimacy. Identifying social norms as collective ways of making meaning and that these

meanings "contain and constrain what we can feel, think, and do" (Weingarten, 1991, p. 2) recognises the importance of collective social expectations in individuals' intimate experiences. Understanding that dyads or groups can co-create meaning and that these mutual meanings can transform non-intimate experiences into intimate ones recognises the importance of personal and shared meaning-making. These two levels of construction – collective and personal, are also examined in terms of self in Chapter 3 to offer a greater understanding of different ways in which these two levels interact.

In another conceptualisation of intimacy, Gordon (2014, p. 167) identified intimacy as characterised by intensity, significance, shared meanings and the possibility of influencing each other's identity: "the existence of intimacy in a relationship indicates that the two parties allow their identities to be shaped, at least in part, by the other". Gordon's understanding reveals intimacy as situated in vulnerabilities, created through the significance of a friendship or the possibility of influencing private thoughts about self, and created through shared and co-created meanings. This understanding of intimacy shares similarities with Marks' (1998) and Weingarten's (1991) understandings of intimacy in terms of co-created meanings and Marks' understanding of intimacy as influencing a person's understanding of self. However, Gordon differs from Marks in that he describes the mutual influencing of self in private and dyadic contexts and influences an already developed individual identity, and from Weingarten in that his focus of influence is the individual, rather than the collective.

2.2.3 Summary

This section has reviewed literature that has explicitly focused on conceptualising intimacy. In general, psychology has focused on private and dyadic experiences of intimacy and has concluded that intimacy is an interactive process involving a revelation of self and a supportive, validating response. There are limitations arising from this conclusion.

One limitation is that this conception views intimacy as a discrete event occurring in a single interaction, and taking Prager's (1995) understanding, that these discrete events sum to define a relationship as intimate. As has been suggested, this can overlook experiences where disclosure and response are temporally dislocated. In addition, a dyadic process that focuses on interpersonal

processes can overlook sociological factors that influence partner's perceptions and experiences.

Another limitation of the conceptions of intimacy that have been described so far is that intimacy has largely been framed as a positive experience. Framing intimacy as involving full disclosure or "telling each other everything" (Parks & Floyd, 1996, p. 94), and as a positive experience fails to recognise the vulnerability involved in doing so and ignores the possibility that such vulnerability might not be in the best interests of the persons involved. Although attachment theory offers explanations for why some individuals may not desire intimate experiences, these are portrayed as the result of attachment insecurity, which suggests psychological maladjustment. An alternative perspective may be that disclosure of self, may create a vulnerability, which may create a risk to psychological or physical safety. Thus avoidance of intimacy may be, in some situations, an adaptive response.

In addition, viewing intimacy only as a positive experience can overlook the potentially intimate nature of intimate partner violence, or other contexts in which physical, sexual or psychological abuse occurs. In such situations, it is possible to see these experiences as involving extreme measures to force vulnerability (such as in intimate partner violence) or involving vulnerabilities that may lead to unwanted intimacies (as in abusive situations). One of the advantages of viewing these experiences as intimate, is that they can be readily recognised, as Gordon (2014, p. 167) suggests, as shaping the victim's (and perhaps the perpetrator's) identity. In addition, taking only a positive view of intimacy makes it easier to overlook the negative effects of vulnerability and the imbalance of power it creates. In a positive dyadic experience, vulnerability can empower the responding partner to validate, care for and understand the disclosing partner. However, Jamieson (1999), in her critique of Giddens' (1992) "pure relationship" identified that intimacy does not seem to resolve the inequalities between relationship partners. At worst, it can, as Hatfield (1984) describes, empower the responding partner to invalidate and manipulate the disclosing partner.

A further limitation of conceptualising intimacy as a dyadic process is that doing so does not encompass a conception of intimacy as an intrapersonal process. That is, it does not provide a way for understanding experiences of intimacy with oneself. Ideas regarding mindfulness (e.g., Hayes, Luoma, Bond, Masuda & Lillis, 2006) suggest that it is possible to observe oneself, and thus, relate to oneself. For

example, a person can be self-accepting, self-critical or self-rejecting, shaping the nature of the relationship one has with oneself. Thus, one can become aware of parts of oneself, and can respond to that awareness. This awareness and response can be understood as disclosure (of oneself to oneself) and response (of oneself to oneself). Therefore, applying Reis and Shaver's (1988) process model, this may be understood as an intimate experience.

Although there are some limitations to Reis and Shaver's (1988) theory, what this dyadic process does add to previous understandings of intimacy is that perceptions, or the meanings attributed to behaviours, determine whether an experience is intimate or otherwise. Thus, self-disclosure or a supportive response, in themselves, do not ensure an intimate experience. This was also an observation offered by Macionis (1978, p. 114, italics in original), that "intimacy has a *subjective* rather than objective character. There is no specific behaviour or interaction that has an inherent quality of intimacy".

In addition, the brief review of sociological literature has also highlighted that intimacy has been understood in diverse ways. In contrast to the dyadic and exclusive ways in which intimacy is often described, other conceptualisations are more inclusive. Examining these differences has also raised the possibility that Kegan's (1982) theory, in describing qualitatively different evolutions of self, can offer important insights for understanding different experiences of intimacy. In addition, this review has identified that collective meanings as well as personal meanings influence experiences of intimacy. Understanding the relationship between personally determined meanings and socially determined meanings in relation to intimacy is important for developing a more comprehensive understanding of how intimacy is experienced in people's lives.

2.3 Experiences of Intimacy

The previous section focused on literature that discussed the way in which intimacy has been conceptualised. As was described in the chapter overview, much of the conceptual work in intimacy predates this century. This section examines more recent studies of intimacy that offer further insights regarding the way in which intimacy is understood by looking at how it is experienced. The following examples allow an examination of inclusive and exclusive experiences of intimacy and a discussion of ways in which lines between private and public are blurred in personal and workplace contexts and through technology. This section is divided

into "domestic" relationships which describe to relationships typically associated with the household members or occurring in the home and "non-domestic" relationships which describe relationships typically associated with non-household members and occurring outside the home.

2.3.1 Domestic Relationships: Inclusive vs. Exclusive, Private vs. Public

Recent studies of intimacy in domestic relationships have examined a variety of contexts involving families, couples and friendships. In a study of intimacy between parents and children, Oliphant and Kuczynski (2011) identified five themes that characterised participants' experiences of intimacy in and around the home: shared positive affect, shared physical closeness, children's self-disclosure, participation in shared projects (both parents supporting children's and children joining in parents' projects) and intimacy rituals. These themes described experiences that involved the development of shared and co-created meanings that were exclusive, such as in the intimacy rituals, practices "that had a whimsical, playful nature that were idiosyncratic and unique to a particular parent and child. Intimacy rituals were co-created such that both the parent and the child knew their role and the exact sequencing of events" (Oliphant & Kuczynski, 2011, p. 1113). It was the exclusivity of these rituals that gave them special meaning, and "because these moments were unique, they were considered a special part of the relationship" (Oliphant & Kuczynski, 2011, p. 1113). In addition to experiencing intimacy through shared inner thoughts or knowledge, these intimacies were also experienced bodily through physical contact such as cuddling or "play[ing] with each other's hair" (Oliphant & Kuczynski, 2011, p. 1112). These were largely private and exclusive experiences, taking place in and around the home.

Cronin (2015), in another study examining intimacy, also focused on typically domestic activities associated with raising children. In this study, Cronin identified strong emotional bonds that developed in "domestic friendships". These friendships were focused on mothers' support for one another in "the practical and emotional demands of caring for children" (Cronin, 2015, p. 676). These friendship groups extended these typically domestic activities beyond the physical and emotional boundaries of the home. These connections were focused upon a mutual understanding of the challenges faced in raising children and a shared sense of being understood in a way that was not experienced in other relationships. Cronin's

analysis revealed, "a profoundly relational constitution of participants' sense of self" (p. 676).

In another study of domestic relationships focused on couples, Gregg (2013) also investigated the ways in which typically private experiences were extended beyond the physical borders of the home. She examined couples' use of technology, such as social media to maintain their sense of closeness. Gregg identified that for some people, the availability of technology enabled more frequent communication whilst at work. She suggested that this increased capacity to communicate more frequently fostered expectations that partners should know everything about each other. In addition, some technologies facilitated the sharing of "mood changes, events and random trivia [which] could be broadcast from distant locations and the reach of these messages extended not only to partners but workmates, friends and family" (Gregg, 2013, p. 306).

Gregg's (2013) and Oliphant and Kuczynski's (2011) findings share similarities with understandings of intimacy that have focused on self-disclosure in private and exclusive dyadic relationships and on different contexts in which intimacy can occur (e.g., Clinebell & Clinebell, 1971). These findings also align with Prager and Roberts' (2004) ideas of intimacy as being intentional, and characterised by positive regard, involving shared understandings of selves through the sharing of thoughts and feelings, and through shared knowledge of personal habits and routines.

In contrast, the women in Cronin's (2015) study experienced intimacy in ways that aligned with Marks' (1998) inclusive understanding of intimacy and, like Marks' participants, developed a sense of self in these relationships.

Both Cronin's (2015) and Oliphant and Kuczynski's (2011) findings highlight the way in which bodily experiences also communicated information about inner thoughts and feelings, supporting a view that self-disclosure need not be verbal. In addition, these align with Jamieson's (1999) instrumental (i.e., through actions) understanding of intimacy in domestic contexts.

Oliphant and Kuczynski's (2011) findings also differed from typical understandings of intimacy in dyadic relationships. These relationships had aspects that were one-sided, such as verbal disclosures by children to parents, but not parents to children, supporting the asymmetrical nature of some intimate relationships suggested by Duck (1994) (see 2.2.1, for links with *Attachment*

Theory). This was explained by Oliphant and Kuczynski's observation that experiences in these relationships were centred on the needs of the child, rather than the parents' needs. In a similar way Cronin (2015) identified that although her participants' friendships provided them with support, these friendships were developed around meeting the participants' children's needs, not their own.

In terms of boundaries between private and public, these studies varied. Oliphant and Kuczynski's (2011) participants experienced intimacy in private and exclusive ways that maintained strong boundaries around typically domestic activities occurring in domestic contexts (i.e., within the home). Cronin's (2015) participants experienced intimacy in less private and more inclusive ways, in that these domestic friendships extended typically domestic activities into more social spaces. Gregg's (2013) participants not only extended typically private, exclusive and domestic exchanges into the workplace, but through technology were able to broaden these exchanges in ways that were inclusive, but in a much more public way than Cronin's participants. Also in comparison to Cronin's participants, Gregg's participants' exchanges were not focused on addressing specific and mutual needs, but upon sharing personal information potentially involving thoughts, feelings and revealing habits and routines. Unlike Cronin's participants, Gregg's findings describe an intersection of typically private and exclusive ways of experiencing intimacy being played out in public and inclusive contexts. As Cronin's (2015) and Marks' (1998) findings suggest, these inclusive ways of experiencing intimacy may lead to one's self-concept being shaped by others. This raises some concern about the vulnerabilities created by such public and intimate practices. Whereas in the past, the private disclosure of self-related information provided some sense of containment, technology has created immediate access to self-related information without containment (see Lambert, 2013, p. 2).

These studies support previous understandings of intimacy as both inclusive and exclusive. They also add to an understanding of intimacy. Cronin's (2015) study identifies how mutual need-meeting can foster strong bonds in new and challenging situations and can shape one's sense of self through mutual understanding. Cronin's and Oliphant and Kuczynski's (2011) studies highlight the importance of nonverbal ways of sharing oneself and in Oliphant and Kuczynski's study this was particularly in the context of an ethically necessary imbalance in verbal self-disclosure. Gregg's (2013) findings raise opportunities to consider the

effects of blurring lines between private and public and transporting typically exclusive types of intimate exchanges into inclusive and public contexts.

2.3.2 Commercial and Professional Relationships: Private vs. Public

The following two examples look at ways in which public experiences were brought into private spaces through television and the internet. Abbots (2015) examined how participants were able to build intimate relationships with celebrity chefs, through television portrayals of the chefs' lifestyles and personal lives, websites and online chat. The strength of these relationships was demonstrated through participants' trust (for example, by trying new foods and recipes because they were promoted by a particular chef), through participants' strong association of recipes, specific pantry items and kitchen equipment with their favourite chefs and through participants' use of first names and terms of endearment when referring to particular chefs. Abbots identified ways in which these connections influenced participants' personal identities; however, she also recognised that these relationships had created an illusion of being personal in what was in reality, an impersonal context.

Like Abbots (2015), Abidin and Thompson (2012) found similar effects with consumers' engagements with blogshops, i.e., "online sites in which young women model and sell apparel via social media" (Abidin & Thompson, 2012, p. 467). As with celebrity chefs, blogshop models created an illusion of a persona and, in addition, used social media posts, frequent email exchanges and face-to-face meetings "at warehouse sales, flea markets, symposium discussions or [through] chance meetings at clubs or eateries" (Abidin & Thompson, 2012, p. 472). These posts, emails and meetings served to construct an intimate relationship between the blogshop models' personas and their readers and customers. In addition, interactions centred around modelling of apparel, role-modelling (through advice and instruction contained in blogs and emails) and role-playing the use of apparel in a variety of social contexts. These relationships with blogshop models influenced readers' and customers' understandings of their own bodies and inner thoughts, aligning with Gordon's (2014) suggestion that intimate experiences shape individuals' understandings of themselves.

In a similar way to Gregg's (2013) findings, these examples show a blurring of boundaries between public and private; however, whereas Gregg's participants brought private experiences into public contexts, Abbots' (2015) and Abidin and

Thompson's (2012) participants brought public events into the private spaces, developing "illusory" personal relationships with commercial personas within their own homes. Perhaps because of this blurring of boundaries, these commercial relationships were able to be viewed in personal ways. In addition, the commercial use of personal communication through blogs and other social media furthered the development of these illusory personal relationships and perhaps masked their asymmetrical nature. In doing so, "these intimacies ultimately served to obfuscate the multiple ways that this relationship remained premised on industry and commercial gain" (Abbots, 2015, p. 240).

These findings raise similar concerns to those described in relation to Gregg's (2013) study. Intimate relationships, which involve personal vulnerabilities, when constructed in public contexts or through public events as quasi-intimate events create the possibility of one's understanding of self being shaped in potentially uninvited ways or for purposes that are immediately obvious to the consumer and not based upon the premise of mutual positive regard, or shared understandings (Prager & Roberts, 2004).

Other studies have examined experiences of intimacy in professional relationships. Stavropoulou et al. (2012) interviewed nurses working in Athens and identified four aspects of nursing intimacy: respect, protection against violation, meeting patient needs and providing intimate care. These themes acknowledged patients' physical vulnerability—both through the diminished capacity created by ill health and through the bodily/private nature of illness. These themes also highlighted patients' emotional vulnerability as a consequence of these physical vulnerabilities, and nurses' capacity to maintain the dignity of patients in their vulnerability. In another study of patient-nurse relationships Bennett (2011) also highlighted the vulnerability of patients and the need for medical professionals to actively guard against ways of treating patients that threatened to invalidate patients by failing to recognise the significance of this vulnerability.

In a study of a medically supervised injecting centre, Rance and Fraser (2011) identified similar issues. Their study revealed that as a socially shunned group (i.e., drug users) participants were particularly vulnerable and sensitive to loss of dignity—both from their own views of themselves and ways in which they perceived they were treated by centre staff. This awareness of vulnerability also led to some patients to experience a sense of gratitude toward centre staff for

treatment that facilitated a sense of dignity. Rance and Fraser suggested that intimacy "counters or transforms the sensations of shame, creating new connections and relations, and new performative possibilities for the production of self, belonging and citizenship" (p. 122).

Bennett's (2011), Stavropoulou et al.'s (2012) and Rance and Fraser's (2011) studies were similar to Abbots' (2015) and Abidin and Thompson's (2012) in that they examined contexts of asymmetrical relationships. However, these studies examining intimacy in medicalised contexts differ from those examining commercial contexts. Bennett's (2011), Stavropoulou et al.'s (2012) and Rance and Fraser's (2011) findings highlighted ways in which medical professionals recognised the physical and emotional vulnerabilities inherent in the intimate nature of their relationships with patients and sought to protect their patients' wellbeing.

Also in contrast to Abbots's (2015) and Abidin and Thompson's (2012) findings, Stavropoulou et al. (2012) and Rance and Fraser (2011) identified that as a result of patients' vulnerability and nurses' capacity to sustain patients' dignity, nurses and patients were seen as developing shared and co-created meanings about the inner perceptions patients hold regarding themselves. In this way vulnerabilities became an opportunity for patients to feel cared for, validated and understood. These findings resonate with both Reis and Shaver's (1988) process understandings of intimacy and with Gordon's (2014) conception of intimacy as transforming identity.

2.3.3 Summary

The studies examined in this section (Section 2.3) have focused on intimate experiences in a variety of contexts (domestic, commercial and professional). This examination has provided examples of previously discussed conceptualisations of intimacy. It has identified that shifting typically private and exclusive forms of intimacy into public contexts, or the shifting of typically public exchanges into private and intimate forms highlights the vulnerability of intimate exchanges. Most of these examples described asymmetries of intimacy. In commercial shifts across boundaries of private and public, it also seemed that these vulnerabilities were less likely to be acknowledged. In contrast, professional situations that recognised the inherent vulnerability in intimate exchanges were able to mitigate the potential for negative effects in terms of sense of self, and create opportunities for positive effects.

2.4 Men's Experiences of Intimacy

As described in Chapter 1, in this thesis I examine men's understandings and experiences of intimacy. The following section provides an overview of literature that highlights the particular ways in which men, compared to women, have experienced intimacy.

Some studies comparing (western) men's and women's experiences of intimacy have identified differences in terms of quality and quantity. In terms of quality, some researchers concluded that men experienced intimacy in different ways to women. Helgeson, Shaver, and Dyer (1987) found that both men and women engaged in self-disclosure, but that men also experienced intimacy in shared activities and Swain (1989) found that men evaluated the closeness of their relationships primarily in terms of shared activities. In terms of quantity, Dindia and Allen (1992) undertook a meta-analysis of 205 studies (23,702 participants) and found that women engaged in more self-disclosure than men, although this gender effect was small ($d = 0.18$). Similarly, Grabill and Kerns (2000) found that undergraduate male students engaged in less self-disclosure than female students and experienced less intimacy. In another study Kaufman (1992) found that amongst college students, femininity was more predictive of intimacy than masculinity in friendships.

As was suggested by Weingarten (1991), dominant social ideals can have a constraining effect on people's experiences. A number of authors have suggested that dominant social expectations regarding gender can explain these differences between men's and women's experiences of intimacy. Balswick (1971), for example characterised the stereotypical "inexpressive male" as independent and as one who regarded vulnerability as weakness. Extending these ideas, Lewis (1978) suggested that men might not pursue certain types of intimate experiences for fear of cultural disapproval. He suggested that masculine ideals reject self-disclosure and demonstrations of affection between men and that ideals for men are focused on competition, homophobia, and an aversion to vulnerability and openness.

Offering a similar explanation, some feminist theorists (e.g., Chodorow, 1999; Gilligan, 1982) have suggested that differences in socialisation have resulted in different understandings of intimacy, which may explain why some men express relational closeness in instrumental or agentic ways, rather than expressive or communal ways (Bem, 1974; Parsons & Bales, 1955). However, Fehr's (1996)

findings, from a review of a number of studies focused on men's and women's same-sex friendships, suggest that men and women do understand intimacy in similar ways. She concluded:

> overall, 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. (Fehr, 1996, pp. 140-141)

Thus, differences between men's and women's experiences of intimacy might best be explained by dominant social ideals of masculinity or socialisation, rather than by capacity. In support of this explanation, Bank and Hansford (2000) found that men's less intimate experiences in their male friendships were largely explained by emotional restraint and homophobia as well as masculine self-identity, supporting understandings held by Balswick (1971) and Lewis (1978).

These ideas regarding masculinity have also been expressed in men's experiences of sex. In contrast to Giddens' (1992) ideas of sex as a prime means of experiencing intimacy, a number of studies describe sex in non-intimate ways. In relation to men's ideas about intimacy in their heterosexual relationships with women, Rogers (2005) analysed men's magazines and identified that these promoted a masculinity that focused on sexual experiences, but described intimate experiences in negative ways as involving uncertainty and risk. As well, in a study of Australian men in the military, Flood (2008), found that sex was used as a way to measure and regulate a particular view of masculinity. Hammarén and Johansson (2014, p. 2) also found this phenomenon and suggested that "women become a kind of currency men use to improve their ranking on the masculine scale". Thus, contemporary studies highlight the continuing presence of dominant masculine ideals in men's experiences of intimacy.

However, not all studies describe men's experiences of intimacy as constrained by these masculine ideologies. Duncan and Dowsett (2010) interviewed men regarding their relationship and sexual experiences. They concluded that "it appears that a particular notion of sex as the idealized

embodiment of intimacy, underpinned by a liberal democratic motif of equality, is the gold standard against which personal life is increasingly measured." (Duncan & Dowsett, 2010, p. 60). Thus, the men in Duncan and Dowsett's study, did see sex as linked to intimacy. In addition, these men saw intimacy as something to be valued and developed in their relationships, rather than something to be avoided, in contrast to the magazine messages examined by Rogers (2005).

In another study, Patrick and Beckenbach (2009) analysed semi structured, in-depth interviews with five men regarding their experiences of intimacy in their current couple relationships. Four men were in heterosexual relationships and one was in a homosexual relationship. Patrick and Beckenbach found that these men described engaging in verbal disclosures including feelings and thoughts as well as nonverbal demonstrations. In describing intimacy more generally, participants spoke about needing to feel safe to reveal themselves (especially when disclosing less desirable aspects of self) and recognised that revealing oneself involved vulnerability and risk taking which created the potential for humiliation or emotional injury. These participants were also able to identify that social ideas about masculinity influenced their expectations and experiences of intimacy. They identified that ideas about "manhood" focused on the importance of maintaining dominance and that from this masculine perspective, emotional involvement threatened one's power. Consequently, vulnerability was equated with weakness. For these participants, couple relationships "became the only place where men could express feelings or fears and experience safety and validation" (Patrick & Beckenbach, 2009, p. 54). These findings suggest that although men might be more willing to engage in self-disclosure in couple relationships, they were less likely to do so in their friendships with other men.

Somewhat aligned with Patrick and Beckenbach's (2009) findings, other studies have found little difference between men's and women's experiences of intimacy in heterosexual couple relationships. Hook, Gerstein, Lacy, and Gridley (2003) found that men were just as likely as women to share important personal details with their significant other. In two other studies Mehta and colleagues (Mehta, Lops, Walls, Feldman, & Shrier, 2009; Mehta, Walls, Scherer, Feldman, & Shrier, 2016) found no significant differences between young adult (18-25-year-old) men's and women's daily experiences of intimacy. Norona, Thorne, Kerrick, Farwood and Korobov (2013) also failed to find differences between males' and

females' experiences of intimacy. They suggested that college education and age (participants were aged 18-23 years) contributed to these particular findings. In addition, they suggested that attending college may encourage broader ideas about gender roles. Thus, these differences may also have been a function of age and education.

In an examination of understandings of intimacy held by university students and community members, Fehr (2004, p. 281) concluded that "men, like women, believe that self-disclosure interactions are more likely to create a sense of intimacy than are activity-based interactions". Fehr did identify a possible limitation to the generalisability of these findings due to the level of education of participants. As was suggested by Norona et al. (2013), higher education may contribute to a broader world view that may challenge the masculine ideologies that inhibit intimacy. Together these findings may suggest that these particular men's level of education may have enabled them to develop non-dominant ideas regarding masculinity, and hence experience intimacy differently.

Other studies have suggested ways in which life experiences challenged men's understandings of their own intimate behaviour. Holmes (2015) studied heterosexual couples engaged in distance relationships due to work requirements. Interviews with male partners revealed that men were generally much more comfortable with tactile expressions of intimacy than verbal ones. However, the demands of a long distance relationship required that much of the contact was via phone or other means that did not allow physical contact. In adjusting to these non-typical contexts, men learned more verbal forms to communicate their care for their partners. Holmes concluded that in navigating changes to embrace new ways in which relationships were experienced (due to distance), emotional reflexivity and communication was essential.

In another study of challenging life experiences that influenced men's relationship experiences, Arenhall, Kristofferzon, Fridlund, Malm, and Nilsson (2011) found that, following their partner's heart attack, men's inability to protect their female partners from possible death presented a challenge to participants' masculine identities. In addition, these researchers identified that the experience had positive relationship effects for participants and that "the men experienced increased intimacy in their relationship. They expressed openness in conversation, even regarding sexual issues, that brought them closer sexually and emotionally"

(Arenhall et al., 2011, p. 112). These studies, Arehnall et al.'s and Holmes' (2015) add to Norona et al.'s (2013) and Fehr's (2004) conclusions by suggesting that experiences that shift men's understandings of themselves can also influence their experiences of intimacy.

Although it has been suggested that understandings of heterosexual masculinity have traditionally been fuelled by homophobia and the avoidance of same-sex intimacy, some recent findings suggest that attitudes regarding the expression of affection toward other men may be changing. Drummond et al. (2015), in a study of young Australian heterosexual men found that about a third of the 90 men interviewed had shared a kiss with another man, and most of these exchanges had been between friends. They also identified that in all cases, alcohol was a contributing factor. Drummond et al. suggested that in these cases, "alcohol helps men express their platonic affection for their friends" and that "because excessive alcohol consumption is coded as a masculine endeavour", it provides "heteromasculine insurance" in case kissing a friend might be regarded by others as a threat to masculinity (p. 651).

2.4.1 Summary

These examples from studies that describe men's experiences of intimacy suggest that there have been some differences, in quality and quantity, between men's and women's intimate experiences. In general, findings suggest that men have reported less intimacy than women, particularly in relation to same-sex friendships. In addition, these studies indicate that men experience intimacy through shared activities as well as through verbal self-disclosure. However, other researchers have suggested that the sharing of important self-related information including feelings has been threatening to ideas of masculinity, particularly masculine ideas that are based upon homophobia and avoidance of vulnerability. As well, studies have identified that some heterosexual men associate sex with intimacy in their relationships with women, but that other men do not, and that for these men, talking about their experiences of sex with women (to other men) is a means of maintaining closeness with their male friends, rather than intimacy with their female partners.

Together, these findings suggest that dominant ideologies about gender hold views of masculinity that privilege independence and strength over connectedness and vulnerability and regard expression of emotion or affection between men as

inappropriate. For some men, these dominant social expectations seem to affect all of their relationships. For others, these social influences seem to have stronger effects for friendships with other men than with their heterosexual couple relationships. However, other studies have suggested that some life experiences (including education) may challenge the dominance of these ideologies and allow men to experience intimacy in new ways. Rather than identifying men as experiencing intimacy in one way, these studies also suggest that within men's experience of intimacy there are differences. As well, there are some indicators that these differences may reflect the degree to which men hold stereotypical ideas regarding how men should behave in relationships.

2.5 Chapter Summary and Working Definition of Intimacy

At the beginning of this review, I suggested that intimacy involved a person's inner experience and was connected to self (Fisher & Stricker, 1982; Kegan, 1982; Sexton & Sexton, 1982). In support of this view, theories of personal development or attachment suggest that self-concept or identity is related to intimacy (Bartholomew, 1990; Berger & Kellner, 1964; Collins & Feeney, 2004; Derlega, 1984; Downing, 2008; Erikson, 1963; Gilligan, 1982; Grabill & Kerns, 2000; Hatfield, 1984; Levine, 1991; Orlofsky et al., 1973; Reis, 2006; Sullivan, 1953). Several studies have also drawn similar conclusions, that experiences of intimacy influence or shape a person's understanding of themself and particular others (Cronin, 2015; Gordon, 2014; Marks, 1998; Rance & Fraser, 2011).

Whilst a view of intimacy as private, intentional, involving positive regard and involving the revelation of self-relevant information (Prager & Roberts, 2004) can portray intimacy as a special and rare experience, I suggest that intimacy that involves shaping of self can be part of everyday experiences. As Jamieson (2011, Section 1.4) claims, people are "always embedded in, reliant on and constructed by social relationships", and that "there is an element of mythology about 'Western individualism' since all individuals rely on and are shaped by others to some degree". Thus, people are constantly in situations where they are consciously or unconsciously vulnerable to being shaped by those around them. As was described in two studies (Abbots, 2015; Abidin & Thompson, 2012), this shaping can also occur through popular media. As Silverston (1994) and others (e.g., Gauntlett & Hill, 2002) have suggested, television and other forms of mass media have a significant impact upon our conceptions of ourselves and others, as does popular

music and its lyrics. Arnold (1993, p. 228) stated that "music exists to put furniture in your mind". She may have been referring to the way in which music brings comfort, but she also highlights that music influences thinking and being. Frith (2011, p. 111, italics in original) expresses it succinctly, "music . . . articulates *in itself* an understanding of both group relations and individuality, on the basis of which ethical codes and social ideologies are understood". Thus, cultural norms, expressed in the ways people relate to one another, and through messages conveyed through media and music, influence people's conceptions of themselves. This was particularly evident in the way that studies investigating men's experiences of intimacy highlighted the influence of masculine ideals (e.g., Bank & Hansford, 2000; Duncan & Dowsett, 2010; Patrick & Beckenbach, 2009).

Aligned with these ideas, I suggest that the experience of engagement with one's understanding of self or one's understanding of specific others is central to an understanding of intimacy. As well, I propose that intimacy can be understood as involving a process of engagement with self, involving a person's understandings of themself (or self-concept) and/or of another (concept of specific other) resulting in experiences where these understandings are expressed, confirmed or influenced.

In support of this proposal (and of my proposed conceptualisation of intimacy in Chapter 1), a number of the examinations of intimacy described in this review focus on intimacy as a dyadic and private experience involving the exchange of self-relevant information through verbal disclosure or other forms of self-disclosure that may be more instrumental or agentic in nature (Argyle & Dean, 1965; Bennett, 2011; Clinebell & Clinebell, 1971; Giddens, 1992; Gregg, 2013; Hinde, 1979; Jamieson, 1999; Jourard & Lasakow, 1958; Jourard & Rubin, 1968; Rance & Fraser, 2011; Schaefer & Olson, 1981; Stavropoulou et al., 2012).

Other studies have focused on intimacy as an interaction and have highlighted the importance of each person's perception of the other's self-revelation or supportive response (Castellani, 2006; Clark & Reis, 1988; Laurenceau et al., 2005; Lin, 1992; Reis & Shaver, 1988). These ways of understanding and experiencing intimacy can also be seen as involving expression of a person's understanding of themself. Receiving a validating, supportive caring response reveals something of the other person, which offers an opportunity to confirm or modify one's understanding of them. In addition, this response also offers an opportunity to confirm or modify one's understanding of oneself. Some studies have described

intimacy in more collective ways that construct shared meanings (Cronin, 2015; Marks, 1998; Weingarten, 1991). This process of developing shared meanings can also be seen as a process of confirming and aligning or modifying one's understanding of oneself and of others.

A number of ideas and findings related intimacy identify intimate experiences as defined by positive feelings (Castellani, 2006; Clinebell & Clinebell, 1971; Cronin, 2015; Giddens, 1992; Jourard & Rubin, 1968; Lin, 1992; Oliphant & Kuczynski, 2011; Prager, 1995; Prager & Roberts, 2004; Rance & Fraser, 2011; Reis & Shaver, 1988; Schaefer & Olson, 1977), which may be generally summarised by Jamieson's (2011, Section 1.1) definition of intimacy as

> the quality of close connection between people and the process of building this quality . . . [which] can be emotional and cognitive, with subjective experiences including a feeling of mutual love, being "of like mind" and special to each other. Closeness may also be physical, bodily intimacy although an intimate relationship need not be sexual and both bodily and sexual contact can occur without intimacy.

However, I suggest that these positive experiences result from an intimate experience, rather than being an intimate experience per se.

Several studies have identified that intimacy involves vulnerability (e.g., Bennett, 2011; Hacker, 1981; Murstein & Adler, 1995; Patrick & Beckenbach, 2009; Rance & Fraser, 2011; Roberts & Greenberg, 2002; Rubin et al., 1980; Stavropoulou et al., 2012). The conceptualisation of intimacy I propose explains this vulnerability as part of the process of engagement with self through a person's understanding of themself or others. This conception of intimacy as involving vulnerability also provides the means to explain why experiences that do not involve positive feelings may also be intimate, such as studies that describe intimacy in experiences involving conflict or enduring hardship with another person (e.g., Strassburger, 1998) or experiences of violence (e.g., Kanuha, 2013; Lafontaine & van Lussier, 2005; Weston et al., 2007). In addition, this conceptualisation of intimacy also provides an opportunity to recognise experiences of rape and childhood sexual abuse as intimate experiences. This offers another explanation for why these experiences have been identified as influencing a person's concept of themself and others in negative ways (e.g., Ackard & Neumark-Sztainer, 2002; Beasley, 1997; Carnes, 1997; Veronen, 1977).

Viewing experiences of abuse as also having the possibility of being intimate experiences challenges the idea that intimacy is voluntary and intentional, as was suggested by Prager and Roberts (2004, p. 45), who described intimacy as characterised by "self-revealing behaviour, positive involvement with the other, and shared understanding". By recognising that intimacy may be involuntary, that is, imposed by some other person or equally, by social entities, such as cultural norms or social discourses, it is also possible to recognise that such influences may happen in unconscious ways.

From a negative perspective, these influences can lead to a diminished view of self, as was described in studies examining sexual abuse (e.g., Lafontaine & van Lussier, 2005; Spitzberg, 2011). However, from a positive perspective, whether conscious or unconscious, involuntary or voluntary, these influences can also lead to opportunities to see oneself more clearly and as more distinct from others. For example, in a study examining recovery from sexual abuse, Burt and Katz (1987), found that such abuse was a horrific experience and touched a person's self-concept. However, for some participants, sexual abuse was also a catalyst for growth, enabling these participants to understand themselves in new and more empowered ways. Similarly, studies examining experiences of adversity have identified these as having the potential, for some individuals, to be experiences of personal growth (Kaiser, Strodl, & Schweitzer, 2012; Papadopoulos, 2007). Although this could be seen as an individualistic endeavour for self-oriented purposes, it can also be seen as one that facilitates a greater awareness of the unique contribution that one can make to one's relationships, one's workplace, one's society, and one's world.

Intimacy, from this view, can be seen as a mechanism of personal and social reinforcement or change, in desirable or undesirable ways. Taking this view, intimacy is neither innately constructive nor destructive. In addition, this broader view of intimacy allows for a greater awareness of the ways in which people are influenced by each other and by their social world. Additionally, intimacy can be seen as possible in every interaction that has the potential to reinforce or influence a person's perception of themself or of others.

Finally, as suggested earlier (see 2.2.3) intimacy can also be recognised as an intrapersonal experience. That is, one can experience intimacy with oneself through

experiences such as self-reflection which provide opportunities to express or modify one's understanding of oneself.

Drawing together this summary, and adding to the working definition of intimacy stated in Chapter 1, I propose the following, and more detailed definition of intimacy as a lens for examining the new findings in this thesis. As well I have summarised these ideas in Figure 2.2. The following points draw on literature that relates to men's and women's understandings and experiences of intimacy. Whilst this may seem to be too broad for the focus of this thesis (on *men's* understandings and experiences), I have taken this approach for two reasons. The most dominant reason is that, in general, researchers have suggested that men are able to experience intimacy in ways that are similar to women's experiences, as stated explicitly by Fehr (1996). A secondary reason is that, as Patrick and Beckenbach (2009, p. 50) state, "few, if any studies have focused solely on men's perceptions of intimacy", thus there is limited research to draw upon in order to develop a male-specific definition of intimacy. As suggested, this definition is a working definition. In providing an explicit description of the understanding of intimacy that has formed my starting point, I am also offering the reader an opportunity to evaluate this starting point, which will inevitably influence the way in which I collect data and the focus I bring to my analyses of those data. However, through reflexive and supervisory processes I will also create opportunities for this starting point to be examined and challenged. With that context in mind, and as a definition-in-progress, I propose that:

- Intimacy is a process of engagement with self (Fisher & Stricker, 1982; Kegan, 1982; Sexton & Sexton, 1982).
- Intimacy involves a person's understandings of themself (or self-concept) and/or of another (concept of specific other) (Bartholomew, 1990; Berger & Kellner, 1964; Collins & Feeney, 2004; Derlega, 1984; Downing, 2008; Erikson, 1963; Gilligan, 1982; Grabill & Kerns, 2000; Hatfield, 1984; Levine, 1991; Reis, 2006; Sullivan, 1953).
- Intimacy results in experiences where these understandings are expressed and confirmed (Castellani, 2006; Laurenceau et al., 1998; Lin, 1992; Reis & Shaver, 1988), or influenced (Cronin, 2015; Gordon, 2014; Marks, 1998; Rance & Fraser, 2011).

- Intimate experiences can involve verbal or nonverbal behaviours or both (Jamieson, 2011; Reis & Shaver, 1988).
- Vulnerability is necessary in facilitating intimacy (Bennett, 2011; Hacker, 1981; Patrick & Beckenbach, 2009; Rance & Fraser, 2011; Roberts & Greenberg, 2002).

In examining ways in which vulnerability can be created, vulnerability:

- can be voluntary and conscious (e.g., Cronin, 2015; Giddens, 1992; Weingarten, 1991); trust is required to create voluntary vulnerability (Jamieson, 1999): see Figure 2.1, paths A, B
    - voluntary vulnerability that involves validating feedback is likely to be result in positive emotions and feelings of closeness (e.g., Reis & Shaver, 1988)
- can be to different degrees/levels
    - a person can be vulnerable in some aspects of their understanding of themself or of another, and not vulnerable in other aspects
    - *asymmetrical* vulnerability results in one person's self-concept being expressed or influenced, but not other other's or, one person's self-concept is not expressed or influenced to the same *depth* (Acitelli & Duck, 1987; Duck, 1994): see Figure 2.1, path B
    - the more central an aspect of a person's understanding of themself is to their self-concept, the greater the degree of vulnerability required to express, confirm or influence it, and the more *intense* the experience of intimacy
- can be *involuntary* and conscious,
    - requiring another's use of power (e.g., Kanuha, 2013; Lafontaine & van Lussier, 2005; Weston et al., 2007): see Figure 2.1, path C
        - physical, psychological, sexual or verbal abuse can influence a person's self-concept in involuntary but conscious ways
    - resulting from difficult life circumstances (e.g., Clinebell & Clinebell, 1971; Strassburger, 1998)
        - personal hardships can a person's understanding of themself or others

- can be involuntary and *unconscious*
    - the unquestioning acceptance of sociocultural norms or advertising messages is an example of involuntary and unconscious vulnerability (Abbots, 2015; Abidin & Thompson, 2012; Bank & Hansford, 2000; Duncan & Dowsett, 2010; Gauntlett & Hill, 2002; Patrick & Beckenbach, 2009; Silverstone, 1994).

This elaboration of the working definition of intimacy is described in Figure 2.2, which highlights the different ways in which vulnerability can be created and how this is an important aspect of intimate experiences.

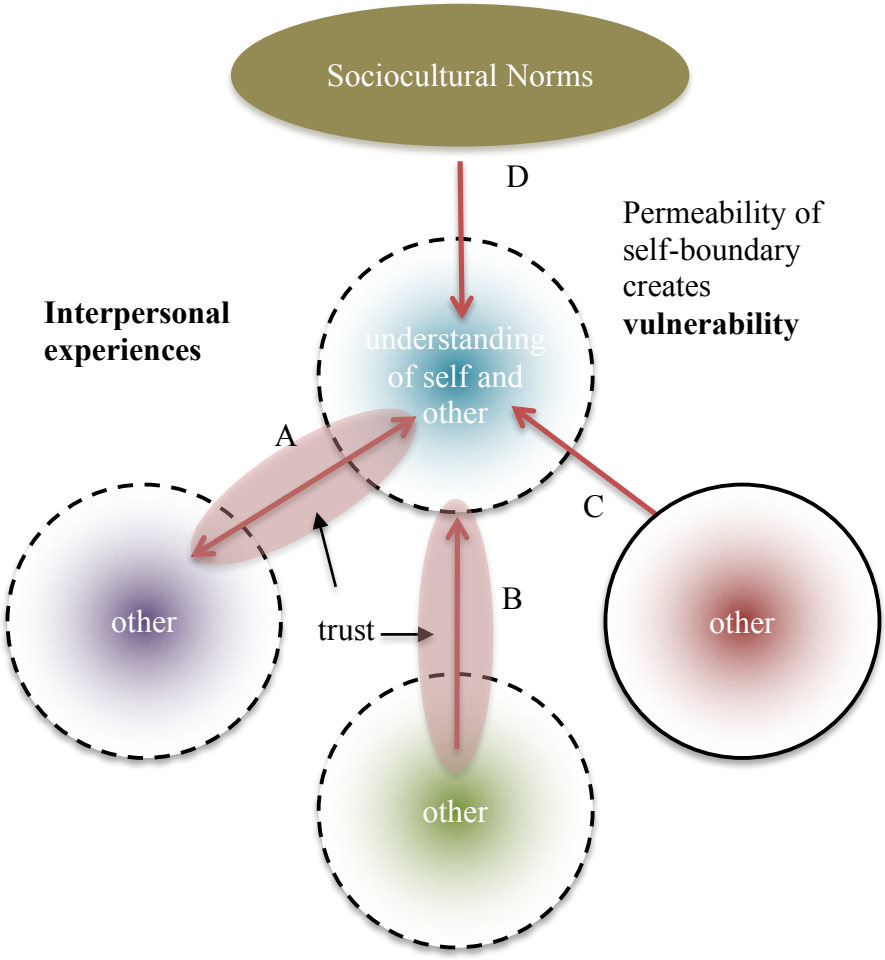


Figure 2.3. Working definition of intimacy

A. Experiences of intimacy involving reciprocal vulnerability
B. Experiences of intimacy involving asymmetrical vulnerability
C. Involuntary and conscious experiences of intimacy
D. Involuntary and unconscious experiences of intimacy

2.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has examined the framework of scholarly literature in which this thesis is situated. It has suggested an understanding of intimacy that incorporates a range of findings. Based upon this understanding of intimacy, a working definition of intimacy has been proposed, which, in summary can be understood as:

> a process of engagement with self involving a person's experiencing of themself (or self-concept) and/or of another (concept of specific other) resulting in experiences where these understandings are expressed, confirmed or influenced. This can be an experience involving verbal or nonverbal behaviours or both.
>
> Vulnerability is necessary in facilitating intimacy and can occur to different degrees; the degree of vulnerability may vary across a person's understanding of themself or of another person. Vulnerability may also be conscious and voluntary, conscious and involuntary, or unconscious and involuntary. Asymmetrical vulnerability can result in an imbalance of power, and trust is required to voluntarily allow this asymmetry.

This is a broad understanding of intimacy that is centred on an understanding of self. The following chapter, which focuses on how self is understood, examines the theoretical framework in which this thesis is situated and builds upon this understanding of intimacy.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

My purpose, in this chapter, is to describe and examine the theoretical framework that supports this thesis. My framework takes up postmodern ideas in that it does not privilege any one truth as universal, and in doing so, recognises a plurality of truths (Drolet, 2004). However, this framework is not exclusively postmodern in that it does not privilege a postmodern epistemology over other epistemologies. What I mean by this is that the framework used in this thesis also validates epistemologies that do not recognise a plurality of truths, without regarding these as inferior to epistemologies that do. As well, the framework I am using also draws upon postqualitative ideas that refocus an understanding of meaning making upon ontology as well as epistemology (Lather, 2016; St. Pierre, 2013) and highlight the importance of epistemology and ontology (Barad, 2003). In describing this, Barad's term "onto-epistemology" captures the interrelatedness of ontology and epistemology, that is a person's "knowing in being" (Barad, 2003, p. 829). This extends postmodern thinking which views being as arising from knowing (St. Pierre, 2013). Barad's "onto-epistemology" intentionally privileges ontology over epistemology to resist the dominant postmodern view that privileges epistemology over ontology. However, this does not inhibit an awareness that knowing leading to being (epistemology → ontology), and being leading to knowing (ontology → epistemology), in reality, co-occur. As well, a postqualitative approach recognises a person as "becoming" or in a state of continual evolution (St. Pierre, 2013). The notion of evolution is key to the central theory utilised in developing the theoretical framework for this thesis.

In developing my theoretical framework, I have drawn heavily upon Kegan's (1982) theory of the evolving self. This theory validates a plurality of epistemologies and ontologies (including those that recognise truths as plural, and those that recognise truth as singular) and recognises that knowing and being are interdependent and mutually informing. However, Kegan's theory pre-dates postqualitative theorising and so what is presented in this chapter extends Kegan's thinking using a postqualitative lens.

Kegan's (1994, p. 32) theory describes the "principles for the organisation (the form or complexity) of one's thinking, feeling, and social-relating, not the content of one's thinking, feeling, or social relating". It is a theory about a person's system of meaning making and how that meaning-making system changes over time. As part of the theory, five stages of evolution are described, with Stage 5 being the most complex (Section 3.3 describes these in more detail). At the centre of this theory, and constructing each of these stages, is an understanding of a person's self as the system that constructs meaning, that is, a person's epistemology (Kegan, 1982). The self is also the means by which a person experiences themself and others, and so this theory can also be understood as ontological (Kegan, 1982). Meaning making "is naturally epistemological . . . [and] is also naturally ontological" (Kegan, 1982, p. 169). Therefore, with a postqualitative lens, Kegan's (1982) understanding of self can be understood as onto-epistemological because it is one's self that determines what one can know and how one can be, and how these are mutually informing. As well, Kegan identifies the self as continually in a state of evolution, aligning with Lather's (2013) identification of "becoming" as an important postqualitative idea.

3.1.1 Chapter Overview

In the section that follows, the detailed examination of the theoretical framework applied in this thesis begins with how the self is central to a person's epistemology and ontology (Section 3.2). This is followed by a description of the balances of subject and object that define each of Kegan's (1982) evolutionary stages or onto-epistemologies (Section 3.3). That is, how the qualitative changes in the self results in qualitative changes in a person's onto-epistemology. Section 3.4 examines these in terms of sociocultural forces (i.e., the interaction between intrapsychic dynamics and interpersonal dynamics) and Section 3.5 applies these to the working definition of intimacy proposed in Chapter 2. I conclude this chapter by identifying some limitations of Kegan's theory as well as a justification for why, despite its limitations, Kegan's theory is an appropriate choice for the purposes of this thesis (Section 3.6) and finally, offer a summary of key ideas (Section 3.7).

3.2 Concept of Self

Kegan's (1982) theory of the evolving self conceptualises the self as a form, structuring how a person thinks, feels and relates. This form is temporary in that different self-forms/onto-epistemologies exist over a person's lifespan. The self

takes qualitatively different forms that are the result of a person's development, which arise from the evolutionary motion that is central to being human. This development occurs both through "the internal processes of maturation" and through "interactions between the [person] and the environment" (Kegan, 1982, p. 7). Thus, development involves biological, psychological and sociological processes.

In addition, the theory describes self as an evolving system, not a fixed structure. At any point of evolution, this system/self takes a form that is structured according to a particular balance of subjectivity and objectivity, a balance which frames a person's thinking, feeling and relating. The theory charts the pattern of evolutionary shifts in the balance of subjectivity and objectivity as stages in human development. These multiple onto-epistemologies are placed in a sequence of increasing complexity such that earlier stages of evolution are less complex than later stages of evolution. A parallel is drawn between complexity and objectivity and so this pattern of evolution also represents decreases in subjectivity. Thus, later stages of evolution, because they are also defined by less subjectivity, can also be understood as describing greater ontological and epistemological freedom. That is, the degree of diversity in how a person can understand and experience themself and construct meaning at later stages of development is greater than at earlier stages. Thus, experiences of self and others are qualitatively different at different stages of development. This offers important possibilities for understanding how intimacy may be experienced and understood differently, according to a person's self-development.

In conceptualising the self as a system of meaning making and as the expression of the evolutionary motion that is central to being human, the theory places meaning construction at the centre of being human. In addition, the theory identifies self as a unifying system through which a person experiences themself and their world as having cohesion and integrity. (The conception of self, as a meaning making system, is examined in more detail in relation to evolutionary stages in Section 3.3.) Thus, new ways of experiencing can develop through new ways of knowing (i.e., through being in knowing).

This theory also identifies that a person can find themself in situations where their ways of making meaning are no longer sufficient to match the complexity of their experience of these situations (Kegan, 1994), that is, there is a mismatch

between ontology and epistemology. Whist these situations may cause a person distress, they also provide opportunities for development that can provide the impetus to move toward a new stage in that person's evolution of self. Thus, new ways of understanding the world can arise from this mismatch of experience (more complex) and meaning-making capacity (less complex). That is, new ways of understanding can develop through being (i.e., through knowing in being).

3.2.1 Self and Intimacy

As described in Chapter 2, the understanding of intimacy applied in this thesis focuses on experiences that, consciously or unconsciously, engage with a person's conception of themself and/or of others. This engagement includes revealing understandings of oneself, or of others, to others and the validation of these understandings by others. It also involves experiences that influence these understandings of self, or experiences that may add to or take away from, or in more intense ways, challenge the very construction of these understandings.

Viewed through Kegan's (1982) theory, this understanding of intimacy implicates self in two ways. Intimacy, how it is understood and experienced, is the consequence of a particular structuring of self (i.e., of a particular epistemology: being in knowing). That is, particular constructions of self allow for particular understandings and experiences of intimacy. In addition, by recognising that a person's interactions also influence their development, Kegan's theory acknowledges that interactions can influence self-form, thus, a person's experiences (i.e., ontology) can lead to change in a person's epistemology. In this way, experiences of intimacy can be understood as influencing one's current self-structure through challenges to one's concept of self and/or one's concept of particular others (i.e., knowing in being).

In order to distinguish more clearly between these two ways in which intimacy and self are linked, it is necessary to describe self in two ways. Kegan (1982) defines the structure of self in terms of subjectivities, and that a person cannot be aware of this structure. I shall refer to this unconscious self, which is the system that generates meanings, as "Self". However, a person can be aware of the *meanings* that are generated. From the pattern of these meanings, a person can develop a concept of who they (and others) are. I shall refer to these conscious aspects of a person as "self" (and "other"). These two ways of describing self/Self makes an important distinction between the experiencing and observing/knowing

parts of self, which is similar to the way in which James (1890, p. 291) refers to "me" as "the empirical self" (i.e., self), and the way in which Mead (1913, p. 374) refers to "I" as subject (i.e., Self/experiencing self) and "me" as object (i.e., self/observing or knowing self).

The way in which a person understands themself and others is the result of their meaning making system, therefore Self generates self and other (i.e., being in knowing). However, a person's experiences (of themself and others) can influence their epistemology, thus, self and other and other can influence Self (i.e., knowing in being). In terms of intimacy this is depicted in Figure 3.1 and described thus:

- Intimacy involves verbal or nonverbal actions that consciously disclose one's understanding of self or other to another person (Path A1).
- Intimacy involves verbal or nonverbal actions that unconsciously disclose one's Self to another person (Path A2)
- Intimacy involves another's verbal or nonverbal actions (one's own or another's) that confirm or modify one's understanding/awareness of self or other (Path B).
- Intimacy involves a person's experiences of themself or another person that transform their understandings of self or other (Path B).
- New understandings of self/other that do not fit with previous conceptions of self/other challenge the system (i.e., Self) that generated the previous conception and can lead to changes to Self (Path C).

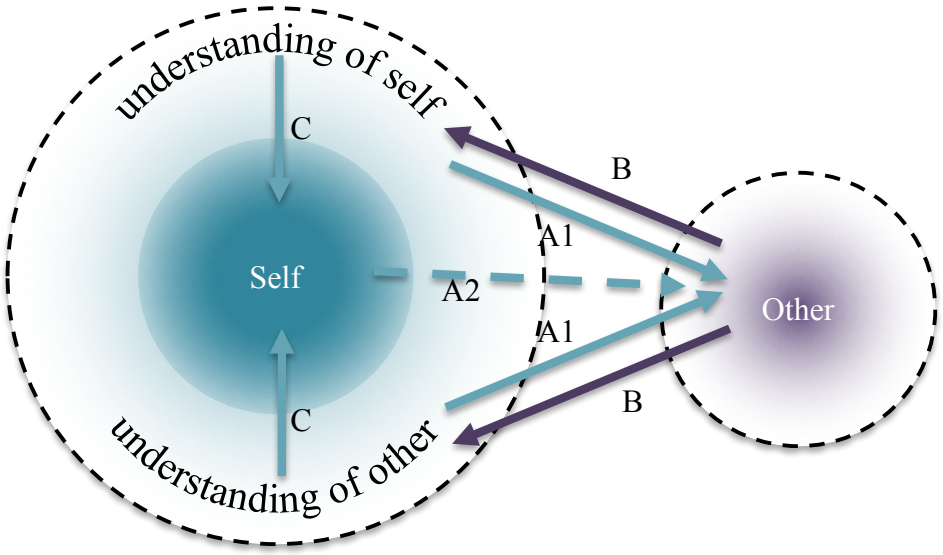


Figure 3.1. Intimacy involving self/other and Self

Drawing an explicit relationship between Self/self and a person's understanding and experiences of intimacy creates a conception of intimacy that is not singular. That is, multiple, qualitatively different onto-epistemologies result in multiple, qualitatively different understandings and experiences of intimacy.

As well, Kegan's (1982) theory does not privilege any one evolution of self as more functional than any other, because function (or dysfunction) depends on the match (or mismatch) between epistemology and ontology. In relation to intimacy, this allows for a conceptualisation of intimacy as multiple, and one that views understandings/experiences as contextualised within a broader view of a person's development. Thus, it is not relevant to understand different understandings/experiences of intimacy arising from different onto-epistemologies as more or less legitimate than others, but rather that some understandings/experiences of intimacy are possible or not possible, depending on a person's current onto-epistemology. In Chapter 2, it was identified that psychology has privileged particular understandings of intimacy, such as those that are private, exclusive and dyadic and involve verbal self-disclosure. Applying Kegan's theory to an understanding of intimacy allows these privileged views to be seen as relevant to some stages of evolution of self (e.g., Stage 3 or 4), but also identifies that they may not be relevant to others (e.g., Stage 2). In this way, his theory offers the possibility of conceptualising intimacy more broadly, yet in an integrated way that recognises different ways of making meaning as related in terms of complexity. (These possibilities for intimacy will be elaborated in Section 3.3 in relation to descriptions of specific evolutions of Self.)

Although Kegan (1982) does not privilege one evolution of self over another, he identifies that more complex evolutions of self are more able to respond to more complex situations. In particular, he refers to the match between person and culture and identifies ways in which a person's capacity to make meaning can be insufficient for the demands of participation in a particular culture. Equally, a mismatch of complexity, between person and situation, or between person and person can also result in failures to understand, inability to address the demands of, or insufficient consciousness to embrace the possibilities of, a situation. In the context of dyadic intimate experiences, a mismatch between two people's current onto-epistemologies can result in differing expectations about what intimacy is and how it can be experienced, and thus failures to meet each other's intimacy needs.

Thus, Kegan's theory can offer possibilities for recognising and exploring these differences.

Also, Lahey et al.'s (2011) application of Kegan's (1982) theory offers possibilities to recognise the process of a person's becoming. Lahey et al. (2011) developed a system for describing fine-grained shifts between Kegan's five stages of evolution. As a more fine-grained system, Lahey et al. introduced four transitional stages between each of Kegan's stages, which represent the emergence of a new stage and the decreasing influence of the previous stage. (This is described in greater detail in 4.5.1 which explains the Subject-Object Interview, Lahey et al.'s tool for understanding a person's onto-epistemology according to this fine-grained system.) This system charts a process of being and becoming and allows for a recognition of ways in which becoming may not be a linear process, but one in which forward movement does not occur consistently across all aspects of Self at the same time.

Lahey et al.'s (2011) tool also offers a means to recognise and respond to the inevitable mismatch between a researcher's and a participant's onto-epistemologies. By recognising the influence of a person's onto-epistemology upon their understanding and experiencing, and by offering a framework to analyse different onto-epistemologies, this tool creates possibilities for researching intimacy in a way that recognises and embraces multiple understandings and experiences. That is, it promotes a more complex and diverse understanding of ways people make meaning and allows the researcher to identify where, in that diversity, a person may be situated. Further, by constructing onto-epistemologies as developmentally linked, Kegan's (1982) theory (and Lahey et al.'s tool) offers a way to understand the means by which changes in a person's understandings and experiences of intimacy occur.

3.2.2 Summary

The combination of Kegan's (1982) theory and Lahey et al.'s (2011) tool offers important advantages in addressing the focus of this thesis. They provide a framework/developmental process that is able to incorporate multiple onto-epistemologies and as such can embrace multiple understandings and experiences of intimacy. Both Kegan's theory and Lahey et al.'s system are developmental in that they identify these multiple onto-epistemologies in sequence and in relation to each other in terms of complexity. Examining intimacy in terms of self enables

multiple understandings and experiences of intimacy to also be understood in relation to one another, and in terms of complexity. In recognising evolutions of self (i.e., stages) as qualitatively different, Kegan's theory does not privilege one onto-epistemology as more valid than another. This allows diverse conceptions and experiences of intimacy to be regarded as equally valid, rather than privileging one experience as necessarily more intimate than another (in terms of a person's perception of their own experience). Rather this theory allows understandings to be developed in terms of differences between complexities which can overcome assumptions that one experience of intimacy is better than another. Different experiences of intimacy are the result of different levels of complexity, which are the result of evolution and are necessary steps in moving from one level of complexity to another. Thus, relationship difficulties arising differences in expectations, understandings and experiences of intimacy can be seen as arising from mismatches between complexities rather than necessarily being about skill development, desire or commitment. In the next section, each of Kegan's stages is explained in greater detail, before applying these to understandings and experiences of intimacy

3.3 Evolutions of Self

Kegan's (1982) theory of the evolving self describes five distinct onto-epistemologies. As described previously, these are developmentally linked and increase in complexity. As well, each stage is seen as having its own integrity and cohesion. Development, which is a result of the evolutionary motion, is a continual process. Thus, there are more than the five possible onto-epistemologies, as Lahey et al.'s (2011) model of stages and transitions suggests. However, certain points in that evolution can be recognised and described more easily than others. These are the points that Kegan focuses upon in describing his five stages of Self, and which are shown in Figure 3.2.

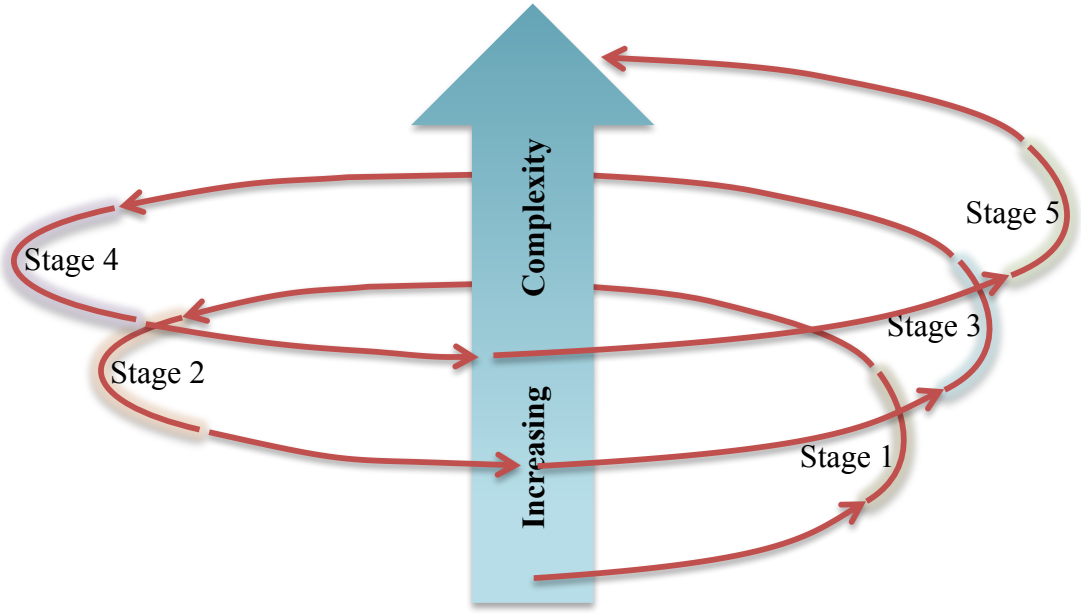


Figure 3.2. Kegan's evolutions of Self

Based upon Kegan, 1982, p. 109, Figure 4.

In addition, Kegan (1982) draws upon other theorists' descriptions of developmental stages, in particular, Kohlberg's stages of moral development and Piaget's stages of cognitive development. Kegan describes his theory as an underlying and unifying theory that offers a framework in which other developmental theories can be situated as the expression of this evolution of self as a meaning-making system. He suggests that specific expressions of aspects of development are governed by the same source, i.e., the Self. That is, each of Kohlberg's moral stages, and Piaget's cognitive stages can be linked to specific evolutions of Self (see Kegan, 1982, pp. 86-87 for specific details).

In terms of this thesis, only Stages 2 to 5 are relevant as they relate to stages of development that have been observed in adults (e.g., Bugenhagen & Barbuto, 2012; Perry, 2014; Postier, 2015; Trimberger, 2013). However, Stage 1 will be described very briefly to give greater context for Stages 2 to 5. For each section, implications for intimacy are described in general. A more specific application of Kegan's theory to the working definition of intimacy proposed in Chapter 2 is provided in Section 3.5.

3.3.1 Stage 1: The Impulsive Self

This first stage in the evolution of Self represents a shift out of an "incorporative stage" which is a continuation of the pre-birth, in-utero state, where the mother and infant co-exist. Kegan (1982) suggest that, in terms of the infant's

earliest post-birth awareness, the infant makes no distinction between themself and their environment, including their primary care-taker. This first evolutionary stage, the "impulsive stage" enables a growing recognition that others (and objects) are separate entities. However, at this stage, the person is driven by impulses and singular perceptions. These impulses are synonymous with an experience of self. Thus, failure to express these impulses is equivalent to an inability to *be* oneself. As well, although the person can begin to recognise that objects are separate to her or him, the objects are subject to their singular perception of them. That is, two perceptions (or two impulses) cannot be experienced simultaneously. Similarly, competing impulses create an internal conflict that cannot be resolved. The following stage allows a separation of Self from impulses and perceptions to *have* impulses and perceptions rather than *be* them.

3.3.2 Stage 2: The Imperial Self

Kegan (1982) describes the Stage 2 evolution of Self as "imperial" because a person at Stage 2 has a singular, imperialistic view, although this view can contain multiple perceptions and impulses. This discrete, singular view enables a person at Stage 2 to develop a stable sense of themself (i.e., a self-concept) according to their enduring dispositions (i.e., needs, wishes, interests, desires). For a person at Stage 2, it is their disposition that defines who a person is, and the way in which they experience themself.

Interpersonally, a person at Stage 2 is only able to hold one point of view—their own or another's, but they cannot hold both together. Thus, relationships can only make sense in terms of roles, that is, predetermined definitions of how a person is to be in a particular relationship (e.g., what constitutes a good friend, a good husband/wife, or a good child/parent). These roles provide a singular view of how a person is to be in any relationship, and creates a sense of fairness through simple reciprocity and mutual fulfilment of complimentary roles. In order to avoid internal conflict, the person must constitute both sides of the relationship, since they cannot hold multiple views as to how relationships might be constructed. In social contexts, this works well when there is a general consensus regarding the definition of these roles. However, limitations become apparent when a person at Stage 2 encounters different understandings of roles, either within the same culture, or between cultures, or does not allow these to be negotiated. In these situations, and in order to maintain one's own way of being, a person must impose their own

understanding of roles on others. In this sense, others are seen as the means by which one's way of being is maintained, as seeing others through one's own needs, wishes or interests, including one's need to avoid internal conflict. For the person at Stage 2, their concept of a specific other becomes the pattern of that other person's capacity to "meet my needs, fulfil my wishes [and] pursue my interests" (Kegan, 1982, p. 91); that is another's disposition, as this relates to the person at Stage 2's needs, wishes or interests.

Thus, for the person at Stage 2, intimate experiences are likely to involve dispositions: experiences that involve disclosing their own dispositions or their perception of another's, experiences that confirm their perceptions of their own dispositions or another's, and experiences that modify or change their perceptions of their own dispositions or another's. Interpersonally, discovering or experiencing mutual interests, wishes or needs are how these shared experiences lead to intimate experiences because these discoveries reinforce or shape a person's perception of themself and/or another person. Intimate experiences are also likely to involve roles: situations may also be experienced as intimate because they fulfil particular understandings of roles in intimate relationships, such as an expectation that good friends have common interests, or good partners are able to meet one another's needs. Shared experiences may also reinforce or shape perceptions of another person as capable of meeting needs, sharing interests or fulfilling wishes, and of their capacity to fulfil the role of good friend or partner. That is, another person can be regarded as a good friend or partner because their disposition is a match for the Stage 2 person's needs, wishes or interests, and aligns with the Stage 2 person's understanding of how a person should be, in order to fulfil relationship roles.

3.3.3 Stage 3: The Interpersonal Self

In the shift from Stage 2 to Stage 3, self-concept is no longer embedded in needs, wishes or interests. Consequently, a person at Stage 3 *has* needs, rather than *is* their needs, and can seek to meet them, or deny them, without loss of integrity or sensing a loss of Self. The Stage 3 Self is described as "interpersonal" because, at Stage 3, the person is subject to interpersonalism or mutuality. That is, a person at Stage 3 experiences themself as their relationships with others who are present, either physically or psychologically. Previously, at Stage 2, a person imposed self on other, at Stage 3 a person experiences self as a merging of self and other. As a person at Stage 3, my concept of "me" becomes my observation of myself in

relation to "you". A Stage 3 onto-epistemology allows the person "to coordinate points of view within [themself], leading to the experience of subjectivity, the sense of inner states, and the ability to talk about feelings experienced now as feelings rather than social negotiations" (Kegan, 1982, p. 95). This Stage 3 Self-form creates a context for meaning-making that is able to hold two points of view internally, and in relation to each other. It is the "in relation to each other" that generates a new consciousness of self (i.e., self-concept). This new Self-form results in a different quality of relationship between self and other: "the person, in being able to coordinate needs, can become mutual, empathic, and oriented to reciprocal obligation" (Kegan, 1982, p. 95).

The construction of Self according to mutuality also means that self-concept is also constructed according to mutuality and the voices of important others remain within this person, even when these others are not present. For example, as a person at Stage 3, your needs, wishes, desires, interests can remain present to me, and can be experienced as expectations. Because my self-concept *is* that shared reality, I am not able to be independent of it; I am subject to it. Consequently, conflict between you and me also creates internal disharmony within the internal construction of this merged self/other. Internal disharmony results in a loss of integrity, a loss of meaning, and a loss of self (and thus, distress).

In a broader context, if the person at Stage 3 has multiple significant relationships, they are likely to experience themself differently across these relationships, because the qualities of mutuality are different in each of these relationships. Thus, the Self is experienced *across* these relationships, an understanding of self that Wetherell and Maybin (1996) describe as a "distributed self". That is, there are particular parts of a person that are only accessible in particular relationships. When the demands of these different relationships come into conflict, the person at Stage 3 experiences an even more complex threat to integrity, meaning and self. Disharmony between one's relationships is equivalent to disharmony between one's parts of self.

Whilst this Self-form has advantages over the Stage 2 Self, in that it has a greater capacity to be empathic and relational, that same capacity, which is subject to mutuality, also results in fusion. In other words, as a Stage 3 person, "you are the other by whom I complete myself, the other whom I need to create the context out of which I define and know myself and the world" (Kegan, 1982, p. 100).

Consequently, more-complex others are likely to perceive a Stage 3 person as needing to "learn how to stand up for [themself]", to "be more 'selfish', less pliable . . . as lacking self-esteem, or as a pushover because [they] want other people to like [them]" (Kegan, 1982, p. 96). However, for this person, *being* is not a matter of accepting oneself, or of self-confidence, it is the consequence of being distributed "in a variety of mutualities" which results in a self that is unable to achieve "the self-coherence from space to space that is taken as the hallmark of 'identity' [i.e., Stage 4]" (Kegan, 1982, p. 96).

In terms of intimacy, Kegan (1982, pp. 96-97) states:

> This balance is "interpersonal" but it is not "intimate", because what might appear to be intimacy here is the self's source rather than its aim. There is no self to share with another instead the other is required to bring the self into being. Fusion is not intimacy.

What Kegan is saying here relates to a conception of intimacy described by authors such as Dahms (1972) who understood that intimacy was a mutual sharing of selves, without deception and in a way that maintains the independence of others. Although this singular view of intimacy is not the view taken in this thesis, what is highlighted by Kegan's view is the vulnerability of one Self to another through fusion. In describing the interpersonal as the Self's source, he identifies that, for the person at Stage 3, their relationship experiences confirm or shape their understanding of themself and of others. In this sense, the person at Stage 3 *is* their relationships. This understanding of intimacy can be seen as aligning with "inclusive" understandings of intimacy described by Marks (1998), or as Cronin (2015, p. 676) described: "a profoundly relational constitution of participants' sense of self".

3.3.4 Stage 4: The Institutional Self

The Self at Stage 4 is characterised by identity and self-authorship. This stage is "institutional" because the ways in which the person at Stage 4 can know themself and others is through a personal ideology: a personal, self-authored system of beliefs. This is a system of beliefs that reaches beyond the needs or interests of a single individual, or even the needs of those who are close to that individual. As a system of self that is complex enough to encompass social consideration, Kegan (1982) describes this Self as an institution. This institutional Self-form is individual and holds its own authority; it is

> a self which maintains a coherence across a shared psychological space and so achieves an identity. This authority—sense of self, self-dependence, self-ownership—is its hallmark. . . . in coordinating or reflecting upon mutuality, [it] brings into being a kind of psychic institution. (Kegan, 1982, p. 100)

Intrapersonally, the Stage 4 person is able to be objective about inner states and their own subjectivity. This is not to say the person is no longer subjective, but that they are now aware of themself as *having* subjectivities, even though the content of these subjectivities may not be known (as they would cease to be subjectivities). Similarly, in being able to be objective about inner states, the Stage 4 person's thoughts and feelings are no longer what determines "who I am". Thus, the person at Stage 4 is capable of "holding both sides of a feeling simultaneously" (e.g., they can feel both gratitude and ingratitude concurrently), and consequently this person is "regulative of [their] feelings" (Kegan, 1982, p. 101). That is, their feelings become a resource to draw upon rather than a necessary expression of self, and certain feelings can be prioritised over others.

Interpersonally, the Stage 4 person is no longer the sum of their relationships, as was the case for Stage 3. Because they no longer rely on the self *as* relationship for meaning or cohesion, the person is free to *have* relationships rather than *be* them. Experiencing disharmony with others may be unpleasant but no longer constitutes a disintegration of self. Consequently, the person at Stage 4 is able to maintain a connection with others *within* disagreement. Thus, in situations of conflict, a person at Stage 4 is able to remain open to another person, because conflict is not necessarily equivalent to a loss of self. This allows a new capacity to know another person, that is, how they are non-mutual as well as mutual, and in their difference as well as their samenesses. This enables, in one's construction of other, a recognition of the other's distinctness, their uniqueness, and their individuality. However, subjectivity to *the self*, as defined by one's identity, means that the Stage 4 person understands themself as independent, self-contained and complete.

Being subject to identity has limitations and this Self-form is not able to evaluate the benefits or costs of being formed by an ideology. Because the person at Stage 4 *is* their ideology, they are not able to take up conflicting ideologies without a loss of self. Although the Stage 4 person's own ideology can be modified and changed, conflicting values, attitudes or beliefs are viewed as "other" and if

accepted, are threatening to one's own. In close relationships, Kegan (1994) suggests that two Stage 4 persons can be respectful and accepting of each other's ideology as the other's truth, just as each person understands their ideology forms their own truth. However, the person at Stage 4 does not have a context in which they can bring conflicting ideologies into some kind of relationship (Kegan, 1982). In personal relationships with others who hold dissenting views, the only solution is to agree to disagree (Kegan, 1994). Failing to disagree would constitute a loss of self. A Stage 4 person's need to be independent, self-contained and complete means that assenting to another's conflicting truth is a loss of one's own truth.

Although this Self is "self-authored", this is more in the sense that the Stage 4 person has brought together their own pattern or organisation of beliefs and ideas. Like a mosaic or tapestry, the Self is a unique patterning of already existing tiles or threads. Although this Self-form's authority creates a unique pattern, it still relies upon these established ideas. Thus, in being ideological, the Stage 4 person draws upon

> a truth for a faction, a class, a group. And it probably requires the recognition of a group (or persons as representatives of groups) to come into being; either the tacit ideological support of American institutional life, which is most supportive to the institutional evolution of white males, or the more explicit ideologies in support of a disenfranchised social class, gender or race. (Kegan, 1982, p. 102)

Here, Kegan refers specifically to a US context, but what he suggests is also likely to be true for other American-like societies, such as Australia, societies which are androcentric and dominated by white (heterosexual, privileged, educated, affluent) males. Thus, for males who identify with this dominant, androcentric identity, either by similarity or aspiration may find it more difficult to fashion a distinctly self-authored pattern than others.

According to the understanding of intimacy taken in this thesis, the person at Stage 4 experiences intimacy through self-discovery or other-discovery. This understanding of intimacy relates to ideas of self-disclosure and validation that were described in Chapter 2 by Reis and Shaver's (1988) process model of intimacy, or by Giddens' (1992) ideas of the "pure relationship". For the person at Stage 4, self is understood in terms of identity and thus, intimate experiences confirm or reveal more to a person about "who they are".

3.3.5 Stage 5: The Interindividual Self

Stage 5 is characterised by a construction of Self that is found in the interpenetration of multiple selves, resulting in an understanding of self that is constructed in the tension between multiple selves. Where the Self at Stage 4 was the embodiment of one particular ideology or system of ideas, the Self at Stage 5 is the interaction of multiple systems of ideas. New ways of being are created in the dialogue between these systems; in this way, the Self at Stage 5 is generative. In contrast to the previous stage, the Self at Stage 5 embraces incompleteness. According to Kegan (1994, pp. 311-2) persons at Stage 5 are:

> suspicious of any sense of wholeness and distinctness. At least they are suspicious of any sense of wholeness or distinction that is limited to an identification of the self with its favourite way of constructing itself. They are suspicious of their own tendency to feel wholly identified with one side of any opposite and to identify the other with the other side of that opposite.

The interaction of multiple systems that construct the Self creates multiple possibilities, thus, the Self is never complete. This stage is called "*inter*individual" because the person has become an interactive community of individuals – individuals in the sense of having multiple yet distinct identities or ideologies or selves. The person at Stage 5 is subject to this interpenetration and can no longer imagine themself according to a single ideology or identity.

Interpersonally, this stage describes a connection between people that is beyond culture and beyond the ideology of a single system. This is not in a way that only *tolerates* difference, as the Self at Stage 4 did, but in a way that finds itself *in* difference. This Self-form also embraces difference as yet-to-be-discovered aspects of self: the "interpenetration of self and other" (Kegan, 1994, p. 315). Previously, for the person at Stage 4, in being their own authority, they also held authority for what constituted "me". In contrast, the person at Stage 5 acknowledges that "you" can also author "me", and recognises their incompleteness as important in understanding themself. At Stage 5,

> the self seems able to "hear" negative reports about its activities . . . to hear, and to seek out, information which might cause the self to alter its behaviour, or share in a negative judgment of that behaviour. (Kegan, 1982, p. 105)

This capacity is made possible because the Self is not situated in any one ideology or identity that produces these activities. The person at Stage 5 is no longer invested in being "right", in order to maintain identity, but in achieving the best outcome for all (based upon that person's understanding of "best", within the tension of interacting ideologies). At Stage 5, the person is able to recognise the interconnectedness of all people, and thus, what is good for all is also good for themself. Kegan (1982, p. 105) states:

> the functioning of the [person] is no longer an end in itself and one is interested in the way it serves the aims of the new self whose community stretches beyond that particular [person].

This awareness of connection, of interpenetration of selves and interpenetration of self and other, describes an intimacy both with oneself and with others. This intimacy arises from the construction of the Self at Stage 5 as existing in the shaping produced by the dialogue between multiple selves and between self and other.

The person at Stage 5 is similar to the person at Stage 3 in that, at both stages, the Self is relational. The difference between these two stages is that the person at Stage 5 is able to maintain individuality in a way that was not possible for the person at Stage 3. For the person at Stage 5, relationship is found between a person's multiple selves as well as between self and others:

> this sharing of the self at the level of intimacy permits the emotions and impulses to live in the intersection of systems, to be "re-solved" between one self-system and another. Rather than the attempt to be both close and auto-regulative, "individuality" [as object] permits one to "give oneself up" to another . . . which at once shares experiencing and guarantees each partner's distinctness. (Kegan, 1982, p. 106)

This speaks to a new experience of relationship, one in which a person is able to surrender their conception of self by holding multiple conceptions of self. Rather than a single conception of *who* I am, this is a multiple sense of *how I am able to be*.

This understanding of intimacy at Stage 5 aligns in part with Dahms' (1972) understanding of emotional intimacy, the highest form of intimacy in his hierarchy. Dahms described this form of intimacy as "complete access to one another, free from criticism" (Dahms, 1972, p. 38). This degree of access to oneself and to

another, and this degree of vulnerability seems to be what Kegan (1982, 1994) describes in his understanding of interpenetration. Kegan differs from Dahms in that Kegan views criticism, not as a threat to connection, but as having the potential to reveal new aspects of self to self. Thus, criticism can also be an experience of self-discovery.

Dahms (1972, p. 47) also described emotional intimacy as "caring on the highest level, delight[ing] in the independence of others, not in the possession of them". This capacity to connect in a deep way, without the loss of independence, and without fusion is also described in Kegan's (1982) understanding of the person at Stage 5.

Although this Self is the most complex of Kegan's (1982) stages, Stage 5 also has its limitations. While Kegan does not describe this limitation, I see that a limitation of the Self at Stage 5 arises from the Stage 5 person's awareness that others may recognise other parts of Self or other selves that are hidden to that person. The person at Stage 5 has no framework to decide if these other possible selves are ones they wish to develop or embody or if they are relevant. That is, she or his is subject to the interpenetration of others. I suggest that overcoming this limitation requires a sense of life-purpose which might govern, out of infinite possibility, which possibilities are important. In a sense, these possibilities create an "ontological landscape" (C. Jensen-Clayton, personal communication, December 8, 2016). However, the person at Stage 5 does not have a "map" (i.e., life-purpose) with which to navigate this landscape, and as such, no possibility can be recognised as a more important "landmark" than any other possibility.

3.3.6 Subject and Object

The previous section has examined evolutions of Self in terms of growing complexity. This section looks more deeply at the structuring of self according to subjectivity.

The various evolutions of Self described in the previous section are meaning making systems, defined by their differing subjectivities. The Self's coherence and consistency in meaning making come from its inability to be other than what it is subject to, or in other terms, what it is embedded in. Thus, the Self's subjectivity (or embeddedness) is what generates meaning. Equally, the Self is able to be objective about what it is not subject to. Kegan (1994, p. 32, italics in original) names these aspects, the Self's subjectivity and objectivity, as subject and object.

> "Object" refers to those elements of our knowing or organising that we can reflect on, handle, look at, be responsible for, relate to each other, take control of, internalise, assimilate, or otherwise operate upon. . . . "Subject" refers to those elements of our knowing or organising that we are identified with, tied to, fused with, or embedded in. We *have* object; we *are* subject. We cannot be responsible for, in control of, or reflect upon that which is subject. Subject is immediate; object is mediate. Subject is ultimate or absolute; object is relative.

Drawing upon psychoanalytic object-relations theory, Kegan (1982) names "object" is that which has become distinct from the self, the result of "a process of differentiation" which also creates the capacity "for integration". This means what has become object can be related to. Therefore, and as Kegan states, this meaning-making is also a process of subject-object relations.

> Subject-object relations emerge out of a lifelong process of development: a succession of qualitative differentiations of the self from the world, with a qualitatively more extensive object with which to be in relation created each time; a natural history of qualitatively better guarantees to the world of its distinctness; successive triumphs of "relationship to" rather than "embeddedness in". (p. 77)

What Kegan (1982) suggests is that the process of development is not only a process of increasing complexity, but a process of increasing clarity about the distinction between self and other:

> each new balance sees you (the object) more fully as you; guarantees, in a qualitatively new way, your distinct integrity. Put another way, each new balance corrects a too-subjective view of you. (p. 100)

In being clearer about this distinction between self and other, a person has a greater capacity to recognise oneself and others as they are. This is the result of decreasing subjectivity, where the constructions of self and other are less and less defined by previous subjectivities. According to Kegan (1982, p. 76) this process is a "lifetime activity of differentiating and integrating what is taken as self and what is taken as other". Mead (1913, p. 380) also describes this interrelated process of shifts in the construction of self and other as "the reconstruction of the social world, and the consequent appearance of the new self that answers to the new object". Thus, in terms of intimacy, the benefits of greater complexity of Self-form are in creating

consciousness of greater depths of both self and other, which, now conscious, can be expressed.

Kegan (1982) summarises his stages of evolution of Self in terms of what is subject and what is object for each stage. A version of this summary is presented in Figure 3.3, which shows that what was subject in one stage becomes object in the next, with each stage revealing a new quality of subjectivity. In addition, each stage can be understood as a theory of what was subject in the previous stage (see Kegan, 1982, p. 104): Stage 2 is a theory of impulses, organised according to dispositions, that is, one's disposition (needs, wishes, interests, desires) is experienced as the result of a pattern of impulses; Stage 3 is a theory of dispositions organised according to mutuality, alignment of dispositions reveal the quality of a particular relationship; Stage 4 is a theory of relationships organised according to identity (at a personal level) and ideology (at a collective level); and, Stage 5 is a theory of identities and ideologies organised according to principles and ethics.

3.3.7 Summary

This section has examined Kegan's (1982) stages of evolution of the Self. It has also applied each of these stages to describe ways in which different subjectivities result in different understandings and experiences of intimacy. (This will be extended in Section 3.5.) Although the theory also describes the process by which a person evolves from one stage to the next, this process of evolution has not been described here as this aspect of Kegan's theory is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the sociocultural context in which a person develops is important to the focus of this thesis. The following section examines the way in which particular stages of Self are influenced, to a greater or lesser degree, by this wider sociocultural context.

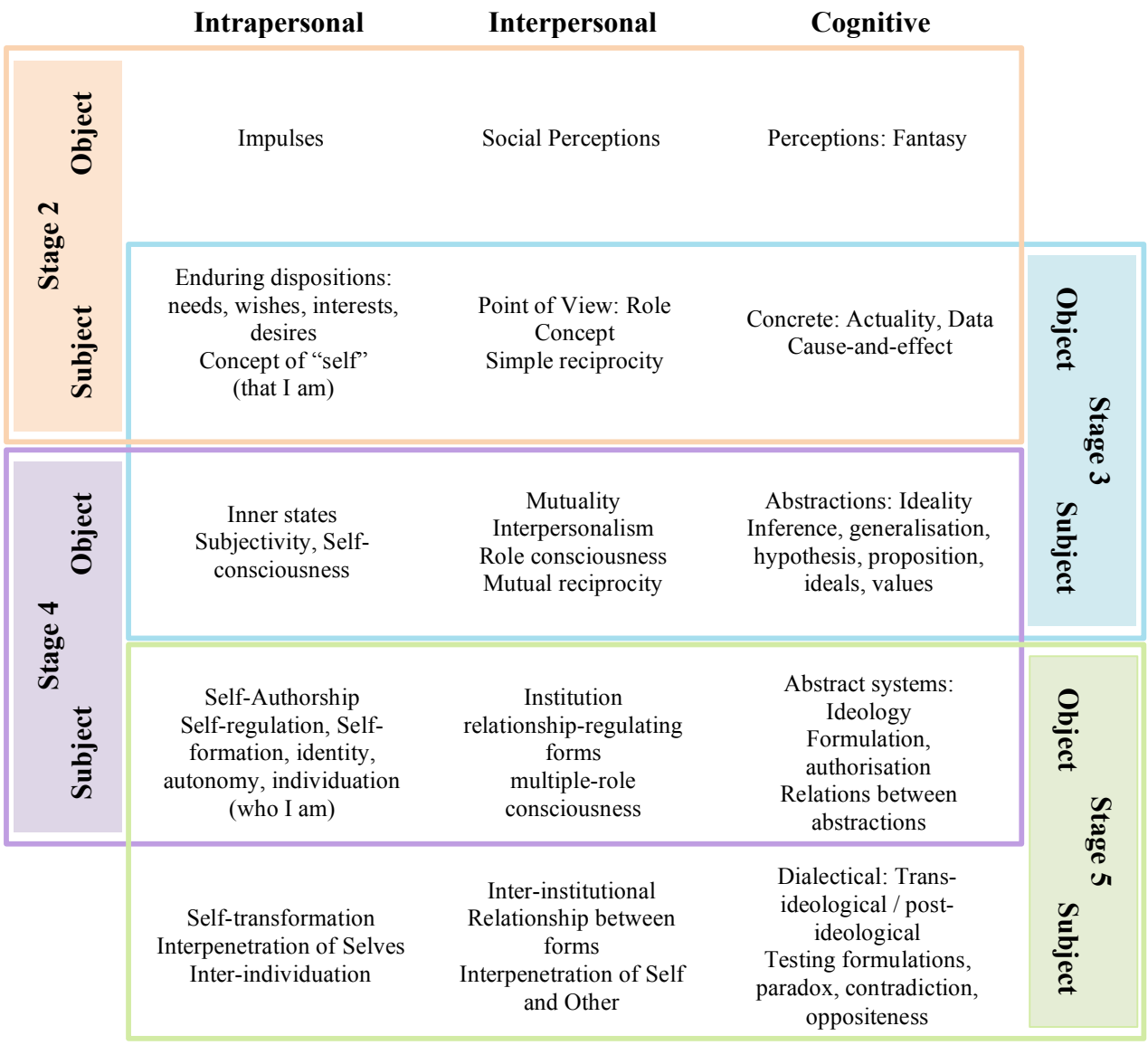


Figure 3.3. Subjects and objects for evolutions of Self.

Based upon Kegan, 1994, p. 314-315, Figure 9.1 and Kegan, 1982, p. 86, Table 6.

3.4 Meaning Making and Sociocultural Influences

The previous section described the way in which different balances of subject and object or different onto-epistemologies result in different ways of understanding and experiencing self and other. As well, implications for intimacy were described. This section examines the sociocultural contexts that also contribute to the subjectivities that construct these onto-epistemologies.

According to Kegan's (1982) theory, at birth, a person enters a world that is more complex than their current meaning making system. The discrepancy between a person's complexity and the complexity of the world is a permanent state, such that the world is always more complex than a person's current meaning

making system. In addition, in entering a cultural system, there are already established ideas about how that person's life will develop. For example, a person enters a family, which is a social environment within the broader social context. This broader context is one that has already established an understanding of human needs and how they are met, a set of expectations of what makes for a successful life and a set of expectations about how people interact with one another. These are usually not aspects of a person's experience that they generate for themself, at least not until much later in life. This influence of culture on the development of self can also be in the influence of gender socialisation on the development of males' selves (e.g., Levant, 1996)

Because of this imbalance of complexity—that the world is more complex than the consciousness of the person—and in order to make sense of the world, some meanings must be adopted from the social environment in which the person finds themself. These adopted meanings influence a person's self. That is, these adopted meanings become part of the subjectivities that shape a person's Self-form. Thus, the process of development, in being described as a movement from greater to lesser subjectivity, is also a process of moving from socially-defined meanings to more personally-defined ones, although still contextualised by culture. Each of Kegan's (1982) successive evolutions of Self enable, and produce, an increasing emergence of self-made meanings, rather than other-defined meanings. Thus, in earlier stages of evolution, compared to later stages of evolution, meanings tend to be more closely aligned with social norms and cultural understandings. Stage 4 is the point at which the person develops an identity that is based upon autonomy. Whilst this is still likely to be aligned with particular social groups (see Kegan, 1982, p. 102), there is a greater degree of intention and choice, and therefore less subjectivity in regard to these dominant social norms. Kegan's fifth stage achieves a separation from culture, and the generative capacity of the Self at this stage enables a move beyond culturally established meanings.

Subjectivities are described as the source of the qualitative differences between onto-epistemologies, that is, between Kegan's (1982) evolutions of Self or evolutionary stages. Changes in subjectivity and the resulting change in a person's onto-epistemology arise through a developmental process, which is influenced by maturation and by that person's environment (Kegan, 1982). Thus, Kegan's stages can also be understood broadly as having two different sources of subjectivity:

internal sources of subjectivity arising from maturation, and external sources of subjectivity such as sociocultural meanings. As suggested earlier, Stage 4 marks an important transition point, representing a shift in the focus of a person's subjectivity. As a generalisation, prior subjectivities, at Stage 2 and Stage 3, are dominated by *socioculturally* determined meanings: Stage 2 by roles and Stage 3 by relationship ideals. In contrast, later subjectivities, at Stages 4 and 5, are dominated by *individually* determined meanings: Stage 4 by self-authorship (although still linked to social group norms, see Kegan, 1982, p. 103), and Stage 5 by the interpenetration of selves and by the interpenetration of self/selves and other.

As subjectivities are unconsciously adopted ways of making meaning, it can be seen that a person at Stage 2 or Stage 3 is influenced in unconscious ways by sociocultural meanings. A person at Stage 2 or 3 is largely unaware that the meanings they experience are external sociocultural meanings, which creates an assumption that "this is just the way things are" (i.e., a hegemonic effect). This can have facilitating and constraining effects. Adopted meanings (i.e., ones that come from an external source) allow a person to function in contexts that are more complex than their current Self (Kegan, 1982). That is, they provide pre-determined meanings that serve as a proxy for self-determined meanings, until the person is able to generate their own meanings at a level of complexity that matches their context. In order to understand how this functions, it is helpful to understand social organisation in terms of Kegan's (1982) theory.

From the perspective of social organisation, society can be understood as a collective expression of Stage 4, that is, a particular society's self-authored, autonomous identity, or its culture (or multiple sub-identities representing sub-groups within the culture). In this framing, Stage 2 provides a concrete way of understanding how to "be" in that society in ways that maintain the society's ideology. From a society's perspective, Stage 2 constructions of meaning provide descriptions of what it means, for example, to be a "good citizen", a "good parent", a "good friend" or a "good husband/wife/partner". Similarly, Stage 3 constructions of meaning offer guidance in more complex social situations. However, Stage 3 meanings are in terms of more abstract ideals, focused on different types of relationships and their purposes in ways that are less prescriptive than for Stage 2. For example, Stage 2 ways of meaning offer concrete descriptions of the roles of "husband" and "wife" in ways that are complimentary but Stage 3 ways of meaning

offer abstract ideals of how couple relationships should function, such as in terms of love and care, or cooperation, or mutual satisfaction. However, Stage 2 and Stage 3 subjectivities are both created by the ideology/ideologies of a (collective) Stage 4 construction of meaning.

For an individual person, Stage 4 identifies the transition from socially imposed ways of making meaning to individually authored ways of making meaning. At Stage 4, the person generates their own identity and chooses the ways in which they draw upon sociocultural influences. For example, a person might choose to adopt Buddhist ideals within a western (Anglo-Christian) society. Although, in general, they are no longer subject to these influences (that is, they choose them), they are still dependent upon them and are blind to the way in which allegiance to a single identity constrains them. In contrast, the person at Stage 5 is less influenced by sociocultural forces, because the richness of multiple voices, which construct a "personal sociocultural" can be an internal experience for the person at Stage 5. As described earlier, Kegan (1982) does not offer a description of the limitations to the Stage 5 Self, and therefore does not provide a description of the experience of subjectivity for a person at Stage 5. However, I have suggested that subjectivity to interpenetration creates a vulnerability in that a person seeks to be open to others' experience of them, but does not have a larger framework in which to prioritise particular "selves".

It is important to note that this division of subjectivities is not an exact representation of the way in which Kegan (1982) describes the experience of the Self at various stages of evolution. At Stages 2 and 3, there are ways in which individual differences act as subjectivities, such as perceptions of personal dispositions at Stage 2 and nuanced understandings of relationships at Stage 3. However, these are at a more fine-grained level of application of Kegan's theory than is relevant to this thesis.

The theory also identifies that the Self, which generates meaning, also constructs conceptions of self and other (Kegan, 1982). These constructions of self and of others are how a person understands themself and others to be. That they are constructions, arising from a Self-structure, suggests that they are only approximations or representations of Self and Other, not the fullness of Self and Other. Thus, Kegan's (1982) theory suggests that the more a person's own meanings are self-authored, and the more a person is able to distinguish themself

from others, the more refined, and less approximate their representations of Self and of Others become. As each stage moves toward greater self-authored meanings, the person makes fewer assumptions about other people. At Stage 2, a person's perceptions of, and assumptions regarding others is in relation to roles; at Stage 3, a person's perceptions of others assume a level of mutuality that aligns others with one's own experiences; at Stage 4 a person's perceptions of others is in terms of one's own ideologies; at Stage 5 a person is no longer framing others in terms of social systems, but in terms of that person's distinctness.

Inherent within this understanding of the way in which subjectivities influence a person's perceptions and conceptions of others is a recognition that a difference is likely to occur between a person's conception of others and who that person is. For example, assumptions of mutuality at Stage 3 are likely to preclude a person from sensitivity to differences between oneself and an important other., Differences may be overlooked or ignored as they pose a threat to a Stage 3 conception of relationships because interpersonal harmony is necessary in order to maintain a sense of self.

Changes in perceptions of others are also intertwined with changes in the way that a person perceives themself – changes that result from their own development, and not necessarily the development of others. Kegan (1982, p. 133) states: "the differences we experience in our relationship to a growing person have much to do with the different person we ourselves have become in the organising of the other". He also goes on to say:

> One of the most hard-to-keep-hold-of pictures this framework presents is that a person's evolution *intrinsically* creates anew "the other" with which the person can be in relation, that as a person evolves those of us around him become something fundamentally different to him. Crucial to the change is that the person confuses us less with [themself]—and not quantitatively less, but qualitatively less. (p. 140, italics in original)

What Kegan suggests is that greater development of self reduces the discrepancies between construction and actuality.

This way of understanding self and other also suggests that experiences of intimacy can be seen as the result of the interaction between a person's constructions of self and other, rather than between actual people. This provides helpful ways of understanding issues related to non-mutual experiences of intimacy

(e.g., Acitelli & Duck, 1987; Duck, 1994). If intimate experiences can be understood as the result of one's own constructions, then it also follows that intimate experiences need not be mutual in order to be regarded as intimate. In a sense, both sides of the relationship are held by each person, and thus a mis-alignment may occur between the perception of other and that other's perception of themself. If experiences of intimacy occur in this internal representation (that may be more, or less linked to actuality), then one person's perception that an experience is shared may not relate to an actual sharing of experience.

The working definition of intimacy proposed in this thesis, which will be examined in the next section, highlights the experience of intimacy as the result of interactions that influence a person's constructions of self or other. Thus, intimate experiences are an important part of facilitating this process of moving toward greater alignment between construction and actuality and also differentiation of self and other. In addition, sociocultural influences, in influencing a person's understanding of self and other, can also be seen as an intimate experience. That is, the very process of being socially influenced, in terms of one's understanding of oneself is an intimate experience (albeit unconscious).

3.5 Understandings and Experiences of Intimacy

Intimacy, in this thesis, as a working definition, has been described as

> a process of engagement with self involving a person's understandings of themself (or self-concept) and/or of another (concept of specific other) resulting in experiences where these understandings are expressed, confirmed or influenced. This can be an experience involving verbal or nonverbal behaviours or both.
>
> Vulnerability is necessary in facilitating intimacy and can occur to different degrees; the degree of vulnerability may vary across a person's understanding of themself or of another person. Vulnerability may also be conscious and voluntary, conscious and involuntary, or unconscious and involuntary. Asymmetrical vulnerability results in an imbalance of power and trust is required to voluntarily allow this asymmetry.

The following sections apply this working definition to Kegan's (1982) Stages 2 to 5; the stages relevant to adult experience. Each of these sections begins with a brief review of the evolution of Self relevant to each of these stages.

3.5.1 Intimacy at Stage 2

At Kegan's (1982) Stage 2, a person's understanding of themself (and others) is based upon a pattern of needs, interests or wishes, which together are understood as an enduring disposition. This is seen as a stable description of how that person is. However, the person at Stage 2 is only able to hold one perspective at a time and so this person understands themself in relation to others in terms of roles. Roles overcome this limitation by enabling harmonious interactions between people based upon a single perspective. Through these complimentary roles (e.g., friend and friend) needs are satisfied, interests are developed and wishes are satisfied. The person at Stage 2 is able to recognise that others have different dispositions to their own. However, these dispositions, both their own and another's, must be learnt through experience.

Applying these understandings to the working definition of intimacy used in this thesis, an intimate experience, for the person at Stage 2 might be understood in the following ways:

- *expressing an understanding of oneself/another* through verbal or nonverbal disclosures of needs, interests or wishes;
- *confirmation of one's understanding of oneself/another* through validation of the appropriateness of those needs, interests, or wishes *in terms of particular roles* one is expected to fulfil; or,
- *influences to one's understanding of oneself/another* through social expectations about how a person is expected to fulfil certain roles, or through challenges to the social acceptability of a person's needs, wishes or interests.

The following vignette describes some ways a person at Stage 2 might experience intimacy.

> *John decided to take up soccer. It had been something he had wanted to do for some time. Although he had been a keen soccer fan for years, he felt that he had never had the chance to find out what it was like to play. It was something he had wondered about every now and then. At the start of the year, he finally overcome his anxieties about not being very skilled, and about meeting new people. Soon after joining a club, he met Adam, a fellow team mate who had been playing for a few years.*

He and Adam began to chat a bit after training sessions. After one practice session, John told Adam that he had been wanting to join a club for ages and that he had really surprised himself with how quickly he was picking up skills. Adam commented that he had noticed that John had made some good plays in the last match. Adam also said that he thought John had courage for taking up a new sport at 40.

Toward the end of the season, John invited his good work friends Brett and Craig to come and watch one of his games. It was a tough match and John's team lost. After the game, John caught up with his friends and asked them about the game. Both Brett and Craig were a bit vague, and commented that soccer wasn't really their thing. During the match, John had noticed that Brett and Craig had been working on their laptops. Later that week at work, John and Brett caught up over lunch. Brett asked John why he had taken up soccer. Brett wondered if all this training was affecting his performance at work. Later that day, Brett told John that he had noticed that he been a bit tired at work and said that he was worried about John because he had noticed a couple of times where John had been "off his game" with clients.

The next day, Craig and John went for a beer after work. In a joking manner, Craig asked John if he was going through a mid-life crisis and if taking up soccer was about trying to recapture his youth.

At the end of the season, John quit soccer. He told Adam that he needed to focus on work and that he no longer had the time to train. To himself, John wondered what he had been thinking, to take up soccer at 40 and that he should just stick to watching the game, not playing it.

In the above vignette John revealed something about himself (his desire to play soccer) to strangers (his new team mates) and to his friends (Brett and Craig). He received feedback about this non-verbal disclosure of himself. Adam validated this disclosure by recognising John's courage which could be seen as affirming John as being "manly"). However, Brett and Craig invalidated this disclosure. Brett saw John's desire to play soccer as interfering with more important obligations – to do well at work. Craig saw John's desire to play soccer as a temporary phase (not an expression of self) and as inappropriate for someone John's age. It is likely that all of these experiences were intimate for John because they influenced how he understood himself in both (with Adam as expanding his sense of self, and with

Brett and Craig as diminishing his sense of self). At the end of the vignette, John decided that playing soccer was not really part of his picture of himself.

As well, John's invitation, to Brett and Craig, to watch his game suggests that John may not have been able to imagine that Brett and Craig might respond negatively to his revelation of his desire to play soccer.

The limitations of the Self at Stage 2 make this person unable to imagine how another person will think or feel or react based upon any other perspective than their own. This creates a vulnerability that can be addressed by knowing, through observed patterns, or inquiring directly about how the other person is thinking, feeling or responding.

By the end of the scenario, John had also learnt more about Brett and Craig and their dispositions. However, having to learn these details through experience was quite costly for John's willingness to recognise his desire to play soccer as an important and valid expression of himself.

3.5.2 Intimacy at Stage 3

At Stage 3, Kegan (1982) suggests that people's understanding of themself (and others) and their relationships are based upon experiences arising from inner states (e.g., thoughts, feelings) and upon mutuality, that is, how they experience themself in their relationships with other people. This also means that a person at Stage 3 is dependent upon another's presence, either physically or psychologically, in order to validate their understanding of themself. For this person, the moderation of their inner state is dependent upon this validation by another and there is little distinction between this person and their relationships (i.e., they *are* their relationships rather than *have* them). Harmonious relationships (i.e., lack of conflict) are necessary to maintain a positive understanding of oneself. In addition, the person at Stage 3 is likely to assume a significant other is similar to them in terms of inner states, that is, they think, feel and respond in similar ways; the greater these similarities are perceived to be, the closer the relationship is understood to be.

Applying these understandings to the working definition of intimacy used in this thesis, intimacy for the person at Stage 3 might be understood in the following ways:

- *expressing an understanding of oneself/another* through disclosure of ideas, experiences and feelings, and through goals or hopes for the future;
- *confirmation of one's understanding of oneself/another* through overt confirmation that these experiences, feelings or hopes are shared; or,
- *influences to one's understanding of oneself/another* through an important other's ideas, experiences and feelings or hopes in regard to one's own.

As an example, the following vignette takes up John's story again, but this time describes some ways a person at Stage 3 might experience intimacy.

> *About a third of the way through the next soccer season, John received a call from Adam. It was quite unexpected because John had felt a bit confused by the whole "soccer experience". Consequently, he felt a bit unsure about how Adam might react, since Brett and Craig had reminded him that, at 40, taking up soccer wasn't really the most sensible thing to do. Although he had written it off as a "learning experience", he felt that there was something he missed about playing. The phone conversation with Adam was a bit awkward, but Adam had called, wondering if John might be able to help them out for a few games. Another player, Dev, had broken his leg in a spectacular play that had won the team the match but left Dev with several broken bones. Although he had tried to find a replacement, Adam hadn't succeeded. He asked John if he might come back to the team. Before he realised what he was saying, John had agreed, and found himself telling Adam about what had happened with Brett and Craig and how they had convinced him to give up the team.*
>
> *After a few weeks, back at soccer training and playing on weekends, John was invited to a team pizza night at one player's home. During the night conversation turned to hopes of winning at least some games during the finals. Later that night, Adam and John and a couple of other men had a conversation in the kitchen about how they had come to take up soccer later in life, and the ways that friends had been surprised or had thought it was strange. John talked about his experience and that he was glad to be back and part of the team.*

John went home feeling that he had really been part of the team that night, and in a way he hadn't experienced before.

In this second vignette, John experienced a sense of connection with others through shared hopes and experiences. Hearing other people talking about the same kinds of things he had experienced confirmed the validity of his experiences. Through this mutual sharing and through the similarities of their experiences, John felt a sense of connection with others.

However, the limitations of the Self at Stage 3 make a person dependent upon significant others' approval. This creates a vulnerability that can be addressed by assurances that others feel/think the same as one does, such as, mutual feelings or declarations that this relationship is unique and special (e.g., kindred spirits, "two peas in a pod", best mates, finding "the one", or one's "other half").

John's experience in this second vignette highlights how John's validation of his own experiences depended on others. It was only through mutuality that John was able to experience this part of himself that had felt so uncertain about playing soccer, and that had high hopes for the season. Although he now had a space in which he felt understood and has others who shared his dreams, he will be faced with a growing dilemma about how, if at all, Brett and Craig fit with this picture. Can he still be friends with people who cannot share this experience?

3.5.3 Intimacy at Stage 4

According to Kegan (1982) the Stage 4 person's understanding of themself is based upon a sense of identity that is individual and distinct from others. It is particularly in this pattern of distinctions that a person is able to recognise themself. In addition, there is a sense of autonomy in this distinctness, that the person has a degree of choice about who they are. In the same way, the person at Stage 4 also understands others as being unique self-authored individuals. This person understands themself in relation to others as having multiple layers, that one can have multiple and sometimes conflicting responsibilities to others and to self. For example, a person might understand themself as having a relationship with an elderly parent as a son or daughter, yet also have a friendship with them as a fellow adult, and a responsibility, as carer, for their health, as well as wanting to support the person's desire to maintain their own integrity as an individual. Conflict in relationships, although difficult, are not necessarily a threat to the relationship, but viewed as the consequence of individual differences (Kegan, 1994).

Applying these understandings to the working definition of intimacy used in this thesis, intimacy for the person at Stage 4 might be understood in the following ways:

- *expressing an understanding of oneself/another* through verbal disclosure of one's understanding of self (or another) and through actions that reveal distinct attributes of a person;
- *confirmation of one's understanding of oneself/another* through verbal feedback or actions that reveal this understanding; or
- *influences to one's understanding of oneself/another* through overt disclosure or challenge.

As an example of how a person at Stage 4 might experience intimacy, this third vignette picks up John's story several years later.

> *After returning to the soccer team, John had struggled with the differences between his work friends and his soccer friends. After several attempts to bring these two worlds together, John had come to the conclusion that feeling torn in his allegiance to one or the other was destructive to his sense of wellbeing and that keeping these worlds apart was the only solution. With this new strategy in place, John enjoyed the sense of comradery he felt with his soccer team mates and the way in which his work friends really understood his passion for accounting. He had discovered that bringing up his fascination with pivot tables and budget reports fell rather flat with his soccer mates. Equally, talking about penalty shots and the intricacies of "off-side" rulings usually cleared the tea-room at work. John was realising that he had to become a different person at work, a different person at soccer and was realising that he was a different person in other parts of his life too, in his family and with other friends.*
>
> *The more he spent time with Adam, the more he realised that his ideas about what was important in life, and how he wanted to see himself were more aligned with Adam's view of the world than with his work friends' views. He began to wonder about what it meant for him to be working for an organisation that judged success only in terms of profit and not in terms of contribution to others. He felt more and more*

uncomfortable with Brett and Craig's subtle suggestions that it didn't matter what you did, as long as you moved up in the company. Nowadays he cleared the lunchroom by raising ethical issues about the company's accountancy policies.

The following year, after many sleepless nights, many arguments with Brett and Craig, and many long discussions over beers with Adam, John cashed in his long-service leave and resigned. John had lost his long-term work friendships, but he felt that in Adam, he had gained a life-long friend. Adam was the kind of friend he could talk to about just about anything. For many things, he was fairly certain that they would see at least nearly eye-to-eye, and when they didn't, somehow, they were able to recognise that being different people meant that they would have different ideas about some things. Adam had never really gotten over losing his wife in a tragic car accident and had never really been in another serious relationship. He missed the opportunity to be a father. John had no great desire to have children, and being gay, his family and friends had long since stopped asking him when he was going to get married and have kids. However, John and Adam did get into heated discussions, particularly after a few beers, when John suggested to Adam that he needed a better financial plan; but they had agreed to disagree and resolved that this was a "no go" area of conversation.

In this third vignette, John experienced a sense of connection (and disconnection) with others through an alignment (or misalignment) of values and beliefs. In connecting with Adam in this way, John came to a greater understanding of himself (e.g., as fiscally savvy) and of Adam in their alignments (e.g., as viewing money as less important than integrity) and in their mis-alignments (e.g., as fiscally savvy or naïve). Although the process involved mutual sharing, the nature of their friendship did not require mutuality of perception. They were able to recognise each other as independent people with some similarities and some differences.

The limitations of the Self at Stage 4 make a person only able to see themself in terms of a single identity (Kegan, 1982). Revealing this identity leaves the person at Stage 4 vulnerable to the acceptance or rejection of that identity by important others. Security is provided through mutual trust and mutual disclosure. In

addition, integrity with that identity is necessary for the person at Stage 4 in order to maintain a sense of self. Thus, that integrity can be questioned or manipulated for another person's purposes, for example, "you say that reliability is important to you, but you haven't kept your promises".

John's loss of his relationships with his work friends demonstrated how a lack of alignment inhibited a level of respect that facilitated trust and disclosure. This lack of alignment in his workplace threatened John's sense of integrity and ultimately led to his resignation.

3.5.4 Intimacy at Stage 5

At Stage 5, a person's understanding of themself is based upon multiple selves and dialogue between those multiple selves to create new perspectives (Kegan, 1982). Similarly, this person understands others as having multiple ways of being, although there may be preferred ways of being that characterise that person (possibly reflecting the single identity developed at Stage 4). The person at Stage 5 understands themself in relation to others as unique and distinct, but sharing a common humanity (Kegan, 1982, p. 104). This means that although there are some aspects of self that one can be aware of, there are many aspects of self that others may recognise but that the person themself may not. In addition, aspects of others, particularly those that are challenging, may also be undiscovered aspects of oneself (Kegan, 1994). If all humans share a common humanity, then ways of being that are possible for one person are also possible for every person. Conflict or differences between people are not only ways of recognising distinction, but also of discovering new aspects of self (Kegan, 1994).

Applying these understandings to the working definition of intimacy used in this thesis, intimacy for the person at Stage 5 might be understood in the following ways:

- *expressing an understanding of self/other* through verbal disclosure of one's understanding of multiple selves (or of another's) and through actions that reveal these diverse selves: or
- *confirmation of one's understanding of oneself/another* through verbal feedback or actions that reveal this understanding; or
- *influence to one's understanding of oneself/another* through overt disclosure, challenge or interpenetration of selves or of self/other.

As an example of how a person at Stage 5 might experience intimacy, this fourth vignette continues John's story.

> *Following his resignation from the accountancy firm, John set up his own business as a financial consultant. His dream was to help people who found themselves in debt to achieve financial independence and put in place sound financial plans for the future. At times, his passion for making a difference meant that he charged clients on a sliding scale, according to their financial status. However, he quickly realised that his own financial strategies were unsustainable as more and more of his clients were unable to pay his full fee. Disenfranchised, he quit his business and went to work as a bookkeeper for a welfare agency, moving back in with his parents while he figured out what to do.*
>
> *Later that year, Adam's mother died, and as the only child living in the country, and as executor of her will, he had to take care of his mother's affairs. He asked John to help him work through the financial aspects of her estate. This involved many hours of working closely together and talk about money – their "no go" topic. Through this process Adam and John both came to a new appreciation of each other's financial perspectives. John realised that he wished he was more spontaneous with his money, rather than always careful and planned. In this new desire, he also discovered a new appreciation for his own father who he had previously seen as too free and easy with his money, getting the family into financial difficulty when John was in his teenage years.*
>
> *Although they were already good friends, John felt deeply grateful to Adam for enabling him to discover this "free spirited" side of himself and the way in which it enabled him to reconnect with, and forgive his own father. Adam was also grateful to John. For the first time in many years, Adam was able to talk about his experience of losing his house-building business through bankruptcy. Although the death of his wife had led to emotional difficulties that affected his capacity to work, Adam was able to acknowledge that his lack of prudence in managing money had also been a factor.*
>
> *In time, John discovered that how he wanted to manage money was not by being spontaneous or by being planned, but by being both, depending on what the situation demanded. Equipped with this new*

understanding of himself, John re-launched his business in partnership with Adam, offering financial advice and career planning to tradespeople. It was Adam's experiences as a carpenter, and of bankruptcy that had sparked the idea for their business. Although decisions regarding client fees continued to be complex, John and Adam were able to negotiate these more effectively with their new understandings of the tension between generosity and restraint.

In this fourth vignette, John's sense of connection with Adam was deepened in engaging with their differences, not their similarities. Through this engagement, John discovered parts of himself that he had not previously seen, and that he had previously rejected as foolish. Consequently, he was able to develop a new appreciation for others and for himself.

As has been stated previously, Kegan (1982) does not identify the limitations of the Self at Stage 5; however, it seems that the person at Stage 5 is vulnerable to the influence of others' suggestions that they are blind to parts of themself that these others recognise: how can one defend against that which one knows one cannot see? A view of oneself as sharing a common humanity may suggests that the selves expressed in others, can also be expressed in oneself. Therefore, in oneself, all selves are possible. From a pragmatic perspective, although all selves might be possible, not all selves can be developed, and so some means of prioritisation is required. What might be needed is a sense of one's purpose, as a unique member of the human race, that is, one's unique contribution to the greater wellbeing of humanity. This would provide a means to prioritise certain selves over others in service to this purpose. Safety in this vulnerability might be provided by trust in another person's understanding of one's own purposes or priorities.

3.5.5 Summary

This section has suggested qualitatively distinct expressions of the working definition of intimacy across Kegan's (1982) stages. Table 3.1 summarises these expressions.

Table 3.1

Expressions of Voluntary Intimacy at Various Stages of Kegan's Theory

Stage	Expressing an understanding of self / other through …	Confirmation of one's understanding of oneself/ another	Influence to one's understanding of oneself/ another	Providing safety in vulnerability
2	verbal or nonverbal disclosures of needs, interests or wishes	through validation of the appropriateness of those needs, interests, or wishes in terms of particular roles	through expectations about how a person is expected to fulfil certain roles, or through challenges to the appropriateness of a person's needs, wishes or interests	knowing, through observed patterns, or inquiring directly about how the other person is thinking, feeling or responding
3	disclosure of ideas, experiences and feelings, and through goals or hopes for the future	through overt confirmation that these experiences, feelings or hopes are shared	through an important other's ideas, experiences and feelings or hopes in regard to one's own	assurances that others feel/think the same as one does, such as, mutual feelings or declarations that this relationship is unique and special
4	verbal disclosure of one's understanding of self (or another) in terms of identity, and through actions that reveal distinct values and beliefs of a person	through verbal feedback or actions that reveal this understanding	through overt disclosure or challenge	mutual trust and mutual disclosure.
5	verbal disclosure of one's understanding of multiple selves (or of another's) and through actions that reveal these diverse selves	through verbal feedback or actions that reveal this understanding	through overt interpenetration	trust in another person's understanding of one's own life purposes or priorities

3.6 Limitations to Kegan's Theory

Kegan's (1982) developmental stages are described in terms of epistemologies and the way in which these each create different meanings. This system of stages presents an understanding of epistemology preceding ontology. Although the more fine-grained shifts between stages described by Lahey et al. (2011) suggest becoming, they also describe shifts in epistemology as the origin of shifts in ontology. What is hidden in this system of categories is the way in which ontology can precede epistemology in making meaning. However, Kegan (1982, 1994) does acknowledge that the complexity of a situation can exceed the complexity of the person(s) in that situation. This is not an aspect of Kegan's theory that has been elaborated in great detail in this chapter, other than to acknowledge that forces external to a person (e.g., sociocultural context) can also be a source of growth. However, Lahey et al.'s (2011) Subject Object Interview (SOI), the process of evoking participants' experiences and evaluating them in terms of Lahey et al.'s categories, situates epistemology in an ontological landscape. That is, in conducting and analysing the SOI, it is the participant's experiencing that forms the basis of inductions regarding that participant's onto-epistemology. This allows for two kinds of meanings to be expressed by the participant – those that are established and where ontology follows epistemology, but also those that are *being* established, where epistemology has not yet caught up with ontology. In this way, the SOI, as an application of Kegan's theory allows for an investigation of participants' understandings and experiences of intimacy drawing on both epistemological and ontological aspects of these.

Another limitation is suggested by VanderPol's (1990) extensive comparison of Kegan's evolving self and Kohut's self-psychology. Although VanderPol identifies many areas of similarity between these theories, he suggests that Kegan takes a largely cognitive view of self, with a limited focus on affective aspects, whilst he sees that the opposite is true for Kohut. Although this may be generally true, Kegan does state that "we are not our stages . . . we are the activity of this evolution . . . out of this evolutionary motion that we are, we experience emotion" (Kegan, 1982, p. 169). This can be understood to mean that emotions do not arise from Self, but from the evolutionary motion to which the Self gives a temporary and particular structure, that is, emotion is *prior to* the Self, it originates form the

same source that generates Self. This level of examination of Kegan's theory is somewhat beyond the scope of this thesis.

However, Kegan (1982) does refer to the part that emotions play in the evolution of Self, both in terms of facilitating evolution and as a consequence of evolution. In terms of facilitation, he identifies intrapsychic distress as an important source of motivation toward change. He states that the experience of a mismatch of complexity, between a person's Self-structure (epistemology) and their experiencing (ontology), results in intrapsychic distress and that this distress arises from an inability to make meaning. For example, this is described in terms of the inability to resolve competing needs at Stage 2 or incompatible relationships at Stage 3 or conflicting ideologies at Stage 4. In these ways, Kegan identifies that intrapsychic distress can facilitate evolutionary change. As well, Kegan identifies that experiences of depression result from the temporary loss of self in the transition from one stage to the next (see Kegan, 1982, p. 270 for specific descriptions of types of depression and its evolutionary causes).

VanderPol (1990) also identified that Kohut's theory resulted from observations of clinical populations. In contrast, Kegan's theory is largely developed through observations of non-clinical populations. This may have led to a further limitation in that Kegan's (1982) theory, which, like Rogers' (1967) ideas of "person", assumes all people to be oriented toward generativity and toward good for all (i.e., humanist principles). This assumption may overlook ways in which people's orientation may be toward destruction, although Rogers does identify that the actualising tendency can be distorted through early experiences, leading to dysfunction. Similarly, Kegan does offer some explanation for this in suggesting that when the social context in which a person evolves limits growth – through neglect or through excessive control (i.e., not allowing the person to develop agency), that this can result in a "stuckness" at best and self-destruction at worst. However, the theory does not give a clear understanding of how sociopathic or psychopathic aspects may develop, nor how they might be expressed at different stages of complexity. As well, the theory focuses on the structure of each stage, rather than the expression of that structure. Some details are given of "best case" embodiments of each stage, but even from a non-pathological perspective, little detail is given of "worst case" embodiments that may reflect non-pathological ways of being that are less than "ideal" examples of human being (being here as a verb,

rather than a noun). For example, it is not clear if a person at Stage 5 may focus on self-interest or self-aggrandisement, because Kegan describes Stage 5 as a pan-cultural perspective that is focused on human good, not self-gain. A lack of clarity in this area makes it difficult to know if such self-focused pursuits are present in later stages (i.e., Stage 4 or 5) or only present in earlier stages (i.e., Stage 2 or 3), or if the complexity of Self present in Stages 4 and 5 can be distorted for self-gain, at the expense of greater human good. In terms of the current study, this is less of a limitation than might be possible in other contexts, given that I am working with a non-clinical sample. However, it is important to keep in mind that participants' descriptions of relational dysfunction cannot be assumed to be indicative of less complex functioning, and need to be analysed in terms of the complexity of the dysfunctional relational patterns and the reasoning associated with them.

Examining intimacy through a framework that allows multiple, equally valid conceptions and experiences of intimacy offers the potential for more diverse experiences to be recognised as valid and as shaping a person's conception of self and/or other. Despite these advantages there are some limitations in understanding the Self in terms of onto-epistemologies. Kegan (1982) suggests that it is impossible to see the means by which we make meaning, or how we experience the world, until we begin to move beyond it to a more complex system of meaning-making. It is only when we are subject to a new system that we can begin to see objectively the system we were previously subject to. This subjectivity to a particular onto-epistemology is our human blind-spot. Although we are able to be conscious about the meanings we make, being conscious of *how* we make meaning is not possible. If we are unconscious of our current onto-epistemology, then it is also impossible for us to imagine the limitations of our current onto-epistemology, until we have already begun to evolve beyond them. In a sense, this constructs our consciousness as always more limited than our unconscious evolution. It is not until we see with hindsight, with a more complex onto-epistemology, that we can realise that our past conceptions and experiences were limited, resulting in meanings that were too simplistic.

The significance of this limitation, in terms of this thesis, depends upon the degree of mismatch between the complexity of Kegan's theory, the complexity of my own onto-epistemology and the complexity of participants' onto-epistemologies. Where my onto-epistemology is at least equivalent to Kegan's

theory in term of complexity, and where both (theory and I) are equal to or greater in complexity than participants' onto-epistemologies, there is no limitation. However, the nature of subjectivity means that questions of relative complexity (theory, participants', my own) are difficult to answer. Whilst, from my own perspective, it may seem that I can make sense of both Kegan's theory and can apply it analytically, I am unable to know what I do not know and cannot see my own limitations. Although there is little I can do to address this limitation directly, being aware of this allows me to approach observations with caution, recognising that I will not see all there is to be seen. In addition, working in the context of a collegial supervisory team provides opportunities for others to recognise the blind spots in my thinking.

Another limitation is that Kegan's (1982) theory is described in linear ways, describing a process of ever-increasing complexity. In doing so, it is not able to embrace patterns of development that might oscillate between greater and lesser complexities, even if the overall path is toward greater complexity. This limitation is common to all stage-based developmental theories (Burman, 1994). However, there is an inherent directional bias related to complexity of experiencing, which Kegan highlights: greater complexity can comprehend lesser complexity, but lesser complexity cannot comprehend greater complexity. In linking levels of complexity, Kegan suggests that less complex functioning becomes incorporated in functioning of greater complexity, rather than being replaced by it. This suggests that less complex functioning is always available, but more complex functioning depends on evolutionary development. Kegan (1994, p. 33) states:

> the different principles of mental organisation are intimately related to each other. They are not just different ways of knowing, each with its preferred season. One does not simply replace the other, nor is the relation merely additive or cumulative, an accretion of skills. Rather the relation is transformative, qualitative and incorporative. Each successive principle subsumes or encompasses the prior principle. That which was subject becomes object to the next principle. The new principle is a higher order principle (more complex, more inclusive) that makes the prior principle into an element or tool of its system.

In stating that previous systems become "an element or tool" of the current system, what Kegan seems to be suggesting is that types of information that a previous

system held as ultimate in determining meaning become a resource for a more complex system. That is, they become information that can be utilised in relation to other forms of information and manipulated by a more complex system. However, this still suggests a single *system* of meaning making, i.e., the most complex system that has been developed. In relation to the limitations of stage theories, this incorporation of lesser complex intrapsychic tools within a more complex system overcomes the linearity of developmental experiencing that is identified within stage-based theories. This incorporation allows for a flexible shifting between levels of complexity, rather than a limitation to respond only in terms of the maximum possible level of complexity available through evolutionary development.

Another way in which this incorporative aspect might be understood is that previous and less complex forms of Self, and their related ways of being and thinking, not just the types of information they rely upon, also continue to be available as meaning making systems that can be adopted when they best serve the needs of a particular situation. Inherent in this alternative understanding is an assumption that greater complexity may not always provide the best outcome for a person. This may be the case in situations where the variety of information available might overwhelm the system's capacity to incorporate that information, within the time available. For example, in an emergency situation, complex ways of making meaning may prevent more basic responses that focus on survival. A person's capacity to focus on the information and ignore other information (e.g., relational or cultural considerations) is necessary to respond to immediate threat. This may be the result of conscious filtering, or training, but may also be the result of some other process that selects a system of meaning making that matches the simplicity of the immediate demands of an emergency situation.

This alternative understanding could also suggest that particular contexts in a person's experience, where greater threat is perceived, may draw upon less complex systems of meaning making, whilst other contexts where no threat is perceived may draw upon more complex systems of meaning making. This kind of thinking aligns with Maslow's (1943) description of needs arranged hierarchically from the most basic physiological needs for survival to self-actualising needs that promote thriving. Maslow (1943, pp. 394-395) suggested that

> the most prepotent goal will monopolise consciousness and will tend of itself to organise the recruitment of the various capacities of the organism. The less prepotent needs are minimised, even forgotten or denied. But when a need is fairly well satisfied, the next prepotent ("higher") need emerges, in turn to dominate the conscious life and to serve as the centre of organisation of behaviour, since gratified needs are not active motivators.

If it is possible that goals that were previously met (such as a physical need for safety) can cease to be met, then what Maslow seems to be suggesting here is that the movement between goals is fluid rather than linear. Although one may be focused on one's self-actualisation, a threat to one's immediate safety draws one's attention to survival. Maslow's classification of needs has been linked to lesser or more complex ways of making meaning in Kegan's theory (see Table 6, Kegan, 1982, p. 86). Thus, it seems logical that there is also a fluid movement between Kegan's stages.

What Kegan's organisation of stages in terms of complexity makes clear is that although less complex ways of making meaning remain available to more complex ways of making meaning, more complex ways of making meaning are not available until a person has evolved to that level of complexity. In terms of understanding a person's experience, this is helpful in that understanding a person's most complex way of making meaning identifies how they might be making meaning across other areas of their experience. This also means that it may be difficult to determine a person's most complex way of making meaning from a single area of a person's experience. It is possible, as was suggested in the example above, that situations involving threat may invoke less complex ways of making meaning. As was suggested in Chapter 2, intimate situations pose threat to some men, because they threaten conceptions of masculinity (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4). Therefore, in this study, the complexity of participants' intimacy-related meanings may not reflect their current Self-form and greatest capacity for complexity in other areas of experience. This does not detract from the purposes of this research, which does not seek to generalise to other men's experiences but seeks to broaden conceptualisations of intimacy, particularly in relation to men.

3.7 Chapter Summary

Kegan's (1982) theory, together with Lahey et al.'s (2011) tool offers a structure and means of analysis with which to examine intimacy. Kegan's five-stage model offers a system of epistemologies that is expanded in Lahey et al.'s SOI, and in turn, the SOI offers an analytical tool that is an ontological process, enabling the application of Kegan's stages to understandings and experiences of intimacy.

Kegan (1982, p. 114) claims that:

> If you want to understand another person in some fundamental way you must know where the person is in his or her evolution.

Thus, understanding someone's current Self-form offers insights regarding that person's understanding and experiences of intimacy. As has been demonstrated in describing each of Kegan's stages, each Self-form holds Self and other in a qualitatively different relationship, and for the person at each of these stages, the experience of self and other is governed by a qualitatively different set of organising principles. Kegan's theory offers a framework, the application of which, using Lahey et al.'s (2011) tool, can lead to an understanding of intimacy as having multiple meanings, meanings that are dependent upon the person's current formation of Self.

As well as governing a person's conceptualisation of intimacy, this Self-form constructs concepts of self and other, meaning that a person's understanding of themself and their understanding of specific others is determined by their current Self-form. This means that the Self also generates the *content* of what is expressed, validated or influenced in experiences of intimacy.

This chapter has also identified the ways in which a person's self as a meaning making system can also be understood as a person's onto-epistemology. It has also described the way that a person's Self is central to an understanding and experience of intimacy. In describing the Self as evolving, and by articulating the evolutions of Self, this chapter has applied these to show how understandings and experiences of intimacy may change according to a person's evolution of self. In addition, this chapter has provided descriptions of how intimacy may be understood and experienced at each stage of evolution. Subjectivity has been identified as defining a person's onto-epistemology and thus subjectivity is an important factor in

understanding a person's experience of intimacy. These understandings of intimacy, as influenced by subjectivity and as changing across a person's lifespan are the focus of the examination of men's experiences of intimacy in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 4: Method

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the ways in which the theoretical framework, presented in Chapter 3, was used to construct an analytical framework. As described in the previous chapter, this thesis utilises a constructive-developmental approach, drawing on Kegan's (1982) theory of the evolving self. The analytical framework presented in this chapter draws upon the developmental aspect of the theory, which identifies the Self as taking multiple and qualitatively different forms across a person's lifespan. This aspect of the analytical framework will be used to examine men's *understandings* of intimacy, that is their epistemologies of intimacy and to answer the research question: "In what ways does a constructive-developmental approach offer new possibilities for understanding intimacy?"

In addition, the analytical framework draws upon the constructive aspect of Kegan's (1982) theory, which identifies the Self as a meaning making system, organised by a particular subjectivity. This aspect of the analytical framework will be used to examine men's *experiences* of intimacy, that is, their ontologies of intimacy and to answer the research question: "How do the intimate experiences of a small number of men add to an understanding of intimacy?"

As Kegan claims, and was stated previously,

> If you want to understand another person in some fundamental way you must know where the person is in his or her evolution. (p. 114).

This thesis adopts Kegan's position as stated here by seeking first to understand each participant's evolutionary development. Kegan (1982) describes the Self as the system through which meaning is made, that is, a person's Self-form. This can also be understood as an onto-epistemology: a person's way of being in the world, and their way of understanding the world. Section 4.5.1 describes the process undertaken to interpret and analyse each participant's current Self-form. In addition, Kegan's theory is used as both an analytical lens for examining participants' understandings and experiences of intimacy (Section 4.5.2), as well as

an organising framework for the analysis of participants' experiences of intimacy (Section 4.5.3).

4.1.1 Chapter Overview

Section 4.2 describes the process of data creation. Section 4.3 explains the use of transcripts for data analysis and ways in which participants were involved in the transcription process. Ethical considerations are addressed in Section 4.4. As described above, analytical processes are described in Section 4.5, and Section 4.6 provides a summary of the chapter.

4.2 Data Creation

The term "data creation" is used in preference to "data collection", to signify that that data analysed in this research are not equivalent to the participants' understanding and experience of intimacy. Rather, the data (that is the transcripts) are a co-construction resulting from the participant's spoken descriptions of their understandings and experiences, as interviewer, my questions and prompts, and as transcriber, my sense-making of these audible utterances as recorded during the interview. Therefore, the data that result from this process are the consequence of multiple and interacting factors tied to both me and my participants. The data are, at the same time, more than, and less than, the participants' understanding and experience of intimacy; more than, in the sense that they are influenced by my own interpretation, and less than, in that they are not equivalent to the participant's total understanding and experience of intimacy.

Data regarding participants' understandings and experiences of intimacy were created by a process of interview design (see Section 4.2.1), recruitment (see Section 4.2.2), interviewing (see Section 4.2.3) and transcription (see Section 4.2.4).

4.2.1 Interview Design

Interview 1

The first interview was designed to create an opportunity for me, as researcher to develop an understanding of each participant's onto-epistemology. To do so, the initial interview followed the Subject-Object Interview (SOI) protocol described by Lahey et al. (2011). The SOI has two parts. The first part is designed to generate the content for the second part, an unstructured interview.

Part 1 of the Subject-Object Interview

In designing the SOI, Lahey et al, (2011) recognised that the type of "structural" information that is needed in order to understand a person's evolutionary development is not the kind of information that would typically form an interview. To describe this, Lahey et al. distinguish "content" from "structure". Content is the kind of information that provides narrative details about what happened, with whom, and the description of how these events were experienced (including thoughts and feelings). In contrast, structure assumes that the meanings embedded in content are organised according to a meaning-making framework, a framework which is consistent across experiences. Structural information seeks to elicit clues in order to, by induction, bring forward the structure of this meaning-making framework. In the language of Kegan's (1982) theory, this can also be described as eliciting clues to a person's current Self-form or system of making meaning. Seeking clues to a person's current Self-form is found by asking "why" questions: why did you respond this way? why not in some other way? why did you construct these meanings? why not other meanings? Such questions seek to engage a person in an exploration of their meaning-making processes in order to gather clues to the structure that orchestrates this process. However, an exploration of "structure" requires some "content" in order to ground this exploration in a person's experience. Lahey et al. (2011) report that, from their process of developing this protocol, some topics seem to be more likely to offer opportunities to explore structure than other topics. Thus, the SOI asks a participant to think about recent experiences (within the last two months) related to the following topics: angry, anxious/nervous, success, strong stand/conviction, sad, torn, moved/touched, lost something, change, and important.

The SOI protocol introduces these topics via a set of cards on which the topics are listed (one per card), which are given to the participant. A brief introduction is given by the interviewer for each topic word. For example, for "angry" the interviewer states:

> If you were to think back over the last several weeks, even the last couple [of] months and you had to think about times you felt really angry about something, or times you got really mad or felt a sense of outrage or violation—are there two or three things that come to mind? Take a minute to think about it, if you like, and just jot down on the

> card whatever you need to remind you of what they were. (Lahey et al., 2011, p. 329: Appendix F.323)

A copy of the introductions for each topic word is provided in Appendix A. Each of the ten cards, is headed with a topic word and provides space for notes to be made. These notes are to assist the participant in remembering the details they have recalled and to assist them in selecting the topic they wish to begin with in Part 2. Participants are not required to return the cards at any point, nor to show them to the interviewer.

As the content is not the focus of the SOI but instead provides context through which to explore structure, the experiences recalled are not, in themselves, important. Thus, not all topics need to be addressed if a participant is unable to easily recall a recent and relevant experience for a particular topic.

At the end of the recollection process, the SOI protocol asks a participant to identify one card to begin with, one which stands out to them. If the participant is unable to make a selection, the interviewer is able to suggest a starting point. Once selected, the interviewer moves to Part 2.

Part 2 of the Subject-Object Interview

The second part of the SOI is estimated to take approximately one hour and explores participants' experiences. During this exploration, the interviewer's responses and questions are guided by a process of formulating and refining a working hypothesis of the participant's meaning-making system. The interviewer undertakes this process by seeking answers to questions about why a participant understands their experiences in a particular way. These answers give onto-epistemological clues. Based on these clues, the interviewer asks further questions to refine their working hypothesis of the participant's onto-epistemology. However, as suggested earlier, there are some problems with asking such questions directly.

The first problem is that a person is not able to describe their current Self-form or onto-epistemology. As was described in Chapter 3, a person is subject to their current Self-form, and cannot be conscious of it. Thus, asking a person directly, "Why did you understand it in that way?" is not a question that can be answered in the way that the interviewer is seeking. Instead, such an answer needs to be inferred from questions that elicit information about what a participant is subject to, and what they can be objective about. For example, identifying aspects

of experience a participant takes responsibility for, or claims to know about can indicate what is subject and object to them. If a participant were to say that they had no choice but to follow the rules, this would indicate that they are subject to certain rules. The interviewer would then seek to understand the source of these rules: were they personal rules (i.e., Stage 4)? were they social rules arising from a basis of mutuality (i.e., Stage 3)? were they rules based on fulfilling a role, such as being a good citizen (i.e., Stage 2)? Alternatively, if a participant claims to know what someone else experienced, how are they able to come to this conclusion? is it because that is how they (the participant) would experience the situation (i.e., Stage 2)? or is it because of their close relationship with the person (i.e., Stage 3)? or because they have sought clarification with the person, knowing that each person's experience is unique (i.e., Stages 4 or 5)?

Lahey et al. (2011, p. 217) suggest that a second problem with asking "why" questions is that they can be experienced as judgmental. For example, asking a question such as "Why did you think that?" can be understood by some people as also asking, "Why didn't you think [something else]?" A feeling of being judged is counterproductive to developing an atmosphere of trust and safety, and the conditions in which a participant is likely to explore structural questions.

A third problem in interviewing with an exclusive focus on structural questioning is that participants can feel interrogated. In order to overcome this possibility, Lahey et al. (2011) suggest balancing probing questions, that seek to examine how the participant makes meaning, with supportive responses. Supportive responses are ones which reflect back to the participant what the interviewer has understood from the participant. As well as checking that the interviewer has understood the participant, supportive responses give the participant an assurance that the interviewer is listening to them, concerned to understand them and not simply seeking to garner the answers relevant to research goals.

The SOI is a complex process of shifting backwards and forwards between supportive responses and formulating and refining a working hypothesis through probing questions. Once the interviewer has gained sufficient evidence to support their hypothesis and to reject alternative hypotheses, the interviewer is able to bring the interview to a close.

Interview 2

Initially, this second interview focused on participants' experiences of personal growth and of intimacy in the context of couple relationships. However, after the first five interviews, the aims of the research became more focused on men's experiences of intimacy rather than on growth. As well as focusing on participants' experiences of intimacy, Interview 2 also became an opportunity to address any uncertainties regarding my analysis of the SOI and to compare participants' perceptions of themselves with my working hypothesis.

Interview questions were developed in relation to Research Question 2: "How do the intimate experiences of a small number of men add to an understanding of intimacy?" Details of questions drew upon my understanding of intimacy, gained from a review of relevant literature, upon my developing definition of intimacy (described in Chapter 2) and upon the insights held by members of my supervision team.

4.2.2 Recruitment

This study sought participants who were male, willing to attend two interviews and to talk in-depth about their life experiences and experiences of intimacy. The characteristics of participants sought for this study, and the focus of investigation created multiple challenges for recruitment. Little has been published about the difficulty of recruiting men, but some sources also identify this difficulty. For example, Juszczyk (2012) utilised a Research Gate (www.researchgate.com) blog to gather ideas about how to recruit men for psychological research. Researchers' responses to Juszczyk's post indicated a similar experience across the UK, Europe and the USA. In addition, Patel, Doku and Tennakoon (2003, p. 229) identified being male as one of 10 factors "adversely affecting response rates" in psychiatric research. In addition, western men have historically been understood as favouring actions rather than words as a means of communicating their internal experiences (e.g., Tannen, 1990; Wood & Inman, 1993). Thus, talking about experiences may not be an attractive prospect for western men.

In order to overcome this problem, a variety of recruitment strategies were utilised. Direct recruitment was pursued through advertisements posted on noticeboards at my own university, on community noticeboards at gyms and shopping centres. Advertisements were also posted on social media sites including a university Facebook research recruitment site, my own Facebook community

page (dedicated to previous relationship research projects), and undergraduate psychology students were invited to participate for course credit via the university research online sign-up system. In addition, emails and follow-up phone calls (where details were available) were sent to various men's organisation including "Men's shed" groups and a men's wellbeing group. These organisations were targeted because their web pages described having contact with men of varied ages and backgrounds. This direct approach resulted in three participants.

Another approach to recruitment involved an indirect approach. Several of my associates were asked to act as proxy-recruiters, drawing on networks of people known to them, but not known to me. This allowed potential participants to be contacted in a personal way, but not by me, as it was felt that recruiting participants known to me presented some concerns (see Section 4.4 for an elaboration). This proved to be the most fruitful approach leading to 8 of the 13 participants. Two additional participants were recruited through other participants' connections (i.e., snowballing technique).

Potential participants were sent an email with a copy of an information letter attached (see Appendix B). Those who indicated continuing interest were telephoned to make an initial contact, to discuss any questions not previously answered, and to arrange an interview. The only exception to this process was one participant who signed up via the university's on-line recruitment system, which also managed the process of interview arrangement. In order to provide an opportunity to address any questions, this participant was contacted via the recruitment system's messaging service with a request that the participant make sure he had read the information letter. In addition, this participant was provided with my contact number to seek answers to any questions he might have.

4.2.3 Interviewing

Of the 13 participants, 12 were interviewed twice. Participant 6 was interviewed only once as he did not respond to attempts to arrange a second interview and consequently, his interview transcript was not able to be used for analysis. Interviews took place in private rooms at locations and times that were convenient for participants.

Participants' first and second interviews took place within 2 days to 24 days of one another. Interview 1 lasted, in general, for approximately 90 minutes. This allowed approximately 20-30 for introductions and rapport building, a review of

participation requirements, discussion of confidentiality, checking for informed consent and signing of consent forms (see Appendix C). Time was also provided for participants to ask questions before beginning with Phase 1. The interview recording commenced with Phase 2. The full schedule for Interview 1 is provided in Appendix D, together with a list of prompts for the Subject-Object Interview.

Interview 2 was approximately 60 minutes long and recording commenced after a brief re-acquainting and a confirmation of consent. At the end of the interview, participants were given the option to receive a summary of the study's findings, after these were finalised. Following each interview, participants were asked if they would like to receive a copy of the interview transcript. In addition, participants were provided with contact information for counselling support services in the event that they felt distressed as a result of the interview. Participants were also informed that they were welcome to contact me should they have any questions about the interview process or experience. There were no participants who made further contact following either interview, other than from communication related to arranging further interviews or receiving copies of transcripts.

As described previously, due to the iterative nature of the research process, Interview 2 was conducted according to two versions. Version 1 (see Appendix E) was conducted with Participants 1 to 5. Version 2 (see Appendix F) was conducted with Participants 8 to 14.

4.2.4 Recording and Transcribing

Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed by me. The processes of recording and transcribing sought to embody the philosophical ideas and theoretical understanding of Self described in Chapter 3. Consequently, transcribing was viewed as a process of constructing meaning; that is, a co-construction between the audible content contained in the interview recordings and my own interpretation of these recordings.

Recording

It was assumed that in describing their experiences, participants made choices about which details of their experience were included or excluded in their spoken narrative. These decisions were understood as potentially influenced by the participant's desire to present himself in a particular way (both in terms of impression management and in terms of level of comfort with self-disclosure). They

may have been influenced by other factors such as memory, or the participant's emotional state at the time of the interview. In addition, the aspects of participants' experiences that were described were also likely to have been influenced by the particular questions they were asked. It was also understood more generally, that communication takes place on multiple levels (including nonverbal aspects such as gestures or facial expressions) and that what was spoken (and thus recorded) is only one of those levels (e.g., Chelune et al., 1984). It was also recognised that, in addition to my questions, my feedback (both verbal, such as "mmm hmm", and nonverbal, such as facial expressions or gestures), is likely to have also interacted with the participant's verbal responses. Thus, the interview recording was understood as describing the participant's experiences but also the result of a process of the participant's and my own conscious and unconscious decision making and co-construction.

Transcribing

The process of transcription was also an interpretative process, rather than an objective one (Green, Franquiz, & Dixon, 1997) and as such was understood to be influenced by my own current meaning-making system (i.e., my current Self-form). Thus, what was transcribed was not equivalent to the participant's interview, nor their experiences described during the interview. It was, like the interview, a co-construction between me and the recording of the interview. Consequently, as briefly described at the beginning of Section 4.2, transcription was viewed as a process of data creation rather than data collection.

In addition to the largely unconscious effects of my own comprehension of the interview recording, other conscious decisions were made in relation to the level of detail of the transcription. Bucholtz (2000) identified a continuum from naturalised, where transcription follows written conventions, to denaturalised, where the transcription attempts to transcribe all utterances of the speakers, including information about pronunciation. In a similar way, other sound information was also present such as pauses, intonation, emphasis and other environmental noises (e.g., background noise or a participant's tapping on the table). Decisions regarding which information was transcribed or not transcribed were dependent upon my own understanding of what might be potentially relevant to the intended analysis (Davidson, 2009). The following decisions were made:

Naturalised vs. denaturalised

Conclusions that might be drawn from a detailed analysis of a participant's intonation or pronunciation were beyond the scope of the analysis undertaken in this thesis. Thus, transcription followed standardised spellings of words. For example, "gonna" was written as "going to", following more a naturalised transcription style. In addition, punctuation was used to convey the meaning understood by the researcher, from listening to the participant's basic intonation.

Transcription conventions

Basic intonation was interpreted in relation to speech units using the following conventions:

- end of intonation unit, falling intonation: . (i.e., full stop)
- end of intonation unit, fall-rise intonation: , (i.e., comma)
- end of intonation unit, rising intonation: ? (i.e., question mark)

Self-interruptions, which suggested the participant had changed their line of thought were recorded using the following conventions:

- change of meaning direction mid word: partial wor- next word
- change of direction mid-sentence: full word – next word

Pauses, which were interpreted as indicating the participant taking time to think/construct meaning, were also recorded where the pause was longer than the participant's usual speech pace. The following convention was used:

- (pause)

Where the researcher interpreted that intentional emphasis had been placed on particular words or syllables, these were also recorded using underlining as follows:

- for a word: <u>word</u>
- for a syllable: syll<u>able</u>

Where I was uncertain about my interpretation of the recording the following convention was used:

- ?uncertain text?

Where I added non-speech elements such as background noise or added text to indicate other activity these were transcribed in parentheses. Such as:

- (lawn mower starts up across the road)
- (participant laughs)

In addition, non-word utterances (e.g., "umm", "uh huh") were included in the transcription.

4.3 Use of Transcripts in Data Analysis

4.3.1 Use of Excerpts in Data Analysis

Transcript excerpts were used in the analyses presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 to validate findings and to give a more detailed picture. Where the transcription conventions described above (such as changes of direction or non-word utterances) were (i) not relevant to the analysis, and (ii) made the quotation unnecessarily complicated to read, these aspects were omitted.

4.3.2 Participant Involvement

Participants were invited to be involved in the analysis process. The purpose of this was to allow the participant to identify any aspects of the transcript that they did not want included in analysis, either in general, or more specifically to be quoted within the thesis. This step was taken to offer the highest possible level of informed consent. This was regarded as particularly important due to the highly personal nature of the interviews. This was not a process of "member checking" or "participant checking" (e.g., Cohen & Crabtree, July, 2006; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Understanding the data as created by me as a result of the co-construction between participants and myself, and not an attempt to capture or represent the participant's lived experience, meant that participant's own understandings of the interview were not required to validate the data. However, participants' responses to a summary statement provided at the beginning of Interview 2 provided a further opportunity to add to this co-construction.

Participants received copies of transcripts at the beginning of Interview 2 (copy of Interview 1 transcript) or following Interview 2 (copy of Interview 2 transcript). Along with this second transcript, participants were given a letter inviting them to identify any sections of the interview transcripts they wished to be omitted from analysis or excluded from use as a direct quotation in the thesis. A copy of this letter is provided in Appendix G.

Between Interviews 1 and 2, the participant's interview recording (for Interview 1) was transcribed and provisionally analysed according to the SOI manual. From this analysis, a summary statement was developed that captured both the content and the structuring of the participant's meaning, according to my interpretation. A copy of this summary statement was also provided to participants at the beginning of Interview 2 and they were invited to offer feedback or seek clarification. The majority of participants identified that the statement was a good summary of their experience of Interview 1 and in many cases, indicated that they felt it described them very well (i.e., "you've nailed it", "spot on", "wow [...] amazing [...] that's spot on", "that's very good, and very fair", "that sounds pretty good", "spot on [...] very good"). In two cases, participants suggested changes; one participant felt that an important aspect of content had been omitted, and so this was included in the final version. The second participant felt that he was not as able to control an aspect that had been described as within his control, and so this was also modified in the final version. For another participant, some clarifying questions at the beginning of Interview 2 revealed that he was constructing meaning in a way that was different to how he had constructed meaning during Interview 1. This is explored more fully in the analysis of his transcript in Chapter 5 (see Section 5.4.1). His summary statement was also modified to reflect these changes. Copies of the summary statements given to participants at the start of Interview 2 are provided in Appendix H.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

Research design, including interview schedules and protocols, were submitted for ethical review (with reference 2015-173H) by the University Human Research Ethics Committee and the approval for data collection, as detailed above, was granted on November 19, 2015. Modifications to protocols, reflecting the shift in focus (also described above) were approved on April 4, 2016.

Key ethical considerations related to the highly personal nature of interviewing participants about their experiences of intimacy and their understanding of themselves. One aspect of these considerations related to the recruitment process. It seemed likely that someone who might consider participating in this study may also want to ask questions about the study, about me as researcher, and the interview process in order to address any concerns about the disclosure of such personal information. Direct recruitment of strangers (through

advertisements) did not provide this opportunity, unless an interested person made contact with me in order to ask further questions. For a potential participant, calling a stranger in order to allay concerns about disclosing personal information may, in itself, have been a confronting experience and may have contributed to difficulties in recruitment. However, recruiting participants from my own networks, who may have had greater confidence in the interview process, through a prior connection with me, presented other concerns. It was of concern that the highly personal nature of the interview content, if disclosed by someone who I already knew, could change the nature of that prior relationship, possibly in deleterious ways. It seemed likely that the asymmetrical nature of the disclosure (participant to me, but not me to participant) would create a possible discomfort in future interactions. Having disclosed intimate details about oneself and ones' loved ones, a person might feel vulnerable when encountering me in another context.

As described previously, overcoming these two conflicting issues led to a recruitment process that involved in intermediary recruiter – someone who was known to both the potential participant and myself, who could vouch for me and address any concerns the participant might have, without needing a direct interaction with me.

In conducting interviews, it was important to identify locations that provided privacy for the participant that also provided a quiet environment to enable a good quality of recording. It was also important to hold interviews in locations where participants felt comfortable to speak about the details of intimate experiences. At the same time, it was important to ensure that these locations were also safe for me. This was not such an issue where the participant was recruited via a mutual connection and where I had some degree of confidence about the demeanour of the participant. However, personal safety was more of a concern where participants were not recruited in this manner. Most interviews took place at workplaces (the participant's or my own), but some were held in participants' homes. Where interviews were conducted in homes, measures described in Appendix I, were taken to provide for my safety. Opportunities were also provided to debrief with my supervisory team following interviews, if needed.

In addition, it was also of concern that after having spoken about such personal details, participants may have felt some regret or concern about how their details might be used. As well, it was possible that participants, in speaking about

relationship difficulties, or unfulfilled relationship expectations, might experience some distress. In order to address this concern, participants were provided with contact details for psychology services available freely (i.e., emergency telephone counselling services) and at reduced rates through university psychology clinics. In addition, participants were also offered free access to my own university's psychology clinic for concerns related to this study. In order to provide for distress during the interview, protocols were developed and are described in Appendix I.

To address any concerns or regrets following the interview, about what had been disclosed, participants were given copies of transcripts of their interviews. The process for this was described in Section 4.3.2.

Following the second interview, most participants were provided with a dining voucher valued at AUD30. This was offered as an expression of gratitude for participants' valuable contribution to this project, but also as a way of compensating for any inconveniences associated with participation. This was not offered as an incentive, and no participant asked questions about the voucher prior to participation. Advertising materials, although mentioning the voucher, did not highlight this aspect in ways that dominated other information presented. For one participant, course credit was provided in place of a dining voucher. This was in line with university policies.

In reporting data, it was important to preserve the anonymity of participants, but also to maintain a sense of them as a person (rather than as lifeless data) and so pseudonyms were used. As well, it was necessary to use additional pseudonyms to make sense of the relationships participants spoke about during their interviews. A table of pseudonyms is provided in Appendix J.

Another matter of ethical concern related to one participant (P06), who did not respond to further communication following the first interview. This was in contrast to the participant's responsiveness when discussing and arranging the first interview. Several attempts were made to resume contact, but it was felt that further attempts might be considered invasive. There were two concerns, that the first interview was not useable, but more importantly, there was no opportunity to address any possible issues related to the participant's wellbeing resulting from the first interview. However, it was not possible to respond to these concerns.

4.5 Data Analysis

Three separate analyses of the data were undertaken. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the three analyses, the approaches taken, sources of data and the chapters in which the findings from these analyses are reported. These analyses seek to address the research questions that are the focus of this thesis. Research Question 1 is epistemologically focused and asks, "In what ways does a *constructive-developmental approach* (i.e., multiple epistemologies) *offer new possibilities for understanding intimacy?*" Answers to this question draw upon findings from Analyses 1 and 2. Research Question 2 is ontologically focused and asks, "How do the *intimate experiences* of a small number of men add to an understanding of intimacy?" Answers to this question draw upon findings from Analyses 1 and 3.

Table 4.1

Overview of Analyses

Analysis	Research Question	Analytical Approach	Data Source	Reporting of findings
Analysis 1: Participants' Subject Object Scores	This analysis supplements Analyses 2 and 3	Subject Object Interview	Sections of Interview 1, supplemented by sections of Interview 2	Chapter 5: Participant Epistemologies
Analysis 2: Participants' understandings of intimacy	RQ 1	Interpretation and Analysis using Kegan's stages and Lahey et al.'s tool	Sections of Interview 1	Chapter 6: Epistemologies of Intimacy
Analysis 3: Participants' experiences of intimacy	RQ 2	Thematic and Interpretative Analysis drawing on findings from Analysis 1 and Kegan's stages, related to sociocultural factors (see Section 3.4)	Sections of Interview 2, supplemented by sections of Interview 1	Chapter 7: Ontologies of Intimacy

4.5.1 Analysis 1: The Subject-Object Interview (SOI)

The SOI was included as part of Interview 1 and a preliminary analysis of the SOI was undertaken between Interviews 1 and 2. This enabled an opportunity, at the beginning of Interview 2, to clarify any ambiguities that arose in the preliminary analysis.

Interview 1 and other relevant sections of transcripts from Interview 2 were analysed according to the procedures detailed in *A Guide to the Subject-Object Interview: Its Administration and Interpretation* (Lahey et al., 2011). This process involved three parts. Part 1 identified aspects of transcripts that offered clues to participants' Self-form structures, i.e., structural aspects of participants' responses. Section 4.2.1 (Interview 1) describes the difference between structural aspects of participants' responses and content aspects of participants' responses. These sections of transcript provided an opportunity to interpret aspects of experience where a participant was either subject to something, or able to be objective about something. These sections were used for further analysis as described in Part 2.

Part 2 involved analysing the identified sections of transcript according to Kegan's (1982) evolutions of Self or the transitions between them as described by Lahey et al. (2011). This analysis identified what it was that participants were objective about, or subject to and compared these subjectivities and objectivities to the principles of meaning-making described by Kegan's stages and the degrees of expression of these principles provided within the SOI guide. (See the following section "Subject-Object Scores" for further elaboration of these degrees.) Each section of transcript was then given a Subject-Object Score (SOS), or a range of scores as a short-hand way of describing the analysis. SOSs are described in more detail below.

Part 3 involved summarising the analysis by identifying which SOSs were supported by the transcript. This range of scores was narrowed through a process justifying the identification of a dominant score and, where possible justifying the elimination of competing scores in light of the total analysis. The result was either a single SOS or a range of SOSs that were defensible according to specific evidence in the transcript.

Subject-Object Scores

The Subject-Object Interview (Lahey et al., 2011) is based upon the evolutions of Self described in Kegan's (1982, 1994) theory. These evolutions are

also referred to as developmental Stages 1 to 5. Kegan identifies that the process of movement between evolutions of Self/stages is one of emergence, transition and reintegration. The SOI describes this process of movement through subsequent stages by creating a system of numbering that describes the degree to which this emergence or reintegration has occurred. Each stage and transition is described by a SOS. The 21 SOSs are listed in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Subject Object Score Sequence

Stage	Emergence	Transitions		
1	1(2)	1/2	2/1	2(1)
2	2(3)	2/3	3/2	3(2)
3	3(4)	3/4	4/3	4(3)
4	4(5)	4/5	5/4	5(4)
5				

Note. Coloured cells indicate the stage in which each score is embedded: Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3, Stage 4, Stage 5.

Scores in Column 1 match Kegan's (1982) descriptions of full evolutionary stages. That is, Kegan's Stages 1 to 5.

Scores in Column 2 represent the beginning of an emergence of the following stage. For example, a score of 3(4) describes a person who is making meaning according to a Stage 3 Self-form but that some meaning making shows greater complexity than the Stage 3 Self-form, demonstrating the beginnings of the emergence of meanings arising from a Stage 4 Self-form. The evolution of Self at Stage 3 is characterised by mutuality. In simple terms, decisions are made according to what maintains mutuality, that is, aligns with others. The evolution of Self at Stage 4 is characterised by self-authorship. In contrast, decisions are made according to what fits with one's own goals or agendas, whilst still considering others' needs. Putting this into concrete terms, Tim (a hypothetical example) has a score of 3(4). A SOS of 3(4) would suggest that Tim is moving towards Stage 4, but is still embedded in Stage 3. Thus, Tim is beginning to be aware that others' expectations about how he should behave sometimes seem to disagree with his own

ideas for himself and/or for others. However, his sense of self is still maintained through mutuality, so he might find himself making choices that keep other people happy rather than always reflecting what he thinks is best. His own views are subjugated to the group's (or significant other's) views.

Scores in Columns 3 and 4 represent transitions between stages where the old Self-form that is being left behind and the new Self-form that is being approached are both present in how meaning is being made. Column 3 represents scores where the old Self-form still dominates in the final resolution of meaning. Column 4 represents scores where the new Self-form dominates in the final resolution of meaning. For example, if Tim's SOS was 3/4, he would be quite conscious of what he thinks is best, but is also aware of what others will think. Where these ideas disagree, he will experience internal conflict: how can I do what is best and do what will make others happy? Tim will feel torn between his own ideas and others' ideas. Because, he is still embedded in Stage 3, standing up for his own views means that he is risking the possibility of being rejected by these important others. In order to maintain his sense of self, Tim will subjugate his own ideas of what is best in order to choose what these important others want.

In contrast, if Tim's SOS was 4/3, he would still be conscious of his own ideas and that others think differently, and this will still create an internal conflict. He will still feel torn; however, Tim is now embedded in Stage 4, and so maintaining his own sense of integrity, doing what he thinks is best, is now his priority. He is more likely to risk being rejected by others in order to maintain his sense of integrity with himself.

Scores in Column 5 represent the final transition to the new stage. Traces of the old Self-form are present, but the person is firmly embedded in the new stage. If Tim's SOS was 4(3), he might need to remind himself that he no longer needs to do what everyone else wants; however, he is not likely to feel torn in choosing his own view of what is best over others' views. In comparison to a score of 4, an SOS of 4(3) requires some conscious effort to maintain the new Stage 4 Self-form. An SOS of 4 describes a person who has fully evolved to Stage 4. For a person with an SOS of 4, neither Stage 3 nor Stage 5 ways of making meaning are present.

The SOSs, that are relevant to this research, range from 2 to 5 (for reasons explained in Section 3.3). The stages and transitional scores in order of complexity are listed in Table 4.3, together with a summary of the dominant Self-form that

relates to each of these stages. A copy of this table is also reproduced in Appendix K for easy reference in relation to other chapters. The analysis of SOIs, and the scores which summarise these analyses, are presented in Chapter 5.

The SOI was selected for this analysis because it offers insights regarding the way in which a person understands themself and their particular way of making meaning, at a particular time, that is their current onto-epistemology. The SOI offers a fine-grained approach to identifying the unique way in which a person is making meaning at a particular point in time. In the context of this thesis, the SOI offered a way to identify how meanings associated with intimate experiences were linked to meanings participants made more generally, across other life experiences. This link was examined through Analysis 2 and reported in Chapter 6 (Section 6.4).

Table 4.3

Subject Object Scores and Kegan's Stages

SOS	Dominant Self-form
	Stage 2 (Enduring Disposition: Needs, interests, wishes)
2,	• An understanding of a person as having dispositions, that is an enduring pattern of needs, wishes, desires.
2(3),	• An understanding of how one should be, governed by roles (e.g., friend, husband, work colleague, boss) that are externally defined (i.e., by institutions).
2/3	• Concerned about the *consequences* of another's dissatisfaction, rather than concerned about the other's feeling dissatisfied per se. • Others constituted as the *means* by which needs are met, wishes are fulfilled, interests are pursued, which allows for greater independence from other. • Unable to hold perception of own needs, wishes and desires *in relation to* perception of another's needs, wishes and desires. Consequently, unable to consider another's needs in own decision making. • Unable to perceive others' needs, wishes, desires as different to own. Consequently, expects others to feel, think, respond to the same situation in the same way as they would.
	Stage 3 (Mutuality, Interpersonal concordance)
3/2, 3(2),	• An understanding of a person as distributed amongst their relationships, that is, what one experience of oneself depends on whom one is with, and one's relationship to that person. How one can be is governed by relationships and how one should be is determined by what preserves relationships. Consequently, interpersonal conflict is problematic.
3,	• An understanding of how one's relationship should be is governed by expectations that are externally defined (i.e., by institution).
3(4),	• Concerned about own and others' feelings, not just consequences. Consequently, is able to empathise and accept some responsibility for how one's actions affect another's feelings. Feelings reveal one's "real" self.
3/4	• Others constituted as the means by which one experiences oneself. "You are the other by whom I complete myself, the other whom I need to create the context out of which I define and know myself and the world" (p. 100) • Unable to perceive others' construction of relationship as different to own. Consequently, expects others to hold the same assumptions and expectations about how relationships work.

SOS	Dominant Self-form
	Stage 4 (Personal autonomy, Identity)
4/3,	• Understanding of a person, independent of one's relationships, i.e., "who I am".
4(3),	• Understanding of how one should be is governed by one's own authority (i.e., Self as institution) – "sense of self, self-dependence, self-ownership" (p. 100), including one's own construction of "role, norm, self-concept [and] auto-regulation" (p. 101)
4,	• Understanding of how a particular relationship works is also self-authored, governed by own roles and norms
4(5),	• Feelings are a source of information, rather than an expression of self, and can be reflected upon. However unresolved internal emotional conflicts can threaten the integrity of self.
4/5	• Unable to construct multiple selves-as-institutions in order to serve principles or purposes. Instead, principles and purposes *arise from* Self-as-institution, which "is inevitably ideological . . . a truth for a faction, a class, a group. And it probably requires the recognition of a group . . . to come into being" (p. 102).
	Stage 5 (Interpenetration of systems)
5/4,	• Understanding of a person as able to behave according to multiple selves/identities in order to serve the principles, purposes and aims of the Self.
5(4),	• The principles, purposes and aims of the Self are generated from an awareness of one's connection to all other persons as sharing a common humanity
5	• Sense of self is not dependent upon the performance of a particular institution. Consequently, is able to "hear, and to seek out, information which might cause the self to alter its behaviour, or share in a negative judgment of that behaviour" (p. 105).
	• Internal emotional conflicts (arising from multiple selves) are new a source of information, providing new ways to construct self in the intersections of self and other and between multiple selves.

4.5.2 Analysis 2: Understandings of Intimacy (Epistemologies of Intimacy)

As part of Interview 2, participants were asked to describe their understanding of intimacy: "When you think about intimacy, what comes to mind?" Participants' responses to this question and other relevant sections of the transcript were collated for each participant. The analysis of these sections occurred in three steps: making sense of the transcript, evolutionary analysis, collation of findings.

Step 1: Making sense of the transcript

The first step involved multiple readings of the transcript to gain a sense of the participant's ideas about intimacy and to revisit the embodied experience of being with the participant during the interview. My analytic goal at Step 1 was to identify sections of transcript that answered the question: What does this participant's transcript say about the meaning of intimacy? Finding answers to this question involved describing my interpretation of the participant's understanding of intimacy, justified by relevant quotes from the interview transcript. For example:

- Social roles getting in the way of intimacy
- Intimacy involves saying what you are thinking, not holding it in
- More willing to take a risk with disclosing to a mate (in the past) than with his wife
- Anger and challenging events made him reveal his vulnerability
- Physical aspects – touch and presence as important now

These interpretations, together with justifying sections of the participant's transcript were collated in a separate table for each participant.

This process was undertaken to be explicit about the meanings I was co-constructing with the content of the interview transcript. By doing this I sought to acknowledge that the meanings that were created from interpreting the transcript were the result of my own meaning-making system or onto-epistemology. Being explicit about the meanings I was drawing, together with how I had arrived at these meanings provided a transparency of process. The documentation of this process was made available to my supervisory team for comment and discussion, however no major discrepancies were identified. Inherent within this acknowledgement is an awareness that it is possible for another researcher to co-construct different

meanings with the same content, or that I might make different meanings in the future.

Step 2: Evolutionary analysis

The second step analysed these meanings in terms of Kegan's (1982) evolutionary stages. This involved the same process as identified in Analysis 1 (see 4.5.1) and identified the Self-form that would be likely to generate these meanings. However, analysis was only in terms of stage scores (i.e., 2, 3, 4, or 5), not in terms of transitional scores (e.g., 3(2), 4/3 or 5/4). Understandings of intimacy were collated in a table according to participant and evolutionary stage, and then combined in a second table according to stage.

Step 3: Collation of analysis

The final step of the analysis brought together the analysis of individual participant's understandings of intimacy to identify patterns. These individual analyses were examined in two ways: (i) participants' understandings of intimacy were coded according to Kegan's (1982) stages, and (ii) participants' understandings were grouped according to participants' SOSs (from Analysis 1). This analysis was added to the table created in Step 2, resulting in Table 6.2

Kegan's theory makes it possible to recognise the importance of diverse understandings of intimacy to match the diversity of people's ways of being and experiencing. It provides a way to examine how the Self, as a meaning making system, constructs a person's understanding of intimacy, that is, their epistemology of intimacy.

This process of analysis was undertaken to address the research question: "In what ways does a constructive-developmental approach offer new possibilities for understanding intimacy?" Analysing participants' descriptions of intimacy according to Kegan's (1982) stages made it possible to draw conclusions as to the usefulness of organising understandings of intimacy according to Kegan's evolutionary stages. In addition, comparing participants' SOSs with participants' understandings of intimacy (coded according to Kegan's stages) allowed conclusions to be drawn regarding links between a person's evolution of Self (or onto-epistemology) and their understanding of intimacy. The findings from this analytical process (Analysis 2) are presented in Chapter 6 and discussed in Chapter 8.

4.5.3 Analysis 3: Experiences of Intimacy (Ontologies of Intimacy)

This analysis was also undertaken in three steps: understanding, analysing and interpreting.

Step 1: Understanding participants' experiences

Relevant sections of the transcripts of participants' interviews (Interview 2) were identified. This involved several readings of the transcript to locate parts of the transcripts where participants spoke about their experiences of intimacy.

The identified sections of transcript were analysed using the following questions:

- What does this excerpt of transcript tell me about this man's experience of intimacy?
- What key ideas, regarding experiences of intimacy, are emerging?
- How do these experiences link with experiences described in other participants' transcripts?
- What do these multiple perspectives of similar experiences offer in terms of understanding this man's experience of intimacy?

Following the same process described in Analysis 2: Step 1, responses to these questions were recorded, with relevant sections of transcript, in a separate table for each participant

Part 2: Thematic Analysis

Sections of transcripts that addressed similar key ideas were gathered together to identify similarities and differences. Through comparison, these key ideas were refined and themes were identified. Key themes were then organised into two main categories, those ideas that indicated subjectivities to sociocultural influences and those that indicated freedom from sociocultural influences (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4 for elaboration of sociocultural influences). Initial themes were as follows:

Sociocultural subjectivities

- Roles
    - Gender
    - Workplace
    - Leadership

- Relationship ideals

Overcoming sociocultural subjectivities

- Temporary Shifts
    - Dangerous situations
    - Other people's vulnerabilities
- Enduring Shifts
- Intentional Shifts

Part 3: Interpretation

Understandings of participants' experiences of intimacy were interpreted drawing upon Kegan's (1982) theory and participants' Subject-Object Scores (SOSs) from Analysis 1.

The approach described here has similarities with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in that it explores participants' subjective experiences, recognising the influence of sociocultural factors and seeks to make sense of these experiences using an interpretative framework (Shinebourne, 2011). However, IPA has roots in a phenomenological view of participants' lived experiences which privileges participants' meanings over researchers' understandings. In doing so, it relies on the capacity of the researcher to put aside their own perceptions in order to understand experiences from participants' perspectives (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). In contrast, a postqualitative approach does not privilege participants' meanings over researchers' perceptions. Rather it acknowledges that researcher and participant are intricately intertwined in constructing meaning (Lather, 2016; St. Pierre, 2013).

Despites these differences, the process described here draws upon IPA by taking an ideographic approach (Smith & Eatough, 2007), holding the experiences of individuals as uniquely important, and as experiences that are shared between participants. In addition, the process described here combines theoretical interpretation with thematic ideas to enable participants' experiences to shed light upon the matter under investigation (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2008; Storey, 2007).

4.5.4 Final Considerations: Transparency, Trustworthiness and Reflexivity

In undertaking an analysis of participants' Subject-Object Scores (Analysis 1), and undertaking an analysis of participants' understandings of intimacy in relation to Kegan's stages (Analysis 2), there was a possibility that my knowledge of participants' SOSs from Analysis 1 could influence my interpretation of their understandings of intimacy in Analysis 2. A number of steps were taken in order to reduce this effect. The first strategy was to allow time to pass between Analysis 1 and Analysis 2. As detailed in the interview process (see Section 4.2.2 – Interview 2), for each participant, Interview 1 was transcribed and analysed prior to Interview 2. Interview 2 was conducted between 2 and 23 days following Interview 1, and for 8 of the 12 participants, within 8 days of Interview 1. All data were collected over a six-month period and Analysis 2 was not undertaken until all interviews had been completed. This meant that for most participants, there was a lengthy delay between Analysis 1 and Analysis 2

A second strategy was that part of my supervisory team were not involved in the SOI analysis. This meant that although they had access to summary documents of participants' SOI scores, they were able to examine drafts of Analysis 2 without being biased by Analysis 1. Feedback from my supervisory team, regarding my analysis processes and my developing understandings were reviewed at regular team meetings, and through regular submission of documents to the team. This allowed the team to monitor the integrity of this process.

A third strategy was to keep notes of my thinking processes to provide transparency, and also to keep a data analysis journal. This allowed me to reflect on my developing understanding of participants' experiences and understandings of intimacy. As well as helping to identify any ways in which my own biases were present in my interpretation of participants' data, these notes kept my thinking about participants' data in Analysis 2 more organic and less constrained by the categories of Analysis 1. In summary, trustworthiness, in relation to data analysis was developed through process of separation of data analyses, transparency in the involvement of my supervisory team in the developing process of interpretation and reflexivity.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has described how the original data were created and analysed in this study. It has also explained how the theoretical framework, described in

Chapter 3, was applied. The findings that resulted from this data creation, interpretation and analysis process are presented in the following three chapters. Chapter 5 reports the analysis of participants' Subject-Object Interviews, identifying Subject-Object Scores for each participant. Chapter 6 reports participants' understandings of intimacy and interprets these according to Kegan's (1982) evolutionary stages by applying Lahey et al.'s (2011) tool. Chapter 7 reports participants' experiences of intimacy, identifying key themes and interpreting these themes in relation to Kegan's theory. These findings are discussed in Chapter 8, in relation to men's epistemologies and ontologies of intimacy, expressed in the research questions which are the focus of this thesis:

- Research Question 1 (epistemology leading to ontology): In what ways does a constructive-developmental approach offer new possibilities for understanding intimacy?
- Research Question 2 (ontology leading to epistemology): How do the intimate experiences of a small number of men add to an understanding of intimacy?

Chapter 5: Participants' Epistemologies: The Subject-Object Interview

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analyses of participants' non-intimate experiences in terms of Kegan's (1982) stages, as identified in the Subject-Object Interview (SOI) protocol (as described in Analysis 1, Section 4.5.1). The outcome of this analysis is a Subject Object Score (SOS), which is a shorthand way of identifying which of Kegan's evolutionary stages explain the ways in which a particular participant makes meaning (i.e., their onto-epistemology). (An explanation of SOSs was provided in Section 4.5.1.)

Understanding each participant's onto-epistemology in terms of their non-intimate experiences provided an opportunity to examine similarities and differences between understandings of intimate and non-intimate experiences. (Chapter 6 focuses on intimate experiences in greater detail.) Any differences add to an understanding of intimacy by highlighting factors that may be particular to how these men understood intimacy, compared to other experiences.

The analysis of the SOI is an extensive process involving a detailed examination of a large proportion of each participant's transcript. In order to minimise the risk of revealing participants' personal details, which might present a risk to privacy, the analyses presented here summarise the full analyses that were undertaken to arrive at each participant's SOS. These summaries present the range of ways in which participants constructed meaning, but with selected examples given here, rather than the entire collection of participant statements that were drawn upon for the full analyses. Only four participants' analyses, in this summary form, are included in this chapter, partly to reduce the length of the thesis, and partly to reduce the amount of raw data included in the thesis, and thus reduce the threat to participant privacy this might create. However, to arrive at the conclusions presented here (regarding SOSs) all participants' SOIs were fully analysed and SOI scores are reported in this chapter for all participants, not just the four participants whose analyses are described in summary. The way in which these analyses, included here, were selected is described below.

5.1.1 Criteria for Selecting Analyses

Although each participant's SOI was analysed in full in order to arrive at a SOS, the analyses presented here were chosen for three reasons. First, the selected analyses provide examples of the way in which Kegan's (1982) theory was applied in identifying SOSs. In order to examine the breadth of Kegan's stages, the analyses described here include meaning making systems that draw upon each of Stages 2, 3, 4 and 5. Second, this set of analyses provides an opportunity to investigate how participants' experiences show the interactions between the Selves of different stages. (As explained in Section 3.2.1, Self/Selves is used to refer to a person's meaning making system(s) in contrast to (the lowercase) self which is used to refer to a person's self-concept.) Third, this particular subset of interviews was chosen because it provided opportunities to examine ways in which participants' ways of making meaning did not fit neatly with Kegan's theory or with Lahey et al.'s (2011) understanding of SOSs. Specifically, the four participants' SOIs analysed here were chosen for the following reasons:

- Mark's transcript provided an opportunity to examine examples of Stage 2 of Kegan's theory, with minimal Stage 3 developments.
- Neil's transcript provided an opportunity to examine examples of Stage 3 of Kegan's theory.
- Daniel's transcript provided an opportunity to examine the application of Stages 3, 4 and 5 and a Stage 4 perspective of Stages 3 and 5.
- Kevin's transcript provided an opportunity to demonstrate the application of Kegan's Stage 5 Self.

5.1.2 Chapter Overview

This chapter begins by providing an introduction to the twelve participants (Section 5.2), followed by a summary of their SOSs (Section 5.3). It then provides part of the analysis of four participants' SOI transcripts (Section 5.4). Summaries of the full analysis of each participant's SOI are provided in Appendix H.

5.2 Participant characteristics

Participants ranged in age and in relationship status. Some had been in committed relationships for many years and others were at the beginnings or endings of relationships (details are provided in Table 5.1). From introductory

discussions with participants and from observations contained in my post-observation reflections, it seemed that for most participants, there were personal reasons why they had decided to participate, and most seemed to hope for some opportunity to understand themselves more clearly. As well, some hoped to offer the benefit of their own understanding of themselves and their relationships to this research project. These discussions and reflections suggest that this research project attracted a particular group of people. Implications of this are discussed further in Chapter 8.

Table 5.1

Participant Demographic Details

Participant pseudonym	**Relationship status**	**Age**	**Occupation**
Andy	Married >20 yrs	49	University academic
Brendan	Married 25 yrs	48	University academic
Cameron	Married 2 months	42	University academic
Daniel	Dating/Single	33	University academic
Erik	Married >50 yrs	74	Semi-retired university academic
Harrison	Single	19	University student
Iain	Married 40 yrs	60	Semi-retired
Jeff	Dating	77	Tour guide
Kevin	Married	49	Corporate consultant
Lucas	Defacto	55	Corporate consultant
Mark	Separated	mid-late 40s	Engineer
Neil	Single	51	University student

5.3 Participants' Subject Object Scores

Subject Object Scores (SOSs) for all participants, resulting from the full analysis of each participant's Subject-Object Interview (SOI) are summarised in Table 5.2. The shaded rows indicate participants whose SOI analysis summaries are presented in this chapter.

Table 5.2

Summary of Participants' Subject Object Scores

Participant	SOS	Dominant Stage	Influencing Stages
Mark	2(3)	2	2 & 3
Brendan	2/3	2	2 & 3
Harrison	3/2	3	2 & 3
Neil	3	3	3
Andy	4/3	4	3 & 4
Jeff	4/3	4	3 & 4
Iain	4(3)	4	3 & 4
Erik	4(3)	4	3 & 4
Daniel	4(3)	4	3 & 4
Lucas	4(5)	4	4 & 5
Cameron	4/5	4	4 & 5
Kevin	5	5	5

5.4 Selected Subject Object Interview (SOI) Analyses

The following section describes the way in which Kegan's (1982) theory was applied to the analysis of four participants' SOIs. For each participant, selected sections of their interview transcript that offer insights regarding their ways of making meaning are presented and interpreted. Subsequently, this interpretation is examined in terms of Kegan's evolutionary stages. This analysis is then summarised by identifying a SOS that describes a particular construction of self from which each participant's experiences are likely arise. Together these analyses

demonstrate how Kegan's theory is applied in this thesis and provide opportunities to extend his theory. As described earlier, the analyses presented in this chapter represent only part of the full analysis undertaken for each participant. Although a detailed analysis of each of Kegan's stages was provided in Chapter 3, a brief summary of how Kegan describes relevant stages is provided with each analysis.

5.4.1 Mark

The analysis of Mark's SOI led to an assessment that his onto-epistemology was best described by a SOS of 2(3). A score of 2(3) is a transitional score that reflects the influence of the Stage 2 Self and the beginning emergence of the Stage 3 self.

Summary of relevant stages of Self

In general, the person at Stage 2 experiences themself in terms of enduring dispositions (a consistent pattern of needs, interests, wishes), which define their self-concept. The person at Stage 2 is also limited by their incapacity to hold more than one perception at a time. Although they can see things from multiple perspectives, they can only see these independently of one another. In relationships, the person at Stage 2 tends to view themself and other people in terms of roles. By viewing relationships in terms of roles, the person at Stage 2 is able to define how people should be in relation to one another from a single perspective, a perspective that dictates sets of complimentary roles. In addition, the person at Stage 2 tends to view others as the means by which needs or desires are fulfilled or unfulfilled.

The person at Stage 3 is able to hold more than one perspective at a time and in doing so is able to understand their needs and another's needs in relation to one another. However, the person at Stage 3 is highly influenced by how they perceive that others view them. This is because the person at Stage 3 experiences Self through their relationships with others. Disapproval or conflict challenge the Stage 3 person's understanding of themself.

Interpretation and analysis of the transcripts

During his first interview, Mark described a rather complicated and recent series of events toward the end of his last relationship. He had come home from overseas to discover that his wife, Steph, was having an affair with another man, Steve. Steph, rather than wanting to end the marriage, had come to the conclusion that she was polyamorous and wanted to be sexually involved with both Mark and

Steve. Mark described how, in his previous marriage, Julie, his first wife had also had an affair with another man, which resulted in the end of their marriage. However, Mark had noticed that during that period of infidelity, when he did not know about the affair, his sexual relationship with Julie had been more fulfilling. He had, since that time, wondered what might have happened if he had approached the situation differently and had taken a more polyamorous view. He suspected that it might have offered a new dimension to his sexual experience. Mark saw this new situation, with Steph, as an opportunity to explore the sexual possibilities of Steph's polyamory:

> *I guess it was an opportunity there to push the envelope, because I wanted to explore that [...] that's one positive I got out of this experience was that I went to my edge which I would have never been able to do unless that whole scenario had unfolded and I would have died wondering where that edge was, that part of me is a little bit grateful that, I feel a bit settled, that part of me is put to bed and it's - I don't have to think about that anymore and it's a bit comforting to have explored that and not wonder about it anymore.*

What seems to be missing in this description is any sense in which Mark is distressed by his wife's infidelity. He described elsewhere in the interview that he had assumed his marriage was monogamous, yet what Mark seems to focus on is the opportunity for self-discovery ("wondering where that edge was"). This sense of detachment may have been the result of the pain associated with the end of the relationship; however, it may have also been the result of an interpersonal detachment that can arise from a Stage 2 Self that is focused on relationships as the means by which a person's own needs are met, rather than a source of mutual need meeting. Here it seems that Mark is more focused on the opportunities the situation offered in terms of exploring himself rather than any sense of anger or loss or sadness.

Mark's belief that the "edge" of himself can be discovered also suggests the idea of a fixed self. This idea is less complex than a Stage 5 Self, which recognises the multiplicity of selves, and which also recognises the self as incomplete and having the capacity to evolve; thus, there is no finite edge. This suggests that Mark's conception of himself arises from a less complex stage than Stage 5.

Mark also described that in his relationship with Steph prior to this series of events, she had been much more demanding, and his way of responding was "passive aggressive", rather than assertive:

> *usually Steph would take the terms of different things, so it would either happen without my knowledge [... or] I'd be informed later, she would just demand [...] it was always dictated by Steph [...] I'd be very passive aggressive which caused its own - I wouldn't say that our relationship was really fantastic over the 16 years mainly because of how we went about things.*

Mark's description of his way of relating to Steph as typically "passive aggressive", suggests that Mark's response to Steph is interdependent with Steph's way of responding to him, a kind of fusion, that is, a Stage 3 way of being. It also suggests that Mark has a capacity for some awareness of Steph's experience in relation to his own, otherwise he would not be able to recognise Steph's emotional vulnerabilities in order to manipulate them for his own advantage. Both of these, fusion and emotional manipulation, require some degree of capacity for mutuality.

As described previously, Mark also saw this new situation was an opportunity to try something different, both sexually and communicatively. Mark responded by taking control:

> *I felt a great sense of having some sort of control over her [...] I wanted to control the situation [...] it was like this is going happen I'm going to be in control of them and I'm going to dictate the terms by how this happens.*

What is interesting about Mark's response to exploring polyamory is his description of feeling "a great sense of having some sort of control over her" and wanting to "control the situation". It is possible that Mark saw Steph's vulnerability, in having her affair discovered, as an opportunity to take control in his relationship. Whether this was as a form of punishment or whether this was an opportunity to explore his own interests, it seems to be a self-directed endeavour. Like his first excerpt, this excerpt also suggests a Stage 2 Self because Mark's response is directed toward viewing others and situations as a means by which his own needs, desires or wishes are met. It seems that Mark wanted to explore himself through the possibilities of polyamory and wanted to change the way he related to Steph from "passive aggressive" to "dominant male" (as described in the next excerpt). These excerpts

suggest that Mark was focused on his own needs or desires, rather than mutual needs, as would be more likely of the person at Stage 3.

Subsequently, Mark and Steph came to a point of significant conflict and eventually separated. Mark described that during conflict he usually found it difficult to think clearly and to be articulate. However, in this particular argument, Mark described having great clarity about his needs and was able to express these to Steph. He saw clearly that what he was articulating was:

> *where I wanted to be in the relationship, what my status was, how she wasn't meeting my needs - the way I imagine it is like a pack of dogs you know, there's a dominant male and I was just barking down these other pair for not toeing the line. That would come very naturally in a pack of dogs, and that's what it felt - felt very primal and it was coming from a very primitive place. [I discovered] that I'm I guess stronger than what I gave myself credit for, that when the shit hits the fan I can perform and if I'm put in a really confrontational situation that I can deal with that situation effectively.*

Mark's focus on his own needs also seems evident in his description of his experience of clarity. His description of "coming from a very primitive place" sounds very much as if he is describing drawing on a more basic or less complex way of understanding his situation. This may suggest that Mark's difficulties in finding clarity and being able to articulate his thoughts during conflict, arise from a mismatch between the complexity of the conflict and his capacity to respond to that complexity. What seems to have brought clarity is being able to see the situation as less complex, and respond in a more "primitive" way, from a basis of needs (i.e., Stage 2).

What this analysis suggests so far is that Mark's response to his wife's infidelity and their exploration of polyamory was driven by his own self-interest rather than his concern about mutual need meeting. In these descriptions of his experiences, there is little evidence that he experiences a loss of self as a consequence of losing the relationship. Thus, it is likely that Mark made sense of these experiences in terms of how he could meet his own needs or desires (Stage 2) rather than through a sense of mutuality or through an interpersonal way of making meaning (Stage 3). However, there is some evidence that suggests that prior to this

series of events, he did experience his relationship in interpersonal ways, expressed in his "passive aggressive" approach.

Although, it seemed clear that Mark was still in the process of working through these experiences in order to make sense of them, it appeared that being in a relationship made it difficult for him to have a sense of agency:

> *I'm still trying to put it together in my own head, but I'm starting to feel that I can run my own agenda again, like before I was in relationships [...] what I'm finding is important to me at the moment is not having to answer to someone else and I can, from now on I can move forward and every decision that I make I can make that decision for myself and I can weigh up the consequences of my decisions on whether it has a positive or negative effect on my life and that I feel that I'm not really interested in getting into another relationship, because the risks outweigh the benefits, as far as I can tell, and being in a relationship is too much compromise for me now and that I just want to make my own way in the world and not have to answer to another adult.*

It seems that Mark's experience of his last relationship had resulted in a loss of self, that he was not able to "run his own agenda". This sounds like a retreat from the mutuality of his relationship (albeit "passive aggressive") to a more secure position that seems to be motivated by "whether it has a positive or negative effect on my life". His desire to move away from being in a relationship seems to be about discovering himself in terms of what meets his own needs (Stage 2), rather than finding himself in a relationship (Stage 3). This seems to suggest a move away from a Stage 3 Self toward a Stage 2 Self. Contrary to Kegan's (1982) theory, this seems to be a movement toward lesser complexity rather than more complexity.

However, Mark stated in his second interview that, after reflecting on the events described in his first interview, he was not satisfied with how he had responded to these events. He described his sexual exploration of polyamory as "dirty", "grimy" and "grungy":

> *thinking about it afterwards [...] it all felt very sordid to me [...] yeah I feel, not revolted, but it just doesn't feel like a nice thing transpired, you know, the last 12 months in my life [...] it's sort of a bit lower than what my own expectations, well the way I've been brought up, it was fairly [...] it just felt a bit dirty and grimy and [...] as a human being I want*

> *to be higher than that primal sort of sexual stuff [...] you know being in a mutually respecting loving relationship where the two, the couple only want to be with each other and seem to be within the bounds of what society deems as normal, you know marriage it's just not, it's just not, yeah it's not that sort of grungy sort of dirty stuff.*

Upon reflection, it seems that his desire to be only focused on himself had shifted. He seemed to be suggesting that he did want "a mutually respecting loving relationship", but one that was more aligned with social norms, not an experimental relationship that pushed boundaries and allowed him to go to "his edge". It seemed that his ideas about what was normal also included stereotypical ideas about men and women:

> *I see women from other cultures not - they play a more natural feminine role and I guess they play a bit more of a submissive role to males and I just think that's the way nature intended it to be and if you go away from that then you'll see a lot of disharmony in relationships between men and women.*

These excerpts seem to suggest that Mark's ideas about relationships are role-driven rather than mutuality-driven and seem to suggest a Stage 2 conception of relationship rather than a Stage 3 conception. So far, all of these examples, except for Mark's description of his pattern of relating to Steph as "passive aggressive" seem to point to meanings that arise from a Stage 2 self, not from a Stage 3 self. However, Mark did identify that he does experience some vulnerability in relation to what others think about him:

> *generally, I like to think that I don't care about what other people think [...] sometimes I've - sometimes I - somewhere inside me I do care what other people think.*

It seems that despite his attempts to maintain self-sufficient ideas about himself, he did "care what other people think", and perceiving what others think requires a capacity to imagine another person's thoughts as different to his own. This capacity indicates the development of a Stage 3 Self. However, there was little evidence that this capacity was influencing Mark's current way of making meaning.

Summary

The excerpts from Mark's interview analysed above demonstrate that Mark was focused on his own needs and viewed his relationship with Steph as a means to explore himself. It also seemed to be an opportunity to assert a stereotypical way of viewing the relationship, taking the role of the dominant male and expecting Steph to take the role of a submissive female. When this did not work out, Mark seemed to blame it on the failure of western society to reinforce such stereotypes. These aspects suggest a Stage 2 construction of Self. There was some evidence that Mark was susceptible to how he perceived others viewed him, which suggests some development of a Stage 3 Self. Therefore, Mark's onto-epistemology is best described by a SOS of 2(3).

5.4.2 Neil

The analysis of Neil's SOI led to an assessment that his onto-epistemology was best described by a SOS of 3. A score of 3 is not a transitional score but represents the full development of the Stage 3 Self and the absence of either Stage 2 or Stage 4 ways of making meaning.

Summary of relevant stages of Self

In general, the person at Stage 3 experiences themself in their relationships with other people, that is their understanding of themself and their experiences is dependent upon their perceptions of others – others' opinions, view, values, attitudes and patterns of behaviours. The person at Stage 3 is dependent upon other people's validation of their way of being.

Interpretation and analysis of the transcript

Neil talked about an aspect of his life that caused him distress. Neil described that his father had left him and his mother and sister when he was nine years old and had not initiated contact with him since. It seemed that not having a father had left Neil feeling that something important was missing from his life. About thirty years later, he attended a family funeral.

> *he was there, the - we were - I was in the church and in - and he was standing in front of me, and for three days, I stayed down there for three days, and in three days he never said a word, didn't even acknowledge my existence. I thought you so and so, so and so, I said, I'm your flesh*

and blood and I've done nothing wrong, I was 9, I've done nothing wrong and you're ignoring me.

Some years after that Neil telephoned his father in an attempt to find out why he had never made contact. However, his father was unable to give him any answers.

I got to the point where I wanted to know why he had never bothered to send me or my sister a birthday card or a Christmas card, I got to that point, I wanted to know [...] I want to know why, what - and I rang him up and I said, why? why haven't you bothered to contact us and give us a card or a letter or asked how we're going, why? and his answer was, I don't know, and I said, that is not acceptable to me, I said, you - I need to know why, he said, well, you're not going to get an answer and I said but that's not fair, I said, I need to know, and he didn't. He hung up the phone

The above section of Neil's transcript highlights how important it was for Neil, in his present understanding of himself, to know why his father had not engaged with him. It seemed that Neil was not able to make meaning in relation to his father's absence from his life and that only his father could bring meaning to that experience. It seemed that what Neil needed most from his father was to be acknowledged and to understand how his father could ignore him for all these years. In his second interview, Neil returned to this feeling of loss:

I just would like, I guess I'm asking, wanting some recognition from dad, that I'm - that I'm a human being that I have been and will be more successful.

Neil's experience of his father's absence, both physically and emotionally seemed to leave unmet needs, not only for answers, but also for validation of his worth as a human being. It seemed that without his father's recognition, he was unable to value himself, even though he knew he had been successful. These excerpts reveal that Neil's view of himself as having worth was dependent upon his father's view of him, suggesting a Stage 3 Self.

It is also possible that Neil was making sense of this situation from a Stage 2 Self. A person at Stage 2 sees relationships in terms of roles. Neil could have been seeing that his father had failed in his role as a father. However, it seemed that there was more at stake for Neil, and there seemed a genuine absence of anger. In relation

to anger, Kegan (1982) states that a Stage 3 person does not tend to experience anger in situations where they have been "taken advantage of or victimised . . . because they cannot know themself separate from the interpersonal context; instead they are more likely to feel sad, wounded, or incomplete" (p. 97). This seems to be a good description of the way in which Neil expressed his experiences. It seemed that Neil had invested his understanding of himself in his relationship with his father. Because that relationship did not exist in any real way, it seemed that Neil also did not exist. Therefore, it seems more likely that Neil's way of making meaning was drawing upon a mutuality that is not present in the more self-contained Stage 2 Self.

In other relationships, there seemed to be the same picture.

> *I'm always thinking about what people think about me, always [...] I keep thinking that people see me as a failure, all my friends see me as a failure, I don't know why [...] I don't want to see myself as a failure, that's why I need to prove to everyone that I'm not going to be one and I - that's why I work so hard at university, whatever I do, I always put 100% into - like an intensive care paramedic, I was exceptionally good at that, not blowing my ego up, but people would say, you are exceptional at your job. I've achieved what I want to achieve, I've done good at it, I'm great at it, I think well, so what?*

Even though Neil had external indicators of success, he was not able to see himself as successful because he perceived that other people saw him as a failure. Despite attempts to convince himself otherwise, he was not able to construct a sense of self that was independent of what others thought:

> *I don't want to be seen as a failure, um ... I always put up the pros and cons and I think well, so what if they see me as a failure, who cares, does it really matter what they think?*

What Neil seems to be describing here are the limitations of the Stage 3 Self: an incapacity to develop an identity that is self-authored.

Also, it seemed that he was intensely focused on his relationship with his father as being the only way in which he could find a sense of self worth or validation as a human being.

I can't explain it, I just can't, I just know that the father's love is - is very different from a mother's love [...] being a father says to me that you're important to me, I created you

It seemed clear to Neil that he was not going to receive the kind of answers from his father that would enable him to understand himself as worthy, and so he was at a loss as to how to move past this point.

Summary

This analysis of excerpts from Neil's transcript suggests that he was making meaning from a Stage 3 Self. It also suggests that Neil's narrow focus on his relationship with his father, as the way in which he needed to experience himself in order to feel worthy, left him unable to develop beyond this Stage 3 Self.

5.4.3 Daniel

The analysis of Daniel's SOI led to an assessment that his onto-epistemology was best described by two different SOSs. This analysis suggests that Daniel's experience of himself, in isolation from others can be described by a SOS of 4/5, but the way in which he makes meaning in relation to others is better described by a SOS of 4(3). SOSs of 4/5 and 4(3) are both transitional scores which indicate that meaning is generally made in terms of Kegan's Stage 4 Self. A score of 4/5 indicates the presence of a Stage 5 Self and a Stage 4 Self, with conflicts in meaning resolved in favour of Stage 4, rather than Stage 5. A score of 4(3) indicates that although the Stage 4 Self is dominant, some effort is required to keep from returning to Stage 3 ways of making meaning.

Summary of relevant stages of Self

In general, the person at Stage 4 experiences themself as independent, autonomous and with a clear sense of identity. They have developed a view of the world that draws upon other's ideas but is self-authored. The person at Stage 4 seeks to bring all of their experiences into alignment with their personal ideology, which is a system of beliefs, attitudes and values that reaches beyond their own needs to include the needs of others. Unlike the person at Stage 3, the person at Stage 4 has an understanding of themself that is independent of their relationships and they no longer seek approval from others.

The person at Stage 5 has developed multiple selves. Unlike the person at Stage 4, they are not dependent upon the expression of any one of these selves in

order to have a sense of self, because the Self is not located in these selves. Meaning is found in the dialogue between these selves and in the dialogue between their own selves and another's self/selves. This makes it possible for them to hear criticisms or consider conflicting views without experiencing a loss of Self.

Interpretation and analysis of the transcript

In speaking with Daniel, it seemed that he had a high degree of certainty about who he was and what was important to him. In describing his approach to life, it was evident that self-awareness and authenticity were important to him, and in his connections with others:

> *a big part of it is consciousness and intention, so being really aware of where I'm at and um… not sort of reacting to the everyday and being quite aware of my presence in the world, the effect that I'm having on others. I think that, I mean, fundamentally bringing good things into the world is important [and] is what I'd like to do with my life and that means caring for the relationships around me and people around me.*

Being conscious meant not only being intentional about how he responded to things in his everyday experiences of others, but also to his internal experience:

> *I try and be quite conscious of, if I'm feeling some kind of resentment, then I will figure out what action I can take that can have me be responsible for it, either changing what I do in some way, or talking about it.*

Daniel's description of his way of understanding himself was in terms of interconnectedness ("the effect that I'm having on others") and in terms of a bigger picture of what he wanted his life to be, beyond meeting his own needs ("bringing good things into the world is important"). These concerns suggest a capacity to perceive how his actions affect others, which requires a complexity of at least Stage 3. In addition, his desire to make a positive difference in the world suggests a perspective that is wider than the interpersonal. It suggests the complexity of Stage 4 or 5, where a person's way of seeing the world reaches beyond their immediate context. As well, his concern about taking responsibility for his own feelings, rather than seeing others as the source of them also demonstrates a level of differentiation between self and other that is more complex than the Self at Stage 3.

Daniel also spoke about how he had come to this picture of what was important to him

> *[it] comes from so many things, comes from noticing the people that I most respect, you know role models I guess, and noticing their ways of being in the world and trying to understand it and then sort of taking on things. Culture, literature's had a huge influence on me, and so I guess when I say resonates, it's things that kind of don't conflict with things that I already hold as truths to some degree and at the same time, and part of it's intuitive as well, sometimes there are ideas that you hear and you're just like, "that makes perfect sense,"*

Daniel's capacity to describe the source of his truth suggests a level of objectivity that allows him to make choices about what he believes and what he does not believe. This capacity reflects the self-authored nature of a complexity of Self at Stage 4 or 5. What differentiates between a person at Stage 4 and a person at Stage 5 is the Stage 5 Self's capacity to hold multiple meaning making systems or selves and to find new ways of being in the dialogue between these selves.

In relation to new ideas, Daniel identified that he had a unifying idea – the notion of living a good life.

> *I've got an already existing notion of a good way to live, and then I come into contact with ideas that might challenge some of my existing principles, and I really welcome that. Sometimes it will challenge my ideas and I'll sort of test it out as a way of being [...] but to me it's much more about finding an equilibrium between all of these different things that work, because there are lots of them and so for me it all comes back to that question of – to keep asking that question of, "What does it mean to live a good life?" And to keep sort of coming back to the search for that equilibrium. [...] How do I choose what to take on? I guess it's, I don't ever think of things as extremes, I might try them as extremes but it sort of gets taken on as a part of a complex tapestry.*

Daniel seemed to be talking about a process of assimilating new ideas into an established framework but also a willingness to be open to ideas that did not seem to fit with what was familiar. However, these new ideas needed, at some point to be able to be integrated into a cohesive whole. Holding onto an idea of "good" in order to decide how he wants to live his life aligns with the ideological nature of

the Self at Stage 4. However, Daniel also seemed to recognise that what he currently understood that to mean and what he might understand in the future, might be different. This was evident in his openness to "ideas that might challenge some of my existing principles". He described encountering challenging ideas as positive ("I really welcome that"). This sense of openness to newness, which challenges a view of himself as complete, seems to align with some of the characteristics of Kegan's Stage 5 Self – a self that is able to "hear, and to seek out, information which might cause the self to alter its behaviour" (Kegan, 1982, p. 105). Although these more complex elements seem to be evident, Daniel seems, in the end, to incorporate these into "a complex tapestry" which maintains his sense of self-authorship. It seems that, although he might be open to different ways of being, ultimately, they are subject to a notion of the "good life".

He described how deeply he felt his need for autonomy and to live in a way that reflected his view of the world. He also described the consequences of a situation in which he had not felt that freedom:

> *I think that it's the most important thing to be questioning if you're living life in the way that you think it should be lived [...] I was feeling that I was stopped from doing that… it's just that sense of not being free you know, in the same way that if you were to cage somebody to imprison them, then what's the feeling that they have? I guess it's a similar kind of a feeling*

The way in which Daniel described his understanding of himself seems to draw on meanings that reflect both Stages 4 and 5 of Kegan's (1982) theory. Both of these ways of making meaning seem to be present, however the analysis above suggests that his understanding of himself as autonomous and self-authoring reflects a Stage 4 resolution of meaning, rather than Stage 5. Therefore, a SOS of 4/5 best describes Daniel's onto-epistemology. However, in contrast to his way of experiencing himself (intrapersonally), his experience of relationships revealed different ways of making meaning.

Daniel's interview revealed that engaging with others as well as living authentically created a conflict that he was not always able to navigate in a way that allowed him to maintain his sense of autonomy. It seemed that his desire for personal freedom and his desire to care for others sometimes came into conflict with one another:

> *I definitely, I wouldn't always want to just go into every situation trying to "show my true self" [...] it brings to mind those people who are very forthright and say exactly what they're thinking [...] that's a way of abnegating responsibility for, I guess that compromise between the self and the social situation, for me it's more about finding the equilibrium, so for me, showing my true self would mean being dismissive of something someone said if it didn't really interest me, I'm not going to do that, I'm going to sort of care for the relationship*

It did not seem that Daniel was able to be his "true self" and "care for the relationship" at the same time. It seemed that part of Daniel's experience of himself was also dependent upon other people. He was not willing to "show his true self" if that meant that other people might be upset with him. This analysis suggests meanings that come from both a Stage 4 Self and a Stage 3 Self.

In his relationship with his girlfriend, it seemed that finding an equilibrium between meeting his sense of personal freedom and his commitment to the relationship was difficult. He described how being in this relationship had challenged his sense of authenticity and feelings of freedom to express himself:

> *with this relationship, in some ways it's really supportive of things that I care about, but in a lot of ways, and a lot of aspects of myself that I think I'm exploring, I feel that there's such a gulf between us that not only, like it's… it's a real battle when we do get to spend weeks at a time together [...] I find it really hard to imagine how we could be really close and living in the same space, and me being content and feeling like I was living a good life.*

One of the experiences that seemed to encapsulate this for Daniel was going out with his girlfriend and her friends to the pub.

> *I've sort of realised at this point that I don't really enjoy talking shit in the pub while drinking. I'll enjoy that a little bit, but I get quite bored by that, and I will be much happier geeking out, talking big ideas with people that are similarly interested by any one of a range of passions, whatever it is that they're into, but something that feels, I guess, more authentic.*

It seems that going to the pub was not an activity that really aligned with who Daniel understood himself to be. However, going to the pub was something that his girlfriend and her friends enjoyed. This created a dilemma for Daniel in trying to balance ideas about being true to himself and wanting to please others:

> *sometimes I go to the pub and I won't drink and then I'll actually just say, "I'm feeling bored" and I'll leave… but it's sort of complex social dynamics because [...] I'll know that it makes my partner happy that I'm there, and makes her happy that I'm fitting in with her friends, also makes me happy because I really enjoy socialising up to a point, and it's sort of knowing where the equilibrium lies, and so often it's just a matter of losing sort of that conscious part of yourself that's kind of watching what's going on [...] it's just like that sense of self is something that fluctuates and sometimes I'm really firm in what I'm about and what I'm doing and then it's the easiest thing in the world to go along and I'll enjoy talking to people, and at a certain point I'll just be like, "Hey, see you guys later…" [...] but at other times, I'm really lacking in that sense of self and I will just be in that situation, [...] I guess, even a little bit anxious, making sure that people like me, and I'll be kind of saying the right thing and fitting in with everybody, and in that situation, I can do that really well, but I come away from it feeling a little bit less full and complete.*

The conflict that Daniel is describing seems to be between a Stage 3 Self and a Stage 4 Self. Daniel's desire to "make sure that people like" him and to keep his girlfriend happy by "fitting in with her friends" reflects the interpersonal nature of the Stage 3 Self, where a person experiences themself through their relationships with others. Daniel's awareness that doing things to please other people is not being true to himself reflects the need to align his actions with ideals, which typifies the Stage 4 Self. However, at the end of an experience where he compromises his ideals for the sake of fitting in, he describes feeling "a little bit less full and complete" and that his desire to do what makes others happy does not satisfy him. It seems that Daniel was describing a loss of self when he tried to behave in ways that please others, which suggests that his experience reflects a Stage 4 Self, rather than a Stage 3 Self. Daniel describes that his "sense of self is something that fluctuates", which he needs to monitor ("that conscious part of yourself that's kind of watching what's

going on"). So, although his experience reflects a Stage 4 Self, it requires some maintenance to achieve. This is best described by an onto-epistemology that is best described by a SOS of 4(3).

Another aspect of Daniel's transcript offers an opportunity to explore of the way in which a person might draw upon multiple ways of making meaning in the process of coming to understand a complex situation. In such situations, where some aspects of security are threatened, a person might also resort to less complex ways of making meaning in order to meet more basic needs (See Section 3.6).

During his first interview, Daniel was in the process of deciding if he wanted to continue his relationship with his girlfriend. As described in the following excerpts from his transcript, being in this relationship also threatened his sense of integrity:

> *I find it really hard to imagine how we could be really close and living in the same space, and me being content and feeling like I was living a good life.*

Although ending the relationship might resolve the conflict with his sense of personal freedom, it also created conflict with his commitment to relationships:

> *it's never clear cut that you should break off a relationship with another human being, it's a really big decision to make.*

His ideals about the importance of relationships were in conflict with his ideals about being himself. One of the ways that he seemed to make sense of this was by looking at his own past patterns and that he felt he tended to err too much on the side of maintaining the relationship. He also identified patterns of relationship behaviours that had, in the past, led to the end of a relationship:

> *the signs to me that there's maybe perhaps it's on the downward trajectory, is that [...] we're a little bit cagey when we talk to each other, because we're both sort of like, instead of just knowing innately that the other person is completely into this, and doing whatever it took to make it work, we both know that the other person's a little bit unsure, so these things kind of change the conversation because both of you are kind of aware, even in the back of your mind, that that's kind of lurking around, "and if, you're not going all out in this, then I'm certainly not going to go all out in this," and you're both feeling that way, so you start kind*

of holding back a little bit, and then that plays out in making plans… instead of involving each other every step along the way, it like, "well… I want to make sure I'm OK in this." That's the sense I'm getting from her, and it just kind of… it just changes the nature of things.

In an attempt to resolve the conflict between ideals of personal freedom and the importance of relationships, Daniel seems to be drawing upon less complex constructions of Self in order to find meaning. Daniel describes this patterns of behaviours as indicative of the end stage of a relationship. In this description, he seems to be indicating an initial reliance on his confidence in a mutual understanding of the relationships ("knowing innately that the other person is completely into this"), and then moving to a less vulnerable position ("I want to make sure I'm OK in this"). The initial reliance on mutuality ("innately knowing") seems to suggest a Stage 3 construction of meaning, while the less vulnerable position seems to shift the focus to concerns for his own needs ("I want to make sure I'm OK in this"), which suggests a Stage 2 construction of meaning. It is plausible that Daniel has been able to maintain his sense of self-authorship (Stage 4) while he has not felt any threat to the future of the relationship. However, when that threat arises, he begins to assess the basis of the relationship, which seems to highlight a focus on mutuality (Stage 3). When this foundation of mutuality is challenged, he seems to turn to meeting his needs (Stage 2). Although elsewhere in the transcript Daniel stated that his choice of "downward trajectory" was a "horrible phrase", perhaps it is an apt description of the process he was experiencing in terms of finding meaning. Not downwards toward imminent disaster, but downwards into less complex aspects of self in order to find some stable point of foundation from which to build meaning.

Summary

In summary, this interpretation and analysis of Daniel's transcript presents a conundrum. According to the interpretation of Daniel's experience of himself and of his interactions with others, Daniel seems to be demonstrating understandings of himself that are described by SOSs of 4(5) and 4(3). However, what is common is that they are both grounded in a Stage 4 construction of self. Although Daniel demonstrated he valued challenge, which arises from a Stage 5 construction of self, he was not able to bring that construction of self, in any form, into the context of close relationships. In addition, he required a conscious maintenance of a Stage 4

construction of self in the context of close relationships to avoid returning to previous Stage 3 constructions of self. This might suggest that, according to this interpretation, an SOS of 4(3) describes Daniel's experience of himself in close relationships, but an SOS of 4(5) is a better description in his experience of himself, independent of others (i.e., intrapersonally). This raises a challenge to Lahey et al.'s (2011) interpretation of Kegan's (1982) theory, as applied to the Subject Object Interview, which emphasises the congruence of a person's SOS across all of their experiences. In addition, Daniel's process of making sense of the end of his relationship also presents an opportunity to examine how less complex forms of meaning might be drawn upon when a person is in a difficult situation. Both of these aspects, differing conceptions of self and less complex forms of self in complex situations, will be explored further in Chapter 8.

5.4.4 Kevin

The analysis of Kevin's SOI led to an assessment that his onto-epistemology was best described by a SOS of 5. A score of 5 is not a transitional score but represents the full development of the Stage 5 Self and the absence of any limitations of Stage 4 ways of making meaning.

Summary of relevant stages of Self

The person at Stage 5, in developing multiple selves, finds meaning in the dialogue between those selves, or in relationship, between themself and others. The person at Stage 5 is similar to the person at Stage 3 in that both are relational; however, the interpersonal nature of the Stage 5 Self maintains the individuality of the person in a way that Stage 3's mutuality is not capable. In addition, the person at Stage 5 welcomes diversity of ideas and experiences as a means of discovering how different perspectives offer a synergy that creates meaning that is greater than the sum of the parts. As well, the person at Stage 5 takes an ethical position that seeks to address concerns that are well beyond their own in a way that embraces a diversity of ideologies and systems of thought.

Interpretation and analysis of the transcript

During Kevin's first interview, he spoke about some of the challenges he faced in relation to contributing to the development of the corporate consulting business in which he worked. One particular challenge was whether or not the organisation needed a vision and mission statement in order to define itself.

> *I suppose the business is a giant organisational experiment around consulting and it takes a different approach than the large organisations and so one of the aspects is, do we really need a vision and a mission? and what does that actually do or achieve?*

For his own purposes, to guide his own consulting projects, such a statement was not necessary, but he could recognise that for others it might be. This dilemma seemed to be about not knowing what process others needed to go through in order to come to a similar awareness: that the level of complexity at which he and others could be working made a vision and mission statement superfluous. Was it a case of giving the consultants what some of them thought they needed in the present? Or did they need to be thrown into the complexity of not having a guide so that they could have an opportunity to see how what they were doing was beyond the guidance of a vision and mission statement.

Kevin could see that there were a number of different perspectives:

> *I can reflect and understand those that are say starting off in their career of consulting, or are you know solid practitioners, those who have a level of aspiration and want to go further [...] I can also understand the point of view where people have this need to understand who it is that they're working for, how that business contributes <u>to</u> something or is aiming <u>for</u> something, similarly I can see that that actually doesn't necessarily add value and it can destroy potential value or miss potential value so the approach that the business is trying to take is that [the] mission is to actually do good things in the world and achieve results and benefits that are sustainable for all businesses.*

Kevin's description of his understanding of himself suggests a way of making meaning that extends beyond a single ideology. It seems for Kevin, that doing business based upon the guidance of a statement of mission or vision is only one way a business can operate. What Kevin also seems to recognise is that by defining vision and mission, possibilities might be limited. That is, ways of doing business that might meet the goal of doing "good things in the world [...] that are sustainable for all businesses" might fall outside of the boundaries defined by a particular mission and vision statement. In this way, it seems that Kevin saw that multiple ideologies might be able to function together. This way of understanding himself and his work reflects the multiple selves of the Stage 5 Self.

It seemed that Kevin was also aware that he could not come to an answer to this dilemma by himself. He recognised that his task was not to find the answer but to facilitate the process of finding an answer.

> *I can see both sides of the story and I can build probably a compelling argument for both and so this is one of those areas where I don't know what the right answer is so what I guess I need to do is start to unpack how I can help others come up with the right answer.*

In recognising that the answer was not going to be found in one particular way of seeing things suggests an understanding that answers are found in dialectical, trans-ideological ways that invite conflicting views into dialogue. This also reflects the way in which the Self at Stage 5 finds meaning in the interpenetration of self and other.

Kevin's process for deciding which clients to work with revealed a high degree of flexibility:

> *I guess any client that has an aspiration to achieve something and as long as that something generates some benefit back to either their client group, the community, the state, the country or the world.*

The parameters around the way in which these benefits might be achieved were aligned with a personal ethic that sought to bring benefits beyond the immediate situation. He understood his work as facilitating processes that sought to honour all parties' needs, and values. In speaking about his personal ethics, he described how he had developed his own ethical view by recognising what was missing in other people's ideas about business:

> *I suppose it's the lack of care about the environment, that there are resources that are to be consumed, stuff to be dug up, stuff to be cut down, stuff to be harvested, that without recognising that it's taken a long time to generate that or it's in limited [supply], so it needs to be curated or nurtured and looked after - so that's environment, I suppose in terms of a community aspect, there are those people who are either not supported or left behind or ignored or not cared for, nurtured and not recognised that they are part of where we live and they have a part to play and they need to be also respected and so the environment, the community, the overall, I suppose, the way or additionally the way*

> *businesses are run [...] I guess it's the level of care and support provided for either the community, the environment [...] all of those things, I feel, need to be supported and sustained for us to continue [...] our communities, our country and the globe*

At a personal level, Kevin seems to apply a degree of pragmatism in how he invests his own resources. It seems that it is not so much about the specifics of where and how his work happens, but that his bigger goals of sustained benefits for all are addressed:

> *I guess was trying to work out well have I got the energy and the passion to pursue this? What's the likelihood that I can get some sort of successful outcome and actually make a difference? or is this going to be an exercise in futility, that I'm not able to build enough or influence enough and actually move and harness either people and resources to be able to make a difference? And I guess it's those things, those 4 or 5 elements that make a logical, rational assessment of, look is there any viability in pursuing this?*

Kevin's commitment seems to be to something that is greater than his client, or than the company he worked for. He seemed committed to a world view that was concerned with sustainable use of resources that facilitated the wellbeing of individuals, communities and environment. This principled, rather than ideological approach reflects meanings arising from a Stage 5 rather than Stage 4 Self. This is a more expansive perspective that recognises the interdependent nature of people and environment, and reflects an awareness of interconnectedness between systems, rather than the dominance of any one system. This also reflects a Stage 5 way of making meaning.

Summary

Kevin's account seems to differ from each of the three previous interpretations of participants' accounts. The dilemmas addressed in these other interpretations focus on dilemmas of self and social norms and self in relation to others. Kevin's dilemma seems to incorporate much more global concerns, rather than how he resolves conflicting priorities, or navigating norms or threats to self-expression, but how he resolves his responsibilities to the community and the environment. This awareness of responsibilities beyond oneself is not necessarily the mark of a Stage 5 Self; however, the aspect that points to a Stage 5 construction

is the way in which his sense of self does not seem to be attached to a single identity, a single set of values, or norms. He has a flexibility of self-expression that is constructed in service to his responsibilities to the environment and community, and in this flexibility, he does not suffer the loss of integrity that would arise from a Stage 4 construction of self. As Kegan (1982, p. 105) states: "the functioning of the [self as identity] is no longer an end in itself, and one is interested in the way it serves the aims of the new self whose community stretches beyond that particular [self as identity]".

What seems evident in the ways that Kevin understands himself in his own work, as a consultant in a consulting business, and in relation to others, is a breadth that seems to be beyond the need for the kind of self-expression that is typical of a Stage 4 construction of self. His capacity to see value in multiple perspectives and to seek a holistic approach seems to recognise a complexity that is not contained within a single ideology or single set of norms or values. In addition, Kevin's decision making seems to be driven by a set of principles, purposes and aims that are beyond himself as an individual, recognising his membership of a common humanity. All of these ways of understanding self are reflected in Kegan's (1982) description of the Stage 5 Self. Thus, this interpretation and analysis of Kevin's transcript is best described by an SOS of 5.

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented a summary of all participants' Subject Object Scores. In addition, selected participants' transcript excerpts have been interpreted and analysed here in order to examine the usefulness of Kegan's (1982) evolutions of self. Utilising the SOI protocols, participants' transcripts were analysed to arrive at Subject Object Scores for all participants. In addition, these analyses have suggested some questions in relation to Kegan's theory and its interpretation in the Subject Object Interview (Lahey, et al., 2011). One question is in relation to finding less complex constructions of self in the face of highly complex experiences. The other relates to finding experiences best described by different Subject Object Scores in distinct aspects of a participant's experiences. These questions will be discussed in relation to Kegan's theory in Chapter 8.

The findings presented in this chapter identify participants' ways of constructing meaning in relation to Kegan's (1982) evolutionary stages, for experiences that are not overtly experiences of intimacy. In the following chapter,

participants' ways of understanding intimacy are also analysed in relation to Kegan's evolutionary stages. Together these chapters provide an opportunity to compare participants' ways of understanding intimacy to their ways of constructing meaning more generally. Any differences between participants' construction of meaning in intimate and non-intimate experiences may add to an understanding of these men's experiences of intimacy.

Chapter 6: Epistemologies of Intimacy: Men's Understandings of Intimacy

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the transcripts of all 12 participants' interviews, focusing on how they described their understandings of intimacy. Participants' definitions of intimacy were examined in relation to Kegan's (1982) developmental stages, using Lahey et al.'s (2011) analytic tool to identify ways in which different onto-epistemologies are expressed in epistemologies of intimacy. These analyses, using Kegan's theory, are described here as epistemologies because they offer an explanation as to *how* participants know that their experiences are intimate.

Participants' definitions of intimacy are also compared to their Subject Object Scores (SOSs) described in Chapter 5. This provides an opportunity to investigate whether participants' ways of making meaning in intimate experiences differ from ways in which they make meaning in other experiences. Together with Chapter 5, this chapter addresses the research question: In what ways does a constructive-developmental approach offer new possibilities for understanding intimacy?

6.1.1 Chapter Overview

The analyses in this chapter begin with a general summary of participants' understandings of intimacy, followed by a participant-by-participant analysis of understandings of intimacy in relation to Kegan's (1982) stages (Section 6.2). This ideographic approach is necessary as no one part of a particular understanding provides the necessary information in order to determine which stage of Kegan's theory it relates to. Rather, it is the parts of a person's particular understanding, in relation to each other that provide this information. These analyses are presented in an order of increasingly complexity, according to Kegan's stages of evolution of self. (This particular ordering is to provide a clearer presentation of the data. The analysis of data took place in order of participation, not evolutionary stages.) At the end of each section a summary is provided, which adds to current understandings of intimacy by identifying how intimacy can be conceptualised

differently, depending on how meaning is being constructed. This analysis is summarised by suggesting some ways in which a constructive-developmental approach offers a way to organise multiple understandings of intimacy (Section 6.3).

Section 6.4 compares each participant's definition of intimacy with their Subject Object Score, as presented in Chapter 5. The purpose of this analysis was to identify similarities and differences between participants' development in general and their development in terms of intimacy specifically. This further analysis was undertaken to identify ways in which similarities or differences add to an understanding of these men's experiences of intimacy in contrast to other experiences in their lives. A summary of findings (Section 6.5) concludes this chapter.

6.2 Participants' Definitions of Intimacy

A number of the participants expressed difficulty in describing how they understood intimacy in general or particular aspects of intimacy. This was evident in comments such as:

> *I'm just struggling because I've never actually articulated any of that out loud* (Brendan)
> *yeah it's strange but that's about as well as I can explain it* (Erik)
> *it's pretty powerful but it's hard to put into words, really* (Harrison)
> *I think it's a bit harder to talk about . . . you can recognise it . . . I can't put words to it* (Jeff)
> *that's not something that I've directly thought about* (Kevin)
> *that's the best I can explain it at the moment* (Lucas)

Most participants spoke about having a deep sense of connection with another person in their experiences of intimacy, that it was an intense experience and involved positive feelings. Most participants also spoke about developing a level of trust or security that facilitated this connection, which was necessary to expose their vulnerabilities. These findings align with the definition of intimacy proposed in Chapter 2, that intimate experiences involve the expression or validation of, or influence to one's understanding of oneself, or of another person and that vulnerability is a requirement for this experience. In Chapter 2 it was also suggested that an experience of connection and positive feelings can result from this intimate

experience. The following section interrogates participants' understanding of intimacy in relation to Kegan's stages.

6.2.1 Intimacy at Stage 2

Mark, Brendan and Andy described aspects of their understandings of intimacy that aligned with Stage 2. Mark's description of intimacy emphasised the importance of honesty or "radical truth". He understood that intimate experiences involved meeting "the real person", letting the "real self [...] come to the forefront", rather than presenting a "persona" that was aligned with others' expectations.

In terms of Kegan's (1982) theory, this description of intimacy is somewhat ambiguous. On one hand, ideas of being "real" could be understood to align with any of Kegan's stages, because the person at any stage is concerned about integrity. The difference between these experiences of integrity is found in the source of that integrity: for Stage 2 it is found in roles, for Stage 3 it is found in feelings of mutuality, for Stage 4 it is found in identity and for Stage 5 it is found in a broad ethical position. What gives some indication of where this understanding of intimacy might sit is in Mark's awareness that intimacy is a choice to be "real" rather than present a "persona". The concept of persona, as presenting a façade aligned with other people's expectations, refers to the subjectivity that constructs the Self at Stage 3. Because the person at Stage 3 experiences themself in their relationships with others, and particularly in the harmony between how they see themself and how they perceive others see them, the concept of meeting others' expectations is the same as the concept of being oneself. That is, their understanding of self is equivalent to how they perceive others see them – both in terms of assuming that perceptual alignment and also in being vulnerable to others' overt statements about who they are or should be. Therefore, Mark's recognition that it is possible to be "real" independent of others' expectations suggests it cannot be the Self at Stage 3. Further, because Mark's description views a "persona" in negative terms (as not being "real"), it is also takes a negative view of Stage 3. At Stage 5, "persona", is not a negative idea because the person at Stage 5 has multiple selves which are brought into the service of a higher purpose beyond these selves. Thus, Mark is likely to be taking either a Stage 4 perspective on Stage 3 or a Stage 2 perspective on Stage 3. The idea of presenting a "persona" that is aligned with other people's expectations creates a crisis of Self for the person at Stage 4. Being true to oneself is paramount to a Stage 4 person's self expression and is required in

all of their relationships, not just their intimate ones. The way Mark seems to describe the choice to be "real" rather than consciously take on a persona suggests that doing so is not a threat to his sense of self. Thus, it seems more likely that Mark's view of Stage 3 is not from Stage 4. In addition, the idea of consciously taking on a persona, in order to serve a particular purpose can be seen to align with the Stage 2 person's focus on doing what is necessary to achieve what serves them best: seeing that meeting others' expectations can be a means to meet one's own needs, wishes or desires.

Mark also described intimacy as

> *being completely honest with each other and knowing exactly how the other person thinks and reacts in different situations".*

This idea could be seen as reflecting the mutuality of Kegan's (1982) Stage 3 Self. However, the person at Stage 3 assumes that they know how others, with whom they have a relationship, think, feel and behave. Instead, needing to know how others think or to predict how someone will respond is a major interpersonal concern for the person at Stage 2, because they are unable to construct another person, internally, as different to themself. Doing so would require holding two different perceptions at once – how they see themself and how they see another person. Kegan (1982, p. 91), expressing the logic of the Stage 2 Self describes it in this way: "being unable to hold [the other person] imaginatively, I am left having to wait or anticipate the actual movements or happenings of others in order to keep my world coherent". Another person's honesty, for the person at Stage 2, becomes a way to maintain this coherence, suggesting this is a Stage 2 construction of Intimacy.

Interestingly, Mark's description does not include any concern about knowing how the other person feels. Knowing how someone else feels is a particular concern of the person at Stage 3, because for them, maintaining interpersonal harmony, that is feelings of unity, is paramount. Interpersonal harmony assures a person that their understanding of the other person's perception of them and their relationship matches their own understanding, which maintains their sense of self. Thus, this analysis of Mark's understanding of intimacy suggests that his epistemology of intimacy reflects the Self at Stage 2.

Brendan's understanding of intimacy was an experience he had "only with Ruth", his wife; and it seemed that his understanding of intimacy was tied to his

understanding of his relationship, that is, intimacy as a relationship quality rather than an experience found in a variety of interactions. He described how the nature of being in a long term relationship meant that intimacy was inevitable:

> *you can't pretend to be someone else [...] you eventually reveal yourself.*

Brendan also spoke about sex as an expression of intimacy

> *it's a natural function, it's ah an expression of closeness, it's an expression of intimacy*

and was also something he assumed to be part of a healthy marriage

> *All right… errr… I hate to say, because everyone says it is [...] I don't know, I've never really assessed it [...] it's important to have a healthy sex life, whatever a healthy sex life is.*

This view of intimacy suggests that the relationship, rather than the people in it, determines whether the experience is intimate. Brendan's experience of intimacy as only with his wife may suggest that it was a particular relationship (i.e., marriage) that was intimate. Brendan's way of talking about intimacy during the interview did not suggest that he expected to find intimate experiences in other relationships. Together, these suggest that Brendan's understanding of intimacy was in terms of roles. That is, the role of being a husband or a wife included an intimate connection. This was highlighted by his description of intimacy as inevitable – a foregone conclusion when one enters a marriage. In a similar way, Brendan viewed sex as part of marriage and an expression of intimacy. These ideas align with Kegan's Stage 2, which describes self and other and relationships in terms of roles that are determined by social norms.

In addition, Brendan's statement:

> *you can't pretend to be someone else [...] you eventually reveal yourself*

highlights how he, like Mark, saw intimacy as revealing yourself rather than maintaining some pretence. For reasons described in relation to Mark's understanding of intimacy, Brendan's understanding also suggests meanings arising from a Stage 2 Self.

For Brendan, one of the benefits of his relationship with Ruth, and the expectation that it would continue:

that idea of a life without her… oh I haven't actually thought about that

This expectation created a freedom to express himself, he described it as:

the safe environment, where you can say, when I say what you want [...] a safe place to be who you are.

Andy also understood intimacy as only occurring in his relationship with his wife:

when I think of intimacy, it's Jen.

He described it as a sustained experience:

uninterrupted me and Jen time.

Intimacy was associated with exclusively shared experiences such as a romantic dinner, weekend away, sex or reliving exclusively shared memories:

no one else is involved, could possibly be involved or would understand,

and with a shared history:

being able almost to kind of, look in the eyes of Jen, and look in my eyes and— Hello, it's still me, the 1991 person's still here.

Andy's description of intimacy shows strong similarities to Brendan's description in that both see intimacy as exclusive to their marriages. Andy emphasises this aspect of his marriage ("uninterrupted me and Jen time", "no one else [...] could possibly be involved"). For reasons described in relation to Brendan, these are also likely to reflect Stage 2 ways of understanding intimacy. Andy also describes the importance of a shared history as providing a sense of stability in his relationship. A reference to "history" is likely to arise from Stage 2 ways of making meaning because it draws on the concreteness of past patterns to predict future patterns.

Summary

This analysis adds to an understanding of intimacy by identifying ways in which participants' understandings of intimacy can be understood in terms of a Stage 2 construction of meaning. This way of understanding of intimacy can be summarised as:

- Intimacy is found in knowing how the other person thinks or will respond, to know them as well as you know yourself.

- Honesty is about revealing the "real self" rather than presenting a persona in order to meet others' expectations
- Honesty is a means to know exactly how the other person thinks and reacts

- Intimacy is created by a relationship involving commitment (e.g., marriage), and which demands honesty
  - Marriage creates a safe place to be who you are
  - Intimacy is inevitable in a "good" marriage
  - Sex is an expression of intimacy and of a healthy marriage
- Intimacy is created by the security of a shared history because each person knows who the other person is (how they think, how they respond, i.e., their disposition).

6.2.2 Intimacy at Stage 3

Although some of Andy's understandings of intimacy aligned with a Stage 2 Self, he also understood that intimacy was about mutually determined meanings. During those shared experiences, he described having a confidence that what the experience meant to him was the same as what that experience meant to Jen. Some of the examples Andy offered were during "couch moments" when they watched TV programs that reminded Andy of those exclusively shared memories

> *there's an unsaid script in my head that links with hers,*

during a rare weekend away without the children or during sex

> *I still love you I hear you still love me and we can still demonstrate that through this physical intimacy.*

These aspects of Andy's understanding of intimacy suggest a mutuality, which is characteristic of Stage 3. Kegan (1982, p. 191) describes this mutuality as "mutually attuned interpersonal relationships.... internal state, shared subjective experience, 'feelings', mood".

Harrison's ideas about intimacy were in terms of revealing himself:

> *let myself go, not keeping anything in,*

and having a mutual integrity:

> *being true to yourself and [...] a significant other.*

Harrison also described the importance of mutuality:

> *being able to [...] communicate and engage [...] on a level where you feel quite mutual [...] both being [...] dependent on one another,*

and of trust and safety:

> *being able to trust them.*

He described intimacy as feeling "quite protected" and having "a strong sense of belonging". He described that an experience of intimacy led to a "happiness which is kind of overwhelming" and "that feeling of 'this feels right'".

Harrison's ideas align with Kegan's (1982) description of the person at Stage 3 as experiencing themself through interpersonal relationships. This aspect is particularly highlighted in Harrison's articulation of being "dependent on one another" and "a strong sense of belonging" that was found in his intimate experiences. In addition, his focus on feelings as a way of identifying interpersonal alignment and thus, the "realness" of an intimate connection also describes the mutuality of Kegan's Stage 3. Like Brendan, Harrison also recognised the need for safety (feeling "protected") in intimate experiences; however, Harrison found safety in the relationship experience ("being able to trust them", "both being dependent on one another") rather than in the institution of relationship (i.e., marriage). This also suggests an understanding of intimacy that arises from a Stage 3 Self, rather than a Stage 2 Self.

Neil described experiencing intimacy as

> *shared history [...] shared goals [...] mutual respect [...] non judgmental.*

He also identified that "the exchange of feelings" or "the exchange of emotions" was important and that in his relationship he had felt "in sync" with his partner.

Having a shared understanding of the relationship does not, in itself, identify how these meanings are generated. In general, some of these ideas (goals, respect, acceptance) can be seen as a source of connection from multiple evolutions of Self. For example, at Stage 2, they are likely to be in terms of roles: do we share the same ideas about marriage? do we acknowledge and value the different roles we play in the relationship? do we accept one another because that's what partners do? In contrast, at Stage 4, they are likely be in terms of individual autonomy: are we

committed to the same things or complimentary things? do we respect and accept each other's differences?

Greater clarity about the source of Neil's ideas about intimacy is found in his reference to feelings and emotions and the concept of being "in sync". Neil's reference to feelings describes a similar understanding of intimacy to Harrison's, where feelings were identified as being particularly relevant for the person at Stage 3. In addition, a sense of oneself being synchronised with another suggests the kind of mutuality that typifies the Stage 3 Self.

Iain spoke in some detail about his experiences of sex:

> *one of the things that is possible with sex is that it pulls you completely into the moment. I think that's what orgasm is really, you're right in the moment, there's nothing else, there's nothing else anywhere, you're just flying in the moment and it's kind of a, quite a unique thing, to have that sense of, I'm right in the moment, with this other person, and appreciating the kind of the specialness of that, that we are sharing this moment completely together*

His ideas about orgasm align with Andy's understanding regarding the shared meanings of his sexual experiences and for similar reasons suggest that this aspect of Iain's understanding of intimacy comes from a Stage 3 Self.

Summary

This analysis adds to an understanding of intimacy by identifying ways in which participants' understandings of intimacy can be understood in terms of a Stage 3 construction of meaning. This way of understanding of intimacy can be summarised as:

- Intimacy is a shared experience through an alignment of perceptions: how one person experiences situations is the same way that their partner experiences situations
    - Shared goals, activities and memories become contexts for experiencing that alignment
    - Positive feelings and shared meanings become evidence of that alignment
    - Sexually, shared orgasms are evidence of that alignment
    - Being true to yourself is the same as being true to the other person

- Letting yourself go, not holding anything back demonstrates commitment to the other person by trusting in the completeness of that alignment – e.g., 'there's nothing you can tell me that will change how I feel about you'

- Belief in the alignment between persons provides the security to risk disclosure.

6.2.3 Intimacy at Stage 4

In addition to some Stage 3 ways of understanding sex, Iain held other ideas about sex and what it meant. Iain also identified that there was a deep vulnerability in his sexual relationship that was not focused on mutual experience but on being seen for who he really was:

> *that kind of wonderful affirmation that someone would give themself to you in that way - deep appreciation for that you know I think, wow this is an incredible gift that the most private part of this person's life you get to share um and to me that sort of is very affirming, what it speaks to me is that I must be really valued in this relationship [...] the deep sense I have of this woman [is that she] accepts me completely as I - not completely as I am, but she accepts me as I am as best as she can.*

These ideas about intimacy seem to describe the mutual respect and acceptance that comes from recognising one another as autonomous individuals. Iain saw that his wife's acceptance is her choice, not as an obligation because they are married (Stage 2) nor as necessary in order to experience herself (Stage 3). Iain demonstrates his recognition of his wife's autonomy in his appreciation for the acceptance that his wife offers to him, freely given from one individual to another. Thus, these ideas suggest a Stage 4 experience of intimacy.

In areas other than sex, Iain also described the importance of expressing himself "warts and all" and emphasised the importance of honesty:

> *the ability to be known for whatever, you know, no secrets so it's an openness, transparency.*

He also recognised that this level of honesty required "a deep level of trust", a "mutual trust" and the need to recognise when this honesty was being offered to you by demonstrating that you were "valuing the other". Iain's ideas particularly focused on areas of weakness:

so with my wife there is a much deeper level of knowing each other and just embracing each other's faults

and that this level of honesty depended on his trust in the other person:

there are parts of me that I would talk about with my wife that I wouldn't talk about even with my closest friends [...] different levels of openness and transparency.

These ideas about intimacy suggest the kind of self-awareness and desire for openness and transparency that matches with Kegan's (1982) ideas of the Self at Stage 4. It seems that Iain has a strong sense of who he is and recognises the individuality of others. Although Iain's awareness of his "warts" could suggest the awareness of incompleteness that comes from the Stage 5 Self, the way in which Iain talks about disclosing himself more fully is in terms of faults, that is, failures to live up to a standard that he believes he should, arising from an ideological Stage 4 Self. In contrast, a Stage 5 Self would see these as undeveloped parts of self, or an expression of the yet-to-be discovered self, rather than failures.

Iain, in comparing intimacy with his wife to intimacy with others also spoke about levels of intimacy and that intimacy could be experienced at different depths. This offers another dimension to understanding intimacy, as not just varying according to evolution of Self, but within the same evolution, varying in a way that depends on the kind of relationship with the other person.

Erik described his understanding of intimacy in his relationship with his wife as arising out of his recognition of the importance of "the examined life". He spoke about the importance of knowing yourself and that sharing that knowledge was what intimacy was about:

we do say what we think to one another [...] we know each other <u>better</u> because I'm more <u>open</u> myself and I tell her how I feel, we talk about things we never would have spoken about and that builds a strong relationship because you're more empathetic, you're more open, you've got a greater degree of trust, you're not concealing anything, you're sharing everything with your partner.

Being open with one another and being present was also expressed for Erik in physical ways and by being emotionally available:

> *intimacy is um… now it's— is very much about … um presence [...] physical presence and physical not in overly sexual way, but touch [...] physical presence is important and the emotional presence too.*

Erik's ideas about intimacy seem to arise from a sense of personal integrity, of being real with one another, talking about what he really thinks or really feels, "not concealing anything". The goal of this seems to be to "know each other better" rather than affirm the mutuality of experiences (as would be typical of Stage 3). This seems much more aligned with the independence of the Stage 4 Self.

Like Erik, Jeff had a clear understanding that knowing himself was necessary for intimacy. He described this as:

> *you've really got to be intimate with yourself [...] you've got to break through these boundaries of these masks that you wear and that takes a lot of intimacy with yourself.*

Like Erik, he also identified the importance of disclosing deep information about himself, which he described as "verbal intimacy". He described verbal intimacy as:

> *closeness and sharing [...] on a level above trivia [...] talking about feelings [...] expressing them to others [...] being vulnerable [...] really sharing yourself [...] opening up – this is me.*

Jeff's ideas about self disclosure seem to resonate with Erik's and in coming from a knowledge of self, align with Kegan's (1982) description of a Stage 4 Self.

Lucas, like Iain, was committed to expressing himself as fully as possible, regardless of how others might judge him. His demand for "personal freedom" meant that in close relationships, he needed to express himself with honesty and integrity. Also, like Iain, he needed to ensure that the sharing of himself was with someone who would value what was precious to him:

> *sometimes you're conveying your level of happiness, sadness, you're trying to describe depths of feeling, maybe like goals, they're quite serious things and I would need to feel, to expose myself to that level, I would need to feel that there's some sort of level of emotional safety net and it would have to be somebody that I trust . . . I would never expose that amount of information, not meaningful information, to somebody that I didn't feel I had that level of emotional safety with.*

Lucas also identified that sometimes talking about how you really think or feel might not be enjoyable, at least, not to start with:

> *sometimes it can be intense, and not in a very, always pleasurable way, but I wouldn't have that sort an experience with somebody that I don't care about, so it probably is in the broader sense an intimate moment . . . what isn't intimate, is not approaching it, and then growing separate, mentally and holding yourself away from that person, <u>that</u> is starting to actually bring a wedge and making intimacy less.*

For Lucas, being personally free was also experienced in physical ways, through "close physical proximity, touch, being in the same room, hearing them".

Lucas' description of finding intimacy in being able to be fully himself, both in terms of raising concerns or expressing depths of feeling or aspirations aligns with the self-authored qualities of Kegan's (1982) Stage 4 Self.

In talking about his understanding of intimacy, Daniel emphasised the importance of self-awareness

> *I don't think you can do a very good job of being intimate if you don't know yourself [... you need to] be in tune with your body and in tune with your heart [... to] develop the self awareness that is a precondition of intimacy.*

Daniel also held ideas about spiritual intimacy as

> *that understanding that intimacy is something that you perhaps create within yourself and can't entirely understand, that its sort of an intention that is entirely independent of your actions and the words that you say to the other person but I guess the way that you conceive of them and the relationship within your own mind-body.*

Daniel's ideas about intimacy as originating from self-awareness seems to align with Kegan's description of the Stage 4 Self, which emphasises an authority that comes from within, a "sense of self, self-dependence, self-ownership" (Kegan, 1982, p. 101). In a similar way, his description of spiritual intimacy points to a self-authorship ("that you create within yourself").

Summary

This analysis adds to an understanding of intimacy by identifying ways in which participants' understandings of intimacy can be understood in terms of a Stage 4 construction of meaning. This way of understanding of intimacy can be summarised as:

- Intimacy is being able to be true to yourself in the presence of another person
    - This involves self awareness, knowing yourself, being intimate with yourself
    - Having a willingness to embrace honesty, openness, transparency
        - Expressing yourself "warts and all", letting go of the "masks" that cover up those "warts"; overcoming barriers to self expression which is not always pleasurable
        - Sharing feelings, saying what you are thinking/feeling, sharing your goals and aspirations, sharing "serious" things
- Being true to yourself in the presence of another person leads to
    - Deep acceptance of one another
    - Comfort in being together: proximity, touch, hearing them
- Safety, in order to be vulnerable, is found in a belief in the other person's commitment to you as a person (not a relationship or an institution) that involves a desire to understand each other's individuality that respects and values differences.

6.2.4 Intimacy at Stage 5

Daniel also spoke about intellectual connectedness:

> *you can really push each other to develop ideas and help each other in understanding the world and creating new conceptions of the world.*

Daniel's ideas about intellectual connectedness suggest an understanding of intimacy that arises from a Stage 5 Self that draws upon the interpenetration of Self and Other to find ways of being in the dialogue between Self and Other.

Cameron described his experiences of intimacy in terms of "mystery" and "depth". He described his experience of intimacy with his wife as revealing things to him about himself ("it is a very powerful way to learn about yourself") and as a

remarkable way to develop new ideas in a synergistic way that reached beyond what either he or his wife had held individually:

> *we both have religious beliefs that are different, both accept that, but we both go beyond them, so we go, ok well let's understand those belief sets, so why is it? so what do you believe? and vice versa [...] we don't just say, ok well I've got a difference of opinion, that's great, let's leave it there and we'll move on [...] [we say], well let's really unpack it and explore why, so possibly two intellectuals trying to understand one another more [...] I think both of us would not rest until it's <u>complete</u> [...] I think we would have to both reach, "here is a resolution that is right".*

In being committed to finding out what each person offers the other, Cameron seems to be describing an openness to contradiction that is one of the characteristics of the Stage 5 Self. As an individual, the person at Stage 5 does not "pretend to completeness" (Kegan, 1994, p. 313) by assuming the individuality and autonomy of the Stage 4 Self. In doing this, the person at Stage 5 allows themself to not only recognise the other as unique, but also as offering meanings that are outside what they already have access to. Cameron finds this both in terms of "learning about himself" and in terms of intellectual ideas.

Kevin's description of intimacy seemed to have three main aspects. The first part was that the meaning of the experience needed to be shared:

> *there's a level of intimacy and [if] the other person doesn't necessarily feel that same way, then [...] it's just a close moment where something was shared but it wasn't necessarily to a deep level.*

The second aspect was that it was an interaction between people who were prepared to surrender personal goals for the sake of engaging with others. He described this as

> *leaving behind any preconceived ideas, or perceptions or bias or any intent [...] everything just flows [...] no hidden agendas or outcomes to achieve [...] it's about leaving all of those things behind and being mindful together and being genuine together [...] guards are dropped, perceptions are dropped and they're left behind [...] they're cut through*

> *and left behind and then the experience goes to the next level where none of that actually matters.*

The third aspect seemed to be intention or mindfulness:

> *a very close and mindful interaction with somebody [...] a very genuine interaction [...] a conversation about something that you're both really interested in or it could just be being together, sharing something [...] I interpret intimacy as about being close, connected and having a very genuine connection with everybody and discussing something that's interesting and everybody's engaged with it, involved in it.*

What was also interesting about Kevin's description was that it did not assume a dyadic interaction. Kevin saw that a group could experience intimacy together if everybody was "engaged with it, involved in it". Kevin also suggested that this aspect of mindfulness, in a personal meditative experience could possibly be a level of intimacy with self:

> *this mindfulness and that um that point of being where there are no preconceived thoughts, barriers, filters [...] delving into a very genuine moment [...] being very mindful but meditative is similar to being in an intimate point in time.*

Kevin presents some ideas that seem to speak of embodying what Jeff's ideas of shedding "masks", but not masks in terms of identity. Kevin's description of his experiences of intimacy seems to be amongst people who had shed, at least momentarily, any goals or agendas. He also speaks about seeking others' perceptions of an experience in order to determine if what he experienced was shared. Interestingly, when he talks about this, it seems that he is not talking about the presence or absence of intimacy, but how deep the experience of intimacy was. If the experience had been shared, that would add a further dimension to "a close moment". Kevin's description refers to a mutuality, a shared experience, however, it differs from what Kegan (1982) describes as interpersonal (Stage 3) because Kevin's understanding depends upon the independence of those involved, and invites their willing collaboration. Although it allows individuals the agency of the self-authorship that is found in Kegan's description of the Stage 4 self, Kevin's understanding of intimacy requires the suspension of this self-authorship, in favour of collective-authorship by letting go of personal agendas. The intentional seeking

of a synergistic experience, which draws upon everyone's engagement, aligns with Kegan's description of the Stage 5 Self.

Kevin's understanding of intimacy, like Iain's also referred to levels and depths, which depended not on the type of relationship, but on the alignment of persons in a particular moment. This also adds to an understanding of intimacy as varied within the same construction of Self.

Summary

This analysis adds to an understanding of intimacy by identifying ways in which participants' understandings of intimacy can be understood in terms of a Stage 5 construction of meaning. This way of understanding of intimacy can be summarised as:

- Finding newness through synergy with self or another person or group of people
    - Meditation/mindfulness as intimacy with self
    - Gaining access to understandings of self that were not possible by oneself
    - Exploring and creating new conceptions of the world through the synergistic development of new ideas
    - Mutual experiencing results in deeper levels of intimacy
- This is made possible through
    - being present, being in the moment
    - letting go of preconceptions, biases, goals, agendas

Interestingly, there was no mention of vulnerability or the need for safety in order to protect that vulnerability.

6.3 Summary of Analysis of Definitions

There were a number of common aspects across many of the participants' descriptions:

- a deep sense of connection or closeness or an intense experience
- experiences involving positive feelings
- an awareness of vulnerability in "being who you are" that requires a level of trust or security in order to facilitate disclosure.

What seemed to be change across participants' descriptions was their understanding of how this deep sense of connection was created and what provided safety in order to be vulnerable. The analysis presented in the previous section (Section 6.2) has demonstrated that a constructive-developmental approach provides a useful way of organising multiple and diverse understandings of intimacy. The organisation of these diverse understandings of intimacy is summarised in Table 6.1, together with a brief summary of Kegan's (1982) Stages.

Table 6.1

Summary of Intimacy Definitions

Stage	Summary of Kegan's Stage	Sense of Connection	Feelings	Vulnerability and Safety
2	In general, the person at Stage 2 experiences themself in terms of enduring dispositions (a consistent pattern of needs, interests, wishes), which define their self-concept. In relationships, the person at Stage 2 tends to view themself and other people in terms of roles. In addition, the person at Stage 2 tends to view others as the means by which needs or desires are met or unfulfilled. The person at Stage 2, when considering things from their own perspective, is unlikely to be able to consider that another person might experience things differently.	Through fulfilment of complimentary roles inherent in particular relationships Honesty in revealing how one thinks and responds	Certainty about how the other person thinks and responds leads to positive feelings about the person / the relationship Feelings of security in fulfilment of roles	Shared history is evidence of knowing how the other person will think/respond Shared history reveals another person's disposition (their pattern of needs, desires, interests) Relationship commitment
3	In general, the person at Stage 3 experiences themself and others, not in terms of dispositions and roles, but in relationships. This is a distributed sense of self that is found in the various relationships in the person's life. This stage also reflects ideas of enmeshment or co-dependence where a person's experience subject to their perception of others' view of them. The person at Stage 3 is dependent upon other people's validation of their way of being. Disapproval or conflict challenge the Stage 3 person's understanding of themself.	Through alignment of perceptions of each other and the relationship (mutuality) Shared activities are contexts for experiencing mutuality.	Positive feelings in the congruence of self and other and perceptual alignment. Negative feelings suggest incongruence and misalignment	Positive feelings and shared meanings are evidence of the alignment between self and other Belief in the mutuality of the relationship

Stage	Summary of Kegan's Stage	Sense of Connection	Feelings	Vulnerability and Safety
4	The person at Stage 4 experiences themself as independent, autonomous and with a clear sense of identity. They have developed a view of the world that draws upon other's ideas but is self-authored. The person at Stage 4 seeks to bring all of their experiences into alignment with their personal ideology, which is a system of beliefs, attitudes and values that reaches beyond their own needs to include the needs of others. The person at Stage 4 has an understanding of themself that is independent of their relationships and they no longer seek approval from others.	Through mutual respect, openness and transparency. Revealing flaws and "deep" aspects of self is the greatest test of the other's commitment to oneself	Positive feelings in being accepted by another (e.g., gratitude) Negative feelings (e.g., through conflict) do not indicate loss of commitment	Belief in the other person's commitment to you as a valued, independent person, that respects differences
5	The person at Stage 5, in developing multiple selves, finds meaning in the dialogue between those selves, or in relationship, between themself and others. The interpersonal nature of the Stage 5 Self maintains the individuality of the person. In addition, the person at Stage 5 welcomes diversity of ideas and experiences as a means of discovering how different perspectives offer a synergy that creates meaning that is greater than the sum of the parts. As well, the person at Stage 5 takes an ethical position that seeks to address concerns that are well beyond their own in a way that embraces a diversity of ideologies and systems of thought.	Synergistic creation of new ways of thinking and being New insights regarding self and others that result from the dialogue between self and others (or self and self through reflection/ meditation) Mutual experiencing results in deeper experiences of intimacy	Not described by participants	Not described by participants

6.3.1 Links to Proposed Definition of Intimacy

In Chapter 2 a working definition of intimacy was proposed, which, in its extended form stated that:

> intimacy is a process of engagement with self involving a person's understandings of themself (or self-concept) and/or of another (concept of specific other) resulting in experiences where these understandings are expressed, confirmed or influenced. This can be an experience involving verbal or nonverbal behaviours or both. Vulnerability is necessary in facilitating intimacy.

Vulnerability may be voluntary or involuntary, and conscious or unconscious:

- vulnerability may be *voluntary* and *conscious; trust* is required to create voluntary vulnerability
- voluntary vulnerability that involves validating feedback is likely to be result in positive emotions and feelings of closeness
- vulnerability creates a change in the *balance of relative perceived power*; reciprocal vulnerability can equalise the imbalance of power
- vulnerability can be experienced to different degrees/levels
    - a person can be vulnerable in some aspects of their understanding of themself or of another, and not vulnerable in other aspects
    - *asymmetrical* vulnerability results in one person's self-concept being expressed or influenced, but not other other's or, one person's self-concept is not expressed or influenced to the same *depth*
    - the more central an aspect of a person's understanding of themself is to their self-concept, the greater the degree of vulnerability required to express, confirm or influence it, and the more *intense* the experience of intimacy
- vulnerability can be *involuntary* and conscious, requiring another's use of power; physical, psychological, sexual or verbal abuse can influence a person's self-concept in involuntary but conscious ways
- vulnerability may be involuntary and *unconscious;* the unquestioning acceptance of cultural norms is an example of involuntary and unconscious vulnerability

Participants' definitions, at all stages, reflected an understanding of intimacy as involving one's understanding of oneself. Some stages focused more on expressing

that understanding to others (i.e., Stages 2 and 4) and others recognised the influence of others upon that understanding (i.e., Stages 3 and 5).

Most participants' understandings of intimacy acknowledged that vulnerability was part of an experience of intimacy and that some form of safety or trust was required in order to allow oneself to become vulnerable. These understandings align with an understanding of intimacy as voluntary and conscious. Participants also identified that the level of vulnerability could vary. This was described in terms of the depth to which they revealed themself and depended upon the relationship they had with that person. Participants also referred to experiences of intimacy as intense and involving positive feelings. However, participants did not describe asymmetrical understandings of intimacy, nor did they refer explicitly to issues of power. No participant spoke about intimacy in ways that reflected an understanding of involuntary vulnerability.

6.4 Comparison of Participants' Subject Object Scores and Understandings of Intimacy

The second part of this chapter reports the analysis of participants' specific understandings of intimacy in relation to their SOSs in order to identify if the ways in which they made meaning in relation to intimacy aligned with ways they made meaning more generally. In other words, this comparison is between participants' onto-epistemologies and their epistemologies of intimacy. This comparison provides the opportunity to observe whether intimacy is unique compared to other types of experiences.

Most participants' understandings of intimacy were aligned with their current onto-epistemology (see Table 6.2). However, some participants' understandings of intimacy reflected a slightly different onto-epistemology to their ways of making meaning in non-intimate experiences. For some of these participants this difference reflected a stage that was not the dominant stage identified in their SOI analysis. For example, Cameron's understanding of intimacy seemed to reflect Kegan's (1982) Stage 5 Self. His SOS was 4/5, which indicates that meaning is also made from the Stage 5 Self, but that the dominant meaning making system is the Stage 4 Self. This suggests that Cameron's way of making meaning in relation to intimacy is resolved in *more complex* ways than his resolution of meaning in other areas of experience.

Table 6.2

Participants' SOSs and Understandings of Intimacy

Participant and SOS	**Understandings of intimacy derived from Interview 2**			
	Understandings aligned with Stage 2	Understandings aligned with Stage 3	Understandings aligned with Stage 4	Understandings aligned with Stage 5
Mark 2(3)	Honesty; revealing "real person" rather than "persona"; being told exactly how the other person thinks and reacts			
Brendan 2/3	Intimacy as a quality of a relationship; Revealing yourself, being who you are, not pretending; Marriage creates a safe place to be who you are, and intimacy is inevitable in a (good) marriage; Sex is an expression of intimacy and of a healthy marriage			
Harrison 3/2		Share everything; Being dependent on one another; Strong sense of belonging; Happiness that is overwhelming; Positive feelings confirm connection		
Neil 3		Shared history; exchange of feelings/emotions; Being in-sync with partner		
Andy 4/3	Intimacy as a quality of a relationship; Intimacy as exclusive to a particular relationship; Shared history	Unsaid knowing of what the other is thinking; Unsaid but shared meanings (e.g., during sex)		

Participant and SOS	Understandings of intimacy derived from Interview 2			
	Understandings aligned with Stage 2	Understandings aligned with Stage 3	Understandings aligned with Stage 4	Understandings aligned with Stage 5
Jeff 4/3			Self knowledge and getting rid of masks to really share yourself; Sharing important things, talking about feelings Being vulnerable	
Iain 4(3)		Orgasm as an exclusively shared, mutual experience	Another's affirmation and acceptance of oneself as valuable and as an individual; Another's acceptance of one's flaws/faults; Being known through openness and transparency	
Erik 4(3)			Self awareness ; Allowing the other person to know you by being open, saying what you are thinking/feeling, sharing everything; Being physically and emotionally present, physical affection	
Daniel 4(3)			Knowing yourself as a pre-requisite for intimacy – being in tune with your body and heart	Developing new ideas, creating new conceptions of the world
Lucas 4(5)			Being able to express oneself as one is; Maintaining personal freedom with another person; Revealing important/deep things about self, not holding yourself away from another person; Not always pleasurable	
Cameron 4/5				Mystery, depth; Learning about yourself through another person; Synergistic ways of exploring ideas
Kevin 5				Letting go of preconceptions, biases or intentions, being present; Meditation as a means of intimacy with self; Mutual experiences increase depth

For other participants, *different aspects* of their experiences of intimacy reflected different ways of making meaning. For Iain, some aspects of his sexual experiences had meanings that seemed to arise from less complex way of making meaning, compared to other aspects of his sexual experiences and other non-sexual but intimate experiences. This may be what Iain referred to when reflecting on his understanding of sex: "I probably had a very adolescent kind of view of sex all these years". Daniel, whose SOSs were 4(3) and 4(5), had one aspect of his understandings of intimacy that seemed to reflect a Stage 5 way of making meaning, which was in terms of intellectual intimacy.

Discrepancies between one participant's understanding of intimacy and their SOS were quite different to these other discrepancies. Andy's SOS was 4/3 but his understandings reflected meanings that related to Stage 2 and 3. It seems that for Andy, his understandings of intimacy arose from less complex ways of constructing meaning than his non-intimate experiences; some understandings came from a stage that did not match his Subject Object Score at all. Further details of Andy's and other participants' *experiences* of intimacy, which add to an understanding of these discrepancies, are analysed in Chapter 7. The discrepancies identified above will be discussed in Chapter 8, in relation to a broader understanding of these participants' experiences of intimacy (see Section 8.2.4). As well, some findings describe different levels and depths of intimacy which will also be discussed in Chapter 8, offering an extension to Kegan's (1982) theory.

6.5 Chapter Summary

The analyses in this chapter reveal that there were some common themes in participants' understandings of intimacy. Most participants identified that intimacy involved a close or deep connection with another person and that this experience involved positive feelings. They also identified that intimacy involved being oneself with another person, and that doing so required a level of trust or security in order to facilitate these self-disclosures. Some less common ideas about intimacy involved ideas of synergy, and intimacy with oneself. However, participants' ideas about what disclosing oneself meant or how that was achieved, or how trust and security were established varied amongst participants. These findings demonstrate that different participants understood intimacy in different ways.

This analysis adds to an understanding of intimacy by offering an evolutionary framework to organise the ways these varied understandings of

intimacy are developmentally linked. In addition, this analysis offers new ways of understanding intimacy, as involving synergistic experiences, and as intrapersonal experiences. Further, these findings support the proposed definition of intimacy as focused on self, and on ways in which understandings of self—the sharing, confirmation and influence of that understanding, as well as vulnerability are important aspects of an understanding of intimacy.

The following chapter examines participants' experiences of intimacy examining ways in which understandings of self and intimacy influenced these experiences. In addition, the following chapter examines ways in which extraordinary experiences created new ways of understanding self and experiencing intimacy.

Chapter 7: Ontologies of Intimacy: Men's Experiences of Intimacy

7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines men's experiences of intimacy through the analysis of the transcripts of 12 participants' interviews. The findings presented in this chapter seek to address the research question: How do the intimate experiences of a small number of men add to an understanding of intimacy? As described in Chapter 2, intimacy is defined in this thesis as:

> a process of engagement with self involving a person's understandings of themself (or self-concept) and/or of another (concept of specific other) resulting in experiences where these understandings are expressed, confirmed or influenced. This can be an experience involving verbal or nonverbal behaviours or both.
>
> Vulnerability is necessary in facilitating intimacy and can occur to different degrees; the degree of vulnerability may vary across a person's understanding of themself or of another person. Vulnerability may also be conscious and voluntary, conscious and involuntary, or unconscious and involuntary. Asymmetrical vulnerability results in an imbalance of power and trust is required to voluntarily allow this asymmetry.

This examination of men's experiences provides an opportunity to investigate factors that influence these men's understandings of themselves and/or others. As well, it provides an opportunity to examine how these understandings of self/other facilitate or inhibit intimacy for men (i.e., the expressing, validating or influencing these understandings of self).

The previous chapter investigated men's overt understandings of intimacy, examining the way in which different epistemologies influenced understandings of intimacy. This chapter investigates these men's experiences of intimacy to examine the part that ontology plays. These findings reveal two distinct relationships between epistemology and ontology: where epistemology preceded ontology, that is where men's understanding of themselves and intimacy confined their

experiences of intimacy; and where ontology preceded epistemology, that is where men's experiences of intimacy disrupted prior understandings of self and intimacy.

7.1.1 Chapter Overview

Section 7.2 begins by examining men's experiences, focusing on ways in which masculine ideals influenced understandings of self and experiences of intimacy with other men (Section 7.2.1) and with women (Section 7.2.2). This is followed by an examination of ways in which workplace expectations influenced understandings of self and experiences of intimacy (Section 7.2.3) and ways in which understandings of intimacy influenced experiences of intimacy (Section 7.2.4). Section 7.3 focuses on ways in which extraordinary experiences challenged men's understandings of themselves and changed their experiences of intimacy. The chapter concludes (Section 7.4) with a summary of findings (Section 7.4).

7.2 Epistemology Influencing Ontology

7.2.1 Masculinity, self and Intimacy with Men

Masculinity and self

Two participants spoke explicitly about the ways in which masculine ideals had influenced their understanding of themselves, indicating that these social norms were closely connected to these men's lives. However, it was only once these norms no longer dictated how these men understood themselves that they were able to recognise how they had been influenced. This meant that these experiences of being vulnerable to the influences of social norms were largely unconscious, although the effects of these influences were conscious.

Erik recognised that his way of being in the past had been strongly influenced by cultural ideas about masculinity and how men should behave:

> *men were stronger (laughs) physically, men were more um ... made the important decisions, men should be paid more because they do more work (laughs) [...] and brutal [...] when I was— you know I used to watch football a lot on-on the TV, I find it— I don't watch it, because I find it rather, you know that that's what manhood <u>was</u> to me, sort of as brutal and con- contact sport and you- you defended your— you know you were- you were stronger but you weren't really (laughs).*

Erik's description shows how ideas about masculinity influenced his understanding of himself and his interests. His laughter and pauses at various points in this

description seemed to be communicating that now, he saw the foolishness of these old ways of understanding himself, and of understanding men in general, and was perhaps even a little embarrassed that he had seen things in that way. Jeff was also highly conscious of how he had been influenced by expectations about how men (and boys) should behave:

> *men are supposed to be strong, you know we're taught from - well that's changing rapidly I - I'm seeing that everyday, but when I was growing up men were told you don't - don't cry - shouldn't cry, don't be a sissy all that sort of stuff [...] not to share, not to even know what our feelings are, let alone share them.*

As reported in Chapter 5, Erik and Jeff had Subject Object Scores (SOSs) of 4(3) and 4/3 respectively. Both scores describe meanings dominated by a Stage 4 Self. This is an evolution of Self that has moved beyond Self-forms that are constructed according to social norms, either as accepted through an understanding of roles (Stage 2) or as reinforced through the expectations of others (Stage 3). Having moved beyond these ways of understanding themselves, Erik and Jeff were able to look back and recognise at how they had been constructed by these norms in the past.

Masculinity and intimacy with men

Now that they were able to recognise the influence of these norms, Erik and Jeff were able to reflect upon how this way of understanding themselves had influenced their experiences of intimacy. Jeff saw that in the past, any form of vulnerability—crying, sharing things about oneself or even thinking about feelings, was unacceptable. He saw clearly that these ways of being were at odds with experiencing intimacy:

> *I don't know what is it about our society but we're - we're almost taught that intimacy is wrong [...] we were taught from the earliest age not to be intimate*

The way in which Jeff spoke about intimacy seemed to communicate that his early understandings of himself that steered him away from intimate experiences had left him with significant loss:

> *I think people become starved, if they don't have that intimacy in their life, they become empty and brittle and unhappy and edgy*

Erik also described how his understanding of himself as a man influenced his ways of relating to others, and in particular to other men:

> *you kept people at bay, you didn't get, they didn't get inside me [...] we probably still didn't talk as much about feelings, what was inside um, but we had a— I had a good relation- you know well ... we were good mates, really good friends, and we did a lot of... did a lot of things together.*

Erik's friendships were based upon shared activities rather than overtly shared understandings of themselves or of each other. Although, these shared experiences may have revealed some details about Erik's understanding of himself, such as his interests, they were at a fairly superficial level. However, it seemed that alcohol changed this experience:

> *the Friday afternoon session was, you know you'd go and have a few beers and when you'd had a few beers you actually ... your tongue was loosened (laughs) a little, a little [...] you were prepared to sort of say a few things about relationships and what you did or what you didn't do*

Talking about relationships and relationship behaviours seemed to be outside of the boundaries of how Erik understood himself to be able to be, as a man, yet alcohol allowed some of these limits to be relaxed and he became more willing to reveal some deeper aspects of himself. This experience could suggest that despite how he thought he should be, Erik did want to share these aspects of himself with his good friends and that alcohol made him willing to take greater risks. Perhaps the alcohol also offered him insurance against this departure from acceptable ways for men to behave, should his sharing of himself be brought into question.

Both Erik's and Jeff's accounts identify that, in the past, their ways of understanding masculinity influenced their understandings of themselves in deep ways. These accounts also reveal that Erik and Jeff recognised that these masculine ideas had kept them from engaging more deeply with others. It also seems that each of them had wanted deeper connections, but had been prevented from experiencing them.

Another participant, Brendan, also spoke about how his way of understanding himself as a "bloke" influenced his way of addressing conflict in his friendship with

another man. This is evident in the way that he described this approach to conflict as "the bloke way" and that he saw it as different to his wife's approach.

> *[Pete and I] didn't fall out, but he crossed me, but he was honest about it, he said, "this is what's happening, and this is why I'm doing it," so I respected him for that, and so we could remain friends [...] and Ruth said, "you should talk to him, at the staff club on Friday, he's your friend". I said, "but we just have. He emailed me the next day and asked me about a totally unrelated thing, I emailed him straight back and said, 'Yeah, no worries mate, see you Friday,'" I said, "that <u>is</u> the discussion, we've had it. If we now discuss the issue, we'll argue, but we've had the discussion we've both- without saying it, said, done, dusted. We won't mention it again, and we've moved on." Whereas I think Ruth ah is a bit more… instinctively, we should talk this through. Whereas I go, if we talk it through, invariably I will say something, that… that is dumb (laughs) or that is offensive or raises other issues, whereas I'd prefer just to go, alright, things were said, things were done, we're both sorry, let's not apportion blame, let's just pretend it didn't happen [...] yeah sometimes the bloke way is the best way*

Here, Brendan describes a mutually understood pattern of interactions that maintain his friendship without having to overtly address how he experienced being "crossed". It seems that this process eliminates the need for Brendan to reveal to Pete how he feels in an overt way, which is something Brendan seems to want to avoid. His reason for this avoidance does not seem to be a lack of desire for a deeper connection with Pete, rather, it seems that he has little confidence in his own capacity to resolve the issue. In establishing a covert way of dealing with conflict, the "bloke way" provided Brendan a way to avoid what he saw as a difficult conversation. However, it also seemed to prevent him from engaging more deeply, and from developing the necessary skills to engage more deeply.

Brendan's experience suggests that these unchallenged ideas about himself as a man may not just have kept him from engaging more deeply, they encouraged him to see little value in doing so. In addition, this shared understanding, between Brendan and Pete also confirmed that his friend saw little value in engaging more deeply. In doing so, Pete provides little reason to believe that he might be trusted with Brendan's revelation of how he feels about being crossed, should Brendan

want to do so. Thus, it would be unlikely for Brendan to risk making himself vulnerable in this situation.

Brendan's description of the situation suggests that Pete's actions (i.e., "crossing" him) had some influence on how Brendan understood himself or Pete, or both, because these actions presented some threat to the friendship, which was only ameliorated by Pete's honesty. In addition, by passively accepting Pete's forewarning about being crossed, Brendan took a submissive position in relation to his friend. This overt warning also contained subtle information about how Pete understood Brendan, and how he could be treated. Although Brendan does not describe it in this way, this experience may have been one of involuntary intimacy, where Pete's view of Brendan influenced Brendan's understanding of himself, and of Pete, resulting in negative views of himself, Pete, or their friendship. It seems unlikely, if Brendan did experience intimacy involuntarily, that he would choose to increase this imbalance of power by revealing details about how this experience has affected him. However, this may have been what was needed to transform this situation from an involuntary (and negative) experience of intimacy into a voluntary, and possibly positive one.

This situation seems to be complex, and one in which Brendan's understanding of himself as a bloke created a double-bind. Overtly challenging Pete's intention to cross him might have enabled Brendan to maintain a positive view of himself; but this would not be the bloke way, and Brendan would no longer be able to understand himself as being a bloke. However, such a challenge might have created an opportunity to express, validate or influence Pete's and Brendan's understandings of themselves and of each other (i.e., a voluntary experience of intimacy). Either way, Brendan stood to lose something in relation to his understanding of himself.

In contrast to Erik and Jeff, Brendan's understanding of himself was dependent upon social norms, indicated by a SOS of 2/3. The dominance of a Stage 2 Self in this score suggests that Brendan was likely to understand himself in relationships in terms of roles, which he expressed in the example above by describing himself as behaving according to the bloke way. However, like Jeff's and Erik's understandings of masculinity, Brendan's understanding of masculinity, as being a bloke, also seemed at odds with experiencing intimacy, at least with other men.

Harrison also spoke about his friendships with other males. Although he did not speak explicitly about masculinity, his ways of relating show some similarities to Erik's experience. Harrison spoke about two close friends with whom he shared a history:

> *Sam, I essentially went through all schooling with, every sort of sporting involvement or whatever with him, whereas with life in general, I went through most of that with Greg [...] he is the kind of guy that, had I not seen him in a day or 10 years, whatever it may be, we'd still interact the exact same [sic].*

Like Erik, Harrison's friendships seemed to be more focused on doing things together rather than talking about inner experiences, and supporting each other was understood in instrumental ways:

> *doing things for one another or helping each other out*

Harrison described a difficult personal issue he had recently faced in the transition from secondary school to university. He and Sam had attended the same school and now attended the same university and thus, would be highly likely to have faced the same issue. When asked if this was something he had talked about to Sam, he did not seem to have considered turning to him, even though they shared a high level of commitment to one another:

> *to be completely honest, I don't think so, no. No not in - and it sounds a bit funny but even with my closest friends I can't say that I've had - obviously we can have serious topics of conversation, discussions and everything and obviously I would - I would be there for them within a heartbeat, I know that they would as well, but we, in terms of the three of us, we've never, I guess, relied on each other in that sort of sense.*

It seemed that there was something about how Harrison understood himself, Sam or his relationship with Sam that kept him from being able to talk about or even consider talking about his experiences. His in-the-moment reflection "and it sounds a bit funny" suggests that, like Brendan, this was an unchallenged assumption he had made.

One attribute of instrumental support is that multiple meanings can be attributed to actions of support or care. In some ways, supportive and caring actions share some similarities with the role that alcohol may have played in Erik's

experiences with his friends in creating ambiguity. Should they not be well received, actions intended to demonstrate care or support, or disclosures of self-relevant information while intoxicated can be explained away. Their ambiguity provides an escape from potentially difficult situations where one's masculinity might be called into question for being too caring or too supportive or disclosing too much information. Thus, instrumental support may have provided a way in which Harrison and his friends could experience some degree of intimacy with one another, without threatening any unspoken expectations about how males should be with each other.

In contrast, Harrison stated:

> *I find it easier to open up to people that I don't know as well, if that makes sense [...] I've always been that way, like I just felt better about myself talking to people that I would consider more to be strangers, like obviously friends and stuff but [...] not close friends.*

Whilst Harrison was prepared to trust that his close male friends would support him in practical ways, he did not seem to consider trusting them in ways that would allow him to open up to them and talk about his understanding of himself. Although he might experience being understood or validated through these instrumental ways, and thus experience some degree of intimacy, like Brendan, overt verbal disclosure did not seem to be possible. Perhaps the benefit for Harrison in sharing with strangers or associates was that, should they challenge his masculinity, he had less at stake in terms of his understanding of himself.

Crisis and intimacy with men

Harrison also spoke about having close relationships with his two brothers, but like his close friends (Sam and Greg) this relationship was not focused on talking about personal issues. It seemed that the support that Harrison and his brothers offered to one another was associated with crisis:

> *in the toughest of times, we'd always have each other's back, but if it wasn't tough then we'd pretty much go about things on our own way*

It seemed that there was something particular about tough times that changed the way in which he understood his relationship with his brothers.

Another participant also described ways in which he understood support between men in times of crisis. Mark described how situations of danger and

created opportunities for a level of intimacy that he did not usually experience with other men:

> *over the years there'd be work situations where you've got each other's back or you saved someone from cutting a finger off, or falling off a roof [...] there were certain situation which I'd say are fairly intimate [...] I guess I liken it to when men go to war and they are fighting together for a common cause and they've got each other's back and it's a level of trust and mutual respect*

Like Harrison, Mark identified that when there was a danger or threat to wellbeing, something different happened between men, allowing an intense level of support. Perhaps these were examples of instrumental ways of providing support that Harrison spoke about in describing his relationships with close friends Sam and Greg. Mark spoke about his experiences of friendship in these crisis situations as being intimate. It is of particular note that Harrison and Mark used the same colloquialism to describe this support: having "each other's back". This commonality across ages (Harrison was 19, Mark was in his late 40s) and situations (Harrison and Mark did not share any relevant demographic similarities) suggests that this idea belongs to a more widely shared understanding of how men can be in their relationships with other men. Perhaps revealing how one feels about, or understands another man is more acceptable in times of crisis. Perhaps the crisis itself, involving some risk to safety, provides insurance against any challenges to one's masculinity. By demonstrating bravery, courage and strength, other threats to ideas of masculinity are ameliorated. This particular interpretation, and others suggested above in relation to insurance point towards these men's desire to be intimate, but that these desires are limited by social expectations.

7.2.2 self and Intimacy with Women

As with times of crisis, men's relationships with women seemed to allow different experiences of intimacy. Brendan spoke about his experiences of intimacy in his marriage:

> *you can't pretend to be someone else, you can in the short term, but in the long term… you can't, if you're living together you eventually reveal yourself there's just… no way ... around it.*

It seems here that Brendan is not attributing his experience of revealing his understanding of himself to his wife as being directly about the quality of their relationship. Rather, it seems to be a function of marriage and the length of their relationship that caused the intimacy. This aligns with an understanding of relationships in terms of roles. Brendan attributes his experience of intimacy as part and parcel of being husband and wife. In this way, he draws upon another social norm to explain his experience, an explanation that does not seem to threaten his understanding of himself as bloke. Perhaps this is because he may see the role of bloke as only relevant to relationships with males, or perhaps blokes are able to be intimate with their wives without threatening their bloke status.

Brendan also spoke about learning about intimacy and identified that this had been through his wife's influence.

> *learning from her, would be the big one in terms of intimacy [...] I've had to learn it ... I think more than Ruth ... yeah I think it's more instinctive for her.*

His way of talking about this implied that knowing about intimacy was instinctive for Ruth because she was a woman. There seemed to be some understanding that intimacy was women's domain and that being married to a woman required intimacy in order to meet her needs.

Daniel also described learning about intimacy through women. In particular, he identified that in one relationship, his girlfriend made it clear that she expected a high level of intimacy from him:

> *I feel like I was kind of taught how to be intimate [...] she was someone that wouldn't accept anything less than a strong connection, and she was very able to teach that [...] for a birthday gave me a book called the art of conscious loving you know that sort of quite a conscious effort to say hey we're together I really want us to be close and intimate*

Brendan's and Daniel's descriptions of their experiences suggest that it was legitimate for women to develop expertise in intimacy. Brendan's description of intimacy as being instinctive suggests that he saw this as something women know about, but something men have to learn about – from women.

7.2.3 Workplace Expectations, self and Intimacy

Ideas about masculinity were not the only ideas that seemed to influence how participants understood themselves in relation to others. Participants also spoke about their experiences of relationships at work. Neil talked about how he had attempted to build friendships with male colleagues, but these attempts were rejected.

> *I thought when I was in the ambulance [service] I had friends, but they weren't, they were just colleagues, and I misinterpreted that and have been let down most severely.*

After a number of disappointing experiences, he came to the conclusion that at work, he should not expect to find friendships. In these experiences, it seemed that it was not necessarily ideas about masculinity that prevented a deeper connection, but expectations about workplace roles and the kinds of connections that were permitted according to those roles. It seemed that Neil saw himself as naïve for thinking his connections with workmates could be anything other than collegial. Although he wanted something different, he came to an acceptance that, at work, intimacy was just not possible. Neil's SOS gives some explanation of why he might accept others' views of intimacy as incompatible with workplace relationships. His score of 3 describes a way of making meaning that is based upon an understanding of himself and his relationships as determined by others' expectations. His desire for a deeper connection with his work colleagues suggests that they were important to him, and he was therefore likely to be highly influenced by their understandings of workplace relationships, which did not include intimacy.

Brendan also spoke about the way in which the workplace dictated that certain topics were taboo in his friendship with his work colleague.

> *I'm a hierarchical thinker, like I was really good friends with the deputy, and I went and had a chat to him, which was almost a ... a shared whinge (laughs) ... but I never lose track of the fact that he's the deputy, that there are things he can't say to me and that – like I don't go to him and say, what do you think of the new boss? because, that's ... hierarchically that's a – and as a friendship, you just can't do it.*

There seemed to be a conflict between Brendan's understandings of friendship and of hierarchy. He stated that it was important to remain conscious of his friend's

hierarchical position in how they interacted, and this awareness of the hierarchical nature of their workplace roles prevented Brendan and his friend from being able to talk about particular experiences that they might want to discuss. Brendan seemed to be describing the conflict between being a friend and the role of being a subordinate in the workplace and this also constrained opportunities for sharing experiences that might lead to intimacy. It is not surprising that Brendan might experience this conflict, given that his understanding of himself in relation to others seemed to be based upon roles and, in this situation, these roles were in conflict. However, it seems that he also had a hierarchy of his own roles (work subordinate before friend) that enabled him to navigate this conflict.

In a corporate context, Kevin, spoke explicitly about the conflict between workplace relationships and experiences of intimacy

> *it's probably more challenging in the workplace because there are perceptions of how you should be acting, dealing, how conversations should be run or meetings should be run so there are, I guess, times where I've had what I felt is a connection and alignment with somebody and we've been able to leave behind all of the, I guess that corporate façade and talk genuinely about a topic or something that's important to us.*

Kevin saw that pre-determined ways of being, or acting according to workplace expectations interfered with the genuine connection that is necessary for experiencing intimacy. He made it quite explicit that in order to find this connection, there was something that each person needed to "leave behind"; a willingness to step outside of the pre-determined patterns of the workplace and behave in ways that were personally determined.

With a SOS of 5 it would be likely that Kevin would be explicitly aware of how expectations shape actions and experiences. Kevin's ways of understanding himself were no longer unconsciously influenced by social expectations as might be for someone whose understanding of self arises from a Stage 2 or 3 way of making meaning. Although Kevin's experiences at work were still affected by how others understood people should behave in the workplace, he was able to recognise these influences and where others are also able to recognise them, and resist them, to experience something different by leaving those façades behind.

Jeff also saw that expectations, or roles that people were required to play created masks, and that some of these masks were created by the workplace:

> *to know yourself, you've really got to be intimate with yourself, haven't you, you've got to break through these boundaries of these masks that you wear ... you know, what do other people expect of you? If you're in a work situation they expect you to be whatever you're employed as, and quite often that's a mask, I know lots of people [...] who do jobs that they don't really love because it's expected of them, or they have to make a living so they're wearing a mask all the time.*

Daniel, like Neil, Brendan, Kevin and Jeff, also spoke about the potential incompatibility of intimacy and workplace relationships:

> *well I guess just [intimacy] can be inappropriate; [I] think there's a certain - every kind of relationship has an appropriate level of intimacy I think [...] in a professional relationship ... there's a real boundary that needs to maintained there ... and too much intimacy can make the relationship work less well*

However, Daniel's description highlights how he understood collegial relationships as serving a particular organisational goal. They existed, not primarily to benefit the people involved, but to benefit the organisation. Here Daniel seems to be saying the opposite of what Jeff and Kevin are saying, that the limits to intimacy placed on professional relationships by boundaries, or in Jeff's language, putting on a mask, are necessary in the workplace. Like Neil and Brendan, Daniel seems to have accepted that in the workplace, intimacy might not be appropriate.

What seems similar in Kevin's and Jeff's descriptions, and contrary to Neil's and Brendan's descriptions, is that Kevin and Jeff recognise that the limits placed on them by social expectations are outside of themselves – Kevin talks about a corporate façade and Jeff talks about masks. In contrast, Brendan identifies hierarchical thinking as his own way of seeing the world, and Neil assumes that he misunderstood how things are in the workplace (i.e., a flaw in his thinking, rather than flawed social norms). What Jeff's account highlights is how people's masks or social expectations cut a person off from themself, from achieving connections they desire. In Jeff's words, "you've got to break through these boundaries of these masks that you wear".

7.2.4 Romantic Ideals and Intimacy

Some participants described experiences of intimacy that focused on romantic ideals. When thinking about how to create intimacy, Cameron spoke about special events that involved exclusive experiences, such as weekends away with his wife:

> *she's had a really busy couple of weeks, and I'm thinking ... how can I organise to take her away, give her a relaxed space that's also intimate for us too, to be together ... there's the bathtub by the forest type of thing ... all that stuff*

Andy and Jen had been married a long period of time but had young children. For Andy, it was not in the context of family life that he experienced intimacy, but in experiences that referred to a time in his relationship with Jen, before children:

> *so I think intimacy is like— um so like the only, the only when I think of intimacy it's Jen so, intimacy with Jen is like, uninterrupted me and Jen time, like the old days.*

It seemed that re-discovering these activities was important in order for Andy to experience intimacy, either through re-creating them:

> *uninterrupted conversation going out to eat at a nice restaurant and being able almost to kind of, look in the eyes of Jen, and look in my eyes and— Hello, it's-it's still me—the 1991 person still here [...] here we are, still together, and food, chat and probably an intimate evening,*

or by reminiscing about them during rare moments of private "couch time":

> *making connections to journeys we've been on, just the level of detail you know? whatever's on TV kind of pings in our memory [...] all those kind of trigger memories that no one else [is] privy to, therefore it becomes intimate*

or through sex:

> *I still love you, I hear you still love me and we can still demonstrate that through this physical intimacy*

Brendan also identified that his relationship with Ruth, his wife, was intimate. It seemed that for him, his understanding of himself seemed to depend upon Ruth:

> *we're reaching a point in our lives where the time we've known each other exceeds ... the earlier part of our life [...] if we broke up now, I'd*

have no conversation because if you said, oh you're off to Venice, I can't say, yeah I went to Venice, because that's our story, we've got to a point where we're… there's no individual story anymore

Participants also spoke about creating intimate experiences through activities, such as sex, that were exclusive to their couple relationship. For several participants, monogamy was an important part of their couple relationship. In contrast to legalistic ideas about monogamy, these ideas about exclusivity made sexual activity a particularly special and intimate experience:

> *[what] makes [sex] intimate is no one else is involved could possibly be involved or would understand what's being shared [...] for me and [Jen], gee, no one else could [or] will be involved, so it's like the whole rest of the world, kids first, and the rest of the world, muted, silenced* (Andy)

> *because I'm monogamous, [sex is] something that separates us as unique from everybody else [...] we've had a monogamous marriage for nearly 40 years, so it really does sort of ... for me heightens a sense of specialness that our relationship is unique and special because we alone share this sexual relationship* (Iain)

> *I just find kissing Derick's probably the most intimate thing we do and I just can't even envisage doing that with anybody else now, whereas I could have before ... it's sacred* (Jeff)

> *we waited longer than most couples would [... sex] is <u>better</u> and it seems more genuine and connected, and I don't know, honourable? like a sense of, her beliefs meant something and they meant something to me as well, so mmm yeah and in some way that I don't know, some ways more intimate* (Cameron)

Brendan spoke about other experiences that only he and Ruth shared:

> *we're a big fan of the Scarlet Pimpernel movie with Anthony Andrews and Jane Seymour and that's kind of our movie in that lame kind of way, we watch it every now and then because it's this lovely romance, and*

we watched it when we were dating [...] so there are things that are off-limits

These more romantic ideas of creating opportunities to be alone together, or of setting apart certain experiences as exclusive to their couple relationship added to participants' experiences of intimacy. However, it also seemed that for some of these participants, these romantic ideals limited opportunities for intimacy to particular types of experiences and particular relationships. Both Brendan and Andy stated that their marriage was their only intimate relationship. Although Cameron only spoke about his marriage when talking about intimacy, his romantic ideas may have been due to only recently having been married (2 months previously). As a significant intimate experience, that influenced his understanding of himself, of his partner and his relationship, it is likely to have been a particular focus in his thinking about intimacy.

In contrast, Kevin spoke about ways his understandings of intimacy had shifted from sex to romance and then beyond romantic experiences:

when I was ... a lot younger I would have associated intimacy with sex and then [I] recognised that you can have, the - the two aren't necessarily connected and so I guess ... intimacy can occur outside of that ... the next step was actually ... going to dinner for example [I] might have then started thinking of, or understanding that ok, what would be defined as intimacy can actually extend beyond and doesn't necessarily have a defined barrier related to sex and can occur with other things or in other areas

It seemed that this shift in his understanding of intimacy as occurring only in romantic or sexual contexts, to finding intimacy in other ways, was the result of experiences that began with social shared understandings and moved to self-authored understandings. This shift meant that Kevin was able to experience intimacy in more and diverse ways, compared to his early experiences. This self-authored understanding of intimacy matched with his understanding of himself, which reflected a stage beyond Stage 3.

7.2.5 Summary

This section of findings has identified ways in which social expectations influenced some participants' understandings of themselves and influenced their

experiences of intimacy. This influence was expressed through expectations associated with roles or through the expectations of important people in their lives. Some of these expectations were associated with masculine ideals, which privileged instrumental support over explicit expressions of understandings of oneself or of others. Participant's descriptions suggested ways in which deeper experiences of intimacy could be experienced in particular situations that provided insurance against threats to masculinity, such as situations involving alcohol. As well, insurances may have been provided by situations that involved danger where other characteristics such as bravery, courage or strength might also be demonstrated. These were particularly evident in relationships with other men. Expectations about who was responsible for developing intimacy in couple relationships also seemed to be influenced by ideas about differences between men and women. Ideas about workplace expectations also influenced participants' experiences of intimacy and romantic ideals also seemed to privilege particular types of intimate experiences involving private and exclusive activities. It also seemed that participants who were more conscious of the effects of these influences and who were more able to make choices about how they were affected by them had developed understandings of self that reflected evolutions of Self beyond Stage 3.

7.3 Ontology Influencing Epistemology

The previous section presented findings that showed how social expectations influenced participants' experiences of intimacy. In contrast, the findings presented in this section show ways in which experiences themselves seemed to overcome social expectations.

7.3.1 Understanding of Others and Intimacy

Mark described some experiences involving death that resulted in shifts in how he understood others, and also in his experience of intimacy. In these situations, it was someone else's vulnerability that allowed Mark to change the way he understood them, which resulted in an experience of greater intimacy.

> *one of my sisters took her own life um and ah I guess the most intimate um … most intimate I was with her was being with her dead body um … ah because it was - she was just, it was like her truth [...] there was no pretending or pretence.*

Mark also spoke about his step mother who died of cancer:

> *just being with her - her in her final days was very intimate, it's just [...] truth, it's just um, when you're dying it's - nothing else matters, you know, um what you've done or what you own or what you have [...] ... it was just so beautiful to see the real person*

Mark described how his step mother recognised that the things she had valued, and that had defined her (travel, knowledge, possessions), did not hold any real value in the face of death. The stripping away of these masks allowed Mark to see his step mother in a new way. For Mark, this honesty was what enabled his experience of intimacy, this deep connection with "the real person". These experiences suggest that his sister's and his step mother's vulnerabilities gave Mark an opportunity to see them in a new way, to change his understanding of them.

Mark also experienced a shift in his experience of intimacy that involved his wife's vulnerability. This was not in a situation involving death; it was a situation of betrayal, where his wife had sex with someone else:

> *I've experienced it twice in my life, once with Julie, my eldest boy's mother and once with Steph and both in the situations of them cheating um and - and so out of this horrible, horrible, fucking scenario comes this gold nugget of - you meet the real person for the first time um and it's just um you know it just blew me away both times*

Mark talked about the experience of the depth of honesty, that allowed him to see Steph clearly. This experience was so significant that it overshadowed, at least temporarily, the horrible details of the experience:

> *for that brief moment [...] it was like this wall had been broken down, which is this façade that she had held all these times and for the first time in our 16 years together, I saw the real Steph, and it was beautiful [...] you know I didn't care because I was talking to the real person*

Mark described that in that moment, he understood Steph in a way that he had not understood her before. In that moment, she gave him access to a depth of herself that she had not been able to access previously, or that he had not been able to receive:

> *I could see all of her [...] I could see all of Steph and I could see why she decides to do different things rather than beforehand, Steph would do something or make a decision but you know it was coming through*

> *that façade, that decision and I couldn't see through that façade to see why she made that decision or why she did what she did, now I could - that façade was gone and I could see all the links of why she thinks the way she does and why she decides*

With his first wife, Julie, Mark talked about reaching a place where she confirmed his suspicions that she was cheating on him:

> *I worked out Julie was cheating on me [...] so I [confronted her with the evidence], because she was still denying, denying and lying and lying and she just sat there and her persona changed in front of me and she said, well, what do you want to know and we had this - the first honest conversation we'd had since we met 5 years [ago...] and it was just um incredible, and like with Steph, my heart opened up to her.*

What is quite striking about these accounts is that Mark described finding an intense experience of intimacy in the midst of this painful revelation. Somehow, he was able to look beyond his own distress and recognise the beauty of another person's honesty. Mark explained that being in a situation where you have nothing to lose, somehow intimacy is easier to experience:

> *when you can sit down with a person who's got nothing to lose [...] our real self [...] comes to the forefront.*

Here he also suggests that someone else's willingness to be vulnerable resulted in them being "real", it also facilitated a similar level of honest in him.

The situations that Mark described were outside of his normal range of experiences. This seems to have been important in enabling these experiences to challenge how he understood other people and to change his own responses. These challenges were significant enough to allow a shift in his understandings of himself and others.

Harrison also spoke about a situation that was outside his typical experience. He described a situation where his brother was having a dilemma in making a decision about his future. His brother wanted to join the army, but was experiencing conflict between what he wanted to do and what he thought his parents wanted him to do. Harrison described his conversation with his brother:

> *he was feeling a bit, I guess, conflicted because he wanted to pursue his goals, chase his dreams, all that, but [...] he was sort of having doubts*

> *in himself because of that [...] I've never seen him doubt himself in his life, so, [...] I guess [he] came to me for a bit of advice, feedback, what I think and I pretty much just reassured him, this is what you want to do, then it comes down to you.*

This is not the kind of instrumental support that Harrison described when he spoke about he and his brother "having each other's backs". There was something different about this situation that enabled Harrison to behave in new ways compared to how he had described himself previously. Perhaps, like Mark's experiences of death, there something about the other person's vulnerability that created these new possibilities.

It also seemed that it was not until Harrison spoke about this experience in the interview, that it occurred to him that his experience with his brother had been an intimate one:

> *I guess in a sense that <u>was</u> an intimate moment, come to think of it, because it was very touchy-feely.*

Although he had not recognised his experience as intimate at the time, it seemed that it may have influenced his understanding of his brother, and of their relationship. Harrison spoke about another experience with his brother, following this intimate conversation. This second experience occurred between Harrison's first and second interviews, and so was very recent. He attended his brother's army march-out and was surprised by the growth in his brother's maturity:

> *he was the same person, but a different one as well but in a positive way, it was really nice, getting to see him and being able to - I guess I felt like a whole new level that we were connected on as well.*

This experience seemed to change how he saw his brother and also changed their relationship. He elaborated on this change:

> *I wasn't exactly seeing him as like a younger brother anymore, if anything I was almost looking up to him, given the achievements that he has successfully completed and I don't know, I sort of - I was looking at him in a sense of like a mature adult now, like he had grown, like immensely, it was crazy to see, it was a bit overwhelming.*

For Harrison, this was quite an emotional experience. Perhaps his brother's vulnerability in talking about his concerns had enabled both of them to move

beyond previous expectations of how brothers behave with each other. As a result, Harrison was able recognise his brother as a person, and a successful person, not just as a brother.

It seems that Harrison's experience, like Mark's experience was one in which someone else's vulnerability challenged expectations of how people are to be with one another. In doing so, it seems that Harrison's brother (and Mark's wives) created an opportunity for Harrison (and Mark) to move beyond typical patterns of relating and find intimacy. Whether or not this experience had a lasting effect on Harrison's understanding of his brother was difficult to ascertain, given its proximity to his second interview.

7.3.2 Understanding of self and Intimacy

Some participants described ways in which significant events in their lives altered their understandings of themselves and changed their experiences of intimacy. Erik spoke about his experience of facing a life-threatening illness and how this created an opportunity to examine certain aspects of his life. It also placed him in a position of involuntary vulnerability that pushed him beyond the barriers of his previous understanding of himself:

> *I think you— you find when you do have a challenge and-and you've— you know like this, it does promote a certain degree of reflection*

Being disempowered by the threat of death, Erik was able to recognise his need for support and discovered a new way of engaging with his wife:

> *over the last 12 months she has been my ... brick... I've- we've been able to talk more openly about things [...] I just think we know each other better because I'm more open myself— I tell her how I feel, I tell her how— you know I ask—-we talk about things we never would have spoken about and that builds a strong relationship because you're more empathetic, you're more open, you've got a greater degree of trust, you're not concealing anything, you're— you're sharing everything with your partner*

These changes had also influenced the ways that he understood physical aspects of his relationship:

> *it's-it's [sex] still you know I still think it's part of your life but it's — it's physical but in a different sense, yeah it's different, it's certainly different ...*

What was also striking was how this experience had changed Erik's experience of himself. He seemed to describe greater self-acceptance and an ability to allow others to see him in ways that he had not been able to do previously:

> *this is quite different, this is really um… it's very peaceful and very— I'm comfortable ... with who I am and our relationship, very comfortable [...] I think I feel much more… much calmer… much more aware… you know… that's what I mean I say… like I think I'm a better person*

Eric also described similar changes to the way he understood his relationships with his children and grandchildren, with work colleagues and with male and female friends.

Iain and Lucas spoke about significant life experiences that changed their understanding of themselves, and which also had an impact on their experiences of intimacy. Iain described his past involvement with a religious outreach organisation, Mission Youth (MY). One of the practices that was cultivated in this organisation involved sharing failings with others. Even after leaving MY, this level of honesty was something that Iain sought to maintain in close relationships. During the interview, Iain spoke about the importance of openness:

> *that was definitely a value in MY and I do understand that if I want that from my friendships, I need to do that, and I do, I [...] try and present myself warts and all, I don't want to try and pretend that I've got things together (laughs) that I'm somehow better than I am, I don't want to do that.*

Iain's experience with MY created an opportunity to discover that this high level of transparency was important to him in developing intimacy in his relationships with family and friends.

Lucas, like Iain, spoke about trying to express himself fully:

> *I am probably a warts and all [person], emotional or mental [in my] approach to that, so I think that is all part and parcel of being in love with someone, loving someone or treasuring someone*

Lucas had been married and involved in a high level of leadership in a religious organisation. At the same time, he was struggling with his own capacity to conform to its expectations with his growing understanding of himself as gay. Over a ten year period of intense struggle, he questioned his understanding of himself:

> *I realised that I'd strayed quite a way from what was really inside [...] so I peeled the layers back [...] so when I've got all of that out of the way, most important probably for me is this personal freedom [...] if I'm really brutally honest, that's become my most important thing [...] my personal freedom and the joy of being able to live life exactly as I want it.*

This process of peeling back layers, or in Jeff's language, taking off masks allowed Lucas to reflect upon his understanding of himself. The result of this was that he was able to influence his own understanding of himself. In terms of the definition of intimacy used in this thesis, Lucas was experiencing intimacy with himself. Having been through a process of personal growth and developing a much greater consciousness of himself, it was clear that Lucas was no longer willing to compromise for the sake of other people's expectations.

Like Iain, maintaining this sense of connection with himself was, for Lucas, the only way he could be. It was in this integrity with himself, or in his intimacy with himself that Lucas found his experiences of intimacy with others. Having a clear understanding of who he was, he was able to share this with others, even if they did not accept him. Lucas spoke about his experience of telling his children about being gay:

> *I've had to reveal stuff and - with my younger son [...] I wanted a loving [...] response, I didn't get it [...] it wasn't a pleasurable experience*

Despite the fact that things did not end happily, it was more important for Lucas to reveal himself and risk the possibility of rejection, because being anything other than truly himself would not lead to a genuine relationship. Risking rejection to create a genuine relationship with his son was more important than withholding the truth in order to keep things as they were. In a sense, this level of intimacy that he had found with himself had become the new benchmark for his experiences of intimacy with others. However, this was costly:

I had feelings of um an unhappy situation, it's unresolved [...] I [could] see this unresolved situation lasting for a long time

Lucas described that after a lengthy period of time, his relationship with his son was restored and that now

there's a certain level of enjoyment in that because you can feel [...] I think we're on the same plane here, that's the secret thing that most people want

Iain also recognised that disclosing himself might not always result in positive responses.

I appreciate that [...] it might create disturbances sometimes when ... if I'm expressing my warts and all kind of character but generally I think it's really important for deepening those friendships and relationships

However, like Lucas, what seemed to be really important to Iain was being able to express himself fully:

sometimes it's a release, it's like ... I'm glad I got that out and I'm - I appreciate being in that group of people who will allow me to get that out, so it's kind of a release of ... inner ... might be a bit of inner - like a self-consciousness you know you felt - I might feel self-conscious about something, I'll tell people in the group, oh I feel self-conscious about this or I feel a little um ... you know I kind of question myself sometimes about why I do things and then to be able to express that is ... a - releasing and affirming at the same time.

Iain's description seems to be one of catharsis in which he is able to re-establish his connection with himself, that he is no longer hiding something and makes that concrete by disclosing it. Perhaps, like Lucas, Iain's experience of intimacy, described here, was with himself.

For both Iain and Lucas, their ideas about intimacy seemed to include a longer-term view. Each of them saw their own vulnerability as investment in future experiences with others. Each of them described how in revealing parts of their understanding of themselves, others might not accept them or provide supportive, validating responses. However, the belief that these responses would come eventually and that relationships would be enriched as a consequence enabled them to make these choices regarding vulnerability. Perhaps these longer-term

understandings of intimacy, investing present vulnerabilities in future relationship benefits, were possible because neither Lucas nor Iain were dependent upon others' approval in how they understood themselves, as evidenced by their SOSs. Both of them had SOSs of 4(3) which describe an understanding of themselves arising from a Stage 4 way of making meaning that is self-authored and is based upon a sense of independent identity.

For Lucas, this willingness to engage with important others by revealing himself, despite the possibility of it not being well-received also seemed to allow him to find intimate experiences in everyday life, not just in special situations. Lucas described a situation in which a conversation, that had been about mundane aspect of life had shifted into something intimate:

> *it was doing something as mundane as furniture shopping for the new apartment, so well we started to talk about you know it was a quite conceptual, what do we want, what's the look that we want, blah blah blah, that conversation soon turned to yeah, how is that we want to live? [...] and then we stated talking about other stuff [...] and then we were feeling lovey-dovey; that felt really nice, it felt gratifying because we then [... talked about] what's the real driving reasons that we're doing all of this, and the anticipation of doing something, so that quickly morphed into something I would say, you know, like those intimate moments that you have together*

Lucas' description shows how he and his partner were able to move into this intimate experience from the mundane details of life. He also described how this was not unusual for him and his partner. This idea of intimacy arising from the mundane experiences of everyday life is in contrast to romantic ideals about intimacy as occurring in particular experiences or in exclusive activities. In addition, like other participants' experiences described in this section, Lucas' experience highlights the possibility of moving beyond social norms and expectations about how one should understand oneself or how one should experience (or not experience) intimacy.

This section has also identified ways in which participants' ontologies influenced their epistemologies in how they understood themselves and/or others. Each of the participants whose understandings of themselves changed as a result of their experiences (Erik, Lucas and Iain) had SOSs that were described ways of

making meaning dominated by a Stage 4 Self. It is also likely, given the way that these participants described their experiences, that these experiences were instrumental in facilitating the evolution of a Stage 4 Self.

Mark and Harrison both described extraordinary experiences that changed the way that they understood others. For Harrison, the proximity of his experiences with his brother to the interviews meant that perhaps it was too soon to see the effects of these experiences upon his understanding of himself. For Mark, in relationships that did not end in death, the changes he experienced in his understanding of others were temporary and these relationships ended in divorce or impending divorce. Mark also described how his experience of western women had left him finding it difficult to trust them

> *I have very distinct distrust of females at the - at the present [...] well not only recent experiences, my whole life experience with females*

Perhaps for him, the degree of hurt that he had experienced was so great it made it nearly impossible to be vulnerable in his relationships with women. Perhaps it also made it nearly impossible for women in his life to influence this biased understanding of them in any ongoing way. Mark's understanding of intimacy (described in Chapter 6) focused heavily on honesty and a particularly intense form of honesty, "radical truth" that meant revealing the "real person". Although it is understandable that Mark might privilege honesty to overcome the deep distrust he felt, it seems unlikely that maintaining such a level of honesty is practical or possible in any relationship and particularly a domestic relationship that involves experiencing a person at their best and worst and everything in between. Perhaps this is why Mark's understanding of females was not changed in ongoing ways.

Mark's description of his distrust of females raises an important aspect of experiences of intimacy by highlighting the effects of a person's past experiences. In particular, for Mark, these experiences seemed to have a hegemonic effect. By setting such high expectations of honesty in order to overcome distrustful views of women, these expectations were impossible to meet. Consequently, his views of women were reinforced. In contrast to Kevin, whose experiences of intimacy overcame his stereotypical views of intimacy, Mark's experiences were not sufficient to move Mark out of this cycle.

7.3.3 Summary

In this section, participants' experiences have described ways in which extraordinary circumstances caused shift in understandings of themselves or of other. In this way, these experiences were, in themselves, intimate experiences. However, these experiences also resulted in shifts in the ways that participants experienced intimacy, either permanently or temporarily. For one participant, this shift facilitated a capacity to transform mundane experience into intimate experiences. One participant's experiences also highlighted the importance of considering the effects of personal history as a potential limiting factor to lasting changes in one's understandings of others.

7.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined participants' experiences of intimacy to identify the part that ontology plays in experiences of intimacy. These findings suggest that social expectations influenced some participants' understandings of self or of others, and consequently their experiences of intimacy. In addition, this examination has explored ways in which ontologies have influenced epistemologies. These findings suggest that extraordinary circumstances can change understandings of self or others in permanent or temporary ways that can lead to different experiences of intimacy.

Social expectations were expressed in some men's understandings of masculinity, workplace roles and in romantic relationship ideals. Masculinity, workplace roles, and romantic ideals, in influencing participants' understandings of themselves, represented involuntary and largely unconscious forms of intimacy. In some participants' relationships with other men, it seemed that they desired to experience intimacy but masculine ideals limited their willingness to allow themselves to be vulnerable in ways necessary to experience intimacy. Although some participants described experiences of intimacy with women, these were limited by ideals that privileged experiences of intimacy as private and exclusive.

In contrast, some participants described extraordinary life experiences that enabled them to find new ways of understandings themselves or others. Some participants spoke about ways in which these experiences enabled them to become less dependent upon others' approval, which allowed a greater capacity to risk being vulnerable. As a consequence, these participants were more able to create opportunities for experiences of intimacy.

These findings suggest that a number of men did find it difficult to experience intimacy, either in their past or in their present experiences. Workplace expectations and romantic ideals were identified as limiting some men's experiences of intimacy. In addition, some limitations resulted from expectations related to participants' understandings of themselves as men. Overcoming these barriers seemed to require the opportunity to display other masculine characteristics in order to ameliorate any threats to masculinity created by intimate behaviours. Alternatively, men could engage in intimate behaviours that could be interpreted ambiguously, in case they were challenged. More lasting ways of overcoming these barriers resulted from significant changes in understandings of self.

Together these findings suggest that in order to experience intimacy, particularly with other men, men may need to alter the ways in which they understand themselves. This might be possible through social change, altering the ways in which men are more generally expected to behave, or personally, by moving beyond ways of understanding self that rely on external validation.

Chapter 8: Discussion

8.1 Introduction

This chapter draws together the findings presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 and responds to the research questions proposed in Chapter 1:

- In what ways does a constructive-developmental approach offer new possibilities for understanding intimacy?
- How do the intimate experiences of a small number of men add to an understanding of intimacy?

As well, this chapter identifies a number of contributions made by this thesis. These are discussed in the sections that follow, but in summary this thesis makes a unique contribution by:

- offering a new, more inclusive model of intimacy, with an understanding of intimacy with self at its centre;
- offering an evolutionary model of intimacy, by linking this understanding of intimacy with Kegan's (1982) evolving self;
- identifying new, more complex forms of intimacy involving synergistic engagement between people and forms of intimacy involving intrapersonal engagement; and
- offering conceptual models for understanding the layers or depths of intimate experience.

As well this thesis:

- gives support to the view that existing and diverse understandings of intimacy can be organised in terms of increasing complexity. This ordering reveals patterns of growth and change in intimacy across a person's lifespan and, as well, provides explanations of these multiple and diverse understandings and experiences of intimacy. These explanations can also assist people to understand their own and others' experiences, particularly where two sets of experiences differ;

- suggests that intimacy can be seen as developmental and that the ways in which intimacy is understood and experienced can be enriched through personal growth;
- adds to literature that suggests that western social norms negatively influence experiences of intimacy, and offers the suggestion that that these negative effects can be overcome through the development of self-authored meanings; and
- makes theoretical contributions by extending and clarifying Kegan's (1982) constructive-developmental theory of the evolving self.

8.1.1 Chapter Overview

This discussion begins by addressing Research Question 1 and identifies ways in which this thesis makes new contributions to understandings of intimacy (Section 8.2). This is followed by an examination of men's experiences of intimacy focusing on the effects of sociocultural influences and significant life experiences (Section 8.3). This section concludes by offering a model for understanding the multiple layers of intimate experiences and raises questions regarding the temporal aspects of intimacy. Section 8.4 offers a discussion of ways in which this study contributes to, and extends Kegan's (1982) theory. Section 8.5 re-examines the definition of intimacy proposed in Chapter 2 and provides an evaluation of its usefulness. In drawing the thesis to a close, Section 8.6 examines the limitations of the conclusions that may be drawn from these findings and of the study more widely. The chapter finishes by and suggesting ways in which these findings may be applied in therapeutic contexts and developed in future research for application in public education/policy contexts (Section 8.7).

8.2 Research Question 1: Understandings of Intimacy

8.2.1 General Understandings of Intimacy

As was reported in Chapter 6, participants described that it was difficult to talk about how they understood intimacy in any great detail. For some, this was because they had not spent much time thinking or talking about intimacy. Others found it difficult to find the words to describe their understanding. This difficulty in talking about intimacy was also an observation that Patrick and Beckenbach (2009) reported in their qualitative study of men's perceptions of intimacy. Findings reported in Chapter 7 also identified that some men had learnt about

intimacy from women. Together, these findings suggest that some men may have assumed that women knew more about intimacy and were therefore more able to address such matters in a couple relationship. These kinds of beliefs about men and women are also described by others. For example, authors have identified that intimacy (Kimmel, 1994) or the self-reflection required to think about intimate experiences (Webb, 1998) are not valued by particular ways of understanding masculinity. Similarly, studies examining intimacy avoidance have identified a greater prevalence amongst men than amongst women. For example, Merves-Okin, Amidon and Bernt (1991) found no significant differences between males and females regarding positive attitudes toward intimacy, but they did find that males, compared to females, were more likely to have fearful attitudes toward intimacy. Likewise, Sobral, Teixeira, and Costa (2015) found that males had significantly higher scores for fear of intimacy than did females. In addition, some studies found that men held expectations that women should take responsibility for certain aspects of heterosexual couple relationships such as intimacy (Arkin, 1979; Knudson-Martin, 2013) or for ensuring that the emotional needs of the relationship are addressed (Loscocco & Walzer, 2013; Perry-Jenkins, Newkirk, & Ghunney, 2013).

Despite initial difficulties in explaining intimacy, participants offered descriptions of how they understood intimacy. Across participants' descriptions, there was a general agreement that intimacy involved:

- a deep sense of connection or closeness, which for some was an intense experience, and
- a level of trust or safety in order to be willing to allow themselves to be vulnerable and to reveal themselves to another person.

Most participants expected intimacy to involve positive emotions (such as happiness or general euphoria). Aligned with participants' understandings, many researchers have suggested that positive feelings of closeness or connection are central to intimate experiences (e.g., Laurenceau et al., 2005; Perlman & Fehr, 1987; Schaefer & Olson, 1981; Timmerman, 1991; Waring, 1984), and that these positive feelings are an important part of an experience of intimacy (e.g., Prager, 2000; Reis & Shaver, 1988).

Vulnerability, the second general theme across participants' descriptions, has also been identified as an important component of intimacy by other researchers. For example, Roberts (2002) identified that vulnerability served as an important

function of intimate interactions in that it encouraged a caring response and Hatfield and Rapson (1993) highlighted that an element of risk in self-disclosure was necessary in order for it to be intimate. Similarly, DePaulo and Kashy (1987) suggested that feeling at ease and being able to trust a partner were key factors in facilitating the revelation of self and Hook, Gerstein, Detterich and Gridley (2003) included trust in their definition of intimacy.

Participants' understandings of intimacy also varied across these aspects of connection: vulnerability and safety, and feelings. By identifying ways in which participants' understandings of intimacy aligned with Kegan's (1982) stages, these understandings were able to be related to one other in terms of increasing complexity. As well, by comparing each participant's general ways of making meaning with their ways of making meaning specifically in relation to intimacy, some helpful differences were identified. These differences provide further opportunity to understand how intimacy might develop. In addition, links can be made between these different understandings of intimacy and the ways in which intimacy has been defined by other researchers.

In the following sections, participants' understandings of intimacy are grouped according to the relevant stage, according to Kegan's (1982) theory. Within each stage, the themes from participants' interviews are discussed in the light of the literature presented in Chapter 2 in order to make links with any existing conceptions of literature.

8.2.2 Stages of Intimacy

Intimacy at Stage 2

Participants' understandings of intimacy reflecting Stage 2 focused on the complementarity of roles and a sense of honesty that prevented one from being surprised by the other person's thinking or responding, which provided a sense of safety. A shared history also created a sense of safety by providing a consistent pattern of the other person's disposition (their needs, desires, interests, etc.). Certainty about how the other person was likely to think/respond led to positive feelings about the person/relationship. Although few scholarly definitions of intimacy express these understandings, some similarities can be found. For example, Schaefer and Olson (1977) identified that time is required in order to develop intimacy, which may reflect an understanding of the importance of shared history (and thus greater capacity to predict the others' thinking/feeling). As well,

Erikson (1950) identified that commitment to a marriage relationship facilitated intimacy, which may relate to participants' understandings of intimacy as being inherent in particular relationships.

Intimacy at Stage 3

Participants' understandings of intimacy reflecting Stage 3 focused on developing a sense of connection through shared activities and through the alignment of perceptions of each other and the relationship (i.e., mutuality), which led to feelings of safety. This sense of congruence was also highlighted by shared positive feelings about each another and the relationship. Consequently, conflict suggested misalignment of perceptions and incongruence or incompatibility.

Some researchers have identified similar ideas in their understandings of intimacy. Parks and Floyd (1996) emphasised the importance of emotional support and connectedness through "telling each other everything" (p. 94). Schaefer and Olson (1977) suggested that "greater homogeny in a given area of intimacy will facilitate intimate experiences" (p. 10), which aligns with ideas of congruence. Walster, Walster and Berscheid's (1978) description of intimacy in terms of deeply intertwined lives may also highlight the importance of congruence and Marks' (1998) and Cronin's (2015) understanding of intimacy as experienced through shared understandings of selves also reflects the mutuality of intimacy that was described by some participants in this present study.

In addition, some aspects of these descriptions reflect Reis and Shaver's (1988) process model of intimacy, who describe that others' supportive responses provide a sense of being understood, validated and cared for. This sense of being understood and validated (and possibly feeling cared for) is reflected in participants' experiences of congruence as evidence of intimate connection.

Intimacy at Stage 4

Participants' understandings of intimacy reflecting Stage 4 focused on developing a sense of connection through mutual respect, openness and transparency, which, at times, involved the revelation of flaws and "deep" aspects of self. A sense of safety was required in order to facilitate this deep sharing and a willingness to risk being vulnerable was facilitated by demonstrations of mutual respect for differences and of valuing each other as independent people. These experiences, of being understood, accepted and valued, led to positive feelings (e.g.,

gratitude). However, in contrast to Stage 3, conflict did not indicate a loss of commitment to, or valuing of, each another.

Several definitions of intimacy align with these descriptions of intimacy. For example, Clinebell and Clinebell (1971) identified that intimacy can be "present even in times of some distance and conflict" (p. 32). In addition, ideas of respecting differences and accepting another person in those differences is reflected in Patrick and Backenbach's (2009) findings that "intimacy is a place where a man can be himself, including showing the worst parts of himself without fear of recrimination" (p. 52). This understanding of intimacy, also seems to align with some of Dahms' (1972) understanding of emotional intimacy as enabling others "to be themselves, to expose their frailties and strengths" (p. 45). These are ideas that may also reflect understandings of valuing the individuality of others, which, in contrast to dependence, is described in Perlman and Fehr's (1987) understanding of intimacy as "the closeness and interdependence of partners, the extent of self-disclosure, and the warmth and affection experienced" (p. 16).

These descriptions of intimacy at Stage 4 also align with some aspects of Reis and Shaver's (1988) process model of intimacy, which views a supportive response as providing a sense of being understood, validated and cared for. Descriptions of intimacy at this stage suggest the importance of being understood and cared for, but do not emphasise others' validation. At Stage 4, a person's validation of self comes from their self-authored, autonomous construction of Self (Kegan, 1982). As described previously, requiring the validation of others is more reflective of the mutuality of the Stage 3 Self, and so different aspects of Reis and Shaver's model of intimacy may reflect intimacy at Stage 3 (validation, understanding, caring) or Stage 4 (understanding, caring).

Intimacy at Stage 5

Participants' understandings of intimacy reflecting Stage 5 identified intimacy as involving a sense of connection through the synergistic creation of new ways of thinking and being. Intimacy was also understood as occurring in the dialogue between self and others (or self and self through reflection/meditation) that led to new insights regarding self and others. Also, a mutual experiencing of intimacy resulted in deeper experiences of intimacy. In contrast to other stages, no other researcher's definitions of intimacy addressed these aspects of intimacy, despite extensive searches across major social science databases (i.e., EbscoHost:

PsychINFO, SocINDEX, Academic Search Complete, CINAHL, LGBT Life with Full Text; Scopus; OVID: Social Work Abstracts and Journals@Ovid).

Summary

As was presented in Chapter 2, there are a range of ways in which researchers have understood the experience of intimacy. This diversity was also represented in participants' understandings of intimacy and most (but not all) participants' understandings of intimacy were expressed by various researchers' understandings of intimacy. Kegan's (1982) evolutionary stages provided a useful organisation of these diverse understandings of intimacy, both within the body of literature and within this study. Together, these suggests that a constructive-developmental approach, using Kegan's stages, provides a useful way to organise and unify diverse understandings of intimacy. In addition, this study offers a unique contribution by presenting possibilities for understanding intimacy in ways that are not described by other researchers; i.e., intimate experiences as occurring through synergy, and intimacy occurring intrapersonally.

8.2.3 Intrapersonal Intimacy

As stated above, this study also offers a unique contribution by identifying some understandings of intimacy as intrapersonal, resulting from mindful meditation. These practices enabled an experience of self-discovery, influencing conceptions of self, which aligns with the definition of intimacy utilised in this thesis. Other participants described the importance of expressing their understandings of themselves to others. Together these findings suggest that intrapersonal intimacy can be experienced both as *expressing* an understanding of self, and through processes of self-reflection, as *influencing* an understanding of self.

A number of studies link mindfulness to experiences of interpersonal intimacy; for example, individuals higher in mindfulness were also found to be less likely to disengage during conflict (Khalifian & Barry, 2016). Mindfulness-based Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (Kocsis & Newbury-Helps, 2016) and meditative practices (McCreary & Alderson, 2013) were also helpful in sexual and intimacy difficulties. Other studies identify ways in which times of solitude spent in nature facilitated a new awareness of self (e.g., Rowe, 2013; Wood, 2010. Only one study reported findings that describe intrapersonal intimacy, through self-reflection, mindfulness or meditation, or through self-expression. This study analysed

Buddhist texts, patient observations and personal experiences. In her findings, Hoeberichts (2004) described self-awareness, achieved through meditation, as facilitating intimacy with herself. Almost in contradiction, she stated that "it is difficult, if not impossible, to be intimate with oneself in isolation. We need others to mirror and engage us through relationship in order to see ourselves" (Hoeberichts, 2004, p. 205). However, what this conclusion does suggest is a link with the findings described in this study of experiencing self in the presence of others, addressing both intrapersonal intimacy as *expressing* and *influencing* an understanding of self.

These findings, Hoerberichts' (2004) and in this study, challenge an important aspect of Reis and Shaver's (1988) process model of intimacy, which emphasises the dyadic nature of intimacy and the importance of another's response to self-disclosure. This is because Reis and Shaver suggest that self-disclosure is not, of itself, sufficient for experiencing intimacy. By contrast, for the participant who experienced intrapersonal intimacy through meditation, another person was not present, and thus, no sense of being understood, validated or cared for by another person was required. For two other participants, although other people were present in order to give a context for self-expression, these others did not necessarily play an active role in these participants' understanding of themselves.

In support of Reis and Shaver's (1988) model of intimacy, a number of studies have found that the relationship between self-disclosure and experiences of intimacy is mediated by perceptions of partner responsiveness (Laurenceau et al., 1998; Laurenceau et al., 2005; Manne et al., 2004). However, other studies using Reis and Shaver's model have found that for men in heterosexual couples, intimacy was predicted by their own disclosures but less so, or not at all, by their partner's supportive response (Laurenceau et al., 2005; Manne et al., 2004; Mitchell et al., 2008). Perhaps in describing themselves as feeling validated or understood, the men in these studies, like the participants in this study, were describing a validation or an understanding arising from themselves. Although Kegan's (1982) theory suggests that moving away from a need for others' validation is a function of the evolution of Self, these other studies raise further possibilities that men's lack of dependence upon others' responses may be the result of being male (i.e., biological differences) or resulting from the influence of social understandings of masculinity or the interaction of biological, social and developmental factors.

What can be understood from these findings is that intrapersonal intimacy was experienced by participants, either in a process that developed self-awareness through meditative practices, or through a process of self-revelation to others. This can be concluded because these processes influenced or expressed these participants' understanding of themselves in ways that did not depend on others' responses. This finding offers a unique contribution to an understanding of intimacy.

8.2.4 Evolutionary Differences Between Participants' Subject-Object Scores (SOSs) and Intimacy Definitions

Some differences were identified between participants' SOSs and the stage of evolution reflected in their definitions of intimacy. In thinking about these differences, it is important to note that SOSs provide a more fine-grained analysis of evolutionary development than Kegan's (1982) stages. For example, one participant's understanding of intimacy reflected both Stage 3 and Stage 4. With a SOS of 4(3), it is not surprising that his understanding of intimacy might reflect both of these stages. However, it is interesting that this participant's understanding of sexual intimacy was less complex (i.e., Stage 3) than his understanding of other aspects of intimacy (i.e., Stage 4). The development of Self, from Stage 3 to Stage 4 involves a shift from meanings that are dependent upon others' approval to meanings that are self-authored and autonomous (Kegan, 1982). As sexual experiences have strong ties to understandings of masculinity (Rogers, 2005), this may be an area in which it is more difficult for men to develop self-authored meanings, suggesting an important area for future research.

Another participant's understanding of intimacy reflected a less complex way of making meaning than his SOS. This participant had a SOS of 4/3, but his understandings of intimacy suggested Stages 2 and 3, and he understood intimacy as occurring only in his marriage. In talking about his experiences of intimacy, he described the difficulty of finding time alone with his wife amidst the hectic demands of family life with young children. It is possible that viewing intimacy in this singular way, as being private and exclusive (i.e., occurring only with his wife) and as being associated with romantic activities (e.g., dinners or weekends away), combined with the demands of parenting, may have meant that his opportunities to experience intimacy were limited by these expectations. Reynolds and Knudson-Martin (2015) also found that for couples in the US, the demands of parenting made it more difficult to experience intimacy. These couples also understood intimacy

as occurring in time together away from the children. Such findings may suggest that for this participant, opportunities to develop his understandings of intimacy, in comparison to his opportunities to develop understandings of other aspects of himself were limited. This may explain why his understanding of himself in more general ways reflected greater complexity compared to his understanding of intimacy.

8.2.5 Summary

This discussion of findings has suggested that a constructive-developmental approach, using Kegan's (1982) stages offers new possibilities for understanding intimacy, offering a framework for organising diverse understandings of intimacy. This provides a number of benefits. Kegan's stages offer a way of understanding intimacy as being related to development, not as a capacity that is either achieved or not achieved, but instead as an evolving understanding of the nature of intimacy. Conceptually, this offers a means by which the diverse conceptions of intimacy presented in the body of literature can be understood as being related to the same construct, but as describing differing points in an evolutionary continuum of experience. In more applied ways, this understanding of intimacy offers explanations for two people who may have different expectations related to intimacy, seek different indicators of intimacy, and have different experiences of intimacy in the same event.

Using Kegan's (1982) stages as a way of organising participants' experiences of intimacy also led to the discovery of new ways of conceptualising intimacy, as involving synergistic experiences and as occurring intrapersonally. These discoveries constitute important developments in understanding intimacy and suggest areas for further research.

As well, examining understandings of intimacy in comparison to ways in which participants understood other experiences also revealed some important possibilities for understanding intimacy. These findings suggested that some aspects of intimacy (such as sex) may be more susceptible to being influenced by dominant ideas of masculinity than others. This suggests that some men who ascribe to these ideas, that sex is an expression of masculinity, may find it more difficult to experience sex as an intimate experience, compared to other ways of experiencing intimacy.

8.3 Research Question 2: Experiences of Intimacy

As with understandings of intimacy, participants' experiences were also diverse. As reported in Chapter 7, some participants' experiences of intimacy were influenced by sociocultural understandings of self (i.e., masculinities) or romantic understandings of intimacy in couple relationships, or both. For other participants, experiences of intimacy were not influenced by sociocultural understandings of self. For some of these participants, developing understandings of self that were no longer determined by social norms was the result of significant life experiences.

8.3.1 Sociocultural Expectations Influence Experiences of Intimacy

Masculinity

Findings reported in Chapter 7 identified that some participants' understandings of themselves had been (prior to their present experiences) influenced by heterosexual masculine ideals and that these ideals had influenced their experiences of intimacy, particularly in relation to their relationships with other men. These findings align with findings in other studies (e.g., Bank & Hansford, 2000; Flood, 2008; Patrick & Beckenbach, 2009).

The similarities, across participants, in the nature of these masculine ideals suggest the presence of a dominant masculine ideal. While Connell (2005) suggests that in Western culture, there are multiple ideas of masculinity, or multiple masculinities, she and other researchers (e.g., Ravenhill & de Visser, 2016) also suggests that one view of masculinity is dominant. This dominant view valorises "the denial of weakness or vulnerability, emotional and physical control, the appearance of being strong and robust, dismissal of any need for help [and] a ceaseless interest in sex" (Courtenay, 2000, p. 1389). This particular view of masculinity sees any deviance from this ideal as "nonmasculine at best, [and] feminine at worst" (Ravenhill & de Visser, p. 1).

This view of masculinity is also described as hegemonic masculinity, which Farrugia (2015) describes as "the dominant socially constructed configuration and expression of masculinity that works to maintain patriarchal power structures through the subordination of women and alternative expressions of masculinity" (p. 240). A number of factors facilitate the hegemony of this dominant masculinity. According to DiMuccio, Yost, and Helweg-Larsen (2016), masculinity is "a precarious status that must be actively and publicly achieved and maintained" (p. 1). Kimmel (1994) states that:

> to admit weakness, to admit frailty or fragility, is to be seen as a wimp, a sissy, not a real man. But seen by whom? Other men: we are under the constant careful scrutiny of other men. Other men watch us, rank us, grant our acceptance into the realm of manhood. Manhood is demonstrated for other men's approval. (p. 128)

Thus, masculinity must be constantly validated, and validated by those who hold the dominant view of what it is to be masculine. For those who require others' validation of their understanding of themselves, there is little chance of escaping this dominant view. As a hegemony, this dominant view also precludes the possibility of conceiving masculinity otherwise.

This view of masculinity is not only valorised by heterosexual men. In a study of men's and women's understandings of masculinity, Ravenhill and de Visser (2016) found that for some heterosexual women, as well as some heterosexual men, dominant views of masculinity were viewed as being desirable. They also found that "masculine capital" could be accrued, through such attributes as muscularity or athleticism to overcome other traits that might be regarded as feminine. Other researchers examining masculinity have suggested that drinking alcohol with mates is an important part of establishing one's masculinity (e.g., Flood, 2008; Zamboanga, Audley, Iwamoto, Martin, & Tomaso, 2016).

For participants in this project, whose understanding of themselves was influenced by heterosexual masculine ideals, intimacy seemed more possible, if this were offset against other demonstrations that reinforced perceptions of adhering to masculine ideals. For example, one participant described how, after drinking a few beers, it was possible to disclose more personal information with his male friends. This may have been a result of the disinhibiting effects of the alcohol, or that the alcohol provided a legitimate excuse, should such disclosures be interpreted by others as being un-masculine. Thus, drinking, as a demonstration of masculinity, may have been one way of offsetting the potentially masculinity-threatening disclosure of personal information. Another participant reported that he experienced intimacy with other men in different ways, in contexts that involved danger or threat. It is also possible that other factors present in situations of danger or threat (such as bravery, courage or displays of strength) may have worked in a similar way.

In a study examining masculine capital, de Visser and McDonnell (2013) adopted the term "man points" to refer to behaviours as either gaining or losing points that accrue to a perception of an acceptable level of masculinity. This perception was held by both men and women participating in this study. Behaviours such as cooking were identified as losing points, while sporting prowess was seen as gaining points. Along similar lines, Kosakowska-Berezecka et al. (2016) found that men who felt that their masculinity was under threat were less likely to engage in domestic tasks, and more likely to accept gender inequalities, compared to men whose masculinity was not threatened.

These findings offer important insights for understanding masculinity as well as its impact upon intimacy. Understanding that less masculine behaviours in some aspects of experience may be offset by more masculine behaviours in other areas suggests that it is important to look more holistically. What might seem to be freedom from the hegemonic effects of dominant views of masculinity may reflect a rebalancing, rather than a freedom from, or change to subjectivity. In addition, this suggests that, for men whose understanding of themselves is subject to the hegemony of dominant masculinity, freedom to experience intimacy may also depend upon other areas of their lives where men feel a vulnerability to being judged as un-masculine. Thus, a loss of intimacy in a particular relationship may not be due to relationship factors, but rather due to other factors in a man's life in which his sense of masculinity is threatened. However, as is discussed later (Section 8.3.2), these may be the very experiences that enable a man to move beyond this subjectivity to result in a more permanent freedom to experience greater intimacy.

Romantic relationship ideals

Findings in Chapter 7 also identified that romantic relationship ideals influenced some participants' experiences of intimacy. This was evident in the ways that participants expected to experience intimacy only in their couple relationship, or saw intimacy as occurring in particular activities, specifically those typically associated with romance (e.g., weekends away, eating out at a restaurant, special movies or sexual activity).

Whilst these activities created experiences of intimacy for some participants, they also limited experiences of intimacy to these kinds of activities. For example, as a result of understanding intimacy as occurring only during child-free times, one

participant did not describe the possibility of intimacy with his wife in the context of family activities. This also meant that he did not see experiences with his children or friends as offering intimate possibilities in those other relationships.

A number of studies have addressed how romantic ideals have been applied to partner selection and evaluation in couple relationships (Campbell & Fletcher, 2015; Campbell et al., 2001; Overall & Fletcher, 2010; Simpson et al., 2001). In a systematic review of the content of romantic comedy films and their effect on young people's couple relationship expectations, Hefner and Wilson (2013) found that viewing such movies did lead to the development of idealistic views of a partner. Similarly, Galloway, Engstrom and Emmers-Sommer (2015) found that idealistic expectations regarding romantic relationships were linked to frequent exposure to romantic films. Other studies have examined the impact of discrepancies between expected levels of intimacy and actual levels of intimacy (e.g., Novak, 2007; Sanderson, Rahm, & Beigbeder, 2005), and they have identified that experiences of intimacy compared to expectations regarding intimacy can influence relationship satisfaction. However, few studies seem to address the effect of such beliefs regarding *how* intimacy is experienced on actual experiences of intimacy. The effect of expectations in shaping experiences has been described in such concepts as "the self-fulfilling prophecy" (Merton, 1948) or "the Pygmalion Effect" or the "Rosenthal Effect" (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968), yet few studies have examined these effects in terms of the facilitating or limiting effects of beliefs about intimacy on intimate experiences. Therefore, this study offers important and new insights regarding the potential limitations for experiences of intimacy created by narrow understandings of intimacy and identifies areas for further research.

In some of the studies described above, (i.e., Galloway et al., 2015; Hefner & Wilson, 2013), media (i.e., films) were identified as having an impact upon the ways in which young people understood their couple relationship experiences. In this present study, expectations regarding intimate behaviours were also understood as the result of sociocultural influences. The ways in which these sociocultural influences had an impact on participants' understanding of themselves and/or of intimacy were consistent with Kegan's (1982) theory, as was described in Chapter 3 (Section 3.4). Participants whose ways of making meaning were more closely associated with Stage 2 or Stage 3 Selves were more likely to be influenced by social expectations.

Drawing upon the definition of intimacy utilised in this thesis, the influences of social expectations were also understood as experiences of involuntary and unconscious forms of intimacy because they shaped how participants understood themselves and how they understood others. This intimate connection between sociocultural influences and participants' selves is described in Figure 8.1. Participants whose ways of making meaning were less influenced by these expectations tended to make meaning in ways that aligned with Stage 4 or 5 Selves. These findings suggest that participants whose way of making meaning had evolved beyond Stage 3 were also able to experience intimacy in more expansive ways, less limited by these expectations.

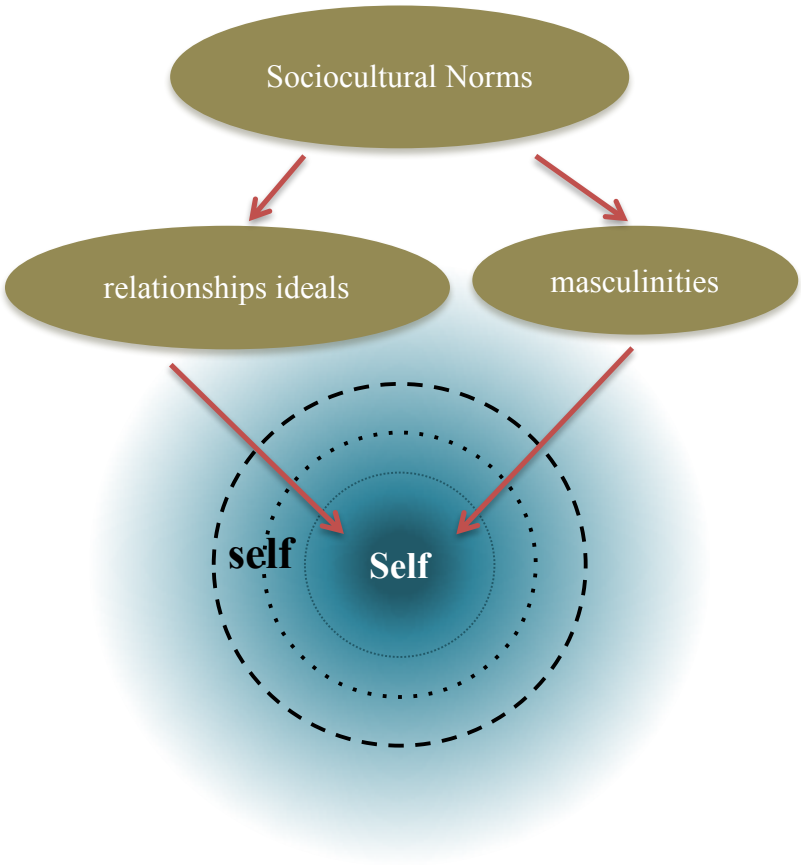


Figure 8.1. Involuntary and unconscious forms of intimacy

8.3.2 Life Experiences

Changes in understanding of self leading to changes in intimacy

In terms of this evolution, some participants described significant experiences or life events that were responsible for moving their understanding of themselves beyond socioculturally determined meanings. One participant described a life-threatening illness as the catalyst for this evolution of Self, which also resulted in new experiences of intimacy. Other studies report similar patterns for participants

experiencing life threatening illnesses. For example, Flynn et al. (2011) found that although some participants reported declines in intimacy as a consequence of the physiological changes resulting from cancer and its treatment, other participants reported increases in intimate experience and/or changes to the way that those participants understood intimacy. In particular, these experiences challenged ideas that sex was necessary for intimacy. One participant in Flynn et al.'s study said, "Actually, it is better than ever. We hug a lot, yes, we kiss a lot. Before, we were so hurried; now we take the time" (p. 384). This resonates with a statement from a participant in this study, who described his intimate experiences with his wife as being more tender, and richer than before his illness: "This is quite different, this is really um… it's very peaceful and very— I'm comfortable". Lindau, Surawska, Paice, and Baron (2011) reported similar findings, identifying that some participants experienced positive effects in terms of intimacy as a result of cancer experiences.

In a systematic review of qualitative studies examining the effects of prostate cancer on intimacy, Tucker, Speer, and Peters (2016) examined findings from 182 heterosexual males, aged 45-84 years. Prostate cancer treatment often results in erectile dysfunction or other negative impacts on sexual function. For a number of men, these effects challenged their sense of masculinity: "they felt diminished as a man . . . because of treatment" (p. 84). Tucker et al. also reported that for some men, limitations to sexual expressions of intimacy facilitated a "reinvention" of intimacy.

In another study reporting the effects of other people's illness upon men's understanding of masculinity, Arenhall et al. (2011) found that heterosexual men, whose partners had experienced heart attacks, also struggled with understanding themselves. Arenhall et al. reported that this experience challenged the men's beliefs in themselves as being in control and able to protect their partners from danger. As well, physiological changes resulting from illness led to decreased confidence or willingness to engage sexually for both partners. However, some couples were able to overcome these difficulties – both in terms of understanding of self and in terms of sex, to develop greater intimacy in their relationship. The increased experiences of intimacy were in relation to sexual and non-sexual behaviours and some men identified that the experience led to greater openness toward their partner. In addition, an increased awareness of mortality challenged

men's understandings of themselves in other ways, in terms of priorities or diet-related choices. It is also important to recognise that some couples were not able to overcome these difficulties and that, although these experiences were life-changing, they did not result in positive changes to understandings of self or intimacy.

These findings from other studies align with the findings in this study, but they also highlight that not all life-changing experiences necessarily lead to richer experiences of intimacy or more self-authored understandings of self. According to the constructive-developmental understanding of Self that underpins this thesis, the effects of life-changing experiences depend upon how an individual is able to respond to these experiences. Kegan (1982) identifies that evolution of Self is dependent upon both support and challenge and that without the necessary balance of these, challenge may not lead to growth, or at worst, it may lead to distortion of Self. Thus, these additional findings provide important qualifications to an understanding of the possibilities and threats of life-changing experiences.

Another participant described his experience of coming to terms with being gay and how this involved a conscious process of peeling away layers of understandings about how he should be, in order to come to a new understanding of himself. As previously suggested, western men (heterosexual and homosexual) are subject to dominant masculine ideals (Ravenhill & de Visser, 2016, June 16). In addition to a rejection of femininity, and based upon competition, dominant masculine ideals have been described as being based upon homohysteria – that is, the fear that one might be perceived as gay (Anderson, 2008; Connell, 2005; Drummond et al., 2015; Elder et al., 2012; Kimmel, 1994; Lewis, 1978; Webb, 1998). Thus, coming to terms with homosexuality is not only a reassessment of one's understanding of oneself in terms of sexual attraction, but for males, it also represents a challenge to one's masculinity. As such, coming to terms with understanding oneself as being gay has similarities to the life-changing, self-concept-challenging experiences described earlier in this section. For this participant, coming to terms with being gay involved a conscious process of examining the basis for how he had understood himself in the past and was a process of awakening from his subjectivity in relation to sociocultural influences.

Other studies also describe the ways in which "coming out" stories are also the result of personal growth in order to resist social expectations (e.g., Cox,

Dewaele, van Houtte, & Vincke, 2011; King & Noelle, 2005; Solomon, McAbee, Åsberg, & McGee, 2015). Vaughan and Waehler (2010) have labelled this growth as "Coming Out Growth". Roseborough (2006) also analysed the process of coming out and described factors that align with transitions from Stage 3 to Stage 4 which, as has been previously described, is a shift from the need for validation from others to an independent and self-authored understanding of self (Kegan, 1982).

In this study, and for this participant, developing a new understanding of self also led to changes in understandings of intimacy. As well as developing a strong commitment to "personal freedom" (described in relation to intrapersonal intimacy – see Section 8.2.3), this participant developed a greater awareness of intimacy in everyday experiences, also overcoming sociocultural expectations of intimacy as being a romantic event. The process of a shift in understandings of intimacy, regarding how it may be experienced is also described by Weingarten (1991), who suggests that that non-intimate interactions can be transformed into intimate interactions through changes in the ways that people construct meaning.

As was described for health-related life changing events, these "coming out" experiences were also experiences of involuntary and conscious forms of intimacy because, in order to "come out", the person needed to overcome social norms that regarded being gay as unacceptable. Thus, these experiences of pushing against social order shaped how these participants (in this study and in the others referred to above) understood themselves. The experiences were conscious in that participants were aware of these pressures, but involuntary in that these social pressures were understood as being outside the participants' control. In addition, these were not experiences that these participants could ignore, forcing some kind of resolution. This intimate connection between these significant experiences and participants' selves is described in Figure 8.2.

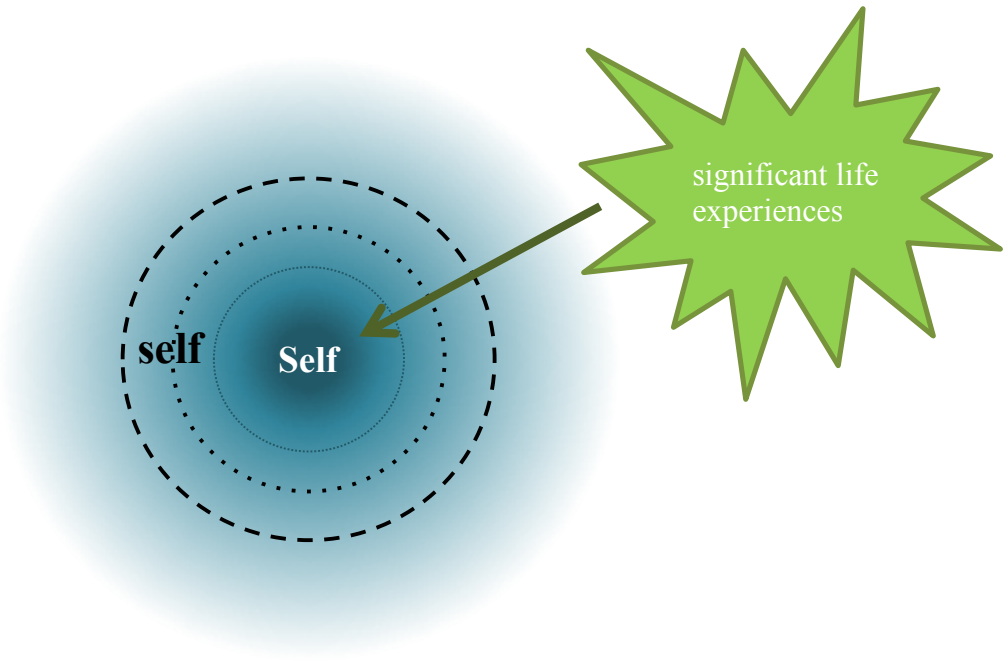


Figure 8.2. Involuntary and conscious forms of intimacy

Changes in understanding of others leading to changes in intimacy

In addition to changes in participants' life experiences having a direct impact on their understanding of themselves and of intimacy, two participants found more expansive experiences of intimacy in life experiences involving *others'* vulnerabilities. For one participant this involved experiences of death and infidelity. For the other, it was an experience of his brother disclosing himself in deeper ways. These were also experiences that enabled masks to be stripped away and that provided access to deeper layers of connection. However, in each of these cases, they resulted in a new understanding of the other person, rather than a new understanding of self (see Figure 8.3). In support of these findings, researchers who have applied Reis and Shaver's (1988) process model of intimacy have found that responding to another person's self-disclosure can also result in increased feelings of intimacy for the responding partner (e.g., Lin, 1992; Mitchell et al., 2008).

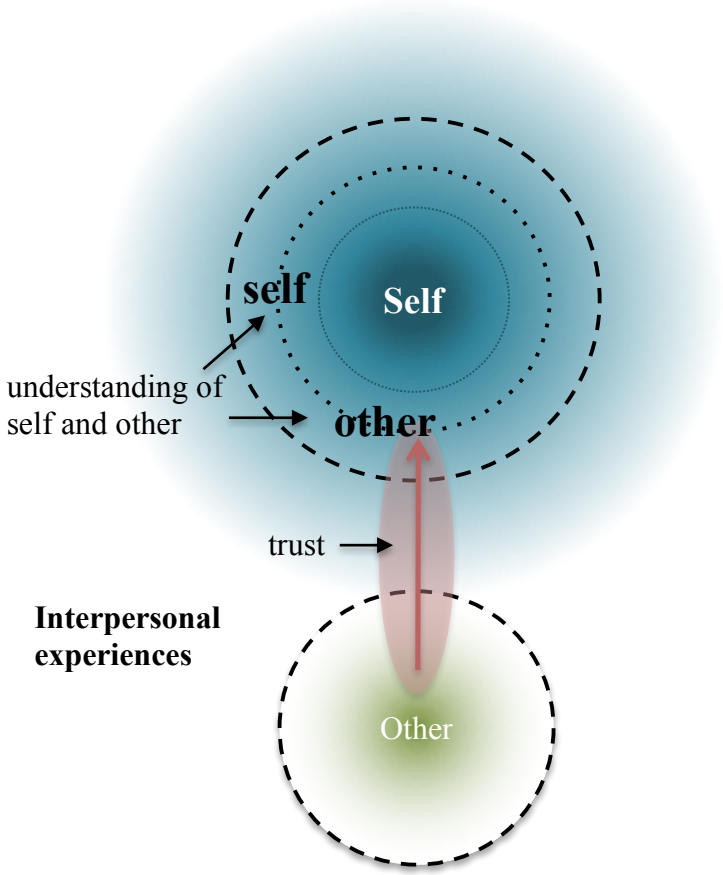


Figure 8.3. Conscious, voluntary and asymmetrical experiences of intimacy

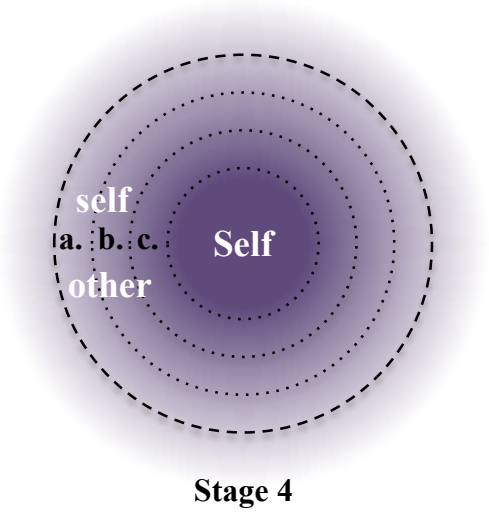
These findings identify that significant life experiences can create opportunities to develop new ways of understanding oneself or of understanding another person. For participants in this study, understanding oneself differently, new experiences of intimacy were possible. These findings also support the usefulness of an onto-epistemological perspective by identifying that although epistemology can influence ontology, equally ontology can influence epistemology.

8.3.3 Layers/Depth

Several participants spoke about ways in which they understood their experiences of intimacy as involving multiple layers or depths of self or of others. As was described previously, participants spoke about peeling back layers or removing masks, or letting go of predetermined conceptions. Other participants spoke about sharing themselves at different levels in different relationships. Participants who spoke about others revealing themselves in new ways also described these new ways as resulting in a new level of connection or moving past façades to find the "real" person. Orlofsky (1976), in examining intimacy according

to Erikson's (1950) psychosocial stages, also identified differing depths of intimacy, reflecting the degree to which a person had resolved Erikson's isolation-intimacy crisis. As well, Dahms (1972) identified three different levels of intimacy, with the highest level expressing the least idealised view of self. Building upon Kegan's (1982) theory may provide a way of understanding this concept of layers in relation to understandings of self or other.

Kegan (1982) suggests that previous stages of Self become object rather than subject; that is, they become aspects of self over which a person has a degree of choice or control. In becoming object, they also become conscious. For example, for a person at Stage 4, roles and relationship expectations have become conscious, in terms of how they understand themself in relation to others. This person can choose how they respond to the role-based or relationship-based demands that others place upon them, that is, be objective about them – because these aspects are no longer part of their Self-structure. Kegan does not provide much detail about how these objective aspects function in a person's experience. However, given that Kegan also identifies that the Self acts as a unifying structure in how a person makes meaning, it follows that subjective aspects of previous stages (such as roles and relationships for the person at Stage 4) become organised objectively according to a person's current Self-structure. Extending Kegan's theory, it follows that since these aspects of self are no longer central to how a person understands herself or himself, engaging with others in terms of these aspects (i.e., roles and relationship expectations) may constitute more superficial levels of engagement. Further, it also seems plausible that the further that a person has evolved from those prior stages, the less influence aspects related to those stages have on a person's understanding of herself or himself and of others. These ideas, adding to Kegan's theory, are represented in Figure 8.4 for the person at Stage 4 (as an example), and in Figure 8.5 for Stages 2, 3, 4 and 5.



Stage 4

Conscious understandings of self and other organised by Self-structure

	Ways of understanding self/other (intrapersonal)	Ways of understanding self in relation to other (interpersonal)
a.	dispositions	roles
b.	inner states	relationship ideals
c.	identity	ideology

Figure 8.4. Layers of self at Stage 4

Using Stage 4 as an example, this extension of Kegan's (1982) theory suggest that the deepest ways in which the person at Stage 4 can understand themself and engage with others is in terms of how they understand their own identity. Identity, which typifies the Stage 4 Self (Kegan, 1982), comes from subjectivity to self-authorship or to self-as-institution. Therefore, identity is the deepest part of the person's understanding of self because they cannot be objective or distanced from the Self-form that constructs it. According to the definition of intimacy used in this thesis, intimacy occurs in experiences that involve, expression or confirmation of, or influence to, a person's understanding of herself or himself. For the person at Stage 4, the deepest way in which they understand themself is in terms of identity. This, then, is also the most vulnerable aspect of this person's understanding of self. In a similar way, engaging with another person in terms of how one understands that person's identity is also the most vulnerable aspect of one's understanding of other.

In terms of how the Stage 4 person understands themself in relation to others, relationships that engage with aspects of ideology (i.e., values, beliefs, principles) are likely to constitute deeper relationships. Relationships that engage with others in terms of roles are likely to be experienced as being more superficial relationships because these do not engage with aspects of self that are as subjective or vulnerable. Building upon Kegan's (1982) framework in this way provides a means of understanding why different levels of engagement might be possible or not possible for different people. It also suggests that experiences involving roles, relationship ideals, or ideologies may be experienced as being more or less intimate, according

to that person's evolution of Self. This explanation of varying depths of intimate experiences is applied to Stages 2 to 5 in Figure 8.5.

This model (Figure 8.5) suggests that different stages of evolution of Self will lead to different perceptions regarding which aspects of self are more central to an understanding of self, and hence more vulnerable. Thus, for one person (a person at Stage 2), expressing an understanding of self that reveals needs, interests or wishes is likely to be a highly intimate experience. However, for another person (a person at Stage 4), hearing someone express their needs, interests or wishes is unlikely to be perceived as intimate, relative to themself. In this way, this model provides an explanation of the incongruence that Duck (1994) names as an asymmetrical experience of intimacy. In a dyadic context, Duck describes this asymmetry as resulting from each person being in a psychologically different relationship. That is, each person constructs the relationship according to a different psychological framework. This model explains the nature and source of these different frameworks.

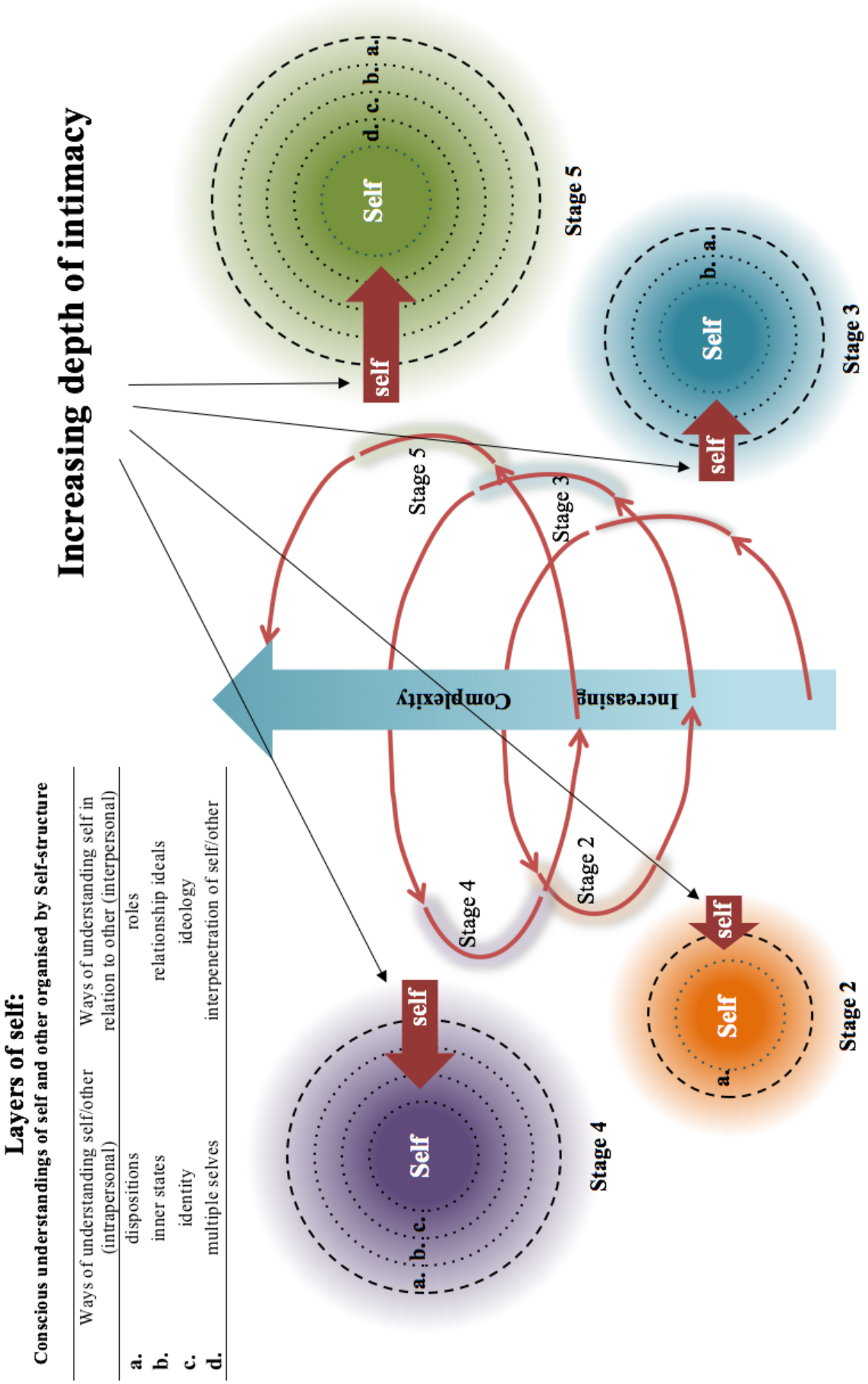


Figure 8.5. Increasing depths of intimacy.

8.3.4 Summary

This section has examined Research Question 2: "How do the intimate experiences of a small number of men add to an understanding of intimacy?" and has identified that a number of sociocultural factors influenced some men's experiences of intimacy. Some participants were influenced by dominant western understandings of masculinity, and these had limiting effects on these men's experiences of intimacy. The negative effects of dominant social ideas about masculinity upon men's relationships were also described by other researchers. These other studies also identified that masculinity is a constant performance of balancing "man points" or gaining "masculine capital" in order to establish one's masculinity in the eyes of other men. The impact of this, for participants in this study was that gaining (or losing) capital through some behaviours made intimacy with other men more or less possible.

For some participants, romantic relationship ideals also limited expectations about how intimacy was experienced and may have contributed to confining experiences of intimacy to romantic events in couple relationships. Although some findings in other studies describe that romantic expectations influence couple relationships, little research has examined how these expectations have a direct influence on understandings and experiences of intimacy.

For other participants, life-changing events related to health or sexuality created opportunities for these men to overcome these limitations, both in terms of understandings of self and in terms of understandings of intimacy. For these participants, experiences of intimacy were enriched by moving beyond sociocultural expectations about masculinity and about intimacy. However, other studies qualify these findings by identifying that life-changing events can also result in diminished understandings of self and loss of intimacy.

This discussion has also identified that for participants in this study, intimacy occurred at different levels, and proposed a way in which Kegan's (1982) understanding of Self can be extended to provide a model for understanding these varying depths. This new model suggests that, objectively; different depths of intimacy are possible at different stages of the evolution of Self. This model also identifies that subjectively, experiences of intimacy involving understandings of self that relate to one's current Self-form (i.e., dispositions/roles at Stage 2, inner states/relationship ideals at Stage 3, identity/ideology at Stage 4 and multiple

selves/interpenetration of self/other at Stage 5), are likely to be experienced as being equally deep, regardless of the evolutionary stage. That is, for the person at Stage 2, expressing an understanding of self in terms of disposition is likely to be experienced (subjectively) at an equal depth to the person at Stage 4, expressing an understanding of self in terms of identity.

8.4 Other Contributions

8.4.1 Understanding self vs. Self

As was described in Chapter 3 (Section 3.2), for the purposes of this thesis it was necessary to describe self in two ways: in terms of conscious and objective aspects, labelled "self" and in terms of unconscious and subjective aspects, labelled "Self". This distinction provided a useful way for overcoming a lack of clarity in Kegan's (1982) theory. Kegan states that a person is unable to be conscious of the structure of their system of meaning making (i.e., their epistemology), which he refers to as self. This is because they are subject to this epistemology, which also enables this way of making meaning to provide unilateral control over a person's experience. That is, what a person can and cannot understand and can and cannot experience is consistently determined by Self. However, what is not clear is how Kegan understands a person's conscious awareness of themself or their understanding of self. In differentiating between these two understandings of self, it has been helpful in this thesis to use Self to refer to unconscious, subjective aspects and self to refer to conscious, objective aspects and may offer a helpful extension to Kegan's theory.

These distinctions have been important in examining intimacy in order to recognise that vulnerabilities exist at both conscious levels (i.e., in relation to self) and unconscious levels (i.e., in relation to Self). As has been suggested earlier, the interpretation of findings in this study suggests that some men's understandings and experiences of intimacy were influenced in unconscious ways by sociocultural factors (e.g., masculinity and romantic relationship ideals: Section 8.3.1). As well, understandings and experiences of intimacy were influenced in conscious ways by life experiences (e.g., life threatening illness, homosexuality and others' expression of vulnerability: Section 8.3.2). Recognising that intimacy involves both self and Self enables a broader conception of intimate experiences, i.e., that intimacy can occur in both conscious and unconscious ways.

8.4.2 Understanding the Process of Meaning Making

This thesis also adds to an understanding of Kegan's (1982) theory in terms of meaning making as a process, rather than as an event. One limitation described in Chapter 3 (Section 3.6) was that Kegan's theory appears to be linear, that a person moves sequentially from Stage 1 to 5 and that meanings reflect a person's current epistemology. As was described in Chapter 5, during a first interview (the Subject-Object Interview; SOI), one participant described ways of making meaning that were less complex than his final Subject Object Score (SOS). This was in relation to a current situation that was particularly difficult and in which finding a resolution to the complexities of the situation eluded this participant. This participant's final SOS was 4(3), yet he seemed to be making meanings in ways that moved from understandings that suggested Stage 4 to Stage 3 to Stage 2. It seemed that for this participant, returning to simpler meanings (focused on his own needs) was necessary in order to find some stable place from which to construct meaning in order to respond to his difficult situation.

The model in Figure 8.5, which extends Kegan's (1982) theory, offers a way of understanding this participant's process of meaning making. The model (in Figure 8.5) proposes that for a person at Stage 4, inner states (defining Self at Stage 3) and dispositions (defining Self at Stage 2) are understood in terms of identity. That is, a person's identity contains a theory of inner states and dispositions – that behaviours, thinking and feeling can vary, but what is consistent is one's ideology. However, when a person's experiences (e.g., I cannot see a way that both our needs can be met) do not reflect ideology (e.g., I should be thoughtful and consider others' needs), a person faces a crisis. Kegan (1982) describes this mismatch of experience and meaning making as a loss of self, and "the occasional inability to compose meaning, which we often experience as the loss of our own composure" (p. 11). This idea is also expressed in Higgins' (1987) self-discrepancy theory, which identifies that large differences between one's "ideal self" and one's "actual self" create psychic distress. This kind of recovery of meaning is a central aspect of Frankl's (1992) logotherapy and of his theory of maintaining self in contexts of severe trauma. In a similar way, deRoon-Cassini, de St. Aubin, Valvano, Hastings and Horn (2009), in a study of spinal-cord related injury, found that loss of meaning was highly related to loss of wellbeing. In a therapeutic context, Fontana and Rosenheck (2005) found that overcoming loss of meaning was an important component of recovery from post-traumatic stress disorder. Although not as

extreme, the findings in this thesis support a recognition of the importance of making meaning in order to resolve psychic distress.

In addressing this crisis of meaning, it is proposed that the participant described in this section temporarily adopted a less complex model (i.e., at Stage 2; Figure 8.5) in order to find a solution by examining how his own needs could be addressed. Applying this new model as a series of more or less complex meaning making systems, across which a person can shift, offers a way of understanding this participants' experience. The model suggests that, while adopting a less complex system, a person's access to depths of self would be reduced. For this participant at Stage 4, his inner states and his identity were likely to become (temporarily) unavailable to him, and his capacity to be accessible to the other person were also likely to have been reduced, a prediction that matched the description this participant offered of his experiences. As well, this may align with attachment ideas that, when under threat, a person may be more likely to exhibit insecure attachment behaviours.

Understanding a person's experience of self as moving between levels of complexity is helpful in providing insight regarding the ways in which a person might experience a diminished sense of self in order to resolve issues that exceed their current level of complexity. As well, this understanding of shifts in levels of availability to another person may contribute to understanding relationship dynamics such as the pursuer/distancer cycle, identified originally by Fogarty (1979) which describes one relationship partner's pursuit of engagement and the other partner's withdrawal in response. In addition, these findings may also be understood in terms of Gable's (2006) model of approach and avoidance motivations in relationships. What is described as approach motivation may be the result of one person moving toward the other, in order to seek a greater understanding of that person's meaning making. What is described as avoidance motivation may be the result of the other person withdrawing to a less complex way of making meaning in order to understand themself. As was suggested earlier, this is a process of lessening complexity, and is one that reduces a person's capacity to consider the other in their meaning making.

In addition to offering an understanding of how a person might utilise different levels of meaning making in coming to an understanding of their experience, which may result in greater or lesser availability of self (to oneself or

to others), this discussion also offers important insights related to conducting the SOI. These findings highlight the possibility that, during the SOI, a person may be in the process of resolving a current issue. If this process involves a temporary reduction in complexity in order to come to a resolution, then what may be observed during the interview may not offer a good opportunity to assess a person's most complex way of constructing meaning. This suggests that sensitivity to the degree to which an interviewee's issue is resolved is important in conducting the SOI. These observations, together with observations of distinctly different Subject Object Scores in different aspects of the same participant's experiences, highlight the need for further exploration of more complex issues in understanding the application of Kegan's (1982) theory, both in terms of understanding a person and in terms of understanding the process of making meaning.

8.4.3 Participant Age and Education was Not a Determinant of SOS

A comparison of SOSs with demographic data also reveals that, for the participants in this study, more complex SOSs did not seem to depend upon education or age. For example, the participants were mostly older males, but they still demonstrated a range of SOSs from 2 to 5. In addition, the youngest (and least educated) did not have the least complex score. However, consistent with these findings, Sneed, Whitbourne and Culang's (2006) longitudinal study found that individual developmental rates varied and consequently that development was not necessarily tied to chronological age. As well, five participants had doctoral degrees, but they had SOSs across four stages of evolution. These findings do not align with Kegan's (1994) suggestion that higher SOSs are more likely to be associated with higher levels of education. These findings raise possible questions about the relationship between age and education, and the evolution of Self, and about what kinds of experiences facilitate the growth of Self. However, as the findings in this study are based upon the experiences of 12 men, it is important to recognise that these findings cannot be taken to represent men's (or people's) experiences in general.

8.5 Proposed definition of intimacy

In Chapter 1, I proposed a working definition of intimacy that was examined in relation to the body of research regarding intimacy and that was refined in Chapter 2. This working definition was then applied to Kegan's (1982) theory in Chapter 3 and to participants' understandings and experiences of intimacy in

Chapters 6 and 7. In its most developed form my definition, drawing from this new empirical evidence is pictured in Figure 8.6 and states:

> Intimacy is a process of engagement with self involving a person's understandings of themself (or self-concept) and/or of another (concept of specific other) resulting in experiences where these understandings are expressed, confirmed or influenced. This can be an experience involving verbal or nonverbal behaviours or both.
>
> Vulnerability is necessary in facilitating intimacy and can occur to different degrees; the degree of vulnerability may vary across a person's understanding of herself or himself or of another person. Vulnerability may be conscious and voluntary, conscious and involuntary, or unconscious and involuntary. Asymmetrical vulnerability results in an imbalance of power, and trust is required to allow this asymmetry voluntarily.

This definition was useful for describing the participants' experiences and understandings of intimacy. Participants' understandings reflected conscious and voluntary experiences of intimacy (discussed in Section 8.2), and participants' experiences reflected conscious and involuntary experiences of intimacy (discussed in Section 8.3.2). Participants' experiences also reflected unconscious and involuntary experiences of intimacy (discussed in Section 8.3.1) arising from the influence of sociocultural norms; however, these had less impact for participants at Stages 4 or 5. As well, participants' experiences of intrapersonal intimacy (discussed in Section 8.2.3) offered an addition to this model of intimacy. In this study, these were evident only for participants at Stages 4 or 5. Combined with the models of layers or depths of intimacy (discussed in Section 8.3.3), these models offer new ways of conceptualising intimacy.

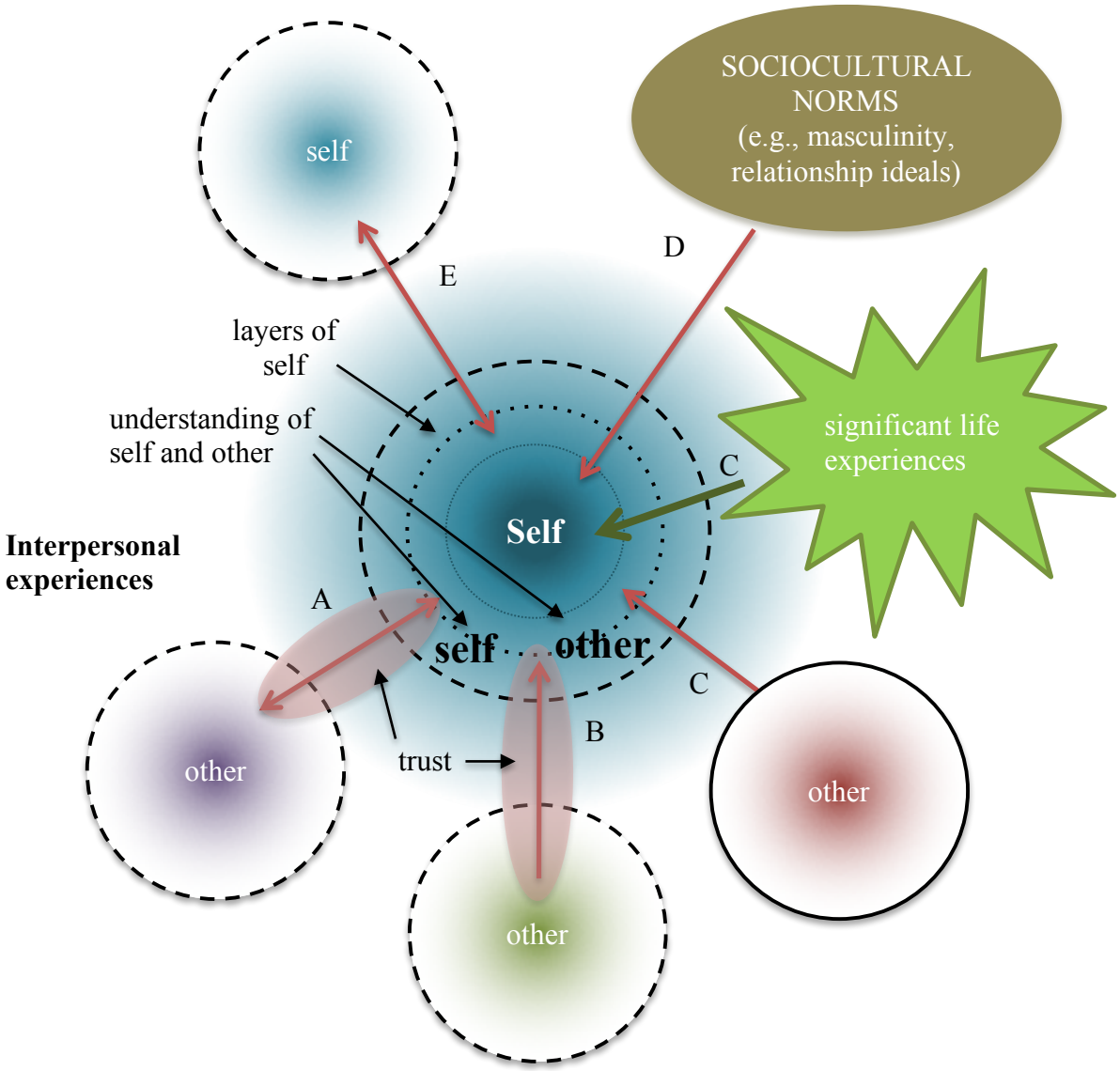


Figure 8.6. Working definition of intimacy.

A. Experiences of intimacy involving reciprocal vulnerability
B. Experiences of intimacy involving asymmetrical vulnerability
C. Involuntary and conscious experiences of intimacy
D. Involuntary and unconscious experiences of intimacy
E. Intrapersonal experiences of intimacy

This definition provides a broader definition of intimacy that is strongly tied to self – including both conscious and unconscious aspects (i.e., self and Self). It provides an understanding of intimacy as being multidimensional: conscious and unconscious, voluntary and involuntary, symmetrical and asymmetrical. This provides a capacity to recognise that intimacy can have both desirable and undesirable effects and that it may occur beyond a person's immediate awareness. This understanding of intimacy recognises that intimacy occurs in everyday

experiences and raises an awareness of the need for greater consciousness in order to be able to choose to what or whom a person's self/Self is vulnerable.

This understanding of intimacy also includes dynamic aspects of self: in terms of the development of self/Self, in terms of varying depths or layers, and in terms of shifting between complexities. These offer useful possibilities for examining more complex dynamics of intimate interactions in future studies.

While empathy has become a concern for health care research (Kirk 2007), the data from this thesis indicate that men often do not conceptualise intimacy as linked with empathy. As well, the relationship between sex and intimacy has not been a major focus of this study. Participant experiences highlighted that for some men, aligning sexual experiences with understandings of intimacy has not been straightforward. It has been suggested that this may be due to the strong relationship between sex and masculinity and the negative relationship between masculinity and intimacy. This is also an area that warrants further investigation to gain a clearer picture of the way in which complex factors, identified in this model of intimacy, interact in men's sexual experiences.

8.6 Limitations

8.6.1 Design, Generalisability and Idiosyncrasies of Participants

There are some limitations associated with the findings presented in this thesis. The qualitative approach undertaken in analysing data in this thesis is subjective rather than objective, and as is emphasised in Chapter 4, the findings presented here represent the researcher's interpretations of the participants' data. As such the conclusions presented here are the result of a complex interaction between the researcher's meaning-making process (both in the process of transcription and analysis) and the participants' meaning-making of their own experiences. Therefore, it is possible that another researcher might come to different conclusions. As well, in taking an ideographic approach to analysing data, it is clear that this study does not attempt to offer generalisable findings. Rather, this study offers possibilities for broadening conceptions of intimacy and for understanding ways in which a developmental approach adds to this broader conception. However, these possibilities also reflect the characteristics of this particular group of participants, who were western, white, mostly older men who were highly educated, all having undertaken tertiary education, and some having

completed doctoral study. As such this group is not representative of the wider population of men in Australia (e.g., Indigenous men, or men from non-western backgrounds). As well, given the difficulties described in Chapter 4 in relation to recruiting men, this group of participants is likely to represent a minority group of men who are actively interested in intimacy. This was indicated by a number of participants' comments related to why they had participated in this particular study. For several of the participants, it was to find answers to personal questions and for others it was because they felt that it was important to share what they knew that other men, in their experience, did not know, but should know. As well, the participants' responses during the interviews suggested that over half of the participants had invested considerable time in developing their understanding of themselves (and others). Some participants were actively involved in men's groups that focused on moving beyond stereotypical understandings of masculinity.

Men in this study were recruited from the general population, rather than from clinical populations. Although no assessments were undertaken as part of this study to identify the presence of pathologies, during the interviews, none of the men exhibited behaviours that might be considered pathological. Therefore, this study is not able to provide examples, or to clarify how Kegan's (1982) theory might be applied to the intimate experiences of individuals with identified pathologies. As well, this study is not able to offer expressions of Kegan's stages that embody destructive or detrimental intent.

Another limitation of to the application of these findings is that the theoretical framework underpinning the interpretation and analysis of data focuses on meaning-making process. As such the understandings of intimacy generated in this thesis assume a level of intellectual functioning of the participants, in contrast, for example, to a framework that might focus on behavioural expressions of intimacy. In this way, this thesis does not consider how intimacy might be experienced for people with limited intellectual functioning. This also represents a considerable gap in the existing literature and may be an important area of future investigation.

8.7 Implications and Applications

8.7.1 Implications for Research

As was described earlier, this thesis provides a broader and more complex understanding of intimacy, involving an understanding of the centrality of self/Self

and vulnerability. As well, it links the development of Self with changing conceptions of intimacy across a person's lifespan. This definition was useful in representing these men's experiences of intimacy and offered ways for unifying previous researchers' understandings of intimacy. This offers important possibilities for further examination of this area of human experience. As well, further research is required in order to apply this model more broadly to determine its usefulness beyond this study.

One way in which this model might be tested across a broader range of experiences is through the development of a standard interview protocol or measurement tool that facilitates the collection of data. This would offer insights regarding the generalisability of the findings within this thesis and across a broader range of men.

Some other areas, in which further research has been suggested, include examining experiences of intimacy that occur through synergy (i.e., interpenetration of self and other) and intrapersonal experiences of intimacy. For example, a qualitative study could investigate the effects of meditation or mindfulness (discussed in 6.2.4) upon intrapersonal connectedness (i.e., a person's sense of connectedness with themselves). Further, such a study could investigate whether or not this process offers greater depth of awareness of self, using the models developed in this thesis. A longitudinal study of adults with a Stage 5 way of making meaning might be recruited to investigate how interpersonal synergy creates opportunities in workplace relationships, for example, to develop greater understandings of self and other, utilising the stages of intimacy described in this thesis.

As well, the effects of beliefs about intimacy, particularly the effects of romantic ideals upon intimacy is another area that warrants further investigation, as is a clearer picture of how men can understand intimacy and sex at different stages of Self. This could be undertaken through a further examination of the existing literature related to men's sexual experiences, using the frameworks developed in this thesis. Finally, a further investigation of the model of layers or depths of intimacy will also offer clarity in relation to this aspect of intimate experience. Research oriented toward operationalising these models in terms of qualitative interview protocols or measurement tool might enable both qualitative and quantitative studies.

8.7.2 Implications for Therapeutic Practice

This thesis offers important possibilities for understanding men's experiences of intimacy in richer and more complex ways. As well, by linking development to intimacy, it offers therapists insights regarding previously unexplored avenues for enriching men's experiences of intimacy: through personal development.

For therapists working with couples, an examination of the differing depths at which intimacy may be experienced at different stages of development, offers alternative explanations for mismatches between partner's expectations and understandings of intimacy. Rather than attributing these mismatches to desire or to capacity or to individual characteristics, this developmental approach offers a way to value and respect these different understandings and experiences. As well, it offers couples in therapy an alternative way to examine their own expectations regarding their experiences of intimacy within their relationship and to respond to differences between partners.

Understanding the sociocultural factors that impact upon men's experiences of intimacy recognises that changes in understanding and experience of intimacy involve factors beyond an individual person. Recognising, in terms of understanding of self, what is at stake for some men, in order to develop greater intimacy may be helpful in supporting clients' development in this area.

As a theoretical contribution, identifying that abusive and violent experiences can also be experiences of involuntary intimacy may assist therapists to identify the impact that these can have upon a person's self/Self. This understanding of intimacy provides a means to understand the ways in which negative experiences of involuntary intimacy may also make experiences of voluntary intimacy more difficult. That is, it is possible that where traumatic experiences have involved involuntary intimacy, future voluntary intimate experiences may be shaped by this trauma. Recognising that intimacy may be possible in abusive or violent experiences may offer avenues for greater understanding of clients' experiences.

8.7.3 Implications for Public Health/Public Education

These findings recognise that sociological factors influence men's understandings and experiences of intimacy. In order to address these factors, broader sociocultural changes are needed. Messages about masculinity that suggest that vulnerability is unacceptable are communicated to boys and men in families,

in schools, in workplaces and through the media. These messages have negative impacts upon men's intimate experiences, and with other men in particular. A number of recent studies have identified that masculinity plays a role in exacerbating issues related to mental health, and depression in particular, for men in the UK (Spendelow, 2015; Yousaf, Popat, & Hunter, 2015), the USA (Nadeau, Balsan, & Rochlen, 2016) and Australia (Whittle et al., 2015). In particular Yousaf, Popat and Hunter (2015) identified that lack of willingness to seek help, as a consequence of ascribing to masculine ideals, was a significant contributor. Combined with the findings presented in this thesis, it is possible that men's lack of willingness to engage with male friends regarding personal matters and particularly in relation to feelings may contribute to this picture of failing to seek support in times of emotional difficulty.

In Australia, in 2015, "suicide was the leading cause of death for men aged 15 to 44 years" (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016b, n.p.). Also in 2015, men were three times as likely as women to die from suicide (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016a). Yousaf et al.'s (2015) findings also identified that when the effect of masculine ideals was removed, there were no differences between men's and women's help-seeking behaviours. Thus, it is possible that assisting men to develop greater intimacy in their relationships with male friends may provide a means to address the problem of male suicide. However, further research is required in this area to establish this claim.

In this thesis, a broad definition of intimacy has also enabled some violent experiences to be understood as intimate, when these are an attempt to express one's self or one's understanding of another person, or an attempt to influence that other person's understanding of herself or himself. These kinds of experiences of intimacy are more likely to align with Stages of Self that reflect an incapacity to take another person's perspective (i.e., Stage 2) or that are unable to value different ways of seeing the world (i.e., Stage 3). Consequently, intimate partner violence (IPV) is less likely to occur at Stages 4 or 5. This theorising is supported by findings that link masculinities to IPV (e.g., Anderson, 2005; Moore et al., 2008) and that report that subscription to dominant masculine ideals (more likely at Stages 2 and 3) increases the likelihood of IPV. Viewed through Kegan's (1982) theory, this suggests that the complexity of demands present in situations that result in IPV outweigh the complexities of the people involved, and perhaps the hegemonic effect

of dominant masculine ideals works against developing this complexity. Thus, the findings in this thesis suggest that growth of Self is not only likely to result in more other-focused expressions of intimacy, but will also facilitate the capacity to lessen the degree to which a man is subject to male norms that play a part in some examples of IPV. This lessening may also have additional effects for addressing IPV. Subjectivity to masculine ideals has been described as an involuntary form of intimacy. If the strength of this were lessened, men might be more likely to seek experiences of voluntary intimacy (such as seeking therapeutic assistance) which could have significant implications for facilitating change in the emotional difficulties associated with IPV. However, further research is required in this area to examine this possibility.

The findings in this thesis also suggest that romantic views of relationships limit experiences of intimacy by confining intimacy to special events that occur in couple relationships. Studies identify that these views are fostered by popular films (Galloway et al., 2015; Hefner & Wilson, 2013). It is important that other messages regarding more varied experiences of intimacy are available to challenge these narrower views.

In an earlier section (Section 8.7.1) I have suggested that men's understandings of the impact of social development upon intimacy may be addressed in the context of therapeutic work, to facilitate personal growth. It is important to recognise that therapeutic contexts are likely to attract particular men who are either already interested in personal growth, or are already aware (or have a partner who is aware) that something needs to change. Thus, this application of these findings may be useful but have limited scope for change amongst men in the wider community. In a similar way, although not therapeutic in orientation, there are men's movements such as Men's Wellbeing (menswellbeing.org) who organise a range of annual gatherings and run free men's groups. These organisations are also more likely to attract men who already have an awareness that they want something different in terms of connectedness and masculinity. Reaching men more generally may be possible through advertising campaigns that highlight the loss of connectedness created by social rules regarding males and masculinity.

Another avenue that may be more fruitful in reaching a broader audience may be within the education system, targeting adolescents (of any gender) who are forming their understandings of masculinity and intimacy. Developing a program

that helps young people to understand the contribution that socialisation makes to their understanding of themselves, as well as the limitations that may place upon connectedness in relationships may be an appropriate application of these findings.

8.8 Conclusion

In concluding, this thesis' unique contributions also offer hope. In recognising that intimacy is not a fixed capacity, but one that is related to the development of Self/self, these findings suggest that men can have more, and deeper experiences of intimacy. In addition, these findings suggest that this can be achieved personally through growth that enables an understanding of self that is not subject to dominant social understandings of masculinity or of relationships.

Afterword

The final resting point of this thesis has come as somewhat of a surprise to me. This thesis has arisen from a doctoral journey which began, not with men and intimacy, but with a proposal suggesting a link between experiences of gratitude and experiences of intimacy in couple relationships. It was a proposal that suggested a mixed, but predominantly quantitative methodology. In many ways, the thesis you have just read is a long way from those early beginnings. In other ways, it is still the same. Looking back, I am able to see that the seed of my desire to understand more about human connection was present in this early proposal. As well, my passion to discover more about how to help people to develop deeper and richer connections was also present. However, it is my view that this thesis is far richer and of greater substance than I was able to imagine at the beginning. The journey to this richer and more substantial conclusion has involved unexpected engagement with research philosophy, feminist theory and the development of a framework of meaning that is now far broader than my original perspective.

It has also been a surprise to see the way in which masculinity has come to play such an important part in my understanding of men's experiences, and in relation to intimacy. Prior to my engagement with this wider literature, I was not aware that masculinity may be achieved only through constant performance, and that this performance is judged by other men as a group, not by women as a group. Although I had some personal sense of this, and of the need for men to compete with one another in order to establish themselves, I was not aware of the significance of multiple masculinities and the hierarchical organisation of these; some having greater status, influence and power than others. Although I knew that the debate about "what it means to be a man" was far from settled, I did not realise the complexity of the process of living out this debate. Nor did I realise how little the men within my sphere of experience seem to be aware of this constant demand to prove themselves worthy to one another. It is little wonder, with so much energy being devoted to establishing themselves, that men have little left to devote to understanding how to connect with one another.

However, this thesis also tells another story: the story of those men who have been able to escape this treadmill of constant performance and validation and who have crafted their own masculinities. It is these men's stories who embody the hope

of our evolutionary capacity to rise above these self-serving endeavours, to look beyond ourselves and to resist the familiar and well-worn path of social norms. These men's stories remind me of the greater riches that are available on the other side of that journey of struggle, resistance and courage.

It is my hope that this thesis will not only inspire possibilities of how, as a society, men can live differently, but also, until that is possible, that individuals who wish for something different, and those who work with such individuals, will find insights that can be applied to make this at least a personal reality. It is also my hope that this thesis will offer insights to women who are puzzled by men's constant performance in ways that seem to fall short of what many women have known for a long time to be the important things in life.

I am another man in a line of men who have seen that intimacy offers hope to stand against the isolation that we create by our ceaseless dividing of humanity, into rich and poor, worthy and unworthy, right and wrong, male and female, heterosexual and homosexual, powerful and disempowered. Within this thesis some of these voices are present; Alan Dahms' (1972) vision that intimacy is necessary for survival and Anthony Giddens' (1992) dream that intimacy would overcome the limitations of gender are two of these voices. It is also my view that intimacy is not an optional extra in human experience; we are thrust into it, whether we want it or not. Like one of the participants, I believe that intimacy is inevitable. We are connected with one another, and we influence and are influenced by one another in every moment of every day. For me, the point is not *if* we experience intimacy, but instead how we respond to the inevitability of intimate experiences. Rather than remain unconsciously subject to the decisions of others about how my intimate experiences occur, I choose to become as conscious as I can about how this human experience, as central to being human, can be used for good. It is my final hope that this thesis inspires others to see more of how this might be possible.

References

Abbots, E.-J. (2015). The intimacies of industry. *Food, Culture & Society, 18*, 223-243. doi: 10.2752/175174415X14180391604323

Abidin, C., & Thompson, E. C. (2012). Buymylife.Com: Cyber-femininities and commercial intimacy in blogshops. *Women's Studies International Forum, 35*, 467-477. doi: 10.1016/j.wsif.2012.10.005

Acitelli, L. K., & Duck, S. (1987). Intimacy as the proverbial elephant. In D. Perlman & S. Duck (Eds.), *Intimate relationships: Development, dynamics and deterioration* (pp. 297-308). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Ackard, D. M., & Neumark-Sztainer, D. (2002). Date violence and date rape among adolescents: associations with disordered eating behaviors and psychological health. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 26*, 455. Retrieved from http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0145213402003228

Ackerman, R. A., & Corretti, C. A. (2015). Pathological personality traits and intimacy processes within roommate relationships. *European Journal of Personality, 29*, 152-172. doi: 10.1002/per.1991

Altman, I., & Haythorn, W. W. (1965). Interpersonal exchange in isolation. *Sociometry, 28*, 411-426. doi: 10.2307/2785992

Anderson, E. (2008). Inclusive masculinity in a fraternal setting. *Men and Masculinities, 10*, 604-620. doi: 10.1177/1097184x06291907

Anderson, E., & McCormack, M. (2015). Cuddling and spooning: Heteromasculinity and homosocial tactility among student-athletes. *Men and Masculinities, 18*, 214-230. doi: 10.1177/1097184x14523433

Anderson, K. L. (2005). Theorizing gender in intimate partner violence research. *Sex Roles, 52*, 853-865. doi: 10.1007/s11199-005-4204-x

Arenhall, E., Kristofferzon, M.-L., Fridlund, B., Malm, D., & Nilsson, U. (2011). The male partners' experiences of the intimate relationships after a first myocardial infarction. *European Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing, 10*, 108-114. doi: 10.1016/j.ejcnurse.2010.05.003

Argyle, M., & Dean, J. (1965). Eye-contact, distance and affiliation. *Sociometry, 28*, 289-304. doi: 10.2307/2786027

Arkin, W. (1979). Prolegomenon to the study of 'brother' as a male family role. *Family Coordinator, 28*, 630-637. doi: 10.2307/583528

Arnold, G. (1993). *On the road to Nirvana*. New York, NY: St Martin's Press.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016a). 3303.0 - Causes of Death, Australia, 2015 Retrieved November 21, 2016, from http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by Subject/3303.0~2015~Main Features~Australia's leading causes of death, 2015~3

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016b). Men's mental health: Let's talk about it Retrieved November 21, 2016, from http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs%40.nsf/mediareleasesbyCatalogue/69778A66901ECBA5CA258067000CC719?OpenDocument&ref=story

Balswick, J. O., & Peek, C. W. (1971). The inexpressive male: A tragedy of American society. *Family Coordinator, 20*, 363-368. doi: 10.2307/582167

Bank, B. J., & Hansford, S. L. (2000). Gender and friendship: Why are men's best same-sex friendships less intimate and supportive? *Personal Relationships, 7*, 63-78. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6811.2000.tb00004.x

Barad, K. (2003). Posthumanist performativity: Toward an understanding of how matter comes to matter. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 28*, 801-831. doi: 10.1086/345321

Barad, K. (2010). Quantum entanglements and hauntological relations of inheritance: dis/continuities, space time enfoldings, and justice-to-come. *Derrida Today, 3*, 240-268. doi: 10.3366/drt.2010.0206

Bartholomew, K. (1990). Avoidance of intimacy: An attachment perspective. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 7*, 147-147. doi: 10.1177/0265407590072001

Bartholomew, K., & Horowitz, L. M. (1991). Attachment styles among young adults: A test of a four-category model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 61*, 226-244. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.61.2.226

Beasley, J. F. (1997). *The psychosocial impact of sexual abuse and rape on adolescent girls.* (PhD, Arizona State University, USA). Available from EBSCOhost Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences database. (UMI No. AAM9726195)

Bem, S. L. (1974). The measurement of psychological androgyny. *Journal of Consulting & Clinical Psychology, 42*, 155-162. doi: 10.1037/h0036215

Bennett, P. N. (2011). Technological intimacy in haemodialysis nursing. *Nursing Inquiry, 18*, 247-252. doi: 10.1111/j.1440-1800.2011.00537.x

Berger, P., & Kellner, H. (1964). Marriage and the construction of reality: An exercise in the microsociology of knowledge. *Diogenes, 12*, 1-24. doi: 10.1177/039219216401204601

Bois, K., Bergeron, S., Rosen, N. O., McDuff, P., & Grégoire, C. (2013). Sexual and relationship intimacy among women with provoked vestibulodynia and their partners: Associations with sexual satisfaction, sexual function, and pain self-efficacy. *Journal of Sexual Medicine, 10*, 2024-2035. doi: 10.1111/jsm.12210

Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss: Volume I: Attachment*. New York: Basic Books.

Bowlby, J. (1973). *Attachment and loss: Volume II: Separation, anxiety and anger*. New York: Basic Books.

Bowlby, J. (1980). *Attachment and loss: Volume III: Loss, sadness and depression*. New York: Basic Books.

Boyd, K. L. (1994). *The relationship between self-disclosure, intimacy, and satisfaction in African-American and European-American heterosexual relationships.* (Doctoral thesis, Virginia Consortium for Professional Psychology (Old Dominion University), Virginia, USA). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 9434847)

Brennan, K. A., Clark, C. L., & Shaver, P. R. (1998). Self-report measurement of adult attachment: An integrative overview. In J. A. Simpson & W. S. Rholes (Eds.), *Attachment theory and close relationships* (pp. 46-76). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Bucholtz, M. (2000). The politics of transcription. *Journal of Pragmatics, 32*, 1439-1465. doi: 10.1016/S0378-2166(99)00094-6

Bugenhagen, M. J., & Barbuto, J. E., Jr. (2012). Testing the developmental nature of work motivation using Kegan's constructive-developmental theory. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 19*, 34-45. doi: 10.1177/1548051811404896

Burman, E. (1994). *Deconstructing developmental psychology*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Burt, M. R., & Katz, B. L. (1987). Dimensions of recovery from rape - Focus on growth outcomes. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 2*, 57-81. Retrieved from http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/088626087002001004

Butler, J. (2001). Giving an account of oneself. *Diacritics, 31(4)*, 22-40. doi: 0.1353/dia.2004.0002

Campbell, L., & Fletcher, G. J. O. (2015). Romantic relationships, ideal standards, and mate selection. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 1*, 97-100. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2015.01.007

Campbell, L., Simpson, J. A., Kashy, D. A., & Fletcher, G. J. O. (2001). Ideal Standards, the self, and flexibility of ideals in close relationships. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 27*, 447-462. doi: 10.1177/0146167201274006

Carnes, M. E. (1997). *Self-concept, emotional and behavioral distress in children whose siblings have been victims of incest.* (PhD Dissertation, Boston College, USA). Available from EBSCOhost Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering database. (UMI No. AAM9735229)

Castellani, A. M. (2006). *Testing an interpersonal process model of intimacy using intimate discussions of committed romantic couples.* (Doctoral thesis). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 090989088)

Chelune, G. J., Robison, J. T., & Kommor, M. J. (1984). A cognitive interactional model of intimate relationships. In V. J. Derlega (Ed.), *Communication, intimacy and close relationships*. Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

Chodorow, N. (1999). *The reproduction of mothering: Psychoanalysis and the sociology of gender* (2nd ed.). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Chronister, J., Chou, C.-C., & Liao, H.-Y. (2013). The role of stigma coping and social support in mediating the effect of societal stigma on internalized stigma, mental health recovery, and quality of life among people with

serious mental illness. *Journal of Community Psychology, 41*, 582-600. doi: 10.1002/jcop.21558

Clark, M. S., & Reis, H. T. (1988). Interpersonal processes in close relationships. *Annual Review of Psychology, 39*, 609-672. doi: 10.1146/annurev.ps.39.020188.003141

Clinebell, H. J., & Clinebell, C. H. (1971). *The intimate marriage*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.

Cohen, D., & Crabtree, B. (July, 2006). Member checks. *Qualitative Research Guidelines Project* Retrieved April 4, 2016, from http://www.qualres.org/HomeMemb-3696.html

Collins, N. L., & Feeney, B. C. (2004). An Attachment Theory perspective on closeness and intimacy. In D. J. Mashek & A. P. Aron (Eds.), *Handbook of closeness and intimacy.* (pp. 163-187). Mahwah, NJ US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Collins, N. L., Ford, M. B., Guichard, A. C., & Allard, L. M. (2006). Working Models of Attachment and Attribution Processes in Intimate Relationships. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 32*, 201-219. doi: 10.1177/0146167205280907

Conlin, M. A. (1994). *Towards an understanding of intimacy in married couples: A meta-analysis.* (Psy. D. dissertation, Pepperdine University, California, USA). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database. (UMI No. 9502483)

Connell, R. W. (2005). *Masculinities* (2nd ed.). Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Costello, C. G. (1982). Social factors associated with depression: a retrospective community study. *Psychological Medicine, 12*, 329-339. doi: 10.1017/S0033291700046663

Courtenay, W. H. (2000). Constructions of masculinity and their influence on men's well-being: a theory of gender and health. *Social Science & Medicine, 50*, 1385-1401. doi: 10.1016/S0277-9536(99)00390-1

Cox, N., Dewaele, A., van Houtte, M., & Vincke, J. (2011). Stress-related growth, coming out, and internalized homonegativity in lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth. An examination of stress-related growth within the minority stress model. *Journal of Homosexuality, 58*, 117-137. doi: 10.1080/00918369.2011.533631

Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory Into Practice, 39*, 124-130. doi: 10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2

Cronin, A. M. (2015). 'Domestic friends': Women's friendships, motherhood and inclusive intimacy. *The Sociological Review, 63*, 662-679. doi: 10.1111/1467-954X.12255

Dahms, A. M. (1972). *Emotional intimacy: Overlooked requirement for survival*. Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Company.

Davidson, C. (2009). Transcription: Imperatives for qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 8*, 35-52. doi: 10.1177/160940690900800206

de Visser, R. O., & McDonnell, E. J. (2013). 'Man points': Masculine capital and young men's health. *Health Psychology, 32*, 5-14. doi: 10.1037/a0029045

Debrot, A., Cook, W. L., Perrez, M., & Horn, A. B. (2012). Deeds matter: Daily enacted responsiveness and intimacy in couples' daily lives. *Journal of Family Psychology, 26*, 617-627. doi: 10.1037/a0028666

Debrot, A., Schoebi, D., Perrez, M., & Horn, A. B. (2013). Touch as an interpersonal emotion regulation process in couples' daily lives: The mediating role of psychological intimacy. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 39*, 1373-1385. doi: 10.1177/0146167213497592

Derlega, V. J. (1984). Self-disclosure and intimate relationships. In V. J. Derlega (Ed.), *Communication, intimacy and close relationships* (pp. 207-220). New York: Academic Press.

deRoon-Cassini, T. A., de St. Aubin, E., Valvano, A., Hastings, J., & Horn, P. (2009). Psychological well-being after spinal cord injury: Perception of loss and meaning making. *Rehabilitation Psychology, 54*, 306-314. doi: 10.1037/a0016545

Dindia, K., & Allen, M. (1992). Sex Differences in Self-Disclosure: A Meta-Analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 112*, 106-124. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.112.1.106

Downing, V. (2008). *Attachment style, relationship satisfaction, intimacy, loneliness, gender role beliefs, and the expression of authentic self in romantic relationships.* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3324769)

Drolet, M. (2004). Introduction. In M. Drolet (Ed.), *The postmodernism reader* (pp. 1-35). London, UK: Routledge.

Drummond, M. J. N., Filiault, S. M., Anderson, E., & Jeffries, D. (2015). Homosocial intimacy among Australian undergraduate men. *Journal of Sociology, 51*, 643-656. doi: 10.1177/1440783313518251

Duck, S. (1994). *Meaningful relationships: Talking, sense, and relating*. Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage.

Duncan, D., & Dowsett, G. W. (2010). 'There's no teleology to it; it's just about the spirit of play': Men, intimacy, and 'late' modernity. *The Journal of Men's Studies, 18*, 45-62. doi: 10.3149/jms.1801.45

Elder, W. B., Brooks, G. R., & Morrow, S. L. (2012). Sexual self-schemas of heterosexual men. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 13*, 166-179. doi: 10.1037/a0024835

Erikson, E. H. (1950). *Childhood and society*. New York: Norton.

Erikson, E. H. (1963). *Childhood and society* (2nd ed.). New York: Norton.

Farrugia, A. (2015). "You can't just give your best mate a massive hug every day". *Contemporary Drug Problems, 42*, 240-256. doi: 10.1177/0091450915601520

Fehr, B. (1996). *Friendship processes*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fehr, B. (2004). Intimacy expectations in same-sex friendships: A prototype interaction-pattern model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 86*, 265-284. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.86.2.265

Felix, E. D., & Afifi, W. (2015). The role of social support on mental health after multiple wildfire disasters. *Journal of Community Psychology, 43*, 156-170. doi: 10.1002/jcop.21671

Fisher, M., & Stricker, G. (1982). Preface. In M. Fisher & G. Stricker (Eds.), *Intimacy* (pp. i-xi). New York, NY: Plenum Press.

Fletcher, G. J. O., & Simpson, J. A. (2000). Ideal standards in close relationships: Their structure and functions. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 9*, 102-105. doi: 10.1111/1467-8721.00070

Flood, M. (2008). Men, sex, and homosociality: How bonds between men shape their sexual relations with women. *Men and Masculinities, 10*, 339-359. doi: 10.1177/1097184x06287761

Flynn, K. E., Jeffery, D. D., Keefe, F. J., Porter, L. S., Shelby, R. A., Fawzy, M. R., et al. (2011). Sexual functioning along the cancer continuum: Focus group results from the Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System (PROMIS®). *Psycho-Oncology, 20*, 378-386. doi: 10.1002/pon.1738

Fogarty, T. (1979). The distancer and the pursuer. *The Family, 7*, 11-16.

Fontana, A., & Rosenheck, R. (2005). The role of loss of meaning in the pursuit of treatment for posttraumatic stress disorder. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 18*, 133-136. doi: 10.1002/jts.20014

Foucault, M. (1970/1966). *The order of things: An archaeology of the human sciences* (A. M. S. Smith, Trans.). New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Fraley, R. C., Waller, N. G., & Brennan, K. A. (2000). An item response theory analysis of self-report measures of adult attachment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 78*, 350-365. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.78.2.350

Frankl, V. E. (1992). *Man's search for meaning: An introduction to logotherapy* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Freud, S. (1923/1961). The ego and the id. In J. Strachey (Ed. and Trans.), *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 19, pp. 3-66). Retrieved from http://www.pep-web.org.ezproxy2.acu.edu.au/static.php?page=standardedition

Frith, S. (2011). Music and identity. In S. Hall & P. du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity* (pp. 108-127). London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Gable, S. L. (2006). Approach and avoidance social motives and goals. *Journal Of Personality, 74*, 175-222. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6494.2005.00373.x

Galloway, L., Engstrom, E., & Emmers-Sommer, T. M. (2015). Does movie viewing cultivate young people's unrealistic expectations about love and marriage? *Marriage & Family Review, 51*, 687-712. doi: 10.1080/01494929.2015.1061629

Gauntlett, D., & Hill, A. (2002). *TV living: Television, culture and everyday life*. London: Routledge.

Giddens, A. (1992). *The transformation of intimacy: Sexuality, love and eroticism in modern societies*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gordon, M. (2014). Friendship, Intimacy and Humor. *Educational Philosophy & Theory, 46*, 162-174. doi: 10.1080/00131857.2012.721732

Gore, J. S., Cross, S. E., & Morris, M. L. (2006). Let's be friends: Relational self-construal and the development of intimacy. *Personal Relationships, 13*, 83-102. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6811.2006.00106.x

Grabill, C. M., & Kerns, K. A. (2000). Attachment style and intimacy in friendship. *Personal Relationships, 7*, 363-378. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6811.2000.tb00022.x

Greeff, A. P., & Malherbe, H. L. (2001). Intimacy and marital satisfaction in spouses. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy, 27*, 247-257. doi: 10.1080/009262301750257100

Green, J., Franquiz, M., & Dixon, C. (1997). The myth of the objective transcript: Transcribing as a situated act. *TESOL Quarterly, 31*, 172-176. doi: 10.2307/3587984

Gregg, M. (2013). Spousebusting: Intimacy, adultery, and surveillance technology. *Surveillance & Society, 11*, 301-310. Retrieved from http://ojs.library.queensu.ca/index.php/surveillance-and-society/issue/view/Surveillance%20Textualism

Hacker, H. M. (1981). Blabbermouths and clams: Sex differences in self-eisclosure in same-sex and cross-sex friendship dyads. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 5*, 385-401. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-6402.1981.tb00581.x

Hammarén, N., & Johansson, T. (2014). Homosociality: In between power and intimacy. *SAGE Open, 4*, 1-11. doi: 10.1177/2158244013518057

Hansen, J. E., & Schuldt, W. J. (1984). Marital self-disclosure and marital satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 46*, 923-926. doi: 10.2307/352541

Hassebrauck, M., & Fehr, B. (2002). Dimensions of relationship quality. *Personal Relationship, 9*, 253-270. doi: 10.1111/1475-6811.00017

Hatfield, E. (1984). The dangers of intimacy. In V. J. Derlega (Ed.), *Communication, intimacy and close relationships* (pp. 207-220). New York: Academic Press.

Hatfield, E., & Rapson, R. L. (1993). *Love, sex, and intimacy: Their psychology, biology, and history*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Hayes, S. C., Luoma, J. B., Bond, F. W., Masuda, A., & Lillis, J. (2006). Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: Model, processes and outcomes. *Behaviour Research and Therapy, 44,* 1–25. doi:10.1016/j.brat.2005.06.006

Hefner, V., & Wilson, B. J. (2013). From love at first sight to soul mate: The influence of romantic ideals in popular films on young people's beliefs

about relationships. *Communication Monographs, 80*, 150-175. doi: 10.1080/03637751.2013.776697

Helgeson, V. S., Shaver, P., & Dyer, M. (1987). Prototypes of intimacy and distance in wame-sex and opposite-sex relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 4*, 195-233. doi: 10.1177/0265407587042006

Hetherington, E. M. (2003). Intimate pathways: Changing patterns in close personal relationships across time. *Family Relations, 52*, 318-331. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3729.2003.00318.x

Higgins, E. T. (1987). Self-discrepancy: A theory relating self and affect. *Psychological Review, 94*, 319-340. doi: 10.1037/0033-295X.94.3.319

Hinde, R. A. (1979). *Toward understanding relationships*. New York: Academic Press.

Hoeberichts, J. H. (2004). Bringing Zen Practice Home. *Journal of Religion & Health, 43*, 201-216. doi: 10.1023/B:JORH.0000039653.80660.33

Holmes, M. (2015). Men's emotions: Heteromasculinity, emotional reflexivity, and intimate relationships. *Men and Masculinities, 18*, 176-192. doi: 10.1177/1097184X14557494

Hook, M. K., Gerstein, L. H., Lacy, D., & Gridley, B. (2003). How close are we? Measuring intimacy and examining gender differences. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 81*, 462-472. doi: 10.1002/j.1556-6678.2003.tb00273.x

Huffman, D. D., & Fernando, D. M. (2012). Adapting the Interpersonal Process Model of intimacy to enhance the co-leader relationship during training. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 37*, 152-167 116p. doi: 10.1080/01933922.2012.663863

Jackson, A. Y. (2013). Posthumanist data analysis of mangling practices. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 26*, 741-748. doi: 10.1080/09518398.2013.788762

James, W. (1890). *The principles of psychology* (Vol. 1). New York: Henry Holt & Company.

Jamieson, L. (1998). *Intimacy: Personal relationships in modern societies*. Malden, MA, USA: Polity Press.

Jamieson, L. (1999). Intimacy transformed? A critical look at the `pure relationship'. *Sociology, 33*, 477-494. doi: 10.1177/s0038038599000310

Jamieson, L. (2011). Intimacy as a concept: Explaining social change in the context of globalisation or another form of ethnocentricism? *Sociological Research Online, 16*, 15. Retrieved from: http://www.socresonline.org.uk/16/4/15.html

Jourard, S. M. (1959). Self-disclosure and other-cathexis. *The Journal of Abnormal & Social Psychology, 59*, 428-431. doi: 10.1037/h0041640

Jourard, S. M., & Lasakow, P. (1958). Some factors in self-disclosure. *The Journal of Abnormal & Social Psychology, 56*, 91-98. doi: 10.1037/h0043357

Jourard, S. M., & Rubin, J. E. (1968). Self-disclosure and touching: A study of two modes of interpersonal encounter and their inter-relation. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 8*, 39-48. doi: 10.1177/002216786800800104

Juszczyk, D. (2012). Innovative ways of recruiting male participants. Any ideas? Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/post/Innovative_ways_of_recruiting_MALE_participants_Any_ideas

Kaiser, J., Strodl, E., & Schweitzer, R. (2012). Qualitative study of adversity activated development and resilience in adolescents and young adults with congenital heart disease and their parents. In K. M. Gow & M. J. Celinski (Eds.), *Trauma: Recovering from deep wounds and exploring the potential for renewal* (pp. 221-237). New York: NOVA Science Publishers.

Kanuha, V. K. (2013). "Relationships so loving and so hurtful": The constructed duality of sexual and racial/ethnic intimacy in the context of violence in Asian and Pacific Islander lesbian and queer women's relationships. *Violence Against Women, 19*, 1175-1196. doi: 10.1177/1077801213501897

Kaufman, E. L. (1992). *The development of adult friendship intimacy.* (Ph.D. thesis, Fordham University, New York, US). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database. (UMI No. 9215350)

Kegan, R. (1982). *The evolving self: Problem and process in human devlopment*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kegan, R. (1994). *In over our heads: The mental demands of modern life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Khalifian, C. E., & Barry, R. A. (2016). Trust, attachment, and mindfulness influence intimacy and disengagement during newlyweds' discussions of relationship transgressions. *Journal of Family Psychology, 30*, 592-601. doi: 10.1037/fam0000194

Kimmel, M. S. (1994). Masculinity as homophobia: Fear, shame, and silence in the construction of gender identity. In H. Brod & M. Kaufman (Eds.), *Theorizing Masculinities* (pp. 119-141). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

King, L. A., & Noelle, S. S. (2005). Happy, mature, and gay: Intimacy, power, and difficult times in coming out stories. *Journal of Research in Personality, 39*, 278-298. doi: 10.1016/j.jrp.2004.06.002

Kirk, T. W. (2007). Beyond empathy: Clinical intimacy in nursing practice. *Nursing Philosophy, 8*, 233-243. doi: 10.1111/j.1466-769X.2007.00318.x

Knudson-Martin, C. (2013). Why power matters: Creating a foundation of mutual support in couple relationships. *Family Process, 52*, 5-18. doi: 10.1111/famp.12011

Kocsis, A., & Newbury-Helps, J. (2016). Mindfulness in sex therapy and intimate relationships (MSIR): Clinical protocol and theory development. *Mindfulness, 7*, 690-699. doi: 10.1007/s12671-016-0506-z

Kohut, H. (1971). *The analysis of the self: A systematic approach to the psychoanalytic treatment of narcissistic personality disorders*. Madison, CT: International Universities Press.

Kohut, H. (1977). *The restoration of the self.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Kosakowska-Berezecka, N., Besta, T., Adamska, K., Jaśkiewicz, M., Jurek, P., & Vandello, J. A. (2016). If my masculinity is threatened I won't support gender equality? The role of agentic self-stereotyping in restoration of manhood and perception of gender relations. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 17*, 274-284. doi: 10.1037/men0000016

Lafontaine, M., & van Lussier, Y. (2005). Does anger towards the partner mediate and moderate the link between romantic attachment and intimate violence? *Journal of Family Violence, 20*, 349-361. doi: 10.1007/s10896-005-7797-5

Lahey, L., Souvaine, E., Kegan, R., Goodman, R., & Felix, S. (2011). *A guide to the Subject-Object interview: Its administration and interpretation*. Cambridge, MA: Minds at Work.

Lambert, A. (2013). *Intimacy and friendship on Facebook*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lather, P. (2007). *Getting lost: Feminist efforts toward a double(d) science*. Ithaca, US: SUNY Press.

Lather, P. (2013). Methodology-21: what do we do in the afterward? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 26*, 634-645. doi: 10.1080/09518398.2013.788753

Lather, P. (2016). Top ten+ list: (Re)thinking ontology in (Post)qualitative research. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies, 16*, 125-131. doi: 10.1177/1532708616634734

Lather, P., & St. Pierre, E. A. (2013). Post-qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 26*, 629-633. doi: 10.1080/09518398.2013.788752

Laurenceau, J.-P., Barrett, L. F., & Pietromonaco, P. R. (1998). Intimacy as an interpersonal process: The importance of self-disclosure, partner disclosure, and perceived partner responsiveness in interpersonal exchanges. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 74*, 1238-1251. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.74.5.1238

Laurenceau, J.-P., Barrett, L. F., & Rovine, M. J. (2005). The Interpersonal Process Model of intimacy in marriage: A daily-diary and multilevel modeling approach. *Journal of Family Psychology, 19*, 314-323. doi: 10.1037/0893-3200.19.2.314

Laurenceau, J.-P., Rivera, L. M., Schaffer, A. R., & Pietromonaco, P. R. (2004). Intimacy as an interpersonal process: Current status and future directions. In D. J. Mashek & A. P. Aron (Eds.), *Handbook of closeness and intimacy.* (pp. 61-78). Mahwah, NJ US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Levant, R. F. (1996). The new psychology of men. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 27*, 259-265. doi:10.1037/0735-7028.27.3.259

Levine, S. B. (1991). Psychological intimacy. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy, 17*, 259-267. doi: 10.1080/00926239108404350

Levinger, G., & Senn, D. J. (1967). Disclosure of feelings in marriage. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly of Behavior and Development, 13*, 237-249. doi: 10.2307/23082456

Levitz-Jones, E. M., & Orlofsky, J. L. (1985). Separation-individuation and intimacy capacity in college women. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 49*, 156-169. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.49.1.156

Lewis, R. A. (1978). Emotional intimacy among men. *Journal of Social Issues, 34*, 108-121. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-4560.1978.tb02543.x

Lin, Y.-C. (1992). *The construction of the sense of intimacy from everyday social interaction.* (Doctoral thesis). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 9304782)

Lindau, S. T., Surawska, H., Paice, J., & Baron, S. R. (2011). Communication about sexuality and intimacy in couples affected by lung cancer and their clinical-care providers. *Psycho-Oncology, 20*, 179-185. doi: 10.1002/pon.1787

Lobitz, W. C., & Lobitz, G. K. (1996). Resolving the sexual intimacy paradox: A developmental model for the treatment of sexual desire disorders. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy, 22*, 71-84. doi: 10.1080/00926239608404911

Loscocco, K., & Walzer, S. (2013). Gender and the culture of heterosexual marriage in the United States. *Journal of Family Theory & Review, 5*, 1-14. doi: 10.1111/jftr.12003

Lowenthal, M. F., & Haven, C. (1968). Interaction and adaption: Intimacy as a critical variable. *American Sociological Review, 33*, 20-30.

Lyons, A., Hosking, W., & Rozbroj, T. (2015). Rural–urban differences in mental health, resilience, stigma, and social support among young Australian gay men. *The Journal of Rural Health, 31*, 89-97. doi: 10.1111/jrh.12089

Macionis, J. J. (1978). Intimacy. *Alternative Lifestyles, 1*, 113-130. doi: 10.1007/BF01081974

Manne, S., Ostroff, J., Rini, C., Fox, K., Goldstein, L., & Grana, G. (2004). The Interpersonal Process Model of Intimacy: The role of self-disclosure, partner disclosure, and partner responsiveness in interactions between breast cancer patients and their partners. *Journal of Family Psychology, 18*, 589-599. doi: 10.1037/0893-3200.18.4.589

Marks, S. R. (1998). The gendered contexts of inclusive intimacy: the Hawthorne women at work and home. In R. G. Adams & G. Allan (Eds.), *Placing Friendship in Context* (pp. 43-70). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review, 50*, 370-396. doi: 10.1037/h0054346

Mazzei, L. A. (2016). Voice Without a Subject. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies, 16*, 151-161. doi: 10.1177/1532708616636893

McCreary, S. L., & Alderson, K. G. (2013). The perceived effects of practising meditation on women's sexual and relational lives. *Sexual & Relationship Therapy, 28*, 105-119. doi: 10.1080/14681994.2013.770830

McGuire, J., & Leaper, C. (2016). Competition, Coping, and Closeness in Young Heterosexual Adults' Same-Gender Friendships. *Sex Roles, 74*, 422-435. doi: 10.1007/s11199-015-0570-1

Mead, G. H. (1913). The social self. *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods, 10*, 374-380. doi: 10.2307/2012910

Mehta, C. M., Lops, C., Walls, C., Feldman, H., & Shrier, L. A. (2009). *Daily intimacy and daily affect in emerging adult couples*. American Psychological Association 2009 Convention, Washington, District of Columbia, US. http://www.apa.org

Mehta, C. M., Walls, C., Scherer, E., Feldman, H., & Shrier, L. (2016). Daily affect and intimacy in emerging adult couples. *Journal of Adult Development, 23*, 101-110. doi: 10.1007/s10804-016-9226-9

Merton, R. K. (1948). The self-fulfilling prophecy. *The Antioch Review, 8*, 193-210. doi: 10.2307/4609267

Merves-Okin, L., Amidon, E., & Bernt, F. (1991). Perceptions of intimacy in marriage: A study of married couples. *American Journal of Family Therapy, 19*, 110-118. doi: 10.1080/01926189108250841

Milner, A., Krnjacki, L., Butterworth, P., & LaMontagne, A. D. (2016). The role of social support in protecting mental health when employed and unemployed: A longitudinal fixed-effects analysis using 12 annual waves of the HILDA cohort. *Social Science & Medicine, 153*, 20-26. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.01.050

Mitchell, A. E., Castellani, A. M., Herrington, R. L., Joseph, J. I., Doss, B. D., & Snyder, D. K. (2008). Predictors of intimacy in couples' discussions of relationship injuries: An observational study. *Journal of Family Psychology, 22*, 21-29. doi: 10.1037/0893-3200.22.1.21

Moore, T. M., Stuart, G. L., McNulty, J. K., Addis, M. E., Cordova, J. V., & Temple, J. R. (2008). Domains of masculine gender role stress and intimate partner violence in a clinical sample of violent men. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 9*, 82-89. doi: 10.1037/1524-9220.9.2.82

Murstein, B. I., & Adler, E. R. (1995). Gender differences in power and self-disclosure in dating and married couples. *Personal Relationships, 2*, 199-209. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6811.1995.tb00086.x

Nadeau, M. M., Balsan, M. J., & Rochlen, A. B. (2016). Men's depression: Endorsed experiences and expressions. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 17*, 328-335. doi: 10.1037/men0000027

Norona, J., Thorne, A., Kerrick, M., Farwood, H., & Korobov, N. (2013). Patterns of intimacy and distancing as young women (and men) friends exchange stories of romantic relationships. *Sex Roles, 68*, 439-453. doi: 10.1007/s11199-013-0262-7

Novak, A. (2007). *Expectations of intimacy: A longitudinal study of the associations between expected, achieved and ideal relationship intimacy, attachment, marital satisfaction and well-being among engaged and married couples.* (Ph.D. thesis, Adelphi University, The Institute of Advanced Psychological Studies, NY). ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global database. (UMI No. 3252968)

Oliphant, A. E., & Kuczynski, L. (2011). Mothers' and fathers' perceptions of mutuality in middle childhood: The domain of intimacy. *Journal of Family Issues, 32*, 1104-1124. doi: 10.1177/0192513X11402946

Orlofsky, J. L. (1976). Intimacy status: Relationship to interpersonal perception. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 5*, 73-88. doi: 10.1007/BF01537085

Orlofsky, J. L. (1993). Intimacy status: theory and research. In J. E. Marcia, A. S. Waterman, D. R. Matteson, S. L. Archer & J. L. Orlofsky (Eds.), *Ego identity: a handbook for psychosocial research* (pp. 111-135). New York: Springer-Verlag.

Orlofsky, J. L., Marcia, J. E., & Lesser, I. M. (1973). Ego identity status and the intimacy versus isolation crisis of young adulthood. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 27*, 211-219. doi: 10.1037/h0034787

Overall, N. C., & Fletcher, G. J. O. (2010). Perceiving regulation from intimate partners: Reflected appraisal and self-regulation processes in close relationships. *Personal Relationships, 17*, 433-456. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6811.2010.01286.x

Pallen, R. J. (2001). *Intimacy, need fulfillment, and violence in marital relationships.* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Arkansas, Arkansas, USA). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 9987287)

Papadopoulos, R. K. (2007). Refugees, trauma and Adversity-Activated Development. *European Journal of Psychotherapy & Counselling, 9*, 301-312. doi: 10.1080/13642530701496930

Parks, M. R., & Floyd, K. (1996). Meanings for closeness and intimacy in friendship. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 13*, 85-107. doi: 10.1177/0265407596131005

Parsons, T., & Bales, R. F. (1955). *Family socialisation and interaction process*. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.

Patel, M. X., Doku, V., & Tennakoon, L. (2003). Challenges in recruitment of research participants. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment, 9*, 229-238. doi: 10.1192/apt.9.3.229

Patrick, S., & Beckenbach, J. (2009). Male perceptions of intimacy: A qualitative study. *Journal of Men's Studies, 17*, 47-56. doi: 10.3149/jms.1701.47

Patrick, S., Sells, J. N., Giordano, F. G., & Tollerud, T. R. (2007). Intimacy, differentiation, and personality variables as predictors of marital satisfaction. *The Family Journal, 15*, 359-367. doi: 10.1177/1066480707303754

Perlman, D., & Fehr, B. (1987). The development of intimate relationships. In D. Perlman & S. Duck (Eds.), *Intimate relationships: Development, dynamics and deterioration* (pp. 13-42). Newbury Park, IL: Sage.

Perry, K. A. (2014). *Coach, know thyself: The developmental consciousness of professional coaches.* (Ph.D. thesis, Fielding Graduate University, Ann Arbor). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global database. (UMI No. 3631514)

Perry-Jenkins, M., Newkirk, K., & Ghunney, A. K. (2013). Family work through time and space: An ecological perspective. *Journal of Family Theory & Review, 5*, 105-123. doi: 10.1111/jftr.12011

Piaget, J. (1977). *The origin of intelligence in the child*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Pickering, A. (1993). The mangle of practice: Agency and emergence in the sociology of science. *American Journal of Sociology, 99*, 559. Retrieved from: http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/230316

Pietromonaco, P. R., & Beck, L. A. (2015). Attachment processes in adult romantic relationships. In M. Mikulincer, P. R. Shaver, J. A. Simpson & J. F. Dovidio (Eds.), *APA handbook of personality and social psychology, Volume 3: Interpersonal relations* (pp. 33-64). Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association.

Pietromonaco, P. R., & Feldman Barrett, L. (2000). The internal working models concept: What do we really know about the self in relation to others? *Review of General Psychology, 4*, 155-175. doi: 10.1037/1089-2680.4.2.155

Postier, J. E. (2015). *Exploring constructive-developmental level and intercultural meaning-making: A phenomenological study of leader development sojourn in Africa.* (PhD Dissertation, Marian University, Fond du Lac, WI). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3725975)

Prager, K. J. (1995). *The psychology of intimacy*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Prager, K. J. (2000). Intimacy in personal relationships. In C. Hendrick & S. S. Hendrick (Eds.), *Close relationships: A sourcebook* (pp. 228-244). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Prager, K. J., & Roberts, L. J. (2004). Deep intimate connection: Self and intimacy in couple relationships. In D. J. Mashek & A. P. Aron (Eds.), *Handbook of closeness and intimacy.* (pp. 43-60). Mahwah, NJ US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Rance, J., & Fraser, S. (2011). Accidental intimacy: Transformative emotion and the Sydney Medically Supervised Injecting Centre. *Contemporary Drug Problems: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly, 38*, 121-145. doi: 10.1177/009145091103800106

Raskin, P. M. (1985). The application of identity status and intimacy status research to counseling with couples. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training, 22*, 201-212. doi: 10.1037/h0085495

Reid, G. M., Holt, M. K., Bowman, C. E., Espelage, D. L., & Green, J. G. (2016). Perceived social support and mental health among first-year college

students with histories of bullying victimization. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 25*, 3331-3341. doi: 10.1007/s10826-016-0477-7

Reis, H. T. (2006). Implications of Attachment Theory for research on intimacy. In M. Mikulincer & G. S. Goodman (Eds.), *Dynamics of romantic love: Attachment, caregiving, and sex.* (pp. 383-403). New York, NY US: Guilford Press.

Reis, H. T., Clark, M. S., & Holmes, J. G. (2004). Perceived partner responsiveness as an organising construct in the study of intimacy and closeness. In D. J. Mashek & A. Aron (Eds.), *Handbook of closeness and intimacy* (pp. 201-225). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Reis, H. T., & Patrick, B. C. (1996). Attachment and intimacy: Component processes. In E. T. Higgins & A. W. Kruglanski (Eds.), *Social psychology: Handbook of basic principles.* (pp. 523-563). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Reis, H. T., & Shaver, P. (1988). Intimacy as an interpersonal process. In S. Duck, D. F. Hay, S. E. Hobfoll, W. Ickes & B. M. Montgomery (Eds.), *Handbook of personal relationships: Theory, research and interventions.* (pp. 367-389). Oxford, England: John Wiley & Sons.

Reynolds, C., & Knudson‐Martin, C. (2015). Gender and the construction of intimacy among committed couples with children. *Family Process, 54*, 293-307. doi: 10.1111/famp.12100

Roberts, L. J., & Greenberg, D. R. (2002). Observational "windows" to intimacy processes in marriage. In P. Noller & J. A. Feeney (Eds.), *Understanding marriage* (pp. 118-149): Cambridge University Press.

Rogers, A. (2005). Chaos to control: Men's magazines and the mastering of intimacy. *Men and Masculinities, 8*, 175-194. doi: 10.1177/1097184X04265319

Rogers, C. R. (1967). *On becoming a person: A therapist's view of psychotherapy* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Constable.

Rogers, C. R. (1979). *The foundations of the person-centred approach*. Unpublished manuscript.

Roseborough, D. J. (2006). Coming out stories framed as faith narratives, or stories of spiritual growth. *Pastoral Psychology, 55*, 47-59. doi: 10.1007/s11089-006-0031-4

Rosenthal, R., & Jacobson, L. (1968). *Pygmalion in the classroom: Teacher expectations and pupils' intellectual development*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Rowe, N. M. (2013). Intentional kayaking: Awakening to intimacy within the natural world. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies, 32*, 63-78. Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.ciis.edu/ijts-transpersonalstudies/vol32/iss2/9/

Rubin, Z., Hill, C. T., Peplau, L. A., & Dunkel-Schetter, C. (1980). Self-disclosure in dating couples: Sex roles and the ethic of openness. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 42*, 305-317. doi: 10.2307/351228

Rusbult, C. E., Arriaga, X. B., & Agnew, C. R. (2001). Interdependence in close relationships. In M. S. Clark & G. J. O. Fletcher (Eds.), *Blackwell handbook of social psychology: Interpersonal processes* (pp. 357-387). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Russell, D. W., Benedek, D. M., Naifeh, J. A., Fullerton, C. S., Benevides, N., Ursano, R. J., et al. (2016). Social support and mental health outcomes

among U.S. Army Special Operations personnel. *Military Psychology, 28*, 361-375. doi: 10.1037/mil0000114

St Clair, M., & Wigren, J. (2004). *Object relations and self-psychology: An introduction* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole

Sanchez, D. T., & Crocker, J. (2005). How investment in gender ideals affects well-being: The role of external contingencies of self-worth. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 29*, 63-77. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-6402.2005.00169.x

Sanderson, C. A., Rahm, K. B., & Beigbeder, S. A. (2005). The link between the pursuit of intimacy goals and satisfaction in close same-sex friendships: An examination of the underlying processes. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 22*, 75. doi: 10.1177/0265407505049322

Sattler, F. A., Wagner, U., & Christiansen, H. (2016). Effects of minority stress, group-level coping, and social support on mental health of German gay men. *PLoS ONE, 11(3)*, 1-14. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0150562

Schaefer, M. T., & Olson, D. H. (1977). *Diagnosing intimacy: Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships. (The P.A.I.R.)*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council on Family Relations, San Diego, CA.

Schaefer, M. T., & Olson, D. H. (1981). Assessing intimacy: The PAIR Inventory. *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy, 7*, 47-60. doi: 10.1111/j.1752-0606.1981.tb01351.x

Schnarch, D. M. (1991). *Constructing the sexual crucible: An integration of sexual and marital therapy*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

Sexton, R. E., & Sexton, V. S. (1982). Intimacy: a historical perspective. In M. Fisher & G. Stricker (Eds.), *Intimacy* (pp. 1-20). New York, NY: Plenum Press.

Shelton, J. N., Trail, T. E., West, T. V., & Bergsieker, H. B. (2010). From strangers to friends: The interpersonal process model of intimacy in developing interracial friendships. *Journal of Social & Personal Relationships, 27*, 71-90 20p. doi: 10.1177/0265407509346422

Shinebourne, P. (2011). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. In N. Frost (Ed.), *Qualitative research methods in psychology* (pp. 43-65). England, UK: Open University Press.

Silverstone, R. (1994). *Television and everyday life*. London: Routledge.

Simmel, G. (1908/1950). Soziologie: Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung [Sociology: Studies on the forms of socialisation] (K. H. Wolff, Trans.). In K. H. Wolff (Ed.), *The sociology of Georg Simmel* (pp. 87-408). Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.

Simpson, J. A., Fletcher, G. J., & Campbell, L. (2001). The structure and function of ideal standards in close relationships. In M. S. Clark & G. J. O. Fletcher (Eds.), *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Interpersonal Processes* (pp. 86-106). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Smith, J. A., & Eatough, V. (2007). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. In E. Lyons & A. Coyle (Eds.), *Analysing Qualitative Data in Psychology* (pp. 35-51). London: SAGE Publications, Ltd.

Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, method and research*. London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd.

Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2008). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. In G. M. Breakwell (Ed.), *Doing Social Psychology Research* (pp. 229-254). Wiley Online Library: The British Psychological Society and Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Sneed, J. R., Whitbourne, S. K., & Culang, M. E. (2006). Trust, identity, and ego integrity: Modeling Erikson's core stages over 34 years. *Journal of Adult Development, 13*, 148-157. doi: 10.1007/s10804-007-9026-3

Sobral, M. P., Teixeira, C. P., & Costa, M. E. (2015). Who can give me satisfaction?: Partner matching in fear of intimacy and relationship satisfaction. *Family Journal, 23*, 247-253. doi: 10.1177/1066480715573709

Solomon, D., McAbee, J., Åsberg, K., & McGee, A. (2015). Coming out and the potential for growth in sexual minorities: The role of social reactions and internalized homonegativity. *Journal of Homosexuality, 62*, 1512-1538. doi: 10.1080/00918369.2015.1073032

Spendelow, J. S. (2015). Men's self-reported coping strategies for depression: A systematic review of qualitative studies. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 16*, 439-447. doi: 10.1037/a0038626

Spitzberg, B. H. (2011). Intimate partner violence and aggression: Seeing the light in a dark place. In W. R. Cupach & B. H. Spitzberg (Eds.), *The dark side of close relationships* (pp. 327-380). New York, NY: Routledge.

Sprecher, S., & Hendrick, S. S. (2004). Self-disclosure in intimate relationships: Associations with individual and relationship characteristics over time. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 23*, 857-877.

St. Pierre, E. A. (2013). The posts continue: Becoming. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 26*, 646-657. doi: 10.1080/09518398.2013.788754

Stavropoulou, A., Kaba, E., Obamwonyi, V. A., Adeosun, I., Rovithis, M., & Zidianakis, Z. (2012). Defining nursing intimacy: Nurses' perceptions of intimacy. *Health Science Journal, 6*, 479-495. Retrieved from

http://www.hsj.gr/medicine/defining-nursing-intimacy-nurses-perceptions-of-intimacy.php?aid=5306

Storey, L. (2007). Doing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. In E. Lyons & A. Coyle (Eds.), *Analysing Qualitative Data in Psychology* (pp. 51-65). London: SAGE Publications, Ltd.

Strassburger, J. R. (1998). *Intimacy in couples: Gender, style, and marital satisfaction.* (Ph.D. dissertation, The Wright Institute, California, USA). Available from Proqust Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 9820976)

Sullivan, H. S. (1953). *The interpersonal theory of psychiatry.* New York: Norton.

Swain, S. (1989). Covert intimacy: Closeness in men's friendships. In B. J. Risman & P. Schwartz (Eds.), *Gender in intimate relationships: A microstructural approach* (pp. 71-86). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Talmadge, L. D., & Dabbs, J. M. (1990). Intimacy, conversational patterns, and concomitant cognitive/emotional processes in couples. *Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology, 9*, 473-488. doi: 10.1521/jscp.1990.9.4.473

Tannen, D. (1990). *You just don't understand: Women and men in conversation*. New York: HarperCollins.

Tesch, S. A., & Whitbourne, S. K. (1982). Intimacy and identity status in young adults. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 43*, 1041-1051. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.43.5.1041

Thibaut, J. W., & Kelley, H. H. (1959). *The social psychology of groups*. New York: Wiley.

Timmerman, G. M. (1991). A concept analysis of intimacy. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing, 12*, 19-30. doi: 10.3109/01612849109058207

Tolstedt, B. E., & Stokes, J. P. (1983). Relation of verbal, affective, and physical intimacy to marital satisfaction. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 30*, 573-580. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.30.4.573

Trimberger, G. E. (2013). *The complexity of social work boundaries: A constructive-development exploration.* (Ph.D. thesis, Marian University, Ann Arbor). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global database. (UMI No. 3601326)

Tucker, S. R., Speer, S. A., & Peters, S. (2016). Development of an explanatory model of sexual intimacy following treatment for localised prostate cancer: A systematic review and meta-synthesis of qualitative evidence. *Social Science & Medicine, 163*, 80-88. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.07.001

Vaillant, G. E. (2002). *Ageing well : surprising guideposts to a happier life from the landmark Harvard study of adult development*. Carlton North, Vic.: Scribe.

VanderPol, W. G. (1990). *A theoretical integration of Robert Kegan's developmental psychology and Heinz Kohut's self-psychology.* (Ed.D. thesis, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI). ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global database. (UMI No. 9101003)

Vaughan, M. D., & Waehler, C. A. (2010). Coming out growth: Conceptualizing and measuring stress-related growth associated with coming out to others as a sexual minority. *Journal of Adult Development, 17*, 94-109. doi: 10.1007/s10804-009-9084-9

Veronen, L. J. (1977). *Fear response of rape victims*. (Ph.D. thesis, North Texas State University, USA, United States). Retrieved from https://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Publications/abstract.aspx?ID=72248.

Waling, A. M. (2014). Heroes, retros and metros: Narratives of conflicting masculinities within contemporary Australian media. *Outskirts: Feminisms Along the Edge, 30*. Retrieved from http://www.outskirts.arts.uwa.edu.au/volumes/volume-30/andrea-waling

Walster, E., Walster, G. W., & Berscheid, E. (1978). *Equity: Theory and research*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Waring, E. M. (1984). The measurement of marital intimacy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 10*, 185-192. doi: 10.1111/j.1752-0606.1984.tb00009.x

Webb, J. (1998). *Junk male*. Sydney, Australia: HarperCollins Publishers.

Weiner, M. R., Monin, J. K., Mota, N., & Pietrzak, R. H. (2016). Age differences in the association of social support and mental health in male U.S. Veterans: Results from the National Health and Resilience in Veterans Study. *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, 24*, 327-336. doi: 10.1016/j.jagp.2015.11.007

Weingarten, K. (1991). The discourses of intimacy: Adding a social constructionist and feminist view. *Family Process, 30*, 285-305. doi: 10.1111/j.1545-5300.1991.00285.x

Weston, R., Marshall, L. L., & Coker, A. L. (2007). Women's motives for violent and nonviolent behaviors in conflicts. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 22*, 1043-1065. doi: 10.1177/0886260507303191

Wetherell, M., & Maybin, J. (1996). The distributed self: A social constructionist perspective. In R. Stevens (Ed.), *Understanding the self* (pp. 219-280). London: Sage.

Whittle, E. L., Fogarty, A. S., Tugendrajch, S., Player, M. J., Christensen, H., Wilhelm, K., et al. (2015). Men, depression, and coping: Are we on the

right path? *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 16*, 426-438. doi: 10.1037/a0039024

Wood, J. T., & Inman, C. C. (1993). In a different mode: Masculine styles of communicating closeness. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 21*, 279-295. doi: 10.1080/00909889309365372

Wood, R. (2010). *Psycho-spiritual transformation experienced by participants of modern wilderness rites of passage quests: An intuitive inquiry.* (Ph.D. thesis, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, Palo Alto, CA). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global database. (UMI No. 3397618)

Yousaf, O., Popat, A., & Hunter, M. S. (2015). An investigation of masculinity attitudes, gender, and attitudes toward psychological help-seeking. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 16*, 234-237. doi: 10.1037/a0036241

Zamboanga, B. L., Audley, S., Iwamoto, D. K., Martin, J. L., & Tomaso, C. C. (2016). The risks of being 'manly': Masculine norms and drinking game motives, behaviors, and related consequences among men. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*. doi: 10.1037/men0000064

Appendices

Appendix A

Subject-Object Interview Introductory Statements

Introduction
We will spend the first 15 – 20 minutes with the cards and then talk together for an hour or so about those things you jotted down on the cards which you choose to talk about. We do not have to talk about anything you don't want to talk about.

Now let's take the first card.

Card 1: Angry
If you were to think back over the last several weeks, even the last couple of months, and if you had to think about times you felt really angry about something, or times you got really mad or felt a sense of outrage or violation, are there 2 or 3 things that come to mind?

Take a minute to think about it, if you like, and just jot down on the card whatever you need to remind you of what they were.

Card 2: Anxious/Nervous
If you were to think back over the last several weeks, even the last couple of months, and if you had to think of some times when you found yourself being really nervous or anxious about something, are there 2 or 3 things that come to mind?

Take a minute to think about it, if you like, and just jot down on the card whatever you need to remind you of what they were.

Card 3: Success
If you were to think back over the last several weeks, even the last couple of months, and if you were to think of some times when you felt kind of triumphant, or that you had achieved something that was difficult for you, or especially satisfying that you were afraid might come out another way, or a sense that you had overcome something, are there 2 or 3 things that come to mind?

Take a minute to think about it, if you like, and just jot down on the card whatever you need to remind you of what they were.

Card 4: Strong Stand/Conviction
... if you were to think of some times when you had to take a strong stand, or felt very keenly "this is what I think should or should not be done about this", times when you became aware of a particular conviction you held, are there 2 or 3 things that come to mind?

Take a minute to think about it, if you like, and just jot down on the card whatever you need to remind you of what they were.

Card 5: Sad
... if you were to think of some times when you felt really sad about something, perhaps something that even made you cry, or left you feeling on the verge of tears, are there 2 or 3 things that come to mind?

Take a minute to think about it, if you like, and just jot down on the card whatever you need to remind you of what they were.

Card 6: Torn
... if you were to think of some times when you felt really in conflict about something, where someone or some part of you felt one way or was urging you on in one direction, and someone else or some other part was feeling another way; time when you really felt kind of torn about something, are there 2 or 3 things that come to mind?

Take a minute to think about it, if you like, and just jot down on the card whatever you need to remind you of what they were.

Card 7: Moved, Touched
... if you were to think of some times when you felt quite touched by something you saw, or thought, or heard, perhaps something that moved you, are there 2 or 3 things that come to mind?

Take a minute to think about it, if you like, and just jot down on the card whatever you need to remind you of what they were.

Card 8: Lost Something
... if you were to think of some times when you had to leave something behind, or were worried that you might lose something or someone; 'goodbye' experiences, the ends of something important or valuable; losses ... are there 2 or 3 things that come to mind?

Take a minute to think about it, if you like, and just jot down on the card whatever you need to remind you of what they were.

Card 9: Change
As you look back at your past, if you had to think of some ways in which you think you've changed over the last few years—or even months—are there some ways that come to mind?

Take a minute to think about it, if you like, and just jot down on the card whatever you need to remind you of what they were.

Card 10: Important
If I were just to ask you, "What is it that is most important to you?" or "What do you care deepest about?" or "What matters most?"—are there 1 or 2 things that come to mind?

Take a minute to think about it, if you like, and just jot down on the card whatever you need to remind you of what they were.

End

Now we have about an hour or so to talk about some of these things you've recalled or jotted down. You can decide where we start. Is there one card you felt more strongly about than the others?

Appendix B

Participant Information Letter

PROJECT TITLE: Relationships & Personal Growth
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Cathryne Lang
STUDENT RESEARCHER: Mr. Atholl Murray
STUDENT'S DEGREE: PhD (Psychology)

Dear Participant,
You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

What is the project about?
This project investigates men's experiences in relationships and how these contribute to personal growth.

Who is undertaking the project?
This project is being conducted by Atholl Murray and will form the basis for the degree of PhD (Psychology) at Australian Catholic University under the supervision of Dr. Cathryne Lang. Atholl is an experienced interviewer and has completed post graduate study in psychology and is an associate member of the Australian Psychology Society.

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?
Participation in this project is unlikely to result in increased risk, however, in describing your relationship experiences, both positive and negative, some participants may feel some degree of discomfort or distress.

What will I be asked to do?
If you decide to be involved in this project, you will be asked to participate in two informal interviews, which will be recorded (audio only). The interviews will create opportunities for you to talk about your positive and negative experiences in your relationship with your partner and ways in which you have experienced personal growth. During the first interview, you will be given some cards with prompt words written on them (such as "success", "torn", "change", "moved, touched") to assist you in recalling experiences that will be relevant to the interview. During the second interview, questions such as, "How important is intimacy in your relationship?", or, "Can you think of a time when you felt that you had grown in yourself?", will also be used to help you explore your relationship and growth experiences.

How much time will the project take?
The first interview is expected to take between one and one and a half hours, and the second interview is expected to take about an hour.

What are the benefits of the research project?
Many people find it a beneficial experience to talk about their relationship, but other than this, there is no direct benefit expected as a result of participating. However, your experiences will contribute to a greater understanding of relationships and personal growth.

Can I withdraw from the study?
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to participate. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study without adverse consequences. You will be given the opportunity to review the written transcript of your interview. It will not be possible to withdraw your data from this study once you have confirmed your transcript. De-identified data from this study may also be used in future studies.

Will anyone else know the results of the project?

The findings from this study will be published in academic journals and/or books as well as in a thesis (as part of the PhD). Short sections of your interview will be replicated as part of reporting these findings; however, they will be altered in a way that will disguise any information that might identify you. Only the researchers involved in this project will know the personal details that you provide.

Once the interviews have been transcribed, your personal information (such as your name or other identifying information) will be disguised, so that no one who sees the data will be likely to identify that it was from your interview.

During the project, the data from this interview (the recordings and the transcripts and your consent form) will be stored electronically on the researcher's computer, using password protection. At the end of the project, the data will be transferred to a CD or flash drive and deleted from the researcher's computer. The data will be archived and kept in a locked location according to the university's policy.

Will I be able to find out the results of the project?
You can request to receive a summary of the findings from this study by providing your email address to the researcher during your interview.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?
You can contact the researcher (Atholl Murray) if you have questions or want further information about this project. Contact details are provided at the end of this letter.

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?
The study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University (review number 2015-173H). If you have any complaints or concerns about the conduct of the project, you may write to the Manager of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research).

Manager, Ethics
c/o Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)
Australian Catholic University
North Sydney Campus
PO Box 968
NORTH SYDNEY, NSW 2059
Ph.: 02 9739 2519 or Fax: 02 9739 2870 or Email:
resethics.manager@acu.edu.au

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

I want to participate! How do I sign up?
The first step is to contact the researcher (details below) and ensure that you all of your questions have been answered. The next step is to arrange an interview at a mutually suitable time and location for in-person interviews. You will also need to sign a consent form prior to participating in the interviews., which can be returned electronically, or in person (at the interview). A copy of the consent form will be sent to you after an interview time has been arranged, and will include the details of your interview.

Yours sincerely,

Atholl Murray
atholl.murray@myacu.edu.au
Telephone: 0490 282 974
Fax: 07 3623 7279

Cathryne Lang
cathryne.lang@acu.edu.au
Telephone: 07 3623 7583

Appendix C

Consent Form

TITLE OF PROJECT: **Relationships and Personal Growth** (2015-173H)

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: **Dr Cathryne Lang (07 3623 7583)**

STUDENT RESEARCHER: **Mr Atholl Murray (0490 282 974)**

I ..... *(the participant)* have read (*or, where appropriate, have had read to me)* and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in two interviews. I understand that the first interview will take approximately one to one and a half hours and that the second interview will take approximately one hour. I understand that these interviews will be recorded (audio only). I understand that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way. De-identified data may also be used in future studies. I give my consent for data collected from my interview to be used in this way. I am aware that I can withdraw my consent at any time.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: .....

SIGNATURE: ..... DATE:

.....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:..... DATE:

.....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: ..... DATE:

Appendix D

Interview Schedule: Interview 1

Introduction

- Greetings
- Thank you for meeting with me today

Overview

- Interview – 60 to 90 minutes
- I will be recording the interview for my research purposes

Confidentiality

- Before we get started with the interview, I want to talk about confidentiality. My goal is to protect your privacy
    - reporting collated data
    - where I might include short sections of the transcript of your interview, I will replace any details that might identify you or people you are connected to, with made-up information

Limits to confidentiality

- If you were to disclose information that would allow some crime to be prevented, or some harm to yourself or others, I will need to reveal that information to the relevant services or authorities
- Are there any questions you would like to ask at this point?

Today's Interview

- Today's interview will begin with a set of topic cards that will give us a starting point for the interview
- The interview will explore some of your recent experiences

Consent

- Have you had a chance to read over the consent form that I sent to you?
- Are there any questions you'd like to ask?
- Are you happy to sign the consent form?

[Commence Recording]

Subject-Object Interview (SOI)

- Phase 1: Follow introductory statements (See Appendix A)
- Phase 2: Exploration of participant's experiences

SOI Prompts

- "What would have changed the way you felt in that situation?"
- Was there anything that she/he/you could have done or said?
- "What was most significant to you about that experience?"
- Looking at the other side of the experience – e.g., if something is making a person anxious, then there is something that they want to go well...
- "What might be the cost to you of ...?"
- "Can you tell me what the consequences might be for you if you ...?"
- Asking how the interviewee knows or evaluates something
- Asking what the situation might tell the person about themself

- Asking what was at stake for the interviewee

[Cease Recording]

Interview Conclusion

Thank you

- Thanks for meeting with me today and sharing your experiences

Transcript

- Would you like to receive a copy of the transcript?
- How would you like to receive the copy?
- email? post?
- Will those ways be safe enough for you, to make sure that no one else has an opportunity to read it?

Wellbeing

- For some people, talking about the sorts of things we've spoken about today can lead to feeling a bit unsettled or even distressed
- I would like to give you some information about where you can get some support, just in case you might need that in the future

Next Interview

- Are you happy to make a time for another interview?

Appendix E

Interview Schedule: Interview 2 (Version 1)

Introduction

- Greetings
- Thanks for meeting with me today

Overview

- Interview – about 60 minutes
- I will be recording the interview for my research purposes
- Asking questions about your experiences of personal growth
- Asking questions about your experiences of intimacy
- Are there any questions you'd like to ask?
- We can stop at any point if you need a break or to finish up

Consent

- Last time you provided your consent for the interviews to be used for my research purposes, are you still happy with that?

[Commence Recording]

Interview A Transcript/Subject-Object Interview Summary Statement

- As part of this process, I would like to give you a copy of the transcript from the last interview

    - give participant copy of transcript

- I have also prepared a statement that summarises my analysis of the last interview. I'd like to read this to you to (i) give you an opportunity to hear my summary of our last interview; (ii) give you an opportunity to clarify anything; (iii) to give you an idea of the kind of statement about you that might be included in my thesis

    - read out summary statement

- Do you have any questions or comments? How does this match with your understanding of the last interview?

Questions

Introductory Questions

1. Can you tell me your partner's name?
2. How would you describe your relationship with XXX?
    a. Married? Defacto?
3. When did you meet XXX?
4. How many romantic relationships would you say you have been in?
5. In what ways is this relationship different from other relationships you have been in?
6. How would you describe your current relationship?
    a. closeness?
    b. passion?
    c. dependence?
    d. importance? (to you? to XXX?)

7. What do you think makes your relationship work?
    a. how do you make decisions in your relationship?
    b. what issues do you argue about?
    c. what are your 'best' times?
8. What do you think makes you 'you'?
    a. How are you distinct / different from other people?
    b. How do you recognise this difference / distinctness?

Self/Growth Questions

1. In the last interview, I asked if there were times when you'd experienced changes. Can you think of a time when you felt like you've grown as a person?
    a. How did you know you'd grown?
    b. What things told you? what were the clues?
    c. Did you feel different?
    d. Did you think differently?
    e. Are there things you think about now that you didn't before?
    f. Are there things you don't think about now that you used to?
    g. Did anyone notice? who? what did they say?
    h. Was there an effect on [your partner]?
    i. Was there an effect on your relationship?
2. What experiences were important for that growth to happen?
    a. Were there skills / knowledge / past experiences that were important?
    b. Were there challenges that led to this growth? What were these? How do you think they helped you to grow?
    c. Did other people support you? Who? How do you think they helped you to grow?
3. Do you think your partner played a role in this growth?
    a. What role?
    b. How important was it? What difference did that make?
4. What was that experience of growth like?
    a. were there things you had to give up / leave behind?
        i. freedoms?
        ii. people?

Intimacy Questions

1. When you think about intimacy, what comes to mind?
    a. what words would you use to describe it?
    b. how do other people think about intimacy? what do you think about those ideas?
    c. is it a good thing? a bad thing? a positive experience? a negative one? tell me some more about why you think that?
2. Were there times in the past when you thought about intimacy differently?
3. Would you say you experience intimacy in your relationship?
    a. what experiences tell you that your relationship is intimate / not intimate?
4. How important is intimacy to you? to your partner?
    a. how do you know?

Final Questions

1. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about that relates to the things we have talked about today?
2. Just a few easy questions to finish with...
    a. Are you happy to tell me your age?

b. What is your most important educational achievement?
c. What is your cultural background
    i. where were you born?
    ii. where were your parents born?
    iii. Have you lived in other countries?
        - when? where? how long?

3. Do you have any questions you want to ask at this point?

[Cease Recording]

Conclusion

Thank you

- Thanks for meeting with me today,
- and for sharing your experiences

Transcript

- Would you like to receive a copy of the transcript? (for checking purposes)
- How would you like to receive the copy? email? post?
- Will those ways be safe enough for you, to make sure that no one else has an opportunity to read it?

Summary of Findings

- Would you like to receive a summary of the findings from this study?
- How would you like to receive the summary?

Wellbeing

- For some people, talking about the sorts of things we've spoken about today can lead to feeling a bit unsettled or even distressed
- I would like to give you some information about where you can get some support, just in case you might need that in the future

Appendix F

Interview Schedule: Interview 2 (Version 2)

Introduction

- Greetings
- Thanks for meeting with me today

Overview

- Interview – about 60 minutes
- I will be recording the interview for my research purposes
- Asking questions about your experiences of personal growth
- Asking questions about your experiences of intimacy
- Are there any questions you'd like to ask?
- We can stop at any point if you need a break or to finish up

Consent

- Last time you provided your consent for the interviews to be used for my research purposes, are you still happy with that?

[Commence Recording]

Interview A Transcript/Subject-Object Interview Summary Statement

- As part of this process, I would like to give you a copy of the transcript from the last interview

    - give participant copy of transcript

- I have also prepared a statement that summarises my analysis of the last interview. I'd like to read this to you to (i) give you an opportunity to hear my summary of our last interview; (ii) give you an opportunity to clarify anything; (iii) to give you an idea of the kind of statement about you that might be included in my thesis

    - read out summary statement

- Do you have any questions or comments? How does this match with your understanding of the last interview?

Questions

Intimacy Questions

1. When you think about intimacy, what comes to mind?
    a. what words would you use to describe it?
    b. how do other people think about intimacy? what do you think about those ideas?
    c. is it a good thing? a bad thing? a positive experience? a negative one? tell me some more about why you think that?
2. Were there times in the past when you thought about intimacy differently?
3. What do you know about intimacy?
    a. sexual
    b. non-sexual
4. How does intimacy happen?
5. How did you learn about intimacy?

6. What is the experience of intimacy like?
7. How do you know you're having an intimate experience?
8. Where do you experience intimacy?
    a. in what relationships?
        i. couple
        ii. family
        iii. friends
        iv. work
        v. self
        vi. other (nature?)
    b. in what situations? locations?
    c. through what types of behaviours?
9. Do you experience intimacy during conflict?

Final Questions

1. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about that relates to the things we have talked about today?
2. Just a few easy questions to finish with...
    a. Are you happy to tell me your age?
    b. What is your most important educational achievement?
    c. What is your cultural background
        i. where were you born?
        ii. where were your parents born?
        iii. Have you lived in other countries?
            - when? where? how long?
3. Do you have any questions you want to ask at this point?

[Cease Recording]

Conclusion

Thank you

- Thanks for meeting with me today,
- and for sharing your experiences

Transcript

- Would you like to receive a copy of the transcript? (for checking purposes)
- How would you like to receive the copy? email? post?
- Will those ways be safe enough for you, to make sure that no one else has an opportunity to read it?

Summary of Findings

- Would you like to receive a summary of the findings from this study?
- How would you like to receive the summary?

Wellbeing

- For some people, talking about the sorts of things we've spoken about today can lead to feeling a bit unsettled or even distressed
- I would like to give you some information about where you can get some support, just in case you might need that in the future

Appendix G

Letter to Participants: Transcripts

Dear XXX,

Hello.

It's been a little while since we spoke, but I wanted to say thank you again for your contribution to my research. Thank you for the experiences and stories that you've shared with me, and thanks for trusting me with those. I wanted to let you know that I recognise the significance of what you have offered me. I hope that in some ways, it was a meaningful and interesting experience for you too.

One of the ways that I want to make sure that I honour what you have given me is to check that you are still happy for me to use the details of our conversations in my analyses. To do that, I've enclosed a copy of the transcript from Interview 2. I have already given you a copy of the transcript from Interview 1, but I am now also enclosing a short statement that summarises what I analysed from that transcript.

I'd like to invite you to:

1. Check the transcripts to make sure that
    a. I have adequately preserved your privacy and that nothing identifies you
    b. You are willing to allow me to use the contents of the transcripts (from both interviews) for analysis
    c. You are willing to allow me to use short quotations from your transcripts to illustrate any findings I might make
2. Read through the summary statement from Interview 1. Please:
    a. let me know how well you think this matches your understanding of yourself
    b. or, if not, please make let me know what I've left out or misunderstood
3. If there are any sections that:
    a. identify you,
    b. are not suitable to be analysed, or
    c. are not suitable to be quoted

    please let me know. The best way might be to send me an email with the line numbers of sections that are not suitable.
4. One last thing, would you be happy for me to contact you via phone if there are any follow-up questions I might have?

If you'd like to get back to me about these things, please send me an email (to: atholl.murray@myacu.edu.au) or about anything else related to the project. I hope to be able to send you a summary of my findings by about August this year.

Thank you again for your contribution,

Kind regards,

Atholl

Atholl Murray | 0490 282 974
Doctoral Candidate | School of Psychology | Room FC.28
Australian Catholic University | 1100 Nudgee Road, Banyo QLD 4014

Appendix H

Interview 1 Summary Statements Provided to Participants

Andy

This participant saw that life teaches many good lessons and that although these lessons may be painful at times, persevering with life's challenges results in good rewards, such as increased resilience, and greater capacity to face future challenges. He identified that even when these challenges were crippling, over time, it was possible to see the good that had come from these difficulties.

This participant also saw that faith gave him a framework in which to recognise these benefits. In addition, faith gave him a confidence about how to respond to these challenges. In relation to others who were facing challenges, he saw that by seeking to bring forward the potential he recognised in others, he was facilitating opportunities for them to live life more richly.

It was also evident in some of his recent and difficult experiences that doing what was right was more important than being popular. It was also evident that in doing what right, he was aware that the cost to himself and to others involved in the process might involve him being represented by others as having betrayed friendships. However, what gave him confidence in these situations, as well as faith, was his belief in the power of change to facilitate self reflection and the growth of character, resilience and wisdom.

Brendan

This participant seemed to have a strong sense of fairness. His ideas about fairness seemed to be based upon working according to a shared system: if everyone follows the system, then life will be fair. Even though he recognised that this is somewhat idealistic, he still held to the hope that being a good person brings not only personal reward, but eventually reward from society. He also saw that as an employee, he had an obligation to follow the expectations that were placed upon him by his employer, that is, to follow the system that was set up by the employer. At the same time, he felt that it was his work context that shaped him to behave in rule-following, legalistic ways, because following the rules was the only way to ensure his security. However, in other contexts, he saw himself as much more flexible.

His experiences seemed to have shown him that not all systems are good, and that despite his best efforts to support the system, regardless of his personal disagreement with some of its expectations, his experience was one of being let down by the system. Coming to this realisation was a catalyst for leaving that system to find a better one. In his next place of work, he experienced being unsupported by the system in a similar way, however he was more able to look at this situation in terms of what his goals and needs were and think more strategically about these.

Cameron

This participant is passionate about making a difference in people's lives, and in particular, those who don't have the opportunities to develop that others get. There's a sense in which fairness is important in this, and in his workplace, he saw that unfair work practices were having detrimental effects on his colleagues and this left him, and others, compromised, and him feeling powerless. People are definitely a strong priority in his understanding of how a workplace should operate and that regardless of the ways that policies are worded, they need to be understood in terms of the effects that any interpretation of those policies will have on the people who are subject to them. He also described recent changes in his experience of work, and a decision to review how he understood his own goals in relation to the goals of the organisation. It seems that he holds a "theory of relationships" that ascribes to principles of making a contribution, demonstrating altruism, building trust and treating others fairly. In making a contribution, there seems to be an increased awareness of his uniqueness, and the way in which that contribution is important for the betterment of society. There is also a growing sense that he is seeing the organisation in a new way, seeing the inner workings that reveal some ways in which the system itself, rather than the implementation of that system is flawed.

Daniel

This participant has a clear sense of building his own way of seeing the world. He has consciously drawn upon multiple sources of ideas about living a good life to develop his own understanding, and that taking these on-board involves processes of intuiting truths, what makes sense, and what resonates with his current ideas. These centre around the ideas of the importance of relationships and community and the responsibility of all to make a contribution to how those relationships and communities are understood. In terms of personal relationships,

he sees that it is important to negotiate relationships that allow him to maintain his integrity with his ideas of living a good life.

Erik

This participant values people and has discovered that happiness is found in the experiences of connecting with others, not in achievements, possessions, or situations. He understands that the only way in which a person's self esteem can be secure is if the source of their self esteem comes from within. He sees clearly that a person's validation must be from inside, and as the result of an examined life, not from outside, from accolades or achievements or the validation of others. Finding validation in others leaves a person vulnerable to loss of self. He has a deep sense of values, of openness, trust and empathy, and recognises that how people appear is not always a good reflection of who they really are; all sorts of people can be inspirational. He truly seeks to give people the freedom to live their own lives, hold their own views and make their own decisions about what is best for them. He is aware that at times, these decisions can affect the possibilities for his own experiences, particularly ones he holds dear. He recognises that giving this freedom can lead to a sense of loss, a sense in which a small part of himself is also lost in another's choice. However, it is through his experiences of loss and of success that he has come to realise these things. Experiences have taught him that he has a choice about how he responds to the challenges that life offers; his experience of life's ups and downs will depend on the choices he makes, not on the ups and downs – facing what can be changed and accepting what can't.

Harrison

This participant identified a strong connection with family and with friends. He described how family and friends were an important part of finding his "true self" and of being "able to formulate a self worth". These relationships also enabled him to get himself "on a path … of finding out" who he is, what makes him happy and how he wishes to act and to be treated. He also described that being independent and "not going with the crowd" was a really important part of who he is. For him, what others thought was important, and that he could recognize that others might view life differently, however, he saw that it was important to be true to himself rather than be influenced by how others saw him.

He also described having a good friend, whom he had been friends with since primary school and that they had many things in common. In thinking about what

this friendship offered him, he described how it represented a shared history, a common love for sports and a strong bond that was like a brotherly closeness.

He also described that spending time in maintaining contact with friends was important but that the demands of university study made these things difficult. However, he also recognised that life as a university student is also what you make of it. For him, maintaining an involvement with sport outside of university study was one thing he had discovered was that really important, despite the demands of study. There was still a sense in which he felt torn between being a good friend and being a good university student. He described this as a struggle between feeling a personal guilt for not doing better, but recognising that he ultimately needed to accept that that's how things had to be while he was at uni.

In his interactions with friends, he described himself as a good communicator and that he was able to keep a conversation flowing and not get off onto other topics that may not be of interest to the other person. He also described being thoughtful about choosing topics that would be of interest to others and of being willing to offer his ideas and opinions about matters that were discussed amongst friends. He also spoke about taking notice of how other people responded to him as a way of working out what things were helpful ideas to offer to others.

Iain

This participant has a clear picture of things that are important to him from a big-picture perspective. His own experiences of disempowerment and of vulnerability have shown him that situations of being without resources, being without agency or without avenues for assistance are not good situations in which to be. He has also experienced that in this situation, others' decisions around the distribution of resources result in life-affecting consequences that reinforce a sense of powerlessness for those subject to those decisions. It is these experiences that help him to recognise the dehumanising effects of these kinds of experiences for others. He also understands that the solution to these problems can be found through the nurture and support that can be provided by cohesive communities. He also understands that life lived in community with others is what brings meaning to life. He has come to these ideas through his own experiences and through his observations of others.

These are not just things he knows in his head, but things he also knows in his heart. Seeing the absence of empowerment and also ways in which helping

others brings about transformation of lives are situations that move him in a deep way.

At a personal level, he has been on a search for identity and to find meaning, beyond how he might be valued by others in terms of providing for his family, in terms of career success or in terms of material accumulation. He holds less now to status or role or possessions as defining who he is. Now, he has questions around finding his passion, both in his understanding of his own purpose in life, and in terms of his relationships with his wife and family. He has been inspired by the way in which other people have demonstrated significant compassion and understanding for others, and recognises the positive effects that this can have on individuals, communities and societies. In his own life, he has been discovering a need to make a greater contribution to others' lives, not for his own gain, although he does find this rewarding, but because he recognises contribution as important in strengthening the whole fabric of our human existence.

Jeff

This participant was in the middle of a dilemma, which seemed to him to be almost impossible to find an answer that didn't involve loss – either a loss of a relationship or a loss of other things that were important to him. On one hand, he had found purpose and meaning and fulfilment in helping others through therapeutic work focused on intimate body work, but on the other hand, maintaining the relationship has meant having to give up that work, because it didn't fit within his partner's ideas about relationships.

In the past, his ways of understanding how to move forward in other dilemmas has been to identify things as related to fear or as related to love, and choosing love has always been the answer. In this situation, it's not his own fear, but rather his partner's fears that are problematic, and these are leading to his own fear of losing the relationship. However, it's because of his love for his partner that he wants to stay in this relationship, as well as his own deep experience of feeling love in a way that he hadn't expected to feel. For this participant, there is an experience of being torn between wanting to bring about positive change in his partner's life and yet an uncertainty that this positive change is what his partner wants. On one level, positive change (which is an expression of love) is the only way forward, but on another level, bringing about that change is only possible if the person wants that change, change which appears to be hindered by fear. And so it seems that the only

solution for both of them is to move away from fear and towards love. However, the dilemma seems to be about what that might mean in terms of the relationship. Does facing his own fears mean being willing to give up the relationship?

Kevin

This participant has a strong sense of values that reflect a deep concern for the wellbeing of people and the environment and the good use of resources. In his professional experiences, he is aware that people's values are not always aligned. Finding ways in which values are aligned, between project teams and clients and within project teams, is very important for success. In contexts where his own or others' values are in conflict with the contexts in which they are working, he seeks to bring a greater understanding of the interaction between values and situations to see more clearly how these values are operating. In his experience, the outcomes of these closer evaluations, examining multiple dimensions of this interaction, can lead to a realisation that what was previously a conflict is no longer a conflict. At other times, these evaluations can lead to a recognition that moving forward requires either a compromise between values and outcomes or a decision to withdraw from involvement when the compromise is too great. He is aware of the personal impact of working in this kind of situation, and that too great a compromise can lead to negative effects. These effects can be felt both in terms of professional productivity and in satisfaction with work, and in terms of personal relationships and enjoyment of life. In these situations, he recognises that it is important for him and others to re-evaluate their level of involvement in such contexts. However, he also recognises that complete alignment between values and contexts, and amongst people is rare. He also recognises that across an organisation, different sets of values mean that whilst some people might feel compromised in some contexts, other people might not. His understanding of how his organisation works best is by itself holding only a few key principles such as sustainability, corporate, social and environmental responsibility, and community contribution, and allowing the diversity of people's perspectives and values engage, according to those principles with a diverse range of projects.

Lucas

This participant has a clear picture of who he is. Through his life experiences, he has come to an awareness that what is most important to him is his own personal freedom and the ability to live his life the way he thinks is best. He has great compassion for those he loves but is not willing to compromise his own authenticity

just to allow others to feel better. For him this lacks integrity. Coming to this place has involved being willing to show people he loves who he is, and allowing them to reject him if they are not willing to accept him as he is, even though this is at great cost to him, "because actually hurting other people leaves you with a horrible price as well, it's not just from the rejection, it's actually the empathy and the guilt that you feel". In his work and in his personal life he recognises that others can help him to recognise things about himself that he may not see clearly. He sees that others can offer him opportunities to smooth off the rough edges of himself. When these important others identify these aspects of himself, he is willing to look at these and consider if he wants to make changes. He also recognises that he can have a powerful impact on other people and can influence how they respond. He is aware that he can use this influence to achieve what he sees is necessary in particular situations. He is also becoming more aware that this might not always allow others to make a contribution and he is working towards understanding more about how others' contributions might be important in terms of achieving his goals.

Mark

This participant has recently had some relationship experiences that have provided him with opportunities to see some things about himself more clearly. Although he is still making sense of some parts of these experiences, he has come to the conclusion that what is important, is living in a way that works for him. Being in a relationship where he has to compromise by being answerable to someone else has made it difficult for him to "make his own way in the world" and to make decisions that are focused on his own needs. In making sense of these recent relationship experiences, he has come to the conclusion that living according to your truth, is how to be happy. He is aware that people can experience strong biological drives, however, he believes it is important to behave in ways that control those drives and "be more than your biology", to live according to the ways that he has been brought up and ways that match the social norms of society. Some of the advantages of living according to social norms are that this way of living brings status and money and success. However, he sees that western norms around relationships cause people to create façades that get in the way of meeting the real person. He knows this because he has had some very significant experiences of honest, true connections with other people. It seems to him that relationships would be more fulfilling if people were more honest with one another, but that these kinds of deeply honest relationships are not really possible in western countries.

Neil

This participant has struggled to find meaning in a number of his life experiences. His experiences of working in Africa, through his involvement with a medical missionary organisation, have made him aware of the stark differences between the poverty of Africa, and the affluence of Western societies. He has found it difficult to reconcile these differences and understand how they can co-exist in the same world. His childhood experiences of a violent and emotionally unavailable father have left him with questions about fatherhood, and how a man with such power can offer so little to his family. He also knows that hard work and dedication in his career have enabled him to become highly skilled at saving lives, something that his professional colleagues were also able to recognise in him. However, despite these achievements, he is left with unanswered questions about the purpose of life. Despite his capacity to understand what it means to be a good professional, and now, a good student, it seems he still struggles to find answers to questions about what, in the end, achievements in these things really mean.

Appendix I

Additional Interview Protocols: Interview Locations

Locations for Interviews
Suitable spaces for conducting interviews will facilitate:

- the integrity of the interview to be maintained by limiting the likelihood of interruption due to intrusion or noise
- the sense of the interview as a safe space for the interviewee and interviewer, this includes:
    - freedom to disclose information without fear of being overheard
    - freedom to conduct the interview without fear of aspersions of unprofessional behaviour (e.g., the interview is conducted in a space where any extreme distress on the part of the interviewee would be heard by others)
    - physical safety, appropriate lighting, comfortable seating, etc.

Possible spaces include:

- Interview rooms at ACU
- Public Library conference rooms (e.g., Brisbane City Council libraries that have rooms that may be booked, Queensland State Library)
- A participant's place of work

Where interviews can only be conducted in the participant's home, this will be discussed with the Principal Investigator/Supervisor and an assessment made regarding the likely risk. Assessment will be made on the basis of a number of factors

- age/sex of participant,
- number of other people who will be present at the home,
- time of day at which the interview will be conducted,
- location of the home (e.g., remote?), and
- researcher's initial perceptions of participant gained through initial telephone contact.

Areas of risk that will be assessed include:

- researcher's physical safety,
- potential for allegations of researcher's misconduct (which may put the researcher and university at risk),
- suitability of environment for maintaining the integrity of the interview.

Where a participant's home is deemed unsafe, the interview will not be conducted, unless it can be arranged at another venue that is more suitable.

Preparation for conducting an interview at a participant's home
Where a participant's home is deemed safe, the Researcher will prepare for the possibility that the participant's home may become an unsafe place to conduct/continue an interview. In preparation the researcher will:

- Have their mobile phone with them at all times
- Travel by their own car to the participant's home and park on the street.
- Inform the Principal Investigator, via mobile phone, that they are about to enter the participant's home and inform the Principal Investigator when the interview has been completed. If the Researcher has not contacted the Principal Investigator within a reasonable time to indicate that the interview has concluded, the Principal Investigator will attempt to contact the Researcher via their mobile phone. If this is unsuccessful after several attempts, the Principal Investigator will contact the police.
- The Researcher will make initial contact with the Participant at their front door (i.e., will request to speak with the participant, not another person), and will not enter the premises unless the Researcher is satisfied that the situation is safe.
- The Researcher will make sure that the room the Participant has selected is suitable for the interview, and will check who else is present in the house.

    - If there is no one else present, then it will not be suitable to continue and the Researcher will request to reschedule
    - If there are others present who represent a risk to the safety of the Researcher, then it will not be suitable to continue, and the Researcher will request to reschedule
    - An explanation may be offered, such as "I'm terribly sorry to do this, but I've just received a text from my partner and I need to go unexpectedly", or "I'm terribly sorry to do this, but I think that I am not feeling at all well, I really need to go home"

- The Researcher will position themself in the room (in which the interview is to take place) with easy access to an avenue of escape (e.g., near the door), and under no circumstances will the Researcher allow the door to be locked.
- If, at any point, the Researcher feels unsafe, or identifies that the situation has reasonable possibility of becoming unsafe, they will terminate the interview by:

    - Indicating that they need to leave unexpectedly (such as in the examples provided above)
    - Apologising for the need to terminate the interview
    - Indicating that they will make contact with the participant to reschedule
    - Leaving the participant's house as quickly and calmly as possible.
    - Documenting the event as soon as possible
    - Contacting the Principal Investigator to inform them of the event

Dealing with Participant Distress in an Interview
Where any interview has involved participant distress, the researcher will debrief with the Principal Investigator.

If a participant becomes distressed the Researcher will:

- Suspend the interview (and pause recording)
- Ask the participant if they are OK
- Offer the participant a tissue or to get them a cup of tea/coffee/water if available
- Ask the participant if they would like to take a break or terminate the interview, or to resume at another time
- Provide the participant with contact information for support services such as Lifeline or the ACU psychology clinic or psychology clinics at other universities.
- Offer to escort the participant to their car, or to arrange a taxi to enable them to get home
- Contact the participant if they have requested to resume the interview at another time
- Document the event
- Inform the Principal Investigator of the suspension or termination or rescheduling of the interview and that the participant was distressed, and if necessary, arrange opportunity to debrief

Appendix J

Pseudonyms Used in Transcripts

Participant	Pseudonym	Related Pseudonyms
P01	Andy	Jen (wife)
P02	Brendan	Ruth (wife)
		Pete (friend)
P03	Cameron	
P04	Daniel	
P05	Erik	Maria (wife)
P07	Harrison	Greg and Sam (friends)
P08	Iain	
P09	Jeff	Derek (boyfriend)
P10	Kevin	
P11	Lucas	
P12	Mark	Julie (1st wife)
		Steph (2nd wife)
		Steve (Steph's lover)
P13	Neil	Rita (ex-partner)

Appendix K

Kegan's Evolutionary Stages

Stage 2 (Enduring Disposition: Needs, interests, wishes)

- An understanding of a person as having dispositions, that is an enduring pattern of needs, wishes, desires.
- An understanding of how one should be, governed by roles (e.g., friend, husband, work colleague, boss) that are externally defined (i.e., by institutions).
- Concerned about the *consequences* of another's dissatisfaction, rather than concerned about the other's feeling dissatisfied per se.
- Others constituted as the *means* by which needs are met, wishes are fulfilled, interests are pursued, which allows for greater independence from other.
- Unable to hold perception of own needs, wishes and desires *in relation to* perception of another's needs, wishes and desires. Consequently, unable to consider another's needs in own decision making.
- Unable to perceive others' needs, wishes, desires as different to own. Consequently, expects others to feel, think, respond to the same situation in the same way as they would.

Stage 3 (Mutuality, Interpersonal concordance)

- An understanding of a person as distributed amongst their relationships, that is, what one experience of oneself depends on whom one is with, and one's relationship to that person. How one can be is governed by relationships and how one should be is determined by what preserves relationships. Consequently, interpersonal conflict is problematic.
- An understanding of how one's relationship should be is governed by expectations that are externally defined (i.e., by institution).
- Concerned about own and others' feelings, not just consequences. Consequently, is able to empathise and accept some responsibility for how one's actions affect another's feelings. Feelings reveal one's "real" self.
- Others constituted as the means by which one experiences oneself. "You are the other by whom I complete myself, the other whom I need to create the context out of which I define and know myself and the world" (p. 100)
- Unable to perceive others' construction of relationship as different to own. Consequently, expects others to hold the same assumptions and expectations about how relationships work.

Stage 4 (Personal autonomy, Identity)

- Understanding of a person, independent of one's relationships, i.e., "who I am".
- Understanding of how one should be is governed by one's own authority (i.e., self as institution) – "sense of self, self-dependence, self-ownership" (p. 100), including one's own construction of "role, norm, self-concept [and] auto-regulation" (p. 101)
- Understanding of how a particular relationship works is also self-authored, governed by own roles and norms
- Feelings are a source of information, rather than an expression of self, and can be reflected upon. However unresolved internal emotional conflicts can threaten the integrity of self.
- Unable to construct multiple selves-as-institutions in order to serve principles or purposes. Instead, principles and purposes *arise from* self-as-institution, which "is inevitably ideological . . . a truth for a faction, a class, a group. And it probably requires the recognition of a group . . . to come into being" (p. 102).

Stage 5 (Interpenetration of systems)

- Understanding of a person as able to behave according to multiple institutions (i.e., multiple sets of: roles, norms, self-concepts, forms of self regulation) in order to serve the principles, purposes and aims of the self.
- The principles, purposes and aims of the self are generated from an awareness of one's connection to all other persons as sharing a common humanity
- Sense of self is not dependent upon the performance of a particular institution. Consequently, is able to "hear, and to seek out, information which might cause the self to alter its behaviour, or share in a negative judgment of that behaviour" (p. 105).
- Internal emotional conflicts (arising from multiple institutions) are new a source of information, providing new ways to construct self in the intersections of institutions.