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Author

Walters, Benjamin James

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**More than Words: An Examination of Intimate Expression in Men's Homosocial
Friendships**

Benjamin James Walters

Bachelor of Psychology (Hons)

School of Applied Psychology

Griffith Health

Griffith University

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Abstract

Despite a history of high quality research in the area, division exists within literature examining gender and communication regarding the degree to which men experience platonic intimacy in their homosocial friendships. Dominant theoretical approaches range from those suggesting that communication behaviours typical of men's friendships are unemotive and, therefore, lacking in intimacy (e.g., Gupta et al., 2013; Levy, 2005; Reisman, 1990); to those suggesting that men's friendships feature overt emotional intimacy, such as vulnerable disclosure (e.g., Batalha, Reynolds, & Newbigin, 2011; Hyde, 2005; Walker, 1994). The present research aimed to examine the various modes of expressing intimacy men employed within a friendship context (Study 1), the degree to which this expression met men's needs for intimacy (Studies 1 and 3), and the impact of contextual factors and individual subscription to masculine role norms on men's use of various modes of expression (Study 2). A mixed methods design was employed to assess intimacy in accordance with men's subjective definitions. Importantly, studies were designed with the limiting implicit assumptions of some previous research in mind (such as the assumption that covert expression is inherently less intimate than vulnerable expression; and that masculinity is inherently incongruent with vulnerable expression). In doing this, the present research attempted to gain new perspective on hitherto unresolved issues in this area of research.

Study 1 utilised a qualitative interview to investigate communication behaviours that men commonly experienced in their friendships, and the degree to which these fostered subjective closeness. Thematic analysis indicated that responses centred primarily on the use of unspoken cues to indicate and create meaningful emotional closeness. The presence of a mutual emotional understanding between male friends, as well as a sense of trust and dependability, was described as crucial to this intimacy. These findings supported the notion that men express meaningful subjective intimacy

through cues that are not explicitly vulnerable (covert expression). The use of direct verbal expressions of closeness (vulnerable expression) was also a prominent theme.

Study 2 was designed as a quantitative follow-up to Study 1, and aimed to further investigate findings relating to the impact of contextual factors and subscription to the masculine ideology on men's attitudes towards gender role incongruent expression (i.e., vulnerable expression). This study employed vignettes to manipulate the presence or absence of three contextual factors (Shared Identity, Validation of Masculinity, and Cover Activity) in an imaginary interaction between two male friends, which culminated in vulnerable disclosure. Moderation analyses were conducted to determine the degree to which the presence of these contextual factors improved participants' perception of the vulnerable disclosure, as well as the moderating effect of subscription to traditional masculine role norms on this relationship. These results indicated that Perceived Similarity and Validation of Masculinity influenced men's perceptions of vulnerable expression, and that the influence of these contextual factors was moderated by subscription to male role norms in a non-linear fashion.

Study 3 ran in parallel to Study 2, and was designed to extend findings of Study 1 by further investigating men's patterns of preference for covert versus vulnerable expression, as well as the degree of expected intimacy associated with each form of expression. In Study 3, men were presented with a range of communication strategies (both vulnerable and covert) and were asked to rate the intimacy and likelihood of occurrence for each strategy. The possible moderating role of subscription to masculine role norms on these relationships was also tested. Results indicated that, although men consistently rated vulnerable expression strategies more indicative of intimacy than covert expression strategies, covert expression strategies were rated significantly more likely to occur between male friends. The size of the latter effect was approximately double that of the former in all analyses. Subscription to masculine role norms did not

moderate this relationship. Results suggested both vulnerable and covert expression play important roles in men's homosocial intimacy, but that each is likely to serve different functions. Results also reinforced the implication of Study 1 that men's use of covert expression is not inherently associated with less subjective intimacy.

Broadly, the present research suggests that men do experience meaningful subjective intimacy in their homosocial friendships. This intimacy appears to be expressed through both vulnerable and covert modes of expression. The decision to use one mode of expression over the other appears to be influenced by personal preferences and the nature of the friendship (see Study 1), contextual factors (see Study 2) and the intended function of the expression (see Study 3). In this way, results support elements of the conflicting aspects of previous literature in this area. Specifically, both vulnerable and non-vulnerable modes of expression appear to be important in the formation of homosocial closeness between men. However, the clear message of the present research is that vulnerable expression is not the only path to subjective intimacy for men. In addition to offering new concepts for investigation in future research (such as mitigated expression, the role of contextual factors in intimate expression, and the notion that masculinity may not preclude vulnerable intimacy), it is hoped that the present research also highlights the importance of carefully considering the manner in which research assumptions influence the methodologies researchers employ, the kind of data that they collect and, ultimately, the conclusions that are drawn about gender and communication.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Benjamin Walters

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Discourse in the area of gender and communication, both scientific (e.g., Tannen, 1991) and in popular lay literature (e.g., Gray, 1992), has historically suggested that masculine communication typically maintains a focus on power, dominance and control, while feminine communication typically centres on affiliation, inclusion and solidarity (see also Eagly & Wood, 2013; Eisler, 1995; Guerrero, Anderson, & Trost, 1998; Levant, 1995; Levy, 2005; Pollack, 1995; Tannen, 1991). These suggested differences have often led researchers to conclude that masculine styles of communication are inferior to feminine styles in fostering and communicating intimacy; because masculine styles are thought both to promote the motivations of the individual at the expense of others, and because they ignore or devalue relationship oriented and internal aspects of the human experience, such as emotions and reliance on others (Fischer & Good, 1997; Gupta et al., 2013; Levant, Allen, & Lien, 2014; O'Neil, Good, & Holmes, 1995; Reis, 1998). Specifically, masculine communication is often discussed as involving a focus on external activities and indirect indicators of closeness (i.e., covert expression), while feminine communication is discussed as involving direct emotional disclosures (i.e., vulnerable expression). As a result, men are often believed not to achieve closeness and intimacy in their platonic relationships (especially homosocial relationships), either because they are not concerned with more emotional or relationship oriented aspects of relationships, or because they are unable to realise these goals (for examples, see Fehr, 2004; Gupta et al., 2013; Land, Rochlen, & Vaughn, 2011; Levant, Hall, Williams, & Hasan, 2009; Levy, 2005; Mazur & Olver, 1987; Peplau & Gordon, 1985). In both cases, men's relationships, especially their same-sex friendships, are deemed to be of a poorer quality than those of women; and this is thought to be a result of interaction styles typically employed by men (e.g., Bank & Hansford, 2000; Derlega, 1993; Edwards & Hamilton, 2004; Levy, 2005; Tannen,

1991). This standpoint has been termed the gender differences hypothesis (or the deficit approach) which, at its core, refers to the notion that men are less expressive and intimate than women (Chrisler & McCreary, 2010; Swain, 1989, 2001).

Masculinity has been offered as a key causal factor in influencing communication style, which in turn produces the supposed difference in the intimacy present in men's and women's homosocial friendships. For example, in his writing on the Gender Role Conflict paradigm, O'Neil (1981b, 2008; O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, & Wrightsman, 1986) states that an intense aversion to feminine values, attitudes and behaviours lies at the heart of the masculine ideology. Because of this, men who subscribe to the masculine gender role are thought to suppress all relationship oriented behaviour that could be viewed as feminine (including affection and emotionality) in their interactions with others (O'Neil, 2008; O'Neil et al., 1986). Similarly, Pollack (1995, p. 33) stated that, because of masculine socialisation, the notion of a dependent relationship with another person is nothing less than "a frightening anathema to men". Based on their survey on communication, Edwards and Hamilton (2004; based on the work of Tannen, 1991) stated that men's primary goal in interactions is to assert and maintain dominance, while feminine interaction styles aim to facilitate connectedness and closeness. The authors utilised causal model analysis to show that this difference can largely be accounted for by gender role identity. Research such as this suggests that the masculine gender role prompts men to adopt interaction styles which preclude intimacy (see also Levant et al., 2014; Levy, 2005).

In contrast to the gender differences hypothesis is the notion that covert masculine interaction styles achieve the same intimacy based goals as vulnerable feminine expression. One of the first studies to suggest this was that by Helgeson, Shaver and Dyer (1987), which found that masculine and feminine modes of expression were equally effective in achieving intimacy. Authors suggested that the creation of feelings

of affection and appreciation determined whether intimacy was achieved, rather than the interaction style employed. Several authors in this area (e.g., Evers, 2010; Kaplan & Rosenmann, 2014; Levant, 1995; Pleck, 1995; Swain, 2001; Thurnell-Read, 2012) suggest that men employ intimate expression strategies which rely more heavily on behavioural evidence of closeness (e.g., the provision of instrumental support) than direct disclosures of emotions. This is in contrast to more feminine, disclosure based, expressions of intimacy which men tend to avoid because it is too threatening to their masculine self-concept (Pollack, 1999). However, these more subtle modes of expression are decreasingly recognised as intimate (Pollack, 1999). Swain (1989, 2001) suggested that the different sex-based socialisation experiences of boys and girls leads members of each sex to feel greater subjective intimacy when engaging in gender role congruent modes of expression. Therefore, although women may feel close to another person when disclosing about a meaningful experience, men may achieve the same subjective experience of closeness while participating together in the same emotive experience (i.e., a shared activity). Ultimately, research from this theoretical perspective evokes the principle of equifinality, suggesting that men and women have similar emotional needs, and that each sex fulfils these needs successfully albeit potentially using different methods.

Also contrasting with the gender differences hypothesis is the gender similarities hypothesis, which suggests that sex differences in communication have been exaggerated in previous research (Chrisler & McCreary, 2010; Hyde, 2005; Zell, Krizan, & Teeter, 2015). According to this hypothesis, there is actually no difference between what men and women consider intimate, or the modes of expression men and women use to convey intimacy. This hypothesis has arisen from meta-analyses indicating that sex differences in relationship oriented aspects of communication, such as self-disclosure and affiliative speech, are so small in effect size as to be ecologically

insignificant (Dindia & Allen, 1992; Fischer, 2000; Hyde, 2005; Zell et al., 2015). This conclusion is supported by data presented in earlier research. For example, Walker's (1994) qualitative study suggested that, although men initially reported a greater focus on shared activities in their friendships, they described interactions focussed on vulnerable disclosure (frequently considered to be feminine) when asked to recall specific interactions (Walker, 1994). Further, when asked to describe behaviours that convey intimacy, both men and women typically rated disclosure based modes of expression highest (Monsour, 1992; Parks & Floyd, 1996).

Often, research in men's intimate homosocial expression makes the assumption that the most efficient and efficacious mode of expressing intimacy is vulnerable disclosure. This has led many studies to use measures of intimacy that focus solely on disclosure. This is problematic as it fails to capture covert modes of expression which, according to some research (e.g., Englar-Carlson & Stevens, 2006; Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010; Swain, 2001), may be men's primary means of communicating intimacy. It is possible that a failure to include covert expression in the operationalisation of intimacy has led past research to incorrectly conclude that men's friendships lack intimacy. Related to this, much previous research has compared men's friendships to women's, based on the assumption that women's communication (which is typically considered to feature more vulnerable expression) represents the ideal form of communication. However, it has been suggested that making sex-based comparisons in this field of research may not lead to a greater understanding of either sex (Addis & Schwab, 2013). Additionally, much research in this area has examined modes of expression in men's friendships without considering the role of the social context. This is based on an implicit assumption that intimacy, and modes of expressing intimacy, is a relatively stable trait across settings. Little consideration has been given to the fact that the social context in which an interaction takes place is likely to play an essential role in

determining the mode of expression an individual employs (Chaplin, 2015). The following chapter discusses the possible role of three contextual factors: perceived similarity, validation of masculinity, and cover activities.

Broadly, research on men's intimate homosocial expression features contradictory evidence regarding the degree to which communication in men's friendships can be classed as intimate; whether men fulfil their needs for intimacy using non-disclosure based modes of expression; and the reasons for men's use of alternate modes of expression (if men prefer alternate modes of expression). Thus, it is the aim of the present research to investigate men's subjective experience of friendship and the modes of expression used therein (in order to determine whether these meet men's intimacy needs); the modes of expression primarily endorsed and utilised by men; and the degree to which contextual factors and subscription to traditional male role norms impact men's use and experience of the various modes of homosocial intimate expression.

The current chapter has provided an overview of the concepts investigated in this thesis, and the relationships between them. Chapter 2 provides a detailed literature review of these concepts, elaborates on the points raised hitherto, and concludes with the research questions being examined in this thesis. Chapter 3 contains Study 1, a qualitative analysis of men's experience of intimacy in homosocial friendships. Chapter 4 contains Study 2, which tests concepts related to vulnerability mitigation (based on features of an interaction context and individual subscription to the masculine role) identified in Study 1 using a more controlled quantitative framework. Chapter 5 contains Study 3, which examines men's preference more broadly for vulnerable versus covert expression and the moderating role of subscription to masculine role norms; especially in relation to perceived intimacy and likelihood of use. Importantly, although Studies 2 and 3 are related, they should be considered as parallel as opposed to sequential. Each study examines unique aspects of concepts raised in Study 1 using

varied methodological approaches. Chapter 6 provides a macro level discussion of the results of Studies 1, 2 and 3; integrates these findings with previous research; addresses the research questions of the present thesis; and discusses the implications of the results for future research.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Within the field of gender and communication, there are contrasting perspectives on the extent to which men's friendships with other men are characterised by meaningful platonic intimacy. One body of research suggests that men's friendships lack behaviours that foster or communicate intimacy (e.g., Levant et al., 2014; Levy, 2005). Subscription to the masculine ideology has been identified as a factor which may moderate the degree to which men's friendships feature intimacy. Specifically, some authors have suggested that the characteristics of meaningful intimate expression (e.g., emotional openness, willingness to be vulnerable) are incompatible with the demands of traditional masculine role norms (e.g., toughness, independence) (Chaplin, 2015; O'Neil, 2008). In contrast, other researchers within the field of communication have suggested that men (particularly those who subscribe more strongly to the traditional masculine ideology) may simply express intimacy using non-traditional, indirect communication strategies (Kaplan & Rosenmann, 2014; Swain, 2001). Literature from this perspective critiques the assumption that emotional, disclosure based modes of expression represent the ideal form of intimate expression. A third body of research within the communication literature suggests that men generally communicate using traditional modes of intimate expression, despite the gender role discrepant nature of these modes of expression (Batalha et al., 2011; Hyde, 2005). Literature from this perspective typically cites small effect sizes and methodological demand characteristics as explanations for previous research findings. Surprisingly, very little research has examined contextual factors as a possible explanation for the incongruent findings within the field of men's communication. The following literature review will provide an overview of research relevant to the masculine ideology (as it pertains to men's communication), and intimate expression in men's homosocial friendships.

2.1 Review of Literature on Theories of the Structure of the Male Role

Elements of the dominant traditional masculine ideology have frequently been identified as a key factor which influences men's communication. Thus, an understanding of the content of the traditional masculine ideology is required to fully understand literature on men's communication. The purpose of the present section is to provide an overview of psychologically based literature examining the content of the dominant traditional masculine ideology in Western cultures that is sufficient to facilitate an understanding of how this ideology impacts men's communication (see section 2.3). The scope of the present literature review does not allow for a detailed review of each of the major theories of masculinity (for reviews, see Chrisler & McCreary, 2010; Cochran, 2010; O'Neil, 2008; Smiler, 2004). Sociologically oriented theories (e.g., hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005)) and femininity oriented theories will not be discussed because these deal largely with the interaction of gender groups, whereas the present research is primarily concerned with an examination of individual men as directed by social norms. Additionally, such sociological theories typically emphasise the consequences of adopting a gender role on intra- and inter-group interaction, as opposed to directly examining the content of dominant gender role norms. Similarly, because the present thesis is concerned with masculinity norms that are dominant within society, theories which discuss the possibility that multiple standards for masculinity exist within cultural subgroups will not be discussed in detail (Coles, 2009). Unless otherwise specified, references to *masculine roles*, *masculine ideologies*, or *masculinity* refers to the dominant traditional masculine role within Western cultures (as discussed below).

Much of the literature examining the content of the traditional masculine ideology utilised scale development to investigate the structure of the masculine ideology and the degree to which individuals subscribed to this ideology (e.g., Levant et al., 1992; Luyt,

2005; Mahalik, Locke, et al., 2003; O'Neil, 2008; Walker, Tokar, & Fischer, 2000).

Factor analytic studies were frequently utilised to determine the key defining prescriptive and proscriptive components of dominant masculine role norms, especially in early research. Therefore, many of the models (see Table 2.1) were composed of collections of factors which were thought to represent the fundamental features of masculinity. As such, a review of the literature within this area must be based upon an integration of the various factor analytic results. The scope of the present review does not allow for a detailed discussion of each proposed structure of the masculine role. However, Thompson and Bennett (2015) have written a review of the variants of the primary theories and the scales which relate to them.

By examining areas of overlap between models of the dominant traditional masculine ideology, it is possible to gain an understanding of the core features of this ideology. Across the body of research in this area, four regularly occurring themes have been identified (see Table 2.1). These include: (a) Separateness from Femininity, (b) Toughness and Stoicism, (c) Dominance and Aggression, and (d) Control and Independence (discussed in section 2.1.1). These four components represent a macro level view of imperatives that men are expected to embody if they wish to be considered masculine. Within this framework, expectations around masculinity are thought to be developed through norms, and enforced through social rewards and punishments (Eagly & Wood, 2013). These norms evolve over time based on gradual changes in how rewards and punishments are applied (Chrisler & McCreary, 2010). In this way, the model below represents a social constructionist view of traditional masculinity (Courtenay, 2011; Pleck, 1995). Because the traditional masculine ideology is a social phenomenon, men are held accountable to it by the majority of individuals in their society, regardless of each individual's level of personal subscription (Addis & Cohane, 2005; Englar-Carlson, 2006; Levant & Pollack, 1995; Pleck, 1995).

2.1.1 Components of the masculine ideology.

The first ubiquitous theme within traditional masculine ideology literature is Separateness from Femininity. This refers to the notion that, in order to be considered masculine, men should not adopt any behaviours, traits, preferences or cognitive styles associated with femininity (Davis, 2002; O'Neil, 2008). A wide range of behaviours and preferences are considered feminine, including colours (e.g., pink), fabrics (anything soft), words (e.g., darling and honey), hobbies (e.g., sewing), and foods (e.g., vegetarian meals) (Brannon, 1976; Cunningham & Macrae, 2011; Gal & Wilkie, 2010).

Importantly, Separateness from Femininity encompasses the notion that any non-aggressive emotion (e.g., affection) may imply some level of vulnerability and femininity and, therefore, should be avoided by men (Levant et al., 2014; O'Neil, 2008). Separateness from Femininity has been argued to be the defining feature of the traditional masculine ideology because femininity is often portrayed as the antithesis of masculinity (O'Neil, 2008). Thus, although other components of the masculine ideology represent unique aspects of the demands placed on men, they all may serve the function of proving one's distance from femininity. A range of other empirical studies have supported the importance of Separateness from Femininity as an important domain within the masculine ideology, especially in the form of overt expressions of sexuality and homophobia (Allen & Smith, 2011; Carnaghi, Maass, & Fasoli, 2011; Cheryan, Cameron, Katagiri, & Monin, 2015; Levant et al., 2012; Luyt, 2005; Mahalik, Locke, et al., 2003; Thurnell-Read, 2012).

The second commonly identified aspect of masculinity is Toughness and Stoicism. This imperative encourages men to hide any internal experience which may indicate vulnerability, weakness or inability to cope. Instead, men are encouraged to appear stoic and impervious to mental and physical harm. The notion of Toughness and Stoicism dates back to early theoretical literature (e.g., Brannon, 1976; Pollack, 1999),

and has since been supported by later empirical investigations (e.g., Levant et al., 2012; Luyt, 2005). Several authors have also suggested that this aspect of the male role prevents men from forming interdependent relationships (Edwards & Hamilton, 2004; Englar-Carlson & Stevens, 2006); seeking help for both physiological and psychological problems (Graef, Tokar, & Kaut, 2010; Player et al., 2015; Sloan, Conner, & Gough, 2015); and freely expressing non-aggressive emotions (Mahalik, Locke, et al., 2003). Thus, Toughness and Stoicism may have important impacts on men's behaviour that reach beyond the extent of the other components of masculinity (see also section 2.2 and 6.5.1). A range of qualitative and quantitative research supports the centrality of Toughness and Stoicism to the masculine ideology (Bowley, 2013; Levant et al., 2014; Levant, Rankin, Williams, Hasan, & Smalley, 2010; Wong, Steinfeldt, LaFollette, & Tsao, 2011)

Dominance in the form of the attainment of superiority over peers has regularly been identified as a component of the traditional masculine ideology (Thompson & Bennett, 2015). Dominance may be indicated through: the attainment of status over peers, being respected by one's peers, and a penchant for risk taking and rowdiness (Courtenay, 2000a; Mahalik, Locke, et al., 2003). Due to the inherent competition involved in attaining dominance, this norm has been argued to act as a barrier to intimate interactions as it can encourage an adversarial approach to interactions, aggression and violence (Edwards & Hamilton, 2004; Levy, 2005). Aggression is often condoned in pursuit of dominance, and may be motivated by a desire to avoid losing masculine status (Vandello & Bosson, 2013). Aggression may also serve to sublimate gender role discrepant behaviours (e.g., expressing sadness) (Reigeluth & Addis, 2015). Empirical research shows the importance of dominance within the masculine ideology (often through competition) (e.g., Levant et al., 2012; Mahalik, Locke, et al., 2003; Singleton & Vacca, 2007). However, some investigations (e.g., Balliet, Li, Macfarlan,

& Van Vugt, 2011; Batalha et al., 2011) have suggested that men may not actually exhibit more dominance and aggression than women.

The final recurring theme is Control and Independence. This reflects the notion that, in order to be considered masculine, a man should be able to manipulate situations in ways that he chooses, and react to external stimuli calmly and with clarity (Levant et al., 2012; Luyt, 2005; O'Neil, 2008). The value of control states that a man should not allow himself to be at the mercy of others or of a situation. Additionally, he should be capable of functioning fully without having to rely on the assistance of others (Levant, 1999; Mahalik, Locke, et al., 2003). This imperative encourages self-reliance, confidence, and self-sufficiency. Within the literature examining Control and Independence, financial control, social control, and self-regulation (especially of emotions) have been identified as key features (Luyt, 2003, 2005; Luyt & Foster, 2001; Mahalik, Locke, et al., 2003). Research examining concepts related to Control and Independence has not moved far beyond the boundaries of description through scale development, however, strong evidence for the importance of this domain to the traditional masculine ideology exists within these studies (see also Levant et al., 2010; Levant et al., 2012).

2.1.1.1 Masculinity research and social constructionism.

In order to contextualise the model of masculinity discussed hitherto, a brief summary of the evolution of masculinity research, especially in relation to its status as a social construction versus an objective phenomenon, is required. Many early theories of gender suggested that masculinity and femininity (and the behaviours and preferences associated with these) were trait-based, and uniform across individuals. For example, Bem's (1974) sex role theory suggests that gender exists along two parallel continuums (masculinity and femininity) on which individuals can score either low or high. Although individuals are able to vary in their embodiment of masculine and feminine

traits within this theory, the manifestation of masculinity and femininity is framed as being uniform for all individuals at similar levels of masculinity and femininity. Similarly, individuals' level of masculinity or femininity is conceptualised within this theory as being a stable internal trait that is largely unaffected by one's environment (Bem, 1974). In this way, gender theories that argue for a trait based approach suggest that gender is a stable and objective phenomenon (see also Beere, King, Beere, & King, 1984; Courtenay, 2000a; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1974; Thompson & Pleck, 1995; Winstead, Derlega, & Wong, 1984).

This is in contrast to a social constructionist perspective of gender. Theories from this perspective suggest that gender is not an objective and unchanging phenomenon; rather, it is thought to be continually defined and re-defined by the members of the different cultures (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Courtenay, 2000a; Madill, Jordan, & Shirley, 2000). More specifically, the masculinity and femininity of an individual is determined by their adherence to gender based norms; however, these norms are defined based on a prevailing social understanding of what constitutes gender (and, as such, are in a constant state of flux). In this way, norms influence group members; however, group members collectively influence norms. As such, social constructionist approaches suggest that gender occurs within interactions rather than within individuals (Addis & Cohane, 2005; Courtenay, 2000a; Englar-Carlson, 2006). The models of masculinity discussed hitherto represent social constructionist conceptualisations of masculinity, as they contend that masculinity is communicated through norms and social interaction.

One social constructionist perspective that has been receiving increasing attention in the area of gender research is that of multiple masculinities. Theories from this perspective propose that, within any one cultural group, multiple definitions of masculinity exist. Hegemonic masculinity (see also Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985; introduced by Connell, 1982) refers to the dominant form of masculinity within a

culture. Although hegemonic masculinity may not be enacted by a majority of individuals within a group, it is the form of masculinity supported by the majority. Hegemonic masculinity research rarely seeks to define the component structure of the dominant form of masculinity. Rather, theories of hegemonic masculinity typically focus on examining the manner in which hegemonic forms of masculinity are maintained and contested by social groups; as well as how the enactment of hegemonic masculinity influences social power differentials between groups (for example between men and women (Connell, 2005); between men with and without physical and mental illnesses (Emslie, Ridge, Ziebland, & Hunt, 2006; Gray, Fitch, Fergus, Mykhalovskiy, & Church, 2002); and between heterosexual and homosexual men (Anderson, 2002)). Discussing this aspect of hegemonic masculinity in depth is beyond the scope of this literature review; however, interested readers can find more information in Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) and Coles (2009).

2.1.2 Gender role conflict.

The concept of Gender Role Conflict was introduced in parallel to theories of the content of the masculine role and has become a cornerstone in masculinity research (O'Neil, 2008). Gender Role Conflict was defined as an aversive psychological state in which the demands of masculine role norms have a negative effect on individuals, thereby reducing their ability to act and think freely (O'Neil, 1981b, 2008). Importantly, the concept of Gender Role Conflict was developed as an extension to theories of traditional masculine ideology, and aimed to explain the impact of this ideology on men's lives. As such, conceptualisations of Gender Role Conflict are complementary to, but not interchangeable with, conceptualisations of the structure of the masculine ideology (Levant, Hall, Weigold, & McCurdy, 2015). Despite this, many researchers (see O'Neil, 2008) have used measures of Gender Role Conflict to infer the degree to which men subscribe to the traditional masculine ideology. The implicit reasoning for

this inference appears to be that men who subscribe strongly to the masculine role are likely to experience greater gender role conflict. Gender Role Conflict was not originally designed to measure ideology subscription, and the efficacy of related measures for this purpose has not been tested. The present research is focussed on the impact of traditional masculine ideology subscription on communication (as opposed to the impact of distress caused by the masculine role on communication) and, as such, the structure of masculinity-related distress proposed by the Gender Role Conflict model is not directly associated with the constructs of interest in the present research. However, given the importance of this model within the area of masculinity, a brief summary of its primary tenets is included below. Interested readers can find further information in O'Neil (2008) and O'Neil et al. (1986).

The central components of Gender Role Conflict were examined empirically through the development of the Gender Role Conflict Scale (O'Neil et al., 1986). Factor analysis revealed a four factor structure of gender role conflict: Success, Power and Competition (which described the unhealthy pursuit of these traits); Restrictive Emotionality (which described the inhibition of non-aggressive emotions); Restrictive Affectionate Behaviour Between Men (which described the suppression of any affection between men to avoid perceptions of homosexuality); and Conflicts Between Work and Family Relations (which described the difficulty juggling family-based and career-based commitments, due to a pressure to achieve in both domains) (O'Neil et al., 1986). A second form of the Gender Role Conflict Scale was designed “to assess situational dimensions of gender role conflict patterns” (O'Neil et al., 1986, p. 341); however this measure has not been frequently used in research since its introduction. Early research in this area theorised that the primary cause of Gender Role Conflict was related to an underlying aversion to femininity that was promoted by the masculine role; however later research has not further developed this hypothesis (O'Neil, 2008; O'Neil et al.,

1986).

One aspect of the Gender Role Conflict model that is directly relevant to the present research is the nature of harmful consequences of the traditional masculine ideology. This is discussed further in the following section.

2.2 Harmful Consequences of the Masculine Ideology

The masculine gender ideology has been frequently associated with negative outcomes for men whether or not they are successful in embodying the characteristics it demands (e.g., Barnes, 2012; Englar-Carlson & Stevens, 2006; Levant et al., 2013; Pauletti, Cooper, & Perry, 2014; Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson, 2012). These outcomes will be referred to as Gender Role Strain to maintain consistency within this chapter; however, several seminal theories have discussed the negative impact the masculine ideology can have on men (including Gender Role Strain (Pleck, 1981), Gender Role Stress (Eisler & Skidmore, 1987) and Gender Role Conflict (O'Neil, 1981a, 1981b)). These paradigms have received criticism for failing to acknowledge positive correlates of the masculine ideology and for exaggerating the impact of the masculine ideology (e.g., Hammer & Good, 2010; see also sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3). Nevertheless, an understanding of Gender Role Strain is essential for contextualising later research on gender and communication. In particular, two forms of Gender Role Strain (Discrepancy Strain and Gender Role Dysfunction) are relevant to the present thesis (Levant, 2011; Pleck, 1995).

2.2.1 Discrepancy strain.

Discrepancy Strain refers to the negative outcomes individuals experience when there is a discrepancy between their own characteristics or behaviours, and the expectations dictated by the masculine gender role (Egan & Perry, 2001; Levant, 2011). These discrepancies are common because the demands of the masculine ideology are unrealistic and contradictory (O'Neil et al., 1995; Pleck, 1995). For example, being in

constant control of all aspects of one's life and dominant over all one's peers is an unrealistic goal. Masculine status is difficult to achieve, tenuous once gained, and requires consistent effort to maintain (Barnes, 2012; Vandello, Bosson, Cohen, Burnaford, & Weaver, 2008). The unrelenting threat of the loss of masculinity has been associated with a wide range of negative outcomes for men, including anxiety, stress, aggression and unhealthy risk taking (for research dialogue on this issue, see Addis & Schwab, 2013; Bosson & Vandello, 2013; Funk & Werhun, 2011; Heesacker & Snowden, 2013; for a review, see Vandello & Bosson, 2013). Pauletti et al. (2014) also showed that gender non-conforming children and adolescents receive aggressive social sanctions from their peers; and can develop internalising problems, increased expressed aggression, and low self-esteem (see also Funk & Werhun, 2011; Reigeluth & Addis, 2015). Despite research supporting the notion of Discrepancy Strain, some literature has suggested that failure to conform to the masculine role may not have a large impact on men's health or functioning, and that teasing associated with gender role nonconformity may actually enhance friendship in some settings (Chu, 2014; Reigeluth & Addis, 2015; Rummell & Levant, 2014; Smiler, 2014; Way et al., 2014). Early literature (e.g., Eisler, 1995; Pleck, 1995) suggests that Discrepancy Strain has a greater impact on men who subscribe more strongly to the masculine ideology; however this has not been examined in recent research. The impact of discrepancy strain on men's communication is discussed further in section 2.3.

2.2.2 Gender role dysfunction.

Gender Role Dysfunction occurs when men successfully fulfil the expectations of the masculine gender role, but suffer negative outcomes due to dysfunctional characteristics inherent in the attributes it promotes (Levant, 2011; Pleck, 1995). The combination of Discrepancy Strain and Gender Role Dysfunction creates a double bind for men, as they are encouraged to adopt damaging traits and punished, through social

disapproval and rejection, if they choose not to do so (Englar-Carlson, 2006; Levant, 2011). Research has suggested that adherence to various aspects of the masculine role has been associated with: lower self-compassion (Reilly, Rochlen, & Awad, 2014), higher scores on measures of depression and poorer attitudes towards help seeking (Good & Wood, 1995; Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson, 2012); higher negative health behaviours (e.g., smoking) and lower positive health behaviours (e.g., exercise) (Levant & Wimer, 2014a, 2014b; Sloan et al., 2015), poorer psychological wellbeing (Alfred, Hammer, & Good, 2014), and difficulty with emotional processing (e.g., grief) (Creighton, Oliffe, Butterwick, & Saewyc, 2013; Gordon et al., 2013; Levant et al., 2014). Findings such as these demonstrate that Discrepancy Strain has a measurable detrimental impact on men (see also Chaplin & Aldao, 2013; Clowes, 2013; Eisler & Blalock, 1991; Lease et al., 2013; Levant et al., 2014; Nguyen, Liu, Hernandez, & Stinson, 2012; Player et al., 2015; Steinfeldt, Rutkowski, Orr, & Steinfeldt, 2012).

A manifestation of Gender Role Dysfunction that has received substantial research attention is the impact that the masculine role may have on men's relationships. Research has frequently suggested that the tendency to restrict emotional and affectionate behaviour (as encouraged by masculine ideals of toughness and independence) creates deficits in men's ability to form and maintain fulfilling relationships (Levant et al., 2014; Moeller, Lee, & Robinson, 2011; O'Neil, 2008). Emotional inexpressiveness commonly associated with the masculine ideology has been linked to difficulties with relationship intimacy, depression, a negative attitude towards help seeking (for both physical and psychological issues) and psychological distress in a number of empirical studies (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Blundo, 2010; Gupta et al., 2013; Hammer, Vogel, & Heimerdinger-Edwards, 2013; Levant et al., 2013; McCusker & Galupo, 2011; O'Loughlin et al., 2011; Sánchez, Bocklandt, & Vilain, 2013; Sears, Graham, & Campbell, 2009; Sierra Hernandez, Han, Oliffe, & Ogrodniczuk, 2014;

Tsan, Day, Schwartz, & Kimbrel, 2011; Vogel, Wester, Hammer, & Downing-Matibag, 2014; Wong & Rochlen, 2005; Yeung, Mak, & Cheung, 2015; Yousaf, Popat, & Hunter, 2015). Although the implications of the masculine ideology for men's health is rarely questioned, a rapidly growing body of research suggests that traditional masculine role prohibitions may have less of an impact on men's formation of meaningful relationships than previously thought (e.g., Batalha et al., 2011; Walker, 1994). This will be discussed further in section 2.3.

2.3 Theories of Men's Communication and the Impact of Masculinity

The literature regarding the level of intimacy and closeness present in men's friendships is largely split into three camps: (a) research suggesting men's friendships do not feature intimacy (e.g., Elder, Brooks, & Morrow, 2012; Levy, 2005); (b) research suggesting men express intimacy in covert, masculinity-congruent ways (e.g., Evers, 2010; Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010; Swain, 2001); and (c) research suggesting men's friendships feature traditional, vulnerable intimacy (e.g., Hyde, 2005; Walker, 1994; Zell et al., 2015). Importantly, research practices within each camp have been informed by the flaws identified in research stemming from other camps; thus knowledge of this range of literature is required to understand the rationale behind contemporary research.

The present research is focussed primarily on expression in close friendships, as opposed to acquaintance relationships or casual friendships. Developing clear definitions for constructs of interest is essential in research examining gender and communication, as small differences in research definitions can be associated with substantial differences in study outcomes and interpretations (discussed further in sections 2.3.1 to 2.3.3). However, defining such constructs has not been a focus of recent research. Although Miller (1985) avoided proposing a strict definition of friendship, he did suggest that close friendships involve more than behavioural markers

such as frequency of contact or degree of disclosure. A fundamental care for, and interest in, another person; as well as the ability to be authentic in interactions was thought to characterise meaningful friendship (see also Helgeson et al., 1987; Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson, 2012). Based on this work, the present thesis has constructed the following definition of close friendship: an experience of mutual enjoyment of another person's company, a concern for one another's happiness and wellbeing, and an internal sense that the person is an important part of one's life (i.e., there is a deep, and positive affective component). On this view, although friendship may manifest through behaviours such as regular contact or comfort with disclosure, these behaviours are neither necessary nor sufficient components of close friendship.

Similarly, based on the seminal work of Helgeson et al. (1987), Stark (1991), Swain (2001), and Reis and Shaver (1988), the present research defines intimate expression as any personally meaningful behaviour which conveys a sense of positive attachment between individuals, and which fosters a sense of being validated, trusted or cared for between interaction partners. The most important aspect of intimate expression is that it involves the expression of affection and closeness. Although these definitions were utilised to inform study design and are presented to the reader to aid understanding of the arguments discussed, the subjective nature of experiences of friendship and intimacy remain paramount. Therefore, participants' subjective definitions of friendship and intimacy should be given primacy during testing (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6).

2.3.1 Research suggesting men's friendships do not feature intimacy.

Much of the early literature on men's communication utilised men's self-reported use of vulnerable expression (especially self-disclosure) as the primary indicator of intimacy in friendships. For the purpose of the present research, vulnerable expression is defined as any form of intimate expression that is direct and uninhibited, and which involves: (a) a potential violation of the masculine role (e.g., revealing a difficulty

coping with adversity), (b) non-aggression based emotional content (e.g., fear or affection), or (c) content that the speaker feels is personally meaningful (e.g., significant aspects of one's personal history). Several studies (e.g., Fehr, 2004; Reis, 1998; Reisman, 1990) found that men either reported their friendships lacked disclosure, or that the disclosure men reported in same-sex friendships was less than that of women's. Such studies have typically concluded that the formation of an intimate emotional connection is not a priority in men's friendships (Levy, 2005). Research on the Normative Male Alexithymia hypothesis states that the socialisation of the masculine ideology renders men who subscribe to it incapable of recognising, processing and expressing emotions or emotion related content (Levant et al., 2014; Levant et al., 2009). This hypothesis is supported by research finding that the subscription to masculine role norms is associated with inhibited emotional expression (Gupta et al., 2013; Yeung et al., 2015). Findings such as these, as well as the subsequent interpretation that less vulnerable expression indicates less intimacy, are representative of a substantial amount of research spanning the past four decades (e.g., Aries & Johnson, 1983; Balswick & Peek, 1971; Bank & Hansford, 2000; Clark & Reis, 1988; Cozby, 1973; Derlega, Durham, Gockel, & Sholis, 1981; Edwards & Hamilton, 2004; Elder et al., 2012; Fehr, 2004; Greene, 2003; Guerrero et al., 1998; Guerrero & Reiter, 1998; Hendrick, 1981; Johnson & Aries, 1983; Land et al., 2011; Levy, 2005; Miller, 1985; Morgan, 1976; O'Neill, Fein, Velit, & Frank, 1976; Pollack, 1995; Reis, 1998; Rubin, 1980; Tannen, 1991; Winstead, 1986).

A problematic aspect of interpreting data showing that men report engaging in less vulnerable expression as indicating less intimacy in men's friendships is that this conclusion implicitly assumes vulnerable expression is the only way (or, at least, the best way) to express intimacy. However, this does not leave provision for participants to endorse alternative modes of expression that may occur more naturally in men's

homosocial friendships (Englar-Carlson & Stevens, 2006; Swain, 2001; Walker, 1994). Additionally, some studies (e.g., Bank & Hansford, 2000; Levy, 2005) use data on frequency of vulnerable expression to draw conclusions about the quality of men's homosocial friendships. However, this practice is based on the assumption that vulnerable expression is inherently and uniquely associated with relationship quality. The notion that vulnerable expression is the purest form of intimate expression, and that it is inherently associated with relationship quality, has no empirical validation. It is possible that other modes of expression (e.g., shared activities) represent an equally efficacious method of creating and communicating intimacy (Taylor, Welch, Kim, & Sherman, 2007). Studies which assume vulnerable expression is the ideal form of intimacy do not take this possibility into account, and thus may not fully test the degree of intimacy present in men's homosocial friendships (see also Cameron, 2007; Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010).

In addition, the practice of examining sex differences to draw conclusions about the degree of intimacy in men's friendships is problematic because it involves the implicit assumption that women's homosocial friendships represent the ideal form of intimate communication. Once again, this assumption does not have an empirical grounding. Research making this assumption also precludes the possibility that men's and women's homosocial friendships represent different methods of reaching the same intimacy goals; thus, potentially giving an inaccurate impression of real world phenomena. Even more fundamental in research examining sex differences in friendship is the assumption that men's and women's friendships are comparable. Addis and Schwab (2013), suggest that comparing men and women may not lead to a better understanding of either group, because doing so frequently over simplifies the complex relationships between sex and gender and fails to account for moderating factors and covariates. Therefore, it may be more appropriate to examine friendship within each sex

through examinations of men's accounts of friendships, as well as their self-reported satisfaction with friendship experiences in relation to the full range of modes of intimate expression, in research on men's homosocial friendships. However, care must be taken in research design to ensure men are able to endorse vulnerable expression without violating gender role norms prohibiting affection or reliance on others. In sum, past research suggesting men's homosocial friendships are characterised by a lack of intimacy has generally done so based on untested research assumptions, and incomprehensive operational definitions of intimacy.

2.3.2 Research suggesting men express intimacy using covert, masculinity-congruent strategies.

In response to the criticisms of research outlined above, a line of empirical enquiry developed which investigated the possibility that men do experience homosocial intimacy, but that they foster and communicate this using covert behaviours that are congruent with the masculine role. For the purposes of the present research, covert expression is defined as any form of expression that communicates intimacy without leaving the speaker vulnerable due to masculine role norm violations, and without directly referencing personally meaningful subject matter or emotions other than anger. Although research espousing the concept of covert expression is divided on the issue of whether covert expression is an equally efficacious mode of intimate expression as vulnerable expression, it is united by the notion that covert expression represents a legitimate alternative to vulnerable expression for fostering and expressing intimacy (see also Taylor et al., 2007). The concept of covert expression draws on covert intimacy (Swain, 1989, 2001), side by side intimacy (Levant, 1999; Moore, 1991) and action love (Pollack, 1999). Substantial research has been conducted on the theoretical underpinnings of covert expression strategies. However, there is currently insufficient empirical data to determine the capacity of covert expression strategies to

foster meaningful subjective intimacy (especially in comparison to vulnerable expression strategies).

Masculinised forms of intimate expression are wide ranging. According to several researchers (e.g., Cameron, 2007; Englar-Carlson, 2006; Kaplan & Rosenmann, 2014; Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010; Pollack, 1999; Swain, 2001; Wood & Inman, 1993), a key mode of masculine intimate expression involves shared activities, especially recreation activities and activities that hold personal significance. For example, Thurnell-Read (2012) described how stag tours, which frequently involve emotional and novel experiences, are important for fostering and expressing intimacy (see also Evers, 2010). It is often reasoned that shared activities indicate intimacy due to the fact that each man actively seeks out the other's company and wishes to spend time together. This is taken as behavioural evidence of closeness, as one would not seek out the company of a person to whom they were not close (Englar-Carlson & Stevens, 2006; Pollack, 1999; Swain, 2001). In addition, the activities selected are often emotionally evocative, which is thought to create and communicate intimacy by virtue of the emotional understanding that contemporaneously experiencing the same emotions as one's friends creates (Englar-Carlson & Stevens, 2006; Kaplan & Rosenmann, 2014; Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010; Levant, 1995; Swain, 2001).

Humour has also been described as conveying closeness because it indicates similarity and understanding between members of a male-male dyad (Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010; Swain, 2001). Humour can also be used to break tension during serious conversations by restoring masculinity at the same time as expressing vulnerability (Barnes, 2012; Kiselica, 2001; Kiselica, 2003). Several researchers (e.g., Barnes, 2012; Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010; Swain, 2001) describe how, in a somewhat paradoxical manner, close male friends may viciously insult one another. This conveys intimacy because, in the context of friendship, objectively hostile

behaviour is considered acceptable by the recipient (Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010; Swain, 2001). This form of intimacy also avoids proscriptions on vulnerability put in place by the masculine ideology because, on the surface, it appears aggressive (Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010; Swain, 2001).

Instrumental support and favours have been suggested as an important form of covert expression, as a willingness to devote time, labour and resources for the benefit of a friend is indicative of intimacy (Pollack, 1999; Wood & Inman, 1993). Using language which is blunt, crude and explicit is also thought to covertly express intimacy because this language fosters the perception that one can express oneself in an uninhibited fashion (Swain, 2001). The use of this kind of language also helps to masculinise more sentimental, affectionate or vulnerable messages between male friends, thus allowing gender role congruent expression of vulnerable sentiments (Swain, 2001). In addition to these modes of expression, the following have been identified as important strategies men use as indicators of intimacy in their friendships with other men: acceptance, trust, mutual understanding, global affect (i.e., a general feeling of positivity in relation to another individual), comfort with competition, and non-sexual physical gestures and contact (e.g., handshakes) (Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010; Pollack, 1999; Swain, 2001; Wood & Inman, 1993).

Researchers have posed conflicting arguments regarding the effectiveness of covert expression in creating and communicating intimacy in comparison to vulnerable expression. Some researchers (e.g., Bank & Hansford, 2000; Levy, 2005) suggest that behaviour based modes of expression represent a less vulnerable, and therefore less intimate, form of communication. As alluded to previously, the Normative Male Alexithymia hypothesis (Levant et al., 2009) suggests that men utilise covert expression because socialisation creates deficits in their ability to engage in emotion based processing. Levy (2005) concluded that covert modes of expression develop comrade

based relationships (as opposed to friendship based relationships); which were devoid of lasting emotional connection or intimacy. An influential paper by Reis, Senchak, and Solomon (1985) attempted to investigate the possibility that men and women have different criteria for what they consider intimate, with men favouring covert expression and women favouring vulnerable expression (the differing criteria hypothesis). After finding that no differences existed in intimacy ratings given by men and women to videos of verbal interactions of varying intimacy levels, the authors concluded that the differing criteria hypothesis was debunked and the use of covert expression represented a choice to engage in less intimate behaviour.

Research taking the standpoint that covert modes of expression represent a less effective method of communicating intimacy has been criticised for making many of the same assumptions that were discussed in section 2.3.1. In addition, much research espousing this viewpoint appears to devalue self-reported behaviours that participants report are intimate, but that do not match researcher definitions for intimacy (Swain, 2001; Wood, 2000). This is especially evident in studies in which researchers or external raters decide the degree of intimacy produced by expression behaviours reported by participants (Reis, 1998; Reis et al., 1985). Additionally, much research (e.g., Bank & Hansford, 2000; Levy, 2005) fails to provide a clear definition of intimacy and, therefore, provides no consistent criteria against which to judge the intimacy producing potential of covert and vulnerable expression strategies. Consistent with the definition of friendship in section 2.3, the present research defines intimacy as any behaviour fostering a subjective sense of emotional closeness and affection, or an enduring sense that an interaction partner is a valuable person in one's life. However, given the subjective nature of intimacy, it is acknowledged that individuals' personal definitions of intimacy supersede this research-based definition in practical interactions. Subjective definitions of friendship and intimacy will be investigated in Chapter 4.

Additionally, some research proposing that covert expression is less intimate than vulnerable expression (e.g., Bank & Hansford, 2000; Levant et al., 2014) suggests that a failure to use vulnerable modes of expression represents an inability to be emotional, or an aversion to vulnerability, rather than a preference for alternative modes of expression. In contrast to this assumption, Rose et al. (2012) found that, in a group of children and adolescents, boys reported fewer positive expectations about the outcomes of self-disclosure, but not more negative expectations. The authors suggested that this may indicate that boys simply feel disclosure based modes of expression are less effective at fostering and expressing intimacy, as opposed to feeling it is too threatening to engage in. Interestingly, Swain (2001) described a male interviewee who, when discussing the use of vulnerable versus covert modes of expression, expressed pity for women because he perceived that they were restricted to a single mode of expressing intimacy (disclosure), while men were able to employ a wide range of behaviours which vary from overt to subtle. Thus, it is possible that men's subjective experience of covert expression may represent more than a less effective substitute for vulnerable expression. Overall, despite the body of research which suggests covert expression may be less intimate than vulnerable expression, the limitations which often feature in such research indicate an alternative explanation may better fit the data.

A growing body of research exists which suggests that covert expression may represent an equally efficacious and satisfying mode of intimate expression as vulnerable expression that is also gender role congruent. For example, Reynolds and Perrin (2004) discussed the notion of mismatches of commission in the provision of social support. This study suggested that providing a mode of interpersonal support that is incongruent with a receiver's preferred style of support may have a detrimental effect on the relationship. Participants in this study were women with breast cancer; however the concept of errors of commission is applicable to the use of covert versus vulnerable

expression. In addition, Parks and Floyd (1996) asked men to identify the most subjectively important aspects of closeness and friendship, and found that substantial endorsement was provided for shared interests (34.5%); help and support (27.4%); and a general sense of comfort and ease (24.8%). A range of other research has been published which also supports the notion that covert expression may not be inherently less intimate than vulnerable expression (e.g., Cameron, 2007; Englar-Carlson, 2006; Pollack, 1999; Swain, 2001). Currently, the data which exists within this area is insufficient to determine the relative effectiveness of covert and vulnerable expression in creating and communicating intimacy. Therefore, the present research aims to investigate this further, while avoiding problematic research assumptions (e.g., about the inherent effectiveness of vulnerable versus covert expression) and practices (e.g., reliance on sex-based comparisons) described above.

2.3.3 Research suggesting men's friendships feature traditional, vulnerable intimacy.

The final research orientation relating to men's interpersonal expression is that, despite the demands of the masculine gender role and social sanctions for gender role discrepant behaviour, men overwhelmingly engage in vulnerable modes of expression in homosocial friendships. In her qualitative analysis, Walker (1994) found that men reported freely engaging in uninhibited discussion about vulnerable topics (e.g., emotions associated with relationship breakdowns), and that they found this to be an important and beneficial aspect of their homosocial friendships. More recently, Watson (2012) demonstrated that gossip, a stereotypically feminine expression strategy, features in men's same-sex friendships, and is positively associated with perceived friendship quality. Similarly, earlier research found that both men and women defined intimacy in terms of mutual appreciation and affection rather than self-disclosure (Helgeson et al., 1987). This line of research, spanning several decades, raises the possibility that men's

and women's fundamental definitions of what constitutes close friendship may be more similar than different; and that men may commonly utilise modes of expression previously assumed to be associated with women.

Monsour (1992) and Parks and Floyd (1996) conducted the only studies which investigated participants' subjective definitions of intimacy and closeness, as well as indicators of intimacy and closeness. Self-disclosure was the most frequently cited mode of expression for intimacy by both sexes in both studies. In support of the notion that men's and women's expression is more similar than different, sex differences in endorsement of shared activities and interests as an expression strategy were non-significant in Parks and Floyd (1996) and small in Monsour (1992) (inferential statistics were not conducted; men = 9%; women = 0%). Other important aspects of intimacy and closeness in same-sex friendship mentioned by men included the presence of understanding, insight and empathy; trust; emotional expression; unconditional support; and acceptance (Monsour, 1992; Parks & Floyd, 1996). Although the results of these studies indicate that men actively employ some covert modes of expression; they also suggest that modes of expression which have traditionally been considered feminine in nature may actually feature in men's friendships to a greater extent than previously thought. However, despite the fact that research from the 1990s identified this possibility, few empirical studies have been designed since this time to test this directly.

Although the notion that men engage in vulnerable expression appears incongruent with data described in sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, several convincing explanations exist which propose to reconcile the contradictory data between the various theoretical orientations in this area of research. Several of these explanations were discussed in a study by Walker (1994), which is one of the first studies to attempt to conduct an assumption free investigation of men's friendships. This study found that, when asked broad questions about their close same-sex friendships (e.g., how do you

define friendship?), men responded in stereotypical, gender bifurcated ways (e.g., spending time together, playing team sports). However, when asked about the actual behaviours that have occurred during recent interactions within specific friendships, men described gender role discrepant, vulnerable modes of expression. For example, one participant recounted having emotional conversations with his male friends at the time of his divorce, despite having responded in a gender role stereotyped manner to previous broader questions. Seventy-five per cent of interviewees (all male) gave gender role discrepant responses such as these (Walker, 1994). Walker (1994) reasoned that this effect may occur because stereotypically masculine modes of expression are highly salient for men; however, they do not occur more frequently in men's friendships (as opposed to women's) in practice. However, these gender role discrepant behaviours are less likely to be reported in quantitative self-report measures due to the effect of the availability heuristic (Walker, 1994). Thus, it is possible that the design (and consequent demand characteristics) of past research may produce misleading results due largely to the use of non-specific item probes and failure to enquire directly about covert expression strategies. Despite the fact that Walker's (1994) research was published over 20 years ago, no subsequent studies have explicitly implemented revised methodologies based on her conclusions. Interestingly, researchers have increasingly recommended the use of qualitative research designs in future literature to address these issues (e.g., O'Beaglaich, Morrison, Nielsen, & Ryan, 2015).

Another explanation for the discrepancy in data found by researchers espousing the view that men engage in vulnerable expression and those who do not relates to effect size. Specifically, although sex differences in the use of vulnerable expression exist, these are typically small in effect size and therefore lack practical significance. In her meta-analysis of multiple meta-analyses, Hyde (2005) stated that sex differences in modes of expression are so small as to be negligible. For example, it was found that the

effect size for the difference in the amount of self-disclosure to friends between men and women was close to small (according to Cohen's (1988) guidelines) at $d = -.28$ (negative values indicate that women perform a behaviour more). Similarly, even though sex differences in the talkativeness ($d = -.11$), affiliative speech ($d = -.26$) and assertive speech ($d = .11$) in children were in gender stereotyped directions, the size of these differences was small. Interestingly, Hyde (2005) suggested that, in this area of research, effect sizes between .11 and .35 should be considered small, and effect sizes of .10 or smaller should be considered very small. Gillespie, Lever, Frederick, and Royce (2015) found no sex differences between the number of friends men and women have on whom they can depend in times of adversity, or with whom they can discuss intimate matters. Similar results have been found in recent research (e.g., Batalha et al., 2011; Eliot, 2011; Zell et al., 2015). Therefore, previously identified sex differences in self-disclosure may not be representative of practical differences in men's and women's behaviour in homosocial friendships. This points to a further need to empirically examine the nature of men's homosocial communication more directly.

Although the explanations described above reconcile many of the inconsistencies of past research, they are unable to account for overwhelming evidence in masculinity research that the masculine role powerfully motivates men to avoid emotionality or vulnerability, nor are these explanations able to account for research suggesting that men have negative health outcomes due to a more suppressed interaction style (see sections 2.1 and 2.2). However, the nature of men's homosocial communication behaviours, and the degree to which these foster subjective intimacy, must be clarified before potential implications for men's health can be fully addressed. In order to provide a less biased investigation into these questions, future research must allow for the possibility that aspects of the various theoretical orientations on men's intimate expression may be simultaneously true.

2.4 Role of Contextual Factors

One aspect of men's homosocial communication that has not been addressed in past research is the role of contextual factors in influencing men's preference for vulnerable versus covert expression. As identified in sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, it is possible that one of the reasons for the inconsistency in the data described hitherto is that previously unexamined contextual factors moderate masculine role norm prohibitions against vulnerable modes of expression. In their meta-analysis, Chaplin and Aldao (2013) suggested that interpersonal context partially moderated the relationship between sex and emotional expression. Similarly, Steinfeldt et al. (2012) demonstrated that the moral atmosphere of football teams (as created by coaches and team mates) moderated the relationship between conformity to masculine gender role norms and on-field aggression. It is also possible that men use features of the social context to mask inherently vulnerable mode of expression. For example, Barnes (2012) describes boys' use of humour to defend against threats to masculinity, such as stereotypically feminine interaction patterns (see also Fischer & LaFrance, 2015). Given the transient nature of contextual factors, it is possible that a failure to control them through experimental manipulation in past research yielded confounded results. Contextual factors of particular interest in the present research include perceived similarity; validation of masculinity; and cover activities. These contextual factors will be the focus of investigation in Study 2 of the present research.

2.4.1 Perceived similarity.

For the purposes of the present research, perceived similarity is defined as a subjective sense that one is the same as another person in one or more personally meaningful domains, such as attitudes, background, values, beliefs or personality. Perceived similarity is related to the concepts of unit relations (Crandall, Silvia, N'Gbala, Tsang, & Dawson, 2007; Heider, 1958) and psychological similarity (Tesser &

Paulhus, 1983). Studies have shown that unit relations and psychological similarity are positively associated with relational closeness, interpersonal attraction and relationship maintenance behaviours (e.g., Ledbetter, 2009). One way this appears to manifest itself in men's friendships is through shared activities, which are thought to facilitate closeness by evoking experiences, emotions and memories shared by all parties (Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010; Levant, 1995). The fact that these subjective experiences are unique to those involved in the activity and shared by all appears to foster a sense of perceived similarity by differentiating participants from others who did not take part in the activity. This process of differentiation may enhance intimacy by creating an in-group among friends. In support of this interpretation, Cho and Knowles (2013) found that individuals assume they are more similar, and feel closer, to others who are in their in-group. It is possible that the sense of intimacy shared by individuals with a previously established sense of perceived similarity may give men the confidence to engage in vulnerable modes of expression without fear of reprisal for violating masculine role norms. However, this hypothesis has not previously been tested.

In support of the role of perceived similarity in the creation and expression of intimacy, Tolson and Urberg (1993) found that adolescent best friends shared significantly more similarities in behaviour and attitudes than they did with non-friends. Similarly, Heller and Wood (1998) found that romantic partners who shared some aspects of their identity (e.g., values and conceptualisations of intimacy) had relationships that were characterised by greater levels of intimacy ($r = .64, p < .001$). Swain (2001) also suggested that humour, in-jokes, and comfort with crude language foster intimacy by affirming a shared world view and masculine identity. These findings point to the notion that perceived similarity may be a contextual factor which indicates and facilitates intimacy. Despite these early findings, the degree to which having a previously established sense of perceived similarity may facilitate men's use of

vulnerable, gender role discrepant modes of expression remains untested in more recent research.

2.4.2 Validation of masculinity.

As discussed previously, men appear to avoid vulnerable expression in order to maintain their masculine image (Bosson & Vandello, 2013; Vandello & Bosson, 2013; Vandello et al., 2008). Several studies have also found that men respond to vulnerable expression (both as speakers and listeners) by using strategies designed to enhance or restore masculinity (e.g., Chiou, Wu, & Lee, 2013; Funk & Werhun, 2011; Weaver, Vandello, & Bosson, 2013). Pleck's (1981) over conformity hypothesis states that violations of the masculine gender role (whether real or imagined) lead men to compensate by conforming to the masculine gender role in an exaggerated manner (see also Cheryan et al., 2015). In support of this, Barnes (2012) and Carnaghi et al. (2011) discussed how men use aggressive humour and homophobic references in the face of threats to masculinity, as a way to demonstrate their gender role conformity (see also Majors & Billson, 1992; Wade & Rochlen, 2013). Given that men respond to gender role discrepancy and vulnerability with strategies designed to enhance masculinity; it is possible that men who have had their masculinity validated (e.g., through displays of strength or external affirmations of masculinity) may be more tolerant of vulnerable expression. For the purposes of the present research, a validation of one's masculinity may be any act which affirms the subject's adherence to the masculine ideology (as described in section 2.1). This act may be performed by oneself or another; be private or public; or be internal (e.g., cognitions) or external (e.g., an observable behaviour).

In support of this hypothesis, Swain (2001) demonstrated male interviewees were comfortable engaging in gender role discrepant expression when this expression was conducted in a masculinised manner. For example, one respondent felt comfortable telling his friend who had moved away that he missed him, but only when using

aggressive coarse language. Similarly, 68% of the male footballers interviewed by Steinfeldt, Wong, Hagan, Hoag, and Steinfeldt (2011) indicated that their emotional expression was greater in a football context, and 50% indicated that they express more affection to their peers when in a football environment. It is possible that the masculine nature of the football context allowed the men to enact gender-role discrepant behaviours without fear of negative evaluation, due to social licensing. A similar social licensing phenomenon was described in Israeli combat soldiers by Kaplan and Rosenmann (2014; see also Fischer & LaFrance, 2015; Gal & Wilkie, 2010; Jones & Heesacker, 2012; MacArthur & Shields, 2015; Migliaccio, 2009; Thurnell-Read, 2012). Broadly, these results indicate that men may feel more comfortable engaging in gender role discrepant behaviour after their masculinity is validated, or when this behaviour is performed in an overtly masculine manner. However, further empirical research is required to investigate validation of masculinity as a facilitating contextual factor for vulnerable expression.

2.4.3 Cover activities.

Another factor which may influence men's willingness to engage in vulnerable expression is the extent to which the social context provides a cover activity to mask the expression. For the purposes of the present research, a cover activity is defined as any activity which facilitates a vulnerable mode of expression while simultaneously distracting from the gender role discrepant nature of this expression. For example, when men invite one another out for a beer, there is likely a level of shared understanding that discussion and disclosure will be involved. In this context, disclosure may be viewed as more acceptable due to the fact that the more salient, explicit purpose of the activity is drinking. In their literature review, Kaplan and Rosenmann (2014) discuss a concept similar to cover activities through the use of humour, however this theory was not investigated in their study. Other than Kaplan and Rosenmann's (2014) work, the

present author was unable to find any other research examining the role of cover activities in men's friendships. The concept of cover activities may account for some previous findings that men rate shared activities over disclosure as the basis for their close friendships more than women (e.g., Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010; Levant et al., 2009; Swain, 2001). Specifically, if it is true that men utilise shared activities as a forum to engage in vulnerable expression, the designs of previous research would have been unable to detect this (see also Walker, 1994). In this way, the presence of a cover activity may be one situational factor which facilitates vulnerable expression, and can account for contradictory findings in previous research. However, further empirical research is required to validate this.

2.5 Summary

In sum, a substantial body of research has demonstrated that traditional masculine role norms are a pervasive social force in Western society, which encourage men to embody the imperatives of dominance and aggression; control and independence; toughness and stoicism; and separateness from femininity. This ideology discourages the use of vulnerable modes of intimate expression, due to their masculine gender role discrepant nature. Three distinct theoretical perspectives have emerged throughout literature attempting to ascertain the impact that male role norm prohibitions against vulnerable expression have on the level of intimacy in men's homosocial friendships: (a) men's friendships lack intimacy, (b) men express homosocial intimacy primarily through covert expression strategies (this perspective is divided about the comparative efficacy of vulnerable and covert expression in fostering intimacy), and (c) men express homosocial intimacy primarily through vulnerable expression strategies.

Much research across these three theoretical perspectives has featured untested, and potentially problematic, theoretical assumptions and methodological flaws. First is the assumption that vulnerable expression is a more efficacious mode of expressing

intimacy than covert expression. This assumption frequently leads to the methodological error of restricted operationalisation of intimacy, through the use of measures of self disclosure as opposed to measures of both covert and vulnerable expression strategies. Second is the assumption that men's and women's friendships are comparable; and that women's homosocial friendships represent the highest standard of platonic intimate expression. It has been argued that making sex based comparisons of friendship may not lead to a better understanding of either group (Addis & Schwab, 2013). Instead, researchers have been increasingly encouraged to focus on qualitative analysis within each sex. Related to assumptions around sex based comparisons, many researchers investigating sex differences report significance without a corresponding effect size. A growing number of meta-analyses (e.g., Dindia & Allen, 1992; Hyde, 2005) suggest that statistically significant sex differences in intimate expression are typically so small in effect size that they lack practical significance. Third is the tendency for researchers to use definitions of intimacy which fail to take into account the subjective nature of intimacy (such as purely research based definitions, and definitions based on external coder ratings). This practice runs the risk of discounting experiences that are subjectively intimate for participants, but that do not match preconceived definitions. Fourth is the methodological error of inadvertently framing item probes in such a way that gender stereotyped responses are cued (e.g., through the use of closed questions which require participants to average across experiences, rather than using specific and open probes; see Walker, 1994). In order to advance the field, future research must avoid relying on these assumptions and methodological errors.

Additionally, the role of contextual factors in men's use of, and comfort with, vulnerable versus covert expression remains largely unexplored. Examining the possible moderating effects of contextual factors on men's use of various expression strategies may help to explain the contradictory results found in previous research by providing

insight into the conditions required for men to engage in vulnerable expression (if such conditions exist). Three such contextual factors are perceived similarity; validation of masculinity and cover activities. By attempting to avoid untested theoretical assumptions and methodological errors made in past research, as well as by investigating previously unexplored contextual factors which may influence men's use of intimate expression strategies, the present research aims to provide further insight into men's experience of homosocial intimacy in their friendships.

2.6 Research Questions

Based on the gaps in the literature identified hitherto, the following research questions were developed. The study which addresses each question is also noted. Specific hypotheses are discussed in the relevant study chapters.

1. To what extent are men's homosocial friendships characterised by intimacy?
 - Study 1
2. If men's friendships are characterised by intimacy, how is this expressed?
 - Study 1 and Study 3
3. What is the relative contribution of vulnerable versus covert expression in fostering meaningful subjective intimacy in men's friendships?
 - Study 1 and Study 3
4. In what way (if at all) do contextual factors (i.e., perceived similarity, validation of masculinity, and cover activities) impact men's endorsement of vulnerable expression; and how is this relationship affected by subscription to male role norms?
 - Study 2

Ethical approval for all studies was granted by the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval Number: PSY/B5/10/HREC). Appendices A and C

contain the information sheets and consent forms associated with the studies included in this thesis.

Table 2.1

Theoretical Consistency Between Major Conceptualisations of the Structure of the Masculine Ideology

	Separateness from Femininity	Toughness and Stoicism	Dominance and Aggression	Control and Independence	Other
Blueprint for Masculinity (Brannon, 1976, 1985b)	No Sissy Stuff	The Sturdy Oak / Male Machine	The Big Wheel; Give 'Em Hell	The Sturdy Oak / Male Machine	
Male Role Norms Scale (Thompson & Pleck, 1986)	Antifemininity	Toughness	Status		
Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale (Eisler & Skidmore, 1987)	Subordination of Women	Emotional Inexpressiveness	Physical Inadequacy; Performance Failure; Intellectual Inferiority		
Gender Role Conflict Scale (O'Neil et al., 1986)	Restrictive Emotionality; Restricted Affectionate Behaviour Between Men	Restrictive Emotionality; Restricted Affectionate Behaviour Between Men	Success, Power and Competition; Conflict between Work and Family Relations [due to need to achieve]		
Male Role Norms Inventory – Revised (Levant et al., 2010; Levant et al., 2012)	Negativity Towards Sexual Minorities; Avoidance of Femininity	Restrictive Emotionality; Toughness	Dominance	Self-Reliance Through Mechanical Skills	Importance of Sex
Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (Mahalik, Locke, et al., 2003)	Emotional Control; Power Over Women; Disdain for homosexuality	Emotional Control	Winning; Risk Taking; Violence; Power Over Women; Dominance; Playboy; Primacy of Work; Pursuit of Status	Self-Reliance	
Male Attitude Norms Inventory II (Luyt, 2005)	Sexuality	Toughness		Control	
Masculine Role Inventory (Snell, 1986)		Restrictive Emotionality; Inhibited Affection	Success Preoccupation		

Chapter 3 – Study 1

As discussed in Chapter 2, much previous research on men's communication has utilised assumptions about which intimate expression strategies result in the most subjectively meaningful and satisfying friendships for men. However, comparatively little research has been conducted which explicitly makes enquiries of men about the behaviours that routinely occur in their homosocial friendships, and the degree to which these result in satisfying subjective intimacy (without imposing researcher definitions of intimacy). Also, as discussed in section 2.3, the manner in which research operationalises intimacy can have a profound impact on the conclusions made regarding the degree to which men's friendships feature intimacy. In particular, the following factors appear to have had an important impact on the results of past research: whether intimacy is operationalised as covert or vulnerable expression, whether questions posed to participants are general or specific, and whether comparisons are made to women's friendships or men's preferences and subjective criteria for closeness.

The present study aimed to determine the degree to which men's friendships featured vulnerable and covert expression strategies, according to men's self-report. In addition, the present study aimed to determine whether men reported feeling that their friendships subjectively satisfied their intimacy needs. Specifically, the present study utilised a qualitative methodology to explore men's subjective views of the modes of expression utilised in their homosocial friendships, and their satisfaction with the efficacy of these modes of expression in fostering and demonstrating intimacy. Two research questions were developed:

1. How is homosocial intimacy communicated in men's same-sex friendships, if at all?
2. To what extent do men feel their homosocial friendships are characterised by subjectively satisfying intimacy?

Given the exploratory nature of this line of qualitative enquiry, it was important that these research questions be addressed prior to other areas of interest raised in this thesis. In particular, using an open-ended qualitative approach to clarify directly from participants the modes of expression utilised within their friendships, and the degree of intimacy associated with these, enabled follow-up studies to be designed based on self-reported participant experiences, as opposed to researcher assumptions (as discussed in Chapter 2). Additionally, the commonly used modes of expression identified by men, as well as the factors that influenced the degree of intimacy associated with these modes of expression, informed the stimulus materials used in Studies 2 and 3.

3.1 Method

3.1.1 Participants

Interviews with 13 men with a mean age of 31.77 years ($SD = 6$) and a range of occupational backgrounds (e.g., armed forces, information technology, musician) were included in the present study. Targeted sampling was used to access self-identified heterosexual men with a maximum age range of 20 to 45 and a cultural background of Australian, New Zealander or British. These inclusion criteria were utilised based on research (e.g., McDermott & Schwartz, 2013) suggesting that men of different age cohorts, races and sexual orientations differ in their experiences of constructs related to masculine ideology and, potentially, homosocial friendship. This in turn may influence the manner in which they conceptualise homosocial friendships. As such, the aim of these inclusion criteria was to reduce the likelihood of confounding factors related to the inclusion of potentially different subgroups of men, while sampling a diverse range of men from a single subgroup (i.e., heterosexual, adult, Australian men). Table 3.1 details demographic information about the sample.

Originally, 16 participants were interviewed; however, three participants were excluded from the final analysis. Participant 002 was excluded because, following his

interview, it was discovered that he was familiar with research examining gender and communication which this may have influenced his responses. Participants 006 and 008 were excluded because, following their interviews, it was discovered that their age was above the cut-off specified in the study guidelines.

3.1.2 Materials

All participants completed a semi-structured interview and a demographics questionnaire. The interview questions were designed to facilitate the greatest depth of discussion while minimising the possibility of imposing potential researcher preconceptions and agendas. All interviews contained prompts about the following topics: a broad description of friends and what the participant liked about them, factors which the participant perceived indicated closeness in homosocial friendships, participants' degree of satisfaction with intimacy within their friendships and the methods through which this is expressed, and a description of a specific incident in which the participant felt close to a male friend and an explanation of why. The interview schedule has been included in Appendix B. Importantly, the interview schedule was used flexibly, and follow up questions were added as appropriate to allow for the exploration of topics that participants initiated in order to best attempt to understand their experience of friendships.

One of the main weaknesses of prior research identified in Chapter 2 was that researcher definitions of important concepts (such as defining features of friendships (versus acquaintances), and the degree of intimacy associated with various communication behaviours) have been prioritised over participant conceptualisations. As such, this interview guide was structured so that participants were able to define these concepts themselves while avoiding technical jargon. For example, the first and second block of questions asked of participants allowed them to provide their personal definition of factors that define friendships (versus acquaintances). The second block of

questions also allowed participants to discuss communication behaviours within friendships they found most indicative of intimacy, regardless of the stance of past research. The third block of questions provided the opportunity for participants to indicate their degree of satisfaction with their friendships according to personal criteria, rather than rating responses against pre-formulated criteria of satisfaction based on previous research. The final block of questions required men to recall a specific event they felt strong intimacy within (according to subjective definitions of intimacy) and further discuss which communication behaviours within that event fostered a sense of closeness (see also Walker, 1994). In this way, the questions were designed to allow an inductive approach to analysis.

3.1.3 Procedure

Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee. After agreeing to participate, participants were given the choice to complete the interview in their home, or in an office at Griffith University. All interviews were conducted in a location that ensured confidentiality and minimal distractions.

All interviews were conducted by the PhD candidate, a 25 year old Caucasian male completing a PhD in Clinical Psychology. Length of interviews ranged from approximately 40 to 105 minutes, with a mean length of approximately 65 minutes ($SD = 18$ minutes). Despite the use of an interview schedule, topics participants deemed important were given priority (see Patton, 2002; Seidman, 1991). Following the interview, demographic information was collected. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed verbatim for coding.

3.1.3.1 Analytic process.

Interviews were conducted using inductive thematic analysis. The primary goal of thematic analysis is to identify themes that are made up of regularly occurring,

meaningfully correlated, and theoretically relevant concepts across a dataset. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that thematic analysis is a frequently used, but often unnamed, method of qualitative analysis in psychology. The aim of coding was to identify features of homosocial friendships that men feel are relevant to intimacy. All coding was completed by the PhD Candidate. Extensive notes and memos about concepts central to interviews were used throughout coding to help reduce coder bias. Percentage corpus coverage was calculated throughout the analysis as one measure of the extensiveness of each theme. This was calculated by dividing the number of words coded at each theme across all interviews by the number of total words across the data corpus and multiplying by 100. This is not a precise measure of the importance of a theme and, for this reason, the number of participants who spoke about each theme and the number of times each theme was discussed were also taken into account.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines for thematic analysis were followed closely throughout analysis. In particular, the PhD Candidate reviewed the coding structure multiple times with his research supervisor, as well as a senior research colleague experienced in qualitative research, throughout the analytic process to help ensure the validity of the thematic map and reduce the effects of author bias. In addition, when transitioning to each new phase of analysis, the content of all codes was reviewed alongside interview transcripts to ensure coding accuracy and comprehensiveness, as well as internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity of themes (see also Patton, 2002). Furthermore, coding validation was conducted with three of the study participants, as well as a blind independent coder, to ensure the validity and integrity of the thematic map. All discrepancies identified were minor and able to be resolved. Following resolution, all participants reported that the thematic map was reflective of their friendship experiences and no concepts were missing; and, in the case of the

independent coder, that all independently identified codes were captured by the thematic map.

3.1.3.2 Research assumptions and author biases.

The adoption of an inductive approach led to the generation of several research assumptions. The first was that knowledge about relational phenomena can be gained through the examination of similarities between individuals' subjective experience of those phenomena. The second was that an individual's experience, and the subjective meaning they attach to this, is knowable by others; and can be communicated through the use of language. The third was that researchers are able to make meaningful interpretations of participants' subjective experiences, and abstract this into a broader understanding of relational phenomena (see also Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Experts in qualitative research (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013) note the importance of explicitly reflecting on author assumptions and biases to minimise their impact on results. The following researcher assumptions were identified prior to testing: vulnerable expression is the most effective and meaningful tool for creating and communicating intimacy; a masculine ideology exists which influences all men (independent of their endorsement) and inhibits vulnerable communication due to fear of gender role norm violation; and men's friendships largely lack homosocial intimacy, despite men's desire for this. These assumptions shifted greatly throughout the study.

3.2 Results

Four main themes were identified: (1) Direct Verbal Communication that Indicates and Fosters Closeness; (2) Implicit, Relationship-Oriented Communication that Indicates and Fosters Closeness; (3) Factors which Enhance other Communication Strategies; and (4) Communication Preferences. Most of these themes are best understood through examination of their related sub-themes. A theme's importance was assessed by considering the number of participants who discussed that theme; the

number of times the theme was discussed; and the percentage of the entire data corpus relevant to that theme. These data are presented in Table 3.2. However, the primary measure of a theme's importance was the degree to which it represented a unique and independent insight in relation to the research questions.

Coding saturation was reached at the seventh coded interview (P010). Due to the small sample size, the remainder of the interviews ($n = 6$) were analysed to ensure the thematic map was comprehensive. Some extracts have been edited to improve clarity when doing so did not alter the meaning.

Several interconnected terms are used throughout this section, and it is relevant to briefly review the relationship between these terms here. Homosocial friendship refers to the nature of a relationship between two men. The specifics of what constitutes a homosocial friendship is the topic of the analysis below; however, broadly it is thought to involve a level of subjective closeness greater than that in an acquaintance relationship. Homosocial closeness and homosocial intimacy are used interchangeably and refer to a subjective sense of positive attachment, connectedness and caring between two men that is platonic in nature and perceived as important. Homosocial intimate expression refers to any behaviour which expresses homosocial intimacy. Meaningful homosocial intimacy and subjectively satisfying intimacy are used interchangeably to refer to a subjective experience of homosocial intimacy or homosocial intimate expression that subjectively meets an individual's intimacy needs. However, it is important to note that meanings of these terms are intended to be broad, as the purpose of this study was to better understand participants' definitions and operationalisations of these concepts.

3.2.1 Theme 1. Direct, Verbal Communication that Indicates and Fosters Closeness

All content coded at this theme referenced some form of verbal communication. Collectively, sub-themes demonstrate that verbal communication strategies can range

from vulnerable to non-vulnerable, yet all foster subjective intimacy. Vulnerable disclosure discusses the role of explicitly vulnerable content in men's friendships; vulnerability mitigation discusses how distraction strategies can be employed to make vulnerable disclosure more comfortable; and non-vulnerable expression discusses the importance of verbal communication which lacks a vulnerable component in communicating intimacy.

3.2.1.1 Vulnerable disclosure.

Many men indicated that a substantial part of their interactions with male friends involved unattenuated vulnerable disclosure. Men engaged in this disclosure willingly and found it enjoyable, comfortable and valuable for the communication of homosocial intimacy. To illustrate, P007 stated:

If you're talking about my best friend, there's nothing that I wouldn't talk to him about. I would probably discuss with him if I was to get cancer tomorrow. ... If I was to break up with my partner I might talk to him about that. If I was to win the lotto I'd probably ring him up and say 'I've won the lotto'. ... I don't think there's anywhere I wouldn't go with him.

Comfort with initiating vulnerable disclosure was frequently framed as more important in indicating intimacy than regular use of vulnerable disclosure.

Occasionally, men explicitly defined the boundaries of what they considered to be vulnerable (versus non-vulnerable) topics. Broadly, these definitions were united by the common thread of difficulty coping with challenges and associated emotions. However, vulnerable topics could be categorised into four topic areas: one's immediate family, the physical or mental health status of oneself or significant others, details of romantic relationships or sexual interactions, and one's financial situation or occupational performance (e.g., *"we're not afraid to talk about certain things like my health issue ...*

So it's not just small talk" –P016; "Anything relating to relationships with women ... I wouldn't talk about that sort of thing, not unless it was a very close friend" –P003).

Several contextual factors influenced participants' comfort with, and likelihood of engaging in, vulnerable disclosure. Vulnerable disclosure was more likely when: communication occurred in a private, one-on-one context; it occurred naturally in conversation (as opposed to being overtly introduced); alcohol was being consumed contemporaneously; the listener was perceived as competent with, and interested in, emotional discussion; and when the listener was perceived as interpersonally close (e.g., *"If someone wanted a serious talk, most likely to either do it one-on-one or two-on-one ... it would probably go on behind closed doors."* –P001; *"[personal problems] probably would have just come up in conversation."* –P009; *"I think that [the choice to disclose] largely depends on the friend's ability to deal with sensitive issues."* –P005).

3.2.1.2 Vulnerability mitigation.

When discussing vulnerable disclosure, several men described the use (both intentional and automatic) of strategies to reduce the salience of emotionality or vulnerability, in order to bypass masculine role prohibitions against vulnerability. One way this was achieved was through masculinisation of either the vulnerable content of the message (e.g., downplaying the seriousness of the issue or its impact), or the communication style (e.g., swearing, humour). Importantly, although disclosure masculinised in these ways was designed to mitigate vulnerability, it was still framed as contributing substantially to meaningful intimacy. To illustrate, P004 stated:

To think of a specific topic: are men and women more or less likely, as friends, to talk about health problems or sexual problems? I can't see that there'd be great difference. The way they talk about it might be different. Men might talk about it in a more jokey, blokey way ... it doesn't mean that one's more valuable than the other.

Men also discussed the simultaneous use of a shared activity to facilitate vulnerable disclosure by providing a socially acceptable context for, and distraction from, the disclosure. Such *cover activities* created a context characterised by norms vastly disparate from the contexts friendship is typically enacted within. This normative shift legitimised the suspension of expectations of adherence to prohibitive norms regarding vulnerable disclosure while in atypical contexts (e.g., “*It [camping] was just in a different environment to being at home. It’s a different set of rules out there when you’re camping. ... [It’s] just a cool place to chill and talk crap*” –P015). Occasionally, cover activities also appeared to taper up to vulnerable expression by first establishing intimacy through non-vulnerable modes of expression (e.g., shared activities), or through discussion of topics that gradually increase in vulnerability (e.g., “*we always ring up, usually we organise a game of golf, and ‘by the way what have you been up to?’ ... generally that’s how it [personal conversations] comes about.*” –P012). Importantly, the use of cover activities was not always explicitly identified by participants, suggesting that this may be an implicit and automatic process.

3.2.1.3 Non-vulnerable expression.

In contrast to vulnerable expression, participants commonly noted that conversation which was not explicitly vulnerable, personally meaningful or emotive contributed to satisfying subjective intimacy. This expression took two forms. The first was discussing mutually enjoyed activities and interests (e.g., “*The ability to talk about stuff you’re interested in ... Everyone is always happy on those days when we’re just talking about lots of stuff*” –P012). The second was reminiscing on past shared activities, especially subjective experiences and emotional reactions to these events (e.g., “*The conversation, come to think of it, is largely the same ... usually reflections of ‘remember whens (sic)’. It’s almost reflection on past things done together, which I’m assuming is like a strengthening of the bond*” –P005.). In this way, non-vulnerable

expression occasionally bore some emotive undertones. Interestingly, many men noted that they felt conceptualising activity based and disclosure based expression as mutually exclusive represented a false dichotomy, as these constructs work synergistically (e.g., *“I don’t know if you can separate them [activities and disclosure] too much. You obviously can’t talk unless you’re with them doing something and, just as a matter of course, being together, you just talk. They’re probably quite well interwoven”* –P001).

3.2.2 Theme 2. Implicit, Relationship-Oriented Communication that Indicates and Fosters Closeness

All content at this theme discussed relationship-oriented aspects of friendship and subjective emotional states that men identified as important indicators of closeness. In order to be meaningfully indicative of intimacy, these must be expressed through behavioural evidence and shared experiences, as opposed to through verbal communication. The concepts discussed appear to represent underlying core mechanisms through which practical communication strategies (e.g., talking, shared activities) achieve intimacy.

3.2.2.1 Emotional understanding and shared experiences.

One of the most frequently discussed indicators of meaningful homosocial closeness was the development of a deep, fundamental and mutual understanding of friends, or an interest in gaining this. This encompassed friends’ ideals, values, motivations, likely internal reactions to external events, important current and past life events, and details of friends’ daily lives (e.g., *“[Male friend] would make jokes or comments that revealed an understanding of me. Maybe it was being understood by them. ... Like, someone knows you a bit more than normal and they’re okay with that”* – P010). These understandings were described as being unique for each friend. Occasionally, this understanding was framed as resulting in an ability to “read” friends by accurately inferring their underlying emotions, moods and desires without verbal

communication (e.g., *“thinking about my best and closest friends, ... I can read them and sort of tell that they’re thinking the same thing about something even before it comes out in the open.”* –P016). This, in turn, was framed as requiring a degree of attentiveness to friends’ emotional states which, when successful, allowed communication through subtle cues that may have been imperceptible to others who lacked the understanding involved in the friendship.

The primary method of developing implicit emotional understanding appeared to be through shared experiences (e.g., *“I know a lot more about them [close friends] ... and their backgrounds. Just through spending time with them.”* –P015). However, in order to indicate intimacy, it appeared that participation needed to be voluntary (as opposed to forced or coincidental), and preferably of mutual interest. Shared experiences associated with strong emotions were central to intimate expression. Men appeared to extrapolate their first-hand thoughts, feelings and reactions to shared experiences, in combination with their knowledge about their friend, to form an emotional understanding of their friend’s internal experience. This unspoken emotional understanding, which was unique to those involved in the experience, both created and indicated intimacy (e.g., *“[When asked how shared emotional experiences contribute to friendships] Someone who understands it. Can relate to it.”* –P010). This process appeared to be reciprocal.

Both positive and negatively valenced experiences were important for intimacy. Three categories of positive emotional events were identified: regular friendship activities featuring a particularly high degree of positive emotions; significant positive milestones, such as weddings and travel; and events in which a strong sense of collaboration, synergy and goal achievement is attained (e.g., *“if you’re having a recreational experience with someone and you can enjoy it, that is going to impact on how much value you put in that relationship.”* –P007; *“... it was an honour to be a best*

man for him. It's sort of acknowledging the fact that I was so important in his life." – P014; *"I spent two weeks sleeping on this guy's couch, waking up and sitting at his computer producing this thing. ... [We] did absolutely everything we could for one another to get something done, which was valuable for both of us."* –P011). Such positive events appear to invoke intimacy by associating subjective positive affect with one's friend.

Conversely, events evoking a sense of difficulty, unpleasantness, crisis, or adversity were often viewed as contributing to a sense of intimacy when one's friend approached this situation with tolerance, patience, grace, maturity or good humour (as adaptive coping fosters a sense of trust and dependability). Negative emotional experiences created a sense of understanding (and, therefore, intimacy) due to the access one had to friends' unfiltered thoughts, emotions and behaviours when under stress (e.g., *"You do bond through adversity. You see people's true colours when they're like that, and if you like what you see, it's a bonding thing. ... It gives you that warm fuzzy feeling that there's nothing you can't achieve."* –P001).

Additionally, shared experiences fostered implicit understanding through gaining insight about oneself and others, and learning new skills (e.g., *"You definitely learn a lot from being around them [friends] and spending a lot of time with them. Even just little things. ... you sort of get influenced"* –P013). Several men stated that shared activities also communicate closeness due to the commitment of time. Because time was often viewed as a valuable resource, spending it with another person was behavioural evidence of closeness (e.g., *"they [close friends] choose to hang out with me. ... They want to be there, they're choosing to be with you as opposed to anyone else that they want to be there with."* –P009). Therefore, the content of shared activities was often framed as unimportant; rather intimacy was said to stem from simply interacting (e.g., *"You can be doing nothing in that time, and nothing is as good as anything."* –P003).

3.2.2.2 Trust, dependability and valued qualities.

The ability to trust and depend on friends was frequently identified as an important indicator of intimacy. Trust was often conceptualised as confidence that good friends will not exploit or misrepresent the speaker; that sensitive information will be respected (i.e., maintaining confidentiality and refraining from using this as a tool for ridicule); and that friends would act in each other's best interest and avoid causing one another harm. Dependability was often conceptualised as an unquestioning faith that one's friends would be willing and able to provide support if it was required (e.g., "*you could pick up the phone and contact [good friends] at any time and you know that they'd answer the phone for you or help you out. Generally, I think there's a reciprocated feeling that they're there for you*" –P014). Costly support was frequently related to the development of trust and dependability. This was defined as offering or receiving support involving one person sacrificing resources such as money, time, or comfort, in the service of their friend's goals or needs (e.g., "*This is one for sure: when things get tough, your good mates hang around at their own expense*" –P005). Regular shared experiences fostered trust and dependability through emotional understanding (e.g., "*The more time I spend with someone obviously the more I get to know them and the more I'll build a trust, a bond between them.*" –P015). Another manifestation of trust and dependability was the perception that one's emotional connection with a friend does not deteriorate during long periods of temporal or geographical separation; and that, upon reuniting, interactions will resume as though no time has passed, without any need for re-acquainting (e.g., "*we have an understanding that, even though we haven't spoken to each other, ... we still share that sort of bond. And if I went back it would still be there and we'd be able to carry it on.*" –P009).

In addition to trust and dependability, participants frequently described traits in their friends that they either valued or that were generally desirable. Being thoughtful

and balanced, and avoiding being aggressive, over-bearing or discriminatory, were discussed particularly frequently as positive attributes (e.g., “*They respect other people’s points of view ... they’re not physically over bearing or intimidating ...not being judgemental. ... But they’re not going to take shit from someone either.*” –P016).

The presence of these qualities appeared to foster a sense of intimacy by creating a sense of platonic attraction. Similarity in values, interests, worldview and background were particularly important for developing trust and understanding (e.g., “*With the oldest, closest friends that I have, I think we share a lot of values. Far from agreeing on all points, but when it comes to the causes of friendship, we’re similar people from similar backgrounds.*” –P005). Perceived similarity also created a sense of belonging (e.g., “*I’d want them on my team. They are my sort of people*” –P009), facilitating a natural flow in interactions and drawing individuals together through a common ground, thus allowing the use of other modes of expression (e.g., non-vulnerable conversation; shared experiences).

3.2.2.3 Interpersonal warmth, acceptance and enjoyment of interactions.

The presence of an unspoken sense of interpersonal warmth; mutual enjoyment of interactions; relaxation; and/or disinhibition was commonly framed as an important indicator and facilitator of homosocial intimacy (e.g., “*we really enjoyed hanging out*” – P015). These factors were framed as being fostered by, and resulting in, positive expectations about future interactions, a tendency for friends to have an easy-going attitude, and a sense of acceptance that facilitates expressing oneself in an uncensored manner (e.g., “[with friends, you can] *be relaxed and just be yourself, and act like an idiot if you feel like it. Do stupid stuff and not have any sort of fear of being judged or rejected by those people.*” –P013).

A specific manifestation of these concepts was through the use of humour.

Humour appeared to communicate intimacy by fostering a sense of perceived similarity

and mutual understanding by demonstrating a shared world view, as well as by creating a sense of belonging (with in-jokes). Humour was also discussed as a vulnerability mitigation strategy. To illustrate, P010 stated:

There's a bit of surprise to it [humour] and so therefore you reveal something about yourself that people didn't know beforehand. And they obviously like it because they laughed. And so you've developed a bit of a relationship because someone has laughed at your joke. ... I don't know how much of it is how I communicate deeper feelings, or feelings at all. Probably a fair bit.

When discussing humour, men frequently described the use of paradoxical humour, which is any form of communication which would usually be considered hostile, offensive, aggressive, antagonising, or otherwise detrimental to a positive relationship (often referred to as “*taking the piss*” –P001). The absence of retaliation was identified as demonstrating closeness, as such retaliation would be expected if one was not considered a friend by the target of the paradoxical humour (e.g., “... *the guys who are closer tend to take the piss out of each other more and play more practical jokes that appear meaner... But I would only do that to guys that I was actually really close with.*” –P001).

Another aspect of acceptance discussed by participants, was the ability to tolerate friends' flaws, differences and occasional inconsiderate actions (and vice versa) without unreasonable anger, criticism, or demands for behaviour change. Tolerance appeared to engender intimacy by providing behavioural evidence of the value the other party places in the friendship, as well as through feelings within the recipient of gratitude and being accepted (e.g., “*he was the one that really didn't make me feel as though I should have to atone, he just welcomed me back in. ... I can't imagine a situation that would demonstrate friendship in a more explicit way.*” –P004).

3.2.3 Theme 3. Factors which Enhance Other Communication Strategies

Two factors emerged which appeared to influence intimacy primarily through their ability to enhance the effectiveness of other modes of expression. These communication strategies were unable to occur without the prior enactment of a different intimate expression strategy. The first was history (i.e., the accumulation of previous interaction experiences); which appeared to enhance the intimate nature of shared experiences and aided in developing emotional understanding (e.g., *“It’s the ‘I’m OK, you’re OK, this bond’s OK’, because we share a history where we’ve done things together that we’ve enjoyed, and that was good, and that just re-emphasises the bond.”* –P005). The second factor was reciprocity. Participants often indicated that the greatest subjective value was derived from friendships when an equal balance of intimate expression (e.g., emotional sharing, instigation of shared activities, perception of closeness) was present (e.g., *“... [If] we got into trouble then we’d defend each other. ... If someone was to make up a ridiculous story, we’d probably back them because we thought they’d do the same in return”* – P009).

3.2.4 Theme 4. Communication Preferences

The subthemes coded at this superordinate theme both related to the degree to which men reported being satisfied with the intimate expression in their homosocial friendships, and the degree to which their friendships met their intimacy needs.

3.2.4.1 Evidence of satisfaction with homosocial intimate expression.

All men interviewed stated that they found the degree of intimacy in their homosocial friendships, and the modes of expression used to communicate this (both direct and covert), subjectively meaningful and satisfying (e.g., *“he fits all my boxes for what a friend would be. So for me that’s perfectly enough.”* –P011). Occasionally, this was expressed as a lack of desire to change any aspect of friendships.

In particular, men frequently stated that they felt vulnerable expression was not inherently associated with intimacy, and was therefore not required for satisfying friendships. Covert modes of expression were occasionally identified as being the most effective expression strategies because these usually involve a cost (e.g., time, resources), and therefore require greater emotional commitment. It was sometimes reasoned that this commitment transcended verbal communication, therefore making vulnerable expression redundant. To illustrate, P005 states:

Because there are the actions, there doesn't need to be words. ... because things are done implicitly and differently, [it] doesn't mean the relationship is any less. A drawing doesn't need colour to be a beautiful drawing, they can be beautiful in black and white.

3.2.4.2 Evidence of dissatisfaction with homosocial intimate expression.

As shown in Appendix B, enquiries were made of participants about whether there were any aspects of their homosocial friendships that they would like to change. Typically, questions examining this were delivered in the context of discussions about modes of expression (e.g., “Are you happy with this, or do you wish that the amount of closeness between you and your friends and the way you go about showing this could be different?”). Importantly, no men interviewed indicated they were dissatisfied with either the degree of subjective intimacy present in their homosocial friendships, nor the modes of expression used to communicate this.

3.3 Discussion

3.3.1 How is Homosocial Intimacy Communicated in Men's Same-Sex Friendships, if at all?

Results indicate men in the present study communicate homosocial intimacy through both vulnerable, direct, verbal modes of expression; as well as covert, attenuated, non-verbal modes of expression. Analysis suggests that, in many contexts,

men engage in vulnerable expression willingly and derive a sense of enjoyment and emotional closeness from this. However, interviews also suggested that, in other contexts, men require the presence of attenuating factors (e.g., cover activities) to facilitate vulnerable expression. Men devoted a greater proportion of interviews to discussing covert communication strategies (49.04% corpus coverage) versus vulnerable strategies (29.37% corpus coverage). Analysis also suggests that men generally engage in covert modes of expression more frequently than vulnerable modes, and that many men believe vulnerable disclosure is neither necessary nor sufficient for the communication of closeness. However it is important to acknowledge the substantial importance men placed on expected comfort with vulnerability with a male friend (even if this did not occur regularly) in the creation and demonstration of intimacy.

Importantly, the modes of expression identified comprised a set of communication proficiencies that men utilise in combination, with fluctuating degrees of emphasis (as opposed to being separate, independent constructs). Additionally, it appears that contextual factors (e.g., how subtly an emotional topic is introduced, emotional competence of the listener) may impact which modes of expression men use in any given interaction. Related to this, the substantial endorsement of Emotional Understanding through Shared Activities (30.54% corpus coverage) may indicate that a sense of deep mutual understanding between male friends is a paramount source of intimacy; and that other modes of expression (e.g., disclosure) are considered secondary to the primary aim of developing this understanding.

3.3.2 To What Extent do Men Feel their Homosocial Friendships are Characterised by Intimacy and Satisfying Communication?

The disproportionately high endorsement of Evidence of Satisfaction with Homosocial Intimate Expression (versus evidence of dissatisfaction) suggests that men are satisfied with the degree of homosocial closeness present in their friendships; as

well as the modes of expression used to communicate this (i.e., a combination of vulnerable and covert strategies). This also suggests that vulnerability mitigation strategies to support vulnerable expression (e.g., reducing vulnerability salience, cover activities) are not considered by men to detract from intimacy. The fact that men report engaging in unattenuated vulnerable communication also suggests men do not feel fearful or incapable of expressing vulnerable content directly to male friends in all contexts (e.g., Levant et al., 2009; O'Neil, 1981b, 2008).

3.3.3 Implications

Self-reports of participants engaging in vulnerable expression were consistent with interpretations of authors such as Cameron (2007), Dindia and Allen (1992), Hyde (2005), and Walker (1994) that differences in masculine and feminine communication styles (traditionally thought to prioritise shared activities and emotional disclosure, respectively (e.g., Tannen, 1991)) are generally either an artefact of research design, or are so small that they lack meaning. However, results also indicated that men appear to utilise modes of expression that rely on unspoken behavioural evidence (e.g., costly support) and subjectively meaningful emotional experiences which are assumed to be shared (e.g., emotional understanding and interpersonal warmth) to communicate intimacy. This is consistent with interpretations of authors such as Kiselica and Englar-Carlson (2010), Levant (1999), Pollack (1999, 2001), and Wood and Inman (1993) that covert, indirect modes of expression represent an important and valued communication strategy in men's homosocial friendships. Participants' framing of covert expression also appeared to indicate that this was viewed as important and effective in its own right, despite men also utilising vulnerable expression.

The present results also support research suggesting that men bypass discrepancy strain (see Pleck, 1995) in communication by employing attenuation strategies (e.g., paradoxical humour) and distraction strategies (e.g., cover activities) to reduce the

masculinity violating potential of vulnerable expression (e.g., Levant et al., 2009; O'Neil, 2008; Pleck, 1995; Swain, 2001). However, participants also described using unattenuated vulnerable expression with male friends. Given that discrepancy strain is a social phenomenon, requiring the threat of negative perception by a peer (O'Neil, 1981b; O'Neil et al., 1995), it is possible that sharing a sense of trust, dependability and emotional understanding with friends was sufficient to render the threat of negative judgement as unlikely and, therefore, negligible. Furthermore, it is possible prior research has not found men self-report engaging in unattenuated vulnerable expression, in part, because friendships characterised by high levels of trust and emotional understanding have not been cued.

In keeping with researchers such as Levant (1999), Pollack (1999), and Swain (1989, 2001), the present results suggest that covert expression should be included in the operational definition of intimacy; as opposed to operationalising intimacy purely as disclosure. Contrary to suggestions in some previous research, the present results suggest the use of covert expression does not represent a fear of, or inability to, express intimacy using more vulnerable modes of expression. Rather, men's descriptions of their use of, and satisfaction with, covert modes of expression suggests these represent a viable, valued and meaningful alternative form of communication that can be used instead of, or in combination with, vulnerable modes of expression. Ideally, future research will conceptualise both covert and vulnerable expression as legitimate in their own right.

3.3.4 Limitations

The implications discussed above must be tempered by an acknowledgement of the limitations of the present study. The authors chose to sample only heterosexual participants aged 20 to 45 who identified their primary cultural background as Australian, New Zealander or British. The purpose of this was to gain a purer measure

of the enactment of intimacy in homosocial friendships of this group that was not confounded by sexual orientation, cohort or culture based differences. However, this also means that caution must be used when generalising the results of this study to different sexual orientations, age groups or cultures.

Also, the sample size of the present study was 13. This was deemed sufficient, as coding saturation had been reached in the seventh interview (P010); and the epistemological aim of thematic analysis is to develop knowledge through a thorough investigation of a selection of individuals, rather than through a more superficial examination of a large group (Braun & Clarke, 2013). However, because of this small sample size, caution must still be used before assuming that the present results are generalizable to the wider population of men.

Specific efforts were made during recruitment to sample men from a range of backgrounds. An examination of the occupations of the participants included shows variation here. However, three psychology students were included in the study, which may be an overrepresentation based on the general population. It was decided that the psychology backgrounds of these individuals was unlikely to unduly influence their responses. Specifically, one was a first year undergraduate student, and thus was unlikely to have been extensively exposed to a psychology framework. The other two were clinical psychology master's students who were naive to research in the area of gender and communication. Occupation was not part of the exclusion criteria for this study therefore it was decided that excluding these participants would not have been justified. However, the inclusion of three psychology students remains a limitation of this study.

3.3.5 Future Directions

The present research focussed primarily on the features of men's homosocial interactions that communicate intimacy without specifically considering the role of

context. Future research may benefit from investigations of the contextual factors that play a role in men's decisions to use one set of modes of expression over other possible options in any given interaction. In particular, investigating the role of concepts such as cover activities, perceived similarity, validation of one's masculinity (therefore reducing the need for vulnerability mitigation), trust and dependability, and emotional understanding may provide a useful starting point.

Additionally, as in much previous research, the present study has conceptualised vulnerability in a largely categorical manner (i.e., vulnerable expression, non-vulnerable expression and covert expression). However, it is likely that vulnerability exists on a continuum. Therefore, future research may benefit from examining the full range of vulnerable expression in greater detail.

Given the focus of much past research on sex differences (e.g., Aries, 1998; Chaplin & Aldao, 2013; Eagly & Wood, 2013; Levant et al., 2009; Rose et al., 2012; Tannen, 1991; Wester, Vogel, Pressly, & Heesacker, 2002), it would be informative to replicate the present study in a sample of females to determine the degree of similarity between communication styles discussed. It is possible that communication styles employed by men and women achieve similar goals (e.g., mutual understanding; warmth and enjoyment; trust and dependability), but occasionally feature different strategies to achieve them (e.g., paradoxical humour). A comparison of thematic maps of strategies for creating and demonstrating closeness in homosocial friendships generated by men and women would provide fertile ground for testing this hypothesis.

3.3.6 Summary

Overall, the present study's findings indicate that men utilise modes of expression involving both vulnerable and covert communication. Men also indicated that, although they engaged in covert expression more, vulnerable expression comprised a substantial portion of their intimate expression. Additionally, men indicated that covert expression

is intrinsically linked with disclosure based communication; and that the communication which occurs in their homosocial friendships results in satisfying relationships characterised by a sense of meaningful subjective intimacy. This suggests that future research may benefit from conceptualising covert modes of expression as a legitimate and valuable aspect of intimate expression in order to more closely reflect men's subjective experience of intimacy in homosocial friendships.

Table 3.1

Demographic Information

Participant ID	Age	Occupation	Cultural Background	Marital Status
001	27	Armed Forces Personnel	Australian/Caucasian	Dating
003	22	Sales Assistant; and Engineering Undergraduate Student	Australian/Caucasian; Irish	Single
004	30	Teacher	Australian/Caucasian	Dating
005	45	Psychology Post-Graduate Student	Australian/Caucasian	Married/De Facto
007	33	Psychology Undergraduate Student	Australian/Caucasian; Argentinian	Married/De Facto
009	28	Seasonal Worker / Fruit Picker	English/British	Married/De Facto
010	37	Business Analyst (Previously a musician)	Australian/Caucasian	Married/De Facto
011	30	Musician	Australian/Caucasian	Married/De Facto
012	34	IT Department Manager	New Zealander; Australian/Caucasian	Married/De Facto
013	32	Medical Laboratory Scientist	Australian/Caucasian	Married/De Facto
014	32	Photographer	Australian/Caucasian; English/British	Single
015	25	IT Quality Assurance Tester	Australian/Caucasian	Single
016	38	Psychology Post-graduate student	Australian/Caucasian; Polish	Married/De Facto

Table 3.2

Sources, References and Corpus Coverage Per Theme

Theme	Sources		Percent Corpus Coverage
	(Total = 13)	References	(Total = 68.27%)
Direct Verbal Communication that Indicates and Fosters Closeness*	13	276	29.37%
Vulnerable Expression	13	170	18.83%
Vulnerability Mitigation Strategies	13	108	10.14%
Non-Vulnerable Expression	13	111	7.8%
Implicit, Relationship-Oriented Communication that Indicates and Fosters Closeness*	13	461	49.04%
Emotional Understanding through Shared Experiences	13	300	30.54%
Trust, Dependability and Valued Qualities	13	241	19.97%
Interpersonal Warmth, Acceptance and Enjoyment of Interactions	13	142	11.4%
Factors which Enhance Other Communication Strategies	12	90	7.06%
Communication Preferences*	13	126	10.97%
Evidence of Satisfaction with Homosocial Intimate Expression	13	126	10.97%
Evidence of Dissatisfaction with Homosocial Intimate Expression	0	0	0%

MORE THAN WORDS

Note: No unique content is coded at superordinate themes (marked with an *), as they represent conceptual groups which assist in the understanding of sub-themes. Statistics presented for superordinate themes represent the combination of text coded at sub-themes.

Chapter 4 – Study 2

The present study implements a quantitative research design in order to follow up and extend the results of Study 1. Study 1 was a qualitative examination of men's subjective experiences within homosocial friendships. Qualitative research stems from an interpretivist paradigm. As such, the outcomes of Study 1 were based on a deep analysis of the subjective self-reported experience of a small number of men; and these reports were subsequently interpreted through thematic analysis. Although qualitative research paradigms are important for gaining a deeper understanding of phenomena that are extant from people who have direct experience with these phenomena, it is not designed to establish the generalisability of findings to a population. The aim of Study 2 is to examine the concepts found in the qualitative Study 1 by using an empirical vignette design within a social cognition study. The use of a vignette design allows for more tightly experimentally controlled conditions. In this way, Study 2 will be able to test whether the results of an experimentally controlled investigation match men's self-reported experiences of their friendships (as discussed in Study 1). The increased experimental control and larger sample size will allow for an assessment of the size of effects of interest, as well as the degree to which these are generalisable.

Within Study 1, men often made reference to the notion that vulnerability mitigation strategies may exist which attenuate the masculine gender role violating nature of vulnerable expression. Perceived Similarity, Validation of Masculinity and Cover Activities were identified by participants as contextual factors which may promote vulnerable expression (see also section 2.4). More broadly, emotional understanding, as well as trust and dependability, were identified as factors which contribute to subjective intimacy. Accordingly, Study 2 aimed to investigate the influence that these factors have on men's experience of vulnerable expression using an experimentally controlled paradigm.

Owing to the potential criticism of vignette studies for a lack of realism, particular attention was paid to maximising ecological validity in the construction of the vignettes. It was important that contextual factors chosen for inclusion in the present study were able to combine into vignettes that were perceived as realistic by participants. Pilot testing informed decisions about vignette designs. Although emotional understanding was a central theme identified in Study 1, this construct was not included in Study 2 because vulnerable expression between vignette characters in the absence of an emotional bond was perceived by pilot test participants as unrealistic and not representative of typical interactions. Additionally, the overt operationalisation of emotional understanding, which men reported experiencing implicitly (see Study 1), distracted from other manipulations in the vignette. The nature of emotional understanding as fundamental to intimacy (as discussed in Study 1) suggests that it may be better conceptualised as a prerequisite for vulnerable disclosure, as opposed to a factor which mitigates gender role norm violation. In this way, emotional understanding likely represents a psychological process distinct from that which was the focus of investigation in the present study.

Trust and dependability was not included as a factor in the present study for the same reasons that emotional understanding was excluded, despite its facilitating effect on vulnerable expression identified by men in Study 1. Perceived similarity was discussed in Study 1 as an aspect of trust and dependability. Thus, it was included here in place of trust and dependability due to this association between perceived similarity and trust and dependability. Perceived similarity was defined as the subjective sense that one is the same as another person in one or more personally meaningful domains (such as attitudes, background, values or personality). Validation of masculinity was defined as any act which affirms the subject's adherence to traditional masculine role norms. This act may be performed by oneself or another; be private or public; or be

internal (e.g., cognitions) or external (e.g., an observable behaviour). The concept of validation of masculinity bears some similarity to the concept of social legitimacy (see Kaplan & Rosenmann, 2014). The key difference between these concepts is that social legitimacy deals with the extent to which behaviours are considered acceptable based on other factors within the actor's social context, while validation of masculinity is specific to the utilisation of masculinity enhancing behaviours to legitimise the use of masculine gender role discrepant behaviours. A cover activity was defined as any activity which simultaneously facilitates vulnerable expression and draws attention away from this expression. Men's reports in Study 1 suggested that cover activities encourage vulnerable expression by reducing the salience of the masculine gender role discrepant nature of vulnerable expression. Additionally, cover activities appeared to be used both consciously and subconsciously by men. The concept of cover activities bears some similarities to Kiesling's (2005) concept of indirectness insofar as both concepts suggest that men may use communication strategies to communicate closeness while simultaneously masking this meaning with distracting behaviours (see also Thurnell-Read, 2012). However, the construct of cover activities is more specifically related to the use of shared activities and topic changes within conversations to achieve this end.

Previous research (e.g., Land et al., 2011; Levant et al., 2009) has often suggested that men find vulnerable disclosure aversive. However men in Study 1 reported generally positive (or, at least neutral) attitudes towards such disclosure. As such, contextual factors discussed above are predicted to further enhance men's attitudes towards vulnerable disclosure. Further, the absence of these factors is likely to be associated with less favourable attitudes, as opposed to negative attitudes. Based on the results of Study 1, as well as past literature on the masculine ideology and communication (e.g., Swain, 2001; Vandello & Bosson, 2013; Wood & Inman, 1993), a moderation model was predicted, in which the presence of contextual factors was

expected to be associated with greater endorsement of vulnerable disclosure; and this relationship was hypothesised to be moderated by subscription to traditional masculine role norms. Specifically, the following hypotheses were made:

H2.1: Men's attitudes towards vulnerable disclosure will be generally favourable or neutral.

H2.2: Each contextual factor, respectively, will be associated with a greater endorsement of vulnerable expression. Specifically:

H2.2.1: The presence of Perceived Similarity will be associated with greater endorsement of vulnerable disclosure.

H2.2.2: The presence of Validation of Masculinity will be associated with greater endorsement of vulnerable disclosure.

H2.2.3: The presence of a Cover Activity will be associated with greater endorsement of vulnerable disclosure.

H2.3: The effect of each contextual factor will be moderated by subscription to male role norms, such that higher subscription to male role norms will be associated with greater increases in endorsement of vulnerable disclosure when any contextual factor is present. Specifically, the presence of (a) Perceived Similarity, (b) Validation of Masculinity, and (c) Cover Activities will be separately associated with higher endorsement of vulnerable disclosure; and the size of this effect will have a positive linear relationship with subscription to male role norms.

H2.4: Contextual factors will have interactive effects on endorsement of vulnerable disclosure and these, in turn, will be moderated by subscription to the masculine ideology. Owing to the lack of prior research investigating the interactive effects of contextual factors (see section 2.4), it is not possible to predict the form or direction of these effects. Therefore, these will be examined in an exploratory fashion.

4.1 Method

4.1.1 Participants

Advertisement based recruitment was conducted through the use of paper flyers placed at local businesses; print, radio and television stories about the study by local news media outlets; and a university wide email advertising service for research at Griffith University (sent to faculty, staff and students). Participants accessed through advertising were offered the option of entering a prize draw to win one of two \$150 gift vouchers to a store of their choice for completing the survey. This method of recruitment resulted in 292 participants accessing the survey, and 218 participants (74.66%) completing it. Recruitment was also conducted by sending an email to members of the researcher's social networks containing information about the study, the survey URL and a request to pass this on to male friends if the recipient felt comfortable doing so. This method of recruitment resulted in 247 participants accessing the survey, and 149 participants (60.32%) completing it. Thus, the total number of people who accessed the survey was 539, with 367 people (68.01%) completing every item.

Data were considered unusable if the participant had not, at minimum, reached the vignette page, completed outcome items, and completed the measure of subscription to masculine role norms. Data were still considered usable if demographic items or manipulation checks (which were presented last) had not been completed. Therefore, 154 cases were excluded as they were considered unusable. Despite the specification in all forms of recruitment that only males were eligible to participate, eight participants identified their sex as female, and were therefore excluded. Criteria for inclusion in the final analysis were: aged 18 years or older; did not self-identify as gay or bisexual (in order to avoid confounds with potential systematic differences in experiences of gender role norms in members of the GLBTIQ community (see McDermott & Schwartz, 2013)). Eight men reported their age as 12 or 13, however these cases were retained

because other demographic information collected (especially marital status and years of education) suggested that this was more likely to represent a failure to change the year of birth from its default setting (2000) in the survey calendar, rather than being an accurate reflection of the participants' ages. These participants were excluded from descriptive statistics for age. Forty-seven men identified as gay or bisexual, therefore these data were excluded. Five men selected "prefer not to answer" in response to the enquiry about sexual orientation, however these data were retained as their inclusion was not found to change the patterns of significance of final results. Two cases were considered to be true outliers due to extreme scores (i.e., Z-Scores greater than 3.29 and a distance of over 1.5 interquartile lengths from group medians) on outcome or moderator items, and were also excluded. Therefore, data from 328 participants was included in the final analysis. Of these, 13 did not complete the demographics section and a further 3 did not complete the manipulation checks.

The mean age of participants was 32.19 years ($SD = 10.73$). When selecting their ethnic background, several participants selected the *Other* option and listed Australian (or a variant of this) as their primary ethnicity. In such cases, it was assumed the participants were indicating Caucasian Australian and, therefore, these responses were recoded under British/Scottish/Welsh/Irish. Information about the sample's ethnic background, education, income, and relationship status is presented in Table 4.1. The sample consisted predominantly of tertiary educated men with ethnic associations with the United Kingdom and Ireland. These men were typically either married currently or not at all, and approximately 46.7% of the sample who indicated their income earned below the median national gross annual household income for 2011-2012 (\$74,984; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013b).

4.1.2 Design

This study followed a 2 (Perceived Similarity (PS): absent vs present) x 2

(Validation of Masculinity (VM): absent vs present) x 2 (Cover Activity (CA): absent vs present) between subjects design. A continuous moderator variable (subscription to the traditional masculine gender role) was also included. Four continuous dependent variables were examined. Broadly, these measured various aspects of men's attitudes towards the use of vulnerable disclosure in homosocial friendships. These will be discussed further in section 4.1.3.2.

4.1.3 Materials

4.1.3.1 Scenario.

A series of pilot tests informed the development of a set of vignettes depicting a man engaging in vulnerable disclosure with a male friend. In this vignette, a man (John) had agreed to help his friend (Michael) move house. When he arrives at Michael's house, John finds that several of Michael's other male friends are already there helping move furniture. The levels of each IV were manipulated by substituting specific sentences within the vignette. Eight different vignette versions were created to account for every possible combination of the IV levels. A copy of the vignette versions with all factors absent and all factors present, as well as an illustration of the sentence substitutions corresponding to each IV manipulation, can be found in Table 4.2. Pilot testing revealed that these manipulations produced the desired effects on men's perceptions of PS, VM and CA (see Table 4.3).

4.1.3.2 Outcomes.

Four dependent variables were examined, which aimed to collectively tap men's attitudes towards, and endorsement of, vulnerable disclosure (including behavioural intentions and subjective evaluations). These outcome variables were as follows: (a) *likelihood of use*, which measured the degree of likelihood that the participant would engage in vulnerable disclosure in a similar context (i.e., "If you were John in this scenario, how likely is it that you would have talked about a personal problem that was

bothering you in the way that he did?”); (b) *awkwardness*, which measured expectations of subjective awkwardness engaging in vulnerable disclosure in a similar context (i.e., “If you were John in this scenario, how awkward/uncomfortable would you find the conversation between John and Michael after everything else that had happened that day?”); (c) *oddness*, which measured the degree to which vulnerable disclosure was perceived as odd or out-of-place, given the contextual factors (i.e., “How odd or out-of-place do you believe John’s disclosure about his girlfriend was in this scenario?”); and (d) *comfort*, which measured expectations of subjective comfort engaging in vulnerable disclosure in a similar context (i.e., “If you were John in this scenario, how comfortable would you feel talking about a significant personal problem like John did?”). All items were rated on a seven point Likert scale with the anchor *Not at all* at one and *Very much so* at seven. High scores on all DVs indicated more favourable attitudes towards vulnerable disclosure, except for awkwardness and oddness, which were reverse scored. In these DVs, lower scores indicate more favourable attitudes towards vulnerable disclosure.

4.1.3.3 Subscription to traditional masculine role norms.

Subscription to the traditional masculine gender role was measured using the Male Role Norms Scale (MRNS; Thompson & Pleck, 1986). This is a 26 item scale designed to measure the degree to which the respondent endorses traditional masculine behaviours in men. Responses are provided on a seven point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating stronger endorsement of traditional male role norms. As its development is based on Brannon’s Blueprint for Manhood (1976, 1985a), a seminal piece of literature within research on the masculine ideology, the MRNS is also based on a strong theoretical framework. The MRNS is comprised of Status Norm, Toughness Norm and Anti-femininity Norm subscales. Several recent papers (e.g., Gordon et al., 2013; Lease et al., 2013; Vincent, Parrott, & Peterson, 2011) have utilised the MRNS to

measure subscription to the traditional masculine role. In the present sample, the MRNS had an excellent Cronbach's alpha of .89 overall, and a mean score of 3.4 (Status norm: $\alpha = .84$, $M = 3.6$; Toughness norm: $\alpha = .77$, $M = 3.6$; Antifemininity norm: $\alpha = .81$, $M = 2.9$).

4.1.3.4 Manipulation checks.

In order to check whether the manipulations had the desired effects, participants were asked to rate the degree to which they believed: (a) the characters in the vignette were alike (check for perceived similarity); (b) the speaker felt masculine in the situation (check for validation of masculinity) and (c) the speaker's main goal was to engage in vulnerable disclosure (check for cover activity). The vignette the participant was initially exposed to was displayed so they could refer back to it. Ratings were made on seven point Likert scales.

4.1.4 Procedure

After following the study URL, participants were presented with an online information sheet and consent form. Once participants had provided consent, they were randomly assigned one of the vignette versions, which was displayed for them to read. Following this, outcome items were presented in a randomised order. While answering outcome items, participants were able to review the vignette. Participants then completed the MRNS. The order of items was randomised and, after commencing the MRNS, participants were unable to go back to change outcome items. Following this, demographic items were presented. The final section of the survey was the manipulation check questions. Participants were not able to progress through the survey if they had not responded to every item. Participants recruited through advertising to the general public, were given the option to be redirected to a prize draw once they had completed all survey items.

4.1.5 Statistical Analysis

For each outcome item, a general linear model was run. In these models, PS, VM and CA were entered as IVs in a crossed factorial design, and the overall MRNS score was entered as a continuous moderator. Previous research (e.g., Gordon et al., 2013; Lease et al., 2013) has typically reported subscale scores for the MRNS. However, if this practice was continued in the present research design, it would require 15 analyses, each with eight cells and a continuous moderator. Such a plan for analysis substantially increases the risk of Type I error. Utilising the overall MRNS score is an effective way to reduce the required number of analyses, while retaining data relevant to the research question. In support of this approach, each of the MRNS subscales represents a nuanced aspect of a single underlying theoretical construct. As identified in section 4.1.3.3, the Cronbach's alpha of the overall MRNS scale (0.89) is higher than that of the three subscales. Related to this, there were strong correlations between all subscales and the total MRNS scores (Status: $r(328) = .86; p < .001$; Toughness: $r(328) = .79; p < .001$; Antifemininity: $r(328) = .74; p < .001$). Such high correlations between scales in this sample mandated the use of the overall MRNS score over subscale scores. Alternative Type I error reduction strategies, such as employing a more conservative threshold for significance, lacked this theoretical rationale and risked inflating Type II error due to the arbitrary nature of new cut-off scores.

In each of the general linear models, moderation terms were requested explicitly through syntax. The hypothesised moderation model (H2.3) would be considered to be supported if a significant interaction between the IVs and the overall MRNS score was found, with simple effects in the expected direction. Following each analysis, simple effects analyses were conducted as appropriate. The use of a fully crossed, factorial analysis allowed for the exploration of interactive effects of variables of interest (H2.4). When interactions between an IV and the MRNS were found, syntax was used to

calculate the IV simple effects with MRNS scores set one standard deviation below the MRNS mean, at the MRNS mean, and one standard deviation above the MRNS mean. In this way, the effect of IVs at different levels of subscription to traditional male role norms was evaluated. Any deviations from this analytic strategy are specified in the Results section.

4.2 Results

Data screening identified that the only potential violation of analysis assumptions was that likelihood of use may be non-normally distributed. All analyses involving likelihood of use were run with and without a square root transformation. No differences in patterns of significance were found, therefore untransformed results are reported here. Means, standard deviations and cell sizes for each of the simple main effects (independent of MRNS scores) are presented in Table 4.4.

4.2.1 Manipulation Checks

As expected, a significant main effect of the PS manipulation was found in the manipulation check for this variable ($F(1, 304) = 62.311, p < .001, partial \eta^2 = .17$). Follow up analysis indicated that the presence of PS was associated with stronger perceptions that the vignette characters were similar ($M = 4.48; SE = .11$) than when PS was absent ($M = 3.32; SE = .1$).

The manipulation check for VM revealed a significant main effect for VM, however this was qualified by an interaction between PS and VM ($F(1, 304) = 8.72, p = .003, partial \eta^2 = .03$). Simple main effects analysis revealed that the presence of VM (PS absent $EM Mean = 4.44; SE = .16$; PS present $EM Mean = 4.24; SE = .16$) was associated with stronger perceptions of speaker masculinity than when VM was absent (PS absent $EM Mean = 2.57; SE = .14$; PS present $EM Mean = 3.26; SE = .15$), at both levels of PS. However, when VM was absent, the presence of PS was also associated with stronger perceptions of speaker masculinity, than when PS was absent.

The manipulation check for CA revealed a significant main effect for CA, however this was qualified by an interaction between PS and CA ($F(1, 304) = 5.98, p = .015, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .02$). Simple main effects analysis revealed that the presence of CA (PS absent $EM \text{ Mean} = 3.64; SE = .18$; PS present $EM \text{ Mean} = 3.93; SE = .19$) was associated with weaker perceptions that vulnerable disclosure was the speaker's main goal in the interaction than when CA was absent (PS absent $EM \text{ Mean} = 5.17; SE = .2$; PS present $EM \text{ Mean} = 4.54; SE = .2$), at both levels of PS. However, when CA was absent, the presence of PS was also associated with weaker perceptions that vulnerable disclosure was the speaker's main goal in the interaction, than when PS was absent.

Overall, these analyses indicated that the main manipulation for each of the contextual factors was operating in the expected direction.

4.2.2 Main Analyses

Broadly, the predominant pattern of results indicated that, when MRNS subscription was low, the presence of PS and VM was most commonly associated with more favourable perceptions of vulnerable disclosure. When MRNS subscription was moderate, the presence of PS was consistently found to be independently associated with more favourable perceptions of self-disclosure. When MRNS subscription was high, PS was associated with more favourable attitudes towards vulnerable disclosure, but only when VM was absent. When VM was present, the absence of PS did not appear to be associated with less favourable attitudes towards vulnerable disclosure. In this way, it appeared that PS played a dominant role in the perceptions of vulnerable disclosure when subscription to masculine role norms was moderate and low; while VM was of primary importance to men's attitudes towards vulnerable disclosure when subscription to these norms was high. Importantly, CA was not found to be associated with perceptions of vulnerable disclosure in any analysis.

The results discussed in this section are presented primarily through figures. Standard error terms for the estimated marginal means presented are shown using error bars. However, because standard error terms for estimated marginal means are based on the same standard deviation terms as the relevant main effects, error bars on these graphs may be unreliable for inferring statistically significant differences. Therefore, statistically significant differences on graphs will be indicated using asterisks ($* = p < .05$; $** = p < .001$). Additionally, lower order effects were frequently qualified by higher order interactions. In these cases, the statistical presentation begins with the highest order effect, rather than listing all effects.

4.2.2.1 Likelihood of use.

A significant interaction between PS, VM and the MRNS was found ($F(1, 312) = 5.99, p = .015, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .02$). A simple main effects analysis revealed that, at low levels of subscription to the male role norm, the presence of PS was associated with higher likelihood of use scores when VM was absent (compared to when PS was absent), and this effect was significantly enhanced when VM was present (see Figure 4.1). At moderate levels of male role norm subscription, the presence of PS was associated with higher likelihood of use scores (compared to when PS was absent), regardless of the presence or absence of VM (see Figure 4.2). At high levels of subscription, the absence of both PS and VM was associated with lower likelihood of use scores than any other variable combination (see Figure 4.3). Importantly, the shape of the graph when MRNS scores were high (Figure 4.3) indicated that the absence of PS was not associated with a decrease in likelihood of use when VM was present.

4.2.2.2 Awkwardness.

A significant interaction between PS, VM and the MRNS was found ($F(1, 312) = 10.34, p = .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .03$). A simple main effects analysis revealed that, at low levels of subscription to the male role norm, the presence of both PS and VM was

associated with significantly lower awkwardness scores than any other variable combination (see Figure 4.4). At moderate levels of subscription to the male role norm, the presence of PS was associated with lower awkwardness scores (compared to when PS was absent), regardless of the presence or absence of VM (see Figure 4.5). At high levels of subscription, the absence of both PS and VM was associated with higher awkwardness scores than any other variable combination (see Figure 4.6). As with the analysis in 4.2.2.1, the shape of the graph when MRNS scores were high (Figure 4.6) indicated that the absence of PS was not associated with an increase in awkwardness when VM was present.

4.2.2.3 Oddness.

A significant interaction between PS, VM and the MRNS was found ($F(1, 312) = 8.86, p = .003$ *partial* $\eta^2 = .03$). A simple main analysis effects revealed, at low levels of subscription to the male role norm, the simultaneous absence of PS and presence of VM was associated with significantly higher oddness scores than any other variable combination (see Figure 4.7). At moderate levels of subscription to the male role norm, the presence of PS was associated with lower oddness scores (compared to when PS was absent), regardless of the presence or absence of VM (see Figure 4.8). At high levels of subscription, the presence of either PS or VM was associated with lower oddness scores (see Figure 4.9). As with the analyses in 4.2.2.1 and 4.2.2.2, the shape of the graph when MRNS scores were high (Figure 4.9) indicated that the absence of PS was not associated with an increase in awkwardness when VM was present.

4.2.2.4 Comfort.

A significant interaction between PS and the MRNS was found ($F(1, 312) = 8.53, p = .004, partial \eta^2 = .03$). A simple main effects analysis revealed that the presence of PS was associated with significantly higher comfort scores (compared to when PS was absent) when MRNS scores were at the group mean or lower, but not when MRNS

scores were one standard deviation above the mean (see Figure 4.10). In this way, the effect of PS on Comfort appeared to be independent of VM.

4.3 Discussion

Results will first be discussed as they relate to study hypotheses. Following this, implications, limitations and future directions will be discussed.

H2.1 was supported. Across all items measuring men's endorsement of vulnerable disclosure, scores rarely fell below three on a seven point Likert scale (the lowest identified score was approximately 2.6; the highest identified score on reverse scored items awkwardness and oddness was approximately 5). This supports Study 1 findings that men generally have positive (or, at the very least, neutral) attitudes towards vulnerable modes of expression, such as vulnerable disclosure.

H2.2.1 and H2.2.2 were partially supported. Both perceived similarity and validation of masculinity were found to be associated with more favourable ratings of vulnerable disclosure; however, this was occasionally dependent on the presence or absence of another variable (especially in the case of validation of masculinity). Main effects in the present analyses were consistently qualified by higher order interactions found as part of analysis for H2.4. These higher order interactions always involved subscription to masculine role norms, suggesting that examining the influence of contextual factors without considering the role of subscription to the masculine ideology may give an incomplete portrayal of men's communication phenomena. H2.2.3 was not supported. Cover activity was not found to be associated with perceptions of vulnerable disclosure in any analyses.

H2.3 (a) and (b) were partially supported. The effects of perceived similarity and validation of masculinity were moderated by subscription to the masculine role in all analyses. However, this was not in the expected direction and, in all but one outcome variable (Comfort), this occurred as part of a higher order interactions found as part of

exploratory analysis for H2.4. H2.3 (c) was not supported, as cover activity did not have a significant effect in any analysis.

H2.4 did not make specific predictions, but aimed to explore the nature of relationships among contextual factors, as well as between combinations of contextual factors and subscription to the masculine ideology. Several analyses identified an interactive effect of perceived similarity and validation of masculinity on endorsement of vulnerable disclosure. Most commonly, when the various MRNS subscale scores were one standard deviation below the mean, the presence of perceived similarity was associated with more favourable attitudes towards vulnerable disclosure. In one analysis this effect was enhanced by the presence of validation of masculinity, and in another, it only occurred when masculinity had been validated. One analysis (Oddness) deviated from this pattern and suggested that vulnerable disclosure was perceived as the least favourable when perceived similarity was absent and masculinity *had* been validated. Overall, perceived similarity appeared to have a primary effect on men's perceptions of vulnerable disclosure when MRNS subscription was low, and this effect was moderated by validation of masculinity.

In all analyses with subscription to the masculine role norm set at moderate, the presence of perceived similarity was found to be independently associated with more favourable perceptions of vulnerable disclosure. When subscription to masculine role norms was high, the absence of both perceived similarity and validation of masculinity was found to be associated with the least favourable perceptions of vulnerable disclosure than any other variable combination. Importantly, these analyses suggested that the presence of either perceived similarity or validation of masculinity alone was associated with more favourable perceptions of vulnerable disclosure. These effects were not enhanced by the presence of other contextual factors. This was in contrast to analyses conducted when MRNS scores were low, in which perceived similarity and

validation of masculinity were typically only associated with more favourable perceptions of vulnerable expression when both factors were present; and perceived similarity appeared to have a greater influence. This was true for every outcome item, except for Comfort, in which validation of masculinity did not have a significant impact on vulnerable disclosure. In this analysis, perceived similarity had no impact on comfort scores when MRNS subscription was high.

Overall the results indicated that, when subscription to the masculine role was at the mean, only main effects of perceived similarity were found (with no interactions with other variables). When subscription to the masculine role was low, the effect of perceived similarity was consistently present, but it appeared to be stronger when validation of masculinity was present. This may suggest that, contrary to the hypothesis, a synergistic effect of perceived similarity and validation of masculinity on perceptions of vulnerable disclosure exists for men who don't subscribe strongly to male role norms. Conversely, when subscription to masculine role norms was high, the effect of perceived similarity was strongest in the absence of validation of masculinity (and vice versa). These findings were largely incongruent with the hypothesis that the influence of contextual factors would be positively linearly associated with strength of subscription to male role norms (H2.3).

Of particular note was the finding that the absence of perceived similarity was not associated with less favourable perceptions of vulnerable expression when validation of masculinity was present. This result was unique to analyses conducted when subscription to masculine role norms was high. Past research has suggested that one of the characteristics associated with high levels of subscription to traditional masculine role norms is a belief that the validation or invalidation of masculinity is central to interpersonal behaviour (Cheryan et al., 2015; Funk & Werhun, 2011; Vandello & Bosson, 2013). Therefore, the presence or absence of other contextual factors (i.e.,

perceived similarity) may have little influence on how interpersonal behaviour is perceived for men who subscribe strongly to masculine role norms, so long as masculinity has been validated. This may explain why an effect of perceived similarity only emerged when validation of masculinity (the contextual factor of primary concern when subscription to masculine role norms is high) was absent in the present study. Conversely, low subscription to masculine role norms may be associated with sensitivity to a wider range of contextual factors when interpreting interpersonal behaviour. Therefore, a greater range of contextual factors may influence the perception of interpersonal behaviour (as reflected in the synergistic effects of perceived similarity and validation of masculinity in the majority of analyses with low MRNS subscription in the present study). In this way, extreme scores in either direction on the MRNS appear to be associated with a sensitivity to the presence or absence of perceived similarity and validation of masculinity, but differences in the subjective importance of contextual factors at low versus high subscription determine how this sensitivity is manifested in relation to perceptions of gender role discrepant behaviour. However, this hypothesis is untestable using the present dataset. Therefore, future research is required to validate this possible explanation.

The analysis conducted with Oddness as the outcome variable when MRNS scores were low does not conform to the same pattern of results as the rest of the analyses. Specifically, Oddness scores were higher when perceived similarity was absent and validation of masculinity was present. Despite its discrepancy from other analyses, this finding is congruent with the interpretation that men at low levels of subscription to male role norms may be sensitive to a wide range of contextual factors (i.e., perceived similarity and validation of masculinity), while men at high levels of subscription to male role norms are chiefly influenced by validation of masculinity. Specifically, the presence of validation of masculinity appears unable to compensate for

the absence of perceived similarity in this analysis. This suggests that perceived similarity plays an important role over and above validation of masculinity in low MRNS scoring men's perception of oddness related to vulnerable disclosure. This result may also indicate that disclosing vulnerable information on the basis of adhering to gender roles in the absence of a shared sense of identity with one's interaction partner is perceived as unusual for men who do not value the masculine role. Instead, a sense of shared identity is more important for fostering a sense that vulnerable disclosure is appropriate.

More broadly, the finding that contextual factors influenced perceptions of vulnerable disclosure when subscription to masculine role norms is low may suggest that masculine role norm prohibitions affect men's behaviour, even when men don't personally subscribe to these norms. Although this result was unexpected, it can potentially be explained by the pervasive nature of gender role norms. Several authors (e.g., Egan & Perry, 2001; Pauletti et al., 2014; Pleck, 1995) suggests that individuals displaying gender role discrepant behaviour are typically met with negative feedback (e.g., social ostracism, negative evaluations). Therefore, it is likely that gender role norms typically influence the behaviour of all individuals through social conditioning, including those who do not subscribe strongly to gender role norms. As such, it is possible that contextual factors influenced perceptions of vulnerable disclosure at low levels of masculine role norm subscription in the present study because participants anticipated that engaging in vulnerable disclosure (a masculine gender role discrepant behaviour) would be associated with negative peer reactions, despite the fact that they did not personally have negative perceptions of the use of vulnerable disclosure in the absence of contextual factors. These findings mirror those of some past research, which demonstrated that, in men from the United States, *less* subscription to some aspects of masculine role norms (e.g., status and toughness) was associated with poorer self-

perceived interpersonal competencies (Lease et al., 2013). This provides further evidence for the assertion that the relationship between subscription to masculine role norms and the use of gender role discrepant modes of expression (e.g., vulnerable disclosure) may not be as simple as a negative linear relationship.

The contextual factors tested also appeared to exert differing degrees of influence over outcome variables. Specifically, perceived similarity appeared to be most influential (especially in analyses with low and moderate MRNS scores), followed by validation of masculinity (which exerted influence primarily in analyses with high MRNS scores). Cover activity was not found to have any influence over outcome variables. This finding was unexpected, as it was hypothesised that all contextual factors would have an equal effect on outcome variables. In Study 1, validation of masculinity and cover activities were aspects of a separate theme (i.e., Vulnerability Mitigation) to perceived similarity (i.e., Trust Dependability and Valued Qualities). Therefore, perceived similarity may have had a greater effect on outcome variables because it operated through a different psychological process (i.e., trust) than validation of masculinity and cover activities (i.e., strategies for mitigating vulnerability). Additionally, an examination of the Study 1 themes suggests that Emotional Understanding (a key theme in the expression of intimacy in men's friendships) may be a prerequisite for perceived similarity, insofar as a thorough knowledge of one's friend is necessary before one can make an assessment about how similar that friend is to oneself. Therefore, it is possible that perceived similarity exerted a disproportionately high degree of influence on outcome variables because of an implicit association with Emotional Understanding. However, this hypothesis remains to be tested empirically.

It is possible that no significant effects were found for cover activity because the strength of the effects of perceived similarity and validation of masculinity statistically overwhelmed the potentially smaller effect of cover activity. It is also possible that the

unexpected difference in the impact of contextual factors on outcome variables was due to the operationalisation of these constructs. It is noteworthy that cover activity was potentially the most subtle manipulation in the vignette, both using the fewest number of words and occurring at the end of the vignette. This may have caused the effect of this manipulation to be lost in the face of the other more salient manipulations for participants when they were responding to outcome items. However, the results of manipulation checks do not appear to support this explanation. Alternatively, it is possible that the effect size of the influence of cover activity as a contextual factor is actually smaller than that of perceived similarity and validation of masculinity; and was therefore unable to be properly detected with the sample size (and related statistical power) of the present study. Because cover activity has not previously been investigated in other studies, an a priori estimate of required sample size could not be performed. As a result, sampling was conducted based on an assumed medium effect size; however the sample size of the present study may have been inadequate for detecting small effects.

4.3.1 Implications and Future Directions

Overall, the present results support the notion that contextual factors influence men's intimate homosocial communication. Further investigations into the role that contextual factors play on influencing men's expression would likely benefit literature on men's communication by adding further detail to pre-existing models. To date, research in this area has typically focussed on the relationship between degree of subscription to masculine role norms (operationalised using a wide range of measures) and willingness to engage in various modes of expression (e.g., direct disclosure versus sharing activities). Little consideration has been given to the role of situational factors in men's preference for using various modes of expression. Previous research has found potentially conflicting results regarding men's use of vulnerable expression (especially vulnerable self-disclosure) (for more information, see Dindia & Allen, 1992; Wood,

2000; Zosuls, Miller, Ruble, Martin, & Fabes, 2011). It is possible that some of the discrepancies in previous results are due, in part, to a failure to account for contextual factors. Many studies in this area follow a self-report structure requiring participants to rate either their comfort with various forms of intimate expression, or the frequency with which they engage in these modes of expression. One of the features of this methodology is that it requires participants to make an averaged rating across a range of friendships and situations, and to create an imagined scenario in which possible expression would take place (see also Walker, 1994). However, the results of the present study suggest that men's level of endorsement of vulnerable modes of expression may be partially contingent on contextual factors specific to each interaction. Therefore, by including contextual factors in research designs, future researchers may be able to account for discrepancies in past research due to systematic error.

In addition, much previous research (e.g., Bank & Hansford, 2000; Levant, 2011; Levant & Wong, 2013; McKelley & Rochlen, 2010; O'Neil, 2008; see also Englar-Carlson, 2006) has found that men's willingness to engage in vulnerable modes of expression is related to their degree of subscription to traditional masculine role norms. Generally, it has been assumed that this relationship is negative and linear. However, the present results are consistent with some recent research (e.g., Lease et al., 2013) suggesting that, under some circumstances, less endorsement of traditional masculine role norms may be associated with greater reluctance to engage in vulnerable expression. This may suggest that some aspects of the traditional masculine role facilitate the use of vulnerable expression (see also Hammer & Good, 2010). Similarly, the findings of the present study also indicate that an unknown factor other than subscription to the masculine role may serve to reduce men's endorsement of vulnerable expression in the absence of contextual factors, even when these men do not harbour a strong subscription to the masculine role. For example, Jones and Heesacker (2012)

suggests that the construct of masculinity (operationalised as gender role conflict) may have both a state and trait component that has been unaccounted for in previous research. Factors such as this may explain the unexpected nature of the impact of subscription to masculine role norms on the relationship between contextual factors and endorsement of vulnerable expression found in the present study. For this reason, future research would likely benefit from investigations into other contextual factors which may facilitate men's use of vulnerable modes of expression, such as those discussed in Study 1. In addition, future research may benefit from examining the role of contextual factors in facilitating men's endorsement of forms of vulnerable expression other than disclosure of a problem.

The present research also has important implications for clinical psychology. A wide array of study findings (e.g., Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Galdas, Cheater, & Marshall, 2005; Jeffries & Grogan, 2012; McKelley & Rochlen, 2010; Pederson & Vogel, 2007; Sierra Hernandez et al., 2014; Vogel et al., 2014; Vogel, Wester, & Larson, 2007) suggest that men are reluctant to engage in help seeking for psychological (and physiological) health problems; and that masculine role norms, especially a desire to avoid appearing weak, play a large causal role in this phenomenon. In particular, men appear reluctant to engage with mental health services (such as psychologists). The present study's finding that contextual factors appear to impact men's endorsement of vulnerable disclosure (albeit not in association with masculinity, as expected) may indicate that the contextual demands of the psychotherapy setting may be partially responsible for men's reluctance to engage in mental health help seeking. Psychotherapy generally involves explicit, unreciprocated vulnerable disclosure to a relative stranger in a traditionally masculinity discrepant setting. As demonstrated by the results of the present study (as well as results of Study 1), this is incongruent with contextual factors which facilitate men's vulnerable

disclosure, such as perceived similarity with the therapist, and validation of the client's masculinity. Therefore, future research may benefit from investigations into the degree to which the incorporation of contextual factors such as these into the psychotherapy setting (i.e., in the way psychotherapy is both conducted and advertised) may improve men's willingness to engage in therapy. In addition, those seeking to encourage men to engage in masculinity discrepant modes of expression (e.g., therapists) may benefit from adjusting contextual factors to increase men's comfort with such expression. For example, efforts to highlight similarities between clients and male therapists may enhance comfort with disclosure due to perceived similarity. Similarly, discussing the masculine nature of self-improvement and addressing difficulties (by tapping the Control and Independence aspects of masculinity) may provide an opportunity for validation of masculinity. On a broader level, incorporating these contextual factors into the portrayal of therapy in promotional materials may also improve men's comfort and engagement with these services. Applications of these findings to a clinical psychology setting are discussed further in section 6.5.1.

Future research would also benefit from further investigation of which specific aspects of male role norms moderate the effects found. However, rather than simply administering full measures of male role norms and identifying which subscales correlate strongly with outcomes, future research would gain more benefit from utilising manipulations within the study design which target different male role norms. For example, creating contextual manipulations specifically designed to enhance or diminish control and independence could be achieved by creating a vignette condition in which the character was either successful or unsuccessful in manipulating aspects of a separate activity prior to his disclosure. This could be done for the remaining components of masculinity (as discussed in Chapter 2); and would allow for a more nuanced understanding of what aspects of masculinity contribute to the positive impact

of the Validation of Masculinity contextual manipulation. Similarly, by further refining manipulations associated with Perceived Similarity to target various aspects of identity which could be similar (e.g., opinions, tastes, personal history, world view) would allow for a more nuanced understanding of how this contextual factor influences comfort with masculinity discrepant modes of expression. In this way, researchers could determine which aspects of social context impact the various domains of masculinity and preference for expression strategies. Additionally, given the high correlations found between subscales of the MRNS (see section 4.1.5), future research examining the degree to which the subscales of the MRNS (and related measures) actually tap broader constructs would benefit the literature on masculinity.

4.3.2 Limitations and Recommendations

The implications discussed above must be considered in the context of the limitations of the present research. As discussed in the results section, it is possible that the sample size of the present study was inadequate to detect small effects for some of the variables of interest (especially cover activity). Therefore, future researchers may benefit from using larger samples (e.g., $N = 500$) in order to better detect these effects. However, if effect sizes are so small that they consistently require a very large sample size to detect, this may indicate that those effects lack practical utility.

In addition, the operationalisation of the contextual factors examined was constrained by the parameters of a vignette design. The vignette required that the text describing the manipulations be brief and sufficiently obvious to be detected by the reader; but not so overt that they caused a bias in responding. As such, it was difficult to create a manipulation which achieved these aims, as well as the requirements of the research design. In creating and piloting the study materials, priority was given to the minimisation of participant bias. However this conservative approach may have created effects that were smaller than those which occur in a naturalistic setting, especially for

cover activity (for examples of how some contextual factors appear to have stronger effects than those found in this study, see Study 1). It may be possible to address this limitation by using a range of different research designs in future studies. For example, the use of pre-recorded interactions between two actors (whom the participant believes are other study participants) portraying friends discussing a vulnerable topic may be a useful alternative to increase the face validity and ecological validity of the research design; and may provide an opportunity to create more clear and influential manipulations without biasing participants.

Further, some of the outcome items used in the present study required participants to rate their degree of comfort with, and willingness to engage in, vulnerable disclosure if they were in a similar situation to that described in the vignette. Previous research (e.g., Walker, 1994) suggests that participants may have difficulty accurately reporting when they are required to think abstractly about interactions in friendships, or to report on possible behaviours and reactions based on hypothetical interactions. For this reason, responses to some items provided by participants may not be completely representative of their actual behaviour in a naturalistic setting. This limitation could potentially be addressed by creating an in-vivo interaction between the participant and confederates within which contextual factors are manipulated, and the participant is asked to disclose to the confederate about a vulnerable topic. In this way both behavioural (in vivo) and self-report (following the interaction) measures of participants' use of, and comfort with, vulnerable disclosure could be utilised. Using a behavioural design such as this would also reduce reliance on participants' ability to accurately forecast their behaviour in hypothetical situations.

4.3.3 Summary

Overall, the results found in the present study appear to provide evidence supporting the notion that perceived similarity and validation of masculinity have some

impact on men's endorsement of vulnerable disclosure as a mode of intimate expression. However, the contextual factors exerted differing degrees of influence on outcome measures, which ran counter to expectations. Additionally, the effects of contextual factors on endorsement of vulnerable disclosure did not appear to be moderated by degree of subscription to traditional masculine role norms in the manner expected. Taken together, these results suggest that the features of the context in which a male homosocial interaction takes place may have a significant impact on men's decision to engage in vulnerable expression (specifically, vulnerable disclosure). The role of contextual factors has not been widely acknowledged in previous research; therefore further investigation into the impact of these factors on men's preference for engaging in vulnerable, (versus covert or mitigated) modes of intimate expression may prove fruitful.

Table 4.1

Breakdown of Demographic Information

Characteristic	Percentage of Total Sample (<i>N</i> = 328)
Did not complete Demographics	4%
Age ^a	
Below 20	2.6%
20 – 30	50.5%
30 – 40	24.1%
40 – 50	12.7%
50 – 60	8.8%
Above 60	1.3%
Ethnic Background	
British/Scottish/Welsh/Irish	63.4%
Northern and Western European	6.4%
Southern European	4.9%
Middle Eastern	3.4%
North-East Asian	3%
Other ^b	14.8%
Education	
Junior school (Grade 10)	2.1%
Senior school (Grade 12)	10.7%
Post-compulsory education (e.g., TAFE, trade)	23.5%
One or more university or college degree/s	59.5%
Preferred not to answer	0.3%

Annual Household Income^c

\$0 – \$70,000	39.3%
\$70,001 or greater	44.8%
Preferred not to answer	11.9%

Relationship Status^d

Never married	44.8%
Separated or divorced	4.3%
Currently married or in de facto relationship	47%

Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding error.

^a Eight participants erroneously listed their ages as 12 or 13 years. Therefore, percentages are calculated based only on the number of people who provided a valid age. ^b Responses were listed as Other when participants selected this as the option on their questionnaire. The breakdown of qualitative responses was as follows: mixed ethnicity (1.8%), North American (1.2%), South American (0.6%); and Libyan (0.3%). ^c Excluding participants who did not provide a valid response, 46.7% of the sample earned less than \$70,000 annually. The median gross annual household income for Australia in 2011-2012 was \$74,984, as calculated from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013b) data. ^d Due to the possible inconsistency in the way individuals define dating, data was only collected on marital status. As such, some participants who selected “never married” may have been in a romantic relationship. However, if participants were living with their partners on a genuine domestic basis, they would have been defined as “currently married or in a de facto relationship”.

Table 4.2

Illustration of IV Manipulations in Vignettes

Vignette Version 1 (all IVs absent)	Vignette Version 8 (all IVs present)
<p>In this scenario, you will be reading about a man named John. John is in his late 20s and is fairly typical. One of John’s friends (Michael) was moving house and had put out the call for a couple of men to help him move some furniture; so John agreed to help. <i>John feels as though he and Michael are very different to one another in many of the areas John personally thinks are meaningful (e.g., their attitudes, background, values and personality).</i> When John arrived at Michael’s house, some other men were already there moving furniture. John tried to help move the furniture, but he was too weak to lift or drag any of it. When it became clear that John was not strong enough to help move the furniture, Michael asked him to clean underneath and behind where the furniture was sitting instead (after the other men had moved it). <u>After cleaning for a while, John asked if he could talk to Michael about</u></p>	<p>In this scenario, you will be reading about a man named John. John is in his late 20s and is fairly typical. One of John’s friends (Michael) was moving house and had put out the call for a couple of men to help him move some furniture; so John agreed to help. <i>John feels as though he and Michael are very similar to one another in many of the areas John personally thinks are meaningful (e.g., their attitudes, background, values and personality).</i> When John arrived at Michael’s house, some other men were already there. The other men were struggling to move some of the furniture. They were unable to lift or drag it more than a few meters between two of them. However, when John tried to move these pieces of furniture, he was able to get them from the house into the moving truck with relative ease, and only a minor amount of assistance. <u>While they were moving furniture together, John and</u></p>

something important that was on his mind. So, they went to a quiet Michael got to talking, and John ended up telling Michael all about
part of the house and John ended up telling Michael all about how he how he was worried his girlfriend of 6 years was thinking of leaving
was worried his girlfriend of 6 years was thinking of leaving him. him.

Note: Manipulations to perceived similarity have been typed in *italics*; manipulations to validation of masculinity have been typed in **bold**;
and manipulations to cover activity have been underlined.

Table 4.3

Results of Vignette Pilot Testing (N = 26)

Independent Variable	<i>M (SD)</i>
Perceived Similarity	
Absent	3.47 (1.36)
Present	4.27 (1.01)
Validation of Masculinity	
Absent	2.20 (.56)
Present	4.55 (1.04)
Cover Activity	
Absent	4.5 (1.78)
Present	3.93 (1.39)

Note: Participants were asked to rate: the degree to which they felt the vignette characters were alike (testing PS); the degree to which the speaker would have felt masculine (testing VM); the degree to which they believed disclosure was the speaker's main goal in the interaction (reverse scored, testing CA).

Table 4.4

Simple Main Effects Means (and Standard Deviations) and Cell Sizes

	CA absent				CA present			
	VM absent		VM present		VM absent		VM present	
	PS absent	PS present						
Outcome items	(n = 43)	(n = 41)	(n = 33)	(n = 34)	(n = 58)	(n = 45)	(n = 36)	(n = 38)
Likelihood of use	2.63 (1.80)	3.39 (1.73)	3.03 (1.79)	4.12 (2.09)	2.66 (1.45)	3.58 (1.73)	3.00 (1.60)	3.71 (1.63)
Awkwardness	4.51 (1.84)	3.66 (1.78)	4.30 (1.74)	3.38 (1.83)	3.98 (1.96)	3.44 (1.73)	3.58 (1.80)	2.89 (1.59)
Oddness	4.88 (2.01)	3.93 (1.93)	4.97 (1.94)	3.26 (1.83)	4.14 (1.94)	3.56 (1.67)	4.03 (1.81)	3.71 (1.89)
Comfort	3.37 (1.90)	4.17 (1.80)	3.48 (2.14)	4.68 (1.68)	3.05 (1.64)	4.20 (1.60)	3.56 (1.83)	4.16 (1.59)

Note: PS = Perceived Similarity; VM = Validation of Masculinity; and CA = Cover Activity.

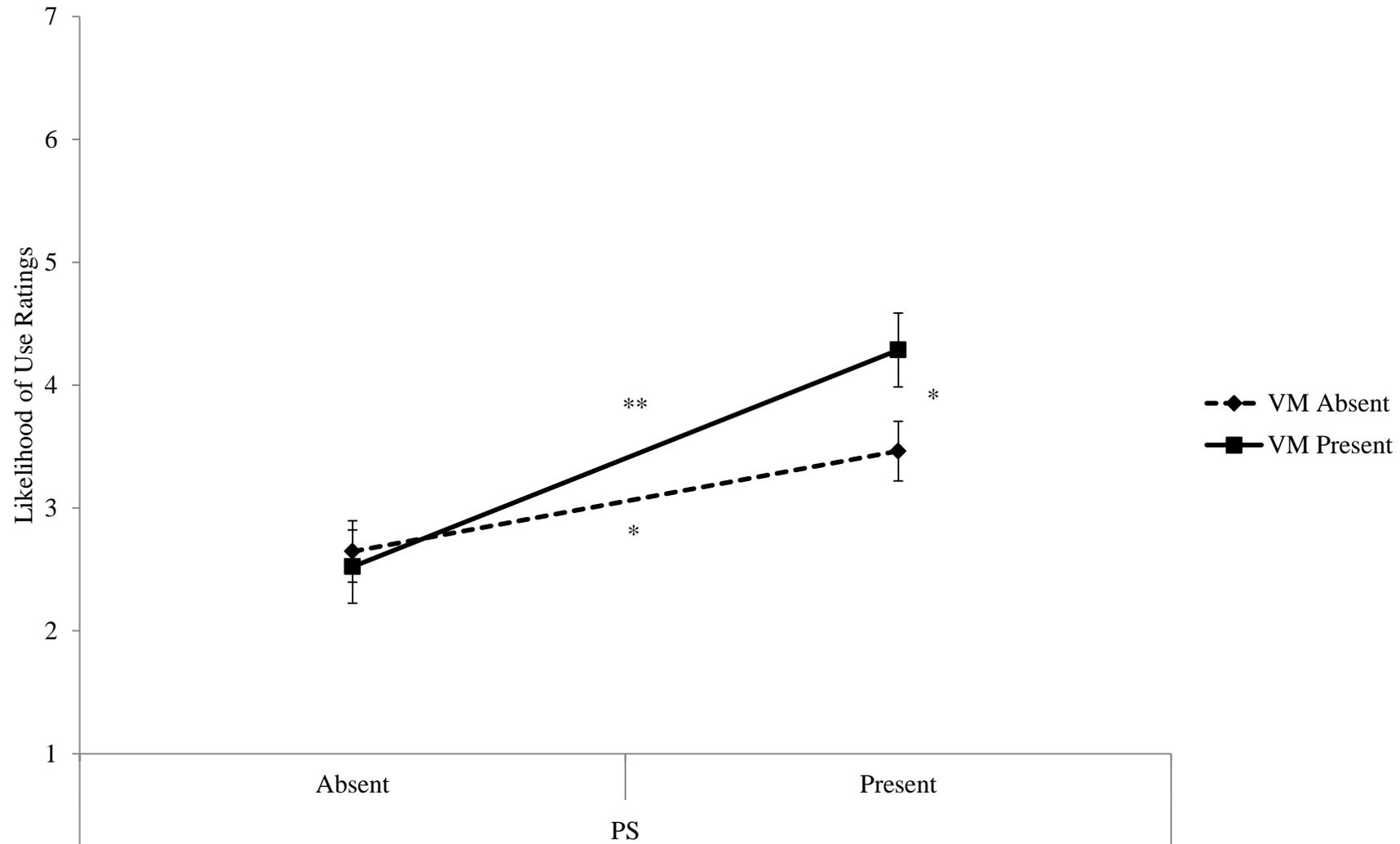


Figure 4.1. Estimated marginal means for the interaction between PS and VM for Likelihood of Use, with MRNS scores one standard deviation below the mean. Error bars represent standard errors. * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .001$.

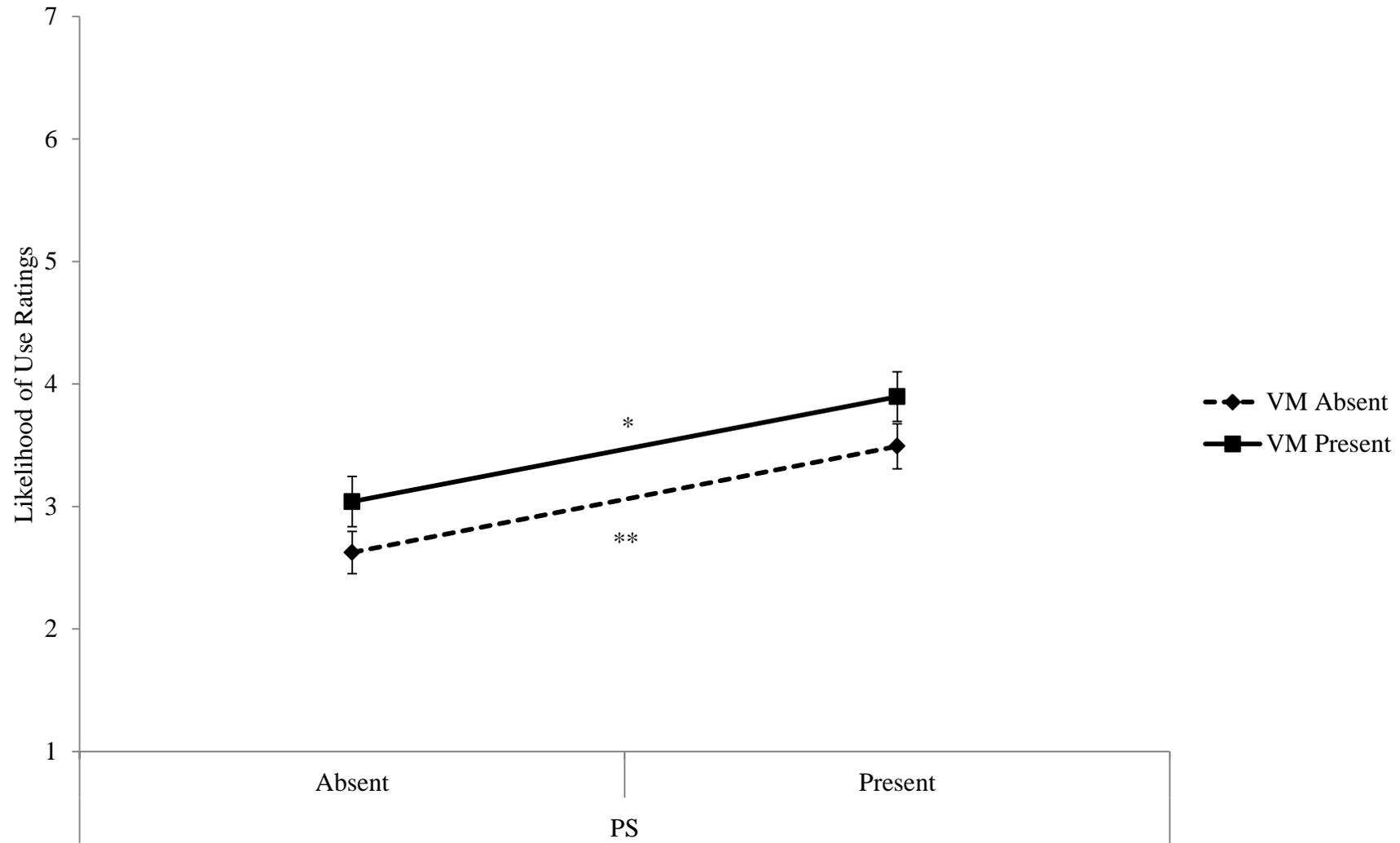


Figure 4.2. Estimated marginal means for the interaction between PS and VM for Likelihood of Use, with MRNS scores at the sample mean.

Error bars represent standard errors. * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .001$.

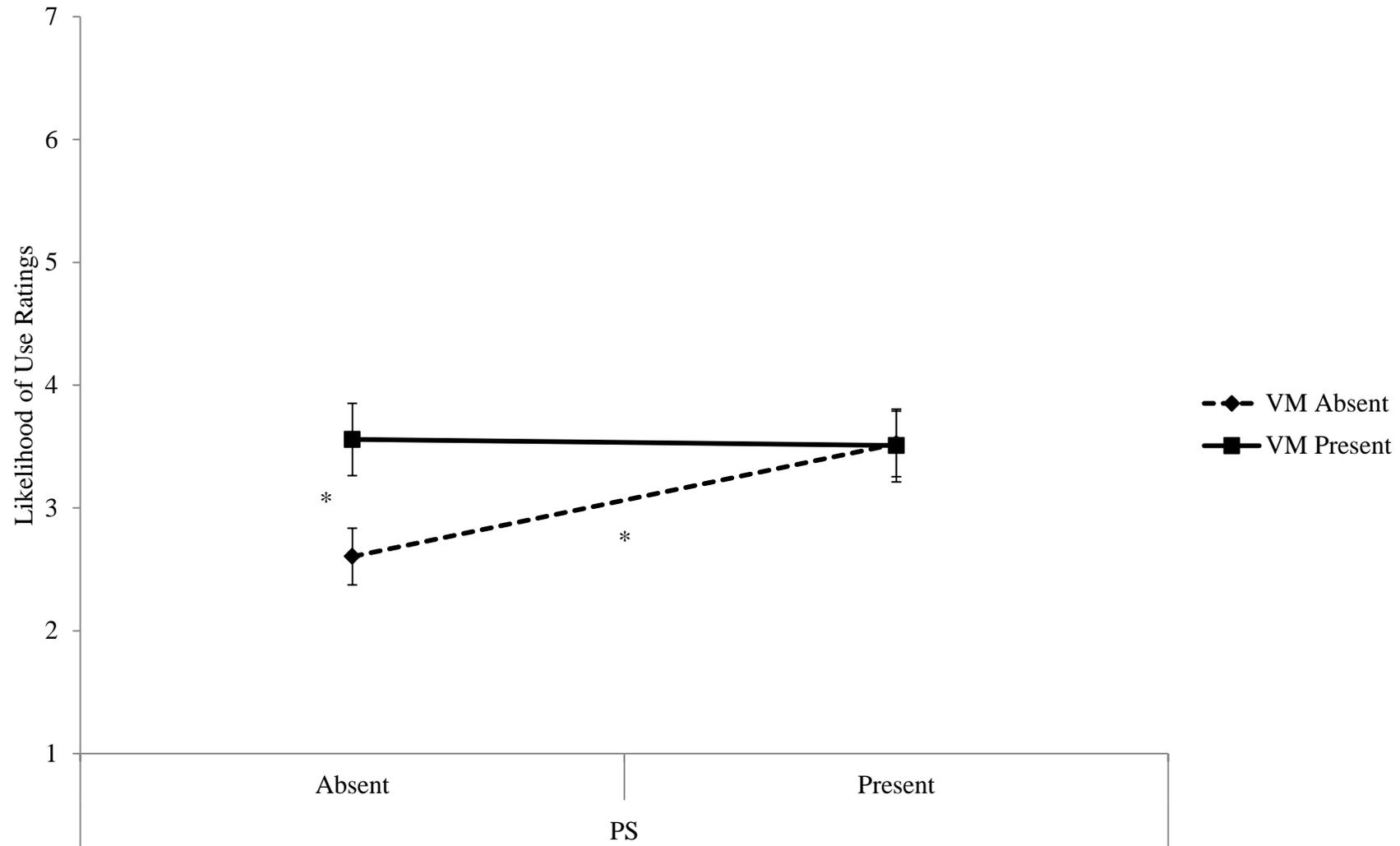


Figure 4.3. Estimated marginal means for the interaction between PS and VM for Likelihood of Use, with MRNS scores one standard deviation above the mean. Error bars represent standard errors. * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .001$.

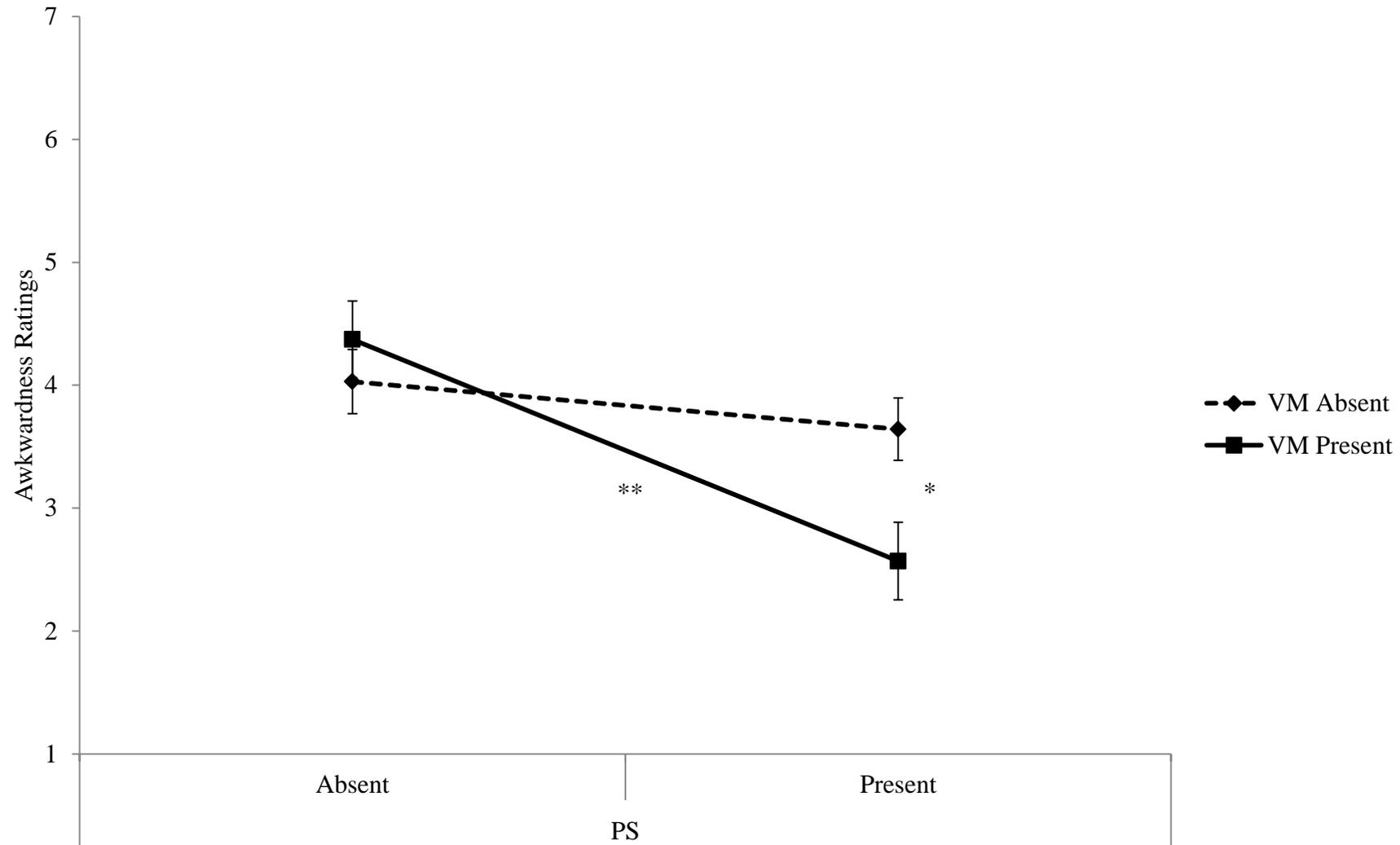


Figure 4.4. Estimated marginal means for the interaction between PS and VM for Awkwardness, with MRNS scores one standard deviation below the mean. Error bars represent standard errors. * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .001$.

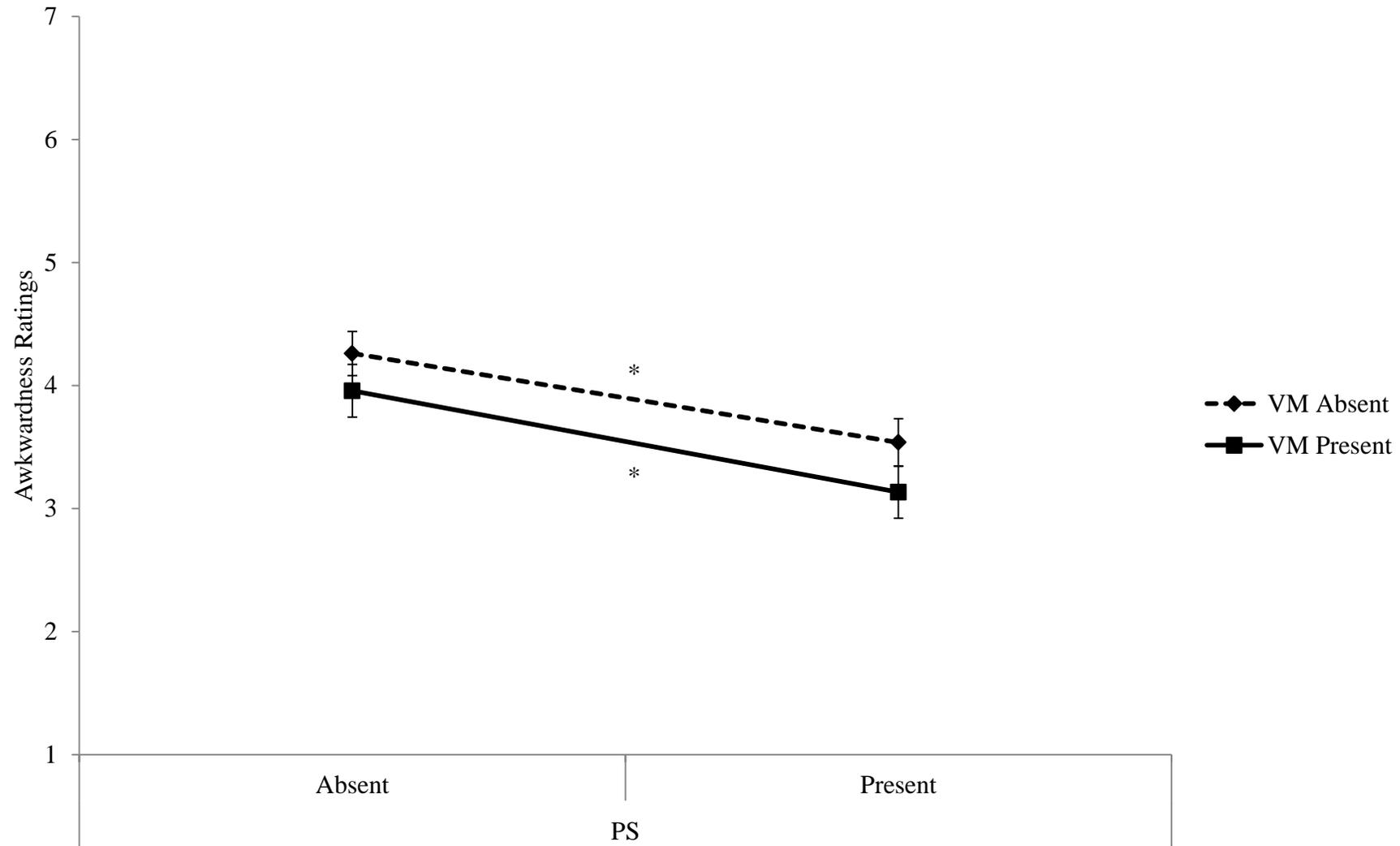


Figure 4.5. Estimated marginal means for the interaction between PS and VM for Awkwardness, with MRNS scores at the sample mean. Error bars represent standard errors. * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .001$.

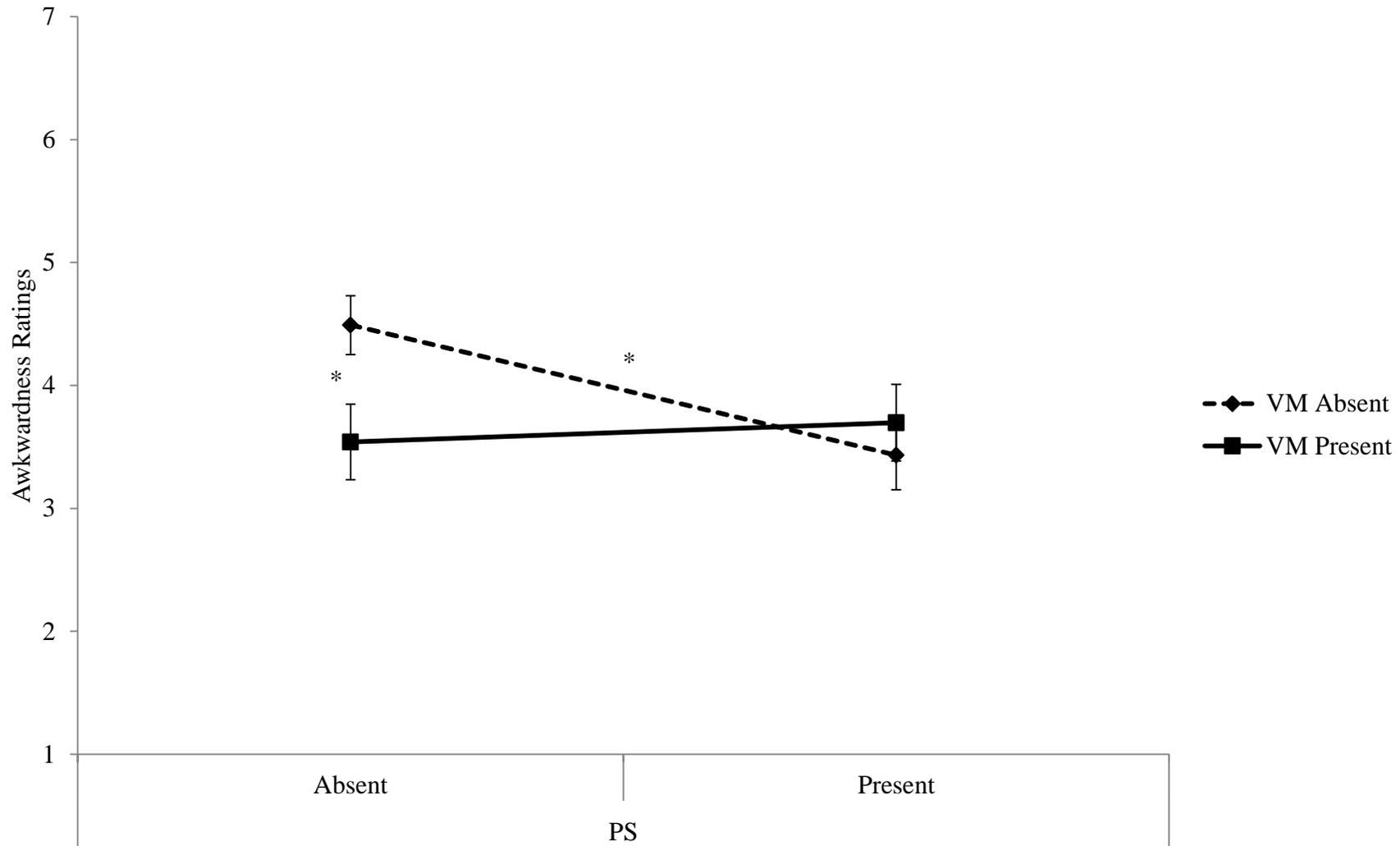


Figure 4.6. Estimated marginal means for the interaction between PS and VM for Awkwardness, with MRNS scores one standard deviation above the mean. Error bars represent standard errors. * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .001$.

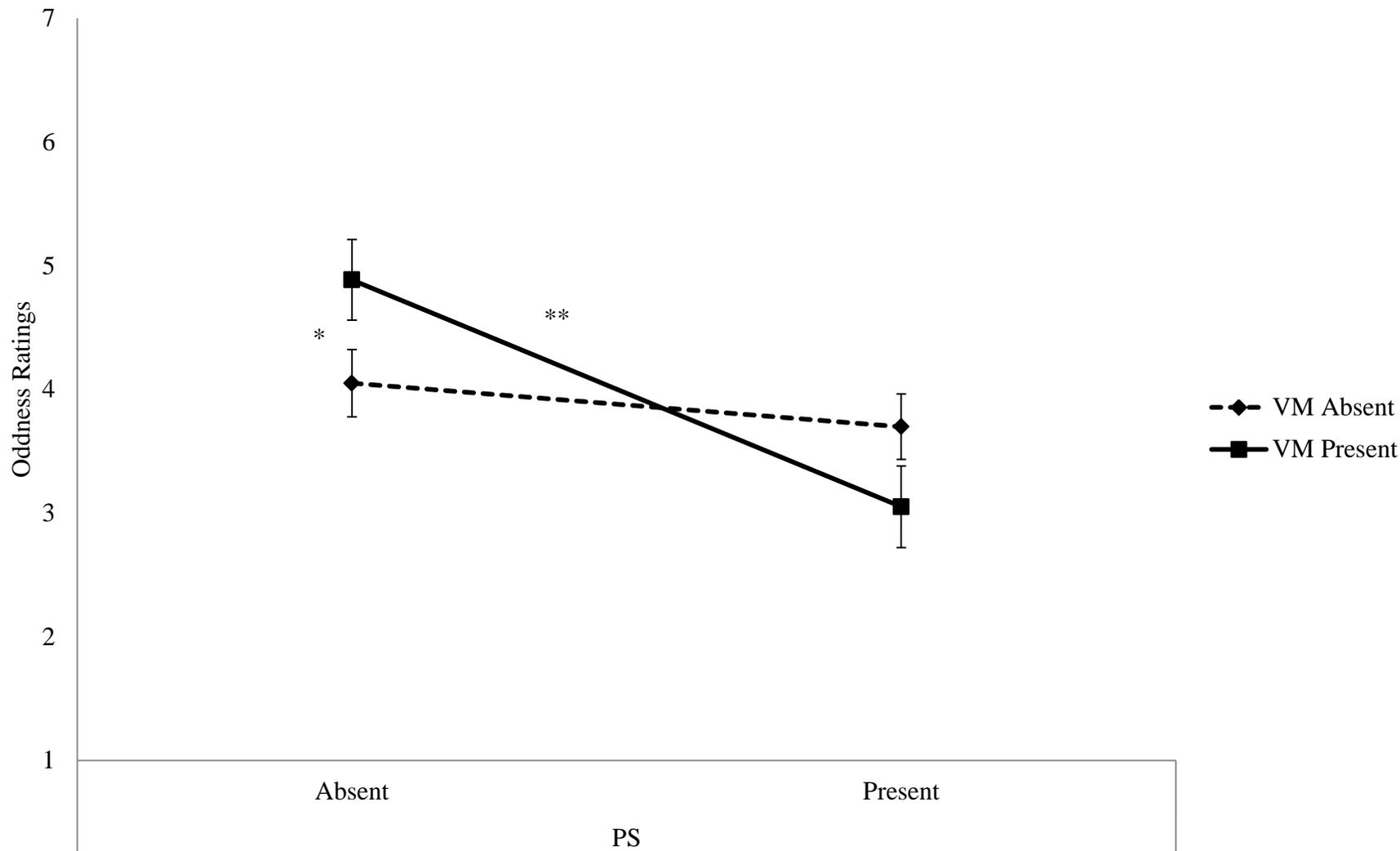


Figure 4.7. Estimated marginal means for the interaction between PS and VM for Oddness, with MRNS scores one standard deviation below the mean. Error bars represent standard errors. * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .001$.

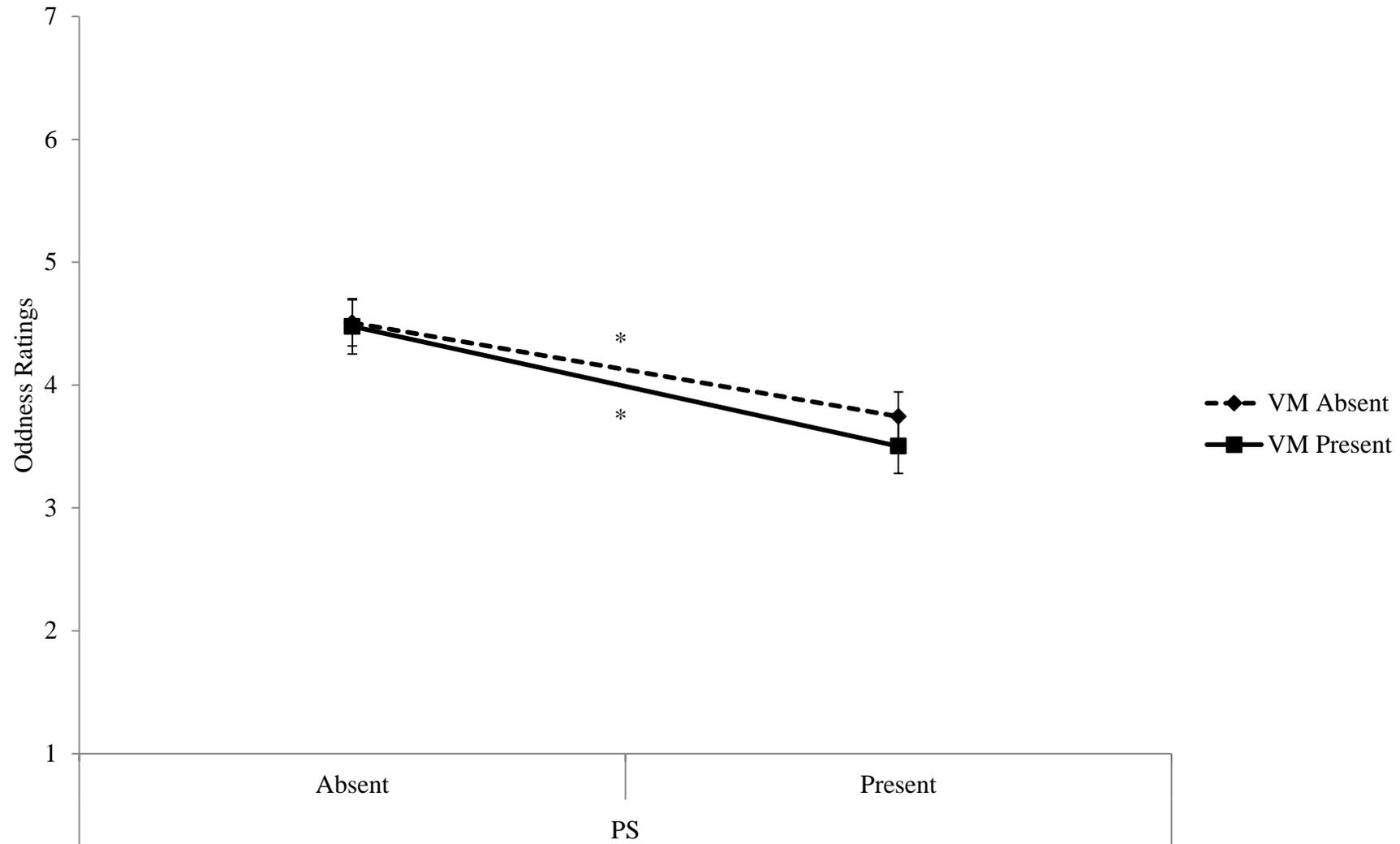


Figure 4.8. Estimated marginal means for the interaction between PS and VM for Oddness, with MRNS scores at the sample mean. Error bars represent standard errors. * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .001$.

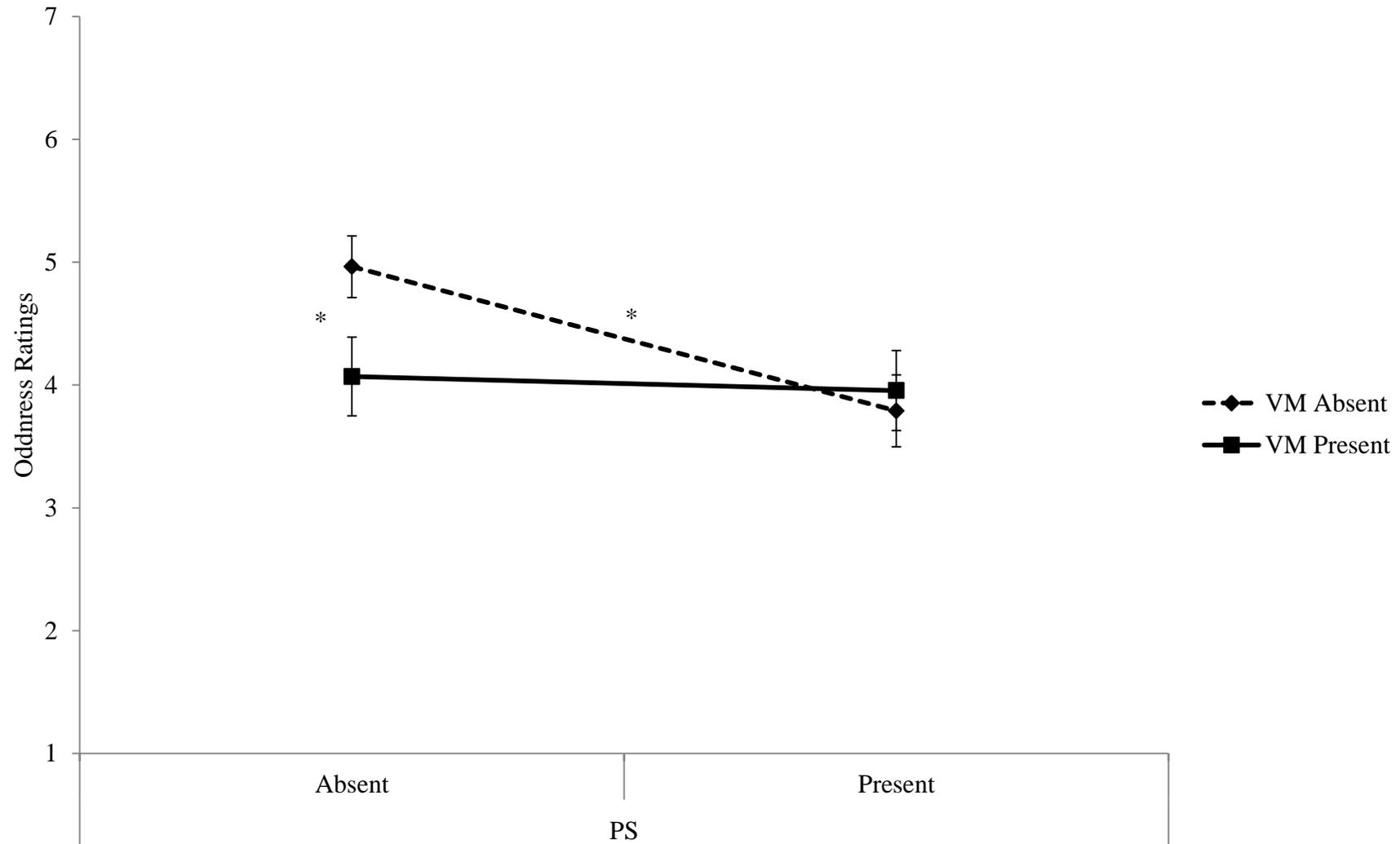


Figure 4.9. Estimated marginal means for the interaction between PS and VM for Oddness, with MRNS scores one standard deviation above the mean. Error bars represent standard errors. * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .001$.

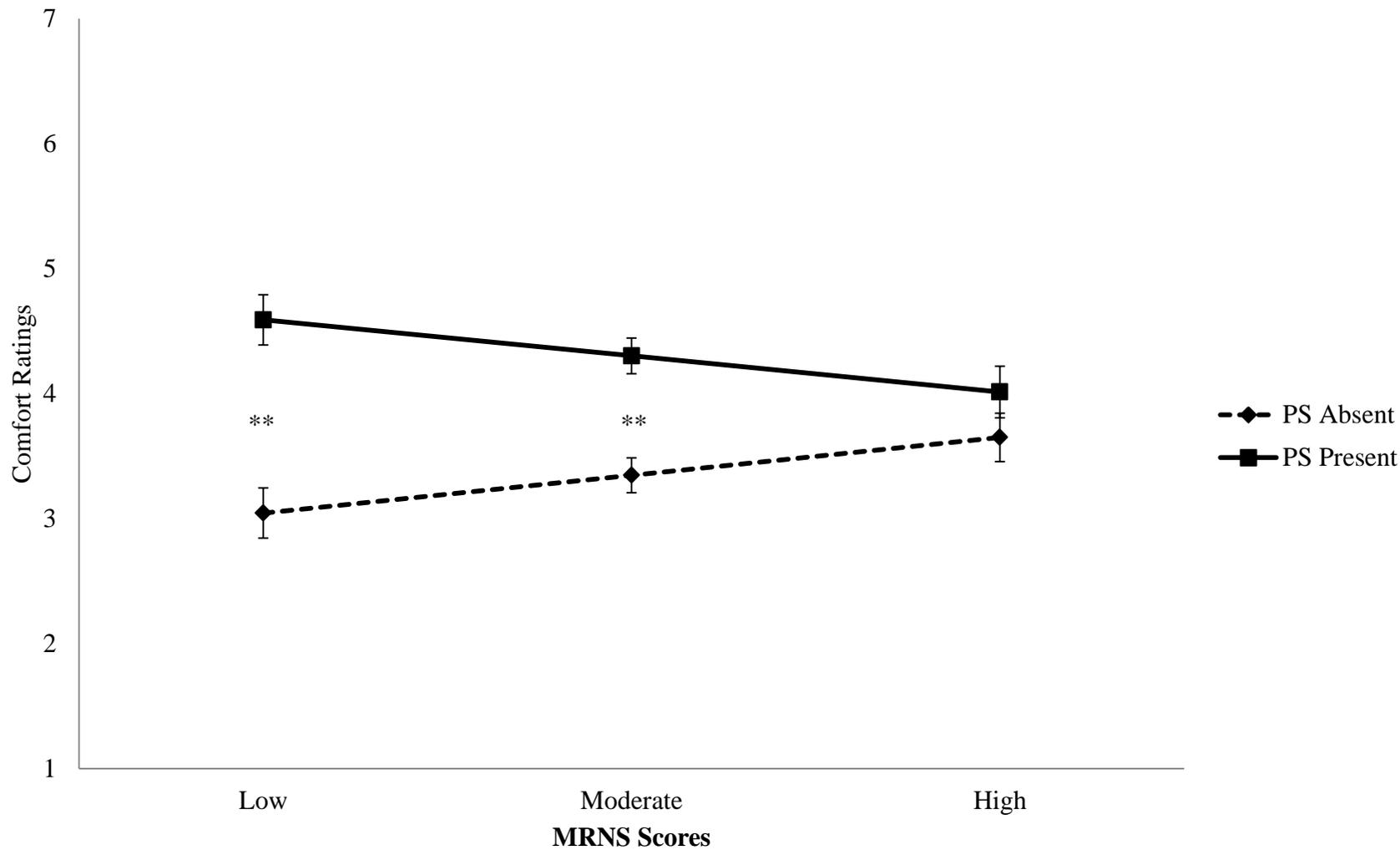


Figure 4.10. Estimated marginal means for the interaction between PS and MRNS for Comfort. Error bars represent standard errors. * = $p < .05$;

** = $p < .001$.

Chapter 5 – Study 3

The aim of the present study was to investigate whether identifiable patterns of preference for non-vulnerable modes of expression over vulnerable modes exist for men; and to examine the relationship between this pattern of preference (if one is found) and subscription to traditional masculine role norms. This study expands on Studies 1 and 2 by explicitly enquiring about a wide range of intimate expression strategies. Based on the findings of Study 1, modes of expression were categorised into either vulnerable expression; mitigated expression; or covert expression. Mitigated expression was a theoretical extension of results found in Study 1. This mode of expression was defined as any form of vulnerable expression which is used in the context of a strategy to reduce the salience or degree of vulnerability of the expression (e.g., alcohol, a cover activity). This expression strategy was designed to account for modes of expression which are inherently vulnerable, but in which this vulnerability is not expressed in an uninhibited manner; and therefore represents a mid-point between vulnerable expression and covert expression. For the definitions of vulnerable expression and covert expression, please refer to sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, respectively.

Of particular interest was the degree to which men's ratings of expression strategies conformed to the 3 factors of covert and vulnerable expression (as discussed in section 2.3), as well as mitigated expression (as identified in Study 1). Also of interest were the relationships between the degree to which men felt each mode of expression (and the strategies that comprise them) was demonstrative of intimacy, and the perceived likelihood of male friends using this strategy. Likelihood ratings were included in order to obtain a more nuanced understanding of men's preference for expression strategies beyond perceived intimacy. It was expected that participants' degree of subscription to the masculine role norm would impact this relationship. As such, the following hypotheses were developed:

H3.1: (a) Intimacy ratings for respective vulnerable expression strategies will be higher than likelihood ratings; (b) likelihood ratings for respective covert expression strategies will be higher than intimacy ratings, however effect sizes for these differences will be smaller than those found in H3.1(a). Because little previous research has been conducted with mitigated expression, no specific hypotheses were made about the relationship between intimacy and likelihood ratings for this mode of expression.

H3.2: Men's responses to items regarding the intimacy of each expression strategy will fall into three distinct factors which correspond to the theoretical mode of expression (i.e., vulnerable expression, mitigated expression, or covert expression) to which they have been assigned (see section 5.1.2.2).

H3.3: Subscription to the masculine role norm will moderate the effect that mode of expression has on intimacy and likelihood scores, as follows:

- a) Men with high MRNS subscription:
 - i. Covert expression: Both intimacy and likelihood will be rated between moderate and high;
 - ii. Mitigated expression: Both intimacy and likelihood will be rated as moderate. These ratings will be significantly lower than those for covert expression;
 - iii. Vulnerable expression: Intimacy will be rated between moderate and high, while likelihood will be rated low. Intimacy ratings will be significantly higher than those for mitigated expression. Likelihood ratings will be significantly lower than those for mitigated expression.
- b) Men with moderate MRNS subscription: Results will follow a similar pattern as in H3.3(a), but all ratings will be more favourable.
- c) Men with low MRNS subscription:

- i. Covert expression: Both intimacy and likelihood will be rated as high;
- ii. Mitigated expression: Intimacy will be rated as significantly lower than in covert expression, however this effect size will be small. Likelihood will be rated as high;
- iii. Vulnerable expression: Intimacy will be rated as significantly higher than in mitigated expression, however this effect size will be small. Likelihood will be rated as high.

5.1 Method

5.1.1 Participants

Recruitment for the present study took place chiefly through advertising. Advertising was conducted through the use of paper flyers placed at local businesses; print, radio and television stories about the study by local news media outlets; and a university wide email advertising service for research at Griffith University (sent to faculty, staff and students). Participants recruited through advertising were offered the option of entering a prize draw to win one of two \$150 gift cards to a store of their choice for completing the survey. This method of recruitment resulted in 241 participants accessing the survey, and 143 participants completing it. Recruitment was also conducted by sending an email to members of the researcher's social networks containing information about the study, the survey URL and a request to pass this on to male friends if the recipient felt comfortable doing so. This method of recruitment resulted in 64 participants accessing the survey, and 54 participants completing it. Thus, the total number of people who accessed the survey was 305, with 197 people completing every item.

In order to be included in main analyses, participants had to have been exposed to the scenario, completed outcome items, and completed the measure of subscription to

traditional masculine role norms. Data was still considered usable if demographic items had not been completed. Of the 305 total cases, 104 were excluded as they were considered unusable. Despite the specification in all forms of recruitment that only males were eligible to participate, six participants identified their sex as female, and were therefore excluded. Similar to Study 2, criteria for inclusion in the final analysis were: must be aged 18 years or older, and must not identify as gay or bisexual (as the potentially different experience of gender in the LGBTIQ community may represent a potentially confounding factor in study results (see McDermott & Schwartz, 2013)). Two men reported their age as 13, however these cases were retained because other demographic information collected (especially years of education) suggested that these reported ages likely represented a failure to change the year of birth from its default setting (2000) in the survey calendar, rather than being an accurate reflection of the participants' ages. These participants were excluded from descriptive statistics for age. Seventeen men identified as gay or bisexual, or chose not to disclose their sexual orientation, therefore these data were excluded.

Participants for whom information on age and sexual orientation was absent due to the fact that they did not complete the demographics section were included in main analyses if they had completed the outcome items and the measure of subscription to male role norms. Three cases were considered to be true outliers due to extreme scores on several variables (i.e., Z-Scores greater than 3.29 and a distance of over 1.5 interquartile lengths from group medians), and were also excluded. Due to a technical error, data for two items on the Status subscale of the Male Role Norms Scale were missing for two participants. These participants' data were included in all analyses, except those which required complete data from the Status subscale. Therefore, data from 175 participants was included in the final analysis. Of these, four did not complete the demographics section.

The mean age of participants, excluding those who listed their age as 13, was 30.16 years ($SD = 11.08$). The breakdown of participant demographic information is detailed in Table 5.1. Several participants selected the “Other” option and listed “Australian” (or a variant of this) as their primary ethnicity. In such cases it was assumed the participants were indicating Caucasian Australian and, therefore, these responses were recoded under British/Scottish/Welsh/Irish. The sample consisted predominantly of men with a secondary school education or higher, and who had ethnic associations with the United Kingdom and Ireland. These men were typically either married currently or not at all; and 55.6% of the sample who indicated their income earned below the median national gross annual household income for 2011-2012 (\$74,984; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013b).

5.1.2 Materials

5.1.2.1 Scenario.

A series of pilot tests informed the development of the vignette. In this vignette, no experimental manipulation was conducted, however participants were asked to imagine a close friendship with a long history between two hypothetical male friends. Participants were then asked to rate several modes of expression (see section 5.1.2.2) in relation to how indicative of homosocial intimacy those modes of expression were, as well as how likely two close male friends would be to engage in these modes of expression. Ratings were made on a seven point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating greater perceived intimacy or likelihood of the behaviour occurring. Participants also had the option of providing a short qualitative response about why they felt each mode of expression was a good or poor indicator of closeness. A copy of the vignette can be found in Appendix D.

5.1.2.2 Outcomes.

Participants were asked to rate the intimacy and likelihood of several expression

strategies. These strategies were selected based on previous literature (see section 2.3.2 and Study 1). Three hypothesised categories of expression strategies were included: vulnerable expression; mitigated expression; and covert expression (see Study 1; Swain, 2001). Expression strategies were framed as an extension of the narrative of the scenario, and pilot testing was conducted to ensure clarity and to maximise face validity of items.

Three items were included in the vulnerable expression category (abbreviations in parentheses): direct disclosure of platonic affection (Direct Affection); disclosure of a personal problem with contextual factors unspecified (Problem Disclosure (Ambiguous)); disclosure of a personal problem without cover activity or minimisation of problem (Problem Disclosure (Direct)). Four items were included in the mitigated expression category: disclosure of a personal problem with minimisation of its impact, but without a cover activity (Problem Disclosure (Minimised)); disclosure of a personal problem without minimisation of its impact, but with a cover activity (Problem Disclosure (Cover)); disclosure of a personal problem with minimisation of its impact and a cover activity (Problem Disclosure (Minimised + Cover)); and disclosure of platonic affection while drunk (Direct Affection + Alcohol). Nine items were included in the covert expression category: invitation to participate in a mutually enjoyed shared activity (Shared Activity); requesting instrumental support (Requesting Favour); offering instrumental support (Providing Favour); paradoxical humour (Paradoxical Humour); conventional humour (Conventional Humour); utilising crude and blunt language (Crudeness); platonic physical gestures (Physical Gestures); engaging in competition (Competition); and relying on an unspoken shared understanding that a mutual sense of friendship exists rather than behaving in a manner unique to the friendship (Assumed Intimacy). Assumed Intimacy also included an additional short response item which asked participants to describe how the characters in the vignette

would feel confident of mutual closeness if their behaviours did not differ significantly from those occurring between male acquaintances. This short response item only appeared if participants made an intimacy rating of 5 or higher for Assumed Intimacy. The order of presentation for expression strategies was randomised for each participant. The stimulus text for each item is presented in Appendix E.

5.1.2.3 Subscription to traditional masculine role norms.

Subscription to the traditional masculine gender role was measured using the Male Role Norms Scale (MRNS). In the present sample, the MRNS had an excellent Cronbach's alpha of .89 overall (status norm: $\alpha = .83$, $M = 3.8$; toughness norm: $\alpha = .77$, $M = 3.8$; antifemininity norm: $\alpha = .76$, $M = 3$). Please refer to section 4.1.3.3 for further details on this measure.

5.1.3 Procedure

After following the study URL, participants were presented with an online information sheet and consent form. Once participants had provided consent, they were presented with the vignette and outcome items. Participants then completed the MRNS, followed by demographic items. Participants were not able to progress through the survey if they had not responded to every item, nor were they able to change their responses after completing a section of the survey. Participants recruited through advertising to the general public were given the option to be redirected to a prize draw once they had completed all survey items.

5.1.4 Analytic Strategy

Convergent evidence based on three different, yet complimentary, analytic approaches will be presented. First is an examination of individual expression strategies. Quantitative data on intimacy and likelihood ratings were analysed using t-tests. Open ended responses for each expression strategy were analysed using thematic analysis (relevant to H3.1). The focus of the thematic analysis was to assist in the understanding

of quantitative findings, rather than being a major focus of the study. For this reason, analysis outcomes will be presented for each expression strategy, followed by a brief summary in section 5.2.2.17. However, more in-depth discussion and links to previous research will be reserved for when such discussion provides further insight into quantitative findings (see section 5.3). The second analytic approach will utilise a factor analysis to provide insight into the underlying structure of modes of expression (relevant to H 3.2). Third, the utility of these modes of expression in promoting subjective intimacy, as measured by both intimacy and likelihood ratings, will be examined using moderated multiple regression (relevant to H3.3). By using a triangulation strategy such as this, research phenomena can be examined from multiple vantage points, and findings are at less risk of being biased by broad assumptions unique to any one analytic strategy.

5.2 Results

5.2.1 Comparison of Intimacy and Likelihood by Expression Strategy

A series of t-tests was conducted comparing intimacy and likelihood scores for each expression strategy. As illustrated in Figure 5.1, all hypothesised vulnerable expression strategies were rated as significantly more intimate than likely. The hypothesised mitigated expression strategies followed the same pattern, however the effect sizes for these differences were generally smaller than for vulnerable expression strategies. This was true for all mitigated expression strategies except for Direct Affection + Alcohol, which followed a pattern of significance that was more similar to hypothesised covert expression strategies. Significant differences between intimacy and likelihood were found for four of the nine hypothesised covert expression strategies. In all such cases, likelihood was rated higher than intimacy. Importantly, intimacy was never rated lower than intimacy for any covert expression strategy. Descriptive and inferential statistics (including effect sizes) for all analyses are presented in Table 5.2.

5.2.2 Qualitative Results

An inductive thematic analysis approach was used in the coding and analysis of qualitative responses to each expression strategy. The aim of coding was to compile a list of factors that prompted participants to rate strategies as either good or bad indicators of closeness. Guidelines detailed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013; see also Richards & Morse, 2007) were followed closely throughout this approach. Specifically, coding and analysis was completed by the PhD Candidate of this paper, and reviewed with his research supervisor. When discrepancies in coding arose, these were easily resolvable with discussion.

5.2.2.1 Direct affection.

Fifty-one participants stated this strategy was a good indicator of closeness. This strategy was framed as being direct, unambiguous, and carrying emotional weight (e.g., *“By saying this in a serious manner you are making yourself vulnerable so you wouldn't say it if it wasn't true”* -P119). One would not be expected to engage in this kind of expression unless someone was a close friend, therefore implying a level of comfort (e.g., *“complete comfortableness (sic) in that moment with a friend so can't get any closer than that.”* -P032).

Forty-two participants stated this was a poor indicator of closeness. Specifically, this strategy was seen as superfluous, as true friendship should be self-evident, and therefore needn't be discussed directly. Additionally, being so direct about one's feelings was occasionally viewed as odd or non-normative (e.g., *“Expressing emotion verbally is not a common activity of men”* - P065). Occasionally, this form of expression was discussed as potentially eliciting suspiciousness or discomfort (on behalf of the listener) and indicating interpersonal manipulation or an ulterior motive (e.g., *“Good friends need no confirmation, it is assumed and acknowledged without the need to say it. I would be suspicious of John's motive.”* -P085).

5.2.2.2 Problem disclosure (ambiguous).

Seventy-two participants stated this strategy was a good indicator of closeness because it suggested a strong degree of trust and willingness to be vulnerable (e.g., “*By demonstrating emotional vulnerability and 'weakness', John evidently holds trust in Michael, as well as seeing Michael as capable of helping resolve the situation or distress caused.*” -P109). This rationale implied that trust mediated the relationship between disclosure and closeness. Some participants also suggested that disclosing a personal problem demonstrates the speaker's trust that the listener will be able to assist in some way. In addition, this kind of disclosure was viewed as something that was uncommon, especially with a person who was not considered a close friend (e.g., “*As males don't tend to talk in depth about personal problems with their mates, to confide in Michael fully makes it a good indicator of closeness.*” -P003). In this way, intimacy was framed as self-evident due to the counter-normative nature of the act.

Nine participants stated this strategy was a poor indicator of closeness, as disclosing a problem simply places a burden on the listener and may make them feel uncomfortable (e.g., “*Emotional troubles aren't really 'solvable', which means sharing them simply places a burden on the listener.*” -P065). Thus, disclosure was implied to potentially result in awkwardness within a close friendship. In addition, disclosure was occasionally framed as being purely a way to relieve stress on behalf of the speaker, with the listener being replaceable (and therefore not necessarily close) (e.g., “*I would say humans are more susceptible to opening up in times of stress and depression to seek help and get advice. Though John confides in Michael who are (sic) good friends, it doesn't necessarily mean that they're close.*” -P134).

5.2.2.3 Problem disclosure (direct).

Eighty participants stated this strategy was a good indicator of closeness because the speaker's behaviour indicates that they consider the listener to be a source of

support. Additionally, as with the previous strategy, this kind of disclosure was taken as evidence of closeness due to the fact that men were generally thought not do this with those they do not consider friends. Further, men indicated that the step of calling to ask to discuss a problem was indicative of closeness, as disclosure is typically enacted in an opportunistic fashion, rather than in a planned fashion. This was argued to show a level of trust over and above that in the previous strategy (e.g., “*Actively pursuing help via phone and arranged meet up shows a great level of trust in the respect John knows he will be shown. Men typically divulge such information opportunistically (such as a shared smoke break at a party) and the display of ‘weakness’ in calling for help is atypical.*” -P017). Related to this, the fact that the speaker was requesting the listener give up his time was a reported indicator of closeness (e.g., “*Michael has actively went (sic) out of his way to meet up with John to discuss the problem with him.*” -P134). Similarly, specifically requesting to discuss a problem was argued to indicate that the speaker perceived that the listener was supportive, and understood him on a cognitive and emotional level (e.g., “*Because John actively sought out Michael's help with the expressed intent to speak about the problem, and he chose Michael specifically.*” -P156). Also, the personal nature of the topic being discussed was said to indicate closeness (e.g., “*That John can disclose extremely personal feeling with Michael shows closeness*” -P018).

Nineteen participants stated this strategy was a poor indicator of closeness because this kind of disclosure would be laborious for a listener, especially because an easy solution is likely not readily available for the listener to provide. The fact that the speaker is requesting the listener's time was also framed as an additional burden which should be avoided (e.g., “*This has all the issues tied in with any emotional sharing (not 'fixable', placing a burden on the listener), in addition to the multi-stage nature of the scenario, as well as the inconvenience of arranging a meeting for the explicit purpose of*

this sharing.” -P065). Some men also stated that this was a poor indicator of closeness, simply due to how unlikely a man would be to do this in reality (regardless of how much intimacy it might communicate) (e.g., *“I find it uncommon for men to call a friend and meet up to talk about a problem. it usually comes up during another activity”* - P186). Additionally, this strategy was framed by some men as indicating weakness, and therefore being detrimental to closeness.

5.2.2.4 Problem disclosure (minimised).

Fifty-three participants stated this was a good indicator of closeness because disclosing a personal problem (regardless of whether full or incomplete) demonstrates trust on behalf of the speaker (especially because this is a gender role discrepant behaviour) and supportiveness on behalf of the listener, thus indicating closeness (e.g., *“being able to trust a friend with personal problems indicates closeness in their friendship”* -P001). Additionally, the speaker's withholding in this scenario was framed by some men as potentially indicating an attempt to avoid burdening the listener (e.g., *“It still indicates that they are close, just that maybe one friend does not want the other to worry too much”* -P044). It was also framed as allowing the speaker to gauge the listener's emotional response before continuing. Further, some men suggested that the seriousness of a personal problem can often be inferred by a listener, thus eliminating the need for explicit discussion of this (e.g., *“It is a good indicator of closeness; Michael will infer it is having a strong impact or John would not have mentioned it.”* - P184). In this way, some men indicated that failure to disclose the full extent of a problem does not imply reduced closeness (e.g., *“Men tend not to talk about stuff like this so if these guys are talking about it, they must be close. The fact that the disclosure is partial makes the scenario more realistic but does not make it a sign of reduced closeness.”* -P193). This strategy was also occasionally framed as being more likely to occur in reality than the more direct disclosure based strategies.

Sixteen participants stated this strategy was a poor indicator of closeness because it involved withholding information, which may suggest a lack of trust on behalf of the speaker. It may also imply the speaker is not comfortable being vulnerable with the listener, which suggests less closeness (e.g., “*John doesn't trust Michael that he can confide deep feelings*” -P122). In this way, disclosure without a full explanation of the impact was occasionally described as indicating closeness, but not much as if a full description was given (e.g., “*A less strong indicator of closeness due to not sharing the impact of the event.*” -P097).

Fifteen participants stated this strategy does not make a clear indication about the level of closeness between the actors because multiple conflicting possible explanations exist. For example, the speaker may be holding back information because the friendship lacks trust (which would indicate poor closeness), or because he wishes to avoid burdening his friend (which would indicate strong closeness). Therefore, this strategy cannot be used as a marker of closeness (e.g., “*This may not just be related to closeness, they may still be extremely close but he may just not want to burden Michael with the emotional side.*” -P098; “*it depends on the type of person, I have friends that would behave that way and friends that wouldn't who are equally close*” -P091).

5.2.2.5 Problem disclosure (cover).

Sixty-four participants stated this was a good strategy for indicating closeness. As in previous strategies, this was described as indicating closeness due to the trust, comfort with vulnerability and history between the two that may be inferred from this disclosure, and because disclosure of this kind is uncommon between men (e.g., “*John would only share his personal matters or personal life with the closest friend.*” -P004). The use of a cover activity during this disclosure was framed as a positive method for preventing oneself from appearing over-emotional or being judged (e.g., “*The other activity may be an acceptable way of broaching that subject without appearing over*

emotional.” -P020); and of helping to ensure that the listener still enjoys the interaction, despite it involving discussion of a problem (e.g., *“This is a good indicator because the activity and advice seeking is a set of actions that allow issues to be talked about whilst still enjoying the time with your close friend”* -P044). The use of the cover activity was also stated by some men to make this form of expression more likely in an everyday setting, especially because this method helps alleviate the potential awkwardness of disclosure (e.g., *“The activity provides a filler for any awkward silences and a focus for attention while the sensitive topic is discussed.”* -P184).

Twelve participants stated this is a poor indicator of closeness because the problem is not addressed directly (e.g., *“the fact that he is using an ice breaker means he is nervous or embarrassed. This would mean there is some hesitation in the relationship”* -P098). Additionally, allowing problems to infiltrate a good friendship may impact closeness negatively (especially due to the burden this may place on one’s friend, as in previous items). Some men also stated that this process may occur in an even less formal manner than depicted by the item. Specifically, instead of organising an activity during which they can talk to a friend, men may be more likely to wait for one to be organised and bring it up at this time if they feel it is appropriate (e.g., *“Blokes will hang onto a problem and use the right time to mention something, not ring up and arrange a ‘talk’, even under the guise of another activity.”* -P085).

5.2.2.6 Problem disclosure (minimised + cover).

Fifty-eight participants stated this was a good indicator of closeness, but that it may be a less effective method than previous disclosure based methods. As in previous disclosure based strategies, the speaker’s withholding of information was framed as potentially indicating a desire to avoid burdening the listener or appear to be whining. The use of a cover activity was also interpreted by some participants as suggesting that the speaker is able to engage in disclosure with the listener at any time, thus indicating

enhanced closeness (e.g., *“this shows that they are really close friend (sic) and they can talk about everything at any time or where ever they are.”* –P004); as well as facilitating an emotional discussion without possible awkwardness (e.g., *“Reduces tension, makes it less awkward.”* -P134). Related to this, some men suggested that allowing the listener to draw out the information through questioning facilitates an easier interaction (e.g., *“sometimes it is easier to broach the subject and let your mate question back to draw it out.”* -P060). In this way, the listener has some choice regarding whether or not the conversation focusses on the (potentially uncomfortable) disclosure, thereby granting implied consent. As in previous strategies, the disclosure of emotional information was identified as indicating closeness through trust, and a willingness to appear vulnerable.

Twenty-four participants stated this strategy was a poor indicator of closeness because, although the speaker is trying to disclose some vulnerable content, he is reducing the vulnerability to an extent which suggests that he does not trust the listener enough to be open and honest with him (e.g., *“Displays a lack of trust due to lack of disclosure. Although males are somewhat expected to keep such things to themselves, mature relationships usually evolve to the point of comfortable sharing.”* -P017). In addition, some men suggested that this style of disclosure was analogous to an ambush insofar as the listener is not made aware of the true purpose for the interaction (e.g., *“It could be a trap for John to get Michael to think it’s just time together when it’s really John wanting to confide his problems”* -P047).

Eleven participants stated that the use of this strategy does not provide a clear indication of the level of closeness between the actors because disclosure is not a proxy for closeness (e.g., *“You don’t have to be close to someone to get something off your chest. Sometimes it’s better to do it with a stranger.”* -P003). In addition, the use of mitigation strategies was sometimes framed as indicating more about the internal state of the speaker than the quality of the relationship between the speaker and the listener.

5.2.2.7 Direct affection + alcohol.

Twenty-nine participants stated this strategy was a good indicator of closeness. Specifically, alcohol was framed as removing the usual inhibitions men have against speaking openly about their affection for other men. Drunkenness was discussed as a way of accessing men's honest thoughts and feelings (e.g., "*indication of closeness, drunk mind speaks sober hearts.*" -P001). In addition, this strategy was stated to indicate closeness because of the positive valence of the statement (e.g., "*Good because positive feelings of John are being expressed.*" -P002).

Sixty-one participants stated this strategy was a poor indicator of closeness because the statements of an individual who is drunk may be untrue or exaggerated. Therefore, it is impossible to tell if the affection John is expressing is genuine or artificial (e.g., "*people say many things they don't mean when drunk*" -P012). Some men cited the notion that, when drunk, men will often become so-called friends with strangers (e.g., "*a drunk person is likely to tell anyone how good a friend they are so it's hard to tell if he truly means it or it's just the alcohol talking*" -P186). Additionally some men suggested that, in a truly close friendship, sentiments of closeness do not need to be explicitly confirmed; rather, they should be taken for granted or communicated through non-verbal, emotional means (e.g., "*Things like that don't really need to be said, if they are good friends.*" -P015).

5.2.2.8 Shared activity.

Sixty-two participants stated this strategy indicated closeness because it implies a desire to involve a friend in one's life and an awareness of the other person's interests, as well as increasing the likelihood of having shared positive experiences (e.g., "*Good because the likelihood they will both share a mutually positive experience is reinforcing for friendship.*" -P002). In addition, it shows that the pair has shared interests and commonalities, which is another important basis for closeness. Some men also stated

that one wouldn't choose to spend time with another person if they weren't confident that they would enjoy the interaction. Therefore, closeness can be inferred on the basis that sharing activities likely indicates enjoyment of one another's company (e.g., "*Men don't invite other men they don't like to do such activities. The fact that John has invited him is that he enjoys Michael's company.*" -P066). Also, this strategy was described as more normative by some participants, insofar as it did not involve gender role discrepant behaviour. In particular, sharing activities was occasionally described as having less potential for awkwardness than extended conversation (e.g., "*Men typically prefer to bond over activities, which they find less awkward than extended conversation. Conversely, close friends can simply enjoy each other's company.*" -P177).

Additionally, men suggested that shared activities create further potential for shared emotions such as "*grief, happiness and excitement*" (P180). As well as this, men indicated that spending time together is a useful strategy because it provides an opportunity to get to know one's friend better, as well as indicating closeness.

Forty participants stated this strategy was a poor indicator of closeness, as spending time together is something that both acquaintances and close friends do. Therefore, one cannot make inferences about the quality of a relationship, based on invitations to do activities together (e.g., "*A lot of guys don't really care if they are close in order to engage in this type of activity, they just want a 'buddy'*" -P024). In particular, several men stated that inviting someone to a shared activity may indicate a shared interest or desire to avoid being alone, as opposed to closeness (e.g., "*Simply indicates a mutual interest but not friendship*" -P149). Some men also indicated that this strategy may be used to improve a friendship, but it does not necessarily indicate closeness. Interestingly, several participants made a distinction between closeness and enjoyment of one another's company, which were framed as orthogonal constructs (e.g., "*This does not really represent closeness. It shows that they just enjoy each other's*

company” -P098).

5.2.2.9 Requesting favour.

Fifty-nine participants stated this strategy was a good indicator of closeness because it shows that the person asking the favour trusts that the other person will be willing and able to help them (e.g., “*Good indicator because John knows that he can count on Michael to help him*” -P018); as well as that the requester is willing to be indebted to one's friend (e.g., “*Owing one a favour means a favour must be returned. One would only ask a favour if it is trusted the returning favour will not be taken advantage of*” -P055). In addition, the gravity of burdening/inconveniencing a friend (at no benefit to them) was framed as indicating a trusting, and therefore close, relationship (e.g., “*asking a friend to inconvenience themselves for one's own sake requires placing a burden on the friend, which is not done lightly, thus indicates a bond of trust.*” -P065). Related to this, asking a favour implies that the requester is confident that the requestee won't turn them down or feel negatively about being asked (e.g., “*John would have been unlikely to ask this of Michael unless he was relatively certain that Michael would say yes, because people hate being rejected or turned down, especially when they need help*” -P058). Also, because one generally does not ask favours of people with whom they are not close, the act of asking implies closeness. The possibility of appearing vulnerable when asking for a favour was also stated to indicate trust, and therefore closeness (e.g., “*men do not like to appear vulnerable, so they will only ask for help from those they trust not to view them as weak for having done so.*” -P177). However, some men also noted that this strategy would only indicate closeness if the exchange of favours was balanced.

Twenty participants stated this strategy was a poor indicator of closeness because it is socially inappropriate to ask favours of other people (e.g., “*I don't think you should ask friends (good or otherwise) to borrow their car or money.*” -P003). Also, several

men framed favours (especially asking favours) as something that most men are willing to do with and for almost anybody; therefore this strategy may not be a reliable indicator of closeness (e.g., *“It is not necessarily a good indicator as there are a lot of people who will happily ask a favour of people they have not known for very long”* - P152). In addition, it places a burden on one's friend, and may strain friendships if the requestee perceives the requester as being overly familiar or engaging in social loafing. In light of this, some men stated that they'd rather place this potential burden on family or someone they weren't close to (e.g., *“Probably more likely to inconvenience a family member or someone not too close than a close friend”* -P174). Additionally, some men stated that the response to a request for a favour would be more indicative of closeness than the request itself.

5.2.2.10 Providing favour.

Seventy-two participants stated this strategy was a good indicator of closeness because it indicates that the person offering the favour is willing to risk a loss of resources (e.g., money, time) in order to benefit the other person (e.g., *“Good because John's resources suffer and are at risk of never being returned by changing them into Michael's possession.”* -P002). This kind of support was framed as an action that one would only do for someone they are close to. This also displays an element of trust that the favour will be repaid (e.g., *“you can trust a close friend to pay you back or return the favour.”* -P029). Similar to the previous strategy, it was frequently reasoned that, given the potential loss of resources, a male would not offer a favour to someone he is not close to (e.g., *“Offering is not usually done by someone who is not close to the potential recipient”* -P087). Importantly, the degree of inconvenience or potential resource loss was framed as proportional to how indicative the favour was of closeness (e.g., *“Good indicator because of the degree of the imposition and the level of trust needed.”* -P158).

Twenty participants stated this strategy was a poor indicator of closeness because men occasionally offer favours to people they do not feel close to. Some men suggested that offering a favour may indicate that an individual is kind or helpful, without implying subjective closeness (e.g., *“Sometimes helping out can just be a friendly thing to do, be it someone you know well or not.”* -P105). Rarely, participants suggested that offering help may be a sign of manipulation rather than genuine closeness.

5.2.2.11 Paradoxical humour.

Sixty participants stated this strategy was a good indicator of closeness because the fact that one person is able to violate social norms and insult the other person in the knowledge that the listener is likely to understand the joke (and therefore not be offended by it) shows some level of confidence and comfort in the relationship (e.g., *“It indicates that both are sufficiently comfortable with the other that they can anticipate the response of the other will not be to misinterpret the behaviour as offensive.”* -P046). Similarly, an insult of this nature is unlikely to be used with someone who is not close, as the speaker would be unsure as to how the subject would react (e.g., *“The sledging and such would only occur between friends that are very comfortable with each other and the ‘sledger’ knows that the ‘victim’ won’t take it personally.”* -P120). Banter was also occasionally framed as an acceptable way to relieve stress or tension in a positive way with a close friend (e.g., *“Banter relieves a certain amount of stressful energy.”* -P076). Banter and teasing was also identified as allowing friends to point out one another's flaws, and demonstrating knowledge of one another, without causing offense (e.g., *“Demonstrates the ability of both to recognize both flaws and strengths of the other in a humorous way, while also avoiding offense.”* -P109).

Forty-three participants stated this was a poor strategy for indicating closeness, primarily because it runs the risk of accidentally insulting the subject of the banter, which displays a lack of closeness or carelessness in the friendship (e.g., *“if it hurt one*

or other then they probably won't continue these (sic) behaviour anymore.” -P004). In addition, this strategy was framed as superficial and occurring more often in fledgling friendships, as opposed to established close friendships. In this way, teasing and banter does not separate close friendships from less close ones (e.g., “It is superficial and not indicative of any great emotional trust or bond” -P020).

5.2.2.12 Conventional humour.

Seventy-three participants stated this strategy was a good indicator of closeness because the exclusive nature of in-jokes mean that the humour is intended specifically for the listener and differentiates in-group members from outsiders (e.g., “Good because the joke signifies intimacy in that no others could understand it's meaning, only the intended friends.” -P002). In-jokes also indicate good knowledge of the friend, a history of shared experiences, and some similarity with one's friend (e.g., “Creating in-jokes affirms that they share a commonality and show closeness.” -P100; “Humour, and in-jokes reinforce specific histories and stories the two share” -P109). Humour was also framed as creating and indicating comfort, creating a sense of fun and happiness, as well as reducing the likelihood of aggression (e.g., “Also fosters positive interaction opposed to any aggression.” -P017; “Comfort with other person” -P051). Some participants also stated that humour is easier to engage in than other expression strategies, possibly due to its more gender role congruent nature (e.g., “an easier way of saying ‘you're a good friend’” -P020). Finally, the use of this kind of humour affirms friendship by clearly demarcating the relationship from relationships either person may have with others (e.g., “In-jokes indicate that they see themselves as a ‘pair’ separate from those not in on the joke.” -P193)

Twenty-one participants stated this strategy was a poor indicator of closeness because men often engage in humour, regardless of the closeness present in a relationship (e.g., “This is something males would do all the time. With both strangers

and friends.” -P039). Some men also suggested that, although humour creates a positive social atmosphere, it lacks an emotional component (especially trust). Therefore, the use of humour without other, more emotional, strategies may indicate a superficial relationship (e.g., *“Being funny makes you fun to be around, but it doesn't make you a decent person, and if that's all John ever did around me, I'd find him to be very shallow, very quickly.”* -P058).

5.2.2.13 Crudeness.

Seventy-four participants stated this strategy was a good indicator of closeness because good friends can comfortably communicate using crude and blunt language, despite the inherent violation of social norms around politeness. Maintaining comfort in the face of norm violation was frequently framed as requiring a good understanding of one's friend's boundaries and limits (e.g., *“Comfort in a friendship to the point of trusting a crude greeting will not be taken negatively, in males, displays at the very least an understanding of personality and personal limits.”* -P017). Additionally, using this style of communication without eliciting offense from the other person demonstrates closeness (e.g., *“I trust you enough to know that I can give you a bit of cheek without you taking offence and hitting me. I couldn't risk doing that with someone I don't know.”* -P174).

Forty-one participants stated this strategy was a poor indicator of closeness because it is disrespectful and offensive to the listener (e.g., *“I think it's an awfully rude way of greeting someone, and maybe something that would not occur between close friends”* -P120). In addition, it was occasionally framed as something one might do with most people, rather than with close friends exclusively (e.g., *“In Australia, most people do that as it is their custom.”* -P134).

5.2.2.14 Physical gestures.

Fifty-four participants stated this strategy was a good indicator of closeness

because it demonstrates a degree of affection, familiarity, genuineness, trust, and mutual comfort with one another (e.g., *“this indicates closeness because it displays affection, support and neutral agreement and is considered as closeness in friendship”* -P001). It was also occasionally cited as indicating a lack of ill will, which is important for closeness (e.g., *“Platonic non hostile exchanges of physical gestures show non hostility”* -P055). Additionally, physical contact between strangers (with the exception of handshakes) is typically counter-normative, therefore the use of this strategy indicates closeness due to the lack of awkwardness when it is used (e.g., *“Physical touching is frowned upon in modern society: to engage in such indicates a willingness to discard some social convention for the sake of expressing/furthering closeness.”* -P065).

Forty-eight participants stated this strategy was a poor indicator of closeness because many forms of physical contact (e.g., pats on the back, handshakes, fist bumps) were viewed as common among all men, and therefore not indicative of closeness. It was occasionally suggested that actual bodily contact would be required for closeness to be indicated (e.g., *“Pats on the back and fist bumps are a superficial level of closeness but actual bodily contact would suggest they were very close unless it was in some kind of sporting reference”* -P020). Also, some men noted that there is large variation in individuals' comfort with physical touch, therefore, the degree to which men engage in this strategy may indicate more about their preference for physicality than closeness (e.g., *“Some people are more tactile than others. This is not an extreme indicator of closeness.”* -P068). Some men suggested that, in sporting contexts, physical contact may be less indicative of closeness, as it is more common in this arena (e.g., *“Behaviour is common in sports teams etc., but does not necessarily indicate friendship. It indicates the team comradery”* -P122).

5.2.2.15 Competition.

Thirty-eight participants stated this strategy was a good indicator of closeness

because it involves spending time together, and provides a context for a positive shared emotional experience (e.g., *“It indicates a willingness to share an activity in such a way that explicitly involves at least a slight emotional component beyond mutual fondness for the activity itself.”* -P065). This strategy was also noted to imply similarity between the participants (especially in interests), which also indicates closeness (e.g., *“Friendly competition is a way to share a mutually enjoyed activity and thus indicates a common interest and a desire to share that interest.”* -P184). Importantly, men noted that it was important that the competition be friendly (i.e., not overly competitive) as this facilitates a sense that winning or losing is less important than enjoying the shared experience. Additionally, the motivational component of competition in which each member implicitly encourages the other to achieve more was occasionally framed as being an important indicator of closeness (e.g., *“Good friends like to challenge and push each other. Although not serious each individual still wants to beat the other”* -P055). This strategy may also show closeness through demonstration of an ability to avoid becoming inappropriately angry or frustrated, especially in defeat (e.g., *“Playful competitiveness shows the ability to not hold grudges against another person, which can mean you are close enough to them to accept defeat.”* -P103).

Forty-six participants stated this strategy is a poor indicator of closeness because no relationship investment is required to engage in competition (e.g., *“Males are competitive regardless of closeness.”* -P039); and because new acquaintances often engage in friendly competition together (e.g., *“Sports and video games are a good way to break a social barrier by having two people who barely know each other to participate in and enjoy together.”* -P185). Participants occasionally indicated that, if an individual was overly competitive, the ability of this strategy to indicate closeness would decrease (e.g., *“I have close friends who suck the fun out of social situations because of their competitive attitudes.”* -P072).

5.2.2.16 Assumed intimacy.

Twenty-seven participants stated that relying on assumptions is a good strategy for indicating closeness because its use implies a comfort, confidence and trust in the friendship that does not need explicit verbal or behavioural reinforcement. This comfort is also indicated through the lack of need to put on any special airs and graces for the benefit of one's friend (e.g., *“Comfort to be oneself no matter the situation and receive normal treatment and respect.”* -P017). It also implies a long history of friendship in order to gain such comfort (e.g., *“If they ‘just know’ all doubt has been experienced and has left some time ago. They must be long term close friends”* -P176). Additionally, some participants suggested that this strategy shows interpersonal synchrony which also implies closeness (e.g., *“This shows that they understand each other and are attuned to each other’s feelings and attitudes.”* -P092). Further, because this is not a default assumption that men tend to make about other men, the fact that one man is assuming friendship with another was framed as indicating closeness. However, this strategy required both parties to make the assumption of closeness (e.g., *“If they both feel they are close friends that would indicate they are even if they don't show it.”* -P024). Interestingly, no participant described how one might determine whether another person was making an assumption of intimacy.

When participants who rated the intimacy of this strategy as five or greater out of seven were asked how two men would know they were friends if they relied on unspoken assumptions, responses could be categorised into three sub-themes. The first (endorsed by 44 participants) was through non-behaviour based indicators of closeness, such as: length of friendship (e.g., *“It would come down to duration of friendship”* - P143); confidence in availability of support (e.g., *“hold higher expectations of each other compared to other friends, knowing that in a time of need the other friend will be there for them before anyone else”* -P012); shared history; similar tastes and interests;

effort to stay in contact when shared activities are not possible; trust and respect; rapport; maintenance of affection despite periods of separation; thorough understanding of one another's emotions and reactions (e.g., *"Sometimes it just comes down to understanding the others mood and meaning of things better than others"* -P152); and subjective feelings of compassion and affection.

The second sub-theme (endorsed by 35 participants) was reflexive, in that participants stated friends would be able to infer intimacy through the use of behavioural strategies covered by earlier DV items (e.g., *"It comes down to how deep their conversations get. Men will only let in a few people into their personal lives."* - P094). It is noteworthy that, despite endorsing the notion that communication is expressed without clear behavioural cues, these participants actually defined closeness through behavioural strategies in these instances. Comfort with vulnerable disclosure and spending time together (e.g., *"Time spent together. Physically or on the phone/email."* -P115) were mentioned with particular frequency. However, it is possible that, due to the gradual progression of friendships, changes such as increased vulnerability may not be detectable by those involved.

The third sub-theme (endorsed by 18 participants) suggested that close male friends have an innate, yet uncommunicated, knowledge about closeness that could not be further defined or explained (e.g., *"He would just know!"* -P016; *"A connection, almost an electricity exists between them."* -P145).

Twenty-seven men stated that relying on assumptions was a poor strategy for indicating closeness because close friends treat each other differently than they do other people, even if these differences are subtle and minor. In this way, close friendship involves behaviour that is inherently differentiated from behaviours one engages in with acquaintances (e.g., *"Close friends act different to how they act with other people as there is a more liberal atmosphere to what can be said and done"* -P044). In addition, it

is not enough for one to rely on their assumption that a friend is close, as this is a relationship quality that requires the input of both parties and one person's subjective assessment of closeness is not indicative of the other person's perception (e.g., *"It's a terrible indicator because neither person can be absolutely certain of feelings or motives without some outward indication."* -P087). Also, some participants suggested that a failure to act differently with close friends may indicate a lack of trust and comfort with those people, therefore providing evidence against closeness (e.g., *"If both of them assume that without articulating it, I think they are in denial and worried to talk about the level of closeness they have"* -P181).

5.2.2.17 Qualitative summary.

One of the most striking features of these qualitative data is that the majority of respondents typically endorsed expression strategies, regardless of the hypothesised mode of expression for that strategy. In fact, the only strategy to receive poor reviews from more than 50% of respondents was Direct Affection + Alcohol. Direct Affection, Physical Gestures, Competition and Assumed Intimacy were both close to an even split of endorsement versus rejection in qualitative responses, despite both receiving more positive than negative reviews. Importantly, all vulnerable expression strategies were endorsed by at least 50% of respondents. This suggests that participants overwhelmingly had positive attitudes towards most expression strategies (including gender role discrepant strategies); and mirrors the results of t-tests presented in section 5.2.1, as well as the data presented in Study 1.

Men often reported endorsing strategies because they felt that these strategies indicated a level of trust and interpersonal comfort. Additionally, participants appeared to search for behavioural proxies of trust and comfort when describing their rationale for endorsement. In this way, trust and comfort appeared to be important underlying factors in participants' endorsement of expression strategies. In a similar way the use of

behaviours that were counter-normative or that were not typically enacted within superficial relationships was commonly cited as a rationale for endorsement of expression strategies that transcended hypothesised modes of expression. It is possible that the use of such behaviours marks a friendship as unique, and separate from polite acquaintance relationships. Interestingly, the counter-normative nature of some strategies was occasionally provided as a rationale against its endorsement.

Despite their being a minority in most of the present qualitative data, men who described negative views of expression strategies often did so with a strength that was uncharacteristic of many of the other responses. This was evident in both the content of the negative responses, as well as the fact that very few expression strategies featured a group of men expressing neutral or ambivalent views (i.e., Problem Disclosure (Minimised) and Problem Disclosure (Minimised + Cover)). Several themes were evident from within the qualitative data expressing negative opinions which transcended hypothesised modes of expression. One of the most common was the argument that some communication strategies are performed with both close friends and superficial acquaintances, and thus could not be used to discriminate between the two. Some communication behaviours were also discussed as placing a burden on the recipient (e.g., requesting favours) or indicating a lack of trust (e.g., minimisation when disclosing problems). A common criticism which cut across the hypothesised modes of expression was that true friendship should not require explicit reaffirmations of closeness. However, many participants' responses to the enquiry about how a dyad would infer intimacy if it is never made explicit contradicted this sentiment by referring to behavioural markers of closeness (e.g., comfort with disclosure, length of friendship). This may indicate that the group of men who feel friendship should be implicit do indeed engage in behavioural markers of closeness, but that they refrain from explicitly acknowledging this. However, an investigation into this possibility is beyond the scope

of the present data. Interestingly, some of the rationales that provided negative ratings of expression strategies (e.g. trust, counter-normative behaviours) were based on the same explanations that other participants had used to endorse the same strategy.

5.2.3 Factor Analysis

A principal factor analysis was conducted to determine the underlying structure of expression strategies in the current dataset. Intimacy ratings for all 16 strategies were entered into the initial model. Three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.00 were identified (Factor 1 eigenvalue = 3.7; Factor 2 eigenvalue = 2.41; Factor 3 eigenvalue = 1.15). However, an examination of the gradient of the scree plot indicated that only two of these factors were likely to be meaningful (see Cattell, 1966). In addition, an examination of the varimax rotated factor loadings indicated that the three strategies loading onto Factor 3 also loaded ambiguously onto Factors 1 and 2. For these reasons, as well as the fact that the eigenvalue for Factor 3 was only slightly above 1, it was decided that a two factor solution would be most appropriate and meaningful.

After varimax rotation of a two factor solution, it was found that Requesting Favour and Providing Favour loaded ambiguously onto the two factors. Requesting Favour had a factor loading of 0.38 on Factor 1 and 0.49 on Factor 2; while Providing Favour had a factor loading of 0.5 on Factor 1 and 0.41 on Factor 2. As a result, these strategies were removed from the analysis, and it was re-run. The final solution accounted for 34.95% of the total variance (Factor 1 = 19.75%; Factor 2 = 15.2%). As shown in Table 5.3, all covert expression strategies loaded unambiguously onto Factor 1, except for Assumed Intimacy. Similarly, all vulnerable and mitigated expression strategies load unambiguously onto Factor 2. This was true for all mitigated expression strategies, except Direct Affection + Alcohol, which loaded onto Factor 1. Possible explanations for this will be discussed in detail in section 5.3.1, however it is relevant to note here that this result indicates that Direct Alcohol + Affection is likely better

conceptualised as covert, as opposed to mitigated, expression. Because strategies comprising hypothesised modes of expression overwhelmingly loaded onto single factors, Factor 1 was named Covert Expression, and Factor 2 was named Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression. It is noteworthy that Assumed Intimacy did not load highly onto either factor (in both the 2 factor and 3 factor solutions), therefore it was not included in the final factor structure. This was appropriate from a theoretical standpoint, as Assumed Intimacy involved the absence of any specific intimate expression strategy, rather than a specific behaviour.

A principal factor analysis was also conducted with Likelihood of Use scores which returned largely similar results. However, the results of this analysis will not be discussed because they are less conceptually relevant. Specifically, the aim of the present analysis was to create a model based on participants' conceptualisations of expression strategies, as opposed to their behavioural intentions towards, or the perceived appropriateness of, each strategy.

5.2.4 Interactive Effects of Intimacy, Likelihood and Subscription to the Masculine Role

A general linear model was conducted to test the moderated multiple regression model predicted in H3.3, using SPSS GLM. In this model, the first predictor was Mode of Expression. This had two levels (Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression; and Covert Expression), which were based on the results of the factor analysis discussed above. Importantly, as discussed in section 5.2.3, Requesting Favour and Providing Favour were excluded due to ambiguous factor loadings; and Assumed Intimacy was excluded due to low factor loadings on both factors. The second predictor was Dimension of Closeness, which was made up of two levels: Intimacy ratings and Likelihood ratings

(repeated measures). The total score of the MRNS was entered as a moderator¹. The hypothesised moderation model would be considered to be supported if a significant interaction between the predictors and the moderator was found in the expected direction. Following main analyses, conditional effects were analysed as appropriate.

A significant interaction was found between Mode of Expression and Dimension of Closeness ($F(1, 171) = 12.55, p = .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .07$). A conditional effects analysis, with the Bonferroni correction applied, was conducted to follow up this interaction. Given that the MRNS was not part of this interaction, all results were evaluated at the mean of MRNS scores. This analysis indicated that, for Covert Expression, intimacy scores ($EM \text{ Mean} = 5.28; SE = .07$) were significantly lower ($F(1, 171) = 29.6, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .15$) than likelihood scores ($EM \text{ Mean} = 5.64; SE = .06$). For Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression, intimacy scores ($EM \text{ Mean} = 5.79; SE = .06$) were significantly higher ($F(1, 171) = 131.57, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .44$) than likelihood scores ($EM \text{ Mean} = 4.76; SE = .09$). Interestingly, intimacy scores for Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression were significantly higher ($F(1, 171) = 38.72, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .19$) than those for Covert Expression; while likelihood scores for Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression were significantly lower ($F(1, 171) = 102.22, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .37$) than those for Covert Expression.

Significant main effects for Mode of Expression and Dimension of Closeness were found, as well as significant interactions between Mode of Expression and MRNS scores ($F(1, 171) = 13.94, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .08$) and Dimension of Closeness and MRNS scores ($F(1, 171) = 5.92, p = .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .03$) were also found. However these were not interpreted, as statistically summarising intimacy and likelihood scores

¹ The total score was used in order to maintain consistency with Study 2. However, given that concerns about inflation of Type I error in Study 2 were not present in the current study, analyses were also conducted using the MRNS subscales. All analyses returned results with identical patterns of significance. For the sake of brevity, only the results for the analysis using the total score of the MRNS are reported here. Curious readers may refer to Appendix F for further details on the remaining analyses.

into a composite so that they may be examined at each level of Mode of Expression did not make theoretical sense (and vice versa). Importantly, the hypothesised interaction between Mode of Expression, Dimension of Closeness, and Toughness was non-significant ($F(1, 173) = .54, p = .465$).

5.3 Discussion

5.3.1 Modes of Intimate Expression

H3.2 was partially supported. All hypothesised covert expression items (with the exception of Requesting Favour, Providing Favour and Assumed Intimacy) loaded unambiguously onto a single factor. Shared Activity and Competition loaded most strongly onto this factor, indicating the importance of reciprocal, emotionally evocative shared experiences. It is noteworthy that Requesting Favour and Providing Favour both related to the exchange of favours. It is possible that these loaded ambiguously onto the two factors because, according to qualitative results, favours also involve vulnerability through a failure of independence; as well as associated trust that one's friend will not shame or judge one for this failure. This is a violation of the masculine role, which is a hallmark of vulnerable expression. Although masculine role violation is only experienced by the receiver of the favour, this likely creates a sense of vulnerability which is experienced by both parties (in much the same way that a man listening to a vulnerable disclosure appears to feel a sense of vulnerability despite not having directly violated the masculine role themselves; see Study 1). Therefore, exchanging favours may involve elements of both covert and vulnerable expression.

It is possible that Assumed Intimacy did not load onto the covert expression factor because this strategy described the absence of expression, as opposed to a form of non-vulnerable expression. Therefore, it makes conceptual sense that this strategy did not load strongly onto either factor. Interestingly, when participants who endorsed Assumed Intimacy were asked what leads to subjective perceptions of intimacy if not vulnerable

or covert expression, a large portion contradicted their initial answer by referring to communication strategies such as vulnerable disclosure and shared activities. Given this finding, it is possible that men's endorsement of relying on an unspoken assumption of mutual intimacy instead of strategies for communicating closeness may indicate that the use of intimate expression strategies (both vulnerable and covert) with friends occurs at an automatic level, as opposed to being an active or intentional process. Alternatively, it could indicate a drive to avoid explicitly acknowledging communication strategies which convey intimacy.

Also in relation to H3.2, vulnerable expression strategies also loaded unambiguously onto a single factor. However, contrary to the hypothesis, all but one mitigated expression strategy also loaded onto this factor. Direct Affection + Alcohol loaded unambiguously onto the Covert Expression factor. This strategy was originally conceptualised as a mitigated expression of closeness because the expression of affection was thought to constitute vulnerability. However, the fact that this mitigated expression strategy alone loaded onto Covert Expression may indicate that the consumption of alcohol (a covert expression strategy; see also Study 1) was the more salient aspect of this expression strategy for men. Additionally, the fact that the remaining mitigated expression strategies loaded unambiguously onto a single factor suggests that these strategies may comprise a distinct unitary construct. Therefore, the current results suggest that Direct Affection + Alcohol is best conceptualised as covert expression, while direct expressions of affection and problem disclosures featuring minimisation and/or cover activities are best considered separately. No previous research has empirically investigated the factor structure of men's modes of expression, thus the nature of H3.2 and associated results is exploratory.

Importantly, the mitigated expression strategies loading onto Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression appeared indistinguishable from vulnerable expression in the

present sample. Thus, the Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression factor was primarily comprised of strategies involving the disclosure of a problem. This finding may indicate that men viewed mitigated expression as functionally equivalent to vulnerable disclosure. This interpretation makes sense in light of the definition of mitigated expression, which states that mitigated expression is any form of vulnerable expression accompanied by factors designed to distract from this vulnerability. Therefore, although men have reported greater comfort with mitigated expression than vulnerable expression in past research (Levant et al., 2009; Parks & Floyd, 1996; Swain, 1989; see also Study 1), the present results indicate that both may serve the same function as a relationship enhancing tool. In this way, the data found within the present study supports the conclusion of Study 1 that both vulnerable and mitigated expression appear to share a common goal (i.e., expression of a vulnerable emotion or concept), but each strategy achieves this through different means (i.e., through direct expression for vulnerable expression, and featuring salience reduction strategies for mitigated expression).

When comparing the qualitative responses of participants who rejected versus endorsed expression strategies, it was clear that responses were highly polarised. In addition, opposite interpretations of the same phenomena were occasionally presented as arguments both for and against the intimacy producing potential of expression strategies. Rationales for the rejection of expression strategies were also often presented with a vehemence that was not as common in rationales endorsing these strategies. These features may indicate that the present data were comprised of two subgroups of men, as opposed to one subgroup that differed along a single dimension (i.e., subscription to masculine role norms). This may explain why subscription to masculine role norms did not have the expected mediating effect (discussed further in section 5.3.2). However, it is beyond the scope of the present data to test this possibility, or the dimensions along which boundaries between possible subgroups may be formed.

Overall, these results support past research (e.g., Cameron, 2007; Englar-Carlson & Stevens, 2006; Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010; Levant, 1999; Pollack, 1999; Swain, 1989; see also Study 1) which suggests that vulnerable expression and covert expression may represent two important, yet distinct, intimate expression strategies used by men in their homosocial friendships. Results also suggest that, although hypothesised mitigated expression strategies (except for Direct Affection + Alcohol) loaded together onto the same factor, these were indistinguishable from vulnerable expression strategies in the present sample. Future research may benefit from investigating whether mitigated expression is distinguishable from vulnerable expression by using a more nuanced methodology; as this distinction, if demonstrable, would have important implications for the conceptualisation of men's intimate expression. Given the frequency with which the vulnerability inherent in expression strategies was identified in qualitative responses, future research may benefit from including an outcome item enquiring about perceived vulnerability for each expression strategy (in addition to intimacy and likelihood) to determine whether mitigated expression is distinguishable from vulnerable expression and covert expression in this domain. Importantly, the present results build on past research by utilising men's own ratings of expression strategies, as opposed to relying on inference by researchers or past theory (e.g., Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010; Pollack, 1999; Swain, 1989; see also Study 1).

5.3.2 The Role of Intimacy and Likelihood in Expression

Overall, H3.1 was partially supported. Specifically, H3.1(a) was fully supported for all strategies. No specific hypotheses were made about mitigated expression strategies. However results provided mixed support for mitigated expression as an independent and unitary mode of expression; and suggested that Direct Affection + Alcohol may be better conceptualised as covert expression. H3.1(b) was partially supported. Specifically, likelihood ratings were significantly higher than intimacy

ratings for four of the nine covert expression strategies. The non-significant results for the remaining five covert expression strategies suggest that the use of these strategies may express a degree of intimacy that is commensurate with the degree of risk that behaviour entails (e.g., through enactment of gender role discrepant behaviour). Interestingly, qualitative data suggested that participants had divided opinions about whether the use of counter-normative behaviour was a good or poor indicator of closeness. Additionally, only two strategies from the Vulnerable and Mitigated Strategies factor had effect sizes smaller than the largest effect size of strategies from the Covert Expression factor. This suggests that the gap between intimacy and likelihood for Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression strategies is generally larger than that for Covert Expression strategies.

H3.3 was not supported. No moderating effect of degree of subscription to male role norms was found. This finding was contrary to the implications of Study 1, the results of Study 2, and the theoretical suggestions of previous research that men's communication preferences and styles are influenced by subscription to the masculine role (Bank & Hansford, 2000; Burn & Ward, 2005; Lease et al., 2013; Levant, 2011; Levant & Wong, 2013; Migliaccio, 2009; Wong, Horn, Gomory, & Ramos, 2013). However, despite the unexpected nature of this finding, it appeared robust. In particular, the finding was clear and stable across all three MRNS subscales (see Appendix F), and occurred despite a large sample size.

This result may be explained by the socially constructed nature of gender role norms. Specifically, it is possible that one's individual subscription to gender role norms may have little impact on social behaviours (such as perceptions of, or engagement in, gender role discrepant communication), because one receives social punishments (e.g., negative evaluations) when violating gender role norms, irrespective of their individual beliefs in the legitimacy of these norms (see Addis & Cohane, 2005;

Englar-Carlson, 2006; Pleck, 1995). Therefore an individual's personal subscription to the masculine gender role may have little impact on their endorsement of the intimacy of homosocial modes of intimate expression and their likelihood of engaging in these, especially when expression is gender role discrepant. Rather, men's perception of the degree to which their social group or culture endorses traditional masculine gender roles may have more influence on their endorsement of gender role discrepant modes of expression (see also Luyt, 2013; Thompson & Bennett, 2015). It is noteworthy that the pattern of results found in the analyses most closely matched those hypothesised in H3.3(a), which was based on the strongest subscription to male role norms. This also lends support to the notion that restrictive gender role norms existing in the wider social context may have more impact on individuals' intimacy and likelihood ratings of vulnerable and covert modes of expression than personal subscription to these gender role norms (Luyt, 2013; Thompson & Bennett, 2015).

However, as discussed by Cuthbert (2015), conceptualisations of gender ideology at both a cultural and individual level have an important place in gender research. Overall, results from the analyses conducted to test H3.1 and H3.3 suggest that men generally reported Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression as higher in intimacy than Covert Expression (and higher in intimacy than likelihood). They also suggested that men reported Covert Expression as higher in likelihood than Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression (and higher in likelihood than intimacy). Importantly, examination of the effect sizes indicated that the difference between likelihood ratings for Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression versus Covert Expression (which favoured Covert Expression) was approximately twice as large as the difference between intimacy ratings for Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression versus Covert Expression (which favoured Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression). Additionally, although intimacy was rated lower

than likelihood for Covert Expression; the difference between likelihood and intimacy for Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression was approximately three times as large.

Taken together these results appear to suggest that, although gender role congruent, covert modes of expression may be less subjectively intimate than vulnerable and disclosure-based expression (as discussed in previous research, e.g., Bank & Hansford, 2000; Edwards & Hamilton, 2004; Elder et al., 2012; Levant et al., 2014; Levant et al., 2009; Levy, 2005; Tannen, 1991), the higher self-reported likelihood of men engaging in covert expression (over vulnerable expression) may make this a more practically useful relationship building tool in men's homosocial friendships. Specifically, utilising covert expression, particularly over repeated instances, may create a mutually caring, emotional and subjectively intimate friendship. Although covert expression may not build this bond as efficiently or directly as vulnerable expression, men's greater willingness to use covert expression strategies appears to outweigh this inefficiency.

5.3.3 Implications and Future Directions

The results of the present research support literature contending that men develop homosocial relationships largely through the use of less vulnerable expression strategies which are congruent with the masculine gender role norms (e.g., Bank & Hansford, 2000; Levy, 2005; Thompson & Pleck, 1995). Additionally, the present research utilised a new methodology to support the assertions of previous research that covert expression may serve as an equally efficacious relationship building tool as more vulnerable modes of expression, when both perceived intimacy and likelihood are taken into consideration (Englar-Carlson, 2006; Monsour, 1992; Pollack, 1999; Swain, 2001). Although not tested in the present study, a convincing body of research exists which suggests that men's greater self-reported likelihood of using covert expression over more vulnerable strategies may be due to a desire to avoid negative intrapersonal and interpersonal

consequences related to violation of the masculine gender role (for more thorough reviews, see Kiselica and Englar-Carlson (2010), Levant and Wong (2013), and O'Neil (2008)). Specifically, aspects of the masculine gender role such as those that emphasise toughness, stoicism, dominance, control and independence, as well as separateness from femininity likely act as a disincentive for men to engage in vulnerable forms of disclosure (Brannon, 1976, 1985a; Luyt, 2005; O'Neil, 1981b, 2008).

Importantly, the results of the present study also provide evidence against the notion that men do not engage in vulnerable expression. Specifically, all likelihood ratings were approximately four or higher out of seven in the present study and qualitative responses largely endorsed the use of vulnerable expression. Additionally, the finding that intimacy ratings for all strategies were approximately 4.5 or higher provides evidence against the contention that men's relationships lack intimacy due to a tendency to use inferior modes of expression (e.g., Elder et al., 2012; Levy, 2005; Reis et al., 1985; Reisman, 1990).

Interestingly, the results of the present study provide mixed support for the findings of Study 1. Specifically, the present results support the finding in Study 1 that men self-report being more likely to engage in covert forms of expression than vulnerable modes of expression. Additionally, Study 1 suggested that men found covert expression and vulnerable expression equally satisfying in the creation and communication of intimacy. The results of the present study could be interpreted as supporting this Study 1 finding because, if both intimacy and likelihood are taken into consideration, Covert Expression strategies in the present study appear to serve a relationship building function in men's homosocial friendship that is at least equivalent to Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression strategies. However, if one examines the aggregate self-reported intimacy scores for Covert Expression in the present study in isolation, they are significantly less than Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression intimacy

scores; and thus appear to contradict Study 1 results. Although this is an extremely conservative interpretation, its consideration bears merit.

It is possible that the lower intimacy ratings for Covert Expression in the present study are an accurate portrayal of the subjective intimacy men associate with covert expression in everyday interactions. However it is also possible that, although each isolated occurrence of covert expression may be less subjectively intimate, the greater frequency with which these expression strategies are used creates a degree of intimacy in aggregate that is comparable to less frequently utilised vulnerable expression strategies. These lower ratings may also be an artefact of item phrasing and methodology. Specifically, Walker (1994) suggested that men are more likely to provide gender role stereotyped responses to general questions about their friendships than they are to questions asking them to recall a past specific homosocial interaction. Although efforts were made to avoid this in the present research by including a short vignette and utilising specific communication strategies in outcome items, it is possible that the effect Walker (1994) described had an influence on study results. Future research may attempt to address this issue by asking men to recall a specific past interaction which featured each of the communication strategies tested, and administering items about level of perceived intimacy in that situation, and likelihood of that communication strategy occurring again. However, this alternative methodology also creates the risk of being biased by the availability heuristic (especially in relation to items about likelihood), and runs the risk of increased missing data if men cannot recall a specific instance of the communication strategies of interest.

The results of the present study also have important implications for the way intimate communication is conceptualised. There has been little acknowledgement in past research that intimacy in communication strategies likely exists on a continuum; and the vast majority of empirical research (e.g., Levy, 2005; Reis et al., 1985) has

conceptualised intimate communication as either vulnerable (or analogous terms, such as disclosure based, emotional, direct, or overt) or covert (or analogous terms, such as instrumental, behavioural, or comradeship). The results of the present study suggest that there may be some merit in further investigating mitigated expression as a possible subcategory of vulnerable expression that may represent a middle ground between vulnerable expression and covert expression. Further research into mitigated expression would also serve to empirically investigate assumptions made in previous research (e.g., Bank & Hansford, 2000; Chaplin, 2015; Levy, 2005; Reisman, 1990) about how intimacy in communication should be measured, and the hierarchy of communication strategies in fostering meaningful and satisfying relationships (see also Walker, 1994; Wood & Inman, 1993). It is possible that, if mitigated expression is further validated as a third form of intimate expression, researchers may begin to find that men engage in vulnerable expression more often than previously thought by using strategies such as cover activities.

In the present research, no distinction was made between modes of expression which appear to induce or foster intimacy versus those that may simply indicate pre-existing intimacy. However, it is possible that the various modes of expression serve different intimacy creating/indicating functions; and that this varies according to relationships factors (e.g., level of perceived closeness) and contextual factors (e.g., dyadic versus group interaction) (See also Studies 1 and 2). Further research into the degree to which modes of expression create versus indicate intimacy, as well as the factors which influence this, would likely open up an important new perspective on the communication of intimacy in men's homosocial friendships.

5.3.4 Limitations and Recommendations

The present research featured some limitations, which must be considered. The first is the use of a quasi-vignette design which required participants to imagine a

hypothetical friendship dyad and answer questions about possible interactions featuring various communication styles. This design assumes that participants' responses will be informed by their own communication preferences and past experiences, despite a lack of instruction to this effect. However, it is impossible to ensure that participant's responses are reflective of the behaviour they would engage in during naturalistic homosocial interactions. Future research may benefit from attempting to use an in-situ design in which participants are asked to demonstrate platonic intimacy to their friend, with responses being either directly observed and coded (if the interaction was conducted in the laboratory) or recorded using post-incident self-report analogous to the Rochester Interaction Record (Wheeler, Reis, & Nezelek, 1983) (if the interaction was conducted outside of the laboratory). Methods such as these would likely reduce researcher reliance on participants' self-awareness. However, with methods such as these, what is gained in external validity may be lost in the cost to experimental control. Specifically, coding and interpreting participant responses may prove difficult. Additionally, some communication strategies (especially those based on processes outside of the actor's awareness, such as disclosing a problem in the context of an activity which serves to reduce the salience of the vulnerability) may be less likely to occur in a laboratory setting, and may be less likely to be identified by participants in self-report. These limitations may potentially lead to the erroneous impression that such nuanced strategies occur less frequently. Also, as discussed in section 2.3.2, coding methodologies can often ignore the subjective nature of intimacy.

In addition, the two main study variables (intimacy and likelihood) were measured using a single item self-report question. It is possible that this is not the ideal method for measuring these constructs. Researchers must rely on self-report to measure perception based phenomena, such as perceived intimacy; however, it is possible that future research could improve on the measurement of this construct by developing a multi-

item scale with the aim of reducing the effects of measurement error. The development of an empirically validated measure of perceived intimacy, which is designed to avoid biases towards favouring disclosure as the primary mode of intimate expression, would allow for greater confidence in research outcomes in this field of research. Similarly, individuals' own estimations about their future feelings and attitudes, and therefore behaviour (such as the likelihood of engaging in various modes of expression), are often inaccurate (Wilson & Gilbert, 2003). Therefore future research may benefit from developing and utilising measures with more concrete points of reference to measure this construct, such as asking participants to estimate the number of times they've engaged in each expression strategy within a specified time period.

5.3.5 Summary

Overall, the results of the present research appear to indicate that homosocial expression strategies that have been frequently discussed in past research fall into two clear categories: vulnerable expression and covert expression. However, it also appears that mitigated expression may be a distinct subcategory of vulnerable expression that achieves the same ends as vulnerable expression, but through different means. The present research also suggests that, although men's ratings of perceived intimacy for covert expression are significantly lower than those for vulnerable and mitigated expression, this difference may be compensated for by the significantly higher (and with greater effect size) expected likelihood of engaging in covert expression over vulnerable and mitigated expression. Thus, when used in a naturalistic setting, covert and vulnerable/mitigated expression may enhance relationships equally, but through different methods of action (i.e., multiple instances of less intense expression of intimacy, versus fewer more intense expressions, respectively). Interestingly, results also indicated that individual subscription to masculine role norms did not impact the perceived intimacy or expected likelihood participants associated with vulnerable and

covert expression. A useful pathway for future investigation would be to determine whether men's perceptions of societal endorsement of masculine role norms moderate the relationship between these constructs.

Table 5.1

Breakdown of Demographic Information

Characteristic	Percentage of Total Sample ($N = 175$)
Did not complete Demographics	2.3%
Age^a	
Below 20	3.6%
20 – 30	58.6%
30 – 40	18.3%
40 – 50	10.7%
50 – 60	8.3%
Above 60	6%
Ethnic Background	
British/Scottish/Welsh/Irish	62.9%
Southern and Eastern European	8%
South-East and North-East Asian	5.2%
Northern and Western European	5.1%
South Asian	3.4%
Pacific Islander	2.9%
Middle Eastern	1.1%
Indigenous Australian	0.6%
Other ^b	7.4%
Nonsense responses	1.7%
Education	
Did not complete primary school	0.6%
Junior school (Grade 10)	0.6%
Senior school (Grade 12)	24%

Post-compulsory education (e.g., TAFE, trade)	30.3%
One or more university or college degree/s	41.1%
Preferred not to answer	1.1%
Annual Household Income ^c	
\$0 – \$70,000	45.1%
\$70,001 or greater	36%
Preferred not to answer	16.6%
Relationship Status ^d	
Never married	53.1%
Separated or divorced	5.7%
Widowed	0.6%
Currently married or in de facto relationship	38.3%

Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding error.

^a Two participants erroneously listed their ages as 13 years. Therefore, percentages are calculated based only on the number of people who provided a valid age. ^b Responses were listed as Other when participants selected this as the option on their questionnaire. The breakdown of qualitative responses was as follows: mixed ethnicity (2.9%), Canadian (2.9%), African (1.1%); Jewish (0.6%); and Venezuelan (0.6%). ^c Excluding participants who did not provide a valid response, 55.6% of the sample earned less than \$70,000 annually. The median gross annual household income for Australia in 2011-2012 was \$74,984, as calculated from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013b) data. ^d Due to the possible inconsistency in the way individuals define dating, data was only collected on marital status. As such, some participants who selected “never married” may have been in a romantic relationship. However, if participants were living with their partners on a genuine domestic basis, they would have been defined as “currently married or in a de facto relationship”.

Table 5.2

Descriptives and T-Test Comparisons of Intimacy and Likelihood Per Strategy

Strategy	Intimacy <i>M</i> (and <i>SD</i>)	Likelihood <i>M</i> (and <i>SD</i>)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Direct Affection	5.34 (1.5)	3.95 (1.56)	10.55	<.001	0.8
Problem Disclosure (Ambiguous)	6.27 (1.13)	4.8 (1.71)	11.26	<.001	0.85
Problem Disclosure (Direct)	6.22 (1.18)	4.66 (1.73)	12.11	<.001	0.92
Problem Disclosure (Minimised)	5.41 (1.23)	5.02 (1.4)	3.31	.001	0.25
Problem Disclosure (Cover)	5.97 (1.06)	5.16 (1.44)	7.39	<.001	0.56
Problem Disclosure (Minimised + Cover)	5.53 (1.22)	5.03 (1.42)	4.44	<.001	0.34
Direct Affection + Alcohol	4.65 (1.63)	5.38 (1.4)	-5.52	<.001	0.42
Shared Activity	5.39 (1.47)	6.09 (1.11)	-5.93	<.001	0.45

MORE THAN WORDS

Requesting Favour	5.73 (1.11)	5.61 (1.2)	1.42	.156	0.11
Providing Favour	5.86 (1.09)	5.89 (1.1)	-0.43	.669	0.03
Paradoxical Humour	5.42 (1.22)	5.78 (1.12)	-3.63	<.001	0.28
Conventional Humour	5.79 (1.2)	5.97 (1.1)	-2.09	.038	0.16
Crudeness	5.23 (1.43)	5.19 (1.43)	0.51	.613	0.04
Physical Gestures	5.42 (1.31)	5.25 (1.25)	1.63	.105	0.12
Competition	5.06 (1.44)	5.85 (1.15)	-7.16	<.001	0.54
Assumed Intimacy	4.79 (1.66)	4.71 (1.72)	0.86	.392	0.07

Note: Degrees of freedom for all analyses = 174. Cohen's d was calculated based on the formula for a paired samples t test: $d = \frac{t}{\sqrt{n}}$.

According to Cohen (1992), the interpretations for Cohen's d are as follows: 0.2 = small; 0.5 = medium; 0.8 = large.

Table 5.3

Factor Loadings for Expression Strategies

Strategy	Hypothesised Mode of Expression	Factor 1 Loading	Factor 2 Loading
Direct Affection	Vulnerable		.44
Problem Disclosure (Ambiguous)	Vulnerable		.65
Problem Disclosure (Direct)	Vulnerable		.64
Problem Disclosure (Minimised)	Mitigated		.52
Problem Disclosure (Cover)	Mitigated		.66
Problem Disclosure (Minimised + Cover)	Mitigated		.53
Direct Affection + Alcohol	Mitigated	.60	
Shared Activity	Covert	.75	
Paradoxical Humour	Covert	.65	
Conventional Humour	Covert	.49	
Crudeness	Covert	.51	
Physical Gestures	Covert	.52	
Competition	Covert	.74	
Assumed Intimacy	Covert		

Note: For clarity, factor loadings less than 0.3 have been omitted from the table.

Loadings are based on a varimax rotation.

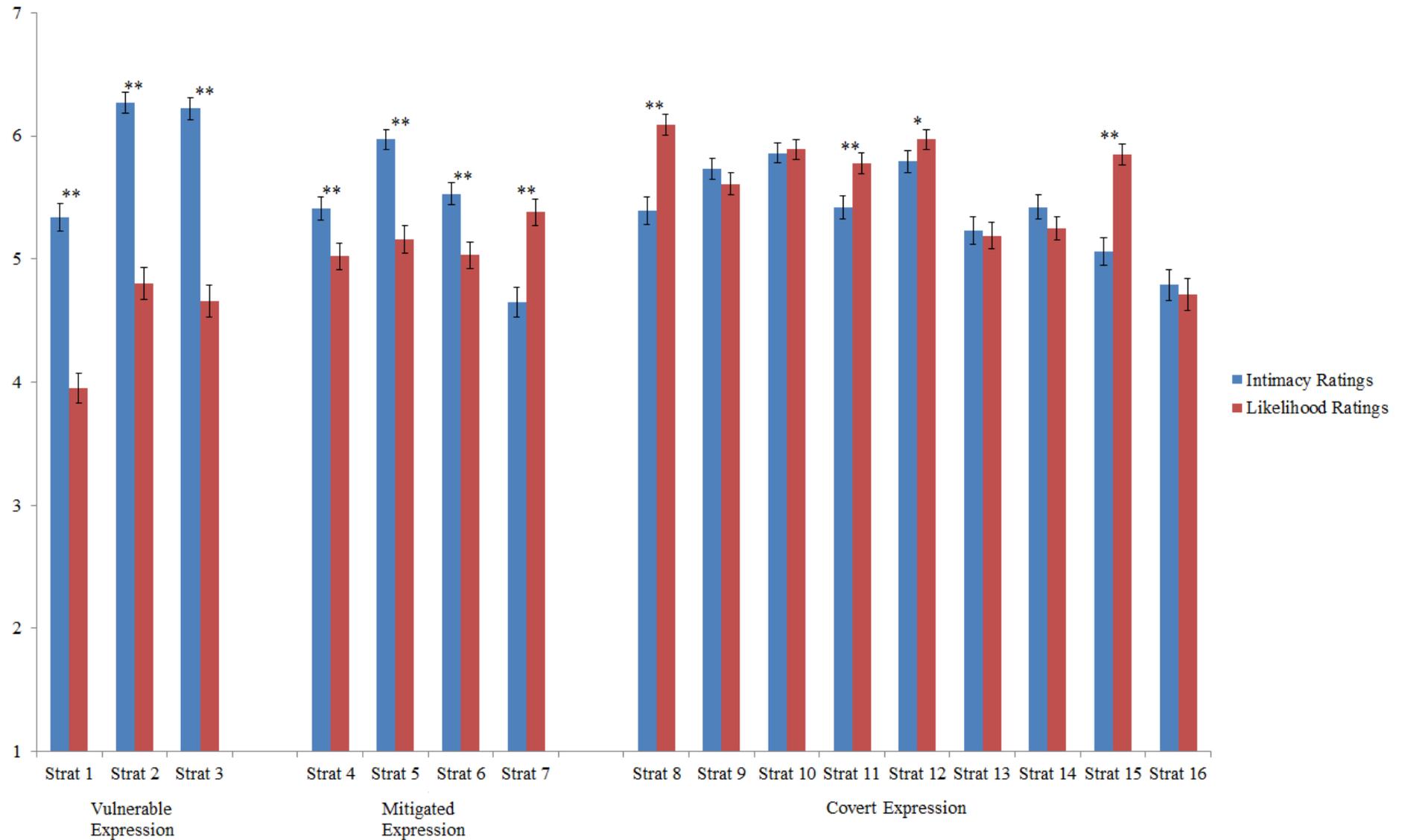


Figure 5.1. Intimacy and likelihood comparisons grouped by hypothesised mode of expression. Error bars represent standard errors.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$. Strat 1 = Direct Affection; Strat 2 = Problem Disclosure (Ambiguous); Strat 3 = Problem Disclosure (Direct); Strat 4

= Problem Disclosure (Minimised); Strat 5 = Problem Disclosure (Cover); Strat 6 = Problem Disclosure (Minimised + Cover); Strat 7 = Direct Affection + Alcohol; Strat 8 = Shared Activity; Strat 9 = Requesting Favour; Strat 10 = Providing Favour; Strat 11 = Paradoxical Humour; Strat 12 = Conventional Humour; Strat 13 = Crudeness; Strat 14 = Physical Gestures; Strat 15 = Competition; Strat 16 = Assumed Intimacy.

Chapter 6 – General Discussion

6.1 The Nature of Men's Homosocial Friendships: Intimate Versus Superficial

As discussed in section 2.6, research question 1 asked: to what extent are men's homosocial friendships characterised by intimacy? Study 1 aimed to address this question by utilising a qualitative methodology to ascertain men's subjective experience of homosocial friendships and the degree to which they believe these experiences feature intimacy. Employing a qualitative methodology reduced the reliance of the present research on assumptions about the definition of intimacy and primacy of vulnerable expression as the ideal mode of intimate expression (which was characteristic of much past research e.g., Bank & Hansford, 2000; Reisman, 1990; see also section 2.3) by tapping men's subjective experiences as directly as possible. The results of Study 1 showed that men reported engaging in vulnerable (both overt and mitigated) and covert expression in their homosocial friendships; and that the expression present in these friendships was overwhelmingly the source of subjective intimacy for the men interviewed. In fact, all of the men interviewed stated that they felt their friendships were characterised by meaningful subjective intimacy; and no men indicated that they desired the expression of intimacy in their friendships to be different.

These results suggest that men find their homosocial friendships to be the source of meaningful and satisfying intimacy. A range of prior studies have suggested that men's friendships lack intimacy (e.g., Levy, 2005; Reisman, 1990), and are subjectively dissatisfying (e.g., Burn & Ward, 2005). The results of Study 1 contradict these previous findings. This discrepancy may be attributable to assumptions regarding the relative value of different modes of expression. By utilising a methodology which allowed men to describe their own experiences of friendship and discuss whether these met their personal criteria for closeness and intimacy, the present research was able to make inferences about intimacy in men's friendship with a lower risk of imposing

research bias. Much past research finding contradictory results (e.g., Reis et al., 1985) made inferences about men's friendships without first contextualising responses with men's subjective definitions of good quality friendship. The present research attempted to encourage participants to utilise their own personal definitions of intimacy when evaluating the degree to which their friendships were satisfying. Avoiding researcher bias in this way has not been a focus of previous research in the area, and may have given rise to misleading findings.

Related to this, discrepancies between results of the present research and those of previous studies may be associated with the nature of methods of enquiry employed. Specifically, previous research has been criticised for using closed and leading questions, as well as questions that require participants to average across experiences (Walker, 1994). It is possible that this method of enquiry biases results by cueing masculine stereotypes and relying on overgeneralised memories (Walker, 1994). The present research made use of open questions and those that targeted specific, recent memories (so as to avoid memory bias and the availability heuristic), in addition to general questions. By taking the assumptions and methodological limitations of previous literature into account, the present research was able to find empirical support for the notion that men's homosocial friendships are characterised by inherent intimacy. Thus, the results of the present thesis may serve as a caution against making the assumption that men's friendships inherently lack meaningful subjective intimacy, and that men are not capable of forming meaningful intimate bonds. Additionally, these findings show how avoiding methodologies which cue masculine stereotypes or fail to sample concrete experiences support results that are congruent with alternative conceptualisations of intimacy.

6.2 How Intimacy is Expressed in Men's Friendships

As discussed in section 2.6, research question 2 asked: if men's friendships are

characterised by intimacy, how is this expressed? Studies 1 and 3 aimed to address this question. Study 1 utilised direct qualitative enquiry, while Study 3 gathered this information through likelihood ratings of various communication strategies. As alluded to in Study 1 and section 6.1, men provided self-reports of expressing intimacy through vulnerable expression strategies (traditionally thought to be male gender role discrepant (Englar-Carlson, 2006; Levy, 2005; Swain, 2001)), and covert expression strategies (traditionally thought to be male gender role congruent (Englar-Carlson, 2006; Levy, 2005; Swain, 2001)). Study 3 expanded on these findings by demonstrating that men's likelihood ratings for strategies loading onto the covert expression factor were higher than those loading onto the vulnerable and mitigated expression factor (*partial* $\eta^2 = .37$ for all analyses). Importantly, however, men rated the likelihood of engaging in vulnerable expression strategies as closer to the Extremely Likely anchor than the Extremely Unlikely anchor on a seven point Likert scale (except for direct discussion of affection, which was rated .05 scale points below the midpoint).

These results suggested that men are capable of engaging in, and deriving pleasure and intimacy from, both direct vulnerable expression and indirect covert expression. These results contradict the conclusion of some prior research that masculinity is inherently associated with an aversion to vulnerable expression (i.e., the deficit model). For example, theoretical orientations, such as the Normative Male Alexithymia Hypothesis (Levant, 1995; Levant et al., 2009) and Gender Role Conflict Theory (O'Neil, 1981b, 2008), contend that men's socialisation prohibits them from engaging in vulnerable disclosure due to the masculine gender role discrepant nature of this form of expression. Conversely, research suggesting that men engage in both covert and vulnerable expression (e.g., Englar-Carlson & Stevens, 2006; Swain, 2001) are congruent with the present findings.

Results of both Studies 1 and 3 suggested that men engage in covert expression with greater frequency than vulnerable expression. Previous research has interpreted this finding as suggesting that men do not value vulnerable expression (e.g., Levy, 2005), or that they are incapable of engaging in this (e.g., Levant et al., 2009). However, the findings of the present thesis that men engage in both vulnerable and covert expression (as discussed previously) are incongruent with this interpretation (see also Kaplan & Rosenmann, 2014; Levant et al., 2009; Swain, 2001; Wood & Inman, 1993). Alternative explanations for men's apparent tendency to engage in covert expression with greater frequency than vulnerable expression may be more closely related to personal preference and contextual demands than inability or disinterest. For example, it is possible that men's intimacy needs are generally met through the use of covert expression strategies. However, vulnerable expression may be utilised when more intimacy is required (e.g., during periods of emotional distress, prolonged separation, or prolonged intervals not featuring intense vulnerable expression). In this way, men may choose their expression strategies based on the metaphorical dose of intimacy they desire at the time. According to this interpretation, both forms of expression are considered valuable and meaningful, despite the fact that vulnerable expression appears to occur less frequently than covert expression. The role that contextual demands may play in men's choice of communication strategies will be discussed in section 6.4.

Studies 1 and 3 provided empirical support for the notion that vulnerable expression and covert expression represent commonly utilised and theoretically distinct modes of expression for men. Study 1 also identified men's use of mitigated expression (defined as vulnerable expression employed in the context of a strategy designed to reduce the salience of the vulnerability inherent in the communication). Partial support was also found for mitigated expression in Study 3, insofar as all but one mitigated expression strategies loaded onto a single factor. However, these strategies loaded onto

the same factor as vulnerable expression strategies. These results indicated that mitigated expression may be a specialised form of vulnerable expression, which also involved elements of covert expression. More broadly, this suggests that men may combine elements of both vulnerable and covert expression to create new communication strategies. Taken together these results indicated that, although vulnerable expression, covert expression and mitigated expression represent theoretically distinct modes of communicating intimacy, men utilise them in concert and experience them as inseparable in practice. These results also suggested that previous research may have misinterpreted men's use of mitigated expression as a failure to express vulnerable and emotional content when, in actual fact, the use of mitigated expression may represent an alternative method of expressing vulnerable content. Given the preliminary nature of these findings, further investigation into the manner in which men combine elements of vulnerable and covert expression (e.g., in mitigated expression) is warranted.

For a variety of reasons discussed in section 2.3, the present thesis did not make use of sex-based comparisons to draw conclusions about men's friendships (see also Addis & Schwab, 2013; Walker, 1994). Therefore, no conclusions can be drawn about the degree to which men's and women's homosocial friendships operate in a similar or different manner. However, it is noteworthy that many of the behaviours endorsed by men were similar to the cultural stereotype of behaviours typical in women's homosocial friendships (Fehr, 2004; Helgeson et al., 1987). For example, results indicated that potentially the most important defining factor of a friendship for men is maintaining a sense of unspoken emotional connectedness with, and understanding of, one's friend; as well as a strong sense of acceptance, warmth and mutual enjoyment of interactions (Study 1). Participants also reported that they use several strategies to achieve this understanding, including vulnerable disclosure and shared experiences

(especially emotional experiences) (Study 1). These core aspects of what defines friendship for male participants appear to be similar to the emotion centred prototype of a female homosocial friendship (Levy, 2005; Tannen, 1991). In addition, it may be that even vulnerability mitigation strategies identified by men (Studies 1 and 3) are congruent with the prototypical female-female friendship. To use cover activities as an example, the concept of men meeting for the explicit reason of having a beer with the implicit expectation of engaging in vulnerable expression may be analogous to women meeting for the explicit reason of having a coffee with the same implicit expectation. Possibly the greatest exception is the possible role that validation of masculinity appears to play in facilitating men's use of vulnerable expression (see section 6.4 for further discussion of validation of masculinity). Additionally, the finding in Study 3 that men rate vulnerable expression as significantly less likely to occur in homosocial friendships than covert expression does not match the cultural stereotype of women's homosocial friendships.

Taken together, the results of the present thesis clearly point to a need to examine men's and women's homosocial friendships with the aim of finding equivalence, as opposed to seeking out differences. Results of the present thesis, as well as research supporting the gender similarities hypothesis (see Hyde, 2005) suggest that the manner in which men and women enact friendship is likely to be more similar than different. To date, the present author has been able to identify only one sex-comparison based study featuring a statistical test of equivalence (Ball, Cribbie, & Steele, 2013). Although this study was not in the area of gender, sex and communication, it provides a strong argument for the use of tests of equivalence in sex-difference based research. This, in addition to the growing number of studies supporting the gender similarities hypothesis (including the present thesis), indicates that further investigations of sex equivalence are likely to be fruitful.

6.3 The Relative Efficacy of Vulnerable and Covert Expression in Developing Intimacy

As discussed in section 2.6, research question 3 asked: what is the relative contribution of vulnerable versus covert expression in fostering meaningful subjective intimacy in men's friendships? Studies 1 and 3 provided data relevant to this research question. As discussed previously, in Study 1, men reported that they found both vulnerable and covert expression important to the creation and communication of intimacy in their friendships. Some men indicated that covert expression was a more meaningful form of intimate expression because it frequently relied on behavioural evidence of commitment to the relationship; therefore rendering vulnerable expression subjectively important, but occasionally redundant. In Study 3, factor analysis was used to identify two main groups of expression strategies: vulnerable and mitigated expression, and covert expression. The intimacy and likelihood ratings of these factors were then compared. Analysis found that, although covert expression strategies were rated as less intimate than vulnerable and mitigated expression strategies, covert expression was rated as more likely to occur as part of a natural male homosocial interaction. Importantly, the size of the difference between these two expression factors for likelihood ratings was almost twice the size of the difference for intimacy. Despite this, likelihood ratings for all vulnerable and mitigated communication strategies were rated above the midpoint on a 7 point Likert scale (except for direct disclosure of affection, which was rated an average of .05 scale points below the midpoint). Therefore, vulnerable and mitigated expression appeared to be viewed as moderately likely to occur in men's homosocial friendships. This is in contradiction to previous research which has suggested that men actively avoid vulnerable expression (e.g., Levy, 2005; O'Neil, 1981b, 2008; Tannen, 1991).

These results suggest that, although covert expression was rated as less intimate than vulnerable and mitigated expression by men (for similar past findings, see O'Neil, 1981b, 2008; Reis et al., 1985), this deficit may be compensated for by the substantially higher likelihood that men will utilise covert expression in everyday interactions. This further supports the notion that men use the different modes of expression for different intimacy related purposes. Specifically, covert expression is likely used to communicate intimacy as part of regular friendship interactions, while vulnerable expression is likely used less frequently to communicate a more intense level of intimacy when covert expression strategies are deemed insufficient (e.g., during periods of emotional turbulence). Results of Study 1 suggested that covert expression (and mitigated expression) may be used as a lead-in to direct vulnerable expression, or to test a listener for possible negative reactions to vulnerable expression. In this way, covert expression may also act as a precursor to vulnerable expression. Overall, men's less frequent use of vulnerable expression may not indicate that they do not value this form of intimate expression or that it does not result in meaningful intimacy for men. Rather, it may indicate that men merely require vulnerable expression less frequently due to the regular, yet more subtle, communication of intimacy through covert expression.

Contrary to expectations, subscription to male role norms appeared to have no moderating effect on men's intimacy and likelihood ratings for vulnerable and covert expression. Individual subscription to male roles did not form a theme in the thematic map developed in Study 1; and analyses in Study 3 uniformly found non-significant effects for the Male Role Norms Scale. This finding was in contradiction to previous research which has suggested that the core tenets of the masculine role are incompatible with vulnerable expression, and therefore prohibit men from engaging in this mode of expression (e.g., Levant et al., 2014; O'Neil, 1981a; O'Neil, 1981b, 2008; Pleck, 1995).

The present research attempted to expand on past research examining male role norm subscription and endorsement of vulnerable expression (e.g., Dindia & Allen, 1992; Pederson & Vogel, 2007; Robertson, Woodford, Lin, Danos, & Hurst, 2001) by modifying probes to be more specific (i.e., examining both intimacy and likelihood) and to focus on a naturalistic setting. This alternate framing may have contributed to the emergence of the unexpected results found in relation to individual subscription to male role norms. In particular, likelihood ratings asked participants to rate the likelihood of two close male friends, external to themselves, engaging in communication behaviour. This external focus was utilised to avoid social desirability biases, and to attempt to tap the norm driven nature of communication behaviour (which participants may not take into account when rating their own behaviour introspectively). However, it may also have drawn on men's perceptions of broad societal values and norms around gendered behaviour, as opposed to men's personal subscription to these norms. The present research also enquired about concrete communication behaviours (e.g., disclosing an emotional problem to a friend) as opposed to less specific modes of expression (e.g., talking with a friend). This may also have contributed to the discrepancy between the present research and past results. This indicates a need to further investigate the possible role that subscription to traditional male role norms at a societal and cultural level has on men's ratings of intimacy and likelihood of various communication strategies, over and above men's individual subscription to male role norms. Ideally, future research would continue to use items designed to target specific communication behaviours, as opposed to more broad modes of expression.

6.4 The Role of Contextual Factors and Subscription to Masculine Role Norms in Facilitating Men's Vulnerable Expression

As discussed in section 2.6, research question 4 asked: in what way do contextual factors impact men's endorsement of vulnerable expression; and how is this relationship

affected by subscription to male role norms? Study 2 aimed to address this question by investigating the moderating role of contextual factors in men's endorsement of vulnerable expression. A vignette was used to manipulate the presence or absence of perceived similarity, validation of masculinity and cover activities, and men were asked to rate their endorsement of vulnerable expression in this context on a range of dimensions, including: comfort, awkwardness, likelihood of use, and oddness. The degree to which these relationships were moderated by subscription to traditional male role norms was also examined.

Of the contextual factors examined, perceived similarity was found to have the most impact in facilitating men's endorsement of vulnerable expression, followed by validation of masculinity. When subscription to male role norms was low, the presence of perceived similarity was typically associated with more favourable perceptions of vulnerable disclosure, most frequently when masculinity was also validated. When subscription to male role norms was moderate, the presence of perceived similarity was associated with more favourable perceptions of vulnerable disclosure, independent of other contextual factors. When subscription to male role norms was high, the presence of perceived similarity was typically associated with more favourable perceptions of vulnerable disclosure, but only when masculinity was invalidated. Contrary to expectations, cover activities had no effect on outcome items. Some effects were not moderated by subscription to male role norms; however these conformed to the patterns of significance described hitherto.

Broadly, these results support the notion that contextual factors have the power to facilitate or undermine men's endorsement of gender role discrepant communication behaviours, such as vulnerable expression. However, the finding that cover activities did not impact outcome variables was unexpected. Similarly, the finding that validation of masculinity only impacted vulnerable expression in specific contextual

configurations, rather than independently, was unexpected. It may be that these factors do not act independently because validation of masculinity and cover activities are not predetermined contextual factors; but that they actually represent implicit communication strategies that men promote or elicit indirectly through their behaviour. In this way, a man who wishes to engage in vulnerable expression may be able to implicitly engineer a social situation in such a way that his masculinity is able to be validated and/or a cover activity is available. Thus, validation of masculinity and cover activities may have a changeable, bidirectional relationship with men's behaviour rather than a static, unidirectional one. Conversely, the degree of perceived similarity between individuals in a given interaction is largely dependent on the similarities identified in interactions preceding it, and therefore may be unchangeable in a short term capacity.

Additionally, this pattern of results may be explained by conceptualising perceived similarity as having a direct effect on men's perceptions of vulnerable disclosure, while validation of masculinity plays more of an indirect, moderating role. This conceptualisation explains why validation of masculinity primarily appeared to act by providing a context for perceived similarity to facilitate more favourable perceptions of vulnerable disclosure. However, further research is required to determine whether basing operationalisations of contextual factors on these new conceptualisations gives rise to a different pattern of results.

Another surprising finding was that the impact of contextual factors on endorsement ratings for vulnerable expression was not moderated by subscription to male role norms in the manner expected. Previous literature (e.g., Eisler, 1995; Englar-Carlson & Stevens, 2006; O'Neil, 2008) has suggested that, as subscription to male role norms increased, men are more threatened by, and therefore less likely to endorse, vulnerable expression (see also section 2.2). However, results suggested that the impact of each contextual factor changes in both strength and direction at each level of

subscription to male role norms in a non-linear fashion. This finding could be explained by the theoretical underlying mechanisms of each of the contextual factors. Although validation of masculinity may facilitate the expression of vulnerability by mitigating gender role norms (especially those centring on toughness and stoicism, as well as antifemininity), perceived similarity appears to act more through the strength of the emotional bond between friends. It is possible that this may be why perceived similarity remained a strong predictor of vulnerable expression endorsement at all levels of subscription to the masculine role.

The reason why validation of masculinity generally influenced vulnerable expression at high and low levels of male role norm subscription, but not at moderate levels, is less readily apparent. It is possible men with low male role norm subscription attended to cues relating to both perceived similarity and validation of masculinity when forming judgements of vulnerable disclosure, while men with high subscription focussed more prominently on validation of masculinity. In this way, the cues for decision making may be different for men with high and low subscription, but each results in significant validation of masculinity effects. Additionally, it is possible that men who do not subscribe strongly to masculine role norms are equally vigilant to gender role norm violations due to past experiences of social punishments for these violations, despite the fact that they don't personally subscribe to these norms. Therefore, mitigating contextual factors may play a similar role in perceptions of vulnerable expression when subscription to masculinity is low (as opposed to high), despite the absence of personal endorsement of these norms. Further, men with moderate subscription to masculine gender role norms may be less sensitive to social sanctions associated with gender role norm violations (due to a lower level of personal experience with, or fear of, violating masculine role norms); and therefore contextual

factors related to gendered behaviour have less impact on their endorsement of gender role discrepant behaviour.

An alternative explanation is that men with low and high subscription to masculine role norms tended to assume that the character described in the vignette subscribed strongly to masculine role norms; while men who had a moderate subscription to masculine role norms viewed the character to be less bound by these norms. Related to this, it is possible that responses were similar when subscription to masculine gender role norms was high and low because men with lower subscription to these norms responded based on how they assumed the majority of men would react in the described situation, rather than how they personally would have perceived the situation. Although all of these interpretations provide plausible explanations for the unexpected results found, future research is required to test them.

In particular, future research would likely benefit from testing the degree to which contextual factors operate through different underlying mechanisms (e.g., moderating the strength of the relationship versus the impact of masculine role norm prohibitions). It is noteworthy that the present findings mirror that of some past research which indicates that, in some samples, less subscription to masculine role norms is associated with poorer self-perceived interpersonal competence (Lease et al., 2013). Future research would also likely benefit from conducting manipulation checks regarding the degree to which participants perceive imagined characters to subscribe to masculine role norms (if a vignette paradigm is used) in order to ensure that a participant's own level of subscription to masculine role norms is properly operationalised. Alternatively, future vignette paradigms may benefit from asking participants to imagine themselves in the described situation. However, this methodological choice runs the risk of activating social desirability bias, inaccurate behavioural forecasting, inaccurate heuristics based on self-perception, and defensiveness associated with a desire to

portray conformity to masculine role norms. Broadly, the results of the present thesis' investigation into the influence of contextual factors indicate that the moderating role of subscription to masculine gender role norms on the relationship between contextual factors and endorsement of gender role discrepant modes of intimate expression is more complex than a linear relationship.

6.5 Implications and Future Directions

Section 2.3 discussed several theoretical perspectives on the degree to which men engage in intimate expression, the degree to which masculinity influences this expression, and the form that this influence takes. Broadly, these theories can be divided into three categories: (a) those that suggest men's friendships do not feature intimate expression; (b) those that suggest men express intimacy using covert, masculinity-congruent strategies; (c) and those that suggest men express intimacy using vulnerable, masculinity-discrepant strategies. The overall results of the present thesis do not support the assertions of the first category of theories and research. Studies concluding that men's homosocial friendships lack intimate expression based on the finding that men self-report engaging in self-disclosure less than women (e.g., Fehr, 2004; Reisman, 1990) fail to acknowledge the subjective importance that men appear to place on covert and non-verbal modes of expression (see Study 1 and Study 3). In addition, research assuming this theoretical orientation is unable to account for the fact that men endorse vulnerable disclosure under the right contextual circumstances (see Study 1 and Study 2). Similarly, research suggesting that men do not value emotionality in their communication (Edwards & Hamilton, 2004; Tannen, 1991), and that they tend to consider homosocial friends to be replaceable (Levy, 2005), is unable to account for the findings emphasising the importance of emotional communication strategies and endorsement of vulnerable expression in the three studies of the present thesis.

Throughout the studies in the present thesis, it was consistently found that men value vulnerable modes of expression and report voluntarily engaging in, and endorsing, uninhibited vulnerable expression in the right context. These findings contradict some of the assertions of the Normative Male Alexithymia hypothesis (Levant, 1995; Levant et al., 2006; Levant et al., 2009), which suggests that masculine socialisation leaves men (especially those who subscribe strongly to masculine gender role norms) with an innate deficit in their ability to process and express emotional content. It is possible that previous research which has found empirical evidence supporting the tenets of the Normative Male Alexithymia hypothesis (e.g., Gupta et al., 2013; Levant et al., 2014; Yeung et al., 2015) did so due to the activation of gender based stereotypes associated with methodologies which utilise questions about men's interactions with other men that do not allow for elaboration or explanation (see Walker, 1994). Study 1 demonstrated that, when asked questions about specific interactions, and when given the opportunity to elaborate, men frequently reported engaging in and enjoying emotion based vulnerable expression.

Data found in the present thesis supports both the notion that men utilise covert expression to communicate closeness with effects on subjective intimacy similar to that of vulnerable expression (see section 2.3.2), and that they willingly engage in uninhibited vulnerable disclosure (see section 2.3.3). Implications for research discussing covert expression will be discussed first. The results of the present thesis lend strong support to theoretical constructs related to covert expression, especially covert intimacy (Swain, 1989, 2001), side by side intimacy (Levant, 1992, 1999; Moore, 1991) and action love (Pollack, 1999). Previous research has been divided about whether covert expression is equally effective in fostering and communicating intimacy as vulnerable expression. Results of the present thesis suggest that men's use of covert expression is associated with meaningful subjective intimacy (Study 1), and that what

covert expression strategies lack in overt intimacy, they compensate for with likelihood of use (Study 3). These findings support research which theorises that covert expression is equal in efficacy to vulnerable expression in fostering relationships characterised by intimacy (e.g., Cameron, 2007; Englar-Carlson, 2006; Monsour, 1992; Parks & Floyd, 1996; Pollack, 1999; Swain, 1989, 2001; Wood & Inman, 1993).

Conversely, the results of the present thesis are incompatible with theoretical assertions that covert expression is a less effective form of intimate expression than vulnerable expression (e.g., Bank & Hansford, 2000; Levant, 1995; Levant et al., 2009; Levy, 2005; Pleck, 1981; Pleck, Sonenstein, & Ku, 1994; Reis et al., 1985; Thompson & Pleck, 1995). Within the present research, specific efforts were made to avoid imposing a definition of intimacy on participants that privileged vulnerable expression over covert expression in order to minimise the possibility of inadvertently creating biases in demand characteristics of the study materials or participants' responses. Additionally, direct comparisons to women's friendships were avoided where possible in order to prevent comparisons between two potentially incomparable groups, and to circumvent the assumption that women's friendships represent the ideal embodiment of communication. Research suggesting that covert expression represents a less intimate form of expression than vulnerable expression typically does not make such methodological considerations. Therefore, it is possible that some past research has concluded that covert expression is less intimate than vulnerable expression based on narrow definitions of intimacy which privilege vulnerable expression (and related methodological designs which do not allow for endorsement of covert expression), and improper interpretations of sex-comparisons.

Data presented in the current thesis also support research which suggests that men express homosocial closeness through uninhibited vulnerable expression, despite the fact that this form of expression is often considered masculine gender role discrepant. In

particular, these findings are congruent with authors such as Walker (1994), Hyde (2005), Dindia and Allen (1992), and Zell et al. (2015) who espoused the gender similarities hypothesis. Similarly, the present research also aligns with empirical findings that men often endorse masculine gender role discrepant definitions of intimacy and closeness (e.g., Helgeson et al., 1987; Monsour, 1992; Parks & Floyd, 1996). In particular, results of Studies 1 and 3 indicated that men placed a high value on uninhibited vulnerable expression in relation to intimacy producing potential. Further, Study 2 indicated that men endorse the use of vulnerable expression, especially when specific situational factors were present. This lends support to the gender similarities hypothesis. These findings also support the notion that previous deficit-based research has over-emphasised statistically significant differences with small effect sizes; and that the conclusions of such research are influenced by the assumption that men find vulnerable expression inherently aversive.

The present research also has implications for research on masculinity, and the role of adherence to masculine role norms in men's communication. Specifically, the results presented in this thesis provide partial support for the notion that the masculine role can play an inhibitory role in men's use of vulnerable communication. However, the degree to which this effect is associated with subscription to masculine norms at an individual versus cultural level remains unclear, and requires further investigation. Importantly, some data discussed in the present thesis also indicates that men willingly engage in uninhibited vulnerable expression, despite masculine role norm prohibitions. Thus, theories of masculinity suggesting that men lack the capacity or impetus to engage in vulnerable expression (e.g., Edwards & Hamilton, 2004; Tannen, 1991) are not supported by the present results. However, the present research also indicated that the relationship that masculinity has with men's communication is likely to be complex and multifaceted, as opposed to linear (see especially Study 2). This likely reflects the

complex process of social construction and reconstruction of the meaning of masculinity. The nature of this complexity may be further captured by the use of longitudinal, in situ methodologies in future research (see also Section 6.6). The results of the present thesis also add to literature on the possible harmful effects of masculinity. A large body of prior research (e.g., Eisler & Blalock, 1991; Moeller et al., 2011; O'Neil, 2008) has suggested that men with a strong subscription to masculine gender role norms avoid engaging in vulnerable expression. However, the present results also suggest that these men still achieve intimacy through covert expression (see especially Study 3).

Finally, there is a dearth of research examining gender, communication and intimacy in gay and bisexual men. Much previous research has addressed the issue of homophobia, typically suggesting that homophobia serves to legitimise heterosexual men's masculinity by further distancing them from perceptions of femininity (e.g., Allen & Smith, 2011; Barnes, 2012; Bowley, 2013; Carnaghi et al., 2011; Cheryan et al., 2015; Luyt, 2005). However, little attention has been paid to how gay and bisexual men construct and define masculinity. Similarly, little research has been conducted into how gay and bisexual men express homosocial intimacy. The results of the present research do not speak to how these phenomena might differ for the non-heterosexual individuals. However, several hypotheses are plausible. Given that much past research suggests that homosexuality is commonly associated with femininity and is therefore an inherent violation of the masculine gender role; it is possible that gay and bisexual men have a reduced concern with further violating the masculine role. If this were correct, gay and bisexual men may be more willing to express closeness through gender role discrepant modes of expression, and require less mitigating contextual factors to do this. Alternatively, if gay and bisexual men perceive that homosexual behaviour is viewed as inherently opposed to masculinity, they may feel they have to strive even harder to

achieve masculinity; thus making their behaviours more tightly bound by gender role conformity restrictions on intimate expression. It is likely that contextual factors would also play a role here, such as whether the individual was interacting with a heterosexual or non-heterosexual man, and whether the individual believed their interaction partner may mistake a gender role discrepant platonic expression of intimacy as a sign of romantic interest. Future research would benefit greatly from further investigations into such topics.

6.5.1 Implications for clinical psychology.

The results of the present thesis have important implications for clinical psychology. The association between subscription to masculine gender role norms and mental health difficulties, as well as negative attitudes towards help seeking, has been well documented (e.g., Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Courtenay, 2000a, 2000b, 2003; Hammer et al., 2013; Mahalik, Good, & Englar-Carlson, 2003; Robertson & Fitzgerald, 1992; Rochlen & O'Brien, 2002; Sánchez et al., 2013; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991; Sierra Hernandez et al., 2014; Vogel et al., 2014; Wong & Rochlen, 2005). Additionally, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013a) found that suicide was the leading cause of death in men aged 15 to 45 in 2011 (see also Degney et al., 2012). Related to this, in 2010, Australian men were 3.4 times more likely to die by suicide than Australian women. This placed Australia in the top 10 countries with the highest ratio of male to female suicides in the world (Kölves, Kumpula, & De Leo, 2013). Several other studies have demonstrated that men in countries around the world are increasingly suffering from mental health problems which are compounded by the avoidance of help seeking often thought to be associated with the masculine gender role (e.g., Berger, Addis, Green, Mackowiak, & Goldberg, 2013; Degney et al., 2012; Eisler, 1995; Good & Wood, 1995; Graef et al., 2010; Jeffries & Grogan, 2012; Kölves et al., 2013; Levant et al., 2013; Rochlen & O'Brien, 2002; Sears et al., 2009; Sierra Hernandez et al., 2014;

Sloan et al., 2015; Vogel et al., 2014; Yousaf et al., 2015). Player et al. (2015) identified that aspects of the male role, such as unhelpful attitudes about stoicism, were identified by male survivors of suicide attempts as risk factors for suicide.

A small number of studies have investigated the utility of altering therapeutic approaches to increase the degree of congruence with masculine role norms. For example, Syzdek, Addis, Green, Whorley, and Berger (2014) created a version of motivational interviewing which incorporated gender role theory and aimed to address men's reluctance to engage in help seeking. Authors found that, although this approach appeared to increase informal help seeking (e.g., from friends), it did not affect men's engagement with helping professionals (e.g., psychologists). Although these results did not demonstrate an impact on men's engagement with professional health services, they do suggest that men's attitudes towards, and willingness to engage in, help seeking may be improved through the use of interventions that specifically take into account the demands of the masculine role. Similarly, McKelley and Rochlen (2010) found that men reported a greater willingness to engage in therapy when it was framed as executive coaching, as opposed to traditional therapy with a psychologist. Authors suggested that the more masculine nature of executive coaching may be the reason for this difference. Other researchers (e.g., Englar-Carlson & Stevens, 2006; Mahalik, Good, Tager, Levant, & Mackowiak, 2012; Player et al., 2015) have also discussed the potential value of integrating knowledge about masculine gender role norms into therapeutic approaches to improve men's attitudes towards, and willingness to engage in, psychological help seeking.

The results of the present thesis may have some applications for future research investigating the effect of masculinised therapeutic approaches on men's attitudes towards, and willingness to engage in, psychological therapy. However, before discussing these, it is important to emphasise that one of the central findings of this

thesis was that men, in many circumstances, are comfortable engaging in uninhibited vulnerable expression (which is typically a requirement of psychological interventions). As such, it is important that clinicians do not make the assumption that their male clients will be inherently avoidant of emotional discussion. In Study 2, perceived similarity was found to regularly play a facilitating role in men's endorsement of vulnerable expression. As such, therapist efforts to explore and emphasise similarities between themselves and their clients may be associated with clients' greater willingness to divulge vulnerable information. This may foster a sense of familiarity, comfort, and trust which in turn may foster vulnerable expression (see also Study 1). Within the literature on clinical psychology, a great deal of research has been published highlighting the importance of common factors (factors stemming from a positive relationship between a client and their therapist which are common to all therapeutic approaches, such as interpersonal warmth) in achieving positive client outcomes (Asay & Lambert, 1999; Lambert & Barley, 2001; Lambert & Bergin, 1994; Messer & Wampold, 2002). Given that, in Study 1, perceived similarity was discussed in the context of trust, dependability and warmth, it is possible that working to foster a sense of similarity between clients and therapists may enhance clients' willingness to engage in vulnerable expression in therapy through the same mechanisms as common factors. Future research will likely benefit from testing this hypothesis directly.

Validation of masculinity was also found to be a factor which enhances men's endorsement of vulnerable expression (especially when perceived similarity is also present). Therapeutic approaches seeking to increase men's likelihood of engaging in vulnerable expression through incorporation of knowledge about masculine gender role norms may benefit from including elements which aim to implicitly validate men's adherence to such norms. For example, allowing men the opportunity to discuss topics which validate their masculinity prior to engaging in vulnerable disclosure (which may

detract from men's sense of successful embodiment of masculinity); or conducting therapy in a context which is more congruent with male role norms (e.g., a workshop or sporting setting) may facilitate the depth of, and comfort with vulnerable expression, especially in men either low or high in subscription to masculine role norms (see also Study 2). Further research into the integration of validation of masculinity into therapy is required in order to investigate this hypothesis.

As noted in section 2.2, many harmful outcomes are associated with cultural adoption of traditional masculine role norms, both when men successfully embody these norms, and when they fail to. It is possible that therapy with men who experience these negative outcomes may be enhanced by in-depth discussions about aspects of the male role that are useful to men's mental health (e.g., determination), and which are detrimental (e.g., a drive to be dominant and independent from others, avoidance of help seeking). In this way, men would have the opportunity to create a new, less detrimental, self-definition of what it means to be a real man. In addition, drawing upon the aspects of help seeking that are congruent with the masculine role (e.g., striving towards independence and control), and utilising a strengths-based approach more generally, may enhance men's comfort and engagement with the therapeutic process. However, given the potentially vulnerable nature of this content, it would be important to reserve this aspect of therapy for after rapport had been well established and when clients were comfortable engaging in vulnerable expression.

Additionally, given that covert expression is a more frequently used form of expression for men than vulnerable expression (see Studies 1 and 3), it may be useful for therapists to make a conscious effort to engage men in covert forms of expression, especially in the beginning phase of therapy. This may include strategies such as using humour, participating in shared activities that are enjoyable and relevant to therapy, or discussing mutually enjoyed activities. Using covert forms of expressions may assist

with rapport, and help to build trust and emotional connectedness (which were identified as the core aspects of friendship by men in Study 1) more efficiently than if therapists attempted to elicit intense vulnerable expression from the beginning of therapeutic intervention. Trust and emotional connectedness are also important aspects of the working alliance which, in turn, has been associated with better therapeutic outcomes (Castonguay, Constantino, & Holtforth, 2006; Lambert & Barley, 2001; Messer & Wampold, 2002). Future research is required to investigate this further.

An interesting discrepancy exists between prior research on the impact of social contact on men's mental health and the results of the present study. Specifically, prior research has demonstrated that aspects of the masculine role associated with social isolation (such as restrictive emotionality) are associated with poorer mental health outcomes (Good & Wood, 1995; Möller-Leimkühler, 2003; Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson, 2012). This may suggest that men feel disconnected or unsupported within their friendships. However, the results of the present thesis suggest that men find their friendships, and the modes of expression within them, to be satisfying. The positive impact of social support on wellbeing is well documented and is not in question (Karademas, 2006). However, the results of the present thesis may point to a need for those having contact with men at risk of poor mental health to acknowledge, honour and explore masculine gender role congruent methods of expressing intimacy; rather than assuming that men cannot feel adequately supported unless they are engaging in vulnerable expression. Related to this, if men do require more social support, it may be important for mental health workers to encourage increased social support and contact through both vulnerable and covert modes of expression, rather than focussing only on vulnerable expression. Importantly, a mental health worker's approach should be tailored to the preferences of the individual, and sex-based assumptions should be avoided. The results of the present research provide a starting point of options to

explore for men who require more social contact, but who are not comfortable using exclusively vulnerable modes of expression.

6.6 Limitations and Recommendations

The implications of the present thesis must be considered in light of its limitations. Specific limitations of each study are elaborated upon in the relevant discussion sections. The largest limitation of the present thesis is that none of the investigations were conducted in situ. The decision was made to conduct studies in the laboratory setting to allow for greater experimental control. However, it is possible that men's self-report may be inaccurate, or that experimenters were inadvertently focussing on aspects of men's homosocial interactions that were not subjectively important to men. Conducting in situ studies and behavioural observation is an extremely time intensive process, and the data gathered are frequently difficult to interpret. Despite this, a small number of high quality in situ studies have been conducted in this area (e.g., Thurnell-Read, 2012). Importantly, none of the data presented in these in situ studies contradicted those presented in the present thesis. This lack of contrary evidence notwithstanding, readers must not assume the findings of the present study are fully representative of the manner in which men's homosocial interactions occur in an everyday context. Future research in this area may benefit from detailed qualitative analysis of men's interactions with close male friends in a naturalistic setting. In order to sample both covert and vulnerable expression, it would be important that observation be conducted in as unobtrusive a manner as possible. The use of prospective sampling and recording equipment (instead of a researcher being present and possibly unintentionally influencing the interaction) may assist in the achievement of this goal.

In addition, research conducted as part of the present thesis utilised samples of heterosexual men from Western Cultures (primarily Australian), who were generally aged between 20 and 50 years. The decision was made to sample from this population

in order to reduce confounding effects based on differences in age/cohort, culture, and sexual orientation. However, because of this less heterogeneous sampling choice, replications of the present research must be conducted in a wide range of samples before generalisability can be inferred. In particular, non-heterosexual men were excluded from the present studies. The unique views of this subpopulation of men would have been inadequately addressed within the scope of present research. Therefore, future research would benefit from an investigation into the manner in which the phenomena discussed in the present research operate in a sample of non-heterosexual men. In addition, the present sample was comprised of primarily young, well educated, affluent men. It is possible that men from different backgrounds may construct masculinity and intimacy differently. For example, older men with lower socio-economic statuses may have a view of masculinity which more strongly prioritises traditional values, achievement and providing for others. Thus, while the present research provides a useful insight into the constructs of interest in the sample gathered, it cannot be assumed that this is uniform across all men.

As with all methods of enquiry, there are limitations associated with the qualitative and vignette based designs that were utilised in the present study. Data collected using qualitative methods of analysis can be difficult to interpret and are potentially at greater risk of being influenced by researcher bias than other methods of enquiry. For this reason, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used in the present thesis. In addition, several strategies were put in place to reduce the likelihood of researcher bias influencing study results (see Study 1). However, despite these safeguards, it is possible the analysis of data collected in Study 1 was not totally representative of the participants' subjective understanding of friendship phenomena. In the same vein, quantitative methodologies can result in misleading data if constructs are poorly operationalised, if outcome variables focus on irrelevant aspects of a

phenomenon, or if a design is created based on biases or assumptions. Vignette studies can be compromised when participants: have difficulty imagining themselves in the described situation, are not able to accurately forecast behaviour based on an imagined scenario, or lack insight. As discussed in the literature review, as well as within the studies, the present research featured active strategies to ensure constructs were operationalised as closely as possible to men's subjective experience, to focus on aspects of interaction and intimacy that men deemed subjectively important, and to minimise the reliance of the studies' methodologies on untested assumptions. However, it is likely that the methodology utilised in the present research did not approximate a male-male friendship experience in a completely accurate manner. For this reason, future research projects should attempt to answer similar research questions using different methodologies in order to provide convergent evidence.

6.7 Summary

The nature of communication in men's homosocial friendships has been the source of substantial debate over several decades. In particular, past authors have disagreed regarding the degree to which the traditional masculine gender ideology precludes men from experiencing satisfying intimacy within these relationships. Further, previous research was divided regarding the degree to which men utilised vulnerable (versus covert) expression, the impact that contextual factors had on men's use of expression strategies, and the degree to which covert expression represented an effective and meaningful strategy for creating and communicating intimacy in men's homosocial friendships. Much of the previous literature examining men's communication made conclusions based on the assumption that vulnerable expression represents the ideal form of communication, and used women's styles of interacting as the benchmark against which to measure men's interaction styles. In this way, much

previous research did not take account of men's subjective experiences in assessing the utility of men's modes of intimate expression.

The present thesis attempted to address the research questions remaining in this area, while also attempting to avoid assumptions made in previous research, through three studies. Study 1 utilised a qualitative methodology to examine the modes of expression men reported utilising in their close male friendships and the degree to which men felt these fostered and communicated subjective intimacy. Study 2 used a vignette design to test the degree to which the presence or absence of contextual factors (perceived similarity, validation of masculinity, and a cover activity) influenced men's endorsement of vulnerable expression. Study 3 used a vignette design to determine the degree to which men rate expression strategies as inherently intimate and likely to occur naturally in male-male friendships based on whether they are covert or vulnerable in nature. Study 3 also aimed to determine whether expression strategies fell into the factor structure discussed in previous literature.

Taken together, the results of the present thesis suggested that men appear to commonly engage in and value both uninhibited vulnerable expression and covert expression. Covert expression appeared to be utilised more frequently in men's friendships, and was viewed as being sufficient in sustaining satisfying intimacy within a friendship. Vulnerable expression appeared to be used less frequently, but emerged in multiple datasets as representing a more intense communication of intimacy. For this reason, vulnerable expression appeared to be used primarily when one member of a friendship group was undergoing emotional distress, or if covert expression was perceived as communicating an insufficient intensity of intimacy. Results indicated that the less frequent use of vulnerable expression was due to a preference as opposed to an inability to engage in this behaviour. However, some results suggested that one reason for men's less frequent use of vulnerable expression was to avoid violating masculine

role norms. Importantly, contextual factors (namely, perceived similarity and validation of masculinity) were found to facilitate men's endorsement of vulnerable expression. It is possible these factors had such an effect because they decreased the salience of, or perceived risk associated with, violations of gender role norms. However, the nature of the relationship between subscription to masculine role norms and the effect of contextual factors on endorsement of vulnerable expression was unexpected and, as such, further research is required to clarify this.

Overall, these results support literature suggesting that men express intimacy in homosocial friendships using both vulnerable and covert expression. It also suggests that vulnerable and covert expression appear to achieve satisfying subjective intimacy through slightly different, yet complimentary mechanisms. Covert expression appears to function through higher frequency of use, while vulnerable expression functions through more intense displays of intimacy. The present findings also provide partial support to research suggesting that vulnerable expression between men may be impaired by masculine role norm prohibitions. However, current results also indicated that the influence of these prohibitions may be modifiable through contextual factors. Broadly, the present thesis suggests that, although men may express homosocial intimacy in ways that are not traditionally associated with intimacy, these methods appear to result in homosocial relationships that are characterised by a deep sense of subjective intimacy and emotional connectedness. For this reason, all forms of intimate expression should be considered useful in the creation and communication of intimacy, and no one mode of expression should be privileged as a better form of intimate expression than alternatives.

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Appendix A

This Appendix contains the information sheet and consent form for Study 1.



School of Psychology

Mt Gravatt campus, Griffith University
176 Messines Ridge Road
Mt Gravatt, Queensland 4122
Australia

Telephone +61 (0)7 3735 3333
Facsimile +61 (0)7 3735 3388

www.griffith.edu.au

Attitudes about Friendship and Interpersonal Communication INFORMATION SHEET

Who is conducting the research

Dr Stefano Occhipinti (Chief Investigator)
School of Psychology, Griffith University
Ph: 3735 3372
Email: s.occhipinti@griffith.edu.au

Dr Caroline Donovan
School of Psychology, Griffith University
Ph: 3735 3401
Email: c.donovan@griffith.edu.au

Ben Walters
School of Psychology, Griffith University
Ph: 3735 3383
Email: b.walters@griffith.edu.au

Why is the research being conducted?

This research is being conducted as part of a PhD being completed by Ben Walters. Much disagreement exists in the scientific literature regarding the different ways that people communicate and, more specifically, the ways that men communicate with each other. The aim of this research project is to investigate these issues further.

What you will be asked to do

You will be asked to answer a few questions about your attitudes and beliefs about friendships, and friendship experiences you have had that have been important to you. The interview will be recorded using a voice recorder (audio only), so if you are not comfortable with this, please let the researcher know. You will also be asked to complete a paper and pencil questionnaire asking your opinion about

various activities, conversation topics and scenarios. This will take a total of approximately one and a half hours.

Selection of potential participants

Because this is a research project about how men interact with one another, only men have been approached to participate. Therefore, the reason you have been asked to participate in this study is because you are male.

The expected benefits of the research

Although this research is not expected to benefit you directly as a participant, it is hoped that your responses can be used to expand scientific knowledge about the various methods men use to communicate friendship to one another. This is an area which is poorly understood by researchers, and this project aims to increase that understanding.

Risks to you

This research is not expected to present any major or likely risks to you as a participant. If you do experience any distress over the course of your participation, you may alert the researcher and stop the interview at any time. If you have any concerns after your participation in the research is complete, please contact any member of the research team listed above.

Recording your interview

The information you provide in your responses is valuable. Some traditional forms of information recording (such as note taking) are not appropriate for use in an interview setting, because they do not allow researchers to record all the information you provide. For this reason, your interview will be recorded in an audio-only format. These recordings will be stored on a password-protected computer, and labelled with a code rather than your name. Only members of the research team (listed above) will have access to these recordings. After your interview, your recording will be transcribed to a written format. This transcription may be conducted by a third party who will be held to the same standards of confidentiality as the research team. In the written transcriptions, your name (if it is said during the interview) will be replaced with a code, so that you cannot be identified. These transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. After your interview has been transcribed and checked, the audio recording will be erased.

The recording of your interview will be used only as a part of this study, and not for any wider use. It is not possible to participate in this research if you do not agree to have your voice recorded.

Your confidentiality

Your privacy is important, and the confidentiality of your responses will be maintained in this research. In order to protect your confidentiality, a code will be used in place of your name for all the demographic information you provide, to label the recording of your interview, and in any written versions of your interview. This means that you will not be able to be identified based on the information you have provided. Also, any information or questionnaire responses that have been

provided by you will be stored in either a locked filing cabinet, or on a password-protected computer.

You will not be identified in any publications that arise from the information you have provided. Any publication that arises from the information you have provided will report group level findings only.

Your participation is voluntary

Your participation in this research is voluntary and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time without providing an explanation, and without any negative consequences to the relationship between you and Griffith University or members of the research team.

Questions and further information

If you wish to obtain further information about this research, you may contact any member of the research team, using the contact details listed above.

The ethical conduct of this research

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. This project has been granted ethical clearance by the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of this research project, please contact the Manager of Research Ethics on 3735 5585 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

Feedback to you

If you wish to receive a summary of the research findings at the completion of this research project, please tick the appropriate box on the consent form and provide an email address to which you would like the summary sent.

Privacy Statement

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and / or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information, consult the University's Privacy Plan at <http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan> or telephone (07) 3735 5585.



School of Psychology

Mt Gravatt campus, Griffith University
176 Messines Ridge Road
Mt Gravatt, Queensland 4122
Australia

Telephone +61 (0)7 3735 3333
Facsimile +61 (0)7 3735 3388

www.griffith.edu.au

Attitudes about Friendship and Interpersonal Communication CONSENT FORM

Research Team

Dr Stefano Occhipinti (Chief Investigator)
School of Psychology, Griffith University
Ph: 3735 3372
Email: s.occhipinti@griffith.edu.au

Dr Caroline Donovan
School of Psychology, Griffith University
Ph: 3735 3401
Email: c.donovan@griffith.edu.au

Ben Walters
School of Psychology, Griffith University
Ph: 3735 3383
Email: b.walters@griffith.edu.au

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and, in particular, have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include a recorded interview about my friendships with other men, as well as a paper and pencil questionnaire (taking a total of approximately one and a half hours);
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand the risks involved;
- I understand that my interview will be audio-taped;
- I understand that only the research team and the transcribing service will have access to this tape;
- I understand that the audio-tape will be erased following transcription;
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;
- I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty;

- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3735 5585 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree to participate in the project.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

- If you wish to receive a summary of the findings at the completion of this research project, please tick the box on the left and provide your email address on the line below.

Appendix B

This appendix contains the semi-structured interview guide utilised in Study 1. This guide was used flexibly, and follow up questions were added as appropriate based on the topics raised by each participant.

- **Tell me about your male friends**
 - What do you like about them?

- **How do you know they are your friends / good friends?**
 - What do you do and what do they do that makes you think they are friends and not just acquaintances?
 - What separates your male friends from your male acquaintances?

- **We've spoken a bit about what goes on in your friendships with other men and how you let each other know that you're friends. Now I'm wondering if (in your ideal world) you're happy with that, or if you would like it to be different?**
 - Are you happy with how close you are to your male friends, or would you like it to be different?
 - Are you happy with the way you and your friends show each other that you're close to one another, or would you like this to be different?

- *I want you to think about a time when you felt really close to one or more of your mates. It doesn't have to be anything out of the ordinary, just a time that confirmed for you that there are some really good mates.*
 - **What happened?**
 - **Why did it make you feel close to your friend/s? / What about that experience made you feel close to your friend/s?**

Appendix C

This Appendix contains the information sheet and consent forms that were used for both Studies 2 and 3. It also contains the information sheets and consent forms for the prize draws in these studies. Because consent forms were presented online, a signature was not required. Instead, the participant continuing on with the survey was taken as an indication of agreement to the conditions stipulated.



School of Psychology

Mt Gravatt campus, Griffith University
176 Messines Ridge Road
Mt Gravatt, Queensland 4122
Australia

Telephone +61 (0)7 3735 3333
Facsimile +61 (0)7 3735 3388

www.griffith.edu.au

Attitudes about Friendship and Interpersonal Communication INFORMATION SHEET

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Dr Stefano Occhipinti (Chief Investigator)
School of Psychology, Griffith University
Ph: 3735 3372
Email: s.occhipinti@griffith.edu.au

Dr Caroline Donovan
School of Psychology, Griffith University
Ph: 3735 3401
Email: c.donovan@griffith.edu.au

Ben Walters
School of Psychology, Griffith University
Ph: 3735 3383
Email: b.walters@griffith.edu.au

Why is the research being conducted?

This research is being conducted as part of a PhD being completed by Ben Walters. Much disagreement exists in the scientific literature regarding the different ways that people communicate and, more specifically, the ways that men communicate with each other. The aim of this research project is to investigate these issues further.

What you will be asked to do

You will be asked to give your opinion on a range of hypothetical scenarios, and respond to some questions about your interaction style. This will take a total of approximately fifteen minutes.

Selection of potential participants

Because this is a research project about how men interact with one another, only men have been approached to participate. Therefore, the reason you have been asked to participate in this study is because you are male.

The expected benefits of the research

Following your completion of this survey, you will be offered the opportunity to submit your details to be entered into a draw to win one of two \$150 gift vouchers to a store of your choosing. These details will be stored separately from your survey responses, and there will be no way which researchers can link your personal details to your survey responses. In this way, your responses in the survey will remain anonymous. Further terms and conditions relating to the prize draw will be presented to you following your completion of the survey. Please note that employees of Griffith University will be ineligible for entry. Additionally, the prize will not be sent to addresses outside Australia.

Additionally, it is hoped that your responses can be used to expand scientific knowledge about the various methods men use to communicate with one another. This is an area which is poorly understood by researchers, and this project aims to increase that understanding.

Risks to you

This research is not expected to present any major or likely risks to you as a participant. If you do experience any distress over the course of your participation, you may stop at any time and/or contact the research team. If you have any concerns after your participation in the research is complete, please contact any member of the research team listed above.

Your confidentiality

Your privacy is important, and the confidentiality of your responses will be maintained in this research. In order to protect your confidentiality, a code will be used in place of your name for all of your responses. Your name will not be associated with the code you are assigned. This means that you will not be able to be identified based on the information you have provided. Also, any information or questionnaire responses that have been provided by you will be stored in either a locked filing cabinet, on a password-protected computer, or on Griffith University servers.

If you choose to enter the prize draw for one of two \$150 gift vouchers to a store of your choosing, your personal details will be stored separately from your survey responses, and there will be no way which researchers can link your personal details to your survey responses. In this way, your responses in the survey will remain anonymous. Additionally, your personal details will not be released to any

individual or entity outside Griffith University (unless required by law) or used for any purpose other than to contact you should you win the draw. If you wish, you may elect to have your details entered into a database which may be used to contact you about future research participation opportunities, in which case your details will be used for this purpose only. Your decision to allow your details to be entered into this database will in no way affect the outcome of the prize draw.

You, as an individual, will not be identified in any publications that arise from the information you have provided. Any publication that arises from the information you have provided will report group level findings only.

Your participation is voluntary

Your participation in this research is voluntary and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time without providing an explanation, and without any negative consequences to the relationship between you and Griffith University or members of the research team.

Questions and further information

If you wish to obtain further information about this research, you may contact any member of the research team, using the contact details listed above.

The ethical conduct of this research

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. This project has been granted ethical clearance by the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of this research project, please contact the Manager of Research Ethics on 3735 5585 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

Privacy Statement

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and / or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information, consult the University's Privacy Plan at <http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan> or telephone (07) 3735 5585.

-- Please click the "next" button to view the consent page --



School of Psychology

Mt Gravatt campus, Griffith University
176 Messines Ridge Road
Mt Gravatt, Queensland 4122
Australia

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Ph: 3735 3401
Email: c.donovan@griffith.edu.au

Ben Walters
School of Psychology, Griffith University
Ph: 3735 3383
Email: b.walters@griffith.edu.au

By continuing on and responding to items in this survey, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and, in particular, have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include responding to hypothetical vignettes, as well as questions about interaction styles and demographic information (taking a total of approximately fifteen minutes);
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand the risks involved;
- I understand that I will be offered the chance to provide my details and enter a draw to win one of two \$150 gift vouchers following my completion of this survey;
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;
- I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3735 5585 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and

- I agree to participate in the project.

-- If you agree to these terms, please click the "next" button --



School of Psychology

Mt Gravatt campus, Griffith University
176 Messines Ridge Road
Mt Gravatt, Queensland 4122
Australia

Telephone +61 (0)7 3735 3333
Facsimile +61 (0)7 3735 3388

www.griffith.edu.au

Attitudes about Friendship and Interpersonal Communication PRIZE DRAW TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Research Team

Dr Stefano Occhipinti (Chief Investigator)
School of Psychology, Griffith University
Ph: 3735 3372
Email: s.occhipinti@griffith.edu.au

Dr Caroline Donovan
School of Psychology, Griffith University
Ph: 3735 3401
Email: c.donovan@griffith.edu.au

Ben Walters
School of Psychology, Griffith University
Ph: 3735 3383
Email: b.walters@griffith.edu.au

When you enter the competition, you accept these terms and conditions of entry. By continuing on and submitting my personal details, I confirm that I have read and understood these terms and conditions and, in particular, have noted that:

- Employees of Griffith University ("the University") are ineligible to enter.
- Entry into the competition is by completing the following form requesting your personal details. These details will be stored separately from your survey responses, and there will be no way which researchers can link your personal details to your survey responses. Only men who have completed the survey will be eligible to enter.
- The first two randomly drawn entries who the University is able to successfully contact via telephone or email will receive an AUD\$150 gift voucher to a store of their choosing.
- The decision of the University is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- The prize is not transferable and cannot be redeemed for cash. The prize is not refundable.
- The competition opens to entries at 21/10/2013 and the competition closes at 30/06/2014. The winner will be drawn at Griffith University, Mt Gravatt Campus. You do not have to be present at the draw to win.

- The winner will be notified by telephone or email by no later than 31/07/2014. If the University is unable to contact you to confirm your details after 4 attempts on 4 separate days, a new winner will be drawn.
- Once the University has contacted the winner and agreed on a suitable postal address, the prize will be mailed to the winner. The prize will not be mailed to addresses outside of Australia.
- The winner releases the University from any and all causes of action, losses, liability, damage, expense (including legal expenses) cost or charge suffered, sustained or in any way incurred by the winner as a result of any loss or damage to any physical property of the winner, or any injury to or death of any person arising out of, or related to or in any way connected with the University or the prize.
- Any winner drawn for the prize who is unable to fulfil all of these terms and conditions will forfeit the prize and another winner will be drawn.

-- If you agree to these terms, please click the "next" button --

Appendix D

This Appendix contains the vignette script for Study 3.

John and Michael are good friends who have known each other for a long time and have a lot of history together. Listed below are a number of hypothetical behaviours that might occur between good friends like John and Michael. These are phrased from John's perspective. Please read each behaviour and rate:

a) how much you believe the behaviour would be indicative of closeness in a friendship like John and Michael's

b) how likely you think it is that good friends like John and Michael would actually engage in the behaviour with one another.

Appendix E

This appendix contains the text for outcome items used in Study 3.

Table E1

Study 3 Outcome Item Text and Hypothesised Mode of Expression

Expression Strategy	Hypothesised Category of Expression	Item Text
Direct Affection	Vulnerable Expression	John tells Michael what a good friend he is the next time the two speak
Problem Disclosure (Ambiguous)	Vulnerable Expression	John confides in Michael fully when he is having a significant personal problem
Problem Disclosure (Direct)	Vulnerable Expression	When John is having a significant personal problem he rings Michael and asks to meet up to talk about it. When they meet, John talks to Michael about the problem
Problem Disclosure (Minimised)	Mitigated Expression	John confides in Michael the next time he is having a significant personal problem, but does not let Michael know how large an impact it is having on him
Problem Disclosure (Cover)	Mitigated Expression	John invites Michael to do some kind of activity together and talks about a significant personal problem he is having during that activity
Problem Disclosure (Minimised + Cover)	Mitigated Expression	John invites Michael to do some kind of activity together and talks about a significant personal problem he is having, during that activity, without letting Michael know how large an impact it is having on him

Direct Affection + Alcohol	Mitigated Expression	The next time he and Michael are both drunk together, John tells Michael what a good friend he is
Shared Activity	Covert Expression	John invites Michael to do an activity that they both enjoy together
Requesting Favour	Covert Expression	John asks Michael for a favour that he knows Michael can help him with
Providing Favour	Covert Expression	The next time Michael needs a favour, John offers to help
Paradoxical Humour	Covert Expression	John teases Michael and engages in banter with him
Conventional Humour	Covert Expression	John uses jokes and humour with Michael that make him laugh, and creates in-jokes with him
Crudeness	Covert Expression	John talks with Michael in an especially crude and blunt way
Physical Gestures	Covert Expression	John uses platonic physical gestures with Michael
Competition	Covert Expression	John engages in friendly competition with Michael in an area that they both enjoy and have a similar ability level
Assumed Intimacy	Covert Expression	John and Michael behave the same way with each other as they would with any other person; but each one assumes the other considers him a close friend (i.e., they just “know”)

Appendix F

This appendix includes the results for analyses examining the interactive effects of intimacy, likelihood, and subscription to the masculine role not included in the main body of Study 3 (see section 5.2.4). Due to their similarity, the results for analyses using the Status, Toughness and Antifemininity subscales of the MRNS as moderators were placed in this appendix to avoid repetition.

Status

In the analysis with the Status subscale of the MRNS entered as the moderator, a significant main effect of Mode of Expression was found; however this was qualified by a significant interaction between Mode of Expression and Dimension of Closeness ($F(1, 171) = 19.48, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .1$). A conditional effects analysis, with the Bonferroni correction applied, was conducted to follow up this interaction. Given that Status was not part of this interaction, all results were evaluated at the mean of Status scores. This analysis indicated that, for Covert Expression, intimacy scores ($EM \text{ Mean} = 5.28; SE = .07$) were significantly lower ($F(1, 171) = 30.44, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .15$) than likelihood scores ($EM \text{ Mean} = 5.64; SE = .06$). For Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression, intimacy scores ($EM \text{ Mean} = 5.79; SE = .06$) were significantly higher ($F(1, 171) = 131.44, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .44$) than likelihood scores ($EM \text{ Mean} = 4.76; SE = .09$). Interestingly, intimacy scores for Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression were significantly higher ($F(1, 171) = 38.8, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .19$) than those for Covert Expression; while likelihood scores for Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression were significantly lower ($F(1, 171) = 100.81, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .37$) than those for Covert Expression.

Significant interactions between Mode of Expression and Status ($F(1, 171) = 10.83, p = .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .06$), as well as between Dimension of Closeness and Status ($F(1, 171) = 8.11, p = .005, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .05$) were also found. However these were not

interpreted, as statistically summarising intimacy and likelihood scores into a composite so that they may be examined at each level of Mode of Expression (or vice versa) did not make theoretical sense. Importantly, the hypothesised interaction between Mode of Expression, Dimension of Closeness, and Status was non-significant ($F(1, 171) = 1.6, p = .21$).

Toughness

In the analysis with the Toughness subscale of the MRNS entered as the moderator, a significant interaction was found between Mode of Expression and Dimension of Closeness ($F(1, 173) = 9.37, p = .003, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .05$). A conditional effects analysis, with the Bonferroni correction applied, was conducted to follow up this interaction. Given that Toughness was not part of this interaction, all results were evaluated at the mean of Toughness scores. This analysis indicated that, for Covert Expression, intimacy scores ($EM \text{ Mean} = 5.28; SE = .07$) were significantly lower ($F(1, 173) = 29.1, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .14$) than likelihood scores ($EM \text{ Mean} = 5.64; SE = .06$). For Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression, intimacy scores ($EM \text{ Mean} = 5.79; SE = .06$) were significantly higher ($F(1, 173) = 131.27, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .43$) than likelihood scores ($EM \text{ Mean} = 4.77; SE = .09$). Interestingly, intimacy scores for Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression were significantly higher ($F(1, 173) = 36.88, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .18$) than those for Covert Expression; while likelihood scores for Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression were significantly lower ($F(1, 173) = 102.61, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .37$) than those for Covert Expression.

A significant interaction between Mode of Expression and Toughness ($F(1, 173) = 6.51, p = .012, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .04$) was also found. However this was not interpreted, as statistically summarising intimacy and likelihood scores into a composite so that this may be examined at each level of Mode of Expression did not make theoretical sense.

Importantly, the hypothesised interaction between Mode of Expression, Dimension of Closeness, and Toughness was non-significant ($F(1, 173) = .03, p = .858$).

Antifemininity

In the analysis with the Antifemininity subscale of the MRNS entered as the moderator, a significant interaction between Mode of Expression and Dimension of Closeness was found ($F(1, 173) = 19.08, p < .001, partial \eta^2 = .01$). A conditional effects analysis, with the Bonferroni correction applied, was conducted to follow up this interaction. Given that Antifemininity was not part of this interaction, all results were evaluated at the mean of Antifemininity scores. This analysis indicated that, for Covert Expression, intimacy scores ($EM\ Mean = 5.28; SE = .07$) were significantly lower ($F(1, 173) = 29.62, p < .001, partial \eta^2 = .15$) than likelihood scores ($EM\ Mean = 5.64; SE = .06$). For Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression, intimacy scores ($EM\ Mean = 5.79; SE = .06$) were significantly higher ($F(1, 173) = 131.5, p < .001, partial \eta^2 = .43$) than likelihood scores ($EM\ Mean = 4.77; SE = .09$). Interestingly, intimacy scores for Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression were significantly higher ($F(1, 173) = 37.59, p < .001, partial \eta^2 = .18$) than those for Covert Expression; while likelihood scores for Vulnerable and Mitigated Expression were significantly lower ($F(1, 173) = 102.55, p < .001, partial \eta^2 = .37$) than those for Covert Expression.

A significant interaction between Mode of Expression and Antifemininity ($F(1, 173) = 9.31, p = .003, partial \eta^2 = .05$) was also found. However this was not interpreted, as statistically summarising intimacy and likelihood scores into a composite so that this may be examined at each level of Mode of Expression did not make theoretical sense. Importantly, the hypothesised interaction between Mode of Expression, Dimension of Closeness, and Antifemininity was non-significant ($F(1, 173) = .16, p = .693$).