Chapter 6

DISCUSSION
The objectives of this research were:

1. To examine whether or not perceived relationship quality determines facets of self and emotional wellbeing

2. To examine the differences of the affect of perceived relationship quality on facets of self and emotional wellbeing, within live-in relationships, romantic relationships, cross-sex friendship, and same-sex friendship

3. To find significant differences, if any, in perceived relationship quality, facets of self, and emotional wellbeing with respect to live-in relationships, romantic relationships, cross-sex friendship, and same-sex friendship

4. To explore the concept of intimate relationships in different types of relationships.

**PERCEIVED RELATIONSHIP QUALITY, FACETS OF SELF, AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING**

The findings of the study show that perceived relationship quality affects facets of self and emotional wellbeing. Stepwise multiple regression analysis shows that in romantic relationships, cross-sex friendship, and same-sex friendship, some of the indicators of perceived relationship quality significantly predict self-esteem, self-disclosure, and emotional wellbeing.

The focus group discussion of the participants who are in a live-in relationship shows that their relationship has influenced them in bringing about self-dependency, a feeling of responsibility, patience, calmness, and emotional stability. Self-dependency and a feeling of responsibility can be seen as something that is related to self-esteem, whereas patience, calmness, and emotional stability clearly reflect emotional wellbeing.
In all the four relationships examined in this research, perceived relationship quality has been found to affect self-esteem, self-disclosure, and emotional wellbeing. Therefore, it can be said that perceived relationship quality determines facets of self and emotional wellbeing.

Relationship quality refers to how positive or negative individuals feel about their relationship (Morry, Reich, & Keito, 2010). It is the overall, evaluation of an individual’s relationship, which comprises of relationship awareness that consists of relational foci of attention (Acitelli, 2008). A positive feeling may lead to affection, intimacy, and nurturance, whereas a negative feeling may lead to conflict, irritation, and antagonism (Dush & Amato, 2005). Goleman (2006) suggests that nurturing and satisfying relationships are an enormous boon to our health and well-being, while stressful and contentious relationships are toxic to our system.

A high relationship quality leads individuals to trust each other, feel secure with each other, and derive satisfaction from nurturing each other. It develops a sense of understanding, validation, and care for each other (Clark, Mills, & Powell, 1986). Members of such relationships appear ready to engage in some active relationship protecting processes such as viewing their own relationship as being better than those of others (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989; Simpson, Gangestad, & Lerma, 1990; Van Lange & Rusbult, 1995). This contributes to a sense of intimacy between partners (Reis & Patrick, 1996; Reis & Shaver, 1988) and relationship members’ having the sense that their relationship is a safe haven (Collins & Feeney, 2000).

Relationship quality being associated with such a wide range of feelings and emotions gives an indication that it is a highly significant construct and may affect the individual in many ways. Self-esteem, which is perhaps one of the most important aspects of the individual and is strongly associated with an individual’s relationships and interpersonal processes, can be affected by perceived relationship quality.
Self-esteem is defined as a person’s evaluation of self; it is a person’s subjective appraisal of himself/herself as intrinsically positive or negative to some degree (Sedikides & Gregg, 2003). Self-esteem is, thus, a value judgment based on knowledge. Much self-knowledge concerns the person’s relations with others, which shows that self-esteem is heavily influenced by interpersonal relationships (Baumeister & Twenge, 2003).

Interpersonal theorists (e.g. Barkow, 1975; Leary & Downs, 1995; Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991) conclude that people’s feelings about themselves are related to how they believe others evaluate them because subjective feelings of self-esteem provide information regarding one’s standing in the eyes of other people or society at large (MacDonald, Saltzman, & Leary, 2003). The interpersonal perspectives suggest that believing one possesses certain attributes predicts self-esteem only to the extent that the individual believes that other people regard those attributes as important or valuable (MacDonald, Saltzman, & Leary, 2003).

Evidence shows that self-esteem is strongly affected by events that have implications for the degree to which one is valued and accepted by other people (Leary, Haupt, Strausser, & Chokel, 1998; Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995). The events that affect self-esteem are precisely the kinds of things that, if known by other people, would affect their evaluation and acceptance of the person (Leary, Tambor, et al., 1995). Most often, self-esteem is lowered by failure, criticism, rejection, and other events that have negative implications for relational evaluation; self-esteem rises when a person succeeds, is praised, or experiences another’s love - events that are associated with relational appreciation (Leary, 1999).

The attributes on which people’s self-esteem is based are precisely the characteristics that determine the degree to which people are valued and accepted by others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Specifically, high trait self-esteem is associated with believing that one possesses socially desirable attributes such as competence, personal likability, and physical attractiveness. In one relevant study, trait self-esteem correlated strongly with
people’s beliefs regarding the degree to which they were generally accepted by other people (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995).

Much research shows that interpersonal rejection results in emotional problems, difficulties relating with others, and maladaptive efforts to be accepted (e.g., excessive dependency, membership in deviant groups), precisely the concomitants of low self-esteem (Leary, Schreindorfer, & Haupt, 1995). In addition, many personal problems lower self-esteem because they lead other people to devalue or reject the individual. All these researches indicate that relationships heavily influence self-esteem. Relationship quality specifically in romantic relationships has been found to affect self-esteem. Quality of romantic relationship is commonly associated positively with feelings of self-worth (Connolly & Konarski, 1994, Harter, 1999). The nature and quality of romantic experiences are correlated with self-esteem, self-confidence, and social competence (Pearce et al. 2002; Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2001, 2004).

Self-esteem is strongly influenced by relationships and romantic relationship quality affects self-esteem. Therefore, it can be said that perceived relationship quality determines self-esteem.

Like self-esteem, self-disclosure is also an important aspect of an individual. Self-disclosure is something that does not exist outside an interpersonal situation. Cozby (1973) states that self-disclosure refers to both a personality construct and a process, which occurs during interaction with others. The concept of self-disclosure is loosely defined as what individuals verbally reveal about themselves to others, including thoughts, feelings, and experiences (Derlega, Metts, Petronio, et al., 1993). Wheeless and Grotz (1976) conceptualized self-disclosure as any message about the self that a person communicates to another. In other words, self-disclosure is a way of showing others who we are and what our needs are (Leung, 2002).

Self-disclosure is an interpersonal behavior, as it most often occurs within a specific social interaction. It is defined simply as personal information verbally communicated to
another person (Cozby, 1973; Chelune, 1979). Personal information may include descriptive, evaluative, and affective disclosures. People can disclose facts about themselves, opinions and attitudes that they possess, or information about their moods and emotions. Finally, to self-disclose, one must reveal information to at least one other person (Omarzu, 2000). The interpersonal nature of self-disclosure, therefore, can be seen as an explanation for perceived relationship quality to affect self-disclosure.

The finding that perceived relationship quality affects emotional wellbeing is well supported with previous research. A number of researches have indicated that relationship quality influences various factors and correlates of emotional wellbeing.

Ross (1995) found that unpartnered individuals reported significantly less depression than did individuals in unhappy relationships. This study shows that romantic relationships enhance well-being, but only to the extent that these relationships are mutually supportive and rewarding. Dush and Amato (2005) found that people in happy relationships tend to experience higher levels of subjective well-being than do people in unhappy relationships. Theory and research suggest that involvement in and the quality of romantic relationships is an essential correlate of well-being (Argyle, 2001; Hinde, 1997; Myers, 2000; Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000).

Friendship quality predicts well-being, especially across periods of transition (Berndt, Hawkins, & Jiao, 1999; Ladd, Kochenderfer, & Coleman, 1996). It has been established as a distinct component with implications for adjustment (Hoza, Bukowski, & Beery, 2000; Oldenburg & Kerns, 1997; Parker & Asher, 1993). Nangle et al. (2003) found that high friendship quality buffers feelings of loneliness and depression. According their study, it is the dyadic experiences of friendship that most directly influence feelings loneliness and depression.

Disruptions in or lack of social support is both a precipitant and outcome of depression (Barnett & Gotlib, 1988). More specifically, symptoms of depression have been linked to friendship experience. Nezlek, Imbrie, and Shean (1994) found that individuals with
higher levels of depression symptoms reported less intimacy with their friend. In addition to the potential role of friendships in the development and maintenance of internalizing symptoms (e.g., anxiety and depression), friendship quality is found to be associated with externalizing symptoms (e.g., hostility and aggression). Conflict-ridden friendships lead to increases in disruptive behavior over time (Berndt & Keefe, 1995). Links between hostility and friendship are likely to be reciprocal because hostility and aggression interfere with being well-liked by others and establishing close friendships (Brendgen, Vitaro, Turgeon, & Poulin, 2002).

Bagwell et al. (2005) found that higher levels of positive friendship features (emotional closeness and companionship) are associated with higher levels of self-esteem and greater satisfaction in the relationship leads to higher self-esteem and fewer feelings of hostility. In their observational assessments they found that observed friendship quality is found to be negatively associated with anxiety and hostility, and positively associated with self-esteem. Observed positive affect is also inversely related to hostility. Finally, observed discomfort in the friends’ interactions was found to be inversely associated with self-esteem, positively associated with interpersonal sensitivity, and marginally associated with overall psychosocial adjustment, and anxiety.

Perceived relationship quality in all the relationships predicted self-esteem and self-disclosure. However, none of the indicators of perceived relationship quality in any of the relationships predicted self-monitoring. The reason for this could be that self-monitoring is something that determines the nature of relationships, but is not determined by the relationship.

Self-monitoring is related to a diverse set of domains (Snyder, 1987; Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Tennen, 2006). It has been extensively linked with how individuals conceive of and enact interpersonal relationships (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Leone & Hawkins, 2006; Snyder, 1987). From relationship inception to relationship dissolution,
low and high self-monitors display characteristic differences in what they seek in a mate (Jones, 1993; Snyder, Berscheid, & Glick, 1985), the degree and growth of trust, commitment, closeness, intimacy, and satisfaction (Norris & Zweigenhaft, 1999; Snyder & Simpson, 1984), engagement of sexual behavior in short-term relationships (Snyder, Simpson, & Gangestad, 1986), the weighing of one’s relationship alternatives (Snyder & Simpson, 1984), how long the relationship lasts (Leone & Hall, 2003; Snyder & Simpson, 1984), and reactions to relationship dissolution (Snyder & Simpson, 1984), among other relationship experiences and outcomes.

Further research addresses the interaction patterns associated with the different levels of self-monitoring. Low self-monitors base friendships on emotional bonds, and they prefer to spend most of their time with the people they like best. In contrast, high self-monitors base friendships on shared activities. Thus they spend time with the people who are best suited to the relevant activity. Consequently, the social worlds of high self-monitors are very compartmentalized, with different friends and partners linked to specific activities. On the other hand, the social worlds of low self-monitors are relatively uncategorized by activities, with friends chosen instead on the basis of emotional bonds (Baumeister & Twenge, 2003).

These interpersonal patterns carry over into romantic relationships (Snyder & Simpson, 1984; Snyder, 1987). For example, high self-monitoring males choose dating patterns based mainly on physical appearance, whereas low self-monitors place more emphasis on personality and other inner qualities. High self-monitors tend to have more romantic and sexual partners than lows. When it comes to marriage, high self-monitors again look for shared activities and interests, whereas low self-monitors emphasize mainly the pleasures and satisfactions of simply being together (Baumeister & Twenge, 2003).

The differing patterns of low and high self-monitors in close relationships reflect two distinct orientations toward close relationships. Low self-monitors have been characterized as having a restricted sociosexual orientation (Snyder et al., 1986). The chief concerns of the prototypical low self-monitor are the cultivation of an intimate,
long-term relationship with a partner chosen on the basis of compatibility. In contrast, high self-monitors have been characterized as having an unrestricted sociosexual orientation (Snyder & Simpson, 1984; Snyder et al., 1986).

The relationship histories of high self-monitors suggest individuals who are more willing to play the field of potential dating partners. These differing orientations are related to closeness and satisfaction in long-term relationships. For low self-monitors, the growth of intimacy may be slower than it is for high self-monitors, but over time low self-monitors are thought to develop greater feelings of closeness and emotional interdependence than high self-monitors (Snyder & Simpson, 1984).

These studies show that the differences in high and low self-monitoring play an influential role in determining the interaction patterns as well as the kind of people individuals choose to be involved with. Thus, self-monitoring influences relationships rather than it being influenced by relationships. It is an important aspect of relationships; however that importance is only in affecting the relationship and not being affected by it. This is why perceived relationship quality, in this research, was not found to predict self-monitoring.

PERCEIVED RELATIONSHIP QUALITY IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS

The findings show that perceived relationship quality in all four relationships affects facets of self and emotional wellbeing differently (refer to table 6.1 and 6.2):

- For romantic relationships, it was found that relationship anxiety, relationship motivation, and relationship preoccupation predict self-esteem; relationship assertiveness and relationship depression predict self-disclosure; and relationship anxiety predicts emotional wellbeing.

- For cross-sex friendship, relationship assertiveness and fear of relationship predict self-esteem; relationship assertiveness and relationship anxiety predict self-disclosure; and internal relationship control and relationship monitoring predict emotional wellbeing.

- For same-sex friendship, relationship satisfaction predicts self-esteem; relationship preoccupation predicts self-disclosure; and relationship anxiety predicts emotional wellbeing.

A look at the focus group discussions shows that each relationship influences the individual in a different way:

- For the participants who are in a live-in relationship, the unique influences (which were not found in the other relationships) of their relationship were found to be seriousness in life and self-dependency.

- For the participants in a romantic relationship, the unique influences of their relationship were found to be self-acceptance, a sense of maturity, a sense of pride, and a realization of important things in life.
For the participants of cross-sex friendship, the unique influences of their relationship were found to be *inspiration, better perspective of life, direction in life, and enhanced motivation*.

For the participants of same-sex friendship, the unique influences of their relationship were found to be *self-confidence, self-belief, and ability to take major decisions in life*.

Each of the four relationships in this research has a marked difference from the other. They have their own unique characteristics that make them different from the other. The distinctiveness of each relationship can be found in their respective features as have been enumerated in previous research.

Live-in relationship/cohabitation is an intimate sexual union between two unmarried partners who share the same living quarter for a sustained period of time (Bacharach et al., 2000). They are in some ways like marital relationships in that they involve sharing a household with an intimate partner who is a potential confidant, caretaker, and provider, and both involve social roles that are seen as improving health and well-being, including someone to monitor health, and provide information (Waite and Gallagher 2000). As both a demographic process and event, cohabitation is fuzzy (Knab, 2005), elusive (Teitler and Reichman, 2001), and heterogeneous (Oppenheimer, 2003). Cohabitation is characterized by increasing number and complexity, with the duration of cohabiting unions appearing to be lengthening (Haskey, 2001). Cohabitors tend to be less traditional and more individualistic than their married counterparts (Musick & Bumpass, 2006). On average, they have lower childbearing expectations, place a higher value on leisure time, and are less religious (Rindfuss & Vandenheuvel 1990; Axinn & Thornton 1992; Thornton, Axinn, & Hill 1992; Clarkberg, Stolzenberg, & Waite 1995). Many have more egalitarian attitudes about sex roles and a more equal division of household labor (South & Spitze 1994).
Romantic relationships involve mutually acknowledged ongoing voluntary interaction that have a typically distinctive intensity, marked by expressions affection and current or anticipated sexual behavior (Collins, Welsh, & Furman, 2009). Some degree of physical intimacy is one of the defining characteristics of romantic relationships, which may involve simply kissing, holding hands, or embracing, or also a variety of interpersonal sexual acts (Baron & Byrne, 2000). Involvement in romantic relationships is associated with improved health and well-being (McCabe, Cummins, & Romeo, 1996). Theory and research suggest that involvement in and the quality of romantic relationships is an essential correlate of well-being (Argyle, 2001; Hinde, 1997; Myers, 2000; Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000). Having a romantic partner is linked to greater health because romantic relationships promote high levels of intimacy, and intimacy is an important factor for adjustment and psychological well-being (McAdams & Vaillant, 1982; Miller & Lefcourt, 1982; Reis & Shaver, 1988; Prager, 1995).

Cross-sex friendships are complicated in nature (Monsour, Harris, & Kurzweil, 1994). As a result of gender role socialization, men and women tend to view one another as sexual and/or romantic partners, rather than friends (Chafetz, 1974; Brain, 1976; Bem, 1981). However, they provide social support (Patford, 2000), comfort during difficult times, an outlet for the expression of fears, feelings, and fantasies, companionship, acceptance, and greater self-knowledge (Werking, 1997, p. 162). They also provide other-sex companionship (Rubin, 1985), an insider’s perspective (Sapadin, 1988; Werking, 1997), and an opportunity to reveal sex-role discrepant information (Swain, 1992). Along with these, cross-sex friendships may also romantic undertones (Monsour et al., 1994; Rubin, 1985; Afifi & Faulkner, 2000; Metts et al., 1989), sexual attraction (Rose, 1985; O’Meara, 1989; Kaplan & Keys, 1997), and sexual tensions (Pogrebin, 1989; Werking, 1997; Sias & Cahill, 1998; Monsour, 2008).

Same-sex friendships involve interdependence, facilitation of socio-emotional goals of the participants, and may involve varying types and degrees of companionship, intimacy, affection, and mutual assistance (Hays 1988, p. 395). These relationships significantly
promote autonomy, self-esteem, identity (Claes, 1992), and social-cognitive development (Berndt, 1996; Hartup, 1996; Berndt, 2002). They include self-disclosing behavior, expression of their emotions, provide support and receive it, experience trust, engage in physical contact, and generally relax with one another (Monsour, 1992; Planalp & Benson, 1992). Further, they involve companionship, help, intimacy, and self-validation (Demir et al., 2011).

As can be seen, the aspects of each relationship highly differ from the other. Each relationship is highly distinct from the other. It is this distinctiveness that has different consequences on the individuals involved in them.

Therefore, the relationship qualities and being in these relationships influence facets of self and emotional wellbeing differently. The unique characteristics of these relationships influence facets of self and emotional wellbeing in different ways.

**COMPARISON OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH RESPECT TO PERCEIVED RELATIONSHIP QUALITY, FACETS OF SELF, AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING**

A comparison between all the relationships with respect to perceived relationship quality, facets of self, and emotional wellbeing, using one-way ANOVA, shows that there are significant differences between all the relationships on relationship preoccupation, relationship consciousness, relationship anxiety, relationship assertiveness, and relationship monitoring.

A further analysis done by using post hoc Tukey test shows that: Relationship preoccupation is significantly higher in romantic relationships compared to same-sex friendship; and significantly higher in cross-sex friendship compared to same-sex friendship. Relationship consciousness is significantly higher in romantic relationships
compared to same-sex friendship; and significantly higher in cross-sex friendship compared to same-sex friendship. Relationship anxiety is significantly higher in romantic relationships compared to same-sex friendship; and significantly higher in cross-sex friendship compared to same-sex friendship. Relationship assertiveness is significantly higher in romantic relationships compared to cross-sex friendship as well as same-sex friendship. Relationship monitoring is significantly higher in cross-sex friendship compared to same-sex friendship.

The explanation of these findings can be seen below. Relationship preoccupation, relationship consciousness, relationship anxiety, relationship assertiveness, and relationship monitoring are first defined and then the findings corresponding to these indicators of perceived relationship quality are explained.

**Relationship Preoccupation**

Relationship preoccupation is the tendency to become absorbed in, obsessed with, and engrossed with the intimate aspects of one's life, to the extent that one virtually excludes from one's mind thoughts of other matters. People high on the relationship preoccupation tend to be obsessed with intimacy.

Same-sex friendship was found to be significantly less in relationship preoccupation as compared to both romantic relationships and cross-sex friendship. Same-sex friendships involve varying types and degrees of companionship, intimacy, affection, and mutual assistance (Hays 1988, p. 395). It is an affectionate attachment characterized by helping one another, intimacy or the disclosing of secrets, mutual praise for success, loyalty, and other positive features (Berndt, 2002).

These relationships significantly promote autonomy, self-esteem, identity (Claes, 1992), and social-cognitive development (Berndt, 1996; Hartup, 1996; Berndt, 2002). Friendships also influence overall adjustment and individual well-being (Rubin et al.,
1995; Allen et al., 2005). Solidarity is often used to describe the closeness of a same-sex friendship (Blieszner & Adams, 1992), and solidarity may be particularly high among unmarried young adults (Carbery & Buhrmester, 1998) because they interact primarily with peers and spend much time with friends.

It is these aspects of same-sex friendship that may make them have less relationship preoccupation as compared to romantic relationships.

Romantic relationships promote high levels of intimacy. This high level of intimacy however is, usually, with only one person at a time. Whereas same-sex friends are usually with more than one person, and at times with many people at the same time. High levels of intimacy with one person in a romantic relationship as compared to varying degrees of companionship and intimacy in same-sex friendship, perhaps many same-sex friends, may tend people in romantic relationships to be more obsessed with intimacy as compared to same-sex friendship, which leads to higher relationship preoccupation in romantic relationships.

There can be other reasons also for relationship preoccupation being higher in romantic relationships. When two people are in a romantic relationship, they often put the keys to their own happiness in their partners’ hands and essentially take a leap of faith (Murray, 1999). Unfortunately, individuals may not always be involved with partners who mirror their ideals, and people reduce uncertainty about relationships and maintain a sense of conviction by perceiving partners in an overly positive light.

Such positive illusions presumably quell doubts and fears about committing to less-than-perfect romantic partners. But people also can be less-than-perfect partners, and thus may examine their partner’s perceptions of them for evidence of love and acceptance. In fact, Murray et al. (1996a) demonstrated that people were happier when their partners viewed them more positively than they viewed themselves across a number of traits. It is suggested that such idealization and enhancement is beneficial to the relationship because these appraisals represent a form of unconditional positive regard, thus allowing people
to feel that their partners see the best in them and thus feel accepted in spite of their faults or imperfections (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Fowers, Lyons, & Montel, 1996; Murray, 2001; Reis & Shaver, 1988). Research has demonstrated that how people are perceived by their romantic partners, in relation to their self-perceptions, is strongly related to how satisfied they are in their relationships (Murray et al., 1996a), how close and intimate they feel in their relationships (Swann et al., 1994), and even how they alter their self-perceptions over time (Murray et al., 1996b).

This reliance on the other person for happiness, satisfaction, and acceptance to the extent that individuals form positive illusions may also make them absorbed in and engrossed with the intimate aspects of their life in such a way that they virtually exclude thoughts of other matters from their mind. It is these reasons why individuals in romantic relationships may feel a higher degree of relationship preoccupation compared to people in a same-sex friendship.

Relationship preoccupation was also found to be lesser in cross-sex friendship as compared to same-sex friendship. Friendships between women and men can be complicated affairs (Monsour, Harris, & Kurzweil, 1994). As a result of gender role socialization, men and women tend to view one another as sexual and/or romantic partners, rather than friends (Chafetz, 1974; Brain, 1976; Bem, 1981). Individuals internalize societal expectations into gender-based cognitive schemata, which encourages the interpretation of cross-sex interaction according to cultural guidelines. Those guidelines suggest male-female interaction should be predominantly romantic or sexual in nature (Bem, 1981).

This complexity and ambiguity of cross-sex friendships may make it particularly fragile (Werking, 1997), which may further lead to relational maintenance in the relationship. Messman, Canary, and Hause (2000) demonstrated that cross-sex friends in platonic relationships avoid flirting with one another as a way of maintaining the status quo and
preventing the relationship from turning romantic. Afifi and Burgoon (1998) found that cross-sex friends avoid talking about sensitive issues (such as the state of their relationship) if they worry that such talk could threaten the existence of their friendship. The level of ambiguity or uncertainty present is likely to be associated with use of maintenance behavior. Scholars have argued that people can use specific types of maintenance behavior to help manage relational uncertainty (Dainton, 2003) or repair relationships after an uncertainty-increasing event (Emmers & Canary, 1996). By engaging in behaviors that help accomplish these goals, cross-sex friends enhance their chances of sustaining a comfortable and satisfying relationship (Guerrero & Chavez, 2005).

The complexities involved in cross-sex friendships are not found in same-sex friendship, which makes individuals in cross-sex friendships to put in more effort in order to maintain their relationship. This may tend to make them more absorbed in their relationship, which may lead to higher relationship preoccupation as compared to same-sex friendship.

**Relationship Consciousness**

Relationship consciousness refers to an awareness of the internal aspects of one's intimate relationship. It is people's tendency to think about and to reflect about the nature of their intimate relationship. Individuals high on relationship consciousness introspect about their intimate relationship, examine their intimacy-related desires and motives, and in general are reflective about the nature of their intimate relationship.

Relationship consciousness was found to be significantly higher in romantic relationships as compared to same-sex friendship. Romantic relationships refers to mutually acknowledged ongoing voluntary interaction that have a typically distinctive intensity, marked by expressions affection and current or anticipated sexual behavior (Collins, Welsh, & Furman, 2009). Theory and research suggest that involvement in and the
quality of romantic relationships is an essential correlate of well-being (Argyle, 2001; Hinde, 1997; Myers, 2000; Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000). Perhaps having a romantic partner is linked to greater health because romantic relationships promote high levels of intimacy, and intimacy is an important factor for adjustment and psychological well-being (McAdams & Vaillant, 1982; Miller & Lefcourt, 1982; Reis & Shaver, 1988; Prager, 1995).

A considerable amount of research has shown that romantic relationships (involvement in and/or quality of) are an important source of happiness (Berry & Willingham, 1997; Diener, Gohm, Suh, & Oishi, 2000; Argyle, 2001; Keyes & Waterman, 2003; Khaleque & Rohner, 2004). For instance, Dush and Amato (2005) showed that involvement in committed romantic relationships and relationship quality were related to happiness across the life-span. Accumulating findings document statistically reliable associations between romantic experiences and multiple aspects of individual development - forming a personal identity, adjusting to changes in familial relationships, furthering harmonious relations with peers, looking ahead to future careers, and developing sexuality (regardless of the extent of sexual activity) (Furman & Collins 2008, Furman & Shaffer 2003).

It is these positive aspects about the romantic relationships that make them reflective about their relationship and be more internally aware about it. Some of these aspects are also present in same-sex friendships, but they are present in romantic relationships in a much higher intensity. Having high levels intimacy, wellbeing, and happiness generates a lot of positivity and satisfaction, which may lead individuals to think more about their relationship. This may make them aware about their relationship and reflect a lot more about it.

Depending on the commitment level of the individuals involved in romantic relationships, they may think about their future with respect to their relationship and romantic partner. For example, they may think of taking up career that will not hamper their relationship and increase the proximity with their partner. Some may also think of marriage as a possibility in the future.
Related to this is the concept of interdependence dilemma and transformation of motivation (Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster, & Agnew, 1999). Sometimes circumstances that are not so congenial may arise - when partners encounter dilemmas involving conflicted interaction or incompatible preferences. In dilemmas of this sort the immediate interests of the individual are incompatible with the interests of the relationship, and something must give.

An interdependence dilemma is a dilemma because it involves conflicting motives. On the one hand, there may be compelling reasons to pursue immediate self-interest. On the other hand, there may be compelling reasons to promote interests of one’s relationship. Resolving interdependence dilemmas therefore entails some degree of effort or personal cost. The interdependence theory of distinction between the given situation and the effective situation provides a framework for understanding what makes some partners willing to endure costs or exert effort to ensure the well-being of their relationships (Kelly & Thibaut, 1978). The given situation refers to each partner’s immediate well being in a specific situation, describing each person’s gut level, self-centered preferences (Wieselquist et al., 1999).

People do not necessarily pursue their given preferences. Frequently, behavior is shaped by broader concerns, including strategic considerations, long-term goals, or desires to promote both one’s own and a partner’s well being. Movement away from given preferences results from transformation of motivation, a process that leads individuals to relinquish their immediate self-interest and act on the basis of broader considerations. The effective situation describes the modified preferences that are aimed to result from the transformation process; reconceptualized, effective preferences are argued to guide behavior (Wieselquist et al., 1999).

Such dilemmas in romantic partners require them think and reflect a lot about their relationship. These dilemmas are not usually involved in same-sex friendships. Therefore, relationship consciousness was found to be higher in romantic relationships as compared to same-sex friendships.
Relationship consciousness was also found to be significantly higher in cross-sex friendship as compared to same-sex friendship. According to Werking (1997), cross-sex friends offer comfort during difficult times, an outlet for the expression of fears, feelings, and fantasies, companionship, acceptance, and greater self-knowledge (1997, p. 162). Cross-sex friendships provide a vehicle for self-expression, companionship, and intimacy (Sapadin, 1988; Monsour, 1992) and provide each other with validation as attractive members of the opposite sex (Bell, 1981). Cross-sex friends have been found to provide each other with insider perspectives (Monsour, 1992), other-sex companionship (Werking, 1997), they sensitize each other to gender differences in communication style (Swain, 1992), and an opportunity to reveal sex-role discrepant information (Swain, 1992). Along these same lines, Swain contended that cross-sex friendships provide an arena in which individuals can explore the similarities and differences between men and women without the pressure that accompanies being a lover (1992).

Cross-sex friendships provide men and women with distinctive advantages that are hard to obtain in same-sex friendships (Bell, 1981; Monsour, 1992). For example, cross-sex friends provide insider perspectives on how members of the opposite sex think, feel and behave (Sapadin, 1988), they are nurturing and supportive for men and fill a void in same sex friendships, they are an emotional outlet where men can express feelings that they tend to keep hidden from same sex friends, they are less demanding for women in that they have lower levels of disclosure and are less threatening (Harvey, 2003), and they improve communication between the sexes (Monsour, 1992).

Swain (1992) concluded that cross-sex friendships give women and men an opportunity to relate to each other as friends in ways that are less familiar but also less constraining than same-sex interaction. For example, some men feel freer to be more emotional and expressive in their cross-sex friendships than in their same-sex ones. Male respondents reported that cross-sex friendships gave them a chance to explore their feminine side and
reveal sex-role discrepant information (e.g., “I cry during sad movies”) without risk of appearing weak (Rubin, 1985).

Swain further contended that women, on the other hand, may find it easier to display competitive behaviors with close male friends than with close female friends. Swain further contends that cross-sex friends take on the role of an informant by sharing and sensitizing each other to the meanings of the other sex’s style of intimacy (p. 169). Swain argued that one of the central benefits of cross-sex friendships is that participants can sensitize each other to gender differences in communication style.

These aspects of cross-sex friendship create an environment of comfort and emotional bonding among individuals. Especially the aspects of other-sex companionship, self-expression, sensitization towards gender differences in communication style, revealing of sex-role discrepant information, opportunity to relate to each other, nurturance promote high levels of emotional intimacy that are not present in same-sex friendship. These create a healthy atmosphere within the realms of the relationship that enable reflecting and introspecting about the relationship. Such a deep level of emotional bonding and sense of understanding may make the individuals internally aware about the intimate aspects of their relationship. This may cause relationship preoccupation to be higher in cross-sex friendship as compared to same-sex friendship.

Some cross-sex friends may also be confused about their emotions, might develop romantic feelings for the other person, or may even think to become romantically involved with the other person. This is the emotional bond challenge (O’Meara, 1989) in which cross-sex friendships may question the nature of their relationship, which may lead individuals to think and reflect about their relationship. The emotional bond between a heterosexual woman and man can range from mild feelings of friendship affection to passionate feelings of romantic love (Reeder, 2000). Studies have revealed that romantic undertones are present in some cross-sex friendships (Monsour et al., 1994), that some individuals find those undercurrents intriguing (Rubin, 1985), and that it is not unusual
for a romantic relationship to start out as a cross-sex friendship (Afifi & Faulkner, 2000; Metts et al., 1989).

This nature of cross-sex friendship in which romantic undertones might be present may also enable individuals to be aware about the aspects of their intimacy, be reflective about the relationship, and examine the intimacy related goals of the relationship, which in turn tends to lead to a high relationship preoccupation as compared to same-sex friendship.

**Relationship Anxiety**

Relationship anxiety refers to anxious feelings associated with the intimate aspects of one's life. More specifically, it is about feelings of tension, discomfort and anxiety about their intimate relationship. Individuals high on relationship anxiety are those who experience chronic anxiety as a result of thinking about the intimate aspects of their relationship.

Like relationship preoccupation, same-sex friendship was found to have significantly lesser relationship anxiety as compared to romantic relationships and cross-sex friendship. Same-sex friendships are associated with a number of positive characteristics that may lead individuals to feel lesser relationship anxiety compared to romantic relationships and cross-sex friendship. Same-sex friendships facilitate socio-emotional goals of the participants, and involve varying types and degrees of companionship, intimacy, affection, and mutual assistance (Hays 1988, p. 395). It is an affectionate attachment characterized by helping one another, intimacy or the disclosing of secrets, mutual praise for success, loyalty, and other positive features (Berndt, 2002).

Individuals in a same-sex friendship feel free to engage in self-disclosing behavior, express their emotions, provide support and receive it, experience trust, engage in physical contact, and generally relax with one another (Monsour, 1992; Planalp & Benson, 1992). People in a friendship seek and/or experience certain provisions in their
friendships (Weiss, 1974; Furman & Robbins, 1985), which include, but are not limited to, companionship, help, intimacy, and self-validation (Demir et al., 2011).

Friendships are an important source of happiness (Myers, 2000; Reis et al., 2000; Argyle, 2001). Empirical research has shown that having friends and close friendship experiences (overall quality, supportive, and intimate interactions) are essential predictors of happiness (Larson 1978; Argyle 2001; Peterson, 2006; Demir & Weitekamp, 2007). The role of friendships in happiness has been called the deep truth (Myers, 1993).

A number of empirical researches investigating the correlates of happiness identified close friendship experiences as a major and robust predictor. Specifically, research has shown that having a friend (Peterson, 2006); satisfaction with the friend (Diener & Seligman, 2002; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005a, b, 2006); support received and intimacy experienced within the friendship (Baldassare et al., 1984; Gladow & Ray, 1986; Argyle, 2001); and friendship quality in general (Hussong, 2000; Demir & Weitekamp, 2007; Demir et al., 2007) are associated with happiness.

There are several theoretical accounts enumerating the central role that friendship plays in individual happiness. Some explanations suggest that establishing and maintaining friendships fulfill a fundamental need and contribute to one’s happiness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Lyubomirsky, 2008). Other explanations focus on certain provisions of friendship. Specifically, it has been suggested that receiving support from a friend in times of need, whether it is tangible or instrumental, and experiencing intimacy within the friendship have the potential to influence one’s well-being (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Reis, 2001; Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008; Lyubomirsky, 2008).

Another view highlights the role of companionship and fun aspects of friendship (Rook, 1987; Cooper et al., 1992; Demir & Weitekamp, 2007; Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). According to this perspective, simply spending time with friends and engaging in enjoyable activities with friends might contribute to individual happiness. Demir & Ozdemir (2010) reported that satisfaction of basic psychological needs (e.g., Deci &
Ryan, 2000) within the friendship mediated the association of friendship quality with happiness.

Being involved in an intimate same-sex friendship most often has positive effects on the two individuals forming the pair (Berndt, 1992). Close friendships can save individuals from depression and loneliness and enhance mental and social well-being (Knickmeyer, Sexton & Nishimura, 2002). Social support from friends protects against loneliness (Dykstra, 1995) and helps reduce stress by allowing emotional expression and fostering appropriate emotion management. In addition, social support contributes to physical and mental health (Uchino, Uno, & Holt-Lunstad, 1999).

These many aspects of same-sex friendship, mainly, companionship, support, trust, happiness, relaxation, fun, and reduction of stress and the benefits associated with them may help to a large extent in relieving individuals from anxious feelings associated with the intimate aspects of their relationship. They may help to reduce the tension, discomfort, and anxiety that individuals feel in intimate relationships. All this may cause same-sex friendship to involve lesser relationship anxiety.

Romantic relationships also involve intimacy, happiness, and wellbeing, but individuals in romantic relationships also form positive illusions about their relationship. Most individuals are positively biased when evaluating their romantic relationships. This is supported by a large body of research showing that intimates systematically evaluate their own relationship as being more positive than what reality suggests is the case (Hall & Taylor, 1976; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996a, 1996b; Murray & Holmes, 1997; MacDonald & Ross, 1999; Agnew, Loving, & Drigotas, 2001).

Positively biased evaluations of a romantic relationship are theorized to help people feel good about their relationships (Fletcher & Thomas, 1996). Such bias allows intimates to maintain their conviction that their relationship is worth keeping, especially when the relationship may be threatened by feelings of doubt and uncertainty (Murray, 1999).
People go to great lengths to maintain their positive views of the relationship (Murray & Holmes, 1993, 1994).

However, there is reason to believe that systematic bias in relationship evaluations might not always be beneficial. A longitudinal study revealed that the more participants held idealistic beliefs about their relationships, the more difficulty they had adjusting to a later long-distance separation (Helgeson, 1994). This suggests that a more accurate understanding of the relationship may be more adaptive when relationship beliefs run the risk of being disconfirmed by a harsher reality. Thus, on the one hand, there exists considerable evidence in the close relationship literature suggesting that positively biased relationship perceptions are adaptive for the relationship. By instilling a sense of security in the relationship (Murray, 1999), they promote and sustain feelings of love, trust, and satisfaction (Murray & Holmes, 1997). Yet, on the other hand, this sense of security may be false (Helgeson, 1994).

The fact that individuals in romantic relationships have positive bias indicates that they feel some kind of tension and anxiety, which is inherent in their relationship. They form positive biases to feel secure and decrease their uncertainty. This may reduce their anxious feelings, but it may not completely eradicate it.

Positive bias can also provide a secure base for what may develop (Gagné & Lydon, 2004). By sustaining felt security, positive bias allows for the exploration of new things in the relationship. Accordingly, intimates who are positively biased in their views of their romantic relationships should feel secure enough to meet epistemic needs as they arise in the relationship. In other words, intimates gain the capacity to be accurate because of their positive bias rather than despite their positive bias. This enhances the risk of future disillusionment about the relationship and regretful decision making (Gagné & Lydon, 2004).

Gagné and Lydon (2004) believe that positive bias without accuracy can be harmful. Individuals who are positively biased but not accurate are probably very content in their
relationships, but ignoring epistemic needs for accuracy may very well lead to poor
decision making and negatively affect the relationship. If the relationship survives, it is
likely to be a function of the moral obligation to remain in the relationship, external
constraints, (Johnson, 1991, 1999), high investments in the relationship, or the lack of
alternatives (Rusbult, 1980, 1983). This further enhances the tensions and anxious
feelings associated with the relationship.

The varying nature of intimacy and companionship involved in same-sex friendships
does not require the individuals to form such positive illusions. Therefore, individuals in
romantic relationships due to forming positive illusions may experience greater
relationship anxiety as compared to individuals in a same-sex friendship.

The significance of relationship quality in romantic relationships and its varying
consequences may also be a factor for relationship anxiety being higher in romantic
relationships as compared to same-sex friendship. Quality romantic relationships are
associated with increased likelihood of positive relationships and relationship
commitment in early adulthood (Collins, Welsh, & Furman, 2009). More negative
qualities likewise have been linked to varied negative outcomes (Furman & Collins,
2008). Depending on duration and the content and quality of the relationship, romantic
involvement has been found to be associated with both social competence and risk
(Furman et al., 2008). A series of very short-term relationships is associated with greater
depressive symptomatology (Joyner & Udry, 2000) and increased rates of problem
behavior in the partners (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2001).

In addition, it was found that a negative quality of individuals’ romantic relationship
could predict depressive symptoms (La Greca & Harrison, 2005), and internalizing and
externalizing disorders (Beyers & Seifge-Krenke, 2007). Anxiety over preserving a
relationship often results in self-silencing, in which individuals suppress their thoughts
and opinions out of fear of losing their intimate partner and relationship. Self-silencing in
turn is associated with poorer communication between partners, higher levels of
depressive symptoms, and greater rejection sensitivity (Harper, Dickson, & Welsh, 2006;
Poor-quality romantic relationships are further associated with alcohol and drug use, poor academic performance, externalizing and internalizing symptoms, poor emotional health, and low job competence (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2001, 2004).

The varying nature of relationship quality in romantic relationships signifies its importance in that it can have varying consequences. High relationship quality may lead to extremely positive consequences and low relationship quality can lead to extremely negative consequences. This varying nature of relationship quality in romantic relationships may involve tension and discomfort in the relationship. Individuals in romantic relationships may therefore experience higher relationship anxiety as compared to same-sex friendship.

Relationship anxiety in same-sex friendship was also found to be significantly lower than cross-sex friendship. The complexity and ambiguity of cross-sex friendships and the subsequent emotional bond and sexual challenge may cause individuals in cross-sex friendships to experience more relationship anxiety as compared to individuals in same-sex friendships.

Friendships between women and men can be complicated affairs (Monsour, Harris, & Kurzweil, 1994). As a result of gender role socialization, men and women tend to view one another as sexual and/or romantic partners, rather than friends (Chafetz, 1974; Brain, 1976; Bem, 1981). Individuals internalize societal expectations into gender-based cognitive schemata, which encourages the interpretation of cross-sex interaction according to cultural guidelines. Those guidelines suggest male-female interaction should be predominantly romantic or sexual in nature (Bem, 1981). The ambiguous nature of cross-sex friendships leads to a number of problems that relational partners may have to confront (Monsour et al., 1994). Cross-sex friendship can be complicated, with ambiguity about the potential romantic or sexual nature of the relationship creating uncertainty.
Some people experience sexual attraction toward their cross-sex friends (Rose, 1985; O’Meara, 1989; Kaplan & Keys, 1997), and a substantial number of cross-sex friendships end because of physical distance or failed attempts at romance (Bleske-Rechek & Buss, 2001).

Dainton, Zelley, and Langan (2003) observed that heterosexual individuals, maintaining a cross-sex friendship involves the affection, companionship, intimacy, and assistance found in same-sex relationships, but it also involves downgrading sexuality (p. 91). Sometimes, however, one or both of the friends may want the friendship to turn romantic. Sexuality may then begin to be emphasized (Guerrero & Chavez, 2005). By contrast, individuals in cross-sex friendships may downgrade sexuality more than usual when one of the friends is in the position of rejecting romance. Indeed, promoting or discouraging movement toward romance is likely to be an important and sometimes difficult part of relational maintenance in cross-sex friendships, especially when cross-sex friends have different romantic intentions and experience uncertainty about the state of their relationship (Guerrero & Chavez, 2005).

The emotional bond between a heterosexual woman and man can range from mild feelings of friendship affection to passionate feelings of romantic love (Reeder, 2000). O’Meara contended that males and females have been socialized since preadolescence to see each other as potential romantic partners, which in turn increases the likelihood of viewing the emotional bond as one of romantic love (1989).

Studies have revealed that romantic undertones are present in some cross-sex friendships (Monsour et al., 1994), that some individuals find those undercurrents intriguing (Rubin, 1985), and that it is not unusual for a romantic relationship to start out as a cross-sex friendship (Afifi & Faulkner, 2000; Metts et al., 1989). It has been found that the possibility of romantic escalation in male-female friendships results in the avoidance of discussions about the state of the relationship (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985; Monsour et al., 1994; Afifi & Burgoon, 1998).
The sexual challenge means that cross-sex friends must confront sexual tensions, feelings, and desires that exist in the relationship (Monsour, 2008). Sexual undertones, desires, and activity in cross-sex friendships can lead to their demise (Pogrebin, 1989; Werking, 1997; Sias & Cahill, 1998). Even if the sexual and romantic desires of one or both of the partners do not end the friendship, a minority of cross-sex friends have considerable difficulty contending with underlying sexual and romantic issues (Monsour et al., 1994; 1997). Sexual tension in cross-sex friendships may be a double-edged sword, providing arousal and excitement on the one hand, and discomfort, distrust, and uncertainty on the other (Davis & Todd, 1985; Sapadin, 1988).

The possible development of romantic feelings and probable sexual tensions in cross-sex friendships add to the complexity of the relationship, which may cause a lot of discomfort, tension, and anxiety among individuals. These complexities are not present in heterosexual same-sex friendships. Therefore, cross-sex friendships may involve higher relationship anxiety as compared to same-sex friendship.

**Relationship Assertiveness**

Relationship assertiveness refers to the personality tendency of being assertive about the intimate aspects of one's life. In particular, it is about the characteristic of being intimately assertive i.e., decisive about one's intimate relationship and self-reliant about the pursuit and fulfillment of one's intimate relationship. People who are high on relationship assertiveness have a behavioral predisposition to be agentic and instrumental in the fulfillment of their intimate desires and motivations. They tend to take an instrumental, self-directed orientation to their intimacy relationship and they tend to rely more on themselves than on others in making decisions about their relationship satisfaction.

Relationship assertiveness was found to significantly higher in romantic relationships compared to both same-sex and cross-sex friendship. Having a romantic relationship and
the quality of that relationship commonly are associated positively with feelings of self-worth (Connolly & Konarski, 1994, Harter, 1999). Self-perceived competence in romantic relationships emerges as a reliable component of general competence (Masten et al., 1995). It has been found that romantic involvement influences social competence and self-esteem (Neeman, Hubbard, & Masten, 1995), identity and other components of self-concept development (Furman, Brown, & Feiring, 1999). Further, within romantic relationships, individuals may also learn relational patterns that influence the course of subsequent relationships (Furman & Flanagan, 1997).

The fundamental role of romantic relationships in promoting individual adjustment and well-being is linked to their psychological functions and their emotional and psychological characteristics (Ponti, Gaurneiri, Smorti, & Tani, 2010). The nature and quality of romantic experiences are correlated with self-esteem, self-confidence, and social competence (Pearce et al. 2002; Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2001, 2004).

The characteristics of romantic relationship quality such as self-esteem, self-worth, self-confidence, and social competence enable individuals to be decisive about their relationship and self-reliant about the pursuit and fulfillment of their relationship. This makes individuals in romantic relationships to have greater relationship assertiveness as compared to same-sex and cross-sex friendship.

Romantic relationships have also been found to decrease self-discrepancy (Campbell, Sedikes, & Bossom, 1994), which can be another factor of high relationship assertiveness. The actual/ideal self-discrepancy (self-discrepancy) has been defined as the measurable difference between an individual's beliefs about who he actually thinks he is (actual self) and his image of the person he would ideally like to be (ideal self) (Higgins, 1987). Self-discrepancy is linked to emotional vulnerability; that is, the greater the discrepancy between actual and ideal selves, the greater the individual's risk of experiencing dejection related emotions such as disappointment, dissatisfaction, and frustration. A decrease in self-discrepancy leads to increased psychological well-being.
According to the interdependence theory, romantically involved individuals who are engaged in promotive relationships experience a reduction in self-discrepancy over the course of the relationship as their actual self-concept becomes closer to their ideal self. Promotive interdependence is defined as the process by which one relationship partner facilitates, through expectancy processes and behavioral interaction, the other partner becoming his or her ideal self (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). Romantically involved individuals feel closer to their ideal selves than do romantically uninvolved individuals (Campbell, Sedikes, & Bossom, 1994). The consequences associated with a decrease in self-discrepancy then may cause individuals in a romantic relationship to be higher on relationship assertiveness.

Romantic relationships have also been found to involve self-enhancement and self-verification. Swann (1983) suggests that individuals strive to preserve their self-concepts by eliciting feedback from others that is consistent with their preexisting self-conceptions. It also increases predictability and control within social situations (Swann et al., 1992). Self-verifying feedback maybe valued from intimate partners, as such feedback is associated with greater felt comfort and security in the relationship (Swann & Schroader, 1995). More specifically, individuals receiving self-verifying partner feedback report greater intimacy (Katz et al., 1996; Swann et al., 1994), satisfaction (Katz et al., 1996), and commitment (Swann et al., 1992). Self-verification theory (Swann, 1983) posits that people prefer feedback that is consistent with their self-perceptions because this feedback bolsters their perceptions of prediction and control over their social worlds. Recognizing how others perceive us and being able to respond appropriately is hypothesized to be a key factor in maintaining successful social relations.

Swann et al. (1994; Murray et al., 1996a) found that individuals in short-term dating relationships reported greater intimacy in their relationships the more positively they were perceived by their partners, whereas verifying appraisals were not related to
intimacy. Conversely, as the relationship matures and the relationship’s future is no longer a central concern, Swann et al. (1994) argued that the relationship becomes less evaluative and that verifying feedback, particularly of negative self-views, become an asset, not a threat, to the stability of the relationship. For instance, as the level of interdependence increases in the relationship, knowing a partner’s strengths and weaknesses becomes a pragmatic concern. In this case, receiving verifying feedback, even if negative, may affirm that their partner truly knows them and that they can depend on their partner for accurate feedback.

Research has demonstrated that individuals in long-term dating relationships also may respond positively to verification of their global self-concept. For instance, Katz, Anderson, and Beach (1997) found that women in long-term dating relationships reported greater satisfaction and intimacy with their partners when there was greater congruence between their reported global self-esteem and perceived partner appraisals. In addition, research shows that for both men and women, mind-reading accuracy during a conflict discussion was positively correlated with relationship satisfaction for those in long-term relationships but negatively for those in shorter relationships.

Romantic relationships can be an important source of information about the self. Past research has demonstrated that how people are perceived by their romantic partners, in relation to their self-perceptions, is strongly related to how satisfied they are in their relationships (Murray et al., 1996a), how close and intimate they feel in their relationships (Swann et al., 1994), and even how they alter their self-perceptions over time (Drigotas, Rusbult, Wieselquist, & Whitton, 1999; Murray et al., 1996b).

The self-enhancing and self-verifying aspect of romantic relationships gives a clear indication that it helps in improving commitment and communication within the relationship. These aspects become very important as far as relationship assertiveness is concerned. In contrast, same-sex friendship is more about companionship, shared activities, spending time together, having fun, and relaxation. They perhaps do not involve a deeper sense of connection among the individuals involved in comparison to
romantic relationships. These features become important for self-concept, but romantic relationships involving a marked distinctiveness in affection and a higher level of intimacy prove to have greater consequences on the individuals. On the other hand, the complications involved in cross-sex friendship may at times inhibit relationship assertiveness.

Cross-sex friendship can be complicated, with ambiguity about the potential romantic or sexual nature of the relationship creating uncertainty. Some people experience sexual attraction toward their cross-sex friends (Rose, 1985; O’Meara, 1989; Kaplan & Keys, 1997), and a substantial number of cross-sex friendships end because of physical distance or failed attempts at romance (Bleske-Rechek & Buss, 2001). Scholars have also noted that the possibility of romantic escalation in male-female friendships results in the avoidance of discussions about the state of the relationship (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985; Monsour et al., 1994; Afifi & Burgoon, 1998).

These complications of cross-sex friendships clearly inhibit assertiveness in the relationship. Romantic relationships, on the other hand, involve characteristics of pro-assertiveness within the individuals. Therefore, individuals in romantic relationships experience higher relationship assertiveness as compared to same-sex and cross-sex friendship.

**Relationship Monitoring**

Relationship monitoring is an awareness of other people's reactions to one's intimate relationship. More specifically, it is about people's public concern about the image which their intimate relationship projects to others. People high on relationship monitoring are those who are concerned about the appearance of their intimate relationship and with the impression their intimate relationship makes on others.
Relationship monitoring was found to be significantly higher in cross-sex friendship as compared to same-sex friendship. The audience challenge, as proposed by O’Meara (1989), experienced by individuals in cross-sex friendship, may be the cause of this. The audience challenge is a concern about how others view their friendship. Cross-sex friends may be concerned with the public’s perception of their relationship. In fact, people often view cross-sex friendships with suspicion and wonder if they are not in fact romantic relationships (Helgeson, 2006).

Once the cross-sex friends have arrived at some mutual definition of their relationship, and frequently while they are struggling at agreeing on that definition, they must present the correct picture of the relationship to relevant audiences (O'Meara, 1989). Rawlins (1982) characterized this challenge as a continual one that is strategically met in different ways by trying to balance the public and private nature of the friendship. It is reasonable to assume that certain factors might impact the degree to which friends are concerned with public perception of their relationship (Monsour et al., 1994).

The audience challenge can present a clear social barrier to the initiation and maintenance of cross-sex friendships as others attempt to influence and control those friendships (Allan, 1989). Devine and Markiewicz (1990) contended that when a woman and a man become close friends they are often assumed to be lovers by suspicious audiences. Swain (1992) speculated that cross-sex friendships may also be threatening to some same-sex friends because cross-sex friendships offer something that same-sex relationships cannot, that is, other-sex companionship that is so highly valued in our society.

The challenge is to manage a public dyad presentation that communicates authentic friendship and to altercast audiences so as to promote their acceptance of this presentation. Rawlins (1982, pp. 349-350) emphasized that the friends need to adopt a strategic position vis-a-vis those who would threaten the relationship with rumors and attributions, and orchestrate social perceptions of their relationship. The challenge is an ongoing array of predicaments requiring strategic management through communication with each other and with third parties. It is assumed here that a vast amount of relational
information is transmitted by the dyad through nonverbal channels such as the adoption of relevant tie signs and the avoidance of romantic tie signs.

An inherent dilemma in this process is the balance that the dyad must achieve between privacy, a basic dimension of friendship in general, and public activities. Cross-sex friends must contend with increased attributions of sexuality if they spend too much time in private interaction. Privacy generates audience suspicion of romantic exclusivity (Rawlins, 1982) and threatens dyadic presentation of the message "we are friends."

All this, clearly creates a concern of the appearance and impression that their relationship has on others. These aspects are obviously not present in same-sex friendship. Therefore, cross-sex friends were found to higher on relationship monitoring as compared to same-sex friendship.

The findings of the study also showed that live-in relationships did not significantly differ with the other relationships on any of the indicators of relationship quality. Live-in relationships are highly distinct from romantic relationships, cross-sex friendship, and same-sex friendship. This distinctiveness from the other relationships should have led to significant differences on some indicators of perceived relationship quality. The sample size of people in live-in relationships (N = 10) being too small could be the reason for why significant differences were not found with the other relationships.

The findings further showed that no significant differences were found between all four relationships on facets of self and emotional wellbeing. Research shows that self and emotional wellbeing are influenced by relationships. The concept of relational self suggests that self is inherent in relationships (Acitelli, Rogers, & Knee, 1999; Andersen & Chen, 2002; Cross & Morris, 2003; Garrido & Acitelli, 1999; Sedikides & Brewer, 2001). It could also be that other relationships, apart from the ones in this study, such
parents or siblings may also have a significant affect on self. Previous research shows that there are many other factors, apart from relationships, that affect facets of self and emotional wellbeing.

The largest single source of variations in self-esteem is genetic (Kendler et al., 1998). At least one-third of the variation may be attributable to this one factor. Parental influence has also been found to influence self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967; Katz, 2000). But these effects do not end with childhood; parents continue to be potent influences into adolescence and beyond (Kashubeck & Christensen, 1995; van Aken & Asendorpf, 1997; Welsh & Stewart, 1995). Other close relationships may in the longer run assume considerable importance but the very existence and success of such relationships are quite probably also effects of self-esteem, and thus indirectly of parental influences (Emlar, 2001). There are also various circumstances, experiences and conditions that have some effect on self-esteem. Real successes and failures do matter (Emlar, 2001), but not so much as perceptions of these. How well one does in one’s career has effects on self-esteem but here, too, perceived and actual accomplishments are not the same thing. Appearance also matters (Harter, 1998), but not remotely so much as beliefs about appearance.

Research has also proposed that individual differences may exist in the degree to which people define themselves in terms of their interpersonal relationships. For some people, interpersonal relationships may be an important part of their sense of self, but for others the self may be defined much more independently (Cross & Morris, 2003).

The intrapersonal theorists have conceptualized self-esteem as a person’s private self-evaluation. These theorists see self-esteem as an independent entity. For example, James (1890) characterized self-esteem as the ratio of one’s successes to one’s pretensions, a personal assessment of how well one is doing in areas that the individual regards as important.
Humanistic approaches, likewise, viewed self-esteem as a personal evaluation of one’s goodness or worth. Rogers (1959) proposed that self-esteem arises when people live congruently with their personal, *organismic* values. Deci and Ryan (1995) argued that true self-esteem (as distinguished from contingent self-esteem) results when people behave autonomously in ways that are consistent with their intrinsic or core self. Bednar, Wells, and Peterson (1989) offered an alternative intrapersonal perspective suggesting that true self-esteem arises when people recognize that they are coping effectively with psychological threats.

Research shows that there may be individual differences that have an affect on self-disclosure. Jourard (1971a) believed that differences in self-disclosure behavior were determined primarily by stable personality differences. Many individual difference variables have been explored in relation to overall self-disclosure tendencies, including social desirability, anxiety, impulsivity, neuroticism, and internal-external control (Goodstein & Reinecker, 1974; Archer, 1979; Stokes, 1987). Stokes (1987) found that extroversion is positively related to scores on retrospective disclosure questionnaires, and social desirability is negatively related to disclosure intimacy observed in experimental acquaintance paradigms.

When it comes to emotional wellbeing most evidence suggests that apart from relationships, emotional factors, like optimism, are primary predictors of emotional wellbeing (Coughlin, 2010). Other factors include: acceptance of self and other; playing to your strengths and using your talents; low levels of defensiveness and openness to emotional experience; autonomy, mastery, and competence; clear values and a strong character; creating meaning and purpose in life; passionate engagement; and the ability to learn and grow from trauma and adversity (Coughlin, 2010).

These studies and theories mentioned above show that facets of self and emotional can be influenced by many other factors. It could be possible that these factors had a greater affect on the individuals in this research rather than the perceived relationship quality of their specific relationship examined in this research. Perhaps this is why significant
differences were not found between the four relationships on facets of self and emotional wellbeing.

THE CONCEPT OF INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

The findings of the focus group discussions show that in all the four relationships, the participants describe intimate relationships in terms of self and emotional wellbeing. The same can be found when the participants describe how their relationship has influenced them. This indicates that the concept of intimate relationships is strongly associated with self and emotional wellbeing, irrespective of the specific relationship.

A number of psychological theories and empirical evidences explain these findings. These theories and researches show that self and wellbeing are inherent within relationships. Sullivan formulated the Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry (Sullivan, 1953) in which he concluded that enduring patterns of human relationships form the essence of personality. The theory majorly propositions that personality is the relatively enduring pattern of recurrent interpersonal situations which characterizes a person’s life (Sullivan, 1953, p. 111). Personality, for Sullivan, is a hypothetical entity, that cannot be isolated from interpersonal situations, and interpersonal behavior is all that can be observed as personality. Therefore, Sullivan believed that it is inane to speak of the individual as the object of study because the individual does not exist apart from his/her relationships.

Relationships generate the social context of personality development. A relationship is characterized by a stable pattern of interaction between at least two individuals (Asendorpf & Banse, 2000; Hinde, 1993), each bringing his/her life experiences and his/her basic dispositions to the relationship. The personality of each relationship partner is likely to affect different aspects of the relationship, which in turn have an effect on the individual personality. It is this kind of interaction, or transaction, which mirrors how
individuals select relationship experiences, which in turn may initiate or foster change in personality characteristics.

Self is an integral part of personality. If relationships shape personality then they also shape self.

Influenced by earlier self theorists such as Cooley and Mead, Sullivan (1953) placed great emphasis on the social, interpersonal basis of the development of the self. According to Sullivan, the self develops out of feelings experienced while in contact with others and from reflected appraisals or perceptions by the child as to how it is valued or appraised by others.

It is difficult to think about the self without referring to other people. The self is incomplete without acknowledging interactions with others (Baumeister & Twenge, 2003). Selves do not develop and flourish in isolation. People learn who and what they are from other people, and they always have identities as members of social groups. By the same token, close personal relationships are potent and probably crucial to the development of selfhood.

The concept of relational self (Acitelli, Rogers, & Knee, 1999; Andersen & Chen, 2002; Cross & Morris, 2003; Garrido & Acitelli, 1999; Sedikides & Brewer, 2001) further elaborates the association of relationships and self. People often describe themselves in terms of relationships (husband, son, mother) or as a member of a profession (and thus as a member of a social group). Even personality traits are usually conceptualized in comparison to other people (one is not extraverted per se, but extraverted compared to others). People’s behavior can be radically affected by social rejection or exclusion (Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Stucke, 2001; Williams, Cheung, & Choi, 2000). In addition, the self is inherently interpersonal because relating to others is part of what the self is for.

These theories and concepts reflect that interpersonal relationships and self are inseparable and are embedded within each other. This can be an explanation of the
participants in the focus group discussions describing the concept of intimate relationships with respect to self.

The participants in the focus group discussions also described intimate relationships in terms of emotional wellbeing. A number of empirical evidences suggest that intimate relationships are associated with wellbeing (Glenn, 1990; Berndt, Hawkins, & Jiao, 1999; Ladd, Kochenderfer, & Coleman, 1996; Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Williams, 2003; Dush & Amto, 2005; Soons, Liefbroer, & Kalmijn, 2009). Social ties provide support that enhances psychological well-being as well as stress that contributes to psychological distress (Kiecolt-Glaser & Glaser 2002).

Research suggests that majority of people consider relationships to matter the most in life and give its fullest purpose (Klinger, 1977). Relationships are sources of joy and happiness (Duck, 1986). Relationships with other people are the bases for self-esteem and for the ability to relate to others (Duck, 1983; Duck & Perlman, 1985). Maintaining a few confiding relationships has been found to correlate with happiness and subjective well-being (Argyle, 2001, 2000).

Relationships are often held up as the single most important correlate of subjective wellbeing (Argyle, 2001). They are said to be one of the most powerful sources of support throughout the life span, and the research evidence clearly shows that being involved in satisfying relationships is associated with enhanced emotional and physical health. It is not surprising that most people view relationships as the most powerful ingredients of a good and satisfying life (Neyer & Lenhart, 2006).

Sullivan believed the significant psychosocial threats to an individual’s wellbeing are inherently social in nature. These threats, mainly, are loneliness, isolation, and rejection. Success in meeting the intimacy goals of young adulthood depend on competence in relationships. Interpersonal loss or failure to form close, supportive relationships
contributes to clinical symptomatology (Sullivan, 1953). Sullivan, thus, locates healthy or unhealthy psychological development in reactions of one’s relationships.

Brown and Harris (1978) show that the presence of a close and confiding relationship significantly reduced the risk of developing depression after a major loss or disappointment. Brown and Harris argue that long-term feelings of self-worth and self-esteem are especially significant, that they are provided important close relationships, and that, to a major extent, these feelings could stave off psychiatric disorder in a crisis.

These empirical evidences corroborate the participants in the focus group discussions describing intimate relationships with respect to emotional wellbeing.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the quantitative and qualitative analyses it can be concluded that perceived relationship quality determines facets of self and emotional wellbeing. It can also be concluded there is a marked difference in the affect of perceived relationship quality on facets of self and emotional wellbeing in live-in relationships, romantic relationships, cross-sex friendship, and same-sex friendship.

Further, people in romantic relationships have a tendency to be more absorbed in and obsessed with their relationship, they tend to be more reflective about their relationship, feel more discomfort and anxiety in their relationship, and are more assertive in their relationship as compared to live-in relationships, cross-sex friendship, and same-sex friendship. Additionally, a concern about the appearance of their relationship is experienced more in cross-sex friendship as compared to live-in relationships, romantic relationships, and same-sex friendship.

Finally, it can be concluded that people in different relationships describe intimate relationships, mostly, with respect to self and emotional wellbeing.