

RECIPROCITY IN MIDDLE AGED WOMEN'S SAME-SEX CLOSE
FRIENDSHIPS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

by

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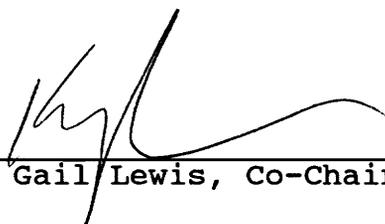
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by

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(ABSTRACT)

Reciprocity in friendship has been identified as necessary to developmental stages of friendship formation in children and adolescents. Studies of young adults and older adults in reciprocal friendships have focused on gender differences, communication, and social satisfaction, including social supports. There has been little research on the role of reciprocity in same-sex close friendships of middle aged women. Eighteen interviews of women ages 40 to 56 years were qualitatively analyzed to explore the importance of reciprocity and how it is expressed in middle aged same-sex close friendships.

The Jones and Vaughan (1990) categories of self-disclosure, emotional support, tangible assistance, and

social initiatives were used as a starting point for coding the interview responses. Shared values, acceptance and trust, feedback, and similarity/mutuality over time were additional themes that emerged from the data.

The women in this study expected reciprocity from close friends. Tangible assistance and social initiatives did not seem to be important whereas shared values and self-disclosure were the foundations of their friendships. However, there were contradictions and reservations about sharing problems and successes. Self-disclosure, feedback, emotional support, and acceptance and trust were found to be interrelated and reciprocal.

Two different levels of listening emerged from the data. The first level was expressed as listening when a close friend self-disclosed with the expectation of being "heard" and "accepted." The second level was expressed as listening when a close friend shared with the expectation of providing feedback. Acceptance and trust emerged as being reciprocally related, while similarity and mutuality emerged as being developmental over time. A relationship between feedback and self-esteem also became evident. The middle aged participants valued reciprocity in their friendships and expressed it with complexity and richness that was multi-dimensional.

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RECIPROCITY IN MIDDLE AGED WOMEN'S SAME SEX CLOSE
FRIENDSHIPS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Research suggests that friendship is a contributor to positive mental health (Adams, 1988). Friends challenge, comfort, support, and encourage personal growth. Friendships provide opportunities for intimacy, shared values, interests and activities, and a variety of resources. In the words of Harry Emerson Fosdick, a twentieth century preacher (Wallis, 1963), "friends are necessary to a happy life" (p.99). In the seventeenth century, William Penn (Wallis, 1963) wrote that "a true friend unbosoms freely, advises justly, assists readily, adventures boldly, takes all patiently, defends courageously, and continues a friend unchangeably" (p. 101).

Reciprocity occurs when friends exchange something mental, emotional, or physical that they perceive is of equal value (Peretti & Venton, 1986). It is interesting to note that reciprocity has been considered basic to friendship for more than two thousand years. In Plato's dialogue, Lysis, Socrates described friendship as "reciprocal or mutual love" (Meidlaender, 1981, p. 37).

The importance of reciprocity in friendship is supported

in extensive literature (Jones & Vaughan, 1990; Robert & Scott, 1986; Rook, 1987). Becker (1989), in Reciprocity, stated that "friendship, by definition, is reciprocal" (p. 94). He further proposed that reciprocity is necessary to develop trust in relationships. An extension of oneself needs to be returned in some way. Resentment eventually destroys friendship because of perceived betrayal of trust when the extension is unreciprocated.

Women's same-sex friendships are distinguished by the "easy reciprocity that envelops the relationship, allowing so many things to be safely discussed and felt" (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1987, p. 21). How this "easy reciprocity" is expressed is unclear. The current study explored the expressions of reciprocity in women's close same-sex friendships.

Statement of the Problem

Friendships are unique and different from relationships with parents, siblings, or spouses (Ingersoll-Dayton & Antonucci, 1988; Shachter, 1982). The expectations of friendships are gender specific. Male and female friendships seem to differ (Davidson & Duberman, 1982; Rubin, 1985; Weiss & Lowenthal, 1975; Winstead, 1986). Studies on same-sex friendships indicate that male friends

emphasize activities and doing things together; female friends emphasize self-disclosure and intimacy (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982).

The purpose of this study was to explore the importance of reciprocity in close friendships of middle aged women and how reciprocity is expressed in these same-sex relationships. The primary aim was to enrich the knowledge of how the process of reciprocity is demonstrated. In this study, reciprocity in friendship was identified as the perceived input of one friend equalling the perceived input of the other (Jones & Vaughan, 1990).

Rationale

In taking a closer look at the literature on reciprocity, it was discovered that the focus of most of the research is on children's friendships, young adult friendships, and older adult friendships. Middle aged persons of either sex were rarely participants in, much less the focus of, an investigation. One of the exceptions is the qualitative study by Helen Gouldner and Mary Symons Strong (1987), Speaking of Friendship: Middle Class Women and Their Friends, which used a sample of seventy-five women in their 30s, 40s, and 50s. This study addressed friendship formation, the circumstances of friendships, and the endings of friendships in both same-sex and cross-sex relationships.

However, the element of reciprocity in friendship was not addressed directly.

Rook (1987) suggested that "knowledge about reciprocity as a feature of naturally occurring exchanges in significant personal relationships is surprisingly limited" (p. 146). In addition, Ingersoll-Dayton and Antonucci (1988) emphasized the importance of examining reciprocity across the age span. Also, Jones and Vaughan (1990) encouraged the examination of the characteristics contributing to friendship satisfaction.

Because of the limited attention to the study of middle aged women's friendships, and the gender differences that were supported by the literature, this qualitative study has begun to fill the gap in research.

The qualitative design, using multiple case studies, allows the exploration of how reciprocity is expressed in middle aged women's close same-sex friendships. Interviews offer a broad range of data which would not be available in survey responses. This method makes it possible to describe the experience of reciprocity in the close friendships of the respondents. This study presents a picture that can be examined and expanded further using different methods.

Family therapists recognize the system of friends as a valuable opportunity for resource and possible intervention (Haber, 1990). Attention to the process of reciprocity

enriches the therapist's ability to evaluate how friends can be used as lay consultants and/or therapeutic resources in treatment.

Literature Review

Although little is known about the phenomenon of reciprocity in middle age friendships, many different aspects of reciprocity in friendship have been investigated. Researchers have addressed different age groups such as preschool, elementary school age, adolescents, young adults, and the elderly. What follows is a review of the literature on reciprocity in the friendships of children and adults.

Children and Reciprocity

Research describing reciprocity in the development of friendships in preschoolers and elementary students indicates a relationship among reciprocity, stability, and popularity. Studies of preadolescents and adolescents emphasize the role of reciprocity in the development of intimacy exchange and understanding of the world.

Drewry and Clark (1985) explored the relationship between reciprocity and stability of friendship and popularity to determine which factors were important to friendship formation. Forty-seven male and twenty-five

female preschoolers, ages 3 years and 5 months to 5 years and 6 months, participated in the study. Results indicated that dyads were more similar in popularity scores and age than unreciprocated dyads. In addition, stability of friendship was a predictor of popularity.

Previously, Gersham and Hayes (1983) investigated the stability of reciprocal versus unilateral friendships in preschoolers aged 34 to 61 months. Using observation of general play and common activities, Gersham and Hayes found that two-thirds of the reciprocal friendships remained stable over time, as opposed to only one unilateral friendship remaining stable across two testing sessions of four to six months.

Gottman's (1983) research on how children become friends was more concerned with the social processes of friendship formation, and included the variables of similarity and popularity. Positive reciprocity was identified as one of seven variables which emerged through an observational coding system and sequential analysis of stable friendships. In the initial experiment, 3 to 6 year olds were observed playing with friends and strangers in their homes. The second experiment, with 3 to 9 year olds, was used to explain the continuation of the development of reciprocity with the unacquainted children toward friendship formation. Stages were identified beginning with reciprocity of common

interest and activity to a developmental progression of exploration of similarity and differences, self-disclosure, and conflict resolution. Popularity and stability were not addressed explicitly in this longitudinal study but were demonstrated implicitly in the results.

In addition to their study of preschool friendships, Clark and Drewry (1985) investigated similarity and reciprocity with third and sixth graders and their relationship to popularity. Their findings indicated reciprocal friendships were more similar in popularity and self-concept than unreciprocated dyads. It was interesting to note that the third grade dyads were more similar in personal self-concept and the sixth grade dyads were more similar in social self-concept. Also interesting, more same-sex and same-race relationships existed regardless of reciprocity.

The developmental stages of Piaget and Sullivan (as cited in Buhrmester & Furman, 1986) were used to explain reciprocity as a preschool "tit for tat" exchange of objects and activity stage, an elementary school mutual cooperation stage, and an early adolescence importance of intimacy exchange stage. In Rotenberg and Mann's (1986), study of four groups of 30 children from kindergarten, second, fourth, and sixth grades, results were consistent with these developmental stages. Their study concentrated on the

development of the norm of reciprocity and its attraction to peers. These researchers showed videotapes of four types of peer conversations to the children. After viewing the videotapes, the children judged the respondents in the conversations. Findings indicated that the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) of self-disclosure was a factor in 6th graders only. The early adolescents indicated the attraction for friendship to the self-disclosing tape respondents greater than the attraction for the limited self-disclosing tape respondents. The level of intimacy exchange or self-revelation was the determinant in the respondents' attraction.

The study of Brooks-Gunn, Warren, Samelson, and Fox (1986) further demonstrated the development of intimacy exchange. Their study was based on the reciprocal self-disclosure regarding the menarche of fifth, sixth, and seventh grade girls. The research suggested a positive relationship between self-disclosure and closeness and reciprocity of early adolescent girls' friendships. Popularity was determined by reciprocal self-disclosure and physical development.

Epstein's longitudinal study (1983) of 4163 students in grades 5, 6, 8, and 11, repeated one year later in grades 6, 7, 9, and 12, suggested that as students mature their friendships become more stable and reciprocated. The study

also suggested that as a maturing from preadolescence to adolescence took place, the number of friends decreased suggesting an increased intimacy exchange with a smaller number of friends. Epstein related this maturation process to the stages of cognitive development of Piaget and the stages of moral development of Kohlberg (1969) and Gilligan (1977). These results were in concurrence with those of the preschool and elementary school studies, demonstrating the developmental aspect of reciprocity in friendships.

Buhrmester's (1990) study of intimacy of friendship during preadolescence and adolescence suggested that there is a greater "reciprocity in perceptions and of feelings of closeness in friendships among adolescents than preadolescents" (p. 1109).

Youniss and Smollars (1985) identified another aspect of reciprocity in adolescent friendships resulting from eight different studies. They identified "consensual validation" as a reciprocal process whereby two people seek to understand the world through an exchange of ideas, thoughts, and feelings, involving give-and-take comment, discussion, and evaluation. In adolescence, consensual validation contributes to understanding experiences and events, as well as understanding the other in a reciprocal friendship.

In this limited review of reciprocity in friendships from early childhood through adolescence the developmental

aspect has been emphasized--complexity and depth increased with age. The progression of reciprocity from common interests and activities, to mutual cooperation and conflict resolution, to intimacy exchange as a determinant of popularity, has been supported in the literature.

Adults and Reciprocity

Much of the literature on reciprocity in adult friendships focused on gender differences, communication, and social satisfaction, including social supports. Many of the studies clarified the context in which reciprocity is a factor. Others contributed to a clearer understanding of reciprocity in friendships.

Gender differences in friendship studies have been examined throughout the life course using same-sex and cross-sex studies. Caldwell and Peplau (1982) investigated the differences in same-sex friendships in two studies with 49 male and 49 female college students, ages 18 to 25 years. They identified three categories of friends: intimate, good, and casual. Although there was no significant difference in the total number of friends identified by the male and female respondents, or the amount of time spent with friends, there was a difference in the nature of the interaction of male and female participants. Women placed a

greater emphasis on emotional sharing and talking; men emphasized activities and doing things with their friends. Although reciprocity was not measured as a variable, the process was discussed in light of the sharing of activities and emotion.

In another direction, Peretti and Venton (1986) were interested in gender differences in the influence of functional components of reciprocity or maintaining and sustaining close friendships. Sixty-four male and sixty-four female college students, ages 18 to 25 years, participated in this study by constructing modified sociograms and responding to open-ended interview questions. The results indicated that the female participants perceived the functional components of the intimacy, acceptance, attachment, emotional satisfaction, and caring as significantly more important than the male participants.

Gender differences in communication and interactional patterns were explored in the Davis and Duberman (1982) research identifying three content levels of communication: topical, relational, and personal. In addition, seven interactional factors were identified: spontaneous communication, trust, non-verbal communication, dependency, shared value systems, conflict, and competition for power. Although reciprocity was not addressed explicitly, it was implied in the communication and interactional patterns.

The data indicated that women related on all levels, while men primarily related on a topical level. Women scored higher on all interactional levels except spontaneous communication and trust. It was concluded that men could be more spontaneous and trusting when their communication levels were merely topical. This was congruent with gender specific results in other studies.

Contrary to previous research, there were few sex differences in the findings by Tesch and Martin (1983) comparing responses of college students ages 19 to 21 years, to the responses of alumni, ages 22 to 29 years. They were given open-ended questions such as, "What does friendship mean to you?" and "What do you value in your friendship?" The authors suggested a possible developmental difference in adult friendships. Interestingly, using the coding dimension of Weiss and Lowenthal (1975), they found that the importance of reciprocity in friendship declined as age increased.

Weiss and Lowenthal (1975), in their life course perspective on friendship, had four age categories: high school, with a mean age of 16; newlyweds, with a mean age of 24; middle aged, with a mean age of 50; and preretirement, with a mean age of 60. In their study, gender differences were demonstrated across the age span, especially in the comparisons of actual friends to "ideal friends."

Reciprocity was singled out as having been the most important aspect in women's friendships across the life span. Middle aged men and women showed the least amount of complexity in their friendships. They were "quite simplistic in their perception of the important qualities of friendship" (p. 61). However, there has been no empirical or descriptive follow-up research on this topic.

The literature regarding older women and friendship is extensive suggesting that reciprocal social supports are a factor in life satisfaction. Jones and Vaughan (1990), Roberto and Kimboko (1989), Ingersoll-Dayton and Antonucci (1988), Rook (1987), and Roberto and Scott (1986) addressed reciprocal aspects of friendships of older men and women ages 65 and over. Reinhardt and Fisher (1989), Lewittes (1989), and Babchuk and Anderson (1989) specifically addressed the friendship of older women--married, widowed, and never married. All of the studies of older persons indicated a positive correlation between reciprocal exchange in friendship and social satisfaction of the elderly.

Ingersoll-Dayton and Antonucci (1988) explored reciprocal and non-reciprocal social support among spouses, children, and friends with a national sample including an age group of 50 to 64 years. They found a complex relationship that suggested that older adults were more comfortable overbenefitting from their children than their

friends or spouses. Middle aged respondents felt that their social and familial "networks were too demanding" (p. S72) suggesting they were providing support to both their parents and their children. However, there were no gender distinctions made in the data analysis.

Some of the studies addressed the gender issues in reciprocal friendships in young adults. Others reflected the importance and expression of reciprocity in friendship communication. Although some research hypothesized an adult developmental model, Weiss and Lowenthal (1975) had the only study that defined four categories and showed the similarities and differences across the adult life cycle. Middle aged friendship emerged as being distinctive in its simplicity.

Theoretical Framework

This study examined reciprocity and middle aged women's friendship in the broad framework of social exchange theory. Social exchange is a universal phenomenon which has been defined by anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists, (Gouldner, 1960; Jones & Vaughan, 1990; Mauss, 1925, cited in Gergen, Greenberg & Willis, 1980; Pryor & Graburn, 1983; Rook, 1987). Generally, social exchange is based on the premise that humans engage in interaction to seek rewards.

The implication exists that real and abstract benefits and losses are determined on the basis of rewards and costs (Epstein & Karweit, 1983).

Equity, reciprocity, and equality are aspects of exchange theory. In this study, reciprocity and equality have been used interchangeably. Reciprocity is concerned with the equality of perceived inputs in a relationship. For example, each friend perceives that an equal amount of resources has been contributed to the friendship. These resources may be different in form or content. One friend may do all the driving whenever they go anywhere while the other friend may offer status by being the wife of a Congressman. Another homemaker friend may provide emergency babysitting, while her working friend may pick up some unusual spices or books during her business travel (Margolies, 1985). The perceived equality of resources defines the reciprocity in these examples.

The basis for the exploration of this study emphasized perceived input of resources in middle aged same-sex women's close friendships.

Research Issues

Because of the explorative nature of this study, the questions addressed were broad. They were used as a guide

in formulating and organizing participant responses for the purpose of exploration.

1. What was the importance of reciprocity in same-sex close friendships of middle aged women? The role that reciprocity played in friendship was examined as an element necessary to the closeness of the relationship.
2. What form did reciprocity take in same-sex close friendships of middle aged women? How would it be described? What did the participants do to reciprocate? This question addressed the process of reciprocity as illustrated in the interviews to determine if distinctive patterns emerged.

Methods

Design of the Study

Because of the nature of the research issues to be explored, a multi-case study qualitative research design was chosen. This design allowed for an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon about which little was known. In addition, a qualitative design allowed the researcher to conduct an intensive investigation of a few cases to get a more complete picture and to develop a detailed description of

the phenomenon under investigation. Reciprocity in middle aged women's close same-sex friendships was the phenomenon investigated in this study. The description of how reciprocity was viewed and expressed by the group of women studied was enhanced by actual quotations from the participants. It was also expected that this exploratory study might serve to "identify important variables for subsequent explanatory or predictive research" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 15).

Participants

The original extant data was from a pilot study and consisted of interviews of 50 women, ages 30 to 63 years. Interviews of 18 women, ages 40 to 56 years, were chosen for this study to narrow the age span and use responses that were rich in description of close friendships. Of those participants whose interviews were selected for this study, fourteen were in their forties and four were in their fifties. The women were predominantly white Americans. One was of Hispanic descent, from Argentina. All but two were college educated, thirteen with advanced degrees. Three were homemakers, one was a secretary, one was a potter, one was a student, six were mental health professionals, and the remainder held professional positions in business and academia. Participants were acquaintances and friends of

the interviewers, with the exception of two individuals whose names were given to the interviewers by the project director. (See Table 1.)

Procedures

The sixteen interviewers included the project director, and doctoral and master's students in graduate programs in family therapy and social work. Each interviewer was responsible for interviewing two to four different women for a larger study of close women's friendships with fifty participants. Interviewers selected respondents for the study from among their own friends and acquaintances. The principal investigator for the original pilot study distributed the questions to the interviewers and provided some guidance on conducting qualitative interviews. Three interviewers received three hours of additional training in qualitative interviewing.

Interviewers met face-to-face with the participants to conduct the interviews which lasted from one to three hours. Some of the interviewers simply read the questions while others asked additional questions in order to more fully explore the responses. The interviewers selected the approach for recording the data which was most appropriate for them. Some of the interviewers taped and transcribed the interviews, while most of the interviewers took notes

during the interviews and recorded the responses from the participants.

The respondents were asked seventeen questions regarding various aspects of close friendships and one question regarding demographic data (See Appendix C).

Analysis and Interpretation

A modification of the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of data analysis was used to analyze the interviews to discover similarities and differences in ideas about reciprocity provided by participants during the interviews, and to provide descriptions of reciprocity in friendships. In order to recognize reciprocity patterns in middle aged women's same-sex close friendships, the Jones and Vaughan (1990) categories were used as a starting point for coding and sorting the interview responses. These categories include self-disclosure, emotional support, tangible assistance, and socializing initiatives. During the coding process, additional categories emerged: shared values, feedback, similarity and mutuality, and acceptance and trust. These categories were added to the Jones and Vaughan categories.

A qualification in the theme of self-disclosure developed that had to do with sharing problems and successes. Responses were coded as reciprocal self-

disclosure if they had anything to do with sharing of self and listening. Responses that suggested support of feelings and mutual understanding of those feelings were coded as emotional support. Any "goods and services" that were reciprocated were coded as tangible assistance. Socializing initiatives included social occasions, letters, and phone calls. The importance of reciprocal taking turns was coded as socializing initiatives. Shared values were coded when they were clearly stated as important. Feedback was coded when it was specifically understood that the initiator wanted their friend's opinion, information, or insights, and the friend expected the same when requested. Similarity and mutuality were coded when they were specifically mentioned as reciprocated by the women participants. The analysis was kept fluid and open to enable the broadest reflection of reciprocity to emerge from the data.

Since the author was not involved in the data collection, her biases have not influenced the interview process. However, it is important to acknowledge that this bias existed--that reciprocity is very important in the researcher's same-sex friendships in middle age. Further, the author believes that reciprocity can take many forms and is very unique and personal to each relationship.

In order to prevent these biases from influencing data interpretation, peer debriefing was used involving two

colleagues to review the data and categories and offer feedback in order to establish "trustworthiness" (Atkinson, Heath, & Chenail, 1991; Moon, Dillon, & Sprenkle, 1990).

Results

Close same-sex friendships of the eighteen middle aged women participants were seen as important to them now, important to them across their life span, and complex and unique. A common theme emerged in all interviews: These women had an expectation and understanding that whatever they contributed to their close friendships would be reciprocated in some way. For example, they expected and understood that their personal sharing would result in the personal sharing of their friends. They expected and understood that they would emotionally support their friends and that they would be emotionally supported. They expected and understood their close friends to share their same basic values, accept them as they are and trust them. The complexity of reciprocity was evident in the manner in which these categories were interwoven. A brief summary of each of the categories will be followed by a more detailed explanation of the results.

Shared values were an expected and understood characteristic of close friendships. The respondents

expressed the need for basic shared values in a matter-of-fact manner. Their discussions of the necessity of shared values indicated that the very existence of their close friendships depended on sharing the same basic values.

All of these women expected reciprocal self-disclosure from close friends. Reciprocity existed when one friend revealed something intimate about herself and the partner did the same. The level of intimacy increased as the personal sharing deepened. The respondents reported that they would tell their friends "anything" and their friends would listen, and they would do likewise. However, all of these women expressed some reservations about self-disclosing successes with their friends. It was interesting to note that these women were far more comfortable sharing their problems with their friends than they were sharing their successes.

Feedback emerged as different from self-disclosure in that it was described as a response to the implied or explicit request of one friend to the other regarding information, opinion, or insight. The understanding between friends, as well as the expectation, was that feedback would be beneficial in some way to the requesting friend. Like self-disclosure, listening was an important element to feedback.

The deep sharing of emotions and the interchange of caring for their close friends was expected by the women. Through self-disclosure, friends gave emotional support because they knew each other so well. The participants had an emotional understanding that they would be there for their friends and that their friends would be there for them.

Providing "goods and services" for their friends was barely mentioned as an important characteristic of friendships of these women. The same was true for reciprocity in socializing initiatives. It did not seem to matter who did what for whom and how often. The participants did not feel it was important to "count." Friends were expected to do "things" for each other and to make contact with each other and the participants believed that initiatives would eventually balance out.

The participants viewed acceptance and trust as reciprocal. There emerged an expectation that friends trusted that they would be accepted totally by each other--just the way they are. Acceptance emerged as the receiving end of trust. For example, they trusted their close friends to accept them as they were.

Similarity and mutuality appeared to represent a continuum of common interests over time. Mutuality seemed to describe a higher level of interests and activities that

were shared. A higher level interest might have something to do with sharing an interest that involved personal growth rather than playing sports, for example.

Many of the respondents described time as a developmental factor in the sharing of interests and activities in close friendships. The element of time also contributed to the depth of self-disclosure.

Reciprocity in middle aged women's same-sex friendship, as explored in this study, included several distinct categories. However, it was evident that these categories were necessarily more intertwined than distinct. None of these categories emerged as being unconnected to the others.

Importance of Friendship

Before the issues of reciprocity were addressed, the assumed importance of friendship was verified. The results of this study supported previous research by Gouldner and Strong (1987) and Eichenbaum and Orbach (1985). The women clearly indicated that close friendships were extremely important to them and that friendships were important throughout their life span. Every one of the eighteen respondents described the importance of their friendships as positive using descriptors such as, "very," "terribly," and "real." Two of the respondents called their friends their "lifeline." Another respondent indicated a continuum where

the connectedness between friends was second only to family. And yet another named her close friends as a substitute for her family. One woman implied that she would leave her husband before she would leave her friends! Three respondents emphasized that it was important for them to preserve their friendships because it would be a real loss without them. One of these women commented that it was ". . . one of the key things that life is all about and makes life good." These responses indicated that same-sex friendship is very important in middle age.

All but four of the women in the study reported that they have always had close women's friendships. The exceptions tried to have their husbands as their close friends and indicated that it "didn't work"; another moved from Italy and was alone until she could learn some English. One participant claimed "moments" when she didn't have a close friend and then she would "get depressed" until she was able to develop a close relationship.

Shared Values

No element had a more clear mandate as necessary to these women's friendships than that of shared values. Every one of the participants described the importance of being on the "same wave-length" and having a "shared world view on some level." The comments on the topic were simple, direct

and almost matter-of-fact. "I guess I could not be friends if my fundamental values were different." One interesting response on shared values reflected reciprocal valuing, "Part of valuing others is the belief that they value me."

Shared values emerged as so basic to close friendships that it seemed inconceivable that the participants would self-disclose on a deeply personal level if they did not share values. Also, if they did not self-disclose, emotional support would not be a part of the relationship. Mutual understanding, necessary to emotional support, would not be able to develop. Nor would the mutuality of higher level interests, such as contribution to society, be able to grow. Thus, shared values provided the base for many of the other aspects of reciprocity in the close friendships of the participants.

Self-Disclosure and the "Listening Post"

Self-disclosure is a characteristic of reciprocity expressed by self-revelation on the part of two friends in intimate exchange. Every participant in this study reported that self-disclosure was important in their close friendships.

One respondent acknowledged reciprocity "in revealing yourself--and in turn having them [friends] do the same thing." Another respondent defined friendship by describing

reciprocal listening to self-disclosure, "Friendship is where you listen to them and they listen to you."

"Listening" was mentioned in many interviews. One respondent mentioned a "listening post" which was defined as exchanging the roles of talker/listener while honestly sharing problems, "private things," needs and preferences, "what's on my mind," with "nothing . . . off limits."

The level of self-disclosure reported by the participants included sharing negative feelings about family. More intimate sharing of feelings was described as being one's "soul sister" with another suggesting an intertwining of self-disclosure and emotional support and the mutual sharing of empathy and understanding.

An interesting pattern emerged from the data on self-disclosure that was contradictory. Throughout the interviews, the respondents replied that they could "talk about anything" with their close friends. Yet, these same women later qualified their statements on sharing problems or successes with their close friends. Twelve respondents indicated that it was easier to talk about problems with their friends than it was to talk about successes. They did not want to appear boastful, or some felt that it was not "all right" to share success. Four other respondents had no problem with sharing problems or successes but they modified how much they would share of their successes. One

respondent felt her problems were too overwhelming to share with her friends and she was afraid of outshining them with her successes. Another did not address the issue at all.

Thus, while the importance of reciprocal self-disclosure in close friendships was expressed and described by all of the participants, some reservation and contradiction was evident in the sharing of problems and successes. Along with shared values, self-disclosure seemed to provide a foundation for close friendships as described by the participants.

Feedback and the "Listening Post"

Many of the respondents marked the value of giving and receiving advice, insights, and opinions from their close friends. The "listening post" was expanded as a forum to "check out perception," "sound things out," and gather information. Feedback involved the offering of beneficial information to the close friend when there was an implicit or explicit expectation of feedback. In contrast, the listening connected with self-disclosure involved personal sharing with the expectation of being "heard" and "accepted." For example, one respondent commented about bringing a problem to a friend to elicit feedback to get help to solve the problem. Other times a problem may be

shared in order to have their close friends listen without any expectation of problem solving input.

Sometimes feedback was shared for the personal growth of the friend. There was an understanding that it was given for the benefit of the close friend and it would be received in a positive light. For example, one participant commented, "I have been given some feedback that I give out an air of being cold and self-sufficient and unapproachable. Obviously useful to me . . . I don't want it [coldness] to be out of my awareness."

An interesting note about feedback was the comment of one of the women, "Wanting my opinion is an important choice." This suggested a reciprocal benefit from feedback. The friend seeking feedback benefitted from the insight, information, or opinion that they were interested in. The friend who gave the feedback benefitted from an increased sense of self-esteem because she felt her opinion was "valued."

Emotional Support

The women in this study expected the emotional support and caring that they have for their close friends to "be there" for them. Every one of the participants described how emotional support was important as a give and take process of emotional sharing. Caring developed as self-

revelation deepened. The greater the self-revelation, the better the women understood their friends and therefore could be more supportive.

One woman expressed the process of caring by this illustration: "To me something that indicates a good friendship is calling the next day when something is going on with a friend rather than waiting until the next time you might happen to talk to them [sic]. You are there for them [sic]." Another explained, "If something happens they [close friend] can predict how I'll react and hone right in on what is troubling me because they know me so well."

Signs of emotional support were described as a "gentle feeling," high esteem, feeling comfortable, "nurturing," being available, dependable, with a "deep sharing of emotions." These descriptors suggested the importance of the benefits of the "interchange" of emotional sharing. Emotional supports seem to have developed from self-disclosure among these women and their close friends.

Socializing Initiatives

The middle aged women in this study seemed unconcerned about the number of times they wrote, phoned, or invited friends to social occasions. The indication from many of the women was that "part of the definition of friendship is that one doesn't count." There was an easy understanding in

sharing experiences with friends. The participants expected that balance in the relationship would occur with little importance as to who did the calling or the writing, or who contacted whom. It did not seem to make a difference who did what and how often. The comment was made, "That's not how you keep track." There was a general sense of enjoyment of having someone to laugh with and to do things with on "the spur of the moment." One woman responded that close friends "seek each other out."

Thus the reciprocity in socializing initiatives for the women in this study had nothing to do with taking turns but much to do with an expectation of sharing experiences.

Acceptance and Trust

The reciprocal relationship between acceptance and trust described by many was summed up by this definition of friendship offered by one participant: "Friendship is when someone accepts you as you are. It is based on trust." More than half of the respondents recognized the importance of being taken "the way I am," emphasizing a non-judgmental aspect of friendship. Close friendships were described as being comfortable and safe. Friends did not "filter" their feelings. A close friend would not argue or try to persuade or change her friend's perspective. There was an acceptance of each other's limits.

One respondent commented that women "are more trusting in relationships with other women. They become natural and I suppose easier." This implied that trust and acceptance developed with increased self-disclosure.

Similarity/Mutuality

In this study, the patterns of similar or mutual interests were collapsed because the respondents used the words interchangeably in reference to similar interests and activities. However, there was an interesting point that some women made regarding similarity over time. About one-third of the women suggested that similar interests and activities were necessary for the beginning of a friendship, "You have to have something in common for friendship to start." This suggested that similar interests or activities provided an initial opportunity for friendship to begin. But, if there were not a progression, "Friendship ends because there is no mutuality."

Many of the respondents described similarity of interests as having been circumstantial and situational. For example, friends who had small children shared common interests. Mutuality was used to describe a commonality that transcended circumstances such as having small children, to a mutual interest in personal growth and

contribution to society. Thus, mutuality was related to larger interests reflective of shared values.

As friendship became closer, the interest in the friend became the focus rather than the activity. For example, one woman who is a potter described her friends' interest in pottery, "They still have an interest in it because I'm doing it." The suggestion was that the process of mutuality was an expectation of sharing that which is of interest to a close friend. In contributing to the personal growth of that friend, the activity became a mutual interest.

One woman was quick to point out that there needed for similarity in "large interests," but if she and her friends had interests that were exactly alike, "I think it would be deadly." This suggested an expectation of personal growth from different interests. The mutuality in friendship was interest in each other, possibly influenced by shared values. (See Table 2 for individual results.)

Time as a Factor

Although it may not have been an expression of reciprocity in friendship, the element of time was important to many of the women in describing their close friendships. The history of sharing experiences over the years, the sense of being able to "pick right back up" when you haven't seen a close friend for months or years, and a sense of "growing

together over a long period of time" was reiterated in more than a third of the participants. "Faithfulness" and the time for trust to grow distinguished "friends" from "close friends" for many of these women. The expectation that friendship needs time to grow into "timelessness" was expressed by many of these women.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the importance of reciprocity and how it is expressed in the same-sex close friendships of the eighteen women interviewed. Because the literature on this age group was so limited, categories from a study on the elderly by Jones and Vaughan (1990) were used as a starting point for coding the interviews. Additional categories emerged from the data.

Friendships were found to be important to the participants across their life span which supported the research by Weiss and Lowenthal (1975). The women offered rich detail in their description of the characteristics of reciprocity in their close friendships. This contradicted the findings of Tesch and Martin (1983) which suggested that the importance of reciprocity in friendship decreased as age increased.

An expectation and understanding of reciprocity in the friendships of the participants were described by the categories of shared values, self-disclosure, feedback, emotional support, acceptance and trust, similarity and mutuality, and social initiatives.

Shared values and self-disclosure were the foundation of the friendships of these eighteen women. This supported the findings of Caldwell and Peplau (1982) which suggested that female friends emphasized self-disclosure. Emotional support and mutuality seemed to develop from shared values and self-disclosure, trust building and acceptance in the relationships. For some women, similarity of interest acted as a catalyst at the beginning of a friendship to develop opportunities to share more deeply and explore shared values, which in some cases was described as mutuality. This suggested a developmental aspect of increasing complexity in middle aged women's friendships which was similar to the increasing complexity shown in the literature on reciprocity in children's friendships by Gottman (1983) in his study, How Children Become Friends.

The middle aged women in this study enjoyed a comfortable balance in their friendships that allowed them to appreciate connecting with their close friends. There was no concern about the need to "take turns" making contact.

Surprisingly, tangible assistance in the form of providing "goods and services" for their middle aged friends had little importance. Perhaps this was an age related issue. The literature on social exchange in older adult friendships (Jones & Vaughan, 1990; Roberto & Scott, 1986) suggested that distress occurred in the relationship when one friend felt overbenefitted from tangible support of another. Limitations on the ability to reciprocate existed because of declining resources of the elderly. The middle aged women in this study did not experience age related resource limitations. They also did not need as much tangible support from their friends. Therefore, reciprocal tangible assistance may not have been a priority in consideration of their close friendships.

What was described as the "listening post" by one of the participants suggested two levels of listening. The first was listening when a close friend shared with the expectation of being "heard" and "accepted" (self-disclosure). The second level was listening when the close friend shared with the expectation of problem solving, offering insight, opinions, and information (feedback). Acceptance and trust seemed to be involved in both levels. However, there may have been a distinction in the level of acceptance and trust.

Close friends were able to share deeply and not worry about being judged as they self-disclosed. They trusted their friends to "accept them as they are" when they listened to their stories. Perhaps when they reached a perceived level of trust, close friends also felt safe enough to seek feedback on a deeply personal issue. There was trust involved in expecting that their friends would have their best interest when giving them feedback. Acceptance and trust were underlying themes in self-disclosure and feedback.

Protection may have been a factor in the contradiction of talking about "anything" and the reluctance to share successes with close friends. Sharing problems may have been easier because it was an opportunity to vent frustration or elicit feedback to deal with the problem. Feedback about problems had positive benefits that were reciprocal for close friends. The friend who elicited feedback received information, insights, opinions, and/or advice. The friend giving the feedback received esteem from being "valued" as someone to be consulted for problem solving.

On the other hand, sharing successes did not benefit all friends involved. The friend sharing the success was listened to and may have received some emotional support. The listening friend, though, did not receive any esteem

from hearing about another's successes. On the contrary, there may have been an esteem diminishing effect because the listening friend may not have felt as successful. At least, that is the successful women's fear. Therefore, one possible reason for the discrepancy between the participants willingness to share problems and their reluctance to share successes was concern and protection from "outshining" the less successful friends. Successes may not have been shared because they were not reciprocally benefitting. The successful friend may have been protecting the listening friend from possible diminished self-esteem.

In Just Friends, Lillian Rubin (1985) makes a connection between protection and competition. She proposed that because women are socialized to cover up their own competitiveness, they deny its existence. Because of denial, women project competitiveness on friends by not sharing success. Rubin explained that by protecting friends from diminished self-esteem that may result from "outshining" or "boasting," women deny the very closeness that results from self-disclosure. This seemed to be a consideration for the eighteen women in this study because of their reported reservation about sharing successes. In their protectiveness, they could have been denying their feelings of competition with their friends and, therefore, not sharing those feelings.

The interview question on competition, "Is competition allowed/encouraged?" did not pertain to reciprocity; however, it was pertinent when exploring the reservation about sharing successes. The responses of the eighteen women were consistent with the findings of Rubin. Sixteen respondents denied feeling competitive with their close friends. Two women discussed a "little" competition--one describing it as work related, and the other saying that competition made her "squeamish." A third denied competition and then contradicted herself: "Competition? I don't know what you mean . . . If her sons won scholarships, I'd be proud of them as though they were my own." When asked about other areas, this same women responded, "Well, I'm a little jealous . . . Maybe she's a better teacher than me. I wish I could be as good as she is." Further research on this phenomenon is needed as this study did not have sufficient data to address this topic.

Because of the variety and richness of its description, reciprocity was found to be important in the close friendships of the eighteen middle aged women in this study. The aspect of reciprocity in these friendships was found to be complex and interrelated. Social exchange theory, specifically reciprocity theory, was appropriate in studying these women's friendships.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations in this study. First, because it was a pilot study, the interview questions were not designed to specifically explore reciprocity in women's close friendships. Therefore, interviewers did not probe participants for a more complete understanding of this phenomena.

Second, there were inconsistencies in the training of students in qualitative interviewing techniques. Therefore, some of the women in this study were asked to expand on their responses while others gave one word answers that were accepted as responses.

Third, there were inconsistencies in the data collection. Some of the women were interviewed by their friends on friendship which could have produced a bias which affected their responses. Some interviews were transcribed from tapes while other interviews were reconstructed from notes.

Fourth, the eighteen women who participated in this study represented a narrow segment of middle aged women. They were well educated, middle class, and all but one was non-Hispanic Caucasian. Most of the women held professional positions. They all lived in a metropolitan area.

Implications for Future Research

A number of directions for future research were indicated. Future research could be developed to address a wider range of socioeconomic status and ethnic background. A larger qualitative study could offer a more complete description of reciprocity in same-sex close friendships in middle aged women of differing backgrounds. Open-ended interview questions need to be specifically addressed to reciprocity and conducted with consistency of training and data collection. In addition, research should be conducted interviewing both members in close friendships. This would enable comparative analysis of identified close friends and how their perceptions of reciprocity are similar and different. Some of these techniques were used by Gouldner and Strong (1987), but not purposely. By using "snowball sampling" they identified some paired close friends but that was not part of their research design.

Further research on how reciprocity in friendship changes over the life cycle is necessary to recognize process changes in adult friendships. The relationship between competition and self-disclosure needs to be specifically addressed.

Further research could identify a model of the process of reciprocal friendships which could benefit the clinician. Because this study has found the process of middle aged

women's same-sex close friendship to be so interrelated, a clearer understanding is needed.

Clinical Implications

Haber (1990) has already suggested that friends can be used as consultants in treatment. Systemic thinking invites further opportunities to use friends as a resource for change.

Because of the importance of women's friendships, emotional and psychological well-being of clients is enhanced by a system of close friends. The clinician can use this system as an avenue for therapeutic intervention that may not be available in other systems such as family or co-workers.

This research has offered clues as to the process of women's friendship in middle age. Because of an increase in understanding of this process, the clinician can help clients get more from their friendships strengthening the friendship system.

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APPENDICES

**APPENDIX A:
EXPANDED LITERATURE REVIEW**

EXPANDED LITERATURE REVIEWFriendship

Many of the books on friendships and, specifically women's relationships, written in the 1980s, offered expanded insight into the nature of women's friendships and addressed multiple aspects of the topic. Some of them reflected the influence of the women's movement on these relationships. Six major books on friendships will be reviewed in this expanded literature review. These books include Just Friends by Lillian B. Rubin (1985), Among Friends by Letty Cottin Pogrebin (1987), Women & Friendship by Joel D. Block and Diane Greenberg (1985), The Best of Friends, the Worst of Enemies by Eva Margolies (1985), Between Women by Louise Eichenbaum and Susie Orbach (1988), Speaking of Friendship by Helen Gouldner and Mary Symons Strong (1987).

Just Friends: The Role of Friendship in Our Lives, written by Lillian B. Rubin (1985), explores 300 in-depth interviews of men and women, ages 25 to 55 years. The question, "What is a friend?" was asked of all participants. Their responses indicated that ideal friendship had the

qualities of "trust, honesty, respect, commitment, safety, support, generosity, loyalty, mutuality, constancy, understanding, and acceptance" (p. 7). Rubin's interviews revealed inconsistencies between "ideal" and "real" friendship similar to inconsistencies revealed in Lowenthal and Weiss' (1975) study. Friendships, by nature, are personal, unique, and changing.

Friend and kin were considered as the difference between choice and obligation. Rubin explained that the participants described how they had to "censor" for family, but friends accept them as they are. Yet, Rubin made the interesting point that close friends are referred to as "being family," a metaphor denoting the epitome of closeness.

Rubin used the term "many selves" (p.34) to describe how our friends are a reflection of parts of ourselves. Throughout our lifetimes we have many friends who fade in and fade out, some who are friends "forever," some who are acquaintances at work or some specific activity, and some who fulfill a particular need. Each one offers new opportunities for growth.

Discussing gender differences in friendship, Rubin cited the results of her research as "unequivocal: At every life stage between twenty-five and fifty-five, women have more friendships, distinct from collegial relationships or

workmates, than men, and the differences in the content and quality of their friendships are marked and unmistakable" (Rubin, 1985, pp. 60-61). Women's friendships involved shared intimacies, self-disclosure, and emotional support. Men tended to share activities with their friends. One telling part of Rubin's research was that 75% of the single women identified a best friend. This was in contrast to the 66% of the single men who could not name a best friend.

Another aspect of gender difference was that men compete while women affiliate. Women have been socialized to hide competition. This may have accounted for pettiness that may developed in women's same-sex friendships. Women do not deal directly with jealousies and envy. They protect each other by not sharing their successes and, at the same time, they cover up their competitiveness. The results of this project on reciprocity were consistent with Rubin's findings.

Just Friends traced the developmental characteristics of friendship formation from preschool through adolescence. Rubin discussed the difference between friends who are single, married, and single again. The identity of a woman in a marriage was defined by the "we." Rubin proposed that the "I" was defined by female friends. Without outside friendships, many marriages would not survive because the

husband could not provide that which was necessary to establish the "I."

Regarding cross-sex friendships, Lillian Rubin's male participants expressed a vulnerability that they could share with their close women friends because they were "accepting and non-judgmental" (p. 159).

In the chapter on best friends, the metaphor of "marriage" was used. However, there is no ritual for friendship. Best friends respected boundaries while sharing intense intimacies. There was an understanding of the core self--an unfailing acceptance and support that was sensitive to closeness and distance.

Lillian Rubin's title, Just Friends, belied the complexity that evolved from her in-depth interviews that were the basis of this book. Friendships differed circumstantially and situationally. Her book affirmed the importance of women's friendships and the uniqueness that each friendship attained by its very existence.

Among Friends by Letty Cottin Pogrebin (1987) has the subtitle, Who We Like, Why We Like Them, and What We Do With Them. Based on interviews of 150 individuals from early adolescence to age 82, the author examined friendship in a broad framework, with an underlying discussion of social exchange theory versus communal friendship theory. Social

exchange theory included instrumental rewards, emotional rewards, and shared interests. Communal friendship described the reward as the enjoyment of the friend and concern for the friend's welfare. The assumption in communal friendship is that you want to provide benefits to the other person.

Pogrebin acknowledged societal interferences that caused problems in friendship: depersonalization, social mobility, the ethic of competition, fragmentation of modern life, changing patterns of marriage/sexual behavior, and changing sex roles. As a result of these societal constrictions, the author delineated seven degrees of friendship: acquaintances, neighbors, confederates, pals, close kin, co-worker, and friend.

Consistent with Rubin (1985), Pogrebin listed the qualities of loyalty, trust, generosity, acceptance, and honesty, as necessary for one to be called a "friend." She examined her own friendships to determine whether they passed the "Litmus test" (p. 37) and to explore social exchange and communal friendship elements in them. Her conclusion was that friendships were complex and have demonstrated these ingredients: proximity, similarity, reciprocal liking, and self-disclosure.

Pogrebin identified ten different causes of conflict in friendship: love and marriage, children, separation and

divorce, competition and envy, money, favors, dependency, illness, seeing someone in a new light, and betrayal. She explained that any and all of these difficulties have been a source for deepening a relationship upon resolution, but that it was difficult to overcome some of the negative damage that may have resulted in these conflicts.

Sometimes friendships ended. Through many case histories, Pogrebin described the ending of friendships as "exits." The fading away of friendships developed as a retreat from proximity and self-disclosure, that led to avoidance, stagnation and, finally, to a break.

One interesting feature of this book on friendship was the author's search for the patterns of friendship formation, continuation, and culmination. Using case histories to demonstrate how people become friends, Pogrebin explored ethnicity, social class, and power in employment status and their effect on the importance of equality in friendship. Her discussion of friendships that crossed boundaries of color, culture, sexual preference, disability, and age offered different perspectives that were enriching. The author also addressed the inherent difficulties of friendships that are "same and different" (p. 189)--same gender, different culture.

Pogrebin discussed the psychoanalytic perspective on women's friendships as "self-in relationship" and the

pitfalls that lay in the fact that women were so skilled at friendship that there was a question as to how good it was for themselves. Three categories of women's friendship were described: feminine friendship, which helps women to function in a man's world; female friendships, which operates when women created a world of their own; and feminist friendship, which helps women function in a world as it is while striving to make it better (p. 285).

Feminine friendship was defined as what "women give each other when they accept, or cannot help, the way they are defined by others" (p. 297). Female friendship developed as a means to save humanity. It was cause related--a coming together by choice to support a common motivation, for example, suffragettes. Feminist friendship was the practice of using the power to make one's own choices--for example, whether to be a homemaker or a career woman. The sense of self was described as being strong within strong relationships.

Pogrebin reflected on the difficulty in cross-sex friendship because the societal power that men have was greater than women's power, and possessed the necessary sexual tension that interfered with the friendship. In marriages, spouses may have claimed their mates as their best friends, but, in reality, each spouse has experienced a different friendship. Men needed women to communicate and

to generate intimacy. In successful cross-sex friendships, Pogrebin's research showed that at least one of the partners was a sex-role nonconformist.

Pogrebin's final chapter traced friendship across the life span. Friendship during ages 40 to 64 years was described as less intense, with fewer friends that were more stable. Family support was found to be less dependable because of old age or independence. A sense of mortality was heightened and the preservation of friendship was deemed important. It was determined that one needed different kinds of friendships for different situations because friends have often been rejuvenated during mid-life slump. Unfortunately, the author did not distinguish responses by gender.

Among Friends offered different insights into friendship that supported and expanded those presented in Just Friends. However, gender distinctions were not made between male and female friendships. Pogrebin's study offered the social exchange perspective and was rich in its case history accounts. The author's ability to recognize emerging patterns enriched the friendship literature.

In Women & Friendship by Joel D. Block and Diane Greenberg (1985), the authors proclaimed that "female friendship is one of the best kept secrets of our society"

(p. 13). The authors used several hundred interviews based on their own clinical experience to focus the many aspects of women's friendships.

They traced how literature historically denigrated women and their relationships. Because of their second class status, women turned to each other to overcome the "blues." They developed different categories of friends with varying interests and commitments.

According to Greenberg, women's friendships developed from childhood into adulthood and dealt with competitiveness and jealousy. In adulthood, marriage and/or career could interfere with the time needed to be a friend. Yet, the interviews indicated that as women matured they were able to appreciate the value of each friendship without the constraints of power struggle due to employment status.

The authors distinguished six stages of friendship: come-ons versus put-offs--interest revealed at the risk of rejection; common ground, uncommon chemistry versus superficial sociability--taking a leap of faith beyond mutual interests; mutual respect versus disparaging comparisons--accepting characteristics which were desirable and not desirable; trust versus mistrust--demonstrating the importance of friends through behavior not merely through words; self-disclosure versus self-enclosure--revealing one's true self to one's friend, not accommodating oneself

to friends; intimacy versus alienation--feeling a sense of self-esteem without feeling the need to change.

The discussion of friendships in different circumstances related the role that competition has played in the boardroom. Sometimes careers were put in jeopardy because of risk to the friendship. The strength of networking was shown to be beneficial to career and friendships. Difference in careers was shown to affect friendship if there was no understanding of the demands of the individual's work situation.

Every study on friendship reviewed herein indicated that sexuality was always an issue in cross-sex friendships. Male and female expectations followed prescribed gender roles and were subject to rigid thinking. The authors offered guidelines for opposite-sex friendships that addressed sex stereotypes, honesty, self-selection rather than spousal selection, sexual involvement, pace of the friendship, separation of work and job status, sharing of problems, and gender differences in conflict resolution (p. 124-125).

Regarding friendship outside marriage, the authors remained consistent with other researchers reviewed here, that is, all of the studies demonstrated that women needed friendships. Women respected the boundaries of taboo topics and friendships were based on shared experience and

acceptance. Friendships between women fulfilled the emotional nurturance that could not be maintained by the spouse alone. For example, early marriage was seen to be similar to a close friendship in sharing. But, circumstances such as career and family changed that "friendship" part of marriage. Not until the second decade of marriage was there a renewal of friendship between partners. The authors proposed, however, that the marriage friendship served the couple's need for socializing. Still, women maintained intimate same-sex friendships, but with the expectation that the spouse was of first priority.

Married women with single friends presented difficulties for some of the participants and their spouses. The envy and jealousy of each partner was one factor; the limit on time and interest was another. Occasionally, the spouse could not understand the importance of the relationship. One participant explained to her husband how necessary it was for her to maintain her friendship. He eventually came to enjoy not having the total emotional responsibility for his wife's satisfaction in life.

Because reactions to new single status could be awkward, supportive, anxious, or threatening, Block and Greenberg discussed relationships with single-again women. Many single-again women sought new friendships which offered new opportunities for the widow or the divorcee. The search did

not happen without some apprehension and dismay. In some cases, cross-sex friendships developed without the goal of remarriage.

In one interesting and unique chapter, Block and Greenberg discussed the mentor-protegee relationship. As the protegee became more equal, the authors observed that friendship could develop because the formal business relationship changed as the emotional involvement increased. The mentor-protegee relationship was seen to be a two-way street. The mentor gave his knowledge while the protegee reciprocated by reflecting what she had learned. Through her performance, the mentor received the benefits of the protegee's successes. The authors warned of the potential danger of a sexual relationship, the vulnerability if the mentor were in a tenuous career position, and the difficulty of letting go of the relationship at the appropriate time.

The final chapter of Women & Friendship dealt with tending, mending, and ending friendships. Block and Greenberg (1985) proposed that caring and commitment were needed to maintain a good friendship. Listening to each other, being open and self-disclosing of feelings, and taking the time to care were necessary for the growth of friendship. When a friendship was in danger, the authors recommended the gaining of new perspectives by reconnecting and building new trust.

As in other research studies, Block and Greenberg found that ending friendships was marked by ambiguity and pain. The expectations of an enduring friendship could be unrealistic. Career changes, geographic mobility, and changing needs resulted in the fading of friendships. However, women seem to have expressed difficulty in saying goodbye. Unfinished business held the hope of friendship renewal, and conflict was uncomfortable. Thus, when friendship ended, the loss needed to be mourned.

The Best of Friends, the Worst of Enemies by Eva Margolies (1985) looks at the negativity in women's friendships from a psychoanalytic perspective. Almost two hundred interviews, conducted over a two year period, examined friendship and mother-daughter relationships. The author used the extremes of "best" and "worst" because of the conflict that she found in women's friendships. Although friendship was traced developmentally, the author concentrated on the separation and independence of the mother-daughter connection. "From mother's lap to the other girl's arms" (p. 20) described the prepubescent need for peer friendship, conformity, and subduing of competitive instincts. The author proposed that squelched competitive urges have been released covertly by female aggression in friendship. During adolescence, the push to independent

heterosexual interests was in tension with the need to remain dependent on mother. Social expectations caused conflict because of denial of the emotional need to be close to mother. Attachment to boyfriends unleashed the competitive urge and served to separate mother and daughter.

Margolies discussed single women's friendships and how they were affected by the entrance of a man. The sense of abandonment was strong resulting in situational friendships developing. However, there was some difficulty because women have experienced emotional interchange even in activity-oriented friendships. The author questioned whether "useful" friendships were exploitive.

Margolies suggested that single women have come to terms with their singleness in their forties and that they have renewed their friendships because of their acceptance of their singlehood. Margolies questioned whether, in fact, women came to the realization that they didn't need women as much as they had previously thought.

When discussing marital friendships, Margolies' case histories supported the findings in Women & Friendship and Among Friends regarding the desire for spouses as friends and women's need for same-sex friendships.

The author used case histories to describe mid-life turmoil that occurred when close friends changed their availability because of a change in activities. Many women

reported gaining respect for their friends despite the loss experienced in not having a daily confidante. Other stories related the jealousy of full-time homemakers for the lifestyle of their career friends and the influence of the women's movement on the self-perceptions of the homemaker. The pain of the "woman who has it all" was reflected by stories of scheduling a conversation with a close friend for forty-five minutes, or missing a funeral of an old friend's father. Women's need for support networks was reiterated repeatedly.

Discussion of the "new friendship" revealed that some career women were relating more like men in their friendships. They have changed their friendships to accommodate career demands and competition in the workplace. Jealousy ended women's friendships when careers were on the line. The author concluded, "when we replace our femininity with the callousness of the male achievement ethic, we do a disservice to the whole human race" (p. 163).

The "best" and "worst" of interrelationship with friends in divorce were illustrated through stories of the confusion that has been corroborated in earlier studies. The discomfort at the situation of divorce and consequent abandonment of the needy friend, the demand for support from the needy divorcee, one's loyalty to the couple, and the sense of threat posed by the single woman were richly

described by the interviews. Margolies related some of these feelings in women to the role of maternal "nurturing" versus the suppressed sense of competition to have experienced the better marriage.

This author discussed women's friendships in the workplace at considerable length. The stories related the confusion between expectations of the job and needs of the woman. The need to "mother" conflicted with the need for autonomous achievement; women needed to set boundaries of business and friendship. The use of intimacy in climbing the corporate ladder, and the pressures of the female boss to be appropriate in self-disclosure were elaborated. Boss-employee conflicts included the anti-female, female boss, the female boss of male co-workers, and the role confusion of a younger female supervising older females. Margolies described the difficulty of calling work friends to task, and finally, the guilt of having to fire a friend. Competition on the job was discussed in terms of women's confusion between the fear of rejection and appearing as "unfeminine" in their success.

The author concluded with a discussion on the importance of both independence and friendships and pointed toward the need for women to achieve balance in their lives with both having priority. Learning how to deal with competition, disappointed expectations, and changing circumstances,

openly and honestly discussed, led to a deepened relationship. Holding on to detrimental friendships might have been holding on to an idea of mothering according to Margolies. Therefore, the author recommended careful examination of our relationships to resolve the mother-daughter, dependent-independent struggles.

The psychoanalytic approach to women's friendships appeared to emphasize more of the "worse" than the "better" in Margolies work, but the case histories offered rich experiences in their telling.

Between Women: Love, Envy and Competition in Women's Friendship (1988) by Louise Eichenbaum and Susie Orbach, discussed the emotional processes of dealing with differences in women from a psychoanalytic perspective as well. This book reflected the influence of women that the authors encountered in long and short term psychotherapy, workshops, conferences, and work-based consultations. The participants ranged in age from 20 to 60 years with varying educational, ethnic, and economic backgrounds.

The authors were concerned with a perceived change in women's relationships because of the trend for autonomy in women. The importance of friends was again reiterated as a source of identity for understanding the world from a feminine perspective. This process emerged as "Women

unguardedly confide in each other with an ease that often astounds men" (p. 19). ". . . Indeed a woman without a best friend is a very lonely woman" (p. 21).

However, the positive feelings about friends were contrasted with strong negative feelings of hurt, anger, envy, and competition in women's friendships. Success has generated envy in friends because of common goals achieved by one friend and not the other. Life circumstances have developed a new set of expectations. Women's connections have deepened as a result of the women's movement. In valuing other women, women have now come to value themselves. However, "there is a post-feminist self-imposed censorship on certain feelings that [some] women consider unacceptable" (p. 32).

As women have become more successful they may have been isolated from their friends because of either the envy or the admiration of others that has put them on a pedestal. The authors used case histories to illustrate these phenomena. The confusion of the isolated women demonstrated the need for attachment to others for their self-development; conversely, the isolation of women in their success stagnated their personal growth.

The authors discussed women's search for a sense of self as having been experienced in relational socialization. This concept was conditioned through the mother-daughter

relationship. The mother taught her daughter that satisfying others was a need of her own. Thus, taking care of one's own needs was contradictory to what was taught by the mother. "Merged attachment" was the term Eichenbaum and Orbach used to describe the contradictory feelings of being close and giving, and of fearing autonomy and separation. The sense of self developed from deprivation rather than "having" according to the authors.

The authors offered a psychoanalytic perspective to a shift in friendship because of a man creating a triangle in the relationship. The sense of abandonment and the loss of attachment to the friend was reflected as a component of the loss of self. Along with this loss was an experience of pain and anger related to disappointments between mother and daughter.

When women have acted autonomously, they have been conflicted with the need to be independent and have a separate sense of self, and the need for "merged attachment" in which their identity was reflected by others.

Between Women's explanation of this tension was clarified in the storytelling of the authors. Case histories gave examples of how friendships ended because interests and needs changed. However, the very nature of "merged attachment" suggested that to effect an autonomous

change is often perceived as abandonment. Abandonment has caused guilt, envy, and competition.

The authors discussed envy in an interesting light. In women's friendships, envy has been revealed as self-hatred. The denial of negative feelings could be so strong that anger was self-directed. It was seen as more comfortable to turn negativity toward oneself than to be threatened by discomfort in having negative feelings toward a woman friend. It was seen as so threatening when another woman separated from friendship by self-development that a friend might have tried to undermine her success. "So much of women's relating revolves around supporting one another through difficult times. When a woman seems to be doing well, however, support may be less forthcoming and she may feel that she has been cast out of the company of women" (p. 97). Envy, in other words, has been seen as a defense against women's desires for self-actualization.

Competition has been historically related to getting men's attention. Eichenbaum and Orbach suggested that competition for other women's approval was a more realistic explanation. Competition disguised a need for attention and appreciation for a woman's struggle. Competition has arisen from fear of not being heard or recognized. Competition has been expressed as the manifestation of feelings of self-doubt. The psychoanalytic explanation for competitiveness

has been the mother-daughter struggle to win in the continuing battle for both separation and connectedness. One has felt competitive when one has not had a secure sense of self. Thus, the need to have one's accomplishments recognized has been revealed in competition.

Anger has been an integral a part of relationships; however, women have been taught to deny its existence. Eichenbaum and Orbach have described anger as culturally out of place in stereotypical friendships. Sometimes anger has resulted from transference issues unresolved in mother-daughter tension. Sometimes anger has resulted when one is neither recognized or heard.

Anger has had a positive dimension when it has enabled one "to hear oneself, defend oneself when one has felt invaded, negated, or denied" (p. 143-144). In addition, having been able to receive anger without self-criticism was an important piece of friendship.

Direct self-assertion to one's friend has been identified as difficult for women, according to Eichenbaum and Orbach. They proposed that it has been a result of the "merged attachment." Without the ability to speak freely, projection of one's feelings onto the friend would continue without the independence that is necessary for growth. By speaking directly, friends grow in relationship rather than being stuck in fantasy projection. Directness has been seen

to break up isolation. It has also helped to establish "separated attachment" which has been defined as two separate identities co-existing in relationship.

The authors described the distinction between sympathy and empathy and how they have been seen to affect the acceptance of difference. The separated attachment/connected autonomy has been defined as the psychological connection between individuated, care giving, empathetic women who have been connected, "with a clear boundary between self and other, the resources one has for giving and receiving" (p. 204).

Speaking of Friendship: Middle Class Women and Their Friends (1987) reflected the qualitative research of Helen Gouldner and Mary Symons Strong. Seventy-five women, ages 30 to 65 years, became involved in this study by "snowball" sampling of middle and upper class women. Each interview took about one and one-half hours. The authors studied middle class women because they tended to be more separate from their relatives on account of geographic mobility, and because their socioeconomic status enabled them to have limited financial worries.

The researchers indicated that none of the participants could relate when and how a particular friendship began. There was some commonality and similarity, but essentially

the friendship "just happened" (p. 21). None of the participants reported using any strategies to form a friendship.

In their quest to understand the process of making and keeping friends, the authors recognized four concepts: "The women made use of their personal (1) dislike criteria, (2) disregard criteria, (3) liking criteria, and (4) their highly individual budgets of friendship as procedures for narrowing down a large unwieldy cast of candidates for closer relationships" (p. 28). As expected, the last two concepts were found to be the determinants in friendship formation and growth, reflecting how close friends could be and how many there would be.

"Talking" emerged as central to all friendships in this study. The participants described differences in talking to women friends and to male friends and/or their spouses. Gouldner and Strong named this importance of women talk as "a special art" (p. 66). It was more than sociable conversation. The type of talk depended on the depth of the friendship. Listening, support, comfort, guidance, and problem solving, as well as entertainment were all part of women talk. On the deepest levels, the authors described women talk as an uncensored sharing of information and feelings.

Similar to previous studies, different categories of friendships emerged. Activity oriented friends and work friends were not necessarily intimates but could have developed into close friendships. The executive relationship was described by the isolation that was experienced in women who responded in the same mode as men so as to climb the corporate organizational ladder.

Extraordinary relationships were described as taking a long time to develop. The authors noted that their middle class sample seemed wary of taking the step toward intimacy essential to these relationships. Many of them hesitated to name a best friend, which was contrary to Lillian Rubin's findings in Just Friends. Gouldner and Strong used the absence of ritual as a possible reason for the uncertainty of naming a "best friend." The participants were willing to name close friends who were "good enough." In fact, some women expressed a sense of loss if they did not have a close friend. But naming a "best friend" was uncomfortable. There was uncertainty when there wasn't a fully reciprocated relationship indicated as a "best friend" among their close friends.

The interviews revealed a hesitancy by the participants to fully self-disclose, particularly when they might have exposed something that might be perceived as unattractive. The participants expressed difficulty in balancing open

honesty with their friends, while protecting themselves at the same time. This finding was contrary to the findings on reciprocity in this study in which the participants suggested that being accepted without the fear of judgment was a characteristic of close friendships.

As with other research on friendship, geographical mobility, change in marital status, change in interest, and perceived misunderstanding or betrayal were mentioned as factors in ending friendships. Consistently, the research indicated that women rarely ended friendships. They allowed them to erode more often than explode in the process of breakdown.

In their discussion of the Adult Women's Friendship Project, from which the interviews were conducted, the authors indicated that friendship was important to middle class women. Some of these women expressed regret at not taking more time for friends. Middle-class women have needed to juggle professional and family responsibilities which have limited their time for their friends. However, they have always valued friendship and developed friends in their progression through the life cycle.

Some of the participants indicated that the women's movement supported friendships by creating a "social climate in which female friendships re-emerged as significant"

(p. 154). The authors reiterated how much these middle class women or "New Breed" (p. 156), as they called these women, worked at developing a network of same-sex friends. Many of the participants were single and did not necessarily want to change that status. Whether married or single, most expressed their time with friends as expected and necessary.

The authors suggested that their sample may have been too small to adequately make conclusions about the complexity of "New Breed" friendships. However, they did predict that the importance of same-sex friendships in the lives of "New Breed" women would remain constant.

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APPENDIX B:
SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

In the literature on friendship, social exchange theory explained friendship relationships on the basis of costs and rewards (Epstein, 1983). "Social exchange characteristics refer to the perceived exchange of actual resources (behaviors and material goods) between friends" (Jones & Carlson, 1990, p. 452). It is a theoretical explanation of the functioning of friendship.

Social exchange reflects the rational determination of acceptance or rejection of a relationship, based on real or abstract benefits, in consideration of the investment made by the individual. Rosemary Bleiszner (1989) explained, "Exchange theorists . . . focus on the friend's evaluations of the benefits of interaction with each other in comparison to outcomes derived from past friendships and to those potentially available in other friendships" (1989, p. 111).

James Flanders (1982) discussed exchange theory in relationship to loneliness. He stated that it was necessary for human contact over time to have a "favorable exchange or resources" (p. 20), that is: time, status, money, affection, information, and goods.

Equity and reciprocity are specific aspects of the broad framework of social exchange theory. Some theorists describe reciprocity as an element of equity theory (Huston & Burgess, 1979). However, equity theory and reciprocity theory are distinct.

Equity theory in friendship is the perception that the investment and outcomes of each of the partners in the relationship are equal. In other words, what each person contributes to the friendship and receives from it equals what the partner contributed to the friendship and got out of it. Fairness exists when rewards are in proportion to contributions (Leventhal, 1983). When there is inequity in a relationship, distress results and an effort is made to restore equity. Distress results from an imbalance of overbenefitting or underbenefitting (Perlman & Fehr, 1986).

The difference between reciprocity theory and equity theory is that reciprocity is concerned with equal input or resources or support into a friendship, while equity theory reflects inputs and outcomes in a relationship. Outcomes have not been not considered in this theoretical framework. "A friendship is considered reciprocal if the level of perceived input of one friend equals the levels of perceived input of the other friend (Jones & Vaughan, 1990, p. 452). John Scanzoni (1979) explained that reciprocity is the "underlying energy that maintains ongoing social systems and

relationships, that influences satisfactions with, and thus commitments to them" (p. 62).

Reciprocity theory is rooted in anthropology. It was used as an analytic tool to describe exotic native custom (Pryor & Graburn, 1979). Alvin Gouldner's (1960) "norm of reciprocity" is a functional theory which explained survival and exploitation in different cultures. It was considered the moral component for what might have been considered utilitarian reciprocity. Simply stated, the "norm of reciprocity" described the belief that people should help those who help them and that people should not do harm to those who help them. The study of elementary school age children by Rotenberg and Mann (1986) indicated that understanding of the "norm of reciprocity" did not develop until preadolescence.

Reciprocity as a component in friendship was both complex and multi-faceted as demonstrated in previously cited research in this project.

This review has addressed some main points of social exchange theory and friendship to expand the understanding of the reader.

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APPENDIX C:
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ON WOMEN'S CLOSE FRIENDSHIPS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ON WOMEN'S CLOSE FRIENDSHIPS

1. How would you define friendship?
 - a. What is the distinction for you between a friend and a close friend?
2. What do you look for in a close friend?
 - a. How many women do you consider close friends now?
 - b. At other times in your life, have you had more, less, or about the same number of close friends at any one time?
3. How do your friendships start?
 - a. Do you grow or fall into them? (Like in sexual relationships, when one "falls" in love.)
 - b. Who usually initiates your friendships--you or the other woman?
4. What are the overt or covert rules of your friendships?
 - a. Do they differ with different close friends?
 - b. Who initiates most of the telephone calls?
 - c. Is open disagreement allowed? About all topics or only some?
 - d. How are disagreements between you resolved?
 - e. Can you openly confront each other or do you do it "gently"?

- f. Is peace at all costs the rule?
 - g. Is competition allowed/encouraged? In all areas or just in some (e.g., work but not men)?
 - h. Is physical and verbal affection allowed? Is it overt or just "understood"?
 - i. Does one of you have more power in the relationship?
 - j. Must you have similar value, styles, interests?
5. What roles do you take in your friendships? Are they different with different women?
- a. therapist/patient
 - b. talker/listener
 - c. initiator/go-alonger
 - d. teacher/student
 - e. Are roles consistent or do they switch?
6. Is friendship more important to one of you than to the other?
7. Are there some topics that are off limits for discussing?
- a. Can you talk about problems with work, with women friends, with men?
 - b. Can you talk about successes with work, with women friends, with men?
 - c. Can you talk about your successes if your friend is not in a successful period of her life?

- d. Can you talk politics if you have different orientations?
 - e. Can you talk about issues when you know you two ardently disagree?
8. Is it easier to talk with friends about problems and mutual struggles or to talk about personal and professional successes?
- a. Are your friends more responsive when you talk about problems or successes?
 - b. Do you worry about looking more successful or about outshining your close friend?
9. Do you have close friends you do not like? This would include close friends that you devalue, feel sorry for, etc.
10. Do you have close friends who live locally but whom you do not see? How do you understand this?
- a. Do you have more close friends living locally or living out of town?
 - b. How often do you talk with your out of town close friends?
 - c. How often do you get together with your out or town close friends?
 - d. Has the quality of your friendship changed since you are not living together, e.g., do you share the same degree and level of intimacy?

11. Have your friendships (and what you look for in them) changed as you have grown older? Did you have different types of friends or were your needs different in your 20s, 30s, etc.?
12. What is the longevity of your close friendships? Are they from your childhood, your young adult years or adult years?
13. What happens to make close friendships end?
 - a. Do they fade out, is one person dropped, does the degree of closeness (intimacy) change?
 - b. Do you understand why each close friendship has ended?
 - c. Did one or both of you grow in different directions?
 - d. Was the desire to end the friendship mutual?
 - e. When the degree of closeness changed, which or you initiated the change?
 - f. Was the cause of the changed relationship related to a man or to men in general? to a job change? to a city change? other?
 - g. Did one of you have different needs (or need different degrees of intimacy) as you got older and therefore needed to move to different friends?
14. What effect do you think men in general or a particular man has on your close women friendships?

15. Are your close friends similar to or different from your mother or your sister(s)?
 - a. Do you think there is a relationship between degree of closeness between you and your mother/sister(s) and between you and your close friends? For example, if you are close with a sister, does that make it easier or more difficult to be close with women friends?
 - b. Are your friendships similar to the type your mother had?
16. Has there been a time when you have not had a close friend?
17. How important are your close friendships to you?
18. Answer each of the following for yourself and for each of your close friends (if you know):
 - a. How old are you?
 - b. How much formal education do you have?
 - c. What do you do for a career/avocation?
 - d. What is your cultural background?
 - e. Where did you grow up?
 - f. Do you have siblings? What is your birth order?
 - g. When you were growing up did your mother have a close friend?

TABLES

TABLE 1

Demographics			
Respondent	Age	Education	Occupation
A	52	H.S.	secretary
B	43	Masters	health administrator
C	41	Masters+	research technician
D	56	7th grade	homemaker
E	56	2 Masters	librarian
F	55	Masters	potter
G	47	Masters	homemaker
H	45	M.S.W.	therapist
I	40	almost B.A.	therapist
J	42	Masters+	therapist
K	46	2 Masters	higher education
L	48	M.S.W.	therapist
M	40	2 Masters	dir. personnel
N	41	Masters	homemaker
O	42	Ph.D.	teacher
P	40	B.S.+	vocational counselor
Q*	40	Masters	graduate student
R	43	B.A.	social worker

* Hispanic

TABLE 2

Interview Responses on Categories

Respondent	SV	SD	FB	ES	TA	SI	AT	S/M
A	X	X	X	X			X	X
B	X	X		X		X		X
C	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
E	X	X		X			X	X
F	X	X		X		X		X
G	X	X		X			X	X
H	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
I	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
J	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
K	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
L	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
M	X	X	X	X				X
N	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
O	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
P	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Q	X	X				X	X	X
R	X	X		X		X	X	X

SV = shared values
 SD = self-disclosure
 FB = feedback
 ES = emotional support
 TA = tangible assistance
 SI = socializing initiatives
 AT = acceptance and trust
 S/M = similarity/mutuality

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