

Women's Friendship Dissolution: A Qualitative Study

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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December 2008

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Acknowledgements

This research idea has come to life through the efforts of many people. To begin with, I would like to thank the participants that willingly shared their stories for the sake of science. Carey Winkler and Christy Zender, this paper is evidence of your research skill, faithful support, and genuine friendship, thank you. Thank you, John Romano, for helping me make this paper as good as it could be. Thank you, Kay Herting Wahl, Pat McCarthy Veach, and Nicki Crick for supporting this research, and supporting me in my professional development. Thank you, Sue Babcock, for the kick in the pants when I needed it. Thank you, Joe Gaines, for being my buddy. And lastly, thank you, Lois Buchinger, for celebrating each step of this journey with me.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the art and science of relationship. May our appreciation, connection, and empathy grow to outweigh our dissatisfaction, disconnection, and egocentrism.

Abstract

This study is the first of its kind to explore and describe female experiences of ending a friendship (non-romantic) with a female friend. The adult friendship did not end through death or moving away, and it ended within the last five years. The unique and specific characteristics of women's relationships with women may suggest that the maintenance of their relationships carry a particular importance that differs from social connections in the lives of men. Given the importance of relational connection in women's lives and the scarcity of literature regarding friendship dissolution, an investigation of the process of women's friendship dissolution was warranted. A survey of the literature provided direction for the exploratory research questions that guided the development of the interview protocol. Participants included in this study were 15 professional women (ages 25-72 years, median age = 32) self-selected from three different recruitment pools. The primary researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with all of the participants. The interviews were analyzed by a research team of three judges employing a qualitative research methodology guided by Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR; Hill, et al, 1997; Hill et al., 2005). The analysis was reviewed by an outside auditor for the study. Final data analysis revealed four domains (Friendship Characteristics, Components of Friendship Dissolution, Learning about Self and Friendship Dissolution, and Experience Related to Participation in Study and Interview), nine core ideas (Friendship Formation, Nature of Friendship, Reason for Dissolution, Process of Dissolution, Nature of Relationship Post-Dissolution, Outcome of Dissolution Experience, Increased Self-Awareness, Awareness Regarding Friendship and Dissolution, and Reaction to Interview), and thirty-two categories. Study strengths

include exploratory investigation of an unexamined phenomenon, goodness of fit between research topic, data collection, and research methodology, and participant ability to describe complex facets of relationship dynamics due to their professions. Limitations of this study include the inability to generalize the findings outside of the participants of this study, self-select and self-report data collection methods, and possible interviewer and research team bias. Future research directions incorporate theoretical connections to female stress response (e.g. Taylor et al., 2000), relational aggression (Crick, 1995), and women's development (Josselson, 1996). Implications for the study for counseling women were discussed.

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Introduction

Dissolution is the relational stage in which a relationship ceases to exist; it is the winter, the death, the felt separation, and the end phase of a relationship (Vanzetti & Duck, 1996; Skovholt, 2004). Dissolution of friendship is at once both conceptually rational and practically irrational. Logically, people are aware that all of the relationships formed over a lifetime will end, ultimately through death, if not before. Experientially, however, dissolution is often resisted and experienced with “considerable distress” (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 503). The process of ending friendships is a relatively unarticulated process in academic literature. Words like break-up, separation, and divorce fit for the dissolution of romantic relationships. In contrast, popular phrases such as “had a falling out” or “moved on” are used to describe the end of non-romantic friendships. Such statements suggest a nebulous, undefined experience in describing the dissolution of friendship.

Although the relational process of dissolution in women's friendships remains unexplored in the academic literature, women's friendships and the endings of those friendships have long been the subject of literature, movies, and television. Books such as *The Color Purple*, (Walker, 1982) movies like *Mean Girls* (Michaels, 2004) and *Beaches* (Marshall, 1988), television shows such as *Sex & The City* (Starr, 1998) and *Desperate Housewives* (Cherry, 2004) explore themes related to women's friendships, the maintenance of those friendships, and at times, the endings of them. Therefore, this present study seeks to extend the academic literature to the dissolution of women's friendships in an effort to broaden clinical practitioners' and social scientists' understanding of this phase of relational experience.

Research on dissolution in romantic relationships lends structure to the investigation of how friendships may end. Sprecher (1988) found that the level of commitment within romantic relationships was influenced by perceived equal investment and satisfaction. Alternatively, Felmlee, Sprecher, and Bassin (1990) investigated dissolution in romantic relationships using a hazards model in which they examined specific factors that contributed to the breakdown of relationship commitment. These findings suggest that multiple components of a relationship can act to sustain or dissolve the level of commitment. This multifaceted notion of relationship dissolution may shed light on the process of women's friendship dissolution.

Friendship appears to serve different purposes and meet different needs for women and men. From preschool (Maccoby, 1990) to emerging adulthood (Johnson, Brady, McNair, Congdon, Niznik, & Anderson, 2007), research has found gender differences within friendships. In a meta-analysis of sex differences within social relationships, Maccoby suggests that the peer group, rough-and-tumble play, and the challenge for girls to verbally influence boys in early childhood combine to create an interaction that leads to same-sex play partners. Research on friendship closeness in adults suggests that females are more likely than males to: "1) develop closer and more intimate friendships, 2) stress the importance of maintaining closeness and intimacy, and 3) expect more closeness and intimacy in their friendships" (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 2; Clark & Bittle, 1992; Foot, Chapman, & Smith, 1977). These findings suggest that women chose women for friends to meet interpersonal needs that they were less likely to find in their friendships with men. Given the importance of friendships in women's lives, their dissolutions are significant (in terms of their impact on women), but

understudied. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the process of dissolution within the friendships of women.

Statement of the Problem

The importance of non-romantic, peer friendships within the lives of women has gained recognition in academic and popular literature over the last few decades (Fiore, Becker, & Coppel, 1983; Liang et al., 2002; Offill & Schappell, 2005). For example, research from evolutionary psychology suggests that women experience a predisposition to forming and sustaining relationships with one another as a response to stress that is unique in comparison with the stress response men experience (Taylor, 2000). Research in feminist psychology suggests that socio-cultural pressures lead women to look to relationships with one another for a grounded sense of self in an environment that is often destabilizing for women in ways that are not for men (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Further, the relationships of women occurring within the workplace (Mansfield et al., 1992), within romantic relationships (Richard & Brown, 2007), and within social communities (Hagerty, Williams, Coyne, & Early, 1996) have been investigated. Findings from the above literature suggest that women find emotional support and intimacy in relationship with one another in multiple capacities, e.g., in the workplace, in romantic relationship, and living within their communities. Further, although narrow, the base of literature on women's friendships with one another suggests that women experience an emotional support and intimacy in their friendships that differs from that which they receive in heterosexual romantic relationships (Oliker, 1989).

The unique and specific characteristics of women's relationships with one another may suggest that the maintenance of their relationships carry a particular importance that differs from social connections in the lives of men. Given the importance of relational connection in women's lives and the scarcity of literature regarding friendship dissolution, a further investigation of the process of women's friendship dissolution is warranted.

Definition of Terms

Friendship. Friendship, as a type of social relationship, has not been given a clear definition in application to adult women in the literature. Therefore, for the purpose of this paper, *friendship* is defined as a *specific close relationship between two non-related women, incorporating strong, frequent, nonromantic, and diverse interactions occurring interdependently over a period of time.*

Dissolution. The process of ending relationships is a relatively unarticulated process in both experience and in the literature. Dissolution, for the purpose of this study, is defined as *the relational stage in which the commitment between two women friends ceases to exist.*

Research Questions

The research questions of this study are:

- 1) What was the nature of adult women's friendships that have ended?
 - a. How were these friendships established?
 - b. What expectations, needs, and desires were met in the friendships?
 - c. Which expectations, needs, and desires were neglected in these friendships?

- 2) In adult women's friendships, in which distance and death were not the primary reason for ending the friendship, how does one member of the dyad describe the reason for dissolution?
 - a. How is dissolution accomplished? How do women approach ending friendships with one another? What does that process involve?
 - b. What are the consequences of dissolution?
- 3) What did women learn about themselves and friendship through the process of dissolution?

To investigate these research questions, Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR; Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997; Hill, Thompson, Hess, Knox, Williams, & Ladany, 2005) was used to analyze the experiences of 15 adult women's friendship dissolution. A team of researchers was utilized to identify domains and categories within and between the interview transcriptions. A further description of the methodology and results of the findings are discussed in chapters three and four.

Significance of the Study

Relational dissatisfaction is one of the primary issues for which people seek psychotherapy (Liem & Pressler, 2005). Women are more likely than men to seek mental health services (Rhodes, Goering, To, & Williams, 2002). Given the significance that relationships play in women's lives, it is likely that some women may discuss friendship dissolution in therapy. Psychological practitioners may be more equipped to assist in the dissolution process if more were understood about the phenomenon. The American Psychological Association (APA; 2007) put forth the *Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Girls and Women* in an effort to address the

specific needs of girls and women in therapy due to experiences of oppression and sexism in the dominant culture. These APA guidelines offer a call to researchers to explore relationship experiences that are specific to the lives of women. This study seeks to understand the process of friendship dissolution within the lives of women, and in so doing, provide normalization and guidance to women and psychological practitioners.

Summary of Chapters

Chapter One provides an introduction to the topic of women's friendship dissolution, incorporating the purpose of the study, the statement of the research problem, and the significance of this investigation. In an effort to further explore the relational dynamic of friendship dissolution, the literature regarding women's relationships, the process of relationship, and women's friendship is reviewed in **Chapter Two**. In **Chapter Three**, a thorough explanation of the research methodology for this inquiry is provided. **Chapter Four** presents the results of this study. The themes that emerged from the participant interviews are highlighted along with a discussion of interview data comprising each theme. Lastly, **Chapter Five** provides a summary and discussion of the research findings, including the recommendations, limitations, implications, and conclusions of this study.

Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature related to adult women's friendship dissolution. This review is conducted via five levels of investigation. First, Josselson's (1996) theory of women's identity development is explored. Second, friendship as a social construct is explored. Third, the unique characteristics of women's friendships are examined. Fourth, the process of relationship dissolution is explored. Lastly, the concepts of aggression, conflict, and dissolution within the friendships of the development of women are reviewed. The chapter concludes by connecting this study to the field of psychology, with particular emphasis on counseling psychology.

Research of the literature began with multiple searches of PsychInfo from 1980-2007 using keywords: friendship, dissolution, relationship maintenance, sex differences, stress response, adult female, and interpersonal conflict. Other literature research tools used include: MNCAT, google.com, and correspondence with researchers and practitioners in the fields of women's health, female stress response, and counseling psychology. This chapter reflects an attempt to gather various and disparate veins of research connected to adult women's friendship dissolution. It is noted at the outset of this chapter that although many theories of interpersonal functioning related to this topic have been hypothesized over the past 30 years, limited empirical literature exists on any one theory. These findings highlight the need and importance of further examining the dynamic experience of adult women's friendship development. The literature review now begins with an exploration of Josselson's (1996) theory of women's identity development.

Josselson's Concept of Women's Identity Development

Psychology, as an academic field, is a relatively new science. Therefore, the established notions of the human psyche and identity development are still in the early stages of conception (Hunt, 1994). The idea of examining women's identity development, as a unique experience from men's, dates back to Freud's writings (Freud, trans. 1995). Karen Horney (1950) and Anna Freud (1966) further pursued concepts unique to women's identity development. However, as the behavioral and positivistic movements of psychology pervaded theoretical research from the 1930s to 1960s, the nuanced and socially influenced concepts of identity development were put on hold. Theories that could be empirically validated were chosen over research veins that were more subjective, creating a research movement that favored laboratory and controlled research over naturalistic and observed studies.

In contrast to the empirical movement in the mid 1900's, the constructivist and pluralistic views of the last 40 years have provided a foundation that allows for qualitative differences between and within gender classification without judgment. The expansion of psychological research in recent times has been nourished by the civil rights movement, feminism, and gender studies. This broadening awareness of being provides a platform from which the uniqueness of women's friendships can be viewed with curiosity and interest, without pressure to define difference or discriminate value between men's and women's social relationships.

The examination of women's friendships begins with the assumption that women, as humans, are innately drawn to relationship with others. This perspective of human interaction, whether female or male, was first posited by proponents of the

school of object-relations theory (Fairbairn, 1952). Josselson (1996) applied facets of object-relations theory to the examination of women's identity development more specifically.

In a three-phase longitudinal study, Josselson (1996) followed the identity formation and development of women, beginning in late adolescence (mean age not available) and ending in middle adulthood (mean age not available). All three phases were completed over a span of 23 years. A total of 30 women were interviewed at three separate times in their lives. In 1971, the first phase of data collection, Josselson randomly drew names of senior college women from three different college directories: a large state university, a large private university, and a small women's college. Participants were contacted by letter and by phone and asked to participate in a study of the psychology of women. In the first study, Josselson reported that 75 percent of women contacted agreed to participate. An initial 60 interviews were completed in an effort to find an equal number of 12 women for each of Josselson's four identity status groups ($N = 48$). In 1983, Josselson recruited another 12 participants at random, separate from the participants above, from different academic institutions than stated above. These participants were recruited to be part of another study that was never completed, and were then grouped into the first phase of data collection for the longitudinal study ($N = 60$).

Initially, participants were interviewed by Josselson (1973, as cited in Josselson, 1996) for 30-60 minutes using Marcia's Identity Status Interview (Marcia, 1964). Interviews were conducted face-to-face and taped (it is not reported whether the taping was audio or visual). The tapes were then rated by Josselson and a psychology graduate

student. Inter-rater reliability for identity status classification was 90 %. If agreement could not be reached between raters, a third person was asked to rate and make a decision.

After the identity status interview and equal groups had been made, participants then completed an intelligence test and a 90-120 minute open-ended, semi-structured personal history interview. Interview questions were meant to elicit information regarding the women's early life, relationships, conflicts, experiences, memories, and recent dreams.

The second phase of data collection occurred in 1983. Josselson (1987, as cited in Josselson, 1996) located 40 of the initial 60 participants. Of these 40 women, 33 agreed to participate by completing a follow-up questionnaire, either in writing or via audiotape. Following questionnaire completion, 31 participants were interviewed, primarily face-to-face, for 3-5 hours by Josselson. Two of the participants were interviewed by Josselson's students because of time constraints. In addition to the identity-status questions, this second interview incorporated work history, decision-making, and life reflection questions. The location of where these interviews were conducted was not reported.

The third phase of data collection began in 1993, 30 of the 40 women from the second phase agreed to participate for the third time in the interview procedures. In person interviews lasted 4-5 hours. Some of the interviews were completed by students of Josselson or completed via questionnaire and audiotape; however, the majority of data collection was done face-to-face by Josselson (1996).

Results of Josselson's (1996) study were presented by grouping the participants into one of four identity statuses, drawn from a combination of ego identity categorizations by Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1964). Josselson's four identity statuses in women's development were: Guardians, Pathmakers, Searchers, and Drifters. A brief description of each status was presented. The Guardians guard their heritage, "foreclosing on the possibility of forming an independent identity by seeking to preserve ways of thinking, responding, and valuing that had always been. Preoccupied with security, they chose what felt safe" (Josselson, p. 45). Pathmakers had "done the psychological work of independence and crafted an identity out of what they felt they were and wished to be. They had taken the step of belonging to themselves" (Josselson, p. 72). Searchers were

emotionally attuned to options, these women knew that they could design their own lives, but were frequently awash in their own inner contradiction. [These] are the women who left their churches, protested the Vietnam War, became feminists, criticized their parents, experimented with sex – and felt guilty (Josselson, p. 105).

Drifters comprised the fourth and final identity status. Drifters scored highest on measures of anxiety, and although they appear to be "charming free-spirits, on closer examination [they] were really less in control of what they were doing than it might have appeared" (Josselson, p. 142).

Josselson (1996) explored the various paths of development for each of the four groups of identity status during the third phase of data collection. At phase one, all 60 women were in their early 20s, but by phase three of data collection, the women had matured into their mid 30s. Josselson reported that women in each identity status learned how to adapt to the world around them by incorporating skills less innate to

their identity status. For instance, Guardians were likely to become less rigid and more courageous over time. Further, Josselson pointed out common factors that influenced identity development consistently across the different statuses. Friendship was one factor Josselson names as

a source from which identity possibilities spring; they also provide an option for the woman who wants to 'try on' different ways of being. Women need their friends in order to explore themselves, to envision who they might be (p. 232).

Therefore, Josselson's research suggests that friendship can provide a window through which identity development can be monitored and documented. Next, the concept and definition of friendship is explored more broadly as a social construct.

Friendship as a Social Construct

The Greek philosopher, Aristotle (350 BCE, as cited in <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.html>) in his book, *Nicomachean Ethics*, suggested that friends can be described as second selves, with the highest form of friendship providing support and care for the character of each friend. This type of friendship, he suggested, can last as long as each friend maintains the character that is appreciated by the other friend. Aristotle's observation of friendship, as one type of interpersonal relationship, has been explored throughout history and by modern day social psychological researchers.

Friendships have been found to incorporate seven common benefits that Weiss (1974) coined as "provisions of relationships" (p. 17). Not every friendship incorporates all dimensions of the provisions, but significant friendships will draw upon multiple factors. Weiss' research method was conceptual in design. He incorporated models of adult social development to design an assessment and model of necessary

components for fulfilling adult relationships. The Weiss provisions of relationships include: 1) assistance and physical support, 2) belonging and a sense of reliable assistance, 3) emotional integration, 4) communication about self, 5) reassurance of worth, 6) opportunities to help others and feel good about self, and 7) personality support (Weiss, 1974 as cited in Vanzetti & Duck, 1996). The seven provisions of relationships fit into an applied, lived experience of the power of befriending behavior, so that the creation of meaningful relationships may deepen and enhance one's experience of life and connection.

Since the development of the social provisions of relationships model (Weiss, 1974), other researchers have empirically validated the existence of the provisions of the model (Mancini & Bliezner, 1992). Mancini and Bliezner used the Social Provision Scale (Weiss, 1974) on a subject pool of elderly adults (N= 494). Confirmatory factor analysis found that four factors were correlated to Weiss' social provisions theory: Factor 1 = Intimacy, Factor 2 = Social Integration, Factor 3 = Reassurance of Worth, and Factor 4 = Opportunity for Nurturance. The range of α , Chronbach's index of internal consistency, for the four factors was .83-.94. The results suggest that Weiss' social provisions were reliable within the elderly adult sample. This empirical study supports the notion that friendship, as a type of social relationship, may provide an opportunity for meeting and sustaining existential needs. The composition of friendship is explored in the following research.

Argyle and Henderson (1984) attempted to elucidate the expectations and assumptions of friendship by exploring rules associated with the maintenance of friendship. While this research sought to articulate the factors comprising friendship, it

did not provide a definition of friendship. Their perspective on friendship standards evolved from the notion that human social behavior is rule-bound. They note that, although formal and legal rules exist in some social relationships (e.g., marriage and parenting), friendships may be governed by “a set of informal rules” (Argyle & Henderson, p. 213). This research study incorporated four separate studies. The first study focused on creating a list of relationship rules.

In the initial study, Argyle and Henderson (1984) brainstormed a list of 43 potential rules of relationships, with 10 of the 43 pertaining specifically to friendships. The researchers created this list of relationship rules after conducting a review of the social psychological literature. The researchers then asked 60 British participants (30 female, 30 male) of two age groups (18-25 years and 30-60 years) to rate the rules of friendship on a nine-point scale (1= rule very important, 5 = rule does not apply, 9= opposite of rule very important). The results of this first study showed that 21 of the total 43 rules met the criteria of high endorsement for friendship with a mean score between one and three. The three most highly endorsed rules were: “Should address the other person by their first name; should respect the other’s privacy; and should volunteer help in time of need” (Argyle & Henderson, 1984, p. 218). They conducted two way analyses of variance (ANOVA), main effect for sex was significant [$F(14,43) = 2.35, p < .05$], but not for age [$F(14,43) = 2.85, p < .05$].

The initial study was then replicated cross culturally in Hong Kong ($n = 94$), Japan ($n = 100$), and Italy ($n = 76$) (Argyle & Henderson, 1984). The genders and ages of the participants in each of the four (including the initial study in England) countries were listed as “approximately equal numbers of subjects in the four age/sex groups

within each sample" (Argyle & Henderson, p. 220). The specific information on the ages or genders of group composition was not provided. The methodology was the same as used in the first study. Results of ANOVA indicated that the majority (60%) of variance between cultural endorsements of rules for friendship was accounted for by 11 out of the 43 rules, suggesting that, across the four different countries, 11 rules of friendship were endorsed similarly. The 11 relevant rules involved emotional support, trust, verbal intimacy, self-disclosure, and emotional expression. Main effects for gender and age were not reported or discussed.

In their third study, Argyle and Henderson (1984) investigated the difference between rule-keeping in current versus lapsed friendships. Participants in this research consisted of 38 females and 26 males (mean age = 22 years). Nearly two-thirds of the participants were non-students of various educational and occupational groups, and about one-third of participants were university undergraduate students. Students completed the questionnaires in small groups, while non-students completed the questionnaires individually. Participants were asked to rate their rule keeping behavior towards two friends, one a current friend and one a past friend. Participants were then asked to rate the rule keeping behavior of each friend. The questionnaire included 27 rules found most salient to friendship via the previous two studies. Results indicated that rules attributed to providing care were endorsed by the participants as contributing to lapsed friendships, while rules associated with needing care were attributed to either a lapsed or current friendship indiscriminately. Gender differences were neither reported nor addressed. Two-way ANOVAs were computed for lapsed and current

friendships across the 27 rules. These findings suggest that when a friendship is lapsed, positive behaviors are attributed to self, and negative behaviors are attributed to others.

For their fourth study, the researchers (Argyle & Henderson, 1984) examined the correlation between lapsed same-sex friendships and rule violations within those friendships. Participants in this study were 156 students recruited from universities and other post-graduate education facilities in Great Britain (97 females and 59 males; mean age = 20.2 years). Participants were

asked to think of a same-sex individual who had once been a good friend but is no longer a particularly good friend...think of someone where the friendship had lapsed because of something to do with the relationship, not just because one of you has moved away (Argyle & Henderson, p. 227).

Participants were given a questionnaire and asked to rate how much each rule contributed to the breakdown of the friendship with the following five-point scale (1 = always, 5 = never). They were also asked to rate the quality of the target friendship on an 11-point scale (0 = very close, best friend now, 5 = casual acquaintance now, 10 = dislike greatly now). Two-way ANOVAs were conducted as participants were divided into two age groups (under 20 years old and 20 years and older) and divided by sex. Results indicated limited agreement on which rules affected the friendship break-ups of the participants. However, when an analysis of covariance was conducted for gender and rules, controlling for age, significant differences were found for each gender. Females were found to significantly endorse rule 14, "Feeling free to take up as much of your time as s/he likes;" rule 15, "Not showing positive regard for you;" and rule 19, "Not showing you emotional support" in comparison with males (Argyle & Henderson, p. 228). In contrast, males were found to significantly endorse rule 13, "Joking or

teasing you” in comparison with females (Argyle & Henderson, p. 228). Three significant main effects were reported for age. Participants under 30 years of age were more likely to endorse public criticism as a rule violation contributing to friendship break-up. The participants over 30 years of age were more likely to endorse rule violations of privacy and advice than the younger participants.

To summarize, the results of the combined four studies (Argyle & Henderson, 1984) were: 1) limited rules applying specifically to friendship were found for same-sex friendships, 2) cross-cultural similarities were found for rules applying to same-sex friendship, 3) participants reporting lapsed same-sex friendships attributed negative behaviors to the other and positive behaviors to themselves, 4) women rated the breaking of rules related to time, positive regard, and emotional support as contributing to their same-sex friendship dissolution, and 5) men were more likely to rate breaking the rule of joking and teasing as contributing to dissolution of their same-sex friendships. Collective strengths of these studies include gender and cultural inclusion. Further, this research was one of two endeavors published in 1984 regarding friendship dissolution. There has been nothing in the literature since that time regarding gender specific behaviors and friendship dissolution. Limitations to these four studies include vague descriptions of some of the research methodology, which decreases the readers ability to critically analyze and evaluate the findings. No reliability or validity data were provided for any one of the instruments used in the research, which raises questions about the accuracy and validity of the findings potentially. However, these studies offer quantitative support for following a theoretical model of relationship

maintenance, in that limited rules for friendship status appear to exist for the same-sex friendships of participants studied.

Sprecher (1988) provides another study suggesting quantitative support of a theoretical model of relationship maintenance. Although Sprecher examined opposite- and same-sex couples in romantic relationships, some of the qualities examined by Sprecher are similar to the rules of friendship purported by Argyle and Henderson (1984).

Sprecher (1988) examined the explanatory power of investment, equity, and social support in relation to romantic relationship connection. The investment model, developed by Rusbult (1980,1983), posits that three factors influence a person's commitment to a relationship. First, the more satisfying a person finds the relationship the more like s/he is to stay committed within that relationship. Second, the fewer alternatives to the relationship perceived by a person, the more likely that person is to remain committed. Third, Rusbult states that the greater investments a person has contributed to a relationship, the more s/he will remain committed to the relationship. In combination with Rusbult's investment model, Sprecher explored components of the equity model of relationship commitment. The equity model "suggests that individuals who perceive themselves to be treated inequitably will be less committed to their relationship than individuals who perceive their relationship to be equitable" (Sprecher, p. 319). Lastly, Sprecher included social support as a third potential factor contributing to relationship commitment. Social support includes the amount of support for the relationship received by family and friends of the couple. Sprecher was interested in

capturing the predictability of relationship commitment by exploring the three above named relationship components.

To investigate the predictability of relationship investment, equity, and social support, Sprecher (1988) studied 197 couples (number of female and male participants were not provided, $N = 394$) from a large midwestern city. Sexual identity of participants and couples was not reported. Ages ranged from 17-42 years ($M = 22.4$ years). Approximately 93% of the sample was Caucasian (remaining 7% were not reported) and 81.5 % were raised in either middle or upper middle-class families. Recruitment of participants occurred through advertisements in the university paper, announcements in classes, and flyers posted in married student housing. Interested couples were required to complete a questionnaire at the same time, in the same room, but independently of one another. Each member of the couple filled out a questionnaire. Most couples filled out the questionnaires in university classrooms, but some couples completed the questionnaire in student housing. Each couple received \$8.00 for participating. Several stages of relationship involvement were identified by the participants. Of the 394 participants reporting on their relationships, 182 individuals were exclusively dating, 21 were regularly dating, 5 were occasionally dating, 70 individuals were living with their romantic partner, but not engaged, 24 individuals were engaged, not living together, 18 individuals were engaged and living together, and 74 individuals were married. Couples were recruited together and then each member of the couple independently reported on the romantic relationship. Some couples clearly disagreed with one another on their relationship status as not all of the status categories were equal numbers.

The questionnaire measured the dependent variable of commitment with four 9-point scale questions (Cronbach's alpha = .80). The four questions were:

How committed are you to your partner? (from 1 = extremely uncommitted to 9 = extremely committed); How often have you seriously considered ending your relationship with your partner? (from 1 = never to 9 = several times); How likely is it that you will try to end the relationship with your partner during the next year? (from 1 = extremely unlikely to 9 = extremely likely); and How likely is that you will try to end the relationship with your partner during the next five years? (from 1 = extremely unlikely to 9 = extremely likely) (Sprecher, 1988, p. 321).

Five independent variables were:

Satisfaction, "1 = this is not a satisfying relationship to 9 = this is a very satisfying relationship;" *investment*, "1 = I would lose nothing to 9 = I would lose a great deal;" *social support*, "1 = none at all to 9 = a great deal;" and *alternatives*, "1 = alternatives would be much less attractive to 9 = alternatives would be much more attractive" (Sprecher, p. 321).

Two measures were used to assess the fifth independent variable of equity: the *Hatfield Global Measure* (HGM; Hatfield, 1978) and the *Sprecher Global Measure* (SGM; Sprecher, 1986). Each measure contained two items, one was a question related to balance of effort between the partners and one was a seven-point scale asking participants to rate the level of their relationship's equity "1 = my partner is much more likely to be the one to contribute more to 7 = I am much more likely to be the one to contribute more" (Sprecher, 1988; p. 322). The author's reason for using two separate measures to capture the same quality of equity is not offered in the article. Sprecher (1988) found two significant differences for gender through t-test analysis. Males rated alternatives to their current relationship more positively with respect to females, whereas females reported more investment in the relationship compared to men. One-way ANOVA indicated a significant effect for stage of relationship (occasional/regular

dating, exclusive dating, living together, engaged, and married) on the variables of satisfaction, investment, alternatives, and social support. Inequity did not yield a significant main effect for stage of relationship. The occasionally and regularly dating individuals showed the lowest levels of commitment, satisfaction, investments, and social support, with the highest amount of perceived alternatives. Satisfaction, investment, and social support were correlated positively with commitment. Alternatives and inequity were negatively correlated with commitment. Further, alternatives and satisfaction were found to be the two strongest predictors of commitment. The above correlations were run between the groups of participants in various stages of commitment. Age and gender differences were not reported on the above correlations. The Pearson correlations between partners suggested only slight similarity, indicating that level of commitment was a stronger predictor on independent variables than was being a member of the same partnership. This suggests that members of the same partnership differed in their reporting of investment, equity, and social support. Sprecher (1988) found significant differences for gender on two independent variables; however, the author did not examine gender effects on all variables. Women were found to report higher levels of investment in their relationship and men were found to rate their alternatives more positively than did the women in the study.

Limitations of the Sprecher (1988) study include only a one-item measurement for each four of the independent variables and a sample consisting only of college students with sexual identity not identified. Therefore, it is unknown whether the relationships are heterosexual or same sex, but they are romantic relationships. Given

the date of the study, and that at least one group of couples was identified as "married" it may be that all couples studied were heterosexual.

Sprecher's study relates to the rules of friendship study by highlighting common components that lead to relational satisfaction and maintenance, at least in romantic relationships. However, Sprecher's investigation of relationship expectations is limited to differences that may exist between men and women only. Building on the foundation that rules in friendship influence friendship maintenance (Argyle & Henderson, 1984) and the increase in levels of investment for women in relationships compared to men (Sprecher, 1988), a focused examination of women's approach to friendship is now explored in this review.

Friendships of Women: Social, Biological, and Evolutionary Perspectives

Oliker (1989) conducted a qualitative study on women and their best-friend, nonromantic, same-sex relationship, comparing this relationship to the marital relationship of the participants. She utilized the snowballing technique (in which participants refer other potentially interested people to the study) to secure her sample. Oliker's methodology consisted of interviews with 21 women (age range: 20-59 years). The women were from working and middle-class-socioeconomic backgrounds in California. Eighteen of the women were White and three were African-American. The participants responded in person to a 140 question structured interview. A sampling of the questions included:

Who cheers you up when you're sad? To whom can you show your worst side and know they'll still like you? Whom can you argue with and still remain close to? and How often do you feel unhappy or a bit depressed these days (Oliker, p.183)?

The data were analyzed using qualitative methodology. Her research goal was to compare intimacy and closeness between women's best-friend, nonromantic relationships and heterosexual marital relationships.

The findings indicated that intimacy in best-friend relationships, as compared to marital relationships, was characterized by the experiences of talking, understanding, and feeling. Some themes that emerged from participant data included the explicit division of time between female best-friends and husbands:

I divide my time. I go to visit Lily in the morning, when Dwight is at work. We've got an understanding – when Dwight comes in from work, I'd rather not have any company. When her husband comes home, I leave too. We just do our spare time together when the kids are at school. And we just resume the next day (Oliker, 1989, p. 113).

Another theme that emerged incorporated using the friendship to sort through marital conflict: "Talking about the problem with June gives me a chance to sift through the issues and feelings and get to what I want to talk about with Lloyd" (Oliker, p. 128).

As is common with qualitative research, limitations of the study included low external validity with little ability to generalize the results. Given that the participant sample was not representative of any particular population, the results of this study speak primarily to the experiences of the interviewed participants. Therefore, the generalizability of the results is limited. Oliker (1988) also noted interactive bias as a possible limitation. She commented on two potential sources of such bias. First, Oliker reported that she only interviewed married women who had self-reported themselves as having a significantly close, best-female friend. Oliker hypothesized that perhaps these women, being comfortable with sharing personal and sensitive information with another woman (the interviewer), may have presented a skewed (they had a female best-female

friend) representation of women's friendships in comparison to marital relationships. Perhaps the relationship between wives and husbands in which the woman does not identify a best-female friend is different in communication, intimacy, and other factors from the relationships examined in the study. Second, Oliker noted that she avoided asking about content in which the participant appeared hesitant to discuss or seemed uncomfortable with the topic. Thus, Oliker's results may provide a limited scope of experiences in reference to the spectrum of experience and emotion in best-friend relationships. Overall, Oliker's research provides one of the few studies on adult female friendship in the professional literature. Her findings suggest that for at least the females in this study, women in best-friend relationships receive facets of intimacy and support from those relationships that differ from and may not be present in their marital relationships.

The Oliker (1989) study echoes the findings regarding rules of friendship (Argyle & Henderson, 1984) and unique investments in women's friendships with one another that differ from intimate relationships that women have with men or other women. Argyle and Henderson's rules for friendship research supports Oliker's findings as women in both studies attributed greater importance to emotional support to their friendships with other women than their relationships with men. Further empirical research comparing the relational and social approaches of women and men is explored next.

Carli (1989) investigated potential differences between men and women in regards to social influence while debating opposite points of a pre-specified topic. A total of 226 undergraduate students at the University of Massachusetts were pre-tested

for level of agreement on a number of different topics while in their introductory psychology class. Students were asked to rate their level of agreement (from 1=completely disagree to 10=completely agree), interest (1=no interest to 10=extremely high interest), and knowledge (from 1=no knowledge to 10=extremely high knowledge) on 27 current event issues. For example, one current event statement was, "Capital punishment should be reinstated in Massachusetts" (Carli, p. 567). Out of the 226 students completing the survey, 128 (64 women and 64 men) students had non-neutral responses (from 1-4 and from 7-10). The author does not state how equal numbered groups of 64 each were composed. The participants were placed into a pair with a participant with opposing beliefs regardless of sex, resulting in 32 all female pairs, 32 all male pairs, and 64 mixed-sex pairs.

Pairs were separated at the beginning of the assessment. The assessment began with each participant being asked to write his/her most important ideas relating to a particular topic. Then, each participant received instructions that pairs would be brought together for 10 minutes, and during that time, the pair had to come to an agreement on the three most important factors to consider when forming an opinion on the topic of discussion. The participants were joined and videotaped. They were then separated again and asked to rate how concerned they were "with convincing their partner that their ideas were the best" (1=not at all to 10= a great deal) (Carli, 1989, p. 568). Next, one person in each pair was randomly given the same instructions as above on a new topic, and one person was given instructions to persuade and convince his/her partner that his/her ideas were most important. After another 10 minutes of videotaped discussion, participants were separated for the last time. They were asked to rate how

concerned they had been with convincing their partner and how much they liked their partner (1= dislike a great deal to 10=like a great deal). Analysis included ANOVA on rated responses. The dependent variables were each participant's proportion of task contributions (giving suggestions, opinions, or orientation), agreements, disagreements, questions, positive social behaviors (showing positive affect toward the partner, relieving tension, or showing solidarity), and negative social behaviors (showing anger, nervousness, or negative affect toward the partner). In addition, the female author and a male researcher each analyzed half of the videotapes in an attempt to address researcher gender bias.

Records of videotaped observations were maintained for each study participant on categories of behaviors, including: task contributions, agreements, disagreements, questions, negative social behaviors, and positive social behaviors. The most significant finding of the study was that whether pairs were mixed-sex or all male, participants that were asked to persuade a male partner had more disagreements than female partners. This means that when female partners were recipients of persuasion from male or female partners, less disagreement occurred than when the male partner was the recipient of persuasion as analyzed in the videotapes. Carli (1989) suggested that if these results are generalized to non-experimental conditions, the findings may contribute to the stereotype that women are more easily influenced than men. However, Carli's findings do not suggest that women are more easily influenced, but rather they come to consensus with less disagreement than men. In relation to women's friendship dissolution, Carli's findings suggest that women may be less likely to disagree with one another or create conflict, even when a difference of opinion is strong. This gendered

approach to relationship development and maintenance has continued to be of interest to psychological researchers (Greene, 2003). The focus of this review now moves from the work of social psychologists to emerging, although limited, research in evolutionary psychology.

Taylor, Klein, Lewis, Grunewald, Gurung, and Updegraff (2000) look to evolutionary and biological psychology to investigate the potential motivations of women's approaches to relationship and reactions to stress. Examining women's unique social behaviors from multiple perspectives can support the investigation of women's friendship dissolution. Although much of this research is theoretical, it is a starting place for incorporating a broader view of women's friendships.

This theoretical approach may expand social conceptions and women's relationship style into the biological and evolutionary worlds of women, focusing primarily on the ways in which responses to stress differ between women and men and how different stress responses may uniquely contribute to the process of friendship between women. Taylor et al. (2000) combined empirical data and theoretical concepts from multiple fields to support gender related differences in regards to stress response and relationship building. Taylor and colleagues posit that unique and significant differences in response to cortisol, oxytocin, and androgens influence the ways in which women form and maintain friendships as different from men (Taylor et al.).

Taylor et al. (2000) draw from stress research in animals, primates, and humans to present a dynamic theoretical model of stress response, named, "tend-and-befriend" (p. 411). Their research examined the findings of over 180 empirical studies.

Patchov and Almeida (1996) support the hypothesis posited by Taylor et al. (2000) in that the female mammal brain may respond differently to stress than the male brain. However, Patchov and Almeida studied rats, rather than humans for this basic research. Patchev and Almeida conducted a study examining the effects of gonadal steroids as facilitating and buffering effects on cortisol in response to stress in rats. The study involved three month old Wistar rats (N not reported). Rats were kept in a 12-hour light-on/light-off cycle with access to food and water at all times. The study involved three separate experiments examining: 1) effects of adrenal and/or gonadal steroid deprivation, 2) effects of sex-hormone administration in steroid-deprived rats, 3) effects of gonadal steroids in rats exposed to supraphysiological levels of corticosterone (B). A control group of rats (*n* not reported) was not submitted to the surgical procedures involved in experiments 1-3. After experiments 1-3 were completed, all rats were killed. The brains were immediately removed and frozen for further dissection at a later time. In experiment 1, adrenalectomy (ANX), gonadalectomy (GNX), and GNX + ANX were surgically performed while rats were under anesthesia. Experiment 2 involved the procedures of experiment 1 plus the administration of estradiol benzoate, progesterone, and hydratestosterone at prescribed days 1, 3, and 5. Experiment 3 involved the procedures of experiment 1 plus the administration of B through a pellet form placed under the skin with the hormonal treatments prescribed in experiment 2. One-way ANOVA was used to compare the results of the different groups; the level of significance was $p \leq .05$. Results suggested that estrogen- and progesterone-like hormones serve as buffering and facilitative effects when female rats were submitted to high levels of stress hormones. The buffering effect did not occur for male rats. These

findings suggest that the female brain in rats responds and uses hormones differently than the male rat brain. The limitations of this study include a lack of numbers in any of the rat groups, and the inability to generalize findings from rats to humans. So, at this point in time it is not possible to translate directly the findings by Patchov and Almeida on rats to human females. However, this vein of research provides a possible direction for future research to investigate similar hormonal differences in humans.

Although the direction for research provided by Patchov and Almeida (1996) is cursory and premature if applied to women's hormonal stress responses and connection to social support, Taylor et al. (2000) theoretically suggest that women may not react to stress in the same biological or behavioral ways that men do, as in "fight-or-flight" response (Cannon, 1932). Cannon posited that fight-or-flight is the "prototypical" human response to threat. Until 1995, laboratory experiments studying the physiological and neuroendocrine responses to threat included only 17% women as participants (Taylor et al.). Hans Selye (1971), an early pioneer studying stress, relied extensively on male participants during the 1930s-1950s, drawing primarily from the military and physician professional groups (Viner, 1999). A common reason given by early stress researchers for the low number of female participants in these early studies was the women's menstrual cycles, which could result in the fluctuating and inconsistent levels of hormones in the bloodstream, making stress responses inconsistent and different from the male hormonal response (Taylor et al.). Potential other reasons could have been reduced numbers of women in the workplace, especially in the military and professional careers; more men who were available on university

campuses, and assumptions regarding the similarity of male and female biological responses.

Within an evolutionary perspective, Taylor et al. (2000) hypothesize that a different mechanism for stress response is present for women as compared to men, and that this response is successful for preservation of self and offspring. The *tend-and-befriend* model, as described by Taylor et al., provides a potential framework to discuss friendships between women and the complex multifaceted experience of dissolution. Tend or tending is comprised of the “quieting and caring for offspring and blending into the environment” (Taylor et al., p. 412). Tending is an evolutionarily successful response for women to threat as fighting (under the traditional fight or flight response) would jeopardize the safety of offspring and self. Befriending is associated with the complicated web of care-giving and protection of offspring. Survival of the fittest suggests that females who were able to use the social group (befriending) for protection and safety were more likely to ensure safety and survival than those who did not exhibit pro-social and befriending behaviors. Befriending is characterized as the “creation of networks of associations that provide resources and protection for the female and her offspring under stress” (Taylor et al., p. 412). [Whereas flight behavior (as in the fight or flight response) in females is potentially counterproductive as flight behavior “by the female can require abandonment of offspring, survival of offspring and the species are more likely if the female can protect herself and offspring” (p. 414).]

The Taylor et al.(2000) theoretical model of tend-and-befriend for human females is based on empirical evidence of the mammal (e.g., rodent) attachment-care-giving system as researched by Panksepp (1998). The attachment/care-giving system as

proposed by Panskepp hypothesizes that neurological and behavioral changes in both baby and mother influence the ways in which the infant and caregiver mammals form an attachment relationship. This description of the mammalian attachment/care-giving system does not translate directly to a stress response in human females. Biologically, oxytocin is known to work as a hormone and neurotransmitter in the facilitation of childbirth and breastfeeding. However, Taylor et al's. theoretical combination of empirical research on mammals may provide a foundation for exploring the extension of hormonal responses to stress and the attachment/care-giving system in human females. This vein of research is examined in this review as it provides one potential theoretical perspective for the interplay of stress, care-giving, and relational support that may exist in women's development.

In addition, Uvnas-Moberg (1997) found that when oxytocin was administered to rodents in times of stress, responses that oppose the traditional fight-or-flight stress response occurred, such as increased relaxation, decreased fearfulness, and less sympathetic nervous system activity. The findings of these animal studies were extended into human hormonal research by a second paper produced by Taylor, Gonzaga, Klein, Greendale, and Seeman (2006).

In the extension of research by Uvnas-Moberg (1997), Taylor et al. (2006) examined the relation of oxytocin to psychological stress responses and hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenocortical (HPA) axis activity in older women. The participants (73 healthy, post-menopausal women) were recruited from two existing pools of research volunteers. Women (age range = 56-75 years) provided verbal consent on the day of testing and were asked to complete five levels of assessment, including: health and

demographic information, a challenge and stress inducing test, emotional measures pre- and post-test, cortisol levels from saliva, blood pressure levels taken throughout the assessment phase (eight times total), and blood samples taken for oxytocin levels.

Analyses revealed that an increase in oxytocin in response to stress may lead to affiliative behaviors in women. This finding was found by comparing hormonal blood levels and data from self-report measures of affiliative behaviors. Therefore, with further empirical research, the baseline level of oxytocin in a woman's system may predict interpersonal relationship satisfaction. The lower the level of oxytocin in a woman's system appears to be correlated with increased levels of self-reported interpersonal support and satisfaction as well. It is as if the body may attempt to protect and correct for unsatisfactory social support by increasing oxytocin levels.

Taylor's (2006) findings offer support for more research to investigate the role of social support in the mental and physical lives of women that can be biologically marked by baseline levels of oxytocin and how this female hormone may impact women differently than men. In addition, Taylor et al. (2000) and Taylor et al. (2006) offer a theoretical lens through which to investigate the potential existence of a physiologically driven need for women to create meaningful and supportive relationships with other women. However, further empirical research on the hormonal interactions with social support for women is warranted. Next, an investigation of relationship dissolution introduces literature focused on how humans end their commitments to one another and reasons they may do so.

Relationship Dissolution

The dissolution of one type of commitment, premarital romantic relationships (opposite and same-sex couples), was investigated by Felmlee, Sprecher, and Bassin (1990). The researchers examined multiple factors contributing to romantic breakups, including factors within the relationship, factors within the social environment, and factors within the individual. The *Hazard Model* (Hannan, Tuma, & Groeneveld, 1977, as cited in Felmlee et al.) was used to investigate the influence of factors contributing to the stability or dissolution of the relationship. The Hazard Model states that a relationship can break-up at any point in time. This theory is analyzed by employing a multivariate, regression-based statistical test. The Hazard Model uses the dynamic nature of the dissolution process by incorporating timing of relationship breakup into the dependent variable. In so doing, the Hazard Model allows for the speed at which a relationship ends to be studied, rather than a dichotomous sustained or dissolved category of relationship status.

Felmlee et al. (1990) recruited 598 students (413 women and 185 men) early in the semester at two large Midwestern universities. The mean age of original participants was 20.8 years ($SD = 2.64$), and 2% of the original participants reported on a same-sex romantic relationship. During a class period, participants were asked to answer questions on either a current romantic relationship or a romantic relationship from the past, either same or opposite-sex partnerships. A total of 74.4 % of participants used a current relationship and 25.6 % used a former relationship. The same questionnaire was distributed to the same participants 12 to 13 weeks later, at the end of the semester, when 75% of the original participants completed the questionnaire.

The dependent variable of the study was the hazard rate of relationship breakup, which means the speed at which the romantic relationship broke-up. The hazard rate was assessed by asking participants to name specific dates at which their relationship entered a different stage (towards commitment or towards dissolution); an explanation of various stages was not provided by the authors. Three levels of independent variables included factors related to the dyad (love, conflict, commitment, sexual involvement in the relationship, hours per week spent with partner, and length of relationship from first date), the social environment (investments: affection, prestige, cash, gifts, and favors; inequity, and comparison level for alternatives) and the individual (gender identity, racial difference, and religious difference).

Results indicated that multiple factors influenced the Hazard Model for relationship commitment, such as number of alternatives, amount of time spent together, dissimilarity in race, support from partner's social network, and the duration of the relationship. Gender differences in results were not addressed, nor were differences between opposite and same-sex couples. Administrations were offered twice to compare participants who continued as a couple and participants who terminated their relationships. Limitations to this study included that only one member of each couple was surveyed and the sample was not random; the sample was taken conveniently in one class on a college campus. However, Felmlee et al. (1990) purport that in romantic relationships, multiple factors at the individual, social, and dyadic level contribute to relationship break-up. This finding suggests that break-ups, not surprisingly, are as dynamic as the relationship itself. With further investigation, it may appear similar in women's friendship dissolution.

In regard to friendship dissolution, Rose (1984) studied specific factors that facilitate dissolution in friendships among young adults. Rose (1984) examined the process of ending friendships among a young adult sample ($N = 155$, 91 females and 64 males). The participants were recruited from a large Midwestern university and were students in an introductory psychology course (age range = 17 - 22 years). No other demographic data were provided. It appears in the methodology that friendship data were collected through written responses. First, participants created a lifeline, highlighting their close friendships in each year of their life. Then, the subjects were asked to write an essay describing the decline of one close, same-sex friendship since high school. They were asked to describe what they liked and disliked about this friendship, why it ended, and what they would have done differently. A 5-point scale was used to rate satisfaction with the friendship, how much the loss of the friendship affected them, how significant they viewed the loss, and how much responsibility they assumed for the decline.

Rose (1984) found that 57.4% of the sample (59 women, 30 men) reported the loss of a close friendship. From the participant essays, four major themes were identified as patterns for dissolution. The four major themes were comprised of the following: 1) physical separation, 2) new friends, 3) dislike, 4) dating or marriage. Physical separation was reported as the highest dissolution influencing factor for both men (56.7%) and women (42.4%). Dating and marriage was reported as a reason for friendship dissolution by 18.6% of the women and 0% of the men. The authors reported that the most significant finding was that heterosexual romantic relationships precipitated the end of a friendship for more women's same-sex friendships than for

men's same-sex friendships. Rose suggested that the findings may indicate that the college years may be a time of transition for young adults' friendships. The factors influencing friendship termination and dissolution appear to differ for women and men. Women's friendships in this study were most likely to terminate due to the addition of a heterosexual relationship of one member of the dyad. In contrast, men's friendships in this study were most likely to terminate because of physical separation and increased distance. Friendship network restructuring was significantly greater for men than for women due to smaller same-sex friendships [$F(1, 82) = 3.68, p < .05$]. Secondly, women assumed more responsibility for the friendship dissolution than men [$F(1,82) = 6.88, p < .01$].

Limitations of the study include only a partial description of the method and analysis of investigation, self-report measures of a dyadic experience from only one member of the dyad, and a lack of participant friendship pattern and history. Gathering more contextual data and a combined experience from both members of the friendship dyad would have provided more depth and detail to this study of friendship dissolution. Further, it was not stated how the lifeline and essays were coded or who rated them.

However, despite these limitations, Rose's (1984) findings suggest that women's same-sex friendships are more likely than men's same-sex friendships to dissolve due to a primary relationship change with one member of the friendship dyad, such as marriage. Further research is needed in order to expand on the understanding of the process of dissolution for adult women friendships.

Women's and Girls' Friendship

The Stone Center for Research at Wellesley College, Massachusetts, has produced *The Relational Health Indices: A Study of Women's Relationships* (Liang, Tracy, Taylor, Williams, Jordan, & Miller, 2002). The purpose of this research was to specify how women's relationships are supportive. The specific research question is: Qualitatively what components of relationships contribute to relational and emotional health for women? Four components of women's relational health were identified through literature review and then translated into an assessment tool. This tool, called *Relational Health Indices* (RHI; Liang et al., 2002) was found to demonstrate reliability, validity, and utility of the measure with 450 female university students. The four components of relational health were: mutual engagement, authenticity, empowerment/zest, and the ability to deal with difference or conflict. The four components were assessed through a pool of 44 questions relating to relationships with peers, within the campus community, and with mentors. The researchers, through consulting literature on this topic, developed the initial 44 questions. The 44 questions were explored by two focus groups (one group of Relational Model theorists and one group of eight students). Then, the researchers, through the information gathered during the focus group process, created 108 additional questions. The 108 questions were then piloted on 25 university students. Items were modified in response to the pilot test. Finally, a total of 76 items were retained after the pilot test to be scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1=never, 5=always).

The final version of the 76 item RHI was administered to a sample of 850 first and second-year students at a women's small liberal arts college in the Northeast. The

participants were given a survey packet containing the RHI survey items, validity scales, and demographic questions. A total of 450 students (53% response rate) returned completed surveys. The ethnic distribution of the sample represented the diversity of the campus with 58% identified as White, 28% Asian/Pacific Islander, 4.3% Black, 4.3% Hispanic, 1% Native, and 4% other. The students ranged in age from 17 to 23 years ($M = 19$, $SD = 1.5$). Confirmatory factor analysis models were fit using LIS-REL 8. The findings indicated that the RHI maintained strong reliability and validity for relational components of authenticity, engagement, and empowerment/zest. Empowerment within the context of this study included the “ability to deal with difference or conflict” (Liang et al., p. 26). These findings offer preliminary empirical support to the mechanism of conflict resolution playing a substantial role in the maintenance of women's relationships, potentially including friendship, if further research suggests as much.

Theoretical support for women relying on one another in relationship and in conflict with one another was presented by feminist theorists Brown and Gilligan (1992). This research offers a platform from which to view further research endeavors, including the investigation of women's friendship dissolution. For example, Brown and Gilligan suggest a cultural interaction with women's and girl's experience with conflict within relationships with one another.

Culturally inscribed and socially institutionalized notions of womanhood which specify the normal, the typical, the desirable, the good, and the bad woman, enter girls' conversations and struggle breaks out – a struggle to know what they know, to rely on their feelings, to hold onto their experiences and their relationships as a way of grounding themselves (Brown & Gilligan, p. 166).

By interviewing adolescent girls, the authors posit the idea that conflict within girls' peer relationships is functional and developmental. Unfortunately, little research has been conducted specifically on the impact of conflict on the friendships of women and girls, and its role in friendship dissolution. However, the body of literature on female relational aggression has blossomed over the past 20 years. Relational aggression, as explored below, is one form of conflict that is present in the friendships of girls and young women. Although the connection between relational aggression and friendship dissolution is yet to be explored empirically, the research on relational aggression provides a starting place for exploring one aspect of conflict in the friendships of girls and young women, and may suggest reasons for friendship dissolution among adult females.

Over the past two decades, Crick and colleagues have examined aggression within the context of the young female social world (Crick, Werner, Casas, O'Brien, Nelson, Grotpeter, et al., 1999). In comparison with boys of the same age, Crick and Grotpeter (1995) found that girls are as likely to behave aggressively as examined by the lens of relational aggression.

In contrast to physical aggression in which the vehicle of harm is physical damage or intimidation, relationally aggressive acts involve the use of relationships as the instrument of harm (e.g., removing your won acceptance of friendship by giving someone the silent treatment; spreading nasty rumors about someone in attempt to elicit rejection of the person by others (Crick & Grotpeter, p. 711).

Relational aggression has been found to be present in the social peer relationships of female preschoolers, children, adolescents, and young women in a college setting (Crick et al.). As physical aggression has been found to decrease in male behavior and in relationships as males develop into adulthood, the cognitive and complex form of

female relational aggression may actually increase over time as women develop into adults (Crick & Grotpeter), and potentially playing a role in the dissolution of adult women's friendships. A brief critical review of the role of relational aggression in the social development of girls, adolescents, and young women is presented below as relational aggression provides one window into conflict among women's and girls' peer relationships that has been empirically investigated. Given that adult women's relational health incorporates conflict, as explored above (Liang et al., 2002), types of conflict that promote negative consequences for peer relationships may offer insight as to what types of conflict contribute to the dissolution of women's friendships.

Ostrov, Woods, Jansen, Casas, and Crick (2004) conducted a semi-structured observational study investigating delivered and received aggression, gender, and social-psychological adjustment in preschool children. The methodology involved a number of steps in administration and analysis. Sixty children (female = 29, male = 31), ranging in age from 44 months to 66 months ($M = 54.9$ months) from two different preschools participated in the study, along with their classrooms' head teachers. Both preschools were affiliated with a large, Midwestern public university. The yearly income of the families of the child participants ranged from \$5,000 to \$90,000, with the majority of the children living in middle class income homes. The mean and median incomes were not reported. Parental consent rates for the sites were: Site 1 = 98% and Site 2 = 75%. The children were introduced to the research assistants a few weeks prior to observation sessions. In an effort to collect baseline interest in coloring (coloring is a familiar activity for preschoolers), the week before the observation, children were asked to rate interest in coloring on a three point scale (1= not at all, 3 = very much). Ninety-

five percent of the children reported their liking for coloring as 3. Then, the children were randomly assigned to same-sex triads. Each child was invited by two other children to be in their observation group. Each observation session included three trials lasting three minutes per trial. In each trial, three developmentally appropriate coloring pictures were presented to the children. The picture order was rotated for counterbalance. Each session was timed by a three minute hour glass placed within the students' view. At the start of each session, two jumbo and useless white crayons were placed on the table in an effort to create a limited-resource situation (the white crayons were useless because they did not show up on the paper for coloring to complete the task). Along with the functionally useless jumbo white crayons, one bright color crayon was placed in a similar distance from the students. The children were asked to color each picture in the given time allotted. They were told that they could not ask the researcher any questions during the observation. Verbal praise was given to the children at the end of each trial.

The sessions were videotaped and coded by trained undergraduate research assistants of mixed gender. The coders were unfamiliar with the children or the study's hypotheses. Each session was coded at least six times, based on the following behavioral categories:

- physical aggression
- verbal aggression (threat of physical aggression)
- relational aggression
- nonverbal aggression
- received physical aggression
- received relational aggression
- received verbal aggression

- received nonverbal aggression, e.g., a mean look of avoidance
- displayed prosocial behavior, e.g. an invitation offered to participate in activity
- received prosocial behavior
- reactivity.

Intra-class correlation coefficients (ICC) were computed between two independent raters (range = .41-.95). Assessments of child behavior were collected from each head teacher using the *Preschool Social Behavior Scale – Teacher Form* (PSBS-TF; Crick et al., 1997), one subscale of the *Preschool Peer Victimization Measure – Teacher Form* (PPVM-TF; Crick et al., 1999) and the *Child Behavior Scale* (CBS; Ladd & Profilet, 1996). The PSBS-TF and PPVM-TF were found to have acceptable psychometric properties with ratings of internal consistency with Chronbach's alpha ranging from .71-.92. The CBS was found to be high in internal consistency as well with Chronbach's alpha ranging from .78-.94.

The analysis of the Ostrov et al. (2004) study consisted of ANOVA analyses testing the “hypothesis that gender differences would emerge for delivered and received subtypes of aggression and prosocial behavior” (p. 363). Regression analyses and partial correlations tested the “hypothesis that subtypes of aggression would be associated with concurrent social-psychological adjustment problems” (p. 363). Results indicated a significant main effect for social behavior type, $F(4, 58) = 7.35, p < .001$. A two-way interaction was also found for behavior type and gender, with girls behaving significantly more relationally aggressive than boys. Overall, the hypotheses of this study were confirmed with boys behaving with more physical aggression, although not statistically significant when compared to girls.

Limitations of this study include the limited one time, nine minute observation time providing a restricted scope of the children's behavior in a naturalistic setting. Further limitations include restricted external validity, e.g., how generalizable are the findings to other preschool classroom experiences? Other threats to external validity include: (1) all children were in preschool, (2) the majority of participants were Caucasian and living in middle-class income families, and (3) the limited diversity in demographics of subjects. The authors' study of relational aggression in preschool lends support for gender specified pattern of addressing conflict arising in early childhood. This study offers modest support for further investigation of the purposes and consequences of conflict within the lives of girls and women, as relational aggression appears to be more common in the relationships of girls when compared to the peer relationships of boys.

Relational aggression in middle childhood is more strongly supported in the research literature compared to preschoolers (Crick, 1995; Crick, et al., 1999; Crick & Rose, 2000). Werner and Crick (2004) reported findings on maladaptive peer relationships and the development of relational and physical aggression during middle childhood. The goals of the study involved a longitudinal exploration of the effects of peer rejection and friends' aggressiveness on aggression, both relational and physical. The second goal of the study examined differences in peer relationships and aggressive behavior in association with gender. The participants were part of a longitudinal study of aggression in childhood, involving 979 children (54.9% girls) in grades 2-4, residing in urban, suburban, and rural areas of Minnesota. The ethnic backgrounds of participants were 55.3% Caucasian, 24.2% African-American, and 24.2% self-identified

as members of other ethnic groups. The procedure involved two administrations of the assessment. The assessment was a peer nomination, the *Children's Social Behavior Scale-Peer Report* (CSBS-PR; Crick, 1997). For the peer nomination, each student was given a class list of other participating students. Each student was asked to nominate three friends in the classroom, selecting one classmate as the closest friend. Students were also asked to rate participating classmates on subscale measures of relational aggression, physical aggression, prosocial behavior, and peer rejection by assigning certain behavioral characteristics to students listed. Internal measures of reliability were high for both subscales of relational and physical aggression ($\alpha = .88$, $\alpha = .95$, respectively). Time 1 (T1) occurred at the end of fall semester when the participants were in 2nd-4th grades. Participants were reassessed (with the same measures) at Time 2 (T2) one year later. Participation in T2 required a reciprocal friendship. The total number of participants at T2 was 517 (boys =, girls= 318). Administration of the questionnaires occurred in classrooms.

Results of the authors study showed that at T1, 30.4% of students were friendless and 29.4% were friendless at T2. Also, analyses indicated that participant and friend aggression scores from the peer nomination were significantly higher among reciprocated friendships (friendships in which both a member of the dyad nominated one another as a friend) in comparison with unilateral friendships (friendships in which the nomination of friendship was unreciprocated) [correlations (r)= .32 and .19, respectively; Fisher's $Z = 3.62$, $p < .001$]. Longitudinal analyses comparing T1 and T2 revealed that children who engage in relationally aggressive behaviors are disliked by their peers. Further, friend relational aggression was found to be moderately stable

between T1 and T2. For girls only, higher levels of peer rejection at T1 predicted higher levels of relational aggression at T2. One limitation of this research involves the use of a socio-metric which includes only the peers in a child's classroom. Friendships in which aggression is present likely also occur outside of a child's classroom. It may also be possible that a child behaves with relational aggression as a way of operating within the classroom, but not in relationships outside of that system. Overall, this study adds to the understanding of relational aggression in middle childhood by extending the exploration to peer rejection in association with relationally aggressive friends. Strengths of this study involve empirical support for the further investigation of the use of relational aggression within reciprocated friendships of girls, and possibly in older girls and women.

An examination of relational aggression in adolescence is less comprehensive in the literature in comparison to research in preschool (Crick et al., 2006; Ostrov et al. 2004) and middle childhood (Crick, Ostrov, & Werner, 2006; Crick et al., 1999). One study has examined relational aggression in an adolescent sample under the lens of friendship jealousy (Parker, Low, Walker, & Gamm, 2005). Friendship jealousy can occur when "individuals feel that a partner's relationship with someone else threatens their own existing relationship with the partner. Individuals who are jealous may feel they are in danger of being replaced in the relationship by the interloper, thereby losing the relationship entirely" (Parker, et al, p. 236). This research involved two studies. A total of 68 girls and 67 boys participated in the first study. Age information was limited to participant description as ninth grade students. The participants were primarily Caucasian and from families of low to middle socioeconomic status. Ninety-four of the

participants were part of a longitudinal study examining family relationships and communication. Another 41 students were recruited for the purpose of this study alone. The measures used were the *Friendship Jealousy Questionnaire* (FJQ; Parker, Low, Walker, and Gamm, 2005), *Children's Social Desirability Scale* (CSD; Crandall, Crandall, & Katkovsky, 1965), and *Self Perception Profile for Adolescents* (SPPA; Harter, 1988). The psychometric properties of the measures revealed high internal consistency for the FJQ ($\alpha = .92$) and high test-retest stability (.96 for girls and .92 for boys). Administration of the measures was done in two waves. First, a researcher visited the participant at home and administered the two measures. Two weeks later, the measures were re-administered over the phone. The results of the analyses are discussed below.

The CSD revealed nonsignificant tendencies for jealousy directly for all participants, correlation $r = .03$. However, "being upset" was found to be significant for all participants: correlation $r = -.29, p < .05$. The SPPA indicated that self-worth was a significant, negative predictor of jealousy ($\beta = -.19, p < .05$) after controlling for sex among participants. Therefore, the results of the assessment validity supported the use of the FJQ, CSD, and SPPA within a young adolescent population. Further, girls reported significantly greater jealousy than did boys, creating a significant main effect for sex, $F(1,110) = 4.19, p < .02$.

The second study (Parker et al., 2004) broadened the scope of the investigation of jealousy to include both self-report measures as well as peer reports. Participants were composed of 79 fifth graders (33 girls, 46 boys), 96 sixth graders (45 girls, 54 boys), 89 seventh graders (38 girls, 51 boys), 73 eighth graders (36 girls), and 59 ninth

graders (36 girls). The participants lived in rural northeastern United States. Goals of the second study were to examine the expression and experience of jealousy throughout different age periods (ages 10-15 years) and to extend the investigation of jealousy into early adolescence from just ninth grade students in the first study to fourth through ninth grade students in the second study. A peer nomination instrument was used to assess the following qualities participating students as rated by their peers: social aggression, passive aggression, verbal/physical harassment, social acceptance, and victimization by peers [and the peer nomination instrument was compiled from several batteries including Crick and Grotpeter (1995); Perry, Kussel, and Perry, (1988)]. The internal consistency of the peer nomination measure was high (Chronbach's $\alpha = .93$). Loneliness and social dissatisfaction were assessed using the *Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction Scale* (LSDS; Asher and Wheeler, 1985); the internal consistency on this measure was $\alpha = .91$. The measures were administered in two group sessions, one week apart from one another. Each session lasted about 40 minutes. Administration occurred within the classroom.

The results of the study indicated sex and grade differences in jealousy. Three parallel multiple regressions were run in which self, friend, and non-friend reported jealousy served as the dependent variables and sex and grade were the first step, and sex \times grade interaction was the second step. Results for all three regressions were significant. Boys were found to be less jealous than girls, and jealousy was found to decrease by increasing grade level. Structural equation modeling (SEM; Arbuckle, 1999) revealed the following for girls:

1. Girls' self-reports of their vulnerability to jealousy predicted a reputation for jealousy among friends and non -friends.

2. Unless girls had a reputation for jealousy among nonfriends, self-reported vulnerability to jealousy was related to aggression.
3. Girls' reputations for jealousy with friends and non-friends independently and negatively influenced social acceptance with peers.
4. After the joint influence of friends' and nonfriends' perceptions of jealousy was considered, girls' reputation for aggression no longer influenced their social standing among peers.
5. Low social acceptance was strongly related to victimization and feelings of loneliness as did reputation for jealousy among friends.
6. Self-reported jealousy contributed directly to loneliness in spite of social acceptance and victimization.

Limitations of the research by Parker et al., (2005) primarily relate to the generalizability of the results to populations of adolescents that differ in demographic make-up from the participants in the study. Further, longitudinal rather than cross-sectional data could contribute to the understanding of the interplay of jealousy in friendships for adolescent development. This study lends modest support for further investigation of jealousy and aggression as forms of conflict within the friendships of adolescent girls. Research extending these concepts specifically focused on friendship dissolution in adult women is needed.

One study has been completed on relational aggression in a young adult, college age sample. Werner and Crick (1999) investigated the relationship between relational aggression and social-psychological adjustment in a sample of young adults.

Participants were members of sororities and fraternities at a large Midwestern university. A total of 225 undergraduates (55% women) participated, ranging in age from 18-23 years ($M = 19.5$ years) and primarily (94%) European-American. A peer nomination instrument was adapted from research with middle childhood and young

adults (Morales, Crick, Werner, & Shellin, 1999). The peer nomination assessed behaviors associated with relational aggression. Self-report indexes of social-psychological adjustment included the *Eating Attitudes Test* (EAT; Garner & Garfinkel, 1979) and the *Satisfaction with Life Scale* (SLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffen, 1985). The *Personality Assessment Inventory* (PAI; Morey, 1991) was used to assess stress, perceptions of nonsupport, depression, antisocial personality features, egocentricity, stimulus-seeking, and borderline personality features. Administration of the assessments occurred in each sorority or fraternity, lasting 45-90 minutes with the lead researcher present at each administration. Correlations were computed between peer nominations of relational aggression and social psychological adjustment variables, and were computed separately for men and women. The EAT was found to have strong reliability with Chronbach's alpha (.88). The contribution of relational aggression to the prediction of social-psychological adjustment was evaluated through a series of hierarchical multiple regression equations. The dependent variables were the adjustment scores, and the predictors were age, gender, and relational aggression scores.

Results showed that relational aggression was positively correlated with peer rejection and egocentricity for men. In women, relational aggression was positively correlated with the following: peer rejection, antisocial behavior, stimulus-seeking, egocentricity, affective instability, identity problems, negative relationships, self-harm behavior, affective features of depression, and bulimic symptoms. A negative correlation was found for women between life satisfaction and relational aggression. Relational aggression was associated with higher levels of psycho-social maladjustment. An interaction occurred between relational aggression and severe

bulimic symptomology for women only. A limitation of this research includes decreased external validity regarding the homogeneity of the participants (Werner & Crick, 1999). Overall, Werner and Crick extend the prior literature on relational aggression into adult development.

Although the aforementioned research on relational aggression does not state whether this type of conflict leads to friendship dissolution in the lives of girls, adolescents, or young adult women, theoretically it is one observable component of conflict that may contribute to the end of a friendship. Therefore, research examining what leads adult women friends into conflict is needed, as well as an investigation of the contribution, if any, of conflict to dissolution.

Why is Research on Dissolution of Adult Women's Friendships Important to Counseling Psychology?

Relationships in each phase of development, initiation, maintenance, and dissolution are integral to the work of therapists (Liem & Pressler, 2005). Much of the work done in therapy incorporates concepts of grief associated with loss. The loss of friendship for adult women can be painful.

Offill and Shappell (2005) highlight the experience of losing friends. The editors asked 20 professional fiction writers to describe their non-fictional process of losing a friend. The essays speak of confusion, regret, ambiguity, loss, sadness, relief, and peace. The positive emotions expressed in the essay suggest that the process of friendship dissolution is not consistently sad or an experience of grief. Perhaps friendship, like most relationships in life, has a time to end. This further suggests that when the time to dissolve a friendship is approached in non-hurtful and communicative interactions, women are allowed to disengage and move into the next phase of their

lives with a clearer understanding of themselves. There may exist a strengths-based skill set underlying the process of ending a friendship. Self-awareness and self-efficacy may be increased by articulating and unearthing strategies to end friendship in health promoting ways, thus promoting personal self-care and relationship efficacy.

Skovholt (2004) presented the cycle of caring for helping professionals, a cycle which allows the caring professional to maintain a sense of self and resources for the ability to reconnect in the next relationship. It may be possible to apply the skills associated with the cycle of caring to approaches in personal friendship dissolution. Potentially, by outlining the process and skills associated with healthy friendship dissolution, women may be able to connect and disconnect from one another in patterns of friendship that edify and support each person. The alternative may be more of an ambiguous process, leaving one or both women dismayed, hurt, confused, or saddened by the effects of the relationship ending.

By building on the theoretical and empirical research of gender researchers [e. g. Josselson (1996), Taylor (2000), Gilligan (1992), and Crick (1995)], the purpose of this study is to extend the study of women's friendships by focusing specifically on one aspect of friendship that has not been studied in any depth, the dissolution of adult female non-romantic relationships. Future research may extend the understanding of friendship in the lives of women, facilitating healthier friendships between women for the benefit of our health and life satisfaction.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Employing qualitative research methods to data gathering and analysis has significantly increased in popularity over the past two decades (Strauss & Corbin, 2006). “Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality.... They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 8). In contrast to quantitative inquiry where representations of the world are symbolized numerically, qualitative inquiry offers representations of the world which are primarily linguistic (Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1999). “Consequently, qualitative researchers want to study behavior in context and might even go so far as to contend that it is the interpretation of the context that is the essential process to be studied” (Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, p. 246). Applying a constructivist approach within this qualitative method of inquiry allows for the study of the “*how*-and sometimes *why*-participants construct meanings and actions in specific situations” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 130). This type of investigation allows for the subtleties of human experience to float to the surface. Attention to subtle and, at times, nebulous, experience requires the researcher to “sustain a fair amount of ambiguity” through flexibility and openness towards the data (Stauss & Corbin, 2006, p. 5). By maintaining a “beginners mind, a mind that is willing to see everything as if for the first time” the qualitative researcher supports a methodology which is ideal for explorative research of a new, or relatively new, social experience (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p. 35).

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe adult females experiences of ending a non-romantic friendship with a female friend. Qualitative inquiry and analysis fit this purpose with stronger sensitivity than a quantitative methodology could offer. Also there exists little research on the topic; therefore, qualitative methods are suited for this study. Since this study is exploratory in nature, the process of allowing the data to speak for itself further supports a qualitative method of inquiry. Given that qualitative methodology uses context, individual experience, and subjective interpretation, generalizability is not possible, nor is it a goal (Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1999).

The qualitative inquiry, as applied in this study, offers a high level of internal validity, as the participants and researcher co-create the data as they explore how women's friendships end. However, external validity, such as the ability to generalize these findings to the experience of all women who end friendships, is not possible, nor intended. Applicability of the study to the reader's personal experience, however, is a goal. Such applicability would allow readers of the study and future researchers to identify pieces of the data that may create an interest or spark the development of questions within the contexts of their own lives or future research.

To best capture and organize participant experiences of ending a friendship, the Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR; Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997; Hill, Knox, Thompson, Williams, Hess, & Ladany, 2005) method of qualitative inquiry was used in this study. CQR was chosen for a number of reasons. First, "CQR method is

particularly helpful during the initial stages of exploration of a research area because it provides a rich description of the phenomenon” (Hill et al., p. 562, 1997). Second, CQR parallels feminist theory. Given that this study is a study about women, conducted by a woman, having a theory that equalized the power differential between participant and researcher through feminist ideals was highly attractive. Further, the consensus process within the primary research team supports collaboration, compromise, and creates a dynamic so that “each person’s voice is heard and valued equally” (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, p. 522). Third, CQR methods are constructivist in nature. “The research team uses consensus to construct their interpretation of the data, trying to set aside their biases so that they fairly describe what the participant has reported” (Hill et al. p. 197, 1997).

Although, CQR allows for flexibility, openness, and compromise, the method used in this study incorporated five essential components. First, in data collection, open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews with adult women were employed. This allowed for the collection of data across individuals as well as in-depth examination of individual experiences. Second, judges within a research team examined the data throughout the analysis process to foster multiple perspectives of the interview data. Third, research team judges worked towards consensus to arrive at judgments about the meaning of the data. Fourth, one auditor surveyed the data and coding structure to check the work of the research judges and minimize the effects of groupthink. Lastly, core ideas, domains, and cross-analysis of the data into categories were used to represent the message of the data as interpreted by the judges.

Participants

Several authors (Hill et al., 1997; Hill et al., 2005) recommend the use of 8-15 interview participants, with fewer participants needed when more than one interview is conducted per participant or when the group of participants is particularly homogenous. Given that the experiences of friendship dissolution of the participants in this study were diverse, and that one interview per participant was collected, 15 interviews were conducted out of 25 women who expressed interest in participating. Decisions for interview selection were based primarily on the availability of interview times that corresponded between the female participant and researcher.

Recruitment

Participants in this study were drawn from two primary groups of women. First, a University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved email (see Appendix A) was sent to a professional networking group of 32 women in a large Midwestern city. These women meet together monthly for breakfast, sharing speakers and information about their work and lives. The name of this group is not included to protect the confidentiality of the participants. The ages of women in this group are from 36 to 78 years, with a mean age of 59 years. The second group of participants was recruited from two graduate programs focusing on human services at a large Midwestern university. A total of 301 graduate students were emailed about participation by their program office with a forwarded email from the researcher that had been IRB approved (see Appendix B). The email informed the potential participants of the researcher's identity and the research purpose and method, i.e. interviews about how adult women end friendships with one another. The potential

participants were asked to consider participating if the following criteria were met: (1) female gender, (2) the non-romantic friendship ended after the age of 25 years, and (3) and the friendship ended for reasons other than distance or death.

Participant Characteristics

The recruitment procedures yielded 25 interested females, and 15 interviews were conducted and used for data analysis. Two of the interviews came from the professional women's group, 12 came from the group of graduate students, and one participant was referred by another participant via the snowballing recruitment technique. Participant ages ranged from 26-72 years old ($M = 38.2$ years; Median = 32 years). Regarding socio-economic status, all participants stated that they currently identify living in "middle class." Three participants stated that they had grown up "poor," one participant stated she had grown up "working class," and one participant stated currently belonging to "upper class." Regarding sexual identity, 11 participants identified themselves as "heterosexual" or "straight." One participant identified herself as "asexual," another self-identified as "pausexual," a third participant identified herself as "queer," and a fourth participant identified herself as "lesbian." Asexual is a term that refers to a lack of sexuality. Pausexual refers to a sexuality that allows for all types of people, with no regard to gender or sexuality. Queer refers to gender-identity expression that does not conform to heteronormative definitions of gender.

Regarding cultural background, 10 participants self-identified themselves as Euro-American. Three participants identified themselves as mixed cultural background, with two participants incorporating Euro-American with Native American heritage and one

participant identifying Euro-American and “half-Jewish” heritage. One participant self-identified as African American.

Instrumentation

Interview Development

Hill et al., (2005) recommends developing an interview protocol that consists of 8-10 questions with probes to fit within one hour. She also recommends at least two pilot interviews to test the questions. The initial interview protocol for this study was developed in a graduate course on qualitative interviewing in Educational Psychology at the University of Minnesota. Through that course, three pilot interviews were conducted, transcribed, and analyzed. The interview questions were then examined during the proposal for this study by the primary researcher and three members of her doctoral committee. This set of interview questions included eight questions with a number of probes. One question was added to the protocol before the IRB process at the suggestion of the researcher's doctoral advisor. After IRB approval, an interview protocol of nine questions was used in the first interview of this study. During the first interview, the participant asked herself the question, “How did I change through this experience?” Her response to her own question was fascinating and the question was then added to the protocol for all other interviews (see Appendix C for final interview protocol).

In an effort to build the relationship between the participant and researcher, the interviews began with background questions, which Hill et al. (1997) suggest can help the participant feel comfortable as well as assist in gathering demographic information. A demographic form was introduced after the consent form and confidentiality were

discussed. After the participant filled out the demographic form, conversation regarding the participant's work, home-life, and interest in the study was conducted.

Procedures

Participants who expressed an interest in participating in the study did so by emailing the researcher. The participants were asked to clarify if their friendship that had ended fit the criteria of the study via email exchange. The criteria included the following two components:

- 1) The non-romantic friendship ended after the age of 25 years.
- 2) The reason the friendship ending occurred was for reasons other than distance or death.

Face-to-face interviews were chosen over phone interviews as the in-person interaction allows for a naturalistic setting while investigating a social phenomenon (Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1999). The in person interviews took place over a two month period (December 2007-February 2008). All interviews were audio-taped. Five interviews took place in public and campus libraries; one interview was conducted in the participant's office; one interview occurred in a classroom on campus; and eight interviews took place at various neighborhood cafes. When the participant chose to meet at a public café, issues of confidentiality were discussed before the interview and revisited upon meeting. Informed consent for the interview and audio-taping was obtained before the commencement of the interview and tape recording (see Appendix D). Interviews varied in length between 45-90 minutes.

*Data Analysis**Research Team*

Hill et al. (1997) suggest that “members of the team need to get along, respect each other, be able to resolve inherent power differences, feel free to challenge each other, and have the ability to negotiate and resolve differences” (p.528). Hill et al. (2005) further suggest that team members have training and experience in qualitative methodology. Given these two recommendations, two Masters level social work graduates, who had conducted their own graduate level qualitative research, were asked to serve on the research team, along with the researcher. The auditor was a doctoral graduate in psychology who had conducted her own CQR study for her dissertation one year prior to serving as auditor. Regarding Hill et al.'s first requirement, the researcher, the two members of the research team, and the auditor have worked together in various capacities and have negotiated differences successfully in the past.

Hill et al. (2005) suggests that researchers differentiate between expectations and biases. Hill et al. (1997) offer descriptions of expectations and biases. Expectations are defined “as beliefs that researchers have formed based on reading the literature and thinking about and developing the research questions” (Hill et al.,1997, p. 538-539).

The three-member research team met before analyses began to discuss any of their biases that may interact with the data. All three members of the research team, primary investigator and two members, are in their early 30s, all identify as European-American, and they include a mix of sexual orientations in their identities, i.e., lesbian,

straight, and bisexual. The auditor was not a part of the biases discussion, as her role in the methodology is broader, requiring some level of detachment from the data.

There were a number of biases named by the research team before data analysis began. All three members of the research team are of Euro-American descent, formally educated in helping professions, raised in Minnesota, and work in a psycho-therapeutic capacity. In addition, team members know each other personally, as two members are related through marriage, and others have been friends, colleagues, or acquaintances for over 10 years.

The research team's own histories of friendships, could potentially lead to identification with participants, unintentionally creating a parallel process, i.e., a research team member could be pulled to over-identify with participant experience, and therefore miss the participant's intention of the data. Biases related to this potential parallel process were also discussed prior to analysis. The research team identified four unique, and at times opposing, biases. These included: a belief that most people would not choose to intentionally end a friendship; a belief that relationship endings can be growth promoting and functional; expectations of appropriate behavior within a friendship; and daily interaction with women in the position of helper may influence interpretation of data, i.e., the clinical, therapeutic mind may be unintentionally applied to the data.

Please note that some of the stated biases are in direct contrast with one another. Ideally, the opposing biases provide some sense of balance in this subjective process. The intention in naming and identifying biases is done in an effort to be mindful about the research team's potential influence on the data analysis process. By discussing and

naming the biases initially experienced by the research team, the reader can then interpret the reliability and validity of the data within the context of the research team

Preliminary Analysis of the Data

Hill et al. (1997) offers a step-by-step method for examining qualitative data. First, the interviews were transcribed. Two medical transcription services were hired for the transcription process. Both services were under Health Information Protection Portability Act (HIPPA) regulation and agreed to confidentiality of the data, in verbal, written, and electronic form. After the interviews were transcribed, the research team met to discuss initial themes for the data. Hill et al. suggests the following initial domains as provided by Strauss and Corbin (1990): *context, intervening conditions, action/interaction strategies, and consequences*. Upon completion of two revisions of initial domains, the research team came to consensus on the final five domains. The domains were named: Action/Interaction (friendship behaviors), Consequences of the Friendship and Dissolution, Context of the Friendship, Insight that Occurred During the Friendship and Dissolution Process, and Other. Through multiple discussions over three rounds of coding of the initial interviews, the research team came to an agreement on the aforementioned domains.

Concurrently, as the research team worked out the best names for the domains, each team member independently coded the first four interviews. During this first part of the process, the research team met together to discuss the first two interviews. The team came to consensus through discussion on multiple points and renamed some of the themes. The team members then independently coded another two interviews. Again, the team met and came to consensus on the coding procedures. The process of

consensus lasted between 2 and 4 hours at each meeting. At this point, the team members agreed that the names of the domains were the best reflection of the data and decided to maintain the aforementioned domains.

Next, as suggested by Hill et al. (1997), the team divided the remaining interviews between two members each. One member and the primary researcher coded six of the remaining interviews and the other member and the primary researcher coded five of the remaining interviews. Four of the interviews that were coded by two members of the research team were discussed in the presence of the third research team member. This third member served as a tie-breaker if the two members could not reach consensus. Disagreements were discussed with the team if the primary researcher did not agree with the members' coding for a particular section of the interview.

Next, the researcher created what Hill et al. (1997) named the consensus drafts. From here, all the interview data were labeled according to one of the domains. The research team brainstormed possible core ideas for the domains. The researcher then read through each domain and applied core ideas to the data. These core ideas were discussed and clarified with the research team and agreement was reached on the strategy for naming of the core ideas. Next, the researcher created consensus drafts of all interviews that were categorized by domain and core idea. The researcher then began to examine each core idea for categories, nuggets or threads of common or unique experience across the interviews.

At this point in the process, as Hill et al. (2005) recommend, the primary researcher prepared a presentation to discuss preliminary findings. The presentation occurred at a community mental health center that was attended by 10 psychotherapists,

2 dieticians, and 3 administrative staff members. The purpose of the presentation was to articulate the study's purpose, methodology, and preliminary findings to a new group of interested individuals. The goal was to clarify the findings and receive feedback about the information presented. The presentation was interactive, as many people shared their own reactions to the information. Also, many discussion points were addressed and new ideas formulated through the process of the presentation. The presentation and question/answer session lasted nearly 2 hours. Ideas and thoughts generated through the presentation added to the formation of concepts in the discussion section of this paper.

Next, the initial domains, core ideas, and categories were shared with the auditor. The auditor reviewed the domains and core ideas and listened to the researcher's description of the initial categories after having read through the purpose of the study, the interview protocol, and the interviews. Hill et al. (1997, 2005) recommend that the auditor's feedback be taken to the research team and discussed. The auditor feedback indicated that different labels could be used to better express the meaning of the domains, core ideas, and categories derived by the research team. The auditor feedback was discussed among the research team and then also between the primary researcher and her doctoral advisor.

After the initial write-up of the results section, it was decided that the themes initially developed did not capture the depth of the data. Therefore, the data were re-analyzed by the research team, with guidance from the feedback provided by the auditor and advisor. The final analysis resulted in four domains, nine core ideas, and 35 categories (please see Table 1 for results).

Table 1: Domains, Core Ideas, and Categories

	<i>Domain</i>		<i>Core Idea</i>		<i>Category</i>
I.	Friendship Characteristics RQ 1	A.	Friendship Formation	1	Friendship Formed through Mutual Interest
				2	Friendship Formed through Proximity of Living Situation
				3	Friendship Formed through Work/Job
				4	Friendship Formed through Connection in Childhood
		B.	Nature of Friendship	1	Means of Emotional Connection
				2	Conflict
				3	Romantic/Sexual Attraction
				4	Early Warning Signs of Dissolution
II.	Components of Friendship Dissolution RQ 2	A.	Reason for Dissolution	1	Disagreement with Friend’s Interpersonal Style
				2	Perceived Relational Aggression - Victimization
				3	Change in Religious Beliefs
				4	Friend Attempted or Achieved Romantic Connection with Participant’s Partner
				5	Participant was Witness to or Victim of Physical Violence by Friend
				6	Experience of Repeated Disrespect from Friend
		B.	Process of Dissolution	1	Face-to-Face Conversation
				2	Phone Conversation
				3	Email
				4	Participant Stopped Returning Friend’s Calls and Emails

		C.	Nature of Relationship Post-Dissolution	1	No Contact
				2	Casual, Chance Meetings
				3	Infrequent Email Exchanges
		D.	Outcome of Dissolution Experience	1	Feelings of Liberation
				2	Feelings of Grief and Loss
				3	Changed Behavior in Forming New Friendships
III.	Learning about Self and Friendship Dissolution RQ 3	A.	Increased Self-Awareness	1	Increased Trust in Intuition
				2	Increased Self-Respect and Self-Confidence
				3	Increased awareness of how past relationships/experiences influence current relationships.
		B.	Awareness Regarding Friendship and Dissolution	1	Tougher Criteria for New Friends and Personal Boundaries
				2	Interaction of Personal Transition and Friendship
IV.	Experience related to Participation in Study and Interview	A.	Reaction to Interview	1	Closure on Dissolution Experience
				2	Learning about Self through Reflection and Discussion
				3	General Interest in Research Topic and Experiences of Other Women’s Friendship Dissolution

Data Interpretation

Before the results are presented, the criteria for evaluating the analysis are explored. Transparency of methodology supports the reader’s evaluation of the actions of the primary research team. The team revisited biases throughout the research process. The researcher also discussed her noted reactions from the interviews with the

research team. These measures were used to support the validity of the data. The final description of the data and research findings is explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

This qualitative study addressed the following three major research questions and several sub-questions as follows:

The research questions of this study are:

- 1) What was the nature of adult women's non-romantic friendships that have ended?
 - a. How were these friendships established?
 - b. What expectations, needs, and desires were met in the friendships?
 - c. Which expectations, needs, and desires were neglected in these friendships?
- 2) In adult women's friendships, in which distance and death were not the primary reason for ending the friendship, how does one member of the dyad describe the reason for dissolution?
 - a. How is dissolution accomplished? How do women approach ending friendships with one another? What does that process involve?
 - b. What are the consequences of dissolution?
- 3) What did women learn about themselves and friendship through the process of dissolution?

The analysis of these research questions yielded four Domains, nine Core Ideas, and thirty-two Categories (See Table 2 for Summary of Results).

The results are organized first by domain, second by core idea, and lastly by category. Data is grouped first by domain. Then, one or more core ideas appear under

each domain. The core ideas attempt to categorize smaller nuances of information within the domains. The categories highlight unique components of participant experience within each domain. Direct interview quotes are used to highlight and personalize the data. The quotes have been edited for grammatical clarity and all names have been changed to protect participant identity. Next, descriptions of the participants and their friendships are provided to offer context and depth regarding the results.

Stability of Results

Hill et al., (2005) recommend presenting the cross-analysis of results through frequency of occurrence in the sample. In this study of 15 participants, categories that occurred for just one participant are labeled *Rare*. Categories that occurred for two to seven participants are labeled *Variant*. Categories that occurred for eight to thirteen participants are labeled *Typical*. If a category had occurred for fourteen or more participants, it would be labeled *General*; however, this frequency did not appear in this study.

Table 2: *Summary of Results*

	<i>Domain</i>		<i>Core Idea</i>		<i>Category</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
I.	Friendship Characteristics RQ 1: What was the nature of adult women’s friendships that have ended?	A.	Friendship Formation	1	Friendship Formed through Mutual Interest	6	Variant
				2	Friendship Formed through Proximity of Living Situation	2	Variant
				3	Friendship Formed through Work/Job	5	Variant
				4	Friendship Formed through Connection in Childhood	2	Variant
		B.	Nature of Friendship	1	Avenues of Emotional Connection	8	Typical
				2	Conflict	9	Typical
				3	Romantic/Sexual	2	Variant

					Attraction		
				4	Early Warning Signs of Dissolution	5	Variant
II.	Components of Friendship Dissolution RQ 2: In adult women's friendships, in which distance and death were not the primary reason for ending the friendship, how does one member of the dyad describe the reason for dissolution?	A.	Reason for Dissolution	1	Disagreement with Friend's Interpersonal Style	8	Typical
				2	Perceived Relational Aggression - Victimization	6	Variant
				3	Change in Religious Beliefs	2	Variant
				4	Friend Attempted or Achieved Romantic Connection with Participant's Partner	3	Variant
				5	Participant was Witness to or Victim of Physical Violence by Friend	2	Variant
				6	Experience of Repeated Disrespect from Friend	4	Variant
		B.	Process of Dissolution	1	Face-to-Face Conversation	4	Variant
				2	Phone Conversation	4	Variant
				3	Email	2	Variant
				4	Participant Stopped Returning Friend's Calls and Emails	5	Variant
		C.	Nature of Relationship Post-Dissolution	1	No Contact	9	Typical
				2	Casual, Chance Meetings	5	Variant
				3	Infrequent Email Exchanges	1	Rare
		D.	Outcome of Dissolution Experience	1	Feelings of Liberation	5	Variant
				2	Feelings of Grief and Loss	8	Typical
				3	Changed Behavior in Forming New Friendships	10	Typical
III.	Learning about Self and Friendship Dissolution	A.	Increased Self-Awareness	1	Increased Trust in Intuition	5	Variant
				2	Increased Self-Respect and Self-Confidence	11	Typical
				3	Increased awareness of	7	Variant

	RQ 3: What did women learn about themselves and friendship through the process of dissolution?				how dissolution influences current relationships		
		B.	Awareness Regarding Friendship and Dissolution	1	Strengthened Criteria for New Friends and Personal Boundaries	5	Variant
				2	Interaction of Life Transition and Friendship	8	Typical
IV.	Experience related to Participation in Study and Interview	A.	Reaction to Interview	1	Closure on Dissolution Experience	1	Rare
				2	Learning about Self through Reflection and Discussion	4	Variant
				3	General Interest in Research Topic and Experiences of Other Women’s Friendship Dissolution	2	Variant

Reflections on Participant Characteristics

Although aspects of participant demographics are highlighted in chapter three, it is necessary to examine the qualitative results of this research within the context of the participants’ shared and unique characteristics (see Appendix E). The particular characteristics of participants likely influenced the data gathered and the types of friendships examined in this study.

To begin with, twelve of the fifteen participants were graduate students or recent graduates in either Social Work or Family Social Science. Students in Social Work and Family Social Science are trained to examine, identify, and articulate relationship dynamics (e.g., macro and micro levels of relationship dynamics: societal, cultural, community, family, partnership, and parent/child). By virtue of their professional pursuits, it is likely that the participants had an elevated ability to process and verbalize

their dissolution experience with regards to self and interpersonal awareness. The remaining three participants had varied professional experiences, yet appeared equally as eager to discuss their dissolution experience. Further, the self-selection recruitment process of this study likely influenced the characteristics of both the friendships and the participants. For example, all but one of the fifteen friendships were ended by the participant, meaning that only one of the participants chose to discuss a friendship dissolution that was not initiated by her. Perhaps, the participants self-selected by the primary experience of initiating the end of a friendship, rather than having the friendship end by the friend.

Friendship Characteristics

Friendship Formation

Two core ideas arose from the domain of Friendship Characteristics, Friendship Formation and Nature of Friendship. The first core idea, Friendship Formation, contained the various ways through which the participants reported having met and formed the friendship explored in the interview process. The analysis revealed four distinct ways in which the participants initially formed the dissolved friendships. These four categories are: 1) Friendship Formed through Mutual Interest, 2) Friendship Formed through Proximity of Living Situation, 3) Friendship Formed through Work/School, and 4) Friendship Formed through Connection in Childhood.

Friendship formed through mutual interest. The first category, Friendship Formed through Mutual Interest ($n=6$), was variant in frequency and the most common means of friendship formation for women in the study. One woman stated that her friendship began while participating in a book club. Another woman stated that her

friendship began by meeting new friends while attending local concerts. A third participant said that her friendship began through rock climbing. A fourth participant stated that her friendship began by attending dinner parties of a friend or a friend and developed through a mutual interest in hiking. Additionally, two women stated that their friendship began while participating in spiritual communities.

Friendship formed through proximity of living situation. The second category, Friendship Formed through Proximity of Living Situation ($n=2$), was also variant in frequency. One participant stated that the friendship formed as the friend was interested in buying a house near the participant's family and was investigating the neighborhood. Another woman reported that her friendship began after her first year of college, when she moved into the same boarding house as the friend. She described her friendship formation with the following words, names were changed to protect identity.

I moved in there in September 1968 and then I met Janine, I think sometime later that year in the fall and we just really hit it off. We liked the same things, we had the same sense of humor... We just had a glorious time. We would walk downtown, go see a movie together and then we would go to Bridgeman's and get a chocolate chip ice cream or whatever we felt like having. We enjoyed the same music, we just had a wonderful time.

Friendship formed through work/school. The third category within the domain of Friendship Formation, Friendship Formed through Work/School, was the second most common experience for participants ($n=5$). Some of these friendships were formed during college; others were formed in early jobs out of college. Participants described meeting friends through work and school in the following ways.

We met as undergraduates and I can't tell you exactly how we met, we seemed to have overlapping friend groups. She also studied social work as an undergraduate at [my undergraduate college].

Another participant stated,

I guess, let's see, we became friends, I am not really quite sure when, but I met her at a community college and I was in the nursing program at the community college and I was struggling with anatomy. I thought, 'oh God, I am going to have to take this again, in order to grasp it, this is really important,' so I was having the discussion with her out the hallway, she was like, oh yeah, I started off in the nursing program myself, I'm a nursing assistant. It is kind of difficult, but you know maybe you should think if you want to work with people, maybe you should consider human services.

Friendship formed through connection in childhood. The final and fourth category within Friendship Formation describes participant friendships that were formed through a connection in childhood (n=2). These friendships tended to have lasted over ten years or longer. One of the participants stated that her friendship began around the age of six years old. Another woman stated that her friendship began in sixth grade.

[We spent our time in 6th grade] you know, making prank phone calls. You know we'd have to watch her brother. We'd rent racy movies that we weren't supposed to watch and stuff like that. Talking on the phone for hours and hours.

Another participant talked about her friendship that was formed in early childhood and how it was maintained after one family moved out of the area.

Like, I would go spend summers there and she would come here and holidays. We would write and call all the time. We talked like every weekend. All the way up to like our 20s.

Nature of Friendship

Stepping back to the broader domain of Friendship Characteristics, the second core idea within this domain is the Nature of Friendship. This core idea describes the ways in which the participants experienced friendship. These data are identified through the following four categories: 1) Avenues of Emotional Connection, 2) Conflict, 3) Romantic/Sexual Attraction, and 4) Early Warning Signs of Dissolution.

Avenues of emotional connection. This category incorporates notions of intimacy, humor, closeness, empathy, and concern (n=8). One participant described the closeness in her friendship by stating,

You know, if she was going for a walk and she was walking by my house she'd say 'Hey, come on with me.' If I was by her house I'd ask her to come with me. You know, she stopped by one day and I told her 'Oh, I was trying to figure out what to do with my living room.' Well, she's an interior design hobbyist so she came in and rearranged my living room, like on the spot, 'let me help you move your furniture.' We got to where we watched each other's kids. You know the first time I colored my hair I stopped by her house on the way home 'what do you think?'

We watched each other's kids and one time our husbands were both on business travel at the same time and we actually slept over at each other's house, just because we both hate being home alone. So we just did fun stuff.

Another participant described the means of emotional connection of her friendship with the following words,

She was a practical friend. We both work in social work and work in the same place, having similar interests and also, we connected about things that people don't ordinarily talk about. So sometimes we would be talking about our experience in life and feeling like, oh, 'we view things the same way!' Because you know, at that time we shared similar values. Those conversations would happen once in awhile.

It is so interesting because I think the one thing that I'm realizing because it was a year and a half of us really struggling to make our [friendship work] ... I feel like I have white-washed that whole experience, all kind of tainted by the last year and a half. But I think definitely like the predominant feelings are the feeling of being connected to another person and I know too, like, there in some ways for me like a sense of admiration, I really thought that she was an amazing person.

Frequently, as participants discussed these initial feelings and experiences of emotional connection, their affect was bright and they smiled. Almost consistently the participants were able to recall, with great fondness, how they had initially felt close to their friend. Often, participants described the positive aspects of the friendship being clouded by interpersonal conflict.

Conflict. Conflict was a part of every friendship discussed. The majority of conflicts were discussed or addressed through communication within the friendship dyad. However, a few participants experienced high levels of distress and frustration within the friendship, but did not verbally discuss these issues with the friend. The following quotes illustrate the two experiences of conflict reported by participants: overt and expressed conflict, and conflict not discussed.

Expressed conflict:

The next day I remember we were taking a walk and I sort of said something like, 'I don't feel comfortable with him [your new boyfriend] and I don't really like him.' I kind of said it sort of like because I cared about her and wanted to be like, 'he's no good.' She basically completely ignored it. 'Well that's okay that you feel that way, but basically like I don't care kind of.' I was like, 'okay, we've been in a friendship for four years and you met this guy three months ago. You're sort of choosing him over me.' It was then that I was like, I think for me why that was like the culminating moment, was that I felt like I was in like a loving way trying to be like, 'this guy is unhealthy and I don't understand why you keep dating him more and more.' And just to even have her say like, 'yeah your right I'm doing this for unhealthy reasons but I'm going to keep doing it.' This was one of the first times in our friendship that I really confronted her in a more major way.

Conflict not discussed is about unexpressed conflict that can lead to distress.

I was going to go to a [religious] service, we had called and we had talked. She was going to be at that service as well. I said, 'well, okay I'll meet you there.' So, she is always running late and the service is starting. So, I went in and took a seat. It was a really popular service so there were very few places available. I took a seat, it was stadium style you know, and there was an empty seat next to me. So the service started, and going along, and she comes in and sits down right next to me. I turned and said, 'Hello' and looked at her, and nothing! Blinders. Pure blinders. That remained through the entire service. She did not see me, hear me, speak to me, anything, through the entire service.

Interviewer: What was that like?

I can't even tell you. That emotion is still so strong. It was confusion. It was hurt. It was, I'm not sure if anger was... it was just complete confusion; and astounded that somebody could just be so totally unaware. I honestly still to this

day I don't even know how to explain how somebody could be like that. I mean the service was more than an hour long. At the end, she turned and walked out.

Interviewer: No communication?

Nothing. Didn't even look in my direction. I was sitting right next to her. So, I left.

This last participant's experience highlights the confusion and sadness that many women felt when the norm in the relationship was not discussing a conflict in the friendship.

Sexual/romantic attraction. Another aspect of the participant friendship experience that comprised the domain, Nature of the Friendship, was sexual/romantic attraction. Three participants hypothesized that the friend may have been romantically attracted to her, however no one reported mutual attraction or having discussed the attraction within the friendship. One participant stated her understanding of sexual attraction within the friendship as the following,

Yeah, I wondered [about sexual attraction on her part], but I didn't really know. My friend's partner used to always joke about my friend and I getting together as a couple. I would always be like, 'Nope, not a couple.' So, my friend's partner knew something, and her way of dealing with everything was joking about it, so it really clued me in, like after she said this a few times, I was like, there is something going on here. I think that my friend was possibly jealous that I was dating someone and I think there is a possibility [that she was attracted to me]. I don't know. She never told me anything. However, her interest [in me] was so strong that it wouldn't surprise me, if you were to talk to her and she would say that she had been [attracted to me].

Interviewer: And on your part?

There wasn't; I asked myself that a few times and there wasn't. Not even in the beginning, no. When my friend's partner would joke about it, I would think, hmmm, 'What do I think about this?' No, I don't think so. I gave it some thought, but no.

This participant highlighted the ambiguity experienced by three of the participants in the study regarding sexual attraction.

Early warning signs of dissolution. The fourth category within the domain of Nature of Friendship captures the felt experience of the majority of participants, it is called, Early Warning Signs of Dissolution. A number of participants ($n=5$) reported experiencing “red flags” early on in the friendships; warning signs that something ambiguous and/or negative was afoot within the friendship dynamic.

Later it was something that we joked about, like, ‘Oh remember when you were jealous of me for no good reason?’ I guess I didn’t think about it at the time, but it should have been a red flag of what kind of person she was and how she dealt with people.

Another participant described her experience of early warning signs in the following manner,

Like in retrospect, that was probably something I should have paid more attention to, but at the time, I wasn’t in a place to really pay attention to it. You know? I wasn’t feeling good about myself, about my life. I was in a friendship with someone who was at my same level of health, if that makes sense. You know, you find people who are the people that you are sort of equal to emotionally and where I was at that time. That is it. We fit together in that way.

Another participant discussed her awareness of deterioration in the relationship with the following words,

The more that she got into it [her romantic relationship], the more she started to ignore it, ignoring what I was saying and so eventually... eventually one day, I remember sitting at the place we always went to, sort of like a regular hangout for us, having a beer and I said to her, something like, ‘I know that we’ve talked about it [your relationship] before, I’m not going to keep bringing it up, but it really bothers me.’ She got really, really angry and really defensive and basically we got into a kind of major fight over dinner. She got really pissed. It was basically like, it was sort of at that moment that I was like, ‘Okay, it is not going to end tonight, but this friendship is not going to last.’

The experiences of these participants highlight the sense of intuition and forewarning that a majority of the women experienced in their friendships. Next, the components of the dissolution process, or how the participants ended their friendships, are explored.

Components of Friendship Dissolution

The second domain arose from the data to incorporate Components of Friendship Dissolution. This domain was comprised of four core ideas: 1) Reason for Dissolution, 2) Process of Dissolution, 3) Nature of Relationship Post-Dissolution, and 4) Outcome of Dissolution Experience. The participants attributed the breakdown of their friendship to various factors; however, the specific reasons for dissolution were similar among participants. Further, some participants stated multiple factors contributing to the breakup of their friendship.

Reason for Dissolution

A total of six categories comprise the first core idea, Reason for Dissolution: 1) Disagreement with Friend's Interpersonal Style, 2) Perceived Relational Aggression – Victimization, 3) Change in Religious Beliefs, 4) Friend Attempted and/or Achieved Romantic Connection with Participant's Partner, 5) Participant was Witness to or Victim of Physical Violence by Friend, and 6) Experience of Disrespect from Friend.

Disagreement with friend's interpersonal style. A number of participants ($n = 8$) described irritation, frustration, and disagreement with their friend's way of interacting with other people. One participant reported that her other friends repeatedly commented on the harshness of her friend's interpersonal style. Another participant reported that she became increasingly frustrated with her friend's tendency to

consistently dominate the conversation. The following quote highlights the participant's lived experience of this relational discord.

I don't know, it felt like it was starting to get, like she became more and more comfortable with me and it felt like she, I don't know, if just felt weird, like the way I was treated, felt she was being possessive but yet also taking me for granted. I don't know, it felt really weird. It felt really one-sided and it felt like instead of being more superficial, it was becoming more genuine, but in an almost more negative way. I don't know, I remember around that time I had actually had a pretty serious and painful breakup with my boyfriend. And so ... instead of being like, just listening and being empathetic and being like, oh that's awful, it was like, whenever I would talk about my feelings about it or whatever, instead of her listening and being empathetic, she would use it as an opportunity to all of a sudden have a two hour monologue about this guy that dumped her two years ago.

It was really one-sided and it would be like, her being on the phone and her complaining about this guy that broke up with her two years ago and I would be like, okay but this just happened to me, like I want to talk about me and like, I need some support here.

Another participant described her experience of her friend's interpersonal style with the following words.

And then we were in this group. I mean, she has a lot of opinions. This is so hard to explain. I don't even know how to explain it. She read something in group that offended me. Really offended me. It wasn't about me, but it was about some people that I knew who she had made a judgment about which I thought was totally wrong. And I sat there and I listened to it and when she got through reading it something went off in my head like 'We're done. We are done. I never want to see this woman again as long as I live.'

Perceived relational aggression. Relational aggression, or attempted acts of relational aggression, appeared to be a part of a number of the participants' experiences ($n=6$). One participant reported feeling that her friend intentionally ignored her in a public setting. Another participant experienced mutual friends changing their behavior and asking the participant to acquiesce to the desires of the friend, hypothesizing that the friend had been speaking negatively about her. The following quote highlights the experience of another participant.

And that same day she called me, and so I told her that's what I was going to do [leave our bookclub] because I didn't want to get into it with her either. And she was furious. She was just furious. And I could just hear it in her voice she was so cold. And she just said 'Fine. That will be fine. Well, I'll just call up everybody and tell them [that you are quitting the group].' And I said 'No you won't. I'll call up everybody and tell them. I'm the one who is quitting'.

This participant was clear about her boundaries, and prevented potential splitting that could have occurred in the group, had the friend made the phone calls rather than the participant.

Another participant described her experience of perceived relational aggression with the following words.

So these are new rules for me to play by because I have six brothers. You fight it out. And this whole middle school Mom thing – well, 'we're just going to overlook how this person is behaving. We're all going to nod and sympathize when she talks.' So I'm kind of shunned now by these Moms who are sympathizing with her and I'm finally going yeah, I don't really want to play. I don't really care if it blows over. This isn't how I function.

This participant's experience of being "shunned" by other mothers from her daughter's middle school illustrate the presence of relational aggression in adult women's friendship dissolution.

Change in religious beliefs. A couple ($n = 2$) of the participants reported struggling within their friendships as their religious beliefs developed and changed.

One woman explained that her friendship was formed through a conversion experience. She described her experience with the following words.

I think [our friendship] had so much to do with that whole dynamic of being saved. I guess you could say in a sense, she was my 'savior'. Because she was so dynamic, you just kind of watch those people and you like, 'Wow? Where are they going to go next?' It's just fascinating. They give off this energy of that invincibility and that you can do anything too because they are so invincible. So, you really do want to be a part of it. They are so connected and they, you know, I think ultimately found that she abused relationships but it doesn't appear like that at the beginning, you know. Because she was really so

well versed in all the Evangelical stuff and the Bible verses and all that kind of stuff, she just would keep feeding, feeding, and feeding, as I was a newbie. Growing up Catholic we don't have access to the Bible. The Bible was a whole new language. I was a sponge, and I was just absorbing all of this stuff from her. As it turns out the reason why I'm now an Atheist is because it always felt like I was 'wearing clothes that didn't fit me'. There was always that little bit on the other side that was like, so caught up in it. It was so dynamic and fascinating. I know there are a lot of people who would think that's a very negative thing, but I think it was liberation.

A different participant described her experience of her friendship dissolving as a direct result of her changing religious affiliation and beliefs . Her experience of friendship dissolution was less related to the dynamics of the friendship, and more closely tied to a change in religious and cultural identity.

She sent me an email at the beginning of last September and I didn't really want to respond and say, 'You can take me off your list, because I'm really not going to be going through that religious route anymore, or I'm not interested in using church affiliations or anything.' So, I presume that somehow she found out because I haven't heard from her since and I haven't gotten any of those routine emails either. I think she is aware of it and maybe she is like, 'Well if I wanted to maintain friendship, it is time for me to pony up or whatever.' I feel like, in a sense, it would take so much work and what's the point, and we are on very different routes right now and there is not that shared assumption on belief systems anymore so what would we make out of it? I guess I just kind of didn't respond to the email and just kind of sort of left it.

The dynamic experience of religion and friendship clearly contributed to the dissolution for two of the friendships in this study as illustrated above by the words of participants.

Friend attempted and/or achieved romantic connection with friend's partner.

This difficult experience was reported by three participants; one participant reported that her friend attempted a romantic connection with her partner, and two participants stated that their friends actually had romantic connections with their partners. All of

these friendships ended as a contributing consequence of this behavior. One participant described her experience of this category with the following words.

Before that, I was talking to a mutual friend and I was like, you know I think there is something going on with our friend and my husband. She was like, 'Oh.' I was like, 'Would you tell me if there was something going on?' She was like, 'Well yeah. You know, our friend is lonely.' And I was like, 'Okay. That's all I need to know.' Clearly, signs were pointing to that. So, my husband and I left and when we came home I confronted him. I said, 'Look, I know there's something going on. You need to tell me what it is.' And, so he did. He admitted to having an affair with her.

He said that they kissed a few times, but that she was an awful kisser and like every single time it happened he felt really guilty about it. I always said in the past, like if anyone ever cheated on me, that's it. There is no going back or whatever. So, he was scared to tell me.

Participant was witness to, or victim of, physical violence by friend.

Physical violence was an unanticipated finding in this study. Physical aggression differs from relational aggression in the current study in that physical force and the body are used as means of control, rather than relational components. One participant reported that her friend hit her repeatedly on the head during times of disagreement to demean her. The impression of this participant's experience of physical violence sounded abusive, and reflective of domestic violence. She reported her experience in the following way.

If I allow myself to think about it, I just get perturbed, but I can't change that. But anyways, what happened was, it was about six months before we ended up having the falling out, she started acting kind of weird and this was when she was dealing with her mother, so I'm sure it's all related, how I don't know and she just started doing things inappropriate around me, like hitting me in the head one time, and just weird stuff. I'm like, 'What is up with this?', you know, it was just not sitting well with me and then she would talk about why she did it.

Another participant reported witnessing violent behavior of her friend toward the friend's romantic partner. The participant reported being surprised and fearful of

the friend's escalating anger. She stated that she distanced herself from the friend shortly after that experience.

Experience of disrespect from friend. The final category of this domain was reported by a number of the participants ($n=4$) as precipitating their friendship's dissolution. The experiences of disrespect ranged from taking clothing without permission to the denial of participant's stated needs. One participant reported her experience of disrespect through neglected emotional support in her friendship. This participant's friendship had endured for over twenty years.

I think that is where the problem is - it is her perception. If we had an intimate relationship where we could converse about these things [our feelings], then we can talk them through. But without that, what do you do? You end up where you end up. I mean, communication, if you don't have communication, you really don't have anything in any way. You have to communicate and she does not communicate feelings at all. They just cannot come out.

Another participant described feelings of being disrespected with the following example,

Overall, I felt like this big selfish freak started showing up, like on our tubing trip. I get really carsick easily and on the way down to go tubing, there were a bunch of us. It was her car but she didn't like drive, so her friend drove, because he also gets carsick. On the way down, I sat in the back and I didn't really say anything because, you know she knew about it, but on the way back up to the Cities, you know, I even asked, 'Oh, can I sit up front, you know, so I don't feel sick?', and she like pitched a fit and yelled at me for being selfish and I was like, 'Okay!'

Process of Dissolution

The second domain within the core idea of Components of Friendship Dissolution examines the process of dissolution, rather than the reasons or result of the dissolution. Participants carried out the process of dissolution in various ways. The following four categories summarize the participants' experiences of how their

friendships ended: 1) face-to-face conversation, 2) phone conversation, 3) email communication, and 4) participant stopped returning friend's calls and emails.

Face-to-face conversation. Two participants participated in face-to-face conversations in which the end of the friendship was discussed. Two other participants reported having had face-to-face conversations that lead to dissolution of the friendship, but that the final communication occurred via email or was not discussed further. The following quotes highlight the level of direct conversation some women experienced ($n=4$) in their process of friendship dissolution.

So I called her up and I called like three times because I knew she had caller ID and she wasn't picking up the phone. So the third time she picks it up and I said 'Hi Amy' and she goes 'How are you?' and I go 'You know, I'm not so good' and she goes "Well you're making too big a deal out of stuff" and I said 'Amy, I need to come over and talk to you. We have to talk' and she said 'Okay. Come over.' So I go over.

Interviewer: Were you nervous?

Yes and no. It was so funny. I took a to-go cup of tea with me. A calming tea. A calming herbal tea. So I went over there and she's like we have to go down to this corner of the basement where they have a sauna where the kids aren't around. You know, she didn't even want her husband to know I was there. So I was like – well it was a disaster. The one word for it was it was a disaster. . . I just looked at her and I said 'Amy, I came over here to try and be friends with you.' I said, "The way you're behaving I feel like you don't want to be friends. I feel like you're sending me very clear signals you don't want to try to be friends." And she just went like this (gave a look suggesting, 'well, what does that mean to you?') And I was like, 'Wow, okay'.

The face-to-face experience of dissolution is further highlighted through another participant's experience,

Interviewer: So, how did you know the friendship was going to end?

I didn't. Then she called me, my friend did, and was like, 'Can we get together for coffee, I want to talk.' I was, in my mind, 'I hope everything is okay.' So we met.

We got there and I was just like, 'What's up?' She was like, "I cannot be your friend anymore." It was just like that. I was just blown away. It was the absolute last thing I was expecting.

I was devastated. We had this whole long conversation like, 'I can't.' It's hard to remember specifics, but it was like these things, that was when she said ever since, you know, when I went abroad and then we came back and we were doing this drinking together. I think she was right in that area. She said you know about ever since right around that time, I just kind of decided in my mind that you weren't really like my friend anymore, just more like this cousin that I always had to deal with that you were always there. I mean, I was like, 'You know, I thought you were my best friend.' I like I couldn't understand just this shift that had happened, you know. I was just like, 'I didn't even know [that you were having all of these problems with our friendship].'

Another participant described her face-to-face dissolution experience by sharing her feelings about having the conversation.

And, so I called her and said, 'Can I come over to your apartment?' She was like, 'Yeah.' So, I went over and...I was really nervous. I was really freaked out. I had been thinking about it the entire day and I had that day off. I was biking around and just basically sitting and thinking about what I would say [to her]. 'Why was I doing it? If I wanted to do it?' Sort of what it would mean to do it, at that time. And, even like going over there, I had to make myself go over there, even though I knew I was going to do it. And like for the first five or ten minutes it was sort of just us hanging out. Eventually, she was like, what's wrong. She could tell that I was sort of freaked out. I basically just started to explain where I was coming from and she got really upset and said some things that weren't very nice to me.

Phone conversation. A number of participants (n=4) reported ending their friendships via telephone. One participant discussed leaving a message on her friend's voicemail after a conflict and then having had one more phone conversation to clarify the dissolution. Another participant described her dissolution phone call with the following words.

I picked up the phone and called her, and got her answering machine. I left this message. I said, 'I just don't even know what to say. I can't tell you how upsetting that was that you sat right next to me for the whole service. What could possibly be going on, you know this and that.' I said 'You know, this is just not worth it to me. That's it, I'm done'! I had never done anything like that

before in my life. She called back and she tried to engage me and discuss this, make it better. I can't even remember what she said, probably something about well, you know, Jesus. This or that. And that was it. Never spoken to her since.

Email. Email was used by one participant as the primary means of dissolving the friendship. This participant stated that she crafted an email after avoiding the friend's calls and messages. She reported that the friend called to discuss the email and they had a brief phone conversation after some dialogue via email regarding the dissolution.

Participant stopped returning friend's calls/emails. This act of non-doing was one the most common practices (n=5) of ending a friendship. A number of participants stated that they actively chose to not return phone calls and emails as a means of ending the friendship. One participant described the act of avoiding the friend with the following statement.

I don't know. I don't know if I ever really made like a conscious decision. I have never like had a formal conversation with her, you know, I never, because like I said since she wasn't a very good listener anyway, I didn't think that she would ever be able to hear anything that I had to say about like why we can't hang out, this is what I'm having problems with, hanging out with you, or being friends with you, just seeing her interact with other people, I just knew if that happened, like she would just yell at me and then I would be termed the bitch, you know. She would just turn it around on me, so I decided not to do that. I'm sorry, what was your question?

Interviewer: How did you know it was going to end?

I don't know, I can't pinpoint it exactly, but it just got to the point yeah, where it felt really unsupportive and really toxic and I started calling her less and less, stopped returning her calls really, if she invited me to do something I was busy, I had plans, because we had similar friends, I would still run into her and see her, but it would be like really superficial, quick, catch up chat, kind of like, 'How are you?, What's new kind of thing?,' and then if she asked me to hang out, I'd be like, 'Oh my God, I am so busy.'

Nature of Relationship Post-Dissolution

The nature of the relationship post-dissolution varied between participants. For example, one participant stated that she occasionally ran into her former friend at local bars. Initially, after the dissolution occurred she said that they would speak briefly and casually. However, as time went on, she said that they eventually stopped speaking and just smiled, and then finally, basically ignored one another upon seeing each other. One participant, who ended a twenty-year friendship, reported that she received random and infrequent emails from her former friend. She stated that they would exchange brief emails, e.g., happy birthday, but that the friendship or deeper life issues were never discussed.

No contact. No contact post-dissolution was the most common experience of participants ($n=9$). The majority of participants reported wanting to keep distance and space from their former friend. One participant described a lingering confusion and anxiety regarding how she would talk to her former friend if they were to pass on the street.

It [the friendship dissolution] was such a profound experience, even to this day. I still have an old address book that has her name and phone number in it and I try to skip past that page as quickly as I can. I don't know if I could say anything to her. What could I say at this point? Really. I search in my mind, what could I say?

Another participant described her experience of attempting to make contact multiple times with her former friend, and then, choosing to keep a distance after repeated failed attempts.

I wrote her this long letter and sent it to her. I think I called her once a week for about three months. She never answered the phone and never answered the letter. She never returned any of my calls. I stopped. I wasn't sure what else I could do.

Interviewer: There has been no contact since?

No. Like we don't have the same group of friends but we do have some overlap, and actually, it was last year. It was a mutual friend's birthday, and I had seen her right before it. She was like, you know, 'I'm going out for breakfast and bowling or whatever tomorrow for my birthday.' She said, 'I just really want you to know that you're my friend and your boyfriend is my friend and I do want you there if your comfortable. She was like, 'Lucy [former friend] will be there and I don't know if you guys have talked or if anything has happened. I would like you to come.' I didn't want to deal with it. I just felt like I wasn't ready to not make a scene, you know? I think I would have just blown up. You know, I didn't want to do that at this girl's birthday. Then another couple of days later another mutual friend had come into town. They were going out again for whatever, a nighttime going out and they had called me. They were like, please come with us. I was like I can't. I just can't. I'm not going to be civil and I don't want to do that. I do still think about what would I do if I saw Lucy? I still don't, I don't know. I think I would probably just be stone cold.

Casual, chance meetings. Although the dissolution process ended the friendship, a few participants ($n=5$) discussed maintaining the same circle of friends, where chance meetings with their former friend would occasionally occur.

Since that [the final] conversation, I have hardly seen her at all, even though she is very active in a lot of groups. But I don't see her. But I did happen to run into her about a month ago at a big party and she was totally fine. She came up and said, 'Hi,' and smiled and you know was very nice and I was very nice back to her. But there is no question in either of our minds that we would ever be friends again.

Infrequent email exchange. This was not a common experience for participants ($n=1$). This particular participant described the email communication post-dissolution with the following words.

Every once in a blue, blue moon she will quick shoot an email to ask, 'How are you doing?' Or she'll always acknowledge my birthday. I'll get an email saying, 'Happy Birthday.' I do hers as well. But, that's the only time I email her. I don't even really email her back with you know like answering her questions or anything. I'm comfortable with that now because you know, I just I think that I've moved past this relationship and the sense that I've gotten from her is that she's still kind of in this place and so I don't think there would be anything we would really have to say to each other that would be significant

anymore. We're just such different people now. We're completely different people than we were like five or six years ago. Because she's not intertwined in my life anymore, it would almost in some ways feel like I was talking to a stranger, I mean not exactly but that there is just no connection there. I can't even think of anything I would want to say to her at this point.

The experience of casual email communication was rare. This particular participant had been in her friendship since early childhood and into her late 20s. Their families had been close; perhaps the longevity of the relationship, and the intensity, influenced the type of communication post-dissolution.

Outcome of Dissolution Experience

The outcome of friendship and dissolution emerged as a domain uniting the various effects and ripples felt and experienced by participants after the occurrence of the friendship dissolution process.

Feelings of liberation. A few participants ($n=5$) discussed how they experienced a sense of relief and freedom after having ended the friendship. These experiences suggest that the dissolution process is complex, neither all bad nor all good, but dynamic. One participant described the experience of her final meeting with her friend. For background, the participant had decided to leave a shared hobby group in which both she and the friend were members. She had explained to the friend via phone that she would be leaving the group. The friend had become upset. This is how the participant describes that last meeting.

It felt good. It felt good. I thought yep. I know we're done. She knows we're done. It's very clear. And if this is how she's going to get through it that's fine with me. It was fine with me. And everybody else was just sociable, friendly, and I mean, it was a little bit weird. But as I say, it was right in my neighborhood. It was about three blocks away and so toward the end of it I left and I just said 'I gotta go' and everyone said 'Oh great, well we'll see you' and they were all people I knew and saw in other – so it wasn't like I was never

going to see them again or anything. So I left. I walked out of the house and I was like flying. I was like gleeful. It was like I was standing back watching myself and I was like 'what is this about' and I'm just going 'Yes! I am out of this!' and I did. I like danced all the way home. It was so weird. It was totally weird. And I just felt like I had been released from something. I mean, that again seems weird to me. That whole incident seems weird to me like, Wow! I was feeling way more oppressed than I realized because to feel that kind of freedom from someone. I'm free of her. I never have to speak to her again as long as I live if I don't want to. So strange. So that makes me think that when I recognized whatever it was that was going on I really felt imprisoned in some way.

This participant's experience of liberation was intense. The gleeful, liberating experience that was reported by some participants (n=5) was met with a more frequent (n=8) response of sadness, grief, and a sense of loss at the end of the friendship. These responses are explored under the next category.

Feelings of grief and loss. The process of ending a friendship, whether the participant initiated the dissolution, or was on the receiving side of the dissolution, frequently created responses of sadness, loss, and grief. A number of participants (n=8) discussed having talked about the dissolution process frequently with other friends, family members, partners, and therapists. The emotional impact of the dissolution was significant on the participants. One participant described her experiences of grief and loss,

Well, initially it was really pretty devastating. Even telling my family, because my family was like her family and visa versa. I went to her sister's wedding. I mean, I was very close to her family. So, there was even that loss too. So, initially that was really challenging to step away from that relationship and figure out how to negotiate that for myself now. But at the same time it was like that whole piece of how to put some closure on this, because I'm realizing that its just never going to be how it once was.

I'm always thinking, because of my background [as a therapist]. You know, that recognizing the loss, particularly of that relationship, like I said, because it was not just with her and I, but again with our families, and everything. I mean it

was a loss on multiple levels and so it wasn't only just me processing that it was my family processing that too.

Also, I was really grateful that I had the time I did with her. Kind of like you do with processing a death. You know, just realizing that she is just not going to be part of my life anymore, so really processing that grief too that I needed to just kind of work through that and that over time it got easier and easier, where it was just like, well, I've developed all these other relationships now, so this one doesn't have as much significance as it used to. So, it was really kinda that letting go and moving on and like I said developing these other relationships.

Another participant described her experience of loss with these words.

It was awful. It was so horrible. I was devastated. We had this whole long conversation. Its hard to remember specifics, but she said, 'I just kind of decided in my mind that you weren't really like my friend anymore, just more like this cousin that I always had to deal with that you were always there'. I mean, I was like you know, 'I thought you were my best friend.' I couldn't understand just this shift that had happened, you know? It was really hard to like grasp I was just like, "didn't even know.' I wrote her this long letter and sent it to her. I think I called her once a week for about three months. She never answered the phone and never answered the letter. She never returned any of my calls.

These experiences of loss and grief were significantly painful for a number of participants. Both the experiences of grief, and the feelings of liberation appeared to influence a third outcome of the dissolution experience, future friendship formation for the participants.

Changed behavior in forming new friendships. A number of participants ($n=10$) discussed ways in which their friendship structures and formations had changed since the experience of friendship dissolution. One participant commented on the changes in her social world and altered relationships after the experience of dissolution.

I'm really not interested in having friends that are religious, who have this need to save the world. Even in the past couple of days, I have realized different ways that women are condemned, not always explicitly, but just all these implications. I don't want anything to with that. It's hard, because I would love to help open their eyes, but I can't make them and you're not going to see it if you don't want to see it. Maybe [someday] I'll be in a place where I'll be able

to help people as they are going through something like this [spiritual development and friendship dissolution].

Another participant described her changed behavior in forming new friends with the following words.

And so because this friend had been one of my main friends, it was going to be really lonely for a while; not even lonely but just I was going to be alone. I had to be okay with that. I got to the point where I would rather... I would be happier alone, and being really good to myself, you know like being that whole innate feeling thing? Just being really solid with yourself, than being in a friendship that brings me down and makes me feel bad.

Participants reported with strong insight the various outcomes and reactions to the dissolution experience. Another area of significant insight on the part of the participants centered around the learning that occurred about self and the process of leaving a friendship. The next core idea explores the learning that was reported regarding the self through the dissolution process.

Learning about Self and Friendship Dissolution

Increased Self-Awareness

Self-awareness, defined as the capacity to become the object of one's attention (Duval & Wicklund, 1972), was enhanced for each participant in the study. Whether the participant initiated the ending of the friendship or lost a friend, self-awareness grew through that experience. One participant highlighted her increased self-awareness by commenting on the connection between her family of origin and her communication style within the friendship.

My dad would say explosive things and be unkind with me and my sister, would be short. He would kind of get it all out and then it would be over, but during this conflict, not actually saying mean things to each other. Whereas my friend, she processes things by being really internal, thinking about them, coming back to them the next day when she has this frame work in her mind and she goes to

the point of it. Whereas, I would run my mouth. She was like, "Why don't you think before you say things?" I was like, 'I do think before I say things, but I don't want to be bound to these details.' She puts a lot of care into what she says and that means it takes her a longtime to process, sometimes it would be the next day and she would say, 'So when you said this, did you ...,' and I'd be like, 'I don't even remember saying that, kind of, I'm sure, like, I'm sure I said it, I believe you, I don't think you are making it up, but I have no idea what it was about.' I had to leave because I was so angry and I knew that if did explode like my family did, she wouldn't be able to handle it, like it would be really hurtful to her and I just needed to cool off and get my head around it and when I was out walking, I realized, I began to wonder is this feeling that I am feeling like, do I hate her? I don't think of myself as feeling that strongly about someone.

A number of categories arose from the data within the domain of Increased Self-Awareness, 1) Increased trust in intuition, 2) Increased self-respect and self-confidence, and 3) Increased awareness of how the dissolution experience influences current relationships.

Increased trust in intuition. Some participants ($n=5$) stated that trust of their own feelings had grown through the dissolution experience. For example, one participant discussed her increased trust in intuition with the following words,

But, I remember thinking, 'Can I see myself being friends with her in five years?' And kind of looking at my future self, thinking do I want that future self to still be friends with this person? I was just like, 'No, I can't see it. I can't see it.' And maybe because you see your future self as this more healthy, great person then you already are, and so I envisioned what I wanted my life to be and she just wasn't in that picture. I was like, okay. It's going to end someday, so its just a matter of when. Does it end now, do you rip it off as a Band-Aid and just sort of heal the loss and kind of move on or do you drag it out for five years? So, a few months later I felt like, okay, I just need to end it. I'm going to do it with not necessarily the most grace. She got really mad, but I felt like it had to be done at that point.

Another participant stated,

I gained a lot of awareness in that process that whenever somebody is pursuing me a lot I get really uncomfortable. And I learned that with her. This is something I really don't like, when somebody is needing me beyond where I'm needing them. I am totally willing to meet you halfway, but if they keep

pushing, pushing, pushing, then I just can't do it. So, I learned that about myself. It was so big that I was not willing to negotiate with her.

Increased self-respect and self-confidence. Participants shared how the experience of friendship dissolution refocused the view of self. Many of the participants commented on how beliefs about the self were changed as a consequence of the dissolution ($n=11$).

I finally learned how to set boundaries and keep them and respect myself enough to not take this kind of treatment. It has been a long time coming, and even though it is hurtful to have to do what I had to do [end the friendship], for my own self-preservation, I feel fortunate to have done it. When I think about our first fights, the dynamics were similar. I didn't see it, I didn't understand it. I wasn't where I am today for starters and I did all of the apologizing, the groveling, whatever, you know, and it was like that again.

Another participant commented on her increased capacity for forgiveness, "I learned that I actually have the capacity to forgive people."

Another participant commented on the existential challenges that the dissolution process created for her self-awareness.

Once again, I learned that I need to realize that being alone is okay. I never thought there was a problem, in regards to this relationship going down hill. I have the option to either fix it or, if it's not going well, you can end it. It is okay to end a friendship.

For some participants, it was an experience of remembering and relearning how they define themselves, after feeling somewhat destabilized from the experience of dissolution.

This experience brought everything into question. I work in the therapeutic community for adults with mental illness. In doing so, I've relearned that, oh, actually I am fairly good with people, I can connect with them, I'm not malicious. [I had to relearn them] because all of those things were brought into question when the friendship ended.

The above quotes highlight participants' increased self-respect and self-confidence as an outcome of the dissolution. The final category within this domain reflects the experiences of participants seeing their current relationships differently after the dissolution.

Increased awareness of how dissolution influences current relationships.

Participants ($n=7$) discussed how their current relationships had changed

I've learned that I need to establish more friendships with people who are probably on the level that I want to be professionally and maybe spiritually or emotionally, kind of have some more connections than I had at first with this particular one, because I think there was an unequal level of power between her and I and I kind of ignored it. You know how you can be friends with anybody but certain dynamics, that violence was just kind of waiting to play itself out with me.

Another participant described the change in her current relationships with the following words,

I have less people I consider friends now. We'd moved into the neighborhood five or six years ago, and at that time there were people I considered friends. And now I understand, especially regarding social class, that no, those people were acquaintances. They're not friends. So, I have less friends now. I'm very careful about who I pick to trust. I always watch how they treat other people.

The above experiences highlight the changed aspects of some participant's current relationships.

Awareness Regarding Friendship and Dissolution

Interaction of life transitions and friendship. Participants ($n=8$) discussed the connection between their friendship experience and the context of their life transitions.

One participant discussed her life transition in this way,

It was 1974. We were in the Navy. I've never really had, up until that time, a really close friend. Period. Because of all of the moving around and stuff like that, so this was probably my first real friend, you know?

Another participant stated how as her life transitioned, so did her friendship.

I wanted someone to listen to me about the things that I felt weren't right about my marriage and agree with me, and she always did that. She always did that. And then, after I figured it out, and I didn't need [that support] anymore, when I didn't need it, it didn't look quite the same to me.

Life transitions played a role in over half of the participants' dissolution experience. Explanations for the connections between life transition, friendship formation, and friendship dissolution are explored in the last chapter.

Experience Related to Participation in Study and Interview

The final core idea arose from statements made by participants regarding their experience of being interviewed and participating in the study. The majority of this content was unsolicited by the interviewer.

Reaction to Interview

This domain is comprised of one core idea, Reaction to Interview, and three categories, 1) Closure on dissolution experience, 2) Learning about self through reflection and discussion, and 3) General interest in the research topic and experience of other women's dissolution process.

Closure on dissolution experience. Closure, in the context of this category, refers to a feeling of being settled, and the notion that something undone has been completed. One participant described her experience with the following words ($n=1$).

I feel like I've just put this [the friendship] to bed. I've been feeling better and better about this over the last year, but this is just kind of to bed now. Whew! I'm done! It's kind of strange. Time to shut it. Absolutely.

Learning about self through reflection and discussion. In addition to the experience of closure through the interview process, some participants ($n=4$) commented on how the interview process impacted them. The following quote

highlights the questions that were raised for this participant as she told her dissolution story.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that you would like me to know?

No. I don't think so. The one thing that I'm going to leave here curious about is, I mean, that friendship just liked popped right up in my mind and it's so big that it sort of blocked out anything else that I could talk about, and it makes me think 'God. How many friendships have I ended and how did they end?' and I can hardly think of any. And I think well there had to be people – I mean, sometimes they just end and there's no hard feelings about it, it's just like you don't seem to have that much in common anymore and it seems kind of pointless and boring to continue. And those people sort of drift out of your life and they basically stop being your friend but it's not so revolutionary. I definitely think this is something I'm going to continue to think about. I'm going to think of a couple other people that happened to and try to figure out if it has things in common with my relationship with Alice or more things in common with it's just the natural evolution of things. But no. I don't think so. I can't think of anything more.

General interest in the research topic and experience of other women's dissolution process. The final component comprising participant reactions to the interview is related to general interest stated by participants ($n=2$) about the topic. The following quote highlights the intrinsic interest in the topic for the women that participated in the study.

Interviewer: Well, is there anything I haven't asked about that you think would be important for me to know?

I don't know. I don't think so. I think it's a really interesting topic and I've thought a lot about this because I think women definitely relate differently to each other as they are raised to like you said either relational and sort of the good parts of that are great and the and the bad parts of that are like negative, gossip, the passive-aggressiveness, that kind of thing. So, I think I mean I'm intrigued by your study because I've sort of always felt like no one else does this. You know there's this feeling of am I the only one who ends friendships? Because its so... friendships are so similar to relationships but yet why do you break up relationships and cut it off and with a friendship its like, a slow painful death or someone speaks to someone's boyfriend and it just ends, you know? That's sort of what I thought.

The words of this participant underscore the purpose of this exploratory research study, the how and why of women's friendship dissolution.

Summary of Research Findings

The analysis of these research questions yielded four Domains, nine Core Ideas, and thirty-two Categories (See Table 2 for Summary of Results). The results are organized first by domain, second by core idea, and lastly by category. Data were grouped first by domain. Then, one or more core ideas appear under each domain. The core ideas attempt to categorize smaller nuances of information within the domains. The categories highlight unique components of participant experience within each domain. Direct interview quotes are used to highlight and personalize the data. The quotes have been edited for grammatical clarity, and names have been changed. Descriptions of the participants and their friendships are provided to offer context and depth regarding the results. Next, a discussion of these results is explored in Chapter Five.

Chapter 5

Summary, Discussion, Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe participants' experiences of ending a friendship (non-romantic) with a female friend. The unique and specific characteristics of women's relationships with one another may suggest that the maintenance of their relationships carry a particular importance that differs from social connections in the lives of men. Given the importance of relational connection in women's lives and the scarcity of literature regarding friendship dissolution, an investigation of the process of women's friendship dissolution was warranted. A survey of the literature provided some direction for the exploratory research questions that guided the development of the interview protocol.

Participants included in this study were 15 women self-selected from three different recruitment pools, an adult women's professional group located in a Midwestern metropolitan area ($n=2$), two graduate programs in human services at a large Midwestern university ($n=12$), and one participant referred to the study by another participant ($n=1$). The primary researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with all of the participants. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. The interviews were analyzed by a research team of three people employing a qualitative research methodology guided by Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR; Hill, et al, 1997; Hill et al., 2005). The domains, core ideas, and initial categories were reviewed by an outside auditor for the study. Through discussion with the research team and graduate advisor, the auditor's feedback was incorporated into the final results and discussion

sections of the study. The interviews were re-analyzed. Data analysis revealed four domains, nine core ideas, and thirty-two categories.

Discussion

Dissolution in Friendships Formed During Times of Transition and Stress

A majority of participants ($n=8$) stated that the friendship developed during a time of developmental or situational life transition. There lies a connection between this finding theme and the bio-evolutionary stress theory for women posited by Taylor, et al., (2000). Taylor asserts that there may exist a biological benefit for women to tend and befriend other women at times of threat or stress. One participant described her life transition and simultaneous friendship development with the following,

And I met [this friend] at a time when my life was kind of in turmoil. It was – see what made it be in turmoil – well, my husband and I were having a few marital problems. As time went on, I started thinking, this ain't working for me. I mean, I don't want to only be a mother. I love being a mother but I don't want to just be a mother. And so, it kind of culminated when our youngest son was in high school and I started thinking, I don't think my husband is ever going to change. I think he's always going to have these very traditional ideas about what women are supposed to do, and I don't want to be in a marriage like that. But I hadn't really made up my mind because, as I say, we came from this long line of very stable marriages. And I think that was over a very rocky period in our marriage that lasted about a year and at the end of a year I did leave him for like two months or something like that. And then I thought, you know what, this ain't working for me either. And at the same time he did not want the divorce and was saying, 'We don't have to do this. We can figure this out. I swear to God, I'll change. We'll both change. We'll get it together.' And I said okay and I moved back home. And, you know, we've struggled since then but that was long ago and I've made my peace with it.

But [during my marital problems] my friend was always more than willing to discuss these things with me. More than willing. In a way that makes me think I wasn't paying attention there either. And I think that's why I left her house sometimes feeling like, 'Why did I tell all that stuff?' I didn't really want to tell all that stuff. But in a way, I felt like I didn't know how to figure those things out without talking about them with people. And there were certain people I didn't really want to talk to about him, especially people that were friends of his who really liked him, and it was always easy to talk about him with her and now

I think back on it. Yeah, right. She made it easy. She deliberately made it easy. And I think what I didn't need right then was somebody who was standing up for him. Because I was always standing up for him. I needed to get clear about who I was and what I had a right – I had a right to have a bank account of my own. I had a right to work. I had a right to go to parties and not take him if I didn't feel like it, if he didn't know anybody, and all those little things that we had to work out. I had a right to have opinions that were different from his. And I didn't want anybody helping him out. I wanted somebody to listen to me about the things that I felt weren't right about this and agree with me and she always did that. She always did that.

While tentative, it is possible that women may be more likely to form friendships during times of transitional stress that offer situational support, and, perhaps, forming relationships that at other times in her life would be less likely. This suggestion is based on Taylor et al, 2000 that in times of stress, women may befriend other women as a means of stress regulation. Then, when the stressful situation has passed, the friends may find themselves in a friendship in which there is little to sustain it without the stress. The experience of the participants in this study suggests that friendships formed in times of developmental or situational life transition may fit the function posed by Taylor and colleagues.

The discussion above is related to the formation of women's friendships and precipitating events that the literature suggests may influence dissolution. Next, components of dissolution along with the experience of ending a friendship are explored.

Participants Experienced Relational Aggression During the Dissolution Process

Relational aggression has been found to be present in the social peer relationships of female preschoolers, children, adolescents, and young collegiate women (Crick et al., 1999). As physical aggression has been found to decrease in male behavior and in relationships as males develop into adulthood (Werner & Crick, 1999),

the cognitive and complex form of relational aggression may actually increase over time as women develop into adults (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995), potentially playing a role in the dissolution of adult women's friendships. Although the connection between relational aggression and friendship dissolution is yet to be explored empirically, the results of this study suggest that relational aggression is present in the friendship dissolution process for some adult women. As mentioned in chapter four, physical aggression within friendship dissolution occurred for one participant in this study; however, relational aggression had a more prominent role and will therefore be further examined in the following discussion.

A number of participants ($n = 6$) experienced typical forms of relational aggression, such as threats of rejection from the peer group, rumor spreading, and being left out of shared activities. One participant described her experience of relational aggression with the following words.

They were testing some sort of wiring from the garage to the basement and going back and forth. I went downstairs and I was standing next to my husband. My friend was standing not too far away and she was watching, looking at me, like kind of confused. I was like, 'Okay, there is definitely something going on. I don't know what it is, but I'm going to find out.' I was standing there next to my husband. He was kind of facing me and had his arm around me and my friend was being like really weird about it, was looking uncomfortable, looking angry and kind of trying to ignore me and I wasn't sure why.

Further, Werner and Crick (1999) found that college sorority members who were more likely to use relational aggression in their peer group also had an increased likelihood to use relational aggression in their romantic relationships. The results of the current study suggest a potential link for the presence of a similar feature of relational aggression in adult women's friendship dissolution. For example, some of the

participants ($n=3$) experienced that their friend attempted and attained a romantic interest with the participant's partner.

Given that adult women's relational health incorporates conflict, as explored by Liang et al., (2002), types of conflict that promote negative consequences for peer relationships may offer insight as to what types of conflict contribute to the dissolution of women's friendships. The connection between perceived relational aggression, friendship satisfaction, and friendship dissolution requires further investigation. However, the results of this study suggest that relational aggression was a form of behavior experienced by adult women participants in this study during their process of friendship dissolution.

Empowerment and Self-Awareness is Associated with Women who end a Friendship

A defining difference within the dissolution process of the women interviewed was related to the amount of control or impact the participant felt she had on the dissolution process of the friendship. The greater the sense of control that a participant felt and utilized appeared to impact her experience of empowerment and self-awareness. For example, one woman described her experience of freedom from oppression within the friendship as the following,

I was feeling way more oppressed than I realized because to feel that kind of freedom from someone. I'm free of her. I never have to speak to her again as long as I live if I don't want to. So strange. So that makes me think that when I recognized whatever it was that was going on I really felt imprisoned in some way.

This participant's experience highlights the notion of liberation and empowerment after ending the friendship. Her experience of freedom from oppression within the friendship was felt physically by the participant. She was surprised to find herself dancing. Her experience of empowerment was shared by several ($n=5$)

participants. One participant, who had been living with the friend, stated that she felt a new beginning upon moving into her own apartment and a freedom to create her own future. Another participant discussed connecting with her future self in an effort to make a decision about ending the friendship, and in so doing, felt permission and empowered to end the friendship. Self-awareness was also related to the process of being the one to end the friendship. One participant describes her experience with this example,

Interviewer: What was it like, to end the friendship?

A big relief, but it also came with a lot of guilt because I had prolonged it longer than I thought was good for her. I needed to have done this a long time ago, when I had clarity. But I gained a lot of awareness in that process that whenever somebody is pursuing me a lot I get really uncomfortable. And I learned that with her. This is something I really don't like, when somebody is needing me beyond where I'm needing them. I am totally willing to meet you halfway, but if they keep pushing, pushing, pushing, then I just can't do it. So, I learned that about myself. It was so big that I was not willing to negotiate with her.

The empowerment and self-awareness that accompanied control in the dissolution experience are suggestive of developmental theories [Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977, 1997), Stages of the Ethic of Care Theory (Gilligan, 1982)] that incorporate locus of control (Rotter, 1966; Furnham & Steele, 1983) and empowerment (Freire, 1973; Robbins, Chatterjee, & Canda, 1998; Lee, 2001). Perhaps these development theories can provide a context for further exploration into the genre of women's friendship dissolution.

Self-Awareness is Associated with Inter- and Intra-Personal Growth

The self-awareness gained through the dissolution process appears to be associated with growth and change in one's relationships with others and one's relationship with self. The self-awareness appears to be pushed to the level of action, cognitive change,

or development. One participant described the association between self-awareness and intrapersonal growth as the following,

A year ago I would have really needed to hear you say that you were sorry for me. A year ago, I really needed people to understand that this [the friendship dissolution] really hurt me. But, it was so developmental for me. I mean, not that I'm able to talk about it more at another level, about this is kind of how friendships go, and my daughter certainly has learned a lot from it.

Another participant described her experience of intrapersonal growth from dissolution with this example,

I think the thing I realized was that I can be alone and be happy. I can be alone and be lonely. It's sort of a choice. I guess what I'm saying is that I have the inner strength to choose to be alone and happy. Moments when I don't choose to do so are when I forget, or I validate myself by sabotaging myself, doing things I know are going to bring me down. You do have some days when you kind of want to be depressed, and damn it...I can't [use that excuse] anymore. I can't just crawl into a hole. I have to live life.

The above participants' statements highlight the intra-personal development that occurred through the dissolution process. The last discussion section focuses on the interaction between participants and the research process, primarily the interview.

Participant Experiences of Research Process were Dynamic

Participants stated varied reactions to talking about friendship dissolution in the interviews for this study. One participant said that she hesitated saying her friend's name in the interview because she tries to avoid thinking of her. A number of participants commented that they were afraid that they would start crying, although no one actually shed tears. One participant discussed what made her feel uneasy about examining the dissolution process,

It feels kind of weird to talk about the friendship ending. You know how it feels? I think there are still a lot of pieces in there I don't really understand about myself, of course, and so it is kind of scary to talk about it because it makes you think,

'Whoops, whoops, wait a minute. What does that mean?' You know? And another thing that I wonder about is how long it took me – and that's kind of scary, I think.

Another participant commented on her thoughts about the research topic during the interview,

I've thought a lot about this [friendship dissolution] because I think women definitely relate differently to each other, as they are raised. Sort of the good parts of that are great, and the bad parts of that are like negative – gossip, passive-aggressiveness, that kind of thing. So, I'm intrigued by this study because I've sort of always felt like no one else does this. You know? There's this feeling of, 'Am I the only who ends friendships?' Friendships are so similar to [romantic] relationships, but yet, why do you break up relationships and cut it off, but with a friendship, it is like a slow, painful death, or someone speaks to someone's boyfriend, and it just ends.

Another participant discussed her reaction to processing the dissolution experience during the interview. She stated,

I feel like I've just put this [experience] to bed. I've been feeling better and better about his over the last year, but this is kind of to bed now. Whew! I'm done! It's kind of strange. Time to shut it. Absolutely.

The five discussion topics discussed above guide some of the potential future directions for research and clinical implications regarding women's friendship dissolution. However, before future research directions are explored, clinical implications of the findings of this research are discussed.

Implications for Clinicians about Women's Friendships that End

Relational dissatisfaction is one of the primary issues for which people seek psychotherapy (Liem & Pressler, 2005). Given the significance that relationships play in women's lives, it is likely that some women may discuss friendship dissolution in therapy. Implications of this study for psychological practitioners includes areas such as normalizing the experience of non-romantic friendship dissolution for female clients and facilitating communication about conflicts and possible dissolution of friendships.

Consequently, if mental health practitioners can assist their clients in seeing dissolution as a normal phase of some friendships, the experience of confusion and ambiguity may be mitigated.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

A primary strength of this study is the goodness of fit between the research topic, research participants, and research methodology. Hill et al (1997) state that the Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) method is supported by feminist ideals. The use of a research team, in which decisions on coding were made through consensus, supported an equal amount of power between the primary researcher and research team members. By using the consensual process, it is hoped that the closest meaning to the participant's words were ascertained. The CQR method arises from counseling psychology. With a focus on interpersonal dynamics and interviewer skill within the interview process, CQR allowed for participant-centered interviewing, in which the interview protocol was flexible enough to adapt to the individual experiences and interview style of the participants. This structured, yet individualized interview style allowed for a great spectrum of data collection and candid, intimate conversations to occur during the interview process. This method of data collection provided the flexibility necessary for this exploratory study.

Given that little to no literature exists on non-romantic women's friendship dissolution in the field of psychology, another strength of this research is studying a topic that has not yet been investigated in the literature. This exploratory study provides a platform from which to examine specific dynamics of the non-romantic women's friendship dissolution process.

Additionally, another strength of the study incorporates the participant composition of the sample. The sample is comprised of women well into early adulthood that have an advanced ability to discuss complex facets of relationship dynamics given their educational and professional training.

Limitations to this study include restricted boundaries to external and internal validity. The lack of external validity is the inability to generalize the findings of this study to other groups, populations, or individuals because the results represent only the words and experiences of the study's participants. Although it is never a goal of qualitative methods to state objective truths within a phenomenon, or to generalize the results (Hoyt & Bhati, 2007), the findings of this study are limited in application to the participants studied. Therefore, future research, as discussed below, is needed to confirm or disconfirm the initial findings of this study. Another limitation to this study involves the concept of internal validity. The stability and reliability of the results of this study could have been increased had the participants been involved in verifying the data analysis for accuracy of their intentions. Participant verification was not used in this study's research process. Involving participants in the data analysis process could strengthen future qualitative research of the.

Further, the participant sample size of fifteen women could have been increased to gather a greater understanding of the stability of results. Additionally, the self-report method of data collection for experiences that occurred up to five years ago could also influence the accuracy of reported experiences as memory can fade or change with the addition of time. Also, all but two participants were graduate students in a human

services profession. The participants' knowledge of the research process and interview skills could also have interacted with the data collection process.

In addition, another limitation of this study involves potential interviewer and research team bias. Although strong measures were taken to avoid clouding the data collection and analysis, it is likely that some aspect of the personalities of the researchers interacted with the research process. One aspect to consider is the interview protocol, perhaps the interviewer's biases prevented the participants from responding to the best questions on the research topic. All of these limitations are aspects for consideration and caution in future research.

Future Directions for Research

The results of this study form a springboard for future research to address further aspects of friendship dissolution within a larger, more diverse sample size. It is evident that somewhat similar experiences existed for the women interviewed regarding their friendship formations, the dissolution process, learning about self, and reactions to the interview. However, differences may be found with a different and larger sample size. A few directions for further research have been noted above in the limitations to this research. For example, increasing the diversity of participants (e.g., diversity of education, age, class, ethnicity, sexual identity, gender identity) in future research could add to the depth and accuracy of findings regarding friendship dissolution. Also, incorporating participants in the data analysis process by having them review interview transcripts and summaries, or conducting focus groups regarding the initial findings could improve the stability and consistency of the findings by decreasing the potential for researcher bias to cloud the interpretation of the data.

Additionally, a future phase of research on non-romantic women's friendship dissolution could incorporate quantitative methods into the methodology. Measuring relational satisfaction, perceived relational aggression, physical and emotional components of stress, and self-awareness could additionally be measured through quantitative instrumentation. Extending the notion of friendship dissolution to the friendships of men, and the friendships between women and men provides further directions for research on this topic. Further, conducting future research with both members of the friendship dissolution dyad could provide a multifaceted perspective of the dissolution.

Conclusions

This study attempted to ascertain and record the experiences of fifteen women ending a non-romantic, same-sex friendship. The participants' words in this study suggest that the process can span the spectrum of emotional experience, feelings of grief and loss to feelings of liberation and strength. It is with humble appreciation of the participants' courage to share their dissolution experiences that this research has been completed.

The results of this study suggest that the topic of non-romantic women's friendship dissolution is a worthwhile topic for continued research. The findings further suggest that the dissolution experience was an important experience in the lives of the participants. Lastly, the results indicate potential connections between friendship dissolution and theoretical components of tend and befriend (Taylor et al, 2001), relational aggression (Crick et al., 1999), and interpersonal dissatisfaction related to seeking counseling (Liem & Pressler, 2005). It is this researcher's hope that as more is

understood about friendship dissolution, that all peoples' relationships can be as fulfilling as possible.

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APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT EMAIL 1

"Hello Ladies,

My name is Kate Jalma and I am a doctoral candidate in Educational Psychology. My dissertation investigates the process of women's friendship dissolution, that is, how women end friendship with one another.

I am looking for participants and I am wondering if you are interested.

What it involves: This study is explorative, involving a 60-90 minute interview about a friendship that you have experienced ending. You receive a \$10 coffee shop gift certificate for participating.

The criteria for participation: The friendship that has ended must have ended for reasons other than distance or death, have been non-romantic, and the ending must have occurred after you were 25 years old.

If this topic interests you and you meet the criteria, I would love to hear from you. Please email me at kjalma@umn.edu.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks for your consideration,

Kate Jalma"

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT EMAIL 2

"Hello Graduate Students and Professors,

My name is Kate Jalma and I am a doctoral candidate in Educational Psychology. My dissertation investigates the process of women's friendship dissolution, that is, how women end friendship with one another.

I am looking for about ten more participants and I am wondering if you are interested.

What it involves: This study is explorative, involving a 60-90 minute interview about a friendship that you have experienced ending. You receive a \$10 coffee shop gift certificate for participating.

The criteria for participation: The friendship that has ended must have ended for reasons other than distance or death, have been non-romantic, and the ending must have occurred after you were 25 years old.

If this topic interests you and you meet the criteria, I would love to hear from you. Please email me at kjalma@umn.edu.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks for your consideration,

Kate Jalma"

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

"Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I am excited to hear about your experience in ending a friendship. It seems that many women have the experience of ending friendships, but rarely do we talk about what happens or how to end a friendship. For the purpose of this interview, when I say friendship, it is defined as a close, intimate relationship that is non-sexual between you and another woman. All of the questions I will ask will be about one particular friendship that has ended for you after the age of 25.

Do you have a friendship in mind? How would you like to refer to this person? You can use a first name, a pseudonym, or an initial. All names will be removed or changed in the write up of my findings.

Before we begin, I have a consent form that I would like for you to read. Please note the risks and benefits associated with participating in this study. The risks that I foresee are potential negative feelings that may arise due to discussing an experience that you may have found difficult. The benefits that I foresee include the experience of telling your story and dialoguing about an experience which may have had myriad emotions associated to it. Also, ideally you sharing will allow other women to learn what friendship dissolution looks like for some women and how it can be done.

After you have read through this consent form, feel free to ask me any questions or to stop participating in the study now or at anytime throughout the interview. Do you have any questions? Please sign.

Now that the paperwork is complete, let's transition into the interview.

1. Tell me the nature of the friendship that you will be discussing in this interview.
 - How did you meet?

- How did you spend your time together?
 - How long were you friends?
 - What feelings did you have when you spent time with this person?
 - When did it start, and when did it end?
 - Where did this occur?
 - How old were you?
 - How old was your friend?
 - Why did you consider this person a friend?
 - Did the other person also consider you a friend? Explain.
2. Can you walk me through some pleasant and happy memories that you have about this friendship? (The purpose of this question is to provide a positive description by which to compare the change of the friendship ending).
- How often did you enjoy spending time with this person?
 - Where did you have fun together?
 - ? This implies a singular memory in place and time
 - How did your relationship change as you began to enjoy one another more?
 - What did you like about spending time with this person?
3. Did the friendship seem to change for you?
- What did that feel like?
 - What changed?
 - What do you think caused the change in your friendship?
4. Can you walk me through your most unpleasant memory of this friendship?
5. How did you know the friendship was going to end?
- What feelings did you have at that time?

- What did you do about how you felt?
 - What did your friend think, feel, say about the ending friendship?
6. How did it feel when the friendship was over?
- How did you know the friendship was over?
 - Does the process seem resolved to you?
7. Do you think that sexual attraction was a part of this relationship?
8. If you could say something to the other person today, what would you say?
9. What did you learn about yourself through this experience?
10. Is there anything that you think I should know that I have not asked about today?

APPENDIX D: IRB APPROVED CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

Women's Friendship Dissolution

You are invited to be in a research study of how adult women end friendships with one another. You were selected as a possible participant because of your interest in the topic. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Kate Jalma, M.A., Doctoral Candidate, Educational Psychology, University of Minnesota.

Background Information

The purpose of this study is to explore how women end friendship with one another. Women's friendships have long been a source of interest in literature, and yet, little is written in psychology regarding the process of ending friendships. This study seeks to ask: How do women end friendship? Why do they end friendships? What happens after the friendship ends? Should you decide to participate in this research, your identity will be held in confidentiality.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

- 1) Participate in an interview that would last about 1 hour to 90 minutes.
- 2) Have the interview audiotaped.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study

The study has few risks: You may experience feelings of discomfort as you recall a friendship that has ended. Experiencing these feelings is likely, and you are encouraged to stop the interview at any point that you wish with no negative consequence.

The benefits to participation are: sharing your experience of ending a friendship with an interested listener. Also, your participation will contribute to a growing knowledge base of women's relationships.

Compensation:

You will receive a \$10 gift certificate to a coffee shop for your participation. You will receive this gift certificate at the end of the interview. This compensation will be provided even if you withdraw from the study during the interview.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Kate Jalma will be the only person with access to the audiotape of this interview. Once the interview has been transcribed, the tape will be destroyed.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time with out affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researchers conducting this study are: Kate Jalma. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at the University of Minnesota, 541-912-4558, kjalma@umn.edu. You are also **encouraged** to contact Kate Jalma's advisor at the University of Minnesota, Dr. John Romano, 612-612-1099, roman001@umn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature _____ Date: _____
Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Appendix E: PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Friendship	How was this friendship formed?	Age of Participant at time of study.	Primary means of spending time together.	Length of Friendship	Context of dissolution.	Process of dissolution.
1	Mutual groups of friends and a shared hobby.	70+ years	Dinner, hobby group, and conversations .	~5 years	Increased frustration regarding conflicting interpersonal styles, unstable qualities of life at time of friendship formation had stabilized.	Phone conversation regarding hobby group. Threatened relational aggression by friend. Participant removed self from hobby group. Friendship ceased at that point.
2	Met while participating in the same religious community.	44 years	Attending concerts, speakers, and choir. Discussing religion.	Just over 2 years	Increased confusion regarding the friend's use of religion. An incident of perceived relational aggression.	Voicemail message left for friend regarding perceived relational aggression and frustration with friendship.
3	Living in the same neighborhood, having children of similar ages.	41	Walking, spending time at one another's homes, watching one another's children.	~2 years	Participant began to voice discomfort with friend's criticisms of other children and families. Friend began ostracizing participant from social group.	Face-to-face conversation initiated by participant to confront behavior and mistreatment.
4	Met as members of the same religious community.	32	Dinner parties, stamping/crafts, and a religiously affiliated professional group.	~3 years	Participant began to question tenants of shared religion. Began to separate self from religious community.	Participant stopped returning phone calls, emails, and invitations to functions. Asked to be taken off of friend's mass email list for professional group.

Friendship	How was this friendship formed?	Age of Participant at time of study.	Primary means of spending time together.	Length of Friendship	Context of dissolution.	Process of dissolution.
5	Participant moved to the area, met friend through mutual acquaintances.	29	Hanging out with mutual friends, attending concerts, talking on the phone, assisting the friend with health issues.	~ 5 years	Increased frustration with friend's behavior. Experience of friend as increasingly selfish. Decreased fun. A feeling of being used and taken for granted began to cloud most interactions.	Participant stopped returning phone calls. When chance meetings occurred, conversation was kept brief and light. Removed friend from cell phone. Interactions faded to no conversation and brief smiles at concerts or gatherings.
6	Participant and friend met while living in the same building.	59	Talking, going to movies. Later in the friendship, the friends lived together and shared childrearing duties.	~25 years	Had experienced many disagreements, participant asked friend to move out of shared residence. Friend had asked participant to take a trip, participant said "No.	Participant did not return phone calls from friend.
7	Met while attending the same undergraduate college.	31	Initially, shared activities in college. Connection to a shared spiritual community. Most recently, living together.	10+ years	Increased conflict and fighting while living together. Differing expectations for the friendship.	Participant had a number of conversations with friend, eventually shared that she planned to move out of their shared residence.

Friendship	How was this friendship formed?	Age of Participant at time of study.	Primary means of spending time together.	Length of Friendship	Context of dissolution.	Process of dissolution.
8	Mutual friends.	29	Hiking and making dinner together. Discussing work.	~1 year	Friend began pursuing participant with greater frequency to connect, hangout, and discuss career ambitions. Participant also noticed friend flirting with the participant's girlfriend.	Participant wrote friend an email asking for space and distance. One phone conversation occurred after the email for clarification of dissolution.
9	Met while attending undergraduate institution.	40	Getting hair and nails done together. Going to plays. Hanging out with one another's families at home.	5+ years	Friend's behavior became more aggressive. Participant witnessed domestic violence while at friend's house. Friend began to behave inappropriately at workplace.	Stopped returning phone calls. Participant told friend that she needed space.
10	Met while working in the same office. Later discovered that they were distantly related.	26	Spending time at work together, going out for dinner, going to family functions.	~2 years	Friend began using alcohol with greater frequency, was struggling with other relationships in life. Began a romantic relationship with the boyfriend of the participant.	Participant had a phone conversation with the friend, expressing concern and boundary violations. Told friend that she needed distance and was not able to remain friends.

Friendship	How was this friendship formed?	Age of Participant at time of study.	Primary means of spending time together.	Length of Friendship	Context of dissolution.	Process of dissolution.
11	Introduced by participant's husband. Mutual hobby.	31	Dinner together. Knitting. Spending time with group of friends.	3+ years	Friend and husband of participant had an affair. Husband discussed the affair with participant, friend did not.	Husband primarily ended the contact between himself and the participant, and the friend. Participant had one phone conversation with friend regarding the affair and the end of that and the friendship.
12	Met and became friends in 6 th grade.	26	Talking on the phone, watching movies. In college, going to the bar together.	12+ years	Participant and friend had been attending concerts and hanging out regularly.	Participant was completely surprised by the friend's request to meet for coffee, and then proceeding to end the friendship.
13	Met while living and working out of state just after high school.	53	Playing softball, learning sign language, practical jokes.	22+ years	Friend and participant had been spending time together with their romantic partners, friend repeatedly made fun of participant. Participant had asked repeatedly for a change in behavior.	Christmas morning, the friend, participant, and their partners were having breakfast. Participant repeated request that friend stop disrespectful behavior. Friend became irritated, shut down, and left the house. Participant then received negative emails and cutoff contact.
14	Met at work.	27	Initially, grabbing lunch together while at work. After a job change, happy hour, dinner, and weekends.	~4 years	Friend began dating a man that acted inappropriately to participant. Participant shared her concerns with friend. Participant felt ignored.	Participant asked friend to get together. Ended the friendship in a face-to-face conversation.

Friendship	How was this friendship formed?	Age of Participant at time of study.	Primary means of spending time together.	Length of Friendship	Context of dissolution.	Process of dissolution.
15	Met in childhood, around age 5.	33	Later in childhood, began to spend time at one another's homes and talk on the phone frequently.	~21 years	Participant was preparing to get married and wanted friend to meet her future husband. Friend tried to ditch the participant and boyfriend. Then, proceeded to bring them to a "swingers" party without their knowledge.	Friend refused to communicate about the party or the friendship. Participant decided that the friendship was finished. Friend continues to email randomly, once a year. Communication is on a surface level.