

Interactive Motifs and Processes in Old Age Friendship

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Abstract:

This chapter focuses on the connections between interactive motifs and dyadic and network structure and process. Cognitive, affective, and behavioral motifs reveal individuals’ propensities to think, feel, and act in certain ways across situations and contexts. Applied to relationships, these interactive motifs reflect how individuals evaluate, respond to, and engage with other people. Thus motifs act as mediators between individual characteristics and the friendship patterns that emerge when partners engage with one another. The chapter analyzes research on older adult friendship to illustrate fundamental aspects of each interactive motif and show how these motifs are expressed through cognitive, affective, and behavioral interactive processes that influence friendship outcomes at the dyadic and network levels. The chapter concludes with discussion and empirical examples of how research on interactive motifs suggests evidence-based approaches for interventions aimed at sustaining psychological well-being.

Keywords: affective | process | behavioral | cognitive | friendship | pattern | interactive | motif | old | age

Book chapter:

Gerontologists were pioneers in the study of friendship, and although less research in this area is being conducted now than in the past, they continue to focus more attention on it than researchers who study other phases of life. This is probably due to their historical preoccupation with theoretical questions regarding successful aging and the role of continued social engagement in that process (Adams & Taylor, 2015). Friends are, however, important during

later adulthood in many other ways as well, serving as sources of social support and contributing to physical health and even to longevity.

Early studies of older adult friendship tended to focus on the effects of quantity of social contact, but more recent ones have focused more on predictors of friendship patterns, including their dyadic and network processes and structural characteristics (e.g., Chatterjee & Mukherjee, 2014). In their 1992 book *Adult Friendship*, Blieszner and Adams introduced their integrative conceptual framework for friendship research, designed to organize the disparate literature focused on this topic. This framework has been revised twice to reflect recent research and theoretical developments (Adams & Blieszner, 1994; Ueno & Adams, 2006). The most recent version of the framework, now known as the Adams-Blieszner-Ueno integrative conceptual framework for friendship research (Figure 3.1), depicts *friendship patterns* as dynamic and contextualized. *Individual characteristics*, consisting of *social structural positions* and *psychological dispositions*, which affect each other through *interpretation* and *internalization*, lead to the development of *interactive motifs* (*cognitive, affective, and behavioral*), which in turn affect *friendship patterns*. Within both friendship *dyads* and *networks*, the *internal structure* of friendships facilitates and constrains their *interactive processes*, which reciprocally modify and sustain friendship structure. Friendships thereby form, are sustained, and dissolve over time. The structural, cultural, temporal, and spatial dimensions of the contexts in which friendships are embedded affect all elements of the model and, in turn, friendships (p.40) and individuals affect their contexts; in both directions, these effects are both direct and indirect.

FIGURE 3.1 IS OMITTED FROM THIS FORMATTED DOCUMENT

Figure 3.1. The Adams-Blieszner-Ueno integrative conceptual framework for friendship research.

Ueno, K., & Adams, R. G. (2006). Adult friendship: A decade review. In P. Noller & J. Feeney (Eds.), *Close relationships* (pp. 151–169). New York, NY: Psychology Press.

This chapter addresses the connections between interactive motifs and dyadic and network structure and process. Although in previous publications Adams and Blieszner provided examples of the structural and dynamic elements of friendship patterns and developed and illustrated the notion of behavioral motif, except for a cursory treatment by Ueno and Adams (2006), the notions of cognitive and affective motifs have not been fully illustrated or elaborated. Furthermore, the connections between these two more psychological motifs and friendship network and dyadic structure and process have not been described. Therefore, in this chapter we define and differentiate among the three types of interactive motifs that influence friendship patterns, distinguish the notion of interactive motif from that of interactive process, and for each interactive motif, draw on examples from research on older adult friendship to illustrate the ways in which it might influence friendship patterns. We conclude with a discussion of possible interactive motif and process interventions that might promote positive friendship patterns.

Our review is illustrative rather than definitive, because of the limits of the existing research on older adult friendship. Many of the original studies were either ethnographies or surveys of small samples of older adults. Although contemporary (p.41) researchers now commonly compare the friendships of adults of various ages and sometimes examine friendship patterns longitudinally, knowledge of why friendship patterns change over time is still limited, because researchers often use the variable “age” as a proxy measure for stage of life course and developmental maturity

without distinguishing between these two aspects of aging. Furthermore, researchers have not yet conducted large longitudinal studies of the friendship patterns of multiple cohorts. So the research on older adult friendships summarized here likely represents snapshots of particular cohorts during their later years rather than reflecting the structural and developmental characteristics of old age. This literature, however, organized according to the elements of the Adams-Blieszner-Ueno framework, generally demonstrates the importance of interactive motifs for determining friendship patterns.

Defining and Differentiating Interactive Motifs

Interactive motifs are the mechanisms by which individual characteristics, comprising both social locations and psychological dispositions, are manifested in everyday life and through which individual characteristics affect friendship patterns (the internal structural characteristics and processes of friendship). Interactive motifs are a person's typical cognitive, affective, and behavioral propensities to think, feel, and act in certain ways across situations. Applied to relationships, interactive motifs reflect how individuals think about other people, respond to them emotionally, and engage with them. Because interactive motifs affect the interactions individuals have with others, they ultimately influence the patterns of friendships that emerge from these interactions. Although other factors surely influence an individual's interactive motifs (e.g., the structural, cultural, temporal, and spatial contexts in which individuals and relationships are embedded), here we focus on motifs as mediators that explain effects of individual characteristics on friendship patterns.

Cognitive motif describes how individuals define, categorize, explain, predict, expect, and evaluate other people and relationships in general. Cognitions specifically about friendships and groups of individuals who constitute a pool of potential friends may vary systematically depending on individual characteristics, and they are likely to be important determinants of friendship patterns. For example, people in different socioeconomic strata have unique standards of behavior and therefore unique expectations for friends (Allan, 1989). These general expectations not only guide their choice of friends but also may influence the way they evaluate friends, how they feel about them, and how they treat them.

Social structural locations and predispositions not only shape what individuals think but also how they feel about people and relationships in general; in other words, they influence their *affective motif*. For example, people tend to like those who are from their own social groups more than those from different ones, and this (p.42) affective motif increases the chance of choosing friends of their own race or with the same level of economic resources even when the pool of potential friends is diverse. Liking within social groups thus promotes homogeneity in friendship networks (Chen, Edwards, Young, & Greenberger, 2001; Sprecher, 1998).

Desire for friendships is an affective motif that may explain the individual and group variations in friendship network size. For example, Field's (1999) longitudinal study of older adults demonstrated that older men's desire to develop new friends declined over time, unlike older women, who sustained the desire. These findings may explain the gradual decline of friendship network size among men, which was also found in that study. As Gilligan (1982) argued, women develop stronger emotional needs for personal relationships than men in their early socialization,

and the affective difference is likely to contribute to a wide range of sex differences in friendship characteristics such as emotional closeness. Attachment style as a personality trait also varies across individuals and influences friendship patterns.

People have different rhythms to their everyday lives, which signify *behavioral motifs*, “the constellation of both the routine and unpredictable aspects of an individual’s daily activities” (Adams & Blieszner, 1994, p. 169). In other words, individuals do what they are predisposed to do given the opportunities and constraints confronting them. Behavioral motif addresses what people do that brings them in contact with others and provides them with opportunities to form and sustain friendships of various types, thereby affecting their friendship patterns. Duneier (1992) provided a good illustration of behavioral motif in his book *Slim’s Table*, in which he described friendships forming among older men because they ate in the same neighborhood restaurant at the same time each day. Similarly, Feld (1982) illustrated the importance of behavioral motif when he discussed how participating in activities brings people together with others who share their interests and are therefore similar to themselves.

Interactive Processes of Friendships

Before proceeding further, it is important to distinguish between interactive motifs and interactive processes, because both can be cognitive, affective, or behavioral. In the context of friendships, interactive motifs reflect how individuals think about other people, react to them emotionally, and spend their time with them. As such they act as mediators between individual characteristics such as stage of the life course or developmental maturity and friendship patterns.

In contrast, interactive processes are components of the friendship patterns themselves, reflecting their dynamic aspects. They are what friends exchange or share. As Adams and Blieszner (1994, pp. 173–174) wrote two decades ago:

Cognitive processes are the internal thoughts that each partner has about her- or himself, the friend and the friendship. These thoughts concern, (p.43) for example, how one assesses the stability of the friendship, explains shared experiences, or interprets one’s own behavior and one’s partner’s intentions or needs, as well as evaluations and judgements of another’s attractiveness, character, similarity to self and so on. *Affective* processes encompass emotional reactions to friends and friendship. Empathy, affection, trust, loyalty, satisfaction, commitment, joy and contentment are all positive or pleasurable emotions. Indifference, anger, hostility and jealousy are examples of negative or unpleasant ones. *Behavioral processes* are the action components of friendship. They include communication, such as disclosure of one’s thoughts and feelings. Other behavioral processes are displays of affection, social support, resource exchange, co-operation, accommodation to a friend’s desires, co-ordination, sharing activities and interests, concealment, manipulation, competition and the like.

Not only can interactive motifs, internal structural characteristics of friendships, and the context of friendship affect friendship processes but also the three types of processes interact with each other, such that cognitive processes can result in affective reactions that in turn influence future actions, behaviors can affect thoughts and emotions, and so on. Although interactive processes

have been studied, the range of processes investigated is not comprehensive and relationships among the processes have not been studied systematically. Furthermore, though interactive processes occur within networks as well as within dyads, most of the research focuses on the latter level.

Having distinguished between interactive motifs and interactive processes as influences on relational outcomes exhibited in friendship patterns, we now turn attention to more detailed examination of research on each type of interactive motif and how it affects the way in which interactive processes are expressed within friendship.

Cognitive Motifs and Processes

Definition of Friendship as Fundamental Cognitive Motif

The fundamental cognitive motif of friendship is an individual's definition of this particular relationship. The characteristics and roles people expect of friends as well as the friend norms they perceive within their social groups shape how they think about friends and friendship and thus influence their openness to becoming better acquainted with persons they meet.

Expectations of and norms for friendship also affect individuals' propensity to evaluate the desirability and quality of friendships once they are established, with implications for their efforts to sustain, intensify, or weaken ties with various friends. Research reveals important elements of friendship commonly held across social groups and cultures. Friends typically (p.44) are defined as people who mutually select each other for friendship; with whom one shares companionship, interests, and values; in whom one can confide; and for whom one feels concern and affection. Friends are expected to be trustworthy with respect to giving solid advice and holding confidences, to engage in appropriate levels of reciprocal self-disclosure about important aspects of life, and to show understanding, acceptance, tolerance, and respect to one another. Loyalty and commitment to sustaining the friendship are also mentioned as key components of friendship (Adams, Blieszner, & de Vries, 2000; Greif, 2009; Pahl & Pevalin, 2005; Shaw, Gulliver, & Shaw, 2014). Illustrating the principle of homophily, which states that people tend to affiliate with similar others (Galupo, Cartwright, & Savage, 2010), most friends are close in age, match in gender, belong to the same socioeconomic class, and share other demographic characteristics (Blieszner & Adams, 1992; Fehr, 1996).

These common elements of friendship notwithstanding, the definition of friendship, as revealed by who populates friend circles, varies somewhat by social locations such as age, gender, ethnicity, and social class and can differ across cultures. For example, using the British Household Panel Survey, Pahl, and Pevalin (2005) found a greater tendency among middle-aged and older adults as compared with younger ones to name relatives as close friends. The longitudinal data showed that regardless of age at entry in the study, adults, especially the oldest ones, were increasingly likely to name relatives as close friends over time. Changing life circumstances that accompany aging are likely to prompt revision of the definition of friend over time, especially among the oldest-old adults (Johnson & Troll, 1994; Pahl & Pevalin, 2005; Shaw et al., 2014). With respect to gender comparisons for broad conceptions of friendship, Pahl and Pevalin (2005) found that men were less likely than women to have a relative as their closest friend and men's likelihood of having their closest friend change over the years of adulthood

from a nonrelative to a relative was lower than women's. In one of the few studies to compare African American and White men's perceptions of friendship, Greif (2009) reported more similarities than differences, but found some indication that African American men placed more emphasis than White men on expressiveness in friendships and were more likely to characterize friendship as involving assistance.

Two studies illustrate the way socioeconomic differences in cognitive motifs can lead to different friendship patterns. Adams and Blieszner (1998) showed that people with high socioeconomic status report more relationship problems. Interpreting the results, the researchers argued that high socioeconomic status allows people to develop and exercise greater cognitive facilities to be critical about relational problems. Similarly, in her study of working-class men and women, Walker (1995) concluded that working-class people value reciprocity and interdependence in material goods and services, whereas middle-class people tend to value sharing leisure activities and having extensive networks of interesting friends. These patterns seem to result from the need for practical support in the working class and the emphasis (p.45) on individuality in the middle class. These values specific to socioeconomic classes influence behavioral processes in friendship.

Looking at cultures outside the United States, a sample of older adults in India defined friendship in terms of expectations for self-disclosure, assistance, shared activities, trust, empathy, loyalty, and caring (Chatterjee & Mukherjee, 2014). These priorities corresponded closely with those of US and Canadian older adults (Adams et al., 2000). In a Polish-US cross-cultural comparison, Rybak and McAndrew (2006) found that Americans perceived all levels of friendship from acquaintances to closest friends as more intense and more intimate than Poles did. These findings about conceptions of friendship are intriguing, and additional cross-gender, cross-race, and cross-cultural probes of definitions of "friend" would be useful for extending and confirming the results of these few studies.

Expressions of Cognitive Processes: Thoughts About Friends

Trust, loyalty, commitment, tolerance, respect, consideration, affection, self-disclosure, and assistance not only are components of the definition of friendship but also are norms for friendship strongly endorsed by older adults. Felmlee and Muraco (2009) used an experimental design to explore gender effects among women and men aged 50 to 97 years on interpretation of vignettes in which friends may be perceived as violating normative expectations of friendship. They found that women viewed friend norm transgressions as more inappropriate than men did, and they placed more emphasis on intimacy in friendship than men did. In general, though, these older women and men did not differ on perceptions of most expectations when evaluating friend norm transgressions in cross-friend dyads. Nevertheless, the authors noted that in some cases, respondents offered contradictory interpretations of the vignette situations, such as some tolerating a friend who cancels joint plans in order to go out on a date versus others criticizing such a friend for breaking a promise. The authors also pointed to evidence of cultural specificity of friendship norms in the findings, concluding that friendship norms are influenced by diverse contextual factors beyond gender that must be taken into consideration when assessing perceptions of friends and friendship.

Although there were no differences between the middle-aged and older members of the Felmlee and Muraco (2009) cross-sectional sample, it is likely that expectations of friends change over time with age-related developmental changes, at least for some individuals. Johnson and Troll's (1994) interviews of women and men aged 85 years and older about their friendships revealed changes over 3 years in these oldest-old adults' views of friendship norms. They reported three accommodations to their changing circumstances. They no longer required face-to-face contact for enjoying and sustaining friendships, but relied instead on telephone calls and letters. They began to include acquaintances and hired help in their categorization of friends, expanding the number of potential friends and the range of (p.46) closeness they considered acceptable in friendship. Finally, they redefined "friend" to minimize the need for intimacy or shared interests, and instead cultivated caring relationships with new friends that were less personal and less committed than they might have expected in the past.

Those kinds of changes in expectations for friends were not disturbing, because they were initiated by the partners as accommodations to their changing needs and abilities. But Moremen's (2008a) interviews showed that women aged 55 to 85 years who identified unwanted disruption of their friendship expectations and norms experienced strain in the friendship. For example, discovering that values actually were dissimilar, finding that a friend insisted on having her own way all the time or never reciprocated support, or learning that a friend had betrayed a confidence or told others lies about people or situations all were norm violations that cooled or ended friendships.

Another line of research illustrative of how cognitive processes affect friendship addresses outcomes of certain ways of thinking about the self and others. Morry, Hall, Mann, and Kito (2014) reported that how individuals think about themselves and perceive how their friends think about themselves affects friendship quality and functions. In other words, not only are self-assessments important in establishing and sustaining the quality of friendships but so also are perceptions of and judgments about the friends' motives and behaviors. MacGregor, Fitzsimons, and Holmes (2013) found that people are reluctant to get too close to others whom they perceive as having low self-esteem, apparently suspecting such persons will be unable to offer support. In contrast, Slotter and Gardner (2011) found that individuals seek potential friends from among those whom they perceive as being able to help them achieve their goals. Indeed, the older women in Moremen's (2008b) study evaluated their confidantes as contributing importantly to their health and well-being because of the many forms of support and assistance the friends offered.

Affective Motifs and Processes

Love, Liking, and Acceptance of Others as Fundamental Affective Motif

By whatever name, the primary affective motif is the degree to which people love, like, and accept others, both those similar to and different from the self. Like other affective motifs such as tendencies to get angry or hurt, or feel betrayed, this key affective motif exists on a continuum—some people are misanthropes and feel very little positive sentiment for people as a whole let alone for people who are different than they are, and others love everyone they meet. So affective motifs vary both by how much people tend to like or love others and also by

whether these feelings apply across diverse groups. Although desire for friendships in general has been studied among older adults, as referenced previously, and certainly affects friendship (p.47) network size, this connection has not been documented. Similarly, intergroup tolerance has been studied extensively, but friendship researchers have not studied the effect it has on friendship patterns among older adults. Theoretically it follows that the more a person loves others and the more inclusive feelings a person has, the larger the pool of potential friends available to them will be, the more solidarity they will feel with their friends, the more diverse their network will be, and the less hierarchical their friendships will be. In addition to these hypothetical structural outcomes of an accepting affective motif, people who love people will approach friendships differently—perhaps feeling higher levels of intimacy, evaluating friendship partners less harshly, and putting more effort into their relationships.

Although no studies specifically address the notion of affective motif, Matthews's (1986) work on friendship styles suggests it varies across older adults. She identified three friendship styles, distinguished by the number, duration, and emotional closeness of relationships. Discerning older adults focus on a few close relationships, independent older adults refrain from close friendships, and acquisitive older adults acquire new friends across their life course. Although the differences in these styles do not reflect varying tolerance of diversity, they do reflect emotional capacity and possibly a difference in how open older adults are to friendships with others. A recent study by Miche, Huxhold, and Stevens (2013) confirmed these three types of friendship styles and further distinguished two rather than one type of acquisitive approach based on the degree of emotional closeness in relationships. Among other variables, these researchers found that friendship style varied by socioeconomic status, gender, and health, all indicators of individual characteristics that are predictors of friendship patterns and might be mediated by affective motif.

Similarly, although no researchers have examined how affective motif regarding relationships changes over the life course, Carstensen's robust research framed by socioemotional selectivity theory suggests that it does change (See Carstensen, Issacowitz, & Charles, 1999). Research confirmed in diverse samples demonstrated that older adults conserve emotional and physical energy by concentrating attention on a reduced number of close relationships, generally including family and close friends. It is also possible that affective motif in relation to friendship changes as family relationships evolve. As Allen, Blieszner, and Roberto (2011) reported, older adults from both mainstream and marginalized families reinterpreted their relationships as a way to adapt to the impermanence of family ties. In a similar way, they could also adapt to the voluntary nature of friendship and the increasing fragility of those ties as people age. Note that it is possible that friendship styles, as defined by Matthews, also change over time, but that has not been studied. Field's (1999) work suggested that men's affective motif might change over time more than women's does, as their desire to develop new friendships declined over time while women's desire was maintained. As future cohorts enter the third age, it is possible that their affective motifs will be different from those (p.48) of current older adults, given the increasing acceptance of diversity of younger cohorts (Howe & Strauss, 2000).

Expressions of Affective Processes: Feelings About Friends

Distinguishing between affective and cognitive processes is sometimes difficult, because of the limitations of language. For example, some people would say they are satisfied with their friends due to positive evaluations of them but others might just say they *feel* satisfied with their friends without thinking about it at all. So although we have described definition of friendship as the primary cognitive motif, the definitions respondents provide often include information about how positive affect is expressed in friendships. For example, in their examination of the definition of friendship in two North American cities, one in the United States and one in Canada, Adams, Blieszner, and De Vries (2000) reported that the older adults they studied mentioned caring as an affective dimensions of friendship, as did De Vries and Megathin (2009) in their study of homosexual and heterosexual older men and women and Grief (2009) in his comparison of the meaning of friendship for older African American and White men. The former two studies also described compatibility as an affective dimension of the definition of friendship, but this concept, like satisfaction, could be considered cognitive.

Similarly, the literature about problematic friendships and friendship dissolution includes information about negative affect expressed in friendship. In the same study cited previously, Blieszner and Adams (1998) reported that discussions of negative emotions dominated their older adult respondents' discussions of fading or problematic friendships and described examples of how betrayal, indifference, or hurt were feelings expressed about friendship.

Behavioral Motifs and Processes

Behavioral Motifs as Routine and Unpredictable Aspects of Daily Activities

Normative expectations exist not only for cognitive motifs, as described previously, but also for behavioral aspects of friendships, such as preferences for where to meet friends or how often to interact with them. In contrast to thoughts about friends, behavioral motifs are reproduced as everyday routines and therefore are easily assessed by analyzing what people do in everyday life that brings them in contact with other individuals. The broad applicability of behavioral motifs for different areas of research—on social integration or isolation, loneliness, deviant behavior, or popularity—readily leads to the inclusion of these items in quantitative research (p.49) designs. Individuals develop strategies to make contacts, to start friendships, and to maintain but also to end voluntarily these relationships. Behavioral motifs vary by gender, social status, life stage, family status, and other personal characteristics. They are highly influenced by personality traits that moderate openness to new contacts (Selfhout et al., 2010). In comparison with the other forms of interactive motifs, behavioral motifs are linked to several foci of activity (Feld & Carter, 1998), for example community services or social activities in general.

Expressions of Behavioral Processes: Doing Friendship

Behavioral processes describe practices of making and sustaining friendships, for example by looking at support exchanges or the frequency of contact. These processes are highly influenced by dispositional, structural, and contextual factors. Several studies have focused on gendered differences in friendship behaviors, such as Wright's (1982) assertion that men's friendships occur "side-by-side" whereas women's ties are "face-to-face." This dichotomy summarized research showing that women are more likely to emphasize self-disclosure and support as

important aspects in friendships whereas men emphasize external activities. Wright also pointed out that sex differences are small and completely disappear when looking at very strong and long-lasting relationships. Several studies highlighted differences in talking patterns within friendships. Women are more likely than men to discuss personal matters with their friends and to choose friends to be their confidants (Connidis & Davies, 1990; Fox, Gibbs, & Auerbach, 1985; Hollstein 2002).

While the comparison of men's and women's friendships is an interesting area of research, we note that some gender differences actually are effects of different life-course experiences rather than resulting from gendered socialization regarding self-disclosure, intimacy, fondness, or supportiveness. This is especially true for differences that result from a gendered division of labor. For example, men confide in their coworkers (Fischer & Oliner, 1983) but change their behavior after retirement and mainly focus on their wives as confidantes (Hahmann 2013; Hollstein, 2002). Women who predominantly interacted in private spheres related to physical and emotional activities of childbearing were more likely to have networks dominated by friends and kin (Bost, Cox & Payne, 2002; Wellman, Wong, Tindall & Nazer, 1997). In contrast, other research did not find such gendered differences in friendship. The study on gender and the life cycle by Gillespie, Lever, Fredericks, and Royce (2014), for example, did not find substantial gender differences in the number of friends or sources for specific tasks, but showed how these patterns of friendship are moderated by age or parental status.

Focusing on life stages and transitions reveals several other strong influences on behavioral processes in friendships, including geographical mobility, the birth (p.50) of a child, or divorce (Bidart & Lavenu, 2005; Kalmijn, 2003; Terhell, Broese van Groenou, & van Tilburg, 2004). Transitions typically linked to older individuals, such as retirement, widowhood, declining health, or relocation to a retirement community, are also potential influences on friendship patterns.

With the death of a romantic partner, an individual not only loses one of the most important sources of emotional support and well-being (Connidis & Davies, 1990) but also may experience challenges in other dimensions of social support and everyday social activities. Ha (2008) showed how sources of support change over time of bereavement. While children are the most important sources of social support shortly after the partner's death, friends become more important in the long term, probably because of the shared experiences of loss that includes sympathetic reactions to bereavement, feelings of isolation, and emotional loneliness (Gallagher & Gerstel, 1993; Ha, 2008). In studies of older adults in Germany, Hollstein (2002) and Hahmann (2013) showed how widowhood also changes time patterns and therefore moderates the possibilities for starting and maintaining friendships that sometimes even become close enough to replace the lost partnership. Substitution of a friend for a partner is especially evident in behavioral processes such as shared vacations and family meetings, as well as in everyday routines and even caregiving situations. Respondents in Hahmann's study described how everyday care-related routines, such as morning phone calls, met their needs for security, especially in the face of declining health, and thus contributed to their subjective well-being.

Relocation to a new community offers options to start new friendships. Dupuis-Blanchard, Neufeld, and Strang (2009) demonstrated how social engagement—defined as both a thought

process and a conscious behavior—shapes the forms of newly established social connections in a senior-designated apartment building. Residents who did not seek close interactions with other members of the community developed casual interactions that did not demand self-disclosure. Other patterns of interaction were analyzed as practices to deal with feelings of security, supportive behavior, and friendship. They resulted in diverse behavioral processes that provided opportunities to serve individuals or the community and promoted friendship formation within the community. Walters and Bartlett (2009) investigated relocation to a new (not age-specific) community after retirement. Their findings highlighted how agency (as a behavioral motif) leads to membership in a “leisure group” that meets for recreational activities but also can be seen as a starting point for new friendships that give support during times of need, such as while being homesick shortly after relocation or in bereavement.

Conclusion

Given the importance of friendship for contributing to health and well-being, Adams and Blieszner (1993) addressed the need to apply friendship research results to develop evidence-based interventions aimed at improving friendship interactions (p.51) and satisfaction. Some efforts to aid friendship success would profitably be targeted to modify friendship motifs, whereas others might usefully address interactive processes. These interventions could be dispositional or structural and designed to change either the processes or structure of friendship. For example, with respect to cognitive motifs, Adams and Blieszner (1993) cited work showing that self-defeating thought patterns related to social anxiety, lack of social sensitivity, or holding unrealistic expectations for friendship could interfere with the ability to engage in satisfying friendships. Dispositional interventions could not only address these areas but also lead to increases in the size and solidarity of friendship networks. With respect to affective motifs, fear of becoming close, feelings of alienation from or distrust of others, and difficulty expressing emotions would be hindrances. As with respect to cognitive motifs, these affective areas could be addressed through dispositional interventions, but also might be addressed by relocation to an environment in which the individual feels more comfortable, perhaps because of homogeneity of residents. Or alternatively, interventions designed to change intergroup relations in an immediate social environment could alleviate some of these feelings and simultaneously increase the diversity of friendship networks. Finally, in the domain of behavioral motifs, a tendency to choose people who are hard to befriend, lack of social and communication skills, and rigid interaction styles could make friendship development and sustainment difficult. A structural intervention, such as changing the immediate social environment by providing more opportunities for people to interact on a regular basis or by relocating an individual to an environment more conducive to friendship, might alleviate these issues. Psychological interventions based on cognitive-behavioral therapy and other modalities and structural interventions based on understandings of the importance of person–environment fit could fruitfully address these kinds of interactive motifs and promote satisfying friendships.

One outcome of meaningful friendships is alleviation of loneliness. Rook (1984) discussed many personal and contextual factors that can contribute to loneliness and focused her recommendations on interventions specifically aimed at preventing loneliness, reducing loneliness, and helping people cope with any loneliness they might experience. These strategies could be directed to helping people develop cognitive, affective, and behavioral motifs and

processes that would enable them to establish positive close relationships. They could also be aimed at preventing loneliness from leading to more serious problems. In this regard, Bouwman, Aartsen, van Tilburg, and Stevens (2014) reported results of an online friendship intervention for older adults in the Netherlands that addressed the cognitive motif related to standards for friendship as well as behavioral strategies related to developing the friend network. After six weeks, the intervention appeared to be successful in reducing loneliness among those in the intervention group as compared with controls.

Martina, Stevens, and Westerhof (2012) provided another example of longitudinal intervention research, this time focused on improving self-management of resources and losses to maintain or improve older adults' well-being. Applied to (p.52) friendship, self-management entails cognitive motifs such as self-efficacy beliefs and a positive frame of mind, as well as behavioral processes such as taking the initiative and investing in relationships. Intervention group members completed a 12-week program of lessons and homework assignments designed to improve self-management in friendship. Comparison of intervention and control group members at 6 and 9 months after the program showed that the former took more initiative, engaged in more investment behavior, and had made more friends than those in the control group, although their self-efficacy scores did not change over time nor differ from those of the control group.

Friendship enrichment programs focus on guided reflections on all forms of interactive motifs to prevent older individuals from experiencing social isolation. Stevens and van Tilburg (2000) showed results on the effectiveness of these programs by comparing female participants with a control group drawn from a longitudinal sample on living arrangements and social networks in the Netherlands. The groups were matched on loneliness and important social variables, such as marital status, age, and network composition. The enrichment program improved quality and quantity of the participants' friendship ties regarding existing ones and those developed during the program, for example through educational activities that were part of the program. The authors highlighted how a change of behavioral motifs, such as the willingness to participate in friendship-enrichment programs to reduce feelings of loneliness, offered a chance to start new ties, which therefore influenced behavioral processes.

In this chapter we have defined and differentiated among the three types of interactive motifs that influence friendship patterns, made a distinction between the concept of interactive motif and interactive process, and, for each interactive motif, provided examples from research on older adult friendship to illustrate the ways in which it might affect friendship patterns. Much of what we have discussed is speculative due to the limitations of the literature on friendships and interventions related to friendship. Care should be taken in undertaking friendship interventions of any kind, as information on their latent consequences does not exist. We also note that these dispositional and structural interventions and other ones targeted to change interactive motifs and processes might also affect other aspects of friendship patterns, including the structural characteristics of dyads and networks. Future research is needed, perhaps using experimental designs, to determine what sorts of interventions targeting interactive motifs and processes are needed to change friendship patterns positively and effectively.

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