Emotional Closeness and Physical Distance Between Friends: Implications for Elderly Women Living in Age-Segregated and Age-Integrated Settings

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Abstract:

The author discusses the need for a better theoretical understanding of friendship in order for its role in the lives of elderly people to be understood. The applicability to friendship of Simmel's approach to the study of social relationships is outlined. From this perspective, types of friendship are determined by the physical distance separating friends and the emotional closeness bringing them together. The data consist of seventy in-depth interviews of senior, unmarried women in a middle-class community bordering on Chicago. Qualitative data are reported to support quantitative analyses. There were positive relationships between emotional closeness and physical distance, duration and emotional closeness, and frequency of interaction and proximity. The author describes the implications for elderly women of the tendency for their close, old friends to be physically separated from them and their neighbors to be casual friends, but constant companions. The author discusses the effects of the age-density of residential context and life history on the types of friends the women had.

Keywords: elderly | women | middle-class | relationships

Article:

Recently, there has been a concern with the informal support systems of elderly people. The focus of much of this literature has been on the ways in which elderly people, with the help of significant others, live independently. The vast majority of this research has focused exclusively on the elderly person's family. I consider this unfortunate in three respects. First, there is evidence that friends are part of the networks supporting older people [l-31. Without a better understanding of the meaning of friendship in the lives of older people, we cannot hope to understand the natural systems in which they live.

Second, aging has been characterized as the process of the loss of choice [4]. It seems that this makes friendship, which is theoretically voluntary, a potentially important activity for older

people who may otherwise face dependence on agencies and family members not of their own choosing.

Third, as long-distance moves become more common, elderly people may be less likely to be entrenched in extended kinship networks. Although now most elderly people have a child near by to help them and give them emotional support, a better understanding of the rewards associated with different types of friendship may be more important in the future.

Researchers have often used, for theoretical or practical reasons, D priori definitions of friendship or have otherwise limited the possible range of responses. For example, some researchers have studied only local friendships [5-6] or friendships in which contact was recent [7-9]. Other researchers have studied only the respondent's best or closest friends [6, 10-12].

In this article, I study the variation other researchers have eliminated from consideration. I borrow my theoretical framework from Georg Simmel. Simmel viewed relationships as existing in social space. Two important dimensions of social space are the social and the physical distance separating people [13]. Simmer used these two dimensions to identify social types. For example, he discussed the "stranger" as being physically close, but socially distant.

> In the case of the stranger, the union of closeness and remoteness involved in every human relationship is patterned in a way that may be succinctly formulated as follows: the distance within this relation indicates that one who is close by is remote, but his strangeness indicates that one who is remote is near [14, p. 1431].

The dimension of physical distance is quite easily interpreted, but that of social distance deserves discussion. Levine, Carter, and Gorman have discussed the variety of ways in which Simmel's use of social distance has been interpreted [13] including: the lack of understanding between members of different groups [15], the invisible territory surrounding a person which others may not enter [16], and dissimilarities among people [17]. Others have viewed social space as multidimensional [18-21].

Most of the work on the social distance between friends has focused on similarities between friends. The extent to which friends are similar has been discussed or researched in terms of social status [l0], values [6, 10, 22], and personality [23-261. Although this approach has been quite useful, I will focus here on the subjective aspect of social distance that involves the degree of emotional closeness felt between people. My interpretation is similar to the concept of personal distance discussed by Kadushin [21, p. 520]:

> Personal distance or empathy is the degree of understanding and unspoken communication that takes place between two persons or two statuses-what Simmel had in mind when he wrote of "personal" relationships.

One could thus construct a typology of relationships in which the categories are described by the degree of emotional closeness felt between people and the amount of physical distance separating them. Simmel's stranger would be described as physically close and emotionally

distant. Using this classification system, Cooley might have described primary relationships as emotionally and physically close.

Compared to the full spectrum of relationships, primary ones are emotionally closer. Yet they still vary within a range. On the dimension of physical distance, primary relationships can exist at any point. This is facilitated by modern communications technology such as the telephone, but was possible beforehand through letters [27]. It is quite common now to have one's family and friends spread all over the country.

Using both dimensions, physical distance and emotional closeness, one can identify different types of friendship much in the same way Simmel identified types of relationships in general. Friends can be 1) emotionally close and live nearby, 2) emotionally more distant and live nearby, 3) emotionally close and live far away, or 4) emotionally and physically distant. Of course, the dimensions are theoretically continuous, so one could identify an infinite number of types of friendship.

This article explores both dimensions of social space, emotional closeness, and physical distance, as they relate to friendship. I look at the range in emotional closeness of friendships, what it means to be close to somebody, and how this differs across friendships. I also describe the variation in the amount of physical distance separating friends. Afterwards, I look at the relationship between emotional closeness and physical distance among friends. Finally, I look at some of the consequences of different types of friendship and at some of the life cycle processes that contributed to the differing types of friendship of the older women studied. I argue that residential and marital history had different impacts on the types of friendship old women had depending on whether the setting in which they lived was age-segregated or age-integrated.

DATA AND METHODS

This article is based on data from a 1981 study of seventy white, *nonmarried*, female senior citizens who lived in Oak Park, a middle-class suburb of Chicago. According to the 1980 Census, a fifth (21.8%) of Oak Park's adult population (41,471) was sixty-two years or older. About two-thirds (66.9%) of the Oak Park residents who were at least sixty-two-years-old were females [28].

I found my respondents with the cooperation of several agencies and individuals who served the senior population in Oak Park. My sample was thus not necessarily representative of the nonmarried female senior citizens in Oak Park. It included only women who served other seniors or received services. It did include, however, women in a wide variety of situations. For example, the women in the sample had incomes that ranged from low to high, some were homebound and others were extremely active, and they ranged in age from sixty-two to ninety-one years. Some of them had only elementary school educations, and others had professional degrees. About two-thirds (65.7%) of the women were widows, a fifth had never been married, and the rest were divorced or separated. Half of the women lived in age-segregated housing, and the rest lived elsewhere in the community.

I interviewed each respondent using a standard instrument which included both structured and unstructured questions. After the first twenty interviews, I modified, abandoned, and added hypotheses. I changed the instrument accordingly. I also did some informal observations in senior residences and gathering places.

In this article, I use the answers to unstructured questions and observational data to support quantitative analyses. In some cases, the respondent is the unit of analysis. In other cases, the dyadic friendship is the unit of analysis. I use a significance level of 0.10.

The respondents named a total of 678 friends. I did not use an a priori definition of friendship. The first question I asked each respondent was: "People have different ideas about what friendship is. How would you describe what a friendship is?" to help them clarify their definitions of friendship, I asked: "HOW does this differ from an acquaintance?" In the first twenty interviews, 1 probed further by asking: "Some people think there are different kinds of friendship. How do you feel about this?" Once I was satisfied that the respondent had as clear as possible a definition of friendship in her mind, I asked: "Are there any people that you consider friends now?" and, if appropriate "Could you please tell me the first names of the people you consider friends?" In this way the interview started with the respondent defining friendship for herself. I asked each respondent a set of questions about each friend and their relationship.

After having the respondent list her friends, I asked her about the relationship of each friend to each other friend. By quickly sketching a sociometric diagram, I identified friendship groups within her larger network. I asked her to choose one person from each group about whom she wished to talk at length. I refer to members of this smaller sample of 304 friends as "group representative friends." I automatically treated a friend who was not a friend of any of the respondent's other friends or whom the respondent named as her best friend as a group representative friend. I asked a more detailed set of questions about each group representative friend than about each other friend.

FINDINGS

Emotional Closeness

I asked the respondents about the emotional closeness they felt toward each of their friends: "Some friends feel closer to one another than others. Would you describe _____ as one of your closest friends, a close friend, or just a friend?" Roughly a third of the friends fell into each category. I have further separated the closest friendships into best and nonbest friendships (see Table 1).

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Emotional
Closeness of Friends

Emotional Closeness	Frequency	Percent
Best friend	47	7.0
Closest friends	173	25.8
Close friends	200	29.9
Just friends	250	37.3
Total	670	100.0

Respondents seemed to have distinguished easily between those friends who were among their closest and those who were not. To a somewhat lesser degree, respondents were able to distinguish further between those who were their close friends and those who were just their friends. In listing her friendships, one woman asked me:

> I think of my friends as surrounding me in concentric circles. Do you want me to name just my inner circle of friends, those I'm closest to, or those in the next larger circle, or those in the big circle?

This woman, who, incidentally, named a large number of friends when I told her to include all of them, expressed clearly that she thought of her friends as being unequally close to her. The ease with which she and the other respondents classified relationships suggests that the different levels of emotional closeness had real meaning for the respondents. It is this meaning I explore below.

The meaning of emotional closeness - Intimacy and emotional closeness seemed to be indistinguishable for the respondents. There is both qualitative and quantitative evidence to support this statement. I asked the first twenty respondents: "Could you tell me what you would mean if you were to say that you feel close to someone?" Almost all of them mentioned some aspect of intimacy such as confiding, trust, understanding, openness, and acceptance. Only about a tenth (1 1.8%) mentioned just a vague feeling without precisely discussing intimacy.

The connection between emotional closeness and intimacy was expressed by respondents in different ways. About three-fifths (58.9%) of them mentioned confiding behavior as a measure of closeness:

> It would mean I could confide in her, tell [her] personal things, trust her, tell her my past. . . .

> Intimate talking. You could converse and tell your side of the story and be able to understand their side. You could trust them.

These respondents often used words like trust, understanding, and openness. Others (29.4%) emphasized acceptance more than confiding:

> I would feel like I didn't have to look like a million dollars and they would accept you no matter what the mood. You have an easy feeling when you're around them. You don't have to weigh your words.

Each of these respondents was describing an intimate relationship, one in which a person does not have to put up an artificial front and can discuss her innermost thoughts. In Goffman's terms, the close friend is allowed "backstage" [16].

In this study I used two measures of confiding behavior. First, I asked the respondents to name any people with whom they felt close enough to confide. The respondents identified about a fifth (18.8%) of their friends as confidants. About three-fifths (58.0%) of the respondents named at least one friend as a confidant.

Second, I asked the following question about each of the group friendship representatives: "Now let's summarize how you feel about discussing things with _____. Which of the following comes closest to the way you feel? DO you feel free to discuss almost anything with _____, feel free to discuss some personal matters with _____, or only feel free to discuss things outside personal matters with _____?" Respondents could discuss almost anything with two-fifths (42.9%) of their group representative friends and some things with about a fifth (21.1%) of them. With the rest, they could only discuss things outside personal matters.

These measures were significantly related to one another ($X^2 = 19.88$, $df = 2$, $n = 293$). Both describing a friend as a confidant and being able to discuss personal matters with a friend were significantly related to emotional closeness ($X^2 = 88.82$, $df = 3$, $n = 667$ and $X^2 = 25.12$, $df = 6$, n $= 292$). In both cases, confiding behavior increased monotonically with emotional closeness.

Physical Distance

Of the friends named by the respondents, half (49.7%) lived in Oak Park, a quarter (23.7%) lived elsewhere in the area, and a quarter (26.5%) lived outside of the area. Most of the respondents' friends thus lived quite close to them.

Of the 337 friends who lived in Oak Park, over half (56.4%) were, according to the respondents, their neighbors. The size of the area in which people were considered to be neighbors varied by residential context. Of the thirteen living in senior buildings, apartments, or condominiums, more than a fifth (23.1%) considered only those on their floor to be neighbors and about half (46.2%) considered only those in their buildings to be neighbors. Only a few also considered those in the next building (7.7%), on the rest of their block (15.4%), or in a wider area (7.7%) to be neighbors.

In contrast, of the five living in single-family dwellings, two-fifths considered everyone on their blocks to be neighbors, and three-fifths included those on the alley or the next block in their definitions. Although the people who lived in single-family dwellings probably interacted with fewer neighbors totally, the physical space in their "neighborhood" was larger.

Of the 161 who lived elsewhere in the area, about two-fifths (45.3%) lived in a suburb adjacent to Oak Park. Another fifth (17.4%) lived in a nonadjacent, but nearby suburb. The remaining two-fifths (37.3%) lived in Chicago.

Of the 180 friends who lived outside of the area, about two-fifths (43.3%) lived elsewhere in Illinois, a fifth (20.0%) lived in another midwestern state, and about two-fifths (36.1%) lived in other regions of the United States. One friend lived outside of the country.

The Relationship Between Emotional Closeness and Physical Distance

After exploring both of the dimensions of social space, emotional closeness and physical distance, one is left with the question: How were they related to one another? If one assumed that the classical interpretation of primary group theory is correct and one needs face-to-face interaction to maintain intimate relationships, one would have expected to find a negative relationship between physical distance and emotional closeness. In other words, one would have expected that friends who lived near one another and thus could have seen one another more often would also have been emotionally closer to one another. If, on the other hand, one assumed that frequent face-to-face contact is not important in maintaining close relationships, one would have expected to find no relationship between emotional closeness and physical distance.

The relationship that existed between emotional closeness and physical distance was contrary to both of these expectations: there was a positive relationship between them ($r = 0.16$, $df = 668$). The farther away a person lived from the respondent, the more likely they were to be emotionally close (see Table 2).

These findings are counterintuitive. Frequency of interaction has often been discussed in the literature as a predictor of emotional closeness. The hypothesis that "persons who interact frequently with one another tend to like one another" was perhaps first considered in Homans's study of the behavior of bank wiremen [29]. He found support for the hypothesis, but qualified it by saying that it holds only when "other things are equal." Palisi's study of Italian-Americans in New York City also supported this hypothesis [30]. He questioned the casual direction of his findings and suggested that people who already liked one another probably tended to interact more, so that the influences were reciprocal. In both cases, the correlation of frequency of interaction with emotional closeness would be positive. It would follow that living far apart would mean less frequent interaction and thus less emotional closeness. This is the opposite of the result I reported above.

Table 2. Physical Distance by Emotional Closeness

Physical Distance	Best		Closest		Close		Just		Total	
	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency
Neighbors	14.9	7	20.8	36	31.0	62	34.0	85	28.4	190
Others in Oak Park	14.9	7	20.2	35	23.0	46	22.8	57	21.6	145
In area	34.0	16	25.4	44	23.0	46	20.0	50	23.3	156
Elsewhere	36.2	17	33.5	58	23.0	46	23.2	58	26.7	179
Total	100.0	47	99.9	173	100.0	200	100.0	250	100.0	670

The key to the dilemma is to be found in Homans's qualification that his hypothesis holds when other things are equal [29] .What was not equal, in this case, were the durations of the friendships. Like frequency of interaction, duration has been suggested as a predictor of emotional closeness [16, 31-33]. Hess suggested that this may be because of the experiences old friends have shared, the demonstrated acceptance of the person, or the friend's importance in contributing to the person's self image [31].

The counterintuitive finding that physical distance and emotional closeness were positively correlated can be understood by exploring the average frequency of interaction and duration of relationships in each category of the social space typology. In addition to presenting those results below, I look at the relationships of duration and frequency of interaction with emotional closeness. A pattern emerges that is quite interesting.

Duration of the friendship - statement that old friends are the best friends. There is both qualitative and quantitative evidence to support this conclusion. I asked the first twenty respondents: "Some people feel that new friends are different from old friends. How do you feel about this?" Almost three-quarters (73.7%) of them indicated that old friends were better in some way. Only one person said new friends were closer than old ones. Four women (21.1%) did not choose one type of friend over the other. Of these four people, three felt there was no difference between old friends and new friends, and one could not make the comparison because all of her old friends were dead.

Those who felt old friends were better than new friends felt that way for different reasons. Some felt it takes time before friendship gets firmly established.

> Old friends. There is a treasure. You hesitate before you take new ones, because it takes time. The test is how they treat others.

> An old friend is tried and true. . . . You are a little cautious with a newcomer. I'd like to see their background, work, and family associations.

Others felt old friends were closer:

> The old friends are closer in a way. When you're young you cling more. There is a feeling of closeness. Old friends are the best friends.

A couple of respondents felt that knowing one another well, as old friends do, was an advantage:

> If you know people for a long time, you know their quirks and idiosyncrasies. It's like family.

Other respondents mentioned it was easier to confide in old friends:

> You don't have the same freedom [with new friends]. You wouldn't confide in them as [you would] those who have served the test of time.

One respondent felt old friends were more caring:

> Old friends are more interested in you and care more about you than new friends.

A couple of others felt they were more dependable:

> An oldtime friend, even when they're far away, in a drastic emergency, could be called.

One should not make the mistake of assuming that old friends were more important than new friends to elderly women because they had difficulty making new ones. I asked the same respondents: "Some people are good at making new friends, some are more comfortable with people they have known a long time. How about YOU?" Only two of the nineteen respondents who answered the question said they had difficulty making new friends:

> I'm not too outgoing.

> I can't get out and make any new ones.

Another would have preferred old friends to new, but:

> When you're older you have to make new friends, because your old friends are dead.

The remaining sixteen respondents all found making new friends easy, but half of them added that old friends were special in some way:

> I feel more comfortable with old friends, but when people show they like me I can't help [but] reciprocate.

> I don't find it difficult to make new friends. They may not be bosom buddies, but at least they're casual friends.

Some women quoted songs or old sayings:

Old pals are always the best pals you ever know, for new pals you meet every day.

Make new friends, but keep the old. One is silver and the other's gold.

New friends are many, but old friends are better than any.

One woman put it simply:

I make new friends, but my old friends are better friends.

Duration of friendship was positively correlated with emotional closeness ($r = 0.29$, $df = 645$). With one major exception, the average duration of the relationship tended to increase with emotional closeness within each category of physical distance (see Table 3). The one major departure from this pattern was the average duration of best friends who were neighbors. One would have expected the average duration of best friendships among neighbors to have been longer than that of the closest friendships among neighbors, but it was not. Five of the seven friendships in the deviant cell were established when the respondents first moved to age-segregated housing. Age-segregated housing had made friendship possible for these five women. Despite the deviant result, it seems fair to conclude that old friends were more likely to be the closest ones, no matter how far away they lived. In fact, duration explained the relationship between physical distance and emotional closeness ($r = -0.02$, $df = 644$).

Table 3. Average Number of Years of Friendship, Within Each Cell, of the Cross-Tabulation of Physical Distance by Emotional Closeness

Physical Distance		Emotional Closeness				
		Best	Closest	Close	Just	Total
Neighbors	$\bar{X}$	6.14	10.43	9.49	8.37	9.09
	s.d.	6.20	12.29	11.65	11.07	11.34
	n	7	35	61	71	174
Others in Oak Park	$\bar{X}$	25.57	22.00	18.16	16.22	18.70
	s.d.	17.75	15.54	12.66	15.98	15.06
	n	7	34	45	55	141
In area	$\bar{X}$	50.63	31.36	19.48	20.06	26.29
	s.d.	22.65	18.44	14.88	14.78	19.33
	n	16	44	46	48	154
Elsewhere	$\bar{X}$	46.82	44.28	31.59	34.07	37.97
	s.d.	19.22	21.41	16.44	19.66	20.20
	n	17	58	46	57	178
Total	$\bar{X}$	38.89	29.60	18.91	19.01	23.22
	s.d.	24.56	21.87	15.96	18.15	20.11
	n	47	171	198	231	647

A skeptic might think these homages to old friends are a bit empty and that once friends are separated physically, with the passage of time, their closeness is forgotten. Looking at Table 3, one sees that the average duration of the relationships increased with physical distance within each category of emotional closeness. As I suggested earlier, the closest friends tended to be the oldest friends, even though time has a way of geographically dispersing people.

In fairness to the skeptic, one must consider some of the forces that seemed to be operating in long-distance friendships. It is not surprising that people maintained long-distance relationships with their best and closest friends. It is a bit surprising that so many casual friendships were maintained over distance. Although I have no systematic evidence, many respondents said that these more casual friends had been closer when they lived near one another, but that distance had caused them to drift apart. Distance did cause a decrease in emotional closeness for some. One must also consider a possibility suggested by Hess that distance might serve a positive function, insulating people from changes in their friends [31]. If this is true, some of the respondents might not have named some of their long-distance friends at all if they had lived closer to them.

Two roads toward friendship – As discussed earlier, the literature suggests that frequency of face-to-face interaction should have been positively related to emotional closeness. As one can see in Table 4, however, in this sample, this was not the case ($r = 0.01$, $df = 654$). Controlling for physical distance, there was a significant tendency for frequency of interaction to increase with emotional closeness ($r = 0.14$, $df = 653$).

Table 4. Average Number of Interactions Per Year,[a] Within Each Cell of the Cross-Tabulation of Physical Distance by Emotional Closeness

Physical Distance		Emotional Closeness				
		Best	Closest	Close	Just	Total
Neighbors	$\overline{X}$	260.00	258.67	188.68	171.77	198.11
	s.d.	134.26	138.88	126.34	146.30	141.06
	n	7	36	62	77	182
Others in Oak Park	$\overline{X}$	46.57	75.77	52.61	56.21	59.20
	s.d.	33.16	85.87	63.28	81.59	75.53
	n	7	34	46	57	144
In area	$\overline{X}$	44.81	34.30	32.39	18.68	30.03
	s.d.	60.90	49.19	58.76	26.05	48.45
	n	16	44	46	47	153
Elsewhere	$\overline{X}$	23.82	16.95	15.02	9.70	14.17
	s.d.	66.65	48.96	21.84	30.66	40.07
	n	17	57	46	47	177
Total	$\overline{X}$	69.53	83.99	81.50	75.05	78.95
	s.d.	108.79	124.20	109.72	116.50	115.86
	n	47	171	200	238	656

[a] I asked the respondents when they last saw each of their friends and, depending on which was appropriate, how many times they had seen them in the last week, month, or year. I then multiplied the number of times they had seen their friends in the last week by fifty-two or in the last month by twelve to get an estimate of the frequency of interaction in a year. If they had not seen their friends in over a year, the frequency was coded as zero.

Since duration was also a positive predictor of emotional closeness, one would have expected duration and frequency of interaction to have been positively correlated, if at all. In this sample, they were negatively correlated ($r = -.048$, $df = 641$). This relationship held when controlling for physical distance ($r = -0.23$, $df = 640$). This suggests that there were two distinct reasons the respondents considered people to be very close friends: their relationship with the friend was an enduring one, or they saw the respondent often. Both could be aspects of the same phenomenon; perhaps one must interact with someone a certain amount before being on intimate terms. This is consistent with Hess's observation that frequency of visiting among new friends is correlated with intimacy but is not among old friends [31]. Proximity would thus have been important in the early stages of a relationship but not after it was firmly established.

The Social Space Typology

The analyses presented above show that friendships vary according to the emotional closeness and physical distance between those involved. This makes a friendship typology, such as the one suggested by Simmers work, useful. To create such a typology, I have collapsed the sixteen categories presented in Tables 2, 3, and 4 into quadrants. The respondents' best and closest friends are thus treated as their emotionally close friends, and their close friends and those who were just their friends are treated as emotionally distant ones. All local friends are categorized as physically close ones, and all nonlocal ones as physically distant ones. The four categories of friendship which result are:

1. emotionally close and local,

2. emotionally distant and local,

3. emotionally close and nonlocal, and

4. emotionally distant and nonlocal.

The emotionally closest friendships were most likely to fall into the third quadrant, and the emotionally more distant ones were most likely to fall into the second quadrant. As the analyses in previous sections show, this means that the respondents' closest and oldest friends tended to live far from them and that they saw them relatively infrequently. The friends who lived near them tended to be their newest, most casual friends, but they saw them relatively often.

Not all respondents had friends of each type. Three respondents did not have any friends. Of the sixty-seven respondents who named at least one friend, about three-fifths (58.2%) had at least one emotionally close friend living in Oak Park, about three-quarters (74.6%) had at least one emotionally distant friend living in Oak Park, about four-fifths (79.1%) had at least one emotionally close friend living elsewhere, and about seven-tenths (70.1%) had at least one emotionally distant friend living elsewhere. Over nine-tenths (92.5%) had at least one emotionally close friend, and almost that many (86.6%) had at least one friend living in Oak Park.

The Role of Friendship in the Lives of Elderly Women

Help from friends of different types - The majority of the respondents received help from friends with at least one of the ten tasks about which I asked them. Of the seventy respondents, including the three who mentioned no friends, about two-thirds (67.1%) had at least one friend who helped them. Respondents received help from friends, in order of decreasing frequency: with transportation (45.7%), during sickness (27.1%), with shopping or errands (25.7%), with fixing things around their homes (15.7%), in emergencies other than sickness (14.3%), in the form of advice on money matters (12.9%), in the form of a gift or loan of money (8.5%), in making important decisions (8.5%), with housekeeping (4.3%), and with cooking (2.9%). Of course, not all of the respondents needed or wanted help in these areas.

As one can see by looking at Table 5, emotionally close friends were significantly more likely to help the respondents, regardless of the physical distance separating them ($r = 0.20$, $df = 667$). Emotional closeness was important for the performance of each of the ten tasks, regardless of the physical distance separating the friends, with two exceptions.' The two exceptions were help with housekeeping and loaning or giving the respondent money. Friends rarely helped the respondents in these two ways, so there were really not sufficient cases to say conclusively that emotional closeness did not matter.

Table 5 also shows that the physical distance separating friends had an important impact on their helping behavior. Although the trend was not monotonic, physical distance was negatively related to helping behavior, regardless of emotional closeness ($r = -0.17$, $df = 667$). Physical distance made it less likely that friends helped the respondents with each of the ten tasks, regardless of emotional closeness, with three exceptions.[2] The exceptions were help with housekeeping, cooking, and decision making. As I mentioned above, there were not enough cases to look closely at the effects on help with housekeeping. One might have expected the friends who lived near the respondents to be more likely to help with cooking. The respondents mentioned, however, that most of the help they received with cooking was when their friends were guests. Both local and nonlocal friends visited the respondents. Help with decision making can be offered on the telephone or through letters, as well as in person.

Table 5. Percentage of Respondents Receiving Help, Within Each Cell of the Cross-Tabulation of Physical Distance by Emotional Closeness

Physical Distance		Emotional Closeness				
		Best	Closest	Close	Just	Total
Neighbors	Percent	57.1	22.2	22.6	12.9	19.5
	n	7	36	62	85	190
Others in Oak Park	Percent	85.7	34.3	37.0	19.3	31.7
	n	7	35	46	57	145
In area	Percent	37.5	27.3	21.7	14.0	22.4
	n	16	44	46	50	156
Elsewhere	Percent	17.6	10.3	2.2	1.7	6.1
	n	17	58	46	58	179
Total	Percent	40.4	22.0	21.0	12.0	100.0
	n	47	173	200	250	670

In summary, friends were more likely to help the respondents with tasks if they were emotionally close to them and lived near them. This makes the friendships in the first quadrant of the social space typology the most crucial in understanding the help respondents received from friends.

Types of friendship and psychological well-being - The question remains, what was the effect of different types of friendship on the elderly women's psychological well-being? I included the questions used to construct Bradburn's affect balance measure [34]. Bradburn's scale consists of ten questions representing two independent dimensions which measure positive and negative affect.

The number of two of the four types of friendships defined by the emotional closeness and physical distance between friends significantly affected the respondent's psychological well-being, when controlling for the size of network. First, the number of emotionally close, local friends was positively related to affect balance, regardless of size of network ($r = 0.18$, $df = 67$). Having a large number of emotionally close, local friends was related to feelings of positive affect ($r = 0.23$, $df = 67$) but did not reduce feelings of negative affect ($r = -0.03$, $df = 67$), regardless of the size of network. The relationships between both the affect balance scale and the positive affect scale and the number of emotionally close, local friends were explained by also controlling for the total frequency of interaction ($r = 0.07$, $df = 66$ for both).

Second, the number of emotionally distant, nonlocal friends was negatively related to affect balance, regardless of the size of network ($r = -0.19$, $df = 67$). It appears that having a large proportion of this type of friend reduced feelings of positive affect ($r = -0.27$, $df = 67$) but did not cause feelings of negative affect ($r = .00$, $df = 67$). The relationships between both the affect balance scale and the positive affect scale and the number of emotionally distant, nonlocal friendships were explained by controlling for the total frequency of interaction with friends in addition to size of network ($r = -0.09$, $df = 66$ and $r = -0.14$, $df = 66$).

The respondent's psychological well-being was improved by contact with friends. Emotionally close, local friends were crucial in this regard, because they saw the respondents often. Emotionally close, local friends made the respondents feel good. They did not, however, prevent them from experiencing negative affect.

The Effects of Residential Context and Life History on the Number of Emotionally Close, Local Friends

Emotionally close, local friends were thus most likely to help the respondent and to improve her psychological well-being. As mentioned before, only about three-fifths (58.2%) of the respondents who named at least one friend, named at least one emotionally close, local one. The crucial question becomes: Which older women were likely to have friends of this type, and which were not?

None of the women in this study were married. The most obvious difference in their current situation was the type of residence in which they lived. Half of them lived in age-segregated housing, and half of them did not. The women who lived in age-segregated housing did not tend to name more friends than women who lived elsewhere ($r = -0.14$, $df = 68$), but they did tend to name more emotionally close, local ones ($r = 0.25$, $df = 64$). It is thus important to explore the influences of life history on the two aggregates of women separately.

I explored the effects on the number of emotionally close, local friendships of residential and marital history. Residential history affected the number of emotionally close, local friendships in both age-segregated situations and elsewhere. Marital history influenced the number of emotionally close, local friendships in age-segregated settings only.

The effects of residential history were different in age-segregated settings than elsewhere in the community. In age-segregated settings, the number of moves the respondent had made in the last twenty years was negatively correlated with the number of emotionally close, local friends named, regardless of the total number of friends named ($r = -0.28$, $df= 31$). Elsewhere in the community the comparable correlation was positive ($r = 0.39$, $df= 30$). In age-segregated housing the correlation was explained by length of Oak Park residence ($r = -0.1 3$, $df = 29$). In other words, those who moved a lot were not as likely to have lived in Oak Park long and thus were less likely to have many emotionally close, local friends.

In the case of those living elsewhere in the community, I have no evidence about the process that explained the positive correlation between number of moves in the last twenty years and number of emotionally close, local friends, just a suspicion. It could be that the women who moved often in their later years became good at developing new emotionally close friendships in new residential settings out of necessity. Those who stayed behind in their old neighborhoods may not have had the same motivation to make new friends. Over time, many of the emotionally close, local friends of those who stayed behind may have relocated, becoming physically distant friends. The question that remains is: why was there no similar effect among women in age-segregated housing? The women in age-segregated housing tended to have moved more in the last twenty years than those living elsewhere in the Community ($r = 0.5 1$, $df= 68$). One could argue that almost all of the women in age-segregated housing had had the opportunity to develop

their skills at making new friends, while many fewer of the women who lived in the community had. This would explain the difference in results for those women in age-segregated settings and those elsewhere in the community.

A similar argument can be made to explain why marital status made a difference in the number of emotionally close, local friendships in age-integrated settings but not in age-segregated ones. In age-integrated settings, widows had significantly more emotionally close, local friends than other women, regardless of total number of friends they named ($r = 0.33$, $df= 30$). Women who had never been married had significantly fewer emotionally close, local friends than other women, regardless of the total number of friends they named ($r = -0.31$, $df= 30$). Once again, this suggests that women in age-integrated settings were more affected by their past patterns of interaction than were women in age-segregated settings. In age-integrated settings, single women were more likely than women who had been married to have worked most of their lives ($r = 0.27$, $df= 33$) and to have supported themselves ($r = 0.40$, $df= 33$). This took them away from their homes, and possibly Oak Park, each day. I suspect that their closest friends were more likely to live outside of the local community than those of women who were married. In other words, they had a cosmopolitan approach to friendship. Women who had been married, on the other hand, probably made their friends close to home. This pattern, if one assumes it was a life-long one, persisted for those women who still lived in age-integrated settings.

Among the widowed women who lived in age-integrated settings, an average of a third (32.5%) of their emotionally close friends lived in Oak Park. This is in contrast to an average of less than a tenth (7.6%) of the emotionally close friends of single women in age-integrated settings. Age-segregated housing seems to have disrupted these old patterns. Women began to recognize the similarities in their conditions. As one respondent who lived in senior housing put it, "We're all in the same boat." The differences between women with different marital histories were thus equalized in age-segregated settings.

CONCLUSIONS

Most researchers, by using an CI priori definition of friendship, have studied only some subtypes of it. This has been misleading. For example, focusing only on friends that respondents had seen recently has left the impression that old people do not have many nonlocal friends, because one does not see long-distance friends often. The women in this sample almost all had friends outside of Oak Park. Often the people whom the respondents had seen recently or most often were not their closest, most intimate friends. By ignoring the variation in the emotional closeness that characterizes friendships, this has been missed.

Friends helped the women in many ways, but not all types of friendships yielded the same rewards. Emotionally close, local friends were more likely than other friends to help with most tasks. Frequent interaction with friends improved their psychological well-being. Since the respondents tended to see emotionally close, local friends most often, they also became important in this regard. Although old, nonlocal friends were most often seen by the women as their best and most intimate friends, they were not their most important helpers or the most important for their psychological well-being.

There were essentially two roads toward close friendship. Close friends were either those the respondents had seen often or those they had known a long time. As suggested earlier, perhaps face-to-face interaction is important in the early stages of a friendship, but not after it is firmly established. We cannot change the life histories of old people, but we can create programs that foster frequent interaction between old people and those with whom they are likely to become friends.

Age-segregated housing seemed to enhance the development of emotionally close, local friendships. Since emotionally close, local friendships were the most important type for the women's everyday lives, there is a need for a better understanding of the factors associated with the establishment of these relationships. Others [1, 5, 35] have suggested that living among age-peers fosters the formation of local friendships, since people are more likely to become friends with people who are near their own ages. The latent effects on the position of elderly people in society of the development of age-segregated housing are not yet fully understood. I thus feel that it is premature to endorse age-segregated housing. The age-density of these buildings, however, is only one of the characteristics that makes them different from other residential contexts in which old people live. Below, I consider three additional explanations for the social advantages which age-segregated housing seems to offer. Programs can be planned which duplicate these advantages for people who live in age-integrated environments.

First, all three of the age-segregated settings in which my respondents lived sponsored activities for the residents. Two of them had communal eating facilities. People were brought into frequent contact with one another. Senior recreation and nutrition programs provide opportunities for frequent interaction for those who live in age-integrated settings.

Second, all of the people who lived in age-segregated housing had relocated. Women who remained in age-integrated settings may have been left behind as old friends moved away or died and may not have been motivated to replace them. A move to age-segregated housing seems to have disrupted old friendship patterns and to have provided the motivation to make new friends. Because all of the people in age-segregated housing had recently relocated, there were not long-established friendship groups within the buildings. This seemed to foster a willingness among the residents to welcome new people into their friendship groups. Programs that provide elderly people with an opportunity to move into newly established age-integrated housing or into age-integrated housing with structural guarantees of population turnover might encourage them to establish local friendships with people of a variety of ages. Of course, relocation would not necessarily be good for everybody [36]. For example, women embedded in long-established, supportive friendship networks would probably be better off aging in place. My data suggest that the ability to make friends in a new setting is a learned skill which people who have not moved may not have developed.

Finally, age-segregated housing seems to have had a leveling effect on its residents. They emphasized the similarities of their conditions rather than the differences. Elsewhere in the community, the accumulated differences of a lifetime seemed to have had a larger impact on current lives. There was social distance between previously married women and never married women. Length of residence varied more, and thus some people were at a social advantage because they had had more time to establish friendships. The leveling effect that took place in

age-segregated settings meant that a higher proportion of a person's age-peers in senior buildings than in age-integrated neighborhoods were eligible for friendship. In other words, the widows in age-segregated housing did not exclude never married and divorced people as friendship candidates. Elsewhere in the community, where past patterns of interaction still prevailed, this was much more likely to take place. Perhaps programs designed to raise age-group consciousness would help remove the social barriers among old people in age-integrated settings.

In summary, age-segregated housing seems to foster the development of emotionally close, local friendships, because its residents have things in common, are aware of the similarities of their situations, are motivated to make new friends, and have the opportunity for frequent interaction with potential friends. For an elderly woman without a supportive, local friendship network, a move to age-segregated housing could be quite beneficial. Since relocation is not the answer for all old people, we need to explore the possibilities for duplicating the social advantages offered by age-segregated housing in age-integrated settings. This will enable a larger proportion of old people to develop the emotionally close, local friendships which are so important in their everyday lives.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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