

FEMINISM AND WOMEN'S FRIENDSHIPS

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The ideology of "sisterhood" within the feminist movement suggests that feminists' and nonfeminists' same-sex friendships would differ profoundly. This assumption was tested by examining the friendships of 45 heterosexual nonfeminists, 43 heterosexual feminists, and 38 lesbian feminists from a large midwestern city. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 46. Using objective measures, differences were found between feminists and nonfeminists for some structural dimensions of friendship, including number of cross-generational friendships, degree of equality, and amount of privacy preferred with a best friend. Lesbian feminists preferred more privacy with their friends than nonfeminists, but rated their friends as lower on relationship quality and degree of equality than heterosexual feminists and nonfeminists. The three groups did not differ on the affective content of friendship, including liking, loving, satisfaction and commitment. However, feminists subjectively perceived their feminism as having contributed to both structural and affective changes in their friendships.

One consequence of the 1960s feminist slogan "The personal is political," was a reassessment of the dynamics of women's friendships. Rejecting beliefs that women's friendships were insignificant, feminists proclaimed them to be both an antecedent of radicalization and an outcome of feminist awareness. The ideology of "sisterhood" emphasized the power of women's friendships to transform and validate the self. Adopting feminist principles supposedly helped women to develop more friendships, resulting in greater support and intimacy, and enhancing a sense of personal power (Strommen, 1977). Lesbian feminists argued that these changes were more likely to occur in their friendships than in those among heterosexual feminists due to lesbians' greater "woman-identification" and valuation of same-sex relationships (Radicalesbians, 1976).

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A body of research on women's friendships now exists and a number of investigators have begun to examine individual differences. However, only two studies (Cherniss, 1972; Seiden & Bart, 1975) have explored the relationship between feminist politics and same-sex friendships.

Research on women's friendships indicate that their same-sex relationships are based largely on intimacy (e.g., Bell, 1981; Rose, 1985). Women tell their friends about personal and family problems, close relationships, anxieties, and daily activities (Aries & Johnson, 1983; Caldwell & Peplau, 1982). In fact, talking plays a primary role in women's friendships (Johnson & Aries, 1983). Women report that their friendships contribute to personal growth, support, or change (Davidson & Packard, 1981). In addition, having emotionally and intellectually supportive same-sex friendships is positively associated with women's overall psychological well-being (Goodenow, 1985).

Research exploring the impact of sex-role identity on women's friendship has tended to focus on self-disclosure (e.g., Fischer & Narus, 1981; Lavine & Lombardo, 1984; Sollie & Fischer, 1985; Williams, 1985). Findings concerning the effect of sex role identity are contradictory. For instance, both Fischer and Narus (1981) and Williams (1985) found that femininity (as assessed by the Bem Sex Role Inventory and Personal Attributes Questionnaire, respectively) was positively associated with self-reported intimacy in friendship. However, Lavine and Lombardo (1984) reported that feminine and androgynous respondents had similar levels of self-disclosure to close female friends. Even more different were Sollie and Fischer's (1985) findings that androgynous women were more willing to disclose on highly intimate topics than feminine-typed women.

Taking a slightly different approach to the study of individual differences, Bell (1981) classified women in their mid-30s as nonconventional (women who were satisfied with their lives overall and were willing to take risks to achieve greater happiness) or conventional (defined as those less satisfied and less willing to take risks) and compared their friendships. He found that the nonconventional women had more same-sex friends, revealed more to them, and were more likely to report feeling love, affection, warmth and support toward a best friend. In contrast, the conventional women revealed less about themselves to a best friend, rarely saw themselves in special demand as a friend, and tended to stress the external aspects of friendship rather than the internal and emotional.

Many of the preceding authors credit the women's movement with having had an impact on friendship and partially attribute their findings to an increased valuation of women's relationships due to feminism (e.g., Bell, 1981). However, no attempt was made in the research cited above to assess women's commitment to feminism.

The only research that has examined the relationship between feminism and friendship were studies by Cherniss (1972), and Seiden and Bart (1975) of the subjective effects of feminism on same-sex friendships. Cherniss (1972) found that compared to a control group of nonfeminist women, feminists reported feeling closer and more sympathetic to women. In addition, the

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feminists spent considerably more time in contexts including consciousness-raising and political organizing.

Seiden and Bart (1975) interviewed 12 women that feminism had changed their same-sex ways. First, they claimed that feminism had changed their same-sex ways. First, they claimed that feminism had changed their same-sex ways. Second, they came to value women as valuable in itself, rather than "s". Third, they received emotional support from their friendships. Fourth, their friendships began to function as political organizations. Fourth, their friendships began to function for some, operating to fulfill the mutual interests reserved for biological or legal kin.

Seiden and Bart's (1975) research indicated that their friendships met the expectations as well as the generalizability of their findings is limited. However, the generalizability of their findings is limited by sample size, the use of subjective measures, and the use of friendships of nonfeminists for purposes of comparison effects.

In summary, although evidence indicates that friendship experience typified by emotional intimacy and respect for each other, other research suggests that as political attitudes may modify the experience. This research focuses on the role of feminist politics in understanding friendship patterns among women.

Hypotheses

In the present study, the intent was to explore the relationship between feminism and friendship among heterosexual and lesbian and nonfeminists. The study used subjective measures of close same-sex friendships. In feminist rhetoric concerning the nature of friendship, Cherniss' (1972) and Seiden and Bart's (1975) research indicated that feminists would have more female friends, more cross-generational friendships, and spend more time with friends than nonfeminists. Lesbian feminists were expected to have more and fewer male friends than heterosexual feminists. In terms of friendship quality, feminists were expected to rate their friendships higher on measures of overall friendship quality than their friends more; to have more equal relationships with their friends, compared with heterosexual feminists; that lesbian feminists would love and value their friendships more than heterosexual feminists and nonfeminists.

No specific predictions were made concerning the perceived effects of feminism on

men's friendships now exists and a number of studies have examined individual differences. However, only a few studies (Seiden & Bart, 1975) have explored the relationship between politics and same-sex friendships. Research on same-sex friendships indicates that their same-sex relationship is characterized by intimacy (e.g., Bell, 1981; Rose, 1985). Women's friendships are often characterized by personal and family problems, close relationships, and emotional support (Aries & Johnson, 1983; Caldwell & Peplau, 1985). Research indicates a primary role in women's friendships (Johnson & Seiden, 1975) and that their friendships contribute to personal and social well-being (Davidson & Packard, 1981). In addition, having a strong network of supportive same-sex friendships is positively related to overall psychological well-being (Goodenow, 1985). The impact of sex-role identity on women's friendship disclosure (e.g., Fischer & Narus, 1981; Lavine & Seiden, 1985; Williams, 1985). Findings concerning the relationship between sex-role identity and disclosure are contradictory. For instance, both Seiden and Bart (1975) and Williams (1985) found that femininity (as assessed by the Inventory and Personal Attributes Questionnaire) was positively associated with self-reported intimacy in women's friendships. Bell and Lombardo (1984) reported that feminine women had similar levels of self-disclosure to close friends as did men. Different were Sollie and Fischer's (1985) findings that women were more willing to disclose on highly intimate questions than were men.

Research on the study of individual differences, particularly in their mid-30s as nonconventional (women who have had non-traditional lives overall and were willing to take risks to live differently) and compared their friendships. He found that nonconventional women had more same-sex friends, revealed more to their friends, and were more likely to report feeling love, affection, warmth and support. In contrast, the conventional women revealed less to their friends, rarely saw themselves in special relationships, and tended to stress the external aspects of friendship rather than the emotional.

Researchers credit the women's movement with having influenced and partially attribute their findings to an increase in disclosure relationships due to feminism (e.g., Bell, 1981). The purpose of the research cited above to assess women's

was to examine the relationship between feminism and disclosure. By Cherniss (1972), and Seiden and Bart (1975) research on feminism on same-sex friendships. Cherniss (1972) used a control group of nonfeminist women, feminists were found to be more sympathetic to women. In addition, the

feminists spent considerably more time with their friends in a variety of contexts including consciousness-raising groups, informal discussions, and political organizing.

Seiden and Bart (1975) interviewed 12 feminists, all of whom reported that feminism had changed their same-sex friendships in at least one of four ways. First, they claimed that feminism had enabled them to cross age lines in their friendships. Second, they came to regard spending time with other women as valuable in itself, rather than "second best" to being with men. Third, they received emotional support for their work from other women. Fourth, their friendships began to function as a substitute kinship system for some, operating to fulfill the mutual obligations and rights typically reserved for biological or legal kin.

Seiden and Bart's (1975) research indicates that feminists in the early 1970s felt their friendships met the expectations associated with "sisterhood." However, the generalizability of their findings is extremely limited by their small sample size, the use of subjective measures, and their failure to include friendships of nonfeminists for purposes of comparison or to control for cohort effects.

In summary, although evidence indicates there is a uniquely female friendship experience typified by emotional intensity, equality, acceptance and respect for each other, other research suggests that individual variables such as political attitudes may modify the experience of friendship. This study focuses on the role of feminist politics in understanding differences in friendship patterns among women.

Hypotheses

In the present study, the intent was to explore the friendships of feminists (heterosexual and lesbian) and nonfeminists. Predictions concerning objective measures of close same-sex friendships were based on assertions found in feminist rhetoric concerning the nature of feminist friendships and on Cherniss' (1972) and Seiden and Bart's (1975) research. It was hypothesized that feminists would have more female friends, fewer male friends, more cross-generational friendships, and spend more time with their friends than nonfeminists. Lesbian feminists were expected to have more female friends and fewer male friends than heterosexual feminists. In terms of friendship quality, feminists were expected to rate their close same-sex friends more highly on measures of overall friendship quality; to like, love, and value their friends more; to have more equal relationships; and to prefer spending time alone with the friend, compared with nonfeminists. It was predicted that lesbian feminists would love and value a close friend more than heterosexual feminists and nonfeminists.

No specific predictions were made concerning the subjective measure that assessed the perceived effects of feminism on friendship for the two feminist

groups. Rather, the intent was to examine current views held by feminists on the topic.

METHOD

Sample

A total of 200 friendship surveys were distributed; 139 women (69.5%) responded. Age of respondents ranged from 18 to 54 years. Of these, five respondents were eliminated from the analyses because their surveys were incomplete; four because they did not meet the criteria for either the feminist or nonfeminist group; and four because they identified themselves as bisexual or asexual.

The final sample was composed of 126 women between the ages of 19 and 46 from a large midwestern city. The nonfeminist group consisted of 45 heterosexual women recruited from undergraduate psychology classes and local church groups. The two feminist groups were comprised of 43 heterosexual women and 38 lesbians recruited from Women's Studies courses, a university women's center, local NOW chapters, and lesbian community groups. Participation in the study was voluntary.

Respondents were classified as feminists based on two criteria: 1) self-identification as a feminist and 2) high scores (88 or over) on the abbreviated (25-item version) of the Attitudes toward Women Scale (AWS) (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1973). The cut-off point of 88 on the AWS corresponded to a score of "mild agreement" on at least one-half of the pro-woman version of the items and "strong agreement" on the other half. Using two criteria guaranteed a rigorous definition of the feminist group. Criteria for the non-feminist group were: 1) refusal to identify self as a feminist, and 2) scores below 88 on the AWS. Subjects were classified as heterosexual or lesbian based on self-identification using these labels.

Instrument

The Women's Friendship Survey is a six-page instrument consisting of five parts:

Demographic Information. Subjects were asked to provide the following information: age, highest level of education completed, occupation, relationship status, and sex of their partner/spouse, if applicable. Subjects also specified their sexual preference by selecting the category that best described them: heterosexual, bisexual, lesbian, or asexual.

Feminism Measures. Respondents were asked whether or not they would describe themselves as feminists, that is, as someone committed to working

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for the social, political, and economic equality. All subjects completed a 25-item version of the Attitudes toward Women Scale (AWS).

Friendship Essay. To assess current beliefs about friendship, participants identifying themselves as feminists were asked to write an essay describing how a feminist's friendships with other women had changed their friendships with other women.

Friendship Network. Subjects were asked to identify a friend (female and male) by their first and last name. For each friend that person's age, sex, and length of friendship were asked to exclude romantic partners from the list.

Close Friend Survey. Subjects were asked to identify a friend, currently living locally, from their list of friends and to complete the following questions with this friend (1 item assessed friendship interaction, 1 item assessed frequency of time spent with this friend (1 item), and ratings of preferences for time spent with this friend (1 item). The quality of the target friendship was assessed using the Friendship Inventory (IRI) developed by Wiseman (1986). The IRI required subjects to rate their friend on 10 items tapping friendship quality (e.g., harmonious, understanding, intellectual). Subjects also completed Rubin's (1974) Friendship Measure. In addition, one item assessed the subject's perception of friendship, three items assessed equality in the friendship, and one item assessed the importance of the friendship to the subject (7-item).

Procedure

Participants were asked to complete the six-page survey in postage-paid envelopes provided.

RESULTS

Sample Characteristics

Nonfeminists were slightly younger ($M = 26.1$, $SD = 7.5$) than feminists ($M = 28.9$, $SD = 7.5$) and lesbian feminists ($M = 28.9$, $SD = 7.5$). These age differences were not significant. Sixty-two percent (46.5%, $n = 20$) of the nonfeminist group and 69.8% (17.8%, $n = 8$) of the lesbian feminist group had college or had post-graduate training, compared to 17.8% ($n = 8$) of the nonfeminist group. $\chi^2(2) = 15.12$, $p < .005$. Of the 126 subjects, 69.8% described themselves as single, compared with 69.8%

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Friendship Essay. To assess current beliefs about the effect of feminism on friendship, participants identifying themselves as feminists were asked to write an essay describing how a feminist philosophy had affected or changed their friendships with other women, if at all.

Friendship Network. Subjects were asked to list all their *close* friends (female and male) by their first and last initials. They were to specify for each friend that person's age, sex, and length of friendship. Participants were asked to exclude romantic partners from this list.

Close Friend Survey. Subjects were asked to select one close same-sex friend, currently living locally, from their friendship network as a target, and to complete the following questions with that person in mind. Five questions assessed friendship interaction, including the number of hours per week the subject spent with this friend (1 item), what they did together (2 items), and ratings of preferences for time alone with friend (2 items). The quality of the target friendship was assessed using the Interpersonal Relationship Inventory (IRI) developed by Wish, Deutsch and Kaplan (1976). The IRI required subjects to rate their friendship on 25 7-point Likert items tapping friendship quality (e.g., harmonious vs. clashing, emotional vs. intellectual). Subjects also completed Rubin's (1973) 22-item Liking and Loving measure. In addition, one item assessed overall satisfaction with the friendship, three items assessed equality in the friendship, and another three evaluated its importance to the subject (7-point scales).

Procedure

Participants were asked to complete the six-page survey and return it in postage-paid envelopes provided.

RESULTS

Sample Characteristics

Nonfeminists were slightly younger ($M = 26.5$, $SD = 8.1$) than heterosexual feminists ($M = 28.9$, $SD = 7.5$) and lesbian feminists ($M = 28.5$, $SD = 5.8$) but these age differences were not significant. Significantly more of the heterosexual (46.5%, $n = 20$) and lesbian feminists (57.9%, $n = 22$) had finished college or had post-graduate training, compared with the nonfeminist group (17.8%, $n = 8$), $\chi^2(2) = 15.12$, $p < .005$. Of the nonfeminists, 42.5% ($n = 14$) described themselves as single, compared with 34.2% ($n = 18$) of the het-

Table 1
Close friendship network

Friendship Network	Heterosexual Nonfeminists (n = 45)		Heterosexual Feminists (n = 43)		Lesbian Feminists (n = 38)		F (5,125)	p
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Total women friends	4.60 (2.11)		5.47 (3.16)		5.32 (2.73)		<1	n.s.
Total men friends	1.49 (1.60)		1.58 (1.97)		.89 (.98)		<1	n.s.
Cross-generational friendships	.36 (.71) ^a		1.12 (1.61) ^b		.79 (.84)		3.05	.02
Length of friendship/years	6.05 (4.49)		5.86 (4.07)		5.36 (3.28)		<1	n.s.
Interaction/hours per week	1.28 (2.07)		1.64 (2.01)		2.19 (3.01)		<1	n.s.

Note: Means with different superscripts differ significantly. Scheffé's test, $p < .05$.

erosexual and 23.4% ($n = 21$) of the lesbian feminists. This difference was not significant.

Objective Measures

A 3×2 multivariate analysis of variance was conducted first on close friendship network data and second on measures of friendship quality. The first factor was group (nonfeminist, heterosexual feminist, and lesbian feminist); the second was age (19–30 and 31–46 years old).

The MANOVA on friendship network data revealed a significant main effect of group, $F(10,230) = 1.98$, $p < .04$. No age or interaction effects were indicated. Subsequent univariate analyses indicated that group significantly affected the number of cross-generational friendships women had. As predicted, heterosexual feminists had significantly more women friends at least ten years younger or older than themselves than did nonfeminists. Means for lesbian feminists were between the other two groups (see Table 1). Contrary to other predictions about friendship networks, no differences were found between nonfeminists and feminists for the measures of number of close women or men friends. Nonfeminists and feminists also had equally enduring friendships and spent about the same amount of time per week on the average with their closest friend.

A MANOVA using the measures of friendship quality as the dependent variables also indicated a main effect of group, $F(24,216) = 2.12$, $p < .003$. No age or interaction effects were revealed. As shown in Table 2, post hoc univariate analyses revealed support for several hypotheses; however, most differences were between the heterosexual feminist and nonfeminist groups.

As predicted, heterosexual feminists rated their friendships as significantly

Table 2
Quality of close friendship

Measure	Heterosexual Nonfeminists (n = 45)		Heterosexual Feminists (n = 43)		Lesbian Feminists (n = 38)		F (2,125)	p
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
1. Relationship Inventory (IRI) ^a	141.6 (15.4)		148.5 (13.5) [*]		137.6 (16.6) ^b		5.56	.005
2. Liking	34.6 (6.1)		36.1 (4.4)		35.3 (4.9)		<1	n.s.
3. Loving	32.0 (6.2)		33.0 (5.0)		33.9 (6.1)		<1	n.s.
4. Satisfaction (7 = very much)	5.8 (1.4)		5.8 (1.2)		5.6 (1.5)		<1	n.s.
5. Importance ^b								
a. Commitment to friendship	5.8 (.8)		5.8 (1.0)		6.3 (.8)		<1	n.s.
b. Importance to society	4.9 (1.5)		4.9 (1.3)		4.4 (1.8)		<1	n.s.

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	M	SD	M	SD		
1)	5.47 (3.16)		5.32 (2.73)		<1	n.s.
2)	1.58 (1.97)		.89 (.98)		<1	n.s.
3)	1.12 (1.61) ^b		.79 (.84)		3.05	.02
4)	5.86 (4.07)		5.36 (3.28)		<1	n.s.
5)	1.64 (2.01)		2.19 (3.01)		<1	n.s.

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friendship network data revealed a significant main effect, $p < .04$. No age or interaction effects were found. Post hoc analyses indicated that group significantly affected the number of friends women had. As predicted, lesbian feminists had significantly more women friends at least than themselves than did nonfeminists. Means were significantly higher for lesbian feminists than between the other two groups (see Table 1). About friendship networks, no differences were found between heterosexual feminists and lesbian feminists for the measures of number of friends. Nonfeminists and feminists also had equally many friends. About the same amount of time per week on friendship.

Measures of friendship quality as the dependent variable were analyzed with a 2 (group) x 2 (age) ANOVA. The effect of group, $F(24,216) = 2.12$, $p < .003$. No age effect was revealed. As shown in Table 2, post hoc analyses supported for several hypotheses; however, the interaction between the heterosexual feminist and nonfeminist

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5. Importance ^c								
a. Commitment to friendship	5.8 (.8)		5.8 (1.0)		6.3 (.8)		<1	n.s.
b. Importance to society	4.9 (1.5)		4.9 (1.3)		4.4 (1.8)		<1	n.s.
c. Significance in terms of what is important in life	5.8 (1.2)		6.2 (.9)		5.9 (1.4)		<1	n.s.
6. Equality								
a. Democratic	5.2 (1.4) [*]		6.0 (1.3) ^b		5.4 (1.3)		4.55	.02
b. Balanced power	6.2 (.9) [*]		6.1 (.9) [*]		5.4 (1.3) ^b		6.82	.002
c. Do more than share to maintain	3.8 (1.3) [*]		3.0 (.8) ^b		3.3 (1.1)		3.11	.05
7. Privacy								
a. Prefer to be alone with friend	4.7 (1.0)		4.8 (.8)		5.4 (1.0)		<1	n.s.
b. Prefer to be with other people when with friend	4.5 (1.0) [*]		3.7 (.9) ^b		3.7 (.9) ^b		5.87	.004

Note: Means with different superscripts differ significantly, Scheffé's test, $p < .05$.

^aHigher scores indicate more positive friendships.

^b1- to 7-point scales, higher ratings indicate higher agreement with item.

more equal on two of the three measures of equality, reporting their friendships to be more democratic and claiming that responsibility for maintaining the friendships was more equally shared. Also as predicted, heterosexual feminists were significantly less likely than nonfeminists to prefer spending time with close friends when in a group of people.

Only one hypothesized difference between lesbian feminists and nonfeminists was found. Like the heterosexual feminists, lesbians reported significantly less preference than nonfeminists for being in a group when interacting with close friends. In addition, two unexpected differences were revealed: Lesbians rated their close friends significantly lower on the Interpersonal Relationships Inventory than heterosexual feminists and reported that the power in their relationships with friends was significantly less balanced than either the heterosexual feminists or nonfeminists.

Contrary to expectations, no differences in liking, loving, satisfaction with the friendship, or importance of the relationship to the individual occurred among the three groups.

Current Beliefs about Feminism and Friendship

About 83.7% ($n=36$) of the heterosexual feminists and 81.6% ($n=31$) of the lesbian feminists responded to the question, "How has your feminist philosophy affected or changed your friendships with other women, if at all?" Subjects' essays were content analyzed to determine what themes predominated. The first author subdivided each subject's essay into separate sentences or paragraphs which represented distinctly different themes. A second rater also subdivided each essay into separate themes. Agreement between the two concerning number of themes present in each essay was 92%. Of the respondents answering the essay, most (80.5%, $n=54$) mentioned only one theme; the remaining essays 19.5% ($n=13$) had two or three themes.

Next, a coding system was developed by the first author and each theme was classified in one of six categories: value women more, friendships are closer, increased self-respect, engage in political action, avoid friendships with nonfeminist women, and no effect. The second author independently classified each unit of information using the same coding system. Interrater reliability between the two judges was 97%.

The most often cited perceived consequence of adopting a feminist political philosophy was "avoidance of friendships with nonfeminist women." About 41.7% of the 36 heterosexual feminists and 41.9% of the 31 lesbian feminists who responded to the question asserted that they tried to avoid or actively rejected friendships with nonfeminist women. Reasons cited for this usually had to do with the need to have friends reflect and support what was seen as a deeply felt feminist identity.

The next most frequently mentioned theme was "friendships are closer,"

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accounting for 30.6% of the heterosexual feminist responses. Feminism allowed friendships to be shared safely. "The biggest influence had for me was that I could talk about my best friends," asserted a 38-year-old heterosexual feminist. According to 25.0% of the heterosexual feminists, it was that feminism had resulted in a greater number of women friends. The fourth theme, "increased self-acceptance and respect," was seen as promoting the growth of the individual. As one 40-year-old heterosexual feminist reported, "I feel better about being a woman. I like myself more." 8.3% of the heterosexual feminists and 12.9% of the lesbian feminists reported "engaging in political action" was very important. Some respondents viewed their feminism as affecting their friendships (e.g., "I think my friendships with women are closer because of feminism"); others felt political activity enhanced their friendships and we can talk about feminism and change things"). Last, a small percentage of the lesbian feminists (12.9%) responding reported "no effect" on their friendships with women. Women are extremely important to me, always.

DISCUSSION

Objective measures of friendship indicated that heterosexual feminists and nonfeminists differed largely in terms of the structural dimensions of friendship, that is, how friendships are formed and maintained. Heterosexual feminists had more cross-generational, equal, and private friendships. This greater range of friend candidates and types of friendships is in keeping with the nonhierarchical structure promoted within the movement (Morgan, 1991). Heterosexual feminist friendships strongly reflected these characteristics.

Lesbian feminists differed from the other groups on only one dimension, privacy in friendships. They rated their close friends significantly lower on the measure of being less equal. However, the difference between heterosexual and lesbian feminists potentially could be attributed to the present study. Lesbians were prevented from having same-sex friend targets in order to control for the effect of sex of target. However, it may be that most heterosexual feminists are satisfied by their romantic relationships, which necessarily fulfilled outside a romantic relationship.

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l consequence of adopting a feminist political
friendships with nonfeminist women." About
nists and 41.9% of the 31 lesbian feminists
asserted that they tried to avoid or actively
nist women. Reasons cited for this usually
friends reflect and support what was seen

tioned theme was "friendships are closer,"

accounting for 30.6% of the heterosexual feminist and 29.0% of the lesbian
feminist responses. Feminism allowed formerly private and personal experi-
ences to be shared safely. "The biggest influence that consciousness-raising
had for me was that I could talk about my sex life and my marriage to my
best friends," asserted a 38-year-old heterosexual woman. A third belief
according to 25.0% of the heterosexual and 29.0% of the lesbian feminists
was that feminism had resulted in a greater valuation of and loyalty towards
women friends. The fourth theme, "increased self-respect," typified 13.9%
of the heterosexual women's and 16.1% of the lesbians' responses. Feminism
was seen as promoting the growth of the individual, particularly in the area
of self-acceptance and respect. As one 40-year-old lesbian feminist wrote,
"I feel better about being a woman. I like myself." Fifth, approximately
8.3% of the heterosexual and 12.9% of the lesbian feminists reported that
"engaging in political action" was very intertwined with their friendships.
Some respondents viewed their feminism as emerging from strong friend-
ships (e.g., "I think my friendships with women formed the basis for my
feminism"); others felt political activity enhanced them (e.g., "My friends
are feminists and we can talk about feminist issues and do something to
change things"). Last, a small percentage of the heterosexual (11.1%) and
lesbian feminists (12.9%) responding reported that becoming a feminist had
"no effect" on their friendships with women, for example, "No changes.
Women are extremely important to me, always have been."

DISCUSSION

Objective measures of friendship indicated that heterosexual feminists and
nonfeminists differed largely in terms of what can be classified loosely as
structural dimensions of friendship, that is with whom and how the friend-
ships are formed and maintained. Heterosexual feminists had significantly
more cross-generational, equal, and private friendships than nonfeminists.
This greater range of friend candidates and a valuation of equality in rela-
tionships is in keeping with the nonhierarchical and egalitarian structures
promoted within the movement (Morgan, 1970). The data suggest that het-
erosexual feminist friendships strongly reflect these values.

Lesbian feminists differed from the other groups in the direction expected
on only one dimension, privacy in friendship. Contrary to expectation, they
rated their close friends significantly lower on the IRI and viewed them as
being less equal. However, the differences between heterosexual women
and lesbian feminists potentially could be an artifact of the design of the
present study. Lesbians were prevented from using their partners as close
same-sex friend targets in order to control for both relationship status and
sex of target. However, it may be that most needs for female friendship are
satisfied for lesbians by their romantic relationship, whereas these are nec-
essarily fulfilled outside a romantic relationship for heterosexual women. To

separate the effect of type of relationship (partner versus friend) from sex of target would require further research comparing love relationships with friendships for heterosexuals and lesbians.

Another methodological consideration pertains to the confound between the feminism measure and subjects' education: heterosexual and lesbian feminists were significantly better educated than nonfeminists. What role this factor has in influencing friendship patterns or how it interacts with feminism was not explored in the present study.

Interpretations of feminists' beliefs about the relationship between feminism and friendship are limited by the absence of a control group. The essay was aimed only at feminists; nonfeminists did not respond. Thus, only comparisons within feminist groups are valid. Of the six categories used to classify current beliefs, two supported the objective finding that feminists' and nonfeminists' friendships differed in terms of structure. First, feminism reportedly had enhanced the women's desire for contact with politically like-minded women and had led to a rejection or avoidance of friendships with nonfeminists. Second, engaging in political action with friends was seen as a significant aspect of the context of friendship. These structural differences reflect the emphasis on affiliation and community found in feminist rhetoric and behavior (Cherniss, 1972).

The finding that feminists prefer friendships with other feminists sometimes to the exclusion of other women deserves special attention in light of the emphasis on "sisterhood" within the movement. Although similarity is a well-documented characteristic of close friends (e.g., Duck & Craig, 1978), feminists might find a shared political philosophy to be an especially crucial aspect of friendship due to the socially "deviant" status they hold. Similarity on dimensions of deviant behavior has been noted by Kandel (1978) and Rodgers, Billy, and Udry (1984) as particularly important in maintaining friendship. Shared violations of propriety serve both to affirm private relationships and develop group solidarity. This might account for the extreme care with which feminists appeared to choose their sisters.

Contrary to prediction, differences in measures that tapped affective (as opposed to structural) dimensions of friendship were not found. The supposedly greater warmth, ease, and closeness reported by Cherniss (1972) to be more typical of feminist than nonfeminist friendships was not validated in the present study on any objective measures of loving, liking, commitment to or importance of friendship. Similarly, objective findings in the present study did not support subjects' subjective impressions that increased closeness and greater valuation of women friends typified feminist friendships.

There are several explanations for the discrepancy between the objective measures of friendship and feminists' perceptions of their friendships. First, given the already great intimacy and satisfaction that empirically has been demonstrated to exist between women, the global measures used in the present study may have imposed an artificial "ceiling" on subjects' ratings. More precise measures of affect such as ones that evaluate what qualities

Feminist Friendships

are liked or loved in the friend, why the friend amount of self-disclosure could reveal substantial here. Second, feminists' beliefs about their relationships are explained as reflecting a "feminist response set" evaluations of their relationships. Rhetoric of friendship is pervasive in the movement and peer standards for same-sex relationships. Feminist and nonfeminist friendships are similar because friendships are highly intimate and supportive preferences (e.g., Faderman, 1981). The great satisfaction as a group seem to regard their friendships mirrors the women's movement developed "sisterhood"

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are liked or loved in the friend, why the friendship is important, or type or
amount of self-disclosure could reveal substantive differences not tapped
here. Second, feminists' beliefs about their friendships also could be ex-
plained as reflecting a "feminist response set" that affects feminists' personal
evaluations of their relationships. Rhetoric concerning the value of women's
friendships is pervasive in the movement and members are quite aware of
peer standards for same-sex relationships. Finally, it could be that feminist
and nonfeminist friendships are similar because the tradition of female friend-
ships as highly intimate and supportive predates contemporary feminism
(e.g., Faderman, 1981). The great satisfaction and esteem with which women
as a group seem to regard their friendships might even have been one reason
the women's movement developed "sisterhood" as a political strategy.

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ACCESS DECISIONS BY DIRECTORS: SUBTLE FC SEX BIAS IN HIRING

Barbara S. Plake, Virginia Murphy-Berman, L. Wenzl Gerber, Sherral K. Miller, Carol A. Sp
University of Nebraska, Lincoln

Midwestern personnel and management assa
gus job applications which had identical bac
varied by sex of applicant, sex-role related a
degree of fit of applicant credentials to job
were rated on their qualifications and likeli
for the position, expected performance, and
job. A significant triple interaction was found
ured the likelihood of the applicant being c
(i.e., access to the position). Higher access
sex-stereotypical applicant when the applic
job demands. When the applicant's creden
mands, raters tended to favor non-stereoty
and research implications are discussed.

Documentation of sex bias in the assessment
began with Goldberg's article in 1968. Severa
have shown women to be evaluated less favor
qualifications (Dipboye, Fromkin, & Wiback,
have recognized that bias may involve a com

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