

**Maintaining Stable Friendships:
an Investigation of Strategic and Routine Communication**

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MAINTAINING STABLE FRIENDSHIPS:

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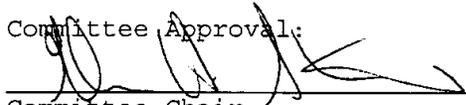
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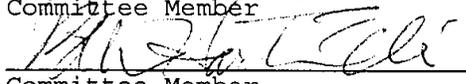
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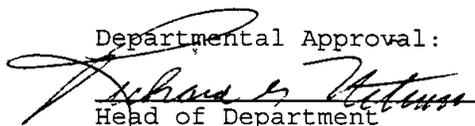


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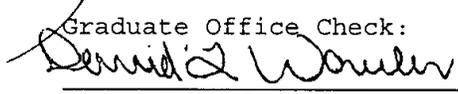


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ABSTRACT

THESIS: Maintaining Stable Friendships: An Investigation
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Other investigators have surmised that different types of relationships use diverse maintenance strategies in order to keep the relationship in existence. This study examines relational maintenance strategies that people use specifically in the relationship known as friendship.

Five adult friendship couples were interviewed for maintenance strategies they use to sustain their friendship. The discussions were recorded and transcribed. The Constant Comparison method was used to compare and contrast the data in order to discover strategies unique to friendships.

Results revealed seven strategies including Openness; Approach to Conflict; Identification; Admiration; Togetherness; and Sense of Continuance. These friendship strategies are uniquely utilized, and therefore distinctive, to the relationship. This may be due to the way people are socialized in our society.

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Chapter One

Introduction

From the beginning of recorded history, friendships have been an integral part of society. Indeed, philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato have examined the nature of the friendship relationship (see Annas, 1977). Friendships are important for a variety of reasons. For example, friendship relationships can help people socialize, allow them to practice interpersonal skills, and serve as an important first step toward marriage. For some, friendships are even more important than their relationships with their own siblings (Pulakos, 1988) or other family members.

Everyone who is involved in a mature relationship has heard the old adage "a relationship takes work." "Work," in this context, typically refers to the maintenance of the relationship. As Aristotle writes, "wanting to be friends does not make you friends any more than wanting to be healthy makes you healthy" (Annas, 1977, p. 534). To facilitate what Aristotle was implying, there are routine and strategic ways to maintain a friendship relationship. For example, a routine method might simply involve calling the friend everyday. One strategic technique is to disclose personal information to a friend. This research project

will examine the "strategies" through which people maintain their friendships. To accomplish this, a number of steps will be taken.

First, the friendship relationship will be examined. This entails defining "friendship" and the nature of the friendship relationship. Second, the nature of relational maintenance will be explored. Towards this end, definitions of maintenance, factors influencing maintenance, and the relationship of communication to relationship maintenance will be examined. Third, an overview of relational maintenance strategies generally and friendship maintenance strategies specifically will be offered. Finally, a methodology for examining the strategies people use to maintain their friendships will be provided.

The Friendship Relationship

The definition of "friendship" is dependent on individuals' perceptions. To one person, a friend might be a confidant she or he sees once a week at the bowling alley, while to another, a friend is a person who knows him/her on a personal level. A friend might be a person whom you met in college twenty years ago and occasionally correspond with or someone you met just a few days ago. Thus, the word "friend" is flexible in that it describes a wide range of relationships.

Definition of Friendship

Defining the term "friendship" has been a problem for researchers as well. According to Hays (1988), several

problems arise for researchers who try to provide a definition of "friendship" for investigations:

First, the [researcher's] definition may not match the respondent's phenomenological meaning of friendship or be appropriate to the particular respondents or contexts. Second, one investigator's definition of friendship may differ from that of another. Third, researchers' definitions often impose requirements, such as frequent contact, same sex, or 'closedness,' that exclude particular types of friends (e.g. long-distance, cross-sex, nonintimate) and so friendship's full spectrum is not represented in the literature.

(p. 392)

The scholarly literature, however, does identify some key conceptual components that appear in most definitions of "friendships." First of all, friendship is a voluntary relationship (Allen, 1989; Blieszner & Adams, 1992; Rawlins, 1983, 1994; Wright, 1974). This makes friendship much different from relationships where people are connected by "blood-ties," legal arrangements, or institutional factors. Second, the foundation of a friendship is based on interdependence between two individuals (Kelley, 1979). In other words, each person's behavior is coordinated and influenced to some degree by the behavior of the other person. As Wright (1974) asserts, "two people are friends to the degree that the plans, activities and decisions of one of them are contingent upon those of the other in the

absence of constraints toward interaction that are external to the relationship itself" (p. 93). These two components have been integrated as "voluntary interdependence" (Wright, 1974), a key behavioral criterion of friendship. Third, for a friendship relationship to exist, interactions must occur over a period of time and there must be some degree of consistency between the consecutive interactions (Hinde, 1979).¹ Finally, the overall enjoyment of the other person's company (Crawford, 1977; Davis & Todd, 1982) is an important consideration as well. Fischer's (1982) study reveals that people label others as friends when interactions include engaging in social activities and discussing pastimes.² Now that the meaning of the word "friendship" has been discussed, the nature of the friendship relationship will be examined.

The Nature and Function of Friendship

Friendships are unique relationships between two people. As McAdams (1985) asserts, "two basic tendencies in human lives--to feel close to others and to have impact on others--are played out in our interactions with those people who mean most to us" (p. 85). If this assertion is true, then the friendship relationship fulfills these two criteria. In addition, Rawlins (1992) claims that "the term friendship usually evokes positive connotations" (p. 271). Rawlins also outlines the typical characteristics of a friendship as:

the freedom to choose and maintain one's bonds with others voluntarily, the personalized recognition of and response to particular individuals' intrinsic worth as human beings, the pursuit of equality based on the corresponding validity of friends' subjective experiences, a shared orientation of mutual good will, understanding, trust, support, and acceptance, and heartfelt feelings of platonic affection and concern. (p. 271)

In a family, relations are usually maintained by virtue of familial rules. A friendship, however, is not constrained by an inherent degree of familial connection. A friendship is a voluntary relationship which can be terminated at any time by either individual. As Bassaro (1990) writes, "Friendship is never simple. It demands much of us: time, self-discipline, commitment, and the patience to be understanding even when we have problems of our own. In return, friendship does not promise us a rose garden" (p. 12). Entering into a friendship, therefore, does not guarantee rewards and may even prove to be a negative relational experience.

Most people feel naturally close to family, but friendships are established through mutual consensus, and may produce a deeper, or different, meaning for each person towards the relationship. Allen (1979) writes that "outside the family itself, friendship appears to be one relationship to which we attach special importance personally and

culturally" (p. 1). Allen further asserts that friends help us establish our identities and perceptions of social worth. While family relationships can serve the same functions, they do not offer the same flexibility. Within the family, a person usually possesses a particular identity which is associated with the role she or he plays in that family (e.g., son, daughter, husband, wife, first child, only child, etc.). These roles usually are assigned to the person by virtue of their gender or position within the family structure. By contrast, a friendship relationship allows a person to step outside of his/her assigned role and establish him/herself as a person in society. Once a friendship is initiated, the relationship needs to be developed.

Friendship Development. Friendships usually are the first relationships that we develop outside of our family unit. Indeed, the earliest friendships may develop when most of us are still in diapers. Children may "make" friends with other children due to close proximity or mutual interest in a toy or object (Rubin, 1980). Friends become a part of people's lives from the moment they interact with others. Rubin (1980) claims that:

By the time they are two years old, children seem to have an initial concept of a "friend," [sic] as a familiar peer from whom one expects particular responses and with whom one engages in a distinctive and enjoyable set of activities. (p. 28)

For whatever reason, people seek out friends at an early age. This quest for friends continues throughout the life-span.

From the ages of three to seven, children are drawn to other children as friends because of their proximity to one another. The friends are usually in the same classroom or are neighbors. At this age, friends often are identified by simple physical attributes such as being pretty or having curly hair, or because they have candy or a neat toy (Selman, 1981). The actual friendship exists while these children play together. Selman (1981) labels this as "Momentary Physicalistic Playmates." A child in this type of friendship might say, "Chris is my friend because he lets me play with his new race car."

After this period, children progress into adolescence and learn about dichotomies such as activity and opportunity, equality and reciprocity, and mutuality and understanding (Rawlins, 1992). During this time, children begin to comprehend the value of sharing and taking turns. Children also become aware that although another youngster may look physically different, he or she might share similar values and beliefs. In addition, children develop understanding towards others and acceptance of others as individual entities. Thus, the groundwork is laid for building close friendships and other social support relationships (Rawlins, 1992).

At an early age, children might define their best friend, on a daily basis, because of their similarity in behavior or possessions (a toy they might possess). As adolescents, however, a best friend assumes a different role, one which stresses the importance of communication. As Rawlins (1992) states, "One phrase summarizes the value of a close friend for adolescents; he or she is 'someone to talk to'" (p. 83). This communication takes various forms. A best friend provides the opportunity for free self-disclosure, can be trusted with personal information, and can provide emotional support (Hays, 1988).

After the teenage years comes early adulthood and the nature of friendship undergoes yet another transition. This transitional phase is known as the Early Adult Transition period and occurs between the ages of 17 to 22 (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1979). This phase allows people the opportunity to explore different lifestyle and career choices. However, young adults may find this phase disruptive. Not only are they forced to build a new social support system but they also must redefine relations with family and friends (Shaver, Furman, & Buhrmester, 1985, p. 194).

During this time period, young adults, perhaps for the first time in their lives, are forced to examine relationships and make deliberate interactional decisions that have a direct effect on their relationships. Rawlins (1992) claims that:

[when] these friendships were developed while dealing with fundamental decisions and life issues for the first time, the partners persist as important conversational recreators of and symbolic links with such unrepeatable moments. Finally, they may set the standards for what is meant by "real friendship" for the rest of one's interpersonal endeavors. (p. 104)

During this period, young adults start to develop the necessary tools to maintain mature and lasting friendships. Therefore, they are more likely to start employing strategies to maintain these friendships. Hence, young adults are ideal subjects for researchers wishing to gather information on friendship maintenance strategies.

Following young adulthood, people typically progress through three life stages. Adulthood occurs from the ages of 30 to 40 years. Middle age begins at 40 and lasts until about 65 years of age. Old age is indicated by ages over 65 (Neugarten, 1968). Friendships formed during the adult and later periods of life are usually based upon common environments and experiences. For example, adult friends are found in the work context or through social organizations. People also form friendships because of their new roles in life. Hess (1972) asserts:

the number and type of friendships open to an individual at particular stages of his [sic] life depend less upon explicit age criteria for the friendship role itself than upon the other roles that

he [sic] plays. As his [sic] total cluster of roles changes over his [sic] lifetime, so do his [sic] friendship relations undergo change. (p. 361)

One of the most dominant roles in a person's life is the work role, and friendships are usually established because of this role. As Rawlins (1992) states, "people in similar jobs often share proximity, overlapping work schedules, common interests and projects, and allied values, which, taken together, can facilitate routine contact and friendship formation" (p. 161).

The friendships formed in work life often last into old age. Long-standing friends help each other to deal with the violation of expectancies as they grow old. The friendship relationship helps the pair preserve self-esteem and adapt to the new experiences. In a sense, they redefine their existence by integrating a continuous sense of self from the past to the present to find meaning in old age (Francis, 1990).

At any age, friendships are important relational entities. This present study is significant not only because friendships comprise a dominant social system in our society, but also because many people place more significance on friendships than they do on family relationships. Pulakos (1989) shows that young adults are closer, more positive, and more reciprocal in friendships than in the relationships they have with their own siblings.

Friendships are dynamic and ever-changing relationships that require maintenance through various means, including the use of strategies. The following section examines the literature on relationship maintenance.

Relational Maintenance

Only recently have researchers begun to explore relational maintenance (Ayers, 1983; Dainton & Stafford, 1993; Dindia & Baxter, 1987; Duck, 1994; Hays, 1984; Shea & Pearson, 1986; Stafford & Canary, 1991). Similar to the term "friendship," "relational maintenance" is troublesome to define. Most people are aware that relationships take "work" and that one cannot simply initiate a relationship and expect the union to survive without conscious involvement. But, one might ask, "What do people do to keep a relationship alive?" To answer this question, several researchers have constructed definitions of relational maintenance, attempting to attain a better understanding of this phenomena.

Definitions of Relationship Maintenance

Dindia and Canary (1993) outline four common definitions of relational maintenance: "(1) to keep a relationship in existence, (2) to keep a relationship in a specified state or condition, (3) to keep a relationship in satisfactory condition and (4) to keep a relationship in repair" (p. 163). In regards to the first definition offered by Dindia and Canary above, researchers explore the notion of "existence" in a relationship. Theorists such as

Duck (1988) and Baxter (1994) identify relationship existence as a fundamental component of relational maintenance. As Duck (1988) states in regard to maintenance: "one clear sense in which researchers use the term is to refer simply to sustaining the existence of the relationship" (p. 84). Baxter (1994) concurs with this observation and writes, "maintenance [is] typically conceived as preventative efforts to preserve or sustain a relationship's current state" (p. 233). Maintenance, therefore, implies efforts to preserve the continued existence of the relationship at some satisfactory level.

Moving to Dindia and Canary's (1993) second definition of relational maintenance, keeping a relationship in a specified state (i.e., the stability of a relationship) is perhaps the most important criterion of relationship maintenance. Several researchers have examined "stability"; therefore, the concept will be discussed in length next.

Relational stability defies obvious articulation and is an important ingredient in relational maintenance. Considering that a relationship is not grounded in one place or moment, finding that point of equilibrium is difficult. The skill of maintaining a stable relationship, however, is vital for continued existence. Wilmot (1981) offers one conceptualization of stability and states that relationships exhibiting stability have three distinct features:

- (1) relationships stabilize because the participants reach some minimal agreement [usually implicitly] on

what they want from the relationship, (2) relationships can stabilize at differing levels of intimacy, and (3) a "stabilized" relationship still has areas of change occurring in it. (p. 99)

Several researchers have examined the three features identified by Wilmot (1981). For example, Canary and Stafford (1994) discuss outcome elements (i.e., expectations or desires) that participants expect from the relationship and label these "relational properties" (p. 5). These properties "are universal to all relationships . . . [as] the features of control mutuality, trust, liking, and commitment are critical components of personal relationships that portray the nature of relationships and indicate relational stability" (p. 5). This definition refers to the actual phenomena in a relationship that, when present, help to stabilize the relationship. If one of these features becomes unsteady (e.g., each person has different expectations regarding commitment), action has to be taken to restore equilibrium or continuance of the relationship.

Intimacy is also an important consideration for relationship stability (Ayers, 1983; Dindia & Canary, 1993; Shea & Pearson, 1986). Indeed, for romantic relationships, intimacy is a critically important consideration. Thus, partners in the relationship utilize strategies to keep the relationship constant when one partner wants to either elevate or lower the amount of intimacy (Shea and Pearson, 1986). To maintain a certain level of intimacy, therefore,

partners may engage in activities which keep their interactions going. For example, they may self-disclose personal information to each other to facilitate a sense of trust, which subsequently helps to maintain relational stability. Duck (1988) adds to this premise with the phrase "regulation of intimacy." This process refers to partners' ability to maintain a relationship at a given level, prohibiting it from generating to a greater intimacy level, and effectively stopping any escalation.

In regards to change within a stable relationship, Stafford (1994) states, "[stability does not mean] to imply [that] staying in the stage of togetherness is stable in the sense that relationships do not change, but rather stable in the sense that they are together" (p. 298). According to Hinde (1979), children learn to initiate and terminate relational interactions as they grow. Therefore, "while we may search for principles relevant to the stability of adult relationships, throughout childhood (and in some adult relationships) the relational principles are constantly changing" (Hinde, 1979, p. 314). If the principles (i.e., rules) are in a continuing state of flux, then stability in the relationship is more elusive for the participants, and maintenance becomes more important to sustain the relationship. People have to take action to ensure that the relationship is stable, yet has the capacity to change according to the participants' needs or environmental

influences. Skill or strategies may be needed to maintain this "stable state."

These three elements (expectations, intimacy, and change) would seem essential to any definition of stability. Ayers (1983) offers a definition of stability which implicitly encompasses these three elements and seems suitable for use in this investigation. He defines stability as that point where "once any valued relationship reaches a mutually satisfactory exchange level it will enter a stable state" (p. 62). This definition elegantly defines stability without being too analytical. Thus, while it can be applied to most relationships, it seems to lend itself well towards friendships.

The notion of stability has been applied to the friendship relationship by Gupta (1983). Gupta examines stability in a friendly dyadic interpersonal relationship and claims that this stability "varies with the similarity of perceived views of problems of common and enduring concern" (p. 17). The author has developed a questionnaire that: (1) identifies problems with which the subjects were very concerned and (2) locates the focus of their anxiety and efforts as both had evolved during the hypothesized determining factors (i.e., similarity of views or problems of enduring concern) and the consequence (i.e., the friendliness of their relationship). Therefore, the stability of the friendship relationship seems contingent on maintaining agreement in terms of partners' views and

problems. The third definition of maintenance identified by Dindia and Canary (1993) pertains to the satisfaction within the relationship.

A number of theorists interested in relationship maintenance stress the importance of satisfaction (Attridge, 1994; Burleson & Samter, 1994; Roloff & Cloven, 1994). Stafford (1994), for example, claims that "maintenance appears to be a state of relational stability with manifest positive relational characteristics" (p. 298). Attridge (1994), extending this concept, believes that maintenance involves more than just the existence of the relationship; the relationship must be satisfactory for each partner. Roloff and Cloven (1994) examine relational maintenance from the perspective of one partner being violated (e.g., having his/her satisfaction decreased). Therefore, their definition involves efforts by one or both parties to regulate any harm that may come to the relationship because of previous or future violations. In any case, maintenance of relationships has been a phenomenon gaining more attention from scholars. Thus, relational satisfaction is an important consideration in understanding how relationships are maintained.

Dindia and Canary's (1993) fourth definition, keeping the relationship in repair, will not be discussed here. The authors note that "this definition invokes a mechanical metaphor referring to whether a machine (such as an automobile) is working properly or is broken and needs to be

fixed" (p. 166). The intent of this project is not to examine broken friendships; rather the intent is to examine the relationship strategies that sustain the existence of the relationship. This is not to say that people are not interested in relational repair; rather, repair is not the central focus of the current investigation. Other factors which impact relationship maintenance will be discussed next.

Factors Impacting Maintenance

In the literature, many factors are cited which may impact relationship maintenance. These include social skills, a person's communication network, situational effects on strategy choice, attachment style, and conflict. For example, Burleson and Samter (1994) develop a social-skills approach to study relationship maintenance. According to Burleson and Samter, in the process of developing assorted social skills, people become more adept at some skills and less adept with others. Maintaining satisfying interpersonal relationships, therefore, is a skill people possess at varying levels. People primarily maintain relationships through various communication behaviors (Burleson and Samter, 1994). Logically, if a person's social skills are lacking, then that person will find maintaining relationships more difficult.

Another factor affecting friendship relationship is the degree of interaction one has with his/her partner's social network. Kim and Stiff (1991) examine the role which

communication networks play in developing close relationships. Their findings show that the degree of interaction with the other persons' social network is a barometer for the extent of relational development, and a high level of interaction contributes to the maintenance of the relationship. For example, when a person introduces a new friend to his/her social network, feedback from the network will be either positive, neutral, or negative. The reactions of the social network toward the new friend can influence a person's decision to continue that friendship. Kim and Stiff's (1991) study reveals that outside forces may have an effect on a relationship, but ultimately, the continuance and maintenance of a friendship is dependent on each person, despite the reactions of the other person's social network.

Fung (1991) examines different situations in which strategies are employed for their maintenance effectiveness. The dimensions of power, relationship, and purpose in gaining compliance are jointly measured for their overall effect when used as interpersonal strategies. One hundred subjects completed one of two questionnaires containing four different situations. The person in the described situation possessed either low power/status or high status/power. Subjects could choose from: friendliness, bargaining, reason (these comprised the weak category), assertiveness, higher authority, coalition, and sanction (which comprised the strong category). Fung discovers that weak strategies

are targeted mainly at powerful others while strong strategies are focused toward those who are less powerful. Subjects use a weak strategy in intimate relationships when they benefit, but use a strong strategy for selfless purposes. Fung's (1991) study reveals that the strategies employed are dependent upon the participants' perceptions of their partners. Therefore, different relationships will display different methods of maintenance. Thus, since friendships are a unique relationship, they will have distinctive maintenance procedures.

The selection of maintenance strategies may be influenced by the attachment-style people develop in their childhood. Simon and Baxter (1993) have studied the effect of individuals' attachment style differences in choosing relational maintenance strategies. Attachment theory states that infants form a stable mental model of themselves and others through interactions with their caretakers (Bowlby, 1982). The attachment style is believed to affect people throughout their lifetimes. The four attachment style prototypes examined were secure attachment and three non-secure styles: preoccupied, fearful, and dismissing. Findings suggest that prosocial maintenance strategies, such as assurances and romance, are more likely to be employed by Secure people than Non-Secure people. Conversely, and contradictory to the authors' assumption, Non-Secure and Secure people report the likelihood of using antisocial maintenance behaviors equally.

A study by Pistole (1989) also investigates adults' attachment styles in relation to their conflict resolution style and relationship satisfaction. Subjects tend to use one of three styles: a secure style, an anxious/ambivalent style, or an avoidant style. These styles affect relationship maintenance. For example, secure subjects are more likely to use a mutually focused conflict strategy and report higher relationship satisfaction. When high satisfaction is present in a relationship, maintenance is easily achieved.

There also have been inquiries into how strategies contribute to the resolution of conflicts within friendships, thereby maintaining the relationship. For example, Haferkamp (1992) gathered data from 103 females and 36 males regarding gender differences in relationship quality, conflict perceptions, self-monitoring orientations, and conflict strategy use. The results show that when compared to females, males are higher in self-monitoring, view friendships as less intimate and stable, see relational conflicts as being more stable, and use denial-avoidant strategies more frequently. Therefore, males and females may perceive their friendships differently and use different maintenance strategies, particularly when resolving conflict.

Communication and Relationship Maintenance

Communication is a dynamic process through which people grow and change. This process also affects relational

development and change. Maintenance is needed to provide relational stability, and stability is a product of the communication within any relationship (Montgomery, 1993). These factors create a dialectical dilemma within the relationship. According to Montgomery (1993), "relationships take shape in the interplay of conflicting and interconnected forces evident in the partners' behavioral patterns, motivational dynamics and contextual environments" (p. 206). Within these patterns are behaviors that simultaneously display openness and closedness to the other person. Therein lies the dialectical dilemma. Montgomery defines this perplexity as "the simultaneous presence of two relational forces that are interdependent and mutually negating" (p. 207).

Montgomery (1993) also notes that researchers are starting to use dialectics to "better understand relationship maintenance as an interpersonal process" (p. 212; see Duck, 1992). However, Montgomery also indicates that it is contradictory to use the dialectical perspective to investigate maintenance, if maintenance refers to the long-term stability of a relationship because "homeostasis is an unacceptable notion within dialectics, which holds that change is constant" (p. 213). One researcher has a solution to this dilemma.

In response to this quandary, Baxter (1994) introduces a new perspective using a variation of dialectical scrutiny to study relationship maintenance. She uses dialogism, as

conceived by Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian social theorist and literary critic. Dialogism is a variant of dialectical theory. Baxter states, "relational maintenance, conceived dialogically, is the process of coping with the ceaseless change that results from the struggle of contradictory tendencies inherent in relating" (p. 233). Baxter argues that a sound relationship is a constantly changing relationship where stability is nonexistent. This approach to investigating maintenance is new and quite intriguing. However, previous investigations typically approach relational maintenance as a communicative process through which relationships achieve certain states and survive threats by outside forces. The position taken in this paper does not necessarily disagree with Baxter's position; however, the concern of the current investigation is the "state" of the relationship and how participants maintain stability to ensure the relationships' continuance. Still, this study does acknowledge that change, broadly conceived, is an inevitable occurrence.

One of the means through which relationships are maintained through communication is with routine behaviors. For example, Dainton and Stafford (1993) compare the differences and similarities in maintenance behaviors between married and dating couples as well as the way in which sex differences affect the use of maintenance behaviors. Routine behaviors are characterized as occurring beneath the level of consciousness required for strategic

behaviors and "are enacted with a 'minimal need for central processing capacity'" (Greene, 1984, p. 300).

In Dainton and Stafford's study, 129 married couples and 114 dating couples participate in a survey pertaining to their maintenance behaviors. Twelve maintenance behaviors were discovered: positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, sharing tasks, joint activities, talk, mediated communication, avoidance, antisocial, affection, and focusing on self. Results show little difference between the type of behavior used by married and dating couples. In only two behaviors was there a meaningful difference: sharing tasks and mediated communication. However, men and women display significant differences in their choice of maintenance behaviors. Females report using positivity, openness, talk, and antisocial actions more than did men. Dainton and Stafford (1993) conclude that there are few overall differences between dating and married couples' choice of relational maintenance behaviors. Married couples report that they share tasks more than dating couples, whereas dating couples report using more mediated communication.

Therefore, maintaining a relationship may be accomplished by couples through their daily and routine behaviors. Duck (1988) acknowledges the importance of examining the "routine." He states, "these aspects of daily living are so 'obvious' that it is easy to underestimate their significance in keeping relationships alive" (p. 86).

The friendship relationship, however, may be a peculiar context in which to examine the routine. Certainly, friends may have more autonomy (and less connection) than married couples, for example. So everyday "routines" may not be fully appropriate. Friends certainly have their own lives to lead and personal goals to achieve. If a person is not directly involved with these goals and aspirations, then more effort (above and beyond the routine) may be needed to maintain the friendship. However, the routine may not be completely inconsequential. Seemingly irrelevant experiences also may help in maintaining friendships. Daily occurrences, for example, can be used as a conversational topic when friends communicate. These conversations may give each partner insight into the other's life, thereby helping each gain a better understanding of the other and reinforcing (and maintaining) the relationship. Therefore, not only do emotions sustain a relationship, but also the way individuals behave and structure their lives (Duck, 1988).

The inclusion of the "everyday" as well as the "strategic" are both important considerations of the shared meaning system of a relationship (Duck, 1994). Duck (1994) argues that:

relational maintenance contains two elements, not one: the first is strategic planning for the continuance of the relationship; and the second is the breezy allowance of the relationship to continue by means of

the everyday interactions and conversations that make the relationship what it is. (p. 46)

Both of these components are necessary to understand how a relationship is maintained. However, communication is the centerpiece of both "mundane" and "strategic" relational maintenance. Duck (1994) asserts that talk is a fundamental component of maintenance for three reasons; (1) talk provides the participants with "rhetorical vision" that defines the relationship both now and in the future; (2) partners share personal experiences through talk; and (3) talk supports the reality of the world by stabilizing the common reality that the relationship represents to the companions.

Therefore, when people talk, their dialogue performs many functions. For example, one friend might request a date or a favor from the other. The subsequent discussion might involve arranging schedules to make time for each other or focus on the relationship itself. When talk is used to describe the relationship, the discourse becomes the essence of the relationship (Duck and Pond, 1989). However, by dealing with the everyday occurrences in their lives, people also are organizing and giving meaning to their relationships and to themselves (Duck, 1994). Both the everyday as well as the strategic discussions create "meaning [which] sustains relationships" (Duck, 1994, p. 51). Duck (1994) suggests that different types of maintenance may be needed to sustain different types of

relationships. Certainly both the routine, which may be more implicit (as discussed above), as well as the strategic (as discussed next), are both important considerations in understanding how friends maintain their relationships.

Maintenance Strategies

Relational maintenance strategies have been examined in numerous contexts by several researchers (e.g., Ayres, 1983; Canary and Stafford, 1994; Dindia, 1992; Dindia & Baxter, 1987; Duck, 1988). A working definition of both "strategy" and "relationship strategy" is provided by Dindia (1992); "a strategy is . . . a plan, method, or series of maneuvers or stratagems for obtaining a specific goal or result.

Relational strategies are. . . strategies designed to change (or maintain) the nature of the relationship through communication" (p. 4). This definition would seem useful for this study since it deals with elements discussed previously (i.e., communication, maintenance, and change).

Related Literature on Maintenance Strategies

The early literature on relationship maintenance strategies is primarily concerned with developing typologies of strategies (Dindia & Baxter, 1987; Shea & Pearson, 1986). For example, Shea and Pearson (1986) examine the types of strategies used in conjunction with the type of relationship, partner intent, and gender. The authors hypothesize that relationship type, gender, and perception of partner's intent towards the relationship will affect the communication strategies chosen to stabilize and maintain