

Developmental Theories (Turning Points)

Ch. 25 Theory Application:
Crystal Schuster



Approaches to Relational Development

01

Uncertainty
Reduction
Theory (URT)

02

Stages of
Relationships

- Social Penetration Theory (SPT)
- Stage Model of Coming Together/Apart (“staircase stage model”)

03

Turning
Points

Turning points - “any transformative event that alters a relationship in some important way, either positively or negatively” (Baxter et al., 1999, p. 294).

● Turning Points

Characterize relational interaction and critical incidents, in which relationships progress and regress over time

Process View

Turning points are events that each partner *considers* “significant” and the perceived impact on their relationship

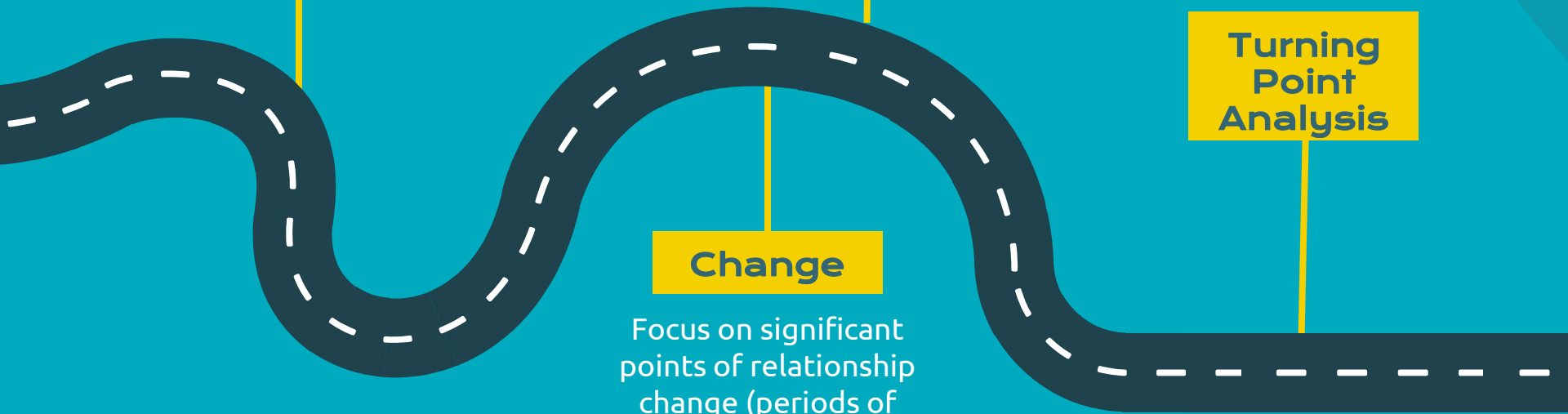
Perception

Asks participants to identify and plot their relational turning points on a graph

Turning Point Analysis

Change

Focus on significant points of relationship change (periods of transformation)



Article

"It's just like a break-up": A qualitative analysis of turning points in female friendships in early to middle adulthood

- Adaptation of the Retrospective Interview Technique (RTI), semi-structured interviews with women (N = 30) ages 25 to 45
- Purpose: Identify turning points related to changes in closeness in significant friendships with other females during adulthood.

COMMUNICATION QUARTERLY
2021, Vol. 49, No. 1, 43–46
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01463373.2021.1877163>

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group

 Check for updates

"It's just like a break-up": A qualitative analysis of turning points in female friendships in early to middle adulthood

Eileen F. Doherty

ABSTRACT

Considerable research has examined turning points within romantic relationships, but studies exploring turning points in the context of friendship are relatively scarce and focus mainly on friendships among college students. Friendships between women during the post-college years through middle-age have received scant attention. Utilizing an adaptation of the Retrospective Interview Technique, semi-structured interviews were conducted with women (N = 30) ages 25 to 45 in order to identify turning points related to changes in closeness in significant same-sex friendships during adulthood. Results suggest that turning points and social support are closely linked in terms of their impact on closeness in female friendships. Overall, findings contribute to an understanding of why closeness levels fluctuate between female friends during the adult years.

KEYWORDS

Friendship; maintenance;
relational closeness; gender;
turning points

Friendship is important for men and women throughout adulthood (Gillespie, Lever, Frederick, & Royce, 2015; Marion, Laursen, Zettergren, & Bergman, 2013) and research indicates that people with a greater number of friends tend to experience better physical and mental health (Cable, Bartley, Chandola, & Sacker, 2013; Fiori, Antonucci, & Cortina, 2006) and live longer (Perissinotto, Cenzer, & Covinsky, 2012). Research by Gillespie et al. (2015) suggests that satisfaction with friends is a significant predictor of overall life satisfaction even after controlling for demographic variables, number of friends, and satisfaction with other aspects of individuals' lives. Despite its importance, scholars such as Muraco (2012) have noted, "friendship is one of the most significant, yet socially ignored, relationships" (p. 15) and the topic has garnered less scholarly attention than romantic relationship and kin relationships (Gillespie et al., 2015). Women's friendships, in particular, have often been overlooked within the relationship literature. Indeed, as Apter and Josselson (1999) point out, "Generally, the scientific community, when it has dealt with the topic at all, either idealizes or trivializes women's friendships" (p. 234).

The scholarly research that has explored female friendship has illustrated its vital function in women's lives. According to O'Connor (1992), friendships among women tend to be positively associated with various indicators of

CONTACT Eileen F. Doherty  edoherty@mm.edu  Associate Professor of Communication & Media Arts, Marymount Manhattan College, 221 East 71st Street, New York, New York, 10021.
© 2021 Eastern Communication Association

RQ1

What types of turning points emerge as salient among adult women describing close, same-sex friendships?

RQ2a

How often, if at all, is increased closeness described as an outcome of each friendship turning point type?

RQ2b

How often, if at all, is decreased closeness described as an outcome of each friendship turning point type?



Method

- Interview protocol examined participants' experiences with turning points in their close friendships with other women
 - On average, the friendships identified by participants started at age 17 SD (= 7.43), with a range from 5 to 36 years of age.
 - Fourteen participants (47%) discussed a friendship that started before age 18, 11 participants (37%) discussed a friendship that started between the ages of 18 and 25, and five participants (17%) discussed a friendship that started between the ages of 26 and 36.
 - The friendships discussed had an average duration of 15.9 years (SD = 7.95), with a range from 2 to 32 years in length.
 - Out of the 30 total participants, five discussed a friendship that had ended, while 25 discussed a friendship that was ongoing.

Now, sometimes things happen in a friendship that end up being 'turning points' in that friendship. What I mean by that is, a turning point is anything that causes a change in the amount of closeness between you and your friend. I don't mean the physical proximity between you; I mean the *feeling* of closeness between you. It could be an increase or a decrease in the closeness, but what matters is that it is a change in closeness that is significant to you personally.

● Results

Romantic escalation
(dating, engagement, wedding)

Romantic de-escalation
(breakups and divorce)

Crisis
Family or pregnancy crisis

Changes in Geographical distance

Betrayal
(turmoil surrounding romantic relationships; dating ex-partners)

Conflict

Having children

Reunion
(sustained meaningful face-to-face contact)

Cohabitation
(close proximity created new tensions)

Shared activities, self-disclosure, and travel

Increased closeness with friends almost always included an element of social support

- While it was the event that was identified as the turning point, provision/receipt of social support served as the *mechanism* to increase the closeness between friends

Turning points that led to a decrease in closeness often described an absence of social support



Big Bang Theory Example!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cYw75pQre4>





“My life is one long
curve, full of turning
points.”

-Pierre Trudeau

References

- Altman, I., & Taylor, D. A. (1973). Social penetration: The development of interpersonal relationships. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Baxter, L. A., Braithwaite, D. O., & Nicholson, J. H. (1999). Turning points in the development of blended families. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 16(3), 291–314. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0265407599163002>
- Dailey, R. M., LeFebvre, L., Crook, B., & Brody, N. (2016). Relational uncertainty and communication in on-again/off-again romantic relationships: Assessing changes and patterns across recalled turning points. *Western Journal of Communication*, 80(3), 239–263. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10570314.2015.1094123>
- Bullis, C., & Bach, B. W. (1989). Socialization turning points: An examination of change in organizational identification. *Western Journal of Communication*, 53(3), 273–293. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10570318909374307>
- Bolton, C. D. (1961). Mate selection as the development of a relationship. *Marriage and Family Living*, 23(3), 234–240. <https://doi.org/10.2307/346967>

