

BESTIES: EXPLORING THE UNIQUE FRIENDSHIPS BETWEEN WOMEN IN  
COLLEGE

by

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HONORS THESIS

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## **DEDICATION**

For my mom, my forever bestie.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This project examines the friendships between women in college. Many young adult women form unique bonds during their college years. While lots of these friendships turn out to be life-long bonds, many other friendships are short lived (yet, no less impactful). Friendship is a necessity in anyone's life. While many women form lasting bonds with childhood friends or friends made in their later adult lives, there seems so be something unique about the relationships made between collegiate women. In this project, I will be interviewing women currently enrolled in college, as well as women who attended college decades ago. These interviews will be transcribed, combined, and used to create an artistic piece that aims to answer the following questions: Who do we hold close? Why do we let them go? What makes a friendship last?

## **I. MY STORY**

The adventure begins:

My very first semester at Texas State, I took an Honors course called Art as A Way of Knowing taught by Dr. Rachel Romero. This course, which focused on arts-based research, quickly became my favorite class. For our final project, I worked in a group with two other students. Each of us interviewed one other person about their experience with the concept of virginity and then we turned those interviews into a poem. We created a video that featured the three of us reading this poem while some images played on the screen. Our project was titled “Poems that Breathe”.

To this day, I am inspired by that project that we created. I have remained so fascinated by the process that we went through and even the small impact of the finished product that we created. I knew that I wanted to revisit arts-based research and hoped to use a similar research process in the future. When it came time to choose a capstone project, this felt perfect.

Oftentimes, presenting research findings in a creative and artistic way can be much more accessible than traditional methods. While many of us have no problem comprehending charts and academic-style articles, some people (myself included) can gather so much more from visual art, literature, or performance. Art speaks to humanity in a unique way. This can allow us to access our emotional intelligence and understand research more deeply..

I have modeled my capstone project from the Art as A Way of Knowing project so that it is a similar process, but on a much larger scale. In this project, I am completing a series of interviews and then turning these interviews into an artistic piece. Each

interview features a woman currently in college, or a woman that is no longer in college.

In these interviews, I have asked the following questions:

- When you were in college/while in college, who did/do you call your best friend/closest friend?
- What is your favorite memory with that friend?
- Did you ever have conflict with this friend?
- What was your favorite part about your friendship with this friend? What makes them your best/closest friend?
- Are you still in touch today/do you expect to keep in touch after college?
- Do you think that there is something special about a friendship between women?  
A unique bond?

It took quite a while for me to craft these questions. I wanted to create a list of questions that were intimate, without feeling intrusive, and would hopefully inspire my interviewees to tell me stories, rather than just giving short answers. Each of these interviews was recorded audibly. I also took notes during the interviews of anything that stood out to me. Once I completed my interviews, I began reworking and revising the text from the interviews to create poetry. This essentially worked like creating a “blackout poem” would, but by using the recordings and my notes instead of a chunk of published text. I made sure not to change any of the interviewees’ language, only alter the order of the words and add some phrasing if necessary. Even though some people naturally speak more poetically than others, it felt important to me to keep the integrity of these stories intact, while creating a digestible artistic text.

I chose the topic of friendships between women in college because, admittedly, I



had begun feeling emotional about my last semester in college. I truly hope that I will remain close and in contact with the friends I have made here at this huge university in this tiny river town, but the reality is that I have no idea what will happen after graduation. The more I thought about this (and panicked about this) the more I reflected on my friendships made at Texas State. Maybe I can blame it on COVID and maybe I can blame it on the massiveness of this university (or maybe there's no blame to be given at all), but I did not have the college experience that I had expected. By any means. Sure, I've had classes that I've loved and friends that I will cherish forever, but I still felt that I had missed out on something. What though? Wild nights out on the Square? A dramatic love affair? Countless friends that I called my "besties" and spent all of my Friday nights with? Maybe. Despite not having the experience I had seen in media and hoped to have for myself, I still feel that there is something truly unique about the friendships between collegiate women. Be it the new-adult age, the first time leaving home, or the lack of sleep, something during these four short years binds us together in a way that no other time in our lives usually does.

I had initially hoped that my work would culminate in some sort of immersive theatre piece, though that is not the case. As a theatre major, my brain automatically jumped to *performance*; however, this whole process has made the importance of starting small and being flexible very clear. It appears that the culmination of these interviews is more like a collection of poetry, each poem titled with the first initial of the corresponding interviewee, that could possibly serve as a non-traditional script for a theatre piece.

On the topic of being flexible, I have truly learned my lesson. Because this project

depends on the willingness of others to participate, I have had to reschedule interviews, cancel interviews, do interviews over the phone instead of in-person, and ask furthering questions on a whim when I wasn't getting as thorough of a response as I wanted. I have had to rethink my end product over and over again. I have loved this project, hated this project, wanted to scrap the whole thing, wanted to work on nothing else, and questioned my "why" over and over again. But finally, we have almost made it to the end.

Below is the poetry, prose, pseudo-script, or whatever you would like to call it that represents the stories of friendships between women spanning semesters, graduations, and decades that will hopefully help all of us answer the seemingly unanswerable question:

What makes a friendship last?

## I. THE POEMS

L:

I remember my childhood,  
And I miss having friends like that.  
I cherish those days.  
Stupid COVID.  
Only a couple “best friends” in college.

Favorite memories?  
The winter storm.  
Terrified and sleep deprived,  
But having too much fun.  
Wishing I had gone home at first,  
But glad I stayed.  
Rescuing a drunk friend  
And laughing about it to this day.  
Camping out at the dining hall until closed late at night.  
I remember saying,  
“This is it. Right here.”

These are the memories I cherish now.

A smidge of toxicity,  
But she would be hurt if she heard me say it.  
Hopes to stay in touch,  
But a nerve-wracking no-guarantee.

Our memories are my favorite.  
The ways in which we can talk for hours  
And never get bored.  
These are my best friends  
Because I trust them.

This is the divinely feminine.

**M:**

My one primary person,

But no friend group.

Not like high school.

Outgoing,

Involved,

Easier then.

12-hour days and more friends.

In college,

Just the one person.

I remember my first college party with that friend.

Freshman year,

Right out of high school.

Full of hope.

Potential.

I was robbed by COVID.

Then the roommates...

A debacle.

No roommate-friends after that situation.

My best friend is so put-together.  
She is my best friend because she is mature  
And has a work ethic  
And is complementary to my personality.  
She is grounding  
And more sensible than my other friends.  
She is reliable.  
Consistent.  
I hope we stay in touch,  
But I fear we won't.

I like her more than my high school friends.

In college,  
I have substantial friendships  
Instead of spreading myself thin.  
I have a say in who I socialize with.  
I want to fit in.  
I want community.  
But I was still not fulfilled by my friend-experience in college.  
I wanted more  
Friends,  
Opportunities.

I was a tomboy growing up,  
But my best friends are women.

I'm drawn back to them.

The familiarity.

The comfort.

The bond.

Being a woman is hard.

It's a girl thing.

**G:**

I met my person in the fall of 1986.

In college on and off for four years,

But never graduated.

We were riding in the elevator.

I was wearing my sundress.

In front of everyone she said,

“I love your freckles and your boobs!”

At this moment we both knew:

This is my best friend forever.

We walked to class together.

We were each other’s maids of honor.

Her mother made my wedding dress.

We have had no conflict.

We are connected.

We’ve maintained our friendship,

Though we’ve moved away from identifying as “best friends”.

We don’t need that title anymore.



I remember having a lot of fun.  
Laughing uncontrollably at random things.  
Our special kind of connection.  
Our chemistry.  
When you want to do everything with that person.  
And you're safe.  
You have secrets.  
You trust with no question,  
Or jealousy,  
Or drama.  
It was the perfect recipe.

Our friendship may not have been the same if we had met outside of college.

We were new adults.  
Our lives paralleled.  
We chose each other over other people.  
Though we've had other best friends,  
Our relationship has weight.  
Longevity.

When we see each other now,  
It's like no time has passed.  
I could tell her anything today

With complete support and confidentiality.

But we don't see each other often.

My favorite memories are just hangin' out.

When the world is our oyster,

And anything is possible.

N:

Years ago,

She told me she had breast cancer.

She said, "I'm dying."

But I remember her like a sister.

I definitely had a very best friend.

She was my college roommate,

But we had never met before.

We didn't even know each other's names.

Sorority rush, pledge sisters.

"So, which are you putting first?"

"I think I'm putting Phi Mu."

"I am too."

She was in my wedding.

She met her husband through me,

Because he and I had maybe two dates...

I went away for the summer

And told them to take good care of each other.

They called me and said,

“We just want you to know that we’re taking *really* good care of each other!

We’re dating!”

We were both crazy, crazy girls.

She was brilliant.

I was a goof-off,

But also brilliant.

We used to pretend we were invisible.

I was working on my music theory final.

Drawing staves and writing music I’d composed,

With all of the fancy signs and symbols.

She couldn’t carry a tune.

And she tipped over my bottle of ink.

But that was our only small conflict.

We were oddballs and we were proud of it.

We marched to the tune of different drummers.

We didn’t wear the right kind of shoes or things that were stylish,

Mostly because we couldn’t afford them.

We would swap clothes.

We kept in touch forever.

On the way to the Carolinas to visit my sisters, I'd stop and stay with her for a while.

It didn't matter if we talked every few weeks or few months.

It was just the same.

After a tremendous rainstorm,

I never saw her again.

I was very sad.

So, out of the clear blue sky,

I called another friend

And found that we had a bond too.