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People Would Talk: Normative Barriers to Cross-Sex Friendships for Elderly Women

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Abstract

A normative explanation for elderly women's lack of male friends is developed by showing that cross-sex friendship is defined as romance, that

there are norms inhibiting romance during old age, and that other norms encourage them to reject potential mates who can no longer meet traditional sex role demands. The data were derived from in-depth interviews and observations of 70 non-married, white, elderly women who lived in a middle-class Chicago suburb. It can be expected that future cohorts of elderly women who will have been exposed to models of non-romantic cross-sex friendships early in their lives will have more of these friendships during old age.

Keywords: [Qualitative](#), [Cohort](#), [Romance](#), [Sex roles](#), [Age norms](#)

Topic:

[marriage, life event](#)

[sex role](#)

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