Conflicted Provision: Exploring the Intersection of Social Support and Deception

Courtney Lane Mcdaniel
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, mcdaniel.courtney2011@gmail.com
CONFLICTED PROVISION: EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF SOCIAL SUPPORT AND DECEPTION

By
Courtney McDaniel

Bachelor of Arts – Communication Studies
University of Kansas
2015

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Arts – Communication Studies

Department of Communication Studies
Greenspun College of Urban Affairs
The Graduate College

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
May 2017
This thesis prepared by

Courtney McDaniel

entitled

Conflicted Provision: Exploring the Intersection of Social Support and Deception

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts – Communication Studies
Department of Communication Studies

Jennifer A. Guthrie, Ph.D.  
*Examination Committee Chair*

Kathryn Hausbeck Korgan, Ph.D.  
*Graduate College Interim Dean*

Tara G. McManus, Ph.D.  
*Examination Committee Member*

Lisa Menegatos, Ph.D.  
*Examination Committee Member*

Emily Troshynski, Ph.D.  
*Graduate College Faculty Representative*
Abstract

Social support and deception are both significant elements of close relationships. Social support involves verbal and nonverbal behaviors that are used when an individual is trying to help another person (Vangelisti, 2009). Social support is imperative to relationships, and as such, plays a large role within friendships, romantic relationships, and professional relationships alike. Research has suggested that friends in particular are one of the most enduring and irreplaceable sources of social support (Burleson, 1994; Burleson & Goldsmith, 1998; Floyd, 1995; Floyd & Parks, 1995). Thus, because friends comprise the strongest support system for many individuals, studying how deceptive communication functions within friendships could be very beneficial.

Additionally, deception is another aspect of close relationships that cannot be avoided. Deception involves a deliberate perpetuation of false information (O’Hair & Cody, 1994). It is often the case that in attempting to provide encouraging social support to their friends, individuals may feel the need to be deceptive in their communication. Individuals may feel the need to be honest with their friends, but may simultaneously want to provide a supportive message. Further, the truth may not always be the kindest version of support. Hence, when social support and deception intersect, a variety of tensions for a support provider may accompany it.

The present study intends to reveal more about the process individuals undergo when deciding whether to provide honest or deceptive supportive communication to friends, coworkers, and acquaintances. The study is focused on the motivations and expectations concerning social support and how best to provide it, as well as considerations of the support seeker. Provision of social support may not be as innate as it seems, as there are several challenges that arise in conjunction with being a provider. Implications for Politeness Theory and truth bias are also discussed. Methods for the current study entailed a seven day diary study, in
which participants recorded their social support provision experiences and the emotions surrounding each instance. A follow-up survey was conducted to garner additional information from the study participants in regard to the study as a whole. Overall, it was revealed that friends were honest with each other more than they deceived each other, but the sense making that occurs in regard to support provision is anything but simple. In addition, the reasons why individuals provided the support they did, as well as insight into the provider’s sense making process are also illuminated.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Introduction and Rationale</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Literature Review</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support Among Friends</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comforting Messages</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness Theory and Social Support</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deception</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types and Motivations of Deception</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deception and Closeness Among Friends</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends and Truth Bias</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Method</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: Results and Interpretation</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diary Data</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Seekers/Recipients and Participants’ Reports of Friend Types</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support Provided</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter One: 
Introduction and Rationale

At first glance, deception and social support may appear to be at two opposite ends of a communication spectrum. Broadly defined, social support includes verbal and nonverbal behaviors employed by individuals when they are seeking to help another person (Vangelisti, 2009). Alternatively, deception involves “deliberate falsification or omission of information by a communicator” when they are seeking to mislead another (Miller, 1983). However, when considered more deeply, it becomes easier to see the link between the two concepts: Occasionally, when proving social support, individuals, whether consciously or unconsciously, may give information that is not fully honest. Research that describes social support outlines behaviors that are coincidently, inherently deceptive in nature (e.g., see Burleson, 1994; Brown & Levinson, 1987.) For example, acting excited about an event in a friend's life when in reality one feels no excitement at all is showing social support for the friend (Brown & Levinson, 1987), but at the same time, it is also deception because it conveys false information (see O’Hair & Cody, 1994).

This idea is complex to consider, especially when the individual seeking support is a close relational partner, such as a best friend. Social support can get chaotic in this regard; as one must juggle wanting to be a good friend (Does that mean being honest? Or, does that mean being supportive, no matter what?) and avoiding causing additional distress in a situation that is potentially already stressful. Thus, deceptive social support is an especially interesting avenue of study because while social support has more of a positive connotation, deception is thought of to be more of a negative communication choice. Therefore, what happens when we mix the negative with the positive? Is deceptive social support considered more acceptable because it’s an attempt to help someone (Vangelisti, 2009), or is it still unethical because false information is
being shared? (O’Hair & Cody, 1994). This intersection of constructs requires more in depth study, and the present study attempted to clarify the feelings of support providers as they deliberate between providing honest or deceptive support to those around them.

Deception is an unavoidable aspect of life. Individuals knowingly deceive others and in tandem, are receivers of deception themselves. Telling lies and being deceived are now considered an aspect of everyday life (DePaulo & Kashy, 1998; Gozna, Vrij, & Bull, 2001; Nyberg, 1993). Whereas deception is very common, research regarding the motivations and decision making parts of the process (i.e., deciding when to deceive vs. deciding to communicate honestly) is not. Much of current deception research focuses on deception detection (see e.g., Buller & Aune, 1987; Levine, 2014; Levine, Kim, Sun Park, & Hughes, 2006; Levine, Shaw, & Shulman, 2010). Moreover, there is a vast amount of scholarship studying how deception is used across relationship types, such as friends, acquaintances, romantic partners, and strangers (see Buller & Aune, 1987; DePaulo & Kashy, 1998; Householder & Wong, 2011; Lemay & Clark, 2008; Whitty & Carville, 2007), but more research is needed that focuses on how deception functions among a certain relational group in a certain context (Cole, 2001) because social support likely varies in different relationship types.

Given that little research studies the particular situation and context of deception among friends, uncovering this information could provide both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the current study could work to expand on current theories, such as Politeness theory, as this particular research angle has not been thoroughly investigated in regard to this theory. Politeness theory focuses on how messages are crafted so that an individual’s as well as others’ faces are protected in the process. Thus, it is clear that studying how people craft
messages to friends while balancing supportiveness and deception, as well as their specific feelings while doing so, could potentially add to the literature on Politeness.

Practically, this study could help friends better understand the tensions that are often felt when deciding whether or not to be deceptive in the communication of support. Additionally, this study may help scholars better identify how the usage of Politeness Theory and deception may intertwine and offer insight to the overlap of the constructs. In gaining a better understanding of how individuals decide to provide honest or deceptive supportive messages to friends, the gap in research can be addressed.

Further, deception does not function as a simple concept that occasionally arises in communication and is dealt with easily. Rather, deceptive communication within relationships can affect both the support providers and receivers. Albrecht and Adelman (1987) suggest that if a friend’s problem cannot be resolved properly by the support of the provider, the provider may in turn experience detrimental effects as a result of the situation, also known as emotional contagion. Thus, due to the emotional investment of both friends involved in the exchange, providing support can become a high stakes situation, especially if a support seeker has expectations regarding the support they will receive. Given this idea, the proposal of the present study concerning how individuals decide to provide support, whether honestly or deceptively, is an important process to analyze indeed. The theoretical implications of the present study would shed light on why individuals occasionally feel pressure to agree with or deceive their friends, as they may wish to aid in finding the problems’ resolution or else they may feel guilty at potentially being unhelpful. The deception and social support angle is a new path of investigation, as it is one of the first to merge two large bodies of research.
Deception has been heavily studied (e.g., such scholars as Burgoon, Levine, Metts, Spitzburg, and Cupach). Likewise, social support studies have occurred liberally as well (e.g., such scholars as Burleson, Goldsmith, Kunkel, MacGeorge, Vangelisti,); however, the connections between the two have yet to be studied in depth. The present study hopes to break into a new territory in communication studies, where extensive scholarship can be produced focusing more deeply on how these two well-studied concepts work concurrently.

This study examines motivations regarding why individuals are deceptive when providing support to friends. In addition, this study examines the expectations of how individuals believe social support should be provided and how these expectations may influence either the honest or deceptive communication by the provider. The following review of literature (Chapter Two) examines what is currently known about deception and social support within close relationships—specifically in friendships. Following this discussion, Chapter Three outlines the diary method through which qualitative data was collected concerning the intersection of deception and social support and their use within friendships. Chapter Four describes results and interpretation, and Chapter Five provides a discussion of these results, as well as theoretical and practical implications. Study limitations and future directions are also provided.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

The following chapter describes how social support and deception are conceptualized, how these communicative behaviors function within friendships, and the dilemmas involved in providing social support and deceptive/honest messages.

Social Support

Though it may seem to be an innate part of human nature, social support is quite complex. Sarason, Sarason, and Pierce (1994) noted that social support encompasses “a complex set of interacting events that include behavioral, cognitive, and affective components” (p. 310). Social support, as defined by Vangelisti (2009) includes verbal and nonverbal behaviors employed by individuals when they are seeking to help another person. In further conceptualizing social support, Burleson and Goldsmith (1998) note that social support is not limited to dealing with simply the emotional distress of others but also the ways in which individuals benefit from close relationships with others. Put another way, social support is present in the way friends are “there” for each other, share personal information with each other, and work together to find resolutions to life issues. As an example, consider how friends often look to each other for help dealing with situations regarding potential or current romantic partners. The back and forth conversational exchange between the two friends discussing the situation can be identified as social support because of the communication and sharing of ideas in regard to a problem or goal. In common situations such as this, when an individual looks to a friend for their perspective or help with a situation and the friend gives their opinion or advice, the resulting dialogue is socially supportive in nature. Social support is evident in many different types of exchanges between friends. It can also be argued that social support is a crucial element
in a friendship, as individuals often perceive a friend as being someone who is “there for them” or “has their back” (Floyd, 1995). Thus, social support is a vital element within friendships, as it allows individuals’ feelings of security in tumultuous (i.e. stressful or emotionally challenging) times in their lives (Cutrona & Russell, 1990).

**Social support among friends.** Research has suggested the personal relationships between friends are one of the most enduring and irreplaceable sources of social support (Burleson, 1994; Burleson & Goldsmith, 1998; Floyd, 1995; Floyd & Parks, 1995). Cutrona, Hessling, and Suhr (1997) suggest five categories of social support: *emotional* (“communicating love, concern, or empathy”), *esteem* (“communicating respect and confidence in abilities”), *informational* (“providing information about the stress itself or advice on how to deal with it”), *social network* (“communicating commonality with or belong to a group”), and *tangible* (providing “goods or services needed in the stressful situation”; p.384). Thus, in line with other conceptualizations of social support mentioned above, social support is not solely communicated through words. Support can be shown in physical ways as well as through demonstrating concern and care for individuals that is tailored to the needs of a specific situation. The current study will aim to examine these types of social support if they arise within the data set and to subsequently determine if perhaps deception or honesty is more common in some forms of support than others and why that might be the case given the reasons provided by participants. For example, is deception more prevalent in esteem support instances because honesty might not be the most polite way to support the individual?

Friendships have several unique attributes that make them of special interest to study. Floyd (1995) writes that friendships are voluntary in nature and also tend to be built on positive affect. While positivity in friendships may seem like an admirable trait, the expectation for
positivity from friends creates the possibility for turmoil among relationship partners. This sense of positivity could potentially encourage deceptive acts from friends, as they do not want to come across negative or hurtful in their discourse. In fact, Zhang & Stafford (2009) suggest that honest comments may not always be desired in relationships, and in providing honest comments and feedback, the individual then assumes the risk of relational harm, even if the motive was not intended to be hurtful.

Further, Baumeister (1998) describes the balancing act that is social support provision, suggesting that while individuals can appreciate honest support that helps them determine situational resolutions, people also like messages that make them feel liked, loved, and competent. For example, how should a friend provide support if the message is honest but will cause hurt in the support seeker? Does the individual assume that person wants to hear the truth or that the person would just like to be comforted in that moment? Or, is there a way to craft a message that can somehow speak truth and comfort simultaneously? The answer likely varies based on the situational context, friends’ personalities, and expectancies based on previous encounters. Moreover, understanding how this choice is made is an idea that the present study hopes to expand upon. Hence, when it comes to providing social support to each other, friends have a complicated role to play.

Another aspect of social support in friendships that can be especially complicated is the reception of support by those seeking it. Sarason and Sarason (2009) explain that social support, while seemingly positive in nature, can actually have both positive and negative effects. The authors note that while social support messages change over time, support remains a relatively stable force of life. Advances in technology, demographic changes (i.e., age, stage in life, employment, etc.), and perspective changes as one enters different periods of life can all
contribute to why expectations and provision of social support may change over time (Sarason & Sarason, 2009). For example, the situations which individuals perceive needing social support may change dramatically from adolescence to emerging adulthood. Regardless, social support is a necessity in relationships and therefore will always be an important area to study. As Sarason & Sarason (2009) assert, “we know that social support ‘works’” (p. 120). Research has repeatedly shown that social support can lead to a variety of benefits both relationally and physically, and even physiologically (Sarason & Sarason, 2009).

Sarason and Sarason (2009) propose that the positive and negative effects of social support do not just affect the seeker; the provider is just as subject to these outcomes. The direct effect of social support is based on multiple factors, but both the thoughtfulness of the provider and the expectation and need from the seeker play a big role in determining the outcome of the situation. For example, Sarason and Sarason claim a positive effect of social support is that if a seeker feels they will receive support from a friend, they may feel more comfortable in bringing their issues to the table and asking for help in resolving them. In short, an expectation of positive reception influences whether or not support will be sought. Additionally, positive affirmations can be felt by the social support provider when they provide feedback that is well received by the seeker. Thus, when considering the current study, Sarason and Sarason (2009) suggest one factor to keep in mind is that in seeking support at all, the seeker has overcome the fear of appearing helpless or like a failure enough to ask for help, and that is something friends should consider when playing the role of the support provider.

Whereas a support seeker may have much to overcome in order to seek support in the first place, the social support provider also faces a unique set of challenges. In some circumstances with friends, there may be times when the support provider communicates their
support in an unintentionally ambiguous way that can then be misinterpreted by the receiver. This miscommunication can have negative implications for the social support provider. For example, to the provider, their contribution of support may seem helpful and supportive, but the seeker may interpret it in a way which seems counterproductive or reduces their sense of autonomy or self-efficacy (Coyne, Ellard, & Smith, 1990). As a result of these miscommunications, Coyne et al. (1990) suggest that friendships making an effort toward effective support must focus on finding ways in which mutual needs can be coordinated.

Thus, in learning how to improve these efforts at support, it is important to understand what type of support friends need, or at least the type of support they tend to prefer. The idea of coordinating and tailoring support, referred to as the “matching hypothesis” (Kim, Sherman, & Taylor, 2008) is debated in the field, but for the purpose of the current study, makes sense to include. This is because in a general sense, when friends look to each other for support, it can be assumed that the friend providing support has some idea of what expectations the seeking friend has for them. People usually know, for example, if a friend receives honesty well or if they would rather be provided a more padded version of the truth, such as a white lie. So, when an individual chooses to utilize deceptive communication because they know the friend will respond the best to it, this would be matching the support provided to the support needed. Put another way, the matching hypothesis involves telling the individual what they want to hear in the way they would most like to hear it as a form of support. In working to uncover feelings and potential motivations behind the use of deceptive social support, this study may be able to provide implications that can encourage individuals to use resolutions other than deception to create feelings of support in friendships as well as within other personal relationships.
In some support providing situations, deciding how and what kind of support to provide can become problematic. Many scholars (see e.g., Albrecht & Adelman, 1987; Coyne et al., 1990; La Gaipa, 1990) refer to these tensions as social support dilemmas. Albrecht and Adelman (1987) suggest that providing social support can have several positive implications, such as the feeling of satisfaction that transpires from helping someone, but there are times when the cost of providing social support may deplete the providers of both material and psychological resources. In regard to negative outcomes of social support provision, the authors suggest these outcomes can be psychological, such as the aforementioned emotional contagion, anxiety, uncertainty, and emotional distress. Specifically, Albrecht and Adelman (1987) suggest that a provider may experience anxiety about the responsibility associated with being a friend and support system, as well as uncertainty in how exactly they should respond to the situation (e.g. honestly or deceptively). Emotional distress might occur in the provider if for instance, the provider feels fear about advice they shared and whether it was sound advice or poor advice. These emotions and concerns are all risks of being a support provider, but again, it would be nearly impossible to escape this role completely in life.

Along with social support dilemmas, tensions regarding support provision also arise. For example, tensions regarding how to provide social support can exist between both the seeker and the provider (Albrecht & Adelman, 1987). In the case of the seeker, they must grapple with the tension of how the provider will view them if they seek help. They must consider if the provider will judge their situation or perceive them as helpless if they ask for help. Moreover, the provider also feels the stress of being the support provider, as they likely feel pressure to respond in ways that match the seeker’s expectations and the demands of the particular situation (Albrecht & Adelman, 1987). Thus, in managing these expectations and pressures to respond in certain ways,
the seeker could decide that attempting to get support may not be worth it and then disengage the situation. Similarly, the provider, responding to the pressures, likely feels a tension in deciding how to give their opinion on how to resolve a situation but also shaping their message in a way in which it has the best chance of being well received (Albrecht & Adelman, 1987). In sum, social support is a complicated web of feelings and expectations for both the seeker and provider, but simultaneously, social support is simply an inevitable part of friendships.

In additional to emotional consequences, social support provision can also strip the provider of resources such as time, energy, and goods (Albrecht & Adelman, 1987). As Floyd (1995) mentioned, people tend to associate the idea of friendship with a sense of presence and loyalty—individuals expect their friends to be there for them as well as “have their back.” Accordingly, time, energy and goods may be considered “currency” in the social support transaction, and it may then be expected that these currencies be returned or reciprocated when the situational tables have turned and the provider becomes the support seeker. It is highly likely that the tables will turn and the support provider will seek support, so it is useful for individuals to become competent in performing both roles. Thus, knowing how to deal with such situations is information that could be well-used in practical settings, which is why this study is important and necessary.

Social support dilemmas are not rare. An additional situation that may produce dilemmas for the provider is uncertainty in potentially causing an argument with the friend. Not being completely sure of which side of a problem to support in a situation can be anxiety and uncertainty producing, and deciding whether or not to support the friend or go against them can be especially challenging (Albrecht & Adelman, 1987). Further, actively choosing not to support a friend and their ideas could cause a point of contention in a friendship, and the seeker feeling
unsupported by their friend. Coyne et al. (1990) suggest that this tension illustrates the interdependence of many personal relationships. Albrecht and Adelman (1987) write that interdependence is “the extent to which the needs and goals of both the recipient and provider are apparent in the relationship and the problems of coordination that both parties face in meeting each other’s needs” (p. 138). Thus, because friendships are typically built on the foundation of interdependence, both parties are emotionally invested in a situation, even when it may only be one person experiencing a challenge. Due to the interdependence of friends, how the support provider responds to the friend’s situation can have lasting effects, so it may be tempting to use deception as a way to protect the friendship. Understanding this dynamic and the pressure to respond in certain ways through social support is another area where additional study is needed, and this study could be valuable.

**Comforting messages.** When considering the matching hypothesis and tailoring support to what the seeker might desire, a certain type of message comes into play. Highly person centered “comforting messages” are another form of emotional social support and have a specific purpose in discourse. The generic role of a comforting message is to relieve the burden of others. Burleson (1994) more specifically defines comforting messages as those that have “the goal of alleviating or lessening emotional distress experienced by others” (p. 136). Burleson and Goldsmith (1998) suggest that individuals become distressed for many different reasons, including unpleasant life experiences, threatening environments, or disappointments regarding certain situations. Whereas different than social support, comforting messages serve similar functions, as they are often used as a form of support within personal relationships, such as those with friends. Comforting messages focus more on effects of everyday stressors, while social support is more often used in situations that are more long term or traumatic (Bippus, 2001).
According to Burleson (1994), comforting acts “signal care, commitment, and interest” (p.5), while also helping to express emotions such as compassion. These highly valued messages play key roles in the maintenance of intimate relationships.

One type of comforting message in particular, problem-focused comforting encompasses advice giving or problem solving attempts by a message provider (Bippus, 2001). This message style is relevant to the present study, as it focuses in part on how individuals manage their friends’ stressors with them, as well as the type of communication in which they choose to give aid. Further, Bippus (2001) suggests that a skillful comforter can enhance the seekers’ coping capabilities, both on social and cognitive levels. First, comforters have the ability to create an environment that is conducive to comforting, which affects the social aspect of comforting. Second, Bippus’ study suggested that more cognitive results can be achieved through effective comforting, through the use of empowerment, providing a different perspective, and refraining from negativity. This study shows just how instrumental a competent support giver can be in comforting and helping a friend reframe their situation or sort out a problem. Thus, crafting these messages assumes much responsibility on behalf of the provider, as the result of their comforting attempts can have effects on the person seeking the comfort. However, it is this pressure to perform a role as comforter that may encourage the use of deception as a form of comforting message.

Burleson (1994), as well as Burleson et al. (2005) suggest that person-centered messages are the most effective form of comforting message. These messages “explicitly recognize and legitimize the other’s feelings, help the other articulate those feelings, elaborate reasons why those feelings might be experienced, and assist the other to see how those feelings fit in a broader context” (Burleson et al., 2005, p. 89). Further, highly person centered messages are better at
reducing distress in the seeker and are the most sensitive and helpful means in regard to helping a distressed individual (Burleson et al., 2005). Burleson and colleagues explain that across a large body of research, highly person-centered messages have consistently been found to be received most favorably (by both men and women) and to be the most desired type of message among support seekers, as seekers tend to evaluate these messages more positively (see also Angell, 1998; Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002; Kunkel & Dennis, 2003). In the present study, participants will discuss specifically the type of support they provided by explaining what they said and did in various situations. Thus, because it has been shown that person-centered messages are most effective, these were closely examined in the participants’ diary entries. Upon completion of data collection, person-centered messages can be coded for and then further examined to see how participants used these messages with different friend types and in different situations.

However, there are times in which attempts at comforting are not received well or are miscommunicated. Burleson and Goldsmith (1998) note that even individuals with good intentions (i.e., “just trying to help”) can sometimes miscommunicate and send messages that are hurtful or harmful. Further, there are times when friends simply do not know what to say to help their friend feel better. These situations have effects on both the provider and seekers of support. In regard to the support provider, Burleson and Goldsmith (1998) note that it is not uncommon for these individuals to become frustrated with their inability to find a solution, frustrated with the seeker, or even frustrated at the situation itself. Moreover, the support seeker can also experience negative emotions and outcomes when seeking comfort from a close friend. A support seeker risks coming across as weak or unable to handle their own problems and may find it challenging to express themselves and their issue, even if the support provider is encouraging
and open to helping (Burleson & Goldsmith, 1998). This idea helps demonstrate that both 
seeking and providing social support is extremely complex and often requires careful 
consideration of communication by both parties involved.

**Politeness Theory and social support.** Many of the challenges associated with 
providing and seeking social support have to do with considering what the other person will 
think of either the problem at hand or the support given. Managing these emotions and 
challenges can be illustrated by Politeness Theory. Politeness Theory focuses on how individuals 
portray and manage themselves within interactions with others. Additionally, Politeness Theory 
encompasses all of the strategies that an individual may use to shape their behavior in regard to 
other people within social interactions. Politeness Theory refers to these actions as politeness 
strategies and posits that societal politeness involves using these strategies to maintain one’s own 
face, but it also involves using the strategies competently to protect others’ faces to avoid hurting 
feelings or causing embarrassment. According to Cupach and Metts (1994), face is “the 
conception of self that each person displays in particular interactions with others” (p. 3). Using 
Goffman’s (1967) concept of face, Brown and Levinson (1987) expand the concept to include 
the idea of positive and negative face. Positive face is focused on how individuals want to project 
a favorable image of who they are and then hope to be well received by others (Goldsmith & 
Normand, 2015). It also encompasses the want for social validation from individuals with whom 
one interacts. Further, it emphasizes the inherent human desire to have one’s identity accepted 
and respected. In contrast, negative face describes the want for autonomy and to act without 
inhibition (Goldsmith & Normand, 2015): for example, saying what we truly believe in every 
situation. Balancing these two faces is another challenge of life, and the maintenance of both 
faces is extremely important. When it comes to positive face, an individual’s reputation is at
stake. Presenting a positive face means presenting the “best” version of oneself and being a likeable and agreeable person. However, presenting a negative face would be illustrated by brutal honesty and going against the grain of situational expectations. Thus, when an individual is providing support to a friend, they must tame the tension between wanting to be honest, but also not wanting to upset the friend and appear unpleasant.

Goldsmith (1992) defines politeness as “a process of managing potentially conflicting goals” (p. 267). Further, Goldsmith (1992) writes that the most efficient (i.e. a clear message is delivered and less likely to be misinterpreted) way to provide support is to do so in the most direct way possible, or “bald-on-record.” However, compulsion toward being polite often interrupts this process. Instead, to avoid coming across as impolite, individuals often employ indirect support strategies, which are considered the safest and most appropriate form of support, but are the least effective (Goldsmith, 1992). Thus, it is clear that tensions arise regarding wanting to appear polite but also wanting to be direct in support giving, which pertains directly to the study at present. Better understanding how individuals navigate these tensions and create their supportive dialogue with consideration to politeness is a goal of this study.

The use and influence of one’s own face while simultaneously considering the need to protect the face of others comes into play often in support giving situations. Brown and Levinson (1987) present positive face as the desire to maintain oneself to the standard of what is socially acceptable, whereas, as mentioned, negative face focuses on the desire for autonomy and freedom. In regard to this balancing act of faces, Goldsmith (1992) gives an example of a support provider responding in a way that promotes their own positive face: “I’m pretty good with these kinds of things. If I were you, I would do it this way” (p. 267). On the other hand, an individual working to protect their negative face may preface their support by saying “Well, I don’t really
have a lot of time, but why don’t you tell me the problem and I’ll see what I can do” (Goldsmith, 1992, p. 267). With the use of these politeness strategies, Goldsmith (1992) writes that it may be expected that the most polite strategies are used when the risk of face threat is highest, and the least polite strategies are used when face threat is at the lowest risk. Knowing this, what does this imply for friends? Are individuals more likely to use impolite strategies within their friendships because they do not perceive the face threat as being particularly high given the nature of friendship, or will they elect to use polite strategies for the sake of respecting others and their need to preserve their positive and negative faces? What about when they are attempting to give social support to their friends? The current study will attempt to investigate the reasoning behind using certain types of support provision strategies, in order to examine whether or not politeness plays a role in the final choice of support.

Brown and Levinson (1987) note that positive politeness strategies commonly used by individuals with friends include actions such as: optimism; noticing and attending to the friend’s needs; seeking agreement while avoiding disagreement; and exaggerating interest, approval, and sympathy with the friend seeking support. In contrast, negative politeness strategies include being pessimistic, being direct, questioning, hedging, and impersonalizing (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Interestingly, several of the positive politeness strategies could also be potentially deceptive in and of themselves. For example, avoiding disagreement could also be seen as withholding, which Guthrie and Kunkel (2013) deem a form of deception (see also Turner, Edgley, & Olmstead, 1975). In addition, exaggerating interest or approval could be labeled blatant deception because it is deliberately perpetuating false information (see also Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2013). It is an intriguing line of study indeed to investigate how politeness can actually function as deceptive communication. Given these generally accepted politeness
guidelines, the current study will focus on where deception as support fits into the equation. Is it more likely that friends and support givers engage in acts of deception as being honest and direct could be preserved as impolite? Politeness Theory would then suggest that when giving support, in order to respect the seeker’s face, the provider should exaggerate their sympathy and interest in the individual’s issue. However, couldn’t this be seen as deception? The current study hopes to fill in current research gaps regarding how people navigate these tensions between positive and negative politeness strategies and how they justify occasionally resorting to deception in order to show their support to a friend.

**Deception**

*Types and motivations of deception.* A key element of the present study is that occasionally, people use deception as a form of social support. The realization that these two constructs have the ability to coexist symbiotically forms the basis of the current avenue of investigation. First, O’Hair and Cody (1994) define deception as “the conscious attempt to create or perpetuate false impressions among other communicators” (p. 183). To begin unpacking deception and its constituents, consider that Turner et al. (1975) note “honesty is not always the best policy” (p. 69). In their classic study, Turner et al. conceptualize controlled information as communication that distorts the presented information in some way. The analysis of data revealed five types of information control: lies, exaggerations, half-truths, secrets, and diversionary responses, with lies comprising the majority of the deception at 30.7% of the instances. Further, Turner and colleagues showed five reasons for controlling information: saving face, maintaining relationships, exploiting, avoiding tension or conflict, and manipulating situational control. The study also suggested that in many situations, deception can have a more altruistic connotation: it can be used to protect the other individual (e.g., the one seeking
support). Thus, the Turner et al. (1975) study reveals that both types of deception as well as the motivations behind it are many.

Using the Turner et al. (1975) study as a starting point, Camden, Motley, and Wilson (1984) focused on further elaborating the specific categories of deception. First, the researchers found that when deception is used altruistically, individuals are quick to justify its use, which may likely be the case in the current study. Moreover, Camden and colleagues also produced an additional four categories of deception. Deception for a **basic need** involved acquiring or protecting resources. A lie of **affiliation** was one that mediated some aspect of a relationship or interaction. A lie of **self-esteem** functioned to convey competence, taste, or social desirability. Finally, lies in the “**other**” category were those such as exaggeration, dissonance reduction, or a practical joke. Data analysis of gender dyads showed that among women same-sex dyads, lies of affiliation and self-esteem were most common by far in regard to basic need and other; however, among men-men dyads, basic need, affiliation, and self-esteem were all in close range of frequency. Accordingly, in their conclusion, Camden et al. write that “people lie a lot” (p. 321). Additionally, whereas it appears men and women lie about different elements of life, both genders are equally deceptive.

Understanding why individuals choose to use deception over the truth is another aspect of deceptive communication research. Scholl and O’Hair (2005) studied the beliefs behind the use of different forms of deception: ethics, motives, intentionality, and upbringing. Through their data collection and analysis from undergraduates in focus groups, Scholl and O’Hair found four emergent concepts: “‘intentionality,’ ‘deception is wrong,’ ‘acceptance of deception,’ and ‘upbringing’” (p. 389). These four groups suggest potential reasons that may be predictive of how individuals decide to respond to people or situations. The data further suggested that
individuals who believed that deception can occur unconsciously will be more likely to expect the same capability of others. The data revealed that there seems to be a “composite set of beliefs under which many people operate” (Scholl & O’Hair, 2005, p. 392). Further, this study proposed that while sometimes deception can indeed be unconscious, much of the time the choice to deceive is often not a simple one. Rather, many elements in life may shape a person’s tendency toward deception or honesty, but for many people, there are several factors and ramifications considered prior to making the conscious choice to deceive a close friend. The authors note that in the search to uncover core beliefs about communication deception, these four categories may be a solid start. In regard to the present study, the Scholl and O’Hair (2005) study is important because the results suggest that understanding that the motives, ethics, intentionality, and upbringing of others may in turn shape their communication patterns and may allow individuals to then see where their friends developed their ideas and why they responded the way they did. The current study similarly examined individual’s beliefs behind their use of deception as the study methods questioned why deception was used rather than honesty and vice versa. In addition, participants were asked to elaborate on why they chose the specific mode of support in the situation, allowing for examination on their beliefs regarding the choice to deceive.

Deception and closeness among friends. In addition to gender differences among individuals’ use of deception, the way in which deception is used among different types of relational partners is of interest. DePaulo and Kashy (1998) studied the function of lies across several relational categories, including friends, romantic partners, and family. The study posited that closeness would have some degree of influence in regard to lying rate, and the hypotheses were supported. The results of the research showed that participants told fewer lies to those they felt closer to, interacted with frequently, and those they had known the longest. In addition, the
participants reported feelings of distress after lying to someone they considered themselves close to. In light of these results, DePaulo and Kashy suggest that being in close relationships with someone should eliminate the need for frequent deception. In considering these results for the present study, the methods allowed for participants to note the relationship of the person they were interacting with, and then elaborate on what form of support they chose, why, and how they felt about it after the interaction. Data analysis will reveal whether or not the DePaulo and Kashy results hold true in this instance. For example, as DePaulo and Kashy found that participants are uncomfortable lying to those they feel close to, it will be interesting to see how participants feel after choosing to deceive a friend versus maybe simply an acquaintance or coworker. However, the current study will also bring in the idea of expectations regarding social support to see if these perhaps have any effect on the choice to deceive or support close friends.

Also intrigued by the unique relationship among friends, Floyd and Parks (1995) studied how these perceptions of closeness emerged in friends as well as siblings. In their 233-participant sample, the researchers discovered that among women, verbal disclosures were important to feelings of closeness, but the same was not true of men. For women, closeness is often communicated by self-disclosure, and in regard to men, closeness is communicated through sharing activities. As a whole, Floyd and Parks’ study revealed that in personal relationships, talking, disclosing, and confiding are all reported as important aspects of the relationship, regardless of gender. Thus, being aware that sharing information with friends is a vital part of a healthy friendship, the current study focused on how these aspects of support seeking and providing (through talking, confiding, and disclosing), can also be accomplished and maintained through dishonest communication as well.
**Friends and truth bias.** Scholarship suggests individuals do not expect their friends to lie to them, and generally, individuals expect their communication interactions with others to remain honest (Burgoon, Blair, & Strom, 2008; McCornack & Parks, 1990). Thus, McCornack and Parks (1990) suggest that a bias towards truth is at the root of these assumptions. Burgoon and Buller (2015) define truth bias as “the tendency to overestimate the truthfulness of others when making judgments of their veracity…Truth bias elevates judgments of credibility and lowers detection accuracy” (p. 355). McCornack and Parks (1990) showed that individuals more invested in the relationship are less accurate in detecting deception, as they may believe they know what their partner is thinking. Burgoon et al.’s (2008) study found that participants judged deceiver’s messages as complete, honest, clear and relevant. Further, the study suggested participants tend to judge in favor of truth, reporting 67% of messages to be truthful when only 53% of the stimuli were actually truthful.

Despite the wide body of scholarship suggesting individuals do not expect their friends to be dishonest with them (see e.g., Burgoon, 1993; Burgoon, Blair, & Strom, 2008; Burgoon & Buller, 2015; White, 2015), it is likely that deception still occurs in relationships between friends. Much of the research conducted on deception in relationships has focused specifically on romantic relationships (see e.g., Carton & Horan, 2014; Cole, 2001; Guthrie & Kunkel, 2013; Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2013). However, few studies have disregarded romantic relationships and focused more specifically on friend relationships as well as “lower” status relationships such as co-worker and acquaintanceships.

Overall, both social support and deception are important components in relationships. Because social support is a necessary part of friendship, deception arguably may become a necessary evil in the eye of the provider. Accordingly, it is valuable to examine how expectations
about friendship in turn guide expectations regarding how to best provide support for a friend—whether deceptively or honestly. Based on the current status of this category of scholarship, the current study hoped to begin filling a large gap of research. Thus, the present study proposed the following set of research questions:

**RQ1:** What motivates individuals to use deception as a form of social support?

**RQ2:** Why might individuals use honesty as a form of social support?

**RQ3:** Do expectations regarding how social support should be provided affect the choices made by the support provider?

**RQ4:** Do men and women appear to vary in their supportive communication styles?

Whereas the aforementioned research questions played a role in the creation and overall design of the diary entry template questions and follow-up survey, the collected data did not seem to correctly “fit” or reflect the initially posed questions. This was discovered following the open coding and axial coding processes. It was noted by the researcher that the originally proposed research questions, while important, did not encompass the major findings the data presented. Thus, the researcher revised the research questions to reflect the data that was collected. Tracy (2012) argued that this is a unique facet of qualitative research. Indeed, the guided, but open-ended diary entry method used by this study allows for resulting data to not necessary match what the researcher expects to find or measure. Tracy (2012) asserts that “articulating qualitative analysis methods in a formulaic manner can actually overshadow and discourage the artistic insight of grounded analyses” (p. 109). Further, the back-and-forth inductive to deductive shifts during data analysis also play a role in effective qualitative research. Given this argument, the researcher and her advisor decided that in following the direction proposed by Tracy, sticking to the predetermined research questions would severely limit and
constrain the ideas presented in this data set. Thus, following the data analysis stage, the researcher therefore presents three revised research questions to guide the overall findings:

**RQ1:** With what frequencies do individuals use honest, deceptive, or combination forms of support in their friendships?

**RQ2:** Which of Cutrona, Hessling, and Suhr’s (1997) social support types are most frequently used among friends?

**RQ3:** How do support providers feel about their support after they give it?
Chapter Three:

Method

Diary studies can be a practical way to gather data, as they allow participants to share information in a timely manner. Ohly, Sonnentag, Niessen, and Zapf (2010) note that diary studies have increased in usage over the past two decades, and diary studies are an efficient way to collect data on a daily (perhaps even multiple times a day) basis. Further, the authors note that uniquely, diary methods allow for “thoughts, feelings, and behaviors” to be studied in their more natural environments (Ohly et al., 2010, p. 80). This is in contrast to a lab setting, which may contain more artificial elements, such as confederates or hypothetical situations. The present study removed the “research lab setting” and instead relied on the participants’ reports of their day to day lives. Diary studies differ from survey data in that they are completed over a course of time, usually a few days, and do not rely on participant’s recollection of an event far into the past. Further, Ohly et al. (2010) note that diary studies allow participants to use their own words, rather than simply responding to scales worded a priori, for example. Whereas still a form of self-report data collection, a diary functions more as a snapshot of daily behavior of the participant. Ohly et al. (2010) note that in an instance where a behavior that is highly fluctuating is being observed, survey designs may not be completely stable, whereas diary studies are a reliable source for analyzing data that may fluctuate based on situational variables. For instance, in the case of the present study, social support provision may not happen one day, but another day, there might be two or more instances; thus, a diary study over the course of several days makes sense as the method for the current study.
Procedures

The first step in launching the study at hand was obtaining approval from the University’s Institutional Review Board (see Appendix D). After being granted approval of the procedures and all the entailments, the study proceeded as detailed in the subsequent paragraphs.

Recruitment. First, an announcement was made in person by the researcher in upper-division communication studies courses about the existence of the study and some background information as well as requirements for participation. At this time, the professor of the course supplemented the researcher’s information by explaining that participation was completely optional and elaborating on how the research credit would function as extra credit in their class. The researcher then passed around an IRB-approved announcement detailing the study specifics and contact information. Additionally, the professor reminded students of the alternate assignment that could be completed in lieu of research participation, available through the Research Participation Coordinator. For the IRB-approved WebCampus and classroom handout announcement, see Appendix E.

Trainings. As directed by the WebCampus announcement, those students interested in participation were directed to the Communication Studies SONA website where they were prompted to create an account. Following their sign up with the system, the student was eligible to sign up for one of the training sessions listed. Trainings were done at a variety of times and days of the week to accommodate as many students as possible, and trainings took place in available classrooms across campus. A total of 17 timeslots were available to participants to sign up for. Additionally, participants were encouraged via the in person announcements to email the researcher if they were unable to attend any of the training sessions. An additional 4 training sessions were held one-on-one with students unable to attend a group training session.
Approximately 1 day before their scheduled training session, the SONA system sent an email reminder to the students to remind them of the date, time, and location of the training.

During this training session, the study and its details were explained, any participant questions were answered, and specific instructions on how to use the diary, as well as examples were explained in detail. (For the Training Session Script, see Appendix F). The researcher used an example manila envelope and its contents to walk participants through the materials and study process, taking time to go through each document and its contents thoroughly. Each training session lasted approximately 20 minutes and allowed participants plenty of time to ask questions and make sure they understood the study expectations. Overall, as detailed in the following sections, participants were given information regarding completing the diary study, a follow-up online survey, and returning the diary.

During these sessions, the researcher also remarked that she did not condone nor condemn deception (Hancock, Santelli, & Ritchie, 2004). Rather, it was explained that the researcher was attempting to better understand supportive communication within friendships, as well as less close relationships such as acquaintances and coworkers. Those still interested in the study were asked to sign an informed consent document. Once the informed consent document was received, the researcher gave each participant a numbered packet, and the packet number was in turn written on the informed consent document. This functioned as identification so the diary could be matched to the individual in order for them to receive credit for participation. The numbered informed consent documents were stored in a binder in a locked cabinet in the researcher’s locked on-campus office.

**Diary study.** The numbered manila envelope given to consenting participants included one diary (also numbered) and stickers with which to seal the diary when not in use. In addition,
the envelope contained an information sheet (general reminders about the timeline and expectations for the study and how and where to return the diary, see Appendix G), a sample diary entry template (see Appendix H), and a copy of the informed consent document (see Appendix I), which contained the researcher’s contact information. The first page of each diary had a sample template written in it so participants would be able to complete an entry without having to have the documents from the manila envelope with them. The participants were encouraged to keep their notebook close to them for the following seven days as they would their cell phone, but if a supportive interaction occurred and they didn’t have their notebook on their person, to take notes on their phone or other medium and record the interaction in their diary later. The envelopes also contained a document with definitions driving the study: deception (O’Hair & Cody, 1994) and social support (Vangelisti, 2009). Also on this document were outlines of the basic friend types that should be categorized in the diary (friend, best friend, acquaintance, coworker, and other). The participants were told that the “other” category was to be used for participants whom they counted as friends, but might not neatly fit in the other given categories. Upon participants’ questioning, it was explained that the researcher understood that the line could easily blur between friends that are also romantic partners and friends that are also family members, so the participants were asked to separate family and romantic partners into the other category since this study was focused primarily on friend relationships. Additionally, the definition of the other category instructed individuals that interactions with strangers should be included in the diaries, as they served as a sort of control for the study. Allowing the researcher to observe—via the diary entries—how the participant gave support to someone they did not know gave a standard of comparison for the closer friend relationships. This is because some individuals may provide specific support based on the recipient, thus giving different support to
strangers than friends, while others may give support in similar ways across relationship types (Kim, Sherman, & Taylor, 2008).

Similar to previous diary research studies, the present study utilized a seven-day collection period (see e.g., Carton & Horan, 2014; Hancock, Santelli, & Ritchie, 2004; Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2013; Young, Curran, & Trothenhagen, 2012). The researcher believed that this length of time would encourage thorough and complete involvement by those participating, as well as provide an adequate representation of social support interactions in everyday life. Participants were instructed to make an entry for each instance of social support they encountered with friends over the seven days. In addition, participants were explicitly instructed to leave the diary blank should they not experience any such instances, rather than feel pressure to create a story to fill the blank space. Entries consisted of: the date, the type of friend (e.g. co-worker, acquaintance, friend, best friend, other), the gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation of the friend, a brief explanation of the situation and support provided, and details about how the participants felt after providing the support that they did. Participants were asked to provide the initials of the friend with each entry so repeat seekers and support types could be evaluated for patterns.

The researcher informed participants that they were to return the diaries in the envelope in which their materials were given to them. Participants were encouraged to contact the researcher should they have any questions or concerns during the duration of the collection period, and contact information was provided on two of the documents in the diary packet. Upon completion of the study, diaries were requested to be returned to the researcher’s on-campus office or to the Communication Studies main office in an attempt to maintain participant privacy.
Follow-up survey. Seven days after the participants’ training session, the researcher sent out an email to participants letting them know that they were now eligible to take the online follow-up survey. In this email, participants were reminded to use their diary to take the survey, but to also return the diary as soon as possible to the researcher. To encourage complete participation, participants received half of their extra credit for completing the diary portion of the study and returning it and the other half upon completion of the online survey (see Carton & Horan, 2014). The online survey asked more “big picture” questions allowing for reflection of the study as a whole and support given during the duration of the study, rather than moment-by-moment commentary which was achieved by the diary entries. (For the sample follow-up survey, see Appendix J.) The purpose of the follow-up survey was simply an opportunity for the researcher to ask more in-depth questions of the participants in regard to both the study and their experiences within it. The participants had one week after the day the link was sent out to respond to the follow-up survey in an attempt to keep experiences recent in the participants’ minds. The follow-up survey data was saved and put aside for later analysis, and results of the survey are not included in the results and discussion chapters of this project.

Once the diary study and follow-up survey were completed, the diaries were requested to be returned to the researcher following the procedures detailed previously. The follow-up survey reiterated that the diaries were to be returned as soon as possible to the locations provided. For participants who still hadn’t returned their diaries after two weeks, follow-up emails were sent reminding them to return the diaries. Overall, 43 out of 49 diaries were returned to the researcher, resulting in a 93% response rate. Additionally, 42 participants responded to the online follow-up survey, resulting in an 86% participation rate. Diaries, consent forms, and survey data
are stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher’s on-campus office and will be destroyed after 5 years.

**Sample**

Participants were gathered through a convenience sample recruited through a research pool of undergraduate students from communication studies classes. Using this research pool, the researcher initially trained 49 individuals to participate in the study. Following this wave of diaries, the researcher and her advisor agreed that saturation had been reached and additional recruitment and training was not necessary. Any student was eligible to participate in the study, no matter their age, gender, ethnicity, etc.. The only prerequisite for the study was enrollment in one of the courses participants were originally solicited from.

Overall, there were 43 returned and completed diaries, and each diary was deemed viable for analysis. The sample was comprised of 13 males and 30 females. Thirty four participants self-identified their sexual orientation as straight; three identified as bisexual; one identified as lesbian; and five participants did not specify their sexual orientation. The average age of participants was 23.71 years ($SD = 4.43$; age range $= 21–38$ years). Nineteen participants identified their race as white; eight identified as Asian or Mixed-Asian; six were Hispanic; two identified as black; two as European-American; one as Puerto Rican; and five participants did not specify their ethnicity. For complete participant demographic information, see Table 1.

**Data Analysis**

As each diary was returned, the researcher transcribed each one electronically, typing and organizing each entry. The diary entries were then analyzed through a series of coding. First, line-by-line open coding was used (Charmaz, 2006). The researcher went through each diary first as a unit, reading each entry in order to better understand the seven-day period for each participant. During this first pass, the researcher took detailed notes about potential themes and
patterns emerging in the data—in each diary and across diaries. Following the first pass, the researcher then printed out the transcripts and cut them apart so that each piece of paper only had one diary entry on it. The entries were then sorted based on the friend type. Some participants did not adhere to the pre-determined friend types and created their own labels for friends, which were put into a separate “miscellaneous” pile and coded together. Using the memos created on the first pass, the researcher then went through all of the entries regarding that specific friend group and created a codebook as she went, using colored markers to highlight recurring patterns and themes and connect back to the original codebook.

Following these subsequent data passes, the researcher and her advisor met and had several conversations about the data and the codes that had emerged. The researchers’ advisor coded 32% of the data and after talking with the researcher, found that she agreed with the researchers’ codebook. The researcher and her advisor then conducted axial coding to collapse the large number of highly specific initial codes into broader categories that were still reflective of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After this meeting, the researcher then conducted yet another pass of the data using the new axial codes to reorganize the data and coding system.

The third round of open coding was done electronically, and each response was read several times and sorted into groups with a common theme. The diary entry, demographics of the support seeker, and the phrase or phrases of the participant’s entry with matching codes were all placed in separate cells in an organized Excel document.

During the entirety of the coding process, the codes were derived inductively, allowing the themes from the data to emerge from several passes of reading by the researcher. As this process progressed, the codebook was created from key themes that were pulled out and checked for multiple occurrences in the data. The data was reviewed over and over until the researcher
felt the codebook was reflective of the data and saturation was effectively reached. Through this multi-step process, participant demographics, as well as their feelings about their friends and the support they provided to them were able to be analyzed more in-depth using the participant’s own words (Charmaz, 2006). Moreover, deductive analysis was used to identify support types: emotional, esteem, information, social network, or tangible (Cutrona, Hessling, & Suhr, 1997).
Chapter Four:
Results and Interpretation

This chapter provides a summary of the results, as well as discussion regarding unexpected situations that the data gave rise to involving how participants decided what situations to include within their diaries. Information and examples that illustrate the social support process and its facilitation from the perspective of the support provider are discussed in detail. Major themes and patterns that emerged from the data through the open and axial coding processes are also examined. All examples from participants appear in italics and are reported using their own words, without revision. Names, initials, and mentions of proper nouns were replaced with pseudonyms to protect the privacy of all involved.

Diary Data

The data analyzed were 43 handwritten diaries, written by 43 individuals trained in the procedures and expectations of the study. Whereas 43 individuals may seem like a small sample size, the present study remains on par with sample sizes in similar communication diary studies. Horan and Booth-Butterfield (2013) argue that smaller sample size is acceptable, given that diary studies in particular “aim to describe social processes, not generalize to larger populations” (p. 211). The subsequent paragraphs report the specific details regarding friend type and honest, deceptive, or combination support tactics. For complete information about the form of support used in these interactions, see Table 3. Overall, the diaries (all of which were deemed viable for analysis) yielded 261 total entries. This resulted in an average of 6 diary entries per participant (range = 1–32). Of the 261 entries, 161 (62%) were participant-identified as honest statements of social support, 53 (20%) were perceived to be deceptive during support provision, and 44 (17%) were participant-reported as a combination of both deception and honesty. Thus, the majority (62%) of the supportive interactions reported in this study were handled with honest forms of
social support, or at least the participants believed they were honest in giving support to their friends. First, results regarding the support seekers/recipient and how participants reported “friend types” is explained, followed by results and interpretation regarding the support that was provided to these support recipients.

**Support Seekers/Recipients and Participants’ Reports of Friend Types**

In each entry, participants were asked to identify the support seekers’ gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. During the training sessions, participants were encouraged to provide as much of the demographic information as they knew about each person with whom they interacted. As a whole, the 261 instances of support seeking were composed of 139 (53%) females, 105 (40%) males, and 17 (7%) instances where gender were not explicitly specified and could not be determined by pronoun usage within the entry. In addition, 177 (68%) of the support seeking individuals were reported as straight, 66 (25%) were not specified, 13 (5%) were participant-identified as gay, and three (1%) were described as bisexual. Eighty-eight (34%) of the support seekers were white, 40 (15%) were Asian or Mixed-Asian, 23 were black (9%), 23 were Hispanic (9%), 13 (5%) were labeled as more ambiguous racial/ethnic backgrounds or combinations that were difficult to categorize (e.g., Irish, Jewish-American, or White/Japanese/Black). Additionally, 74 (28%) participants’ ethnicities were not specified by participants. For complete information regarding support seeker demographics, see Table 2, Seeker Demographic Information.

Of the 261 diary entries, 53 (20%) were labeled as interactions with friends, 33 (13%) were interactions with best friends, 23 (9%) entries were with an individual who was a friend and at least one other distinction (e.g., 9 instances of Coworker/Friend). These three subgroups were grouped together and deemed to be reflective of the present study’s ultimate goal of examining
social support interactions among friends. Because the participants explicitly labeled the seekers in these instances to be friends in addition to another identifier, such entries were included within the “Friend” data set. The “Friend” data set was comprised of 109 total entries, making up 42% of the entire 261 entry data set. Within the set, individuals were honest with their friends in 67% of reported interactions, deceptive in 19%, and a combination of both honest and deceptive in 19% of the entries.

Outside supportive interactions with friends, 29 (11%) individuals penned entries based on experiences with romantic partners. Similar to friends, an overwhelming percentage of these instances were labeled as honest at 25 (86%). Further, 35 (13%) entries shed light on support given to coworkers. Likewise, 20 (57%) entries regarding coworkers showed that individuals gave support rooted in honesty. The same held true with acquaintances, with 5 out of 9 (56%) entries considered honest.

As outlined in Chapter 3, participants had the option of assigning to their friend to the “Other” category. This category was created for participants to report interactions with someone who didn’t meet one of the other friend types. When explaining this to participants during training, the researcher explicitly stated that the purpose of this study was to collect data on friends, but if participants wanted to report an instance with a family member or romantic partner for example, whom they also considered a friend, to label the interaction as “Other” and then explain who the other person was. This was an attempt at creating a distinct line between relationships that might fill two or more of the friend types. This is following Bridge and Baxter’s (1992) suggestion that “blended relationships” (p. 201) can occur among friends and exist with both personal and role components, especially within coworker relationships. The “other” category functioned to prevent individuals from struggling to decide whether to place a
romantic partner whom they also call their best friend into one category or another. The researcher believes this is why the “Other” category received such a large number of entries, at n = 82; 19% of the entire data set. Whereas participants were supposed to make the distinction between friend and coworker, they may have still considered these individuals as friends and wished to include them. However, it is likely that a handful of participants simply did not pay attention during the training session and reported any and all social support interactions during the seven day period.

A large portion of the “Other” entries reported were instances with family members. In fact, 41 (50%) entries in the other category were specified as family members, including mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, father and mother-in-laws, and even grandmothers. Two individuals even journaled about giving deceptive social support to their children. In contrast, other individuals included within “other data” were people such as a barista, a homeless man, as well as the more frequently cited roommate or classmate. There were also many instances in which study participants created their own label for the individual with whom they were interacting. Some of the participant-authored labels were specific enough to be judged for inclusion in the friend group, as they explicitly stated some sort of friend relationship (e.g., close friend, casual friend, family friend). Other labels, such as “peer” and “neighbor” were too vague to be classified into any group and thus remained as “Other” data. Further, of the 82 “other” entries, 10 were classified as encounters with strangers, and these instances were typically quick and impersonal encounters, but the participants deemed them as supportive nonetheless. Thus, the data appear to agree with Albrecht, Burleson, and Sarason’s (1992) suggestion that “Social support is important: It is the cornerstone for the quality of human life” (p. 149). In considering
this, it would make sense that social support would also be provided to people whom individuals didn’t know, as well as friends or coworkers, whether or not it is truly sincere.

It is important to note that in this study, there were 35 (13%) entries involving coworkers. Thus, coworker data comprised 13% of the data, or nearly equal to the amount of best friend entries. Nine entries listed the support seeker as both a coworker and a friend. Whereas the goal of this study was not to study coworker interactions specifically this type of interaction was one that participants experienced with as much frequency as their best friends, and interestingly, the statistics of honest support are similar to those of the best friend data. Best friends were treated with honest support 67% of the time, while coworkers came in at 57%. However, one big difference between the two subgroups was deception. Whereas best friends were deceived in a reported 4 (12%) out of 33 instances, coworkers in contrast, reported twice the deceptive experiences (23%) in a similarly sized sample of 25. It may prove fruitful to study these supportive interactions more in the future, but additionally, focus on why the individuals chose the form of support they did. Understanding the politeness demands in the context of support among coworkers is especially intriguing. This is due to the unique interpersonal relationship that is coworkers. These individuals are seen and interacted with often, but may be (as the present study participants showed) not quite at the friend level, but perhaps more than an acquaintance.

Social Support Provided

This chapter also discusses the major themes and recurring instances within the 43 diary and subsequent 261 entry data set. The results are presented in an effort to answer and provide elaboration upon the initial set of research questions. By undergoing the multi-step coding process, explanations regarding the following were identified: frequency of honest, deceptive, or
combination social support among friends (RQ1); which of Cutrona, Hessling, and Suhr’s (1997) five types of social support were given most often in friendly supportive instances (RQ2); and the support provider’s reaction to the support they gave after the fact (RQ3). In addition, while efforts were being made to answer the proposed research questions, the data collected illuminated another important piece of the study’s findings: the demand associated with and tensions surrounding being a supportive provider. Thus, while not an answer to a specific research question, this concept is a direct result of the inductive analysis of data related to the research questions.

RQ1: With what frequencies do individuals use honest, deceptive, or combination forms of support in their friendships? As a whole, participants reported an overwhelming amount of interactions wherein they gave honest social support. Out of the 261 entries, there were 161 (62%) entries in which participants explained how they gave social support, and participants identified it as being honest. Because the diary entry template explicitly asks if the support given was honest, deceptive, or a combination, 100% of the entries were able to be coded as one of the three categories of support. Among friends, the frequency of honest support mirrored that of the data set representing any other “friend” individual. Of the 109 “friend” entries, 67 (61%) were reported as honest, 21 (19%) were labeled as deceptive, and 21 (19%) were a combination of support. Honest support was only sharing truthful information in the interaction. Any use of false information, even if it was accompanied by truths, was to be labeled as a combination of support. Further, because deception was conceptualized as sharing any information that the provider knows to be false (O’Hair & Cody, 1994), even when the support was given with good intentions (e.g., a white lie to protect the support seeker), participants were instructed in the training session to report such support as deception.
Additionally, in each category outside of the friend data, honesty was the most frequently used form of social support. Coworkers received honest support 57% of the time, acquaintances 56% of instances, and others 60% as well. Thus, it would appear, based on this data set, that the status of the relationship doesn’t necessarily matter and honesty may be an almost default form of support. This may indeed be the case, as only one-third of the data reflected deceptive responses. Even when individuals were deceptive, it seems that they also would rather provide at least some honest support or opinions, as 17% of entries reported deception and honesty used in tandem. On the same note, it was also the case that many individuals felt guilty for being brutally honest and also used some deception in the same interaction to provide more encouraging support: As the saying goes, “the truth hurts.” Thus, this suggests that combination support was used as a way to pad the truth. For example, participant 47 wrote:

*Her other friend had accused her of lying but L.D. didn’t feel like she was. I told her to just be honest with her and that I’m sure everything will be okay.*

*I would say I was a combination of honest and deceptive. I told her everything would be okay because she was crying, but honestly it was a really bad situation and I think L.D. was at fault. But in the big picture of things, it could have been worse.*

Some of the participants also used the “combination” label to report support given that perhaps appeared honest and felt honest, but in their minds, the participants were also experiencing thoughts that conflicted with the support they were providing. Classifying the support is complicated because the support was indeed honest, but at the same time, the support providers experienced feelings that made them feel they were being deceptive. The researcher referred to this type of support as “mechanical support” and will be further explained in Chapter Four. For example, participant 45 mentioned:
My best friend’s car got ruined b/c she spilled water on the dash. I told her how sorry I was and hugged her.

I was a combination. I did feel sorry for her but it was also her fault for not closing her water bottle so I was a little deceptive.

As is elaborated on later in this chapter, the current data suggest that it is quite possible that individuals do NOT want to lie to their friends. They appear to prefer honesty with them if at all possible, but there are also times when honesty is simply “not the best policy.”

RQ2: Which of Cutrona, Hessling, and Suhr’s (1997) social support types are most frequently used among friends? Cutrona, Hessling, and Suhr (1997) provide five types of social support: emotional, esteem, information, social network, and tangible. Among friends, in the 109 entries, 66 (61%) provisions of one of these types of support were able to be distinguished from participant’s own reflections of the interaction. Codes were constructed based on the definitions described in Chapter 2. At times, it was difficult to distinguish emotional from esteem support; thus, the researcher reserved esteem support codes for when a participant was specifically making remarks about the support seeker’s characteristics as a person and their abilities to overcome obstacles. Emotional support was then coded to also encompass active listening and other nonverbal communication, such as hugs and hand holding because each of these actions can communicate caring.

Within the complete friend category (i.e. friends, best friends, and other friend distinctions), 32 (48%) of the entries coded for specific support type indicated some form of emotional support; 16 (24%) were considered informational support provision; ten (15%) were tangible support efforts; eight (12%) were coded as esteem support instances, and zero were social network support interactions. Thus, the data suggest that emotional support is the most
common and frequently used form of Cutrona, Hessling, and Suhr’s (1997) support types in close friendship relationships. When the friend categories are broken apart and looked at individually, no other support type appears with as much frequency as emotional support. Hence, providing emotional support is likely a “go-to” form of support, but it can also be said that emotional support also reflects more of what societal implications suggest are supportive behaviors. In fact, Feeny and Collins (2015) recently suggested that “good support-providers are those who are able to effectively restore an attached person’s felt security when needed—by providing emotional comfort and facilitating problem resolution” (p. 127). The results of the current study support this notion, as the majority of entries reflect the giving of emotional and information support.

There was a wide range of behaviors study participants used when providing emotional support to their friends. Participant 45 wrote, “I was hugging her, holding her hand, listening, and telling her I’m here for her.” Similarly, participant 49 noted: “She had recently been in a car accident and had called to tell me. I offered verbal support saying things like ‘I’m so glad to hear you are alright.’”

Overall, participants’ reports indicate that they provided emotional support with good intentions. However, there were several instances where the participant provided the support seeker with some hard to hear honesty but then also used emotional support to reinforce their devotion to their friend. For example, participant 44 explained being tired of providing support when an event is recurring:

I love you and I support you but stop coming to me because you guys break up every single day. You complain about the same things and whenever I offer you my advice you
The participant reported providing her honest opinion, but at the same time, made it clear that she would still be there for her friend at the end of the day. Participant 46 described another situation involving a friend and their romantic partner, which was labeled as a combination support message:

*I was happy they separated but my best friend was crying so I acted sad with her. Even though I didn’t want them back together, I told her maybe they can get back together if he takes $ management class & she limits how much she gives him. I did express my desires for her to have financially steady bf; but told her I will support her no matter who she’s with.*

Like participant 44, this individual was able to express her true feelings about the situation, but also reinforce that she will remain in support of her friend. This type of situation happened frequently in the data.

The second most common support type among friends was information support. Similar to emotional and esteem support, there seemed to be an overlap between information and tangible support. For coding consistency, the researcher conceptualized information support as more focused on finding ways to alleviate the problem. This includes actions such as advice giving, brainstorming solutions, or attempts at clarifying situations for the friend based on the provider’s own knowledge. Thus, information support was used liberally by participants, which helped the researcher understand that people want to help their friends in solving their issue, and often do so by involving themselves in the situation. This idea is congruent with Burleson’s (1957) suggestion that “persons are more likely to engage in comforting acts when they perceive
that the distressed other is particularly in need of help” (p. 257). Participant 42 wrote about providing support to a friend who was struggling in school:

I expressed my feelings about his school habits (like whether or not he should type his notes during lecture or write them) and reminded him that he is doing great and will graduate soon.

Another participant (25), helped a friend in need of support locate resources that would help her in ways the participant could not:

L.M. is worried about what she’s going to do after she graduates college. I told her to look around, go to career fairs, and check out the career services here at [University]. I told her [people with her major] shouldn’t really have any problems finding a career since it’s in high demand.

Tangible social support was another frequently used social support technique. To more clearly separate information support from tangible support, the researcher coded tangible support as physical actions that sought to aid in problem solving, as well as the direct provision of goods and services to the support seeker. For example, participant 22 described tangible support she gave to her friend when her dog was sick, “Her dog ate spilled pasta and was sick all night, so I brought over plain yogurt (for her stomach), and I shared news about our meeting she had missed.”

Like participant 22’s example, many participants’ provision of tangible support involved helping with school in some way or another. This involved sharing notes from class they missed when they were ill, or helping the friend prep for a quiz or test when they were struggling. Other cases involved helping using the provider’s knowledge or familiarity with the topic. Participant 25 shared, “J.F. got pulled over on the way to school I told him I’m sorry to hear that and ask
how fast he was going so I can offer an estimate of his fees.” This was coded as tangible support rather than informational support, as instead of simply suggesting the friend use Google to estimate his fees, the support provider offered up a direct service of helping to estimate fees. An example of the more physical instances of tangible support provision is provided by participant 36: “W.P. joined a new gym to lose some weight. I thought it was great for them and told them that I would go with to help w/ their motivation.” In this instance, the support that was provided was a service, as the individual was offering to actually be an active part of the solution, rather than just pointing the friend in the direction of a local gym, which would have, in this case, been coded as information support.

RQ3: How do support providers feel about their support after they give it? The diary entry template included a question asking support providers to explain any emotions they were experiencing in regard to the situation. The question was intentionally vague as to not lead participants and to also leave an open channel for them to express themselves, although some did this unprompted when providing the brief summary of the scenario and support provided. This was effective, as many participants shared deeper thoughts about how they were feeling about the support they provided or emotions associated with the friend. These insights were very intriguing and therefore alerted the researcher to additional underlying themes in the data.

Participants tended to classify their feelings about support provision in four ways: (1) no feelings about the situation; (2) feel okay about the support; (3) feel confident in the support given and happy they could help out; and (4) feeling bad/regret about the support given. The most frequently cited feeling following support provision was a sense of satisfaction in the support given. Several entries described feeling good about the support that they provided the friend. Likewise, many participants reported feeling a sense of satisfaction in being able to help
the friend and feeling happy that the friend came to them for support. For example, participant 11 mentioned that: “I am feeling accomplished about this experience because after she said ‘This is why I always come to you. You always know what to say.’” In the same way, participant 40 reflected on an interaction with two feuding friends:

*I feel good about my involvement in the episode as I was able to be honest with both parties during “mediation.” I also feel good that they both will find it in their hearts to make amends and that I hopefully helped with that.*

Based on the data, it became increasingly evident that many support providers were confident in their advice-giving skills.

There were also some instances in which participants felt indifferent to the situation, even after they had provided support. Some participants indicated that this was just a normal daily interaction among friends, so they didn’t get too caught up in any feelings with it. Participant 42 put it frankly, “I am feeling somewhat indifferent about the interaction. B.D.’s problem stinks but it’s not a life altering issue.” Similarly, participant 49 responded that he gave the response he did because he perceived it as an issue that didn’t really affect him, “I did not feel anything particular because I used my knee-jerk reaction to anything I don’t feel impacted by.”

Although not as frequent, there were also instances where the study participants talked about feeling guilty afterward. However, some of them did not actually feel guilty about their form of support until they were asked to reflect on it in their diary entry. Further, it should be noted that all but one of the interactions where guilt was expressed were reported as either a deceptive or combination interaction with friends. In one entry, however, the individual discussed feeling guilty for being too honest:
I feel really guilty for saying this to J.S. I never want one of my friends to feel like they can’t come to me for support. I just got so tired of her crying wolf. I felt aggravated, but now I feel upset for reacting this way. (Participant 44)

Many of the other participants reported feeling guilty because the support that they chose to give stemmed from selfish motives. Participant 46 wrote, “Due to my own interest, I didn’t help a friend, so I don’t feel too good.” Participant 15 responded similarly, saying: “I felt kind of bad because he needed a friend, but he also asks very last minute!”

Finally, there were also participants who reported feeling “okay” with the support they gave. This emotion was displayed in both honest and deceptive interactions alike. The “feel okay” code was used when participants in their own words said they felt okay (which was often) but also when participants mentioned that they didn’t feel bad about their support provision, implying that they felt they had made the right choice. When participants recorded feeling okay, they often wrote about why they felt okay about it. It seemed that in situations when the participants felt okay about their support (as opposed to guilty or confident), and it was deceptive or a combination in nature, they felt the need to justify it, whether to themselves or the researcher. The diary entry template did not ask the participants to elaborate on why they felt the way they did, but several participants did, giving the researcher insight into the sense-making process of the support provider. Several entries that included justification for deception seemed to be rooted in politeness, as the deception saved the face of the support seeker. This is consistent with Lippard’s (1988) finding that participants felt justified when using deception to avoid hurt feelings, more so than any other form of deception in the study. For example, in the present study, participant 23 wrote:
I don’t feel bad about not saying my true feeling because I have mutual friends with this girl and I don’t want to burn bridges. She’s not a close friend, and stating my mind would’ve done more harm than good.

Similarly, participant 5 wrote about a conversation with their friend:

> When she was talking to me, I tuned out of the conversation and pretend[ed] I was listening. My reasoning was because her stories were circulating and it was starting to become boring. In the initial conversation, I was completely attentive. But the longer it lasted, the least interested I was. I feel okay about my form of deception. I don’t feel guilt.

Another participant justified not feeling bad about their deceptive support with a coworker/friend by reporting it in his diary with brutal honesty. This individual wrote: “[She] didn’t know who told [our] other coworker about her saying she was happy she’s gone, [I] assured not me and it was silly. Satisfied b/c she is turning out to be a shitty coworker.”

In a completely different way, participant 2 discussed a deceptive interaction with her boss that she didn’t feel guilty about because it ended up saving her from losing her job: “I lied to my boss/friend in order to not get in trouble and not be penalized for my actions. I feel it is more important not to lose my job.”

Occasionally, the participants were okay with being deceptive because it protected them in some way or another. Participant 5 wrote about an interaction in class one day: “We talked about being prepared for an upcoming quiz...I told half of a lie and half-truth. I mildly lied and said I was prepared to appear ‘ready.’ I feel okay about lying.”

Although not as common, a couple participants also justified their honest responses. Based on their entries, this seemed to be done because in the moment their honesty might seemed abrupt, so they justified why honesty was necessary for the situation:
Before class, my female friend was griping about who she feels a certain professor grades her work more critically than mine. I feel like I do better work than her, but I told her that if she feels like it’s unfair to see the professor during office hours. She kept pushing me to agree with her that her answer on the test was the same quality as mine, and although I disagree, I told her that maybe the professor preferred my wording better.

( Participant 23 )

Thus, it seems as though individuals feel the need to justify their responses when they felt okay about the support they provided, but the support was selfishly motivated or perhaps not the support the seeker had expected to receive.

**Support provision: How and why.** In addition to the initially proposed research questions, two larger, overarching themes became apparent to the researcher during the coding process. One of the larger themes involves why the participant gave the support they did, which was collected by the diary template question that asks the participant to elaborate on the support they gave as well as how they gave it. After several passes of the data, a second theme emerged from this idea that brought to light an obvious tension providers experience during the support process. The coding process gave rise to the idea that during this process, support providers make the choices they do for both positively intentioned and more negatively intentioned motivations. There were also times when support providers knew that it was time to be honest with their friends, even though it wasn’t the most polite or kind method of support. Thus, there are times when honesty may be painful, but necessary.

**Emotionally driven support.** There were several ways in which providers could give their friends positively intentioned support, but the most cited motivation had to do with emotions regarding the friend. In most cases, it was the support seeker who was experiencing a highly
emotional situation and the provider did their best to notice this and respond accordingly. However, there were also times in which the provider experienced emotions as a result of their support, which Albrecht and Adelman (1987) would label as emotional contagion. Thus, emotionally-driven support refers to either the support seeker’s high emotions about the situation or the consequential emotions felt by the support provider in response to the seeker. Indeed, in 13 (20%) entries of friend instances, the support provider wrote about feeling bad for the friend or even experiencing feelings of helplessness. Along with helplessness, participants reported feeling bad that there was not more they could do to remedy the situation. Many times, the support provider felt sympathy for their situation and the fact that the friend had to deal with it: “My dad’s fiancée and I went to Target to get a chemo bag together for his first treatment. We both had a breakdown [I was feeling] mostly sad and helpless” (Participant 45). Participant 44 expressed similar feelings about her best friend: “I feel bad because I know that L.R. is in love with this guy and he’s told her he doesn’t feel the same.”

In other situations “feeling bad” took on a more protective connotation, wherein participants felt like the situation was somehow unfair to the friend or regarding something the friend couldn’t necessarily control (e.g., personality traits):

K.P. has been feeling uncomfortable at work. He feels isolated by coworkers. I told him to talk to his coworkers and explain his feelings to them. I also said I was sorry and I was here for him for whatever he needed. I was honest to K.P. The best way to resolve his issue is by confronting it. I felt disgusted by his coworkers.

In the same way, participant 42 (whose diary entry categorized her romantic partner as a friend) mentioned:
A.B. and I discussed grades. This was a hard conversation for me because I tend to do very well in school with little effort and he studies so hard and gets below average grades :(

I was honest in this conversation. This convo made me sad because he tries so hard and I wish there was something more I could do to help.

In addition to the subtheme of feeling bad or helpless for the friend, people also reported feelings of empathy or identification with the friend’s situation. Many participants felt they could be honest and offer advice because they had themselves been in a similar situation. This theme also provided some examples of Albrecht and Adelman (1987)’s emotional contagion, as hearing friends’ stories affected the providers’ feelings as well. Participant 20 provided an example of this idea, saying:

*She told me about how her older brother has been in prison for almost two years. I gave her my support and comforted her by letting her know that I used to be in the same situation as her. I was honest in this interaction because I could understand what she was going through. I am feeling a bit sad because it brought me back to those moments in my life when my brother was in prison.*

Participant 18 explains that because he identified with his friends’ situation, he was able to share solutions that had been effective for him in the past:

*First, I considered him saying that its okay to feel upset, but then started to give him strategies on how to combat his stress and anxiety through my own experiences overcoming the same challenges.*

*I was honest in my approach of supporting E.L. by validating his stress, but then also giving him my own advice to overcome the challenge.*
In many of the supportive situations among friends, the participant provided at least some form of encouragement, motivation, or reassurance about the situation. This occurred in 28 (42%) of the entries. However, this code was often double coded with emotional support, but during conversations in the coding process, the two were found to be mutually exclusive, in that emotional support did not always mandate the presence of words of encouragement. For example, participant 47 expresses frustration with a friend who was slacking in school and “freaking out”: “So I told her she knew this was coming. And that she had gotten off track and wasn’t focused on school. She needed to find the motivation she used to have.” Additionally, some of the encouragement and motivational codes also qualified as informational support because advice was given. Like participant 47, multiple participants wrote about giving their friends a little push when they needed it, but did it in a way that was kind and an honest attempt at encouraging their friend. Participant 15 also provided a “friendly shove” to her best friend who was thinking of giving up on a class assignment: “You have to at least try! Email your teacher, ask a friend, and you know I’m here if you need anything. You can’t give up before you even try to do something. Give a little effort!”

The encouraging and motivational messages often took the form of reassurance, whether it was simply reminding the friend that everything was going to be okay, or assuring the friend that whatever happens, the provider would still be there to support them:

I gave her my support by letting her know I was there for her if she ever needed someone to talk to or let out her emotions. I told her to just be honest with her and that I’m sure everything will be okay. That the situation could be worse and just take deep breaths and talk to her calmly. (Participant 15)

I texted her when I got home and I told her I fully supported her running. (Participant 24)
I told her I would support her no matter who she’s with. (Participant 36)

Still more emotionally-driven messages were crafted with the idea of saving the friend’s face or protecting them in mind. This is because when the support seeker was experiencing emotional distress or worried about a sensitive topic, participants indicated that being honest might not have been well received at that time. Many participants reported not saying what they really felt about a situation in order to not hurt the friend’s feelings:

Me and my wife went out to dinner with friends of ours. My friend’s girlfriend had gained some weight since the last time we saw her. She mentioned she gained weight but I said “No you look great. You look the same to me.” This was not true and not sincere, but I didn’t want to be rude. (Participant 26)

I used combo of both honesty and lies to prevent her from future troubles, but also protect her feelings in the moment. (Participant 36)

I didn’t want to hurt his feelings of being too forward. (Participant 34)

Similarly, there were instances in which individuals gave certain support because they were attempting to protect the friend. It was often the case that when these situations came up, the support provider simply withheld some of the information because they knew it would upset the support seeker. Participant 2 described one such scenario with a coworker who expressed interest in training to become a police officer:

So I am kinda afraid for him and I think he could maybe choose a safer career, but that is life it is okay. I did not mention my fear for him cause I didn’t want him to be scared. You never know what is going to happen. (Participant 2)

Participant 15 used deception in order to avoid annoying her friend: “I ended up agreeing with him to make him happy. I think I was being deceptive but I also didn’t want to irritate him” In an
interesting twist, participant 22 used deceptive support with one friend in order to protect a group of her other friends: “I told him I was sick. I really wasn’t. He just has a bad track record with his girlfriends, and I didn’t want to bring him around my friends I was hanging out with tonight.”

Hence, participants used a variety of tactics to provide support, and for the most part, their support efforts were pro-socially motivated. They wanted to encourage and challenge their friends, but as evidenced, a few participants also knew when it was time to be real with their friends and give them some tough love.

**Provider-oriented support.** While the data show that friends mostly want to be honest within their friend relationships, the participants were also honest with the researcher by reporting when they had interactions with more selfishly motivated intentions. In the same way participants provided support to protect their friend, there were times when they gave support that protected themselves instead.

*She’s not a close friend, and stating my mind would’ve done more harm than good* (Participant 23).

*Said he’s been having problems w/ his life and wanted to grab a drink and talk about everything. I told him that I have tons of homework and need to stay in tonight. I was deceptive to a certain extent. I did have homework, but nothing that was extremely important. I just didn’t feel like spending money and talking!* (Participant 15)

There were also a few instances where individuals gave seemingly genuine social support but did so because they benefitted from the outcome. As an example, Participant 26 recalled a complex instance where he gave what appeared to be honest social support to a coworker, but it was actually a selfish move by the provider:
I meant what I said I’m his upper management so I make over rides off him, so it was important to get him motivated (Participant 26).

After a long 12 hour day on campus my friend dealing with his break up which is now a week old. Needs to get his mind of things, we go out and drink & eat, then he tells me that he really wants to work things out after the conversations we have been having.  
I do not truly think they should get together. I am just simply done with having these conversations with him about it (Participant 46).

I would like to say it was for Ryan’s benefit but honestly it was because I’m selfish and didn’t want to deal with a stupid-pointless argument (Participant 27).

The overarching data theme of “How and Why Support was Given” encapsulated many of the themes present in the data. This theme and the exemplars appear to agree with Albrecht and Adelman’s (1987) conclusion that being a social support provider can lead to much indecision about how to best communicate support based upon situational context. It isn’t always easy to balance tensions about how support should be given, decide when the situation demands honesty versus polite deception, and try to be a “good friend” all at once. The second recurring theme was born out of the tensions illuminated in this theme, as these ideas allowed the researcher to become aware of how individuals actually manage feelings of confliction when taking their turn as support provider.

Social Support: A Balancing Act

The second major overarching theme to emerge from the data set was the idea of conflicted provision. After reading participants’ reports of how they decided what support to provide, the researcher noticed that this is actually quite a complicated process. The main tension experienced by conflicted providers was the “What I should say” versus “What I want to say”
dilemma. Put another way, the participants had to decide whether to avoid lying to their friend or to be honest. However, another constraint is added when politeness and appropriateness are also evaluated. The study participants were creative in their solutions to dealing with this situation.

**Obligatory comforting.** There were a number of circumstances reported that providers faced where they gave comfort to their friend more out of obligation than caring. Falling in line with several previously mentioned themes, the participants then felt conflicted with deciding if this was deceptive or honest support because they care deeply for the friend and want to help them, but at the same time, the support they gave wasn’t necessarily heartfelt. This code appears to be yet another iteration of the combination support and padding of the truth method of support identified earlier in this chapter. Many of the conflicting feelings in these scenarios revolved around people feeling like they needed to provide support to be a good friend, but questioning if they should still provide that support if they didn’t actually mean it. A running theme throughout the data set but was especially prevalent in friends was discussions of the friend’s other close relationships, especially romantic partners. Multiple participants felt conflicted about what was the “right” support to give to their friend. For example, participant 45 discussed supporting her friend who was having trouble with her romantic partner:

> My friend was going through a difficult time with her boyfriend. I was hugging her, holding her hand, listening, and telling her I’m here for her. I was honest but a little deceptive. I don’t really like her boyfriend so I was a little deceptive in that sense.

Participant 5 reported a comparable situation, noting, “This isn’t the first time she has complained about this guy. It’s pretty recurring. I guess I was deceptive because I pretended that I cared when I really didn’t.”
Pressure to respond accordingly. Another situation participants seemed to be experiencing throughout the course of the study was the pressure to respond to their friends in certain ways. It appeared that there were situations during which the participants felt that their friends couldn’t handle honesty at that moment, so they instead supported them with deception instead:

*I think I was being deceptive... I feel like I couldn’t be honest and I hate that!* (Participant 15).

*So while I don’t like him and think she’s just hurting herself, right now she’s still healing and needs to hear what she wants to hear. I was deceptive with her because in that moment that’s what she needed to hear* (Participant 47).

*I was totally deceptive toward her! I felt like I was cornered to answer that question. I thought it didn’t make her look different! Waste of money. I wish I could have told her the truth but we aren’t close anymore like we used to be!* (Participant 15).

In addition, there were times when the provider’s friend just would not accept the specific support participants were trying to offer, so the providers ended up switching their support tactic in the moment because it was easier than an argument or having the friend in turn become upset with them:

...To which my honesty was not being heard, so I just started to agree w/ her. I felt like I had no other choice but to agree w/ her because she was completely ignoring my attempt at using honesty in my support to her (Participant 44).

*J.E. did not get good grade on a quiz & was bummed. I told him he can’t dwell & change grade, but can only control future scores. I was honest & said he could have studied more instead he blamed quiz for being hard. I did lie & said quiz looked really
hard to make him feel a little better by attributing faults to external factors, but it was really J.E. being ill prepared. I used combo after I saw my honest hurt his feelings (Participant 36).

I’ve told her I don’t want to & that I really don’t want to move in with her boyfriend. In order to avoid fight about it I decided to lie and tell her I will consider it in order to avoid the conversation AGAIN! (Participant 37).

Instances such as these provide support for Kim et al.’s (2008) concept of the matching hypothesis. The hypothesis states that people sometimes provide support based on what they perceive the other person to be expecting. This was common in the present study. Many providers reported matching, either in the heat of the situation, or even based on previous experiences. When this was the case, participants had adapted their social support provision techniques to best suit their friends. For example, participant 47 said, “This is my best friend so I don’t feel the need to be deceptive with her. Plus I know she responds better to tough love.” It is clear with this participant that she and her best friend have clear standards for social support, and she had learned in the past that deception was not the best form of support for this friend. The same is likely true for many friends who have known each other long enough to learn this about each other. In the same vein, Participant 15 explained, “I wanted to be honest b/c this isn’t his 1st time doing this. He got annoyed w/ my suggestion. I ended up agreeing with him to make him happy” Participant 44 also used context clues in the situation to realize her method of support wasn’t working, so she needed to switch to something that was going to work:

After trying approaches of deception to make her feel better, I finally said “I mean maybe he’s spending more time w/ you so you feel like he’s not just using you for the pictures, but I definitely would keep my guard up, because it is a little strange w/ the timing.”
Later in her entry, she explained her reasoning more fully, saying: “I think I just starting off using just deception but I switched to using both deception and honesty. I’ve tried to talk to her about his intentions before, however, she just finds excuses so I’ve learned to bite my tongue.”

The study participants demonstrated many support provision tactics employed to help them out of potentially sticky situations. Participants reported using fake and insincere responses to essentially say what needed to be said and move forward with life. One of the main reasons this technique seemed to be effective was because while the provider knew their responses were insincere and fake, the person on the receiving end did not. Thus, in the end, these situations tend to be a win-win but with a caveat: The seeker gets support, and the provider doesn’t have to deal with the backlash of being transparent with their true feelings. The caveat lies in the moral implications surrounding the very nature of social support. This will be further elaborated on in Chapter 4.

Additionally, a number of participants indicated that they simply gave nearly automatic and subconscious responses. The responses were reported as honest, but quick and impersonal. These seemingly “instinctive” responses were typically of the “I’m so sorry!” or “Everything will be okay!” support variety. Participant 19 recollected:

\[
J.M. = \text{worried about starting first day of externship} \\
Me = \text{You’re gonna do great!} \\
\text{Feeling: Nothing really. It was an honest answer but an automatic response.}
\]

In a later entry, participant 19 further elaborated on what these types of responses meant to her, “Me: “Good luck! You got this!” Feeling: Reponses like that are basically second nature to me (almost like the LOL via text). While I’m honest, sometimes I feel like I don’t sound sincere.”
Participant 41 also weighed in on automatic responses, saying, “*Her friend has been immature and she’s pissed about it. I told her she’s young and will get past the phase. I don’t care about their problems.*”

It is interesting to point out that a majority of the instances involving insincere or fake responses took place with individuals whom the providers didn’t know as well. There were many reports of these types of responses with acquaintances and strangers, which is perhaps expected. However, it is intriguing to see that some of them made their way into closer friend and best friend relationships as well.

The study participants also devised creative methods to convey support for things they didn’t necessarily agree with but wanted to avoid the debate that might ensue if they stated their honest opinions. This “clever crafting” was often justified by explaining that these responses, while not deceptive, were not really honest either. They were merely an “escape route” to make a hasty exit from an unwanted conversation. For example, participant 31 reported:

> *My friend decided to go on a political rant (pro-Trump) & looked to me for support & agreeance about certain issues occurring as of now. I nodded & said I can understand why you feel this way, trying to avoid saying “Boo Trump” or to agree with her on something I didn’t believe. I never said I’m pro-Trump but I also didn’t want to fight her.*

Participants 3 and 27 employed similar support giving tactics, respectively:

> *I chose to carefully answer her question, but not using the words she wanted me to. I didn’t disagree but I didn’t agree either. I offered an alternative.* (3)

> *When Ryan asked me (over the phone) how my night was/what I had been up to I left out that I had talked to my CA friend (27).*
Participant 31 shared another example that was coded as clever crafting because it exemplified the careful production of a message to fit the situational needs. “I feel so weird about it and I don’t feel like I directly lie in the situation as much as I just hold in my thoughts and am not honest. Participant 23 told about a time when she was providing support to a friend who was venting about her husband:

This time I chose to suggest she talk to him and communicate her needs and explain what her expectations are. She seemed surprised that I didn’t just agree with her that her husband is the worst. I kind of think SHE is the worst. Rather than say that, I offered an alternative.

These examples illustrate how support providers carefully crafted messages that served their necessary purpose in the conversation, but technically didn’t qualify as either an honest message or a deceptive one.

Provider fatigue. Participants also made it very clear that there were times when they had simply “had it” and were exhausted by the friend or the problem. This was due to a variety of reasons, from the event recurring often to feeling frustration that the friend hasn’t listened to previous support attempts. In addition, sometimes the providers felt like the friend was at fault for their situation was it was difficult to provide sincere support. Provider frustration with recurring events was shown to affect how providers gave support:

S.M. was complaining about this one guy who supposedly shows signs of interest. This isn’t the first time she has complained about this guy. It’s pretty recurring. I guess I was deceptive because I pretended that I cared when I really didn’t. I’m a pretty bad person because I don’t care that I pretended to listen (Participant 5).
Well this time I got kind of fed up w/their daily break ups. I feel extremely annoyed because I was really trying to be a good friend by telling her the truth (Participant 44).

In a later entry, participant 44 describes how her feelings from a previous encounter with the friend affected the support she gave a day later:

I was still so annoyed from the night before and not even just the night before but all of the other nights that I used 100% honesty in my response.

Participant 19 discusses the way in which constantly being a support provider to someone can be taxing:

Over the years, my responses have been distant and deceptive at times. With the problems I’m facing in my own life, I struggle to be 100% there for her when her problems are of her own construction. I should probably feel more remorseful about my deception, but it’s too much work to talk things though w/ her, openly.

In the end, while most participants were eager to help and provide support to their friends experiencing problems, it was also apparent that there are times in which individuals are placed in the support provider position and it is not a role they wish to take on at that moment. Support provision can be repetitive, exhausting, and even annoying. It can also put individuals in a strange position, for instance, when they disagree with the support seeker, but know they need to provide some sort of response. Thus, it is important to remember that while social support is imperative to relationships and a daily part of life, in excess, it can have detrimental effects on the provider, and this can in turn affect the quality of support they provide.

As a whole, the participants and their diary entries provided clarification on some of the cloudier issues regarding social support provision. Overall, the participants in this data set made it evident that indeed, social support is tricky and can get messy; however, it is something that is
a part of life that can’t be avoided. Because of this, individuals are presented often (sometimes
even daily) with opportunities to be a support provider. The data suggest that friends prefer to
keep things honest and real with each other if possible. However, as with most things in life,
there are always exceptions. There are times when the support provider is fed up, doesn’t care, or
wants to make themselves look better. There are times when the support provider is trying to
make the friend feel better and wants to provide support but is not sure whether to be honest or
deceptive. Further, there are times when faking interest and support is just plain easier. However,
based on the data, in the majority of instances, friends do truly care about one another and want
to do what they can to help each other with any problems or obstacles they may encounter.
Chapter Five:

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to examine social support interactions among friends in depth in order to better understand the sense making process individuals undergo when providing support. This was accomplished through a qualitative, seven-day diary study during which social support providers recorded diary entries regarding the support that they gave and the emotions they were feeling. Each participant also recorded the demographic information of the social support seeker, the provider’s label of their friendship (i.e. friend or best friend), and a brief summary of the support scenario. The findings of this study provided insight on both a theoretical and practical level.

Results of the study suggest that individuals provide honest social support more often than they provide deceptive or combination support. In fact, 62% of the entries penned by support providers were identified as honest support (RQ1). Further, the most common type of support participants provided to their friends was emotional support (RQ2). Based on participant’s reflections about the social support interactions they were experiencing, it was found that some participants feel confident in their support giving, many feel indifferent, some feel “okay,” and some end up regretting or feeling guilty about the information that they gave their friend (RQ3). There were also instances in which individuals felt that their friends were expecting certain forms of social support and comfort, so the providers adjusted their provision to match these expectations. Most of the time, this meant realizing what the friend “needed to hear most” in the moment and matching the support to that demand. This was consistent with Kim et al.’s (2008) matching hypothesis. In other instances, participants first tried a different form of support but quickly realized that their current attempt at support was being “rejected” by
the friend, so they simply gave in and agreed with the friend to ease the situation. The following section includes elaboration of two major themes found in the data, as well as theoretical and political implications. Study limitations and future directions are also provided.

**What Constitutes “Friend”**

This study indicated that it can be hard for individuals to decide who in their lives qualifies as a friend and who does not. It appears that individuals conceptualize “friend” as someone whom they care about and interact with relatively often. This was first brought to light during the coding process. Participants were told in the training sessions that this study is focused on friends, and should they have a supportive interaction with a friend that didn’t meet one of the predetermined categories (i.e., friend, best friend, coworker, or acquaintance) that they should place the individual in the “other” category. The other category indicated that family or even strangers could be included under this label. Additionally, upon participants’ questioning, the participants were told that the researcher acknowledged that romantic partners are also often considered best friends, but for purposes of the study, they should make a distinction between the two and distinguish romantic partners as others. Many participants followed these directions and included social supportive interactions with a multitude of other individuals, creating an additional 82 entries outside the friend parameters set up by the researcher. The majority of the individuals reported as other were family members, but participants also included such individuals as roommates, classmates, and customers at work.

Additionally, although participants were asked to distinguish friends as one relationship or another, a number of people still categorized individuals as two identifiers. There were several instances of “Coworker/Friend,” and a few “Romantic Partner/Friend.” These interactions, as long as one label was some iteration of “friend” were included in the data analysis of friend,
because technically the participant, in their own words, did refer to the person as a friend. There were also entries where participants simply made up their own labels for their friends and disregarded the categories provided by the researcher. Examples of these classifications included “casual friend,” “close friend,” and “family friend.” Thus, participants made it very clear that it can be hard to precisely classify a friend. Even though participants attended a study training session with the researcher where instructions and specific elaboration were given, as well as a take home information sheet that gave category definitions, participants struggled to categorize those whom they interacted with as only one identifier.

In future studies involving friends, it may be beneficial to consider how “friend” is conceptualized. Do romantic partners qualify as friends? Do family members qualify as friends? Regardless of the answer, it may very likely be the case that the dynamics in these types of friendship-hybrids may be vastly different than that of non-related/familial or non-romantic interpersonal relationships. However, the dynamic between any kind of friends is likely very different as well. Thus, there are innumerable ways to continue the study of friends in the future; however, how friends are conceptualized may need be to be examined more in-depth.

How friendship is conceptualized also appears to differ in past research. For example, Floyd and Parks (1996) conducted a study on friendships wherein participants were asked to describe a “close” friend relationship, but were not asked to exclude any people from that distinction other than “casual friends” or “best friends.” In contrast, in his 1983 study, Rawlins recruited strictly friends to participate in a study, wherein the “principal bond had to be one of friendship, not that of siblings, spouses, coworkers, lovers, or fiancés” (p. 257). Thus, while this may help eliminate the overlap of relationship categories, it may subsequently also eliminate much data on friendships. For example, when the present study forced participants to classify
their friends into these categories, only 44% of the data set was viable for use for strictly “friend” relationships. Had the researcher allowed participants to label romantic partners, family, and coworkers as friends, there would have been significantly more data produced. There is something to be said for individuals who want to categorize family, romantic partners, or coworkers as friends: If these individuals want to label these people as friends, but they also fit another category, it could be difficult to decide how the researcher would want them to report it. Additionally, if a coworker has transcended the level of strictly coworker and is also now “friend,” it is likely that this person is a friend the participant just happened to meet at work, because if the person was not truly a “friend,” the participant should have no qualms about simply labeling them as coworkers.

However, because the researcher encouraged the participants to still record these instances if they were unsure of how to categorize them and thus did not disregard them completely, it was able to be empirically suggested that social support provision does not appear to be all that different in different forms of close relationships. One of the only differences in categories was romantic partners, and the present study suggests that individuals are honest with romantic partners more so than with friends, as participants recorded being honest with romantic partners in 86% of the instances, while on average, in all other categories, individuals were honest in 60% of instances. Obviously, additional studies regarding friendship could shed more light on these similarities between categories, such as coworkers, romantic partners, and family members. While some work has been done to shed light on overlapping friendships, there remains much work to do to understand the dynamics of social support within them (see Floyd, 1995; Floyd & Parks, 1995). Thus, while friendships remain a difficult concept to conceptualize,
the present study suggests that perhaps friendships that overlap with other relational categories should not be completely discounted as friendships worthy of study.

**Mechanical Social Support**

There were many instances in the data set where individuals took the opportunity to explain more about their social support interaction. Sometimes, they justified why they used the form of social support that they did, and other times they gave background about the friendship that gave the researcher insight into why the interaction went the way it did. For example, some of the participants gave support that may have seemed abrasive, but because they took the time to explain why, the researcher was able to see that in the past, they may have tried to give this friend social support that had been rejected. Thus being abrasive seemed like a solid solution. These explanations allowed the researcher to pick up on additional patterns happening in the data. One such pattern was what the researcher labeled as mechanical social support. Mechanical social support occurs when the support provider gives support in the way that is socially acceptable and perhaps even expected but does not sincerely mean it. However, it can get tricky to label this supportive interaction because often times, when the participants were giving this type of support, it wasn’t technically deceptive. They care about their friend and want to show them support, but for whatever reason (e.g., time or provider fatigue), they aren’t truly trying to immerse themselves in the friend’s situation and help.

In the current study, participants gave honest support but later explained that they were going through the motions of support—the empathy and sympathy aspects just were not there. This makes it different from deceptive social support because to the provider (and likely the seeker), it seems honest. For the support provider, it is indeed honest support because they want to help their friend and believe that is what they should do, but it isn’t necessarily genuine either
because they are not whole-heartedly invested in what they are saying. They aren’t meeting the definition of deception by perpetuating false information (O’Hair & Cody, 1994) or intending to incur false belief upon the seeker (Buller & Burgoon, 1998). Mechanical social support may also give evidence for the construct of truth bias, which suggests individuals naturally assume that people are being truthful during communication (Burgoon & Buller, 2015). This is because during instances of mechanical social support in the present study, the participants’ reports of the situations suggest that the support seeker was unaware that the given support was not entirely sincere. However, mechanical support is still a slightly different idea because the support given is truthful, but the provider is not completely authentic in their involvement. The current participants reported such support as honest, but done almost out of obligation to fulfill the role of friend.

Thus, the examples in the data show that individuals will often find creative ways to break news to their friends that would not necessarily be easy to hear directly. This clever crafting provides a useful strategy for when the provider wants to respect the face of the friend, but not do so through blatant deception. These results from the present study may be congruent with Horan and Booth-Butterfield’s (2013) diary study focused on romantic relationships. Participants in that study gave “deceptive affection”: giving displays of affection to their partners even though they didn’t always feel like it. The participants cited “face-saving, handling conflict, or emotion management” (p. 210) as motives for providing disingenuous messages to their partners. Thus, the individuals gave insincere affection to their partners because they felt it was part of being in a romantic relationship. This was likely due in part to expectations of the support seeker, but also to protect the face of the provider as a good romantic partner. Similarly, participants in the present study sometimes used clever crafting to protect their own or their
friends’ faces; additionally, like “deceptive affection” (Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2013), participants used mechanical support to fulfill expectations regarding what a good friend does and to be a supportive friend. However, in this study, participants believed that mechanical support was indeed an honest form of support in that their intention was to support. It appears that deceptive affection, clever crafting, and mechanical support provide a “meet-in-the-middle” approach that allows providers to find alternative routes to dodge directly deceptive acts.

**Theoretical Implications**

The data for this study supported Brown and Levinson’s (1987) theory of Politeness. Brown and Levinson suggested that positively centered politeness protects the face of the person seeking social support. Indeed, many of the participants in the study attempted to save the seeker’s face in many ways but mostly by simply providing support that was conscious of the seeker’s feelings and opinions. Additionally, Brown and Levinson argued that people are abiding by positive politeness when they listen to the needs of others and validate their needs. For the most part, participants appeared to be abiding by these guidelines as they often tried their best to find ways to fix the issue as well as providing empathy and personal identification to the problem whenever possible. The participants also gave lots of reassurance to their friends, reminding them that everything would be okay. It also appeared that when they couldn’t help the friend, they worked to help them find solutions, in the form of both tangible and information support. Thus, the data suggest that when providing support, friends attempt to do so in the most polite ways possible because they care about their friend’s feelings. Nevertheless, at the same time, they are not hesitant to jump right in and actively work to correct the issue.

There were also a handful of participants who appeared to be struggling with the tensions of negative politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Under this construct, Brown and Levinson
(1987) posited that individuals undergo a tension negotiation between wanting to be honest while at the same time also wanting to say things that save face. To compromise, Brown and Levinson suggested providers find a way to provide information that is a bit of both, and this is mostly accomplished in indirect ways. For example, instead of explicitly saying someone has a character flaw that caused them to be in the situation they are currently enduring, one might craft a message that indirectly suggests the seeker is at fault but does not directly call them out on their character flaw. This method, in the present study coded as “clever crafting,” was seen in action by many of the participants who felt that it was not a time to be honest but also didn’t want to offend the person they were supporting.

Results also provide support for Burleson’s (1994) concept of comforting messages, which function to ease some of the strife experienced by others. Consistent with Burleson’s argument that these messages are used most often to provide comfort in regard to everyday stressors, the participants in the present study cited socially supportive interactions in regard to more everyday issues (e.g., classwork, tough days at work, and short-term illness). The social support provided in tandem with these stressors was meant to comfort, motivate, or reassure. Further, individuals who seemed truly invested in their friends’ issue did have a tendency to use more person-centered messages, wherein their communication included justifying the friends’ feelings and helping the friend come to terms with such feelings. Social support provided in more long term contexts (e.g., divorce, cancer diagnoses, or job loss) appeared to be more intensive than basic comforting messages. For example, support given in the more long term examples was reported to be more sincere, and more feelings of helplessness and empathy regarding the situation were present among participants. When this was the case, participants gave the reassurances Burleson (1994) suggests but went beyond the comforting messages goals.
of comforting and reassuring. This is in contrast to times when a friend was having a rough day and the participant would tell them something like, “It’s okay, we all have bad days. You’ll get through it!” However, it was also shown that both the comforting messages and social support were often accompanied by one or more forms of Cutrona, Hessling, and Suhr’s (1997) five categories of tangible, emotional, esteem, informational, and social network support.

**Practical Implications**

In addition to theoretical implications, there are also several practical implications provided by the current study. First, it is important to understand that it appears as though people do not wish to be dishonest with their support. As the data showed, more than half the time, participants were honest with their friends, but the same held true for any interaction they had with another individual. Further, for the most part, when the participants did provide deceptive social support, it was usually done to protect the support seeker. Of course, there were some deceptive instances in which the support provider was being selfish, but in general deceptive supportive actions were often deemed necessary (e.g., in order to protect feelings or avoid negative consequences) or the best solution given the circumstances by the support provider. This idea appears consistent with Lippard’s (1988) conclusion that justifying deception between friends “reflects a cultural attitude which suggests that such deception is actually morally superior to telling a ‘painful’ truth (p. 100).

Second, the findings of this study imply and reinforce the idea that social support is critical, not only to close relationships, but between humans in general. Even though this study requested social support interactions among friends, coworkers, acquaintances, and strangers, there were few, if any, entries in which support seekers sought help and the participant did not provide at least some form of support, even if it was deceptive or mechanical. Thus, while this
study cannot conclude that this is the case in every supportive interaction among all types of individuals, it can conclude that in a general sense, individuals do indeed have a tendency to give support to those who ask them for it. The researcher believes this reflects a general attitude among humans that if possible, we should build each other up, rather than tear each other down. Of course, there will always be exceptions to ideas such as this, but in general it would appear that people do not want to cause hurt in others if they don’t have to. This idea reflects not only the data set, but it also mirrors the idea of politeness. However, there are also times when people perceive that others need a “wake-up call” in the form of some “tough love.” Interestingly, there were a couple instances where participants were brutally honest with their friends, but later justified their actions, citing that their role as “friend” or “best friend” made this necessary. However, perhaps it is true that people would rather, even if it stings, hear the truth from a friend than an individual with whom they share a less close relationship.

Roggensack and Sillars (2014) suggested that most romantic relationships hold honesty in highest esteem, even though the degree of honesty expected can vary. This information would be consistent with the current study’s finding that romantic partners were more honest with each other than any other relationship category. However, as suggested by Roggensack and Sillars, the discrepancy in expectations can in turn lead to conflict within the relationship. It is likely that similar wants and desires for honesty exist within friendships, but perhaps these expectations have not been discussed as explicitly as it might be in a romantic relationship. Hence, more future research could focus on exploring the honesty expectations among individuals in friendships to see how relationship rules and expectations might guide or influence individuals to use certain forms of social support.
One important thing to consider is that social support is unique in that there is always the potential for reciprocity. Individuals will always take turns as the support provider, just as they will sometimes be the one who needs support. This likely affects the nature of support provision because individuals are aware of the frequent role shifting that takes place during social support exchanges. This may encourage people to be more supportive of their friends and try to help them because they know when they are in the role of the seeker in the future, they would appreciate the same sort of support. This reason likely also plays a part in why the code of empathy and identification was so prevalent in provider’s reasons for giving support. Something that is easy to forget with social support is that in order to seek support, an individual has to risk their positive face and let it be known that they are in need of some form of assistance. This idea can be neglected easily, especially with individuals who are seemingly always in need of support.

Thus, this study can serve as a reminder that sometimes people just need a little boost and to be reminded that they are doing a good job. Additionally, as a social support provider, it is relatively easy to give this service. Therefore, while social support involves being a good friend, it also generalizes to being a good human to those individuals outside of close relationships as well. The results of this study serve as a reminder that although support provision can prove to be quite the undertaking, it is still one of the major components of a friendship. Friends have a responsibility to look out for each other and provide assistance when necessary, so it is important to consider the context and expectations of the relationship when support is provided. In addition, it may be helpful to explicitly ask for honesty if it is desired when seeking support to let the support provider know what is expected. Broadly, it may also be beneficial to friendships in
general to have open conversations about how each party best receives support, and whether or not deception is ever acceptable.

Finally, the current study also has practical pedagogical implications. In the field of communication, deception and social support are typically taught as two separate entities. When teaching about social support, however, it is rarely mentioned that some socially supportive techniques are inherently deceptive. The overlap between the two concepts is not often addressed or made clear; thus, in the future, this idea should be pondered. For example, when students are taught Politeness theory and that the face of others should be protected, whereas face maintenance is being labeled as politeness, by definition it could also be labeled as deception, albeit polite deception. As communication scholars and educators, there is much to be considered: Should deceptive social support be authorized under the guise of social support and its necessity in relationships? Is deception authorized if it functions as a form of social support and is successful? Clearly, the current study sheds light on important topics of future conversation that should be considered within the discipline.

Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Given that this was one of the first studies to examine the two constructs of social support and deception together, the study method was largely exploratory. It is not yet known how to best capture these interactions among friends. Given this, the study had several areas which could be approved upon prior to further study. One such limitation was that this study was one-sided. All of the data collected was only from the perspective of the support provider and their perception on the support that they provided. In the future, it would be beneficial to also collect dyadic data that focuses on both the support provider and the support seeker regarding the same interaction. The participants in this study tended to be confident in their advice and support
giving skills, and it would be of interest to also observe how the support seeker interpreted the provider’s support to see how closely the two align.

Another limitation of this study involved the design of the diary entry. While the entry provided participants with plenty of prompts to provide a thorough investigation, in the future it might be helpful to also include a couple scale items wherein participants rate how serious or how emotionally charged they perceive the situation to be. The researcher believes that understanding the dynamics of different situations and how support might adapt to certain situations would definitely be worthy of further study. For example, this data set included everything from support for a friend whose parent had just been diagnosed with cancer to providing support to a stranger at a basketball game. It would be very interesting to learn more about how the support demands might be different in more serious or emotional situations and how providers may change their support based on these constraints.

A third limitation involved the ambiguity of the definition of “friend” for the purposes of categorization. In the present study, the researcher created five categories, but participants often crafted their own or double-labeled the individuals with whom they interacted. Thus, it became clear that there was a great deal of overlap between the categories, and further conceptualization may be necessary in future studies. More precise detail of inclusion and exclusion principles for who qualifies as a “friend” would likely produce more specific data tailored to the researcher’s interests; however, it also may hinder further analysis of how the relational category of “friend” is perhaps more conceptually nuanced in practice. For example, consider the relationship between roommates. Many people are best friends with their roommates, but that is not the case for all individuals. A roommate is likely a person who is seen on a frequent basis, and an adequate amount of information is known about them. However, it is also the case that a
roommate may not quite be at the level of a “friend” but is closer than an acquaintance. Additionally, even if the roommate is a friend, living with said friend might completely change the dynamic of the relationship, at least in terms of how “friend” is conceptualized. Hence, more study on how to best and most consistently study friend relationships would be beneficial to the discipline—methodologically, conceptually, and practically.

Perhaps one of the largest takeaways of the present study involves how researchers conceptualize social support and all that it encompasses. For instance, if social support is truly the “cornerstone” of human life (Albrecht, et al, 1994), should it always be provided even if it isn’t genuine? What about when it is deceptive? Is it better to lie to people and give false support rather than inform them that we do not wish to support them at that moment or do not care about how they are feeling? Future social support and deception researchers will have to determine how they will advise social support be given in this way. Should social support always be a genuine effort, or is deceptive support acceptable as well? What then, does this mean for the idea of mechanical social support? These are all important avenues for future research as the intersection between two important constructs is mapped.
Appendix A

Table 1: Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>Straight</th>
<th>Lesbian</th>
<th>Bi-Sexual</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian or Mixed-Asian</th>
<th>European American</th>
<th>Puerto Rican</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Total Participants:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(38)- (20)=17</td>
<td>23.71</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Table 2: Support Seeker Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seeker Demographics</th>
<th>n= 261</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexual Orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Mixed Asian</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix C

#### Table 3: Friend Group Support Frequencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENTRY DATA</th>
<th>$n$</th>
<th>Subgroup %</th>
<th>Data %</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Subgroup %</th>
<th>Data %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Entries</strong></td>
<td>261</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>161</td>
<td></td>
<td>62%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceptive</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friends</strong></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceptive</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Best Friends</strong></td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceptive</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other &quot;Friend&quot; Distinctions</strong></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceptive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total &quot;Friend&quot; Data</strong></td>
<td>109</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceptive</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Romantic Partners** | 29 | 11% | 86% | 86% |
| Honest | 25 | 86% | 86% |  | | 10% | 10% |
| Deceptive | 3 | 10% | 10% |  | | <1% |  |
| Combination | 1 | 3% | <1% |  | |  |

| **Coworkers** | 35 | 13% |  |  |
| Honest | 20 | 57% | 57% |  | |  |
| Deceptive | 8 | 23% | 23% |  | |  |
| Combination | 7 | 20% | 20% |  | |  |

| **Acquaintances** | 9 | 3% |  |  |
| Honest | 5 | 56% | 56% |  | |  |
| Deceptive | 1 | 11% | <1% |  | |  |
| Combination | 3 | 33% | 33% |  | |  |

| **All Others** | 82 | 31% |  |  |
| Honest | 49 | 60% | 19% |  | |  |
| Deceptive | 20 | 24% | 8% |  | |  |
| Combination | 13 | 16% | 5% |  | |  |
Appendix D: IRB Approval Document

UNLV Social/Behavioral IRB - Expedited Review
Approval Notice

DATE: January 17, 2017
TO: Jennifer Guthrie, PhD
FROM: UNLV Social/Behavioral IRB
PROTOCOL TITLE: [971792-2] Social Support and Deception within Friendships: A Diary Study
SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: January 14, 2017
EXPIRATION DATE: January 13, 2018
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for submission of Revision materials for this protocol. The UNLV Social/Behavioral IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a protocol design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

PLEASE NOTE:
Upon approval, the research team is responsible for conducting the research as stated in the protocol most recently reviewed and approved by the IRB, which shall include using the most recently submitted Informed Consent/Assent forms and recruitment materials. The official versions of these forms are indicated by footer which contains approval and expiration dates. If your project involves paying research participants, it is recommended to contact Carisa Shaffer, ORI Program Coordinator at (702) 895-2794 to ensure compliance with subject payment policy.

Should there be any change to the protocol, it will be necessary to submit a Modification Form through ORI - Human Subjects. No changes may be made to the existing protocol until modifications have been approved.

ALL UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risk to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed. All NONCOMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this protocol must be reported promptly to this office.

This protocol has been determined to be a Minimal Risk protocol. Based on the risks, this protocol requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Submission of the Continuing Review Request Form must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of January 13, 2018.

If you have questions, please contact the Office of Research Integrity - Human Subjects at IRB@unlv.edu or call 702-895-2794. Please include your protocol title and IRBNet ID in all correspondence.
Office of Research Integrity - Human Subjects
4505 Maryland Parkway . Box 451047 . Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-1047
(702) 895-2794 . FAX: (702) 895-0805 . IRB@unlv.edu
Appendix E: Recruitment Announcement

The Communication Studies department and researcher Courtney McDaniel invite you to participate in a research study regarding supportive communication within different types of relationships. Specifically, the study will examine the ways in which friends, coworkers, and acquaintances provide support to each other.

Participants will complete a seven-day diary study, followed by a brief online follow-up survey. The diary portion of the study involves completing brief journal entries about instances of supportive communication in your everyday life. In order to participate in the study, students must first attend a 30 minute training session with the researcher to go over the study procedures. If at any time during the study you wish to withdraw your participation, you may do so without penalty.

Extra credit will be awarded! Participants will receive half of the extra credit for participating in the diary study and returning the diary, and the other half of the credit for completing the online follow-up survey.

To sign up to participate, go to https://unlv-comm.sona-systems.com and create a free account. Following registration, you will be able to sign up for one of several timeslots to attend diary training. At training, you will be given your diary and instructions on how to complete the study.

Questions, comments, or concerns? Please contact the researcher (Courtney McDaniel) at mcdanc1@unlv.nevada.edu for more information! You may also contact Dr. Jennifer Guthrie at jennifer.guthrie@unlv.edu.
Appendix F: Training Session Script

Hello, all! My name is Courtney McDaniel, and I’m a second year grad student here in the COM department. I’m so excited that you all are interested in participating in my study. Basically, this study looks at how support is provided in different types of relationships. So, think about your everyday interactions with your friends, your best friends, your acquaintances, your roommate, a stranger at the gym, whatever it may be, and how you provide support to them throughout the day. The study will ask you to really think about how you are providing support, why you provide the specific support that you did, and whether or not it was honest or deceptive. This is an area that hasn’t been heavily studied in the discipline, so you are a part of a very exciting study!

The study itself is pretty simple. I will give you one of these little notebooks and that will serve as your diary. For the next seven days, consider this notebook a part of you like you do your cell phone. Stick it in your pocket, your purse, or your backpack and have it on you at all times. More on this later...let’s discuss the meat of the study. For the purposes of this study, the following definitions are extremely important: (These will also be on an information sheet that goes home with participants). The examples are there to help you think about when you might use one of these concepts, but they are absolutely not an exhaustive list.

**Social support:** “Verbal and nonverbal behaviors employed by individuals when they are seeking to help another person” (Vangelisti, 2009).

**Examples:** nodding, hugs, listening, shoulder patting, “I’m so sorry,” “Are you okay?” “Do you want to talk about it?” “Maybe you could try this…”

**Deception:** “The conscious attempt to create or perpetuate false impressions among other communicators” (O’Hair & Cody, 1994, p. 183).

**Examples:** “That outfit looks great!” “I stayed in last night.” “I can’t go...I’m sick (two coughs).” “Of course I read all the readings for class today!”

**Best friend:** This is a person you call your best friend for whatever reason, regardless of length of friendship.

**Friend:** You don’t describe this person as your best friend, but they are still someone you are fairly close to.

**Coworker:** This is someone you interact with at your job, or perhaps work closely with in an extra-curricular activity such as intramurals, a club, or student senate. This is a professional relationship, and likely involuntary.

**Acquaintance:** This is someone you don’t know extremely well, but perhaps you know of them or about them. You wouldn’t describe this person as a friend, but they also are not a stranger.
**Other:** This is a person that does not meet any of the above categories. It could be a stranger, a sibling, your mother, your grandmother, etc. If you choose to write other, please explain the relationship as well.

You may not realize it yet, but supportive communication happens constantly throughout the day, whether or not you are truly conscious of it. For example, you are standing at the grocery store, just trying to check out and go home and a sweet old lady is telling you all about her cats and how little Fluffy has ear mites and is SO itchy. Do you really care? Probably not, you don’t know this woman or Fluffy, and you’re grossed out by the idea of what an ear mite might look like, but regardless, you probably nod your head and tell her you are sorry to hear that and you hope her cat gets better. Maybe you mean what you’re saying, or maybe you don’t… and that’s when you would write an entry in your journal to tell me about it. Don’t worry about whether or not “it counts” - write it down anyway! *(Show template and do a sample entry for cat story. Go over above examples as well. Ask if anyone has questions).*

Now, I totally understand that you may go a day or two without supporting anyone and then maybe the next day you have four instances. THIS IS OKAY AND FINE. Please do not simply make up a story because you feel like you have to fill the blank space. I would rather have less data if it means it is real and honest. If for some reason you forget your journal and you are out and about, take notes of an interaction on your phone and add it to your diary later.

Your privacy is my top concern! Your diary will be numbered, and only I will know which number you are associated with. You may also notice that I have provided you with stickers. This is an optional process, but if you want to attempt to keep other people from reading your journal, after each entry, put stickers on either side of the diary. This way, you can tell if the seal has been broken, and it will also probably discourage others from leafing through your diary. Using the stickers is optional, but I would encourage you to use them for your privacy.

Towards the last day of the study, I will email you a link to the second half of the study. You will have a week to finish the survey, and in order to receive the other half of your research credit, you have to complete this survey. It is fairly brief and just asks for your feelings about the study. You can and are encouraged to use your diary to answer those questions. You can bring back your diary any time after you finish that survey. Seal it back up in this envelope and bring it back to my office or the Communication Studies Main office. I need your diaries back as soon as possible after you finish the survey! I will send email reminders if I still don’t have your diary a few days after the survey is due. Once you give me your diary, it will be stored in a locked cabinet in my office and destroyed in five years.

*(Take questions and pass out informed consent. Once they give me a signed informed consent, they will be given a numbered envelope with a diary inside. I will keep a roster of corresponding names and diary numbers to protect privacy but keep track of who has participated and returned their journal).*
Appendix G: Study Information Document (Front and Back)

Study Information:

Below are some important definitions and examples for you to keep in mind as you complete the study:

**Social support:** “Verbal and nonverbal behaviors employed by individuals when they are seeking to help another person” (Vangelisti, 2009).

**Examples:** nodding, hugs, listening, shoulder patting, “I’m so sorry,” “Are you okay?” “Do you want to talk about it?” “Maybe you could try this…”

**Deception:** “The conscious attempt to create or perpetuate false impressions among other communicators” (O’Hair & Cody, 1994, p. 183).

**Examples:** “That outfit looks great!” “I stayed in last night.” “I can’t go…I’m sick (two coughs).” “Of course I read all the readings for class today!”

---

**FRIEND TYPES:**

**Best friend:** This is a person you call your best friend for whatever reason, regardless of length of friendship.

**Friend:** You don’t describe this person as your best friend, but they are still someone you are fairly close to.

**Coworker:** This is someone you interact with at your job, or perhaps work closely with in an extra-curricular activity such as intramurals, a club, or student senate. This is a professional relationship, and likely involuntary.

**Acquaintance:** This is someone you don’t know extremely well, but perhaps you know of them or about them. You wouldn’t describe this person as a friend, but they also are not a stranger.

**Other:** This is a person that does not meet any of the above categories. It could be a stranger, a sibling, your mother, your grandmother, etc. If you choose to write other, please explain the relationship as well.

---
Basic Instructions:

1. Fill out the diary over the course of 7 days, starting the day of your training session. Make an entry for each supportive interaction you have in the day. There is no set number for how many entries you must have. I would rather you have less entries than for you to make something up so that you have something in your diary.

2. Give me as much information as you want. Try to complete the basic template, but if you want to write more, please do!

3. After seven days, you will be ready to log back into the SONA system and enroll in the second half of the study, “Social Support Among Friends (Part 2)”. Complete the survey, using your diary, and submit it. Use this survey to give me your feedback about the study! When it asks for your diary code in the survey, enter the number on the white stickers on the front of your diary and the manila envelope.

4. After submitting the survey, you’re done! It’s time to return your diary. Seal it up in the manila envelope, and bring it to Greenspun Office 4121, or if I am not there, you may leave it in the Communication Studies Main Office, with the person at the front desk. Please return your diary as soon as you can after you finish the study.

Thank you so much for participating in my study. In doing so, you have contributed to scholarly research and the discipline of Communication Studies! If you have any questions at ANY TIME during or after the study, please don’t hesitate to email me at mcdanc1@unlv.nevada.edu and I will get back with you ASAP! Thank you again for your help!
Appendix H: Diary Entry Template

Date/Time of day:

Friend Type:

Gender, Sexual Orientation, Ethnicity, and Initials of Friend:

Brief Summary of Problem and Support Given:

Were you deceptive, honest or a combination with your support? In what way?

Are you experiencing any specific feelings in regard to this experience?
Appendix I: IRB Approved Consent Document

INFORMED CONSENT

Department of Communication Studies

TITLE OF STUDY: Talking with Friends about Stressors

INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. Jennifer Guthrie (Principal), Courtney McDaniel

For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Courtney McDaniel at mcdanc1@unlv.nevada.edu or Jennifer Guthrie at jennifer.guthrie@unlv.edu. For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact the UNLV Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects at 702-895-2794, toll free at 877-895-2794 or via email at IRB@unlv.edu.

Purpose of the Study
You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to examine how friends give support to each other. This study focuses specifically on learning how or why friends, coworkers, and acquaintances choose deception or honesty when communicating support to each other, and the emotions associated with being a support provider.

Participants
You are being asked to participate in the study because you are enrolled in a course that is eligible to participate in this study.

Procedures
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to (1) attend a training session, (2) complete a seven day diary study, and (3) complete an online follow up survey within seven days of your diary study completion. Questions and entries will focus on conversations and experiences with other individuals seeking support from you and your support provision to these friends, coworkers, and acquaintances. The follow up survey will ask about your experience with the study, as well as some of the emotions and expectations you experienced in the situations you journaled about.

Benefits of Participation
There may be direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. You will have the opportunity to consider more deeply your supportive interactions with other people and how these interactions affect both you and the person you are giving support to. You may also gain insight into how support is provided differently to different types of friends. This study also aims to learn what friends choose deception or honesty when providing support to each other. Results could indicate how to help yourself and others more effectively provide social support to individuals in different types of situations based on expectations.

Risks of Participation
There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include minimal risks, such as psychological distress and discomfort. To minimize distress and discomfort, you will have the choice of whether or not to journal about some experiences. Similarly, more sensitive topics need not be journaled about if you do not wish to do so, and do not need to be disclosed in the follow-up survey.
In some instances, participants possibly may reveal that they are a danger to self, others, or that they have been or currently are being physically, psychologically, or verbally abused. If within the diary entries or follow-up survey you indicate you are currently a danger to yourself, others, or that you are currently are being physically, psychologically, or verbally abused, the researcher will end your participation in the study. You will still receive your research credit in full, but the researcher is required to report this information to the Office of Research Integrity, according to the Adverse Events Procedures, and to local authorities (UNLV Campus Police or Las Vegas Police Department).

Because you have control over the entries and responses pertaining to the diary study and follow-up measures, these risks should be similar to those you would normally experience interacting with other individuals and providing support. If you are a student and have questions about your own physical or mental health, contact the Student Wellness Center (Email: caps@unlv.edu; Phone: 702-774-7100). If you are not a student at UNLV and you have questions about your own physical or mental health, you may contact The Practice (702-895-1532) or The Center for Individual, Couple, and Family Counseling (702-895-3106).

**Cost/Compensation**
There will not be financial cost to you to participate in this study. If you are participating in this study for a course that offers opportunities to earn research credit, you will be compensated for your time with 1 credit for completing the full study (1/2 a credit for completing the diary and 1/2 a credit for completing the survey). Your research credit will be updated within 1 week after you return the diary to the researcher. (An alternative assignment is available if you wish to earn credit without participating in the research study.) If you are not enrolled in a course that offers opportunities to earn research credit by participating in a Communication Studies research study, no compensation is available.

**Confidentiality**
All information gathered in this study will be kept as confidential as possible. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for 5 years after completion of the study. After the storage time the information gathered will be deleted from electronic files and papers will be shredded and confidentially recycled.

**Voluntary Participation**
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time during the data collection process without prejudice to your relations with UNLV. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

**Participant Consent**
I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I have been able to ask questions about the research study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

_______________________________  __________________________
Signature of Participant                      Date

_______________________________
Participant Name (Please Print)

89
Appendix J: Follow-Up Survey

Gender:

Sexual Orientation:

Age:

Ethnicity:

Open-Ended Questions: (Please feel free to use your diary to complete these questions!)

1. What type of support did you feel you provided most often during the study? (e.g. lies, white lies, truths, etc.?)

2. Why do you think you responded to your friends in the ways that you did?

3. Looking through your responses, did the type of support you gave vary based on who was seeking it?

4. In what situations, if any, do you think using deception is acceptable?

5. When you are in need of support, what expectations do you have for the person you are seeking support from?

6. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding social support among friends?

7. Please share any other feelings, concerns, or comments regarding your participation in the study.
References
Albrecht, M. B. Adelman, & Associates (Eds.), Communicating social support (pp. 240–
254). Newbury.
communication and social support. Communication Research, 19(2), 149-153.
doi:10.1177/009365092019002001
Angell, L. R. (1998). Communication comforting strategies and social bereavement: Verbal and
nonverbal planning and appropriateness. Journal of Personal and Interpersonal Loss, 3,
271-283. doi:10.1080/10811449808409704
Bippus, A.M. (2001). Recipients’ criteria for evaluating the skillfulness of comforting
communication and the outcomes of comforting interactions. Communication Monographs,
68(3), 301-313. doi:10.1080/03637750128064
Journal of Communication, 56(3), 200-255. doi: 10.1080/10570319209374414
Jaworski & N. Coupland (Eds.), The Discourse Reader (2nd ed). (pp. 311-323). New York:
Routledge.


doi:10.1177/0261927X8543006


Curriculum Vitae

Courtney L. McDaniel

Department of Communication Studies
Greenspun College of Urban Affairs
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
4505 Maryland Parkway, Box 4504052
Las Vegas, NV 89154-4052
620.339.9468
mcdanc1@unlv.nevada.edu

EDUCATION

M.A. 2017 (in progress) University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Department of Communication Studies
Major Area: Interpersonal Communication
Focus Areas: Deception, Social Support
Thesis Director: Dr. Jennifer Guthrie

B.A. 2015 University of Kansas (with honors)
Department of Communication Studies
Honors Thesis: “You look fine”: A Closer Look at White Lies in Female Best Friendships.”
Honors Thesis Director: Dr. Adrianne Kunkel

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Fall 2015-Present Graduate Teaching Assistant & Graduate Research Assistant
Department of Communication Studies,
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

HONORS, AWARDS, & RECOGNITIONS

Recipient, Dean’s Associate’s Conference Funding, 2016.
Department of Communication Studies, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Awarded to graduate students presenting original research at conferences.

Recipient, UNLV Graduate Access Scholarship, 2015.
Department of Communication Studies, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Awarded to promising graduate student applicants.

Recipient, Graduate and Professional Student Association Conference Funding, 2015.
University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Awarded to graduate students presenting original research at conferences.
Commencement Speaker, 2015  
Department of Communication Studies, University of Kansas. Nominated and selected to give the annual commencement address.

Member, Lambda Pi Eta Honor Society, 2014-present  
Department of Communication Studies, University of Kansas.

Finalist and Nominee, Will Linkugel Public Speaking Competition, 2013  
Department of Communication Studies, University of Kansas

RESEARCH

MANUSCRIPTS UNDER REVIEW:


RESEARCH IN PROGRESS:


COMPETITIVELY SELECTED PAPERS PRESENTED AT PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS:


presented at the Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender conference, Chicago, IL.


**RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

Research Assistant to Dr. Tara McManus, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Spring 2016-present. Laboratory assistant for research studying discussions of stress among friends.

Research Assistant to Dr. Jennifer Guthrie, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Spring 2016-present. Compiled scholarly sources for auto-ethnography and health communication, and collected data for paper presentation on the anti-feminist rhetoric of The Red Pill.

Outside research with Dr. Tara McManus, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Spring 2016-present. Organized, unitized, and coded data and co-wrote manuscript on friends’ discussions of sexual health concerns.

Participant, University of Nevada Las Vegas Graduate Research Forum. Competitive research competition and presentation on March 12, 2016.

Participant, University of Nevada Las Vegas Graduate Research Forum. Competitive research competition and presentation on April 8, 2017.


University of Kansas, Certification in Research Experience. Awarded Spring 2015.

**TEACHING**

Courses Taught

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS**

COM 101, Oral Communication (Fall 2015; Fall 2016)
COM 102, Introduction to Interpersonal Communication (Summer 2016)
Additional teaching experience:


SERVICE

Representative, UNLV Graduate and Professional Student Association, Student Senate. Fall 2016-present.

Judge, UNLV Public Speaking Competition (Fall 2015; Spring 2016; Fall 2016, ).


Volunteer Advocate, Willow Domestic Violence Center. Lawrence, Kansas. 2014-2015

MEMBERSHIPS

Organization for the Study of Communication, Language & Gender, 2015-present

National Communication Association, 2016