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**C.S. Lewis’ Definition of Friendship Applied to Modern-Day Friendships**

**I. Introduction**

*The Four Loves*, authored by C.S. Lewis, defines friendship and lists various factors that go into creating a friendship. Within this chapter, Lewis postulates that males and females cannot create a lasting friendship without the relationship developing into Eros Love. This is not entirely applicable to today's friendships. Lewis also argues that two individuals cannot be friends unless the individuals share a common interest, which does appear to be accurate. Within this paper, I will provide arguments for why males and females can create a lasting friendship without developing a romantic relationship and that two individuals cannot be friends unless the two share a common interest.

**II. Background**

*The Four Loves* was published in 1960, and the era of publication contributes to Lewis' view on friendship and the qualities that go into making a friendship. Lewis presents several factors that can be applied to friendships today, such as the fact that two people cannot be friends without a shared common interest. However, Lewis also argues that a male and a female cannot enter a friendship without the relationship developing into eros love or romantic love. In a survey of undergraduate students conducted in 2000, Lewis’s views are contradicted.

**III. Argument**

Lewis that states when two people find they share a common interest and begin to develop a friendship based on the shared interest, the bond will turn into eros or erotic love unless “they are physically repulsive to each other or unless one or both already loves elsewhere.”[[1]](#footnote-1) In today's society, this aspect of Lewis' definition does not apply to most friendships between a male and a female. In a survey of undergraduate students conducted by Bleske and Buss, responses showed that the average student, ranging between the ages of 17 to 27, had approximately four friendships with a person from the opposite sex and three of those friendships participants believed were close friendships.[[2]](#footnote-2) In current times, when asked why one would want a friendship with the opposite sex, respondents’ answers include: they obtain a different perspective on specific situations that they would not be able to get from a same-sex friend, and they prefer to have friendships of the opposite sex because the relationship boosts their self-esteem because more respect is given between the two friends.

In my friendships with the opposite sex, as a female, I can discuss a broader range of topics with a male without judgment. I have also found that my friendships with the opposite sex have lasted longer and been closer since less competition is involved in the relationship. Even though my male best friend and I spend a significant amount of time together, our relationship has not moved into romantic love even though we do not find each other unattractive, which would refute Lewis’ assertion. I believe that these types of friendships do not transition into romantic love because the two individuals value the friendship enough not to want to risk ending the friendship because they do not work as a couple. In a previous friendship, it developed into a romantic relationship which caused more tension between us and we were not able to make the relationship work. Because of the stress created, we were not able to remain, friends, as we argued all the time and the male became jealous when I moved on which caused more frequent arguments. If our relationship had not passed into romantic love, and we valued the friendship more, I believe that we could still be best friends.

During the 20th century when C.S. Lewis authored this book, males and females frequently did not have shared common interests since men mainly worked, while women stayed home and tended to the children. Because of the lack of shared interests, if a relationship were to develop, it was likely due to the individuals finding the other person attractive which would cause the friendship to grow into eros love. Lewis states that “[w]hen the two people who…discover that they [have a shared interest or experience], are of different sexes, the friendship which arises between them will very easily pass… into erotic love.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

When in a romantic relationship, one does not want to share their partner and allow them to have the same type of relationship with another person, without becoming jealous of the others involved in the relationship.[[4]](#footnote-4) In friendship, the people involved must not be jealous of the others since others bring out other sides of the person which would not manifest otherwise.[[5]](#footnote-5) However, C.S. Lewis does explain that romantic love between two people can lead to a friendship between the two but will rarely remain merely a friendship.

Lewis also argues that friendship is created “when two or more … discover that they have in common some insight or interest or even taste which the others do not share and which, till that moment, each believed to be” only true of themselves.[[6]](#footnote-6) When two people first meet, and a topic is discussed in which they both have an interest or experience, the two individuals bond and may begin to develop a closer relationship. Lewis utilizes the example that men and women, during the mid-20th century, would not likely establish a friendship based on a common bond. This is due to the two sexes not having shared common interests due to the difference in everyday life at the time. At gatherings, Lewis implies that the men will be on one side of the room “talking shop” while the women will be on the other side of the room discussing home-life as the two sexes do not have shared experiences.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Even though the separation of professions and daily life between men and women have changed, the idea that two cannot be friends without a shared common interest has not. If two individuals do not have a common interest, they will not want to spend time together and grow closer as friends, which Lewis believes is key to creating a lasting friendship. People with common interests participate in activities that express these interests and spend time with people that share the same interests, which provides a basis for friendships to be developed.

When I was sixteen, I joined the fire department which is full of people sharing the common interest of helping people. Even though most of the members are older men who have significantly different home and work lives from mine, we have bonded because we all love to help people in their time of need. This common interest allows us to develop a friendship as we spend a significant amount of time participating in shared activities and shared experiences, good or bad, allow us to engage in conversation with one another.

**V. Conclusion**

Within *The Four Loves*, C.S. Lewis establishes a set of characteristics of a friendship, which includes variables that contribute to the development of the relationship. Lewis argues that two individuals must share a common interest if a friendship is to develop and opposite sexes cannot become friends without the relationship transitioning over to romantic love. The idea that a male and a female cannot establish a friendship without the relationship turning into romantic love is not accurate when talking about modern-day friendships. Lewis' assertion that friendship develops because of a shared interest remains relevant today even though the dynamics of friendships have changed over time.

1. Lewis, C. S. (1960). Friendship. In *The Four Loves* (p. 67). New York City, NY: Harcourt. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Bleske, A. L., and David M. Buss. “Can Men and Women Be Just Friends?” *The Canadian Journal of Chemical Engineering*, Wiley-Blackwell, 20 May 2005, onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1475-6811.2000.tb00008.x. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Lewis, C. S. (1960). Friendship. In *The Four Loves* (p. 67). New York City, NY: Harcourt. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Lewis, C. S. (1960). Friendship. In *The Four Loves* (p. 67). New York City, NY: Harcourt. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Lewis, C. S. (1960). Friendship. In *The Four Loves* (p. 61). New York City, NY: Harcourt. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Lewis, C. S. (1960). Friendship. In *The Four Loves* (p. 65). New York City, NY: Harcourt. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Lewis, C. S. (1960). Friendship. In *The Four Loves* (p. 64). New York City, NY: Harcourt. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)