CHAPTER 6

FRIENDSHIP.

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Information collected in the household survey depicted characteristics
which friends share in common. Our survey asked people to list three of
their closest friends. If they wished, relatives could be considered
as friends. Afterwards, the respondent answered questions concerning what
they and each of their friends had in common. Were they members of the
same church or parish? the same ethnic heritage? watched each others
children? and numerous other questions. Answers to these questions provide
a profile of friendship patterns. Moreover, since we know the respondent's
sex, ethnicity, marital status, and income, we may classify similar
characteristics together and observe what they do with their friends as
distinct from other groups. Finally, we were interested in what the data
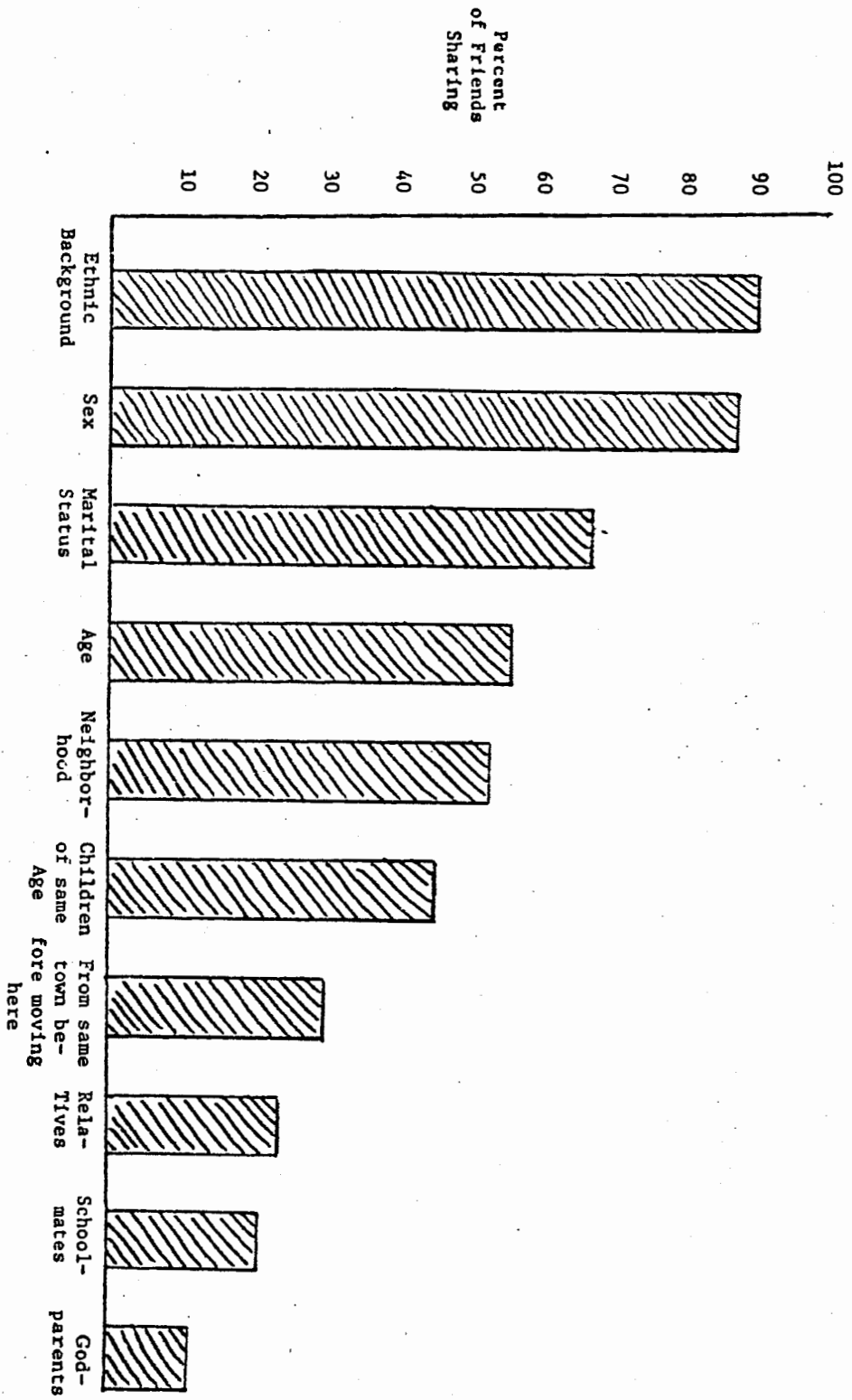suggest about channels of communication between community members.

Overall Profile

The most significant fixed characteristic influencing Douglas friendships is a person's ethnic background (Table 1). In a town with about 65 percent of the population of Mexican heritage, we found that Mexican Americans prefer Mexican Americans and Anglos prefer Anglos as friends. Ninety out of every 100 Douglasites said their friends were of the same ethnic heritage. The second most important characteristic shared by friends in Douglas is their sex. Men prefer to associate with men, and women with women. Eighty seven percent of the persons interviewed stated that their friends were of the same sex.

The next three most commonly shared characteristics are interrelated, reflecting the tendency for people of about the same age to be of the same marital status and to have about the same number of children who are about the same ages. Sixty four percent of the respondents report they were of the same marital status as their friends. Single persons tend to associate with friends who are also single, and married persons tend to have friends that are also married. Likewise, it was discovered that friends tend to be of about the same age. A related characteristic of having children about the same age, was shared by slightly less than half the friendships in Douglas. Slightly fewer people formed friendships with someone in their neighborhood. Other less important characteristics shared by friends included living in the same place together before moving to Douglas, attending school together, and being co-godparents (compadres). One possibility was that a person's friends might also be relatives. This

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Table 1

Characteristics Shared By Friends

Percent of Friends Sharing

100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
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Ethnic Background | Sex | Marital Status | Age | Neighborhood | Children of same Age | From same town before moving here | Relatives | Schoolmates | Godparents

Note: All these associations are strong enough not to be attributed to chance as measured by a Chi-square test ($X \leq .05$ level of significance).
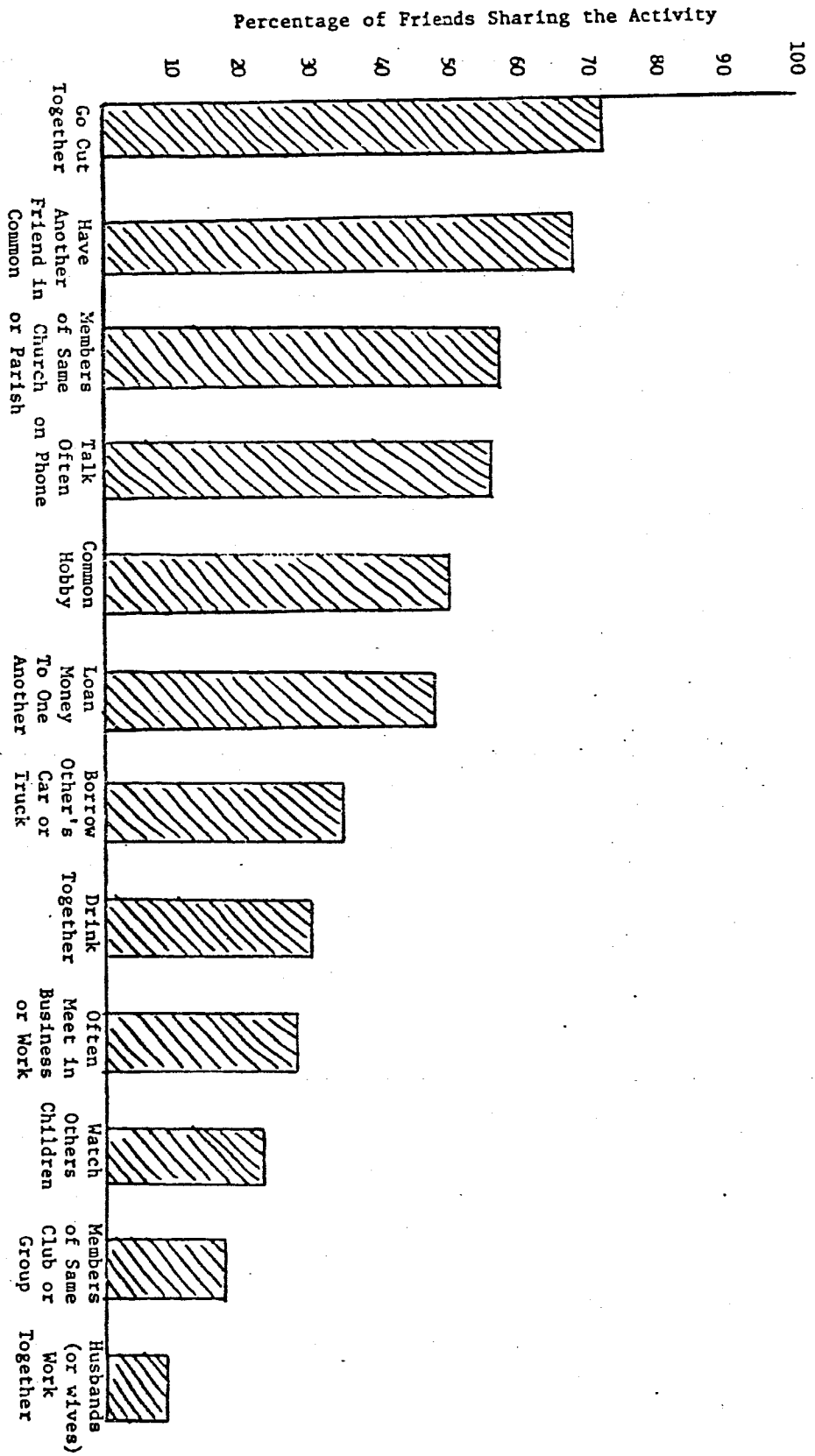
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situation occurred in one-fourth of the friendships, a figure that is
average for a town this size (Loomis, Loomis, and Gullahorn, 1966).

The survey also provides a glimpse of the activities which friends
do together (Table 2). The most frequently mentioned activity was
"going out together" (71 percent). This phrase could be interpreted in
many ways, but at the most general level, it seems to refer to some
activity taking place outside of the house of either friend. In other
words, it may be used as a crude indicator of whether friends partake of
activities inside a person's household or whether activities with friends
are taken to another place.

Similarly, the second most frequently mentioned activity, having
another friend in common, is an indicator of much more than appears.
Friendships may be held only between two persons, with neither having
another friend in common, or friendships may include three or more people
each of which views the others as friends. In the social sciences, a
friendship pattern that links three or more people indicates greater
internal solidarity for a group than a pattern that links isolated pairs
of individuals. In Douglas, the friendship patterns suggest a high degree
of internal solidarity. Sixty eight percent of the town claims that they
and their friends share a third friend in common.

Activities that were less frequently shared by friends are church or
parish membership (57 percent) and frequently talking on the telephone
(56 percent). The remaining activities, in order of their importance, were
having a hobby in common (49 percent), loaning money to one another (forty
seven percent), borrowing one another's car or truck (34 percent), and

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Table 2

Activities Commonly Shared By Friends in Douglas (Both Male and Female)

Percentage of Friends Sharing the Activity

10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Go Out Together

Have Another Friend in Common

Members of Same Church on Parish

Talk Often on Phone

Common Hobby

Loan Money To One Another

Borrow Other's Car or Truck

Drink Together

Often Meet in Business or Work

Watch Others Children

Members of Same Club or Work Group

Husbands (or wives) Work Together

Note: All these associations are strong enough not be attributed to chance as measured by a Chi-square test (χ ≤ .05 level of significance).

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drinking together in the same place (31 percent). The activities which friends seemed less likely to share in common included frequently meeting in business or work (27 percent), watching one another's children (23 percent), belonging to the same clubs or groups (18 percent) and having husbands (or wives) that worked together in the same place (9 percent).

The preceding information provides a general sketch of all Douglas friendships, but conceals significant differences between the friendship patterns of different types of people. To discuss these differences, it is necessary to contrast the responses of different groups (male vs. female, Mexican American vs. Anglo, or rich vs. poor). Statistical tests can then be performed to determine if the differences between the friendship patterns of groups are significant enough to warrant the conclusion that the groups are different.

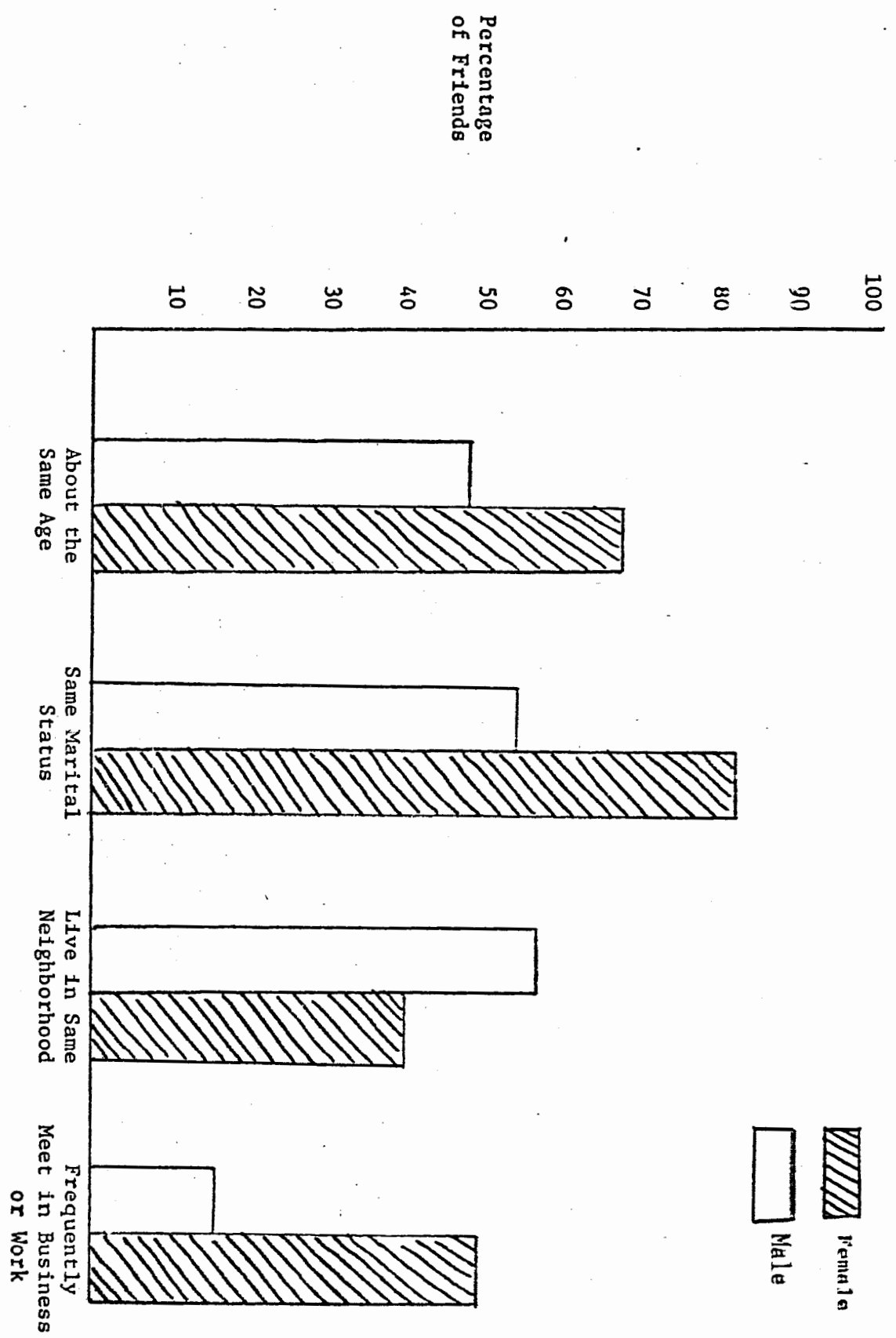178

Men, Women, and Their Friends

Douglas men choose their friends from a broader universe of people than do Douglas women (Table 3). Men are more likely than women to have friends of different marital status, from inside their own neighborhood and away from their place of work or business. Conversely, women were more likely to prefer friends of about the same age and marital status, who lived in the same neighborhood and, if the women worked, who worked with them.

Otherwise, a person's sex had little influence over the kinds of friends made. Men and women were equally likely to have friends who were relatives, of the same sex, old classmates, of the same ethnic background, or who worked with their spouses or lived in the same place before moving to Douglas.

Men and women did not differ in the activities they shared with their friends. In contrast to some popular beliefs, men and women proved equally addicted to talking with friends on the telephone, belonging to the same church, parish, or club, loaning money to each other, trading cars, going out together, being godparents, or having a friend or hobby in common.

Table 3

Friendship Patterns of Men and Women

Percentage of Friends

Categories: About the Same Age; Same Marital Status; Live in Same Neighborhood; Frequently Meet in Business or Work
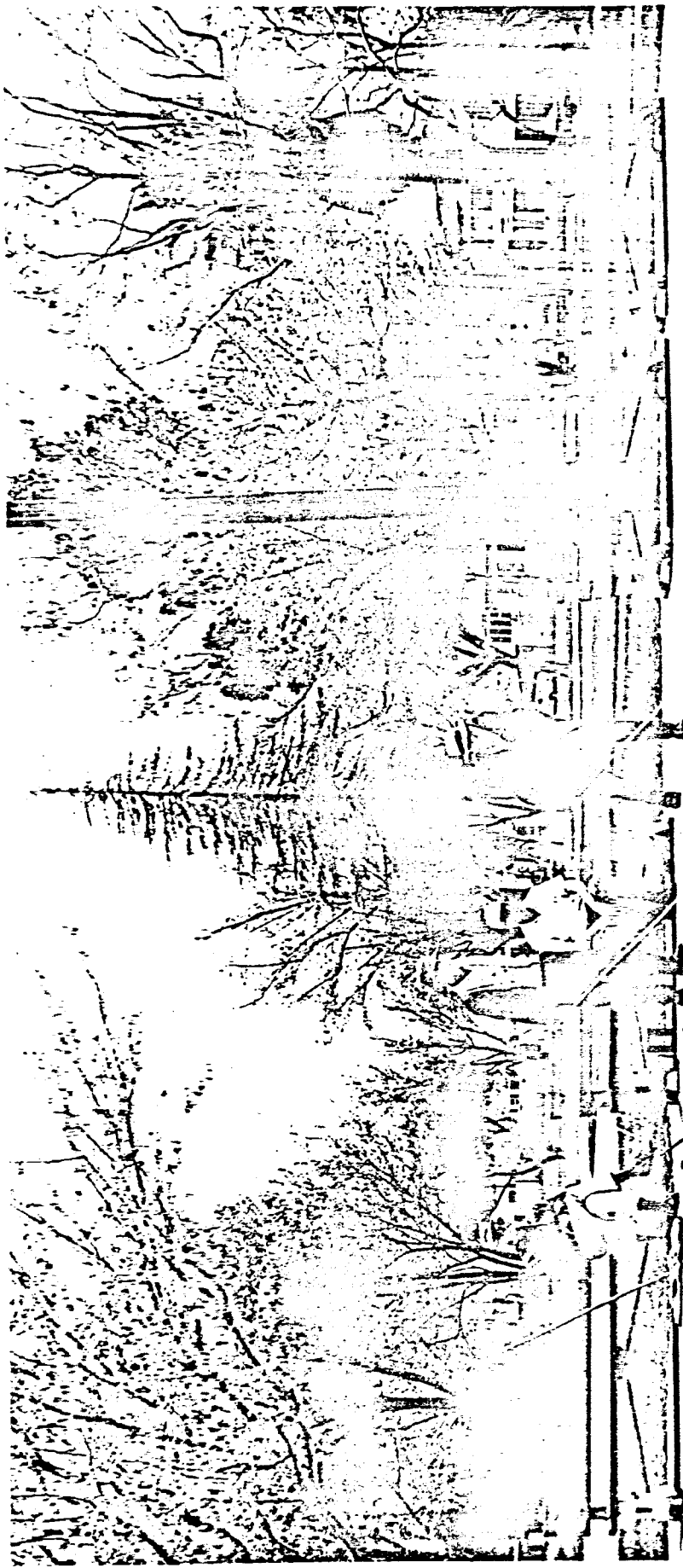
Legend: Female; Male

Note: All these associations are strong enough not to be attributed to chance as measured by a Chi-square test ($\chi^2 \leq .05$ level of significance).

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Marital Status

A person's marital status has some influence on his or her selection of friends. Single persons, including separated or divorced parents, appear much more likely to find friends who were married than visa versa (Table 4). Or, reading this finding another way, married people seem to prefer other married people more than singles. In a similar vein, married people are twice as likely as singles to include relatives among their friends.
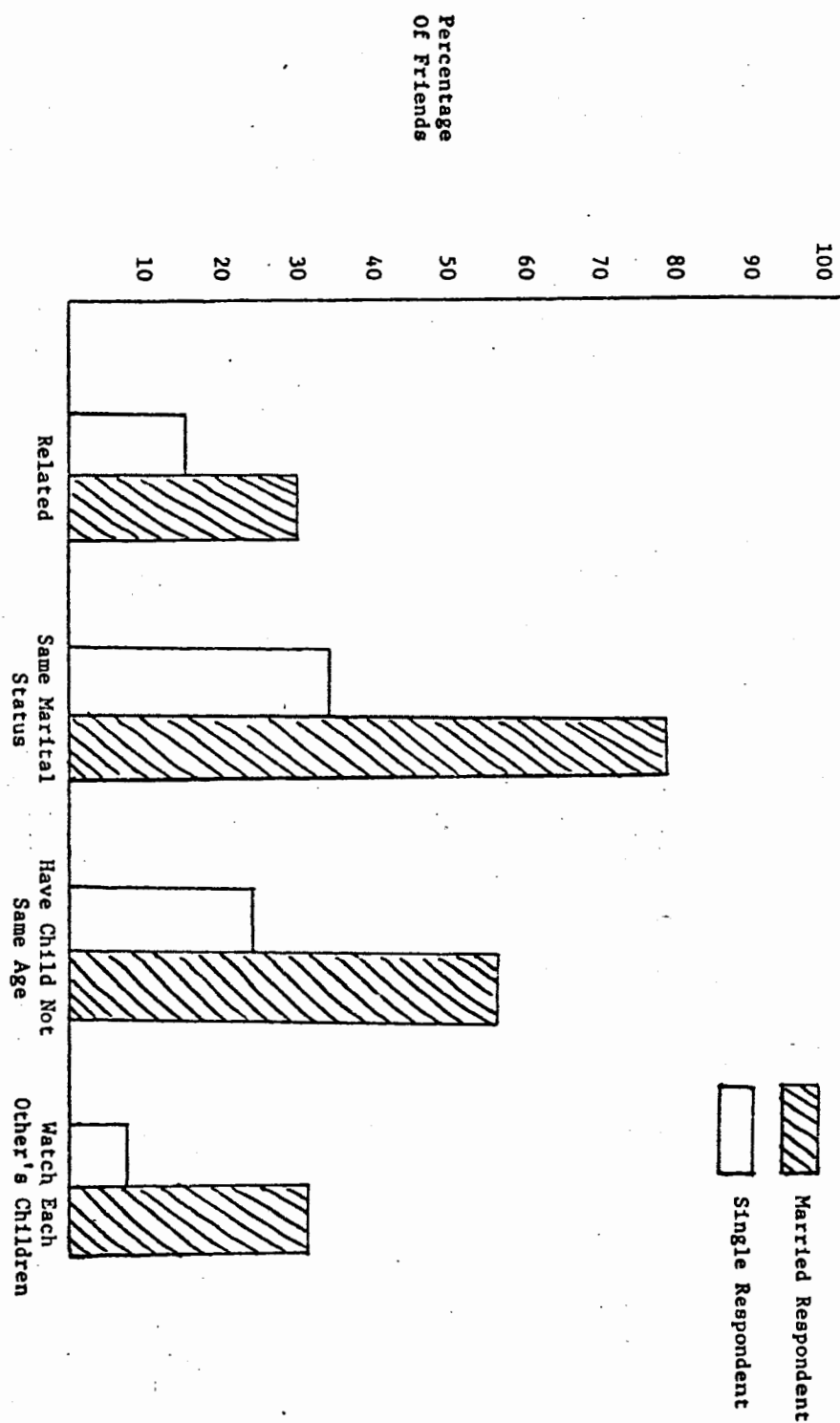
Respondents showed different characteristics along two other dimensions of friendship. Married respondents were more likely to have children about the same age, a conclusion reflecting a general preference in the Douglas friendship profile of preference for friends of similar age and marital status. A second minor pattern discovered, the practice of watching a friend's child, was more common among married respondents than single respondents with children. Other than these findings, marital status had no other significant influence on friendship activities and patterns.

Plus X-38 #30A (2,8,7+4,?). Shuffleboard at noon in 8th St Park.

Table 4

Friendship Patterns of Married and Single Persons

Note: All these associations are strong enough not to be attributed to chance as measured by a Chi-square test
($x \leq .05$ level of significance).

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Ethnicity and Income

Douglasites appear to be making friends within their own ethnic group. I stress "appear" because this finding might be given a different interpretation. In Douglas, Mexican Americans are significantly poorer than Anglos (Table 5). Thus, it is possible that low income is the basis for clustering of Mexican American friendships rather than their ethnicity. To help resolve this problem, we shall first look at characteristics which distinguish friends in the two ethnic groups regardless of income. Then, we shall reverse the perspective and examine characteristics of friendship in which the respondent's income seems important, but not his or her ethnicity. Finally, we shall investigate several friendship patterns in which both the respondent's ethnicity and income seem to influence the choice of a friend.

A few friendship patterns seemed specifically related to the respondent's ethnic affliation (Table 6). First, 25 percent of the town's population consider relatives among their close friends. Comparing the responses of Mexican Americans and Anglos, however, reveals a preference for relatives as friends twice as strong among Mexican Americans. Second, compared to Mexican Americans, Anglos' friends are more likely to share a common hobby and belong to the same clubs or groups. And third, Mexican Americans' friends loan money to one another more frequently than their Anglo counterparts.

Ethnicity proves unimportant in other spheres of friendship activity. Both Mexican Americans and Anglos are equally likely to talk to their friends on the telephone, watch each other's children, meet in business,

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Table 5

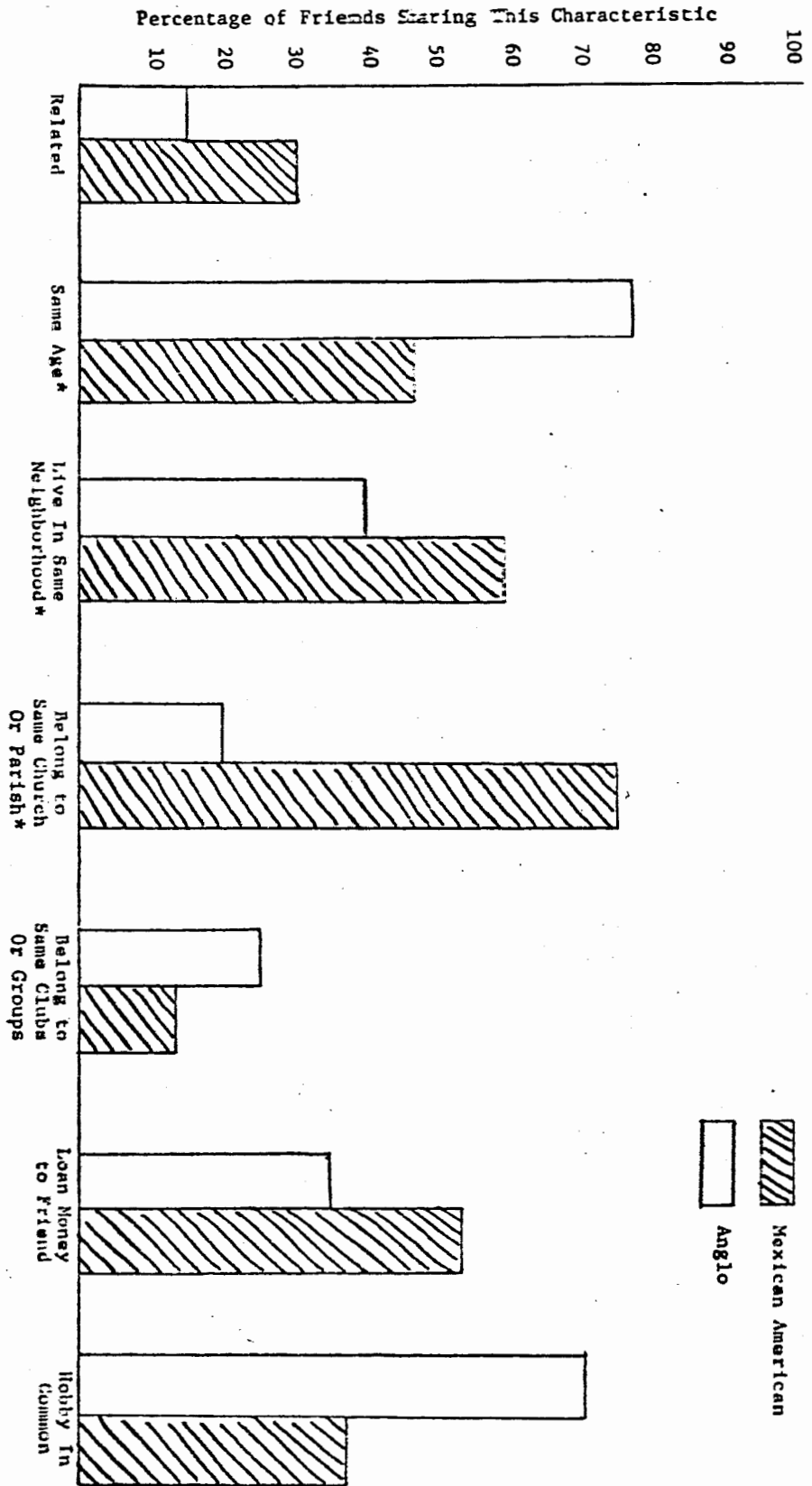Household Ethnicity and Income

		ETHNICITY	
		Anglo	Mexican Heritage
ANNUAL INCOME	HIGH 10,000 or more a year	25	19
	LOW 10,000 or less a year	29	79

X^2 = 10.98   Sig. = .0009   N = 152 Households

Table 6

Friendship Patterns of Mexican Americans and Anglos

Percentage of Friends Sharing This Characteristic

Categories (bottom axis): Related, Same Age*, Live In Same Neighborhood*, Belong to Same Church Or Parish*, Belong to Same Clubs Or Groups, Loan Money to Friend, Hobby In Common

Legend: ▨ Mexican American　▢ Anglo

Note: All these associations are strong enough not to be attributed to chance as measured by a Chi-square test (X≤.05 level of significance).

*These characteristics were also different for rich and poor. See texts for discussion.
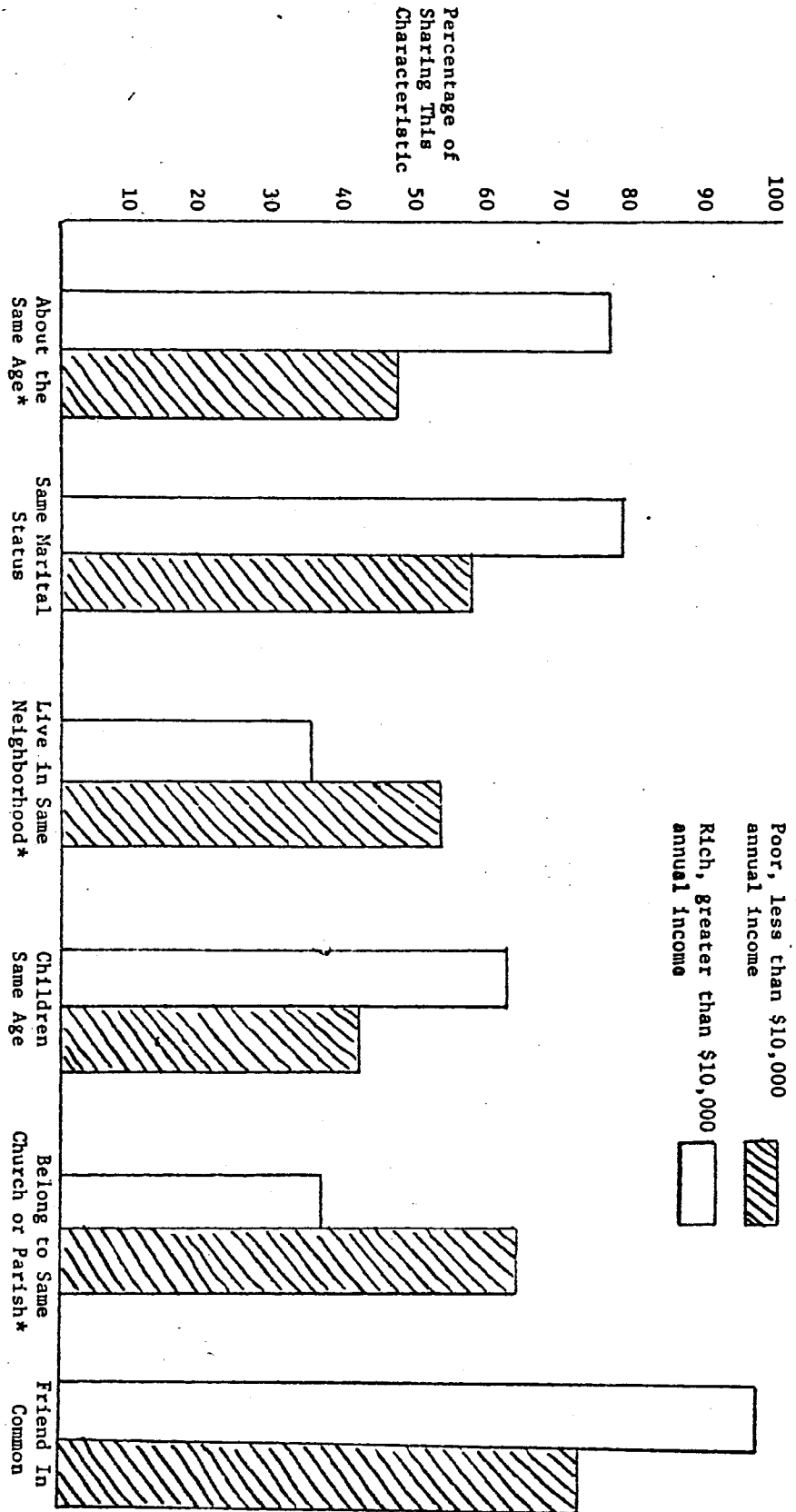
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have drinks at the same place, go out together, or have a friend in common. Controlling for income demonstrated that these patterns were attributable to ethnicity, not income (Table 7).

Other friendship patterns are specifically related to the respondent's income, but not his or her ethnicity. People from households with annual incomes over 10,000 dollars showed a significant preference for friendships with people of same marital status. Higher income compared to lower income respondents also tend to have friends with children who were the same age. And higher income appears to be an indicator of greater in-group solidarity because a higher proportion of the respondents claim to share another friend in common with the friend listed.

Problems arise when interpreting the discovery that upper income groups, and Anglos prefer friends who were about their same age or conversely, that lower income groups and Mexican Americans were more likely to form friendships with persons of different ages than their own. That is, upper income peoples are usually Anglo and lower income peoples are usually Mexican Americans. To determine whether income or ethnicity is the dominant factor in these parallel relations, the sample was divided into Anglos and Mexican American. Then the preference for ages was examined for both groups. By using this method of statistical control, we discovered that wealthier Anglos are more likely to form friendships with age mates than are poorer Anglos. In contrast, the income of Mexican Americans did not influence their demonstrated preference for friends of different ages.

Combining the finding that Mexican Americans show a strong preference for friends of different ages, and the finding of their stronger preference for relatives supports the contention that ties linking different genera-tions are stronger among Mexican Americans than Anglos.

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Table 7

Friendship Patterns of Rich and Poor

Percentage of Sharing This Characteristic

Poor, less than $10,000 annual income
Rich, greater than $10,000 annual income

About the Same Age* | Same Marital Status | Live In Same Neighborhood* | Children Same Age | Belong to Same Church or Parish* | Friend In Common

Note: All these associations are strong enough not to be attributed to chance as measured by a Chi-square test ($p \leq .05$ level of significance).

*These characteristics were also different for Mexican Americans and Anglos (Table 6). See texts for discussion.
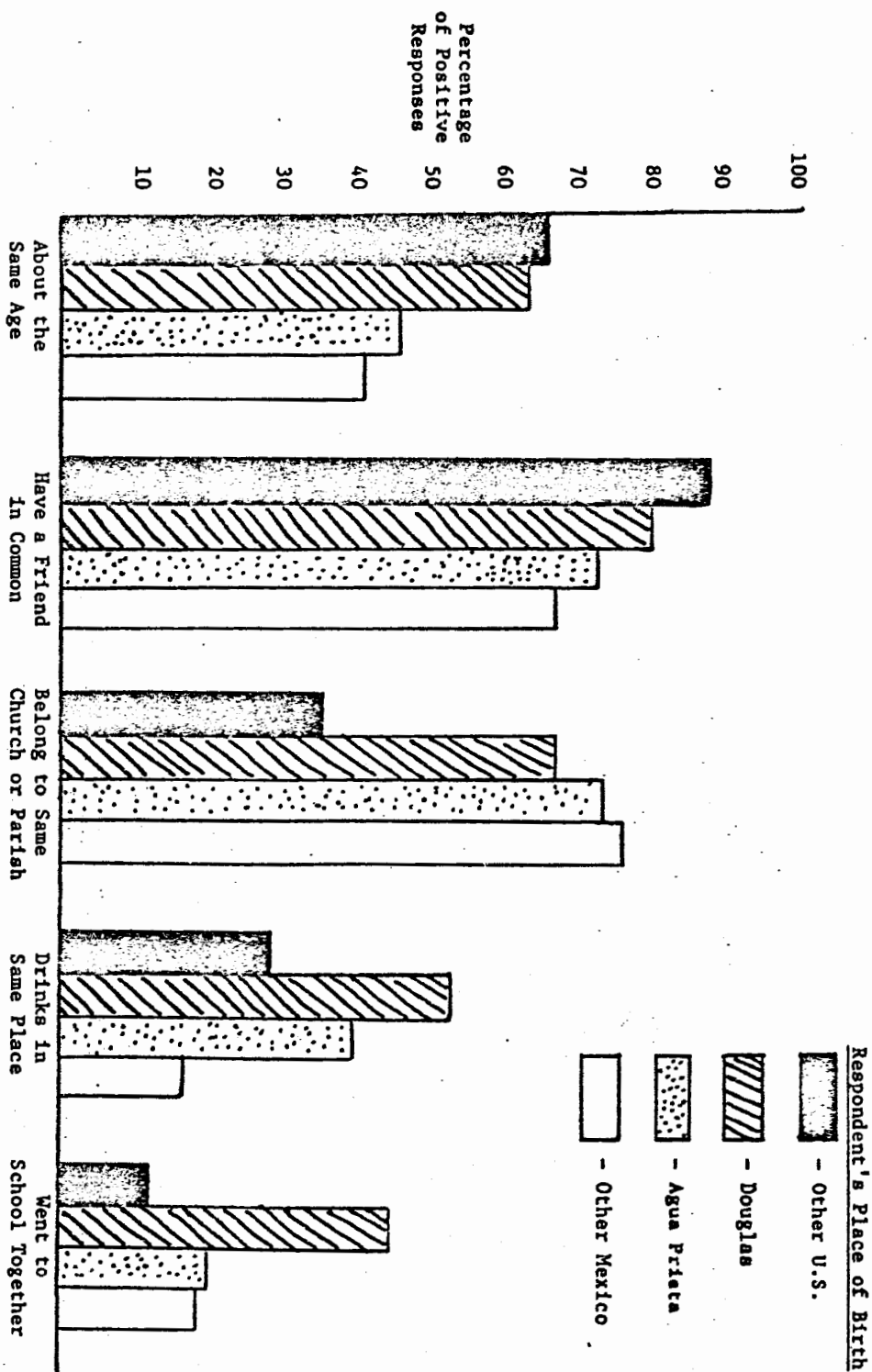
Place of Birth

In an earlier chapter, we described the transitory nature of the
Douglas population. Only 22 percent of those living in Douglas today were
born there. An even smaller percentage (6 percent) were in-migrants from
the sister town of Agua Prieta. By far the largest proportion of the Douglas
population were outsiders, born in other parts of the United States (40 per-
cent) or in Mexico (32 percent). Knowing this, we asked whether the
outsiders had different friendship patterns from those born in the Douglas -
Agua Prieta area.

We found that persons born in the United States, either in Douglas or
elsewhere, were more likely to prefer friends of about the same age than
those born in Mexico (Table 8). Also, United States born people appear to
have a higher degree of connectivity in their friendship networks than
those from Mexico. Douglas and Agua Prieta did fall closer to the pattern
of Mexican born persons in that they prefer friendships with those belonging
to their church or parish, and stand in contrast to persons born in other
parts of the United States who found fewer friends in the city's religious
institutions.

Two other friendship patterns appear to distinguish Douglas and
Agua Prieta born persons from those born in other parts of Mexico or the
United States. People born in Douglas and Agua Prieta are more likely to
have drinks with their friends than do in-migrants, perhaps reflecting long
standing associations. Moreover, a sharp difference was found between
friends that went to school together. As might be expected, these persons
were more often from Douglas than any other town, including Agua Prieta.

Table 8

Friendship Patterns and Place of Birth

Percentage of Positive Responses

About the Same Age

Have a Friend in Common

Belong to Same Church or Parish

Drinks in Same Place

Went to School Together

Respondent's Place of Birth

- Other U.S.
- Douglas
- Agua Prieta
- Other Mexico

Note: All these associations are strong enough not to be attributed to chance as measured by a Chi-square test ($X \leq .05$ level of significance).

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Most Mexican Americans and people with low annual income show a significant preference for friends within the neighborhood and for members of the same church or parish. Applying statistical controls first for income and then for ethnicity failed to discriminate either factor as being the dominant influence on the Mexican American poor's preference for friends in their same neighborhoods and church or parish.

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Overview

The findings on the nature of friendship may be utilized to suggest
a general structure of alliances between people in Douglas. First, it
is readily apparent that an "ethnic boundary" between Mexican Americans
and Anglos is a social reality with only a few friendship ties crossing
the ethnic boundary. This implies that information which is normally
passed between friends will tend to remain within the ethnic group that
possesses or generates such information.

Moreover, the strong association between low income and Mexican
heritage suggests yet another barrier within the community. Anglos with
high incomes appear to have more limited access, in terms of intimate
friendships, to the rest of the Douglas population. They search out
friends of the same marital status, age, and have children about the
same ages as their own children. These patterns may be viewed as
restricting access to the majority of the community. The high connectivity
of friendships in the upper class reinforces this pattern, suggesting
that since they have friends in common that they form an isolated group.
Looking at the opposite end of the social hierarchy, we find the lower
income segment of the community forming friendships from a larger
spectrum. This lower income group, consisting primarily of people of
Mexican heritage, have a greater proportion of friends of different age
and marital status. Mexican Americans also tend to form friendships
with relatives more than do their Anglo counterparts. Furthermore, we
discovered that persons born in Mexico are more likely to have friends
from different age groups than Mexican Americans or Anglos from the
United States side of the border.

Throughout the community, regardless of ethnicity or income, we discovered women have a more restricted friendship network than men. The fact that men have more friends of a different age and marital status than do women, might be interpreted as an expression of male dominance in social relationships. Another pattern which emerged was that Mexican Americans and Anglos find friends in different types of associations, with the Mexican Americans preferring friends who are in their church or parish, but with Anglos finding friends in clubs or through shared hobbies.

These findings suggest that Douglas has numerous barriers to the flow of information. Knowledge of these barriers may be used to facilitate the flow of information within a certain group. For example, if information on housing is aimed at the lower income community, the logical loci for communicating this information is through the churches. On the other hand, if information is aimed at the upper class Anglo, it can be assumed that clubs are a better means for communication than churches.