

# Friendship Qualities and Social-Emotional Functioning of Adolescents With Close, Cross-Sex Friendships

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The significance of having close, cross-sex friendships in adolescence was examined with 223 adolescents in Grades 10 through 12. Adolescents with only same-sex friends were compared to adolescents with both same- and cross-sex friends in terms of their social and emotional functioning. In addition, the friendship qualities (companionship, intimacy, prosocial support, esteem support) of adolescents with same- and cross-sex friendships were compared. Adolescent age and gender were considered in the analyses. Results revealed that having a close, cross-sex friend is a common experience in adolescence, and increases with adolescent age. Furthermore, findings revealed that (a) adolescents reported more companionship in their same-sex versus cross-sex friendships, (b) younger adolescent girls reported more prosocial support in their same- versus cross-sex friendships, and (c) adolescent boys reported receiving more esteem support from their cross-sex friends. Unlike during middle childhood, having close, cross-sex friends in adolescence does not appear to be associated with problems in social or behavioral adjustment, but is associated with lower perceived social acceptance. The implications of these and other findings for understanding adolescents' close friendships and issues for future research are discussed.

The company youngsters keep and the friendships they form are essential to their emotional and psychological adjustment (Hartup, 1996). In particu-

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lar, during the adolescent years, friendships play an important role in adolescents' identity development (Gavin & Furman, 1989), and set the stage for the development of mature, adult interpersonal relationships (Reis, Lin, Bennett, & Nezelek, 1993).

Several important changes can be observed in youngsters' friendships over the time period from the preadolescent to the adolescent years. Specifically, friendships increase in their levels of intimacy (Sharabany, Gershoni, & Hofman, 1981) and emotional support (Reid, Landesman, Treder, & Jaccard, 1989). One other noteworthy change over this period is that interactions with opposite-sex peers increase dramatically, and involvement in cross-sex friendships becomes more common (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987). This latter transition is extremely important because friendships provide the foundations for intimate and supportive relationships in adulthood (Reis et al., 1993).

Much of what is known about cross-sex friendships is derived from studies of younger children. Throughout the preschool and elementary school years, children prefer to affiliate with same-sex peers (Gottman, 1986; La Freniere, Strayer, & Gauthier, 1984). In fact, this preference can be witnessed in the structure of girls' and boys' friendships. Boys have been found to have larger, more diverse groups of friends and tend to be activity oriented; in contrast, girls prefer more exclusive, dyadic relationships based on disclosure and intimacy (Thorne, 1986). This same-sex preference may exist because children are attracted to others with attitudes, behaviors, and interests that are similar to themselves (see Maccoby, 1988); therefore, same-sex peers may be more reinforcing and effective at meeting children's social demands (Dusek, 1991).

As children enter adolescence, however, involvement in cross-sex friendships becomes more accepted and common (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Ingersoll, 1989). By eighth grade, cross-sex peers become important as companions for adolescents (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987). Interactions with opposite-sex peers continue to increase and become more important throughout high school. For example, in one study, over half of 16- and 17-year-olds indicated their friendship patterns had crossed gender lines (Broderick, 1966). By adolescents' senior year in high school, an estimated 24% spend their time in opposite-sex dyads (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984). Even among adults, 27% report having a best friend of the opposite sex (Davis, 1985).

Despite the findings that cross-sex friendships increase in frequency from childhood to adulthood, there has been relatively little research conducted on adolescents' cross-sex friendships. Furthermore, existing research has focused primarily on the frequency of interactions and friendship formation with opposite-sex peers, but not on the correlates of

close, cross-sex friendships. Close friendships provide very different experiences and challenges than acquaintanceships. Unlike acquaintances, close, reciprocal friendships can contribute to adolescents' self-esteem and social skills, and may reduce anxiety about the changes adolescents face (Douvan & Adelson, 1966).

Therefore, in view of these concerns, the primary goal of this study was to examine the nature of close, cross-sex friendships among adolescents. In particular, differences in the friendship qualities provided by adolescents' close friendships of the same- and opposite-sex were examined. It is possible that cross-sex friendships may serve different friendship functions (Gottman, 1986), or provide different types of support than same-sex friendships (Monsour, 1992; Sapadin, 1988). Thus, this study compared same- and cross-sex friendships in terms of several key aspects of adolescents' friendships: companionship, intimacy, prosocial support, and esteem support (Berndt & Perry, 1986; Vernberg, 1990).

This issue of differing friendship qualities among adolescents' same- and cross-sex close friends has been relatively unexplored. One study that compared adolescents' same-sex "best friend" and their opposite-sex "boyfriend or girlfriend" found that the friendship qualities of companionship, intimacy, and help (similar to prosocial support) were higher for same-sex best friends than for girlfriends or boyfriends (Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1993). Because this study excluded adolescents who had cross-sex friends who were not romantic partners, it is not clear whether the findings would extend to the substantial number of adolescents with (nonromantic) cross-sex friends. Thus, this study examined differences between cross-sex and same-sex friendships in terms of the friendship qualities of companionship, intimacy, and prosocial support. In general, it was expected that these three friendship qualities would be higher in same-versus cross-sex friendships.

Other work with young adults (Rose, 1985) also found that same-sex friendships provided more prosocial support (i.e., advice, assistance, or encouragement) than cross-sex friendships. However, more striking findings were observed when interactions with gender were taken into account. Specifically, for young women, same-sex friendships provided more acceptance (Rose, 1985) and intimacy than cross-sex friendships (Rose, 1985; Sapadin, 1988); however, for young men, cross-sex friendships provided more ego support (i.e., self-esteem; Wright & Bergloff, 1984) or emotional support (Aukett, Ritchie, & Mill, 1988; Parker & de Vries, 1993; Sapadin, 1988) than same-sex friendships. Together, these findings suggest that cross-sex friendships may be qualitatively different for young men and women. Although interesting and important, it is not clear whether these patterns of findings would be similar for adolescents.

Thus, in this study we considered gender differences in comparing adolescents' close same- and cross-sex friendships, and also included esteem support as a fourth aspect of friendship quality.

Furthermore, gender differences were also considered because adolescent girls have been found to report greater levels of intimacy in their close friendships and view intimacy as more central in their relationships than do boys (Berndt, 1981; Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Sharabany et al., 1981). Consistent with this notion, recent research has revealed that adolescent girls rate their same-sex friendships higher on many friendship qualities (e.g., affection, companionship, intimacy, and instrumental support) than adolescent boys (Clark-Lempers, Lempers, & Ho, 1991; Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1993). Thus, in this study, adolescent girls were expected to report higher levels of friendship qualities overall than were adolescent boys.

In addition to gender, potential age differences in adolescents' friendships were considered. Previous research examining the development of friendships from childhood into adolescence has found that friends play an increasingly important role in adolescents' lives (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987). Reflecting this shift, adolescents have been shown to display more intense relationships with their friends. Specifically, companionship (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987), intimacy (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Sharabany et al., 1981), and affection (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992) appear to increase from childhood to adolescence. However, the development of friendships is less clear after midadolescence. Although some research has found increases in the levels of intimacy and support from same- and cross-sex friends (e.g., Sharabany et al., 1981), other research has failed to find differences over this time period (Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1992, 1993). As the likelihood of having cross-sex friends increases during this time period, age-related shifts in the roles of same- and cross-sex friends may also occur. Thus, this study examined age differences in friendship quality with close, same-, and cross-sex friends from mid- to late adolescence.

A second major goal of the study was to examine the social and emotional correlates of having close, cross-sex friendships during adolescence. Specifically, adolescents with only same-sex friends and those with both same- and cross-sex friends were compared in terms of their functioning in several areas: (a) social competence (e.g., perceptions of social acceptance, romantic appeal, and competence in friendships), (b) frequency of aversive peer experiences, (c) social support from significant others, and (d) reports of behavior problems (i.e., internalizing and externalizing symptomatology). To our knowledge, no previous work with adolescents has examined potential social and emotional correlates of having cross-sex friends in such a comprehensive manner.

Initial work has suggested that elementary school children who spend more time with cross-sex peers are less accepted than their classmates (Carter & McCloskey, 1984; Ladd, 1983; Stroufe, Bennett, Englund, Urban, & Shulman, 1993). Furthermore, Kovacs, Parker, and Hoffman (1996) found that children whose cross-sex friendships were of primary importance had poorer social skills and lower peer acceptance than children whose best friend was of the same sex.

As adolescents' interest in the opposite sex becomes more common, however, seeking and developing close, cross-sex friendships may be normative and well accepted (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987). Among early adolescents, others have found those with both same- and cross-sex friendships are as accepted and even more accepted by their peers than those with only same-sex friendships (Bukowski, Gauze, Hoza, & Newcomb, 1993; George & Hartman, 1996). For older adolescents, the same pattern may be true, although this has not yet been investigated. It seems likely that having close, cross-sex friendships would have few, if any, negative associations with social-emotional adjustment (e.g., behavior problems, peer rejection or exclusion). On the other hand, having both same- and cross-sex friendships may be associated with greater social acceptance. These notions were evaluated in this study.

In comparing the social-emotional adjustment of adolescents with only same-sex friends and those with both same- and cross-sex friendships, two additional factors were considered. First, potential gender differences were evaluated because several studies have observed gender differences in adolescents' social-emotional functioning. For example, girls report more internalizing problems than boys (Bernstein, Garfinkel, & Hoberman, 1989; Kashani, Orvaschel, Rosenberg, & Reid, 1989), but also report more social support from close friends than do boys (Harter, 1988; La Greca & Lopez, 1998). Second, adolescents' participation in dating members of the opposite sex was also considered in the study design because adolescents who actively date may have greater opportunities to develop close, cross-sex friendships than those who do not.

In summary, this study had two main goals. First, adolescents' close, same-sex and cross-sex friendships were compared in terms of four key friendship qualities: (a) companionship, (b) intimacy, (c) prosocial support, and (d) esteem support. Gender and age were considered as factors that may moderate associations between the type of friendship and the friendship qualities. Second, we compared the social-behavioral functioning of adolescents with close, same- and cross-sex friends and those with only same-sex friends in terms of their (a) social competence, (b) frequency of aversive peer experiences, (c) social support from significant others, and (d) reports of behavior problems (from adolescents and parents). Overall,

it was expected that adolescents with both types of friendships would not differ from those with only same-sex friendships. As with the first study goal, gender and age were examined as potential main effects and moderating variables.

## METHOD

### Participants

Participants were 223 adolescents ( $n = 129$  girls,  $n = 94$  boys) who were enrolled in Grades 10 through 12. Ages ranged from 15 to 18 years old ( $M = 16.7$ ,  $SD = .92$ ), with 43% ( $n = 96$ ) of participants 15 to 16 years old and 57% ( $n = 127$ ) of participants 17 to 18 years old. The adolescents came from predominantly middle-class socioeconomic backgrounds (Hollingshead [1975] Social Class: 36.3% Level 1, 41% Level 2, 15.7% Level 3, 4.7% Level 4, 2.3% Level 5;  $M = 47.83$ ,  $SD = 11.95$ ). The ethnic composition of the sample was as follows: 44.4% White ( $n = 99$ ), 39.5% Hispanic American ( $n = 88$ ), 12.6% African American ( $n = 28$ ), and 3.5% Other (e.g., Asian, mixed ethnicity;  $n = 8$ ).

### Procedure

Adolescents were recruited as part of a study of adolescents' peer relations. This project was part of a follow-up study of an earlier cohort of students. An unselected sample of school-age children, who had attended one of three suburban elementary schools in a Southeastern U.S. metropolitan area 6 years earlier, were tracked through the county public school database. Of the 306 students who remained in the database and were able to be contacted, 250 students (82%) agreed to participate and 56 (18%) declined participation. Of the 250 participating students, 27 were unable to complete all of the questionnaires and, therefore, were not included in the analyses ( $n = 223$ ). Participating students did not differ from those who declined to participate with respect to gender, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status, or grade.

Adolescents were interviewed in their homes by trained research assistants. Written informed consent was obtained from adolescents and their parents prior to participation. Adolescents completed several measures for this study, including: the Friendship Interview, the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents, the Rejection Experiences Questionnaire, the Social Support Scale for Children and Adolescents, the Youth Self-Report, and a

Dating Questionnaire. Parents completed the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL), and provided information regarding ethnicity, education, employment, marital status, and income level.

## Measures

*Friendship quality and length.* To evaluate quality of adolescents' friendships, participants completed the Friendship Interview, developed by Berndt and Perry (1986), and modified by Vernberg, Abwender, Ewell, and Beery (1992) and Vernberg, Beery, Ewell, and Abwender (1993). Following Vernberg et al.'s (1993) procedure, participants listed the names and gender of their closest friends (up to eight), starting with their first closest friend, then listing their second closest friend, and so on. Participants were allowed to nominate both in-school and out-of-school friends. Next, participants were asked to indicate the gender of each friend and how long they had been friends with each one. Finally, adolescents were asked to focus on the first three friends that they nominated (i.e., their three closest friends), and answered a series of questions relating to their friendship quality. If one of their three closest friends was of the opposite sex, they were considered to have a close, cross-sex friendship.<sup>1</sup> Only the information obtained about the adolescents' three closest friends were utilized in this study.

For each close friend, 18 items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*every day*). The 18 items represent four different friendship qualities: (a) companionship (6 items; e.g., "How often do you and [your friend] go places together, like a movie, skating, shopping, or a sports event?"; "How often do you and [your friend] get together on weekends or after school?"); (b) intimacy (4 items; e.g., "How often do you tell [your friend] things about yourself that you wouldn't tell most kids?"; "When something is bothering you, how often do you talk to [your friend] about it?"); (c) prosocial support (4 items; e.g., "If you ask [your friend] to do a favor for you, how often will he or she agree to do it?"; "If you need help with something, how often can you count on [your friend] to help you?"); and (d) esteem support (4 items; e.g., "When you do a good job on something, how often does [your friend] praise or congratulate you?"; "How often does [your friend] make you feel that your ideas and opinions are important and valuable?").

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<sup>1</sup>The instructions explicitly asked adolescents to name their closest friends. However, it is possible that some adolescents may have listed a romantic partner as a close friend; because of this, some precautions were taken with the data analyses (see footnote 2).

For each friendship quality, separate scores were computed for same- and cross-sex friends. Specifically, ratings for same-sex friends were averaged across relevant subscale items to yield scores for same-sex companionship, same-sex intimacy, same-sex esteem support, and same-sex prosocial support. The same procedure was used to compute four friendship scores for the cross-sex friends.

The Friendship Interview has been found to have moderate to high internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .54-.77$ ; see Berndt & Perry, 1986; Keefe & Berndt, 1996; Vernberg et al., 1992; Vernberg, Ewell, Beery, & Abwender, 1994). Internal consistencies for this sample were also found to be high (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .90-.92$  for the subscales), and were similar for all ethnic groups. In addition, there is evidence for moderate test-retest reliability over a 6-month interval ( $r_s = .44-.58$  for subscales; Vernberg et al., 1992). Prior research has shown the subscales to be moderately intercorrelated (Vernberg et al., 1992, 1994).

**Social competence.** To assess adolescents' perceptions of their social competence, the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (SPPA) was administered (Harter, 1988). The SPPA is a 45-item questionnaire; there are eight subscales (six items each) measuring adolescents' judgments of competence or adequacy in different areas (i.e., scholastic competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, physical appearance, job competence, romantic appeal, behavioral conduct, and close friendship) as well as a ninth subscale measuring global self-worth. In this study, the social acceptance, close friendship, and romantic appeal subscales were used to examine adolescents' perceived social competence in interpersonal relationships. Each item is coded with a score of 1 through 4, in which higher scores reflect greater perceived competence. Responses are averaged within each of the subscales. Harter (1988) reported good internal consistency for the SPPA subscales (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .74-.93$ ). Internal consistency for this sample was also found to be high (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .78-.81$ ), and was similar for all ethnic groups. In this study, intercorrelations of the subscales ranged from .33 to .52 (all  $ps < .01$ ).

**Aversive peer experiences.** To measure the frequency of aversive peer experiences, the Rejection Experiences Questionnaire was administered (Vernberg, 1990; Vernberg et al., 1992; Vernberg, Ewell, Beery, Freeman, & Abwender, 1995). This four-item instrument assesses the frequency of occurrence of two types of aversive exchanges with peers: rejection and exclusion. Three items pertain to peer rejection (being teased or picked on in a mean way, being threatened, and being hit or pushed in a mean way); one

item pertains to being "excluded from peer activities." Adolescents rated the frequency of occurrence for each event on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*). Evidence for internal consistency has been found for the three items involving peer rejection (i.e., teasing, hitting, and threatening; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .67$ ; Vernberg et al., 1992; Vernberg et al., 1995). In this sample, internal consistency for peer rejection was .44, and was consistent across all ethnic groups. The one item referring to exclusion from peer activities was retained as a separate variable; the test-retest reliability of this item over a 6-month period is statistically significant ( $r = .36$ ; Vernberg et al., 1992; Vernberg et al., 1995). In this sample, rejection and exclusion were modestly related ( $r = .20, p < .01$ ). In previous work, aversive peer experiences have been associated with high levels of social anxiety (Vernberg et al., 1992), and with loneliness and internalizing symptomatology (Vernberg et al., 1995) among adolescents.

**Social support.** Adolescents' perceptions of social support from significant others were assessed with the Social Support Scale for Children and Adolescents (SSSCA; Harter, 1985). The SSSCA is comprised of four subscales, reflecting different sources of support: (a) parents, (b) classmates, (c) teachers, and (d) close friends. Each question results in a score from 1 to 4 for each item, in which higher scores reflect greater levels of perceived social support. The score for each subscale is the average of the scores for the items within the subscale. The internal consistency reliabilities for all four subscales have been considered satisfactory (range = .72-.88; Harter, 1985). Internal consistencies for this sample were very similar (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .71-.84$ ) to those reported by Harter (1985), and were similar for all ethnic groups. Intercorrelations of the social support subscales in this study ranged from .25 to .50 (all  $ps < .01$ ).

**Behavior problems.** Two measures assessed adolescents' behavioral problems. First, the Youth Self-Report (YSR) was administered to adolescents (Achenbach, 1991b). It consists of 102 behavior problem items rated on a 3-point scale ranging from 0 (*not true*) to 2 (*often true*) for the adolescent. The two broad-band scales assess internalizing and externalizing problems. Normalized  $t$  scores were obtained for the internalizing and externalizing scales. The reliability, validity, and norms for the YSR are very well established (Achenbach, 1991b).

In addition, parents provided ratings of adolescents' internalizing and externalizing behavior using the CBCL (Achenbach, 1991a). The CBCL consists of 118 problem behaviors that are rated on a 3-point scale ranging from 0 (*not true*) to 2 (*often true*) for the adolescent. Scores were calculated

for the internalizing and externalizing scales. The reliability, validity, and norms for the CBCL are very well established (Achenbach, 1991a).

**Dating status.** To assess adolescents' involvement in romantic relationships, a Dating Questionnaire was developed for this study. Adolescents indicated whether or not they had been involved in a dating or romantic relationship in the past 6 months (yes, no), and whether or not they had broken up with their partner within the last 6 months (yes, no). This information was used to assign adolescents to one of three categories: (a) active dater (i.e., the adolescent was currently in a romantic relationship), (b) inactive dater (i.e., the adolescent had been in a romantic relationship within the past 6 months, but was not currently), and (c) nondater (i.e., adolescent reported that he or she had not been in a dating relationship within the past 6 months). These categories were used as an indicator of dating status for the analyses comparing the characteristics of adolescents with both same- and cross-sex friends to those with only same-sex friends.

## RESULTS

### Overview of Analyses

Descriptive analyses were conducted prior to examining the main study goals. For each set of analyses, gender (boys, girls) and age (15–16 years old, 17–18 years old) were considered as factors in the design. Although there were no a priori expectations for differences among the ethnic groups who participated in this study, exploratory analyses also examined participants' ethnicity (White, Hispanic American, African American). The results of analyses involving ethnicity are later reported only when they differ from the main analyses reported.

### Descriptive Information on Adolescents' Close Friendships

Based on adolescents' reports of their three closest friends, descriptive analyses revealed that 46.6% ( $n = 104$ ) reported a cross-sex peer as one of their closest friends. No significant differences were found in the likelihood of having a close, cross-sex friend as a function of gender (see Table 1). However, significant differences were found for age; adolescents over 16 years of age were more likely to have a close, cross-sex friend than adolescents at or under 16 years of age (see Table 1). Furthermore, significant differences for ethnicity revealed that African American adolescents were less

TABLE 1  
 Percentage of Adolescents With Cross-Sex Versus Only Same-Sex Friendships by Gender, Age, and Ethnicity

Characteristic	Percentage With Cross-Sex Friends	Percentage With Only Same-Sex Friends	$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>
Gender			2.48	<i>ns</i>
Boys	40.9	59.1		
Girls	51.6	48.4		
Age			3.85	.05
15–16 years old	39.8	60.2		
16–17 years old	53.2	46.8		
Ethnicity			6.82	.05
White	53.1	46.9		
Hispanic	48.3	51.7		
African American	25.0	75.0		

Note. *ns* = not significant.

likely to report having a close, cross-sex friend than White or Hispanic American adolescents (see Table 1). Specifically, no African American boys and only 7 African American girls (38.9%) reported having a close, cross-sex friend. Overall, 52.5% of adolescents had only same-sex friends ( $n = 117$ ), 45.3% had same- and cross-sex friends ( $n = 101$ ), 1.3% had only cross-sex friends ( $n = 3$ ), and 0.9% had no close friends ( $n = 2$ ).

Next, the average length of adolescents' same- and cross-sex friendships was computed. Only adolescents who had at least one same- and one cross-sex friendship were included ( $n = 101$ ). A repeated measures analysis of variance was conducted: Gender (boys, girls)  $\times$  Age (15–16 years old, 17–18 years old),  $\times$  Friendship Type (same sex, cross sex), with the latter factor within subjects. A significant main effect was observed for friendship type, in that same-sex friendships were about 1 year longer in duration than cross-sex friendships (see Table 2). In addition, boys reported having close friendships of longer duration than did girls (see Table 2). No significant interactions were observed. On the average, adolescents reported having been friends with their current close friends (both same sex and cross sex) for 3 to 5½ years. No significant differences by age were detected for length of friendship.

### Comparison of Friendships Qualities for Same- and Cross-Sex Friendships

A primary goal of this study was to examine differences in the quality of adolescents' same- and cross-sex friendships. This analysis was restricted to

TABLE 2  
Length of Friendship and Ratings of Friendship Quality for Adolescents With Both Same- and Cross-Sex Friendships

	Same Sex						Cross Sex						Fs	Age		
	Boys		Girls		Total		Boys		Girls		Total					
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD				
Length of friendship (in years)	5.57	2.75	4.15	2.26	4.66	2.53	4.03	3.14	3.17	2.84	3.47	2.97	11.76***	7.23**	—	
Type of support																
Companionship	3.49	0.90	3.67	0.79	3.61	0.83	3.23	0.98	3.68	0.95	3.52	0.98	—	4.59*	4.09*	
Intimacy	3.62	1.04	4.39	0.62	4.11	0.87	3.87	0.91	4.39	0.65	4.20	0.79	—	22.47***	4.56*	
Prosocial support	4.06	0.83	4.49	0.50	4.34	0.67	3.87	0.78	4.33	0.65	4.17	0.73	4.10*	17.26***	—	
Esteem support	3.45	0.96	4.53	0.54	4.14	0.88	4.01	0.77	4.59	0.47	4.38	0.66	19.70***	49.12***	—	

Note. N = 101; boys: n = 36, girls: n = 65. Type = friendship type.

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01. \*\*\*p < .001.

adolescents who had at least one same- and one cross-sex friend ( $n = 101$ ). A repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted for the set of friendship variables.<sup>2</sup> Gender and age were between-subject factors and friendship type (same sex, cross sex) was a within-subjects factor. The set of dependent measures were the friendship qualities for same- and cross-sex friendships (companionship, intimacy, prosocial support, and esteem support). Table 3 lists the intercorrelations between these friendship qualities.<sup>3</sup>

Significant MANOVA effects were obtained for gender,  $F(3, 94) = 5.85$ ,  $p < .001$ ; type of friend,  $F(3, 94) = 14.83$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Gender  $\times$  Type of Friend,  $F(3, 94) = 4.19$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and Age  $\times$  Type of Friend,  $F(3, 94) = 4.70$ ,  $p < .05$ . To interpret these effects, follow-up analyses were conducted separately for each friendship quality; the results are summarized in Table 2. For companionship, a significant gender effect was observed, with girls reporting more companionship with friends than boys (see Table 2). In addition, a significant age effect was revealed, which was qualified by an Age  $\times$  Friendship Type interaction,  $F(1, 96) = 7.21$ ,  $p < .01$ . Simple effects analyses revealed that younger adolescents reported significantly more companionship with their same-sex friends ( $M = 3.67$ ,  $SD = .92$ ) than with their cross-sex friends ( $M = 3.13$ ,  $SD = .95$ ). However, when adolescents with cross-sex friends who were also currently dating were excluded from the analysis, it was found that adolescents, in general, reported more companionship with their same- versus cross-sex friends<sup>4</sup> (see Table 2).

For intimacy, significant main effects of age and gender were obtained (see Table 2). Older adolescents reported more intimacy with friends ( $M = 4.35$ ,  $SD = .70$ ) than younger adolescents ( $M = 3.94$ ,  $SD = .88$ ). Furthermore, girls reported more intimacy with close friends than boys (see Table 2). No interactions were observed.

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<sup>2</sup>As a precaution, these analyses were repeated, excluding the 33 adolescents who reported having a cross-sex friend and who were actively dating at the time of the study (i.e., those who may have potentially reported a boyfriend or girlfriend as a close friend). When these adolescents were excluded from the analyses of friendships qualities, the results remained virtually the same, with one additional finding for companionship, as noted in the text. Thus, the results of the friendship quality analyses do not appear to be influenced substantially by adolescents potentially including their boyfriend or girlfriend as a close, cross-sex friend.

<sup>3</sup>In addition, correlations between same- and cross-sex friendships for each friendship quality were as follows: companionship ( $r = .24$ ), intimacy ( $r = .49$ ), prosocial support ( $r = .29$ ), and esteem support ( $r = .61$ ).

<sup>4</sup>Specifically, a main effect of friendship type was obtained for companionship,  $F(1, 66) = 4.70$ ,  $p < .05$ . In general, adolescents reported more companionship from their same-sex friends than from their cross-sex friends.

For prosocial support, a significant effect for gender revealed that girls reported more prosocial support from friends than boys, and a significant effect for friendship type revealed that same-sex friendships were reported to provide more prosocial support than cross-sex friends (see Table 2). However, these main effects were qualified by an interaction of Gender  $\times$  Age  $\times$  Friendship Type,  $F(1, 96) = 4.29, p < .05$ . Specifically, younger girls reported significantly more prosocial support from their same-sex friends ( $M = 4.61, SD = .40$ ) than from their cross-sex friends ( $M = 4.10, SD = .67$ ).

Finally, for esteem support, main effects for gender and for friendship type indicated that girls report more esteem support than boys, and that esteem support is higher in cross-sex friendships (see Table 2). However, these findings were qualified by an interaction of Gender  $\times$  Friendship Type,  $F(1, 96) = 12.66, p < .01$ . Specifically, boys reported greater esteem support from their cross-sex friends than from their same-sex friends,  $F(1, 35) = 14.29, p < .01$ , whereas, for girls, no difference between cross-sex and same-sex friends were detected,  $F(1, 64) = .91, p = .34$ . Even taking this interaction into account, however, girls did report more esteem support from close friends overall than did boys (see Table 2).

One additional analysis was conducted as a "check" to determine whether the same-sex friendships of the adolescents who had both types of friends ( $n = 101$ ) were comparable in quality to the same-sex friendships of adolescents who had only same-sex friends ( $n = 117$ ). This analysis revealed the friendship qualities of same-sex friendships did not differ be-

TABLE 3  
Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients Between Friendship Qualities  
for Same-Sex Friendships and for Cross-Sex Friendships

	<i>Companionship</i>	<i>Intimacy</i>	<i>Prosocial Support</i>	<i>Esteem Support</i>
Same-sex friendships				
Companionship	1.00			
Intimacy	.59*	1.00		
Prosocial support	.69*	.78*	1.00	
Esteem support	.46*	.76*	.73*	1.00
Cross-sex friendships				
Companionship	1.00			
Intimacy	.55*	1.00		
Prosocial support	.59*	.60*	1.00	
Esteem support	.38*	.61*	.54*	1.00

Note.  $N = 101$ .

\* $p < .01$ .

tween adolescents who had both kinds of close friends and those who had only same-sex close friends.<sup>5</sup>

### Adolescents' Social and Psychological Adjustment

A second major goal of this study was to evaluate whether having a close, cross-sex friendship was related to differences in adolescents' social and psychological adjustment. MANOVAs were conducted for four sets of variables: (a) social competence, (b) aversive peer experiences, (c) social support, and (d) behavior problems. Table 4 lists the intercorrelations among these sets of dependent variables. Each MANOVA included the between-group factors of type of adolescent (both types of friends; only same-sex friends), gender (boys, girls), dating status (active dater, inactive dater, nondater), and age (15–16 years old, 17–18 years old). Dating status was included as a factor in these analyses because “daters” may have more opportunities to develop cross-sex friends, and also to take into account the possibility that some adolescents may report their romantic partner as a cross-sex friend.<sup>6</sup> Although age was a factor in the MANOVA design, no significant main effects or interactions were obtained for age, and thus age was subsequently excluded from the analyses to maximize power and cell size.

Table 5 includes the means and standard deviations for all of the social and psychological variables for adolescents who had both same-sex and cross-sex friends ( $n = 101$ ) and for those who only had same-sex friends ( $n = 117$ ). Because of their low numbers, adolescents with only close cross-sex friendships ( $n = 3$ ) and those with no close friendships ( $n = 2$ ) were excluded.

**Social competence.** To examine differences in the social functioning of adolescents with only same-sex friends versus those with both same- and cross-sex friends, scores on the social acceptance, friendship competence, and romantic appeal subscales of the SPPA were entered as a set. The

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<sup>5</sup>A MANOVA was conducted for the same-sex friendship variables (e.g., companionship, intimacy, prosocial, and esteem support), with the factors of gender and type of adolescent (both types of friends; only same-sex friends). This analysis revealed no significant differences in same-sex friendships as a function of the type of adolescent, and no interactions were obtained.

<sup>6</sup>When the analyses were repeated excluding the 33 adolescents with cross-sex friends who were actively dating, the results remained virtually the same. Thus, the results of the analyses pertaining to social-emotional functioning do not appear to be influenced by adolescents' potentially including their boyfriend or girlfriend as a close, cross-sex friend.

TABLE 4  
Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients Between Social-Emotional Adjustment Measures

	HFrd	HSoc	HRom	Reject	Excl	SSCIs	SSFrd	SSPar	SSTch	YInt	YExt	Clnt	CExt
HFrd	1.00												
HSoc	.49**	1.00											
HRom	.28**	.46**	1.00										
Reject	-.04	-.23**	-.12	1.00									
Excl	-.14*	-.17*	-.18**	.20**	1.00								
SSCIs	.46**	.60**	.27**	-.35**	-.19**	1.00							
SSFrd	.70**	.31**	.16*	-.05	-.11	.46**	1.00						
SSPar	.34**	.24**	.20**	-.05	-.05	.25**	.32**	1.00					
SSTch	.27**	.28**	.08	-.16*	-.07	.27**	.31**	.27**	1.00				
YInt	-.20**	-.31**	-.32**	.24**	.26**	-.32**	-.17*	-.24**	-.07	1.00			
YExt	-.03	-.17*	-.03	.35**	.15*	-.27**	.02	-.33**	-.20**	.54**	1.00		
Clnt	-.05	-.05	-.17*	.19**	.13	-.08	-.06	-.15*	-.04	.27**	.15*	1.00	
CExt	.05	-.02	-.03	.22**	-.07	-.06	.01	-.28**	-.20**	.05	.30**	.64**	1.00

Note.  $N = 218$ . HFrd = perceptions of competence in close friendships; HSoc = perceptions of social competence; HRom = perceptions of competence in romantic relationships; Reject = peer rejection; Excl = peer exclusion; SSCIs = social support from classmates; SSFrd = social support from friends; SSPar = social support from parents; SSTch = social support from teachers; YInt = Youth Self-Report internalizing  $t$  scores; YExt = Youth Self-Report externalizing  $t$  scores; Clnt = Child Behavior Checklist internalizing  $t$  scores; CExt = Child Behavior Checklist externalizing  $t$  scores.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

TABLE 5  
Adjustment of Adolescents With Only Same-Sex Friends and With Both Same- and Cross-Sex Friends

Type of Functioning	Same-Sex Friends Only						Cross-Sex and Same-Sex Friends						Significant Effects	
	Boys <sup>a</sup>		Girls <sup>b</sup>		Total <sup>c</sup>		Boys <sup>d</sup>		Girls <sup>e</sup>		Total <sup>f</sup>		Type	Gender
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Social competence	3.35	.52	3.46	.50	3.41	.51	3.17	.47	3.33	.54	3.27	.52	—	—
Social acceptance	2.95	.65	2.87	.76	2.91	.57	2.88	.50	3.03	.57	2.97	.55	—	—
Romantic appeal	3.54	.46	3.74	.47	3.65	.47	3.46	.70	3.82	.30	3.69	.51	—	—
Close friendship														
Aversive peer experiences	1.32	.46	1.20	.29	1.26	.38	1.21	.34	1.29	.46	1.27	.42	—	—
Rejection	1.41	.63	1.29	.55	1.34	.59	1.32	.47	1.42	.61	1.38	.56	—	—
Exclusion														
Social support	3.41	.53	3.44	.58	3.43	.57	3.27	.56	3.44	.60	3.38	.59	—	—
Parents	3.54	.46	3.74	.47	3.65	.47	3.46	.70	3.82	.30	3.69	.51	—	—
Close friends	3.32	.49	3.45	.44	3.39	.47	3.42	.47	3.36	.53	3.38	.51	—	—
Classmates	2.77	.62	3.24	.60	3.02	.65	2.78	.64	3.16	.53	3.03	.63	—	—
Teachers														
Behavior problems	50.12	10.18	51.54	9.09	50.90	9.58	49.38	9.51	53.95	8.99	52.31	9.39	—	—
YSR internalizing	54.84	8.98	54.48	9.17	54.64	9.04	52.92	10.57	56.55	8.22	55.24	9.25	—	—
YSR externalizing	50.63	10.55	50.75	11.93	50.70	11.27	49.53	9.76	50.69	9.80	50.26	9.74	—	—
CBCL internalizing	49.65	9.60	49.90	10.18	49.79	9.88	47.80	8.75	48.41	10.74	48.19	10.05	—	—
CBCL externalizing														

Note. YSR = Youth Self-Report t scores; CBCL = Child Behavior Checklist t scores; type = friendship type.

<sup>a</sup>n = 55, <sup>b</sup>n = 62, <sup>c</sup>n = 117, <sup>d</sup>n = 38, <sup>e</sup>n = 66, <sup>f</sup>n = 104.

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .001.

MANOVA revealed significant main effects for type of adolescent,  $F(3, 207) = 4.09, p < .01$ ; gender,  $F(3, 207) = 5.24, p < .01$ ; and dating status,  $F(6, 414) = 5.26, p < .001$ . No significant interaction effects were observed.

For social acceptance, univariate analyses revealed a main effect only for type of adolescent,  $F(1, 209) = 4.91, p < .05$ . Adolescents with only close same-sex friends had higher perceived social acceptance than adolescents with both same- and cross-sex close friends (see Table 5). For friendship competence, a main effect for gender revealed that girls reported greater perceptions of friendship competence than did boys,  $F(1, 209) = 13.94, p < .001$ . Finally, for perceived romantic appeal, a main effect for dating status indicated that nondaters reported significantly lower levels of romantic appeal ( $M = 2.51, SD = .70$ ) than either inactive ( $M = 3.00, SD = .59$ ) or active ( $M = 3.13, SD = .57$ ) daters,  $F(2, 209) = 14.13, p < .001$ ; Tukey's honestly significant difference.

**Aversive peer experiences.** Scores for peer rejection and peer exclusion served as the next set of dependent variables. The MANOVA did not reveal any significant main effects or interactions (see Table 5 for the means). However, when the MANOVA considered ethnicity as an additional factor, a significant interaction emerged for Type of Adolescent  $\times$  Ethnicity,  $F(4, 398) = 3.33, p < .05$ . Follow-up analyses revealed that this effect was significant only for peer rejection,  $F(2, 200) = 4.29, p < .05$ . Simple effects revealed that African American adolescents with cross-sex friends ( $M = 1.71, SD = .91$ ) reported significantly more peer rejection than did White ( $M = 1.25, SD = .36$ ) and Hispanic American ( $M = 1.21, SD = .34$ ) adolescents with cross-sex friends. However, because no African American boys reported having cross-sex friends, this effect was exclusively due to the high levels of peer rejection reported by African American girls with cross-sex friends.

**Social support.** To examine social support from significant others, the four social support subscales of the SSSCA (i.e., friend, classmate, teacher, and parent) served as the set of dependent measures. The MANOVA revealed a significant main effect of gender,  $F(4, 205) = 11.16, p < .001$ ; relative to boys, girls reported higher levels of support from close friends,  $F(1, 208) = 20.34, p < .001$ , and from teachers,  $F(1, 208) = 28.11, p < .001$  (see Table 5). No significant main effects for type of adolescent or for dating status were revealed, and there were no significant interactions observed.

**Behavior problems.** Finally, to examine adolescents' behavioral adjustment, the internalizing and externalizing subscales of the YSR and the CBCL served as the set of dependent variables. In general, adolescents'

scores for internalizing and externalizing scales fell within the normal range (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1987; see Table 5). No significant effects were obtained for type of adolescent or for gender, and no significant interactions were found. However, a significant effect was obtained for dating status,  $F(8, 376) = 18.77, p < .05$ . Specifically, on the YSR, inactive daters reported more externalizing symptoms ( $M = 57.26, SD = 8.15$ ) than nondaters ( $M = 51.25, SD = 10.52$ ),  $F(2, 205) = 3.89, p < .05$ ; neither group differed significantly from active daters ( $M = 54.14, SD = 8.28$ ).

## DISCUSSION

This study was one of the first to examine close, cross-sex friendships in mid- to late adolescence. One major finding was that by mid- to late adolescence, having close, cross-sex friendships is a relatively common experience, as 47% of adolescents reported having at least one close, cross-sex friend. Furthermore, the likelihood of having a cross-sex friend increased significantly with age, as the percentage of 17- to 18-year-olds with close cross-sex friends (57%) was greater than for the 15- to 16-year-olds (43%). These age-related differences are consistent with the developmental literature that describes the transition from childhood to adolescence and adulthood as including a gradual breakdown in the "walls" that separate the sexes in social contexts (i.e., Blyth, Hill, & Thiel, 1982; Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Hallinan, 1980). It is particularly noteworthy that having cross-sex friendships was so common in this study considering that the focus of this study was on close, cross-sex friendships, not merely acquaintances. This indicates that adolescents are not simply interacting with opposite-sex peers in a superficial manner, but appear to be developing meaningful relationships that may affect how they perceive themselves and the world around them.

A primary goal of this study was to compare the qualities of adolescents' close same- and cross-sex friendships, and to examine gender and age as potential moderating variables. In doing so, the results help to bridge the gap between prior work with younger adolescents (e.g., Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Bukowski et al., 1993; Sharabany et al., 1981) and research with young adults (e.g., Aukett et al., 1988; Monsour, 1992; Parker & deVries, 1993; Rose, 1985). Specifically, adolescents reported more companionship with their same-sex friends than with cross-sex friends. This appears consistent with previous research suggesting that adolescents' same-sex friends are a greater source of companionship (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987). On the other hand, in this study, only younger adolescent girls reported more prosocial support from their same-sex

friends than from their cross-sex friends; that is, they felt that they could rely more on their same-sex friends to do them favors such as helping them with homework. By late adolescence, however, this differentiation between same and cross-sex friends was no longer apparent. Thus, the data suggest that, as cross-sex friendships become more normative in late adolescence, adolescents turn equally toward same- and opposite-sex friends in times of need.

In contrast to these findings that favor same-sex friendships, adolescent boys reported that their cross-sex friends provided more esteem support than did their same-sex friends. Specifically, boys' opposite-sex friends (i.e., girls) were more likely to make them feel good about themselves and their accomplishments than their same-sex friends. This pattern is consonant with findings from the adult literature on cross-sex friendships (Wright & Bergloff, 1984). Stereotypically, boys have been portrayed as being more reserved emotionally and as less likely than girls to express their feelings to other individuals, including their friends. Indeed, in this study, girls reported significantly higher levels of support and intimacy in their close friendships than did boys. More specifically, with respect to esteem support, it is possible that girls help to fill a void in this area for boys. Boys may not feel as comfortable praising others, especially their other male friends, and may look toward female friends to receive this support. Perhaps this is because of the way boys and girls are socialized to fit traditional sex roles in heterosexual relationships; women are socialized to be more emotionally supportive and esteem enhancing, whereas men are socialized to be more financially supportive and protective (Bailyn, 1970).

Regardless of friendship type, age was also found to be an important factor in the friendship qualities of adolescents. Companionship and intimacy levels were both found to increase from mid- to late adolescence, consistent with previous research (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Sharabany et al., 1981). This is not surprising, as peers have been found to play an increasingly important role in the lives of adolescents as they mature (Berndt, 1982; Berndt & Perry, 1986; Blyth et al., 1982).

Furthermore, gender differences in the qualities of close friendships were fairly robust. Girls reported significantly greater levels of companionship, intimacy, prosocial support, and esteem support in their close friendships than did boys, consistent with previous findings (see Berndt, 1982; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1992, 1993; Rose, 1985; Sapadin, 1988). Girls consistently report more intense relationships with their close friends than do boys, perhaps because a greater emphasis is placed on interpersonal relationships during socialization for girls (Douvan & Adelson, 1966), or perhaps because boys' conception of

friendship is different than girls'. Future research should evaluate potential reasons for gender differences observed in friendships in childhood and adolescence.

In addition to examining close same- and cross-sex friendships, a second major goal of the study was to compare the social and emotional adjustment of adolescents who had both same-sex and opposite-sex close friends with those who only had same-sex friends. In contrast to findings for school-age children, it was expected that adolescents with both types of friendships would be similar to adolescents with only same-sex friends in their levels of social-emotional functioning. Indeed, our findings generally support this notion. Adolescents with both types of close friends reported similar levels of social support from significant others, similar levels of competence in their friendships, and similarly low levels of aversive peer experiences as did adolescents with only same-sex close friends. Furthermore, these two groups of adolescents did not differ in terms of their behavior problems, as reported by adolescents and their parents. Taken together, these findings suggest that having both same- and cross-sex close friends is a fairly normative experience during adolescence, and is not associated with problematic social or behavioral functioning.

The one exception to this overall pattern, however, was the finding that adolescents with both same- and cross-sex friendships perceived their general social acceptance to be lower than adolescents who only had same-sex friends. It is noteworthy that other aspects of social competence, such as perceived romantic appeal and competence in close friendships, did not differentiate these two types of teens. This pattern suggests that adolescents who do not feel accepted by their larger peer group may seek out members of the opposite sex to develop close friendships; alternatively, those with close opposite-sex friends may have less opportunities to socialize with same-sex peers, and thus perceive their general peer acceptance to be lower. Because adolescents with close cross-sex friends did not appear to be at a social disadvantage based on a comprehensive assessment of social and behavioral functioning, the significance of this finding bears replication. Overall, it appears that adolescents with both same- and cross-sex friendships are generally as well adjusted as those who only have close same-sex friendships. Our findings extend the views of Kovacs et al. (1996), who suggested that those with cross-sex friendships are as well adjusted as individuals with only same-sex friends.

Few gender differences and no age differences were noted in adolescents' social-emotional adjustment, suggesting that these findings generally hold true for mid- to late adolescent boys and girls. The only exceptions were for perceived competence with close friends and for social support from friends and teachers, in which girls reported higher levels

than boys. This is consistent with research conducted on children and adolescents (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992) revealing that girls perceived greater support from friends than boys. Perhaps girls' preference for more exclusive, dyadic relationships based on disclosure and intimacy (Douvan & Adelson, 1966; La Greca & Prinstein, 1999; Thorne, 1986) results in greater perceived competence and support in these relationships.

In addition, adolescents' dating status was examined. Prior research typically has not examined dating status in connection with adolescents' reports of cross-sex friendships. In this study, a few findings were observed. First, and not surprisingly, adolescents who reported recent experiences with dating perceived their romantic appeal to be higher than nondaters. In addition, adolescents who were "inactive daters" (i.e., dated within the past 6 months, but not at the present time) reported more externalizing behavior problems than nondaters. As Feiring (1996) and Furman and Wehner (1994) recently noted, very little research has addressed the nature and function of romantic relationships among adolescents. Yet, there is some suggestion that "early daters" are more likely to have behavior problems than nondaters (Neemann, Hubbard, & Masten, 1995). This may help to explain why some of the daters in this sample reported more externalizing problems (i.e., some of them may have begun dating at an early age), even though the level of these problems was well within the normal range. Additional research is needed to better understand the nature of adolescents' romantic relationships, and their potential effects on adolescents' social functioning, self-perceptions, and psychological adjustment.

Although not a central aspect of the study, several findings emerged regarding the length of adolescents' friendships. Specifically, same-sex friendships were longer in duration than cross-sex friendships. Whereas adolescents' close same-sex friendships typically began 4 to 6 years earlier, when they were in elementary or middle school, their close cross-sex friendships typically developed 3 to 4 years earlier, during middle school or high school. This pattern is consistent with other studies of youngsters' friendships that reveal a bias toward maintaining exclusively same-sex friendships in elementary school, but by middle school and high school, cross-sex relationships become more common (e.g., Broderick, 1966; Bukowski et al., 1993; Hartup, 1983).

It was also observed that adolescent boys' close friendships were of longer duration (about 1 year) than girls'. Boys tend to have larger friendship networks than girls (Berndt & Hoyle, 1985), so it may be possible for friends to remain in boys' friendship networks for longer periods of time than in girls' networks. It is also possible that girls undergo greater flux and transition in their close friendships during middle school and high

school than boys. Further research is needed to elucidate these potential linkages.

Moreover, it is interesting to contrast these data on length of friendships with studies that have found that adolescents' close friendships are not very stable over periods exceeding 1 year (Berndt, 1982; Epstein, 1986; Feiring & Lewis, 1993). The relatively long friendships that were observed in this study may be attributed to the methodology used in this study. Specifically, in this study, adolescents were asked to indicate how long they had been friends with their current, closest friends, whereas other methodologies ask children to name their best friends at one time point, and then again at another time point (e.g., Berndt, Hawkins, & Hoyle, 1986; Cairns, Leung, Buchanan, & Cairns, 1995; Keefe & Berndt, 1996), a method that may underestimate the length of these friendships. It is likely that adolescents considered their close friends to have been their friends for quite some time, even though they may not have consistently been best friends or closest friends during the entire time period. Our findings suggest that future investigations may consider this issue by assessing friendship length as well as the stability of specific friendship pairs.

Given the diverse demographics of the population, ethnicity was considered as an exploratory factor in the analyses, although it was not a central issue in the study. Very few differences were observed as a function of ethnicity; however, the observed differences were notable. Specifically, African American adolescents were less likely to report having close, cross-sex friends than other adolescents. In fact, none of the African American boys and only 38.9% of the girls reported close, cross-sex friends. Moreover, for African American girls, having close cross-sex friends was associated with significantly higher levels of peer rejection than was the case for other girls with cross-sex friends. These findings should be viewed cautiously, given the relatively small number of African American youth in this sample. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that having close, cross-sex friends may be less normative and more stigmatizing among African American youth; this issue would be of interest to examine further in future research.

Despite this study's contributions to understanding close, cross-sex friendships among adolescents, there are several caveats and issues to be addressed in future research. First, information on adolescents' friendships was obtained only from the perspective of the adolescent—although ratings of behavior problems were obtained from both adolescents and their parents. For friendships and social functioning, adolescents are considered to be the best informant source (e.g., Furman, 1996; La Greca & Lemanek, 1996; Lindau & Milich, 1990). Indeed, studies of adolescent friendships have typically relied solely on adolescents' reports (e.g., Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; La Greca & Lopez, 1998; Sharabany et al.,

1981; Vernberg et al., 1992). Furthermore, the limitations of adult informants (parents, teachers) for adolescents' friendships have been noted (e.g., La Greca & Lemanek, 1996; Loeber, Green, & Lahey, 1990). Nevertheless, in the future it would be useful to supplement the adolescents' perspectives with information obtained from peers or parents.

A second caution is that this study provides a one-time snapshot of adolescents' close friendships. Given the paucity of literature on adolescents' close cross-sex versus same-sex friendships, it was appropriate to investigate this issue in a correlational design. However, longitudinal designs will be essential for capturing the dynamic nature of social relationships, and for examining causal processes. Research designs that track the development of cross-sex friendships over time and establish linkages with adolescents' social and emotional functioning would be especially useful and informative.

Finally, future studies of cross-sex friendships may consider revising existing assessment methodologies to better account for adolescents' romantic relationships. This study represents an improvement over earlier studies, in that dating status was assessed and considered in the analyses; prior work has not typically assessed the existence of adolescents' romantic relationships. Although it was not possible to specifically "match up" the names and identities of adolescents' friends and their romantic partners, this would be a useful strategy for future studies. In this study, we took the precaution of repeating the analyses, excluding active daters who also reported cross-sex friends (i.e., those who may potentially report a boyfriend or girlfriend as a close friend) and found essentially the same results when daters were excluded. However, future research might systematically evaluate and assess cross-sex friendships that are specifically nonromantic in nature.

In summary, the findings of this study are consistent with the view that cross-sex friendships are developmentally appropriate for adolescents and may, in fact, help to prepare them for developing close, intimate relationships with members of the opposite sex as adults. Future research is needed that follows the formation and development of cross-sex friendships through late adolescence and adulthood, and that examines the long-term effects of close, cross-sex friendship on social adjustment and competence in social and romantic relationships.

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