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## Introduction

This presentation highlights preliminary analyses from an ongoing project comparing the quality of different types of college students' close peer relationships: same-sex (SS) friendships, other-sex (OS) friendships, and romantic relationships. These relationships have been established as differing in quality, such as the amount of support provided. For example, Hand and Furman (2009) indicated that adolescents perceived their OS friendships as less supportive than both their SS friendships and romantic relationships. Adolescents also perceived their OS friendships as having less conflict than their romantic relationships.

The current project attempts to replicate these findings in an older age group. College students tend to have more time and opportunity, compared to adolescents, to develop close OS friendships (Monsour, 1997).

Research on adolescents and college students has found that their close peer relationships tend to be egalitarian (e.g., Furman & Buhrmester, 1992), although this is not always the case. We examine whether these relationships are egalitarian, or if one person tends to have more power. We also examine the length of their current relationships and previous experience with each type of relationship.

## Method

### Participants

The participants were 54 students (46 cis females, 6 cis males, 1 trans male, and 1 participant who did not disclose their identity) attending college at SUNY Geneseo. The students were between 18 and 25 years of age ( $M = 19.35$  years,  $SD = 1.12$  years). The majority (77.8%) of these students were White; a majority (87%) also identified as heterosexual.

Thirty-two participants reported on all three types of relationships. The final sample consisted of 27 cis females, 3 cis males, 1 trans male, and 1 participant who did not disclose their identity, all between 18 and 21 years of age ( $M = 19.16$  years;  $SD = 0.808$  years). The majority (81.3%) of the participants identified as White (9.4% Asian; 6.3% Latinx, Hispanic, or Spanish origin; 3.1% as multiple identities). A majority (87.5%) also identified as heterosexual (6.3% bisexual; 3.1% questioning/unsure; 3.1% preferred not to answer).

### Measures

**Relationship quality.** Each participant completed the 33-item Network of Relationships Inventory (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985) for their current closest SS friend, OS friend, and/or romantic partner. The measure evaluates relevant features of relationship quality for each relationship: positive features (companionship, instrumental aid, intimacy, nurturance, affection, admiration, reliable alliance, and satisfaction), negative features (conflict and annoying behavior), and relative power.

The amount of positive and negative features present in each relationship were rated from 1 (little or none) to 5 (the most). Scores for relative power ranged from 1 (the partner has more power) to 5 (the participant has more power), with 3 indicating equal power.

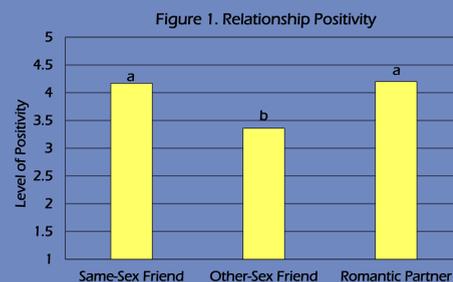
**Relationship experience.** The participants reported on their experience with each relationship type, including the length of their current relationship(s) and how many of each type they have ever had since age 11.

## Results & Discussion

### Relationship Quality

Repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted to determine whether students reported differences in the quality of their SS friendships, OS friendships, and romantic relationships. Post hoc LSD comparisons followed statistically significant findings. Means with different letters differ significantly at  $p < .05$ .

**Relationship positivity.** There was a significant and large effect of relationship for positivity (see Figure 1),  $F(2, 62) = 33.50$ ,  $p = .000$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .52$ ). Students reported that their OS friendships were less supportive than both their SS friendships and their romantic relationships. This replicates the findings of Hand and Furman (2009) in an older population.



## Results & Discussion (cont.)

**Relationship negativity.** There was not a significant effect of negativity (see Figure 2),  $F(2, 62) = 2.90$ ,  $p = .062$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .09$ ), although a medium effect size was found. There was an observed trend of OS friendships possessing less conflict than their romantic partnerships, although this only approached significance. This is similar to Hand and Furman's (2009) finding. We anticipate that this finding will be replicated once the project is completed.

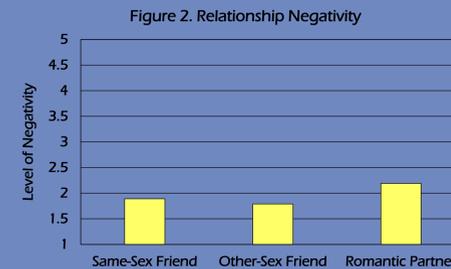
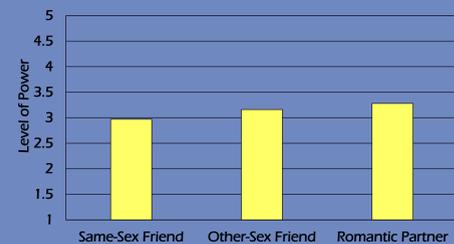


Figure 3. Relationship Power



**Relationship power.** There was also not a significant effect for power (see Figure 3),  $F(2, 62) = 1.78$ ,  $p = .177$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .05$ ), although there was a small-to-medium effect size. Currently, participants have indicated that they have slightly more power in their romantic relationships than their other relationships, especially SS friendships. We will re-visit this trend after data collection is complete.

Table 1. Relationship Quality Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	M	(SD)
1. Positivity with SS Friend	–									4.17	(0.5)
2. Positivity with OS Friend	.46**	–								3.36	(0.6)
3. Positivity with Romantic Partner	.17	.16	–							4.20	(0.6)
4. Negativity with SS Friend	.08	.09	-.14	–						1.89	(0.9)
5. Negativity with OS Friend	-.05	.12	-.34†	.41*	–					1.79	(0.7)
6. Negativity with Romantic Partner	.06	-.22	-.41*	.39*	.16	–				2.19	(0.9)
7. Power with SS Friend	.06	.03	-.11	-.45**	-.11	.16	–			2.97	(0.7)
8. Power with OS Friend	.15	.45**	-.04	.11	.14	.11	-.10	–		3.16	(0.6)
9. Power with Romantic Partner	-.17	-.01	.04	-.21	-.21	-.16	.30†	.16	–	3.28	(0.8)

Notes. Scores for positivity and negativity range from 1 (little or none) to 5 (the most). Scores for power range from 1 (the partner has more power) to 5 (the participant has more power), with 3 indicating equal power. †marginally significant. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 1 describes correlations of relationship quality (positivity, negativity, and power) for SS friendships, OS friendships, and romantic relationships. Participants who reported higher levels of positivity for SS friendships also reported relatively higher levels of positivity for OS friendships. Participants who reported higher levels of negativity for SS friendships also reported relatively higher levels of negativity for OS friendships and romantic partnerships.

Those who reported lower levels of negativity in their SS friendships were less likely to report that their SS friend had more power than them in the relationship. Participants who experienced greater positivity in their OS friendships were also less likely to report that their OS friend had more power than them.

For romantic partnerships, positivity and negativity were found to be negatively correlated.

## Results & Discussion (cont.)

### Relationship Experience

The length of students' current relationships ranged from 6 to 240 months for SS friendships, 4 to 180 months for OS friendships, and 0.75 to 60 months for romantic partnerships.

Since age 11, students reported having 1 to 50 SS friendships, 1 to 50 OS friendships, and 1 to 8 romantic partnerships.

Repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted to determine whether students reported different levels of experience with their SS friendships, OS friendships, and romantic relationships. Post hoc LSD comparisons followed statistically significant findings. Means with different letters differ significantly at  $p < .05$ .

**Length of current relationship.** There was a significant and large effect for current relationship length (see Figure 4),  $F(2, 58) = 12.57$ ,  $p = .000$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .30$ ). Students reported that their current romantic relationship was significantly shorter than both their current SS friendship and OS friendship.

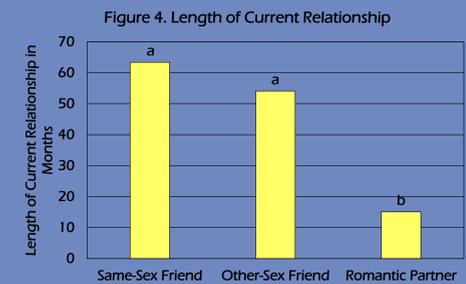
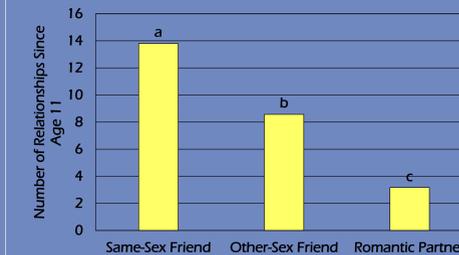


Figure 5. Number of Relationships



**Number of relationships.** There was a significant and large effect for the total number of each type of relationship since age 11 (see Figure 5),  $F(2, 58) = 19.74$ ,  $p = .000$  ( $\eta_p^2 = .40$ ). Participants reported having significantly more SS friendships than OS friendships, which in turn were significantly greater in number than romantic partnerships.

## Next Steps

- We plan to collect data for approximately 250 additional participants.
- Re-conducting these analyses, with a full data set, will allow us to better clarify the ways in which these relationships are similar and distinct, in terms of quality and how experience plays a role.
- This larger sample size will enable us to examine whether these findings vary for individuals with differing identities: gender, sexual orientation, and racial and/or ethnic background.
- We will also examine whether a history of romance, or a desire for future romance, in a friendship, and a history of friendship preceding a romantic relationship, are common and/or related to relationship quality.
- We plan to use person-oriented analyses to distinguish patterns of relationship quality across the types of relationships, and determine how these patterns are associated with adjustment (e.g., self-esteem, internalizing problems, externalizing problems).

## References

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