

Gender Differences and Similarities in Adult Friendships: Can Women and Men be Best Friends?

Purpose: This exercise is designed to evaluate the nature of same-sex and cross-sex friendships in adulthood.

Instructions: Using the data sheets on the following pages, interview four adults about their friends and their understanding of friendship. Recruit two women and two men who are willing to complete a short questionnaire. Select a variety of participants for this project. Include four people who vary not only by sex category but also by other social categories (for example, age, race, or ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class, etc.). Describe each participant by indicating his or her sex category, age, and social attributes (for example, race or ethnicity, social class, etc.) at the top of each interview form.

Then, summarize your findings by answering the following questions. Be sure to draw upon relevant course materials.

1. Compare and contrast your participants' responses to the research discussed in the text. Do your findings support the research findings? How? Are any responses inconsistent with the research? How would you explain this?
2. What do you conclude? How are men and women's cross-sex and same-sex friendships similar? How do they differ?
3. Research has found that a substantial proportion of college-aged women and men identified their romantic partners as their best friends. Were your results similar? What do you conclude from this?

Participant A

Sex _____ Age _____

Comments/Characteristics _____

This survey asks you to describe two of your closest friendships. The questions will ask you about your relationship with your best female friend and your best male friend. Think for a minute about these two friends, and then answer the following questions by circling the appropriate response.

1. How often do you share your personal problems and feelings with your friends?

Female friend:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seldom						Always

Male Friend

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seldom						Always

2. How well would you say your friends know the “real you”?

Female friend

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not very well						Extremely well

Male Friend

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not very well						Extremely well

3. How would you describe these two relationships?

Female friend:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Casual						Very intimate

Male friend

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Casual						Very intimate
Never						Always

4. How do you feel about these two relationships?

Female friend:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very dissatisfied						Very satisfied

Male friend:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very dissatisfied						Very satisfied

5. Are you romantically involved with your female friend?

Yes No

6. Are you romantically involved with your male friend?

Yes No

Participant B

Sex _____ Age _____

Comments/Characteristics _____

This survey asks you to describe two of your closest friendships. The questions will ask you about your relationship with your best female friend and your best male friend. Think for a minute about these two friends, and then answer the following questions by circling the appropriate response.

1. How often do you share your personal problems and feelings with your friends?

Female friend:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seldom						Always

Male Friend

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seldom						Always

2. How well would you say your friends know the “real you”?

Female friend

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not very well						Extremely well

Male Friend

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not very well						Extremely well

3. How would you describe these two relationships?

Female friend:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Casual						Very intimate

Male friend

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Casual						Very intimate
Never						Always

4. How do you feel about these two relationships?

Female friend:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very dissatisfied						Very satisfied

Male friend:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very dissatisfied						Very satisfied

5. Are you romantically involved with your female friend?

Yes No

6. Are you romantically involved with your male friend?

Yes No

Participant C

Sex _____ Age _____

Comments/Characteristics _____

This survey asks you to describe two of your closest friendships. The questions will ask you about your relationship with your best female friend and your best male friend. Think for a minute about these two friends, and then answer the following questions by circling the appropriate response.

1. How often do you share your personal problems and feelings with your friends?

Female friend:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seldom						Always

Male Friend

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seldom						Always

2. How well would you say your friends know the “real you”?

Female friend

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not very well						Extremely well

Male Friend

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not very well						Extremely well

3. How would you describe these two relationships?

Female friend:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Casual						Very intimate

Male friend

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Casual						Very intimate
Never						Always

4. How do you feel about these two relationships?

Female friend:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very dissatisfied						Very satisfied

Male friend:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very dissatisfied						Very satisfied

5. Are you romantically involved with your female friend?

Yes No

6. Are you romantically involved with your male friend?

Yes No

Participant D

Sex _____ Age _____

Comments/Characteristics _____

This survey asks you to describe two of your closest friendships. The questions will ask you about your relationship with your best female friend and your best male friend. Think for a minute about these two friends, and then answer the following questions by circling the appropriate response.

1. How often do you share your personal problems and feelings with your friends?

Female friend:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seldom						Always

Male Friend

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seldom						Always

2. How well would you say your friends know the “real you”?

Female friend

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not very well						Extremely well

Male Friend

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not very well						Extremely well

3. How would you describe these two relationships?

Female friend:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Casual						Very intimate

Male friend

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Casual						Very intimate
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4. How do you feel about these two relationships?

Female friend:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very dissatisfied						Very satisfied

Male friend:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very dissatisfied						Very satisfied

5. Are you romantically involved with your female friend?

Yes No

6. Are you romantically involved with your male friend?

Yes No