

# **Stability in Adolescent Same- and Cross-Gender Best Friendships**

*Paige L Seegan*

Sponsor: Adrienne Nishina Ph.D., Human and Community Development

Best friendships during adolescent years have been found to support healthy psychological adjustment, buffer individuals from stress, and increase problem solving capabilities (Hartup, 1996). Research suggests that the influence of a best friendship on adolescent development depends on the closeness and stability of that friendship (Hardy, Bukowski, & Sippola, 2002). Using a daily report methodology, this study examined the stability of same- and cross-gender best friendships over a five-day period. Participants were 101 ninth graders (49 female, 52 male) who completed questionnaires at the end of five school days. Students were asked to think about the one person they considered to be their best or closest friend at school and write this person's initials down, indicating whether this person was a boy or a girl. Day-to-day changes in best friend initials were coded. Results showed a modest amount of best-friendship stability as 41% of students (57% of boys and 29% of girls) did not change friends over the five days. Same-gender best friends were reported the majority (70%) of the time, though having a same- or cross-gender best friend did not differ by gender of the respondent ( $\chi^2(2) = 3.87, p > .05$ ). These findings suggest that many best friendships may be in the process of being negotiated during ninth grade. Future research should examine how the stability of same- and cross-gender best friendships might influence other areas of development such as coping strategies during adolescence.