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Adolescents' Emotion Disclosure to Same-Sex and Cross-Sex Friends and
Associations with Empathetic Distress and Latino Boys' Machismo

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Adolescents' Emotion Disclosure to Same-Sex and Cross-Sex Friends and
Associations with Empathetic Distress and Latino Boys' Machismo

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Abstract

Friendships are important for social and emotional adjustment. Friendships are adaptive, as they help in the maturation of social skills (Asher, Parker, & Walker, 1996; Berndt, 1982; Sullivan, 1953) and provide emotional and cognitive resources for support and coping (Berndt, 1982). However, not all friendships are created equal. Differences exist across the sexes, particularly in regards to emotion disclosure. The current study assesses girls' and boys' emotion disclosure to same-sex and cross-sex friends. It also explores the relationship between emotion disclosure and empathetic distress- a maladaptive form of empathizing with a friend. In a subsample of Latino boys, this study explores girls' and boys' patterns of emotion disclosure to same-sex and cross-sex friends and the relationship of machismo with emotion disclosure patterns.

Adolescents' Emotion Disclosure to Same-Sex and Cross-Sex Friends and
Associations with Empathetic Distress and Latino Boys' Machismo

Friendships are important and adaptive for social-emotional well-being. They provide opportunities for the development and sharpening of social skills that are important to relationships (Asher, Parker, & Walker, 1996; Berndt, 1982; Buhrmester & Furman, 1986; Sullivan, 1953) and serve as contexts that promote self-knowledge and self-esteem (Berndt, 1982). In addition, they provide emotional and cognitive resources for support and coping (Berndt, 1982). Research shows that mutual friendships serve as protective factors in childhood and adolescence (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995). For example, friendships can buffer against psychosocial maladjustment linked to harsh parental discipline (Schwartz, Dodge, Pettit, Bates, & the Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 2000), social skill deficits (Fox & Boulton, 2006), general internalizing problems, and peer victimization (Hodges, Boivin, Vitaro, & Bukowski, 1999; Hodges et al., 1997).

Friendships differ in terms of quality; some friendships have more positive qualities than other friendships (Parker & Asher, 1993). Having friendships high in positive quality is associated with aspects of positive adjustment, such as, high self-esteem, social adjustment, and ability to cope with stressors (Hartup & Stevens, 1999). It is also associated with greater school involvement and higher self-perceived social acceptance (Berndt & Keefe, 1995), also with emotionally engaged strategies for helping a friend in need (Glick & Rose, 2011). One critical aspect of positive friendship quality is self-disclosure, which is the sharing of personal information, thoughts and feelings with a relationship partner (Snell et al., 1988).

Self-disclosure is the primary way in which youth achieve intimacy and feelings of emotional closeness in friendships (Camarena et al., 1990). It is also linked to other positive aspects of friendship quality such as helping and companionship (Parker & Asher, 1993). Given its importance to friendships, self-disclosure is the focus of the current study. In particular, this study investigates self-disclosure specifically about emotions.

Adolescence is the developmental period of interest for the current research, as friendships are especially important during this time when youths increasingly rely on friends for social support (Helsen et al., 2000; Nansel, Haynie & Simons-Morton, 2003; Prinstein, Boergers, & Vernberg, 2001). The supportive features of childhood friendships such as, self-validation, affection, companionship, and instrumental and emotional support (Sullivan, 1953), may become particularly critical around the transition to adolescence, when youths face a larger and less protective social context (Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998), as well as increases in peer victimization and exclusive groups (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1995). Adolescent friendships may be well-suited to provide support and protection against the social challenges of adolescence due to the increased intimacy that characterizes them during this developmental period (Fox & Boulton, 2006; Sullivan, 1953). Additionally, disclosure in friendships increases in adolescence (Sharabany et al., 1981) and is one of the key features for building intimacy in adolescent friendships (Berndt, 1981c; Bigelow, 1977; Douvan & Adelson, 1966; Reisman & Shorr, 1978; Selman, 1981; Youniss, 1980).

The current study explores adolescents' emotion disclosure patterns with same-sex and cross-sex friends. In the sections that follow, the importance of emotion disclosure will be discussed first. Then, the role of gender will be considered in terms of gender differences in emotion disclosure and the role of gender in the selection of emotion disclosure partners based on gender. Next, emotion disclosure will be examined as a potential correlate of empathetic distress (i.e., taking on a friend's distress as one's own). Finally, the role of gender will be further considered using a subsample of Latino boys and examining associations of machismo (i.e., gendered cultural values) with emotion disclosure.

Emotion Disclosure

Emotion disclosure is the sharing of intimate feelings with friends (Snell et al., 1988) and is an important feature of friendships (Sullivan, 1953). Emotion disclosure becomes increasingly important moving into adolescence (Berndt, 1981c; Bigelow, 1977; Douvan & Adelson, 1966; Reisman & Shorr, 1978; Selman, 1981; Youniss, 1980; Sharabany, Gershoni, & Hofman, 1981)). In adolescence, friends, as opposed to parents or siblings, become the primary social interaction partners (Papini et al., 1989). Indeed, according to self-report, adolescents spend more time talking to their friends than engaged in any other single activity (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1977) and, interestingly, they claim that they are most happy when talking to friends (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1977).

Past research has focused on emotion disclosure in general. Disclosure of emotions, specifically, may be of particular importance in adolescence because risk

for emotional adjustment difficulties, such as, mood disruptions, depression and anxiety (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984), conflict with parents (Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991) and risky behavior (Arnett, 1992; Moffitt, 1993) increase in adolescence. This highlights the importance of having peers adolescents can confide in about their emotions. Consequently, the current study focuses on adolescent disclosure specifically about emotions.

The Role of Gender

The role of gender will first be considered in terms of gender differences in emotion disclosure. Past research has focused on disclosure in same-sex friendships and has found robust mean-level gender differences in disclosure, with girls disclosing more than boys (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Camarena et al., 1990; Parker & Asher, 1993; Rose & Rudolph, 2006). One possible reason for this is that boys feel more negatively about disclosure than girls do. Specifically, it has been found that boys feel less comfortable with disclosure and see less utility in it (Rose et al., 2012).

Other factors that may contribute to boys' lack of engagement in emotion disclosure is that there are societal values regarding male gender roles that discourage the discussion of emotions. According to O'Neil, boys and men are continually socialized in line with a masculine ideal. He termed this masculine ideology "the masculine mystique and value system" (O'Neil, 1981a, 1981b, 1982; O'Neil, Good, & Holmes, 1995). More specifically, it is "a set of values and beliefs that

are learned during early socialization and are based upon rigid gender role stereotypes and beliefs about men and masculinity" (O'Neil, 1981b, p. 205). Males are socialized to view this ideology as optimal and, as a result, develop a fear of femininity. The consequences tied to the endorsement of male stereotypes may span difficulty expressing emotions; issues regarding balancing work and home demands; conflicts related to success, power, and competition; an inability to express affection towards other men; and homophobia (Good, Robertson, Fitzgerald, Stevens, & Bartels, 1996).

It is a common conception that males may not refrain from disclosure entirely, but instead might more often choose females, rather than other males, as disclosure partners (e.g., Dindia & Allen, 1992). If this is the case, and boys do, in fact, choose cross-sex friends (i.e., girls) as disclosure partners, then much of male disclosure would have been overlooked in previous studies that assess only disclosure to same-sex friends. In contrast, girls would be expected to disclose to same-sex friends. That is, girls would be expected to disclose more to other girls than they do to boys, given that disclosure is a central aspect of girls' same-sex friendships (Rose & Rudolph, 2006). The current study provides the first test of the common conception that both girls and boys turn to girls as their confidants. It is hypothesized that girls disclose more to same-sex friends than they do to cross-sex friends, whereas boys disclose more to cross-sex friends than to same-sex friends.

Empathetic Distress

Overall, emotion disclosure is a positive feature of friendships. However, disclosing about emotions with a friend may have drawbacks if the disclosure contributes to the friend's strong feelings of empathy in the form of empathetic distress. Empathetic distress refers to the strong sharing of a friend's negative affect to the point of taking on a friend's distress and experiencing it as one's own (Smith & Rose, 2011). Investigating potential factors that may give rise to empathetic distress is important given that it may have negative implications for youths' emotional adjustment. Specifically, past work has found that empathetic distress is associated with symptoms of depression and anxiety among youth (Smith, under revision). Although empathetic distress has been linked with co-rumination, a form of self-disclosure that is characterized by excessive discussion of problems and a strong focus on the negative emotions associated with those problems (Smith & Rose, 2011), it is unknown whether empathetic distress may be elicited from more normative levels of emotion disclosure. Moreover, the past study linking empathetic distress to co-rumination only assessed same-sex friendships. Therefore, a contribution of this study is that it will assess whether emotion disclosure with same-sex and cross-sex friends is related to empathetic distress.

Latino Boys' Machismo

Gender plays a role in emotion disclosure (as reviewed above) and researchers have suggested that in adolescent friendships this gender difference is especially pronounced among Latino boys (Way et al., 2014). This leads to

considerations of why that is the case. As reviewed above, there are societal norms that make it particularly challenging for boys to talk about their emotions. Those societal pressures may be especially strong in Latino culture, where masculine ideals are very strongly emphasized through the cultural value of machismo, which is a set of ideals regarding male gender roles that emphasize hypermasculinity and discourage behaviors perceived as feminine (Fragoso & Kashubeck, 2000). Although male gender roles may discourage female-typed behaviors in general (among boys in many cultures), Latino culture is unique in that machismo explicitly discourages males from disclosing their emotions (Fragoso & Kashubeck, 2000). Therefore, Latino boys are an ideal population to study in order to understand the influence of masculine cultural values on emotion disclosure in friendships.

The conception that boys disclose more to girls than to other boys may particularly hold true among Latino boys if it is the case that Latino values influence boys to maintain masculine appearances, especially in interactions with other males (and consequently avoid disclosure to males). Additionally, Latino boys' endorsement of machismo may be associated with decreased emotion disclosure overall (in both same-sex and cross-sex friendships).

Other Latino cultural values may be at odds with machismo in relation to disclosure. Specifically, *simpatia*, a Latino cultural value that emphasizes the importance of interpersonal harmony, interdependence, and connection with others (Triandis et al., 1984), may actually encourage disclosure. A propensity towards *simpatia* may encourage a feeling that there is overlap between the self and the other, making it easier to engage in behaviors such as emotion disclosure. As such,

the influence of simpatia may cancel out the effects of machismo on disclosure. Thus, in the current study, analyses testing relations between machismo and disclosure are conducted while controlling for simpatia.

In sum, the current study includes a subsample of Latino boys to examine the relationship between machismo and emotion disclosure in friendships. In regards to whom Latino boys would rather disclose to, it is predicted that it would be easier for them to disclose to girls than to display a vulnerable side to their male peers. It is predicted that higher levels of machismo will be associated with overall lower levels of same-sex and cross-sex emotion disclosure but that the presence of simpatia may prevent that relationship.

Summary of Current Study

The current study serves to assess (1) whether girls disclose more to other girls than they do to boys (2) whether boys disclose more to girls than they do to boys and (3) whether emotion disclosure to same-sex and cross-sex partners is associated with girls' and boys' empathetic distress. Moreover, this study examines a subgroup of Latino adolescent boys and tests (4) whether Latino boys disclose emotions more to boys than girls, (5) the association between machismo and tendency to engage in emotion disclosure with boys and girls and (6) relations between Latino boys' emotion disclosure and empathetic distress.

Method

Participants

In the current study, 168 middle and high school students of ages 12-18 participated as part of a larger study ($M = 14.64$, $SD = 1.75$). Ninety-eight (58.3%) of the participants were female, 70 (41.7%) were male. Of the participants, 133 (79.2%) identified as White, 15 (8.9%) as Hispanic, 7 (4.2 %) as Black or African American, 2 (1.2%) as Asian, 8 (4.8%) as multi-racial, and 1 (0.6%) did not provide a response. Participants were recruited by means of contacting schools and posting flyers in the Mansfield, Connecticut area. Residents of this area are predominantly high socioeconomic status; about 35.6% of people in the county over the age of 25 had a Bachelor's degree or higher and the median reported income was \$80,333, with 6.7% of people living below the poverty level (United States Census Bureau, 2010). Once notified of participants' interest, a graduate research assistant scheduled visits to the lab and mailed parental consent forms, along with directions to the lab. Parental consent forms were collected upon arrival. Adolescents also provided their own assent. Participants over the age of 18 provided their own consent. Due to the nature of the larger study, participants were asked to visit the lab with a friend, of the same age within a year, who would also participate in the study. Before each scheduled visit, a graduate research assistant would contact the participants, and their parents, to confirm the visit. The duration of each visit was of about 2.5 hours, after which compensation was provided.

Procedure

The current study was conducted by use of questionnaires, which were administered by trained research assistants. As part of the larger study, the friend pairs also participated in a conversation task in which they talked about recent problems they had experienced and then reported on the level of empathetic distress they experienced during this conversation.

Measures

Emotional self-disclosure

The Emotional Self-Disclosure Scale (Snell et al., 1988) was modified so as to be specific to (1) same-sex friends and (2) cross-sex friends. The questionnaire tapped into willingness to express emotions with different conversation partners. At the top of the survey, participants were prompted with the question, "How willing were you to share the following information with same-sex friends?" Example items are, "Times when you felt depressed," "Times when you felt happy," and "Times when you felt anxious." They were asked to answer these same questions in regards to cross-sex friends. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which each of the 24 statements described them using a 4-point Likert system ranging from *not at all willing* (1) to *totally willing* (4). The items formed a reliable scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .99$). The same-sex emotion disclosure scale was reliable among girls (Cronbach's $\alpha = .95$) and boys (Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$). The cross-sex emotion disclosure scale was also reliable among girls (Cronbach's $\alpha = .97$) and boys (Cronbach's $\alpha = .97$). In the Latino boys subsample, same-sex emotion disclosure was a reliable measure

(Cronbach's $\alpha = .95$), as was the cross-sex emotion disclosure measure (Cronbach's $\alpha = .97$). Analyses were conducted by calculating the means of the items on the same-sex measure and the cross-sex emotional disclosure measure.

Empathetic distress

Empathetic distress was measured by use of a revised version of Smith & Rose's (2011) 12-item questionnaire. This revised version included 18 items that assessed the empathetic distress the participants experienced during the conversation task, in which they discussed problems they have struggled with recently. Example items are "I got really emotionally involved with my friend's problem," "It really bothered me a lot that the problem is making him/her feel bad," and "I felt as upset about my friend's problem as if it were my own." Youth rated how well each item described them using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *does not describe me at all* (0) to *describes me very well* (4). The items formed a reliable scale among the whole sample (Cronbach's $\alpha = .95$). The empathetic distress measure was reliable among girls (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$) and boys (Cronbach's $\alpha = .96$). This measure was also reliable among the Latino boys subsample (Cronbach's $\alpha = .98$). The mean of all empathetic distress items were calculated and used to run analyses.

Machismo

The subsample of Latino boys responded to 20 items from Arciniega et al.'s (2008) Machismo and Caballerismo scale (TMCS) assessing machismo, a construct

that assesses how much importance is given to traditional gender stereotypes typically found in Latino culture. The subscale uses items such as, “It would be shameful for a man to cry in front of his children,” “The birth of a male child is more important than a female child,” and “Real men never let down their guard.” Because the TMCS was originally intended for adults, and the participants in our sample are adolescents, some minor wording changes were made to accommodate a younger sample. For example, the original item “In a family, a father’s wish is law” was reworded to read, “In a family, a father’s wish is law (what he says, goes).” In this study, youth rated each item on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (4). Higher scores indicated stronger traditional machismo beliefs. The items with the strongest factor loadings reported by Arciniega et al. 2008 were retained. These items represent a dimension of interpersonal dominance, control, and clearly differentiated gender roles. The remainder of the items had a weak factor loading (below .25) and were omitted. Cronbach’s alpha for the retained items was .80.

Simpatia

The Latino boys subsample also responded to 21 items from Kim et al.’s (2009) Latino/a values scale (LVS) assessing *simpatia*, a construct that assesses how much importance is placed on harmony, interdependence, and interpersonal relationships, which are typically emphasized in Latino culture. Example items are, “One must help one’s group to achieve its goals” and “A woman should sacrifice everything for her family.” Since this scale was originally intended for adults, and the participants in our sample are adolescents, some minor wording changes were

made to accommodate a younger sample. For example, the original item “One should never offend one’s elders” was reworded to read “One should never offend one’s elders (adults).” Participants indicated how well each item described them using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (4). The items formed a reliable scale (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .78$). Scores were the mean across items.

Results

Emotion Disclosure in Same-Sex vs. Cross-Sex Friendships

A *t*-test was conducted to assess mean-level gender differences in emotion disclosure collapsing across same-sex and cross-sex disclosure. Consistent with previous studies, girls reported higher overall levels of disclosure than did boys. These results are presented in Table 1.

A repeated measures *t*-test was conducted to test whether girls disclose their emotions more to other girls than they do to boys. The results, as reported in Table 2, provide support for this hypothesis; girls reported significantly more emotion disclosure to other girls than they did to boys ($p < .05$).

Next, a repeated measures *t*-test was conducted to test whether boys disclose their emotions more to girls than they do to other boys. Results indicated that boys did not disclose their emotions significantly more to girls than they did to boys. In fact, they disclosed more to boys, although this difference was not statistically significant ($p = .07$). These results are reported in Table 3.

Relations of Same-Sex and Cross-Sex Emotion Disclosure with Empathetic Distress

Pearson correlations were computed to assess the relationship between same-sex emotion disclosure and empathetic distress. Among girls, the relationship between same-sex emotion disclosure and empathetic distress was positive but did not reach significance, $r(98) = .16, p > .05$. Among boys, however, this relationship was significant, $r(70) = .32, p < .01$. To further explore this relationship, median-split analyses were used to determine empathetic distress at low and high levels of

emotion disclosure. The results are presented in Figure 1. Girls reported greater empathetic distress relative to boys and this was the case at both low and high levels of emotion disclosure. Moreover, girls' empathetic distress did not vary as a function of emotion disclosure. Boys, on the other hand, reported higher empathetic distress when sharing of emotions was high than when sharing was low. These findings suggest that girls may have a low threshold for the experience of empathetic distress; in other words, that they may experience similarly high levels of empathetic distress even when emotion disclosure with same-sex friends is relatively low. Among boys, however, distress is more relative to how much emotionality is being shared.

Next, Pearson correlations were computed to assess the relationship between cross-sex emotion disclosure and empathetic distress. The relationship between cross-sex emotion disclosure and empathetic distress was not significant among girls, $r(98) = .02, p > .05$ nor boys, $r(70) = .22, p > .05$. To further explore this relationship, median split analyses were conducted as depicted in Figure 2. The findings were similar to those for same-sex emotion disclosure. Girls who reported high and low disclosure to boys are at similarly high levels of empathetic distress. Boys who reported high emotion disclosure to girls had slightly higher levels of empathetic distress than boys who reported low emotion disclosure to girls.

Latino Boys' Emotion Disclosure in Same-Sex vs. Cross-Sex Friendships

A repeated-measures *t*-test was used to determine whether there were mean-level differences in Latino boys' emotion disclosure to girls and boys.

Contrary to the hypothesis, there was no significant difference in Latino boys' disclosure to same-sex and cross-sex friends ($p > .05$). These results are presented in Table 4.

Relations of Machismo and Same-Sex and Cross-Sex Emotion Disclosure in Latino Boys Sample

A Pearson correlation was computed to assess the relationship between machismo and same-sex emotion disclosure among Latino boys. The relationship between the two variables was not significant $r(9) = .48, p > .05$, as shown in Table 5. However, the direction of the correlation was positive, in contrast to hypotheses. The results of a partial correlation show that when *simpatia* was controlled for, the association between machismo and same-sex emotion disclosure still was positive and nonsignificant, but was reduced $r(9) = .17, p > .05$.

A Pearson correlation was also computed to determine the relationship between machismo and Latino boys' cross-sex emotion disclosure. Similar to same-sex disclosure and contrary to hypotheses, there was a significant positive correlation between the two variables $r(9) = .71, p < .05$, as shown in Table 5. Interestingly, this is not the case when controlling for *simpatia*. Results of a partial correlation show that when *simpatia* was controlled for, machismo and cross-sex emotion disclosure were no longer significantly related $r(9) = .09, p > .05$.

Relations of Same-Sex and Cross-Sex Emotion Disclosure with Empathetic Distress among Latino Boys

A Pearson correlation was computed to assess the relationship between same-sex emotion disclosure and empathetic distress among Latino boys. The relationship between the two variables was in the expected direction but did not reach significance $r(9) = .41, p = .28$, as shown in Table 6.

A Pearson correlation was also computed to assess the relationship between cross-sex emotion disclosure and empathetic distress among Latino boys. As shown in Table 6, the relationship between the two variables was not significant $r(9) = .20, p > .05$.

Discussion

The current study explores girls' and boys' same-sex and cross-sex emotion disclosure and its relationship to empathetic distress. In a subsample of Latino boys, it serves to assess their patterns of emotion disclosure to girls vs. boys and the relationship of machismo with emotion disclosure patterns.

Overall Sample

Due to the centrality of disclosure to girls' same-sex friendships, it was hypothesized that girls would disclose more to girls than boys, which was the case in this study ($p < .05$). It also was hypothesized that boys, too, would disclose more to girls than boys. However, this prediction did not hold. Boys disclosed slightly more to boys than girls, but the difference was not significant ($p = .07$).

Taken together, these results suggest that girls have a stronger preference for same-sex disclosure than boys do. This may be the case because girls have learned, whether through experience or observation, that boys are typically not inclined to engage in this type of behavior to the same degree that girls do (Rose, 2002). Also, because disclosure is more typical, and therefore more practiced among girls, their extensive experience with it may lead to perceiving boys as less capable disclosure partners (Rose et al., 2012). It may also be the case that girls, in their friendships with boys (Rose & Rudolph, 2006), simply do not have the intimacy required to disclose about such sensitive topics. Future research is needed to determine whether boys may provide support to their friends who are girls in ways other than through disclosure.

The hypothesis that emotion disclosure would be positively associated with empathetic distress was supported only among boys. The relations were positive but nonsignificant among girls. These results serve to extend past work on co-rumination, which is essentially an excessive form of disclosure (Rose, 2002), by showing that empathetic distress can be related to more normative types of emotion disclosure. Results of the median-split analyses point to girls' susceptibility to empathetic distress regardless of levels of emotion disclosure, whereas boys experience empathetic distress relative to their emotion disclosure levels. If it is the case that some youths experience elevated empathetic distress even when engaging in normative levels of emotion disclosure, there may be negative implications for youths' mental and emotional health and interventions may be needed. Indeed, empathetic distress has been linked to higher levels of depression and anxiety (Smith, under revision), though it is not yet clear if these mental health issues are a result of empathetic distress or if they precede it.

Latino Boy Subsample

It was predicted that, due to Latino boys' machismo, it would be easier for them to disclose to girls than to display a vulnerable side to their male peers. Thus, it was hypothesized that there would be a mean-level difference between Latino boys' same-sex and cross-sex emotion disclosure. However, this hypothesis was not supported ($p > .05$). Latino boys appear to disclose similarly to girls as to other boys.

In terms of relations between emotion disclosure and machismo, it was hypothesized that the higher the endorsement of machismo, the lower the levels of

emotion disclosure. These hypotheses were not supported by the results. The relation of machismo with same-sex disclosure was positive but nonsignificant and the relation with cross-sex disclosure was positive and significant. However, these effects were attenuated when controlling for simpatia.

The fact that simpatia explains the correlation between machismo and cross-sex emotion disclosure is important, as future work will need to tease apart these cultural values in examining the role of cross-sex disclosure.

In examining the relations between emotion disclosure and empathetic distress, it was predicted that the higher the emotion disclosure, the higher the empathetic distress. The results for same-sex emotion disclosure showed that the relationship was indeed positive and approached, but did not reach, significance. Similarly, the relationship between cross-sex emotion disclosure and empathetic distress was in the expected direction but not significant. Although neither of the correlations reached significance, it is worth mentioning that the correlation was greater for same-sex emotion disclosure than for cross-sex emotion disclosure. It may be the case that same-sex disclosure is more related to empathetic distress than cross-sex disclosure because boys have a frame of reference for what other boys go through, and consequently can feel more empathy for other boys in the context of discussing emotions. In contrast, it may be difficult for them to place themselves in the shoes of girls possibly because girls' experiences deviate from their own. This may be especially challenging for boys who do not have many friends who are girls.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study has some limitations that point to directions for future research. One limitation is that the empathetic distress measure is, by default, a same-sex measure so it does not address cross-sex friendships. Nevertheless, the current study provides interesting initial findings; that empathetic distress can be linked with more normative levels of emotion disclosure. Future work should test these relations while assessing empathetic distress in cross-sex friendships.

In addition, supplementary results show that Latino youth had higher mean levels of empathetic distress than European-American youth. These results did not reach significance but there is a conceptual basis behind them; if Latino youth adhere to values of interdependence, then there is less divide perceived between the self and the other, and it would make sense for them to experience a friend's distress as their own. Given this reasoning, there could quite possibly be significant effects given a large enough sample size of Latino youth.

Lastly, with a larger Latino subsample, we could test the gender difference in empathetic distress for Latino boys and girls and compare it to the gender difference found for other ethnic youth. Quite possibly, the gender difference in empathetic distress may be minimized in Latino samples if cultural values emphasize interdependence similarly among boys and girls.

Tables

Table 1

Mean-Level Differences in Emotion Disclosure

	Gender					
	Girls			Boys		
	n	Mean	(SD)	n	Mean (SD)	<i>t</i> value
Emotion Disclosure (Same-Sex)	98	3.16	(.57)	70	2.82 (.56)	3.90***
Emotion Disclosure (Cross-Sex)	97	2.78	(.72)	70	2.71 (.71)	.64

Notes. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 2

Repeated-Measures T-Test Results for Differences in Girls' Disclosure by Friendship Partner

	n=97	Mean (SD)	t value
Emotion Disclosure (Same-Sex)		3.16	6.00***
Emotion Disclosure (Cross-Sex)		2.78	

Notes. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 3

Repeated-Measures T-Test Results for Differences in Boys' Disclosure by Friendship Partner

	n=70	Mean (SD)	t value
Emotion Disclosure (Same-Sex)		2.82	1.83
Emotion Disclosure (Cross-Sex)		2.71	

Notes. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 4

Mean-Level Differences in Latino Boys' Emotion Disclosure to Same-Sex vs. Cross-Sex Friends

	n = 9	M (SD)	t value
Emotion Disclosure (Same-Sex)		2.83	.241
Emotion Disclosure (Cross-Sex)		2.79	

Notes. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 5

Pearson Correlation Assessing the Relationship between Machismo and Emotion Disclosure among Latino Boys

	Machismo	Emotion Disclosure (Same-Sex)	Emotion Disclosure (Cross-Sex)
Machismo	1	.48	.71*
Emotion Disclosure (Same-Sex)		1	.77*
Emotion Disclosure (Cross-Sex)			1

Notes. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 6

Pearson Correlation Assessing the Relationship between Empathetic Distress and Emotion Disclosure among Latino Boys

	Empathetic Distress	Emotion Disclosure (Same-Sex)	Emotion Disclosure (Cross-Sex)
Empathetic Distress	1	.41	.20
Emotion Disclosure (Same-Sex)		1	.77*
Emotion Disclosure (Cross-Sex)			1

Notes. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Figure 1

Median-Split Analyses of Empathetic Distress at Low and High Emotion Disclosure to Same-Sex Friends

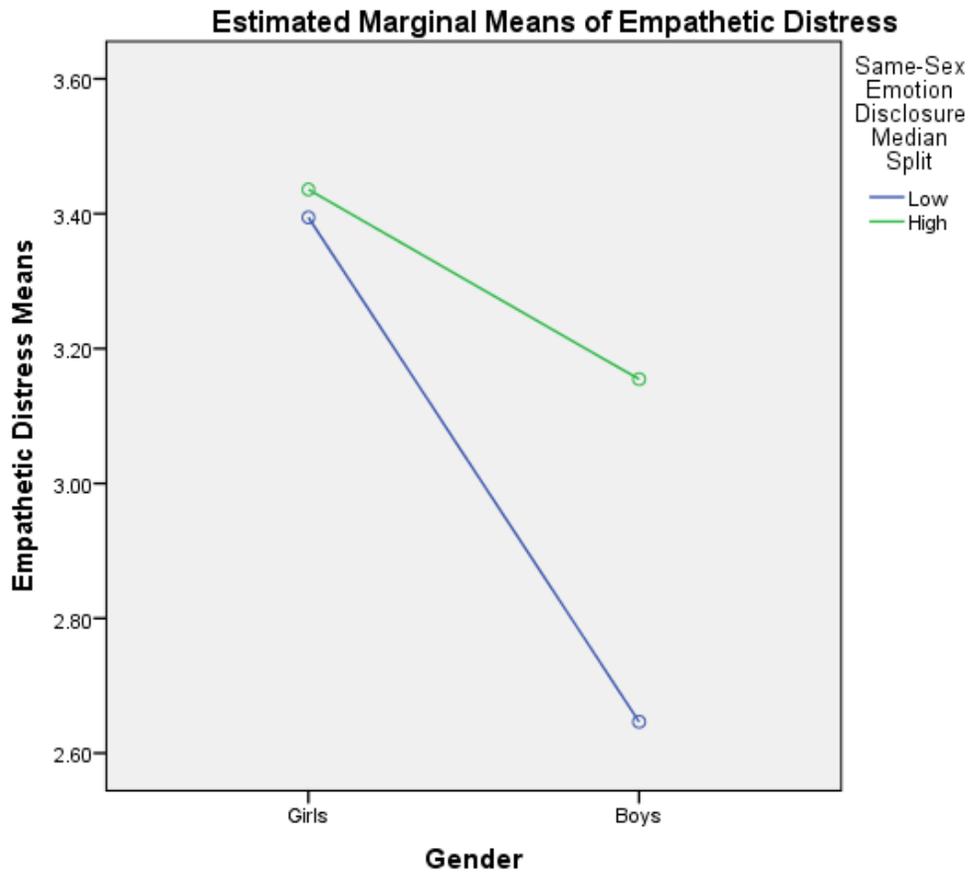
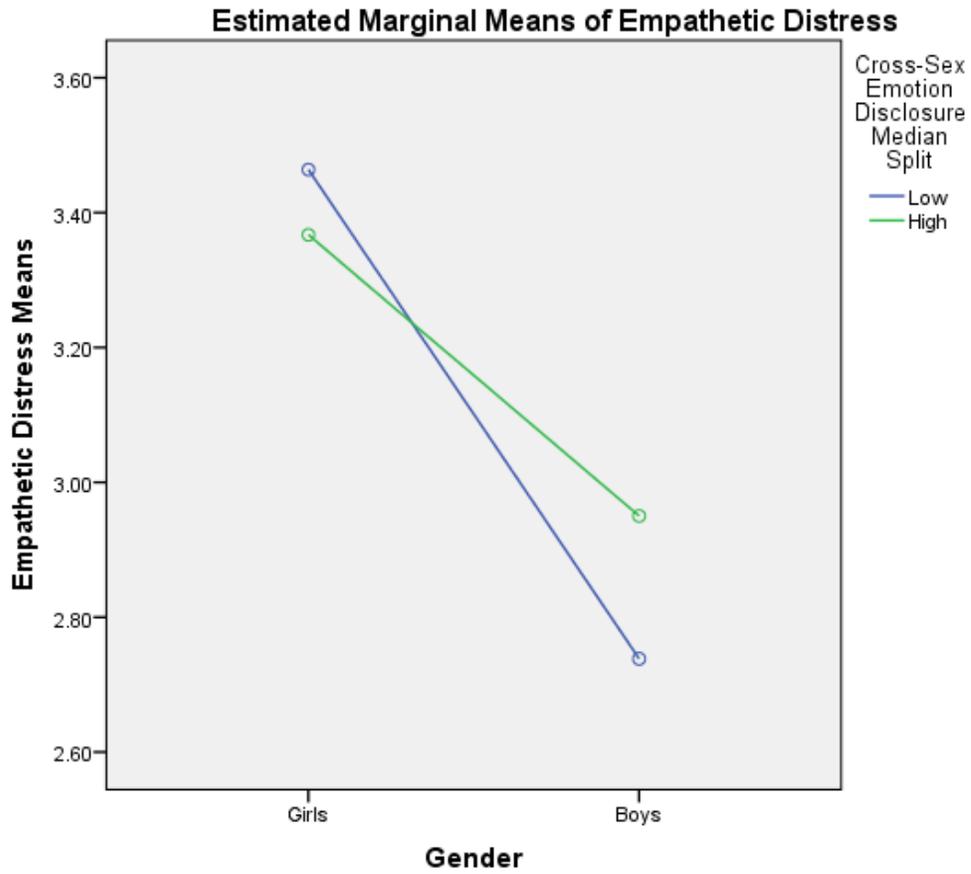


Figure 2

Median-Split Analyses of Empathetic Distress at Low and High Emotion Disclosure to Cross-Sex Friends



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