Theoretical Background

The degree to which romantic and sexual attraction manifest in cross-sex friendships varies, as do the patterns of expression for the experience of attraction in cross-sex friendships. Although cross-sex friendships may potentially lead to romantic attraction and/or sexual events, sexual events are uncommon in cross-sex friendships. Existing studies have focused on sexual attractiveness and sexual attraction in cross-sex friendships. Participants were recruited from the larger questionnaire, participants reported on their own relationship history and current romantic relationship status, their physical and sexual attraction toward their cross-sex friend as a desirable object, and their perceived degree of romantic involvement.

Study 1 Method

Participants were asked to rethrough the questionnaires completed from research and theory on the structure of cross-sex friendships. Although participants generally agreed to recall a personal friend of the opposite sex who is neither a dating partner or family member (e.g., Block & Keys, 1995), it is possible that the robust sex differences in attraction may be a product of men and women having different "types" of friends. In this study, participants were asked to complete a larger questionnaire, participants reported on their own relationship history and romantic relationship status, their physical and sexual attraction toward their cross-sex friend as a desirable object, and their perceived degree of romantic involvement.

Study 1 Results and Discussion

On average, and as seen in prior studies, men reported more attraction to their female friends than women did to their male friends. This difference remained significant and substantial for men's and women's other interest in short-term sexual opportunities. Moreover, although men appeared to be aware that their friend was less attractive to them than to their female friend, they still internalized their friend's level of attraction to them. There is no evidence that men's and women's attraction to their potential romantic or sexual opportunities. Women, in particular, may be more likely to develop new cross-sex friendships when they were less attracted to them than when they shared romantic attraction with their friends.

Studies 3 and 4: Emerging and Middle-aged Adults' Perceptions of Costs and Benefits

Studies 3 and 4 Objectives

The aim of Studies 3 and 4 was to examine emerging and middle-aged adults' perceptions of the costs and benefits associated with cross-sex friendships. Specifically, we aimed to investigate whether these adults would endorse the idea of cross-sex friendships as a launching pad for future romantic relationships. For mid-life adults, who are typically married or at least seriously committed to a partner, having cross-sex friendships may serve as a launching pad for future romantic relationships. For middle-aged adults, who are typically married or at least seriously committed to a partner, having cross-sex friendships may serve as a launching pad for future romantic relationships.

Studies 3 and 4 Method

Participants were 100 men ages 18 to 35 years and 100 women ages 18 to 35 years from UW-Madison. Participants who endorsed the idea of cross-sex friendships as a launching pad for future romantic relationships, the mid-life adults, who are typically married or at least seriously committed to a partner, having cross-sex friendships may serve as a launching pad for future romantic relationships.

Studies 3 and 4 Results and Discussion

The findings from Studies 3 and 4 highlight the consistency with which men and women — now including middle-aged men and women — perceived cross-sex friendships as negatively impacting their friendships. These findings are limited to emerging adults, for whom cross-sex friendships may serve as a launching pad for future romantic relationships. For middle-aged adults, who are typically married or at least seriously committed to a partner, having cross-sex friendships may serve as a launching pad for future romantic relationships.