

# Talisha Cottrell, Psychological Sciences

---

**University:** Alabama A&M University

**Year in School:** Senior

**Hometown:** Charlotte, North Carolina

**Faculty Mentor:** Dr. Amanda J. Rose, Psychological Sciences

**Funding Source:** Emerge Summer Undergraduate Research Internship

## **Age and gender differences in the use of emotion words between adolescent friends**

*Talisha Cottrell and Amanda J. Rose*

Studying the degree to which individuals express emotions in relationships is important because it reflects the level of comfort and social sharing in relationships. Previous research has examined age and gender differences in children's and adolescent's use of emotion words with most studies focusing on parent-child communication. Past research with young children found that girls express emotions more freely than boys with mothers and that gender differences became stronger with age (Cervantes & Callanan, 1998). Other research with early adolescents also found that daughters used more emotion words than sons did during conversations with parents (Aldrich & Tenenbaum, 2006). However, less is known about emotional expression within friendships. The purpose of this study was to examine age and gender differences in the use of emotion words between adolescent friends. A total of 66 adolescents (33 friend dyads in 7th or 10th grade) were observed discussing problems for 16 minutes. Consistent with previous findings, females used more emotion words than males. In both grades, girls expressed more distress than boys. In 10th grade, girls were also especially likely to express pleasure. In addition, 10th graders were more likely than 7th graders to express distress and affection, regardless of their gender. This fits with research indicating that friendships become increasingly intimate with age (Durell, 2004). These findings are discussed in terms of the socialization of gendered patterns of communication.