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# FRIENDSHIP IN SCHOOL: GENDER AND RACIAL HOMOPHILY

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*This article analyzes the development of racial and gender homophily in a population of 2,135 schoolchildren, grades 3–12, in all public schools in a biracial Southern community. Sociometric friendship nominations were used to examine changes in racial and gender segregation and preference. The results suggest that for these major status variables, the relationship between homophily and grade is curvilinear, first increasing because of increments in racial homophily from elementary to middle school (while gender homophily remains stable), then decreasing owing to the decline of gender homophily from middle school onward (while racial homophily remains stable). The findings are most consistent with theories that give the middle school a prominent role in shaping peer relations.*

Friendship among schoolmates has received increasing attention in recent years as an important aspect of the structure of peer relations (Carter, Detine-Carter, and Benson 1980; Cohen 1979–80; Crockett, Losoff, and Petersen 1984; Eder 1985; Eder and Hallinan 1978; Hallinan and Smith 1985; Hansell 1985; Kandel 1978). Most empirical studies have focused on the extent to which observed patterns manifest tendencies toward “homophily,” or similarity among peers, with respect to race and gender. These analyses have been restricted in the range of grades considered and in the measures used to tap homophily. This article presents data on patterns of gender and racial homophily in relationships among schoolchildren in Grades 3–12. We address the question, To what extent are segregation and patterns of same-group preference, as manifested by racial and gender divisions, associated with grade level?

We begin with a brief discussion of theories about the development of peer

relations and their implications for homophily over the school years. Next we consider studies of age-related shifts in gender and racial homophily and the importance of the distinction between segregation and preference. Finally, we present findings on grade-related shifts in racial and gender homophily for a school system in one community.

## DEVELOPMENT OF PEER RELATIONS

Reviews of age-related differences in patterns of friendship, conceptions of friendship, and the social correlates of peer associations suggest that a number of significant changes occur during the school years (Berndt 1982; La Gaipa 1981). By age 8 or 9, an extended period of cognitive development begins to stabilize and peer relations grow in importance. Preadolescent social networks become increasingly complex as the child begins to make the transition from family-oriented sources of social support toward the community of peers at school and play (Dickens and Perlman 1981; Douvan and Adelson 1966). Friendships that are formed during this period tend to be with other children of the same race and gender, although this tendency toward homophily is not constant (Criswell 1937).

Two models for changes in homophily may be identified. Developmental perspectives and stage models assume a gradual and continuous increase in the degree of homophily during the school years (Kon and Losenkov 1978; You-

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niss 1980). However, criticisms of developmental assumptions (for a review, see Dannefer 1984) suggest that "sociogenic" dimensions may offer more insight into age-related shifts and that a linear relationship may not be appropriate. Nonlinear models are implied by theories that assign primacy to the social context of development, such as those that view shifts from one school to another as critical to peer relations (Shrum and Cheek 1987). For example, some investigators have suggested that the transition to middle school is a critical point at which adolescents' concern with peers is at its height (Crockett et al. 1984; Eder 1985; Simmons, Rosenberg, and Rosenberg 1973). This view suggests not only a nonlinear but a nonmonotonic relationship. In the following discussion, we limit the analysis to the two statuses that are most frequently discussed—gender and race.

*Cross-gender interactions.* To what extent does gender-based separation characterize the school years? The most consistent finding in studies of peer relations has been that girls and boys are relatively isolated from one another in every age category, although most studies have examined too few grade categories to address the question of variation (Carter et al. 1980; Criswell 1937, 1939; Hallinan and Smith 1985; Schofield and Sagar 1977; Singleton and Asher 1977; St. John and Lewis 1975; Thomas 1982).

There is some indication that cross-gender interactions decrease through the early school years. Hallinan (1979), using a sample of children from Grades 4–6, showed that the percentage of cross-sex friendships declined from 14 percent to 6 percent. Criswell (1939) found that gender separation was present in kindergarten, increased to almost complete separation by Grade 4, and then decreased slightly in Grades 7–8. Studies of cross-gender interaction in middle school have had conflicting results. Crockett, Losoff, and Petersen (1984) examined cross-gender relationships from Grades 6 to 8, reporting an increasing interest in such relationships but no increase in the proportion who have boy-friends or girlfriends.

A fairly large literature has documented gender differences in friendship, guided by the notion of greater intimacy among girls. Because of the greater emphasis during socialization on personal relationships, it is frequently argued that girls' friendships should be more intimate than are boys', such that girls display an earlier preference for friends

of the same gender (Crockett et al. 1984; Douvan and Adelson 1966; Eder and Hallinan 1978). An alternative argument can be made on the basis of a slightly different pattern. If girls are more strongly socialized toward a concern with personal relationships, they are also more likely to display an early interest in cross-gender relationships (Crockett et al. 1984; Kon and Losenkov 1978).

*Cross-race interactions.* Virtually every study of homophily has found less separation by race than by gender (Carter et al. 1980; Criswell 1939; Hallinan and Smith 1985; Schofield and Sagar 1977; Singleton and Asher 1977; St. John and Lewis 1975; Thomas 1982). Studies of racial separation have found low levels of racial interaction in the early elementary grades, but disagree about when this occurs (Bartel, Bartel, and Grill 1973; Criswell 1937; Braha and Rutter 1980; Gerard, Jackson, and Conolley 1975; Hallinan 1982; Hallinan and Smith 1984, 1985; Singleton and Asher 1979). At the higher grade levels, research has produced even more conflicting results (Carter et al. 1980; Jelinek and Brittan 1975; Thomas 1982). In general, however, increasing racial consciousness should produce an increase in racial homophily over the school years.

The differences and inconsistencies in these studies may be due not only to differences in the populations sampled and the methods of analysis that were used, but to the failure to distinguish between segregation and preference. Just as perceptions of friendship need not be identical to actual patterns of interaction (Bernard, Killworth, and Sailer 1981), studies that use sociometric measures often confuse two theoretically distinct phenomena—segregation and preference—and hence draw imprecise conclusions about changes in racial and gender-based homophily. *Segregation*, which refers to the degree to which intergroup relations are absent (Blau and Schwartz 1984), characterizes an entire population of social actors. It is a symmetric concept, implying that Group A is segregated from Group B to exactly the same degree that Group B is segregated from Group A. *Preference* need not be symmetric. It is the degree to which actors are oriented toward members of their own group, based on the perception of intergroup ties from the perspective of specific groups. Groups in the same population can have divergent levels of same-group preference, particularly when key status variables are differentially evaluated by

the wider culture (Ridgeway and Berger 1986). In other words, segregation is a measure of between-group interaction in a population, while preference is a measure of within-group choice. For this reason, we provide separate empirical assessments of trends in segregation and preference in the analysis that follows.

## METHODS

### *Data Collection*

Sociometric data were collected in 1981–82 as part of a program to investigate the early natural history of arteriosclerosis among children from birth to 24 years in a biracial Southern community. These items, together with the demographic variables of gender, grade, and race, provide the basis for the analysis that is presented here.

The network section of the questionnaire was administered to 2,460 children in Grades 3–12, out of a total of 3,312 children aged 5–17 who were examined for risk-factor variables (Grades K–2 were excluded). It was completed by students in their classrooms under the supervision of trained monitors in an average of 5–10 minutes. Sociometric data were requested in the following way for Grades 7 to 12:

Please write the full names and grades of the people you name in the following questions. Write down as many names or as few names as you want. All your answers will be kept secret. (1) Who from school are your best friends? (2) Who from school do you spend the most free time with?

In the administration of this section to Grades 3–6, posters were used in a slightly more elaborate presentation of the same questions. In spite of the wording of the question, only three spaces were provided, so that the method must be described as fixed (rather than free) choice. Fixed-choice designs may underestimate the actual linkages that are present in a system (Holland and Leinhardt 1973). Since the levels of separation between groups are likely to depend not only on the specific concepts that are used (Carter et al. 1980) but on the degree to which they apply (such as friendship), these results represent a conservative estimate of intergroup contact. Although the question specified “school” context, respondents were permitted to name

children outside the school if they desired to do so. In all, 5 percent of the choices were outside the respondents’ schools.

There are 13 schools in and near the community. Through Grade 3, most children attend one of 3 public schools. They switch to one of another 3 schools for Grades 4–6, spend Grades 7–8 at a junior high school, and attend the high school for Grades 9–12. The exceptions to this pattern are one public school that includes Grades 3–6 and a feeder school that stops at Grade 2 and, therefore, was not included in these data. Finally, there are 3 private schools (2 are quite small) that do not, with rare exceptions, enroll blacks. Since racial homophily was a central issue in the study and since private schools are different in fundamental ways from public schools, these students were excluded from the analysis. The removal of private schools also decreased the potential that a problem might arise because of the racial composition of the schools. The proportion of black children in the public schools ranged from 29 percent to 48 percent.

After removing private schools and missing data, we had a sample of 2,135 respondents. The sample was distributed as follows: white boys, 665 (31 percent); black boys, 396 (19 percent); white girls, 632 (30 percent); and black girls, 442 (21 percent).

About two weeks after the initial screening, each question was readministered to 449 children. Figure 1 presents the percentage of consistent responses in naming “best friends” and “free-time friends” at two points in time, by age. Responses to the best-friend item had a higher test-retest reliability in all but the last age category. Since the overlap between the two items was fairly high (72 percent of the respondents mentioned at least one similar name on both items), we used best-friend choices as the primary sociometric measure. Figure 1 also reveals that although the youngest and oldest age groups were most consistent in their choices, there was a general increase in consistency from age 9 through age 17. This finding corroborates previous findings of a positive association between consistency and age (Berndt 1982; Hallinan 1979–80).

### *Measurement*

*Segregation.* Segregation refers to the extent of separation among groups, requiring symmetric dyadic linkages. Given the

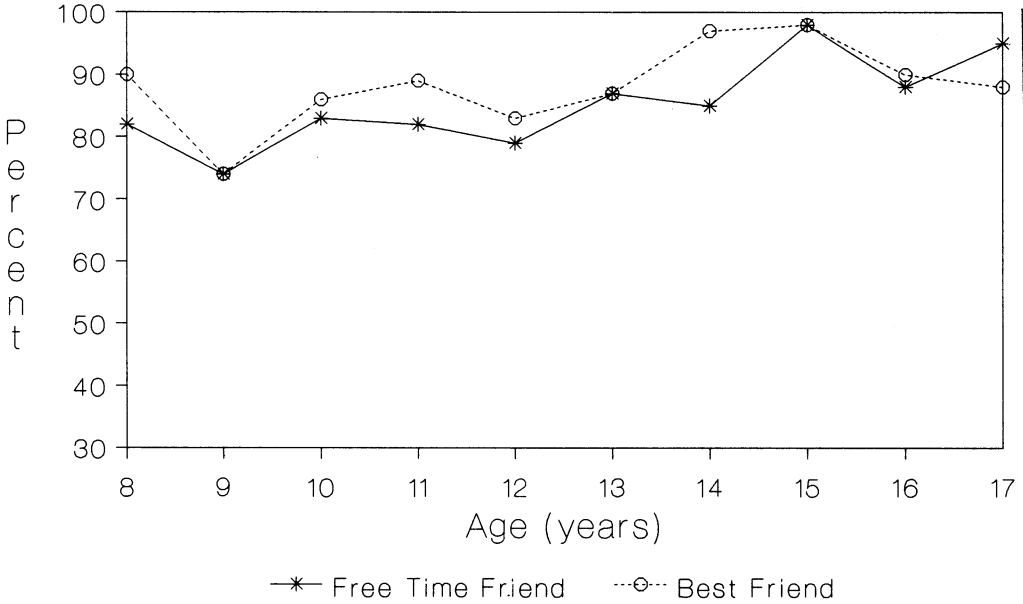


Figure 1. Consistency of Choice of Friends Across Time

restricted-choice format of the item, it was preferable to include the maximum amount of information on linkages. Therefore, all links, whether reciprocated or unreciprocated, were included in the analysis.

The measure of segregation (S) that we used was proposed by Freeman (1978). On the basis of the number of cross-category links in a given population, S controls for the number of actors in a given population and their distribution across categories. It is expressed as a count of the number of cross-category links that are *missing*, compared with a state in which links are generated at random, taken as a proportion of its maximum value for a population of that size. S varies between 0 and 1; 0 indicates the absence of segregation (the number of links among group members is greater than or equal to the number expected by chance) and 1 indicates complete segregation (no cross-category links). The interpretation of the value of S is simple for our purposes: the proportion of missing links, or the amount by which the expected number of cross-category links is reduced in observation (Freeman 1978).

We calculated S for each grade, rather than compute the school or class averages. There remained the issue of whom to include in an analysis of homophily by grade level. Most investigators have assumed, as we did at the outset, that the overwhelming majority of friendship choices are within the respondent's grade. This assumption is particularly true for

studies that examine friendships that are restricted to members of the respondent's classroom. However, the data indicated that over 20 percent of the dyads involved children at *different* grade levels. Furthermore, these cross-grade ties were an increasing function of grade level. Whereas 12 percent of the third-grade dyads involved members of different grades, the percentage increased to 35 percent by the twelfth grade. Given the possibility that cross-grade dyads are different from same-grade dyads, the segregation results are presented separately for inclusive and within-grade dyads by grade level. "Within-grade" pairs refer to dyads in which both members are in the same grade. "Inclusive" pairs refer to dyads in which *at least* one member is at the given grade level.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The total number of symmetrical linkages by grade is reported below. The percentages of non-grade dyads are larger than those reported in the text, which were calculated on asymmetric relations.

Grade	Inclusive	Within Grade
3	412	325
4	533	382
5	505	336
6	466	319
7	405	306
8	297	170
9	328	181
10	350	151
11	310	146
12	152	73

In assessing the results, we found that Freeman (1978) did not present test statistics for between-group differences. However, the data are not a sample but the entire population of children in a community. We employed tests, when available, but note that the question of generalizability rests with future studies.

*Preference.* In the estimation of preference, it is only necessary to consider the choices made by a group, both to itself and to out-groups. When examining preference as a function of grade and subgroups defined by race and gender, we utilized a measure first proposed by Criswell (1943) and used in subsequent studies in which differences in the degree of homophily were the focus (Jelinek and Brittan 1975; Lundberg and Dickson 1952; St. John 1964). The Criswell index is a ratio of ratios, using the number of observed in-group links divided by the number of observed out-group links as the numerator and the expected ratio of in-group to out-group links as the denominator. A value greater than 1 indicates an in-group preference and a value less than 1 indicates an out-group preference. Extreme values of the

index are usually based on fewer than five out-group links and are sensitive to small variations in reported links. It should be noted that even the lowest values of the index show in-group preferences of over five to one. As with the measure of segregation, only the general pattern of values is important.

FINDINGS

*Segregation.* Figure 2 plots the segregation index calculated on racial subgroups by school grade for inclusive and within-grade dyads. All values of S in Figures 2–4 are significantly different from 0, which assumes that relations are established without distributional constraints (Freeman 1978). The abscissa label begins with kindergarten, emphasizing that these data are extensive but not complete. The pattern of increasing racial homophily is clear. In the third grade, approximately two-thirds of the expected cross-race links are absent—implying significant racial segregation in elementary school—but by the junior high school years, over 90 percent of expected cross-race links are missing. Racial segregation increases fairly

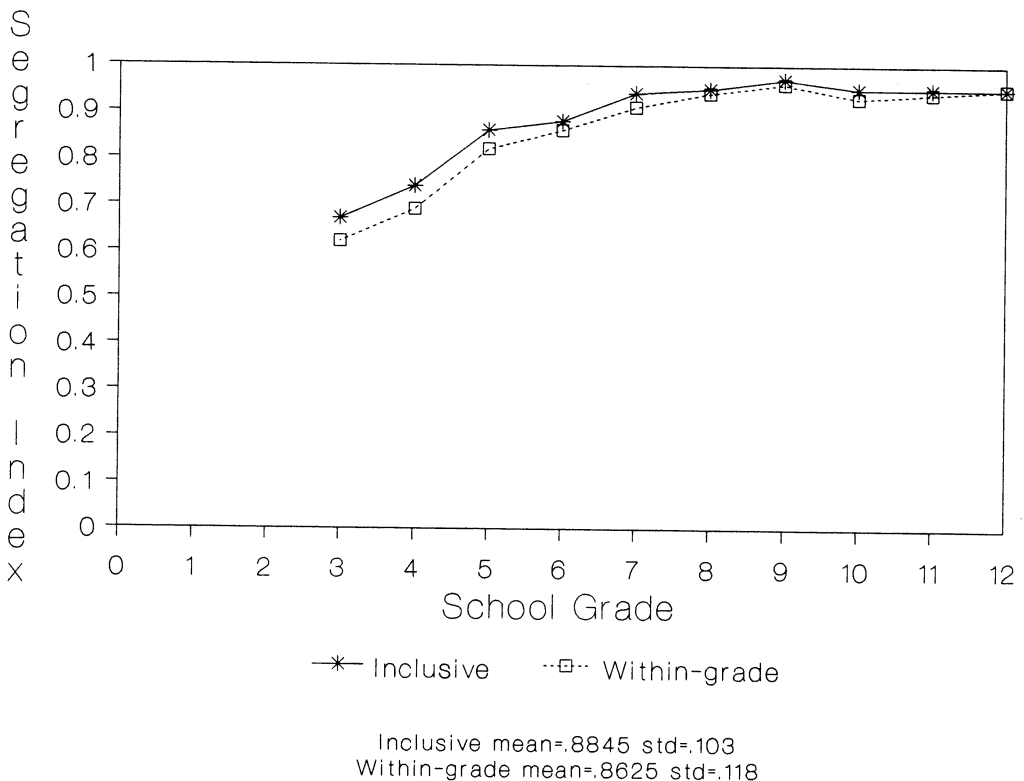


Figure 2. Segregation by Grade and Race



rapidly through the seventh grade and then stabilizes with minor fluctuations. The greatest increase is between Grades 4 and 5 for both inclusive and within-grade measures. For race, inclusive dyads are more homophilous than within-grade dyads at all grade levels, which indicates that cross-race friendships are slightly more likely to form when schoolchildren are at the same grade level. However, these are not large differences.

The distinction between these two measures assumes importance in Figure 3, where gender segregation is graphed by grade level. For gender, *within-grade* dyads are more homophilous than are inclusive dyads at all grade levels until Grade 12. That is, there is a greater tendency for friendships to be within the same gender when only same-grade friendships are included, just the opposite tendency of race. The explanation for this finding may be in the residential segregation that characterizes the community. If cross-grade friendships are more likely to be formed from residential proximity than are within-grade friendships, then one would expect the inclusive dyads to be subject to more opportunity constraints and to be less likely to cross racial lines than within-grade pairs.

Friendships based purely on residential proximity would have an even chance of crossing gender lines, which accounts for the lower levels of homophily for inclusive dyads by gender.

For gender, as contrasted with race, homophily generally *declines* from Grade 3 to Grade 12. The greatest gender segregation occurs during elementary and middle school, with the proportion of heterosexual relationships increasing during the high school years. Although we do not have information on which relationships involved dating, dating undoubtedly accounts for some of the increase.

The effects of including cross-grade relationships are apparent in the shape of the functions in Figure 3. For both inclusive and within-grade dyads, gender segregation is relatively extensive in the early grades, with a slight peak at Grade 6 (over 90 percent of expected cross-gender relationships missing), and decreases to its lowest level by Grade 12, with two-thirds or fewer links missing. But if within-grade dyads are the basis for S, it appears that segregation remains high (with minor fluctuations) until the last year of high school. A much different picture is given by

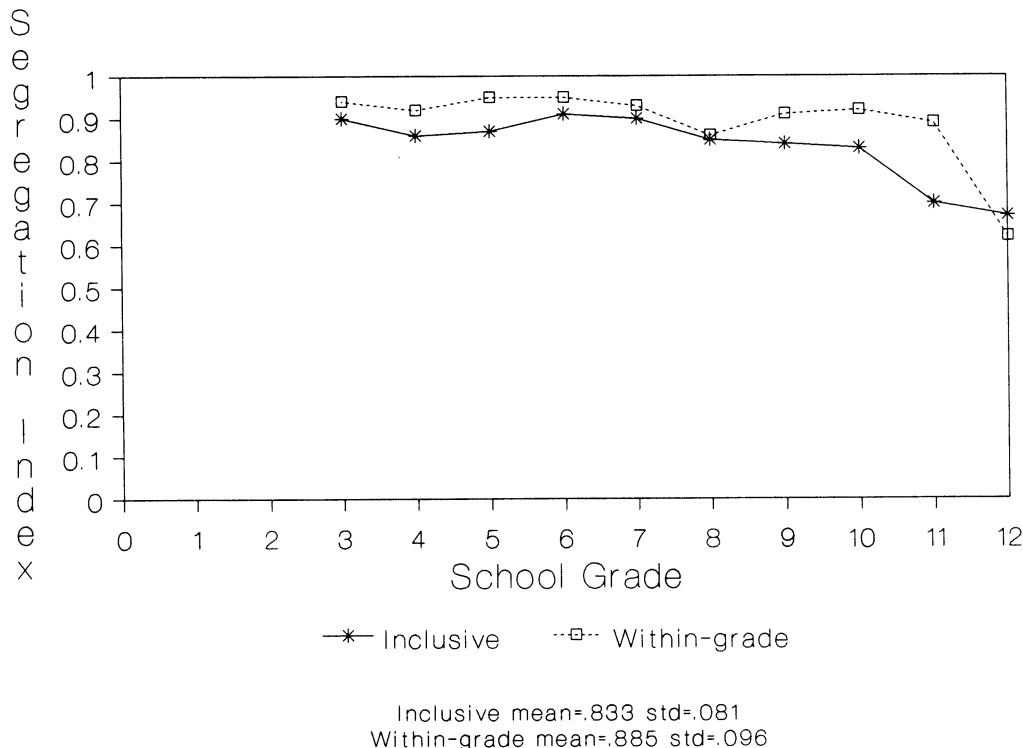


Figure 3. Segregation by Grade and Gender

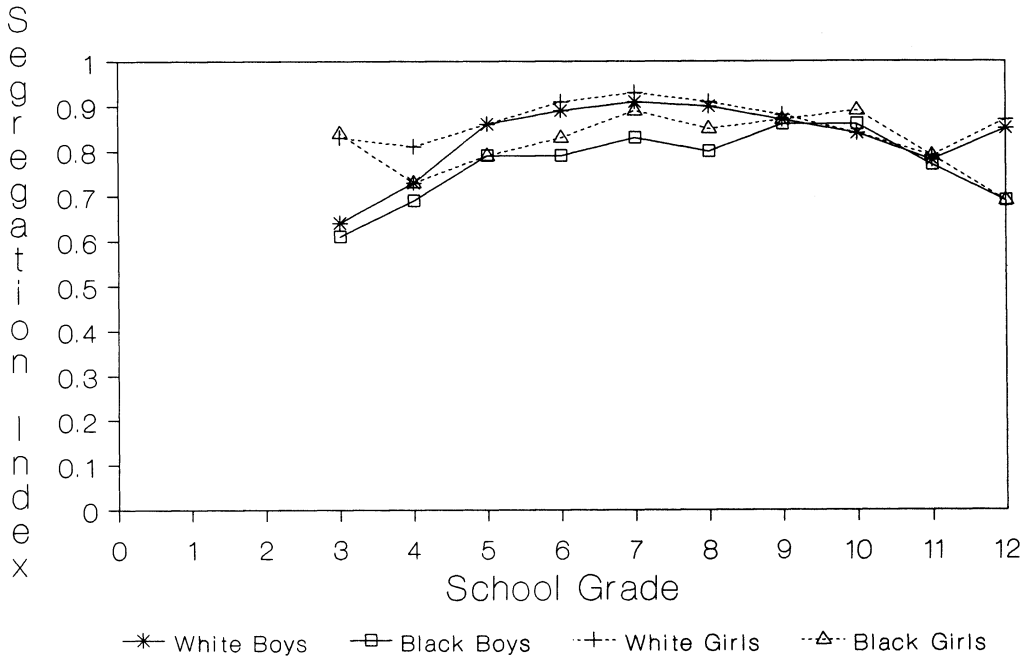


Figure 4. Segregation by Grade and Gender/Race

the inclusion of all dyads for each grade, indicating that the decline in gender segregation begins in middle school and is relatively gradual. The implication of this result is that the omission of cross-grade relations can have important effects in the analysis of homophily. In the remainder of the analysis, only the results for inclusive dyads are presented.

Figure 4 completes the description of racial and gender segregation by showing values of *S* plotted against grade for each race/gender category. As suggested by the previous results, the shape of the homophily function is generally curvilinear, first increasing because of increments in racial homophily from elementary to middle school (while gender homophily remains stable), then decreasing because of the decline of gender homophily from middle school onward (while racial homophily remains stable).<sup>2</sup> Boys of both

racess are less segregated than are girls in Grade 3. Blacks (both boys and girls) are less segregated than are whites in Grade 12.<sup>3</sup>

White girls are an exception to this curvilinearity. The *S* statistic for this group shows somewhat higher values for Grades 6–8 but is generally flatter and uniformly high. Indeed, white girls are the most segregated group in six of ten years ( $X = .862$ ). Black boys are the least segregated group in seven of ten comparisons ( $X = .769$ ).

*Preference.* Values for racial preference in Figure 5 show a greater preference of blacks for blacks throughout grade school, continuing until Grade 7.<sup>4</sup> The picture changes dramatically with a peak in the preference of whites for whites in Grades 8 and 9. The preference of blacks for blacks fluctuates less,

<sup>2</sup> As a test of curvilinearity, we estimated the linear regressions of segregation on grade for each of the four subgroups, obtaining an average  $R^2$  of .09 (N.S.). The inclusion of a quadratic term in each equation increased the average  $R^2$  to .61, an average increase of 52 percent in the variance explained with the curvilinear models. The models for white and black boys are significant at the .01 level, the model for black girls is significant at .11, and the model for white girls is not significant ( $p = .292$ ).

<sup>3</sup> All four boy/girl comparisons for Grade 3 are significant at the .05 level, but none of the four black/white comparisons are significant for Grade 12, owing to smaller *N*s in the last year of high school.

<sup>4</sup> The significance of group differences may be calculated by a difference of differences of proportions, using as denominators for the preference ratios the total number of choices and system members, rather than out-group figures. All black-white differences are significant at the .05 level with the exception of Grades 4 and 11.



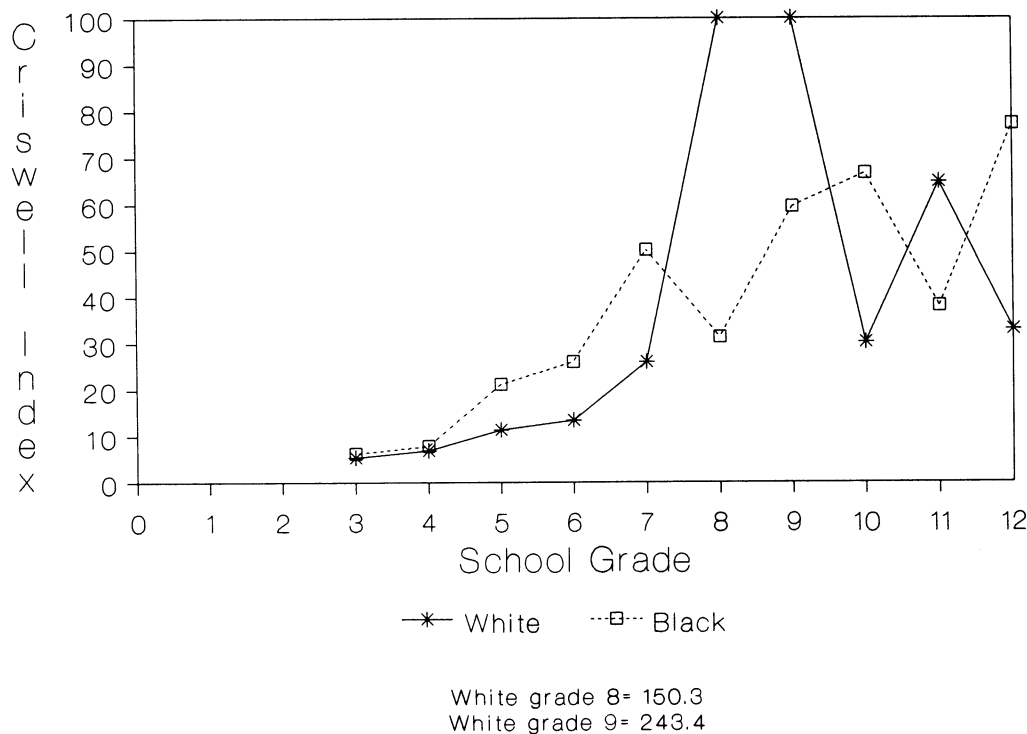


Figure 5. Preference by Grade and Race

exhibiting a slow increase that peaks in the final year of high school.

Figure 6 indicates that boys revealed a greater preference for boys through three of four elementary years, but the preference of girls for girls showed a striking peak in the first year of middle school and higher values throughout the remainder of the school years.<sup>5</sup> Relatively low levels of preference characterized both genders by the last years of high school.

Preference values for subgroups defined by race and gender continue to reveal a curvilinear pattern in Figure 7.<sup>6</sup> Paralleling the findings for segregation, girls (both white and black) reported a greater preference for girls in the third grade, while whites (both boys and girls) reported a greater preference for whites in the twelfth grade. All groups experienced a peak sometime during Grades

7–9. Girls, in particular, showed large increments in preference on their entry into junior high school. White girls’ preference for white girls reached extreme levels during these years, with the largest value in Grade 7. The first of two peaks for black girls was also in this year, which is consistent with the notion that the first important increases in feminine homophily are associated with entry into middle school.

DISCUSSION

The major results may be summarized as follows:

*Gender segregation decreased in junior high school.* The findings suggest a relatively gradual decline in gender homophily beginning in junior high school and continuing throughout high school. Contrary to previous studies that found changes in homophily in elementary school, our results indicate virtually complete segregation beginning in Grade 3 or earlier.

*Racial segregation increased until junior high school.* There is clear evidence in this sample that racial separation was at a minimum in elementary school and increased rapidly through Grade 7. Of course, we are

<sup>5</sup> Only the Grade 5 difference is statistically significant at the .05 level.

<sup>6</sup>  $R^2$  values for four regressions of preference by grade average .04, while  $R^2$  for the quadratic functions average .43—an average increase of 39 percent in the explained variance with the curvilinear model. Only the model for black boys is significant at the .05 level.

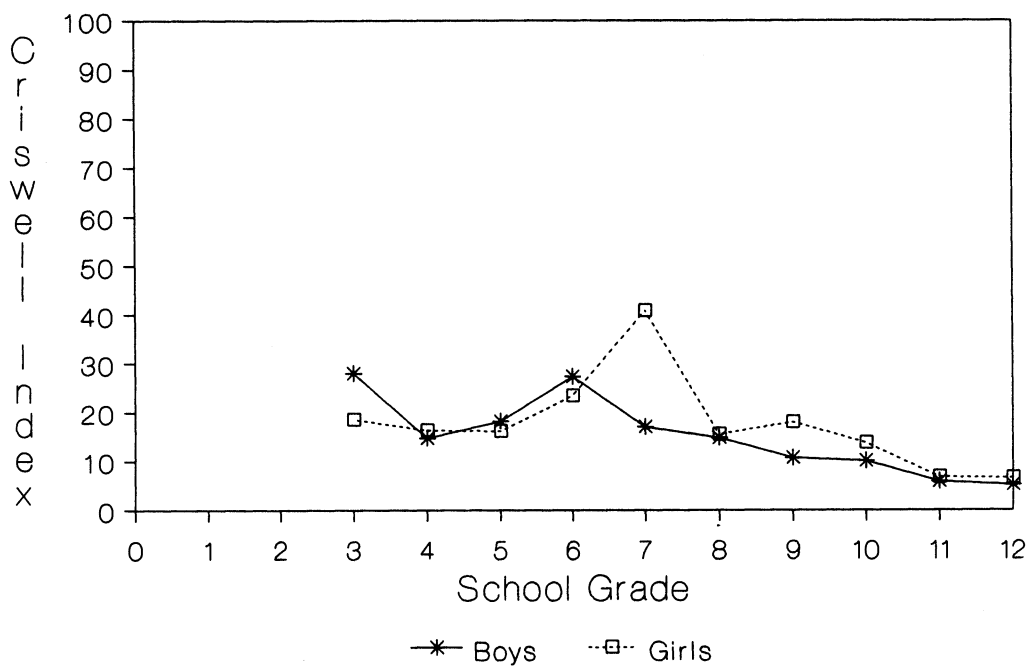
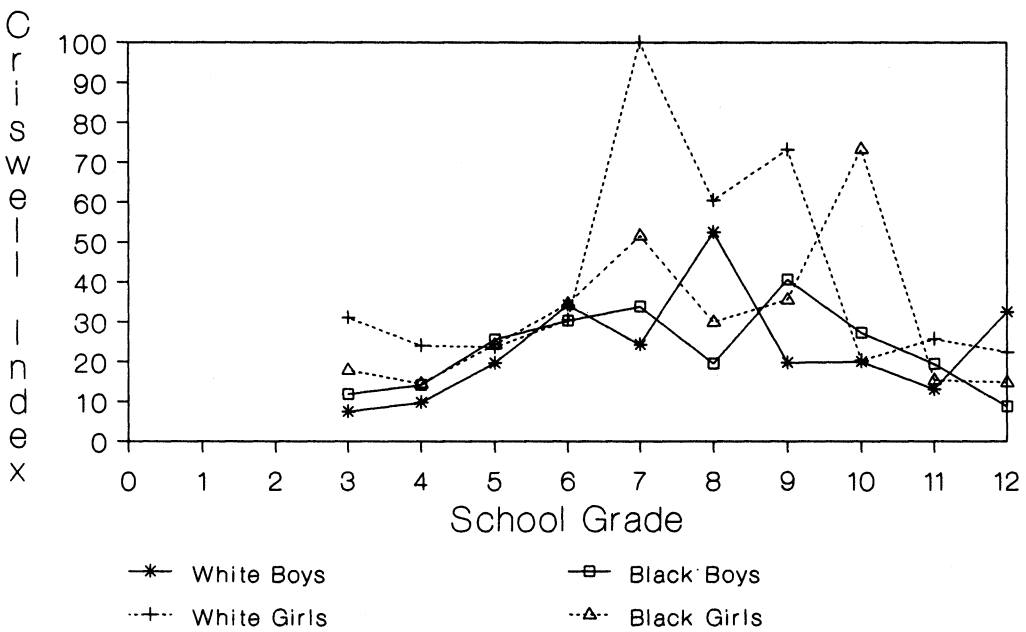


Figure 6. Preference by Grade and Gender

unable to say how many cross-race ties were absent in the earliest elementary years, but there was nearly complete segregation throughout middle school and high school. This finding confirms the increase found in previous studies within a region where one might have expected more thorough segregation throughout the school years.

*Differences in gender preference reversed in junior high school. Boys showed a greater*



White girls grade 7=122.1

Figure 7. Preference by Grade and Gender/Race

preference for boys than did girls for girls, but only in elementary school. A reversal was apparent at the beginning of junior high school. Whereas boys generally had a somewhat greater same-gender preference than did girls through the early years, in seventh grade, girls reported a dramatic increase in same-gender preference that remained slightly higher throughout high school. This finding tends to support arguments for the greater intimacy and exclusivity of girls' friendships, against the notion of the earlier onset of presocialization for mate selection among girls. The data suggest that although the reduction in the degree of gender homophily that was observed throughout the school years was large, heterosexual relationships did not begin to supplant same-gender friendships. However, the wording of the item may have led respondents to omit "romantic" friendships and thus the data may underestimate their importance.

*Differences in racial preference reversed in junior high school.* Important variations exist with respect to racial preference. Blacks selected same-race friends more frequently than did whites throughout the elementary years, whereupon whites' same-race selections drastically exceeded those of blacks throughout middle school. No consistent pattern was evident in high school. This finding rules out the hypothesis that the preference of blacks for blacks emerges in response to the previous rejection of blacks by whites, suggesting, instead, an early awareness of racial identity and an increasing propensity to respond with homophilous friendship selections. Blacks may initially have had a greater preference for blacks because of the greater salience of race for them, but the withdrawal of whites, so apparent in middle school, was likely to reinforce the tendency. It should be emphasized, for this finding and, indeed, for the overall results on racial segregation, that the observed patterns may have been due partly to the Southern location of the community. Other regions may exhibit less extreme levels of racial homophily.

The most general question with respect to segregation and preference concerns the shape of the relationship between grade and homophily for gender and race. The results for both segregation and preference showed a generally curvilinear pattern that may be simply described: from third grade onward, increases

in homophily resulted from the increasing separation of the races, while gender homophily remained relatively high. This pattern peaked in middle school, after which homophily decreased owing to reduced gender separation, while racial homophily remained high.

Although this general relationship describes racial and gender homophily, it does not apply equally to all subgroups. In particular, white girls were more segregated in nearly all grades and displayed only a mild curvilinearity, while black boys were less homophilic than were other groups.

In terms of the theory reviewed earlier, perhaps the most significant question is where peaks in homophily occurred. The data indicate that the middle-school grades represent, in some sense, years of extreme emphasis on associations with others who are similar. Moreover, we can identify, with some precision, peaks of preference for each subgroup. Significantly, these peaks did not occur at the *same* grades for each subgroup. One explanation for this finding is that the subgroups were "responsive" to each other's preferential tendencies, so that, for example, the extreme preference of white boys for white boys in the eighth grade was a protective or boundary-maintaining response to the extreme preference of white girls for white girls in the seventh grade. Another possibility is the existence of gender or racial differences in rates of development, which we are unable to rule out with the present data. Finally, these may be fluctuations with purely historical significance for the school district in question.

## CONCLUSIONS

With these data, it has been possible to describe the operation of two ascriptive status variables that structure the population of friendship dyads over most of the school years in one community. By addressing a greater range of grades, we could be more confident that several observed patterns were not simply short-term fluctuations. These patterns include the early isolation of boys and girls (Carter et al. 1980; Hallinan and Smith 1985; Singleton and Asher 1977), the greater same-gender preference of middle school girls (Douván and Adelson 1966), the earlier same-race preference of blacks (Hal-

linan 1982; Singleton and Asher 1977), and age-related increases in racial segregation (Gerard et al. 1975; Jelinek and Brittan 1975). Perhaps what is most significant is that theories that have identified the middle school as the crucial locus for the transformation of peer relations, rather than the gradual and continuous view of development, received strong support from our findings.

Overall, the analysis indicated that racial homophily increased as grade level increased, whereas the reverse occurred with respect to gender homophily. The pattern in the analysis of preference appears to be similar to the observed pattern in the analysis of segregation, apart from the greater variability and more extreme values for racial than gender homophily. This pattern might be the result of the simultaneous influence of unmeasured status variables that interact with race effects but do not alter the overall pattern. On the basis of these findings, it would seem that when we consider the pattern of choices *from the perspective of the actor*, race poses a greater barrier than does sex to the formation of intergroup relations.

The strength of the results rests, in part, on the contrast between varieties of homophily. In those middle grades when separation is nearly absolute, the strategic and symbolic importance of cross-category ties may be great. Although the school system under study has long been integrated and the school policy does not condone discrimination, the senior class has separate proms for blacks and whites.

However, the differences between blacks and whites may be a function of the regional limitation of the study. Previous studies were essentially unanimous in their verdict that gender is a greater factor for social separation than is race. A more accurate rendering is simply that the effects of each are localized in particular grade ranges. Therefore, in presenting our results, we deemphasized the comparative strength of race and gender separation by stressing patterns and timing (grade-level effects and trends), rather than the importance of one or the other factor. Although we would be remiss to overgeneralize regional results, this is a corrective to previous studies that made no reference to such limitations.

There are changes in the observed pattern of friendships among peers in a *grade* as a proportion of all friendships in the system. We noted that an average of 20 percent of all

the friendships were between children at different grade levels and that this percentage increased over the school years (from 12 percent in Grade 3 to 35 percent in Grade 12). For the study of friendship patterns, the findings warrant more attention to cross-grade relations. It is possible that the observed increase was related to the shift from self-contained to departmentalized classrooms and, particularly, the increasing variety of extracurricular activities that integrate members of various grade levels. Cross-grade relations have been shown to be less homophilous than are same-grade relations. Future studies will profit from a closer examination of their nature and diversity.

Is it correct, then, to describe peer relations during the school years as, *inter alia*, a sequence of homophilic variations? Our answer is yes, provided that the appropriate caveats regarding segregation/preference and the scope of the dyadic context are recognized. When segregation (or preference) is the analytical focus, dyadic structures may be used to generate aggregate measures for *any* dimension of interest. This suggestion applies not only to the ascriptive variables used in the present analysis, but to such dimensions as attractiveness, academic performance, deviance, participation in athletics, skills, organizational memberships, and other achieved factors that may be expected, on theoretical grounds, to be important bases of separation.

One might consider grade level as a "measure of achievement." Each promotion involves the mastery of more complex and difficult subjects and building on previous work at lower levels. So considered, one may note that race and gender as dimensions of ascriptive status remain consistently deterministic as bases for friendships over implied statuses, albeit measured indirectly. This observation appears to be consistent with studies of friendships among adults in settings as diverse as work, family, voluntary organizations, and neighborhoods (Feld 1982, 1984; McPherson and Smith-Lovin 1987; Tuma and Hallinan 1979).

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