

# Why do friendships end? Investigating features of same-sex friendship dissolution

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## Background: Friendships are beneficial, so why do they end?

- Research on the benefits of friendships:**
  - Alloparenting, cooperative breeding (Hrdy, 2008)
  - Emotional support & better subjective well-being (van der Horst & Coffé, 2011)
  - Advice for various life events (Lewis et al., 2011)
  - Opportunities to raise in social status and hierarchy ranking (Geary et al., 2003; Vigil, 2007)
  - Alliances in conflict (Kurzban & DeScioli, 2009)
- Research on friendship length suggest sex differences:**
  - Men have greater tolerance for conflict with non-kin and can thus stay friends with them for longer than women can (Benenson et al., 2009; Vigil, 2007)
  - Men's friendships are more stable than women's are (Benenson & Christakos, 2003; Geary & Flinn, 2002)
- But little research has systematically assessed why friendships end...**

## Method

### Study 1

- 356 MTurk participants ( $M_{age} = 34.62$  years,  $SD = 10.41$ ) were asked to nominate their 3 best friends
  - 215 men, 141 women
- Answered questions about height of relationship and current relationship:
  - Felt about best friend, their positive and negative emotions towards friend in two dimensional space

### Study 2

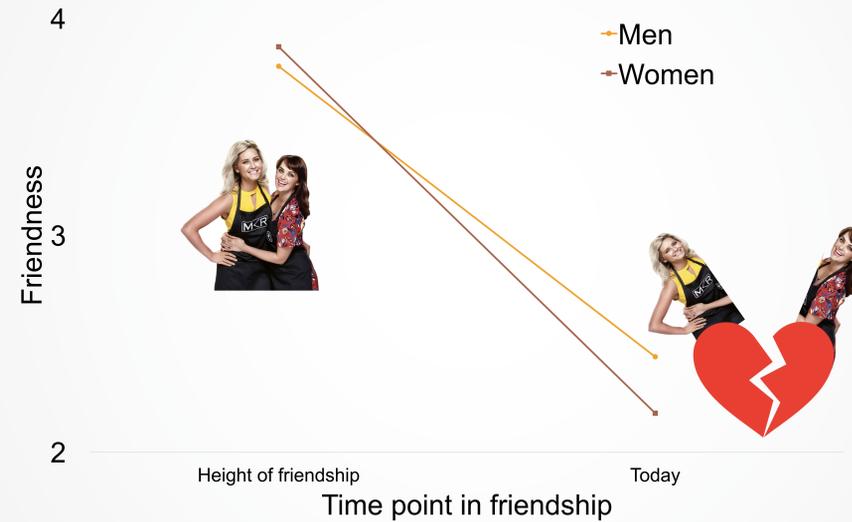
- 359 MTurk participants ( $M_{age} = 34.97$  years,  $SD = 12.01$ ) were asked to answer questions about ending friendships
  - 166 men, 193 women
- Indicated negative reactions after reading conflict scenarios

## Results

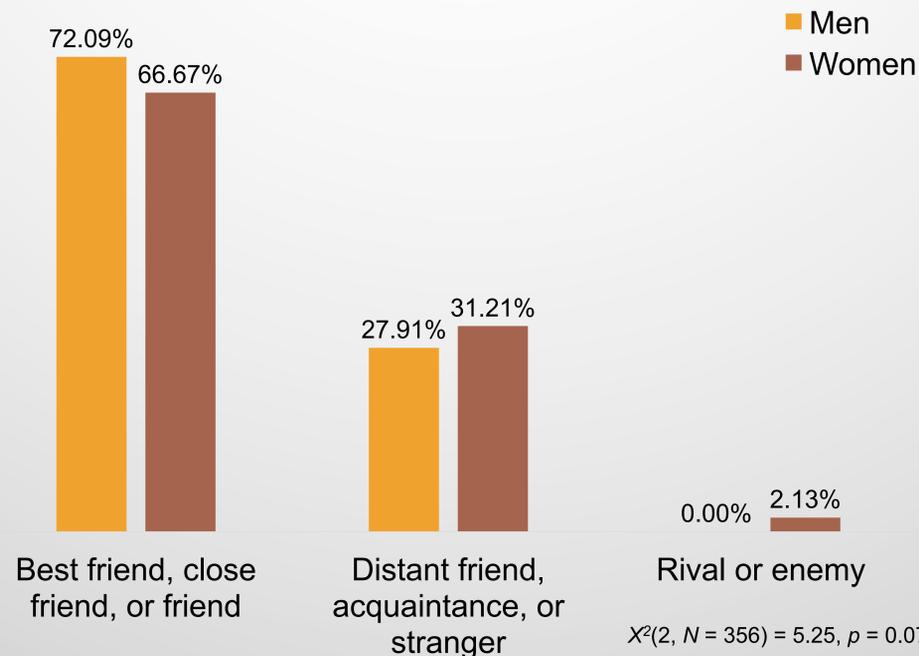
### Study 1: Sex differences in friendship length?

Both men and women reported higher friendship ratings at the height of their friendship compared to currently in their friendship,  $F(1, 352) = 298.49, p < 0.001, partial \eta^2 = 0.46$ . This was qualified by a friend-ness by sex interaction,  $F(1, 352) = 3.97, p = 0.047, partial \eta^2 = 0.01$ .

Women reported higher friendship ratings at the height of the friendship and lower friendship ratings currently in their friendship compared to men.



### Relationship to reported best friend today



### Study 2: Sex differences in why friendships end?

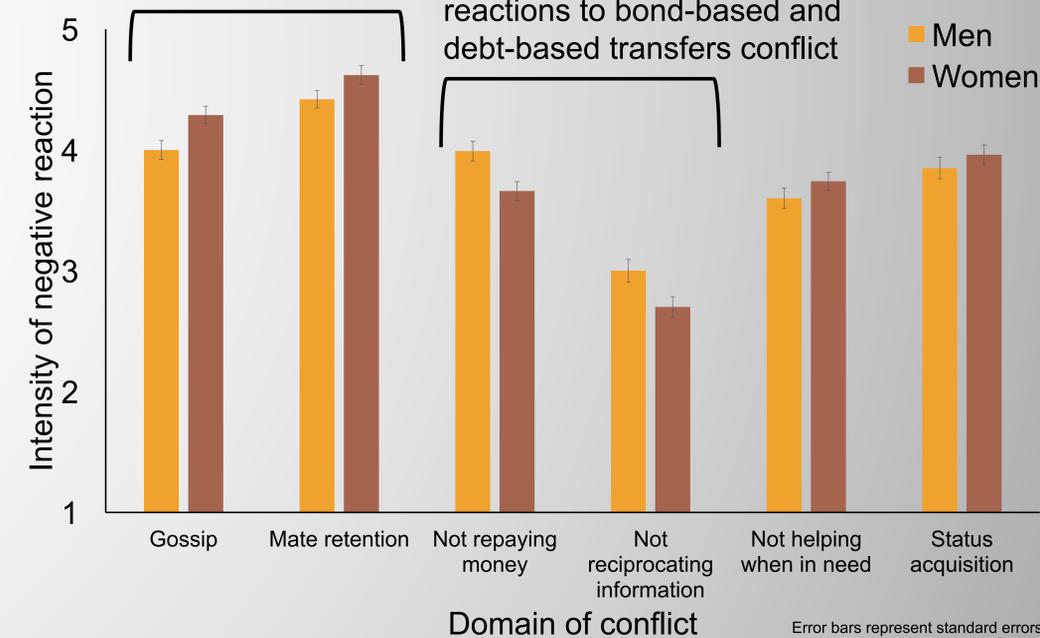
#### Participants reported why friendships ended:

Jealousy, lying, betrayal, broken trust, envy, gossiping
Other people pull you apart, romantic interest or new friend getting in the way, pursuing same romantic interest
Change in social status, money, or other friendships/relationships
Dating an ex, mate poaching, cheating with significant other
No longer have things in common, grow up, change in opinion, growing apart

- Both men and women had heightened negative responses to the high conflict scenarios
- No sex difference in reported likelihood of ending friendship after conflict scenarios
  - Women more upset and resentful than men
  - Men more likely to react out of anger than women
  - Women more likely to confront in high-conflict, less likely to ignore in low-conflict scenarios

Women had more negative reactions to gossip-based and mate retention based conflict

Men had more negative reactions to bond-based and debt-based transfers conflict



## Conclusions and Future directions

- Investigating the role of fitness interdependence in decisions to end friendship
- Replicate study 1 with younger sample
- What is the difference between relationships that "fizzle" out vs. acrimoniously end?
- High conflict brings higher costs, so only problematic when you have more to lose in social partner? Why doesn't this happen in low conflict?
- Stake of conflict additive, tipping point for when friendships end?

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