

Poaching, promiscuity, and deceit: Combatting mating rivalry in same-sex friendships

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Abstract

If humans faced recurrently over evolutionary history the adaptive problem of competition with same-sex friends for mates, they may have evolved psychological mechanisms designed to prevent and combat mating rivalry with same-sex friends. Four studies were conducted to test hypotheses about the design of these mechanisms. In Studies 1 and 2 ($N = 406$ and $N = 342$, respectively) we found that, as predicted, people experience more upset in response to imagined rivalry from a friend than from a stranger. In Study 3 ($N = 455$), in which a between-subjects design was utilized, we found that women's, but not men's, willingness to become friends with a member of the same sex is lower when the person is described as sexually promiscuous. In Study 4 ($N = 169$) we found that people report being deceived by friends about mating rivalry more often than they themselves report engaging in deceit about rivalry, and women more than men deceive each other about how sexually experienced and promiscuous they are. Discussion addresses implications of the findings and the use of an evolutionary approach for understanding conflict in same-sex friendship.

The cross-cultural ubiquity of friendship may be due to the benefits friends offer. Friends offer us task support when we are in need, care for us when we are ill, and provide honest advice when we are upset (Leaper, Carson, Baker, Holliday, & Myers, 1995; Rose, 1985). They may offer us information about the opposite sex and how to

attract a mate (Bleske & Buss, 2000; Gottman & Mettetal, 1986). And they may introduce us to potential mates (Bleske & Buss, 2000). Friends, however, also can inflict costs.

Friends know our personal information and may reveal it to enemies. They may humiliate us in public and threaten our reputation. They may compete with us for access to the same limited resources. Friends may even compete with us for the same mates or steal the mates we have already attracted.

In this article, we focus on one potential adaptive problem of same-sex friendship: intrasexual rivalry. We propose, first, that ancestral men and women recurrently faced the problem of competing with same-sex friends to attract members of the opposite sex. Second, we propose that ancestral men and women faced the adaptive problem of having a same-sex friend steal or poach on (i.e., gain sexual access to) their long-term mate. If our ancestors recurrently faced these problems over evolution-

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ary history, men and women may have psychological mechanisms designed to combat them. One suite of mechanisms may be designed to cause *upset* in response to rivalry with, and potential mate stealing by, a same-sex friend. A second suite of mechanisms may be designed to help us *select* as same-sex friends those people we can trust not to be rivalrous with us or to steal our long-term mates. A third suite of mechanisms may be designed to lead us to be sensitive to *deception* from friends and to deceive our friends about our own rivalrous behaviors.

It may be unpalatable to entertain the notion that, over human evolutionary history, men and women came into conflict with their same-sex friends. It also may be unpalatable to entertain the notion that we have an evolved psychology designed to combat rivalry with our same-sex friends. Intrasexual rivalry is cross-culturally ubiquitous (Daly & Wilson, 1988) however, and there are reasons to hypothesize that it was a problem, throughout our evolutionary history, between same-sex friends as well as strangers.

Logic of intrasexual rivalry

The driving force of evolution by sexual selection is differential reproduction (Darwin, 1871). In intrasexual competition, one form of sexual selection, members of one sex compete to embody characteristics desired by the opposite sex. Selection favors those characteristics that lead to success at intrasexual mate competition. Women and men compete intrasexually to embody characteristics desired by the other sex. For men more than for women, reproductive success historically was dependent on recognizing members of the opposite sex who were fertile and reproductively valuable. Characteristics associated with female fertility and reproductive value are correlated with physical attractiveness (Singh, 1993a, 1993b; Symons, 1995). Men more than women thus have evolved to desire physical attractiveness in a long-term mate (Buss, 1989), and

women more than men compete with one another in the currency of physical attractiveness by enhancing their own attractiveness and derogating the attractiveness of other women (Buss, 1988; Buss & Dedden, 1990; Cashdan, 1998; Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1987; Schmitt & Buss, 1996).

For women more than for men, reproductive success historically was dependent on the acquisition of resources for themselves and for their offspring. Women more than men, thus, have evolved to select long-term mates on the basis of willingness and ability to provide resources (Buss, 1989). Men more than women rate as effective, and more frequently use, self-enhancement and competitor derogation tactics that are linked to possession of resources, social status, ambition, industriousness, and physical prowess (Buss, 1988; Buss & Dedden, 1990; Schmitt & Buss, 1996).

In summary, intrasexual rivalry is an adaptive problem that our ancestors faced recurrently over human evolutionary history. There are several reasons to believe it was an adaptive problem within same-sex friendships and thus had an impact on our evolved same-sex friendship psychology.

Intrasexual rivalry in friendship

Men and women select mates and friends who are similar to them on a variety of dimensions (Buss, 1984, 1985; Kandel, Davies, & Baydar, 1990; Rushton, 1988, 1989; Rushton, Russell, & Wells, 1984; Tolson & Urberg, 1993; Vandenberg, 1972; Watkins & Meredith, 1981; Werner & Parmalee, 1979). This positive assortment in mateships and same-sex friendships suggests that men and women benefit from developing close relationships with people who share their interests and goals. Positive assortment in friendship, however, may have drawbacks.

Same-sex friends positively assort for age, education level, intelligence, physical attractiveness, and social class (Johnson, 1989; Kandel et al., 1990; Tolson & Urberg, 1993; Verbrugge, 1977; see Fehr, 1996 for a review). Many of these dimensions are

linked to mate value, or value as a potential mate on the “mating market” (Buss, 1994): physical attractiveness, as an indicator of reproductive value and fertility; and education level and intelligence, as indicators of access to resources. Because same-sex friends positively assort on characteristics associated with mate value and because romantic partners also positively assort on these dimensions (Buss, 1984, 1985; Vandenberg, 1972), same-sex friends may have more in common with each other’s potential or current mates than would be expected by chance. Such assortment may lead to competition between friends for attention from members of the opposite sex—in particular, for attention from a friend’s mate. There are at least three reasons why. First, because we are similar in age, activity preferences, and mate value to both our same-sex friends and our mates, our same-sex friends are more likely than same-sex strangers to be similar to our long-term mates. Given that similarity increases attraction (e.g., Byrne, 1971; Tan & Singh, 1995), one’s mate and same-sex friend may develop an attraction to each other.

Second, our same-sex friends may be more successful rivals than same-sex strangers because they are likely to have special knowledge about our mates. Our same-sex friends know when we are spending time with our mates and when we are spending time apart. Our same-sex friends also have information on the status of the romantic relationship—they often know when we are arguing with our partners, and thus when our mates are vulnerable to the compassion and sensitivity of others.

Third, as a byproduct of spending time with us, same-sex friends are likely to spend more time with our mates than would same-sex strangers. Given that individuals judge interpersonal stimuli as more attractive and favorable with increased exposure (Hamm, Baum, & Nikels, 1975; Morinaga & Matsumura, 1987), our same-sex friends and our mates may develop attractions with increased exposure to each other.

To propose that friends have the poten-

tial to be rivals is not to imply that all friends are rivals. Poaching on a close friend’s mate may result in the loss of a valuable friendship, physical and emotional abuse from an angry victim, and reputational damage as one becomes known as a disloyal friend. For the majority of friendship pairs faced with the potential for rivalry, these probable costs likely do not override the benefits. In some cases, however, the benefits of mate stealing may override the costs. First, the friendship may have more to offer the poachee than the poacher, thereby decreasing the costs of losing the friendship for the poacher. Second, poaching on a friend’s mate can result in the acquisition of a desirable mate—a benefit that, in reproductive currencies, may outweigh the potential costs.

Given the threat of rivalry in same-sex friendship, why do friends positively assort? One reason may be that friends who are less attractive or less intelligent than us may socially repel others, thus negating our potential for receiving benefits from others. Friends who are more desirable than us, on the other hand, may receive positive attention from others that could have been directed toward us. It thus appears that men and women face the task of selecting friends who are both similar to themselves in desirability and unlikely to be intrasexual rivals.

The reported occurrence of same-sex rivalry in friendship suggests that finding desirable but “safe” friends is not easy. When asked to list disadvantages of their close same-sex friendships, a small proportion of college-aged men and women reported that they and their close friends had been attracted to the same member of the opposite sex or had competed to attract members of the opposite sex (Bleske & Buss, 1998). Bleske and Buss (1998) asked another sample of college-aged men and women to report how often they had experienced sexual competition in their closest same-sex friendships. Eighteen percent of men and 29% of women reported that their closest same-sex friends had at least sometimes flirted with a romantic partner (responded 3 or above on

a frequency scale ranging from 0 = never to 6 = often). Over half of the men and women reported that they had at least sometimes competed with their friends to attract members of the opposite sex. Further, 10% of men and 20% of women reported competing frequently with their friends to attract members of the opposite sex. Both men and women perceived the potential for such rivalry as among the 10 most costly aspects of friendship (Bleske & Buss, 2000).

Other work suggests that rivalry occurs in same-sex friendship. Eichenbaum and Orbach (1987) suggest that women compete with their friends for access to a variety of limited resources, one of them being "good husbands." Rawlins (1992), in a discussion of adolescent friendship, describes the situation between same-sex friends as follows:

Competition for members of the opposite sex disturbs both boys' and girls' friendships, which function curiously in the dating process . . . The most frequent topic of talk between boys is girls and between girls is boys. Thus friends risk engaging in heartfelt to ribald discussions of possible dates with persons who subsequently may vie for them (the dates) as well. (p. 89)

In summary, the logic of friend selection and mate selection, in addition to several sources of empirical evidence, suggests that people have faced recurrently the adaptive problems of intrasexual rivalry in same-sex friendship, including competition over attracting mates and the potential for mate stealing. If our ancestors faced these adaptive problems in their same-sex friendships, humans may have evolved psychological mechanisms designed to solve these adaptive problems.

By proposing an evolved psychology designed to deal with rivalry in friendship, we are not implying that intrasexual rivalry in friendship was a frequent occurrence throughout evolutionary history or that it is a frequent occurrence today. As Ellis and Symons (1990) noted, when the benefits or costs of an event are high—in terms of reproductive currencies—selection can forge

mechanisms designed to deal with the event. Thus, although intrasexual rivalry between friends may not have been a frequent event throughout history and may not be frequent today, the costs of experiencing rivalry in friendship are high and therefore subject to the forces of selection.

Upset in response to rivalry with a same-sex friend

Men and women should perceive actual or potential intrasexual rivalry in friendship as very upsetting. If people have evolved mechanisms that motivate them to select as friends people who will not compete with them for mates, then one implicit yet defining feature of a good friend may be that he or she will not be a rival. Engaging in rivalrous behavior would thus betray the implicit rules of being a good friend. Upset in the victim would serve the function of activating psychological mechanisms that are designed to deal with such a betrayal of friendship. Such mechanisms might motivate reassessment of the value of the same-sex friendship and assessment of whether the friendship should be terminated. Thus, when the rivalry includes mate poaching, victims may incur a double whammy (Shackelford & Buss, 1996)—the victim may lose the mate *and* may decide to terminate the friendship because of the betrayal the friend has committed.

Hypothesis 1. Humans have psychological mechanisms that cause upset in response to rivalry, particularly if from a same-sex friend.

We thus predict that people will experience more upset in response to same-sex friends performing acts to attract their mates than to same-sex strangers performing acts to attract their mates (Prediction 1).

Our second hypothesis, about the design of these mechanisms, is that women are particularly sensitive to friends' attempts to attract their mates by displaying characteristics that men find most attractive, whereas men are particularly sensitive to friends' attempts to attract their mates by

displaying characteristics that women find most attractive.

Hypothesis 2. Women and men have psychological mechanisms that cause upset in response to rivalry from a friend over characteristics that the opposite sex desires.

First, because women more than men compete on the basis of physical attractiveness and experience upset over a rival who surpasses them in attractiveness (Buss, 1988; Buss & Dedden, 1990; Buss, Shackelford, Choe, Buunk, & Dijkstra, 2000; Cashdan, 1998; Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1987; Schmitt & Buss, 1996), we predict that women will experience more upset than men when imagining a same-sex rival, particularly a close same-sex friend, performing acts toward a partner that imply enhanced physical attractiveness (Prediction 2a). Second, because promiscuous, sexually available women may pose a threat for mated women because they may weaken a man's commitment to his long-term mateship and lead him to channel his time and resources outside the mateship (Schmitt & Buss, 1996), we predict that women will be more upset than men when imagining a rival act sexually available to attract their partners (Prediction 2b). If women trust their close same-sex friends to not poach on their mates, women's level of upset should be particularly higher than men's when the poacher is a close friend rather than a stranger. Third, because men more than women compete for physical prowess and experience upset over a rival who surpasses them in physical prowess (Buss, 1988; Buss & Dedden, 1990; Buss et al., 2000; Schmitt & Buss, 1996), we predict that men will experience more upset than women when imagining a same-sex rival, particularly a close same-sex friend, performing acts toward their mates that imply physical prowess (Prediction 2c). Finally, because men more than women compete for access to resources and experience upset over a rival who surpasses them in resource potential (Buss, 1988; Buss & Dedden, 1990; Buss et al., 2000; Schmitt & Buss, 1996), we predict that men will experience more upset than will women when imagining a same-sex

rival, particularly a close same-sex friend, performing acts toward their mates that imply resource potential (Prediction 2d).

In summary, we predict that women will report more upset than men in response to a same-sex rival enhancing her physical appearance or acting sexually available with the intent of poaching on their long-term mates. Men will report more upset than women in response to a same-sex rival displaying physical prowess and resource prospects with the intent of poaching on their long-term mates (Buss & Dedden, 1990). These sex differences should be more robust when the rival is a same-sex friend than when the rival is a same-sex stranger.

Strategic friend selection

As a second solution to rivalry in same-sex friendship, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 3. People have psychological mechanisms that motivate them to select friends who will not be mating rivals.

Such mechanisms should guide the selection of friends who will not compete to attract mates, as well as the selection of friends who will not poach on mates already obtained. We generated two predictions to test this hypothesis. First, because promiscuous women threaten other women's efforts to attract and retain a desirable long-term mate by triggering men's desire for sexual variety and casual sex, women more than men should perceive sexual promiscuity as undesirable in a same-sex friend (Prediction 3a). Thus, women who appear sexually available to men may risk rejection from other women. In contrast to the situation for women, promiscuous men may not thwart other men's attempts to attract a desirable mate because the majority of women at a given moment in time are more likely to desire a long-term rather than a short-term mate (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). Moreover, men may gain some benefit from engaging in friendships with promiscuous men, such as sexual access to the women these men have attracted. Thus, we predict that women more than men will actively reject an oppor-

tunity to become friends with members of the same sex who have a history of sexual promiscuity (Prediction 3b). Third, because sexually promiscuous friends may be more likely to attempt to poach sexually on one's mate, relationship status should be related to both men's and women's willingness to befriend someone who is sexually promiscuous. Both sexes should be more likely to reject an opportunity to become same-sex friends with someone who is sexually promiscuous if they are in committed mate-relationships than if they are not in committed mate-relationships. Given the special interference promiscuous women pose to other women's efforts to retain a desirable long-term mate, the effect of relationship status should be stronger for women than for men (Prediction 3c).

Strategic deception about rivalry with friends

If rivalry has been a costly feature of human same-sex friendships by sometimes leading to distrust and ultimately friendship dissolution, then men and women should have psychological mechanisms that motivate them to be sensitive to the possibility of being deceived about rivalry from friends. Likewise, men and women should be motivated to deceive their friends about their own rivalrous behavior. We thus propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4. Humans have psychological mechanisms sensitive to potential deception about rivalrous behavior from a same-sex friend.

Hypothesis 5. Humans have psychological mechanisms that motivate them to deceive same-sex friends about their own rivalrous behavior.

Because the costs of failing to detect rivalry from a friend may have been more costly than falsely perceiving rivalry from a friend (due to the possibility of mate stealing), people may be especially sensitive to the possibility of experiencing rivalry from their friends (see Haselton & Buss, 2000).

Thus, we predict that men and women will report being the victim of deception about rivalry and mate poaching from friends more often than they report engaging in deception about rivalry and mate poaching behaviors themselves (Prediction 4a). Second, we predict that the most frequently reported, and thus most memorable, accounts of deceit by a same-sex friend will involve rivalry and mate poaching (Prediction 4b). Third, because we hypothesized earlier that promiscuous women are actively rejected by other women as same-sex friends, we predict that women more than men will report being deceived about a friend's sexually promiscuous experiences (Prediction 4c) and that women more than men will report deceiving a same-sex friend about their own sexually promiscuous behavior (Prediction 5a).

In summary, we hypothesize the existence of three suites of psychological solutions in humans that function to combat the problem of intrasexual rivalry in friendship. First, we hypothesize rival-specific and sex-specific upset in response to potential rivalry. Second, we hypothesize strategic selection of "safe" friends. Third, we hypothesize that friends strategically deceive each other about engaging in intrasexual rivalry. We conducted four studies to test these hypotheses.

Studies 1 and 2: Upset in Response to Imagined Rivalry from Friends

Method

Study 1 participants. Participants in Study 1 were 99 men and 150 women from a large southwestern university and 72 men and 90 women from a large southern university. Participants ranged from 16 to 50 years of age ($M = 20.80$). Sixty-four percent of participants were Caucasian, 10% Hispanic, 11% Asian American, 6% African American, and 8% "other." We omitted the data from five homosexual participants. The final data set included data from 406 college students. Thirty-nine percent of men and 45% of women were involved in a commit-

ted romantic relationship at the time of the study (9 men and 15 women were married). Participants received credit as a partial requirement for a psychology course.

Study 2 participants. Participants in Study 2 were 118 men and 97 women from a large southwestern university and 57 men and 79 women from a large southern university. None had participated in Study 1. Participants ranged from 17 to 57 years of age ($M = 22.76$). Seventy percent of participants were Caucasian, 12% Hispanic, 10% Asian American, 5% African American, 1% Pacific Islander, and 3% "other." We excluded data from nine homosexual participants. The final data set included responses from 342 college students. Thirty-five percent of men and 48% of women were involved in a committed romantic relationship at the time of the study (12 men and 21 women were married). Participants received credit as a partial requirement for a psychology course.

Instruments. Study 1 and Study 2 used similar instruments. In both studies, participants reported on their age, race, sexual orientation, and current relationship status. To encourage thoughtful responses to questions about same-sex friendship, participants were asked to write the initials of up to five of their closest same-sex friends and to report whether each friend was currently single or currently involved in a committed relationship.

Participants then rated the desirability of 59 characteristics that might be found in a same-sex friend. The characteristics, such as "Kind," "Honest," "Good-looking," and "Intelligent" were selected from Buss's (1989) cross-cultural study of mate preferences. We included additional characteristics to allow for more reliable tests of the hypothesis that women would perceive sexual promiscuity as more undesirable than men. The 5-point scale ranged from +2 (Very desirable) to 0 (Neither desirable nor undesirable) to -2 (Very undesirable). We formed a composite variable of characteristics linked to sexual promiscuity that included 12 characteristics such as the follow-

ing: "Having had sex with two people in one night," "Open to having casual sex," "Having had a one-night stand," "Sexually promiscuous," and "Being sexually active with various partners." We labeled the composite *Sexual promiscuity* ($\alpha = .87$).

The next section included 102 acts that people might perform to attract the opposite sex (see Buss, 1988). Participants were asked how upset they would be if a same-sex rival engaged in each act to attract their long-term mates. In Study 1, participants rated each act twice, once for the upset elicited when the imagined rival was a same-sex stranger and once for the upset elicited when the imagined rival was a close same-sex friend. Participants used a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (Not at all upset) to 7 (Unbearably upset). In Study 2, participants were forced to choose which upset them more: a close same-sex friend performing an act to attract their romantic partners, or a same-sex stranger performing an act to attract their romantic partners. The presentation order of friend and stranger acts of mating rivalry was counterbalanced in both studies.

Procedure. Participants were tested in groups ranging from 10 to 40. A researcher was available to answer questions. Most participants completed the survey within 45 minutes.

Results and discussion

Composite variables. To simplify the analysis and presentation of tests of Hypotheses 1 and 2, we formed four composite variables from individual items that correlated highly. In Study 1, we computed reliability coefficients within the two rival categories (friend or stranger). Coefficients ranged from .80 to .93 (mean $\alpha = .89$). Because Study 2 involved a single forced-choice rating rather than dual ratings, we calculated one reliability rather than two for each composite. Coefficients ranged from .79 to .92 (mean $\alpha = .85$). The first composite variable, *Enhancing physical appearance*, includes 13 mate attraction tactics that imply intent to en-

hance physical appearance and was used to test Prediction 2a. Sample items include, "She (He) spent more than one hour making her (his) appearance pleasant for your romantic partner" and "She (He) went on a diet to improve her (his) figure for your romantic partner." The second composite variable, *Sexual availability*, includes 11 mate attraction tactics indicative of sexual availability and was used to test Prediction 2b. Sample items include, "She (He) wore sexy clothes in front of your romantic partner" and "She (He) talked openly to your romantic partner about having sex with him (her)." The third composite variable, *Physical prowess*, includes 6 mate attraction tactics indicative of physical prowess and strength and was used to test Prediction 2c. Sample items include, "She (He) talked to your romantic partner about how good she (he) was at sports" and "She (He) lifted weights to look good for your romantic partner." The fourth composite variable, *Financial prospect*, includes 5 mate attraction tactics that suggest future access to material resources and was used to test Prediction 2d. Sample items include, "She (He) got a high-paying job to impress your romantic partner" and "She (He) mentioned to your romantic partner that she (he) expected to earn a lot of money."

Upset in response to imagined rivalry from friends and strangers. Prediction 1a, that

people experience mating rivalry as more upsetting from a same-sex friend than from a stranger, was tested in Study 1 and Study 2. For the Study 1 data, we conducted the analyses in two ways. All tests were two-tailed. The results are displayed in Table 1. First, we conducted paired *t*-tests separately for each composite variable. These tests confirmed the prediction. Participants judged it as more upsetting to imagine a same-sex friend than to imagine a same-sex stranger performing acts indicative of *Enhancing physical appearance*, *Sexual availability*, *Physical prowess*, or *Financial prospects* to attract their partners. Second, we averaged the upset levels from the friend-as-rival composites and from the stranger-as-rival composites and then conducted a paired *t*-test to compare mean upset levels. In confirmation of the prediction, people's overall upset in response to imagined rivalry from a same-sex friend was greater than their overall upset in response to imagined rivalry from a stranger.

For the Study 2 data, we conducted a chi square analysis for each composite variable. Confirming Prediction 1a, participants perceived it as more upsetting to imagine a same-sex friend performing acts of *Sexual availability* to attract their romantic partners than to imagine a same-sex stranger performing such acts to attract their romantic partners [$\chi^2(1, N = 339) = 232.92, p < .0001; w = .58$]. They also perceived it as

Table 1. Study 1 tests of Prediction 1: Upset is greater when mating rival is a same-sex friend

Upset in response to:	Rival		<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>
	Friend Mean (<i>SD</i>)	Stranger Mean (<i>SD</i>)		
Rival acting sexually available	4.60 (1.29)	4.09 (1.31)	12.27***	.20
Rival enhancing physical appearance	2.69 (1.28)	2.37 (1.23)	9.36***	.13
Rival displaying physical prowess	2.73 (1.18)	2.44 (1.17)	8.00***	.12
Rival displaying future access to resources	2.26 (1.33)	2.14 (1.29)	3.45**	.05
Overall upset	3.07 (1.14)	2.76 (1.13)	9.55***	.14

Note. *df* = 403. Within-subjects design. Ratings are on a scale from (1) *Not at all upset* to (7) *Unbearably Upset*. Differences in upset were significant in both mated and unmated groups of participants. ** $p < .001$; *** $p < .0001$ (two-tailed).

more upsetting to imagine a same-sex friend than to imagine a same-sex stranger *Enhance their physical appearance* [$\chi^2(1, N = 339) = 126.40, p < .0001; w = .43$], perform acts of *Physical prowess* [$\chi^2(1, N = 339) = 60.32, p < .0001; w = .30$], or perform acts that implied *Financial prospects* to attract their romantic partners [$\chi^2(1, N = 339) = 2.85, p = .05; w = .07$].

In sum, all tests of Prediction 1a supported the hypothesis that men and women are more sensitive to mating rivalry from same-sex friends than from strangers.

Sex-linked upset in response to imagined rivalry. According to Hypothesis 2, women more than men should be sensitive to acts of rivalry linked to physical appearance and sexual availability, especially when the rival is a friend rather than a stranger. Men more than women, on the other hand, should be sensitive to acts of rivalry linked to physical strength and financial prospects, especially when the rival is a friend rather than a stranger. The hypothesis was tested only in Study 1, which obtained dual upset ratings—friend and stranger—from participants for each of the acts of rivalry. Repeated measures multivariate analyses of variance were conducted to test Predictions 2a through 2d, with sex as a between-subjects variable and type of rival (stranger or friend) as the within-subjects variable.

Confirming Prediction 2a, the analysis revealed an interaction between sex and rival type in predicting upset in response to imagining a rival enhance his or her attractiveness to attract one's partner [Interaction $F(1, 402) = 12.30, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .03$]. Simple effects revealed that, although men and women did not differ in upset over a stranger enhancing his or her physical attractiveness ($p = .69$), women reported more upset than men when the rival was a same-sex friend [Female $M = 2.81, SD = 1.30$; Male $M = 2.52, SD = 1.22; t(402) = -2.28, p < .05, d = .12$]. Follow-up analyses also revealed that, as predicted, women were more upset by rivalrous acts of enhancing physical appearance than by acts of

physical prowess or financial prospects ($ps < .05$).

In confirmation of Prediction 2b, the analysis revealed an interaction between sex and rival type in predicting upset in response to imagining a rival acting sexually available to attract one's mate [Interaction $F(1, 402) = 26.21, p < .0001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .06$]. Simple effects revealed that women reported more upset than did men upon imagining either a same-sex stranger or same-sex friend act sexually available to attract their partners [Same-sex stranger: Female $M = 4.27, SD = 1.29$; Male $M = 3.82, SD = 1.30; t(402) = -3.44, p < .001, d = .17$; Same-sex friend: Female $M = 4.96, SD = 1.21$; Male $M = 4.09, SD = 1.24; t(402) = -7.08, p < .0001, d = .36$]. Consistent with Prediction 2b, the magnitude of the effect of sex appeared to be considerably larger in the friend condition than in the stranger condition. Also consistent with Prediction 2b, follow-up analyses revealed that women were more upset overall by rivalrous acts of sexual availability than by acts of physical prowess or financial prospects ($ps < .0001$).

Prediction 2c was not confirmed. Although analyses revealed an interaction between sex and rival type in predicting upset in response to imagining a rival displaying physical strength to attract one's mate [Interaction $F(1, 402) = 11.53, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .03$], the interaction was not in the predicted direction. Contrary to the prediction, men did not report greater upset than women in response to imagining a same-sex friend display physical strength to attract their mates ($p = .48$). Men did report greater upset than women when the rival was a stranger [Male $M = 2.63, SD = 1.25$; Female $M = 2.31, SD = 1.09; t(402) = 2.72, p < .01, d = .14$]. Although men perceived acts of physical prowess as more upsetting overall than acts displaying enhanced physical appearance ($p < .0001$), they perceived acts of physical prowess as *less* upsetting than acts of sexual availability ($p < .0001$).

Prediction 2d was not confirmed. Following a pattern similar to that found for Prediction 2c [Interaction $F(1, 402) = 15.97, p < .0001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .04$], men did not

report greater upset than women in response to imagining a same-sex friend display good financial prospects ($p = .95$). Men did report greater upset than women when the rival was a stranger [Male $M = 2.31$, $SD = 1.37$; Female $M = 2.02$, $SD = 1.23$; $t(402) = 2.19$, $p < .05$, $d = .11$]. Disconfirming the prediction that men should be particularly sensitive to those acts of rivalry linked to the opposite sex's desires, men were *less* sensitive to acts linked to financial prospects than to either enhanced physical appearance or sexual availability ($ps < .01$).

In sum, Hypothesis 2 was supported by two of four tests designed to test it. Although women reported more upset over rivalry linked to physical attractiveness and sexual availability, particularly when the rival was a close same-sex friend, men did not demonstrate sex-linked upset over acts of physical prowess and future access to resources. Because men report competing more often than women on physical strength and financial prospects (Buss & Dedden, 1990), it is not clear why men in this sample did not report more upset than women over intrasexual competition on these characteristics. Men's upset ratings were higher than women's in the stranger condition but not in the friend condition. It is possible that women's tendency to report more upset than men in response to rivalrous acts from a close friend outweighed any potential sex differences on a given item about rivalry in friendship.

Dislike of sexual promiscuity in a same-sex friend. Hypothesis 3 stated that humans have mechanisms that guide the selection of friends who will not compete to attract mates. Studies 1 and 2 provided an initial test of this hypothesis—that women more than men will perceive sexual promiscuity as undesirable in a same-sex friend (Prediction 3a).

Confirming Prediction 3a, Study 1 analyses revealed a main effect for sex. Women rated *Sexual promiscuity* in a same-sex friend as more undesirable than did men [Female $M = -.94$, $SD = .56$; Male $M =$

$-.40$, $SD = .59$; $F(1, 394) = 71.09$, $p < .0001$, $d = .42$], and this sex difference held for both mated and unmated people ($ps < .01$). Study 2 analyses replicated the pattern of findings [Female $M = -.81$, $SD = .52$; Male $M = -.50$, $SD = .57$; $F(1, 327) = 23.98$, $p < .0001$, $d = .30$]. In neither study was there an interaction between sex and relationship status.

In sum, initial tests supported Hypothesis 3. We designed Study 3 to test Predictions 3b and 3c.

Study 3: Rejection of Potential Mating Rivals

Method

Participants. Participants were 455 undergraduate students (227 men and 228 women) from two southwestern universities. Participants ranged from 17 to 42 years of age ($M = 18.63$). Sixty-nine percent were Caucasian, 11% Hispanic, 11% Asian, 4% African American, 1% Native American, and 3% "other."

Instruments. Participants completed a questionnaire comprised of several sections, only one of which pertains to the current study and thus is described here. Embedded within the questionnaire was a section titled, "Impression Formation." Participants were given the following set of instructions:

"Imagine that you are involved in a study of impression formation. These studies are interested in how people form impressions of other people. Please read the person description below. Do not dwell on any one aspect of the description. Rather, read over the entire description and use your overall impression of the person to answer the questions that follow."

Participants read one of four person descriptions (counterbalanced across participants), two of which were about a member of the opposite sex and thus not discussed further in this article. The remaining two person descriptions were about a member of the same sex. Within the description, one

sentence was altered to manipulate the perceived sexual promiscuity of the person. The description of the person high in sexual promiscuity read:

“Jenna (John) is a 2nd year student at the University of Texas. She is majoring in History and has worked hard to maintain a 3.5 GPA. Although she spends a bit of time studying, she also spends a lot of time with friends. Jenna is 5'4" (5'10") tall, 130 (170) pounds, and is fairly attractive. She comes from a family of three children, of which she is the eldest. She enjoys listening to music, but more than that is into sports like running and rock climbing. She does not seek steady relationships; instead she prefers short-term sexual relationships with men. Jenna's friends say that she is an agreeable, kind person with a bright future ahead of her.”

In the low promiscuity condition, the description was the same except that the penultimate sentence read, “She is interested in steady, committed relationships with men, and is currently searching for the man of her dreams.” Gender pronouns were specific to each form.

After reading the person description, participants rated on a 7-point scale how willing they would be to befriend the person in the description if they met him or her (“Not at all willing” to “Very willing”), and whether or not they thought they would like to become friends with someone like the person described (“Definitely no” to “Definitely yes”).

Procedure. Participants were tested in same-sex groups of 10 to 30 people. A researcher was available to answer questions. Most participants completed the survey within 30 minutes.

Results and discussion

The impression formation task in this study allowed us to test Prediction 3b, that women more than men will be unwilling to become friends with members of the same sex who have a history of sexual promiscuity. The design also allowed a test of Prediction 3c, that both mated men and women, but par-

ticularly mated women, will be more likely than unmated men and women to reject an opportunity to become same-sex friends with someone who is sexually promiscuous.

Participants' reported willingness to befriend the specific person in the description and desire to be friends with someone like the person in the description were correlated but only moderately ($r = .48$). Thus, we report the results from the two items separately.

Contrary to Prediction 3b, analyses revealed a main effect for sex on willingness to befriend the person described in the scenario, such that women were more willing than men to befriend either a nonpromiscuous or promiscuous member of the same sex [Male $M = 5.12$, $SD = 1.43$; Female $M = 5.62$, $SD = 1.21$; $t(213) = -2.76$, $p < .01$, $d = .19$]. Analyses also revealed a main effect of the manipulation, such that both men and women were less willing to befriend a promiscuous person than a nonpromiscuous person [Promiscuous $M = 5.16$, $SD = 1.42$; Nonpromiscuous $M = 5.62$, $SD = 1.20$; $t(213) = 2.56$, $p < .01$, $d = .18$].

Consistent with Prediction 3b, however, analysis of the second impression formation item revealed a marginally significant interaction between sex of participant and promiscuity level of target on desire to become friends with someone like the person depicted in the scenario [$F(1, 193) = 3.66$, $p < .06$, *partial* $\eta^2 = .02$]. Whereas men's desire to become friends with the person was not affected by the manipulation ($p = .83$), women's desire was affected. Women exposed to the promiscuous description reported less desire to be friends with someone like the person depicted than did women exposed to the nonpromiscuous description [Promiscuous $M = 5.17$, $SD = 1.08$; Nonpromiscuous $M = 5.84$, $SD = 1.35$; $t(106) = 2.86$, $p = .005$, $d = .28$]. Although the means were in the predicted direction (Female $M = 5.17$, Male $M = 5.35$), women and men exposed to the promiscuous depiction did not differ in desire to become friends with someone like the person depicted ($p = .39$).

Prediction 3c was not confirmed. Mate-

ship status was not related to willingness to befriend the person depicted in the impression formation task nor to the desire to become friends with someone like the person depicted. Mateship status did not interact with sex or with the promiscuity manipulation to predict willingness to befriend the person depicted or the desire to be friends with someone like the person depicted ($ps > .1$).

In sum, Studies 1 and 2 provided initial support for Hypothesis 3 by demonstrating that women more than men perceive sexual availability as undesirable in a same-sex friend. Study 3, which was designed to test the possibility that women actively reject opportunities to befriend promiscuous women, provided mixed results. Although women reported more willingness than men overall to befriend members of the same sex, women's desire to become friends with someone like the person depicted was affected by the promiscuity manipulation and men's desire was not. Contrary to Prediction 3c, mated people were not less willing than unmated people to befriend promiscuous members of the same sex. In Study 4, we test the hypothesis that men and women have a psychology that is sensitive to deception about mating rivalry from friends and that motivates them to deceive friends about their own rivalrous behaviors.

Study 4: Deception among Friends about Mating Rivalry

Method

Participants. Participants were 88 female and 81 male undergraduates attending a large southwestern university. No biographical information was collected on the sample.

Instruments. Participants were given a brief questionnaire that asked them to recall a time when they had been deceived by a same-sex friend, as well as a time when they had deceived a same-sex friend. To compile a broad array of deceptive events, half of participants were asked to report

deceptions that involved a failure to tell someone something, and half were asked to report deceptions that involved a lie. A sample set of instructions for a participant in the failure-to-tell condition is as follows:

“In this study we are interested in deception in same-sex friendship. Please think of the same-sex friendships you have now and that you have had in the past. Have you ever failed to tell a same-sex friend something about yourself or about your friendship? For example, you may have failed to tell a same-sex friend about something you did or didn't do, your feelings about the friendship, what was going on in your life, or your reasons for being friends with him or her. Please think carefully about a time when you failed to tell something to a same-sex friend. Then, answer the questions below.”

Participants then reported *what* they failed to tell their same-sex friend and *why* they failed to tell this to their same-sex friend. On the next page, participants reported *what* a same-sex friend had failed to tell them and *why*. The order of the deception—victim or perpetrator first—was counterbalanced across participants.

Procedure. Participants in several sections of a course in Introductory Psychology completed the act nomination as part of an in-class activity. Students received 2 extra credit points toward their class grade for participating. The first author was available for questions at all testing sessions.

Results and discussion

Categorization of the nominations. Participants generated 331 lies and failed tellings, 220 of which were nonredundant. To categorize the items, five judges (undergraduate research assistants) independently categorized the nominations, each of which was written on a separate card, by placing them in separate stacks. To keep the task manageable, the categories from only two judges were then compared. Items that both judges had placed together under a similar category label were used to form the initial categories. Placement of the remaining items

was resolved by discussion among the five judges and the first author. The final list consisted of 220 distinct lies and failed tellings comprising 32 categories. Table 2 lists the 10 most frequently nominated categories and two sample items from each category.

Deception about mating rivalry. According to Hypothesis 4, men and women are sensitive to potential deception about rivalrous behavior from a friend. According to Hypothesis 5, men and women are motivated to deceive each other about their own rivalrous behavior. Confirming Prediction 4a, people reported being the victim of intrasexual rivalry from a friend more often than they themselves reported engaging in rivalrous behavior [67.4% of rivalry nominations vs. 32.4% of rivalry nominations, respectively, $\chi^2(1) = 12.04, p < .001$]. In confirmation of Prediction 4b, the most frequently reported accounts of deceit in friendship involved rivalry and mate poaching by a same-sex friend (49, or 14.8% of total nominations). Moreover, the most frequently reported victim accounts of deception involved mating rivalry (33, or 19.3% of victim nominations). The next most frequently reported accounts of deception involved deceit to appear less sexually experienced and promiscuous than one actually is (34, or 10.3% of total nominations). In confirmation of Prediction 4c, more women than men reported being deceived about their same-sex friends' sexual experience and level of promiscuity [14.3% of women vs. 2.7% of men, $\chi^2(1) = 7.83, p < .01$]. Likewise, and in confirmation of Prediction 5a, more women than men reported deceiving their same-sex friends to appear less sexually experienced and promiscuous than they actually were [16.1% of women vs. 5.6% of men, $\chi^2(1) = 5.12, p < .05$].

In sum, the tests conducted offer initial support for Hypotheses 4 and 5. Overall, the findings suggest that mating rivalry is perceived as costly and potentially a threat to the stability of a friendship and, therefore, is often kept secret. That episodes of deceit about rivalry are more frequently recounted than any other category of deceit suggests

that such episodes are quite memorable to those involved.

General Discussion

Four studies tested the proposal that men and women have evolved psychological mechanisms designed to respond to and prevent rivalry and mate poaching in same-sex friendship. The results suggest that (1) men and women experience more upset in response to rivalry from a close same-sex friend than from a stranger, (2) women experience more upset than men in response to rivalrous acts of sexual availability and appearance enhancement by friends, (3) women, regardless of relationship status, perceive sexual availability and promiscuity in same-sex friends as more undesirable than men do, (4) women's, but not men's, willingness to become friends with someone may be influenced by whether or not the person is sexually promiscuous, and (5) men and women deceive their friends about engaging in rivalrous behaviors such as mate stealing and such episodes of deceit are frequently reported among friends. These results are consistent with the central hypothesis that people have evolved mechanisms that are designed to generate upset in response to rivalry with same-sex friends, guide friend selection to prevent rivalry, and motivate detection of mating rivalry from friends as well motivate secrecy of one's own rivalrous behavior.

Emotional upset in response to imagined rivalry

Studies 1 and 2 provided preliminary support for the general hypothesis that men and women are emotionally sensitive to mating rivalry from same-sex friends. To provide more support for the proposal, several predictions remain to be tested. For example, future work could show that (1) men and women invest less in those friendships perceived as rivalrous, (2) men and women report going out to meet the opposite sex less frequently with friends perceived as potential rivals than with friends

Table 2. *Most frequent forms of deceit in same-sex friendship, as reported by victims and perpetrators*

Perpetrator Reports		Victim Reports	
Category and Sample Nominations (Nomination Frequency)		Category and Sample Nominations (Nomination Frequency)	
Discontent about friend or friendship (21)		Intrasexual rivalry (33)	
"I did not tell my friend that he was annoying me."		"My friend did not tell me he hit on my romantic partner."	
"I did not tell my friend that I felt we were growing apart."		"My friend did not tell me she had sex with my partner."	
Sexual experience and promiscuity (18)		Sexual experience and promiscuity (16)	
"I said I'd had fewer sexual experiences than I actually had."		"My friend did not tell me she had had sex."	
"I did not tell my friend I had a one-night stand."		"My friend did not tell me he fooled around on his romantic partner."	
Intrasexual rivalry (16)		Discontent about friend or friendship (7)	
"I did not tell my friend that I had sex with his partner."		"My friend did not tell me she didn't feel close to me."	
"I did not tell my friend that the guy she liked, liked me."		"My friend did not tell me that I was irritating him."	
Protection of friend's feelings (15)		Substance use and abuse (7)	
"I did not tell my friend that someone was talking bad of them."		"My friend did not tell me about his drug use."	
"I did not tell my friend that I found a new friend to hang out with."		"My friend did not tell me about the extent of her drug use."	
Events in personal and home life (12)		Destruction or use of friend's possessions (6)	
"I did not tell my friend that my parents got divorced."		"My friend lied and said she did not steal from me."	
"I did not tell my friend how bad my home life was."		"My friend did not tell me he trashed my yard."	
Substance use and abuse (8)		Protection of self when hurting friend (6)	
"I did not tell my friend about my drinking."		"My friend did not tell me she said mean things about me."	
"I did not tell my friend that I smoke and drink."		"My friend did not tell me that he was just using me."	
Protection of friend's self-perceived mate value (7)		Reputation enhancement (5)	
"I did not tell my friend that his mate cheated on him."		"My friend lied and said she hung out with a famous musician."	
"I did not tell my friend that her partner said bad things about her to me."		"My friend lied about how cool he was."	
Whereabouts and plans (5)		Involvement with ex (5)	
"I did not tell my friend where I was going."		"My friend lied and said he had not spent time with his ex."	
"I did not tell my friend who I hung out with one night."		"My friend did not tell me she had sex with her ex after they broke up."	
Lack of rivalry (4)		Whereabouts and plans (5)	
"I did not tell my friend it annoyed me that she flirted with my partner."		"My friend did not tell me about his plans for the weekend."	
"I lied and said it was okay for my friend to date my ex."		"My friend did not tell me she was going on a trip with other friends."	
Devaluing the friendship (4)		Sexual orientation (4)	
"I lied and told my friend we were closer than we were."		"My friend did not tell me she was bisexual."	
"I lied and told my friend that he was my best friend."		"My friend did not tell me that he was homosexual."	

not perceived as potential rivals, and (3) friendships perceived early on as potentially rivalrous are less likely to endure over time.

We proposed that upset in response to rivalry from a friend may function to motivate assessment of the friendship. The current studies do not directly test this proposal. Future research could assess friendship dynamics in response to actual mating rivalry rather than people's consciously articulated responses to imagined rivalry from friends. If upset over rivalry does function to promote friendship assessment, experiencing rivalry from a friend should predict subsequent dissatisfaction with the friendship, decreased investment in the friendship, and, potentially, dissolution of the friendship. Further, rivalry from a friend may prompt the victim to derogate the friend as untrustworthy and a poor choice for a friend.

Finally, the results of Study 1 suggest that women experience more upset than men over rivalry linked to physical attractiveness and sexual availability, particularly when the rival is a close same-sex friend. Men, however, did not demonstrate sex-linked upset over acts of physical prowess and future access to resources—a finding for which below we offer a potential explanation.

Strategic selection of "safe" friends

The current studies found mixed support for the hypothesis that men and women have psychological mechanisms that motivate the selection of same-sex friends who will not be mating rivals. For example, mated participants in Study 3 were not any less willing to befriend someone described as promiscuous than were unmated people—a finding that suggests that either involvement in a mateship does not trigger sensitivity to mate stealing as we proposed or that people are sensitive to mating rivalry regardless of their mateship status.

Given that sexually available friends are more threatening to women's mating interests than to men's, we did find some support

for the hypothesis that women are motivated to select same-sex friends who will not be mating rivals. Relative to men, women perceived sexual availability and sexual promiscuity as more undesirable in a same-sex friend. Further, women's desire to become friends with someone was affected by a description of them as promiscuous or not, whereas men's desire was not affected by the manipulation.

Coupled with the findings on sex-linked upset in response to rivalry from friends, our findings on strategic selection of "safe" friends suggest that women, overall, may be more sensitive than men to mating rivalry from friends. Because other researchers have found that men do find certain characteristics in an unknown rival, such as access to resources and physical prowess, as more upsetting than do women (Buss et al., 2000), our findings suggest that friendship may be a unique context with respect to mating rivalry. One possible explanation for this may be that women's same-sex friendships tend to be wide in breadth, spanning many activities and contexts, whereas men's same-sex friendships tend to be activity- and task-specific (Weiss & Lowenthal, 1975). Moreover, women are more likely than men to reveal secrets and insecurities to their close friends (Bell, 1981; Davidson & Duberman, 1982; Sharabany, Gershoni, & Hofman, 1981). Thus, the very nature of same-sex friendship appears to be different for men and women and may have been over ancestral history. If so, women more than men may have been selected to choose their same-sex friends with care.

Deception in friendship

The findings from Study 4 suggest that a relatively large amount of conflict between same-sex friends may involve mating rivalry. Almost 15% of nominations about deception involved mating rivalry—more nominations than in any other category. Future work could explore how well and under what conditions perpetrators of deception about mating rivalry manage to keep it hidden. For example, perpetrators who feel less

invested in the friendships on which they poach may undergo less emotional turmoil and thus be more able to successfully deceive their friends about rivalry. Other work could also explore the perceived magnitude of betrayal in response to deception about mating rivalry, as well as how an uncovered deception affects the friendship.

Because the costs of failing to detect rivalry may historically have been greater, on average, than the costs of detecting a rivalry that wasn't there, we predicted higher rates of reported victimization than perpetration. Our findings confirmed the prediction. However, it is possible that the proposed cost asymmetry is wrong, and one alternative explanation for the finding is that people may be unwilling, for self-enhancement purposes, to admit their own deceptions about rivalry. Another possible explanation is that people may self-deceive about their deceptions (Trivers, 1985)—self-deception may function to prevent leaking actual deception to the deceived friend.

Have we compiled evidence for evolved psychological mechanisms?

Evolutionary research on romantic relationships is a large enterprise and has produced many novel findings and effects (e.g., see Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Clarke & Hatfield, 1989; Kenrick, Neuberg, Zierk, & Krones, 1994). An evolutionary approach to the study of same-sex friendships offers similar promise. In the current investigation, an evolutionary perspective led us to generate several novel predictions about men's and women's feelings about and experiences in same-sex friendship. The perspective has also generated several predictions for future research. Moreover, an evolutionary perspective to friendship has practical applications—by focusing on the adaptive problems posed by same-sex friendship, we have delineated rivalry in same-sex friendship as one of the primary reasons for friendship conflict and, ultimately, friendship dissolution. Finally, an evolutionary approach to same-sex friendship inspired us to take a deeper look at

betrayal. Psychologists have known for some time that betrayal is the most frequently cited reason for friendship dissolution (Rose & Serafica, 1986), but what *types* of betrayal are important? The current investigation's findings on deception between friends about mating rivalry suggest that rivalry may top the list.

Although an evolutionary analysis of same-sex friendship holds promise and our findings are consistent with the hypothesis that humans have psychological mechanisms designed to prevent and combat rivalry in same-sex friendship, we have not compiled direct evidence of evolved complex design. Overcoming the limitations of the current investigation may strengthen our proposal that humans have specific psychological mechanisms for same-sex friendship.

One limitation of the current investigation is that, although the samples are large and may be representative of students in introductory psychology courses, they are college samples and thus the results are of limited generalizability. The typical participant was a young adult whose primary concerns likely centered on the development of intimate friendships and romantic relationships. Such a sample provided an excellent testing ground for the hypotheses, and we would not predict similar findings in children's perceptions of their same-sex friendships. We might predict, however, that if people have mechanisms designed to prevent and combat rivalry, these mechanisms should be triggered by the onset of puberty, entry into romantic relationships, or spending time with members of the opposite sex. For example, we might predict that girls do not begin to perceive sexual promiscuity as undesirable in a same-sex friend until they themselves begin perceiving members of the opposite sex as potential mateship partners. In short, then, to demonstrate evidence for evolved mechanisms, future studies will have to detail conceptually the design features of the proposed mechanisms.

Evidence of a psychology designed to combat mating rivalry in same-sex friend-

ship might also be garnered from cross-cultural research. Future research, for example, might strive to demonstrate that across cultures, mate poaching by one same-sex friend is a predictor of friendship dissatisfaction and dissolution by the other friend. Other supporting work might demonstrate that, across cultures, both sexes attempt to deceive their same-sex friends about engaging in rivalrous behavior, and women in particular deceive their female friends about their likelihood of engaging in promiscuous sex.

A second limitation is that the current investigation secured self-report data only. Although self-report data provide a window into people's perceptions of their experiences with friendship, it is possible that the self-reports in this series of studies represent people's stereotypical beliefs about same-sex friendship (e.g., that for women, promiscuous same-sex friends are undesirable) rather than their actual perceptions of friendship. If people do have stereotypical beliefs about friendship, an evolutionary perspective may help to clarify why these beliefs exist and, moreover, why they are maintained. Integrating the evolutionary and social learning explanatory accounts

will likely lead to a more complete understanding of the psychology of same-sex friendship.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the current studies provide preliminary evidence that is consistent with the proposal that humans have evolved psychological solutions to the adaptive problems of sexual rivalry and mate poaching in same-sex friendship. People experience upset over rivalry with friends, may be motivated to select friends who can be trusted to not compete with them to attract or steal mates, and are sensitive to the possibility of being deceived by friends about mating rivalry. These findings elucidate the advantage of using evolutionary principles as a heuristic for understanding the psychology of friendship. Using an evolutionary perspective, we have begun to identify the adaptive problems that same-sex friendships pose and the psychological mechanisms that may have evolved to combat these adaptive problems. We forecast a fruitful future of research on friendship from an evolutionary perspective.

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