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# Opposite-Sex Friendship: Sex Differences and Similarities in Initiation, Selection, and Dissolution

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*The authors hypothesized that people form opposite-sex friendships (OSFs), in part, to acquire long-term mates (both sexes), to gain short-term sexual access (men more than women), and to gain physical protection (women more than men). In Study 1, men and women evaluated reasons for initiating OSFs, characteristics preferred in an OSF, and reasons for ending OSFs. Study 2 extended the framework to include individual differences in sociosexual orientation. Compared with women, men judged sexual attraction and a desire for sex as more important reasons for initiating OSFs, reported a preference for sexual attractiveness when selecting OSFs, and judged the lack of sex as a more important reason for dissolving OSFs. Women judged physical protection as a more important reason for initiating OSFs and the lack of it as a more important reason for dissolving them. Across sex, people with an unrestricted sexual style were more likely to perceive OSFs as opportunities for sex. Discussion addresses the implications of the results for understanding conflict in OSFs.*

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**W**hy do people form opposite-sex friendships? And why do some opposite-sex friendships end? Although a number of relationship researchers have explored friendship in general (e.g., Davis & Todd, 1985; Duck, 1991; Duck & Allison, 1978; Fischer, 1982; Hays, 1988; W. H. Jones & Burdette, 1994; Matthews, 1986; Sapadin, 1988; Solano, 1986; R. S. Weiss, 1974; L. Weiss & Lowenthal, 1975; Wilmot & Stevens, 1994), relatively little research has been conducted on opposite-sex friendships. The few studies conducted have found that opposite-sex friendships provide a vehicle for self-expression, companionship, and intimacy (Monsour, 1992; Sapadin, 1988) and that opposite-sex friends provide each other with validation as attractive members of the opposite sex

(Bell, 1981). Some people experience sexual attraction toward their opposite-sex friends (Kaplan & Keys, 1997; O'Meara, 1989; Rose, 1985), and a substantial number of opposite-sex friendships end because of physical distance or failed attempts at romance (Werking, 1994). This research is designed to fill in gaps in the study of why people engage in opposite-sex friendships, how people choose their opposite-sex friends, and the circumstances under which opposite-sex friendships dissolve.

## *Is There an Evolved Psychology of Opposite-Sex Friendship?*

Our central hypothesis is that men and women have evolved psychological mechanisms that are designed to guide the initiation, selection, and dissolution of opposite-sex friendships. This hypothesis assumes that opposite-sex friendships solved specific adaptive problems that ancestral men and women faced recurrently over the course of human evolutionary history. It also implies that the benefits of engaging in opposite-sex friendships, on average, would have overridden the costs. Given the many potential benefits of opposite-sex friendships, such

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as companionship, protection, information about how to attract the opposite sex, and short-term sexual opportunities (Bleske & Buss, 2000; Sapadin, 1988), it is plausible to hypothesize that natural selection forged mechanisms in men and women designed to guide the formation, selection, and dissolution of such friendships.

#### *Sex and Relationship Status*

An evolutionary psychological perspective on friendship suggests that sex and relationship status may predict people's motivations for initiating, selecting, and dissolving opposite-sex friendships. Men and women are predicted to differ psychologically in domains in which they recurrently faced different adaptive problems over human evolutionary history (Buss, 1995). Women, for example, have faced a 9-month obligatory investment to produce a child. Men have not. Historically, the direct reproductive benefits in offspring production from gaining sexual access to a variety of mates would have been higher for men than for women (Symons, 1979; Trivers, 1972). Compared with women, then, men may have evolved a stronger desire for sexual variety (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Ellis & Symons, 1990; Symons, 1979). Our first hypothesis is as follows:

*Hypothesis 1:* Men, but not women, form opposite-sex friendships as a strategy for gaining short-term sexual access to the opposite sex.

Hypothesis 1 implies that men's opposite-sex friendship psychology evolved, in part, to provide men with short-term sexual opportunities. Because both single men and mated men benefit reproductively from short-term mating, relationship status should not affect men's perceptions of sexuality in opposite-sex friendships. This hypothesis predicts that, relative to women, single men and mated men will judge sexual attraction to friends as a more important reason for initiating opposite-sex friendships (Prediction 1a), judge the potential for sexual access to friends as a more important reason for initiating opposite-sex friendships (Prediction 1b), desire opposite-sex friends who are sexually attractive (Prediction 1c), report higher levels of sexual attraction to their opposite-sex friends (Prediction 1d), report more frequent desire to have sex with their opposite-sex friends (Prediction 1e), judge a lack of sexual attraction to their opposite-sex friends as a more important reason for terminating friendships (Prediction 1f), and judge a lack of sexual access to their opposite-sex friends as a more important reason for dissolving friendships (Prediction 1g).

Because of their smaller stature and lesser strength compared with men, women and children have historically been especially vulnerable to harm from other humans as well as nonhuman predators. Relative to men,

therefore, women have recurrently faced the adaptive problem of securing protection for themselves and their offspring. Women who sought and secured protection from men would have been more reproductively successful than those who did not. Women are thus expected to have an evolved preference for men who are willing and able to offer protection (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Ellis, 1992), and those men may have included mates as well as friends. Thus,

*Hypothesis 2:* Women form opposite-sex friendships as a strategy for gaining protection.<sup>1</sup>

This hypothesis predicts that, relative to men, women will judge physical protection as a more important reason for initiating opposite-sex friendships (Prediction 2a), desire opposite-sex friends who are physically strong (Prediction 2b), and judge the failure to receive physical protection as a more important reason for dissolving friendships (Prediction 2c).

Some men and women may engage in opposite-sex friendships to acquire long-term mates (Bleske & Buss, 2000). Single people should benefit from the long-term mating prospects of friendship more than mated people. Because female reproductive success is closely linked to obtaining a mate who invests over the long term, long-term mateship potential in friendship should be especially beneficial for single women. We thus hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 3:* Single men and women, more than mated men and women, form opposite-sex friendships as a strategy for gaining long-term mates.

This hypothesis predicts that, relative to mated people, single people will judge the potential for a long-term romantic relationship as a more important reason for initiating opposite-sex friendships (Prediction 3a), report more frequent desire to have a committed romantic relationship with their opposite-sex friends (Prediction 3b), and judge the lack of long-term romantic relationship potential as a more important reason for dissolving opposite-sex friendships (Prediction 3c). If mateship potential in friendship is especially beneficial for women, then the effect of relationship status should be larger for women than for men.

#### STUDY 1: FRIENDSHIP INITIATION, SELECTION, AND DISSOLUTION

##### *Method*

##### *PARTICIPANTS*

Participants were 200 undergraduates (100 men and 100 women) ranging from 17 to 32 years old ( $M = 19.13$ ).

Of the participants, 66% were Caucasian, 15% Asian American, 12% Hispanic, 4% African American, and 3% other ethnicities. The data from 1 bisexual and 2 homosexual participants were dropped. The final sample thus consisted of 197 participants; of the participants, 119 were single or casually dating a member of the opposite sex and 78 were involved in a committed romantic relationship with a member of the opposite sex (4 of the 78 were married). Participants received research credit as a partial requirement for a course in introductory psychology.

#### INSTRUMENTS

*Friendship history.* Participants reported their actual and desired number of same-sex and opposite-sex friends. They then thought of their closest, most important opposite-sex friend who was *not* a long-term romantic partner.<sup>2</sup> To prompt consideration of an actual friendship rather than general beliefs about friendships, participants identified their friend by his or her initials and responded about that person throughout the questionnaire.

*Friendship initiation.* Participants received a list of 63 benefits of opposite-sex friendship (see Bleske & Buss, 2000). They rated on a 7-point scale how important each benefit was to them when they became friends with the person (1 = *not at all important*, 4 = *somewhat important*, 7 = *very important*). The list of benefits tapped 16 different categories, such as advice about the opposite sex, common interests, companionship, conversation, desire for sex, emotional support, physical protection, resource acquisition, self-esteem boost, and sexual attraction. To prompt participants to think about how each benefit influenced them at the time of friendship initiation rather than after the fact, each item was written in the past tense (e.g., "We had a lot in common").

*Friend selection.* Participants received a list of 87 characteristics that are found in a relationship partner (see Buss & Barnes, 1986). Sample characteristics include the following: cheerful, good-looking, good sense of humor, honest, intelligent, kind, sentimental, and witty. Many of these characteristics have been used in recent studies of the characteristics people differentially prefer in mates, friends, and coalition partners (DeKay, Buss, & Stone, 1998). In the current investigation, participants rated on a 5-point scale how desirable each characteristic would be to them in someone they might have for an opposite-sex friend (-2 = *very undesirable*, 0 = *neutral*, +2 = *very desirable*).

*Friendship dissolution.* Because we found no previous literature on reasons for friendship dissolution, we adapted an act nomination procedure for securing a list of reasons (Buss & Craik, 1983). Participants were 120

college students (55 men and 65 women) who completed the act nomination as an in-class activity during an introductory psychology course. Each student completed one of three forms. One form pertained to opposite-sex friendships, another to same-sex friendships, and another to romantic relationships. All forms were identical except for sex-specific and relationship-specific wording and included 10 lines for students' responses. The following is an example of an instructional set on a man's opposite-sex friendship form:

In this study we are interested in the reasons why men *end* their friendships with women. Please think of the close friendships you have had in the past with women. *List the reasons why one or more of the friendships ended.* If none of these friendships has ended, please think of the reasons why you, or a guy you know, would ever end a close opposite-sex friendship. As you make your list of reasons why men end their friendships with women, ask yourself the following questions: What did my friend do that caused me to end the friendship? Or, what did I do that caused my friend to end the friendship? What event between the two of us led to the dissolution of our friendship?

The first author retained all nominations of reasons for opposite-sex friendship, same-sex friendship, and romantic relationship dissolution, compiling them into one master list. Redundancies were then eliminated and the nominations were categorized. In addition, two judges (one graduate student and one professor) independently categorized the original, uncategorized list. Reasons that were judged to belong to a given category by at least two of three judges were included in the category. This process yielded a list of 86 categories comprising 227 nominations.

To create a manageable list, the authors selected 61 nominations to appear in the survey. Items were selected according to two criteria: (a) their frequency of appearance on the participants' nominations and (b) their utility for testing predictions about the effects of sex and relationship status on people's perceptions of why opposite-sex friendships end. The list covered myriad categories, including dishonesty (e.g., "He or she lied to me"), betrayal (e.g., "He or she tried to turn others against me"), miscommunication (e.g., "We had a hard time communicating"), lack of common interests (e.g., "We had no common interests"), lack of sexual attraction (e.g., "I lost my sexual attraction to him or her"), and jealousy toward romantic partner (e.g., "He or she was jealous of my romantic partner"). A full list of the items and categories is available from the first author. Participants in the current investigation rated on a 7-point scale how important each reason would be in leading to the end of their opposite-sex friendship (1 = *not at all important*, 4 = *somewhat important*, 7 = *very important*).

*Attraction in friendship.* In the final portion of the survey, participants reported their perception of their opposite-sex friend's sexual attractiveness. The item was rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all sexually attractive*) to 4 (*somewhat sexually attractive*) to 7 (*very sexually attractive*). Participants reported how often they felt a desire to have a committed romantic relationship with their opposite-sex friend and how often they felt a desire to have sexual intercourse with their opposite-sex friend. Both items were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*sometimes*) to 7 (*very often*). Finally, participants reported on their friend's feelings toward them on each of the attraction scales.

*Items used to test hypotheses.* Table 1 displays the specific items used to test each prediction. If more than one item was used to test a prediction, the items were averaged and then analyzed as a composite variable. Composite reliabilities were computed as a function of sex and relationship status for both studies and ranged from .50 to .95 (Study 1 mean  $\alpha = .81$ , Study 2 mean  $\alpha = .82$ ).

#### PROCEDURE

Participants were tested in mixed-sex groups ranging from 3 to 30 people. A researcher was available to answer questions. Participants placed the completed survey word-down into a box and were then thanked and debriefed.

#### Results and Discussion

##### DESIGN SPECIFICATIONS

We conducted analyses of variance (ANOVAs) with sex and relationship status as the predictor variables. Participants were categorized as single if they reported that they were either single, casually dating one or more persons, or divorced. Participants were categorized as mated if they reported that they were seriously involved with one person or married. Tests of predictions, which specified a direction of effect, were one-tailed, with alpha set to .05. Other tests were two-tailed.

##### FRIENDSHIP NETWORKS

Although men and women did not differ in reported number of opposite-sex friends (men  $M = 6.34$ ,  $SD = 8.02$ ; women  $M = 6.42$ ,  $SD = 11.62$ ), men preferred to have more opposite-sex friends than did women (men  $M = 11.92$ ,  $SD = 20.03$ ; women  $M = 7.03$ ,  $SD = 8.57$ ),  $F(1, 193) = 6.05$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d = .17$ . Neither relationship status nor the interaction between sex and relationship status was related to current or desired number of opposite-sex friends ( $ps > .10$ ).

##### SEXUAL ACCESS

Table 2 displays the results for tests of Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. In confirmation of Prediction 1a, both single men

**TABLE 1: Items Used to Test Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3**

Prediction	Item
<b>Hypothesis 1</b>	
1a: Initiation because of sexual attraction	I was sexually attracted to her (him). I was physically attracted to her (him). She (he) was good-looking.
1b: Initiation because of desire for sex	I wanted to have sex with her (him). She (he) had sex with me. I wanted to pursue her (him) as a short-term sex partner.
1c: Preference for sexual attractiveness	Sexually attractive Physically attractive Good-looking
1d: Sexual attraction to friend	I find my opposite-sex friend ___ sexually attractive ( <i>not at all to very</i> ).
1e: Desire for sex with friend	I have ___ felt a desire to have sexual intercourse with my opposite-sex friend ( <i>never to very often</i> ).
1f: Dissolution because of loss of attraction	I wasn't physically attracted to her (him). I lost my physical attraction to her (him).
1g: Dissolution because of lack of sex	There wasn't enough sex in our relationship.
<b>Hypothesis 2</b>	
2a: Initiation because of protection	I felt safer in dangerous situations when I was with him (her). He (she) protected me.
2b: Preference for physical strength	Physically strong
2c: Dissolution because of lack of protection (Study 2 only)	He (she) failed to physically protect me when I was in danger. I didn't feel physically safe when I was with him (her).
<b>Hypothesis 3</b>	
3a: Initiation because of mateship potential	I wanted to date her (him). I wanted to know if she (he) would be a good romantic partner. There was the possibility of a future relationship beyond friendship.
3b: Desire for committed relationship	I have ___ felt a desire to have a committed romantic relationship with my opposite-sex friend ( <i>never to very often</i> ).
3c: Dissolution because of lack of mateship potential	I started having romantic feelings for her (him) and she (he) didn't have those feelings for me.

and mated men judged sexual attraction as a more important reason than did women for initiating their most important opposite-sex friendship ( $d = .40$ ). Simple effects revealed that whereas single men and mated men did not differ in their judgments, single women perceived sexual attraction as a more important reason for initiating an opposite-sex friendship than did mated women,  $t(89) = 2.07$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d = .21$ .

Consistent with Prediction 1b, single men and mated men also judged the desire for sex as a more important reason for initiating an opposite-sex friendship than did

TABLE 2: Study 1: Tests of Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3

Prediction	Men		Women		F		
	Single M (SD)	Mated M (SD)	Single M (SD)	Mated M (SD)	Sex	Status	Sex × Status
Hypothesis 1: For men more than for women, opposite-sex friendship is a strategy for gaining short-term sexual access to the opposite sex.							
Initiation because of sexual attraction	4.12 (1.65)	4.33 (1.73)	3.17 (1.95)	2.43 (1.54)	30.93****	1.03	3.45
Initiation because of desire for sex	2.20 (1.46)	2.37 (1.66)	1.48 (.92)	1.25 (.82)	23.97****	.03	1.15
Preference for sexual attractiveness	1.26 (.71)	1.31 (.67)	.84 (.74)	.71 (.77)	21.59****	.11	.68
Sexual attraction to friend	5.41 (1.46)	5.11 (2.06)	4.06 (2.12)	3.16 (2.10)	33.11****	4.45*	1.07
Desire for sex with friend	4.19 (2.03)	4.07 (2.29)	2.76 (2.18)	2.22 (1.81)	27.54****	1.09	.46
Dissolution because of loss of attraction	2.83 (1.80)	2.86 (1.86)	1.83 (1.29)	1.69 (1.22)	21.31****	.06	.12
Dissolution because of lack of sex	1.97 (1.45)	2.07 (1.82)	1.23 (.67)	1.27 (.86)	16.90****	.12	.03
Hypothesis 2: For women more than for men, opposite-sex friendship is a strategy for gaining protection.							
Initiation because of protection	2.68 (1.64)	2.34 (1.73)	4.11 (1.84)	4.26 (1.90)	39.71****	.14	.82
Preference for physical strength	.20 (.89)	.21 (.90)	.79 (.77)	.59 (.81)	14.77****	.58	.66
Hypothesis 3: For both men and women, but particularly for women, opposite-sex friendship is a strategy for gaining long-term mates.							
Initiation because of mateship potential	3.43 (2.01)	3.20 (1.87)	2.88 (1.97)	1.92 (1.42)	10.87***	4.63*	1.73
Desire for committed relationship	4.57 (1.85)	3.93 (2.18)	3.85 (2.21)	2.76 (1.85)	9.86**	8.31**	.56
Dissolution because of lack of mateship potential	3.77 (2.07)	3.82 (2.36)	3.17 (1.75)	3.45 (2.41)	2.30	.27	.13

NOTE: Status = relationship status. Total *d* range from 193 to 196. Initiation and dissolution items were rated on scales from 1 (*not at all important*) to 7 (*very important*). Characteristics were rated on scales from -2 (*very undesirable*) to +2 (*very desirable*).

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ . \*\*\*\* $p < .0001$ .

women ( $d = .37$ ). Neither relationship status nor the interaction between sex and relationship status was related to men's and women's importance judgments.

Relative to women, men also judged a prospective friend's lack of desire to have sex with them as a less important reason for initiating an opposite-sex friendship (men  $M = 2.70$ ,  $SD = 2.19$ ; women  $M = 3.47$ ,  $SD = 2.67$ ),  $F(1, 195) = 3.94$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d = .16$ . This offers further confirmation of Prediction 1b.

Prediction 1c was confirmed. Both single men and mated men preferred sexual attractiveness in an opposite-sex friend more than did women ( $d = .34$ ). Neither relationship status nor the interaction between sex and relationship status was related to men's and women's preference ratings.

Both single men and mated men reported higher levels of sexual attraction to their opposite-sex friends than did women ( $d = .45$ ), confirming Prediction 1d. Whereas single men and mated men did not differ in their judgments, single women reported higher levels of sexual

attraction to their friends than did mated women,  $t(94) = 2.09$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d = .21$ .

Men reported that they were more sexually attracted to their female friends ( $M = 5.31$ ,  $SD = 1.66$ ) than their female friends were to them ( $M = 4.73$ ,  $SD = 1.59$ ), paired  $t(95) = 3.05$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = .18$ , and women reported that their male friends were more sexually attracted to them ( $M = 4.68$ ,  $SD = 1.72$ ) than they were to their male friends ( $M = 3.60$ ,  $SD = 2.15$ ), paired  $t(95) = -5.43$ ,  $p < .0001$ ,  $d = .28$ .

In confirmation of Prediction 1e, both single men and mated men reported more frequent desire than women to have sexual intercourse with their opposite-sex friends ( $d = .41$ ). Neither relationship status nor the interaction between sex and relationship status was related to men's and women's reported frequency of desire to have sex with friends.

Men also reported that they felt a desire to have sex with their female friends more often ( $M = 4.16$ ,  $SD = 2.10$ ) than their female friends felt a desire to have sex with them ( $M = 3.43$ ,  $SD = 1.94$ ), paired  $t(96) = 4.18$ ,  $p <$

.0001,  $d = .18$ , and women reported that their male friends desired sex with them more frequently ( $M = 3.35$ ,  $SD = 2.07$ ) than they felt a desire to have sex with their male friends ( $M = 2.48$ ,  $SD = 2.01$ ),  $t(95) = -4.67$ ,  $p < .0001$ ,  $d = .21$ .

Both single men and mated men perceived a loss of sexual attraction to their opposite-sex friend as a more important reason for ending their friendship than did women ( $d = .35$ ), confirming Prediction 1f. Neither relationship status nor the interaction between sex and relationship status was related to participants' judgments.

Despite low overall levels of perceived importance of lack of sex for dissolving an opposite-sex friendship, Prediction 1g was confirmed. Relative to women, both single men and mated men judged the lack of sex as a more important reason for ending a close opposite-sex friendship ( $d = .32$ ). Neither relationship status nor the interaction between it and sex was related to participants' importance ratings.

In summary, all relevant tests supported the hypothesis that opposite-sex friendship is a strategy by which men gain short-term sexual access to women.

#### PROTECTION

In confirmation of Prediction 2a, women judged physical protection as a more important reason for initiating an opposite-sex friendship than did men ( $d = .45$ ). The sex difference held across relationship status.

Prediction 2b also was confirmed. Relative to men, both single women and mated women judged physical strength as more desirable in an opposite-sex friend ( $d = .29$ ). Neither relationship status nor the interaction between sex and relationship status predicted desirability ratings. Because the list of reasons for friendship dissolution in Study 1 did not include the failure to offer protection, Prediction 2c was not tested.

In summary, the tests conducted supported the hypothesis that, for women, opposite-sex friendship is a strategy for gaining physical protection.

#### LONG-TERM MATESHIP POTENTIAL

A main effect for relationship status revealed that single people judged romantic potential as a more important reason for initiating an opposite-sex friendship than did mated people ( $d = .22$ ). In confirmation of Prediction 3a, the effect of relationship status was stronger for women than for men. Whereas single men's and mated men's importance judgments did not differ, single women's and mated women's judgments did,  $t(85) = 2.75$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $d = .28$ . A main effect for sex revealed that men judged romantic potential as more important than did women ( $d = .26$ ).

Prediction 3b was confirmed. Single people reported more frequent desire to have a committed romantic relationship with their opposite-sex friends than did mated

people ( $d = .27$ ). The effect of relationship status was significant for women,  $t(94) = 2.64$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $d = .27$ , but not for men. Again, the ANOVA revealed a main effect for sex. Relative to women, men reported more frequent desire to have a committed romantic relationship with their opposite-sex friends ( $d = .27$ ).

Prediction 3c was not confirmed. Relative to mated people, single people did not judge the lack of relationship potential as a more important reason for dissolving an opposite-sex friendship.

In summary, two of three tests supported the hypothesis that opposite-sex friendship serves, in part, a long-term mate acquisition strategy. In addition, single women were more sexually attracted to their opposite-sex friends than were mated women and perceived sexual attraction was a more important reason for initiating an opposite-sex friendship. These findings raise the interesting possibility that single women are not only more likely than mated women to perceive their opposite-sex friends as potential long-term partners but also are more likely to perceive them as prospective short-term sex partners.

Men, overall, judged romantic potential as a more important reason for initiating an opposite-sex friendship than did women and reported more frequent desire for a committed romantic relationship with their friends. Single men and mated men did not differ in their judgments.

#### SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE SEXES

In several domains, men's and women's perceptions were similar. They agreed that kindness, good conversation, and companionship were among the most important reasons for initiating an opposite-sex friendship. They both judged honesty, humor, and dependability as among the most desirable characteristics in an opposite-sex friend. Men and women also concurred that distrust and betrayal were the most important reasons for terminating an opposite-sex friendship. Because this study documents for the first time the reasons men and women end their friendships with each other, Table 3 lists the most important reasons for friendship dissolution.

#### STUDY 2: EFFECTS OF SEX, RELATIONSHIP STATUS, AND SOCIOSEXUAL ORIENTATION ON PERCEPTIONS OF OPPOSITE-SEX FRIENDSHIP

Study 2 was designed to augment the first study by testing for the predicted effects of sex and relationship status in a community sample of people of diverse ages, years of education, occupations, and incomes. Study 2 also was designed to determine if individual differences in sociosexuality, or willingness to engage in casual sex,

**TABLE 3: Study 1: Most Important Reasons for Dissolving an Opposite-Sex Friendship, as Reported by Men ( $n = 95$ ) and by Women ( $n = 93$ )**

Rank	Men		Women	
	Reason	M (SD)	Reason	M (SD)
1	She tried to turn others against me.	6.27 (1.44)	He tried to turn others against me.	6.64 (.86)
2	I didn't trust her.	6.04 (1.48)	He started rumors about me.	6.58 (.86)
3	She was not trustworthy.	6.01 (1.50)	He told other people about our private conversations.	6.52 (.91)
4	She started rumors about me.	5.88 (1.60)	He didn't respect me.	6.48 (.88)
5	She talked about me behind my back.	5.77 (1.55)	I didn't trust him.	6.42 (1.03)
6	She lied to me.	5.74 (1.51)	He was not trustworthy.	6.36 (1.12)
7	She didn't respect me.	5.72 (1.39)	He made mean remarks about me.	6.31 (1.07)
8	She annoyed me.	5.41 (1.63)	He talked about me behind my back.	6.28 (1.16)
9	She made mean remarks about me.	5.39 (1.69)	He lied to me.	6.27 (1.00)
10	She told other people about our private conversations.	5.33 (1.52)	He hurt my feelings.	6.07 (1.20)

NOTE: Ratings were on a scale from 1 (*not at all important*) to 7 (*very important*).

explain additional variance in men's and women's sexual attraction to and desire for sex with their opposite-sex friends. We predicted that, across the sexes, willingness to engage in casual sex would predict (a) greater perceived importance of sex for initiating an opposite-sex friendship and (b) greater perceived importance of a lack of sex for dissolving an opposite-sex friendship.

#### Method

##### PARTICIPANTS

Participants were 151 coffee shop customers. We omitted the data from 11 largely incomplete surveys. Of the remaining participants, 12 were gay men, 10 were lesbians, 3 were bisexual men, and 9 were bisexual women; their data were omitted from the present data set.<sup>3</sup> The final data set thus included responses from a diverse sample of 60 male and 46 female heterosexual participants. Of the participants, 81% were Caucasian, 6.5% Hispanic, 7.5% Asian American, 1% African American, and 4% other ethnicities. Of the participants, 56% were single, 31% were involved in a committed heterosexual relationship, 11% were married, and 2% did not report their relationship status. Participants ranged from 18 to 54 years old ( $M = 30$ ). Participants reported between 6 and 20 years of completed education ( $M = 15.4$ ); 51% of participants held a bachelor's degree or higher. The majority of participants (77%) were nonstudents, 19% were undergraduate and graduate students, and 4% were unemployed (neither student nor employed). Participant annual income ranged from \$0 to \$120,000, with a median annual income of \$21,500.

##### INSTRUMENTS

The instruments were similar to those used in Study 1, with two changes. First, to give the list of reasons for friendship dissolution a broader range of category inclusion, we expanded the list to 100 items. We added the cat-

egory lack of protection, for example, to determine whether women would judge the lack of physical protection from an opposite-sex friend as a more important reason for dissolving a friendship than would men.

Second, we included the Sociosexuality Orientation Inventory (SOI), which consists of seven items that measure people's behavioral experience with and attitudes toward engaging in casual sex (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). SOI scores were computed as recommended by Simpson and Gangestad (1991). Because more than half of the sample was single, we omitted one item linked to current relationship involvement, "How often do you fantasize about having sex with someone other than your current romantic partner?" Higher SOI scores indicate unrestrictedness, or relative willingness to engage in casual sex.

##### PROCEDURE

One graduate researcher and four undergraduate researchers approached people at five coffee shops and asked them to complete a survey. To increase the likelihood of gathering a nonstudent sample, all coffee shops were located off campus and away from the university. Researchers visited the coffee shops at all times of the day, although most visits took place in the late evening on weekdays and late afternoon on weekends. Regardless of sex, researchers solicited questionnaire responses from both men and women. Approximately 10% of those solicited declined to participate because of time constraints. Those who agreed to complete the survey were given a consent form and a large manila envelope that held the survey. After reviewing the consent form with the participant, the researcher instructed the participant to write directly on the survey and, when complete, to put it in the envelope, close the clasp, and drop the envelope in the box at the researcher's table. When complete, each participant received a debriefing form



and a small card for a free coffee drink of their choice at that coffee shop. Most participants completed the survey within 45 minutes. If two participants were sitting at a table together, they were asked to respect each other's privacy while completing the survey and to not discuss the survey contents until they had both completed it. Participants complied with this request.

### Results and Discussion

#### DESIGN SPECIFICATIONS

Because sociosexuality was distributed as a continuous variable for both sexes, we conducted hierarchical multiple regression analyses to examine people's judgments of friendship initiation, selection, and dissolution. Sex was entered into the first block of each equation because of its theoretical importance. To determine the effect of relationship status after controlling for sex, relationship status (single or mated) was added in the second block. To determine if SOI accounted for additional variance after statistically controlling for sex and relationship status, SOI scores were added in the third block. Two correlations among the predictor variables were significant: men were more likely than women to be single ( $r = .23, p < .05$ ) and single participants tended to be more unrestricted than mated participants ( $r = -.30, p < .01$ ).

#### SOI SCORES

Contrary to past research using college students (Hebl & Kashy, 1995; M. Jones, 1998; Reise & Wright, 1996; Wright & Reise, 1997), the relatively older men and women in our study did not differ significantly on the SOI (composite male  $M = 24.92, SD = 13.85$ ; female  $M = 22.29, SD = 14.81; p = .36$ ), possibly because sex differences on the SOI generally decrease with age as women become more likely to pursue a short-term mating strategy (Jeff Simpson, personal communication, August 20, 2000). Moreover, the standard deviations in our sample were larger than usual, perhaps because a diverse community sample includes more variation in sexual attitudes and behavioral experiences than a college student sample. The large standard deviations may have attenuated the significance tests. As with previous studies of sociosexuality (Reise & Wright, 1996; Wright & Reise, 1997), both men's and women's distributions were slightly positively skewed such that participants tended to be more restrictive than unrestricted in sociosexual orientation.

#### FRIENDSHIP NETWORKS

Relative to mated people, single people desired more opposite-sex friends (single  $M = 7.37, SD = 6.55$ ; mated  $M = 4.29, SD = 4.83$ ),  $F(1, 98) = 8.48, p < .01, d = .27$ . Neither sex nor the interaction between sex and relation-

ship status was related to participants' current or desired number of opposite-sex friends.

#### SEXUAL ACCESS

Table 4 shows the results for tests of the hypotheses. Table 5 displays the means for men and women on the target factors for Hypotheses 1 and 2.

Prediction 1a was confirmed. Compared with women, men judged sexual attraction as a more important reason for initiating an opposite-sex friendship. Relationship status did not account for additional variance. As predicted, across sex and relationship status an unrestricted sociosexual style was related to higher perceived importance of sexual attraction for initiating a friendship.

Prediction 1b was confirmed. Men rated a desire for sex with a prospective friend as a more important reason for initiating an opposite-sex friendship than did women. Relationship status accounted for additional variance in the model, with single people rating a desire for sex as more important than mated people. For both single people and mated people, an unrestricted sexual style predicted higher importance judgments.

Further confirmation of Prediction 1b comes from the finding that, relative to women, men judged a prospective friend's lack of desire for sex and lack of sexual attraction to them as less important reasons for initiating an opposite-sex friendship, no sex  $F_{\text{change}}(5, 80) = 6.20, p < .01, \beta = 1.44$ ; no sexual attraction  $F_{\text{change}}(5, 80) = 4.68, p < .05, \beta = 1.05$ . Neither relationship status nor sociosexual orientation was related to participants' importance judgments.

In confirmation of Prediction 1c, men judged sexual attractiveness as more desirable in an opposite-sex friend than did women. Neither relationship status nor sociosexual orientation added further predictive value to the model.

Prediction 1d was not supported. Neither sex, relationship status, nor sociosexuality predicted participants' reported level of sexual attraction to their friend. Contrary to their counterparts in Study 1, men in Study 2 did not report that they were more sexually attracted to their female friends than their female friends were to them. Women, however, reported that their male friends were more sexually attracted to them ( $M = 4.24, SD = 1.87$ ) than they were to their male friends ( $M = 3.64, SD = 2.06$ ), paired  $t(42) = -2.38, p < .05, d = .15$ .

Men reported more frequent desire for sex with their friends, confirming Prediction 1e. Men in Study 2 also reported that they wanted to have sex with their female friends ( $M = 3.70, SD = 2.15$ ) more often than their female friends wanted to have sex with them ( $M = 3.25, SD = 1.89$ ), paired  $t(57) = 2.12, p < .05, d = .11$ , and women reported that their male friends wanted to have sex with

TABLE 4: Study 2: Tests of Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3

Prediction	Independent Predictor								
	Sex			Status			SOI		
	$\beta$	$F_{change}$	$R^2$	$\beta$	$F_{change}$	$R^2$	$\beta$	$F_{change}$	$R^2$
Effects of sex, relationship status, and sociosexual orientation on perceptions of sexuality in friendship									
Initiation because of sexual attraction	-.98	7.04**	.07	-.71	3.51	.03	.16	8.02**	.07
Initiation because of desire for sex	-.83	6.08**	.06	-.77	5.00*	.05	.21	19.90*****	.15
Preference for sexual attractiveness	-.45	10.16***	.09	-.14	.94	.01	.02	.62	.01
Sexual attraction to friend	-.60	2.27	.02	-.78	3.62	.03	.08	1.73	.02
Desire for sex with friend	-.83	4.07*	.04	-1.25	9.32**	.08	.20	11.83***	.09
Dissolution because of loss of attraction	-.23	.77	.01	-.53	3.88*	.04	.11	7.80**	.07
Dissolution because of lack of sex	-.52	3.70*	.04	-.66	5.71*	.05	.10	6.90**	.06
Effects of sex, relationship status, and sociosexual orientation on perceptions of protection in friendship									
Initiation because of protection	1.19	12.89***	.12	-.69	4.17*	.04	-.01	.05	.00
Preference for physical strength	.15	1.39	.01	.05	.14	.00	.01	.17	.00
Dissolution because of a lack of protection	1.17	10.52***	.10	-.35	.86	.01	.02	.17	.00
Effects of sex, relationship status, and sociosexual orientation on perceptions of long-term mateship potential in friendship									
Initiation because of mateship potential	-.70	4.29*	.04	-.58	2.82*	.03	.12	6.02**	.05
Desire for committed relationship	-.11	.08	.00	-.78	3.76*	.04	.08	2.06	.02
Dissolution because of lack of mateship potential	.10	.05	.00	-.64	2.08	.02	.03	.28	.00

NOTE: SOI = sociosexuality; status = relationship status;  $\beta$  = standardized beta weight;  $F_{change}$  = change in  $F$  score after entering new predictor to regression equation; and  $R^2$  = proportion of variance accounted for by predictor. Values in first block of columns represent the effects of sex, values in second block of columns represent the effects of relationship status after controlling for sex, and values in third block of columns represent the effects of sociosexuality after controlling for sex and relationship status. For perceptions of sex, tests of the effects of sex and sociosexuality, which specified a direction of effect, were one-tailed and other tests were two-tailed. For perceptions of protection, tests of the effects of sex were one-tailed and other tests were two-tailed. For perceptions of mateship potential, tests of the effects of relationship status were one-tailed and other tests were two-tailed.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ . \*\*\*\* $p < .0001$ .

them ( $M = 3.27$ ,  $SD = 2.12$ ) somewhat more often than they wanted to have sex with their male friends ( $M = 2.86$ ,  $SD = 1.95$ ),  $t(44) = -1.69$ ,  $p < .10$ ,  $d = .10$ . Across sex, single people reported more frequent desire to have sex with their friends. As expected, those who expressed more interest in and acceptance of casual sex reported more frequent desire for sex with their opposite-sex friends.

Prediction 1f was not supported. Men did not judge a loss of sexual attraction as a more important reason for dissolving an opposite-sex friendship. Across sex, however, single people judged a loss of sexual attraction as more important than did mated people, and those with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation judged a loss of attraction as more important than did those with a restricted orientation.

Tests of Prediction 1g revealed that, relative to women, men judged a lack of sex as a more important reason for dissolving an opposite-sex friendship. Across sex, single people more than mated people judged a lack

of sex in friendship as an important reason for dissolving an opposite-sex friendship. Compared with people with a restricted sociosexual orientation, unrestricted people judged a lack of sex as a more important reason for friendship dissolution.

In summary, five tests of Hypothesis 1 supported the hypothesis that for men, opposite-sex friendship is a strategy for gaining short-term sexual access.

#### PROTECTION

In support of Hypothesis 2, Prediction 2a was confirmed. Women judged protection as a more important reason for initiating an opposite-sex friendship than did men. Across sex, single people judged protection as more important than did mated people. Variation in sociosexual orientation did not account for additional variance in the model.

Prediction 2b was not confirmed. Women in Study 2 did not desire physical strength in an opposite-sex friend

**TABLE 5: Study 2: Mean Ratings for Target Factors in Hypotheses 1 and 2, for Men and Women**

Prediction	Men		Women		t	d
	M	(SD)	M	(SD)		
Hypothesis 1: For men more than for women, opposite-sex friendship is a strategy for gaining short-term sexual access to the opposite sex.						
Initiation because of sexual attraction	3.56	(1.98)	2.49	(1.61)	3.05**	.30
Initiation because of desire for sex	2.41	(2.02)	1.50	(1.13)	2.90**	.29
Preference for sexual attractiveness	.99	(.66)	.54	(.77)	3.25***	.31
Sexual attraction to friend	4.40	(1.89)	3.71	(2.07)	1.77	
Desire for sex with friend	3.65	(2.14)	2.80	(1.93)	2.11*	.21
Dissolution because of loss of attraction	1.99	(1.38)	1.70	(1.20)	1.16	
Dissolution because of lack of sex	1.98	(1.68)	1.36	(.96)	2.41**	.23
Hypothesis 2: For women more than for men, opposite-sex friendship is a strategy for gaining protection.						
Initiation because of protection	2.09	(1.36)	3.38	(1.93)	-3.85****	.39
Preference for physical strength	.31	(.62)	.43	(.69)	-1.01	
Dissolution because of a lack of protection	2.07	(1.59)	3.42	(2.06)	-3.64****	.37

NOTE: Tests of predictions are one-tailed. Total degrees of freedom range from 92 to 104. Initiation and dissolution items were rated on scales from 1 (*not at all important*) to 7 (*very important*). Characteristics were rated on scales from -2 (*very undesirable*) to +2 (*very desirable*).

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ . \*\*\*\* $p < .0001$ .

more than did men. Neither relationship status nor sociosexual orientation predicted desirability ratings.

In confirmation of Prediction 2c, women judged the failure to receive physical protection from a friend as a more important reason for terminating an opposite-sex friendship than did men. They also judged feeling physically unsafe when with their friend as more important ( $\beta = 1.21$ ),  $F_{\text{change}} = 6.18$ ,  $p < .01$ . Neither relationship status nor sociosexual orientation accounted for additional variance.

In summary, two predictions were confirmed, offering some support for the hypothesis that for women, opposite-sex friendship is a strategy for gaining protection.

#### LONG-TERM MATESHIP POTENTIAL

In support of Hypothesis 3, Prediction 3a was confirmed. Single people judged long-term mateship potential in friendship as a more important reason for initiating an opposite-sex friendship than did mated people. As in Study 1, men in Study 2 judged romantic potential as more important than did women. Across sex and relationship status, people with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation judged romantic potential as a more important reason for initiating an opposite-sex friendship. This result suggests that participants may have interpreted the items in this category—"I wanted to date her (him)," "I wanted to know if she (he) would be a good romantic partner," and "There was the possibility of a future relationship beyond friendship"—to denote short-term sex opportunities rather than long-term mateship opportunities.

Prediction 3b was confirmed. Independent of sex, single people reported more frequent desire to have a committed romantic relationship with their opposite-sex friends than did mated people. Neither sex nor sociosexual style accounted for additional variance in the model.

Contrary to Prediction 3c, single people did not judge the lack of romantic potential in friendship as a more important reason for dissolving an opposite-sex friendship than did mated people. Neither sex nor sociosexual style was related to participants' judgments.

In summary, two of three tests supported the hypothesis that opposite-sex friendship is a mate acquisition strategy.

#### SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE SEXES

As in Study 1, men's and women's perceptions of opposite-sex friendship were similar in many domains. They agreed that having someone to talk to and having a companion were two of the most important reasons for initiating an opposite-sex friendship. They both judged honesty and a good sense of humor as two of the most desirable characteristics in an opposite-sex friend. In addition, they concurred that having an opposite-sex friend try to turn others against them or lie to them were two of the most important reasons for opposite-sex friendship dissolution.

#### GENERAL DISCUSSION

We hypothesized that humans have evolved psychological mechanisms designed to guide opposite-sex friendship initiation, selection, and dissolution. In two

studies, we tested hypotheses about the effects of sex, relationship status, and sociosexuality on people's motivations for initiating opposite-sex friendships, their preferences when selecting opposite-sex friends, and their motivations for dissolving opposite-sex friendships.

In some ways, men and women perceive opposite-sex friendships much like same-sex friendships. As with same-sex friendships, both men and women initiate opposite-sex friendships because they offer companionship, good times, conversation, and laughter. As with same-sex friends, both men and women prefer opposite-sex friends who are honest, intelligent, sensitive, funny, and dependable. And as with same-sex friendships, men and women dissolve opposite-sex friendships with those who abuse, betray, annoy, and lie to them. These findings suggest that the need for companionship with someone who is kind, intelligent, and trustworthy transcends gender and the specific type of friendship in which one is involved. In the context of these similarities, several unique qualities of opposite-sex friendship stand out.

#### *Sex in Friendship*

First, men more than women appear to be motivated by the potential for sex with their opposite-sex friends. Men were more sexually attracted to their friends than were women and more often desired to have sex with their opposite-sex friends. Men preferred sexual attractiveness in their friends and perceived sexual attraction to someone and a desire to have sex with someone as more important reasons for initiating an opposite-sex friendship. Moreover, men in both studies judged the reason "There wasn't enough sex in our relationship" as a more important reason for dissolving their opposite-sex friendships.

Although these results support the hypothesis that men more than women may form friendships to gain sex, the results do not imply that sex is the only motivator for men. Other benefits, such as companionship and emotional support, are clearly important. In neither study did men rate a desire for sex as one of the most important reasons for initiating an opposite-sex friendship, nor did they rate a lack of sex as one of the most important reasons for ending an opposite-sex friendship. Although men's perceived importance of the desire for sex for initiating opposite-sex friendships and the lack of sex for dissolving them was relatively low on average, the variation among men's ratings was substantially larger than women's. These findings support the hypothesis that for more men than women, sex is a motivator in opposite-sex friendships.

In fact, the sex differences reported for the target factors were among the largest in the data set. For example, in Study 2, the largest sex difference in reasons for initi-

ating a friendship was that women perceived protection as a more important reason than did men (see Table 5). The second largest sex difference in friendship initiation was that women rated a potential friend's lack of desire to have sex with them as a more important reason to initiate a friendship than did men. These findings support a model of sex-specific psychological mechanisms.

Study 2 did not find a significant sex difference in sexual attraction to opposite-sex friends, although the means were in the predicted direction. Both single men and mated men in Study 2 reported less sexual attraction to their opposite-sex friends than did the college men in Study 1. Given that women's desirability as a mate is negatively correlated with age (Symons, 1979), and that men's opposite-sex friends in the community sample may have been older than college men's opposite-sex friends, men in the community sample may have reported less sexual attraction to their female friends because their opposite-sex friends were not as sexually desirable as college men's female friends. Future studies could test this possibility.

#### *Protection in Friendship*

A second conclusion is that women more than men appear to value physical protection from their opposite-sex friends. In both studies, women rated protection as a more important reason for initiating an opposite-sex friendship, and in Study 1, women judged physical strength as more desirable in an opposite-sex friend. In Study 2, women judged the failure to receive physical protection from a friend as a more important reason for dissolving an opposite-sex friendship. Because a lack of physical protection was not nominated by participants as a reason for friendship dissolution, and because Study 2 did not replicate the sex difference in preference for physically strong friends, the current studies do not provide unequivocal support for the hypothesis that opposite-sex friendships function in part to provide women with protection. Rather than select friends partially on the basis of ability to provide protection, women may merely benefit from protection after becoming involved in opposite-sex friendships. These data may also be a product of male perceptions of strength that do not require an evolved friendship psychology. Perhaps men recognize that women are smaller and physically not as strong as they are and thus do not seek friendships with women for that reason. Likewise, they may recognize that women are less able to offer physical protection in dangerous situations and thus do not perceive a lack of protection as grounds for friendship dissolution.

If there is an evolved female preference for physically strong male friends, however, the preference may exist because strong friends historically provided protection

from sexual aggressors and abusive mates, just as female baboons may prefer dominant males because they offer them and their offspring physical protection from aggressors (Smuts, 1985). Comparative research suggests that members of several nonhuman primate species, including those most closely related to humans, initiate their opposite-sex friendships for distinct reasons—females for protection and males for status, coalitional support, and sexual access (Chapais, 1981; Fedigan, 1982; Gagneux, Boesch, & Woodruff, 1999; Gould, 1996; Smuts, 1983, 1985). If our hypothesis is correct, then certain environmental circumstances should activate women's preferences. Women who live in dangerous neighborhoods or who are in abusive relationships should preferentially select and value physical strength in their opposite-sex friends. Moreover, women with physically strong opposite-sex friends should feel more satisfied and invested in their friendships than women with physically weak opposite-sex friends. Finally, men's physical size and strength should be correlated with their reported number of opposite-sex friends, particularly in dangerous environments. These predictions could be tested in future studies.

#### *Individual Differences in Friendship*

A third conclusion is that opposite-sex friendship is one medium by which single people can seek and initiate both short-term and long-term mateships. Compared with mated people, single people judged a desire for sex as a more important reason for initiating a friendship, reported more frequent desire to have sex with their opposite-sex friends, and judged the lack of sex as a more important reason for dissolving an opposite-sex friendship. Single men and women in both studies also reported a more frequent desire to have a committed romantic relationship with their friends than did mated people.

A final conclusion is that individuals differ in their perceptions of sex in opposite-sex friendships. The results from Study 2 suggest that individual differences in sociosexuality correlate with people's judgments of sex in their opposite-sex friendships. As we predicted, men and women who were relatively willing to engage in casual sex reported higher levels of sexual attraction to their friends, judged sexual attraction and a desire for sex as more important reasons for initiating an opposite-sex friendship, and judged a loss of sexual attraction and a lack of sexual access as more important reasons for ending an opposite-sex friendship. These correlations with sociosexuality, even after controlling for sex and relationship status, underscore the importance and prevalence of within-sex as well as between-sex variation

in mating strategies (Bleske & Buss, 2000; Gangestad & Simpson, 2000).

#### *Conflict in Friendship*

The results of the current studies suggest that men and women engage in opposite-sex friendships for many of the same reasons. If the potential for conflict in opposite-sex friendship lies in those domains in which people differ in their motivations and desires, then sex and romance may be two prominent areas of conflict between opposite-sex friends. Sex differences in desire for sex with opposite-sex friends, for example, may create conflict in opposite-sex friendships. Both men and women may feel betrayed by an opposite-sex friend—women because a trusted friend suddenly rejects them because there is no potential for romance and men because they feel they have been led on sexually.

The findings from our studies have important implications for people's experiences with opposite-sex friendship during college. Mated men did not differ from single men in sexual attraction to their opposite-sex friends. These findings suggest that mated college men who have opposite-sex friends may be more likely to be sexually unfaithful to their girlfriends, or feel tempted to be sexually unfaithful, than those men who do not. It is possible that the threat opposite-sex friends may pose exists well beyond the college years. A male Christian organization known as The Promise Keepers, for example, urges married men to avoid risky and potentially tempting situations, such as dining alone with female friends or coworkers (Bright, Dobson, & Cole, 1999).

Regardless of sex, conflict in opposite-sex friendship also might arise when one friend is single and the other mated, because one friend may be more motivated by mating possibilities and the other not. Likewise, regardless of sex, conflict might arise when one friend is more unrestricted in sociosexual orientation and the other more restricted.

#### *The Nature of an Evolved Psychology of Opposite-Sex Friendship*

Although the current investigation has provided evidence that is consistent with the hypothesis that there is an evolved opposite-sex friendship psychology, it is possible that the effects discussed in this article are due instead to men's and women's evolved mating strategies' impinging on their experiences of opposite-sex friendship. Men's perception of sex as an important reason for forming an opposite-sex friendship, for example, may be a byproduct of their evolved desire for sexual variety. Men may desire sex with their opposite-sex friends because the friendship serves as an additional context in

which their desire for sexual variety can be manifested. If future work using mateships as a comparison group were to find few or no differences between people's perceptions of romantic relationships and opposite-sex friendships, then we would tentatively reject the hypothesis that there is a distinct evolved psychology for opposite-sex friendship.

Although our hypotheses and findings were generated by an evolutionary account, alternative explanations could be fashioned post hoc, such as those involving differential socialization. For example, women more than men may have learned that they will jeopardize an opposite-sex friendship by having sex with their friend and thus may not rate it as a very important reason for initiating a friendship (although this does not explain why women rate having sex with their friend as a more important reason than do men for dissolving an opposite-sex friendship). Or, women may believe that they will lose power in the relationship by having sex with their friend. Relatedly, our self-report data may indicate what men and women have been socialized to believe about opposite-sex friendships rather than what they actually do in their friendships. Although socialization theory provides an additional account of some of the findings, it is not mutually exclusive of an evolutionary account (see, e.g., Low, 1989). Linking the theories may provide a more complete account of the content of people's beliefs and the particular patterns of sex-differentiated socialization practices involved (for a discussion of these issues, see Buss, 1989; Low, 1989; Oliver & Hyde, 1993).

### Conclusion

Our findings suggest that opposite-sex friendship is a strategy men use to gain sex, women use to gain protection, and both sexes use to acquire potential romantic partners. Furthermore, sex and romance may be important in determining which opposite-sex friendships end, and why. Future research could profitably explore opposite-sex friendship conflict and dissolution in depth.

### NOTES

1. There are two reasons we do not test the hypothesis that women form opposite-sex friendships to gain resources. First, in a series of exploratory studies on the costs and benefits of opposite-sex friendship, we found little support for the hypothesis that one benefit of opposite-sex friendship, for women more than for men, is the receipt of resources (see Bleske & Buss, 2000). Second, when we conducted the act nomination study of reasons for dissolving friendships and romantic relationships, lack of resources was not nominated as a potential reason. In the current investigation, we pursue tests of the hypotheses that most directly follow from Smuts's (1985) work on special friendships in baboons, which are also the hypotheses that were best supported in our exploratory studies of opposite-sex friendship.

2. We chose to leave friendship undefined because we did not want to restrict our study of friendship to any subtypes (Adams, 1989; Monsour, 1997). By not offering a specific definition of opposite-sex

friendship for our participants, we allowed them to define it according to their own experience. A core assumption of our investigation is that there is within-sex and between-sex variation in how people perceive and define opposite-sex friends. Leaving friendship undefined for participants allowed a proper test of that assumption. Future research might investigate systematic variation in people's perceptions of the types of relationships that are considered "opposite-sex friendships."

3. Homosexual and bisexual participants were similar to heterosexual participants in distribution of age, education, income, and relationship status. The majority of bisexual participants were nonstudents (9 of 12), whereas the majority of homosexual participants were students (18 of 22). Results from analyses of homosexual and bisexual participants' data are available from the first author.

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