# The Double-Edged Nature of Assortative Friendship:

## Attractiveness and Rivalry in Women's Friendships with Women

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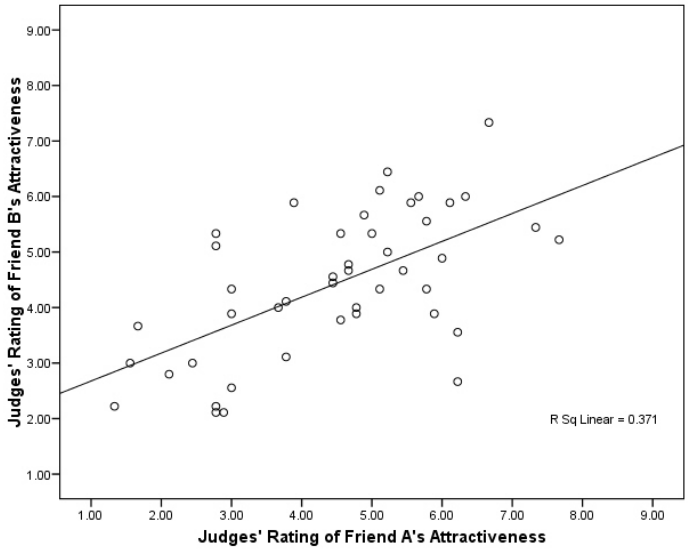
## Assortment in personal relationships

- Group identity
- Status
- Intelligence
- Interests and hobbies
- Attitudes
- Sexual strategy
- Attractiveness

# Female friends should assort on attractiveness

# Initial evidence suggests that female friends are similarly attractive

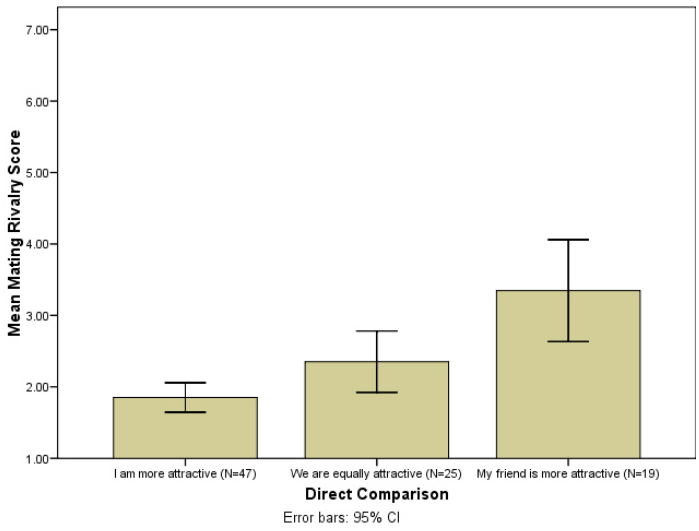



*(Bleske-Rechek & Lighthall, 2010)*

# Female friends should compete on attractiveness

- A female's attractiveness is arguably best predictor of her appeal to men, and women compete to embody attractiveness. Women's friends, then, might also be intrasexual competitors.

# Initial evidence suggests that mating rivalry is tied to perceptions of friend's attractiveness




*(Bleske-Rechek & Lighthall, 2010)*

# The current research

***Hypothesis 1****: Women befriend women who are similar to them in mate value.*

*Prediction*: Female friends will be similar in mate-value relevant attributes-

- body shape (WHR);
- breast (cup) size;
- face, body, and full-body attractiveness.

# The current research

***Hypothesis 2****: Female friends compete over their level of attractiveness.*

*Prediction*: Women who perceive themselves as less attractive than their friend will feel more rivalry in their friendship.

*Prediction*: Women will rate their friend as more attractive than themselves when pitted against other women, but not when pitted directly against each other.

## Study 1:
## 43 pairs of young adult female friends

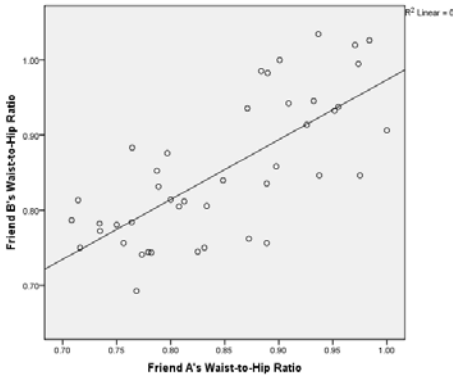
- *Step 1: Photographs*
  - Original clothing and hair
  - In scrubs, hair back and make-up removed
- *Step 2: Measurements*
  - Height and weight; chest, waist, hip circumference
- *Step 3: Questionnaires*
  - In independent rooms/cubicles
  - On self, friend, and friendship
- *Step 4: Ratings from outside judges (6 unique sets)*
  - Original look: Face only, Body only, Full body
  - Scrubs: Face only, Body only, Full body


## Study 2:
## 37 pairs of young adult female friends

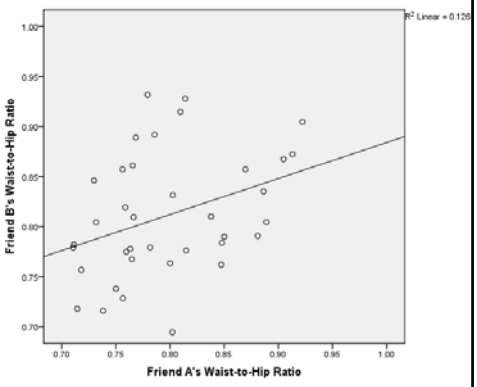
- *Step 1: Photographs*
  - In a two-piece swimsuit, hair pulled back, makeup removed
- *Step 2: Measurements*
  - Height and weight; chest, waist, hip circumference
- *Step 3: Questionnaires*
  - In independent rooms/cubicles
  - On self, friend, and friendship
- *Step 4: Rating from outside judges (3 unique sets)*
  - In swimsuit: Face only, Body only, Full body

# Results

# Hypothesis 1: Similarity in Mate Value Attributes (WHR)

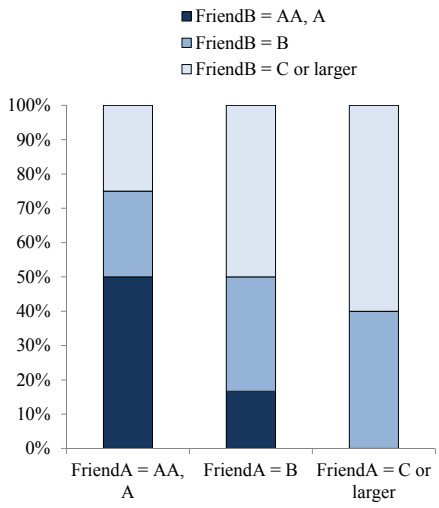



Study 1, $r(43) = .72$, $p < .001$.

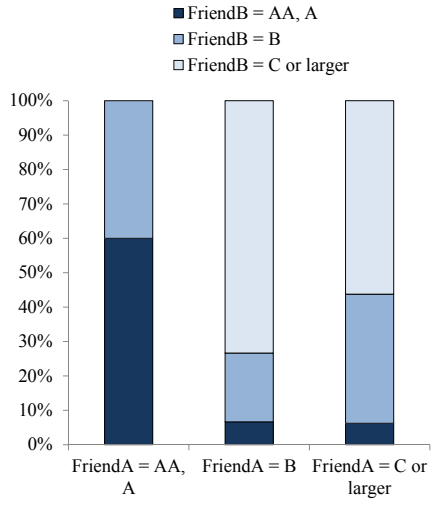



Study 2, $r(37) = .36$, $p = .031$.

# Hypothesis 1: Similarity in Mate Value Attributes (Cup Size)

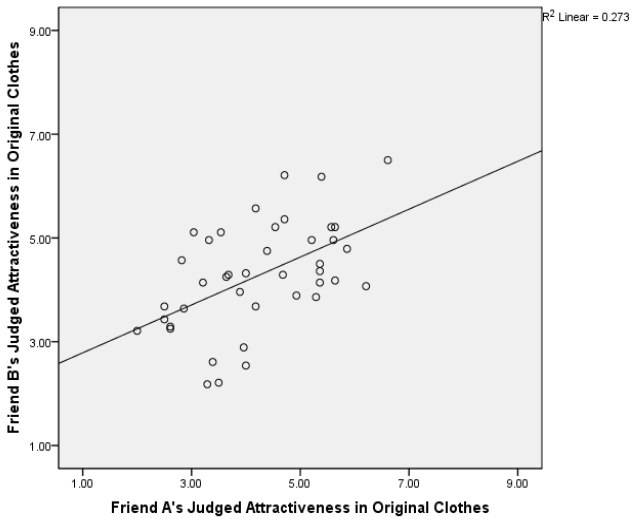



Study 1:
$\chi^2(4, N = 41) = 9.31$, $p = .054$, Cramer's $V = .34$.



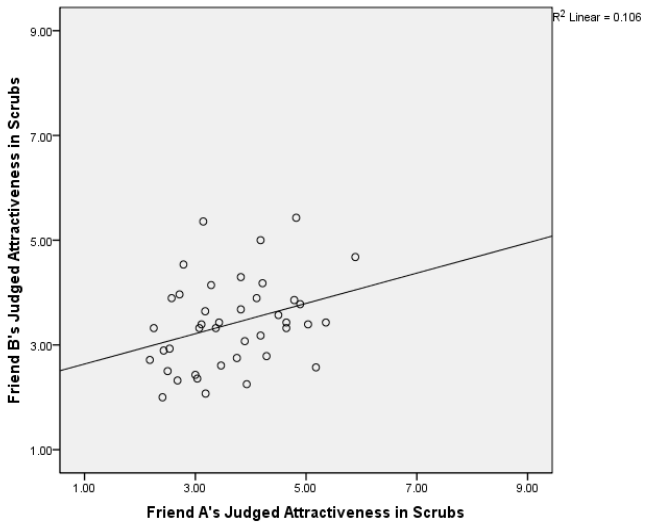

Study 2:
$\chi^2(4, N = 36) = 13.47$, $p = .009$, Cramer's $V = .43$.

# Hypothesis 1: Similarity in Mate Value Attributes (Full Body Attractiveness)



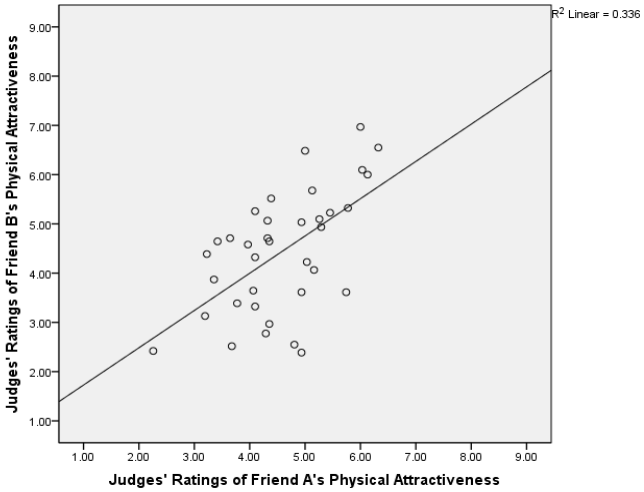

Study 1, full-body original clothes, $r(41) = .52$, $p < .001$.

# Hypothesis 1: Similarity in Mate Value Attributes (Full Body Attractiveness )




Study 1, full-body scrubs, $r(41) = .33$, $p = .038$.

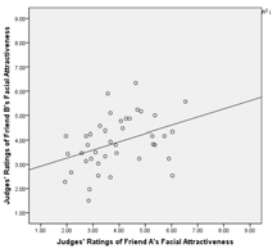
# Hypothesis 1: Similarity in Mate Value Attributes (Full Body Attractiveness)




Study 2, full-body swimsuit, $r(36) = .58$, $p < .001$.

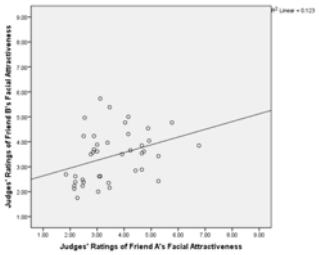
# Hypothesis 1: Similarity in Mate Value Attributes (Face Attractiveness)

Study 1: Original



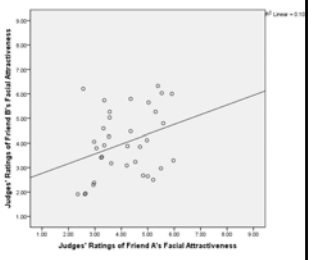
$r(41) = .39$, $p = .013$

Study 1: Scrubs



$r(41) = .35$, $p = .024$

Study 2: Swimsuits



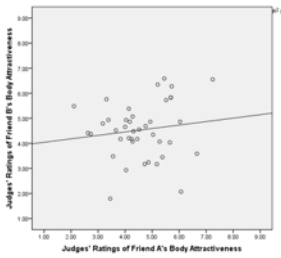
$r(35) = .32$, $p = .061$

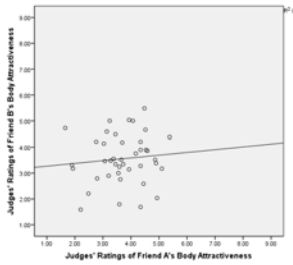
# Hypothesis 1: Similarity in Mate Value Attributes (Body Attractiveness)

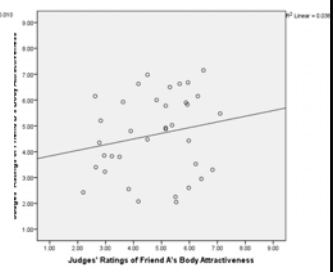
Study 1: Original

Study 1: Scrubs

Study 2: Swimsuits



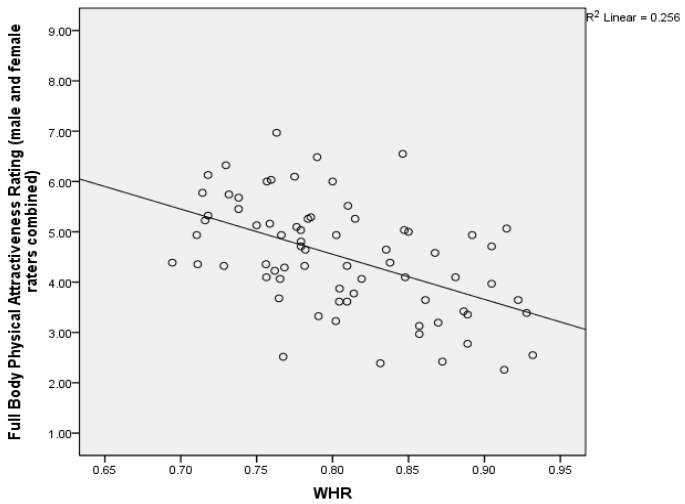




$r(41) = .14$, $p = .395$

$r(41) = .10$, $p = .528$

$r(36) = .20$, $p = .251$

# *Across women, WHR predicts attractiveness



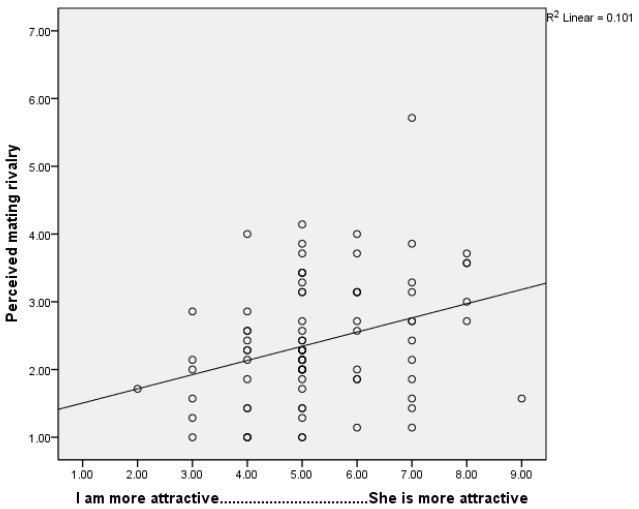

Swimsuit sample: WHR and full body attractiveness , $r(72) = -.51$, $p < .001$, WHR and face only attractiveness , $r(71) = -.27$, $p = .023$, WHR and body only attractiveness, $r(72) = -.58$, $p < .001$.

## *Across women, both face and body predict full-body attractiveness

- Study 1, predicting full-body attractiveness ratings (original clothes)
  - Face: partial *r* = .81
  - Body: partial *r* = .39
- Study 1, predicting full-body attractiveness ratings (in scrubs)
  - Face: partial *r* = .90
  - Body: partial *r* = .44
- Study 2, predicting full-body attractiveness ratings (in swimsuit)
  - Face: partial *r* = .72
  - ***Body: partial r = .81***

## Hypothesis 2: Perceptions of friend's attractiveness are tied to feelings of rivalry

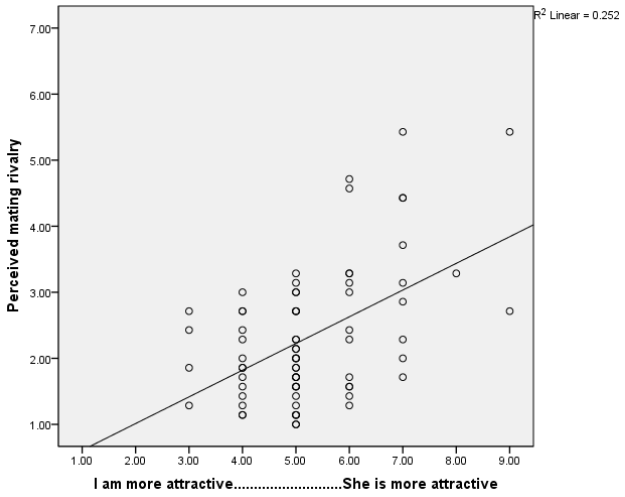
**Study 1:**




Attractiveness ratings and rivalry, $r(85) = .32$, $p = .003$.
Perceptions of friend's intelligence, athleticism, ambition not significantly associated with feelings of rivalry.

# Hypothesis 2: Perceptions of friend's attractiveness are tied to feelings of rivalry

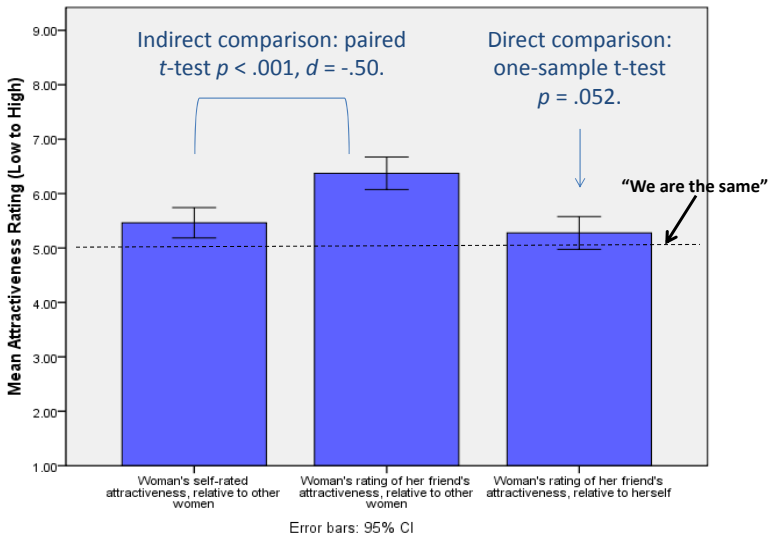
**Study 2:**




Attractiveness ratings and rivalry, $r(72) = .50$, $p < .001$. Perceptions of friend's intelligence, athleticism, ambition not significantly associated with feelings of rivalry (ambition marginal at $p = .052$).

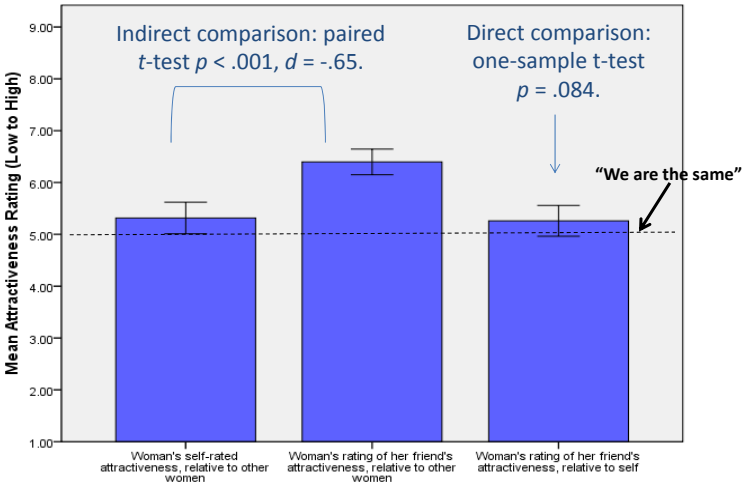
# Hypothesis 2: Women feel competitive about which friend is more attractive

**Study 1:**



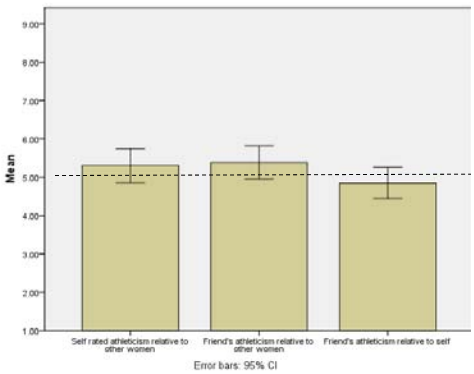
# Hypothesis 2: Women feel competitive about which friend is more attractive

**Study 2:**

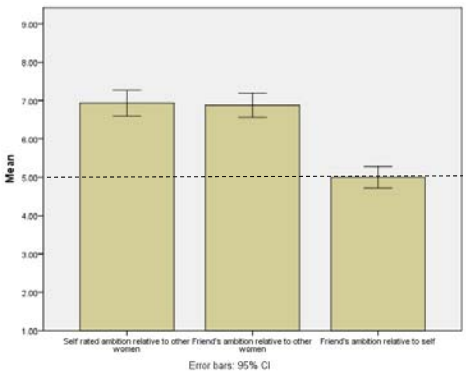



# Other attributes showed a different pattern

Athleticism:




Ambition:



## Summary of findings

- Across samples:
  - assortment for body shape
  - body shape tied to attractiveness
- But, friends do not receive similar ratings of body attractiveness. Face and full body, yes.
- Given face is generally better independent predictor of overall attractiveness, assortment on that variable is key.

## Summary and future directions

- Women's perceptions of their friend's attractiveness, relative to self, predicts feelings of rivalry.
  - What are the costs and benefits of having a friend who is somewhat *less* versus somewhat *more* attractive?
  - What variables predict rivalry between male friends?
  - Are women friends at different life stages similar in attractiveness?

# Thank you

*Funding and support:*

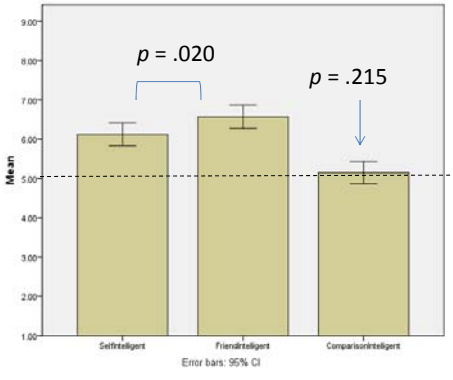
- Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at UWEC

*Feedback and suggestions:*

- Eric Fuerstenberg
- Heather Harris
- Meg Risdal
- Danielle Ryan

# Intelligence comparisons are inconsistent

Intelligence, Study 1:




Intelligence, Study 2: