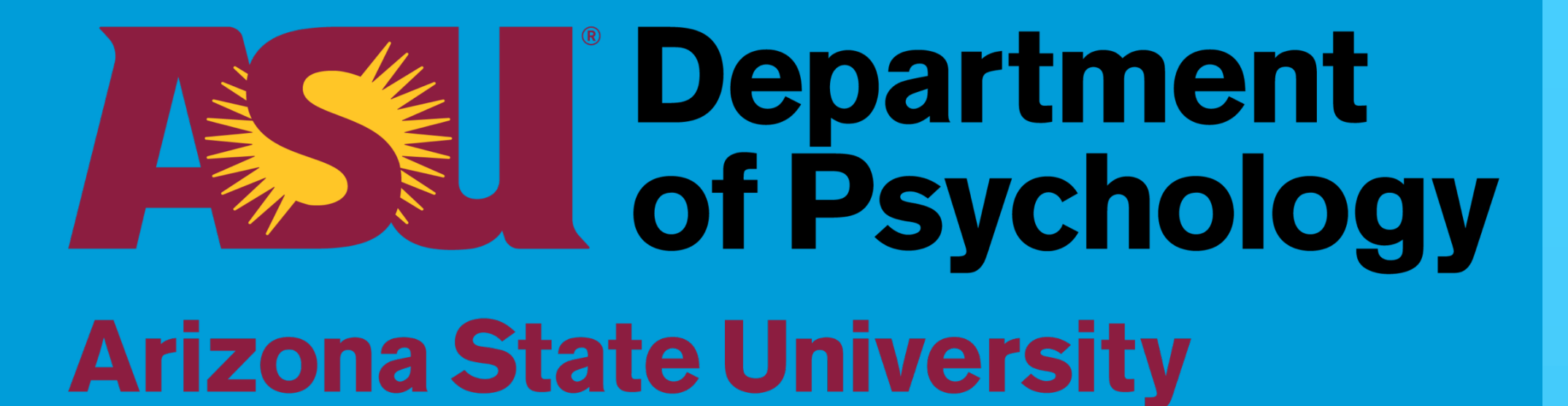




# Rules of friendship

Jessica D. Ayers, Jaimie Arona Krems, Athena Aktipis  
Department of Psychology, Arizona State University



## Introduction

Friendships can provide benefits such as alliance formation, resource pooling, alloparenting and cooperative breeding, and emotional support (Hrdy, 2008; Kurzban & DeScioli, 2009; van der Horst & Coffé, 2011).

Argyle and Henderson (1984) proposed that distinct “rules of friendship” that regulate friendships but they did not distinguish between the rules themselves and the behavioral manifestations of these rules. We sought to replicate Argyle and Henderson while distinguishing rules and traits.

We investigated the prioritization of friendship traits in a limited budget paradigm, asking participants to create the ‘perfect friend.’

We asked participants to evaluate the importance of various rules of friendship which were generated based on previous work and focus groups with undergraduate RAs.

## Methods

- 186 ASU undergraduates (79 males, 107 females)
- $M_{age} = 19.84$  ( $SD = 2.06$ )
- Budget paradigm to create the “perfect friend”
  - 20, 40, or 60 friendship tokens
- Rate importance of certain traits in friends
- Rate importance of following rules of friendship

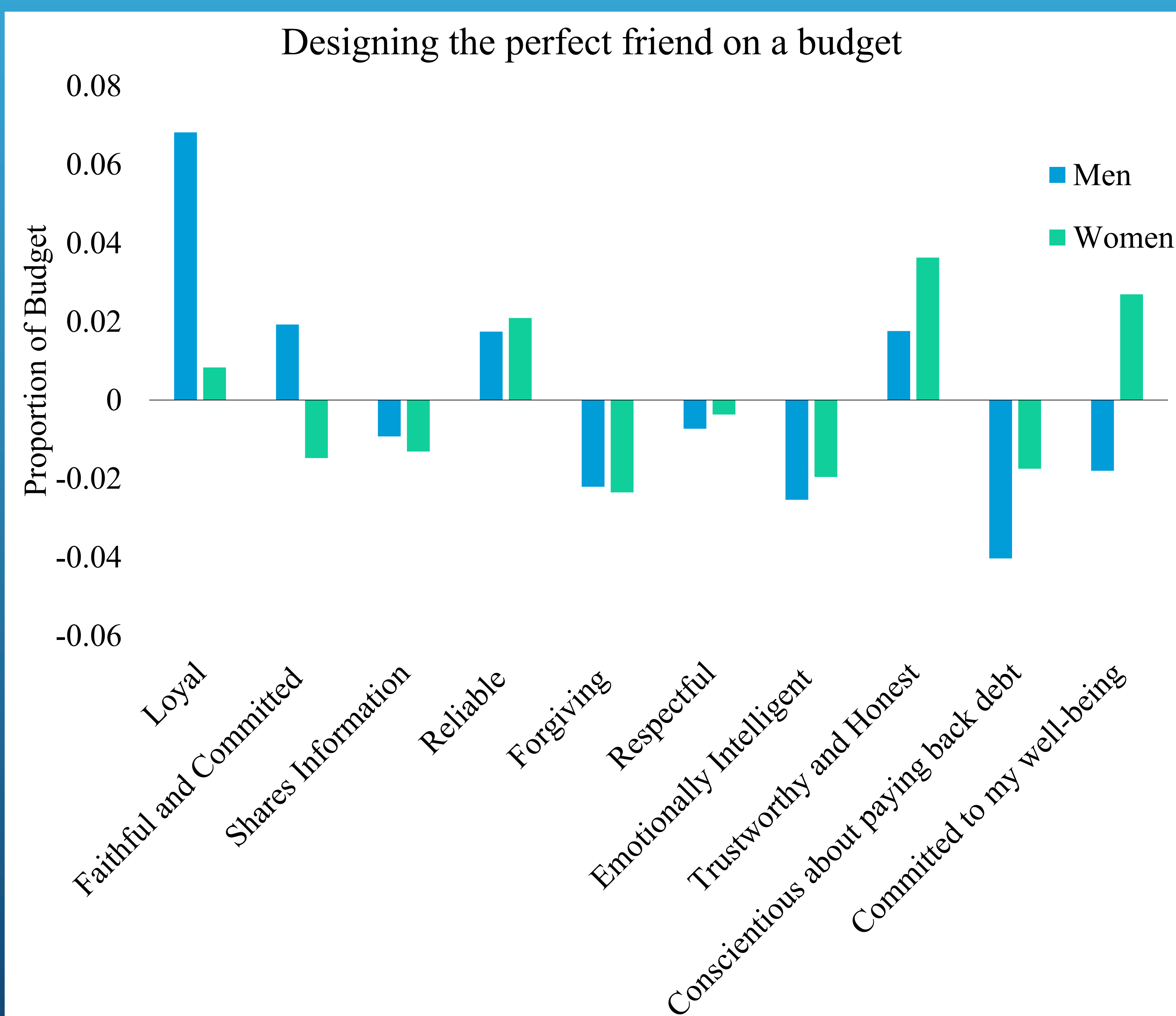
## Results

### Does the importance of traits vary by budget?

Yes, the trait by budget condition interaction was significant,  $F(18, 346) = 2.39$ ,  $p = 0.002$ , partial = 0.11, suggesting that loyalty, reliability, and trustworthiness are considered necessities in friendships while sharing information, forgiveness, emotional intelligence, and paying back debts are considered luxuries

The overall trait by budget by sex interaction was not significant,  $F(18, 346) = 1.11$ ,  $p = 0.344$ , partial = 0.05, suggesting that males and females preferences for various traits in friends don’t differ with regard to what is considered a luxury or necessity.

Probing the trait by budget interaction, loyalty is invested in more by men and trustworthiness is invested in by women more in the low budget condition while emotional intelligence and being conscientious about paying back debts are invested in more by men in the high budget condition



Overall, women give higher ratings to the importance of all rules of friendship,  $F(23, 162) = 2.71$ , partial = 0.28

There are similarities and differences in top rules of friendship rated by men and women

### Top 9 rules of friendship

1. Shows me that I can trust and confide in them
2. Doesn't spread negative false information about me to other people
3. Trusts and confides in me
4. Doesn't disclose my feelings and personal problems to others
5. Helps me when I am in need
6. Works with me to make our friendship viable
7. Talks to me about problems in our relationship
8. Doesn't try to date people I'm dating
9. Doesn't leave the friendship because of challenges in our friendship

## Conclusions & Future Directions

- We replicate Argyle and Henderson’s (1986) finding that there appear to be underlying rules of friendship
- Based on our budget paradigm, loyalty, reliability and trustworthiness appear to be “necessities” in friendships while sharing information, forgiveness, emotional intelligence, and paying back debts appear to be luxuries
- There were no significant overall sex difference in the characteristics endorsed in the budget paradigm
- Women report overall that the rules of friendship are more important than men do.
  - Is this a reporting problem?
  - Is this because women think rules, and regulating relationships, is more important?
- How do different contexts and goals influence the importance of these friendship traits and rules?