

Women who are cheated on 'win' in the long run; new women 'lose'

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Women who lose their unfaithful mate to another woman actually win in the long run, according to new research.

"Our thesis is that the [woman](#) who 'loses' her mate to another woman will go through a period of post-[relationship](#) grief and betrayal, but come out of the experience with higher mating intelligence that allows her to

better detect cues in future mates that may indicate low mate value. Hence, in the long-term, she 'wins,'" said Craig Morris, research associate at Binghamton University and lead author on the study. "The 'other woman,' conversely, is now in a relationship with a partner who has a demonstrated history of deception and, likely, infidelity. Thus, in the long-term, she 'loses.'"

Research on the effects of mate loss has focused on a breakup's short-term consequences, such as emotional distress, but the [long-term effects](#) to mate loss have not been previously explored. Researchers from Binghamton University and University College London conducted an anonymous online survey of 5,705 participants in 96 countries; this was the largest-ever study on relationship dissolution, particularly as regards to cross-cultural experiences and age variation. Their findings show that there are consequences of female intrasexual mate competition that may be both evolutionarily adaptive and also beneficial in terms of personal growth, and that may expand beyond mating and into other realms of personal development.

Morris, a biocultural anthropologist and evolutionist, has highlighted how certain breakups seem to hit people very hard in past research. This new research highlights the ways in which humans - women, in particular - have adapted to cope with breakups.

"If we have evolved to seek out and maintain relationships, then it seems logical that there would be evolved mechanisms and responses to relationship termination, as over 85% of individuals will experience at least one in their lifetime)," said Morris.

What can women learn from this?

"They can learn that they are not alone—that virtually everyone goes through this, that it's okay to seek help if needed, and that they will get

through it," Morris added.

Going forward, the research team will look at how people of different life experience, age and relationship history process breakups, as well as how the (enormous) number of non-exclusively heterosexual respondents process [breakups](#).

The study, "Intrasexual Mate Competition and Breakups: Who Really Wins?," was published in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Competition*.

More information: *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Competition*, [dx.doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199376377.013.19](https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199376377.013.19)

Provided by Binghamton University

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