Romantic Relationships: An Examination of Partner Evaluation, Women's Mate
Preferences, and Dynamics in Long-term Relationships

by

Christine E. Stanik

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Doctoral Committee:

      Professor Phoebe C. Ellsworth, Chair
      Professor Eugene Bernstein
      Professor Bobbi S. Low
      Professor Robert Kurzban

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<u>Note</u>

Chapters 2 and 4 were co-authored with Prof. Phoebe Ellsworth and Prof. Robert Kurzban, and Chapter 3 was co-authored with Prof. Phoebe Ellsworth and Prof. Bobbi Low.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Choosing, attracting, and retaining a romantic partner are among the most compelling and complex tasks people face in their lives. The universal desire to understand and predict others' behavior in the context of romantic relationships is reflected in the wide and ever growing body of psychological literature devoted to this topic. However, attempting to document and explain such complicated phenomena have led to many small camps of researchers narrowly focused on single pieces of a very large puzzle. A useful starting point for ordering this task is the evolutionary perspective that people living today are equipped with cognitive and behavioral predispositions that evolved in response to the consistent obstacles to reproductive success faced by ancestral humans. This approach, when informed by the vast set of literatures in social psychology on romantic relationships, can lead to a unified and organized field of research. Research presented here demonstrates the utility of such a framework by integrating theory from evolutionary approaches to behavior with empirical methods and findings from social psychology in an exploration of attraction, partner perception, and dynamics within long-term relationships.

A central component of human mating is the formation of long-term pair-bonds. When seeking a partner for such relationships, people desire a variety of traits, some easily observed, but many that are harder to discern (e.g. Buss, 1994; Miller, 2000). It is (and always has been) challenging to choose a partner likely to be a good parent, a loyal

companion, and a person competent to deal with both challenges from the environment and the complex dynamics of human social groups, and to do so efficiently.   We therefore might predict that people are especially attuned to detect and use a variety of signals available in the social environment when judging who is worth investing time and effort in and who should be passed over (Miller & Todd, 1998).

Long-term partner choice is both a situation where people are highly motivated to make an accurate decision, and one where the necessary information to make this decision is often not readily available.   Research in other domains has demonstrated that these are the exact criteria that determine when people will be most likely to look to the attitudes and behaviors of others as a source of information (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Sherif, 1936). Therefore we might expect that when trying to determine the desirability of a possible partner, in the absence of other relevant information, people will be sensitive to how the person was assessed by others. Information that signals a person has been unsuccessful on the dating market and has been judged to be of low value will likely severely harm their chances of securing a date with a new partner. The second chapter of this dissertation uses an experimental paradigm to test the hypothesis that initial favorable impressions of a potential long-term partner will decrease following information that the person was abandoned by their most recent romantic partner.

In a widely cited paper, Clark and Hatfield (1989) describe results of two studies in which college students, while walking around campus, were approached by and offered sex from a stranger. Even with the predominant stereotype that men have more favorable attitudes towards casual sex, researchers were struck by the results that the majority of men were willing to say yes to the experimenter's proposition, but not one

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woman accepted. Rather than relying on cultural norms to explain these results, a more parsimonious and satisfying explanation can be gleaned from considering the different constraints on reproductive success experienced by men and women. Women, who bear the heavier burden in reproduction, cannot afford the risk of pregnancy without a partner who is committed to providing resources for her and her impending offspring. However, the biggest obstacle to how many children a man can have is the number of women he can copulate with (Trivers, 1972). Men are therefore much less choosy when it comes to sexual partners; their most valued quality in a woman is that she is willing.

Although women, compared to men, have less favorable attitudes towards casual sex, under some circumstances they do pursue short-term partners (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). When evaluating sexual partners women desire men with certain clearly observable physical traits that are thought to display heritable genetic quality including symmetrical and strongly masculine features (Gangestad & Thornhill, 1997; Mueller & Mazur, 1997; Perrett et al, 1998). A second aim of the research presented in chapter 2 is to demonstrate that social information that heavily influences both sexes when they are evaluating long-term relationship partners will have little bearing if the person is being considered for a short-term sexual relationship. We expect there will be a large main effect of sex, such that male participants find the woman desirable even after learning of her unfortunate break-up and that this information has little effect on women, who are already less willing to have sex with someone they don't know.

The third chapter of this dissertation takes a step back from how people assess value in possible partners to individual differences in what qualities women look for in a long-term partner. The fact that the obligatory investment in reproduction is higher for

women than men is thought to be the distal explanation for both women's relative avoidance of casual sex and the relative importance they place on traits in a long-term partner that signal his ability and willingness to provide. However, we suspect that given a culture where women are afforded access to educational and economic opportunities, women's ability to take advantage of these opportunities, i.e. their intelligence, may be one predictor of individual variation in these preferences and behaviors. The research in chapter 3 examines whether women's ability to procure their own resources is related to their desire for a partner who can provide financial resources. It also explores the relationship between women's intelligence and the tradeoffs they are willing to make between resource provider traits and other desired qualities. Finally it explores the possibility that as women's intelligence increases they will demonstrate increasingly positive attitudes towards casual sex.

Knowing what traits people value in a partner and what signals they use to determine if a potential partner meets their standards leads naturally to the question of how people attract partners and entice them to commit to long-term relationships. Assortative models of mating predict that people will partner with those that have relatively similar mate values; thus higher-value people will have higher-value partners and lower-value people will have lower-value partners. Although a general trend towards assortment does seem to be present in long-term relationships, there are also many exceptions to this rule (Vandenberg, 1972; Watson, et al., 2004; Keller, Thiessen, & Young, 1996). This may not be so surprising: research demonstrates that people are attracted to and try to date others that are agreed to be the most desirable partners, rather than aiming to partner with those that are similarly desirable to themselves (Kurzban &

Weeden, 2005; Walster, Aronson, Abrahams, & Rottmann, 1966). How then do people end up mismatched on mate value? Are these just happy accidents for the lower-value partner and unfortunate twists of fate for the higher-value partner? This question is addressed in Chapter 4, which presents a new theory of relationship dynamics. The Relationship Negotiation Hypothesis (RNH) suggests that who people come to be paired with is not only a function of individuals' absolute mate value, but also of the compromises and accommodations they afford their partner.

Research presented in chapter 4 tests two central components of the RNH. The first study (using two samples) tests the prediction that people will report more willingness to offer accommodations to attractive, compared to unattractive, partners. The second study in chapter 4 relies on data from couples currently engaged in long-term romantic relationships; it examines the prediction that less attractive partners will report making more concessions for their more attractive counterpoints. A methodological highlight of this chapter is the reliance on different subject populations to ensure that results can be generalized beyond the typical college aged sample.

In sum, this dissertation presents three papers that combine an evolutionary perspective with literature and methods from social psychology to advance the understanding of human behavior in the context of romantic relationships. The results of the empirical work provides insights into how people decide who is a valuable partner, individual differences in what women want in a partner and the mating strategies they employ, and dynamics in the formation and maintenance of long-term relationships.

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Chapter 2

**What Becomes of the Broken Hearted?   If you want to a Get a Date Don't Mention
you were Dumped**

"…Melanie acted indifferent – sometimes aloof, sometimes nice, but always

happy and busy.   She didn't return their calls, didn't stare at them and always ended

phone conversations first.   "I've got a million things to do" was her favorite closing

line" (Fein & Schnier,1995).

The opening quote is taken from the bestselling, yet vehemently disdained,

women's self-help guide to catching a husband, *The Rules*.   Despite the outcries from

feminists there may be a kernel of truth in one of the book's central tenets: being too

available and/or too desperate for a romantic partner is a surefire way to repel potential

suitors. Unlike the authors' claim that acting aloof is attractive because men are

biologically drawn to a challenge, we propose that it's likely because unavailability or

scarcity is a heuristic people use to estimate the value of something, or in this context,

someone (Cialdini, 1993). Research in other domains has demonstrated that the sheer

unavailability of an item or an opportunity can greatly increase the perception of its value

(Lynn, 1991; Lynn, 1992).   Desperation, then, in both men and women might be a turn

off because it sends the message that one is clearly putting oneself out on the dating

market, but hasn't yet found anyone willing to buy.

Investing in a mate carries opportunity costs; time spent getting to know someone could be time spent doing any number of other things, including pursuing a more desirable partner. Because many of the qualities people desire in romantic partners are hard to observe, there is a tension between lost opportunity and accurately assessing a possible partner's value before making an investment. Therefore when choosing a romantic partner, perhaps even more than in consumer decisions, people should be aware of and influenced by information that signals a person's market value.   Here, we explore the idea that people are able to quickly detect and integrate such information when evaluating someone as a potential romantic partner. We predict that initial favorable impressions of a target person will be diminished by the introduction of information that the person was rejected by his or her last partner.   We also predict this information will be particularly influential when the person is being evaluated for a long-term relationship, in which desired traits are hard to detect compared to a short-term relationship, in which desired traits are more obvious.

Detecting Desired Qualities in Short-term and Long-term Partners

The cognitive process of deciding who is worth investing in can be broken down into three stages. First, people look for cues that communicate a potential partner's value. Second, they integrate these cues to form an overall impression; and finally they decide whether to pursue (or accept) the person (Miller & Todd, 1998).   Whether someone is perceived favorably depends partly on whether he or she is being considered for a brief sexual affair or a long-term committed relationship. Men, relative to women, generally show much more relaxed standards for a sex partner, desire a greater number of partners, and endorse having sex with someone after knowing her only a brief time (Schmitt &

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Buss, 2003).   This is not surprising: when men were offered the opportunity to have sex with a stranger, nearly 75% agreed, in comparison to 0% of women (Clark & Hatfield, 1989). When seeking a short-term partner, men most value women who are willing to engage in sex. Although they have higher standards, women too seek brief sexual affairs, desiring partners with symmetrical physical features that denote dominance and masculinity (Gangestad & Thornhill, 1997; Mueller & Mazur, 1997; Perrett et al., 1998). It is important to note that both men and women desire traits in a short-term partner that are readily observable features of the person's behavior or appearance.

On the other hand, both men and women have more exacting standards when evaluating long-term partners. Assessing a person's value for this type of relationship requires a great deal of time and effort because the qualities that are sought in a partner are hard to directly observe and must instead be inferred from behavior (Buss, 1994; Miller, 2000). For instance, in a seminal study on mate preferences, Buss and Barnes (1986) found that the top three qualities desired in a spouse by both men and women were *kindness and understanding*, *exciting personality*, and *intelligence*. These preferences have been replicated many times (e.g. Sprecher, Sullivan, & Hatfield, 1994) across cultures (Buss, 1989). People may also try very hard to portray themselves in the best light possible with regard to these traits, particularly during the initial phases of courtship; an honest assessment can only be made after viewing someone across time and circumstance.   This process is further complicated, because unlike interviewing a series of job candidates, a person must decide to choose or reject a potential partner on the spot (Todd, 1997).

Utilizing Social Information

People cannot spend an infinite amount of time getting to know possible partners before making a commitment; neither can they view the whole pool of partners available to them before choosing their best option. One way to streamline the process of deciding in whom to invest is by detecting and integrating signals that indicate a person's value on the dating market.   Any information that conveys that a person has been unfavorably evaluated by others may be particularly relevant because it can keep a person from wasting time with someone who is low value. In support of this logic, research in other domains has observed that people frequently use the behavior and opinions of others as a major source of information and guidance. Deutsch and Gerard (1955) described this process as *Informational Social Influence*. Similarly, Bandura (1961; 1977) demonstrated that people do not need direct reward and punishment to learn and Boyd and Richerson (1985) distinguished between direct learning through trial and error and social learning, which occurs by watching how others interact with the environment.

There is also reason to suspect that in the context of romantic relationships people might be especially likely to value the opinions of others. Sherif (1936) and also Deutsch and Gerard (1955) note that people are most likely to utilize social information when they have a strong desire for accurate information and when the situation and thus the "correct" answer are somewhat ambiguous. Given the importance of long-term partner choice both for one's happiness and well-being and the subsequent happiness and well-being of future children, people are certainly highly motivated to acquire accurate information about potential partners. While a person's value as a partner is not completely ambiguous, it is often hard to detect, particularly with regard to the qualities that people want in a long-term partner. Trying to find out enough information about a

person to determine whether to keep investing or move on in hopes of finding someone better is a situation where people are likely to pay attention to the judgments of others.

<u>Existing Evidence</u>

Some preliminary evidence suggests that the opinions and behaviors of others do affect people's evaluation of a potential mate. A series of studies demonstrated that people's ratings of opposite sex individuals were influenced by the preferences of their peers (Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, Shebilske, & Lundgren, 1993). In these experiments participants received rating sheets assessing physical and personality traits of a target that had ostensibly been filled out earlier by their fellow participants. Although this design allowed for a high degree of experimental control, a major drawback is that it doesn't reflect the actual nature of social interactions. When people are searching for cues about a potential partner's character, they are not given to the opinions of others in such a direct and organized manner; more often they must look for subtle or indirect cues about how others might feel about the person, and we expect these cues might be most easily gleaned from the targets themselves.

The behavior of others influencing one's own choices is also reflected in the concept of *Mate Choice Copying*, seen in some non-human animals (Pruett-Jones, 1992). Most notably, Dugatkin (1992) experimentally demonstrated that female guppies preferred male partners who they had previously viewed interacting with another female to ones that were alone. Studies exploring mate choice copying in humans have to this point produced mixed results. Waynforth (2007) demonstrated that a man simply being pictured next to a woman believed to be his partner was not sufficient to raise perceptions of his attractiveness, compared to when he was pictured alone. Women's ratings only

increased if at the time of the second rating he was partnered with a highly attractive woman; being partnered with an unattractive woman caused perceptions of the man's attractiveness to decrease. In contradiction to their mate choice copying hypothesis, Uller and Johannson (2003) showed that women found men less desirable when they were wearing a wedding ring compared to when they were not. It should be noted that in an effort to closely replicate work on mate choice copying done with non-human species these studies only looked at women evaluating men. However, human mating, particularly in the context of long-term relationships is more a two-sided market, with both women and men exercising choice.

Asao, Gottlieb, and Kurzban (unpublished manuscript) included both female and male participants and found mixed results. Target individuals of average attractiveness were shown pictured alone and with an opposite sex person of high, medium, or low attractiveness. Only one group seemed to demonstrate mate choice copying; men with high self-rated attractiveness rated women thought to be dating highly attractive men as more desirable relative to when the women were pictured alone. Men with low self-rated attractiveness rated all women as less attractive compared to when they were alone. No effects were found for women rating men. As in the other two mate choice copying studies, asking people how much they would like to be in a relationship with someone who is already committed presents a confound. Social conventions against both coveting someone else's partner and seeking a relationship with someone known to be in a relationship may have diminished participants' perceptions of the desirability of people who they believed to be "taken."

Present Study and Hypotheses

The aim of the present study is to add to the understanding of how people utilize information from the social environment to choose whether or not to pursue or date a potential romantic partner.   To maximize both experimental control and keep the way in which participants learn information about a target as naturalistic as possible, we used on-line personal advertisements.   Participants see some generally positive information from a dating profile and rate the desirability of the person who posted the ad for both long term and short-term relationships.   They then view additional information which includes information about the circumstances under which the target person's last relationship ended.   Participants are again asked to rate the desirability of the target. This method lends itself well to our research question for several reasons.   First, it is realistic in the type of information a person might expect to learn about someone through either a real dating profile or in the initial stages of courtship.   Second, it clearly establishes that all targets are single, both because they are advertising for a partner and because they provide information about their last break-up.   Finally, it captures the cognitive process of deciding who to pursue well, because in the context of on-line dating people are presented with a limited amount of clues to a person's mate value that they must use to form an impression and decide whether the person is someone they'd like to pursue.

The main hypothesis is that participants' initial favorable impressions of a target person's desirability will decrease after they learn the person was abandoned by their last partner.   A second hypothesis is that this information will be especially potent when participants are considering a long-term romantic relationship with the person compared to a short-term sexual relationship.   Finally, with regard to sexual relationships, we

expect male participants to be less influenced by the information than female participants. In addition to these hypotheses we also explore the influence of learning that a target rejected their last partner or that the target refused to disclose information about the circumstances surrounding their last break-up.   Both of these examples seem ambiguous in that they may be interpreted favorably or unfavorably; a person who did the dumping might be confident about their prospects on the dating market and thus breed confidence in others that they are worth the investment or they might be seen as too choosy; not talking about an ex may be seen as considerate or it may incite suspicions that the person has something to hide.

Method

Participants

Two-hundred fifteen participants were recruited from the University of Michigan's Introductory Psychology Subject Pool.   As compensation they received partial credit towards fulfillment of a course research requirement.   Seven participants reported a preference for dating same sex partners and were dropped from further analysis leaving a total sample size of 208 (Men = 98, Women = 110, M age = 18.82, SD = 1.0).

Procedure

Participants were brought into the lab in groups and seated at individual computers. After written consent was obtained, all components of the study, including presentation of stimuli and response collection, were carried out on the computer. Participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to understand how people evaluate personal advertisements. In an attempt to bolster authenticity and retain

participants' interest they were told that all the profiles they were about to see had been posted on-line by local users between the ages of 18 and 22.

Stimuli for the study included three brief hypothetical dating advertisements written to resemble those posted on popular dating web-sites. Participants were presented with half an ad (four sentences) that contained relatively innocuous information about the target (e.g. I am: easygoing, funny, adventuresome, and independent, but can be shy and soft-spoken depending on the situation) and were asked to rate how much they would like to date, be in a serious relationship with, and have sex with the person who placed the ad on a scale from one (not at all) to nine (very much). They then viewed the second half of the profile which contained more trivial information (e.g. favorite ice-cream flavor) plus the critical information; a response to the prompt, "My last relationship ended because." The target's last breakup was varied to show the person as having initiated the break-up (*my last partner was great, but I thought I could find someone closer to my ideal*), abandoned (*I was in love with my last partner, but he/she dumped me*) or non-disclosing (*the person who placed this ad chose not to respond to the question*). Participants were then asked to again rate the desirability of the target for the three types of relationships. All subjects viewed all three personal advertisements; the order was counterbalanced across three randomly assigned conditions. There was no effect of order on any of the dependent measures and it was therefore excluded during all analyses.

After completing the main dependent variables for the study, participants were asked to fill out several questionnaires for exploratory purposes and to provide basic

demographic information.   Upon completion of the study participants were fully

debriefed and thanked for their time.

Results

Our central hypothesis was that ratings of a target person's desirability for a

long-term relationship would decrease after participants learned that the person had been

abandoned by their last partner.   Ratings of desire to date and participate in a serious

relationship with the target were highly related, (α = .92 at time one and α = .94 at time

two) and thus were combined into the variable *Romantic Relationship.*   We used a

General Linear Model (GLM) with time as the repeated factor (before the break-up

information, after the break-up information) and sex as a between subjects factor.

Consistent with our prediction both male and female participants' ratings of the target

person at time one (*M* = 5.52, *SD* = 2.38) dropped significantly (*M* = 3.97, *SD* = 2.57),

$F(1, 200) = 125.94$, $p < .001$ after they found out the person had been rejected (see Figure

2.1).

Participants' ratings of how much they would like to have sex with the target

were submitted to an identical GLM analysis and produced similar results.   At time one

participants' ratings of the desirability of the target for a sex partner (*M*= 4.69, *SD* = 2.58)

were significantly higher than after finding out the person had been abandoned by their

last partner (*M* = 3.93, *SD* = 2.71), $F(1,198) = 40.53$, $p < .001$ (see figure 2.1).   To test

our hypothesis, the difference between time one ratings and time two ratings for both

romantic and sexual relationships were entered into a GLM as the repeated factor, with

sex of participant as a between subjects factor. Consistent with our prediction, the

difference in ratings for romantic relationships (*M* = 1.54, *SD* = 1.99) was significantly

greater than for sexual relationships ($M = .75$, $SD = 1.67$), $F(1,198) = 61.06$, $p < .001$. Thus both of our main hypotheses were strongly supported.

We also expected that because men are less choosy about sexual partners than women, negative information would be less influential for men when rating a potential partner for a sexual relationship. Although there was a main effect of sex of participant at time one (men $M = 5.57$, SD = 2.29, women $M = 3.88$, $SD = 2.57$), $F(1, 197) = 24.04$, $p < .001$ and time two (men $M = 4.73$, $SD = 2.68$, women $M = 3.21$, $SD = 2.54$), $F(1, 197) = 17.25$, $p < .001$, there was not a significant difference between the decrease in men's ($M = .84$, $SD = 1.75$) and women's ratings ($M = .68$, $SD = 1.59$), $F(1,198) = .45$, $p = .5$.

In a more exploratory vein, we examined how participants would react to the information that the target person had rejected his or her last partner. A GLM analysis with time as the repeated measure and sex as a between subjects factor revealed an intriguing sex difference. Men's ratings decreased from time one ($M = 5.85$, $SD = 2.17$) to time two ($M = 5.35$, $SD = 2.41$) while women's ratings at time one ($M = 5.37$, $SD = 2.54$) showed a very slight increase at time two ($M = 5.56$, $SD = 2.62$), $F(1, 201) = 14.4$, $p < .001$ (see Figure 2.2). When analyses were run separately for each sex the change in ratings was significant for men, $F(1, 95) = 11.42$, $p = .001$, but not for women $F(1, 106) = 2.9$, $p > .05$. Thus men want to date a woman a bit less if they learn she initiated the end of her last relationship.

Another research question we explored was what effect failing to disclose information about a past relationship would have. Our results revealed a sex difference, with men showing little difference in ratings at time one ($M = 5.75$, $SD = 2.35$) and time two ($M = 5.57$, $SD = 2.4$), but women showing a sizable drop from time one ($M = 5.45$,

SD = 2.56) to time two (*M* = 4.66, *SD* = 2.45), $F(1, 201) = 10.82$, $p = .001$ (see Figure

2.2).   As expected from glancing at the means the difference in ratings from time one to

time two was significant for women, $F(1,106) = 42.74$, $p < .001$, but not for men, $F(1, 95)$

$= 1.67$, $p = .2$.

Men seemed to look unfavorably on a woman who had rejected her last partner

as did women rating men who failed to provide information about their last break-up. We

suspected however, that the most damning information for both sexes would be that the

target person had been rejected.   Post-hoc planned contrasts revealed that the drop in

men's ratings from time one at time two was significantly greater for the abandoned

target (*M* = 1.81, *SD* = 2.14) than for the rejecting target (*M* = .5, *SD* = 1.54), $F(1, 97) =$

26.64, $p < .001$, as was the drop at time two from time one in women's ratings of the

abandoned (*M* = 1.33, *SD* = 1.85) compared to non-disclosing target (*M* = .76, *SD* =

1.36), $F(1, 107) = 7.99$, $p = .006$.   Therefore participants desire to date a target dropped

most after learning he or she was abandoned by their most recent partner.

Discussion

Summary and Implications

Here, we tested the hypothesis that favorable impressions of a person as a

candidate for a long-term relationship would decrease after people learned that the target

had been abandoned by his or her last partner.   Results supported this hypothesis and

revealed that people very quickly change their opinions of people in response to signals

that they are not highly valued partners.   Consistent with our expectations we also found

that information that a target person had been rejected had a larger impact when they

were being assessed for a long-term relationship compared to a short-term sexual

relationship.   Contrary to our expectations, although men compared to women expressed a stronger desire to have sex with the target, their ratings showed a similar decrease to woman's after learning the target had been abandoned by her last partner. These results provide preliminary support for the broader theoretical idea that people are sensitive to and quickly integrate cues about how a person is regarded by others on the dating market into their estimate of the person's worth as a romantic partner.

We also explored how two other types of information, targets expressing they had rejected their last partner and targets choosing not to give any information about their last relationship, would effect their desirability as long-term romantic partners.   Although female participants, if anything, reported a slightly increased desire to have a romantic relationship with a target after learning he had been the initiator of his last break-up, males' initial favorable impressions of the female target were tarnished by this same information.   Conversely, men's ratings for the non-disclosing target were consistent before and after the information was introduced, whereas ratings by women decreased. We are intrigued by these sex differences, but can only speculate about what produced them.   Men may be more hesitant to date woman who take on the more dominant role in relationships and women may be more prone to suspicion if someone seems evasive. However, another possibility is that with such small effects these sex differences won't necessarily replicate with other participants. Although the influence of these two types of information is significant, it is small compared to the effect of information that the target person was abandoned by his or her last partner.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although the insights gained in this study are promising, there are several methodological weaknesses that should be addressed in future research.   As with many studies in psychology, reliance on a student subject population limits how far we can generalize our results; future endeavors will seek to sample from broader non-student populations.   Another drawback of the current method is that people might be reacting to the person's willingness to divulge that they were abandoned rather than to the information itself.   It may be that social rules dictate against sharing this type of information and people are responding to the person's lack of social grace, or it might insinuate that the person still has feelings for their ex.   Future research will attempt to gain more insight into why people so quickly lower their ratings of the abandoned target.

There are many directions in which this research can be expanded.   In a future project, on top of how the target person's last relationship ended we will also include information about the quality of his or her last partner. Past research (Waynforth, 2007) has found that partner quality can raise or lower the perception of a man's attractiveness and we suspect a similar pattern would emerge with our manipulation: being rejected by someone of lower quality might be more damning than being rejected by someone of very high quality; having rejected someone of high quality might do more for a person's desirability than having rejected someone of poor quality. Another avenue for investigation is the hypothesis that information about a person's last break-up has a framing effect on the perception of other information about the person.   For instance, learning that a person was rejected may contaminate perceptions of their behavior; a man who likes to read, instead of being considered intellectual might be seen as an introvert, a woman who likes to exercise, instead of being viewed as healthy and active might be

seen as overly concerned with her appearance.   Finally, future research would benefit from including an analysis of individual differences. It might be informative to explore the relationship between people's own mate value and their responses to the different types of break-up information.

As outlined in the introduction, we suspect that the subjective assessment that someone is "desperate" is off-putting in a potential romantic partner because it signals that s/he has been unfavorably evaluated by others on the dating market. The foremost goal of this research program will be to build on our understanding of both this subjective judgment of a person's desperation and the statements and behaviors that contribute to a possible partner being seen as desperate.   This can be informative both for our theoretical understanding of person perception in the context of romantic relationships and the advice of friends and clinicians alike for how to make oneself a desirable dating partner.

Conclusion

Advice abounds from friends, grandmothers, and self-help books about how to attract and retain a romantic partner.   Our piece of dating advice based on empirical evidence: if you're a woman don't discuss your last break-up, if you're a man, imply you dumped your last girlfriend, but if you want a date never under any circumstances mention you were dumped.

Figure 2.1

Ratings for the desirability targets as a romantic partner (left) and sexual partner (right) before (Time 1) and after (Time 2) participants learned they had been abandoned by their last partner. Error bars represent standard errors of the mean.
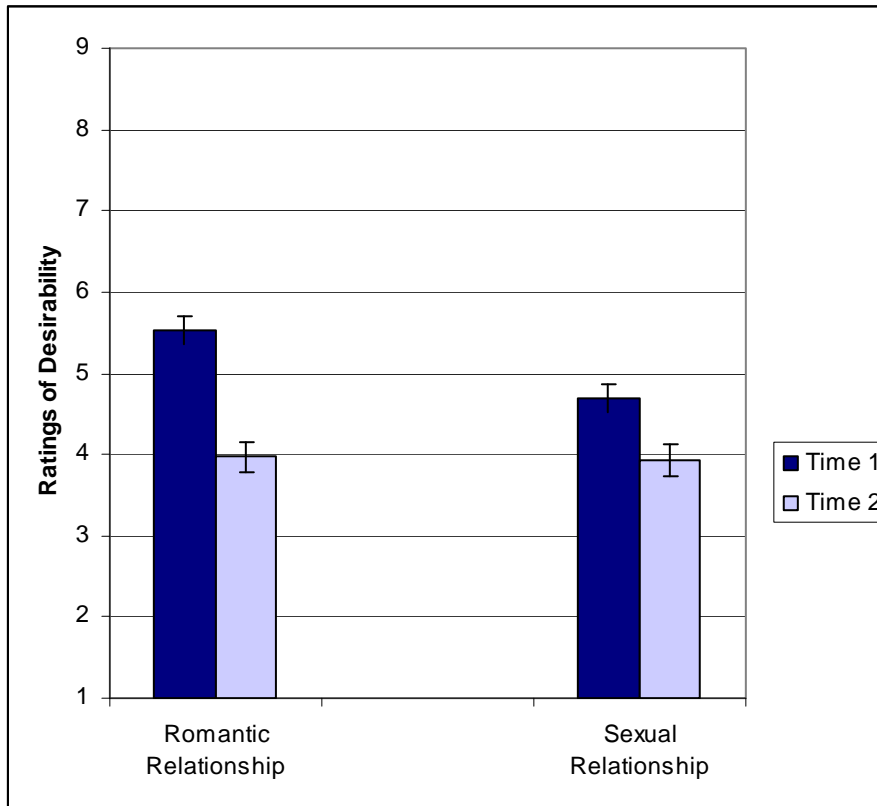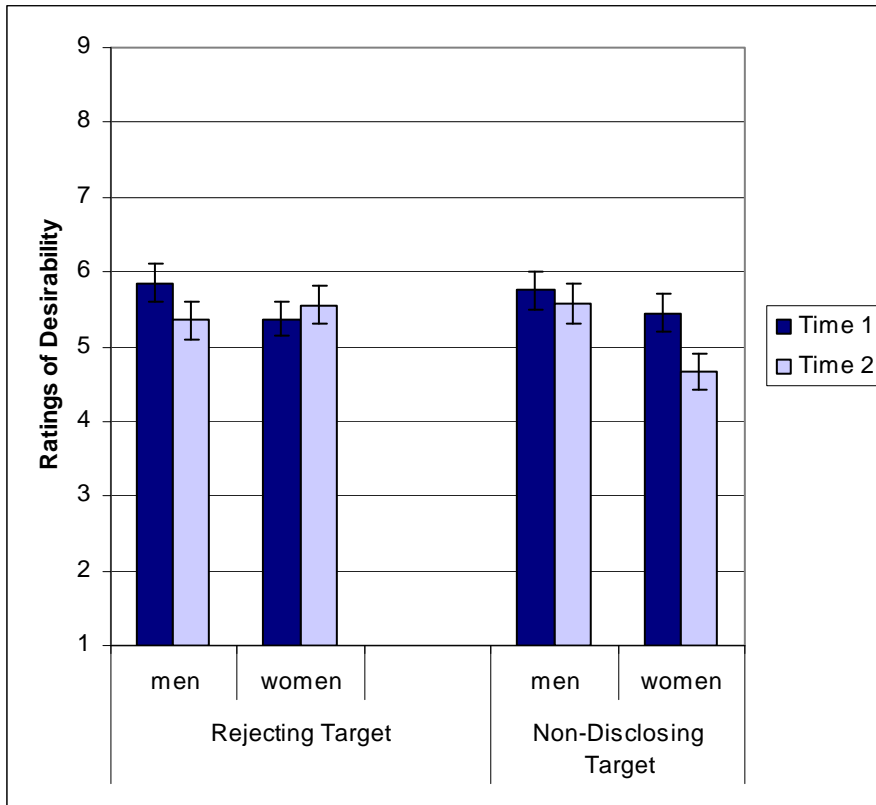
Figure 2.2
Ratings for the desirability targets as a romantic partner before (Time 1) and after (Time 2) learning they rejected their last partner (left) or they chose not to disclose information about their last break-up (right). Error bars represent standard errors of the mean.

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Chapter 3

Who Cares about Marrying a Rich Man? The Effect of Intelligence on Women's Mate Preferences

Evolutionary theorists posit that ancestral women who preferred qualities signifying a mate's willingness and ability to provide continued resources were more likely to successfully reproduce than women who did not (e.g. Buss, 1994).   Insofar as these preferences have a genetic component, one would expect modern women to value men who are good providers.   In support of this prediction, research suggests that across cultures that differ vastly with respect to the social and economic status of women, women consistently place more emphasis on a long-term partner's ability to provide material support than do men (Buss, 1989).

Despite this robust sex difference, there are reasons to expect within-sex variability in women's concerns about their potential husband's income and status. Because the environment of evolutionary adaptation was not static, but posed various challenges to reproduction, human mating behavior is flexible and sensitive to environmental input (e.g. Gangestad & Simpson, 2000; Gross, 1996; Simpson & Lapaglia, 2006). Further, women bring a broad range of qualities and attributes to the table, and these individual differences may affect the mating strategy that they use (e.g. Buss, 1994; Gangestad & Simpson, 1990; Penton-Voak et al. 2003). Under some cultural circumstances women are afforded access to economic freedom and educational opportunity.   Because intelligence is related to women's ability to take advantage of

these opportunities, we propose that intelligence will likely predict women's long-term partner preferences; particularly their desire for traits in a partner that signal ability to provide.

<u>Previous Evidence</u>

Several studies provide evidence that cultural context plays a role on the emphasis women place on traits in a partner that indicate ability and willingness to provide. In a reanalysis of Buss's (1989) cross-cultural data, Eagly and Wood (1999) demonstrated that women's emphasis on a potential husband's ability to provide resources decreased as the division of labor within a society became more egalitarian. In a reanalysis of the same data, Kasser and Sharma (1999) demonstrated that reproductive freedom and access to education lead to a similar decrease. Finally, Li and colleagues (2002) experimentally demonstrated that when resources are scarce, women placed greater value on traits indicative of a partner's ability to provide, whereas when resources are abundant, the emphasis was not apparent. These studies suggest that women's mating strategies are influenced by relevant environmental conditions.

Research examining the effects of *individual differences* in women's earning potential on their desire for a financial provider has thus far produced mixed results. Moore and colleagues (2006) found that women who reported greater control over monetary resources considered a man's physical appearance more important than his ability to provide. However, Townsend (1989) showed that in a small sample of medical students, women en route to becoming physicians and ostensibly earning a high and steady income were still more concerned than their male colleagues with their potential partner's finances. In a similar vein, Wiederman and Allgeier (1992) found a

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small positive correlation between expected income and desire for a good financial provider ($r = .18$).

<u>Current Studies and Hypotheses</u>

In order to test our idea that under certain economic circumstances women's intelligence will be related to their partner preferences we conducted two studies. The first is a preliminary examination of our central hypothesis that women's resource earning potential will be negatively related to their desire for a partner who can provide status and resources. The second study aims to replicate and extend the findings of study 1 to other aspects of women's mating behavior including ideal marriage age, sociosexuality, and gender role adherence. Specific hypotheses pertaining to both studies are discussed below.

<u>Women's Resource Earning Potential Affects Mate Preferences</u>

Mating preference and behavior reflects numerous tradeoffs. Not all women will be able to attract and retain a long-term mate with all desirable qualities and so most must prioritize the qualities they consider essential. Many intelligent women may realistically expect to acquire resources on their own and therefore we predict that as women's intelligence increases their desire for traits in a future spouse indicating his ability to provide should decrease. We also suspect that women's intelligence may be related to tradeoffs they make between desired traits.

<u>Resource Earning Potential Affects Marriage Age</u>

Because women's reproductive life-spans are limited, lifetime reproductive success is highly contingent upon when reproduction starts (Low, Simon, & Anderson, 2002). However, investing in educational and career opportunities before having

children may be beneficial in that doing so may result in a substantial increase in the resources that can be provided to subsequent children. We expect then that women's intelligence will be positively related to what they consider their ideal marriage age

Resource Earning Potential Affects Sociosexuality

Evidence suggests that human mating is pluralistic, with people capable of using both long-term and short-term mating tactics (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Gangestad & Simpson, 2000). However, women compared to men generally have much less favorable attitudes towards casual sex (Schmitt & Buss, 1993). For women, a sexual encounter that may result in pregnancy without the commitment of a partner to help provide resources for the child is often a dangerous prospect. However, we expect that intelligent women, who may be able in a better position to acquire resources on their own, may show more favorable attitudes towards casual sex.

Resource Earning Potential Affects Gender Ideologies

Individual differences in women's adherence to traditional gender ideology are related to their desire for a partner with resources (Eastwick et al., 2006; Johannesen-Schmidt & Eagly, 2002; Koyama, McGain, & Hill, 2004). It has also been shown that increases in educational attainment are related to more egalitarian views about the appropriate roles for men and women (Harris & Firestone, 1998). One interpretation of these findings could be that as women acquire skills that increase their ability to compete with men for access to resources they can depend less on the traditional social roles of woman as homemaker and man as breadwinner, and reject the attitudes and beliefs associated with such ideologies. Thus we expect a negative relationship between women's intelligence and their endorsement of traditional female gender roles.

Study 1

<u>Method</u>

    <u>Participants</u>

One hundred seventy-four women (*M* age = 18.63, *SD* = 2.5) were recruited from a private liberal arts university on the East Coast.   As compensation for taking part in the study, participants received partial credit towards fulfillment of an introductory psychology research requirement.   Five women reported a homosexual dating orientation and were dropped from further analysis leaving a total sample size of 169.

    <u>Materials & Design</u>

Intelligence scores are fairly good predictors of academic performance and later job performance (for a review see Neisser, et al., 1996) and therefore are plausibly related to a woman's ability to acquire her own economic resources. For this preliminary study we used scores on the verbal portion of the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) as a proxy measure for intelligence. Evidence exists that SAT scores are highly correlated with other standard measures of intelligence (Frey & Detterman, 2004). Scores on the SAT also predict getting into university and therefore predict higher-status jobs and better income. With participants' permission, we were able to obtain their SAT scores directly from the registrar's office.

    <u>Procedure</u>

During the data collection session, participants were asked to assess how much they desired certain traits in a potential spouse using a four point scale with 0 corresponding to *Irrelevant/Unimportant* and 3 corresponding to *Indispensable*.   The traits *Good Financial Prospect* and *Favorable Social Status or Rating* were selected from

a scale developed by Hill (1945) and widely used by Buss (1989) as indicators of a man's

earning potential.   Women also filled out several questionnaires testing unrelated

hypotheses and provided standard demographic information. Upon completion of the

study women were fully debriefed and thanked for their time.

Results

    As was the case in past research (Kasser & Sharma, 1999) women's reported

preferences for the traits *Good Financial Prospect*, *Favorable Social Status or Rating*,

and *Ambition and General Intelligence* were combined into one variable: *Financial*

Provider.   Consistent with our prediction, there was a negative relationships between

women's SAT verbal score ($M = 558.58$, $SD = 60.58$) and their desire for a financial

provider (M = 1.82, SD = .65), $r = -.21$, $p = .007$. However, only two of the individual

items, *Good Financial Prospect* ($r = -.27$, $p < .001$) and *Favorable Social Status and*

Rating (r = -.17, p = .03), showed a negative relationship with verbal SAT. *Ambition and*

General Intelligence was unrelated to women's aptitude score (r = .003, p > .05).

Discussion

    Women's score on the verbal portion of the SAT was negatively related to their

desire for traits in a long-term partner that indicate his ability to provide financial

resources. These results suggest that women's intelligence (at least in a culture that

rewards intelligence with educational and economic opportunities) predicts within sex

variation in well established mate preferences.   However, there are many limitations to

this study including: reliance on a proxy measure of intelligence and lack of control

over third variables that potentially explain the correlation.   In an effort to address these

weaknesses and extend the findings to other aspects of women's mating psychology a second study was conducted.

Study 2

Having some preliminary evidence that women's ability to provide for themselves is related to their preferences for a long-term partner, we wanted to document the phenomenon using a direct measure of intelligence. We also wanted to address our predictions concerning women's desired marriage age, their adherence to gender role ideologies and their attitudes toward short-term sexual relationships. We collected a sample of women that spanned the freshmen, sophomore, junior, senior, and graduate levels of a large Midwestern university. The main predictor variable in the study was the women's scores on the verbal portion of the Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test (2nd Edition). We predicted that as women's IQ scores increased, their desire for traits associated with earning potential in a future partner would decrease, the longer they'd report wanting to delay marriage, the more favorable their attitudes towards casual sex, and the more egalitarian their views on gender roles.

Method

Participants

To reach women from each year of college, data was collected in two waves. By recruiting from the introductory psychology subject pool of a large Midwestern university, the first wave mainly included freshmen and sophomores, who in exchange for participating earned partial credit towards a research requirement. The second wave targeted older women and recruited through posted advertisements at the same university. Women who reported a homosexual dating orientation ($n = 3$) and those with incomplete

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data ($n = 4$) were dropped from all analyses.   The final sample consisted of 56 freshmen, 29 sophomores, 27 juniors, 43 seniors, and 19 graduate students for a total sample of 174.

Material & Design

The verbal portion of the Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test 2nd Edition (KBIT-II) was chosen as a measure of women's intelligence. This test is designed to be accessible to a range of ages and literacy levels and is conducted in a face-to-face interaction between the tester and the participant.   One advantage of using such a measure is that subjects stay engaged with the task even as it gets increasingly difficult.

The main dependent variables included measures of romantic partner preferences, gender roles, and sociosexuality. As in the first study, our measures of long-term mate preferences were selected traits from a questionnaire first developed by Hill (1945) and later used by Buss and his colleagues (1989).   Women were asked to rate how much they desire *Good Financial Prospect*, *Social Status or Rating*, and *Ambition/Industriousness* in a future long-term partner on a scale of zero (Irrelevant) to three (Indispensable).   However, with this measure it is possible for someone to rate *all* qualities as indispensable.   A more realistic approach to mate choice must assume that people vary greatly in the quality of mate they can attract and thus must make choices about which characteristics are most important to them. Using a modified version of Li and his colleagues' (2002) "mate dollars" paradigm, women were given 40 points or "mate dollars" to build their ideal mate from ten qualities.   Each trait could be assigned from zero to ten dollars;   participants were instructed that zero represented the bottom person in the entire world, a one represented above 10% of the population, a two above 20%, and so on until 10 which meant the top person in the entire world for that trait.

In addition to testing our central hypothesis we were interested in several secondary questions. To assess women's preferred marriage age, we asked the straightforward question: *At what age would you ideally like to get married?* We were also interested in the perceptions of gender roles that are most relevant to romantic relationships and division of labor within the home. To assess women's adherence to traditional gender ideologies we developed a short scale which measured how much women desired certain courtship rituals and their expectations for home and family life[1]. Finally, attitudes toward short-term and long-term mating strategies were assessed using Jackson & Kirkpatrick's (2007) multidimensional measure of Sociosexuality.

Procedure

The administration of the KBIT-II required individual testing. After completing the test, participants were left alone to respond to the self-report measures. Upon completion of the study participants were fully debriefed, thanked for their time, and (in the case of the second wave) paid.

Results

Mate Preferences

We again combined *good financial prospect, favorable social status or rating, ambition and industriousness* into a composite variable: *Financial Provider.* As predicted, the higher women's intelligence score ($M = 51.27$, $SD = 3.85$) the less they desired traits associated with financial provider ($M = 1.87$, $SD = .6$) in their future spouse, ($r = -.32$, $p < .001$). Because our sample consisted of women across a relatively broad range of ages we felt it necessary to conduct this and all subsequent analyses controlling for participants' age. While, the size of the correlation between verbal intelligence and

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[1] The scale is available from the authors upon request.

the desire for a financial provider fell when age was considered it remained significant, (r = -.21, p = .001). Unlike in the first study, there was a significant negative relationship between verbal intelligence and all three individual components of the composite variable; Good Financial Prospect (r = -.22, p = .004), Favorable Social Status or Rating (r = -.19, p = .01), and Ambition and General Intelligence (r = -.18, p = .02).

We also tested the prediction that given a fixed budget of points to shop for a mate, women with higher intelligence would spend less on traits associated with ability to provide financial resources.[2] Following Li and colleagues (2002), *Hard Working* and Y*early Income* were combined into one variable representing *Work Ethic* (M = 4.58, *SD* = 1.81). As predicted, the higher women's intelligence the fewer points they allocated to work ethic *(r = -.20, p =. 03)*, however, once age was controlled for this relationship remained only marginally significant (r = -.12, p = .1). Using this paradigm we were able to see that women who spent less of their budget on traits associated with a partner's ability to provide financial resources were able to allocate more points to other qualities they desired. The negative relationship between intelligence and desire for a financial provider was true of women in every year of college.

Delaying Reproduction

We predicted that as women's intelligence increased, so too would their reported ideal marriage age. As most people view marriage as encompassing reproduction we used this as a measure of when women were planning to start a family. As expected intelligence and ideal marriage age were positively related, (r = .24, p = .002).

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[2] Because there is a fixed budget, allocation to one trait is dependent upon what has already been allocated to all the others. However, since the results replicate those of the Hill scale it is unlikely that they are the result of statistical peculiarities of the scale.

However, once participants' own age was taken into account this relationship completely disappeared, ($r = .04$, $p = >.05$).

Sociosexuality

As expected, we found no relationship between women's attitudes towards long-term romantic relationships as measured by the new sociosexuality inventory (James & Kirkpatrick, 2007) and intelligence, ($r = -.1$, $p = > .05$). We did, however, find a positive relationship between intelligence and women's attitude towards casual/short-term sexual relationships, ($r = .24$, $p = .01$). This relationship remained after controlling for age, ($r = .18$, $p = .04$); independent of their age, the higher women's resource earning potential the more they reported positive attitudes towards uncommitted casual sexual encounters.

Gender Roles

For our current purposes we were mainly interested in looking at gender role attitudes that related to the social structure of woman as homemaker and man as breadwinner. Although some of these items are correlated with each other, we will first provide the relationships between the items and women's intelligence scores individually. All analyses control for participant age. Significant relationships emerged for participant's prediction that they would take their husband's last name, ($r = -.2$, $p = .01$), their desire for a traditional proposal including a diamond ring, ($r = -.22$, $p = .001$), and the belief that men should always pay on dates, ($r = -.31$, $p = <.001$). However, there was no relationship between intelligence and thinking that couples should split the check on dates, that the person who pays more should pick up the bill, or that the person who initiated the date should pay. There was also a negative relationship between

participants' intelligence and their belief that women should stay home to raise children, ($r = -.23$, $p = .005$) and a marginally significant relationship between intelligence and belief in a traditional division of labor based on sex, ($r = -.13$, $p = .12$).

In an exploratory vein we were interested in looking at the relationship between intelligence and gender role orientation for women in each year of college separately. We created a composite variable by combining five of the gender role items that showed a relationship to intelligence in the whole sample: women will take husband's last name, desire for a traditional proposal, men should always pay on dates, women should stay home with children, and belief in a traditional division of labor ($\alpha = .7$). Controlling for age, women's intelligence score and their endorsement of gender roles showed an increased relationship with each subsequent year of college: freshmen ($n = 50$), ($r = -.1$, $p = .4$), sophomores ($n = 23$), ($r = -.25$, $p = .2$), juniors ($n = 23$), ($r = -.33$, $p = .1$) and seniors ($n = 43$), ($r = -.42$, $p = .01$). However, the relationship between intelligence and gender role endorsement in graduate students ($n = 15$) was less than in the sample of senior women, ($r = -.36$, $p = .15$, which may reflect a leveling off effect or may be the result of the small graduate student sample.

Discussion

Summary

In support of our predictions, women's intelligence was negatively related to their desire for traits in a spouse that indicated his ability to provide financial resources. Across the entire sample the higher the women's intelligence the less they adhered to traditional gender roles in romantic relationships.   An interesting trend emerged when looking at this relationship in each year of college.   In the sample of freshman women

there was no relationship between intelligence and gender roles.   This relationship began to emerge in the second year and gained strength in each subsequent year.   We believe this may be due to women's increasing awareness of their actual earning potential as they progressed through college. Finally, women's intelligence, while unrelated to their desire for a long-term romantic partnership, was related to positive attitudes toward casual sex.

Implications

The results of our study appear to contradict past research looking at the connection between women's own earning potential and their desire for traits in a spouse indicative of his ability to provide financial resources. Two notable studies conducted over 15 years ago, Townsend (1989) and Weiderman and Allgeier, (1992) have been widely cited as support for the premise that women's high incomes do not alleviate their desire for a mate who is wealthy. Because many scholars in the field have relied upon these studies we devote some attention to discussing what we see as their shortcomings, particularly in relation to the current work.

Townsend (1989) found that among medical students, females place more emphasis than males on a potential partner's income and occupational status. We see several problems with the conclusion drawn from this study that women who expect to earn a high income still focus on a partner's ability to provide.   First, the sample was small: only 20 women studying one traditionally male-dominated occupation.   Second, the men in the study expressed a clear preference for a wife who made less money than they did; the women's responses might have reflected their accurate perceptions of what men wanted.   Finally, the study simply compared women medical students' attitudes to

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male medical students' attitudes, and not with any other group of women. It therefore did not examine within-sex variation.

Weiderman and Allgeier's research (1992) is also sometimes cited in support of the idea that the higher a women's earning potential, the more she seeks a wealthy partner. The extent to which this paper actually supports this thesis is debatable. In Study 1 the main predictor variable, future income, is a simple self-report of what one's future income is likely to be three to four years after college graduation. Such a subjective measure is not the best way to tap women's resource earning potential, particularly with a sample composed primarily of college freshmen (*M* age = 19). Undergraduates don't know what they'll be doing and, even if they think they do, they may not know the salary that such a position is likely to earn. Women who plan on continuing on for a post-graduate degree may expect a very limited salary so soon after graduation. Most important, in a second sample of women from the community who were older and actually earning income Weiderman and Allgeier (1992) found *no* relationship between expected income for the next year and desire for a financial provider.

Limitations

The current study's unique design contrasts with previous work that draws different conclusions. Rather than relying on young women to report their expected income, which may be problematic for many reasons, our main predictor was intelligence - a possible correlate of women's ability to provide for themselves. While there is considerable debate about what intelligence tests actually measure, at least to some extent scores on established measures of verbal intelligence predict ability to succeed academically and thus most likely financially as well. That being said, there are still a

number of limitations associated with the present study. The correlational nature of the study presents a problem for demonstrating a causal relationship. However, we feel that it is much more likely that women who excel in an academic environment develop mating strategies based on their competencies, rather than that their mating strategies influence their test performance. An additional limitation to this study is the cross-sectional design. Any cross-sectional design is open to the problem of cohort effects, and in the future we hope to study these questions longitudinally.

As is the case with many studies in the field, reliance on university students is a limitation. However, by including women from each year of college we may have avoided some of the usual pitfalls that accompany a typical convenience sample of introductory psychology students. Still, our participants reflect only a small minority of the United States population not only in their age, but also in several demographic variables (e.g., race and socio-economic status). Finally, the range of intelligence was restricted by including only college undergraduates; this may have some bearing on the size of the correlations, we found which were small to moderate. It is also important to note that women in college may view their pool of potential husbands as men who are their academic peers; thus they may show little concern about income because most of the men they know will have a relatively decent salary. Research on a diverse sample of women living within more varied economic circumstances within the United States and abroad is a future goal.

Future Directions

Our results qualify the assumption that women in general seek men who will be good financial providers, and suggest that a woman's power to gain resources on her own

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influences how much she cares about a man's earning capacity.   Although this project took a cursory glance at the other qualities women may desire, future research should further investigate the qualities self-sufficient women seek in a mate.   One possibility is that women who plan to divide their time between work and home will seek a partner who is willing to take on child-care responsibilities.   In keeping with their rejection of traditional gender roles defining man as breadwinner and woman as homemaker, women may also seek a partner who shares her egalitarian views about gender, such as a man willing to make sacrifices in order to support his wife's career.

Finally, our data on changes in gender role adherence over the course of college has an important implication that should be studied using a longitudinal design.   Women may enter college with unrealistic expectations about their ability to succeed.   The majority of first year students in our sample reported that they planned to continue their education after college by pursuing a doctoral, law, or medical degree.   Although the university is a highly-ranked one, and some of these women fulfill their plans, many more will change their majors and finish their education with a bachelor's degree, while a few will not finish college at all. Many women face situations in which they have to revise their expectations based on the unexpectedly rigorous demands of college, but others may flourish in an academic environment that offers more diversity in specialized coursework and programs and majors than they ever realized existed.   As women progress through college, their perceptions of their own abilities change, and these changes may produce corresponding changes in their expectations about career, family, and the qualities they desire in a mate.   Because of these caveats, studying introductory

psychology students may be particularly misleading when examining what women seek

in a husband.

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Chapter 4

Let's Make a Deal:
A New Model of Dynamics in Romantic Relationships

The pervasive desire to understand and predict what drives two people to commit

to an exclusive relationship, and which of these unions will survive, is reflected in an

extensive body of psychological research. A consistent result of these inquiries has been

that individuals tend to pair or positively assort with others that are equivalent to

themselves on a variety of traits and behaviors (e.g. Vandenberg, 1972).   However,

though matching is a strong predictor of who partners with whom, it isn't a perfect

predictor. For example a meta-analysis by Feingold (1990) revealed that the average

correlation between partners' attractiveness was $r = .49$. Given that people tend to desire

and try to date those who are generally agreed to be attractive partners rather than those

that are similarly desirable to them (Kurzban & Weeden, 2005; Walster, Aronson,

Abrahams, & Rottmann, 1966) some level of mismatch is not that surprising. The

question arises though: is mismatch due to chance and circumstance or is there a

systematic way to explain couples who are mismatched on desirability?

Although partners are more closely matched on some traits than others (Watson,

et al., 2004) and matching differs in fundamental ways between dating partners and

married couples (Keller, Thiessen, & Young, 1996), some deviations warrant further

attention.   For instance, knowing that Gerald likes horror movies and Mary prefers

comedies doesn't call for an explanation the same way as knowing Gerald is an obese gas station attendant and Mary is an ivy league educated lawyer who competes in triathlons does. In the latter example, the couple deviates on what evolutionary psychologists have termed Mate Value (for a review see Sugiyama, 2005), an amalgamation of traits (e.g. kindness, intelligence, sparkling personality, physical attractiveness) that appear to be universally appealing in a partner (Buss, 1989). In a strict evolutionary sense, mate value is the positive influence mating with a given individual will have on one's reproductive success. Though not rigorously adhering to this definition, we use the concept of mate value to represent how a person would fare on the dating market.

Although components of mate value (e.g. age, Kenrick & Keefe, 1992) are recognized to change within individuals across time or between individuals cross culturally (e.g. women's weight, Symons, 1979) it has largely been characterized as an intrinsic property of the individual. People are assessed by potential partners on their mate value in the absolute sense, i.e. their worth compared to others at a given point in time on the market in which they are operating. The hypothesis of this paper is that besides absolute mate value an individual's desirability is also determined by the deal they are willing to offer a given partner. This deal is made up of concessions, compromises, and accommodations in situations where the needs or wants of one partner do not coincide with those of the other partner. We have termed this idea the Relationship Negotiation Hypothesis (RNH) and here we present empirical work aimed at testing its central components.

Brokering Deals

The RNH suggests that in addition to bringing their absolute mate value to a relationship, individuals can offer potential partners deals.   We expect that these deals will consist of demonstrating a willingness to elevate the wants of one's partner above one's own.   Situations in which individuals' desires are at odds with those of their partner have been termed non-correspondent situations (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). They arise frequently between romantic partners, and encompass many domains, e.g., sex, friends, relatives, shared activities, and finances. The RNH suggests that people can attract and retain a higher value partner than would be predicted by pure assortment, by conceding over a highly valued item (e.g. commitment) or routinely conceding on more trivial issues (e.g. restaurant choice).   Likewise, an individual might be satisfied with maintaining a relationship with a lower value partner because of the value added to the individuals by these accommodations.

As one illustration of the RNH, imagine a man whose combination of traits, abilities, and accomplishments would designate him a seven on absolute mate value (with one being the low point of the scale and ten being the high point).   According to the rules of assortment one could predict that this man's long-term romantic partner will also be close to a seven. Suppose, though, that when the man finishes his advanced degree from a university in the Midwest he has a strong desire to move to Boston.   Women who are sevens presumably have other equally desirable men available to them who wouldn't demand a major relocation if the relationship were to become serious.   When the man is assessing potential partners, a woman who is a five, but is willing to accompany the man back east may gain value in the man's eyes and rise to the status of seven or perhaps even higher.   Conversely, the woman who is a five may be willing to move to acquire a

partner of such high market value, even if she wouldn't necessarily be willing to make the same compromise for a man who was of equal or lesser value to her.

Assumptions of the RNH

In the past few decades marriage contracts specifying partner obligations to perform or refrain from certain behaviors have become increasingly common. Though the concessions and accommodations we discuss in the RNH are rarely so explicit, their presence rests on the assumption that people think of their long-term romantic relationships in terms of exchange and fairness. We are certainly not the first psychologists to take such a position; a well established body of literature supports this stance. Empirical tests of Equity theory (e.g. Walster, Traupmann, & Walster, G. W., 1978; Hatfield, Greenberger, Traupmann, & Lambert, 1982) have demonstrated that perceiving that one gives to a partner more than one receives (feeling under-benefited), and conversely, getting from a partner more than one gives (feeling over-benefited) are both aversive states; both have negative consequences for the well being of the individual and the relationship (Utne, Traupmann, & Greenberger, 1984). Though this supports the idea that people do keep track of costs and benefits, it differs from the RNH in a fundamental way. The RNH predicts that people will actually tolerate inequity under many circumstances, providing that deficits in one area are adequately compensated for in another.

Interdependence Theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), like equity theory, a derivation of exchange theory (Homans, 1961), proposed that people will persist in a relationship only so long as their experience of satisfaction is not less than what they expect they could receive elsewhere. Rusbult's tests of the Investment model (1980)

empirically verify some aspects of Interdependence Theory by demonstrating that the subjective experience of commitment and stay-leave decisions depend, along with satisfaction and investment, on the perception that the quality of alternatives outside the relationship is poor (Rusbult, 1983). Commitment and stay-leave decisions are also influenced by the ratio of the extent that individuals' needs are fulfilled by their partner compared to the extent that those same needs are fulfilled by others outside the relationship (Drigotas & Rusbult, 1992).

For our thesis that people offer concessions to partners as a function of perceived differences in mate value to be accurate, people must be aware of the relative mate value between themselves and their partners and behave in response to these differences. Three lines of research looking at individual behavior as a function of mate value lend support to this idea. Sidelinger and Booth-Butterfield (2007) found that the higher participants perceived their partners' value in relation to their own the more likely they were to forgive partners after feeling wronged or hurt by them. Buss and Shackelford (1997) had independent coders rate the mate value discrepancies between husbands and wives. They found that the higher the husbands' mate values compared to their wives', the more likely the wives were to think their husbands would have either a brief or serious extramarital affair. Finally, McNulty, Neff, and Karney (2008) found that positivity during an in-lab conversation was related to relative differences in attractiveness between husbands and wives. Taken together, these studies provide some limited evidence that people act in response to discrepancies in perceived mate value between themselves and their partners.

Defining Concessions

Save for a few examples, to this point we have relied on the abstract concepts of accommodation, concession, and compromise to represent components of "deals" in the RNH. In seeking concrete acts of concession for the current empirical undertaking, we drew on literature exploring frequent sources of conflict within romantic relationships. Research by Argyle and Furnham (1983) found that common sources of strife in couples include finances, differing values/beliefs, independence, emotional support, lifestyle habits, and friends, among other things. Kurdek (1994) found that these sources of conflict could be further sorted into five factors: power, social issues, personal flaws, distrust, intimacy, and personal distance. We took these major sources of conflict and phrased them in terms of concessions and compromise, e.g. I am tolerant of my partner's annoying habits; I gave up my religion for my partner; and I have sex with my partner even if I'm not in the mood. We made an effort to include items from each of the domains suggested by Kurdek, including finances, friends, relatives, household tasks, personal values, undesirable habits, and sex (Appendix A).

Physical Attractiveness, Mate Value, and the RNH

Though absolute mate value is an amalgamation of many aspects of a person, here we focus only on one component, physical attractiveness. We made this choice for several reasons. Physical appearance is a good indicator of how a person will fare on the dating market (Berscheid, E. Dion, K., Walster, E., & Walster, G. W., 1971; Curran & Lippold, 1975). It is also easily observable, ratings for it can be obtained quickly, and it tends to show a trend toward general consensus. There is however, a current debate in the literature surrounding sex differences in the emphasis placed on physical

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attractiveness in a potential partner. Because the findings from each side might lead us to make different predictions, we pause here to briefly discuss the issue.

An abundance of previous research, the most notable example being Buss's (1989) study of 39 cultures, has consistently shown that men report a greater desire for a physically attractive long-term partner than do women (Sprecher, Sullivan, & Hatfield, 1994). Evolutionary theorists believe this sex difference is due to different obstacles to reproductive success faced by our male and female ancestors. For men, passing genes on to future generations was influenced by access to fertile women; for women, who bear the brunt of the reproductive burden (gestation and lactation), producing viable offspring required a partner who was a dependable source of plentiful resources (Buss, 1994). Traits that men find physically attractive are good predictors of fertility, e.g. youth (Kenrick & Keefe, 1992) and low waist hip ratio (Singh, 1993). However, a man's ability and willingness to provide is not contingent on and may even be negatively correlated with his physical attractiveness (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000).

Though there is no disagreement about the sex difference on stated mate preferences, research examining actual dating preferences has shown that both men and women are motivated to date people who are attractive. Two such findings have come from studies done on speed dating, a relatively recent phenomenon where like aged singles are brought together in a central location and engage in several short dates over the course of an evening. At the end of such an event participants privately indicate which if any of their dates they'd like to see again. When two people indicate a favorable response to one and other their contact information is shared. Kurzban and Weeden (2005) showed that physical characteristics in both men and women (facial

attractiveness, Body Mass Index, race, age) were the strongest predictors of who was desirable.   Similarly Eastwick and Finkel (2008) demonstrated that the physical attractiveness of dates was an equally strong predictor of who both men and women indicated they wanted to see again.

Kurzban and Weeden (2007) and Eastwick and Finkel (2008) both found that speed daters' stated mate preferences gathered prior to the event revealed typical sex differences, though these did not predict their actual behavior during the event. Eastwick and Finkel (2008) suggest that this is another example of research participants "telling more than they can know".   Kurzban and Weeden (2007) suggest three possible explanations: 1.) given only three minutes to assess a possible partner participants don't have enough time to gather information about qualities they truly desire, 2.) lacking other means to detect desired qualities people use attractiveness as a proxy, and 3.) in the context of speed dating participants are acting in response to short-term preferences. While the first seems unlikely given that Walster and colleagues (1966) found similar results with a sample of participants that was paired for two and a half hours, the other two explanations are compelling and if accurate have implications for predicting people's behavior in similar contexts.

<u>Current Studies</u>

To summarize, the RNH suggests that people's mate value can best be understood as a combination of the traits and qualities that influence their worth on the dating market and the deal they are willing to offer a given partner in the resolution of non-correspondent situations. As a first attempt at testing aspects of this hypothesis we

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conducted two studies, an experimental lab study and an exploration of the dynamics between individuals in existing couples.

Study One Aims

In the first study we sought to test the hypothesis that the concessions one is willing to offer a long-term romantic partner are not based on individual predispositions, but instead are (at least to some extent) a function of the partner's perceived mate value. Specifically, we predicted that individuals would be more willing to offer concessions to an attractive compared to a less attractive hypothetical partner. We were also interested in exploring whether sex differences emerged, with men being more swayed by attractiveness than women, or if both sexes were equally influenced by the attractiveness of hypothetical dating partners.

Method

Participants

In order to avoid relying solely on data from college students, we collected data from a student and non-student population simultaneously. Identical procedures were used, but the results from each sample will be presented separately.

Student Sample

One hundred six participants were recruited from the subject pool of a large Midwestern university. The sample consisted of 39 males and 67 females, (M age = 18.69, SD = 1.03). Participants were compensated with credit toward partial fulfillment of an introductory psychology course requirement. All participants reported a heterosexual dating orientation.

On-line Sample

Our internet sample consisted of 152 participants.   Five participants failed to complete the study and 29 reported a homosexual dating orientation; these subjects were removed prior to analysis leaving a final sample of 118.   Data from 55 men and 67 women were analyzed, (M age = 31, SD = 10.28).

Procedure

Whereas in the student sample written adult consent was obtained, online participants were informed that completing the survey implied consent. Data for both samples were collected using the increasingly common web-survey interface Surveymonkey.   Participants were assigned to one of two conditions which were identical except for the counterbalanced order of stimuli. The first question asked participants to indicate whether they preferred to date men or women and all subsequent stimuli matched this choice.   Participants were shown a photograph and asked to imagine that they were interested in maintaining a long-term romantic relationship with the person pictured.   They then reported how much they agreed with statements describing their willingness to accommodate their partner across several domains, (e.g. I would be willing to convert to this person's religion), on a scale of one (strongly disagree) to nine (strongly agree). Participants were also asked to rate the person's attractiveness on a scale of one (extremely unattractive) to ten (extremely attractive). After completing all the questions participants repeated the process in response to a second target photograph.   In condition one the first target person had been chosen because she/he had received above average ratings in attractiveness during pilot testing while the second target person had received below average ratings; for the sake of brevity and clarity targets will henceforth be referred to as attractive and unattractive.   In the

second condition the order of the target photographs was reversed. After completing the

main dependent variables participants responded to a questionnaire for an unrelated

hypothesis and provided standard demographic information.

Results

Student Sample

Results were collapsed for the attractive and unattractive target and order was

entered as a dummy code variable.   The order participants saw the stimuli in (condition)

did not result in any significant effects.

The 19 concessions subjects responded to were highly related for both the

attractive stimulus person α = .92 and the unattractive stimulus person α = .93 and were

therefore averaged into two composite variables: attractive concessions and unattractive

concessions.

Manipulation Check

In order to ensure that subjects did perceive the more attractive stimulus

photograph as more attractive than the less attractive stimulus photograph we employed a

general linear model with the independent variable attractiveness ratings of the stimulus

photographs as a repeated measure (attractive, unattractive) and sex of participant as

between subjects factors. This analysis indicated an interaction between the repeated

measure and sex, $F(1, 102) = 30.79$, $p < .001$.   Results of a MANOVA indicated that

men rated the attractive target ($M = 7.9$, $SD = 1.19$) significantly higher than women rated

the attractive target ($M = 6.25$, $SD = 1.8$), $F(1, 103) = 26.01$, $p < .001$.   There was not a

sex difference on ratings of the unattractive target, (men $M = 2.36$, $SD = 1.35$, women M

$= 2.81$, $SD = 1.47$), $F(1, 103) = 2.29$, $p = .13$.

<u>Concessions</u>

Because of the initial sex difference in how participants perceived the stimulus photographs we choose to conduct analyses with the main dependent variable separately by sex. Again a general linear model was used where concessions were entered as the repeated measure (attractive concessions, unattractive concessions). There was a significant effect of the repeated measure for men $F(1, 37) = 91.21$, $p < .001$ such that they were more willing to make concessions for an attractive partner ($M = 5.02$, $SD = 1.17$) than they were for an unattractive partner ($M = 2.61$, $SD = 1.49$). The pattern of results was identical for women, $F(1, 65) = 62.38$, $p < .001$, concessions for an attractive partner ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.23$) compared to concessions for an unattractive partner ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.14$). Again, from the means it seemed that men and women differed in their response to the attractive target. We tested this using a MANOVA. Men reported significantly more willingness to concede to an attractive partner ($M = 5.02$, $SD = 1.17$) than did women ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.23$), $F(1, 103) = 32.89$, $p < .001$. There was no difference in men's ($M = 2.61$, $SD = 1.49$) and women's ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.14$) willingness to concede to the unattractive target, $F(1, 103) = .17$, $p = .68$.

We used regression analyses as suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) to test whether ratings of target attractiveness mediate the interaction between sex and willingness to concede. A regression analysis with participant sex as the dependent variable and the difference between attractive and unattractive concessions as the criterion variable yielded a significant regression weight for participant sex $\beta = -.52$, $t(102) = -6.25$, $p < .001$. The effect of sex on the proposed mediator (difference in attractiveness ratings for the attractive and unattractive target) also revealed a significant

regression weight of sex $\beta = -.49$, $t(102) = -5.67$, $p < .001$.   Finally both participant sex

and the difference between ratings of attractiveness for the attractive and the unattractive

partner were both used as predictors of the difference between the attractive concessions

and the unattractive concessions yielding a significant regression model, $R^2 = .35$, $F(2,$

$103) = 27.94$, $p < .001$.   The effect of the proposed mediator was significant, $\beta = .32$,

$t(101)$ $.54$, $p < .001$ and although the β for sex dropped to $\beta = .37$ it still remained

significant, $t(101) = 4.04$, $p < .001$ suggesting that sex difference in perceptions of the

attractiveness of the target did not fully explain sex differences in willingness to concede.

Instead, men show more willingness to concede to an attractive target compared to

women even when controlling for men's higher attractiveness rating of the target.

Internet Sample

Manipulation Check

As with the student sample, there was a significant interaction between

participant sex and ratings of attractiveness for the stimulus photographs, $F(1, 111) =$

4.24, $p = .04$. A MANOVA analysis likewise revealed that men rated the attractive target

($M = 7.31$, $SD = 1.55$) as more attractive than women did ($M = 5.92$, $SD = 1.94$), $F(1,$

$112) = 17.455$, $p < .001$ whereas there was not a significant difference between men's (M

$= 4.26$, $SD = 1.84$) and women's ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.88$), ratings of the unattractive target,

$F(1, 112) = 1.38$, $p = .24$.

Concessions

Again GLM analyses were conducted separately for men and for women.

Patterns were similar to those from the student sample.   Men reported significantly more

willingness $F(1, 53) = 30.04$, $p < .001$ to make concessions for the attractive target ($M =$

5.01, $SD = 1.53$) than for the unattractive target ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.58$), as did women (attractive target $M = 4.05$, $SD = 1.37$, unattractive target, $M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.51$), $F(1, 61) = 24.25$, $p < .001$. As with the student sample men reported more willingness to accommodate the attractive target person ($M = 5.01$, $SD = 1.53$) than did women ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 1.37$), $F(1,115) = 12.96$, $p < .001$, but there was no difference in men's ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.58$) compared to women's ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.51$) willingness to accommodate the unattractive target, $F(1, 115) = 1.58$, $p = .21$.

We again tested for mediation of participant sex on willingness to concede by ratings of target attractiveness. Participant sex was significantly related to the difference in attractiveness ratings, $\beta = -.21$, $t(114) = 2.29$, $P = .02$ as was sex on the difference in willingness to concede, $\beta = -.2$, $t(114) = -2.14$, $p = .03$. When both sex and difference in ratings of attractiveness were entered as predictors of the difference in willingness to concede and differences in concessions as the dependent variable the entire regressions was significant $R^2 = .54$, $F(2, 112) = 64.71$, $p < .001$, the effect of the mediator (difference in attractiveness ratings) was significant $\beta = .71$, $t(113) = 10.87$, $p < .001$ and unlike in the student sample the regression weight of participant sex dropped below significance $\beta = -.08$, $t(113) = -1.15$, $p = .25$. This suggests that significant effect of men reporting more willingness to concede to the attractive target compared to women was due entirely to men's higher rating of the attractive target.

Discussion

The results of the first study provide good support for our idea that the deals people are willing to offer partners differ based on the partner's mate value. In both a sample of college undergraduates and one of older participants recruited via the internet,

participants reported that they would go to greater lengths to accommodate an attractive person than they would to accommodate an unattractive person. We take this as preliminary evidence in support of the RNH and suggest that it reflects that offering a partner concessions is a tactic that people may use in an attempt to attract or retain higher value partners.

Along with our major hypothesis, an aim of this study was to determine whether men would be more influenced by women's attractiveness and thus show a greater difference in concessions for the attractive compared to unattractive targets or if the sexes would be relatively similar. From the current data the answer to this question is still not clear. Data from the student sample support the idea that men are indeed more influenced by attractiveness than women. Independent of the effect of ratings of attractiveness men reported making more concessions for the attractive woman than women did for the attractive man. However, the on-line sample did not replicate this result. After taking into consideration attractiveness ratings, the effect of participant sex did not remain. We can only speculate about differences between the two samples. One possibility is that the sex difference only emerges in samples of young participants. The older subjects might be equally influenced by differences in physical attractiveness, which may be a result of men being more influenced by other components of a person or may reflect women's increased interest in attractiveness. Future studies will aim to include more components of mate value.

Study Two Aims

According to the RNH, people can increase their chances of retaining a relationship with a relatively higher value partner by accommodating the person's wants

and needs.   The second study aimed to discover whether relative attractiveness in existing couples was related to the compromise individuals made for their partner. Specifically, we wanted to determine whether less attractive partners more frequently place their partner's wishes above their own, compared to their more attractive counterparts. In an effort to answer this question, couples were brought into the lab, as a part of a larger data collection effort, and provided reports of concessions made by both themselves and their partners. Each participant was also photographed so objective ratings of attractiveness could be obtained.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited from Craigslist.com, a heavily trafficked web-site featuring free classified advertisements.   To be eligible for the study couples were required to be heterosexual, living in the same residence for at least one year (thought not necessarily married), and must not have children residing with them. Women who were expecting ($n = 3$), but not yet visibly pregnant were permitted to participate in the study. Additionally, individuals were required to visit the lab for the data collection session at the same time as their partner.   As compensation participants were paid $50 and were entered into a raffle to win an additional $100.

Fifty-six couples met the criteria and participated in the study.   The average age of individuals in the study was $M = 28.47$, $SD = 8.22$, Range = 18-56. The majority of the subjects identified themselves as Caucasion, 80.9%, with 9% Asian, 5.4% Black, 2.73% mixed race, .91% Hispanic, and .91% who did not respond.   Forty-one percent of

participants had completed a four year college degree while 23.6% held advanced

degrees and 34.5% had an associate's degree or below.

Materials

In an effort both to retain participants' attention throughout the hour long session,

we used a few questions modeled after those in established research rather than including

a series of complete questionnaires.   This approach allowed us to inquire into a number

of research questions and hypotheses in an effort to refine the focus of our future research

endeavors. The main focus of the work we present here is partners' reports of the

concessions they make or have made for their partner.   We used the same domains

discussed above, including finances, friends, relatives, household tasks, personal values,

undesirable habits, and sex.   Additionally we tried to tap into large and perhaps one time

concessions such as moving, changing religions, or giving up one's career, as well as day

to day accommodations such as household tasks, and choice of leisure activity.

Participants also provided standard demographic information and were photographed.

Procedure

All couples were brought into the lab for individual data collection sessions.

The experimenter briefly described the aims of the study and obtained written adult

consent after which individuals were separated from their partner for the duration of the

study.   Participants completed the survey in small testing rooms and reconvened with

their partner and the experimenter when they had finished responding.   We anticipated

that asking individuals about accommodations or lack thereof in their relationship may

evoke negative feelings towards their partner. In an effort to leave them in a more

positive state, the last page of the survey asked for two essays describing why one loved

their partner and good qualities about their partner that others recognized.   Judging from

the general warmth that characterized people's answers, this task seemed to meet its

required goal. After participants reconvened with the experimenter, they were

photographed individually.   Upon completion of the study participants were fully

debriefed, paid, and thanked for their participation.

Results

The main predictor variable in this study was objective ratings of participant

attractiveness.   Participants' photographs were rated by independent opposite sex raters

and standardized, with a mean of zero separately for men and women.   Similar to past

findings (Feingold, 1990) there was an average correlation $r = .41$ between partners'

attractiveness.   As a crude and initial attempt at determining relative attractiveness

dummy codes were entered categorizing each participant as either more attractive than

their partner or less attractive than their partner.

All analyses were done using the Mixed Linear Model command in SPSS.   This

procedure allows individuals to be nested within dyads, accounting for the

non-independence associated with data gathered from couples. In part, we suspect due to

a very small sample, there weren't enough participants who reported making large

concessions to their partner such as moving far from home, changing religions, or

learning to speak a new language to analyze these dependent variables.   We present

results below for variables that asked about day to day concessions. Unless indicated

otherwise all questions were answered on nine point Likert scales (one = strongly

disagree, nine = strongly agree).

Sexual Concessions

As we predicted there did seem to be a general trend toward less attractive individuals giving into the demands of their more attractive partners.   Individuals who are more attractive report that their partners are more willing to sexually experiment with them ($M = 7.23$, $SD = 1.92$) than do less attractive individuals ($M = 6.4$, $SD = 1.89$), $F(1, 50.84) = 19.57$, $p = .04$.   Less attractive partners report more willingness to have sex with their partner even when they are not in the mood ($M = 6.75$, $SD = 1.96$) compared to more attractive partners ($M = 5.96$, $SD = 2.17$), $F(1, 51.24) = 3.88$, $p = .05$.   Finally when a couple first has sex shows an intriguing, though only marginally significant interaction between participant sex and attractiveness.   When women are the more attractive partner in the couple they report (in months) having waited longer to engage in sex with their partner ($M = 19.01$, $SD = 22.39$) compared to when they are the less attractive partner in the couple ($M = 8.56$, $SD = 10.9$).   Data from men reflect this, when men are the more attractive person in the couple they report having waited less time before having sex with their partner ($M = 12.55$, $SD = 17.29$) than when their partner is the more attractive one ($M = 21.6$, $SD = 32.68$), $F(1, 50) = 2.91$, $p = .09$.

There were a number of sexual concessions that did not seem to be related to the relative attractiveness of participants.   For instance, attractive partners were no more likely than unattractive partners to perceive that their partner would tolerate sexual indiscretion; likewise less attractive partners were no more willing than more attractive partners to tolerate sexual indiscretion.   Similarly there was no effect of relative attractiveness on partner's reporting they had complied with a particular sexual behavior they found objectionable or of reporting that one's partner complied with their demand for a particular sexual behavior that they objected to.

Household Tasks

Participants were asked to report how much responsibility they had for a number of tasks associated with the organization and running of a household on a scale from one (I am more responsible) to nine (my partner is more responsible) including cleaning, yard work, car maintenance, cooking, shopping for groceries, making sure bills are paid on time, planning meals, decorating the house, choosing furniture, and doing the laundry. Perhaps not surprisingly there was no effect of individual's relative attractiveness, but there was a consistent effect of participant sex on who took responsibility for the tasks. For all tasks save for yard work and car maintenance women reported significantly more responsibility than their partner and men reported significantly less responsibility than their partner, F's ranged from 5.77 to 82.53 and p's ranged from .02 to <.001. For yard work and car maintenance men reported more responsibility for their partner and women reported less responsibility than their partner F's = 17.21 and 41.68, p's both = <.001.

Friends and Family

These questions were designed to tap into subjects' perception that they made sacrifices in their relationships with friends and family in an effort to maintain a relationship with their partner. There were no significant effects of either participant sex or relative attractiveness and no significant interactions between the two on participants reported concessions in these areas.

Activities

These questions were designed to tap into decisions about free time and leisure activities. Again, there were no significant effects of sex or relative attractiveness on individuals' reports about their willingness to accommodate their partner in these areas.

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<u>Money and Wants</u>

These questions asked subjects to report broadly on concessions they make for their partner.   Individuals who were the less attractive person reported more agreement with the statement, *My partner makes most of the financial decisions* ($M = 4.42$, *SD* = 2.42) compared to individuals who were the more   attractive partner ($M = 3.36$, *SD* = 2.33), although this relationship was only marginally significant $F(1, 51) = 3.19$, $p = .08$. The same pattern was present for the statement, *I give in to my partner's wants,* more attractive partner (M = 2.16, SD = 1.46) less attractive partner (M = 3.1, SD = 2.06), $F(1, 51) = 6.68$, $p = .01$.

<u>Discussion</u>

Study two provides some interesting insights into the relationship between relative attractiveness and which member of a couple does more to accommodate his or her partner.   Concessions in the domain of sex, finances, and a broad question about giving in to partner's wants in general fit our predicted pattern of the less attractive partner more often conceding to the more attractive partner. However, concessions in many other domains, friends, family, and leisure activities showed no relationship with relative attractiveness. One highly speculative interpretation of this data is that physical attractiveness only has bargaining power in specific domains. Until a larger and perhaps more specifically selected sample (e.g. couples where one partner has made a large concession such as moving) we hesitate to speculate too much about the nature of these results.

<u>General Discussion</u>

<u>Summary</u>

Taken together the results of the studies presented here provide strong preliminary support for the RNH and suggest many avenues for further research. Results from the first study demonstrate that people report more willingness to accommodate an attractive compared to unattractive romantic partner. This suggests that the "deal" people are willing to offer is contingent not on some internal predispositions, but on the mate value of their partner. This is true to some extent for both men and women, but whether men compared to women will do more for an attractive partner is still a matter of debate. In a sample of college students this seemed to be the case, however, data from older participants showed men and women to be equally moved by a hypothetical partner's attractiveness.

An exploration of the relationship dynamics in couples currently involved in long-term relationships provided further evidence that deals between partners are contingent on relative mate value. People who were less attractive than their partner reported concessions in the domains of finances, sex, and in response to their partner's wants broadly defined. This brings up an intriguing possibility that physical attractiveness is related to concessions in some, but not all areas.

Though assortative models predict people will partner with others of equivalent mate value, people actually desire and strive to date those who are generally agreed upon to be of high value rather than those that are similarly desirable to themselves. The theoretical framework of the RNH and the findings in support of that theory presented here provide a systematic way to understand how individuals attract and retain partners with relatively higher value and likewise why individuals are willing to enter into and continue relationships with relatively lower value partners.

<u>Limitations and Future Research Directions</u>

Although the results of the research presented here are encouraging we recognize that there are many methodological limitations.   We see these as avenues for future research, which we outline in the following sections.

A limitation of this research is that it isolated only one component of mate value, physical attractiveness.   A more textured portrait of someone may prove useful in understanding the deals people are willing to offer and accept from romantic partners. For instance, people may be willing to accommodate a kind intelligent person that is unattractive more than a person who is attractive, but who is lacking in other areas. Another limitation is that our understanding of what is actually negotiated between partners is based only on responses to a limited number of domains.   Future efforts will be made to ask participants about the specific accommodations they make for their partner and their partner makes for them.   It is also worth mentioning that one area seemingly rife with possible concessions is that of child rearing and maintenance. When raising children people are confronted with a variety of issues from what religion to raise the child to the division of child-care responsibilities.   In these initial studies we chose to exclude issues pertaining to children, but acknowledge their importance and will certainly address them in future empirical work.

Another consideration for future research is that many of the large concessions we examined, e.g. moving, changing faiths, becoming proficient in a new language, forgiving adultery were not reported by participants.   We suspect that in order to find a large enough sample of people where one partner made a sacrifice in one of these areas we would need to either greatly increase our sample size or specifically recruit

participants who have faced such situations. For instance, many assistant professors have little say in where their first jobs will be and it may be informative to study such a population, particularly those people who were in long-term relationships at the time of their move. Likewise, because they have little or no choice in where they're stationed, families where one partner is enlisted in the military may be another population to target.

It is important to note that even after initial deals have been struck people most likely continue to negotiate throughout the duration of their relationship. We suspect that initial concessions or at least demonstrations of willingness to concede may facilitate initial commitment between partners, but that renegotiation may occur frequently both in response to daily events, e.g., events that make salient an individual's value or lack thereof and those that have more enduring implications for mate value. It is easy to imagine many such scenarios that play out during the course of a relationship: people observe others flirting with their partner and are thus reminded of their partner's value; they lose or gain a great deal of weight; they graduate and start earning a high salary; or they are unable to find employment during an economic recession. Collecting longitudinal data both with daily diaries and in waves over a longer time course will be necessary to fully capture all the phases of relationship negotiation.

Conclusions

From the results presented here we draw several broad conclusions. First mismatches between partners on fundamental aspects of mate value can be understood not as the result of happenstance, but instead as a function of the deals people are willing to negotiate with each other. People report a much greater willingness to accommodate an attractive compared to unattractive partner. This reflects our theoretical assumption

that people offer deals based on the mate value of a given partner.   Even with a very small sample, it is evident in existing couples that less attractive partners concede more than do their more attractive counterparts.

Figure 4.1
Target photographs used in Experiment 1.
Attractive (left) and unattractive (right) target males (top row).
Attractive (left) and unattractive (right) target females (bottom row).

Figure 4.2
Men's and women's willingness to accommodate attractive and unattractive targets
(Experiment 1, Sample 1) Error bars represent standard error of the mean.
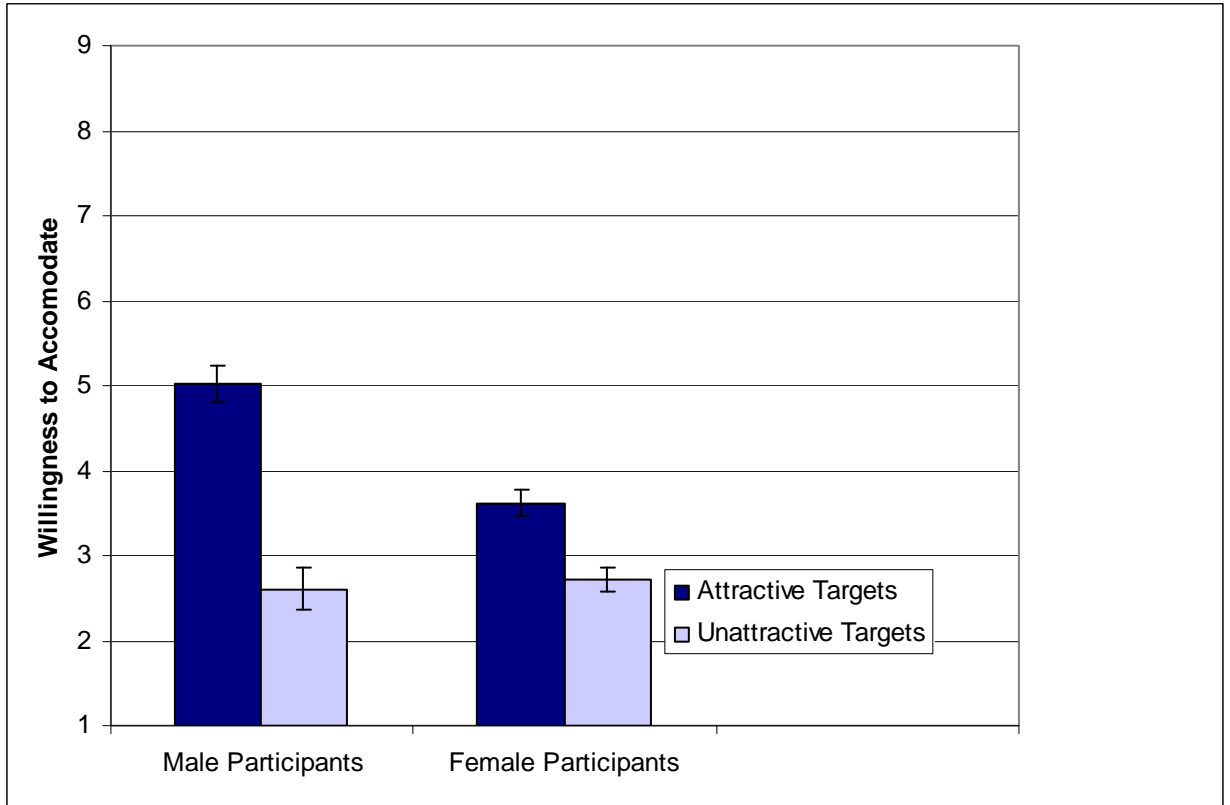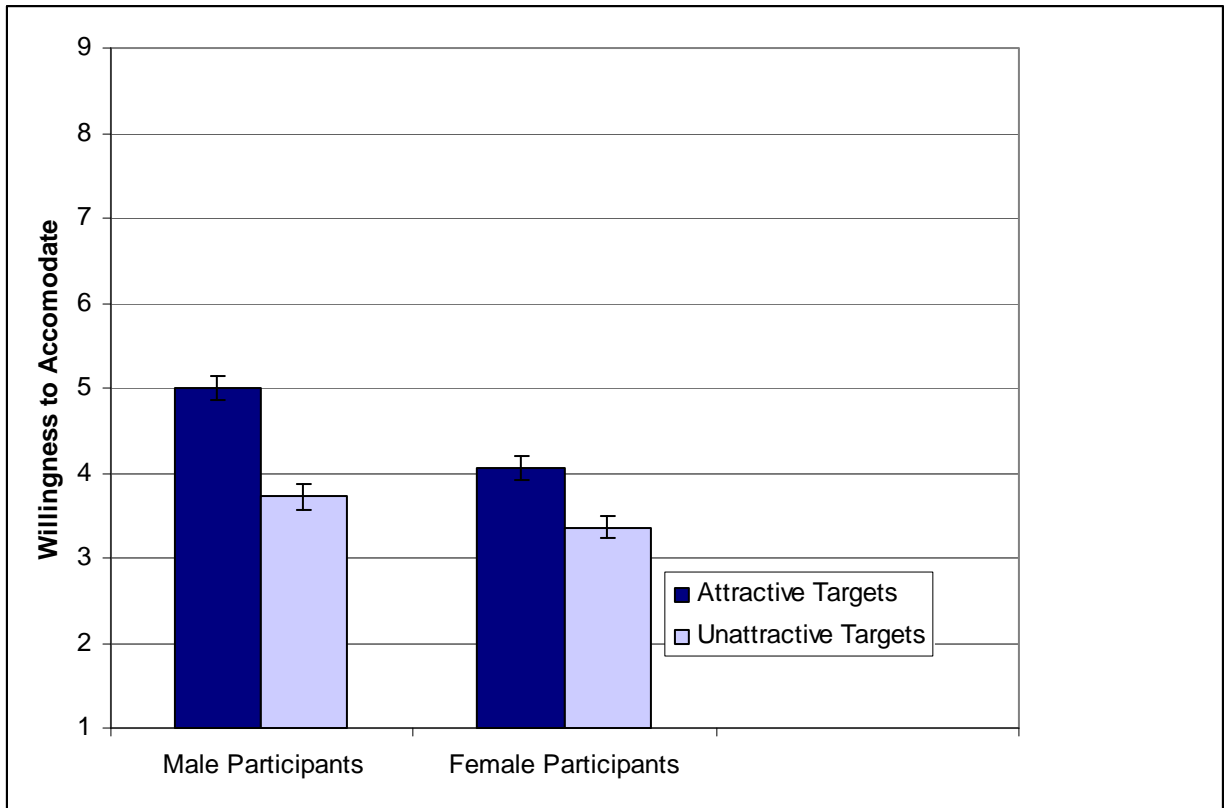
Figure 4.3

Men's and women's willingness to accommodate attractive and unattractive targets (Experiment 1, Sample 2) Error bars represent standard error of the mean.

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Appendix: Accommodations

<u>Study 1 (Experiment)</u>

Convert to partner's religion

Learn a new language for partner

Move to accommodate partner's career

Move to be closer to partner's family

Move, even to a place where I knew no one but my partner

Spend a large percentage of my free time with my partner

Marry my partner, even if I wasn't ready

Wait to marry my partner, even if I was ready

Be tolerant of partner's annoying habits

Date partner even if she/he didn't get along with my family

Spend time with partner's friends instead of mine

Date partner even though she didn't get along with my friends

Date partner even if she/he didn't get along with my best friend

Let partner make decisions about how we spend our time

Put my career on hold

Forgive partner for a sexual indiscretion

Forgive partner for an emotional indiscretion

Engage in sex with partner if I wasn't in the mood

Experiment sexually with partner

<u>Study 2 (Existing Couples)</u>

How long did you wait before having sex with your current partner?

I stopped practicing my religion for my partner

I'm ready to get married, but my partner wants to wait

My partner wants to get married, but I'm not ready

I give up spending time with my friends so we can spend time with my partner's friends

On average we spend more time with my partner's friends than with mine

I frequently give up holidays with my family so we can see my partner's family

I am tolerant of my partner's annoying habits

I pursued a relationship with my partner even though s/he didn't get along with my friends

I pursued a relationship with my partner even though s/he did not get along with my family

My relationship with some family is uncomfortable because of my partner

I pursued a relationship with my partner even though s/he didn't get along with my best friend

My relationship with my best friend suffered because of my partner

I learned a new language for my partner

I moved to accommodate my partner

I moved so my partner could be closer to his/her family

I moved to accommodate my partner's career

I spend a large percentage of my free time with my partner

We spend more time doing activities that my partner chooses than ones I choose

When we eat out my partner usually chooses the restaurant

My partner makes most of the financial decisions

If I had sex with someone outside the relationship my partner would not leave

I have had sex outside of the relationship

I'm willing to sexually experiment with my partner

I have done something sexually that I did not want to do because my partner wanted it

I'm willing to have sex with my partner even when I'm not in the mood

I frequently give in to my partners wants

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In applying empirical methods to the study of attraction and close relationships psychologists are faced with the challenge of understanding human behavior at its most varied and complex.   Having a framework to guide such efforts is essential if steady progress is to be made. An overarching goal of this dissertation was to display the utility of letting an evolutionarily functional approach be a theoretical guide to formulating questions and hypotheses about behavior in the context of romantic relationships. The research presented here integrates this approach with the rich literature and methods from traditional social psychology to advance the understanding of how people evaluate the desirability of potential partners, what qualities women look for in a husband, and tactics people use to attract and retain desirable partners.

The first study (Chapter 2) presented work examining the information people take into consideration when evaluating whether or not someone is a good candidate for a long-term relationship partner. Because many of the traits desired in a long-term partner are hard to observe (e.g. Buss, 1994; Miller, 2000) and because people have been shown to rely on the opinions of others in many other facets of life (e.g. Boyd & Richerson, 1985; Deutsch & Girard, 1955; Sherif, 1936) we expected people to be particularly sensitive to how a target person was evaluated by a past partner. Consistent with this prediction we found that participants immediately devalued targets after learning they had been abandoned by their last partner.

In contrast to the qualities sought in a long-term partner, those sought in a short-term partner are readily apparent. Therefore, although some types of social information (e.g. if the person is diseased) may factor into ratings of desirability, we expected that learning a target person had been rejected would not be heavily weighed if the person was being considered for a sexual relationship.   Further, women are generally reluctant to engage in casual sex with a stranger, whereas men are often inclined to, thus we also expected a main effect of participant sex (Clark & Hatfield, 1989; Schmitt, 1993). Consistent with these predictions, data revealed that learning a person had been rejected was not as important when they were being evaluated for a sexual compared to romantic relationship.   Additionally, men relative to women expressed a greater desire to have sex with the target both before and after learning of the circumstances surrounding her last break-up.

The second study (Chapter 3) of this dissertation narrowed the focus from global impressions of a person's desirability to the specific qualities that women value in a long-term partner. The cost of reproduction is higher for women relative to men, which is thought to explain both women's relative disinterest in casual sex (Schmitt, 1993) and their relative emphasis on traits in a long-term partner that signify willingness and ability to provide resources (Buss, 1994). We predicted, however, that for women who have both access to education and the ability to control their own resources there would be a relationship between intelligence (one indicator of the women's ability to take advantage of said opportunities) and these attitudes and preferences. As expected we found that as women's intelligence increased their reported desire for traits in a future spouse that indicated ability to provide decreased, and their desire and willingness to engage in

casual sexual relationships increased.   Increases in intelligence were also positively related to egalitarian views on the appropriate roles of men and women in the context of home, family, and relationships.

Finally, integrating the ideas that people know what they want in a partner and what signals they use to determine if a person is likely to have those qualities, the third research project (Chapter 4) presented theoretical and empirical work exploring how people attract and retain desirable partners. Taking into consideration that people strive to date others generally agreed to be valuable partners (Walster et al. 1966; Kurzban & Weeden, 2007) and that mismatches in partner value often occur, the Relationship Negotiation Hypothesis (RNH) suggests that people come to be paired not only based on their absolute value, but also as a function of accommodations individuals are willing to make for their partners.   Study 1 demonstrated that people report more willingness to accommodate an attractive compared to unattractive hypothetical partner. The second study explored the effects of relative attractiveness on people's willingness to concede to their partner in existing couples. Even with a very small sample, data supported the hypothesis that less attractive partners would do more to accommodate their more attractive counterparts than vice-versa.   This seems to especially be the case with regard to sex and money, which suggests the intriguing possibility that physical appearance offers more bargaining power in some domains than in others.

Though individual chapters more thoroughly present strengths and limitations of the studies discussed here, some strengths and limitations apply to the work as a whole. Besides the central goal of integrating an evolutionary perspective with more standard social psychological theory and methods, another overarching goal was to broaden how

far results could be generalized by sampling beyond typical introductory psychology students. Although the data presented in Chapter 3 was gathered from college students, women from all years of college were sampled avoiding the usual pitfalls of having only the attitudes of 18 year olds represented. In the first study in Chapter 4 a large data set was gathered from the internet that displayed diversity in terms of age, income, race, and level of education.   Since the results from this study replicated those from the student sample the findings can considered much more robust and somewhat impervious to individual differences. In the second study hypotheses were confirmed using data from existing couples.

Although this work has its strengths, there are two serious limitations that should receive consideration in future research endeavors. First, all the studies relied on self-reports of behavior and attitudes. As in many other areas of psychological inquiry, what people report in these types of artificial lab studies does not always reflect how they actually behave in real life situations (e.g. Eastwick & Finkel, 2008). Second, there is reason to expect that people's attitudes and behavior fluctuates over time and in response to many life circumstances, particularly with regard to the hypotheses in Chapters 3 and 4.   In an effort to fully understand the behaviors discussed there it would be necessary to collect longitudinal data.   As this program of research matures every effort will be made to correct these limitations.

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