FLEXIBILITY REGARDING POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CHARACTERISTICS IN POTENTIAL INTIMATE PARTNERS

by

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Abstract

In addressing partner selection and the development of intimate relationships, previous studies have examined mainly positive characteristics. The purpose of this study was to investigate and compare the importance and flexibility of positive and negative characteristics in partner selection. Specifically, this study investigated the importance of positive characteristics in facilitating the development of intimate relationships. Furthermore, this study examined the importance of negative characteristics in deterring the development of intimate relationships. Flexibility regarding both positive and negative characteristics was also explored. Results of this study demonstrate that a negative relationship exists between the importance and flexibility of positive characteristics, while a positive relationship exists between the importance and flexibility of negative characteristics. In regards to partner selection, negative characteristics were found to be more important than positive characteristics. Differences between males and females were noted.

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Introduction

People have certain characteristics they prefer in their intimate partners. Prior to entering into an intimate relationship, individuals are likely to compare their potential partner to ideal standards to determine whether they want the relationship to develop. While ideals vary among individuals, they serve as a basis against which perceptions of their partners are measured and their relationships evaluated (Fletcher, Simpson, Thomas, & Giles, 1999). In particular, the more consistent people's ideal standards are with perceptions of their current partner, the more likely they will evaluate their current partner and relationship positively (Campbell, Simpson, Kashy, & Fletcher, 2001; Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000; Fletcher & Simpson, 2000; Fletcher et al., 1999).

Positive characteristics have been the focus of existing research. As noted by Felmlee and Sprecher (2000), research addressing partner selection and close relationships has centred on what people find appealing or positive in potential partners. Positive characteristics that increase attraction are a good personality, honesty, intelligence, and emotional stability (Fletcher et al., 2000; Fletcher et al., 1999; Regan, 1998; Sprecher & Regan, 2002). These characteristics, however, are not rigid. Instead, people modify their beliefs by allowing their ideals a certain degree of latitude when selecting a partner. In particular, flexibility in their ideals is reflected in their willingness to accept discrepancies between their ideals and their perceptions of their current partner and relationship (Campbell et al., 2001; Regan, 1998). Finally, though not specifically utilized in partner selection research, both the Person-Positivity bias and the Pollyanna principle further the notion that positive characteristics play a large role when evaluating individuals (Sears, 1983; Matlin & Stang, 1978).

Negative characteristics in potential partners have not been emphasized in the literature. There is reason to believe, however, that negative characteristics play a pivotal role in partner selection. The negativity bias, for instance, suggests that people place greater weight on negative rather than positive information (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001). In other words, contrary to the Pollyanna principle and Person-Positivity bias, people pay greater attention to negative information when formulating opinions regarding others. In addition, the repulsion hypothesis states that dissimilarity between partners deters a relationship from developing (Rosenbaum, 1986). In particular, people eliminate potential partners based on characteristics they would not consider appealing in a partner. Negative characteristics, therefore, do influence the development and termination of intimate relationships.

Normal, healthy relationships are likely to consist of a mixture of good and bad characteristics. Acknowledging and accepting a person's faults is necessary for a relationship to develop (Knee, Nanayakkara, Vietor, Neighbors, & Patrick, 2001; Murray & Holmes, 1999). People's beliefs regarding their partners may influence their ability to cope with challenges faced within the relationship and predict whether they remain or leave an unsatisfying relationship (Knee, 1998). Since satisfying relationships are important determinants of people's well-being (Freedman, 1978), gaining insight into people's beliefs regarding positive and negative characteristics as well as their flexibility regarding these characteristics may lead to greater knowledge regarding relationship quality and personal satisfaction.

This study considered both positive and negative characteristics in potential partners. The purpose of this study was threefold. First, this study explored the

importance given to positive characteristics in describing a potential intimate partner. Second, the importance given to negative characteristics in describing a potential partner people are unlikely to develop an intimate relationship with was investigated. Third, this study examined how willing people are to accept discrepancies regarding characteristics that are important in affecting the likelihood of developing an intimate relationship. Differences were assessed in regards to age, sex, ethnicity, and relationship experience. Unique to this study is the inclusion of negative characteristics when addressing partner preferences. Knowing what characteristics facilitate and deter a relationship from developing, as well as how flexible people are willing to be regarding these characteristics, may aid in developing a broader understanding of successes and failures in relationships.

<div align="center">Review of Literature</div>

Positive and Negative Affect

Clarification regarding the relationship between being attracted to and avoiding partners is necessary prior to reviewing the literature on partner characteristics. The literature on positive versus negative affect provides a useful model in this regard. Affect is defined as "genuine subjective feelings and moods" (Russell & Carroll, 1999, p. 3). Affect can be either positive and pleasant or negative and unpleasant. Whether positive affect is independent of or the bipolar opposite of negative affect has been the subject of debate among researchers. Those arguing in favour of independence (e.g., Mayer & Gaschke, 1988; Meyer & Shack, 1989: Watson & Tellegen, 1985) suggest that positive and negative states of affect are independent of one another. Both pleasant and unpleasant states are separate entities and can be experienced simultaneously. In other

words, a person can be both happy and unhappy at the same time. Bipolarity, on the other hand, suggests that positive and negative affect fall at opposite ends of a single continuum. Researchers (e.g., Barrett & Russell, 1998; Barrett & Russell, 1999; Carroll, Yik, Russell, & Barrett, 1999) arguing in favour of bipolarity feel that positive and negative affect are opposites. For example, if a person is feeling calm, then that person cannot also be feeling upset. Both sets of researchers offer complex and convincing arguments, and to date, neither bipolarity nor independence has received complete support.

The debate regarding the bipolarity or independence of positive and negative affect is important to understanding the present paper. In partner selection, are a partner's positive and negative characteristics viewed on a bipolar continuum or independent of each other? For example, if an individual wants a potential partner to be high in physical attractiveness, does this mean that a potential partner who is highly unattractive will not be given a chance? According to the argument of independence, the answer to the preceding question is no. Since physical attractiveness and unattractiveness are independent of each other, valuing a partner who is physically attractive does not imply that a partner who is physically unattractive is not valued at all. Bipolarity, on the other hand, suggests that physical attractiveness and unattractiveness are on opposite ends of one continuum. If physical attractiveness is extremely important in a potential partner, then a person who is not attractive will not be considered as a potential partner.

The arguments presented in this paper are consistent with the notion that positive and negative affect are independent of each other. In this paper, the possibility is

entertained that what leads to rejection differs from what leads to attraction. A higher preference for a positive characteristic does not imply that its opposite will be given a lower preference. As will be demonstrated later in this paper, ideals are flexible (Campbell et al., 2001; Regan, 1998). Since ideals are flexible, each characteristic, whether it is positive or negative, is allowed a certain degree of latitude. Flexibility varies for each characteristic, and thus, the positive aspect of a characteristic may receive more or less latitude than the negative aspect. Because of this notion, positive and negative characteristics may not be direct opposites, as suggested by bipolarity.

Positive Characteristics of Intimate Partners

Positive characteristics have been emphasized in partner selection. Research suggests that people tend to look at the positive in individuals and situations. The Person-Positivity bias suggests that, in general, people evaluate others in a positive manner. The Person-Positivity bias indicates that favourable evaluations of individuals are more likely than unfavourable evaluations (Sears, 1983). In addition, evaluations of the individual as a whole, rather than on separate attributes, are generally more favourable. Even within a group, individuals are evaluated more favourably than the group as a whole (Sears, 1983). These favourable evaluations are due, in part, to people seeing similarities between themselves and the individual being evaluated (Sears, 1983). By looking at the individual as a whole and taking the individual out of the group, people are better able to relate to the person and thus, give favourable evaluations.

Consistent with the Person-Positivity bias is the Pollyanna principle. The Pollyanna principle refers to the notion that people tend to be optimists and look at the bright side of situations and individuals (Matlin & Stang, 1978). For instance, people

seek pleasant situations and avoid situations that are unpleasant. In addition, people are more inclined to evaluate others in a positive manner, regardless of whether the individuals are friends or strangers (Matlin & Stang, 1978). It appears that information processing is selective when making evaluations. Pleasant information is easier to learn and remember. Pleasant information is also rehearsed more often, making it easier to retrieve (Erdeyli, 1974). Thus, when people are asked to evaluate an individual, pleasant information is at the forefront of their memory and consequently, a favourable rating is given.

The Person-Positivity bias and Pollyanna principle offer insight into partner selection. Both of these concepts suggest that when selecting a potential partner, people are more likely to give greater weight to positive rather than negative characteristics. Specifically, the Person-Positivity bias implies that if looking at a potential partner as a whole, rather than looking at each individual characteristic, that person would generally receive a favourable rating. People do not emphasize the negative characteristics, and thus, favourable ratings are probable. According to the Pollyanna principle, people are more likely to pay greater attention to the positive rather than negative characteristics. Since greater attention is given to positive characteristics, these characteristics are likely to be retrieved from memory with greater ease and thus, a favourable rating of a potential partner is likely.

Ideals reflect characteristics which are positive, or in other words, valued in a partner. Ideals are derived through observations of other people's relationships, personal experience, and through the media (e.g. TV, films, books...) and specify people's hopes or expectations for a potential partner. Thus, ideals serve as the standard to which people

compare their perceptions of their current or potential partner and relationship (Fletcher et al., 1999). Through their comparisons, people evaluate their partners and relationships, enabling them to decide the direction they want their relationship to take. If a potential partner is consistent with their ideals, they are likely to proceed with the relationship. When ideals and current partner perceptions differ, the likelihood of the relationship continuing is questioned. Ideals, however, are not static. People may come to realize that their ideals contain unrealistic expectations, and thus, through experience, they modify their ideals to reflect a more realistic picture of a potential partner (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996).

Ideals are frequently measured in terms of their importance. It is not necessarily the mere selection of a characteristic in a potential partner that deems the characteristic as ideal. Rather, as noted by Fletcher et al. (1999), it is the importance of the characteristic in a potential partner that makes it ideal. Importance is measured in terms of the likelihood a relationship will develop if a potential partner possesses characteristics which are deemed attractive or unattractive.

Partner ideals are multi-dimensional. Fletcher et al. (1999) suggest that ideals are divided into three major dimensions. The first dimension, labelled warmth-trustworthiness, refers to a partner's ability for intimacy and commitment. Focusing on finding a partner who is intimate and committed may increase the likelihood of finding a partner who is able to provide emotional and practical support needed to raise a family and be a good parent. The second dimension is attractiveness and vitality. People who emphasize this dimension are more likely to acquire a partner who is young, healthy, and fertile. The third, and final, dimension pertains to status and resources. Partners with a

large amount of resources, or the potential to amass resources, are likely to have a greater capacity to provide for and protect their families (Fletcher, Tither, O'Loughlin, Friesen, & Overall, 2004; Fletcher et al., 1999).

Ideals include characteristics from each of the three dimensions. The selection of characteristics varies as a function of how people view themselves (Fletcher et al., 2000; Fletcher et al., 1999). People realize that they are unlikely to attract a partner who exceeds their own value as a partner. For instance, if a male feels he is not very attractive, he knows that his potential to attract a supermodel is not great. His ideal for attraction, then, will be similar to how attractive he sees himself. Thus, people formulate their ideals based on their self-perceptions on the same dimensions. The higher they see themselves on a dimension, the greater their expectations for a potential partner (Campbell et al., 2001; Fletcher et al., 2004).

Ideals vary based on the anticipated duration of the relationship. People have different ideals depending upon whether the individual is thought of as a long-term partner or short-term sexual partner. A long-term partner is one with whom the potential to develop an intimate, committed relationship exists. In long-term partners, characteristics pertaining to warmth and trust are more important than characteristics pertaining to social status and resources. Specifically, preferred characteristics in long-term partners are honesty, intelligence, loyalty, dependability, emotionally stability, and a good personality (Buss & Barnes, 1986; Regan, Levin, Sprecher, Christopher, & Cate, 2000). Characteristics pertaining to physical attractiveness and social status do not rank as highly when referring to long-term partners (Regan et al., 2000). These findings are consistent with the three-dimensional approach used by Fletcher et al. (1999; 2004) in

describing ideal partners. When thinking of long-term partners, people prefer partners that offer them warmth and trust, facilitating the development of a committed relationship.

Short-term partners represent a fling. A short-term partner is a partner with whom people are likely to develop a one-night stand or a casual sexual relationship. In short-term partners, an emphasis is placed on sexual desirability and physical attractiveness (Regan et al., 2000; Sprecher & Regan, 2002). Characteristics pertaining to warmth and kindness, such as being understanding and supportive are less desirable in short-term partners (Regan & Berscheid, 1997; Sprecher & Regan, 2002; Regan, 1998). People are less likely to value warmth and kindness in short-term partners because these characteristics are more relevant in developing an intimate and loyal relationship. Since people are not looking for an intimate relationship with short-term partners, they prefer a person who is attractive, desirable, and who will fulfill their sexual needs.

Sex Differences and Flexibility

Differences exist between the sexes regarding their ideals. Women, for instance, place greater emphasis than men on characteristics pertaining to intimacy and commitment. These characteristics include honesty, dependability, and kindness (Buss & Barnes, 1986; Regan & Berscheid, 1997). Women also place greater emphasis on characteristics pertaining to social status than men (Fletcher et al., 2004). The elevated importance of social status for women is perhaps related to their physiological investment in children (Regan & Berscheid, 1997; Fletcher et al., 2004). Women have a greater physiological role in child-rearing, including pregnancy, and thus, they tend to have greater expectations for men to provide the resources. Men, on the other hand,

place a greater emphasis than women on physical attractiveness and sexual desirability. Men seek women who can produce offspring, and thus, place a greater emphasis than women on characteristics reflecting women's reproductive capacities (Regan et al., 2000; Buss & Barnes, 1986).

Ideals are flexible rather than static. Flexibility is defined as people's willingness to accept discrepancies regarding characteristics they feel are important in increasing and decreasing the likelihood of developing an intimate relationship (Campbell et al., 2001; Regan, 1998). People's ideals consist of the characteristics they value in a partner. Potential partners possessing these characteristics, however, may not always be available. By accepting discrepancies between their ideals and perceptions of potential or current partners, people have greater opportunities of finding potential partners that meet their standards. Flexibility also aids in the maintenance of current relationships. People's willingness to accept discrepancies between their current partners and their ideals facilitates their satisfaction and commitment (Campbell et al., 2001; Regan, 1998). In general, when people are less flexible and have large partner discrepancies, perceived relationship quality is lower. Those who are more flexible accept greater discrepancies, and thus, experience greater relationship satisfaction (Campbell et al., 2001).

The notion of flexibility is based on Social Judgement theory (Sherif & Hovland, 1961; Sherif, Sherif, & Nebergall, 1965). This theory suggests that people make judgements, or formulate opinions and standards, regarding situations, events, and people in their lives (Sherif et al., 1965). People are flexible, though, regarding their standards. Realizing that a perfect partner is not attainable, people are willing to adjust their standards and accept characteristics in potential partners that do not meet or exceed their

standards. Specifically, Social Judgement theory suggests that people have both a latitude of acceptance and rejection (Sherif et al., 1965). A latitude of acceptance includes all positions a person finds favourable regarding a particular issue. A latitude of rejection, on the other hand, includes all positions a person objects regarding a particular issue. Campbell et al. (1999) refer to these latitudes when describing flexibility. According to Campbell et al. (1999), when people are less flexible, their latitude of acceptance is narrow and their latitude of rejection is wide. In this instance, large discrepancies between what people want in a partner and their perceptions of a potential partner are not tolerated. People with wide latitudes of acceptance and narrow latitudes of rejection, however, are more flexible, and thus more tolerant of large discrepancies.

Flexibility varies based on how important the issue is to that person. As mentioned previously, importance refers to how characteristics people value and do not value in a potential partner affect their likelihood of developing an intimate relationship. As people become more personally involved in the issue at hand, such as partner selection, the issue receives greater importance and their convictions become stronger, making it less likely that people will sway from their beliefs (Sherif & Hovland, 1961). Thus, the greater the importance people place on the characteristics involved in partner selection, the less flexible they will be.

Both sexes differ in the amount of flexibility given to potential partners. Women are less flexible than men regarding characteristics pertaining to warmth and trustworthiness and status and resources (Campbell et al., 2001; Regan, 1998). As noted previously, women also found these characteristics to be more important than males. Flexibility is lower with these characteristics because they are central in facilitating the

development of a long-term relationship (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000). A partner who is committed, honest, and supportive is more likely to be a partner with whom a lasting relationship is developed and a family is created. Furthermore, a partner who has a multitude of resources is likely to be able to provide for a family. Men, on the other hand, are less flexible than women regarding characteristics pertaining to physical attractiveness (Campbell et al., 2001; Regan, 1998). As reported previously, these characteristics were more important to males than females. These characteristics are reflective of good genes and fertility. If males seek a partner who will provide them with children, they are likely to hold characteristics related to physical attractiveness in high regard and thus, they are less likely to be flexible with these characteristics. Interestingly, in terms of a short-term sexual partner, both men and women were least flexible regarding physical attractiveness. Because these relationships are likely to be a casual fling or a one-night stand, people are not concerned with their partner's warmth or honesty. Instead, they are more concerned with their partner's appearance and ability to fulfill their sexual desires.

Positive characteristics have been the focus of previous studies. People, however, possess an array of positive and negative characteristics. Lasting satisfaction in an intimate relationship requires consideration and understanding of both a person's strengths and weaknesses (Brickman, 1987; Swann, De La Ronde, & Hixon, 1994). For a relationship to succeed, people must accept both a partner's positive and negative characteristics (Knee et al., 2001). Looking at only the positive characteristics presents one side of the picture. This present study, therefore, combined both positive and

negative characteristics to investigate how flexible people are regarding these characteristics in potential partners.

Negative Characteristics of Intimate Partners

Research has not addressed the role of negative characteristics in partner selection. The negativity bias, however, offers insight into the possible importance of negative characteristics in partner selection. It contradicts the notion that people are inclined to be optimists, as suggested by the Pollyanna principle. Instead, the negativity bias suggests that negative information is processed more thoroughly than positive information and has a greater impact in forming an impression (Baumeister et al., 2001). Evolution plays a role in focusing on negative information. Baumeister et al. (2001) argue that it is adaptive to give negative information greater weight. Through negative experiences and consequences suffered, people learn to adapt to their environment. They change their method of survival to avoid experiencing further costs. People who focus solely on what is positive are likely to repeat their mistakes, reducing their chances for survival.

Negative information plays a large role in impression formation. People's attention is drawn towards negative information. Learning negative information about someone, rather than learning positive information, has a greater impact on subsequent evaluations of that person (Baumeister et al., 2001; Pratto & John, 1991). This is due to the notion that negative information carries more weight than positive information (Anderson, 1965; Fiske, 1980; Vonk, 1993; Wyer & Hinkle, 1971). In other words, people are likely to place an emphasis on a person's faults when forming an opinion rather than focusing on a person's positive attributes. Since a person is expected to have

positive characteristics, negative characteristics are seen as being more revealing of a person's true character (Hamilton & Huffman, 1971).

Negative events impact the development and maintenance of intimate relationships. Negative events have a greater influence on the outcome of a relationship than positive events do. Specifically, the harm negative events can cause to the relationship have a far greater effect than the benefits of positive events (Baumeister et al., 2001). The impact of negative events in relationships is so great, Gottman (1994) suggests that negative events are five times as powerful as positive events. Thus, for every negative event that occurs within the relationship, five positive events must occur to balance out the impact.

If negative information and negative events impact relationship development and outcomes, perhaps negative characteristics play a role in partner selection. Negative characteristics refer to characteristics that are not valued in a potential partner. Anderson (1968) conducted a study addressing how people rated the likeability of 555 characteristics. Consistently, positive characteristics were rated more favourably than negative characteristics. Although negative characteristics were rated unfavourably, people may feel as strongly about not having negative characteristics in an intimate partner as they do about the presence of positive characteristics, as suggested by the negativity bias. People's preferences regarding negative characteristics are explored in this present study.

Prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) offers insight into the role of negative characteristics in relationship formation. Prospect theory suggests that there are two phases in decision-making. The first phase involves editing, while the second phase

involves evaluating. When people are in the editing phase, they analyze their potential prospects and organize their options in a manner which simplifies subsequent evaluations. In the evaluation phase, the edited prospects undergo evaluation, and the prospect deemed to have the highest value is selected. In assessing value, a reference point, such a person's aspirations, is used and the overall value is calculated as a function of the magnitude of change from the reference point (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). The overall value of an option is assessed by balancing its advantages and disadvantages in relation to the reference point (Kahneman & Tversky, 1983). People try to maximize their gains and minimize their losses, since losses have greater repercussions than gains (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Losses inflict greater psychological harm than gains do, and thus, people are more willing to take risks to avoid losses (Jervis, 2004).

Prospect theory can be utilized in regards to partner selection. The reference point would be aspirations for an intimate partner. People would try to find a partner who is evaluated as meeting or exceeding their aspiration levels. A partner who displays more negative than positive characteristics would be evaluated as a loss, and would thus be eliminated from partner selection. People are not likely to choose someone who exhibits negative characteristics because they do not want to take a risk. The safe choice is someone who displays adequate levels of what they are seeking. People are likely, therefore, to emphasize seeking positive characteristics and minimize the chance that they will choose a partner who overtly displays a large number of negative characteristics. Since people are especially risk aversive, from the stand point of prospect theory, one might expect people to especially try to avoid partners with negative characteristics.

The repulsion hypothesis offers further insight into the potential importance of negative characteristics. According to Rosenbaum's (1986) repulsion hypothesis, similarity to potential partners is not the basis for attraction. Instead, dissimilarity elicits repulsion. Though the emphasis on this research is attitudes, these findings can be extended to partner characteristics. In his study, Rosenbaum (1986) uses characteristics derived in Anderson's (1968) study to determine similarity and repulsion. Findings from Rosenbaum's (1986) studies would suggest that prior to selecting an intimate partner, people eliminate individuals they feel exhibit characteristics not wanted in their partners.

The repulsion hypothesis has received mixed support. Researchers (Byrne, Clore, & Smeaton, 1986; Smeaton, Byrne, & Murnen, 1989; Drigotas, 1993; Singh & Yon Ho, 2000) have criticized Rosenbaum's (1986) emphasis on repulsion. These criticisms are based on findings that similarity does play a role in attraction. People with similar characteristics are attracted to each other. Thus, Byrne et al. (1986) and Smeaton et al. (1986) offer a different interpretation of research findings. They suggest that both dissimilarity and similarity play a role in attraction. Initially, people rely on negative characteristics to exclude individuals from being selected as potential partners. People then select from the remaining prospective partners based on similarity in positive characteristics.

The finding that dissimilarity plays a role in partner selection is critical to the present study. The importance of negative characteristics in deterring people from selecting a potential partner is unknown. The negativity bias suggests that negative characteristics are more important than positive characteristics in partner selection. Even

though a potential partner may possess positive characteristics, the presence of negative characteristics may prevent the development of a relationship. The importance given to negative characteristics in partner selection is explored in this study.

In terms of flexibility, positive, rather than negative characteristics have been studied. Flexibility for negative characteristics, however, does not necessarily follow the same pattern as it does for positive characteristics. Deviations from positive and negative characteristics are different. When people deviate from positive characteristics, they are moving away from what they consider ideal. This is detrimental to relationship formation. On the other hand, when people deviate from negative characteristics, they are removing what deters them from developing a relationship. Removing the aversive characteristic is beneficial to relationship formation. Intuitively, then, people should be more flexible regarding negative characteristics rather than positive characteristics.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Positive characteristics have been emphasized when looking at characteristics people prefer in their intimate partners. The Pollyanna principle and Person-Positivity bias suggest that positive characteristics are emphasized in partner selection. The negativity bias and repulsion hypothesis, however, infer that negative characteristics are more important than positive characteristics in partner selection. This study incorporated both positive and negative characteristics. Specifically, this study measured how important both positive and negative characteristics are in describing an intimate partner with whom people are likely and unlikely to develop an intimate relationship. Since people possess both positive and negative characteristics, this study then explored how

willing people are to accept discrepancies regarding positive and negative characteristics in potential partners.

Based on the literature reviewed regarding flexibility, a few hypotheses were developed. Specifically, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis I: There is a negative association between the importance given to characteristics describing a potential partner people are likely to develop an intimate relationship with and flexibility.

Hypothesis II: There is a positive association between the importance given to characteristics describing a potential partner people are unlikely to develop an intimate relationship with and flexibility.

Since research has neither explored the importance nor the flexibility of positive and negative characteristics simultaneously, it is unclear which characteristics are more important in partner selection. It is also unknown if people are more willing to accept discrepancies regarding positive or negative characteristics. Thus, these issues were addressed in this study.

Research Question 1: Do positive characteristics have greater importance than negative characteristics in describing potential intimate partners?

Research Question 2: Are people more flexible regarding positive or negative characteristics?

Based on the sex differences noted in the literature, it was hypothesized that:

Hypothesis IIIa: Females will find characteristics pertaining to warmth-trustworthiness and status-resources more important than males.

Hypothesis IIIb: Females will be less flexible than males regarding characteristics pertaining to warmth-trustworthiness and status-resources.

Hypothesis IIIc: The relationship between sex differences and flexibility regarding characteristics pertaining to warmth-trustworthiness and status-resources will be mediated by the importance given to these characteristics (See Figure 1).

Importance
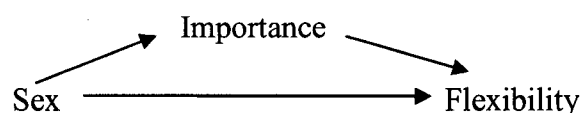
Sex ⟶ Flexibility

Figure 1: Importance as a mediator between the participants' sex and flexibility.

Hypothesis IVa: Males will find characteristics pertaining to attractiveness-vitality more important than females.

Hypothesis IVb: Males will be less flexible than females regarding characteristics pertaining to attractiveness-vitality.

Hypothesis IVc: The relationship between sex differences and flexibility regarding characteristics pertaining to attractiveness-vitality will be mediated by the importance given to these characteristics (See Figure 1).

Since research has focused on positive characteristics, it is unknown how males and females differ regarding the importance and flexibility given to negative characteristics versus positive characteristics. This study investigates whether sex differences exist.

Research Question 3: Do males and females differ regarding the importance given to positive and negative characteristics in describing potential intimate partners?

Research Question 4: Do males and females differ in terms of their willingness to accept discrepancies regarding positive and negative characteristics in potential intimate partners?

Methods

Participants

Several undergraduate classes at the University of British Columbia were surveyed to obtain participants. Classes surveyed included Sociology, Biology, Geography, Math, and Political Science with a total enrolment of 776 students. Overall, 295 questionnaires were distributed to students indicating their interest in participating and 139 completed questionnaires were returned, for a response rate of 47.1%. Fifty-eight males (41.73%) and 81 females (58.27%) participated. Ages ranged from 18 to 40 years of age, and the average age of the participants was 21.09 years of age (SD = 3.34). The ethnicity of participants included East Asian (N=72, 51.8%), European/Caucasian (N=48, 34.5%), Southeast Asian (N=11, 7.9%), South Asian (N=4, 2.9%), Middle Eastern (N=2, 1.4%), and African (N=1, 0.7%).

Ninety-one (65.5%) participants reported being previously involved in a serious intimate relationship. The majority of participants (N=43, 48.9%) have had one partner, while 18.2% (N=16) have had two partners. Eighty of the eighty-six participants (93.0%) providing data on their previous relationships are heterosexual, while five (5.8%) are homosexual. One (1.2%) participant is bisexual.

Regarding current relationship status, 72 (51.8%) participants are not currently involved in a relationship, 44 (31.7%) are currently involved in a serious relationship, 15 (10.8%) are currently involved in a casual relationship, 3 (2.2%) are engaged, and 3 (2.2%) are married.

Procedures

A convenience sample was solicited from various undergraduate classes. Contact was made with professors to seek permission to approach the class. Once permission was given, the researcher attended the beginning of each class and gave a brief introduction explaining the purpose of the study. Students were asked if they were willing to participate, and only those who volunteered were given a survey. Questionnaires were retrieved in two subsequent classes following distribution.

Rather than having students sign a consent form, their completion of the survey was taken as a sign of their willingness to participate. It was stressed that participation was voluntary and confidential. A cover sheet was included on each survey detailing the purpose of the study and outlining that by completing the survey, participants gave their consent to allow the researchers to analyze the data.

Measures

Importance of Partner Characteristics. Items from a scale created by Fletcher et al. (1999) were used to measure positive partner characteristics, defined as characteristics that are valued in a potential partner. This list was derived in a study where participants were asked to describe characteristics of their ideal partner in a dating or marital relationship. A total of 42 characteristics were derived. Fletcher et al. (1999) devised a

short version of the list (17 items; See Appendix A) which was used in this study, with one exception. The item "nice body" is very similar to "attractive" and was excluded. Participants were asked "How important are the following characteristics in making an individual with whom you could have an intimate relationship attractive to you? That is, someone with whom you would want to have a relationship?" Items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 being very unimportant to 7 being very important.

To measure negative characteristics, items from a scale used by Murray et al. (1996) were used. Negative characteristics are defined as characteristics that are not valued in a potential partner. Murray et al. (1996) created a measure containing 12 negative characteristics to determine how married and dating couples felt about themselves and their intimate partners (See Appendix B). Six items were added to test the bipolarity of characteristics (unkind, insensitive, physically unattractive, withdrawn, unsuccessful, and financially insecure). Participants were asked "How important are the following characteristics in making an individual with whom you could have an intimate relationship unattractive to you? That is, someone with whom you would NOT want to have a relationship?" Items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 being very unimportant to 7 being very important.

Flexibility. Flexibility was assessed using the same items measuring the importance of partner characteristics. Two measures were used. The first measure was for characteristics that are important in increasing the likelihood of developing an intimate relationship. Participants were asked "For each of the characteristics that would attract you to a potential partner, to what extent would a romantic partner have to match your ideal on that characteristic in order for you to have a successful and happy

relationship with that person?" Items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 being not at all match to 7 being completely match.

The second measure was for characteristics that are important in decreasing the likelihood of developing an intimate relationship. Participants were asked "For each of the characteristics that would repel you from becoming involved with a potential partner, to what extent would a romantic partner have to differ from the characteristic that repels you in order for you to have a successful and happy relationship with that person?" Items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 being not at all differ to 7 being completely differ (See Appendix C).

Sex. Participants were asked whether they are male or female.

Current Relationship Status. Participants were asked if they are in currently in a relationship. Items included not currently involved, currently involved casually, currently involved seriously, engaged, or married.

Relationship Experience. Participants were asked if they have previously been involved in a serious intimate relationship. If they had been involved, they were asked the number of partners they had been involved with. They were also asked whether their previous partners were male, female, or both.

Age. Participants were asked their age in years.

Ethnicity. Participants were asked to identify their ethnicity. Selections included: First Nations/Native, Caucasian/European, Latino/Hispanic, African, South Asian, East Asian, South East Asian, and Other.

Results

Prior to testing the hypotheses, a one-way ANOVA was used to determine if any significant differences existed between the various ethnicities. To conduct the one-way ANOVA, categories with less than two participants were dropped. These include African and Middle Eastern. Also, the South Asian and Southeast Asian categories were collapsed into one category. No significant differences were found between the various groups in terms of importance ratings for positive characteristics ($F = 2.00, p = 0.14$). Significant differences were not found regarding the flexibility of positive characteristics ($F = 1.92, p = 0.15$). A one-way ANOVA was also used to determine if any significant differences existed between the various ethnicities regarding the negative characteristics. The same modifications made previously for positive characteristics were used in regards to collapsing categories. No significant differences were found between the various groups ($F = 1.48, p = 0.23$) regarding the importance of negative characteristics. Significant differences were not found either regarding flexibility of negative characteristics ($F = 1.81, p = 0.17$). Since significant differences were not discovered, ethnic differences were not addressed in the hypotheses and research questions.

The first two hypotheses dealt with deviations between ideal and actual characteristics of potential dating partners. Hypothesis I stated that the importance given to favourable characteristics describing a potential partner is negatively related to flexibility. Hypothesis II stated that the importance given to unfavourable characteristics describing a potential partner is positively related to flexibility. Correlations between the importance of positive characteristics and their flexibility as well as the importance of negative characteristics and their flexibility were conducted at both the individual item

and aggregate levels. At the individual item level, correlations between importance and flexibility were highly significant (See Table 1). Given the high significance level, the individual results do not appear to be capitalizing on Type I errors.

Table 1

Correlations Between Importance and Flexibility Scores

Characteristic	Flexibility
Positive Characteristics	
Understanding	0.32**
Physically Attractive	0.62**
Considerate	0.50**
Kind	0.59**
Good Listener	0.62**
Sensitive	0.46**
Adventurous	0.58**
Outgoing	0.55**
Successful	0.73**
Supportive	0.51**
Good Lover	0.57**
Good Job	0.70**
Financially Secure	0.74**
Nice House/Apartment	0.70**
Appropriate Ethnicity	0.85**
Sexy	0.67**
Well-dressed	0.62**
Negative Characteristics	
Lazy	0.61**
Critical	0.57**
Dominant	0.67**
Distant	0.50**
Insecure	0.69**
Irrational	0.57**
Unkind	0.46**
Controlling	0.56**
Judgemental	0.50**
Thoughtless	0.31**
Insensitive	0.47**
Childish	0.61**
Withdrawn	0.50**
Emotional	0.52**
Moody	0.37**

Physically Unattractive	0.49**
Complaining	0.41**
Unsuccessful	0.64**

Note. All correlations are between importance and flexibility scores at item level
** $p < 0.001$ (2 tailed).

To test hypothesis I at the aggregate level, the overall average of the 17 items in terms of their importance and flexibility was calculated and used. A correlation was conducted and a significant r-value of $|.56|$ ($p < 0.01$) was obtained. Thus, a negative relationship exists between the two variables. The more important a characteristic is in describing a likely intimate partner, the less flexible people are willing to be. Hypothesis I was thus supported.

A hierarchical regression was conducted to determine if importance scores for positive characteristics still have a predictive capacity after controlling for the age of the respondent, current relationship status, and number of previous partners. The only significant predictor of flexibility was the importance of positive characteristics ($\beta = 0.57$, $p < 0.01$) (See Table 2), adding further support to hypothesis I. (See Appendix D for Correlation Matrix)

Table 2

Results of Regression to Predict Flexibility Regarding Positive Characteristics

Variable	B	$SE\ B$	β
Age	0.00	0.02	-0.04
Number of Partners	0.00	0.02	0.09
Current Relationship Status	0.00	0.05	0.07
Importance Scores	0.57	0.08	0.57**

Note. $R^2 = 0.32$ ** $p < 0.01$ (2 tailed).

Hypothesis II suggested that there would be a positive association between the importance given to negative characteristics in describing an unlikely potential partner and flexibility. To test hypothesis II, the overall average of the 18 items in terms of their importance and flexibility was calculated and used. A correlation was run and a significant r-value of .63 ($p < 0.01$) was obtained. In other words, the more important a negative characteristic is in describing an unlikely intimate partner, the more a potential partner would have to differ from the negative characteristic for a relationship to develop (i.e. flexibility is low if the characteristic has great importance in deterring the development of a relationship). Thus, Hypothesis II was supported.

A hierarchical regression was conducted to determine if importance scores for negative characteristics still have a predictive capacity after controlling for age and current relationship status, and number of previous partners. The only significant predictor of flexibility was the importance of negative characteristics ($\beta = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$) (See Table 3) (See Appendix D for Correlation Matrix).

Table 3

Results of Regression to Predict Flexibility Regarding Negative Characteristics

Variable	B	$SE\ B$	β
Age	0.00	0.02	0.02
Number of Partners	0.00	0.02	0.06
Current Relationship Status	0.00	0.05	-0.05
Importance Scores	0.73	0.07	0.68**

Note. $R^2 = 0.45$
** $p < 0.01$ (2 tailed)

Research questions 1 and 2 addressed the difference between positive and negative characteristics in regards to importance and flexibility. Specifically, research question 1 inquired as to whether positive or negative characteristics had greater importance in describing potential intimate partners. Research question 2 addressed whether people were more flexible regarding positive than negative characteristics. Within-subject t-tests were used to test both research questions. For research question 1, a significant t-value of -3.03 ($p < 0.01$) was obtained, indicating that negative characteristics ($M = 5.26$, $SD = 0.68$) are more important than positive characteristics ($M = 5.09$, $SD = 0.71$). For research question 2, a non-significant t-value of -1.45 ($p = 0.15$) was obtained, illustrating that there are no significant differences between the negative flexibility scores ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 0.79$) and positive flexibility scores ($M = 4.81$, $SD = 0.70$).

Hypotheses III and IV dealt with sex differences in regards to the importance and flexibility of positive characteristics. These hypotheses are based on three categories identified by Fletcher et al. (1999). The first category includes characteristics pertaining to warmth-trustworthiness (understanding, supportive, considerate, kind, good listener, sensitive). The second category includes characteristics pertaining to status-resources (adventurous, outgoing, sexy, physically attractive, good lover). The final category includes characteristics pertaining to attractiveness-vitality (good job, financially secure, nice house/apartment, appropriate ethnicity, successful, well-dressed). A factor analysis was conducted to determine if, in this study, the characteristics fell in the same categories. Based on the scree plot, it was determined that this scale does have three components with eigenvalues over one (See Figure 2). A principal component analysis

with varimax rotation was conducted, and each of the items grouped into the same

categories as those of Fletcher et al. (1999), except for the item "well-dressed." This

item loaded on the status-resources category rather than the attractiveness-vitality

category (See Table 4).

Figure 2

Scree Plot for Positive Characteristics

Component Number
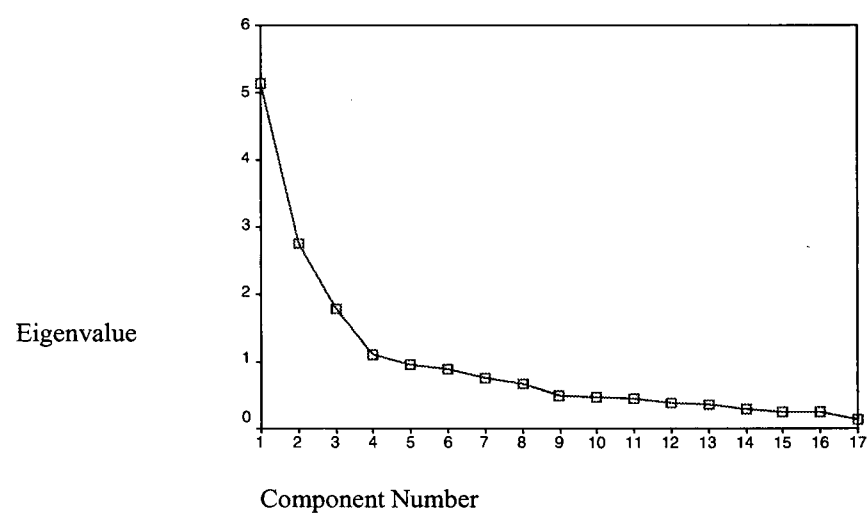
Table 4

Component Matrix for Importance of Positive Characteristics

Item	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
Understanding	**0.69**	-0.19	-0.01
Supportive	**0.75**	0.01	0.12
Considerate	**0.79**	0.14	0.01
Kind	**0.78**	0.15	0.07
Good Listener	**0.74**	0.02	0.17
Sensitive	**0.62**	0.10	0.09
Adventurous	0.10	**0.69**	0.12
Outgoing	0.14	**0.63**	0.03
Sexy	-0.05	**0.84**	-0.01
Physically Attractive	0.01	**0.69**	0.03
Good Lover	0.10	**0.49**	0.30
Good Job	0.23	0.20	**0.84**
Financially Secure	0.25	0.10	**0.85**
Nice house/apartment	0.05	0.18	**0.81**
Appropriate Ethnicity	-0.12	0.03	**0.55**
Successful	0.22	0.20	**0.77**
Well-dressed	0.07	**0.53**	0.48

Hypothesis IIIa suggests that females will find characteristics pertaining to warmth-trustworthiness and status-resources more important than males. An independent sample t-test was conducted with the independent variable being the participants' sex and the dependent variable being the importance of characteristics pertaining to warmth-trustworthiness. Results support the hypothesis that females find characteristics pertaining to warmth-trustworthiness more important than males (See Table 5). Equal variances were not assumed ($F = 8.08$, $p = 0.01$). An independent sample t-test was also conducted with the independent variable being the participants' sex and the dependent variable being the importance of characteristics pertaining to status-resources. Results support the hypothesis that females find characteristics

pertaining to status-resources more important than males (See Table 5). Equal variances

were assumed ($F = 0.00$, $p = 0.96$).

Table 5

Summary for Independent Sample t-tests for Importance Scores

Characteristics	Females		Males		df	t-statistic
	M	SD	M	SD		
Warmth-Trustworthiness	6.02	0.65	5.55	0.87	100.54	-3.50**
Status-Resources	4.78	1.13	4.08	1.12	136.00	-3.40**
Attractiveness-Vitality	4.92	0.93	4.92	0.93	135.00	-0.02

** $p < 0.001$ (2 tailed)

Hypothesis IIIb states that females will be less flexible than males regarding

characteristics pertaining to warmth-trustworthiness and status-resources. Hypothesis

IIIb was supported for both sets of characteristics. An independent sample t-test was

conducted with the dependent variable being flexibility of characteristics pertaining to

warmth-trustworthiness. The independent variable was the participants' sex. Results

demonstrate that females are less flexible than males regarding characteristics pertaining

to warmth-trustworthiness (See Table 6). Equal variances were assumed ($F = 0.88$, $p =$

0.35). An independent sample t-test was conducted with flexibility of status-resources

characteristics being the dependent variable and the participants' sex being the

independent variable. Females are less flexible than males regarding characteristics

pertaining to status-resources (See Table 6). Equal variances were assumed ($F = 0.00$, p

$= 0.98$).

Table 6

Summary for Independent Sample T-tests For Flexibility Scores

Characteristics	Females		Males		df	t-statistic
	M	SD	M	SD		
Warmth-Trustworthiness	5.66	0.64	5.31	0.73	135.00	-2.97**
Status-Resources	4.45	1.23	3.99	1.18	136.00	-2.20*
Attractiveness-Vitality	4.44	1.13	4.84	0.90	135.00	2.21*

** $p < 0.001$ (2 tailed)
* $p < 0.05$ (2 tailed)

Hypothesis IIIc states that the relationship between participants' sex and flexibility will be mediated by the importance ratings. Baron and Kenny (1986) suggest that a mediation relationship is evident when three conditions are met. First, there has to be a significant relationship between the predictor and outcome variables. Second, a significant relationship must exist between the predictor variable and the mediator. Finally, a significant relationship must exist between the mediator and outcome variables when all the variables are entered into the same equation. The direct effects of the predictor on the outcome must be reduced in this final condition. To test the third condition of mediation, the first two conditions must be met. To test hypothesis IIIc for warmth-trustworthiness characteristics, a series of regressions were conducted based on the protocol of Baron and Kenny (1986). First, the dependent variable was regressed on the independent variable. Second, the mediator was regressed on the independent variable. Third, the dependent variable was regressed on both the independent variable and the mediator in a hierarchical regression. Based on these steps, flexibility for characteristics pertaining to warmth-trustworthiness was regressed on the participants'

sex. The β value was 0.25 ($p < 0.01$). Secondly, the importance of characteristics pertaining to warmth-trustworthiness was regressed on the participants' sex. A significant finding was obtained ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.001$). Thirdly, the flexibility of characteristics pertaining to warmth-trustworthiness was regressed on the importance for these characteristics. A significant finding was obtained ($\beta = 0.63$, $p < 0.001$). Finally, a hierarchical regression was conducted in which flexibility was regressed on the participants' sex in the first step followed by the importance of the characteristics in the second step. In this analysis, the β value for the association of the participants' sex with flexibility dropped from 0.25 to 0.07 (See Appendix D for Correlation Matrix). The Sobel test produced a value of 3.40 with an alpha of 0.00068, thus suggesting that importance mediated the relationship between the participants' sex and flexibility.

Similar regressions were conducted for characteristics pertaining to status-resources. First, a significant finding was attained when flexibility was regressed on the participants' sex ($\beta = 0.19$, $p < 0.05$). Second, the importance of characteristics pertaining to status-resources was regressed on the participants' sex and a significant finding was also obtained ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.001$). Third, significant findings were found when flexibility was regressed on the importance of characteristics pertaining to status-resources ($\beta = 0.77$, $p < 0.001$). Finally, a hierarchical regression was conducted in which flexibility was regressed on the participants' sex in the first step, followed by the importance of the characteristics in the second step, and significant results were obtained. In this analysis, the β value for the association of the participants' sex with flexibility dropped from 0.19 to -0.04 (See Appendix D for Correlation Matrix). The Sobel test produced a value of 3.48 with an alpha of 0.00051, indicating that importance mediated

the relationship between the participants' sex and flexibility. Thus, hypothesis IIIc was supported.

Hypothesis IVa states that males will find characteristics pertaining to attractiveness-vitality more important than females. An independent sample t-test was conducted with the participants' sex being the independent variable and the importance of characteristics pertaining to attractiveness-vitality being the dependent variable. Support for hypothesis IVa was not obtained as significant differences were not found between males and females regarding the importance of these characteristics ($t(135) = -0.02, p = 0.98$) (See Table 5). Equal variances were assumed ($F = 0.08, p = 0.78$). Hypothesis IVb suggested that males will be less flexible than females in regards to characteristics pertaining to attractiveness-vitality. An independent sample t-test was conducted with the independent variable being the participants' sex and the dependent variable being the flexibility of characteristics pertaining to attractiveness-vitality. Hypothesis IVb was supported in that males reported less flexibility than females ($t(135) = 2.21, p < 0.05$) (See Table 6). Equal variances were assumed ($F = 2.60, p = 0.11$). Since hypothesis IVa was not supported, hypothesis IVc, which suggested that the importance scores for characteristics pertaining to attractiveness-vitality mediate the relationship between the participants' sex and flexibility scores, was not tested.

Research questions 3 and 4 addressed sex differences in regards to the overall importance and flexibility of positive and negative characteristics. Research question 3 asked whether males and females differ regarding the importance given to positive and negative characteristics in describing likely and unlikely intimate partners. To test research question 3, two independent sample t-tests were used. The independent variable

for both analyses was the participants' sex. The dependent variable in one analysis was the importance given to positive characteristics in describing a likely intimate partner. The dependent variable in the second analysis was the importance given to negative characteristics in describing an unlikely intimate partner. Females rated positive characteristics as being more important than males did in describing likely intimate partners (See Table 7). Equal variances were assumed ($F = 0.57, p = 0.45$). Females also rated negative characteristics as being more important than males did in describing unlikely intimate partners (See Table 7). Equal variances were assumed ($F = 1.49, p = 0.23$).

Research question 4 asked whether males and females differ in regards to the flexibility given to positive and negative characteristics. To test research question 4, two independent sample t-tests were used. The independent variable for both analyses was the participants' sex. In one analysis, the dependent variable was flexibility regarding positive characteristics. In the second analysis, the dependent variable was flexibility regarding negative characteristics. No significant differences were found between males in females in regards to the flexibility of positive characteristics. Equal variances were assumed ($F = 0.14, p = 0.71$). Significant differences were also not found regarding the flexibility of negative characteristics. Equal variances were assumed ($F = 0.92, p = 0.34$) (See Table 7).

Table 7

Summary for Independent Sample T-tests For Overall Importance and Flexibility Scores

Characteristics	Mean For Females	Mean For Males	df	t-statistic
Importance of Positive Characteristics	5.26	4.84	134.00	-3.56**
Importance of Negative Characteristics	5.42	5.02	135.00	-3.56**
Flexibility of Positive Characteristics	4.88	4.71	134.00	-1.35
Flexibility of Negative Characteristics	4.98	4.79	134.00	-1.37

** $p < 0.01$ (2 tailed)

Though not hypothesized, gender differences were explored regarding negative characteristics. A principal component analysis with varimax rotation was conducted and results demonstrated that the negative items can be categorized into six components (See Table 8). The first component consists of characteristics which are consistent with one's dominant and critical nature (critical, dominant, unkind, controlling, and judgemental). An independent samples t-test was conducted with importance scores for characteristics in this first component being the dependent variable and the participants' sex being the independent variable. Females found these characteristics to be more important than males did in deterring the development of an intimate relationship (See Table 9). Equal variances were not assumed ($F = 5.19, p = 0.02$). An independent sample t-test was also conducted with flexibility of these characteristics being the dependent variable and the participants' sex being the independent variable, but significant differences were not found (See Table 10). Equal variances were assumed ($F = 0.00, p = 0.95$)

The second component of the factor analysis for negative characteristics includes being lazy, irrational, thoughtless, and insensitive. An independent samples t-test was conducted with importance scores for this second component being the dependent variable and the participants' sex being the independent variable. Females found these characteristics to be more important than males in deterring the development of an intimate relationship (See Table 9). Equal variances were not assumed ($F = 5.83, p = 0.02$). An independent sample t-test was also conducted with flexibility of these characteristics being the dependent variable, but significant differences between the sexes were not found (See Table 10). Equal variances were assumed ($F = 0.53, p = 0.82$).

The third component included the characteristics childish, emotional, moody, and complaining. An independent sample t-test was conducted with the importance scores for characteristics in this component being the dependent variable and the participants' sex being the independent variable. No significant results were obtained indicating that males and females did not differ in terms of the importance given to this component (See Table 9). Equal variances were not assumed ($F = 4.50, p = 0.04$). An independent sample t-test was also conducted with flexibility of characteristics in this component being the dependent variable, but significant results were not obtained (See Table 10). Equal variances were assumed ($F = 0.29, p = 0.59$).

Financial insecurity and being unsuccessful comprised a fourth component. An independent sample t-test demonstrated that females found these characteristics more important in preventing the development of an intimate relationship (See Table 9). Equal variances were assumed ($F = 1.49, p = 0.22$). The results of an independent sample t-

test, with flexibility of these characteristics being the dependent variable, demonstrated that females were less flexible than males in terms of these two characteristics (See Table 10). Equal variances were assumed ($F = 0.20, p = 0.65$).

The fifth component included the characteristics distant and withdrawn. An independent sample t-test was conducted with the importance scores of this component being the dependent variable and the participants' sex being the independent variable. Significant results were not obtained (See Table 9). Equal variances were assumed ($F = 0.47, p = 0.50$). Results of an independent sample t-test with flexibility scores from this second component as the dependent variable and the participants' sex as the independent variable were not significant (See Table 10). Equal variances were assumed ($F = 0.47, p = 0.49$).

Physical unattractiveness was the final component in the factor analysis for negative characteristics. Two independent sample t-tests were conducted with the importance of physical unattractiveness as the dependent variable in one analysis and the flexibility of physical unattractiveness in the second analysis. Males were found to give this characteristic greater importance in deterring the development of an intimate relationship (See Table 9). Equal variances were assumed ($F = 1.23, p = 0.27$). Males were also less flexible than females regarding physical unattractiveness (See Table 10). Equal variances were assumed ($F = 0.51, p = 0.70$).

Table 8

Component Matrix for Negative Characteristics

Item	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4	Component 5	Component 6
Critical	**0.70**	-0.01	0.07	0.10	0.23	0.30
Dominant	**0.47**	0.02	0.42	0.03	0.15	-0.39
Unkind	**0.71**	0.38	-0.16	0.02	-0.04	0.05
Controlling	**0.74**	0.10	0.23	0.08	0.02	-0.30
Judgemental	**0.70**	0.29	0.22	-0.01	0.03	-0.05
Lazy	0.16	**0.49**	0.16	0.34	0.25	-0.03
Irrational	0.19	**0.64**	0.15	0.21	0.04	0.01
Thoughtless	0.14	**0.68**	-0.07	0.08	0.24	0.30
Insensitive	0.13	**0.73**	0.07	-0.02	0.20	-0.07
Childish	0.01	0.48	**0.65**	0.07	-0.04	-0.07
Emotional	0.10	0.05	**0.81**	0.10	-0.02	0.10
Moody	0.30	0.01	**0.51**	0.37	0.27	0.21
Complaining	0.35	-0.08	**0.50**	0.09	0.44	0.31
Financially Insecure	0.06	0.10	0.04	**0.90**	0.18	0.07
Unsuccessful	0.01	0.16	0.16	**0.84**	-0.04	0.14
Distant	0.11	0.22	-0.12	0.05	**0.81**	-0.06
Withdrawn	-0.01	0.32	0.23	0.14	**0.73**	0.11
Physically Unattractive	-0.04	0.07	0.07	0.05	0.04	**0.85**
Eigenvalues	4.98	1.88	1.59	1.30	1.12	1.03

Table 9

Gender Differences for Importance of Negative Characteristics

Components	Males		Females		df	t
	M	SD	M	SD		
Component 1	5.23	1.04	5.77	0.81	103.19	-3.23**
Component 2	5.37	0.99	5.78	0.70	96.49	-2.71**
Component 3	4.81	1.17	5.01	0.89	101.32	-1.09
Component 4	4.01	1.43	5.06	1.22	137.00	-4.65***
Component 5	5.18	1.12	5.53	0.97	137.00	-1.96
Component 6	5.28	1.52	4.64	1.32	112.45	2.57*

* $p < 0.05$ (2 tailed)
** $p < 0.01$ (2 tailed)
*** $p < 0.001$ (2 tailed)

Table 10

Gender Differences for Flexibility of Negative Characteristics

Components	Males		Females		df	t-statistic
	M	SD	M	SD		
Component 1	5.07	0.97	5.34	1.01	137.00	-1.77
Component 2	5.11	1.03	5.17	1.00	137.00	-0.36
Component 3	4.50	1.11	4.58	1.11	137.00	-0.40
Component 4	3.74	1.42	4.77	1.42	137.00	-4.22***
Component 5	4.75	1.07	5.10	1.24	137.00	-1.76
Component 6	4.91	1.55	4.27	1.50	137.00	2.46*

* $p < 0.05$ (2 tailed)
*** $p < 0.001$ (2 tailed)

To summarize, hypothesis I, suggesting that a negative relationship exists between the importance and flexibility of positive characteristics was supported. The greater the importance given to a characteristic, the less flexible people were willing to be. Hypothesis II, which indicated that a positive relationship would exist between the importance and flexibility of negative characteristics, was also supported. The more important a characteristic was in deterring the development of a relationship, the greater the potential partner had to differ from that characteristic for a relationship to develop. Hypothesis IIIa, IIIb, and IIIc were all supported. Females found characteristics pertaining to warmth-trustworthiness and status-resources more important than males and were less flexible regarding these characteristics. The importance of these characteristics was also found to mediate the relationship between the participants' sex and flexibility regarding the characteristics. Hypothesis IVa, which suggested males would find

characteristics pertaining to attractiveness-vitality more important than females, was not supported. Hypothesis IVb, on the other hand, which suggested that males would be less flexible than females regarding characteristics pertaining to attractiveness-vitality, was supported.

In regards to the research questions, it was discovered that negative characteristics describing unlikely intimate partners were more important than positive characteristics describing likely intimate partners. No differences were discovered in terms of the flexibility of positive and negative characteristics. In looking at the sex differences, females gave greater importance than males to both positive and negative characteristics. No significant differences were found in terms of sex differences regarding the flexibility of positive and negative characteristics.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the importance of positive characteristics in facilitating the development of an intimate relationship as well as the importance of negative characteristics in deterring the development of an intimate relationship. People's willingness to accept discrepancies regarding characteristics which affect relationship development was also explored. Several hypotheses and research questions were put forward regarding the relationship between importance and flexibility. For the most part, the results supported the hypotheses and the relationships predicted between the variables followed the expected directions.

Flexibility Regarding Positive and Negative Characteristics

The first hypothesis suggested that a negative relationship would exist between the importance of positive characteristics and the flexibility associated with these characteristics. In other words, the greater the importance given to positive characteristics, the less flexible individuals are willing to be regarding these characteristics. This hypothesis was supported. This finding is consistent with the body of literature that exists regarding positive characteristics. Campbell et al. (2001) and Regan (1998) both found that flexibility varied inversely as a function of importance.

The second hypothesis suggested that a positive relationship would exist between the importance of negative characteristics and people's willingness to accept discrepancies regarding these characteristics. In this study, it was inferred that the more important a negative characteristic is thought to be in describing an unlikely intimate partner, the more a potential partner would have to differ from the negative characteristic for a relationship to develop. Thus, hypothesis II was supported.

Both hypotheses I and II are consistent with Social Judgement theory (Sherif & Hovland, 1961; Sherif et al., 1965). This theory suggests that people have a latitude of acceptance and a latitude of rejection. Regarding intimate partners, the latitude of acceptance contains the information a person finds favourable concerning a potential partner. The latitude of rejection holds the positions a person finds unfavourable regarding a potential partner. Flexibility varies depending upon how wide people's latitudes of acceptance and rejection are. Wider latitudes of acceptance result in greater flexibility. This theory further argues that the importance people place on an issue is critical in swaying one's beliefs (Sherif & Hovland, 1961; Sherif et al., 1965). In regards

to partner selection, the greater the importance people place on characteristics that facilitate and deter a relationship from developing, the less likely they are willing to accept discrepancies regarding these characteristics. This study offers support for these concepts. The higher the importance given to positive characteristics, the lower the flexibility reported. Similarly, the more important negative characteristics are in deterring relationship development, the less likely people are to report a desire to develop relationships with people exhibiting these characteristics. Based on the findings of this study, it appears that the importance given to characteristics is critical to flexibility. Regressions demonstrated that importance still had predictive capacities even after controlling for age, current relationship status, and previous relationship experience. Thus, the importance of a characteristic is vital to its flexibility.

The findings of hypothesis I and II change the way perceptions of relationships have been looked at in the past. To date, research has emphasized positive characteristics and the notion of what is ideal in an intimate partner (Fletcher et al., 1999; Fletcher et al., 2004; Fletcher et al., 2000; Murray et al., 1996). The focus has been on determining characteristics that people seek in an intimate partner. This study supports this notion, but adds another dimension to partner selection. Negative characteristics clearly play a role in partner selection. People are not willing to develop relationships with potential partners who display characteristics that they find unattractive in a potential partner. Partner selection, therefore, is multi-dimensional. In regards to positive characteristics, the greater the importance placed on people's ideals, the less flexible people are willing to be. The greater the importance of negative characteristics, the more a potential partner has to differ from those negative characteristics for a relationship to develop.

Sex Differences Regarding Importance and Flexibility

Several hypotheses dealt with sex differences regarding the importance and flexibility of positive characteristics. Specifically, it was hypothesized that females would find characteristics pertaining to status-resources and warmth-trustworthiness more important than males. It was also hypothesized that females will be less flexible regarding these two sets of characteristics. Finally, it was hypothesized that the importance of these characteristics would mediate the relationship between the participants' sex and the flexibility given to these characteristics. All three of these hypotheses were supported. These results are consistent with those of previous studies (Buss & Barnes, 1986; Campbell et al., 2001; Fletcher et al., 2004; Regan, 1998; Regan & Berscheid, 1997).

Characteristics pertaining to warmth-trustworthiness have great implications for women. The characteristics of warmth-trustworthiness are associated with the development of a long-term intimate and committed relationship (Buss & Barnes, 1986; Regan et al., 2000). Women, therefore, are more likely to seek a potential partner who exhibits characteristics that are critical to the development of a long-term relationship rather than a short-term fling. It is more important for a woman to have a partner who is understanding and sensitive rather than one who is well-dressed and has a good job. Being as these characteristics are of importance to women, it is not surprising that they are less flexible regarding these characteristics. This result is consistent with findings from Campbell et al. (2001) and Regan (1998).

Characteristics regarding status-resources have greater importance for women from an evolutionary perspective. Women play a greater physiological role in child-

rearing and thus, they seek a potential partner whose resources are likely to provide stability for a family (Buss, 1989; Kenrick, Groth, Trost, & Sadalla, 1993; Sprecher, Sullivan, & Hatfield, 1994). Males with greater resources may also be seen as having genes which contribute to their success. In selecting a male with higher status and resources, then, females not only seek a provider, but also a person whose traits may be passed on to their offspring, enabling success to continue in the offspring (Hanko, Master, & Sabini, 2004). Furthermore, from a sociocultural perspective, women in most societies have less status and resources than men. Since women often lack in these dimensions, they search for men with these attributes to move upward in society (Li, Bailey, Kenrick, & Linsenmeir, 2002). The notion that importance mediates the relationship between one's sex and flexibility regarding these sets of characteristics once again emphasizes the influence that importance has on flexibility.

Males were found to be less flexible than females regarding characteristics pertaining to attractiveness-vitality. Thus, hypothesis IVb was supported. This finding is consistent with that of Campbell et al. (2001). From an evolutionary perspective, males seek women with reproductive capacities (Regan et al., 2000; Buss & Barnes, 1986). Attractiveness and youthfulness are signs of reproduction and fertility, which ensure the possibility of offspring for men. Furthermore, since men traditionally have greater resources than females, their emphasis is placed on other characteristics, including the attractiveness of a potential partner (Li et al., 2002). Although differences were not found between the sexes in regards to the importance of these characteristics, the finding that men are less flexible than females regarding these characteristics signifies their

attentiveness to these characteristics in potential partners as well as their unwillingness, in comparison to females, to accept discrepancies.

Gender differences were also explored regarding negative characteristics. A factor analysis was conducted and results demonstrated that the negative items can be categorized into six components. The first component consists of characteristics which are consistent with one's dominant and critical nature. The second component includes being lazy, irrational, thoughtless, and insensitive. Financial insecurity and being unsuccessful made up the third component. For each of these components, females found the characteristics more important than males in preventing the development of an intimate relationship. In addition, females were less flexible than males with regards to financial security and being unsuccessful. The fact that females found these characteristics more important than males is not surprising. In looking back at the positive characteristics, females placed a greater importance on characteristics which facilitate the development of an intimate, long-term commitment. The first two components deal with characteristics which reflect a person's dominance and irrationality. These characteristics reflect a person's inability to be an equal partner in the relationship as well as an inability to make rational decisions and are thus, detrimental to the development of an intimate and committed relationship. Finally, regarding financial insecurity and being unsuccessful, females seek a person who can provide for a family (Li et al., 2002). If a person lacks the potential to accumulate resources, females will not find this person to be a suitable partner.

Physical unattractiveness comprised its own component in the factor analysis for negative characteristics. Males were found to give this characteristic greater importance

in deterring the development of an intimate relationship. Males were also less flexible than females in regards to physical unattractiveness. This is consistent with the notion that males seek a partner with reproductive capabilities (Regan et al., 2000; Buss & Barnes, 1986). It is interesting to note that significant differences were not found in regards to the attractiveness-vitality category of positive characteristics, but differences were found for the negative aspect of attractiveness. Males and females were relatively similar in regards to the importance given to physical attractiveness in facilitating the development of an intimate relationship. When physical unattractiveness, however, underwent evaluation, males became more selective and were less willing to develop a relationship. This is consistent with the notion that negative information has a greater influence than positive information in impression formation (Anderson, 1965; Fiske, 1980; Vonk, 1993; Wyer & Hinkle, 1971). Males place greater emphasis on the negative aspect of attractiveness, and are thus, more critical of a person who is described as physically unattractive.

The factor analysis for the negative characteristics produced two other components, neither of which had greater importance or reduced flexibility for males or females. The first of these components included the characteristics childish, emotional, moody, and complaining. The second component included the characteristics distant and withdrawn. These categories deal with one's emotional nature and perhaps are not seen as hazardous to relationship development as the characteristics in the other components. Thus, neither females nor males gave these characteristics greater importance in deterring the development of an intimate relationship.

The Importance of Positive and Negative Characteristics

Prior to this study, it was unknown whether positive or negative characteristics had greater importance in partner selection. Results from this study suggest that negative characteristics have greater importance in deterring the development of an intimate relationship than positive characteristics do in facilitating the development of an intimate relationship. These findings support the negativity bias which suggests that negative information has a greater impact than positive information when forming an impression (Baumeister et al., 2001). In partner selection, people are deterred by negative characteristics in a potential partner. People are more likely to evaluate a potential partner based on his or her faults rather than his or her positive characteristics. The finding that negative characteristics are more important than positive characteristics also supports the repulsion hypothesis. People are likely to eliminate potential partners based on the presence of negative characteristics which are unlikely to lead to an attraction. As suggested by Byrne et al. (1986) and Smeaton et al. (1986), negative characteristics are likely used to eliminate individuals from the potential pool of prospective partners. Once these individuals are eliminated, people may choose a potential partner based on the presence of positive characteristics which lead to attraction.

The findings of this study are inconsistent with the Person-Positivity bias and the Pollyanna principle. The Person-Positivity bias suggests that people look at the individual as a whole rather than look at the positive and negative characteristics separately. If this were the case, there would not be any differences between the positive and negative characteristics. The Pollyanna Principle suggests that positive characteristics would have greater influence than negative characteristics in partner

selection. The opposite was true in this study. People put greater importance in characteristics that deter them from developing a relationship than they do in characteristics that facilitate relationship development. People feel strongly about what they do not want in a potential partner, and thus, they are unlikely to develop a relationship with someone who displays these characteristics. Perhaps the Pollyanna principle did not hold true in this study due to the nature of the study. Rather than being asked about an inanimate object or about random people who do not have any significance in their lives, participants in this study were asked about a potential intimate partner. This study was personalized in that people had to think about their desires and needs in regards to an intimate partner with whom they would want and not want to develop an intimate relationship. In this case, the negative characteristics stand out because they have the greatest ability to hamper the development of a relationship and thus, negative characteristics were given greater importance. Relationship development, then, undergoes a selection process. Potential partners are scrutinized based on the presence of positive and negative characteristics. In fact, the presence and display of negative characteristics will likely halt the development of an intimate relationship. The implication is, then, that in partner selection, the presence of negative attributes in a potential partner is likely to deter relationship development.

Differences in flexibility for positive and negative characteristics had not been explored prior to this study. Results demonstrated that flexibility did not significantly differ between these two sets of characteristics. This is not a surprising finding since the importance of characteristics appears to be critical in relationship development. As importance levels increase, people are less flexible regarding positive characteristics.

People also expect a potential partner to be different from a negative characteristic with high importance in deterring relationship development.

This study explored the difference between males and females regarding the importance and flexibility given to positive and negative characteristics. Though the sexes did not differ in regards to the flexibility given to positive and negative characteristics, females were found to give greater importance to both sets of characteristics. In other words, females are more particular in partner selection and have higher standards than males in regards to characteristics they seek. This finding is not surprising considering females found characteristics pertaining to warmth-trustworthiness, status-resources, and three of the six components categorizing negative characteristics more important than males.

Contributions and Limitations

By combining both positive and negative characteristics, this study offers a unique perspective to understanding partner preferences. Existing research emphasizes the positive characteristics of a person. People, though, possess both positive and negative characteristics. This study provided insight as to characteristics people value and do not value in an intimate partner. It was discovered that negative characteristics are more important in deterring the development of a relationship than positive characteristics are in facilitating the development of a relationship. It was also demonstrated that flexibility varies based on the importance ratings given to the characteristics. Higher importance scores for positive characteristics were associated with lower flexibility scores. For negative characteristics, the more important a

characteristic was in deterring the development of a relationship, the more a potential partner had to differ from that characteristic for a relationship to develop.

Despite the contributions of this study, it does have limitations which need to be noted. The sample composition may have impacted the results. Participants were drawn from undergraduate classes and the average age of the population was 21 years. Different results may have been obtained if an older sample was used. For instance, whereas younger adults have been found to give negative information greater weight than positive information in impression formation (Baumeister et al., 2001), older adults have been found to remember and attend to positive information to a greater extent than they do negative and neutral information (Carstensen & Mikels, 2005). These findings would suggest that with an older sample, positive characteristics may have been more important than negative characteristics in partner selection. In addition, a large number of participants did not have any previous relationship experience. They are still in the early stages of partner selection and have several years ahead of them prior to entering into a marriage. Thus, a bias may exist in the results due to their lack of experience. In initial dating stages, individuals may have more romantic views of love, whereas with time, they become more pragmatic (Knox, Schacht, & Zusman, 1999; Sprecher & Metts, 1999). The results of this study, therefore, need to be interpreted with caution.

The cross-sectional nature of this study is a further limitation. Asking participants about potential partners at one point in time may not be realistic in terms of the decisions people make regarding potential partners in their everyday lives. Furthermore, when studying partner preferences, it would be ideal to see if preferences change across time. When following individuals for a longer period of time, one can

establish how various life experiences impact their choices for an intimate partner. The questionnaire is a further limitation of this study. Though it was adapted from the work of previous researchers (Fletcher et al., 1999; Murray et al., 1996), the list of characteristics used does not encompass all the characteristics a potential partner may exhibit. Using a completely different set of characteristics may yield different results.

This study has paved the way for future research in this area. This study confirms the importance of both positive and negative characteristics in partner selection, and thus, more research is needed to expand knowledge in this area. Future research should focus on the role cognitions play in partner selection. Cognitive strategies influence the way individuals approach partner selection. People have social schemas which contain their general expectations and their knowledge base which influence their decisions (Augoustinos & Walker, 1995). Future studies should delve into the cognitive processing that occurs during partner selection. Exploration could occur in addressing how people use their knowledge to formulate decisions regarding partner selection. Further to this notion is addressing how previous experiences influence the characteristics valued in partner selection. Researchers could explore how relationships with previous partners impact subsequent partner selection.

Future studies should also follow people during the course of relationship development. Ideally, researchers could identify individuals prior to relationship development to determine ideal standards. Once partner selection occurs, researchers could then identify factors involved in partner selection as well as follow the couple to determine if people's standards change during the course of the relationship. If the relationship dissolves, researchers could attempt to determine factors that led to the

dissolution. Studies could also follow couples to determine how the presence of negative characteristics influences the progress of intimate relationships. If potential partners do not display their negative side in the initial stages, the relationship is likely to develop. It is unclear what occurs once a person's negative traits become visible, and thus, future research could shed light on this topic.

Future research could also address the influence of family members in partner selection. Do people base their standards on the way they were socialized as children? If so, researchers could explore whether certain populations are vulnerable to selecting unsuitable partners. Furthermore, research could explore the influence that siblings and parents have in partner selection using both positive and negative characteristics. People may be easily swayed based on the opinions of family members, or they may choose partners who are the opposite of what family members expect. Since ideals are based on observations of other's relationships as well as the media, partner selection may reflect the ideals of popular culture rather than the ideals that parents impart on their children. Reiss and Miller's (1979) theory on sexual permissiveness suggests that courtship autonomy and the degree to which premarital sexual permissiveness is accepted in one's culture and social setting influence one's behaviour. Those involved in courtship favour the rewards of sexuality, whereas family members emphasize the costs of sexuality, such as pregnancy and disease. Taking this into the context of relationship development, one may argue that family members place greater emphasis on negative characteristics in partner selection, whereas children place a greater emphasis on positive characteristics. The avenue for research in this area is immense, and researchers should take the opportunity to increase awareness and knowledge in partner selection.

Conclusions

This study was designed to explore the role of positive and negative characteristics in relationship development. People's willingness to accept discrepancies regarding these characteristics was also a central focus. Results from this study demonstrate that the importance given to positive and negative characteristics greatly influences how flexible people are willing to be. As importance increases, flexibility decreases for positive characteristics. For negative characteristics, the greater the importance of the characteristic, the more a potential partner would have to differ from that characteristic for a relationship to develop.

Previous research has emphasized positive characteristics. This study incorporated negative characteristics to compare whether positive or negative characteristics have greater importance in partner selection. Interestingly, results demonstrate that negative characteristics have a greater influence in deterring the development of an intimate relationship than positive characteristics have in facilitating the development. This is a critical finding and demonstrates that people are not willing to develop relationships with individuals who display characteristics they find unattractive.

Relationship development is complex and multi-faceted. The results of this study contribute to and expand upon the existing body of literature on relationship formation and partner selection. Future research can build upon these findings and continue to incorporate both positive and negative characteristics in partner selection. By utilizing both positive and negative characteristics, a broader perspective is gained in partner selection. People exhibit both positive and negative characteristics, and thus, it should

follow that the examination of partner selection acknowledges both dimensions to gain a

clearer outlook in this area of research.

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Appendix A

Positive Characteristics

1. Understanding

2. Supportive

3. Considerate

4. Kind

5. Good listener

6. Sensitive

7. Adventurous

8. Outgoing

9. Sexy

10. Physically attractive

11. Good lover

12. Good job

13. Financially secure

14. Nice house/apartment

15. Appropriate ethnicity

16. Successful

17. Well-dressed

Appendix B

Negative Characteristics

1. Critical

2. Judgemental

3. Lazy

4. Controlling

5. Dominant

6. Emotional

7. Moody

8. Thoughtless

9. Irrational

10. Distant

11. Complaining

12. Childish

13. Unkind

14. Insensitive

15. Physically Unattractive

16. Withdrawn

17. Unsuccessful

18. Financially Insecure

A. In evaluating potential romantic partners for dating, cohabiting and/or marital relationships, people often consider each potential partner's characteristics. Some characteristics make potential partners attractive to us and other characteristics make them unattractive to us (i.e., repel us).

How important are the following characteristics in making an individual with whom you could have an intimate relationship attractive to you? That is, someone with whom you would want to have a relationship?
For example, is maturity a characteristic that would make a potential intimate partner attractive to you? If so, then maturity would receive a relatively high score of importance.

	Very unimportant		Neither important nor unimportant			Very important	
1. Understanding	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Physically attractive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Considerate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Kind	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Good listener	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Sensitive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Adventurous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Outgoing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Successful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Very unimportant		Neither important nor unimportant			Very important	
10. Supportive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Good lover	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Good job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Financially secure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Nice house/apartment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Appropriate ethnicity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Sexy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Well-dressed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

B. How important are the following characteristics in making an individual with whom you could have an intimate relationship unattractive to you? That is, someone with whom you would NOT want to have a relationship?

For example, is selfishness a characteristic that would make a potential partner unattractive to you? If so, then selfishness would receive a relatively high score of importance.

		Very unimportant		Neither important nor unimportant			Very important	
1.	Lazy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	Critical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	Dominant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	Distant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	Financially Insecure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	Irrational	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	Unkind	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	Controlling	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	Judgemental	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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	Very unimportant		Neither important nor unimportant			Very important	
10. Thoughtless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Insensitive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Childish	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Withdrawn	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Emotional	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Moody	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Physically unattractive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Complaining	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Unsuccessful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

C. Think again about the characteristics that would attract or repel you from forming a relationship with a potential partner.

For each of the characteristics that would attract you to a potential partner, to what extent would a romantic partner have to match your ideal on that characteristic in order for you to have a successful and happy relationship with that person?

For example, if you are willing to date an individual who shows little or no maturity as you define it, then maturity would receive a relatively low (or "Not at all Match") score, since you could imagine dating a person who does not show this characteristic. If you are only willing to date an individual who does show a great deal of maturity, then maturity would receive a relatively high ("Completely match") score since you could only imagine dating a person with this characteristic.

		Not at all match			Somewhat match		Completely match	
1.	Understanding	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	Physically attractive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	Considerate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	Kind	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	Good listener	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	Sensitive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	Adventurous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	Outgoing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Not at all match			Somewhat match		Completely match	
9. Successful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Supportive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Good lover	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Good job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Financially secure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Nice house/apartment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Appropriate ethnicity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Sexy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Well-dressed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

D. Think again about the characteristics that would attract or repel you from forming a relationship with a potential partner.

For each of the characteristics that would repel you from becoming involved with a potential partner, to what extent would a romantic partner have to differ from the characteristic that repels you in order for you to have a successful and happy relationship with that person?
For example, if you are willing to date an individual who shows selfishness as you define it, even though this characteristics repels you from attraction, then selfishness would receive a relatively low (or "Not at all differ") score since even though a person shows that characteristic, you could imagine yourself dating them. If you would only accept a person who shows little or no selfishness, then selfishness would receive a relatively high (or "Completely Differ") score, since you could only imagine yourself having a relationship with someone who shows little or none of that characteristic.

	Not at all differ		Somewhat differ			Completely differ	
1. Lazy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Critical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Dominant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Distant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Financially Insecure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Irrational	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Unkind	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Not at all differ		Somewhat differ		Completely differ	
8.	Controlling	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	Judgemental	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	Thoughtless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11.	Insensitive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12.	Childish	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13.	Withdrawn	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14.	Emotional	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15.	Moody	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16.	Physically unattractive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17.	Complaining	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18.	Unsuccessful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

E. Demographic Information

How old are you? _____ years

Are you **male** or **female**? (Circle one)

What is your ethnicity? (Check all that apply)
First Nations/Native _____
Caucasian/European _____
Latino/Hispanic _____
African _____
South Asian (e.g., India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka) _____
East Asian (e.g., China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong) _____
South East Asian (e.g., Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand) _____
Other (Please Specify) _____

F. Relationship Experience

1. Have you previously been involved in a serious intimate relationship (i.e. a close, committed relationship)?

Yes_____   No_____ (skip to question 4)

2. If you have previously been involved in a serious intimate relationship, how many partners have you had?

_____

3. Were your partners **male** or **female** or **both**? (Circle one)

4. Are you currently involved in a relationship? (Please select one option)
   a. No, I am not currently involved. _____
   b. Yes, I am currently involved in a casual relationship. _____
   c. Yes, I am currently involved in a serious relationship. _____
   d. Yes, I am engaged. _____
   e. Yes, I am married. _____

THANK-YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

Appendix D

Table 11

Correlation Matrix for Positive Characteristics

Variable	M	SD	Age	Sex	Number of Partners	Current Relationship Status	Importance
Age	21.09	3.34					
Sex	---	---	-0.09				
Number of Partners	1.71	2.99	0.30**	-0.18*			
Current Relationship Status	1.90	1.06	0.24**	-0.05	0.24**		
Importance	5.09	0.71	-0.10	0.29**	-0.22*	-0.09	
Flexibility	4.82	0.70	-0.09	0.12	-0.04	0.02	0.56**

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$

Table 12

Correlation Matrix for Negative Characteristics

Variable	M	SD	Age	Sex	Number of Partners	Current Relationship Status	Importance
Age	21.09	3.34					
Sex	---	---	-0.09				
Number of Partners	1.71	2.99	0.30**	-0.18*			
Current Relationship Status	1.90	1.06	0.24**	-0.05	0.24**		
Importance	5.26	0.68	0.08	0.29**	-0.11	0.04	
Flexibility	4.91	0.79·	0.10	0.12	0.02	0.03	0.63**

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$

Table 13

Correlation Matrix for Warmth-Trustworthiness Characteristics

Variable	M	SD	Sex	Gender	Number of Partners	Current Relationship Status	Importance
Age	21.09	3.34					
Sex	---	---	-0.09				
Number of Partners	1.71	2.99	0.30**	-0.18*			
Current Relationship Status	1.90	1.06	0.24**	-0.05	0.24**		
Importance	5.83	0.78	0.05	0.30**	-0.28**	-0.02	
Flexibility	5.52	0.70	0.05	0.25**	-0.14	0.02	0.63**

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$

Table 14

Correlation Matrix for Status-Resources Characteristics

Variable	M	SD	Age	Sex	Number of Partners	Current Relationship Status	Importance
Age	21.09	3.34					
Sex	---	---	-0.09				
Number of Partners	1.71	2.99	0.30**	-0.18*			
Current Relationship Status	1.90	1.06	0.24**	-0.05	0.24**		
Importance	4.48	1.18	-0.18*	-0.30**	-0.22*	-0.14	
Flexibility	4.26	1.23	-0.21*	0.19*	-0.17	-0.07	0.77**

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$