

***The links between self-perceptions
of mate value and partner ideal
standards in intimate relationships:***

Carving the intimate relationship mind at its joints

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for a Masters of Science Degree
in Psychology at the University of Canterbury

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Abstract

This research investigated the links between self-perceptions and partner ideals, taking into account the multiple domains in which people evaluate these two constructs. In Study 1, 200 participants (100 males and 100 females) rated their ideal partner and their self-perceived mate value on the Partner Ideals Scales developed by Fletcher et al. (1999). Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) confirmed the superiority of a hierarchical, domain-specific model of self-perceptions and partner ideals over a global model of the cognitive representation of self-perceived mate value and partner ideals. Discriminant and convergent correlations between self-perceived mate value and partner ideals were calculated across the three ideal categories (Warmth/Loyalty, Vitality/Attractiveness, and Status/Resources). The findings provide evidence for the hypothesis that people desire a partner who resembles the self and provide validity for both variables. In Study 2, self-perceptions of 149 students (77 men and 72 women) were manipulated upwards or downwards on Vitality/Attractiveness or Status/Resources. The manipulation succeeded in significantly altering self-perceptions of mate value. However, contrary to predictions, partner ideal ratings were relatively impervious to the manipulation. Implications for the causal links between self-perceptions and ideal standards, their cognitive representations, and the implications of the results with regard to evolutionary approaches, the Ideal Standards Model, and mate selection are discussed.

Introduction

What people want in a partner, whether this partner is a “good match”, and whether the self is worthy of a (potential) partner’s attention are central questions in both everyday life and in the science of intimate relationships. The vast number of movies, novels, and scientific research that deal with this issue provide clear evidence for this proposition. In this thesis, I will focus on one particular central issue in mate selection; namely, how a person’s self-perceptions of mate value and his or her partner ideal standards are linked.

Past research has emphasized that rather than randomly pairing with a person of the opposite (or perhaps same) sex, mate selection works according to the principle of assortative mating. Assortative mating can be defined as a non-arbitrary pairing of people based on their similarity in one or more genotypic or phenotypic features (Buss & Barnes, 1986). Indeed, homogamous assortment has been proven to be the predominant form of mate selection for a variety of attributes such as age, race, religion, social status, cognitive abilities, values, interests, attitudes, personality dispositions, and physical attractiveness (Buss & Barnes, 1986). Gender is the only exception to this, with most people preferring an opposite-sex partner (heterogamous assortment).

Thus, people seem to look for a partner who is similar to the self. However, correlational studies such as these quoted above do not explain how assortative mating works, and whether it is a conscious or an unconscious process. Assortative mating could operate through a simple unconscious imperative to find the best partner possible (Fletcher, 2002): In a limited pool of individuals, this heuristic will produce a pattern of mating in which “mate-value” will be correlated positively across partners. It is also plausible that proximity effects produce assortative mating, especially with regard to socio-economic status and religion. For example, religious people may tend to mate assortatively, because they tend to meet other religious folk in church or other social settings. However, it seems likely that assortative

mating is also partly conscious, and that self-perceptions of mate value help guide mate-selection.

In this research I aimed to further explore the links between self-perceptions and what people are looking for in their potential mates (i.e., their ideal standards). I initially investigated whether there are similar cognitive structures for evaluating the mate value of the self and potential partners, and whether these perceptions (self versus other) are processed in a similar way. The second goal of this research was to explore whether the links between self-perceptions and ideal mate standards are causal. That is, do more positive self-perceptions *cause* people to have higher expectations of a potential mate? For example, if Grace perceives herself as very sexy and attractive, does this cause her to set her ideal standards for a potential partner high in this particular dimension?

There exists a plethora of approaches to mate selection including exchange models (e.g., Murstein, 1972; Murstein, Cerreto, & MacDonald, 1977), equity theories (e.g., Hatfield, Traupmann, Spencer, Utne, & Hay, 1985; Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978), theories that emphasize complementarity (Winch, 1958), and psychoanalytic theories (see Eckland, 1968). However, the focus of this thesis is not to review these different theories. I will primarily concentrate on human mate selection from an evolutionary and social-cognitive perspective.

An Evolutionary and Social Cognitive Approach to Mate Selection

Evolutionary and social-cognitive accounts of mate selection have been combined by Fletcher and his colleagues in a series of studies and theoretical statements (e.g., Fletcher, 2002; Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000; Fletcher, Simpson, Thomas, & Giles, 1999). These researchers devised the Ideal Standards Model, according to which partner ideals represent chronically accessible knowledge structures that help an individual to evaluate a potential or current partner against desired standards. Fletcher et al. (1999) initially used an

inductive approach, obtaining the desired attributes ($n = 49$) in an ideal partner from free-response protocols. Factor analysing these data provided evidence that partner ideal items cluster into three dimensions: Warmth/Loyalty, Vitality/Attractiveness, and Status/Resources. From an evolutionary standpoint this tripartite structure makes sense in terms of the qualities that individuals seek in a mate. Good looks, health and vitality in a partner suggest good fertility and that offspring are going to be healthy, rather than having a disease or genetic defect. Having a warm, trustworthy and loyal partner would enhance the chances of raising offspring successfully, as compared to sheltering, feeding and taking care of children alone. Finally, status and resources should guarantee plentiful food supplies for the children and a secure position within the social group (see Fletcher, 2002; Gangestad & Simpson, 2000).

Evolutionary theory deems partner preferences to be adaptive solutions to problems of our ancestral past (Buss, 1999; Buss & Schmitt, 1993). One has to bear in mind that medicine and contraception in ancestral times were not abundant or even accessible as they are now; nor were institutions for child care or social welfare. Bringing up a child on one's own may even have been an unfeasible task in our ancestral past (although the extended family would also have been involved). Therefore, partner preferences should have evolved to enhance the chances of reproductive success. The different ideal categories represent solutions to distinct problems. For example, for a woman considering marriage to a man, these might be "Is my partner reliable, will he help to raise the children?" (Warmth/Loyalty), "Are my children going to be healthy?" (Vitality/Attractiveness), and "Do we have sufficient resources to bring up the children?" (Status/Resources).

Evolutionary hypotheses concerning human mate selection are common in social psychology (e.g., Buss, 1999; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Fletcher et al., 1999; Kenrick, Groth, Trost, & Sadalla, 1993). Triver's (1972) parental investment theory is perhaps the most important basic theory in this area. This theory emphasizes different time spans in the

reproductive ability of men and women. Whereas men can produce offspring up to a late age, the time span for women's fecundity is limited. Therefore, men should place more importance on physical attractiveness, as it signifies health, youth and fertility. Women, on the other hand, should place less importance in these cues as they have less bearing on reproductive success. However, women should value highly signs indicating men's ability to provide resources and safety that are needed to bring up children successfully.

Triver's theory has been supported by many studies investigating gender differences in mate selection (Buss, 1999; Buss & Barnes 1986; Fletcher et al., 1999; Fletcher, Tither, O'Loughlin, Friesen, & Overall, 2003; Symons, 1979). Men attach more importance to a potential partner's physical attractiveness than do women. On the other hand, women favour existing resources and a partner's potential to achieve these more than do men.

It is noteworthy that these findings have been replicated cross-culturally (Buss, 1989; Buss et al., 1990) and across generations (Buss, Shackelford, Kirkpatrick, & Larsen, 2001). The latter study found that gender differences, especially for Status/Resources, have been diminishing mostly due to men placing more emphasis on financial resources in a potential mate. However, a difference between the genders was still apparent in 1996, with men placing more importance on Vitality/Attractiveness and women accentuating Status/Resources.

Apart from these well-replicated gender differences, there is considerable similarity between men and women in their mate preferences. In long-term relationships, both men and women give the greatest weight to characteristics of warmth, loyalty, trust, and support (e.g., Buss & Barnes, 1986; Fletcher et al., 1999; Hassebrauck & Aron, 2001). Data from longitudinal research in the USA show that the importance attached to personality attributes signifying warmth and agreeableness remained high between 1939 and 1996 (Buss et al., 2001). Moreover, cross-cultural data (Buss et al., 1990) also corroborate the proposition that a warm and trustworthy personality is regarded as indispensable in a long-term partner.

Characteristics like warmth and loyalty are cues for high relationship satisfaction. Therefore (from a pragmatic angle), warm and loyal partners should be preferred, as they would enhance the probability that the relationship is going to last. According to evolutionary theory, characteristics such as warmth and kindness also indicate a partner's readiness for reproductive investment (Buss & Barnes, 1986), which is related to the probability of the survival of offspring, as I have mentioned earlier.

In general, all these findings suggest that the intimate relationship mind is organized in a tripartite way, with each domain representing a factor that improves the prospects for one's offspring. Potential partners should be evaluated along the three dimensions proposed by the Ideal Standards Model; namely, Warmth/Loyalty, Vitality/Attractiveness, and Status/Resources. However, these factors are probably only partially independent, as it is likely that they are not completely distinct and unrelated. Indeed, Fletcher et al.'s (1999) original research reported positive (albeit weak) correlations across the three factors. When evaluating a potential partner, it is likely that the mate value of the whole person is taken into account (Regan, 1998). Furthermore, an abundance of assets in one particular factor might balance out shortcomings in a different factor. For example, if Grace is Phillip's dream partner regarding Vitality/Attractiveness, he might be more inclined to put up with her sometimes cold and selfish nature than he would be if she were homely (see Fletcher et al., 2003).

Self-perceptions of Mate Value

If partner ideals are organized in terms of three quasi-independent factors, one question that arises is whether the same structure applies to self-perceptions of mate value. In the past, self-perceptions have typically been examined in a global fashion in social psychology. Self-esteem, for example, is referred to as “a person’s broadest evaluation of him- or herself” (Baumeister, 1999, p. 340). However, one current trend in social-cognitive research, informed by evolutionary psychology, is to distinguish between domain-specific processes and concepts, rather than concentrating on domain-general mechanisms (Gutierrez, Kenrick, & Partch, 1999; Kirkpatrick & Ellis, 2001; Tooby & Cosmides, 1992). This approach is based on the view that during evolution, distinct cognitive processes must have evolved to cope with different problems. During the last two decades some psychologists have differentiated and tested the various dimensions of self-esteem and other self-related measures (Byrne & Shavelson, 1987; Harter, Waters, & Whitesell, 1998; Marsh, 1993; Marsh, Relich, & Smith, 1983; Shavelson, Stanton, & Hubner, 1976). These studies have gathered evidence that the self-concept is structured in a multidimensional, hierarchical way rather than in a unidimensional, global manner. However, in spite of the research on the different dimensions of the self, relatively few studies have been dedicated to adult populations, and none have been carried out concerning self-perceptions of mate value in intimate relationships.

The Ideal Standards Model proposes that self-perceptions of mate value should correspond to the specific ideal dimensions discussed earlier (Campbell, Simpson, Kashy, & Fletcher, 2001). In other words, people should possess different self-representations for Warmth/Loyalty, Vitality/Attractiveness, and Status/Resources. This makes sense from an evolutionary standpoint. Rather than elaborating different systems for self-perceptions and partner perceptions, a more parsimonious way of classifying perceptions would be to channel

them through the same (tripartite) evaluative structure. It seems likely that humans evaluate the mating self along this tripartite ideal structure rather than in a global positive or negative fashion. Evaluating the self along these ideal dimensions should facilitate the search for a suitable partner, as multiple domains allow for trade-offs. It gives the individual an impression about what assets he or she possesses (or does not possess) and what he or she can (or cannot) accordingly ask for in a partner.

For example, if Maria perceives herself as ranking high on Warmth/Loyalty and Status/Resources, but low on Vitality/Attractiveness, then we would expect her to seek a partner who corresponds to this pattern. That is, Maria would probably have high standards regarding the first two domains and attach less importance to the latter domain in an ideal partner. A partner who exceeds Maria's Vitality/Attractiveness, for example, might be hard to attract in the first instance and difficult to retain in the long run. Having a partner who does not match Maria's warm and trustworthy nature, on the other hand, might lead to recurrent conflicts. In both cases, the mismatch would increase the chances of either rejection or early relationship dissolution and would therefore be maladaptive for the survival of potential offspring.

The idea that individuals make social comparisons between the self and others in order to develop impressions of their own relative value on the "mating market" was first noted by social exchange theories (e.g., Cameron, Oskamp, & Sparks, 1977). However, this notion is also compatible with evolutionary theory. Several evolutionary theorists have argued that the self-concept guides the individual in making decisions about potential partners and thus regulates mating strategies (Kenrick, 1994; Kenrick et al., 1993; Regan, 1998; Sloman & Sloman, 1988; Wright, 1994). In the service of maximum reproductive success, an individual will seek a partner with the most desirable assets. Depending on the qualities that this individual can offer, he or she will be able to obtain or retain the best possible mate.

The current research, however, goes beyond previous findings of evolutionary psychology. Consistent with the Ideal Standards Model, I predicted that people's self-perceptions of their mate value conform to the same tripartite structure as partner ideals. These different dimensions should allow quasi-independent judgements of one's own mate value. However, I also expected that the positivity of a person's overall self-view would influence his or her judgements on each specific factor.

Individual Differences in Mate Selection Standards

Regarding mate selection criteria, I have thus far concentrated on what men and women consensually want in a mate and sex differences in mate selection. In the next section I will focus on individual differences in mate selection. Why, for example, do some individuals have high ideal standards, whereas others have low standards? Various explanations have been put forward including past relationship experiences, supply and demand considerations, and other personality factors such as flexibility (Fletcher & Simpson, 2001; Campbell et al., 2001). However, two variables have clear theoretical and empirical links to ideal standards; namely, self-perceived mate value and global self-esteem. These two variables will be discussed next.

Self-perceived mate value. Several studies have documented the link between self-perceptions and partner ideals (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Campbell et al., 2001; Kenrick et al., 1993; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996a, 1996b). These studies have provided evidence that people who believe they have more to offer, tend to demand higher standards in a potential partner. Kenrick et al. (1993), for example, reported moderate correlations between self-appraisals and minimum standards in a prospective partner. These results were moderated by the level of commitment. Correlations between self-perceptions and desired partner traits were moderate for a short-term relationship but considerably higher for a long-term partner.

Regan (1998) reported that particularly women who rated their own mate value as high had higher ideal standards. Similarly, Murray et al. (1996a) found that the more positively individuals evaluated themselves, the more they expected in an ideal partner ($r = .50$ for women and $r = .48$ for men). However, self-perceptions and partner ideals were measured in a generically global fashion in all these studies.

A more recent study by Campbell et al. (2001) distinguished between the three domains of the Ideal Standards Model. Campbell found that self-perceptions and partner ideals correlated highly across the same ideal domains. The link was most striking for Warmth/Loyalty ($r = .57$) and the Vitality/Attractiveness ($r = .43$) factors but was also significant and positive for Status/Resources ($r = .28$).

The current studies go beyond previous research in several ways. First, as opposed to most studies which assessed self-perceptions in a global fashion, the current research measured self-perceptions and partner ideals in domain-specific ways. I hypothesized that higher self-ratings on each domain would predict higher ideal standards on the corresponding domain (convergent correlations). The correlations across different domains, on the other hand, were expected to be lower and non-significant (discriminant correlations). In addition, the causal links between self-perceptions and partner ideals were investigated. Previous studies have relied on correlational data only. Although it is a plausible hypothesis, there is no direct evidence to date that self-perceptions *cause* people to set their ideal standards at particular levels. I tested the proposition that changing self-perceptions will cause ideal standards to alter in a domain-specific fashion. Specifically, boosting an individual's self-perceptions in a given domain should elevate ideal standards on the same domain. Manipulating people's self-perceptions in a negative direction, on the other hand, should result in less importance being attached to this characteristic in an ideal partner.

Self-esteem. In this research I also examined self-esteem as a hypothetical moderator for the links between self-perceptions and partner ideals. As opposed to self-perceived mate value, self-esteem reflects overall feelings of self-worth and self-respect. Recent studies (Murray et al., 1996a, 1996b; Murray, Holmes, MacDonald, and Ellsworth, 1998) have reported that high self-esteem is associated with more positive views of others and thus should produce more stringent ideal standards. This hypothesis is based on the idea that models of the self and models of others are linked in complex ways. For example, Baldwin (1992) noted that people develop cognitive structures that help them guide their relationship-related behaviour. These cognitive structures are drawn from past interpersonal experiences and comprise representations of the self, the other, and a script for the anticipated pattern of interaction. Baldwin points out that feelings of self-worth are closely related to the belief that others are available to the self in the context of a relationship.

Consistent with attachment theories (Bowlby, 1982), Murray et al. (1996a) argued that an individual's model for an ideal partner should be contingent on his or her sense of self-worth. Murray and her colleagues found strong evidence for this hypothesis in a series of studies on the relationship experiences of low self-esteem individuals (Murray et al., 1996a, 1996b; Murray et al., 1998). For instance, low self-esteem individuals idealized their relationship partners less than their high self-esteem peers (Murray et al., 1996a). The same study revealed a significant correlation between self-esteem and partner ideals for men, with higher self-esteem resulting in more positive partner ideals. Murray et al. (1998) also conducted a study embracing several experiments in which participants were exposed to different threatening experiences (such as false feedback from an intelligence questionnaire). A pattern that repeatedly emerged in this research was that in the face of this self-threat, high self-esteem individuals appeared to employ their relationship as a self-affirmational resource; they reacted to an increase in self-doubt with a greater conviction of their partner's affection

and love. Low self-esteem individuals, on the other hand, were inclined to question their partners' regard for them and consequently devalue their relationship.

Murray (2001) explains the latter finding by arguing that low self-esteem individuals (wrongly) assume that partners see them as negatively as they see themselves. Confronted with a threatening situation, they not only doubt themselves but also devalue their partners and underestimate their partners' regard for them. According to Murray, the reason for this is that they anticipate their partner's rejection, which they prevent by devaluing the relationship first. In a complementary vein, Baumeister (1982) proposed compensatory self-enhancement processes that are prompted when the self is threatened. Compensatory self-enhancement is mainly evidenced in people with high self-esteem (Baumeister, 1982; Baumeister, Tice, & Hutton, 1989; Crocker, Thompson, McGraw, & Ingerman, 1987). In addition, compared to low self-esteem people, high self-esteem individuals have been found to be less flexible and malleable in their self-perceptions (Brockner, 1984), and less sensitive to and adversely influenced by everyday events (Campbell, Chew, & Scratchley, 1991).

What these findings suggest for the current research is that high and low self-esteem people might react differently to manipulations of self-perceptions. I predicted that in reaction to threats to the self, low self-esteem individuals would lower their ratings for self-perceived mate value and partner ideals. High self-esteem people, on the other hand, were hypothesized to be less affected by the manipulation and to respond by maintaining or even raising their self-perceptions and ideal standards. Finally, I predicted that high self-esteem individuals would have generally higher self-ratings and higher ideal standards than their low self-esteem counterparts.

Overview of the Two Current Studies

This research comprised two studies: In Study 1 participants ($n = 200$) were administered the partner ideal scales (Fletcher et al., 1999) for assessment of their ideal standards in a partner and their self-perceived mate value. Data were analysed conducting confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) to determine whether judgements of self-perceived mate value correspond to the tripartite structure of ideals in intimate relationships. Two hypothetical models of cognitive representations of ideals and self-perceptions were tested (described in due course). Next, correlations were calculated across the three domains (Warmth/Loyalty, Vitality/Attractiveness, and Status/Resources) for the two variables (partner ideals and self-perceptions) to test the assumption that a person's self-perceived mate value correlates with what he or she wants in a partner. This procedure provided additional convergent and discriminant validation evidence for the two variables.

In Study 2, an experiment was employed to test the hypothesis that self-perceptions of mate value cause people to adjust their ideal standards at particular levels. One hundred and forty-nine university students took part in this part of the research. Participants' self-perceptions were manipulated upwards or downwards on particular ideal domains. Partner ideals were assessed as the dependent variable in an ostensibly different study. This study also tested whether global self-esteem exerted a moderating influence on the links between self-perceptions and ideal standards.

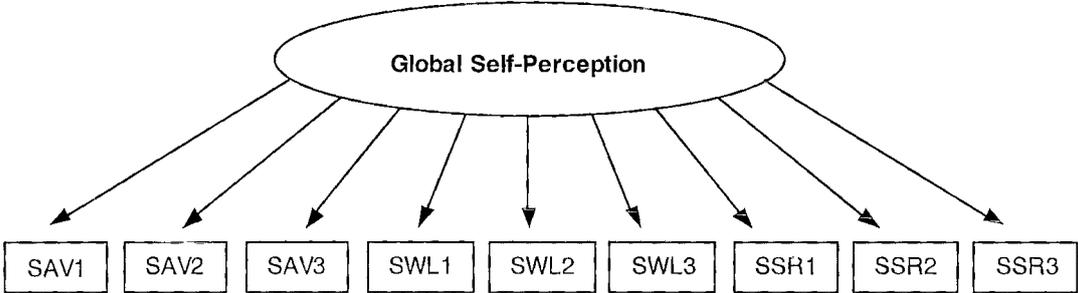
Overview Study 1

The major goal of Study 1 was to test the hypothesis that self-perceptions of mate value conform to the same tripartite structure as do partner ideals. That is, I hypothesised that people do not evaluate themselves in a global fashion, but quasi-independently on separate dimensions (i.e., Warmth/Loyalty, Vitality/Attractiveness, and Status/Resources). In order to show this, different models of the cognitive representation of self-perceptions were tested and compared using confirmatory factor analysis. Figure 1 depicts two different versions of how self-perceptions might be represented cognitively. Model 1 suggests that all self-related variables load on a global self-perception factor. Model 2, on the other hand, proposes that the data are best explained by a second order factorial structure comprising three first-order factors (Vitality/Attractiveness, Warmth/Loyalty, and Status/Resources) and a general second-order factor. It was predicted that the hierarchical, multidimensional model (Model 2) of self-perceptions would be superior to the fit of a one-dimensional model which posits that people evaluate themselves on a single global self-perception factor. There is evidence from previous studies that the fit of Model 2 exceeds the fit of Model 1 with regard to partner ideals (Fletcher et al., 1999; Fletcher et al., 2003). I investigated these two models using ratings of self-perceived mate value and also attempted to replicate the Fletcher et al. (1999) findings with regard to partner ideals (see Figure 2).

Testing of these models was carried out using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), a Structural Equation Modeling technique. This program calculates stand-alone fits and also allows for statistical comparisons between models, providing a powerful and sensitive test of such models. In addition, CFA can be used to evaluate the goodness of fit of a given model across different subgroups (e.g., men and women).

A further goal was to test the hypothesis that the correlations across ideal standards and self-perceptions would reveal a pattern of convergent and discriminant correlations. That is, the correlations between self and ideals on the same domains should be higher than the correlations between self and ideals on different domains. I also aimed to replicate prior research and show that the three subscales for the assessment of self-perceptions of mate value were reliable.

Model 1



Model 2

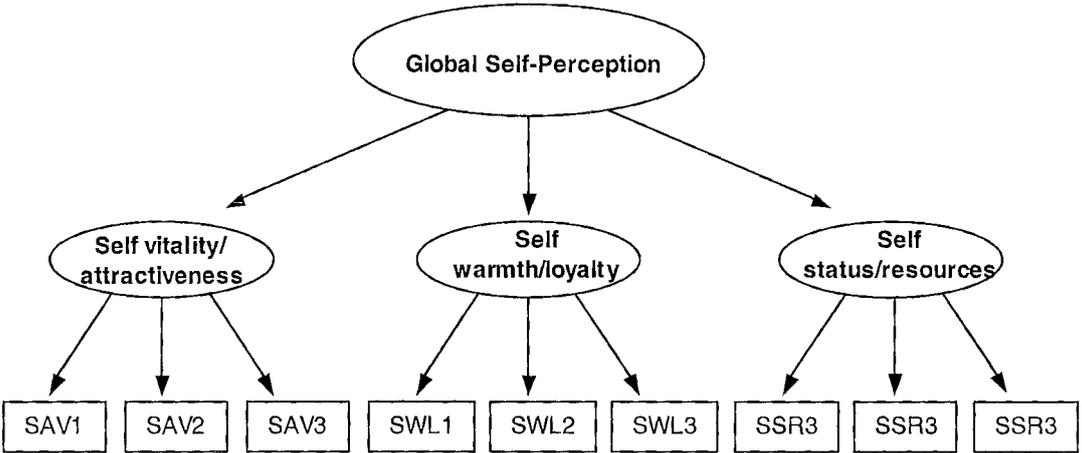
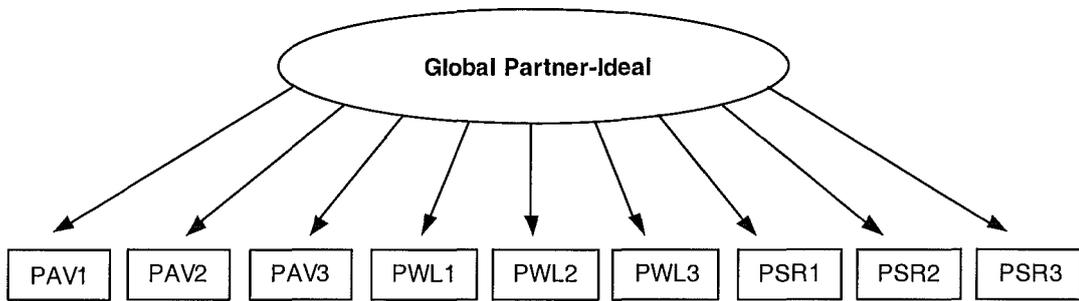


Figure 1: Two models of the representation of self-perceived mate value

Model 1



Model 2

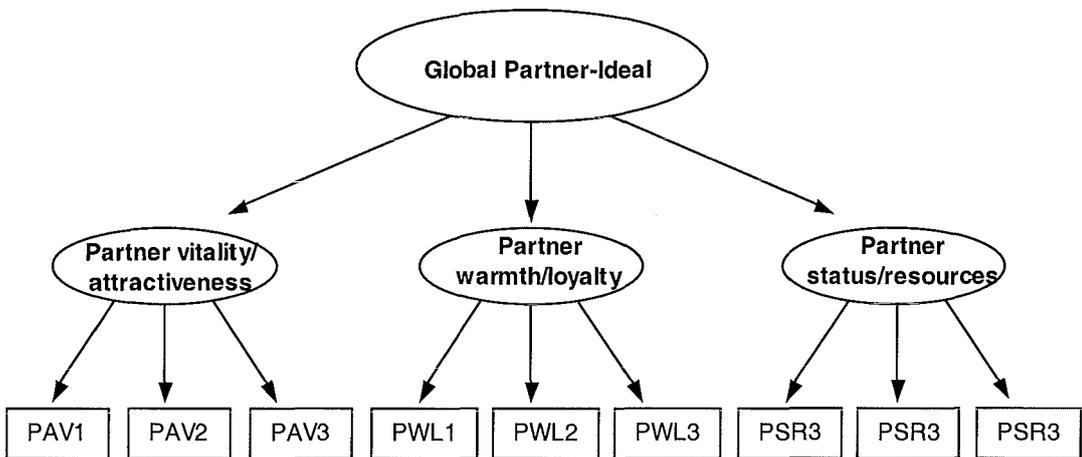


Figure 2: Two models of the representation of partner ideals

Method

Participants

Participants were 100 men and 100 women attending the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. The mean age of the sample was 22.55 years ($SD = 6.44$) and the age of the participants ranged from 17 to 58 years. Of the sample, 100 were not in a relationship at the time of testing and 100 were involved in a relationship of which 62 were dating, 27 were living together, and 11 were married. The mean length of these relationships was 19.61 months ($SD = 55.51$). Subjects received a \$5 remuneration for their participation.

Materials

The short version of the partner ideal scales (see Appendix A) developed by Fletcher et al. (1999) was used to measure subjects' self-perceptions and their partner ideals. As mentioned earlier, the items of the partner ideal scales cluster into three factors; namely, Warmth/Loyalty, Vitality/Attractiveness, and Status/Resources (Fletcher et al., 1999). These three scores were calculated separately for both self-perceptions and partner ideals.

For the ratings of self-perceived mate value, participants were asked to rate each item "in terms of how each factor accurately describes yourself". A 7-point Likert scale accompanied each item (1 = *very inaccurate* to 7 = *very accurate*). For ideal partner ratings, participants were instructed to rate each factor "in terms of the importance that it has in describing your ideal partner in a close relationship (dating, living together, or married)" on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *very unimportant* to 7 = *very important*).

Several studies have confirmed good reliability and validity for the partner ideal scales (Campbell et al., 2001; Fletcher et al., 1999; Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000). For the present study, the three sub-scales proved to be reliable. Cronbach's alphas for the self-perception scales were .86 for Warmth/Loyalty, .77 for Vitality/Attractiveness, .82 for

Status/Resources, and for the partner ideal scales .86 for Warmth/Loyalty, .71 for Vitality/Attractiveness, and .87 for Status/Resources.

The CFAs were calculated with EQS 5.7b for Windows (Bentler, 1995). As opposed to exploratory factor analysis, CFA is theoretically driven and utilized to test a priori hypotheses about the connection between the measured variables and the underlying (latent) factors (Byrne, 1994). In addition, CFA provides statistical evidence concerning fits, and is able to compare distinct models. The program provides several measures of model fit, the most important of which are: the comparative fit index (CFI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the chi-square statistic. A CFI measure of $> .90$, an RMSEA measure of $< .08$, and a low and non-significant chi-square are regarded as indicators of a good model fit (Bentler, 1995; Browne & Cudeck, 1993). For my analyses, I mainly used the former two indices of fit, as the chi-square statistic is sensitive to sample size and even good model fits are likely to become significant with large samples (Bentler & Bonett, 1980; Byrne, 1994; Marsh, Balla, & McDonald, 1988). The chi-square difference test (D test) was used to compare the fits of the different models and to determine whether the difference in fit was significant.

The minimum number of observed variables per latent factor to conduct a CFA is three (Bentler & Chou, 1987; Rindskopf & Rose, 1988). Thus, variables of each subscale of the ideal scales (Warmth/Loyalty, Vitality/Attractiveness, and Status/Resources) were summed to produce three variables for each latent factor.

Statistical identification needs to be considered prior to calculating CFAs (Byrne, 1994). The second-order level of Model 2 proved to be just-identified with six parameters to be estimated and six data points. Such a model, therefore, lacks sufficient degrees of freedom to be rejected (Bentler & Chou, 1987; Byrne, 1994; Marsh & Hocevar, 1985). To tackle this problem, and in accordance with conventional procedures, two paths from the second-order

factor to the first-order factors were constrained to be equal (Bentler, 1995; Marsh & Hocevar, 1985). Under these circumstances, fewer parameters need to be estimated and the degrees of freedom increase by two. The Lagrange Multiplier test (LM-test) was employed to test whether these additional constraints impaired the model fit and whether this model adjustment was justified to achieve over-identification.

Procedure

The participants completed the scales as part of a larger study, which included scales not described here.

Results

I conducted various CFAs to evaluate the fit of the proposed models shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2. First, I tested the higher-order model (Model 2) against the single-factor model (Model 1) for both self and partner ideals. Stand-alone fits were used as well as direct comparisons between the models (it was predicted that the fit of Model 2 would exceed the fit of Model 1). Second, I conducted a multi-sample CFA to test assumptions that Model 2 is invariant across different populations; namely, women versus men, and people who are currently in a relationship versus people who are not. The results of these analyses will be discussed respectively.

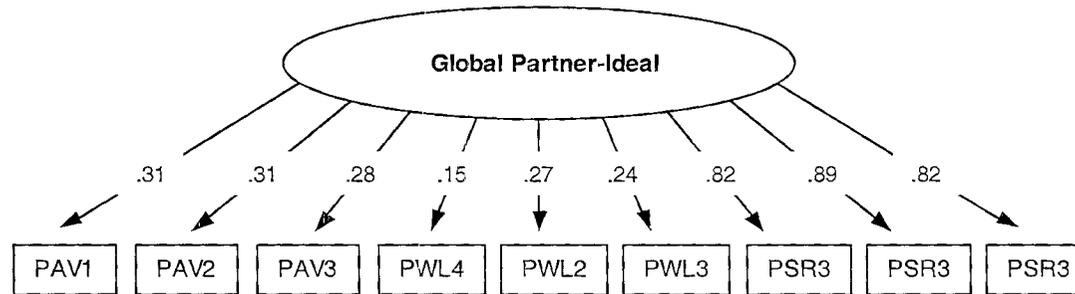
Model Comparisons: Domain-general vs. Domain-specific Model

Table 1 illustrates the results of this first set of analyses. Factor loadings are depicted in Figure 3 and Figure 4. For Model 1, in which all self-variables load on one general self-perception factor, factor loadings were significant, but uneven, ranging from moderate to high. For Model 2, which proposes a hierarchical domain-specific structure, all factor loadings were positive and significant, with moderate values for the second order factorial structure and high values for the first order factorial structure.

Table 1: Comparison of Domain-general (Model 1) and Domain-specific Model (Model 2)

Model	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	CFI	RMSEA
Partner Ideals					
Model 1 (domain-general)	458.29	27	< .001	.48	.28
Model 2 (domain-specific)	34.32	25	> .05	.99	.04
Self					
Model 1 (domain-general)	472.97	27	< .001	.44	.29
Model 2 (domain-specific)	59.75	25	< .001	.96	.08

Model 1



Model 2

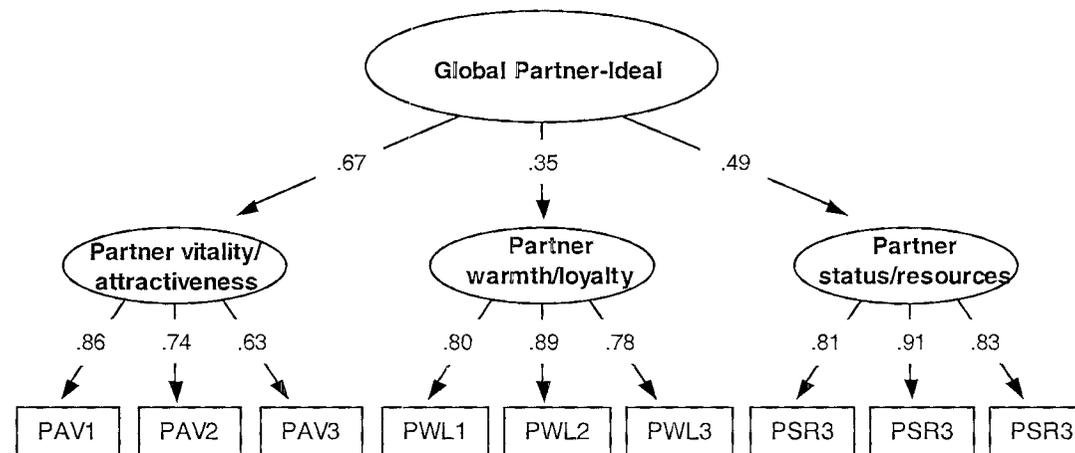
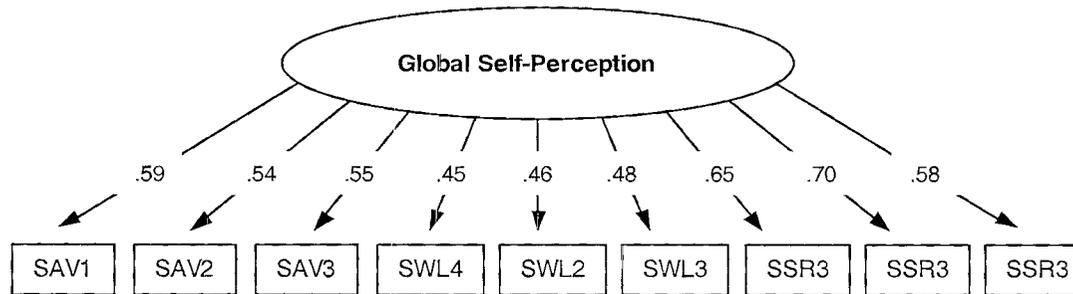


Figure 3: Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the two Models of Partner Ideal Representations

Model 1



Model 2

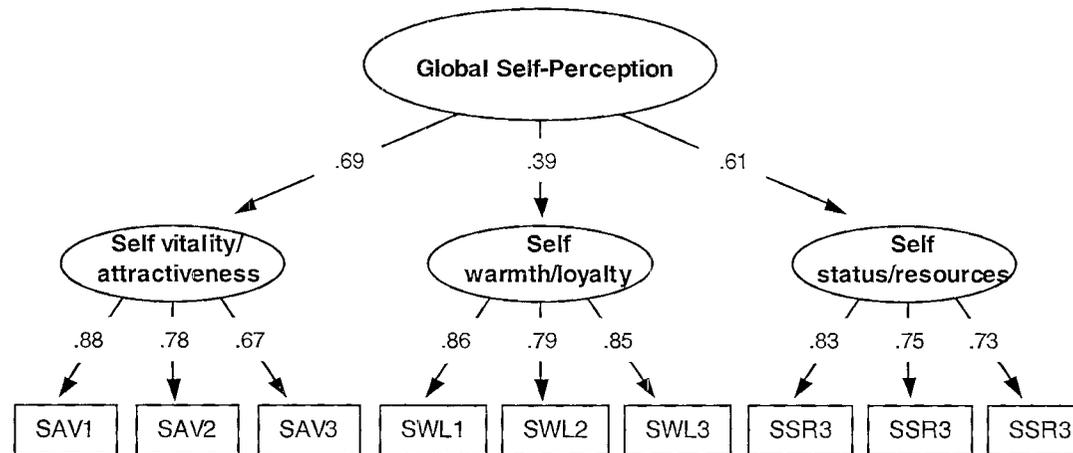


Figure 4: Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the two Models of Representations for Self-perceived Mate Value

For the self-ratings, the goodness-of-fit indices in the domain-general model (Model 1), were poor, with a CFI of .44, an RMSEA of .29, and a high and significant chi-square. The domain-specific model (Model 2), on the other hand, showed a good fit to the data with a CFI of .96, an RMSEA of .08 and a low, though significant, chi-square. An LM-test, assessing the appropriateness of the constraints imposed, revealed that the model fit was not adversely affected by the restrictions ($LM\chi^2(1,200) = 1.51, p = .22$). In addition to the stand-alone fits, a chi-square difference test confirmed the superiority of Model 2 over Model 1 (see Table 2).

Table 2: Chi-square Difference Test for the Fits of Model 1 and Model 2

Comparison	χ^2 change	df change	p for χ^2 change
Partner Ideals			
Model 1 and Model 2	423.97	2	<. 001
Self			
Model 1 and Model 2	413.22	2	<. 001

For the partner ideal ratings, the first order model (Model 1) proved to have a poor fit with a CFI of .48 and an RMSEA of .28. Also, the chi-square was high and significant. The domain-specific model (Model 2) provided an almost perfect fit to the data with a CFI of .99, an RSMEA value of .04, and a low and non-significant chi-square. Again, an LM-test confirmed that the constraints that had been imposed did not adversely impact on the model fit ($LM\chi^2(1,200) = 0.47, p = .49$). The chi-square difference test corroborated the advantage of Model 2.

In summary, as predicted, the fit of the domain-specific models for both partner ideals and self-ratings considerably exceeded the fit of the domain-general models. The fit of the domain-general model was poor; a single-factor model can therefore be rejected. In the following analyses, only the validated domain-specific model will be considered.

Factorial Invariance across Gender

A multi-sample CFA was conducted to test the hypothesis that the factorial structure would replicate across gender. I tested an overall baseline model (with no between-group constraints) against a model in which first-order and second-order factor loadings were constrained to be equal across groups. The appropriateness of these between-group constraints was evaluated by the Lagrange Multiplier test. Furthermore, the LM-test was employed to assess whether the fit between the baseline model and the constrained model was significantly different. If the model is equivalent for the two groups, the difference in fit should be minimal and the LM-test non-significant.

Table 3 depicts the results of the overall baseline and the multi-group invariance tests for both partner ideals and self-perceptions. The results for the LM-test are shown in Table 4.

Table 3: Invariance across Gender

Model	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	CFI	RMSEA
Partner Ideals					
Baseline model	68.24	48	< .05	.97	.05
Model with all factor loadings constrained	74.07	57	> .05	.98	.04
Self					
Baseline model	79.88	48	< .05	.96	.06
Model with all factor loadings constrained	85.21	57	< .01	.96	.05

Table 4: Chi-square Difference Test between Constrained and Baseline Model

Comparisons	LM χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Partner Ideals			
Constrained and unconstrained model	5.83	9	>.05
Self			
Constrained and unconstrained model	5.33	9	>.05

The baseline model showed a good fit to the data. When constraining the model, the CFI and the chi-square values increased slightly but this increase was not statistically significant. A non-significant LM-test indicated that the hypothesised equality of the constraints imposed on the path loadings held. Thus, these analyses provided good support for the factorial structure of the domain-specific solution (Model 2) and its generalizability across gender.

Factorial Invariance across Relationship Status

The sample comprised 100 participants who were not in a relationship at the time of testing, and 100 participants who were in a relationship. Analogously to the test of invariance across gender, the domain-specific models were tested to determine whether the fit would replicate across relationship status. The results are displayed in Table 5 and Table 6.

Table 5: Invariance across Relationship Status

Model	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	CFI	RMSEA
Partner Ideals					
Baseline model	70.68	48	< .05	.97	.05
Model with all factor loadings constrained	73.09	57	> .05	.98	.04
Self					
Baseline model	77.30	48	< .01	.96	.06
Model with all factor loadings constrained	83.22	57	< .05	.97	.05

Table 6: Chi-square Difference Test between Constrained and Baseline Model

Comparisons	LM χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Partner Ideals			
Constrained and unconstrained model	2.41	9	>.05
Self			
Constrained and unconstrained model	5.92	9	>.05

Again, when constraining the path loadings to equality, the CFI and RMSEA slightly improved, and the chi-square statistic increased, but the difference was not significant. No equality constraints had to be released. Overall, the domain-specific model (for partner ideals and self-perceptions of mate value) provided a good fit to the data and proved to be consistent across gender and relationship status.

Correlations between Self-perceived Mate Value and Partner Ideals

It was hypothesized that high ratings of self-perceived mate value on each domain would predict high standards on the corresponding ideal domains. The correlations across different domains, on the other hand, were expected to be weaker. In short, the convergent correlations should be higher than the discriminant correlations. The results for this analysis are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Correlations between Self-ratings of Mate Value and Partner Ideal Ratings

	Ideal Partner Warmth/Loyalty	Ideal Partner Vitality/Attractiveness	Ideal Partner Status/Resources
Self Warmth/Loyalty	.52**	.26**	.11
Self Vitality/Attractiveness	.04	.54**	.21**
Self Status/Resources	.10	.30**	.37**

Note: ** significant at $p < .01$ level

As predicted, the discriminant correlations were all lower than the convergent correlations (printed in bold). This pattern of results lends additional validity to both sets of measures (self-perceived mating value and ideal standards). The size of the convergent correlation was most marked for the Warmth/Loyalty and Vitality/Attractiveness domains, but also positive and significant for Status/Resources.

Discussion

To summarize the results, a hierarchical, domain-specific model describes adequately how both self mate value and ideal partner standards are cognitively represented. The model also proved to be consistent across gender and relationship status. These results replicate previous findings about the tripartite structure of partner ideals (Fletcher et al., 1999; Fletcher et al., 2003). In addition, they provide good evidence that individuals assess their own mate value in both a general way and quasi-independently on separate dimensions; namely, Warmth/Loyalty, Vitality/Attractiveness, and Status/Resources. This finding implies that rather than perceiving themselves on an overall positive or negative dimension, people tend to judge their own mate value independently (to some extent) across domains. For example, Phillip might think he is very warm and trustworthy, moderately attractive and exciting, but possesses little ambition and status. In addition, the pattern of discriminant and convergent correlations between ideal domains and self-domains supports the proposition that people desire a partner who resembles the self, and provides validity to the measures of both self-perceived mate value and ideal standards.

The notion that self-perceptions and partner ideals are tied together is not new. Social exchange theorists in particular have pointed out the importance of assessing one's own "market value" in the mating game (Cameron et al., 1977). It has also been noted by several evolutionary psychologists that people base their partner preferences on an estimation of their own mate value (Kenrick et al., 1993; Sloman & Sloman, 1988). However, most prior studies measured self-perceived mate value in a global fashion (Kenrick et al., 1993; Murray et al., 1996a, 1996b; Regan, 1998).

Guided by Shavelson's notion about the multidimensionality of the self-concept (Shavelson et al., 1976; Byrne & Shavelson, 1987), and Kirkpatrick and Ellis's (2001)

argument that several self-concepts have evolved to tackle different problems, I investigated the different dimensions on which people evaluate their self-perceived mate value. As expected, the structure of this variable conformed to the same tripartite structure as partner ideals. These findings support Fletcher's (2002) argument that "the mental links between self-perceptions and ideal standards are funnelled through the three distinct ideal categories" (p. 180). In addition, the findings of this study confirm the pivotal function of these three categories in mate selection processes.

Presumably, self-evaluations along these three categories give the individual a good notion about what he or she can offer to a potential partner. This concept should, in turn, anchor the calibration of ideal standards and demands in a partner.

One caveat to this study is that the links between self-perceptions and partner ideals were established by calculating correlations. However, the conclusions that can be drawn from correlational data are limited. To address this limitation, an experiment was designed for Study 2 to test the hypothesis that self mate value assessments can (partly) cause ideal standards to be set at different levels.

Overview Study 2

The major aim of Study 2 was to demonstrate that the links between self-perceptions and partner ideals are causal. In particular, I attempted to show that altering self-perceptions would change standards for an ideal partner. A second aim of this study was to give further validation to the notion that mate selection works in a domain-specific way; i.e., mate selection should operate along the three ideal-domains proposed by Fletcher et al. (1999).

In this study, subjects' self-perceptions of mate value were manipulated either upwards or downwards on particular ideal domains. Self-perceptions manipulated upwards on a particular dimension (e.g., Vitality/Attractiveness) should lead to more importance being attached to the corresponding ideal factor (i.e., Vitality/Attractiveness) when people are asked to rate characteristics of the ideal partner. In contrast, self-perceptions manipulated in a negative direction should lead to less importance being placed on the corresponding ideal dimension.

Moreover, I predicted that the manipulation would work in domain-specific ways; i.e., that changing self-perceptions on a particular dimension (e.g., Vitality/Attractiveness) would alter the subjects' ideal standards on that particular dimension, but not on others (e.g., Warmth/Loyalty). The Vitality/Attractiveness and the Status/Resources dimensions were chosen as the manipulated dimensions. Warmth/Loyalty was not selected because of probable ceiling effects, given that people's ideal ratings on this dimension have been high in prior research (e.g., Fletcher et al., 1999; Fletcher, 2002). In addition, recent research (Fletcher et al., 2003) has documented people's unwillingness to make trade-offs on this dimension, due to its centrality in human mate selection, which suggests this dimension may not be especially malleable.

Two additional predictions concerned subjects' self-esteem. First, high self-esteem individuals were predicted to have higher self-ratings and maintain higher ideal standards than

their low self-esteem counterparts. Second, self-esteem was predicted to exert a moderating influence. That is, I expected low self-esteem people to lower their self-ratings and partner ideal ratings in reaction to the self-threat imposed on them. High self-esteem people, on the other hand, were hypothesized to be influenced less by the manipulation or perhaps even to compensate with higher self-ratings and partner ideal ratings.

Method

Participants

The sample for Study 2 comprised 149 students of the University of Canterbury (72 women, 77 men) all of whom were in a relationship at the time of testing. The average age of participants was 22.73 ($SD = 5.67$); the age of the participants ranged from 17 to 59 years. Of the sample, 95 were dating, 35 were living together, and 19 were married. The mean length of relationships was 27.12 months ($SD = 40.16$). Twenty individuals were excluded from the analyses, because of suspicion concerning the links between the two ostensibly unrelated studies, leaving a sample of 129 people.

Materials

Self-esteem. The 10-item Rosenberg (1965) self-esteem scale was used to tap participants' feelings of self-confidence and self-worth (e.g., "I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others"). Participants indicated their answers on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 = *strongly agree* to 4 = *strongly disagree*. This scale attained good internal reliability in this study ($\alpha = .88$).

Manipulation questionnaire. To enhance or undermine participants' view of themselves, a questionnaire of six open-ended questions was developed. Participants' self-perceptions were manipulated up (boost version) or down (threat version) on either Vitality/Attractiveness or Status/Resources. The Warmth/Loyalty dimension was employed as an additional within-subject control. The experimental design for Study 2 is depicted in Table 8.

Table 8: Experimental Design

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Warmth/Loyalty	control	control	control	control
Vitality/Attractiveness	up	down	control	control
Status/Resources	control	control	up	down

Each of the six questions in the manipulation questionnaire related to one item on the corresponding subscale of Fletcher et al.'s (1999) partner ideal scales.¹ Initially, subjects were informed that the questionnaire was concerned with how they perceived themselves. It was emphasized that there were no right or wrong answers. Participants were instructed to answer the questions carefully and conscientiously.

In the Vitality/Attractiveness boost version of the questionnaire, participants were asked to “Describe below three features of your own physical shape, weight, and appearance (from the neck down) that you like the most” (corresponding item: *nice body*); “Describe below THREE features of your face that you like the most” (corresponding item: *attractive appearance*); “Think back over the last year and describe (in detail) THREE vivid and clear cut examples in which you behaved in an extroverted fashion” (corresponding item: *outgoing*); “Think back over the last year and describe (in detail) THREE vivid and clear cut examples in which you took risks and behaved in a courageous fashion” (corresponding item: *adventurous*); “Describe below THREE of the strongest features of your own ability to sexually please a partner” (corresponding item: *good lover*); “List THREE ways in which you are sexually appealing to other people” (corresponding item: *sexy*). In the threat version of this scale, these questions were phrased in a negative way. To ensure comparability, the different versions of the questionnaire were made as similar as possible.

¹ The original Status/Resources scale comprises only five items as compared to the Vitality/Attractiveness scale which comprises six items. Therefore, one additional question was asked in the Status/Resources manipulations so as to ensure equal length.

For the manipulation on Status/Resources, participants were predominantly asked to imagine future scenarios of their possessing much (boost version) or little (threat version) status and resources. Participants in the Status/Resources threat version responded to the following questions: “Describe THREE features of your personality that really get in the way of you achieving your full potential” (additional item); “Imagine yourself in 10 years’ time living in a rented, sub-standard house (you don’t own a house). Give THREE reasons why you could end up in this situation” (corresponding item: *nice house*); “Imagine yourself in 10 years’ time as being poor, with no bank balance, and little money to spend. Give THREE reasons why you could end up in this situation” (corresponding item: *financially secure*); “Give THREE reasons why you don’t dress well at times or have an underdeveloped dress sense” (corresponding item: *dresses well*); “Imagine yourself in 10 years’ time in a poorly paid, low-status job. Give THREE reasons why you could end up in this situation” (corresponding item: *good job*); “Imagine that in 10 years’ time you have achieved much less in your life than your current friends and classmates. Give THREE reasons why this could be the case” (corresponding item: *successful*). Again, the boost version of this scale was meticulously matched with positive wording.

Each version of the manipulation questionnaire was pilot-tested extensively prior to their use in the experiment proper. For the full version of the questionnaires see Appendix B.

Mood scale. This 13-item scale tapped participants’ mental state after the manipulation. Participants were instructed to “rate the following items in terms of how you are feeling right now”. Of the scale, the first five items refer to positive feelings (happy, optimistic, passionate, joyful, excited) and the last eight items relate to negative emotions (depressed, angry, disappointed, irritated, worried, distressed, rejected, jealous). A 7-point Likert scale accompanied the items anchored 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *extremely*. The latter eight items were reverse coded and an overall score for mood calculated with high values

signifying positive mood and low values indicating negative mood. This scale proved to be reliable with a Cronbach's alpha of .90.

Self and Ideal Partner Ratings. The same scales as described in Study 1 were administered to assess participants' self-perceptions and partner ideals. For self-perceptions, Cronbach's alphas ranged from .80 to .88, and for partner ideals the internal reliability varied from .78 to .85. Thus, all scales were reliable. Items were summed to produce scores representing each ideal domain.

Appraisals of Current Partner. In addition to ideal appraisals, participants were asked to "rate each factor below in terms of how accurately each factor describes your current partner" on the same attributes as those used in the partner ideal scales. Responses were given on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *very inaccurate*, 7 = *very accurate*). In total, three scores were calculated representing partner perceptions across the three different domains: Warmth/Loyalty, Vitality/Attractiveness, and Status/Resources. Cronbach's alphas ranged from .69 to .85 for this scale; thus the scales were reliable.

Relationship Satisfaction. The 18-item Perceived Relationship Quality Component scale (PRQC; Fletcher et al., 2000) was employed to assess participants' satisfaction with their current relationship (e.g., "How satisfied are you with your relationship?", "How committed are you to your relationship?", "How intimate is your relationship?"). The PRQC taps six dimensions of relationship satisfaction (love, passion, commitment, trust, satisfaction, and closeness) on 7-point Likert scales anchored by 1 = *not at all* and 7 = *extremely*. One total score for relationship satisfaction was calculated by summing the items. This scale has proved to have good reliability and validity (Fletcher et al., 2000) and also attained good reliability in this study ($\alpha = .94$).

Procedure

Participants were led to believe that they were participating in two unrelated studies: one about self-perceptions and one about perceptions of partners and relationships. To ensure the effectiveness of this deception, the two parts of the study took place at different venues, with different researchers, different sign-up sheets, and so forth.

Upon their arrival in the first laboratory, participants were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions; namely, the Vitality/Attractiveness boost version, the Vitality/Attractiveness threat version, the Status/Resources boost version, and the Status/Resources threat version. Participants were informed that they were taking part in a study about self-perceptions and instructed to fill out the questionnaires honestly and accurately. In addition, they were assured that the study was anonymous and confidential and a padlocked box, in which they were to put their questionnaires after the study, was pointed out to them.

The first scale of the questionnaire assessed their self-esteem. Next, subjects filled out the “self-perception questionnaire” (to manipulate their self-perceptions), followed by the mood scale.

Having completed this part of the study, participants were paid \$5 and directed to a different laboratory. In the second part of the study, participants completed questionnaires tapping their partner perceptions, partner ideals, self-appraisals, and relationship satisfaction.

Before being released the participants were carefully probed for suspicion. A separate questionnaire comprising six questions was administered. Participants were initially asked what they thought had been the purpose of the study they had just completed. Next, I tested whether they had noticed an overlap between the two studies (participants were instructed to write only about thoughts that had occurred to them during the study, not thoughts that occurred to them while filling out this final questionnaire). The third question examined whether the subject had thought that the studies were related, followed by a question as to

how they had thought the studies were related. The fifth question asked about the extent to which it had occurred to them that the studies they had completed were in fact only one study. Last, I examined whether the participants had guessed that their response to the first study was intended to affect their answers in the second study. Finally, participants were fully debriefed² and paid a further \$5 remuneration.

² As part of the debriefing procedure, subjects were told about the real purpose of the study, about the manipulation, and the effects that cognitions can have on the mood. In addition to this, participants who had been manipulated downwards completed a short form of the scale designed to manipulate self-perceptions upwards. This was done to correct any temporary decline in their self-esteem.

Results

Self-perceptions

The means and standard deviations for self-perceptions are reported in Table 9.

Initially, I conducted a 2 (men versus women) × 2 (Vitality/Attractiveness category versus Status/Resources category) × 2 (manipulation condition: boost versus threat) ANOVA on the participants' self-perceptions.

Table 9: Means and Standard Deviations for Ratings of Self-perceived Mate Value

	Men			Women		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Vitality/Attractiveness						
Boost condition	4.43	0.69	15	4.20	0.70	18
Threat condition	4.04	0.84	15	3.89	0.83	15
Status/Resources						
Boost condition	5.36	1.36	16	5.53	0.81	16
Threat condition	5.14	1.52	17	4.90	1.32	16

The dependent variable represents self-perceptions on the manipulated ideal category. That is, for participants who were manipulated on Vitality/Attractiveness this variable consists of their ratings on Vitality/Attractiveness, and for participants manipulated on Status/Resources this variable comprises their ratings on Status/Resources. This strategy simplifies the results and increases statistical power. In addition, any differences across ideal categories can be picked up by the main effect or interactions. As predicted, a main effect for the boost versus the threat condition was significant, $F(1, 120) = 4.24, p < .05$. Participants in the threat condition ($M = 4.45$) saw themselves more negatively than did those in the boost condition ($M = 4.87$). Thus, the experimental manipulation was successful. No other main effects or interactions were significant.

Partner Ideal Ratings

New dependent variables for the ideal standards were created analogously to the strategy for self-ratings described earlier. A 2 (men versus women) × 2 (Vitality/Attractiveness category versus Status/Resources category) × 2 (manipulation condition: boost versus threat) ANOVA was calculated with partner ideals as the dependent variable. The means and standard deviations are shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Means and Standard Deviations of Ideal Standard Ratings

	Men			Women		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Vitality/Attractiveness						
Boost condition	5.33	1.03	15	5.33	0.50	18
Threat condition	5.30	0.97	15	4.89	1.04	15
Status/Resources						
Boost condition	3.95	1.56	16	4.63	1.24	16
Threat condition	3.91	1.34	17	4.93	1.15	16

I predicted that altering people's self-perceptions would change their ideal standards in domain-specific ways. Specifically, I posited that boosting participants' self-perceptions in a particular domain (e.g., Vitality/Attractiveness) would produce an increase in their partner ideal ratings in the same domain (i.e., Vitality/Attractiveness). Threatening people's self-perceptions, on the other hand, was expected to make them lower their ideal ratings (in domain-specific ways).

Contrary to the predictions, the partner ideal ratings appeared to be largely unaffected by the manipulation. The only significant effect was the interaction for gender × ideal category, $F(1, 120) = 6.80, p < .01$. Women ($M = 4.78$) rated Status/Resources as more important than did men ($M = 3.93$). In contrast, the genders differed only slightly in their ideals for Vitality/Attractiveness (women: $M = 5.11$; men: $M = 5.32$). These findings are in

accordance with the results of previous studies (Buss, 1999; Buss, 2001; Campbell et al., 2001), and do not reflect an effect of the manipulated variable.

The interaction for gender, ideal category (Vitality/Attractiveness versus Status/Resources), and manipulation condition (boost versus threat) was also not significant ($F(1, 120) = 1.19, p = .28$). However, the pattern of these results was suggestive: While men's ideal ratings were impervious to the manipulation, women showed a (non-significant) decline in ideal standards when threatened on Vitality/Attractiveness (i.e., the means for women's partner ideals in the boost condition were higher than the mean score for women's partner ideals in the threat condition). However, contrary to the predictions, women threatened on Status/Resources enhanced their ideal standards in the same dimension.

Alternative Explanations

To rule out the possibility of other factors exerting a hidden influence on the results, I re-calculated the ANOVAs while controlling for several variables. First, Warmth/Loyalty was entered as a covariate. Warmth/Loyalty is a central category with regard to self and ideal partner descriptions (Buss & Barnes, 1986; Fletcher et al., 1999; Hassebrauck & Aron, 2001). I predicted that Warmth/Loyalty should not be affected by the manipulation. Controlling for this variable, therefore, should not change the results. Second, the participants' moods after the manipulation could mediate the results to a certain extent. Third, the effect of relationship satisfaction was assessed to discount the possibility that less satisfied individuals might have been more affected by the manipulation than highly satisfied individuals. Finally, "appraisals of current partner" (the participants' ratings of their current partner) was entered as a covariate, since people with higher ideal ratings could conceivably have had partners with higher partner value.

For self-ratings as the dependent variable, partialing out the influence of Warmth/Loyalty, relationship satisfaction, and “appraisals of current partner” did not influence the results. When entering Warmth/Loyalty as covariate, the manipulation effect remained marginally significant ($F(1,119) = 3.64, p = .06$). However, when mood was controlled for, the F -value dropped substantially and failed to attain significance ($F(1, 119) = 2.26, p = .14$), suggesting that mood mediated the manipulation to a certain extent. For the ideal ratings, controlling for all these potential mediators did not change the previously non-significant findings.

Moderating Analysis: Did Self-esteem Moderate People’s Self-ratings?

It was predicted that self-esteem would moderate the decline in self-perceptions and partner ideals. That is, low self-esteem individuals were posited to be more prone to change their self-perceptions and partner ideals as a function of this manipulation. High self-esteem individuals, on the other hand, were hypothesized to be more resistant to the attempted change or even to compensate with higher self-ratings. The sample was first divided into a high and a low self-esteem group via a median-split (Median = 3.2). Next, a 2 (self-esteem: high versus low) \times 2 (men versus women) \times 2 (Vitality/Attractiveness category versus Status/Resources category) \times 2 (manipulation condition: boost versus threat) ANOVA was calculated on both self-perceptions and ideal ratings.

A main effect for self-esteem ($F(1, 112) = 13.29, p < .001$) revealed that low self-esteem individuals rated themselves more negatively ($M = 4.32$) than their high self-esteem peers ($M = 5.00$). The interaction term for self-esteem \times manipulation condition (boost versus threat) was marginally significant, $F(1, 112) = 3.35, p = .07$. Figure 5 depicts this interaction. As predicted, high self-esteem individuals exhibited stable self-ratings (boost condition: $M = 5.04$; threat condition: $M = 4.96$). Their low self-esteem counterparts, on the other hand, were strongly affected by the manipulation (boost condition: $M = 4.71$; threat condition: $M = 3.94$).

A planned comparison revealed that the latter difference (for low self-esteem individuals) was significant, $p < .05$, however, the former difference was not. These findings are in line with my predictions.

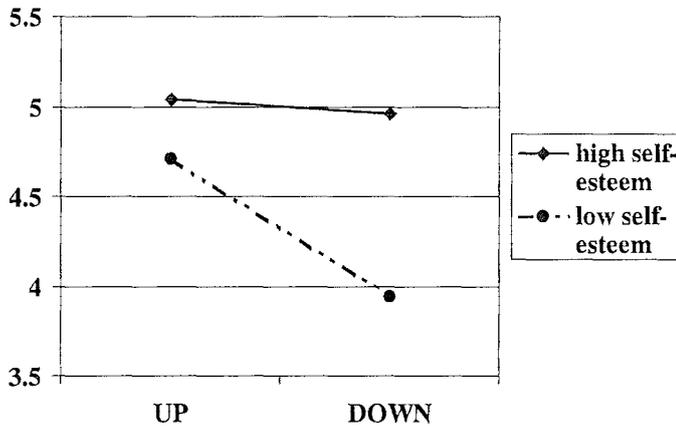


Figure 5: Interaction between Self-esteem and Self-perceived Mate Value

Alternative Explanations

These data were analysed partialing out the effect of the variables that could potentially mediate these results. There was some evidence of mood mediating the interaction effect for self-esteem \times manipulation condition (boost versus threat) to a certain extent, with the F -value dropping to 2.07 ($p = 0.15$). However, no other potential mediator had an impact on the original results.

Moderating Analysis: Did Self-esteem Moderate Partner Ideals Ratings?

The role of self-esteem was also tested with ideal partner ratings as the dependent variable. High self-esteem individuals had slightly higher ideal standards than low self-esteem individuals (high self-esteem: $M = 4.91$; low self-esteem: $M = 4.58$), but this difference was not significant, $F(1,112) = 2.50$, $p = .12$. Contrary to predictions, the interaction term self-esteem \times manipulation condition (boost versus threat) was not significant ($F < 1$).

Domain-specificity

As mentioned earlier, partialing out the effect of Warmth/Loyalty did not influence the manipulation on either self-ratings or partner ideals. This suggests that the results were specific to the ideal domains that were manipulated.

However, another test for domain-specificity is to analyse the Status/Resources ratings of the group manipulated on Vitality/Attractiveness and the Vitality/Attractiveness ratings of the group manipulated on Status/Resources. To accomplish this, a new self-variable was created.³ For participants who were manipulated on Vitality/Attractiveness, this variable consists of their ratings on Status/Resources; and for participants manipulated on Status/Resources this variable comprises their ratings on Vitality/Attractiveness. A 2 (men versus women) × 2 (Vitality/Attractiveness category versus Status/Resources category) × 2 (manipulation condition: boost versus threat) ANOVA was calculated on this new variable. As predicted, the manipulation effect was now not significant, indicating domain-specificity $F(1, 120) = 1.69, p = .20$.

A more stringent test for domain-specificity, however, is to conduct the original ANOVA with the self-perceptions as the dependent variable and to control for this new variable representing the non-manipulated variable (either Vitality/Attractiveness or Status/Resources). This analysis revealed that the manipulation main effect for self-perceptions dropped to non-significant levels and failed to attain significance ($F = 2.52, p = .12$). In effect, this analysis suggests that there was leakage across the Vitality/Attractiveness and Status/Resources dimensions. This leakage, however, did not extend to the Warmth/Loyalty dimension.

³ Due to non-significant findings concerning partner ideals, this variable was not considered for this set of analyses.

Discussion

As predicted, people in the threat condition rated themselves significantly less positively than did people in the boost condition. However, this shift in self-perception did not have the predicted effect on partner ideals, which were largely impervious to the manipulation. Women were slightly, but non-significantly, more affected by the manipulation; when threatened on Vitality/Attractiveness they lowered their ideal standards. Contrary to the predictions, however, women enhanced their ideals when threatened on Status/Resources.

As expected, there was evidence that self-esteem had a moderating effect on self-perceptions. Overall, low self-esteem individuals rated themselves more negatively than did their high self-esteem counterparts. In addition, people with low self-esteem were significantly affected by the manipulation on self-perceptions, whereas those with high self-esteem appeared to be resistant to the threat. However, in terms of their ideal standards in a potential partner, high and low self-esteem individuals did not differ significantly. The hypothesis that low self-esteem individuals would be more prone to change their ideal standards was not supported.

The hypothesis concerning domain-specificity was partly supported. The Warmth/Loyalty dimension specifically was not affected by the manipulations (for self-perceptions and ideal ratings), suggesting domain-specificity. However, the manipulation of self-perceptions in Vitality/Attractiveness seemed to have some impact on the Status/Resources dimension (and vice versa), which suggests a cognitive overlap between these two domains. This is perhaps not surprising given the prior evidence (Fletcher et al., 1999; also see Study 1) that these two dimensions tend to be positively correlated.

As noted earlier, the manipulation was effective in shifting self-perceptions of mate value. However, ideal standards were not influenced significantly. There are several possible explanations. First, the manipulation might have been strong enough to influence self-perceptions, but too weak to affect partner ideals. Different manipulations, such as giving the participants false feedback about their attractiveness, might have been more effective.

A second explanation is that partner ideals are relatively stable and impervious to temporary declines in self-perception. Mate selection standards have been shown to be malleable (Pennebaker et al., 1979), but they might not be influenced strongly by temporary declines or increases in self-perception. Partner ideal standards represent chronically accessible knowledge structures (e.g., Fletcher et al., 1999) that have developed over a long period of time, derived from past relationship experiences, feedback concerning one's own mate value, and cultural values. Therefore, they might be more stable than I had initially assumed.

There are other explanations for why the manipulation did not impact on partner ideals in the predicted fashion. I predicted that self-perceptions would cause partner ideals. On theoretical grounds, however, it is possible that partner ideals actually cause self-perceptions (producing the correlations reported in Study 1), or that both variables are caused by a third (missing) variable. I shall turn to these possibilities in the General Discussion.

Gender-specific and Domain-specific Hypotheses

Past research has shown that people seek partners who are similar to the self (e.g., Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Campbell et al., 2001; Kenrick et al., 1993). In the same vein, I hypothesized that if subjects' self-perceptions are manipulated in a negative direction on one particular dimension, their partner ideals on that dimension should decrease (while ideal standards should increase if participants' are manipulated in a positive direction). However, reality might be less straightforward. It is possible that these (matching) hypotheses apply

differentially to different ideal categories, and that these mechanisms are not the same for men and women. Two subtle findings point in that direction. First, women were slightly (but non-significantly) more affected by the manipulation. Second, when threatened on Status/Resources, women (non-significantly) increased the importance of this factor in an ideal partner. Although unexpected, the latter finding is in accord with previous research by Buss and Barnes (1986), who found that women who preferred high professional status in a partner did not typically score high on personality scales for levels of achievement or intellectual efficiency. A German study by Luszyk (2001) also yielded evidence that individuals with low socio-economic status valued resources in a partner more than did individuals who possess high levels of socio-economic status.

Perhaps women who have little in the way of status and resources attempt to make up for this deficit by looking for a mate who has much to offer on this dimension. Social exchange theorists have argued that different assets can be exchanged in romantic relationships (e.g., high status in a man for high attractiveness in a women). However, the findings of my research indicate that assets like wealth and position are more likely to be shared and exchanged than qualities like attractiveness and good health. Indeed, it appears implausible that women will seek a very handsome mate to complement their own (potential) unattractiveness.

It makes sense in terms of evolutionary theory that women, in particular, should emphasize status and resources in a potential mate and try to mate upwards in this dimension. Bearing the burden of a nine-month gestation period and subsequent lactation and child rearing, women relied on other people to contribute food and shelter to guarantee the survival of offspring in our ancestral past (Buss, 1999). They would therefore have profited most from a partner's ability to provide valued resources.

In summary, future research investigating the link between self-perceived mate value and partner preferences should take into consideration that different hypotheses might apply according to the nature of the ideal dimensions and gender.

Self-esteem

The finding that self-esteem moderated the manipulation effects for self-perceptions is consistent with previous research by Baumeister (1982, 1989), Murray et al. (1998) and Murray (2001). Baumeister (1982), for instance, proposed compensatory self-enhancement processes in high self-esteem individuals. In an experiment involving false feedback, he was able to show that high, but not low self-esteem individuals, countered self-threat with compensatory self-descriptions. Similarly, Murray et al. (1998) provided evidence that high self-esteem individuals reacted to any form of self-doubt with an increase in reflected appraisals (ratings that refer to how the people think their partners see them). My research corroborates such findings concerning the ability of high self-esteem individuals to fend off self-doubts.

Contrary to the predictions, self-esteem did not moderate the effects of the self-perception manipulation on partner ideals. This result reinforces the finding that partner ideals may be relatively stable and impervious to change for both low and high self-esteem people.

General Discussion

This research investigated the links between self-perceptions and partner ideals, taking into account the multiple domains on which people evaluate these two factors. In Study 1, I evaluated two competing models that specify how self-perceptions of mate value and partner ideals might be represented cognitively. In particular, a global model of cognitive representation was tested against a hierarchical, domain-specific model. Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) confirmed the superiority of the hierarchical, domain-specific model to the global model. The domain-specific model also replicated well across gender and relationship status. The results verified the hypothesis that self-perceptions of mate value conform to the same tripartite structure as do partner ideals (i.e., Warmth/Loyalty, Vitality/Attractiveness, and Status/Resources). Discriminant and convergent correlations between the two variables (self-perceived mate value and partner ideal standards) replicated previous research, and provided additional evidence for the domain-specificity hypothesis. In short, there is evidence that this tripartite structure of mate categories carves the intimate relationship mind at its joints.

In Study 2, a self-perception manipulation was employed to test the hypothesis that self-perceptions of mate value cause partner ideals to be set at particular levels. Participants' self-perceptions were manipulated upwards or downwards on particular ideal dimensions (Vitality/Attractiveness or Status/Resources) and ratings of self-perceived mate value and partner ideals were expected to shift in a corresponding fashion (upwards or downwards on the manipulated ideal dimension). The manipulation of self-perceptions of mate value succeeded; however, the experiment did not produce any changes for partner ideals. The hypothesis that the manipulation would work in domain-specific ways (i.e., the manipulation on one ideal-domain was expected to influence participants' ratings only on that particular

domain, but not on others) was partly supported. Self-esteem moderated the manipulation effects for self-perceived mate value (as expected), but not for partner ideals.

How do the results contribute to a better understanding of human mate selection? How do these findings relate to previous theories of human mating? And, how can evolutionary theory explain the findings that the three mate ideal categories also apply to people's self-perceived mate value? In the following section, I first discuss the tripartite structure of self-perceived mate value and partner ideals. Second, I focus on how different theories of mate selection explain the link between self-perceived mate value and ideal standards. Third, I discuss the distinctness of specific ideal domains. The fourth section deals with the causal links between self-perceptions and partner ideals. In the fifth section, I discuss the malleability of partner ideals. I conclude by identifying some limitations of the current research.

The Tripartite Structure of Self-perceived Mate Value and Partner Ideals

The CFA results of Study 1 replicated previous research concerning the tripartite structure of partner ideals (Fletcher et al., 1999), and revealed that the same structure applies to self-perceptions. In contrast to other theories, evolutionary theory explains why the three dimensions – Warmth/Loyalty, Vitality/Attractiveness, and Status/Resources – are pivotal in human mate selection. Gangestad and Simpson (2000), for example, proposed a model of human mating in terms of “good genes” and “good investment”. Focusing on “good genes” in a partner should contribute to having healthy and genetically superior offspring, whereas concentrating on “good investment” in a mate should secure the investment and emotional commitment that is required for the survival of offspring. Fletcher (2002) notes that the three categories of mate standards correspond to Gangestad and Simpson's (2000) model, with Vitality/Attractiveness representing the “good genes” component, Warmth/Loyalty signifying

“good investment”, and Status/Resources probably indicating a mixture of good genes and good investment. Utilizing these categories with respect to both self and partner should allow people to adopt a suitable mating strategy. For example, focusing on Warmth/Loyalty in a partner (and consequently acting in a warm and loyal manner to attract the attention of suitable mates) should help further a long-term relationship with a committed partner. Conversely, concentrating on Vitality/Attractiveness in a potential partner could help genetic fitness (both in terms of health and attractiveness). Depending on the circumstances, both mating tactics can be adaptive and can help further reproductive fitness (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000), although they are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

It is plausible that the structure of self-perceptions of mate value should correspond to the structure of ideals in intimate relationships. The tripartite structure of self-perceptions should help regulate mating strategies by giving people information about what they have to offer to a potential mate. For example, people who are aware of their own (superior) attractiveness can afford to have high partner standards for Vitality/Attractiveness. The finding that self-perceived mate value and partner ideals are both structured in a tripartite way, points to an important link between these two variables, which will be discussed in the following section.

Why is it Adaptive to Base One’s Mate Preferences on One’s Self-perceived Mate Value?

The substantial positive correlations between self-perceived mate value and partner ideals are consistent with previous research (e.g., Campbell et al., 2001; Kenrick et al., 1993), indicating that desired attributes in a partner are tied to how people perceive themselves. This link between self-perceived mate value and partner ideals has often been explained in terms of social exchange theories. For example, Murstein (1970) specified a cost and profit model of mate choice. He argued that although the relationship might be highly rewarding (high profit),

attracting a mate whose mate value exceeds that of the self would involve high costs (e.g., if the partner rejected the seeker or subsequently paired up with a more desirable mate).

Avoiding risks and pairing up with a less desirable partner (low cost), on the other hand, entails fewer rewards from the relationship (low profit). Therefore, according to social exchange models, people of equal mate value should tend to pair up.

Evolutionary theory goes beyond social exchange theories by explaining the origin of “costs” and “rewards”, and *why* they take the form they do. That is, the connections between self-perceptions of mate value and ideal standards might have evolved to facilitate mate selection processes and to maximize the likelihood of reproductive success. Seeking similar mates (in terms of mate value) might fulfil two adaptive functions. First, people are less likely to seek a mate whom they cannot retain in the long run (which would be maladaptive for the survival of potential offspring). Second, individuals are less likely to select or invest in a partner who falls short of their own qualities, thus reducing the seeker’s chances to produce and raise healthy offspring with a partner possessing genes of high quality (Buss, 1999; Fletcher, 2002; Regan, 1998). Consequently, people in long-term relationships are motivated to take full advantage of their own assets, and seek a partner who can contribute most to having healthy, attractive offspring within the context of a resourceful, cooperative and supportive relationship.

Domain-specificity

Study 1 provided good evidence for domain-specificity in ideal standards and self-perceptions. However, the results of Study 2 only partly confirmed the hypothesis that the manipulation would work in domain-specific ways. In particular, the manipulation of Vitality/Attractiveness had some impact on the Status/Resources domain and vice versa. However, as expected, the Warmth/Loyalty dimension was not influenced by the manipulation of Vitality/Attractiveness or Status/Resources. The leakage across the

Vitality/Attractiveness and the Status/Resources domains indicates that these domains have something in common. Indeed, these two domains seem to differ in significant ways from the Warmth/Loyalty domain. One explanation is that the former two domains are less important in long-term relationships, whereas the latter domain (Warmth/Loyalty) is more pivotal. Indeed, prior research has emphasized the centrality of the Warmth/Loyalty dimension as indicated by the importance ratings on this domain, and people's unwillingness to make trade-offs in this dimension (Fletcher et al., 2003).

The Status/Resources dimension also contains at least one item that would be expected to load on the Vitality/Attractiveness dimension and vice versa. For example, the factor loading for the item "dresses well" (in the original work by Fletcher et al., 1999) indicates that this item is a sign of high socio-economic status. However, it could also be regarded as an item signifying attractiveness (and this item also loaded positively on this dimension).

In sum, these results suggest that the Vitality/Attractiveness and Status/Resources dimensions are related and differ from the Warmth/Loyalty dimension. Further research is needed to confirm this finding. However, I conclude that examining human mate selection processes by measuring partner ideals and self-perceived mate value in a global fashion is less informative than taking into account the specific dimensions of self and partner ideals.

The Causal Links between Self-perceptions and Partner Ideals

The prediction that self-perceptions cause people to set their ideal standards at particular levels was not supported in Study 2. This finding was unexpected for the following reasons. First, it seems plausible that ideal standards should be closely connected to the self, and that self-perceptions should play a central role in the calibration of ideal standards (Simpson et al., 2001). Second, empirical work (e.g., Campbell et al., 2001; Fletcher et al., 1999) and Study 1 in this research have found significant positive correlations between the two variables (self and ideal standards).

These positive correlations (between self-perceptions and ideal standards) indicate that a link exists between self-perceptions and ideal standards. However, several directions of influence are theoretically possible (apart from that hypothesized). First, partner ideals might cause self-perceptions rather than vice versa. Second, a third variable might exert an influence on both variables and explain the correlation between them. I shall now consider each of these possibilities.

The possibility that partner ideals cause self-perceptions would suggest that people form their self-concepts on the basis of what they want in partners. However, it is commonly held that the self-concept is formed on the basis of different sources of self-knowledge such as behaviour, thoughts and feelings, feedback from others, and social comparisons (Smith & Mackie, 2000). The development of firm self-perceptions of attractiveness and personality characteristics follows a developmental sequence through childhood, so that coherent self-concepts are well in place before adolescence when the search for mates begins.

It is certainly plausible that feedback from potential mates in adolescence and early adulthood help form stable self-perceptions of mate value (and also help set mate standards in place). However, the notion that ideal standards primarily cause self-perceptions seems implausible. This would imply, for example, that those who desire very attractive mates would come to the conclusion they themselves are very handsome (even if they were, in fact, homely) – a highly unrealistic belief that would founder on the basis of constant rejection by “good-looking” potential mates.

A more plausible possibility is that a third variable exerts an influence on the calibration of both self-perceived mate value and partner ideal standards; thus, the correlation between self and ideal standards does not represent a direct causal link. One obvious (third) variable that might fulfil this criteria is self-esteem. To test this possibility, multiple regressions were calculated, with self-perceptions in each specific ideal domain as the dependent variable (self-perception of Warmth/Loyalty, self-perception of

Vitality/Attractiveness, and self-perception of Status/Resources). Self-esteem and partner ideals in the corresponding ideal domains were then entered as independent variables. Because these data derive from an experiment, in which self-perceptions were manipulated, this strategy is not ideal, but the results are suggestive, nevertheless. When controlling for self-esteem, all beta-weights for ideal standards stayed positive and significant, suggesting that self-esteem does not represent a missing variable. Of course, other factors may constitute plausible missing variables, but self-esteem, at least, does not appear to play this role.

That self-perceptions mate value (partly) cause partner ideals is perhaps still the most plausible explanation for the positive correlation between these two variables. There is no prior research concerning the causal links between self-perceived mate value and partner ideals, but there are studies examining the links between partner perceptions and ideals. For example, Fletcher et al. (2000) found empirical support that people's perceptions of their current partner influence their partner ideals over a three month period, but not vice versa. A study by Murray et al. (1996) also found evidence for the same causal proposition. In a similar fashion, it appears likely that people are motivated to bring their ideals into line with their self-perceptions. It is therefore likely that self-perceptions do indeed influence partner ideals, but that my experiment failed to confirm this hypothesis for methodological reasons. I have already mentioned two possible reasons for this failure; that is, that the manipulation was not strong enough to influence partner ideals and that partner ideals are relatively stable. A further explanation will be discussed in the following section.

Malleability of Partner Ideals

The finding that partner ideals seemed impervious to change is not entirely consistent with findings by Pennebaker et al. (1979) indicating the malleability of mate selection standards. Furthermore, the stability of partner ideals in this study seems inconsistent with the

research by Fletcher et al. (2000) showing that ideal standards were prone to change over time.

However, in Fletcher et al.'s (2000) research, the shift of ideal standards was related to positive perceptions of the current partner, not self-perceptions. Also, these researchers adopted a longitudinal research design that may be more sensitive in assessing changes in partner ideal standards. In Pennebaker et al.'s (1979) study the (temporary) decline of mate standards was related to mate selection pressures (the time to find a mate for the night in a bar got shorter), which has been referred to as the "closing time phenomenon" (Gladue & Delaney, 1990; Nida & Koon, 1983; Pennebaker et al. 1979).

Pennebaker et al. (1979) also studied short-term mate standards, whereas I examined long-term ideal standards. As mentioned earlier, the criteria for short-term relationships are probably more flexible than those for long-term relationships. There is little direct evidence available concerning the stability of short-term ideals. However, previous research has shown that people (especially men) will lower their mate standards for a short-term fling but not for a potential marriage partner (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Fletcher et al., 2003; Kenrick et al., 1993; Regan, 1998). In any case, the stability of short-term ideals is an important topic for further research.

Research about ideal standards and "ideal flexibility" by Campbell et al. (2001) might provide an answer as to why partner ideals were not found to be malleable in this research. The term "ideal flexibility" refers to the extent to which people are prepared to consider a partner who falls below their ideal standards. Simpson et al. (2001) proposed (based on the findings of Campbell et al.) that people who have recently been rejected by one or several prospective partners might extend their ideal flexibility without changing their ideal standards. Temporarily broadening one's range of acceptable partners in reaction to a temporary change in self-perceived mate value might also be more adaptive than changing

well-established ideal standards. In this research, I did not measure ideal flexibility, and therefore could not test this hypothesis, but this idea is eminently testable in future research.

In summary, partner ideals seem to be relatively stable and not affected by temporary changes in self-perceptions. However, in the long run, perceptions of self mate value probably do play a very important role in the calibration of partner ideals. A longitudinal research design that takes into account short-term versus long-term standards, and temporary versus long-term changes in self-perceptions, might be more sensitive in testing hypotheses about the causal links between self-perceptions of mate value and partner selection criteria. In addition, future research should consider a variety of mate selection criteria, including minimum standards, maximum standards, partner ideals, and ideal flexibility.

Caveats and Implication for Future Research

This research has some potential limitations that are addressed in the following section. In particular, questions could be raised about the representativeness of the sample, and the robustness of my conclusions about mate selection processes. Some methodological limitations are also discussed.

Age group. The samples in both studies comprised students of the University of Canterbury. Although the age range was wide in both cases, the majority of the students were between 18 and 25 years old. Clearly, this sample is not representative of the population of New Zealand. However, the age of participants should not impact on the results concerning the cognitive structure of self-perceptions of mate value and partner ideals in Study 1. It is unlikely that this cognitive structure changes dramatically after adolescence, although the importance placed on different domains might, nevertheless, vary with age. Similarly, the findings concerning the relative stability of partner ideals should not be influenced by the age

of participants. If anything, we would expect ideal standards in older people to be even less malleable.

However, correlations between self-appraisals and partner ideals may vary according to age. Perhaps the ties become stronger as people get older. Older folk are likely to be seeking intimacy and long-term relationships, and various authors have argued that the ties between self-appraisals and what people want in a partner should increase as commitment intensifies (e.g., Buss, 1999; Kenrick et al., 1993). On the other hand, people who have not been successful finding a partner might tolerate larger discrepancies between self-perceptions and perceptions of their partner. In summary, future research on mate selection could potentially focus on how these processes change with age.

Partner ideals. Mate preferences almost certainly predate mate choice, but people cannot (or do not) necessarily choose exactly who they prefer. Partner choice might, for example, be constrained by the non-availability of the ideal mate, relationship beliefs, or past relationship experiences. It would therefore be interesting to investigate people's actual partner choices in future research.

The limitations of CFA. In Study 1, I found that a multi-dimensional, hierarchical model best represents people's self-perceptions of their mate value. This model was tested and compared against a competing model, in which all items loaded on one general factor. Model comparisons were carried out using CFA. However, one important methodological caveat is that CFA can only test whether a priori models represent a good fit to the data. CFA, on its own, is not able to determine whether missing factors are at work. A more thorough way of establishing the different domains in which people evaluate their own mate value would be to collect items using free-response protocols and carry out an exploratory factor

analysis. This procedure has been followed for partner ideals (e.g., Fletcher et al., 1999), but not, to my knowledge, for self-perceptions of mate value.

Research design. One potential limitation of this research is the way in which self-perceptions were measured. Ideally, the measurements of self-perceived mate value should have been taken both before and after the experiment to determine whether participants' self-perceptions changed as a result of the manipulation. To avoid demand characteristics, I measured self-appraisals only after the experiment and relied on comparisons between the manipulated groups (a less powerful design).

Future research should also consider the longitudinal influences or relations between self-perceived mate value and partner ideals, which was not addressed in this cross-sectional research.

Conclusion

This research provided evidence that self-perceptions of mate value are structured in a tripartite way, although they also load on an overarching factor of global self-perception. The self-perception manipulation in Study 2 did not yield the expected results; thus, I found no evidence that self-perceptions of mate value can cause ideal standard ratings to shift. Nevertheless, the experiment suggested that long-term partner ideals might be more stable than has commonly been considered, and raised further questions which are eminently testable and worth investigating further. The general question of how self-perceptions of mate value are related to partner ideal standards (and other mate selection criteria) remains an important issue. Answering this question promises to be informative about both basic social-cognitive processes and the way in which intimate relationships work.

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Appendixes

Appendix A : Partner Ideal Scales

Instructions: Please rate each factor below in terms of the importance that each factor has in describing your IDEAL PARTNER in a close relationship (dating, living together or married). Circle ONE number in each scale.

Sexy	very unimportant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very important
Nice body	very unimportant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very important
Attractive appearance	very unimportant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very important
Good Lover	very unimportant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very important
Outgoing	very unimportant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very important
Adventurous	very unimportant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very important
Kind	very unimportant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very important
Supportive	very unimportant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very important
Understanding	very unimportant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very important
Considerate	very unimportant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very important
Sensitive	very unimportant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very important
A good listener	very unimportant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very important
Successful (achieved or potential to achieve)	very unimportant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very important
Nice house (achieved or potential to achieve)	very unimportant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very important
Financially secure (achieved or potential to achieve)	very unimportant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very important
Dresses well (achieved or potential to achieve)	very unimportant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very important
Good job (achieved or potential to achieve)	very unimportant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very important

Appendix B: Manipulation Questionnaire

Instructions :

This questionnaire is concerned with how you perceive yourself. There are no right or wrong answers. Answer the following questions carefully and conscientiously.

Manipulation on Vitality/Attractiveness – threat version:

- (1) Describe below THREE features of your own physical shape, weight, and appearance (from the neck down), that you dislike the most.
- (2) Describe below THREE features of your face, that you dislike the most.
- (3) Think back over the last year and describe (in detail) THREE vivid and clear cut examples, in which you behaved in a shy or withdrawn fashion.
- (4) Think back over the last year and describe (in detail) THREE vivid and clear cut examples you can recall, in which you failed to take risks and behaved in a timid fashion.
- (5) Describe below the THREE of the weakest features of your own ability to sexually please a partner.
- (6) List THREE ways in which you are not sexually appealing to other people.

Manipulation on Vitality/Attractiveness – boost version:

- (1) Describe below THREE features of your own physical shape, weight, and appearance (from the neck down), that you like the most.
- (2) Describe below THREE features of your face, that you like the most.
- (3) Think back over the last year and describe (in detail) THREE vivid and clear cut examples, in which you behaved in an extrovert fashion.
- (4) Think back over the last year and describe (in detail) THREE vivid and clear cut examples, in which you took risks and behaved in courageous fashion.
- (5) Describe below the THREE strongest features of your own ability to sexually please a partner.
- (6) List THREE ways in which you are sexually appealing to other people.

Manipulation on Status/Resources – threat version:

- (1) Describe THREE features of your personality that really get in the way of you achieving your full potential.
- (2) Imagine yourself in 10 years time living in a rented, sub-standard house (you don't own a house). Give THREE reasons why you could end up in this situation.
- (3) Imagine yourself in 10 years time as being poor, with no bank balance, and little money to spend. Give THREE reasons why you could end up in this situation.
- (4) Give THREE reasons why you don't dress well at times or have an underdeveloped dress sense.
- (5) Imagine yourself in 10 years time in a poorly paid, low-status job. Give THREE reasons why you could end up in this situation.
- (6) Imagine that in 10 years time you have achieved much less in your life than your current friends and classmates. Give THREE reasons why this could be the case.

Manipulation on Status/Resources – boost version:

- (1) Describe THREE features of your personality that really contribute to you achieving your full potential.
- (2) Imagine yourself in 10 years time living in a really nice home that you own (mortgage-free). Give THREE reasons why you could end up in this situation.
- (3) Imagine yourself in 10 years time as being relatively wealthy, with plenty of money in the bank, and money to spend. Give THREE reasons why you could end up in this situation.
- (4) Give THREE reasons why you dress well or have a well-developed dress sense.
- (5) Imagine yourself in 10 years time in a well-paid, high-status job. Give THREE reasons why you could end up in this situation.
- (6) Imagine that in 10 years time you have achieved much more in your life than your current friends and classmates. Give THREE reasons why this could be the case.