

THE WEDDING RING EFFECT REVISITED

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ABSTRACT

The wedding ring effect—or mate-choice copying in humans—is the belief that individuals who are involved in romantic relationships are preferred as partners over uninvolved individuals. While few studies have investigated the wedding ring effect, many have provided conflicting results, leaving an open question as to whether or not, and what about, a paired person is more attractive than an unpaired person. The present study examined two distinct independent variables of romantic targets (i.e., relationship availability and openness to commitment) as well as one independent variable of participants (i.e., sociosexuality), in order to understand how these variables might impact the wedding ring effect in a sample of female participants. Evaluations were made for the likability of and romantic attraction towards targets. The results revealed that a target's high level of openness to commitment, regardless of his availability, increased both his likability and romantic attractiveness. Moreover, restricted females (i.e., sociosexually) demonstrated a marked preference for high commitment males, while unrestricted females showed no preference for males of either high or low commitment levels. The findings appear to discredit the notion of the wedding ring effect and indicate that commitment is the more coveted partner characteristic, relative to availability.

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INTRODUCTION

An emerging subset of the attraction literature has focused on the real or imagined trend of partner selection based on relationship status. The aptly labeled “wedding ring effect” (Uller & Johansson, 2003) is the idea that humans who engage in a process to identify a romantic partner will be more attracted to or desiring of persons who are presently unavailable due to their concurrent relationships with others. Proponents of this proposed phenomenon reason that an unavailable partner is more desired because he or she possesses qualities of high mate value. These qualities (e.g., openness to commitment) have been discerned by a rival mate, thereby making them more salient to others. Subsequently, the unavailable partner—having been removed from the dating pool by the rival mate—has become attractive to and coveted by the potential mate.

Few studies have endeavored to further our understanding of the wedding ring effect; moreover, the results of these works have been mixed and offer little clarity regarding the legitimacy of the wedding ring effect. In the current examination, I first discuss the literature on non-human (animal) mate choice copying, which provides a background and rationale for similar research investigating humans’ mate choice behaviors. Next, I point out several major weaknesses entrenched within previous human mate-choice copying studies, and I include an additional lens through which to interpret results of the wedding ring effect—Sexual Strategies Theory. Finally, I report a new study that was designed to address former experimental limitations with the hope of refining our understanding of the wedding ring effect.

Mate-choice Copying

Non-human (Animal) Research

Since Darwin (1859) researchers in the ecological and evolutionary sciences have been

interested in the mating behaviors of non-human animals, yet only recently have researchers examined mate selection as a copied behavior. Stephen Pruett-Jones (1992) was the first to formally define mate-choice copying, which as it applies to both sexes indicates an increased probability of future mating, given that an individual has recently mated. Dugatkin (2000) expanded this definition to emphasize that, “the information about [one’s] mating history (or some part of it) must be obtained by the [partner] via observation” (pp. 65). Therefore, in its strictest interpretation, given that a female, for example, witnesses another female copulate with a male, the likelihood that the recently mated male will copulate again increases, specifically with the witnessing female.

Animal studies have routinely demonstrated mate-choice copying in species such as sage grouse (Gibson, Bredbury, & Vehrencamp, 1991), black grouse (Stöhr, 1998), guppies (Dugatkin, 1992; Vukomanovic & Rodd, 2007), Japanese quail (Galef & White, 1998), and sailfin mollies (Schlupp & Ryan, 1997; Witte & Noltemeier, 2002; Witte & Ryan, 2002), in both laboratory and natural settings. Moreover, while most studies support mate-choice copying in females, evidence for male mate-choice copying exists also (Schlupp & Ryan, 1997; Witte & Ryan, 2002). In classic studies of non-human mate-choice copying, a focal female (i.e., participant in human research terms) is first introduced to a sexually viable male (i.e., target), though is restricted from physical interaction with him. Subsequently, a model female (i.e., confederate) is introduced to the male and allowed access to court (Dugatkin, 1992) or copulate (Galef & White, 1998) with him, in plain sight of the focal female. When given her own opportunity to court or copulate with the male after his pairing with the model female, the focal subject spends more time with (Dugatkin, 1992) or copulates with (Galef & White, 1998) the male target. Based on these general procedures, focal subjects consistently demonstrate mate

choice copying as a means of mate selection.

While not wholly understood, mate-choice copying in non-human animals appears to be an adaptive solution to countering deficits in mate-assessment ability (Stöhr, 1998). A poor ability to discriminate between high quality mates should limit an individual's opportunity to secure superior genes, resources, or parental investment, particularly for the benefit of offspring. As a result, two classes of individuals emerge: choosers and copiers (Losey, Stanton, Telecky, Tyler, & Zoology 691 Graduate Seminar Class, 1986). Choosers employ a personal and direct assessment of potential mates; conversely, copiers employ an indirect method of evaluating mates, which largely relies on public information, or the mate choices or appraisals made by other intrasex members (Nordell & Valone, 1998). Assuming that copiers mimic the choices of same-sex members who have superior mate-assessment abilities (i.e., successful mimicking), then copying—relative to processes of direct assessment and selection—should be a faster and more efficient strategy for securing a mate of high value.

Human Research

As research on mate-choice copying in non-human animals has grown in recent years, so too has an interest in identifying similar mate-choice behaviors in humans. Since humans and non-human animals mate for reproductive reasons, the potential relatedness of their evolved mating strategies appears plausible. The notion that, like some non-human species, humans might also mate-copy was introduced by Dugatkin (2000), and was labeled later as the “wedding ring effect” by Uller and Johansson (2003). According to the logic behind this alleged phenomenon, if mate copying is an adaptive solution to quickly and efficiently identifying a mate of high value (i.e., suitable for reproductive or recreational sexual purposes), then humans, like animals, should benefit from the same copying strategy.

Specifically, it is reasoned that humans would also copy others' mate choices as a shortcut because mate selection is a difficult and time-consuming task. Attributes that are most critical to relationship maintenance and raising offspring are not readily discernable through sight, but rather through experience. For instance, openness to commitment is one of such less visible attributes, as opposed to characteristics of a more physical nature like fluctuating asymmetry or waist-to-hip ratio. However, a wedding ring is clearly noticeable and can be interpreted as a sign of one's willingness to commit, which is a trait desired by mate copiers. Thus, individuals should prefer partners with a wedding ring (or other indicator that the partner has already been chosen by someone else) over those without such clear signs of commitment.

To date, however, only a limited number of studies have examined the wedding ring effect directly (Eva & Wood, 2006; O'Hagen, Johnson, Lardi, & Keenan, 2003; Uller & Johansson, 2003). Despite the seemingly well-founded logic, research on the wedding ring effect has returned only conflicting evidence, with some findings supporting and others refuting the claim. Moreover, due to the scarcity of research on the wedding ring effect, some of its support is derived from less direct methods of investigation which are only remotely linked to the deliberate study of mate-choice copying in humans.

Direct support for the wedding ring effect comes from Eva and Wood (2006), who demonstrated that females perceived married males to be more attractive than their single counterparts. In their experiment, female participants viewed a series of photographs of male targets, each of which was accompanied by a description unique to that male, including personal interests, sexual orientation, and relationship status. Identical photographs and descriptions were used throughout the experiment, save for relationship status, which varied between levels of either single or married. After observing each male target, participants then evaluated that man

for his attractiveness as well as for other characteristics. The results indicated that married males were rated as more attractive than single males, lending support to the wedding ring effect.

Indirect support for mate-choice copying comes from the social transmission of face preferences for opposite-sex targets. Within this literature, participants' face preferences may be influenced as the result of viewing images of confederates who react either positively or negatively toward a second pictured person (i.e., the target). Utilizing a form of this procedure, Jones, DeBruine, Little, Burriss, and Feinberg (2007) examined the face preferences of female participants who viewed two male faces paired with a lone female face. The three images were lined in a row, with the female face dividing the two male faces; in addition, the female was adorned with either a smile (i.e., positive appraisal) or a neutral stare (i.e., negative appraisal), and was positioned to face one of the males. When asked to evaluate the attractiveness of male targets, participants rated those whom had been smiled at by a model female as more attractive than males whom had been viewed by a neutrally expressive model female. However, when male participants were put through an identical procedure using the same stimuli, male participants rated the male targets who had been smiled at by female confederates as less attractive than those who had been viewed with a neutral expression. This opposite effect explicates a sex difference in perceptions of attractiveness rather than a universal preference for faces perceived positively by others. It seems then that mate choice may be a function of the social information borrowed from same-sex individuals regarding the quality of a prospective partner.

In an alternative face preference investigation, Waynforth (2007) found mixed support for the wedding ring effect. In a design similar to those employed in non-human studies of mate-choice copying (e.g., Dugatkin, 1992), female participants first viewed photographs of males and evaluated their respective attractiveness. A week later the same female participants viewed one

of the previously seen male targets; however, at this time the male was now accompanied by a photograph of a female alleged to be his dating partner. Again participants were instructed to appraise the attractiveness of the target male. Findings revealed no simple effect of mate-choice copying, indicating that the attractiveness of every male target was not elevated as a result of his pairing with a female partner. Further analysis, however, revealed that males were perceived to be more or less attractive based on the level of attractiveness of their dating partners. In particular, males presented with an attractive dating partner were rated as more attractive than when they were presented alone, and males presented with a less attractive dating partner were rated as less attractive than when they were presented alone. Consequently, mate-choice copying may be in part determined by the value of the individual who pairs with the prospective opposite-sex partner.

In contrast to the preceding support for the wedding ring effect, other studies have found no evidence for the phenomenon. O'Hagen et al. (2003) examined whether or not varying levels of relationship status impacted participants' perceptions of a hypothetical target's attractiveness. The researchers instructed participants to imagine an opposite-sex partner whom they had recently met, while simultaneously reading a description of an opposite-sex person who was single, involved, or married. Findings revealed that women were most attracted to single males and least attracted to married males, while men were equally attracted to females regardless of their relationship status. In either case there is a lack of support for the wedding ring effect because there is not a disproportionate preference for involved or married over single targets.

Similar results were obtained by Uller and Johansson (2003). In a live interaction investigation of the wedding ring effect, female participants were introduced to and allowed to interact with a male confederate for a short period of time. Confederates wore either a wedding

band or no band at all, with the man's left hand clearly visible to the participant throughout the interaction period. In a subsequent inquiry about the male's attractiveness, participants reported no difference in the attractiveness of single and married males.

Limitations of Previous Research

Importantly, there appear to be three central limitations which may explain the conflicting evidence for the wedding ring effect that have jeopardized our ability to more accurately understand it from a mate-copying perspective. These limitations will be discussed in detail below.

Confounded Variables

All previous wedding ring effect studies manipulated the partner's openness to commitment through relationship status, and thus confounded these separate concepts—relationship availability and openness to commitment. That is, while a wedding ring—or more generally one's unavailable relationship status—can be interpreted as an indicator of commitment, it also clearly conveys that this partner is not available for forming a relationship anymore. Likewise, a partner without a wedding ring, although absent of signs of willingness to commit, is available for dating. By confounding availability and commitment, previous studies have been unable to explain whether or not partners are preferred due to their availability (i.e., sexual or romantic access) or lack thereof (i.e., wanting who you cannot have), or due to their real or perceived positive commitment qualities. Moreover, while these studies have proposed the wedding ring effect as an issue of availability, often the rationale for their findings is couched within the issue of commitment (e.g., Eva & Wood, 2006) such that if a less available partner is preferred, then it may be due to the level of commitment that he or she is open to engage in. Consequently, only by exploring openness to commitment as a distinct independent variable may

we hope to resolve the speculation that commitment has an impact on the wedding ring effect.

Additionally, while the merger of unavailability and commitment may be acceptable for animals, it poses a fundamental ethical dilemma for humans, as human mate choices are bound by moral codes and social norms. Although it is logically sound that people should be attracted to partners who demonstrate evidence of willingness to commit, it is also likely that one's romantic attraction toward—or desire for—a partnered person will be inhibited instantly because it is normally regarded as unethical and socially disruptive. This confound between commitment and availability may have led participants to make ambivalent responses, which contributed to the inconsistencies in previous findings. By disentangling availability and commitment, the current study will remove this difficult response dilemma and hopefully will provide clearer results regarding the wedding ring effect.

Dependent Measures

A second limitation of research on the wedding ring effect is the fundamental lack of measurement consistency and clarity across studies. In each investigation, attraction was recorded in a different manner. Eva and Wood (2006) inquired about general attractiveness; Uller and Johansson (2003) asked about general and physical attractiveness; O'Hagen and colleagues (2003) asked about general attractiveness and dating desirability, despite that in this latter study some targets were not even available to form a dating relationship. In order to appropriately assess the wedding ring effect, measurements of attraction must focus on romantic attraction rather than general attractiveness or liking, which can be completely irrelevant to mate choice. However, liking may be assessed in tandem with romantic attraction, if the former is used as a basis of comparison for the more critical latter variable in order to differentiate between the escalating degrees of attraction. Moreover, romantic attraction must be evaluated in the

specific relationship context of the target, rather than presenting one context (i.e., unavailable) and assessing another (hypothetical) context (i.e., if available). By including two distinct dependent variables (general liking and romantic attraction), we should be able to determine whether or not individuals are simply liked more when partnered, or if they are in fact more romantically appealing or desirable.

Individual Differences

In their assessments of the wedding ring effect, previous studies have largely ignored the role of individual differences in mate preference, particularly with respect to differences in mating strategy. Mating strategy should be an important variable given that persons who adopt a particular strategy do so with the aim of acquiring a distinct type of partner. Put simply, it is likely that one's specific mating or sexual strategy will determine whether or not a person will evaluate an available or unavailable partner as attractive or desirable. By classifying participants based on their particular sexual strategies, and by making predictions in line with these differences, we should be able to gain a better understanding of what type of person selects what type of mate. The notion of divergent sexual strategies will be explained in greater detail below.

Sexual Strategies Theory

A great many theories and principles have been proffered to explain human mate selection. Sexual Strategies Theory (Buss & Schmitt, 1993) is but one of these theories, offering an evolutionary account of human mate selection which rationalizes the mate-choice decisions that men and women make based on the type of sexual strategy they employ. According to the theory, humans as a sexually reproducing species have faced various adaptive challenges relative to reproducing and rearing reproductively viable offspring. In order to handle these challenges,

humans have developed a series of adaptive solutions, although they mostly operate beneath the conscious level (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). Sexual Strategies Theory (SST) posits that both men and women engage in short- or long-term mating strategies to counter these problems.

As one of its primary influences, SST draws on Triver's (1972) parental investment model, which explains mate selection and mating effort as a function of parental investment. Triver's (1972) model is built on two central notions: (1) the more heavily investing sex in offspring (typically the female) is the more selective sex in mate choosing; (2) the less heavily investing sex (typically the male) is also less selective, and therefore must compete vigorously with its intrasexual rivals for the opportunity to mate. This explains why females tend to take a long-term sexual strategy and favor committed and secure partners, whereas males tend to take a short-term sexual strategy and attempt to maximize their genetic reproduction by having more partners. In the case of humans, at the most basic level of reproduction, women invest considerable time in fertilization, gestation, labor, delivery, and lactation, whereas men invest solely in fertilization which may take only a matter of minutes. Thus, based on Triver's (1972) model, it presents no surprise that, on the average, men are more prone to employ a short-term mating strategy whereas women engage in the opposite (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Schmitt, Shackelford, & Buss, 2001).

However, sexual strategies theorists suggest that individual differences in sexual strategies is the more fundamental variable that accounts for not only the between-sex differences in mate preferences, but also the within-sex differences, which are the greater of the two types of differences (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Simpson, Wilson, & Winterheld, 2004). In other words, the better predictor of preference for a long-term or short-term mate is whether the individual employs a long-term or short-term mating strategy, not whether the individual is a

man or a woman. The latter assumption reflects a social bias, whereby women are expected to be long-term mating strategists and men are expected to be short-term mating strategists (e.g., DeLamater, 1987). Yet with the advent of the birth control pill and women's subsequent sexual liberation (i.e., the "sexual revolution"), women have adopted increasingly permissive sexual attitudes (Wells & Twenge, 2005) and a greater propensity for engaging in casual sexual liaisons and hookups (e.g., Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000) which are forms of short-term relationships. Consequently, between-sex differences in mating strategies are diminishing, while within-sex differences are widening (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991), particularly for women (Wells & Twenge, 2005). As a result, irrespective of their sex, individuals adopting a particular sexual strategy should favor partners who adopt a similar strategy (e.g., evaluate same-strategy partners as more attractive).

Based on SST, the current study focuses part of its efforts on understanding the effects of individual differences in mating strategy, namely short-term or long-term, rather than the effects of sex difference. In order to study behavioral differences between mating strategies, there must be a means of classifying individuals into one strategy or the other. Simpson and Gangestad (1991) designed such a measure. The Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991) is an instrument which assesses the extent to which a person does or does not need an emotional attachment or element of commitment prior to investing sexually in a relationship. Persons who need little commitment or intimacy in their relationships possess an unrestricted sociosexual orientation—hereafter, sociosexuality—and adopt a short-term mating strategy. In contrast, persons who need to form an emotional bond with a partner prior to sexual engagement possess a restricted sociosexuality, which equates to a long-term mating strategy as presented under SST (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Schmitt, 2005; Simpson, Wilson, & Winterheld,

2004). Given that unrestricted and restricted sociosexualities encapsulate the same behaviors as engaged in by short- and long-term sexual strategists, respectively, these are considered to be valid comparisons; moreover, the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory is an appropriate indicator of one's adopted sexual strategy.

As based on the principles of sexual strategies and sociosexualities, adaptive problems overlap between sexes, particularly for unrestricted strategists who place priority on securing high quality genes and for restricted strategists who emphasize the need for stable partners who are willing to commit and invest. Within this framework then there are specific predictions which may be made to explain the mate preferences of unrestricted and restricted strategists, relative to prospective partners of varying commitment levels. Generally, unrestricted strategists should prefer partners who are not commitment-oriented, as they are principally interested in gaining sexual access. Restricted strategists, conversely, should prefer partners who are commitment-oriented. These predictions will be explicated further below.

The Present Research

The present research was designed to overcome the limitations of previous studies which have examined the wedding ring effect, which will be operationalized here as the preferential attraction toward an unavailable over an available individual. First, by separating relationship availability and openness to commitment, this study includes two manipulated independent variables—dating availability with two levels (available and unavailable), and commitment history with two levels (high and low)—which will divorce a recurrent confound in earlier research. Second, separate dependent variables for two types of attraction—general liking and romantic attraction—will be assessed using validated measures specific to each variable; such measurement should increase the validity of our findings relative to previous studies. General

liking, though not the target variable of one's interest in cultivating a romantic relationship, will serve as a basis for comparison for the romantic attraction variable. Consequently, any detected effects for romantic attraction should stem from a separate and more intense domain of attraction than liking, since liking loosely denotes an interest in friendship and nothing more. Furthermore, to examine hypotheses regarding the impact of individual differences in mating strategy on mate preference, we will investigate potential differences in mate preference for short-term and long-term maters by assessing sociosexuality. The design, which will remain constant for each dependent variable, will be a 2 x 2 x 2 between-subjects design. Predictions are based on a review of the existing literatures and are made specifically for each dependent variable.

General Liking

I predict that availability will have no effect on evaluations of general liking because an individual may be liked equally well regardless of his or her relationship status given that there are no expectations of romantic interaction. Participants should, however, like a target more when a match is perceived between one's personal mating strategy and a target's commitment history. In this sense, sexual strategy and openness to commitment may be linked as in the form of an in-group, which perpetuates a bias toward a target who resembles a participant in desire for commitment. Therefore I expect to see a two-way interaction between mating strategy and commitment level for general liking.

Romantic Attraction

I expect that a target's romantic attractiveness will show a three-way 2 x 2 x 2 interaction, which differs from likability. In particular, when a target is available (i.e., not dating), then short-term maters will most favor a target who is not linked with a history of commitment, whereas long-term maters will most favor a target who is linked with a history of commitment. This

prediction is consistent with SST which asserts that short-term maters avoid commitment, while long-term maters seek it. Therefore, when an opposite-sex individual is available for dating, his or her commitment level will determine which type of sexual strategist is most attracted to him or her.

When a target is not available (i.e., dating), I predict that short-term maters will continue to prefer a target who fails to demonstrate a history of commitment, while long-term maters will show no preference for a target regardless of his or her commitment level. For a short-term mater, the objective is to invest sexually with a partner without the constraints of commitment. Even when a target is not available for dating, a short-term strategist should still be more attracted to him or her than a long-term mater because a short-term strategist is not looking for a commitment or emotional bond (Wiederman & DuBois, 1998). The long-term mater, conversely, is in pursuit of a steady partner, which is not accessible when the target is presently dating. Therefore, the target's commitment level should have no impact on his or her romantic attractiveness as perceived by a long-term mater because the crucial first factor involved in selection is availability.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 140 female students (M (mean age in years) = 18.59) from a medium-sized public university in the southeast. All participants volunteered their participation in exchange for course credit. We focused our investigation on the female population alone, in line with human mate-choice copying studies before ours. Our intent was to test new predictions using this population before exploring similar ideas in the male population.

Furthermore, we used a homogenous sample of romantically available (i.e., single or

casually dating), heterosexual Caucasian females. Since our photo stimulus was of a Caucasian male, we decided to utilize Caucasian females as participants in order to eliminate potential biases in evaluating the attractiveness of an interracial or interethnic prospective partner. Participants meeting all criteria were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions: Available/High Commitment ($N = 35, M = 18.31$); Available/Low Commitment ($N = 36, M = 18.51$); Unavailable/High Commitment ($N = 34, M = 18.79$); and Unavailable/Low Commitment ($N = 35, M = 18.74$). A one-way ANOVA revealed no significant age differences between the groups, $p > .05$.

Procedure

Participants were recruited via an online experiment management system for an investigation entitled “Interpersonal Judgment and Relationships Study.” At the time of recruitment, a brief description of experimental procedures informed participants that the study entailed viewing pictures of, and reading descriptions about, college-aged individuals, and then evaluating these people on a range of interpersonal dimensions and relationship contexts. Moreover, participants completed an array of supplementary measures assessing a variety of personal characteristics.

Participants reported in groups of 20 to 30 students to classrooms designated for experimental procedures. After giving consent to participate, each participant was randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions in a 2 (Dating availability: available vs. unavailable) x 2 (Commitment history: high vs. low) factorial design. The participant first reviewed a description of an opposite-sex (i.e., male) person, which included a photograph (measuring 4.00 in. x 3.00 in.) of that individual from the shoulders up. The description was a hand-written, first person fact sheet, offering a personal account of the target’s defining

characteristics (e.g., ethnicity, age) and hobbies, as well as relationship, personal, and friendship histories. In all cases the experimenter instructed the participant to examine the pictured individual and to carefully read and consider the supplementary information. The participant viewed the materials for five minutes, after which point the stimulus was removed by the experimenter. Subsequently, the participant completed a questionnaire assessing his or her perceptions of the target on multiple dimensions, as well as measures of self characteristics. All procedures were completed in 30 or fewer minutes per participant.

Stimulus Materials

Photographs

For our choice of target stimulus we utilized facial averaging software rather than student model participants who may have been identifiable to experimental participants. The software program was provided with permission by The Face Research Lab at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. Initially, a series of Caucasian male facial averages was created by the author, and was later presented to nine (8 females and 1 male) undergraduate and graduate research assistants for prescreening evaluations of physical attractiveness; research assistants were blind to the true nature of the ratings at the time of evaluation. Research assistants rated the physical attractiveness of each face on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated “*very unattractive*”, 4 indicated “*neutral*” attractiveness, and 7 indicated “*very attractive*”. Our intent was to isolate one male face whose physical attractiveness was determined to be slightly greater than the midpoint of the scale, in order to protect against ceiling or floor effects, in accord with previous attraction research (e.g., Luo, 2007).

Following the above mentioned procedures, one male face was found to be marginally more attractive than a neutral rating, and was chosen subsequently to be evaluated for its

physical attractiveness by a larger sample. In a pilot assessment, 134 female undergraduate participants evaluated the physical attractiveness of the preselected male face ($M = 5.15$). Consequently, since the preselected face was rated as marginally more attractive than neutral in the larger pilot assessment, it was selected as the target stimulus for the experimental procedures. The selected face was used for all experimental conditions, and is included in Figure 1.

Figure 1.
Photograph Stimulus of the Target Male.



Target Description Stimuli

A single hypothetical description of the target was created for all experimental conditions; only the manipulated variables—dating availability and openness to romantic commitment—were free to vary. An ambiguous series of demographic attributes and self-descriptions (for relationship contexts) was created, such that the characteristics of the person described maintained universal validity, in line with the notion of the Barnum Effect (Forer, 1949). By drafting a purposely vague character composition of the target, we aimed to limit factors that would mask the effects of the other variables on perceptions of the target’s attractiveness (e.g., friendly or smart).

In total we generated four versions of the character description. All descriptions are alleged to have come directly from the target, Jesse, in response to the question: “How would you describe yourself? Please consider each of the following: (1) relationships, (2) you as a person, and (3) friendships.” A brief list of additional information, including the target’s gender, ethnicity, age, year in school, and general interests, was also supplied, preceding the descriptions of the target and the target’s relationship and friendship histories (see Appendix A).

Relationship availability and commitment levels were manipulated in the section of “relationships”. The four conditions are labeled as: Available/High Commitment, Available/Low Commitment, Unavailable/High Commitment, and Unavailable/Low Commitment. The following is what participants read in the Available/High Commitment experimental condition:

My longest relationship lasted three years, so I’ve taken that risk before. I’m the kind of person who prefers long-term relationships. As for now I’m single, but I’m definitely open to dating. I guess I’ll see how things unfold in the future.

In the Available/Low Commitment condition, participants read the same general information, but

the ensuing availability and commitment description:

I've really never taken that risk before though, and I've never been in a relationship for more than a few months. I'm just the kind of person who prefers short-term relationships. As for now I'm single, but I'm open to dating. I guess I'll see how things unfold in the future.

In the Unavailable/High Commitment condition, the target's paired availability and commitment level was presented as:

My longest relationship lasted three years, so I've taken that risk before. I'm the kind of person who prefers long-term relationships. As for now I am dating someone, and we actually live together. I guess I'll see how things unfold in the future.

Finally, in the Unavailable/Low Commitment condition, the target describes himself as:

I've really never taken that risk before though, and I've never been in a relationship for more than a few months. I'm just the kind of person who prefers short-term relationships. As for now I am dating someone, and we actually live together. I guess I'll see how things unfold in the future.

Complete versions of all stimuli are available in Appendix A.

Measures

Demographic and personal characteristics

Questions for gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and relationship status were all represented in the questionnaire packet. During the recruitment phase of this investigation, participants were eligible to participate only if they were single (i.e., not involved in a committed relationship). The inquiry about relationship status was, therefore, an item used to ensure that all participants were in fact single, and presumably available to freely evaluate the romantic

attraction of a potential partner. A complete copy of demographic and personal characteristics is available in Appendix B.

Manipulation checks

Two sets of items served as manipulation checks to decipher whether or not participants correctly perceived the target's relationship availability and commitment history. The first set of questions used a forced choice format. The availability item asked: *What is Jesse's relationship status?* The forced choices were "Single" or "Dating". Commitment history was assessed by the item: *What is the longest amount of time that Jesse has spent in a relationship?* The forced options were: "A few months" and "A few years". The second set of items were on a continuous rating form. We assessed the target's perceived commitment by one item "*how important does relationship commitment appear to be to Jesse?*" on a 7-point rating scale ranging from 1 = *very unimportant* to 7 = *very important*. We assessed the target's perceived availability by two items, one tapping sexual availability: "*how available is Jesse for a sexual relationship?*" and the other tapping relationship availability "*how available is Jesse for a romantic relationship?*" These two items were rated on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 = *very unavailable* to 4 = *very available*.

Attraction Ratings

Two types of attraction were evaluated. The first, general liking, was measured using Reysen's Likability Scale (RLS; Reysen, 2005). The 11-item instrument is designed for the purpose of evaluating the likability of a third-party person. In doing so, the scale draws on a range of interpersonal qualities and contexts, as evidenced by sample items "*[Jesse] is likeable*" and "*I would like [Jesse] as a friend*". Each item is evaluated based on one's strength of agreement with focal statements. Ratings are made on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 = "*very strongly disagree*", 4 = "*neutral*" agreement, and 7 = "*very strong agree*". The original

instrument was designed as a composite measure, whereby the sum of the eleven individual item scores resulted in a target's likability score. Herein I average across the individual item scores to ascertain an average likability score, for comparative purposes with the Romantic Attraction Scale (see below). Low scores indicate limited target likability, whereas high scores denote elevated target likability. The internal consistency of the RLS ranged from .90 to .91, as evaluated by Cronbach's standardized reliability coefficient. A copy of The Reysen Likability Scale is included in Appendix C.

The second form of attraction evaluated was romantic attraction. Romantic attraction was assessed using the Romantic Attraction Scale (Campbell, 1999). The 5-item measure assesses an individual's romantic attraction towards a target, or put in other words, a person's level of interest in forming a romantic relationship with a target. Additionally, some of the scale's items force participants to consider dating a target, which in turn probes not only participants' romantic attraction towards a target, but also their interest in entering into a courtship process with a target. Ratings are made on a 7-point Likert scale, where low numbers represent low levels of romantic attraction for a target, and high numbers represent high levels of romantic attraction for a target. Scoring in its original form is on a composite basis, whereby the scores on individual items are summed to produce a total romantic attraction score. In the present investigation the scores for each of the five items will be averaged, for comparative purposes with the Reysen Likability Scale which also features scoring on a 7-point Likert scale. Response options differ depending on the particular item, as evidenced by example questions, "*How desirable would you find [Jesse] as a dating partner?*" (response scaling, 1 = "*not at all*", 4 = "*neutral*" desirability, 7 = "*very much*"), and "*How would you feel about yourself if you were dating [Jesse]?*" (response scaling, 1 = "*very bad*", 4 = "*neutral*", 7 = "*very good*"). The internal consistency of the scale, as

measured by Cronbach's standardized reliability coefficient, was .89 (Campbell, 1999). All five items on the Romantic Attraction Scale may be found in Appendix D.

Individual Differences in Sexual Strategy

Participants completed the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991), which is a composite measure of sexual attitudes and behaviors. Seven items make up the scale, three of which assess sexual attitudes (e.g., "*Sex without love is OK.*") and four tap sexual behaviors (e.g., "*With how many different partners have you had sex (sexual intercourse) within the past year?*"). Moreover, one of the attitudinal items ("*I would have to be closely attached to someone (both emotionally and psychologically) before I could feel comfortable and fully enjoy having sex with him or her.*") is reverse-scored on a 9-point Likert scale. Due to the high correlation between the attitudinal items, the scores for these three items are aggregated to produce an "attitudinal" measurement. The sum of the four behavioral items added to the aggregated attitudinal item equates to the composite sociosexuality score.

Importantly, each of the five items is uniquely weighted to approximate z-score standardizations, resulting in the following formula: $(5 \times \text{Item 1}) + (1 \times \text{Item 2}) + (5 \times \text{Item 3}) + (4 \times \text{Item 4}) + (2 \times \text{aggregate of Items 5, 6, and 7}) = \text{sociosexuality score}$. Low scores on the instrument indicate restricted sociosexuality, or the general unwillingness to engage in sexual intercourse which is free from emotional commitment (i.e., short-term mating strategy). High scores, alternatively, reflect unrestricted sociosexuality, or the acceptance of and engagement in sexual intercourse in the absence of emotional investment (i.e., long-term mating strategy). Simpson and Gangestad (1991) reported an adequate reliability score of .73 for the SOI using Cronbach's alpha. Refer to Appendix E for a complete version of the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory.

RESULTS

Manipulation Checks

Before I analyzed the data to test my predictions, I first verified that the availability and commitment manipulations were effective by comparing participants' responses for each manipulation check item with their condition assignment. Two participants incorrectly identified either the availability status or commitment level of their respective targets and were eliminated from further analyses, which left the sample of 140 female participants. The target in the high commitment condition was perceived to have a higher level of commitment ($t(1, 138) = 8.06, p < .01$) compared to the low commitment condition. The target in the available condition was perceived to have significantly greater sexual availability ($t(1, 138) = 10.16, p < .01$) and relationship availability ($t(1, 138) = 11.87, p < .01$).

ANOVA Analyses

I conducted separate analyses for each dependent variable—general liking and romantic attraction. To test each of my hypotheses, I conducted a 2 (Dating Availability: available vs. unavailable) x 2 (Commitment History: high vs. low) x 2 (Sociosexuality: unrestricted vs. restricted) between-subjects ANOVA for each dependent variable. To do this, I first performed a median split on the continuous variable, sociosexuality, thus dividing all participants into either unrestricted (i.e., short-term) or restricted (i.e., long-term) sexual strategists. Unrestricted strategists were coded as 1 in the analyses, while restricted strategists were coded as 0. The two groups differed significantly on their sociosexuality scores ($t(1, 138) = 14.80, p < .01$). Means and standard deviations for liking and romantic attraction, as a function of the stated independent variables, are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1.

Means and Standard Deviations of General Liking and Romantic Attraction as a Function of Availability, Commitment, and Sociosexuality

Variable	N	<u>General Likability</u>		<u>Romantic Attraction</u>	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Availability					
Available	71	5.12	.64	5.15	1.02
Unavailable	69	5.00	.51	4.99	1.04
Commitment					
Low Commitment	70	4.93	.56	4.81	1.00
High Commitment	70	5.19	.59	5.33	.99
Sociosexuality					
Unrestricted	70	5.06	.52	5.09	.99
Restricted	70	5.06	.64	5.05	1.07
Commitment X Sociosexuality					
Unrestricted					
Low Commitment	36	5.01	.57	4.98	.92
High Commitment	35	5.10	.48	5.21	1.06
Restricted					
Low Commitment	34	4.85	.54	4.65	1.06
High Commitment	35	5.27	.67	5.45	.92

The data reveal mixed support for my hypotheses. On the one hand, as predicted, no statistically significant main effect was found for availability. Consequently, the availability, or relationship status, of the target had no effect on participants' evaluations of the targets' likability ($F(1,132) = 1.62, ns$). On the other hand, a similar pattern of results emerged for romantic attraction—contrary to my prediction—in which no main effect was found for availability ($F(1,132) = .89, ns$). Therefore, the availability of the target had no impact on participants' romantic attraction toward him. Furthermore, I uncovered no statistically significant main effects for sociosexuality, indicating that the sexual strategies enacted by participants also had no effect on ratings of liking of ($F(1,132) = .04, ns$) or romantic attraction toward ($F(1,132) = .05, ns$) the target.

Additionally, commitment was a significant predictor of both a target's likability ($F(1,132) = 6.49, p = .01$), as well as participants' romantic attraction towards a target ($F(1,132) = 8.53, p < .01$). Specifically, participants perceived high commitment targets to be more likable than low commitment targets, regardless of targets' availability. Similarly, participants were more romantically attracted to high commitment rather than low commitment targets.

Furthermore, I found the interaction effect between commitment and sociosexuality to be marginally significant for general liking ($F(1,132) = 3.26, p = 0.07$). However, unrestricted sexual strategists showed no significant difference in their liking of high commitment and low commitment targets ($t(1, 68) = .68, ns$), whereas restricted sexual strategists found a high commitment target to be significantly more likable than a low commitment target ($t(1, 68) = 2.87, p < .01$). These interaction findings provided partial support for my prediction.

I found no support for the predicted three-way interaction ($F(1, 132) = .90, ns$). Instead, a similar two-way interaction was discovered for romantic attraction ratings. Specifically, there

was a marginally significant interaction between commitment and sociosexuality for romantic attraction $F(1,132) = 3.27, p = .07$. Unrestricted participants did not show a significant difference in their attraction toward the high commitment and low commitment targets ($t(1, 68) = .94, ns$), whereas restricted participants assessed high commitment targets as significantly more attractive than low commitment targets ($t(1, 68) = 3.37, p < .01$). I present the interaction effect for general liking in Figure 2, and the interaction effect for romantic attraction in Figure 3.

Figure 2.
General Likability as a Function of the Interaction between Commitment and Sociosexuality.

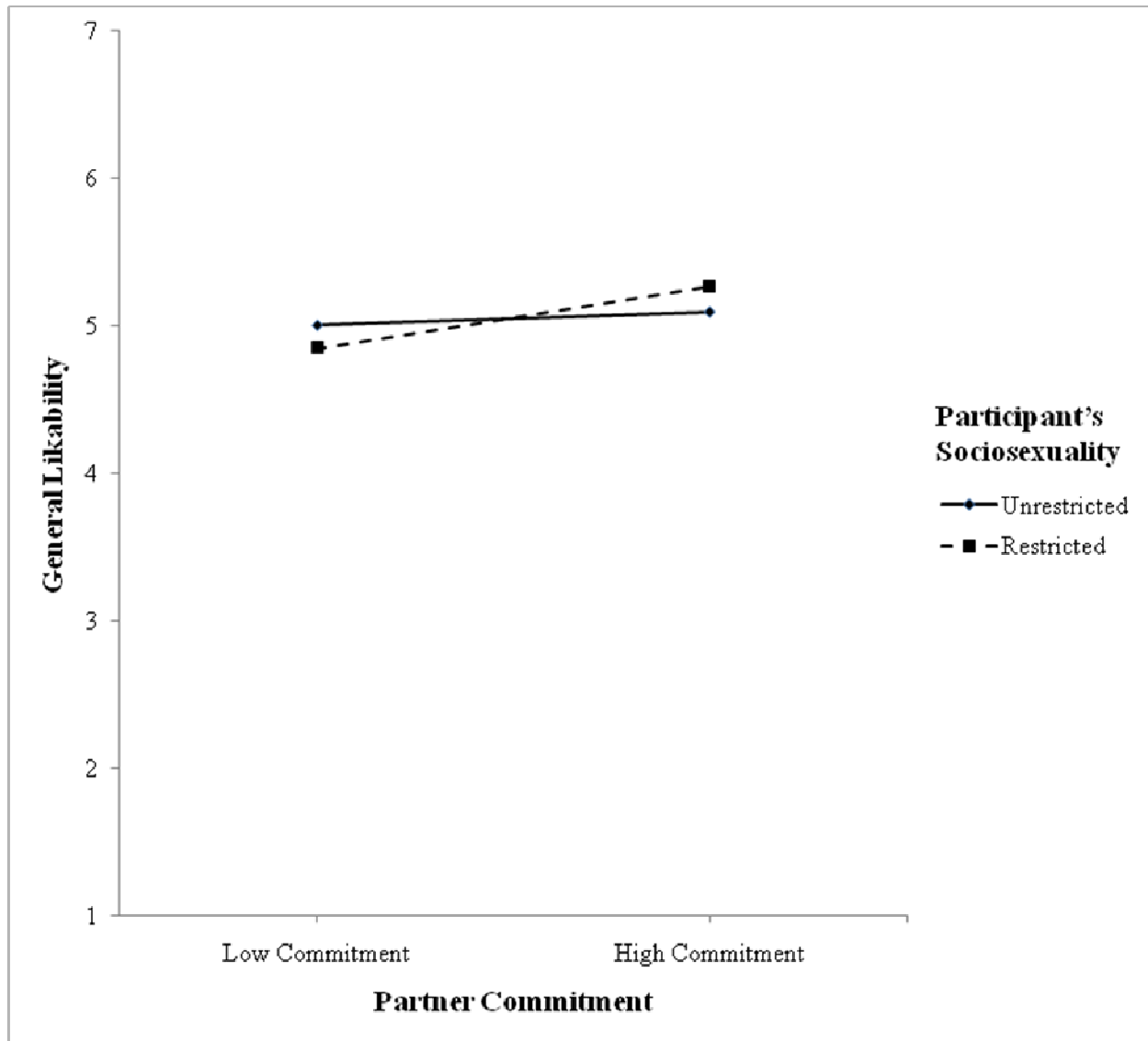
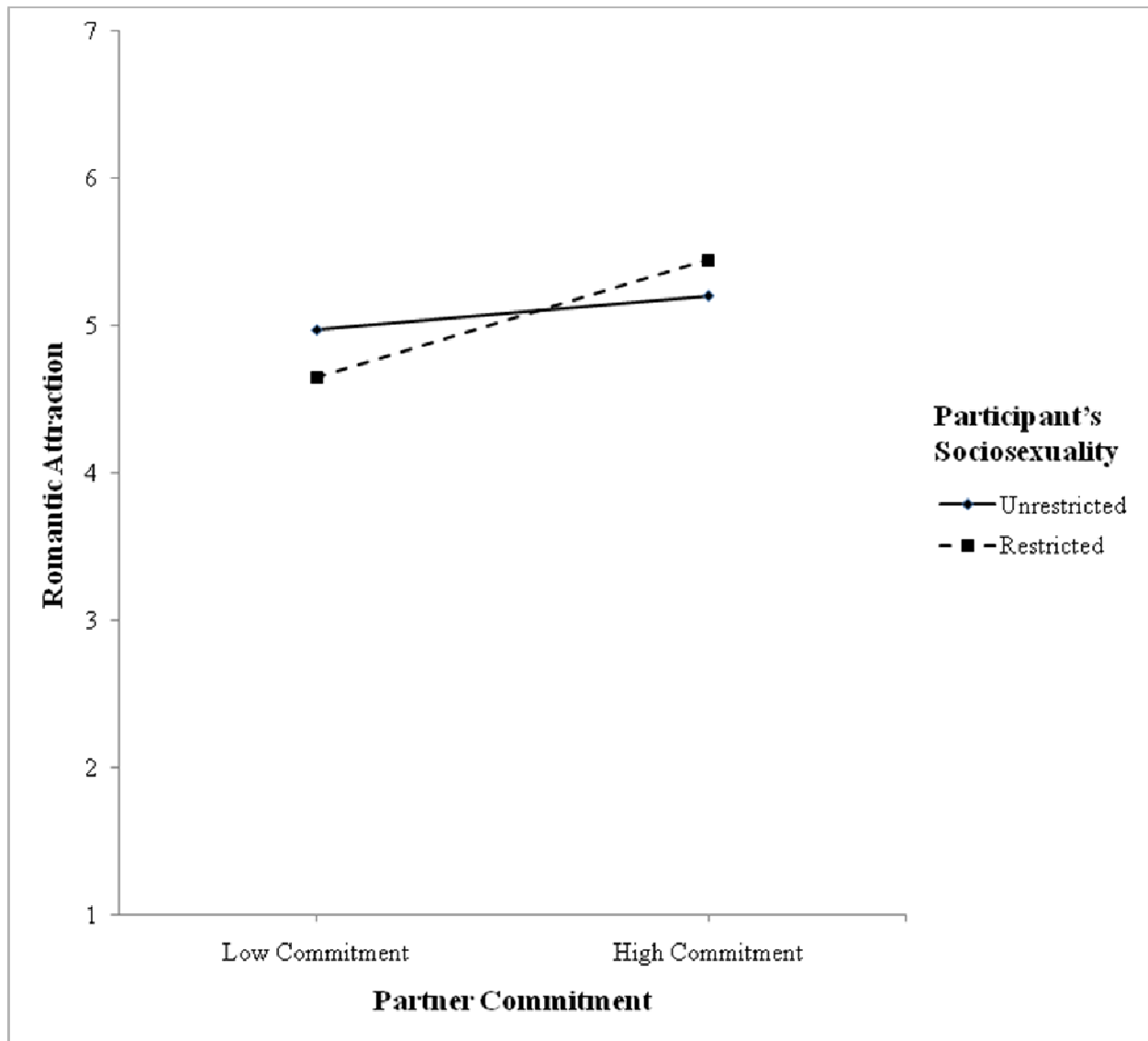


Figure 3.
Romantic Attraction as a Function of the Interaction between Commitment and Sociosexuality.



Regression Analyses

The initial findings returned promising trends to consider within the scope of my hypotheses. However, the interaction effects were only marginally significant. This is likely due to the lack of statistical power as a result of the median split approach I used to analyze effects of sociosexuality. I, therefore, decided to conduct a more powerful set of analyses and treat sociosexuality as a continuous variable. Specifically, to examine the effects of a target's dating availability and commitment history—as well as participants' sociosexuality—on measures of likability and romantic attraction, I performed separate hierarchical regression analyses for likability and romantic attraction. For each hierarchical regression, I first transformed availability, commitment, and sociosexuality scores into standardized z scores. Subsequently, I entered all three main effects (availability, commitment, sociosexuality) at Step 1, all 3 two-way interaction terms at Step 2, and a three-way interaction term at Step 3, all as independent variables.

The results of the regression analyses confirmed a significant main effect of commitment for both general liking and romantic attraction, found previously in the ANOVA analyses. Therefore, high commitment targets were more likable and more romantically attractive than their low commitment counterparts. Furthermore, the interaction effect between commitment and sociosexuality, uncovered as marginally significant for both dependent variables in the ANOVA analyses, was statistically significant in the regression analyses. Importantly, unrestricted females exhibited no preference for either high commitment or low commitment males, while restricted females exhibited a clear preference for high commitment rather than low commitment males. The results for likability are presented in Table 2 and the results for romantic attraction are in Table 3.

Table 2.

Predicting the Target's General Likability: Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Step	Independent Variable	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
1	Availability	-.10	-1.23	.21
	Commitment	.21	2.59	.01
	Sociosexuality	.02	.29	.76
2	Availability	-.09	-1.09	.27
	Commitment	.21	2.66	.00
	Sociosexuality	.04	.55	.58
	Availability X Commitment	-.09	-1.18	.23
	Availability X Sociosexuality	-.05	-.67	.50
	Commitment X Sociosexuality	.21	-2.58	.01
3	Availability	-.09	-1.08	.27
	Commitment	.21	2.62	.01
	Sociosexuality	-.05	.53	.59
	Availability X Commitment	-.09	-1.18	.24
	Availability X Sociosexuality	-.05	-0.66	.50
	Commitment X Sociosexuality	-.21	-2.53	.01
	Availability X Commitment X Sociosexuality	.00	.04	.96

Table 3.

Predicting Romantic Attraction toward a Target: Hierarchical Regression Analyses

Step	Independent Variable	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
1	Availability	-.08	-1.04	.29
	Commitment	.25	3.06	.00
	Sociosexuality	-.03	-.44	.65
2	Availability	-.07	.88	.37
	Commitment	.25	3.05	.00
	Sociosexuality	.00	-.09	.92
	Availability X Commitment	-.09	-1.12	.26
	Availability X Sociosexuality	.02	.24	.80
	Commitment X Sociosexuality	-.19	-2.35	.02
3	Availability	-.06	-.78	.43
	Commitment	.24	2.89	.00
	Sociosexuality	.00	.07	.94
	Availability X Commitment	-.09	-1.16	.24
	Availability X Sociosexuality	.03	.39	.69
	Commitment X Sociosexuality	-.21	-2.47	.01
	Availability X Commitment X Sociosexuality	-.07	-.86	.39

We can see that the results for likability and romantic attraction have highly similar patterns. Moreover, these regression results closely mirrored the ANOVA results, only with larger effect sizes because of the increased statistical power. Specifically, commitment and the two-way interaction between commitment and sociosexuality remained statistically significant predictors of likability and romantic attraction in all steps. No other main effects and interactions were significant.

DISCUSSION

The current investigation tested the validity of the wedding ring effect, or the preferential attraction toward an unavailable romantic partner relative to an available romantic partner. By disentangling a confound between the relationship availability and openness to commitment of a prospective partner (i.e., target), and by introducing valid measures of two distinct forms of attraction—general likability and romantic attraction—I hoped to resolve the limitations of previous research. Furthermore, by including a measure of sociosexuality, or mating strategies, I aimed to ascertain whether or not individuals adopting a particular mating strategy preferred available or unavailable targets.

My first general question regarded whether or not an unavailable individual is more attractive than an available individual. By manipulating a target's availability and openness to commitment, I aimed to advance our understanding of why an unavailable or available individual may be more attractive than the other. Specifically, this setup allowed me to test if males are more attractive because they are unavailable (e.g., mate-choice copying, “wanting what we can't have”) or if males are more attractive due to their commitment qualities (i.e., an adaptive strategy for particular individuals under SST).

For both general likability and romantic attraction no effect was discovered for

availability. Therefore, the relationship availability of the target males had no impact on whether or not those males were liked or perceived to be romantically attractive. Particularly interesting is that females preferred unavailable and available males relatively equally, even when the unavailable targets were at the advanced relationship stage of cohabitation. This null finding contradicts the evidence of Eva and Wood (2006) and Waynforth (2007), both of which support the existence of the wedding ring effect and mate-choice copying. Moreover, the present results refute, also, the findings of O'Hagen, Johnson, Lardi, and Keenan (2003), who found that single males were preferred more to either involved or married males. Instead, similar to Uller and Johansson (2003)—yet with improved validity due to the dependent measures used herein—the current findings reveal that a prospective partner's relationship availability does not factor significantly into the mate selection process.

What appears to play a more critical role than availability, however, is a target's openness to commitment. Males were perceived as more likable and more romantically attractive if they reported a history of long-term commitment, regardless of their availability at the time of female evaluation. Consequently, women, in general, appear to select potential partners on the basis of their commitment qualities, while disregarding that some of these potential partners are not currently accessible in the dating pool. This finding elucidates that commitment is clearly an integral factor in women's mate-choices, which was merely assumed previously as a rationale for women's mate-copying (Eva & Wood, 2006). This finding makes good sense considering the high infidelity rates among married men (see Wiederman, 1997), suggesting that just because a man is married does not mean he is more able or willing to commit to a relationship. These findings have advanced our understanding of the WRE by clarifying its nature—women do not just want someone they cannot have, but someone who is likely to be committed. The

wedding ring effect, therefore, appears to be an issue of commitment rather than of availability.

My second general question concerned the impact that a female's mating strategy has on her evaluation of both available and unavailable, and low commitment and high commitment, males. For availability, mating strategy had no effect for likability or romantic attraction, indicating that women's sociosexuality, or mating strategies, had no impact on their preferences for available or unavailable males. Conversely, separate interactions were identified between sociosexuality and commitment, for both likability and romantic attraction; importantly, the more pronounced interaction was found for romantic attraction, which stands as a measure of an individual's actual interest in forming a relationship with a target. On the one hand, unrestricted females, or those who employ a short-term mating strategy, demonstrated no difference in their preferences for the low commitment and high commitment males. On the other hand, restricted females, or those who employ a long-term mating strategy, exhibited a distinct favoritism for the high commitment male relative to the low commitment male.

The preceding results mesh well with Sexual Strategies Theory. Based on this theory, short-term (i.e., unrestricted) strategists aim to secure high-quality genes or immediate resources from temporary sexual partnerships (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). Accordingly, unrestricted maters in the present study—who do not openly seek or prefer commitment (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991)—were not concerned by the commitment qualities of prospective partners, but conceivably instead with gaining sexual access to those partners. Conversely, long-term (i.e., restricted) strategists aim to secure partners who are willing and able to invest in and commit to relationships of extended durations (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). Fittingly, restricted maters in the current investigation—who deem commitment to be a cornerstone of romantic relationships (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991)—preferred males who offered the most enhanced opportunity to

forge longstanding, commitment-based relationships (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). Similar findings have been discovered previously by Simpson and Gangestad (1992). In a series of investigations, the authors uncovered that unrestricted and restricted individuals desire, select, and even partner with persons who share similar traits, including physical attractiveness and social status for unrestricted individuals, and faithfulness and parenting qualities for restricted individuals. Ultimately, then, while a woman's sociosexuality does not appear to affect her preference for available or unavailable males, her sociosexuality does affect her preference for males of varying personality traits, or in this case, commitment.

Limitations

The present study, while informative, is not without its limitations. For one, the sample of female participants was reduced to only Caucasian women. The data from minority participants were excluded to eliminate possible differences in evaluations of interracial attraction (e.g., an Asian female evaluating a Caucasian male). As a result, the findings herein have no bearing on alternative populations of women, including intraracial evaluations of attraction and interracial ratings, likewise.

Perhaps a more looming weakness of the current research is its lack of real-life validity. As is the case with similar photograph- and vignette-based mate-choice studies, the results captured from paper-meetings between female participants and male targets may in no way represent how real-life mate selection processes unfold. For example, a woman's reported romantic attraction toward a man whom she has only seen in a photograph and read about briefly may not reflect accurately her true desire to form a relationship with him. Moreover, her evaluation is based on limited information, which is likely not representative enough to generate a fair holistic judgment of the target. Consequently, our results remain, to some degree,

speculative, and should be considered with this limitation in mind.

Future Research

An interesting discovery in the current research was that women, generally, expressed more romantic attraction toward committed males, regardless of whether or not those males were available to forge new romantic partnerships. In other words, women's mate-choices were not hampered by the reality that some males were presently out of the dating pool or "off the market," or even that these males were cohabitating simultaneously with female partners. This finding leads us to new questions concerning the rationale behind the mate selection process of women.

One such question is, *Do women believe that unavailable males are only temporarily unavailable?* Perhaps they believe that unavailable males will in fact be available one day in the future, and therefore they evaluate them as more romantically attractive based on this possible future availability. Conceivably, if a man is not married, it is not outside the realm of possibility that his relationship could end and he would be "on the market" once more. After all, my manipulations featured targets who reported being in prior relationships of a terminal nature. Future studies might explore the perceived availability of target males in relation to the manipulations used here, or they might introduce new manipulations, whereby the possible future availability of targets is even more fleeting than projected by cohabitating males. For example, a target who is cohabitating might live locally and therefore be proximally "available", whereas a paired target who announces his relocation to a distant city would be unavailable both intimately and proximally.

Additional research on the wedding ring effect should explore males' preferences for unavailable and available, as well as low commitment and high commitment, female targets.

Although men's commitment is reliably found to be one of the most desirable traits in women's mate selection, according to SST, there is greater within-sex variability on mating strategies than between-sex variability. Thus, results from a male sample should largely replicate the current findings based on women.

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APPENDIX A

Target Description Stimuli

A1: Available/High Commitment; A2: Available/Low Commitment; A3: Unavailable/High Commitment; A4: Unavailable/Low Commitment

A1: Available/High Commitment

Please provide answers in the spaces available below. Please also write as legibly as possible so that we can read your answers and evaluate them accurately for our research.

Name (first name only): Jesse

Gender: Male

Ethnicity: Caucasian

Age: 20

Year in school: Junior

Interests: going out, traveling, intramural sports, TV, movies, concerts, listening to music, reading, going out to eat, outdoor activities

How would you describe yourself? Please respond to the following prompts.

Relationships: I think romantic relationships are a big part of life and I would love to share my life with someone who understands me. However, from my experience, relationships are not just about fun and excitement. Relationships can be risky, but if it's the right person I think it's worthwhile to take the risk.

My longest relationship lasted three years, so I've taken that risk before. I'm the kind of person who prefers long-term relationships. As for now I'm single, but I'm definitely open to dating. I guess I'll see how things unfold in the future.

You as a person: I guess I'm probably pretty average. At times I'm extroverted and outgoing, while at other times I can be a bit on the quiet side. I like to be independent, but I'm approachable and enjoy social interaction as well. I prefer a certain amount of change and variety in my life and I like to try new things. I consider myself to be an independent thinker, but I certainly can be convinced by a good argument. I enjoy playing sports recreationally, although I played soccer competitively in high school.

Friendships: I have a lot of friends, but I'm not constantly with them. Sometimes I enjoy doing my own thing. I love to get to know new people though, and I'd like for others to like me.

Note: Typed responses have been inserted into the lined spaces above to serve as a model of what participants read. The actual stimuli featured legible, hand-written responses to prompts.

A2: Available/Low Commitment

Please provide answers in the spaces available below. Please also write as legibly as possible so that we can read your answers and evaluate them accurately for our research.

Name (first name only): Jesse

Gender: Male

Ethnicity: Caucasian

Age: 20

Year in school: Junior

Interests: going out, traveling, intramural sports, TV, movies, concerts, listening to music, reading, going out to eat, outdoor activities

How would you describe yourself? Please respond to the following prompts.

Relationships: I think romantic relationships are a big part of life and I would love to share my life with someone who understands me. However, from my experience, relationships are not just about fun and excitement. Relationships can be risky, but if it's the right person I think it's worthwhile to take the risk.

I've really never taken that risk before though, and I've never been in a relationship for more than a few months. I'm just the kind of person who prefers short-term relationships. As for now I'm single, but I'm open to dating. I guess I'll see how things unfold in the future.

You as a person: I guess I'm probably pretty average. At times I'm extroverted and outgoing, while at other times I can be a bit on the quiet side. I like to be independent, but I'm approachable and enjoy social interaction as well. I prefer a certain amount of change and variety in my life and I like to try new things. I consider myself to be an independent thinker, but I certainly can be convinced by a good argument. I enjoy playing sports recreationally, although I played soccer competitively in high school.

Friendships: I have a lot of friends, but I'm not constantly with them. Sometimes I enjoy doing my own thing. I love to get to know new people though, and I'd like for others to like me.

A3: Unavailable/High Commitment

Please provide answers in the spaces available below. Please also write as legibly as possible so that we can read your answers and evaluate them accurately for our research.

Name (first name only): Jesse

Gender: Male

Ethnicity: Caucasian

Age: 20

Year in school: Junior

Interests: going out, traveling, intramural sports, TV, movies, concerts, listening to music, reading, going out to eat, outdoor activities

How would you describe yourself? Please respond to the following prompts.

Relationships: I think romantic relationships are a big part of life and I would love to share my life with someone who understands me. However, from my experience, relationships are not just about fun and excitement. Relationships can be risky, but if it's the right person I think it's worthwhile to take the risk.

My longest relationship lasted three years, so I've taken that risk before. I'm the kind of person who prefers long-term relationships. As for now I am dating someone, and we actually live together. I guess I'll see how things unfold in the future.

You as a person: I guess I'm probably pretty average. At times I'm extroverted and outgoing, while at other times I can be a bit on the quiet side. I like to be independent, but I'm approachable and enjoy social interaction as well. I prefer a certain amount of change and variety in my life and I like to try new things. I consider myself to be an independent thinker, but I certainly can be convinced by a good argument. I enjoy playing sports recreationally, although I played soccer competitively in high school.

Friendships: I have a lot of friends, but I'm not constantly with them. Sometimes I enjoy doing my own thing. I love to get to know new people though, and I'd like for others to like me.

A4: Unavailable/Low Commitment

Please provide answers in the spaces available below. Please also write as legibly as possible so that we can read your answers and evaluate them accurately for our research.

Name (first name only): Jesse

Gender: Male

Ethnicity: Caucasian

Age: 20

Year in school: Junior

Interests: going out, traveling, intramural sports, TV, movies, concerts, listening to music, reading, going out to eat, outdoor activities

How would you describe yourself? Please respond to the following prompts.

Relationships: I think romantic relationships are a big part of life and I would love to share my life with someone who understands me. However, from my experience, relationships are not just about fun and excitement. Relationships can be risky, but if it's the right person I think it's worthwhile to take the risk.

I've really never taken that risk before though, and I've never been in a relationship for more than a few months. I'm just the kind of person who prefers short-term relationships. As for now I am dating someone, and we actually live together. I guess I'll see how things unfold in the future.

You as a person: I guess I'm probably pretty average. At times I'm extroverted and outgoing, while at other times I can be a bit on the quiet side. I like to be independent, but I'm approachable and enjoy social interaction as well. I prefer a certain amount of change and variety in my life and I like to try new things. I consider myself to be an independent thinker, but I certainly can be convinced by a good argument. I enjoy playing sports recreationally, although I played soccer competitively in high school.

Friendships: I have a lot of friends, but I'm not constantly with them. Sometimes I enjoy doing my own thing. I love to get to know new people though, and I'd like for others to like me.

APPENDIX B

Demographic and Personal Characteristics

Your Personal Information

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

What is your current relationship status?

- Single
- Casually dating
- Committed relationship

How old are you? _____

What is your ethnicity?

- African-American/Black
- Asian
- Caucasian/White
- Hispanic
- Other: _____

What is your sexual orientation?

- Heterosexual
- Homosexual
- Bisexual

How would you evaluate your own physical attractiveness?

- | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Very unattractive | Moderately unattractive | Mildly unattractive | Neutral | Mildly attractive | Moderately attractive | Very attractive |

APPENDIX C
Reysen Likability Scale (RLS)

Each of the following questions is in reference to the individual who you just saw and read about. Please fill in the bubble which corresponds to how strongly you agree with each statement.

1. I would ask Jesse for advice.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

2. Jesse is knowledgeable.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

3. Jesse is physically attractive.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

4. Jesse is likeable.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

5. Jesse is warm.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

6. Jesse is friendly.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

7. I would like Jesse as a coworker.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

8. Jesse is similar to me.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

9. I would like to become friends with Jesse.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

10. I would like Jesse as a roommate.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

11. Jesse is approachable.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

APPENDIX D

Romantic Attraction Scale (RAS)

Here are some questions about your feelings of Jesse—the person you just read about. Please indicate your answer by filling in the appropriate bubble.

1. How attractive do you find Jesse?

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not at all	Very little	A little	Neutral	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very much

2. How desirable would you find Jesse as a dating partner?

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not at all	Very little	A little	Neutral	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very much

3. How much would you actually like to date Jesse?

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not at all	Very little	A little	Neutral	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very much

4. How would you feel about yourself if you were dating Jesse?

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Very bad	Somewhat bad	A little bad	Neutral	A little good	Somewhat good	Very good

5. How do you think your friends would feel about you if you were dating Jesse?

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Very bad	Somewhat bad	A little bad	Neutral	A little good	Somewhat good	Very good

APPENDIX E

Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI)

Please answer all of the following questions honestly. For the questions dealing with behavior, write your answers in the blank spaces provided. For the questions dealing with thoughts and attitudes, bubble in your answer on the scales provided.

1. With how many different partners have you had sex (sexual intercourse) within the past year? _____

2. How many different partners do you foresee yourself having sex with during the next year? (Please give a *specific, realistic* estimate). _____

3. With how many different partners have you had sex on *one and only one* occasion?

4. How often do you fantasize about having sex with someone other than your current dating partner? (Circle one).

- Never
- Once every two or three months
- Once a month
- Once every two weeks
- Once a week
- A few times each week
- Nearly every day
- At least once a day

5. Sex without love is OK.

- | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

I strongly disagree-----I strongly agree

6. I can imagine myself being comfortable and enjoying “casual” sex with different partners.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I strongly disagree-----I strongly agree

7. I would have to be closely attached to someone (both emotionally and psychologically) before I could feel comfortable and fully enjoy having sex with him or her.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I strongly disagree-----I strongly agree