Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Difficulties Associated with Low Self-Esteem in Processing and Responding to the Romantic Overtures of Desirable and Undesirable Others

by

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Abstract

Successfully managing interpersonal relationships requires both pursuing desirable bonds and forgoing those that could be costly. Balancing these goals might be more difficult for some than for others, especially for those with low self-esteem who are motivated to connect, yet stifled by their lack confidence in their abilities to attract desirable dating partners. So, when a potential date's romantic interest is unambiguous, will they eagerly seize any opportunity to connect, or will the desirability of the person making the request influence their decision? In three laboratory experiments, single, female participants were randomly assigned to receive a romantic overture from an ostensible, single, male who was presented as a desirable or an undesirable dating partner. Independent of whether they accepted or rejected the target's advances, lower, relative to higher, self-esteem individuals experienced more emotional and cognitive uncertainty and distress before and after making their decision. Desirability of the target moderated some of these effects, such that high self-esteem individuals appropriately distinguished between desirables and undesirables, whereas low self-esteem participants experienced distress at the thought of accepting or rejecting either target. Notably, the actual decisions participants made were unaffected by self-esteem, and driven instead by the extent to which the target was presented as possessing desirable social commodities. Results are discussed with reference to potential mechanisms driving self-esteem differences in balancing the pursuit of quality interpersonal bonds while avoiding costly relations.

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Monica is shopping for a new car. Poor Monica has had money problems all her life and much as she wants to buy the fully loaded new Benz on the lot, she knows her budget won't afford her much more than a standard Versa. Meandering around the lot, weighing the cost of her disappointment with the Versa against those of having no car at all, Monica bumps into her friend, Lois, and shares her frustrating plight. Lois responds with a personal account: "I don't know what to tell you, Monica. I might be stuck in a similar predicament! I've been wishing for months that Ben would notice me, but then Vern asked me out instead! Vern sure isn't my dream man, but I've been looking for love for a long time. Maybe it's time we both get real and take what we can get."

Research in consumer decision-making suggests that Monica would do just that. Her resolution would not come easily, however. Being unable to see how either choice would play out in the future will arouse decisional uncertainty (Berger & Calabrese, 1975), the experience of which is unsettling, to say the least (Luce, Bettman, & Payne, 1997). Moreover, because Monica perceives either option to buy or forgo the Versa to be fraught with costs, she is especially prone to suffer emotional discomfort and the anticipation of regret (Beattie, Baron, Hershey, & Spranca, 1994; Carmon, Wertenbroch, & Zeelenberg, 2003; Gilovich & Medvec, 1995; Janis & Mann, 1977; Landman, 1987; Luce, Bettman, & Payne, 2001; Shafir, Simonson, & Tversky, 1993; Simonson, 1992). Naturally, she will want to escape this discomfort, but her motivation to make a reward-maximizing decision (Sunnafrank, 1986, 1990) could leave her stewing in an

emotionally-aversive state. After all, Monica assumes that spending a great deal of time considering her options will lead her to the best resolution (Anderson, 2003; Urbany, Dickson, & Wilkie, 1989), and her priority to avoid anticipated regrets in this scenario makes her all the more certain that she ought to take her time deciding (Zeelenberg, 1999). Despite her best efforts to come to a satisfying conclusion, the uncertainty-driven unpleasantness associated with her decision-making *process* will negate her eventual satisfaction with the car (Heitmann, Lehmann, Herrmann, 2007) and sour her loyalty to the brand (Olsen, Wilcox, Olsson, 2005). Moreover, as she continues to compare her chosen outcome to the unchosen alternative, the costs associated with her choice will remain much more salient than its benefits, exacerbating and perpetuating outcome dissatisfaction and its associated anxiety (Brenner, Rottenstreich, & Sood, 1999; Hsee & Leclerc, 1998; Kahneman & Tversky, 1982).

Are Lois' decisions and outcomes similarly fated? Like Monica's budget constraints should lead her to rationally but unhappily settle for the Versa when she really wants a Benz, Lois' romantic resignation could lead her to rationally but unhappily settle for Vern despite her desire for Ben's companionship. The remarkable parallels in the content their stories might justify this theoretical extension. Economic metaphors have long been applied to social relations: Theories of social exchange (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) and evolutionary theories of mate selection (e.g., Buss & Barnes, 1986; Darwin, 1871), which are both relevant to Lois's conundrum, are aptly-illustrated by mathematical functions (e.g., Ferguson, 1989; Todd & Miller, 1999). Sadly, this extension implies that the process leading Lois to Vern will ultimately contaminate her satisfaction and her loyalty to him.

The goal of the proposed studies is to investigate this potentially unnerving process. Though everyone has a need to belong, people differ in their abilities to fulfill it (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995). Therefore, when lackluster social opportunities present themselves, individuals who are particularly attuned to the costs of perpetual loneliness should experience the same storm of unpleasantness that surrounds cost-aversive consumer decisions. However, like Monica, who could have dodged the fiasco associated with her choice had she had enough money to buy the Benz she lusted after in the first place, those who believe that they are rich in qualities that attract high caliber partners should be exempt from decisional conflict sparked by the advances of undesirable others. In the current research, I drew upon social, economic, and evolutionary theories of mating behaviour to explore how individuals use their inferred "social budgets" to regulate their responses to social opportunities. The value of any relationship is a function of its rewards and its costs (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), both of which will concern individuals when they evaluate potential bonds. To illustrate the importance of this task, I begin with a discussion of what a person stands to gain and lose from their interpersonal bonds.

Theoretical Foundations of Social Goal Conflict

The drive to form and maintain supportive relationships with others is an inherent component of human nature and fundamental to individuals' wellbeing (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In addition to the warm, positive feelings associated with these connections (Bersheid & Reis, 1998), quality social bonds objectively contribute to mental and physical health, buffering against the negative impacts of stressful events (e.g., Cohen & Wills, 1985) and protecting against illness from common colds to chronic diseases (for

reviews see Cacioppo, Hawkley, & Berntson, 2003; Cohen, 2004; Uchino, Cacioppo, & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996). Undeniably, human beings are a social species who, throughout history, have thrived in groups and perished in isolation.

The mere presence of relationships is of no automatic value, however. In fact, contact with potentially competitive, exploitative, diseased, or norm-violating others poses great risk to individuals' physical and social fitness (Alexander, 1974, Leary & Cottrell, in press) and ought to be avoided. Even beyond the possibility of these detrimental effects, the drive to affiliate with others requires selectivity simply due to limited resources of time and energy required to maintain an all-inclusive social network (Baumeister & Gitter, 2008, Leary & Cotrell, in press). Fortunately, the quality of social bonds bears more influence on psychological wellbeing than their quantity (Parker & Asher, 1993), and people accordingly report a preference for fewer intimate connections over many weak ties (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982; Reis, 1990). Taken together we can surmise that affiliative pursuits are not always adaptive, and where undesirable others are concerned, avoidance goals and strategies are preferred.

Yet, in some situations, some people might legitimately doubt the utility of this heuristic. Pricey as fraternizing with unattractive others may be, given the aforementioned considerations, so, too, is the loneliness experienced without alternative bonds to fill the social void. People with lower self-esteem (LSEs) are predisposed to experiencing this catch-22. Compared to those with higher self-esteem (HSEs), LSEs feel isolated and rejected (Leary et al., 1995), suggesting that their need to belong is insufficiently satisfied. Further, they assume that that they do not possess the interpersonally valued traits that could potentially secure others' acceptance (Anthony,

Holmes, & Wood, 2007). These characteristics drive LSEs' expectations for and sensitivity to rejection in relationship initiation contexts to the detriment of their connection goals (Cameron, Stinson, Gaetz, & Balchen, 2010; Cameron, Stinson, & Wood, 2012). However, if another person were to unambiguously convey liking and acceptance in a direct proposition to affiliate, the constraint of rejection sensitivity would be lifted and LSEs would be freed to passively accept a connection opportunity without the risks of pursuing it themselves[1]. So, when the extender of this invitation is undesirable, how do LSEs reconcile their unfulfilled connection needs with their imperative to be choosy?

True to the cliché that desperate times call for desperate measures, LSEs might be tempted to grasp at the chance to secure a relationship. Just as a hungry individual cannot afford to hold out for a gourmet meal, an interpersonally starved person might be tempted to seize *any* connection opportunity, even if the source is of questionable worth. Indeed, individuals high in anxious attachment, who share the social insecurities of LSEs (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), cast a considerably wide net in their attempts to catch a mate (e.g., McClure, Lydon, Baccus, & Baldwin, 2010). This suggests that those with unfulfilled belongingness needs are at least willing to consider forming relationships with lower caliber partners compared to those who are not so forlorn. The potential for negative outcomes introduced by this relatively indiscriminating strategy seems to challenge its logic. However, it may well be justified based on a the concept of *deep rationality,* which supposes that individuals' strivings for social fitness are pragmatically

[1]That is not to say that LSEs would not be concerned about the potential for future rejection from the target, but simply that because the other is responsible for initiating contact, they ought to assume that the other cares to meet them.

informed by their past experiences (Kenrick, Griskevicius, Sundie, Li, Li, & Neuberg, 2009). Put simply, if LSEs have failed to form these types of bonds in the past, they have reason to believe that their difficulties will persist in the future. By implication, they are hardly fools to consider taking advantage of surefire opportunities, even when their quality is less than stellar. With potentially high costs of connecting with an undesirable mate pegged against what might be equally high costs of passing up what they perceive to be a rare opportunity, LSEs are perfectly situated between a rock and a hard place when they are forced to determine the value of prioritizing connection goals at the expense of selectivity.

Studying Social Bond Regulation in Romantic Relationship Initiation Contexts

Though this type of decisional conflict can be applied to many social interactions, it might be amplified in contexts involving the initiation of romantic bonds. The guiding assumption in Western cultures is that we are ultimately concerned with finding a single "soulmate" with whom to live happily ever after, forsaking all others (DePaulo & Morris, 2005)[2]. Beneath the hyperbole, there is a scientific foundation for this tenet. Stable, lasting relationships are well-suited to the fulfillment of belongingness needs, so it is presumably no accident that human beings come equipped with an attachment system that drives the pursuit of exclusive, secure relationships with long-term partners (Hazan & Diamond, 2000; Fraley & Shaver, 2000). This exclusivity constraint of romantic relationships thus raises the stakes of the to-affiliate-or-not-to-affiliate decision: If securing an intimate connection is at the cost of pursuing other potential partners, people must be careful to choose the beneficiaries of their affections wisely.

[2] There are exceptions to this rule in some societies as well as violations of the norm where it is valued (e.g., infidelity).

Unfortunately, even the most careful attention to markers of partner quality cannot ensure that individuals' amorous resources are well-invested. Potential partners are also driven by their own interests to find their best match, placing a mutuality constraint on romantic partnering. Put simply, partner selection is a dyadic process in which *both* parties exercise selectivity such that connections can only occur when two people reciprocate interest. This, of course, differentiates the process from consumer markets in which buyers hold the decision-making power. For example, a person may test-drive ten cars before committing to just one, but once the choice is made, it is absurd to imagine that one of these cars might reject the buyer (Penke, Todd, Lenton, & Fasolo, 2008). The mutuality constraint of the "meet market" thus implies that individuals are advantaged to set attainable aspiration levels, lest they waste effort wooing someone who is out of their league and likely to reject their early advances or abandon them later should a relationship initially form (Kenrick, et al., 1993).

It seems, then, that the relationship initiation arena is as amply laden with strategic considerations as it is hot with desire. The weight of these considerations should be most pronounced when an opportunity to affiliate occurs. Penke et al. (2008) nicely dubbed the difficulty presented by this scenario as "the twin challenge of the sequential mate search: Not being able to go back in time, nor look ahead to the future, and so struggling to make a good yes or no choice concerning the person before us right here and now" (p. 44). If people are driven to find the best partner that will have them, how do they go about balancing unmitigated desire (or lack thereof) and deeply rational strategy when romantic opportunities present?

Social Exchange Theory as a Framework for Mating Decisions

Social exchange theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) provides a useful framework for understanding how people might assess the value of a given mating opportunity. This view, which was originally applied to assessments of satisfaction and stability in existing relationships, is based on the tenet that people strive to maximize social benefits and minimize social costs. To that end, people are interested in obtaining the highest value social outcomes possible, given the social "budget" set by the mutuality constraint. In intimate relationships, people evaluate discrepancies between their current relationship outcomes, the outcomes they expect to receive (their comparison level, CL), and their perceptions of the outcomes they would receive in alternative scenarios (in other relationships or single; their comparison level alternatives, CLalt). Essentially, when outcomes exceed individuals' CL they are happy and when they fall short of their CL they are unhappy. Independent from their satisfaction, individuals' outcome comparisons to their alternatives determine the stability of their relationships; that is, whether they stay or go. So, as long as outcomes exceed individuals' CL and CLalt, their relationships will be both satisfying and stable. This model explains why people might stay in unsatisfying relationships: When outcomes are bad, but alternatives are worse, people will stay in their relationship, however dissatisfying (Choice & Lamke, 1999; Ellis, Simpson, & Campbell, 2002).

We might apply a similar framework to individuals' assessments and decisions when mating opportunities present. Discrepancies between individuals' evaluations of a target (analogous to outcomes in the close relationships context) relative to their hopes about what their ideal dating partner would possess (analogous to CL) and their perceptions of the kind of partner they could obtain if they passed up the opportunity

(analogous to CLalt) should similarly determine their satisfaction with the presented opportunity as well as their decision about whether to accept or reject it. Therefore, individuals need two important pieces of information in order to size up their dating opportunities and make maximizing decisions to accept or reject another's romantic advances: what they want in a partner (hereafter referred to as *desired partner characteristics)*, and the caliber of partner they can reasonably expect to attract (hereafter referred to as *attainable partner characteristics)*. On what basis do people set these levels?

Assessment of Factors Affecting Mating Decisions

There is an endless array of qualities people might put on a shopping list for their dream man or woman. In reality, however, people quite willingly stray from the list when what seems like the right opportunity comes along (Eastwick & Finkel, 2008). Suffice it to say, then, that while desired partner characteristics might vary to some extent based on individual differences in mate preferences, this level should be largely determined by ubiquitous standards. Indeed, the basic underpinnings that define desirable and undesirable mates are universally shared (Shackelford, Schmitt, & Buss, 2005). Namely, both men and women are most concerned with potential others' physical condition (e.g., Grammer, Fink, Juette, Ronzal, & Thornhill, 2002; Zebrowitz & Rhodes, 2004; Arnquist & Rowe, 2005) and attachment-promoting qualities (Buss, 1989; Kenrick, Sadalla, Groth, & Trost, 1990; Li, Bailey, Kenrick, & Linesenmeier, 2002; Fletcher, Tither, O'Loughlin, Friesen, & Overall, 2004). Further to this, women are particularly attuned to a mate's resources (Buss, 1989; Li, Bailey, Kenrick, & Linsenmeier, 2002) whereas men show preference for sexual variety (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Schmitt et al., 2003). Borrowing a

metaphor from the economic marketplace, the extent to which a person possesses these desired traits is deemed to be their *mate value*, and desired partner characteristics should be accordingly set to reflect a relatively unwavering standard.

The determination of attainable partner characteristics is much more susceptible to individual variation, however. While snagging a partner with the highest mate value is preferable, these high-caliber specimens do not always reciprocate interest. The harsh reality of the mutuality constraint is certainly not lost on observers who taunt their friends about pursuing others who are "out of their league." That these differences in mate value are a source of interest and so readily perceived has functional value for setting one's level of attainable partner characteristics. Indeed, the strategic route to setting an optimal aspiration level is to acquire accurate knowledge of one's own mate value. That is, those who are aware of the extent to which they possess the qualities that potential mates find appealing will most efficiently direct their affections to people with whom they are most likely to form successful relationships. Because mate value is appraised by potential partners in the dating pool, interacting with them and tuning into their evaluations is the best way to acquire this knowledge.

Self-esteem has been theorized to serve this function. In essence, self-esteem operates as a "sociometer" which rises and falls with social acceptance and rejection feedback, alerting people to threats to their social inclusion (Leary et al., 1995). Kirpatrick and Ellis (2001) elaborated on this model of self-esteem, specifying multiple sociometers for specific subdomains, under a global self-esteem umbrella. Among them, they propose a *mating sociometer* that is particularly attuned to social evaluative cues in romantic contexts (as opposed to friendship or working contexts, for example). Given

that self-esteem is directly responsive to cues of relational value, its very nature makes it the perfect benchmark by which individuals should set their level of attainable partner characteristics[3].

Calibration of this gauge, which corresponds with trait levels of self-esteem (see Leary, 2004), is based on past experiences with acceptance and rejection by potential mates, and marks self-perceptions of attractiveness, popularity, and the ability to draw attention and manipulate the behaviour of potential or actual mates (Kirpatrick & Ellis, 2001). Given that people most often pair off with others who are objectively similar in status (Todd & Miller, 1999), a well- calibrated mating sociometer should inform the specification of an optimal aspiration level. In other words, when a person knows the extent to which he or she possesses valued characteristics they are equipped to strive for the highest quality mate that would have them (Kirpatrick & Ellis, 2001; Penke et al., 2008). Therefore low self-esteem, be it chronically based on a personal history of rejection, or situationally induced by an experience of relational devaluation, should correspond with lower levels of attainable partner characteristics, compared to those experiencing high self-esteem (e.g., Kavanagh, Robins, & Ellis 2010; Murray Holmes, & Griffin, 1996).

Self-Esteem Drives Mating Aspirations

To test this regulatory function of the sociometer, Kavanagh et al. (2010) investigated the impact of social feedback on individuals' self-reported aspiration levels. They led participants to believe that three other people participating with them in a study on dating would be interested in going on a date with them (acceptance condition) or

[3] See also Anthony et al., 2007 for a discussion of how self-esteem is inherently tied to characteristics denoting mate value.

unsure about their interest in going on a date with them (rejection condition)[4]. Then, as a measure of their dating aspirations, participants rated their compatibility with a series of targets ranging in attractiveness. Although there was no difference between those who experienced acceptance or rejection in their low ratings of compatibility with unattractive targets, rejected participants rated themselves as significantly less compatible with the more attractive targets than did those who had just been ostensibly accepted. Consistent with Kirpatrick and Ellis' (2001) hypothesis, changes in state self-esteem following the manipulation fully mediated the resulting adjustment of aspiration levels.

That neither accepted nor rejected individuals in Kavanagh et al.'s (2010) study rated themselves as compatible with the unattractive targets supports the contention that there is some objective level of mate value that is ubiquitously perceived. Presumably, then, when chronic or situational experiences with rejection lower standards in dating pursuits, it is not due to more generous evaluations of unappealing others prompting a change in desired partner characteristics, but, rather, a reflection of a pragmatic tactic to secure a more modestly-endowed companion given a deficient lot of appealing qualities and the level of attainable partner characteristics it affords. By extension, LSEs might well be motivated to make a calculated acceptance decision when faced with an unattractive mating opportunity, yet they are unlikely to be thrilled by the caliber of their mate.

Although the negative implications of target dissatisfaction may permeate relationships that form with undesirable mates, the deep rationality that underlies the sociometer's function suggests that individuals in this scenario should not experience

[4] Neutral interpersonal feedback is interpreted as rejecting (Leary et al., 1995).

decisional uncertainty so long as their evaluation of any interested other exceeds the evaluation of their alternatives. However, if the mating sociometer is responsive to the romantic expressions of others, its calibration is confounded by the very process it is intended to regulate! Ironically, then, the functional value of the depressed aspirations demonstrated by Kavanagh et al. (2010) may be negated if meeting them invokes the assumption that one can do better.

Self-Esteem and the Epistemic Regulation System

The ability of the sociometer to guide deeply rational decisions hinges on its attunement to social reality. But when one's historical reality (rejecting relationship experiences) and situational reality (social acceptance) are at odds, the sociometer's ability to set appropriate aspiration levels declines. The parameters by which individuals will choose to seize or squander mating opportunities might be better defined with consideration given to a second regulatory system that is concerned with keeping the sociometer in line with reality. Whereas the sociometer operates as an acceptance signaling system, the *epistemic signaling system* checks the extent to which social feedback is consistent with individuals' global perceptions of their relational value (Stinson et al., 2010). When inconsistencies are detected, the epistemic system alerts the individual via feelings of psychological discomfort, epistemic confusion, and uncertainty. These uncomfortable states motivate the resolution of the confusion (Swann & Shroeder, 1995), which requires either reinterpreting the certainty-offending feedback, or adjusting one's global self-views (i.e., recalibrating the sociometer).

Accordingly, when others' positive evaluations violate LSEs' assumptions that they will not be desired, they should experience self-evaluative uncertainty. And, because

self-assessments of mate value determine their assessments of whom they can attract, they may become uncertain about their level of attainable partner characteristics. Therefore, without a stable standard of alternatives against which to evaluate the target opportunity, self-uncertain LSEs may experience decisional uncertainty and its associated negative affect. By contrast, another's romantic overtures would not violate HSEs' assumptions that they will elicit acceptance from others. Therefore, HSEs should forgo epistemic confusion in the same scenario, and proceed to make their decision with confidence in their self-assessments and corresponding perceptions of attainable partner characteristic. In summary, the extent of decisional uncertainty when faced with another's invitation to affiliate should vary as a function of one's self-uncertainty.

Research Overview & Hypotheses

So, how might these theory-based assumptions manifest in Lois' romantic pickle? My predictions might be most clearly understood in the context of her story. Lois has low self-esteem and, accordingly, judges her personal characteristics harshly (low self-perceptions). Though she is well aware of Ben's assets and has lusted after him for some time (high desired partner qualities), she cannot imagine how anyone, never mind a man of his caliber, would ever be interested in her attributes (low perceptions of attainable partner qualities). When Vern suggests they grab a bite to eat together, she is not sure what to make of the situation. Sure, she might be flattered by his offer (high positive affect), but she might also be wounded by the implication that they are in the same "league" when it comes to choosing dating partners (high negative affect). Either way, the feedback distorts her self-perceptions and leads her to question just how datable she is (uncertain aspiration levels)! Fraught with uncertainty about her own value as a mate, she

becomes anxious at having to make an immediate decision about Vern. She has yet to try to make a move on Ben… but is this limited reassurance that *someone* finds her attractive sufficient justification to pass up on an uninspired sure thing and assume that the man she truly desires will feel the same way?

She contemplates her options, first imagining what it might be like to have dinner with Vern. Would they enjoy themselves? (Probably not). Would he like her as he got to know her better? (She doesn't think so). Would they continue to pursue a relationship together? (Unlikely). Then she thinks about how things might transpire if she turns down his invitation. Would he be hurt? (You can bet on it) Would she regret it? (She would be left wondering for a long time, that's for sure).

Vern is waiting for a response and Lois is forced to choose. Truth be told, she is doomed to be unhappy with her choice no matter what the outcome. The cost-aversive decision-making process she has just endured leaves her with regrettable outcomes in either scenario. Saying yes, she will be fully aware of her settling for less than she truly desires. Saying no will leave her in turmoil about her lost opportunity for love – one she does not encounter often. Suffice it to say that a well-meaning offer at which we assume most would delight seems to have had the ironic consequence of sending poor Lois into a rather perplexing and aversive cognitive-emotional state.

This is the very experience I expected LSEs would have when faced with a similar opportunity in the laboratory. I expected that relative to HSEs, LSEs would be sent into a self-uncertain frenzy faced with any overture connoting romantic interest. However, when the opportunity to pursue a love connection came from a less than desirable source, I predicted that LSEs' entire decision-making process would be tainted

by the same cocktail of confusion, sour emotions, and pessimistic thoughts described in Lois' scenario. And what if Ben had made the romantic overture instead of Vern? We might rationally assume that Lois would delightedly accept her dream date! Yet, her negative self-views and uncertainty about her desirability as a dating partner lends to a competing prediction – that realizing her desired opportunity would spawn new anxieties about impressing Ben on the date. Therefore, I considered that LSEs might also experience difficulty deciding about desirable targets, with their anxieties squashing their ability to capitalize on their lucky shot at love. In contrast to LSEs, I expected HSEs to experience only limited negativity from having to deal with the uncomfortable task of rejecting an undesirable making an earnest advance. Otherwise, certain about their own attributes and abilities to attract high caliber mates, I expected HSEs would painlessly make sound decisions about desirable and undesirable targets alike.

To test my predictions, I conducted three laboratory studies investigating young single women's[5] reactions to the romantic overtures of desirable and undesirable others. In the first two studies, I tested two different manipulations of the desirability of an interest-expressing ostensible other to evaluate the unique decisional considerations introduced by targets high versus low in communal qualities (Study 1) or social commodities (Studies 2 and 3). In Study 3, I explored whether, in addition to the desirability of the target being evaluated, manipulating people's perceptions of the quality

[5] This being the first investigation of its kind, I opted to conduct these studies with women only. Because men are most often the initiators of heterosexual relationships (Cameron et al., 2012), their inclusion as study subjects would introduce an additional complexity – that a direct initiation attempt by a woman might violate their gender-based expectations. Therefore, using only women as study subjects best reflected real life norms and avoided the complexity of including gender as a factor in an already large set of variables under investigation.

of available alternative mates could influence their decisions about whether or not to seize an opportunity with romantic potential in the present.

Study 1: Responding to Interest From a (not so) Nice Guy

If a potential romantic partner appears to be deficient in the qualities that foster secure, supportive relationships, that should raise caution about whether one should pursue getting to know him or her. Therefore, in Study 1, I varied the target's desirability by manipulating the extent to which he appeared to possess the communal qualities (CQs) that would make him a great relationship partner. Participants took part in a laboratory study in which they thought they were interacting with an ostensibly interested single male participant whose personality was described as being high in CQs (desirable target) or moderate in CQs (undesirable target).

Method

Participants

Eighty female introductory psychology students were recruited to participate in a study on "Constrained Communication" through the University of Manitoba online psychology research pool. Participation was limited to women who identified as heterosexual and single (i.e., uninvolved in dating relationships), and who were able to speak, read, and write English fluently. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 21 years ($M = 17.93$, SD = .76). As compensation for their time, participants received partial course credit.

Procedure

Participants each attended a private laboratory session. Upon arrival, the researcher explained that they would be participating in a study about the kinds of

information people consider when they are deciding whether another person would make a good dating partner. The researcher informed participants that they would be exchanging personality profiles with another participant ("the target") of the opposite sex in a room nearby, and that any exchange of information between them throughout the study would take place over the computer. However, participants were told that at the end of the study they might have an opportunity to meet the other person face-to-face, provided both individuals were interested in meeting.

After reading and signing a consent form, participants completed a battery of computer administered preliminary questionnaires, including a measure of self-esteem, and a (bogus) personality profile assessment. The computer then supposedly generated a personality profile based on their responses that was sent to the ostensible other participant. Meanwhile, participants received a profile for the target that was supposedly generated from his personality test. This personality profile served as the experimental manipulation of the target's desirability. Depending on the participants' randomly assigned condition, the profile depicted the target as a very desirable dating partner or a relatively undesirable dating partner. Following the delivery of the profile, a message appeared on-screen, ostensibly from the target, indicating that he would like to meet after the study. Participants then answered a series of confidential (i.e., not to be seen by the other participant) questions assessing their thoughts and feelings about the offer before indicating whether or not they would accept or reject the target's invitation to meet. After making their decision, participants answered some follow-up questions about their choice. At the conclusion of the laboratory session, participants were probed for

suspicion about the true nature of the study and fully debriefed about the deceptive element of the ostensible other.

Measures

Reliabilities for all scales are shown in Table 1. Means and standard deviations for all scales and subscales are shown in Table 2. Measures are described in the order in which they appeared to participants.

Preliminary measures. Participants' global *self-esteem* was assessed with Rosenberg's (1965) 10-item measure (Appendix A). Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed with each self-evaluative statement (e.g., "I feel that I have a number of good qualities") using a 9-point scale (1 = *very strongly disagree*, 9 = *very strongly agree*).

Then, participants completed multiple adaptations of the Social Attributes and Skills Inventory (SASI; Anthony et al., 2007, Appendix B). This scale consists of ten of traits reflecting social commodities (SCs; e.g., sexy) and 8 traits reflecting communal qualities (CQs; e.g., loyal). Participants used these items to report on their perceptions of their own qualities (*self-perceptions*), the qualities they desired in a partner (*desired partner qualities*), and the qualities they believed they could obtain in a partner (*attainable partner qualities*). Ratings for each item were provided on a sliding scale from 1(not at all) to 100 (very much) where the midpoint was indicative of the average for that characteristic in the population.

Post-overture measures. After completing the bogus personality test (Appendix C), reading the personality profile for the desirable or undesirable target (Appendix D), and receiving the invitation from the target to meet at the end of the study (Appendix E),

participants used the SASI items to indicate their perceptions of the target's qualities (*target perceptions)*. Then, they completed a series of measures tapping into their self-perceptions, their emotions, and their cognitions prior to making a decision about whether to accept or reject the target's advance.

Participants completed a modified version of the *Self-Concept Clarity* Scale (Campbell, Trapnell, Heine, Katz, Lavalee, & Lehman, 1996; Appendix F) to assess the extent to which they were certain or uncertain about their self-perceptions. The original items, which were written to tap trait-level self-concept clarity, were adapted to measure state self-concept clarity (e.g., "*Right now, I have a clear sense of who I am";* Stinson et al., 2010*).* Participants rated each of 12 items on a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all*; 5 = *extremely*). Items were scored such that higher numbers reflected higher levels of self-uncertainty.

Then participants reported on their current emotional state by indicating the extent to which they were feeling each of 40 emotions (Appendix G). The items, which were compiled into five subscales[6] tapping feelings of *uncertainty*, *anxiety*, *negative affect*, *positive affect*, and *regret,* were rated on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *extremely*).

To assess whether participants' perceptions of the mates they could attract were affected by receiving the romantic overture from the target, participants gave a revised rating of their presumed attainable partner qualities, using the SASI items (Appendix H). Given that I predicted self-concept uncertainty for LSEs, and that self-perceptions are theorized to guide mating aspirations, this revised rating was designed to identify any

[6] The emotion subscales were created from the list of 40 items after the completion of all three studies in order to ensure that the subscales were identical (and reliable) for each study. Items selected for each subscale, and those dropped from further analyses, are presented in Appendix G.

uncertainty participants might have experienced about their quality of mate they could attract. To measure this, participants were instructed to select a "baseline" on each SASI item indicating the extent to which a person they were certain they could attract would possess that quality (*baseline attainable partner qualities)*. Then, they were asked to identify a "ceiling" for each item, indicating the extent to which the highest caliber mate they thought they could attract would possess that quality (*ceiling attainable partner qualities)*. Participants provided both baseline and ceiling ratings concurrently for each trait before moving onto the next, effectively providing a range around their aspiration level. The size of this range was meant to serve as a proxy for certainty about the caliber of mate any participant thought she could attract, where larger ranges reflected greater uncertainty.

The cognitive processes involved in reacting to the target's overture and coming to a decision about whether to accept or reject the invitation to meet at the conclusion of the study were assessed with a few measures. First, participants completed the *Interaction Rewards and Threats Scale* (MacDonald & Tackett, 2012; Appendix I) to specify their expectations about the kind of interaction that would occur with the target if they agreed to the meeting. Five items comprised the *Rewards* subscale (e.g., "I will probably like my interaction partner a lot") and 5 comprised the *Threats* subscale (e.g., "I'm concerned my interaction partner won't like me very much"), all of which were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*).

Next, participants rated a series of possible outcomes to follow their response to the imagined other's invitation for a date. On a 7-point scale (1 = *very unlikely*; 7 = *very likely*), participants indicated the likelihood of 17 outcomes if were they to accept the

invitation and 15 outcomes if they were they to reject the invitation (Appendix J). These items, which were created for the study, were broken down into several subscales for analyses[7]: *evaluative concerns*, expectations for a *positive meeting*, and expectations for *positive outcomes following a meeting* if they accepted the invitation; and *concern for other*, and *rumination* if they rejected the invitation. All items were rated on a 7-point scale (1 = *extremely unlikely*; 7 = *extremely likely*).

The decision and the aftermath. Before making their actual decision about the target's invitation, participants rated their *desire to accept* the offer. Then, they indicated a "yes" or a "no" to the target's request (*decision*). The time it took them to submit their choice on the computer-administered questionnaire was also recorded (*time to decide*). Once participants had made their decisions, they reported on their *decision satisfaction* and their *post-decision feelings* (uncertainty, anxiety, positive affect, negative affect, and regret) using a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all,* 7 = *very much*). These items are presented in Appendix K. Demographic information was collected at the conclusion of the session.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Self-perceived mate value and aspirations. Means and standard deviations for all variables are presented in Table 2. Before embarking on the analyses related to LSEs' and HSEs' responses to the overtures of desirable and undesirable others, I tested whether the predicted relationships between self-esteem and self-perceived mate value, desired partner characteristics, and perceptions of attainable partner characteristics held before

[7] The subscales for predicted outcomes for accepting and rejecting the invitation were created from the list of items after the completion of all three studies in order to ensure that the subscales were identical (and reliable) in each study. Items selected for each subscale, and those dropped from further analyses, are presented in Appendix J

the target's introduction. For each of these reports, I ran regression analyses with self-esteem (mean centered; $M = 5.86$) as the independent variable on both SC and CQ subscales. All estimated means reported in text are at one standard deviation above and below the mean. Full results are presented in Table 3.

Contrary to expectations, self-esteem was not a strong predictor of self-perceived mate value. Its relation to self-ratings of SCs trended in the predicted direction ($\beta = .20$, $t(78) = 1.80$, $p = .075$) whereby HSEs perceived they were better endowed ($\hat{Y} = 66.79$) than did LSEs ($\hat{Y} = 62.38$), but HSEs and LSEs did not differ in their self-perceptions of CQs ($\beta = .12$, $t(78) = 1.09$, $p = .280$). As predicted, when it came to specifying their desired partner characteristics, HSEs and LSEs did not differ on either ratings of an ideal partners' SCs ($\beta = .17$, $t(78) = 1.50$, $p = .139$) or CQs ($\beta = .12$, $t(78) = 1.13$, $p = .262$). Unexpectedly, HSEs and LSEs did not differ significantly in their perceptions of their abilities to attract a mate rich in SCs ($\beta = .13$, $t(78) = 1.13$, $p = .262$) though there was a trend for a difference in their perceptions of their attainable partners' CQs ($\beta = .20$, $t(78) = 1.77$, $p = .081$) whereby HSEs had greater confidence in their abilities to attract a man with great qualities ($\hat{Y} = 77.49$) than did LSEs ($\hat{Y} = 72.15$).

Target perceptions. Did participants rate the desirable target as possessing more desirable characteristics than the undesirable target? As a test of the manipulation, I conducted regression analyses on participants' perceptions of targets' SCs and CQs with main effects for self-esteem (mean centered) and target (desirable = 1; undesirable = -1) entered at the first step and their interaction entered at the second step. Including self-esteem and its interaction with target in these analyses allowed for the possibility that HSEs and LSEs would differentially perceive the targets. However, as predicted, the only

significant effects for these regressions were for target, whereby the desirable target was rated as possessing somewhat greater SCs ($\beta = .21$, $t(77) = 1.83$, $p = .071$; $\hat{Y} = 66.16$) and greater CQs ($\beta = .48$, $t(77) = 4.77$, $p < .001$; $\hat{Y} = 76.99$) than the undesirable target ($\hat{Y}_{SC} = 62.85$; $\hat{Y}_{CQ} = 65.60$). Notably, the size of the effect was greater for CQs than for SCs, which is consistent with the content of the manipulated target personality profiles. That HSEs and LSEs did not differ in their perceptions of the target on either index ($\beta_{SC} = .08$ $t(77) = .73$, $p = .470$; $\beta_{CQ} = .09$ $t(77) = .88$, $p = .382$) suggests that they were objective perceivers of a potential mate's desirability. Full results are displayed in Table 4.

Post-Overture Analyses

How did HSEs and LSEs react to the overtures of desirable and undesirable others? I conducted a series of regressions to tap into the emotional, cognitive, and behavioural responses of participants following the target's expression of interest. As in the manipulation check, each of these regressions consisted of self-esteem and target in the first step, and their interaction in the second. Effects were interpreted at the step in which they were entered, and when interactions were significant, tests of simple effects were conducted in accordance with Aiken & West's (1991) recommendations.

Self-(un)certainty and recalibrated aspirations. The epistemic signaling system alerts the individual with feelings of uncertainty when he or she receives social feedback that is inconsistent with self-views (Stinson et al., 2010). Because LSEs anticipate rejection (e.g., Leary et al., 1995; Anthony et al., 2007) the acceptance implied by either target's overture should cause self-uncertainty for them. What remains unknown, however, is whether acceptance feedback from undesirable others would be more consistent with LSEs' self- views, and thus less apt to instigate feelings of self-

uncertainty. To test this possibility, I regressed self-concept clarity on self-esteem, target, and their interaction. Results are presented in Table 5. The predicted main effect for self-esteem was significant (β = -.40, $t(77)$ = -3.82, $p < .001$), such that LSEs experienced greater self-uncertainty ($\hat{Y}$ = 2.28) than did HSEs ($\hat{Y}$ = 1.73). However, neither the target (β = .02, $t(77)$ = .18, p = .860) nor the interaction effects reached significance (β = -.11, $t(76)$ = -1.05, p = .299), suggesting that the epistemic system did not respond differently to acceptance from those who possessed more versus less desirable CQs.

One way to tap into whether LSEs' self-perceptions were confused by the acceptance feedback would be to see whether their specified level of attainable partner characteristics (which ought to be guided by their self-perceptions) shifted from their first ratings. Unfortunately, the results for participants' baseline and ceiling measures on each of the items assessing attainable partner SCs and CQs were not interpretable. Had participants completed that portion of their post-overture questionnaire correctly, they would show a positive score on each item when their baseline was subtracted from their ceiling. However, a significant portion of participants answered consistently in the opposite direction (i.e., such that baseline levels were higher than reported ceiling levels), or inconsistently (i.e., such that sometimes ceiling ratings were higher than baselines and sometimes baselines were higher than ceilings). Whether participants misunderstood the instructions or became frustrated by having to complete multiple iterations of the SASI scale is unknown. Ultimately, this impediment to interpreting participant responses led me to exclude this measure from analyses in this and subsequent studies.

Post-overture/pre-decision emotional state. How did HSEs and LSEs feel after the target expressed interest in meeting them? Because reacting to the other's overture

required consideration of how to respond to it, I expected that LSEs would experience greater negativity and emotional uncertainty than would HSEs, and that this might be even more so the case when LSEs were considering the offers of an undesirable target. Analyses revealed no significant target or interaction effects across each of the emotional state composite scales, but main effects for self-esteem were found for uncertainty (β = -.28, $t(77)$ = -2.49, p = .015; $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = 1.67, $\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 2.16), anxiety (β = -.35, $t(77)$ = -3.29, p = .002; $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = 2.19, $\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 2.67), positive affect (β = .21, $t(77)$ = 1.88, p = .063; $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = 2.95, $\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 2.65) and negative affect (β = -.23, $t(77)$ = -2.02, p = .047; $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = 1.10, $\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 1.24). Overall, LSEs were prone to greater emotional suffering than were HSEs as they anticipated their response[8]. Results are displayed in Table 6.

Pre-decision cognitions. The emotional states addressed in the previous section were general feeling items that could have encompassed participants' reactions to the other's overture, their feelings about deciding whether or not to meet the other (e.g., related to anticipating an interaction) or both. But, when asked to think explicitly about what it would be like to interact with the target, or to refuse his request, how did participants weigh potential outcomes of either decision? There were no significant predictors in the regression model for interaction rewards. However, analyses revealed a trending main effect for self-esteem (β = -.20, $t(77)$ = -1.82, p = .073) and a main effect for target (β = .24, $t(77)$ = 2.17, p = .033) for interaction threats. Relative to HSEs ($\hat{Y}$ = 2.86), LSEs anticipated greater interaction threats during a meeting with the ostensible

[8] It is important to note that because there was not a no-overture control condition, the impetus for these main effects remains unclear. It is possible that LSEs reports reflected general negative emotion (Baumeister, Campbell, Kruger, & Vohs, 2003), reactions to the overture itself, the task to responding to the overture, or any combination of these possibilities.

other ($\hat{Y}$ = 3.20), and all participants perceived a potential meeting with the desirable other to be comprised of greater interaction threats ($\hat{Y}$ = 3.23) than a meeting with the undesirable other ($\hat{Y}$ = 2.84). These results are presented in full in Table 7.

Results for predicted costs and benefits of accepting the offer are presented in Table 8, and those associated with rejecting the offer are presented in Table 9. Analyses revealed a main effect for self-esteem on evaluative concerns (β = -.26, t(77) = -2.37, p = .020), whereby LSEs were more likely to assume that the target would evaluate them negatively during a face-to-face meeting ($\hat{Y}$ = 4.12) than were HSEs ($\hat{Y}$ = 3.62). Target and interaction effects for evaluative concerns were not statistically significant, nor were any of the effects for expectations for a positive meeting and expectations for positive outcomes following a meeting, if participants were to accept the invitation.

The effects for participants' anticipated outcomes were they to reject the invitation were similarly sparse: only a trend for the self-esteem by target interaction appeared for concern for other (β = -.21, t(75) = -1.87, p = .065; see Figure 1). Tests of simple effects revealed a self-esteem effect for desirable targets (β = -.29, t(75) = -2.52, p = .014) whereby LSEs had greater concerns about a desirable other's reaction to their potential rejection than did HSEs. There was also a significant target effect for LSEs (β = .25, t(75) = 2.17, p = .034) whereby LSEs' other-focused concerns were greater for desirable targets than for undesirable targets. HSEs showed the opposite pattern, with greater concerns about an undesirable target's reaction than for that of a desirable target, through this trend did not reach statistical significance (β = -.18, t(75) = -1.60, p = .113).

The Decision

Did HSE and LSE participants differ in their decisions to accept or reject

desirable and undesirable others' invitations? Results, which are presented in Table 10, showed that none of the variables in the regression model predicted participants' desire to meet the ostensible other. To test whether self-esteem, target, or their interaction could predict participants' actual choice, I conducted a hierarchical logistic regression on their choice (no, reject invitation = 0; yes, accept invitation = 1) with self-esteem and target in the first block and their interaction in the second. These results are presented in Table 11. There were no significant effects. This may not be surprising, however, given that most participants agreed to the meeting – 66 out of 80 said yes – which left little variation to be predicted by any variable in the regression model I tested.

Though I had remained tentative about predicting whether participants would accept or reject the ostensible other's invitation, I had expected that LSEs would have more difficulty than HSEs in coming to their decision, whatever it might be. Assuming that grappling with a tough decision takes more time than making an easy choice, time taken to respond definitively to the target's request could be a tenable proxy for tapping into participants' difficulty making the decision. To probe this possibility, I regressed the time it took for participants to submit their decision to meet or not meet the other participant on self-esteem, target, and their interaction. Results are presented in Table 12. Once again, there were no significant predictors in this model, suggesting that all participants struggled equally with the choice they were given.

After the Decision

Decision satisfaction. Once participants had committed to meeting or refusing to meet the interested other, how did they feel? When it came to satisfaction with the decision they'd just made, the only main effect to emerge was that for self-esteem (β =

.23, $t(77) = 2.08$, $p = .041$) whereby HSEs were more satisfied with their decision ($\hat{Y} = 3.81$) than were LSEs ($\hat{Y} = 3.47$). This effect was qualified by an interaction between self-esteem and target ($\beta = .33$, $t(76) = 3.22$, $p = .002$; see Figure 2). Tests of simple effects showed that the main difference was in the desirable other condition, in which HSEs were much more satisfied than were LSEs with their decision to meet or not meet the other ($\beta = .58$, $t(76) = 5.07$, $p < .001$) whereas HSEs and LSEs did not differ in their decision satisfaction in the undesirable other condition. Furthermore, target effects were revealed for LSE ($\beta = -.31$, $t(76) = -2.94$, $p = .004$) and for HSEs ($\beta = .38$, $t(76) = 3.62$, $p < .001$). HSEs were more satisfied with their decisions about desirables than undesirables whereas, contrary to predictions, LSEs showed the opposite effect by being less satisfied with their decisions about desirables than undesirables. Decision satisfaction results are displayed in Table 13.

Post-decision emotional state. Next I went on to test the emotional states of participants following their decision. Because it was conceivable that participants experience similar emotions to the first round of measurement for different reasons (e.g., anxiety about making the right decision versus anxiety about an impending face-to-face meeting), I opted not to control for pre-decision emotions in the regressions on post-decision emotions. Therefore, I conducted regression analyses on each of the five post-decision emotional sate composite variables using the same independent variables as I did for the regression conducted on decision satisfaction.

Although there were no significant predictors of post-decision positive affect, analyses revealed main effects for self-esteem on uncertainty ($\beta = -.23$, $t(77) = -2.03$, $p = .045$), anxiety ($\beta = -.31$, $t(77) = -2.84$, $p = .006$), negative affect, ($\beta = -.29$, $t(77) = -2.61$,

p = .011), and regret (β = -.26, $t(77)$ = -2.60, p = .022). On each of these indices, LSEs exhibited more distress in the reports of their feelings ($\hat{Y}_{uncertain} = 2.05$, $\hat{Y}_{anxious} = 3.07$, $\hat{Y}_{negative\ affect} = 1.18$, $\hat{Y}_{regret} = 1.42$) than did HSEs ($\hat{Y}_{uncertain} = 1.64$, $\hat{Y}_{anxious} = 2.55$, $\hat{Y}_{negative\ affect} = 1.05$, $\hat{Y}_{regret} = 1.18$). Full results for regression analyses on post-decision feelings are presented in Table 14.

Decisional Impact. The wash of main effects for self-esteem on post-decision outcomes paints an unfortunate scenario for LSEs, who seem not to bounce back from their negative emotional states after the decision-making pressure has been lifted. But could these emotions be impacted by the actual decisions they (and HSEs) made? After all, foregoing a connection and preparing to meet a romantically interested stranger present qualitatively different scenarios, not to mention the added impact of sacking or snatching a hot versus a lukewarm date.

Unfortunately, because so few participants declined the meeting, including *decision* and its interactions with self-esteem and target as predictors in the regression model produces results that are difficult to interpret with confidence. Given this serious statistical limitation, these results are not presented in text with the primary analyses. Results from exploratory regression models including decision and its interactions are presented in Appendix L, and they should be interpreted tentatively.

Discussion

The results from Study 1 suggest that the process of deciding whether or not to have a meeting initiated by a single person of the opposite sex is more strenuous for LSEs than it is for HSEs. Though LSEs and HSEs did not differ in their actual choices about whether to meet the target, LSEs experienced greater negative and uncertain emotions

and cognitions both during deliberation and after they made their decision.

Though participants were able to distinguish between the qualities possessed by the desirable and the undesirable target, the fact that the vast majority of participants agreed to the ostensible other's request to meet, coupled with the absence of consistent main effects or interactions for target suggests that the CQs on which the targets differed were not terribly important drivers of participants' decision-making process. In retrospect, this is perhaps not surprising. While CQs are certainly important for long-term commitments, they may hold less bearing on whether someone decides to have a time-limited, commitment-free meeting with another person. Instead, initial attraction and interest might be better sparked (or extinguished) by a target's possession of SCs (see Anthony et al., 2007). I set out to test this possibility in Study 2.

Study 2: Responding to Interest From a (not so) Hot Guy

In Study 2, I replaced the personality profile manipulation with target profiles designed to vary on SCs. I created profiles for a desirable and an undesirable target, which included a headshot picture that looked like it was taken in a laboratory similar to the one the participants would be in, and some "get to know you" information about each target. The pictures, which were taken out of province to ensure that the participants in the present study would not recognize the targets, varied in physical attractiveness. To bolster the manipulation of social commodities, the attractive (desirable) target was described as being more athletic, having more sociable hobbies, and having more interesting preferences than the less attractive (undesirable) target. Both target profiles are presented in Appendix O.

Instead of completing the bogus personality tests from Study 1, participants in Study 2 completed a "get to know you profile" and had their photo taken, which would ostensibly be shared with the other participant. Otherwise, the measures, procedures, and analysis strategy were identical to those presented in Study 1.

Method

Participants

Participants were once again recruited from the introductory psychology subject pool based on the personal characteristics laid out in Study 1. Because of the age of the ostensible targets (19 and 21), participants who were 23 years of age or older were excluded from the sample. The final sample included 50 women, ranging in age from 17 to 22 years (M = 18.90, SD = 1.17).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Self-perceived mate value and aspirations. Means and standard deviations for all variables are presented in Table 2. As in Study 1, I first conducted tests of the relationship between self-esteem and self-perceived mate value, mate ideals, and perceptions of attainable partners. For each of these reports, I conducted regression analyses with self-esteem (mean centered; M = 5.66) as the independent variable on both SC and CQ subscales. Results are presented in Table 3.

In contrast to Study 1, self-esteem was a much stronger predictor of participants' self-ratings on SCs (β = .45, $t(47) = 3.43$, p = .001). Overall, HSEs perceived they were richer in SCs ($\hat{Y} = 70.45$) than did LSEs ($\hat{Y} = 60.56$). The rest of the results were consistent with those found in Study 1. Although trending in the same direction, self-

esteem was not a significant predictor of self-perceived CQs (β = .23, $t(47) = 1.59$, p = .119). As predicted, when it came to specifying their desired partner characteristics, HSEs and LSEs did not differ for either SCs (β = .00, $t(47) = .02$, p = .982) or CQs (β = -.116, $t(46) = -1.14$, p = .261). Finally, despite a trend in the predicted direction, HSEs and LSEs did not differ significantly in their perceptions of their abilities to attract a mate rich in SCs (β = .23, $t(46) = 1.60$, p = .116), and there was no difference in their perceptions of their attainable partners' CQs (β = .08, $t(46) = .58$, p = .565).

Target perceptions. To check the validity of the manipulation, it was important to determine that participants appropriately distinguished between the SCs of desirable and the undesirable targets, and to test whether LSEs and HSEs would discern differences between them. Regression results for target perceptions are presented in Table 4. A main effect for target on SCs (β = .63, $t(46) = 5.41$, $p < .001$), whereby participants assigned greater SCs to the desirable other ($\hat{Y} = 7$3.63) than to the undesirable other ($\hat{Y} = 5$6.42), verified the content of the manipulation. Targets were rated equally on their possession of CQs (β = -.01, $t(46) = -.05$, p = .957), however. The main effects for self-esteem were not significant (β_{SC} = .04, $t(46) = .35$, p = .728; β_{CQ} = .24, $t(46) = 1.62$, p = .112), nor were the interaction terms on these indices (β_{SC} = .07, $t(45) = .59$, p = .559; β_{CQ} = .03, $t(45) = .18$, p = .857), establishing that self-esteem did not qualify people's evaluations of desirable and undesirable targets.

Post-Overture Analyses

Self-(un)certainty. Did the social commodities manipulation differentially impact the LSEs and HSEs feelings of self-concept clarity? Analyses revealed an identical pattern to those found in Study 1, results for which are displayed in Table 5. The

predicted main effect for self-esteem was significant (β = -.58, t(46) = -5.41, p < .001, but the target (β = -.03, t(46) = -.31, p = .830) and interaction effects were not (β = .13, t(45) = 1.07, p = .289). Therefore, though LSEs experienced more uncertain self-perceptions ($\hat{Y}$ = 2.74) relative to HSEs ($\hat{Y}$ = 1.76), the extent to which this occurred was not impacted by the level of SCs the target expressing interest was presumed to possess.

Post-overture/pre-decision emotional state. Analyses revealed a pattern of emotional states for HSEs and LSEs following the target's expression of interest that was similar to that found in Study 1. These results are displayed in Table 6. There were predicted main effects for self-esteem on all emotion composites whereby, relative to HSEs, LSEs experienced greater feelings of uncertainty (β = -.36, t(46) = -2.33, p = .011; $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = 1.76,$\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 2.74), anxiety (β = -.51, t(46) = -3.98, p < .001; $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = 2.05,$\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 2.79), negative affect (β = -.51, t(46) = -3.93, p < .001; $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = 1.04, $\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 1.44), and regret (β = -.29, t(55) = -2.27, p = .027; $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = .99,$\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 1.68), and lower positive affect (β = .26, t(46) = 1.90, p = .064; $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = 2.84, $\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 2.48). In contrast to Study 1, there were also trends for target effects for anxiety (β = .23, t(46) = 1.76, p = .086) and positive affect (β = .24, t(46) = 1.73, p = .091). The desirable target aroused more anxiety ($\hat{Y}$ = 2.58) than did the undesirable target ($\hat{Y}$ = 2.26), but he also inspired more positive affect ($\hat{Y}$ = 2.78) than did the undesirable target ($\hat{Y}$ = 2.54).

The effects for positive affect were qualified by a self-esteem by target interaction (β = .24, t(45) = 2.05, p = .046; see Figure 3). Tests of simple effects revealed a target effect for HSEs (β = .51, t(45) = 3.86, p < .001) and a self-esteem effect for desirable targets (β = .54, t(45) = 4.24, p < .001), showing that while LSEs were in a less positive emotional state than HSEs, HSEs' experience of positive affect depended on who was

interested in getting to know them. It seems, then, that HSEs felt good when the overture came from the desirable target, but the undesirable target did failed to induce a positive glow.

Pre-decision cognitions. Analyses on participants' cognitive appraisals of the costs and benefits of accepting or declining the target's invitation to interact at the end of the study revealed several effects that did not appear with the communal qualities manipulation in Study 1. First, as expected, everyone agreed that interacting with the desirable target held more potential for rewards (β = .43, $t(46) = 3.23$, p = .007; $\hat{Y}$ = 3.11) than meeting the undesirable target ($\hat{Y} = 2.58$), but they recognized that the value of the desirable target increased interaction threats (β = .39, $t(46) = 2.89$, p = .006; $\hat{Y}_{\text{desirable}} = 3.22$, $\hat{Y}_{\text{undesirable}} = 2.52$). A main effect for self-esteem on interaction threats (β= -.30, $t(46) = -2.25$, p = .030) further revealed that LSEs were more inclined than HSEs to perceive a meeting with either target as encompassing threats ($\hat{Y}_{HSE} = 2.59$, $\hat{Y}_{LSE} = 3.14$).

When it came to costs and benefits of accepting the invitation, HSEs were more optimistic than were LSEs, with lower levels of evaluative concerns (β = -.34, $t(46) = -2.44$, p = .019; $\hat{Y}_{HSE} = 3.34$, $\hat{Y}_{LSE} = 4.09$), and higher expectations for a positive meeting (β = .33, $t(46) = 2.43$, p = .019; $\hat{Y}_{HSE} = 4.64$, $\hat{Y}_{LSE} = 3.89$). Furthermore, a trending main effect for target on expectations for a positive meeting (β = .24, $t(55) = 1.99$, p = .053) and a significant main effect of self-esteem on positive post-meeting outcomes (β = .41, $t(46) = 3.01$, p = .004) revealed that participants presumed fraternizing with the desirable target would be more positive during ($\hat{Y}_{desirable} = 4.64$, $\hat{Y}_{undesirable} = 3.89$) and after the meeting ($\hat{Y}_{desirable}$ =,3.65 $\hat{Y}_{undesirable} = 2.70$). Results for predicted outcomes if the invitation was accepted are displayed in Table 8.

Though I had predicted that relative to HSEs, LSEs would perceive greater costs to rejecting an offer from an interested other, there were no self-esteem effects on concern for other (β = .01, $t(46)$ = .08, p = .934) nor for rumination (β = -.18, $t(46)$ = -1.28, p = .209), though the latter trended in the predicted direction. There were no significant effects of target or the self-esteem by target interaction on these indices either. These results are presented in full in Table 9.

The Decision

In Study 1, the majority of participants agreed to meet the ostensible other. This changed with the modification of the social commodities manipulation: Overall, 50% of participants agreed to the meeting and 50% declined it. Could self-esteem or the desirability of the target predict this yes or no decision?

First, I tested participants' reported desire to meet the other. Results, which are presented in Table 10, revealed a main effect for target (β = .37, $t(46)$ = 2.67, p = .011) such that participants were more interested in meeting the desirable other ($\hat{Y}$ = 3.64) than the undesirable other ($\hat{Y}$ = 2.66). To test whether this interest was reflected in people's actual decisions, I conducted a hierarchical logistic regression on participants' decisions (no, reject invitation = 0; yes, accept invitation = 1) with self-esteem and target in the first block and their interaction in the second. Full results for this analysis are reported in Table 11. Results revealed a main effect of target (B = 1.19, $Wald(1)$ = 3.76, p = .053): In line with their desires, participants were 3.29 times more likely to agree to meet the desirable target than the undesirable target. The main effect for self-esteem was not significant, nor was the interaction term.

Could self-esteem or its interaction with target desirability predict how long a

person would struggle with the decision about whether to accept or reject the invitation? As in Study 1, I regressed the time it took participants to submit their decision on self-esteem, target, and their interaction. These results, none of which reached statistical significance, are presented in Table 12.

After the Decision

In Study 1, the actual decision participants made was not included in the regression model for all post-decision analyses because of unequal numbers agreeing to and declining the ostensible offer. Although Study 2 allowed for equal groups on this variable, the size of the sample did not provide enough statistical power to properly test a regression model with decision and its interactions. Therefore, I followed the same analysis strategy for post-decision outcomes as I did in study 1. Exploratory analyses including decision in the regression models are presented in Appendix M and should be interpreted within the caveats of these statistical limitations. Results presented in text are for regression models including just self-esteem, target, and their interaction as predictors.

Decision satisfaction. For decision satisfaction, there were significant main effects for self-esteem (β = .35, $t(46) = 2.58$, p = .013), and for target (β = -.34, $t(46) = -2.52$, p = .015). Thus, HSEs were more satisfied ($\hat{Y} = 4.28$) than were LSEs ($\hat{Y} = 3.77$), and those in the undesirable condition were more satisfied ($\hat{Y} = 4.27$) than those who made decisions about whether to meet the desirable target ($\hat{Y} = 3.78$). Full results from regression analyses on decision satisfaction are presented in Table 13.

Post-decision emotional state. Relative to HSEs, LSEs experienced a more negative emotional state following their decision in the form of greater feelings of

anxiety (β = -.40, $t(46)$ = -2.90, p = .006; $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = 2.10, $\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 2.78), negative affect (β = -.57, $t(46)$ = -4.67, $p < .001$; $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = .98, $\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 1.36), and regret (β = -.46, $t(46)$ = -3.47, p = .001, $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = 1.09, $\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 1.55), as well as less positive affect (β = .25, $t(46)$ = 1.75, p = .086; $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = 2.72, $\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 2.39). The effect for positive affect was qualified by a significant self-esteem by target interaction (β = .32, $t(45)$ = 2.34, p = .024, see Figure 4). Simple effects tests showed that LSEs felt less positive affect than did HSEs after having made a decision about the desirable target (β = .58, $t(45)$ = 4.45, $p < .001$). Furthermore, target effects for HSEs (β = .38, $t(45)$ = 2.73, p = .028) and LSEs (β = -.28, $t(45)$ = -2.05, p = .047) revealed that while LSEs felt better when faced with undesirable rather than desirable others, HSEs felt the opposite, reporting more positive affect after deciding about desirable targets than undesirables. Full results for post-decision emotions are presented in Table 14.

Discussion

It was clear from Study 2 that people respond differently to those high vs. low in social commodities. Also clear, was the fact that LSEs continued to have distress about making their decision and dealing with its aftermath. I had initially proposed that a mechanism for this distress could be that LSEs have less confidence in the availability of desirable alternatives. Put simply, being less than enthused about the opportunity before them, while also pessimistic about future prospects, could make for a tough decision. While I had predicted this would be the case where undesirable targets were concerned, it turns out LSEs' difficulty in romantic decision-making extends to desirable targets too. In hindsight, this is not surprising – even if a desirable other shows interest, a LSEs might deem it only a matter of time before their true, unlovable qualities reveal themselves and

inspire the rejection they both fear and expect. Even so, perceptions of alternative prospects could have influence on their response to any target motivating anxiety in the here and now. Thus, in Study 3, I proceeded with my planned manipulation of perceptions of available alternatives to investigate whether its effects might shed some light on differences between LSEs and HSEs responses to desirable and undesirable targets.

Study 3: Deciding Now Depends on Who is Available Later

To directly manipulate perceptions of available dating partners, I created two bogus articles summarizing the state of dating in the 21st Century. The articles were formatted to look like they had been recently published in a popular psychology magazine, and summarized research from a reputable university (see Appendix P). Both articles described the dating scene as being comprised of plenty of single and available people. However, in the *low quality alternatives* condition, the article went on to describe how the quality of singles in the dating pool is lacking, making it difficult it is to find a great partner despite the vast array. In the *high quality alternatives* condition, on the other hand, the article described the dating pool as being full of high quality singles, making it all the more likely that a great partner will be easy to come by.

After providing their "get to know you" information and having their picture taken, participants were directed to complete an ostensibly unrelated study while the researcher uploaded their information to be exchanged with the other participant. Here, they read their randomly assigned article and answered a few questions about it, under the guise that they would be helping to determine whether the article would be suitable for an unrelated study to be run in in the future. Afterwards, they were automatically

directed into the study of interest by the computer, at which point the procedure was identical to that presented in Study 2.

Method

Participants

Single, heterosexual women were recruited from the introductory psychology participant pool based on the same restrictions described for the first two studies. Once again, I excluded participants who were 23 years of age or older. The final sample consisted of 114 women ranging in age from 18 to 22 years ($M = 18.79$, $SD = 1.08$).

Results

Analysis Strategy

Given my expectation that the quality of available alternatives manipulation would wipe out the effects of self-esteem, I had planned to test my hypotheses with 2(desirable vs. undesirable other) x 2(high quality vs. low quality alternatives) ANOVAs. However, when I checked this assumption by running regression models including self-esteem and its interactions with both condition effects, several significant self-esteem effects emerged. Therefore, I could not conclude that the alternatives manipulation was a clean simulation of the mechanism driving self-esteem effects in previous studies, and I retained self-esteem as an independent variable in all analyses. Thus, my analyses were comprised of a series of regressions, including main effects of self-esteem (mean centered, $M = 5.52$), alternatives (-1 = low, 1 = high) and target (-1 = undesirable, 1 = desirable) in the first step, all two-way interactions in the second step, and the 3-way interaction in the third step. Significant effects, which were interpreted from the step at

which they were entered, are described below. Means and standard deviations for all variables are presented in Table 2.

Preliminary Analyses

Self-perceived mate value and aspirations. In contrast to the previous studies, regression analyses revealed main effects of self-esteem for self-perceptions of SCs (β = .55, $t(111) = 6.89$, $p = < .001$) and CQs (β = .32, $t(111) = 3.59$, $p = < .001$), partner ideals on SCs (β = .40, $t(111) = 4.48$, $p = < .001$) and CQs (β = .24, $t(111) = 2.64$, p = .010), and attainable levels of SCs (β = .43, $t(111) = 5.09$, $p = < .001$) and CQs (β = .35, $t(111) = 3.95$, $p < .001$) in a partner. Overall, HSEs reported more favourable self-perceptions of their SCs ($\hat{Y}_{HSE} = 72.66$, $\hat{Y}_{LSE} = 58.42$) and of their CQs ($\hat{Y}_{HSE} = 82.60$,$\hat{Y}_{LSE} = 75.10$), higher ratings of desired SCs ($\hat{Y}_{HSE} = 76.54$,$\hat{Y}_{LSE} = 68.81$) and of CQs ($\hat{Y}_{HSE} = 86.75$,$\hat{Y}_{LSE} = 81.98$) in a partner, and a higher standard of attainable SCs ($\hat{Y}_{HSE} = 71.20$,$\hat{Y}_{LSE} = 60.23$) and CQs ($\hat{Y}_{HSE} = 76.72$,$\hat{Y}_{LSE} = 67.77$) in a partner than did LSEs. There were no main effects for or interactions with the alternatives manipulation on any of these indices. Full results on these indices are presented in Table 3.

Target perceptions. Once again, the manipulation check on the targets' qualities showed that participants distinguished between the undesirable and the desirable target. Despite main effects for self-esteem (β_{SC} = .19, $t(110) = 2.49$, p = .014; β_{CQ} = .19, $t(110) = 2.09$, p = .039) whereby HSEs rated both targets more favourably ($\hat{Y}_{SC} = 63.18$, $\hat{Y}_{CQ} = 71.06$) than did LSEs ($\hat{Y}_{SC} = 58.98$,$\hat{Y}_{CQ} = 65.89$), a target effect on SCs (β = .57, $t(110) = 7.32$, $p < .001$) showed that undesirable targets were rated as having fewer SCs ($\hat{Y} = 54.90$) than desirables ($\hat{Y} = 67.27$). In contrast to the previous study employing the same manipulation, a target effect on CQs emerged (β = -.21, $t(110) = -2.35$, p = .021)

whereby the undesirable target was presumed to possess greater CQs ($\hat{Y}$ = 71.38) than the desirable target ($\hat{Y}$ = 65.57). There were no main effects for or interactions with the alternatives manipulation. Regression results for Target perceptions are presented in Table 4.

Post-Overture Analyses

Self-(un)certainty. As predicted, and consistent with previous studies, a main effect for self-esteem on self-concept clarity (β = -.50, $t(110)$ = -6.13, $p < .001$) showed that LSEs experienced greater self-concept uncertainty ($\hat{Y}$ = 2.73) than did HSEs ($\hat{Y}$ = 1.91), following the other's overture. As in previous studies, interactions with the desirability of the target were not significant, further supporting the notion that acceptance feedback does not differentially impact self-perceptions based on the source of the feedback. There were no main effects for or interactions with the alternatives manipulation. Results are shown in Table 5.

Post-overture/pre-decision emotional state. Replicating results from Studies 1 and 2, main effects emerged for self-esteem on all post-overture emotion composites. Relative to HSEs, LSEs felt greater uncertainty (β = -.34, $t(110)$ = -3.74, $p < .001$; $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = 1.82, $\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 2.44), anxiety (β = -.31, $t(110)$ = -3.42, p = .001; $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = 2.38, $\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 2.82), negative affect (β = -.30, $t(110)$ = -3.30, p = .001; $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = 1.15, $\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 1.40), and regret (β = -.23, $t(110)$ = -2.47, p = .015; $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = 1.31,$\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 1.58) as well as marginally lower positive affect (β = .17, $t(110)$ = 1.81, p = .074; $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = 2.81,$\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 2.58). Main effects for the target and alternatives manipulation were not significant, but there were two self-esteem by alternatives interactions that appeared for anxiety (β = -.21, $t(107)$ = -2.29, p = .024, see Figure 5) and negative affect (β = -.18, $t(107)$ = -1.91, p = .059, see

Figure 6). Tests of simple effects revealed a self-esteem effect for those in the high alternatives condition on anxiety (β = -.50, t(107) = -5.84, p < .001) and negative affect (β = -.45, t(107) = -5.00, p < .001) whereby LSEs felt worse than HSEs on both indices. There were also alternatives effects for LSEs on anxiety (β = .25, t(107) = 2.84, p = .005) and negative affect (β = .19, t(107) = 2.05, p = .043) such that both were higher for LSEs in the high alternatives condition than in the low alternatives condition. No other interactions were significant on these or other emotion composites. Full post-overture emotion regression results are presented in Table 6.

Pre-decision cognitions. There was a main effect of target desirability for interaction rewards (β = .25, t(110) = 2.75, p = .007) whereby participants presumed that an interaction with the desirable target would be more rewarding ($\hat{Y}$ = 2.88) than a meeting with the undesirable target ($\hat{Y}$ = 2.57). A main effect of target desirability for interaction threats (β = .20, t(110) = 2.55, p = .012) indicated that participants acknowledge the risk that comes with the potential for reward, assigning greater interaction threats to a meeting with a desirable target ($\hat{Y}$ = 3.18) than with an undesirable target ($\hat{Y}$ = 2.83). Finally, there was a main effect for self-esteem on interaction threats (β = -.53 t(110) = -6.76, p < .001), indicating that relative to HSEs ($\hat{Y}$ = 2.55), LSEs were more inclined to perceive any face-to-face meeting with a target as threatening ($\hat{Y}$ = 3.47). Results for interaction rewards and threats, which were consistent with those found in Study 2, are presented in Table 7.

Analyses of participants' predictions for invitation acceptance outcomes revealed a significant main effect for self-esteem on evaluative concerns (β = -.44, t(110) = -5.22, p < .001), whereby LSEs had higher evaluative concerns ($\hat{Y}$ = 4.33) than did HSEs ($\hat{Y}$ =

3.56). There was also a target effect for evaluative concerns (β = .18, t(110*)* = *2*.19, p = .031) indicating that participants were more worried about a potential meeting with the desirable ($\hat{Y}$ = *4*.11), rather than the undesirable target ($\hat{Y}$ = *3*.78). In contrast to Study 2, these main effects were qualified by a self-esteem by target interaction (β = .21, t(107*)* = *2*.54, p = .012, see Figure 7). Tests of simple effects revealed a target effect for HSEs whereby their evaluative concerns were much lower for the undesirable target than for the desirable target (β = .39, t(107*)* = *4*.75, p < .001). Further, there were effects of self-esteem for desirable targets (β = -.33, t(107*)* = -3.11, p = .002) and undesirable targets (β = -.57, t(107*)* = -8.00, p < .001) whereby HSEs were less concerned about the others' evaluations than were LSEs.

There were no significant effects for participants' predictions for a positive meeting, but regression analyses on participants' expectations for positive outcomes following a meeting revealed a main effect for Target (β = .35, t(110*)* = *3*.97, p < .001). People assumed that they would be more likely to continue having positive relations with the desirable target after a laboratory meeting ($\hat{Y}$ = *3*.43) than with the undesirable target ($\hat{Y}$ = *2*.77). All results for participants' predictions if they accepted the invitation are presented in Table 8.

In contrast to Study 2, analyses of expected costs to rejecting the target's invitation were in line with original predictions, revealing a main effect for self-esteem on both predicted concern for other (β = -.23, t(110*)* = -2.50, p = .014) and rumination (β = -.32, t(110*)* = -3.70, p < .001). LSEs were more inclined toward concerns about the target's response ($\hat{Y}$ = *3*.26) and their own rumination ($\hat{Y}$ = *3*.49) than were HSEs who showed lower other-focused concern ($\hat{Y}$ = *2*.76) and lower likelihood of rumination ($\hat{Y}$ =

2.79). There was also a main effect of target on rumination (β = .25, t(110*)* = *2*.93, p = .004) whereby participants thought they would be more likely to ruminate about their decision if they were to reject the desirable target ($\hat{Y}$ = *3*.42) than if they refused the undesirable target ($\hat{Y}$ = *2*.86), suggesting that people are aware that the desirable other represents a valuable connection. These results are displayed in Table 9.

The Decision

Compared to Study 2, participants were slightly more likely to say no (57.5%) than yes (42.5%) to the other's overture. Regression results predicting the decision were similar to those found in Study 2. First, participants were more interested in meeting the desirable other than the undesirable other (β = .27, t(110*)* = *2*.95, p = .004; ($\hat{Y}_{desirable}$ = *3*.32, $\hat{Y}_{undesirable}$ = *2*.65). Following suit, when it came to their actual choice, participants were almost twice as likely to say yes to the desirable target's invitation than to the undesirable target's invitation (B = .67, *Wald*(1*)* = 2.94, p = .086; *Odds Ratio* = 1.96). As in previous studies, I tested whether there were any predictors of participants' time to make the decision about whether to meet the other and none of the predictors in the regression model were significant. These results are displayed in Tables 10 through 12.

After the Decision

As in Study 2, the sample size in Study 3 did not allow enough power to include decision and its interactions in the model. Furthermore, the addition of a second condition variable created a multicolinearity problem for testing a regression model with all independent variables, decision, and their interactions. Therefore, results presented in text will follow the same pattern of analyses conducted for pre-decision variables (main

effects for self-esteem, target, alternatives, and all resulting interactions)[9].

Decision satisfaction. A main effect for self-esteem (β = .23, $t(110) = 2.55$, p = .012) indicated that HSEs were more satisfied with their decisions ($\hat{Y}$= 3.97) than were LSEs ($\hat{Y}$= 3.61), and a trending main effect for target desirability (β = -.16, $t(110) = -1.71$, p = .089) showed that those who were faced with a decision about a desirable target were less satisfied with their eventual decision ($\hat{Y}$= 3.67) than those who decided whether or not to meet the undesirable target ($\hat{Y}$= 3.91). These effects were qualified by a 3-way interaction between self-esteem, target, and alternatives (β = .17, $t(106) = 1.85$, p = .068; see Figure 8). Tests of simple effects revealed a self-esteem effect for undesirable others in the low alternatives condition (β = .38, $t(106) = 2.18$, p = .032), and for desirable others in the high alternatives condition (β = .34, $t(106) = 2.10$, p = .038). In both cases, HSEs were more satisfied with their decisions than were LSEs. A target effect for LSEs in the high alternatives condition (β = -.45, $t(106) = -2.33$, p = .022) revealed that LSEs who read about there being plenty of quality mates in the dating pool felt more satisfied with their decisions about an undesirable other than about a desirable other. Finally, an alternatives effect for LSEs responding to undesirable others (β = .42, $t(106) = 2.19$, p = .031) showed that LSEs satisfaction with their decision about undesirable targets was greater when they had been exposed to the high alternatives passage than the low alternatives passage. Full results are presented in Table 13.

Post-decision emotional state. There were main effects for self-esteem on all

[9] In Appendix N, I have presented separate models for those in the high alternatives (HiAlt) and low alternatives (LoAlt) conditions, which include decision, self-esteem, target, and their interactions, though these results should be interpreted within the context of the aforementioned statistical limitations.

post-decision emotion indices. Replicating the results from Study 2, LSEs reported greater feelings of uncertainty (β = -.27, t(110) = -2.90, p = .005; $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = 1.53, $\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 1.98), anxiety (β = -40, t(110) = -4.74, p < .001; $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = 2.17, $\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 2.88), negative affect (β = -.32, t(110) = -3.50, p = .001; $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = 1.09, $\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 1.34), and regret (β = -.37, t(110) = -4.19, p < .001, $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = 1.26, $\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 1.68), as well as lower positive affect (β = .21, t(110) = 2.28, p = .025; $\hat{Y}_{HSE}$ = 2.84, $\hat{Y}_{LSE}$ = 2.48).

There was only one significant target effect on post-decision emotional states. Following the trend from Study 2, those who responded to a desirable target felt more anxiety than those who responded to an undesirable target (β = .18, t(110) = 2.07, p = .041; $\hat{Y}_{desirable}$ = 2.68, $\hat{Y}_{undesirable}$ = 2.37). There was, however, an interaction between the target and alternatives manipulation for post-decision positive affect (β = .20, t(106) = 2.14, p = .035; see Figure 9). Tests of simple effects revealed a target effect in the high alternatives condition, (β = .29, t(107) = 2.23, p = .030) whereby participants who had read about there being plenty of high quality mates in the dating pool and responded to a desirable other felt more positive affect than those who had read the same passage before deciding about an undesirable other. A trend for alternatives in the desirable other condition (β = .23, t(107) = 1.78, p = .081) also suggested that after having responded to a desirable target, those who had read the high alternatives passage felt better than those who had read the low alternatives passage. Finally, there was a trending interaction effect between the alternatives and target manipulations on post-decision regret (β = .15, t(107) = 1.72, p = .088; see Figure 10), though post-hoc tests did not reveal any significant simple effects. Full results for all post-decision emotions are presented in Table 14.

Discussion

Though the relative difficulty LSEs experience in responding to others' romantic overtures was consistently demonstrated in Study 3, the addition of the alternatives manipulation clearly contributed to the process. Unexpectedly, there were no main effects of the alternatives manipulation at all. However, its addition to the study resulted in several main effects of and interactions with self-esteem and target that did not appear in the previous study employing the same target manipulation. Therefore, it would seem that merely being attuned to the availability of singles comprising the dating pool – whatever their quality – activates something for HSEs and LSEs alike. I return to this point in the general discussion.

General Discussion

In three studies, I set out to investigate the process by which LSEs and HSEs make decisions about pursuing potentially romantic liaisons with desirable and undesirable others. I had predicted difficulty for LSEs faced with an opportunity with a less than desirable mate. On the one hand, their unsatisfied need for social connections and lack of confidence in their ability to secure high quality partners would drive them toward grasping at any social opportunity, whereas on the other hand, attunement to the lackluster qualities of the undesirable partner would not inspire much excitement about settling for a "sure thing". Therefore, I expected LSEs, relative to their HSE counterparts, to experience emotional and cognitive distress when forced to respond to an undesirable other's advances, and to dwell in that negativity after having made a decision. In part, my predictions were supported. Compared to HSEs, LSEs experienced greater feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, negative affect, and regret, as well as a more pessimistic set of cognitive appraisals as they considered the consequences of both accepting and rejecting

the target's invitation for a face-to-face meeting. What's more, however, is that LSEs experienced this same array of distress in the face of desirable targets!

Indeed, though HSEs seemed to appropriately distinguish between targets in a few of their evaluations leading up to their decision (e.g., feeling greater positive affect and evaluative concerns for the desirable than for the undesirable target), LSEs' thoughts and feelings were functionally identical for both desirable and undesirable targets, despite their ability to distinguish between the qualities each presumably possessed. Whether this means that LSEs are equally flabbergasted by the mere presentation of any dating opportunity, or whether the undesirable target was still in their range of desirable partners is unknown. That is to say, HSEs might have been more discerning simply because they would never have entertained the idea of dating the undesirable target, whereas the undesirable target might not have met a threshold of what is considered undesirable to LSEs. So, despite successfully manipulating the extent to which desirable and undesirable targets possessed valued qualities relative to each other, it is difficult to speak to whether they were perceived as great, terrible, neutral, or at any other point along an evaluative continuum. Future research would benefit from testing HSEs' and LSEs' thresholds for what they consider desirable and undesirable.

This ambiguity in participants' evaluations of the targets might help us to understand why there were no effects of target desirability on LSEs' or HSEs' reports of self-concept clarity, following the overture. LSEs, who do not expect acceptance from others, are thrown off by others' indications that they find them valuable or interesting (Stinson et al., 2010). The resulting prediction was that LSEs, hearing that the target was interested in their qualities, would feel epistemic uncertainty faced with the acceptance

implied by the other's overture, whereas HSEs' sense of self would remain undisturbed. However, varying the desirability of the target opened up further possibilities. If people hold an implicit assumption that people approach those who are "in their league", then the overture from an undesirable other might have different implications for HSEs and LSEs. Namely, LSEs might not feel as much uncertainty as a result of an undesirable target's overture because it is more in line with their expectations than acceptance from a heartthrob. HSEs, too, could be affected by targets, and confused by an undesirable's presumption that it is acceptable to make a pass at them (though they could as easily assume that everyone would *try*).

It turns out that none of these scenarios played out. Instead, LSEs showed the same pattern of self-uncertainty reported in other studies of self-concept clarity. It is possible that this main effect simply reflected baseline levels of self-concept clarity for LSEs (e.g., Campbell et al., 1996) and had little to do with the overture from the other. On the other hand, this effect might represent an additive effect of LSEs' baseline dispositions coupled with epistemic confusion resulting from another's romantic interest. Unfortunately, without a control group in which there is no acceptance feedback to activate epistemic uncertainty, it is impossible to determine precisely what is responsible for these strong effects. Although neither HSEs' nor LSEs' sense of self was differentially confused by the other's overture, once again, the fact that they did distinguish between target desirability on both the social commodities and communal qualities manipulations suggests that their epistemic systems did not discriminate based on these relative differences in the qualities possessed by the provider of acceptance feedback. However, the possibility remains that the epistemic system would be more

reactive had the gap in target desirability been wider, and the undesirable perceived as blow average or revolting.

To probe this possibility, future research might benefit from testing multiple targets with varied qualities. The manipulated qualities in both the CQ and SC descriptions in the current investigation were based on the characteristics that generally influence women's attraction (e.g., kindness, good looks), but to some extent attraction can be idiosyncratic. Rather than relying on the objective difference in targets' possession of valued qualities to drive participants' reactions, assessments of participants' evaluation of a target relative to their own idiosyncratic ideals might be more impactful to their epistemic systems. Some post-hoc analyses of the data collected in the current investigation suggest that this is a fruitful avenue to pursue. Indeed, in Study 3, LSEs experienced greater epistemic confusion as their evaluations of the target increased, relative to their ideals, whereas HSEs' sense of self-concept clarity seemed to be unaffected by the extent to which the target measured up to their hopes. It seems reasonable, then, that future research should attempt to more directly assess participants' unique preferences for a target.

Are HSEs' and LSEs' Perceptions of Target Desirability Motivated?

Another possibility put forth at the inception of these studies was that people's perceptions of a target's qualities would depend on their perceived ability to attain them. Studies of assortative mating – the process by which individuals tend to match with people of similar mate value –ask: do people with low perceived mate value match with similar others because they have a legitimate preference for lower caliber partners or because that is all they can attain (see Ellis & Kelley, 1999)?

The results from these studies would suggest that the latter is more likely, at least when it comes to social commodities. Self-esteem did not interact with target desirability in participants' ratings. Though HSEs were more generous in their ratings overall, the lack of interaction suggests that LSEs are not motivated to perceive undesirables – who are presumably more attainable – as more enchanting than they actually are. This is consistent with Kavanagh et al. (2010) in which a reduction in state self-esteem caused participants to downgrade their perceived compatibility with high-caliber mates, but not to boost their compatibility with low-caliber partners.

Still, one might argue that LSEs could have a preference for lower-caliber partners, despite clearly perceiving their qualities. This was not the case. The only predictor of desire to meet the other was the desirability of the target in the two studies where SCs were manipulated. Therefore, LSEs actually had a preference to pursue the desirable over the undesirable target, even though he too aroused negative emotion.

What do HSEs and LSEs Ultimately Decide (and Does it Matter)?

The begging question, then, is if LSEs both accurately perceive and lack interest in undesirable relative to desirable targets, are they still willing to settle by choice? It would seem that at least the initial answer is no. Across all three studies, LSE were no more likely to seize an undesirable opportunity than were HSEs. Just as LSEs and HSEs were equally adept at distinguishing between the qualities of the desirable and the undesirable other and equally likely to show more interest in the desirable than the undesirable other, they were equally prone to actually accept the advances of the desirable other over the undesirable other. It appears, then, that LSEs are not as disadvantaged in this position as we might have thought, since they ultimately come to

the same decision as their HSE counterparts. But is the actual decision the most important part of this exercise? Or is the process (and its aftermath) just as, if not more, important?

Notably, LSEs faced a much more stressful process in coming to the same decision as HSEs. Comparatively, they failed to capitalize on the positivity associated with the other's expression of interest, and they experienced an array of distress emotions including anxiety, uncertainty, and negative feelings before ultimately deciding whether to meet the target. It is difficult to isolate a single impetus for these feelings, however. For instance, LSEs' tendency toward pessimism and reports of their emotional states are generally lower than those of HSEs (Baumeister et al, 2003). To some extent, then, self-esteem differences in LSEs' and HSEs' reported feelings might just reflect individual differences in baseline emotional states. On the other hand, these feelings might also comprise reactions to the other's overture and feelings about the impending decision to accept or reject it. A likely scenario is that the emotional states of HSEs and LSEs are comprised of some mix of these drivers.

Sadly, there is no relief for LSEs even after the decision to accept or reject the offer has been made. Immediately after making their decision they report more regret than HSEs, regardless of the decision they made. The fact that this occurs supports the notion that either choice to accept or reject the other's invitation is perceived as costly to LSEs. Rejecting the invitation presents a missed opportunity that may not come along again, whereas accepting it introduces anxieties about the upcoming interaction and the potential for rejection therein (Cameron et al., 2010).

This attention to the costs associated with the decision might have further implications for the way in which LSEs experience the aftermath of their decision.

Specifically, this negativity experienced by LSEs throughout and following their decision-making process may well contaminate their satisfaction with the bonds they choose to develop, or the quality of their renewed singledom after having passed up a connection opportunity (see Heitmann, Lehmann, & Herrmann, 2007). Satisfied HSEs would not be motivated to continue comparing their outcome to the unchosen option, however, and would be disposed to carry that positivity through either post-decision scenario. In other words, HSEs, who do not suffer a great deal through their process, should be able to focus on what they have – either a chance at a date or the freedom to pursue other opportunities. These effects are especially meaningful in light of the methodological constraints making it difficult to interpret any results that include decision as a factor in participants' post-decision emotions. Though it is certainly plausible that LSEs and HSEs feel differently after accepting or rejecting a desirable or an undesirable other's invitation, these main effects of self-esteem are telling of HSEs' abilities to handle with equanimity yet another interpersonal context in which LSEs struggle.

What did the Alternatives Manipulation Actually Manipulate?

With no dispute as to whether LSEs struggle more than HSEs in this particular romantic conundrum, the question remains as to why this is the case. LSEs' rejection sensitivity and pessimistic forecasts of gaining others' acceptance are well-established (e.g., Anthony et al., 2007), so it stands to reason that these perceptions would tarnish any optimism about their future prospects and motivate their seizing of a sure opportunity. However, my attempt to manipulate this view with passages depicting the dating scene as full of quality available mates, versus full of singles who ought to be dodged, did not

appear to have the intended effect. In fact, rather than alter participants' dispositional tendencies, it seemed to exacerbate them! Even before the target's introduction and overture, strong self-esteem differences emerged for self-ratings, attainable partner quality ratings, and desired partner quality ratings – patterns that did not emerge as strongly (or in some cases, at all) in Studies 1 and 2. It seems, then, that merely reading a passage about the state of the dating scene activated perceptual biases associated with self-esteem, regardless of whether the article's content was written to caution or encourage. So what was the impact of each of these articles on HSEs and LSEs?

The few interaction effects that emerged for the alternatives manipulation suggests that there were some perceivable differences between them. These differences are perhaps best interpreted with consideration given to LSEs' and HSEs' baseline perceptions of the quality of available alternatives on the scene. For HSEs, neither article posed a threat. From their view, whether there are plenty or few great available men should not matter because they are confident in their abilities to attract one of the best, and perhaps already have, in the past. Meanwhile, the low alternatives version of the article might have been disheartening, albeit consistent, with LSEs' views, whereas the high alternatives version might have introduced an unintended threat of competition for mates. The article specified that there were many great singles on the dating market, which implies that there are many datable women out there too. Judging by LSEs' self-rated characteristics and their low confidence in their abilities to attract a man high in SCs and CQs, the idea of there being plenty of wonderful available men *and* women out there could easily discourage them. In other words, being told that there are many quality singles on the scene so finding one should not be so hard might just alert LSEs to their

failure to do so already, and highlight their personal inadequacies that make them less competitive in a dating world full of quality singles. In essence, rather than encourage LSEs that their future is bright, the high quality alternatives manipulation might have unintentionally aroused their dating insecurities and pessimism. That LSEs felt more pre-decision anxiety and negative affect in the high quality alternatives condition than in the low quality alternatives condition supports this hypothesis. Perhaps they assumed that they would not measure up to the target's expectations given all the other high caliber candidates with whom the target might be used to interacting. In the low quality alternatives condition, on the other hand, perhaps LSEs could console themselves that at least they would not be expected to be great, and thus experience less pre-decision anxiety and negative affect.

Though unrelated to self-esteem, the post-decision positive affect interaction between the alternatives manipulation and target desirability further indicates that there was some evaluation of the target relative to alternatives presented in the manipulated articles. Without regard to the decision they made, participants in the desirable other condition exposed to the high alternatives article reported more positive affect than those exposed to the low alternatives article, perhaps because in that scenario, the decision really would not matter. Seeing a desirable target, participants received some confirmation that desirable men are available. Coupled with the notion that there are plenty of desirable men out there, these participants were in the ideal situation. If they accepted the target's request, they would meet a desirable guy. If they declined it, however, they could still feel confident that that they would be able to acquire another one once they left the laboratory.

Implications, Limitations, and Future Directions

So what does all this mean for Lois? It seems likely that that Lois would, indeed have a difficult time responding to Vern's advances. What she might not have considered, however, is that if Ben were to make the same approach, her cognitive-emotional wheels might be just as likely to spin a web of uncertainty, anxiety, and negative emotion. The discouraging contribution from this particular set of studies is that there seems not to be a perfect scenario of a safe date or a perfect match to appease the rejection sensitive sensibilities of LSEs. An abundance of literature has already demonstrated their difficulty in initiating romantic liaisons (e.g., Cameron et al., 2010; Cameron et al., 2012) but these data seem to suggest that even when others make the first move, LSEs are plagued by distress that impedes their seizing of a readily available opportunity – desirable or otherwise. It is possible that this is just symptomatic of the chronic negative outlook characteristic of LSEs, and not the direct result of an available dating opportunity. Even so, it is disheartening to see that LSEs' insecurities are not ameliorated by another's expression of interest, their implied approval, and a desirable social opportunity.

This finding is one of the major contributions gleaned from the current set of studies. This was the first investigation to place LSEs and HSEs as recipients of a direct romantic overture, rather than as initiators of potentially romantic scenarios. To this point, these studies have corroborated the *signature styles* (Murray, Holmes, & Collins, 2006) of LSEs and HSEs that seem to influence their motivations in other risk-laden interpersonal contexts. Here, even where acceptance is implied, evaluative concerns and anxieties prevail for LSEs. However, the current investigation has also illuminated some

new complexities for this particular context – namely, that the behaviours of LSEs and HSEs do not differ so much as do their cognitive-emotional reactions to the situation.

Most notably, the results of these studies clearly delineate the process of making the decision from the decision itself – which has important implications for how we think about the role of self-esteem in interpersonal contexts. Specifically, in these studies, self-esteem had no impact on the actual decisions participants carried out (i.e., whether or not they would meet the target). However, on nearly every emotion index and many of the cognitive measures, self-esteem effects clearly demonstrated a troubled process for LSEs relative to HSEs. Though this is hardly ideal, there is perhaps *some* good news in this fact that LSEs are no less adept than HSEs in their abilities reject a potentially costly social relationship or to take a valued interpersonal risk, at least when some guaranteed level of acceptance is conveyed. Knowing that their decisions are ultimately driven by their unbiased evaluation of the target before them, and not by their cognitive-emotional turmoil leading up to it, means that attention should be paid to ameliorating LSEs' skills to handle the difficult decision, rather than coaching them to change their interpersonal behavior, per se.

However, these contributions should be regarded as preliminary evidence for a process requiring further investigation, as the summation of these studies is constrained by several limitations. First, there is some inconsistency in results across studies. It is probably safe to assume that the manipulation of CQs in Study 1 produced different patterns than the manipulation of SCs in Studies 2 and 3 – especially given the high acceptance rate of 80%. However, because the mechanism behind attempts to manipulate perceived alternatives remains somewhat elusive, it is difficult to draw clear conclusions

about what is driving HSEs' and LSEs' decision-making process. Furthermore, some of the inconsistencies between Studies 2 and 3 might just be attributable to smaller sample sizes in Study 2, which did not allow some of the effects to emerge at higher levels of statistical significance. It is worth noting that where significant effects appeared in one study but not others, the same trend often appeared in the others, even if it did not reach standard levels of statistical significance, suggesting that it was indeed sample size that led to many of the apparent inconsistencies across studies.

Low sample sizes also lent to the problem of not being able to include participants' decisions as a factor in any post-decision analyses. Given that agreeing to or declining the meeting represented not only a difference in participants' choices, but a difference in the potential outcomes they would experience, finding a way to examine its influence seems crucial to understanding the entirety of this process. Therefore, future research should attempt to independently manipulate participants' perceptions of the control they have over their choice to meet or not meet an interested other as well as the actual outcome of meeting or not meeting an interested other. Despite this considerable limitation, the fact that post-decision effects emerged in the present studies is telling of just how complex a process this is – that even without regard to the outcome participants choose, their satisfaction and emotional reactions are at least somewhat dependent on their personalities and the desirability of the target. This provides further evidence that the decision making *process*, and not just the decision itself, is of utmost importance in defining individuals' interpersonal experiences.

The abundance of self-esteem effects relative to the lack of its predicted interactions with target desirability also leaves some room for exploration of what is

driving the decision-making process. Although LSEs and HSEs made the same decisions about the targets before them, these decisions might well have been driven by different mechanisms (e.g., fear of rejection by a desirable target versus fear of being miserable with an undesirable target). Future research might benefit from defining and testing multiple mechanisms driving the self-esteem effects reported in these studies.

It is also worth considering whether the mere availability of an acceptance-secured opportunity drives negative emotions for LSEs, relative to HSEs, or whether their experience is truly dependent on the characteristics of the target. Comparison to a "no overture" control group could at least inform about the source of the self-esteem effects on self-concept clarity. However, a control group of this kind would not allow for assessing participants' decision-making process. To this point, it might be useful to separate pieces of the process under investigation so that reactions to an overture, consideration of the decision to meet, the actual decision to meet, and its aftermath, could all be studied in isolation. Moreover, studying the components of this process one at a time would eliminate the possibility that answering several modified versions of the questionnaires multiple times (i.e., the SASI and the emotion measures) might have influenced responding.

Another avenue to consider might be that the manipulation of the undesirable target was not strong enough to produce the clear and consistent differentiation between the undesirable and desirable targets on the cognitive-emotional experience measures. Both targets were rated as well above average in their qualities, so a truly repugnant undesirable target might have tempered LSEs' decision anxieties and soothed their evaluative concerns, for example.

Finally, the generalizability of the results insofar as how self-esteem drives the seizing of potentially romantic opportunities is limited to young adult women in a university setting. Though this sample was justifiable for this preliminary investigation, true understanding of how self-esteem drives women's responses to romantic opportunities will require research with participants at different ages (and stages) of life. I would expect, for example, that the increased biological and social pressures to secure a mate experienced by women in their late 20s and early 30s could increase the importance of the dilemma, perhaps increasing decisional conflict about available opportunities or tipping their favour toward settling for any target. Moreover, it is likely that older women have had more experience in, or at least observing, the dating arena, lending to a less malleable set of baseline beliefs about the availability of quality alternatives on the scene.

Another avenue worth pursuing in the name of generalizability is to conduct similar research with men as the targets of women's romantic overtures. For instance, men's and women's standards for seizing a potential dating opportunity may differ. These studies utilized only an implied romantic opportunity (i.e., knowing the target was single and interested) without any guarantee of a long-term connection. Although men's and women's standards for long-term partners tend to converge, men have a much wider range of qualities they'd accept in a woman given a short term context (e.g., a date; Kenrick et al., 1993). I would expect, then, that men would be even more likely than women to accept an opportunity to interact with a female stranger.

It would also be important to pursue this research paradigm with men given that self-esteem moderates men's relationship initiation behavior when they are in the position to make, rather than receive, a romantic advance (Cameron et al., in press).

Though the context of a woman making a direct overture of interest might present a norm violation in such a paradigm, it would be interesting to see whether HSE and LSE men would perceive this as off-putting or too sweet an opportunity to pass up.

Suffice to say there are plenty of future research directions that are ripe for exploration. This current set of studies has made clear that evaluating and acting upon a time-limited, acceptance-secured social opportunity is as fraught with complexity as making one's own moves toward desirable others. Ultimately, understanding the mechanisms driving the cognitive-emotional process of responding to romantic advances and dealing with the aftermath of those decisions could benefit the development of interventions that allow for being appropriately delighted or deterred by the romantic overtures of desirable and undesirable others, respectively.

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Appendix A

Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)

How do you feel generally?

Think about each statement that follows and rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with it on the following scale.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very strongly disagree								Very strongly agree

1. _____ I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.
2. _____ I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
3. _____ All in all I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.*
4. _____ I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. _____ I feel that I do not have much to be proud of.*
6. _____ I take a positive attitude toward myself.
7. _____ On the whole I am satisfied with myself.
8. _____ I wish that I could have more respect for myself.*
9. _____ I certainly feel useless at times.*
10. _____ At times, I think I am no good at all.*

Note. Reverse code items marked with *

Appendix B

Social Attributes and Skills Inventory (SASI; Anthony et al., 2007)

SASI characteristics			
Interesting to talk to*	Exciting Personality*	Good sense of humour*	Honest†
Sexy*	Physically Active*	Wealthy*	Social Status*
Physically Attractive*	Popular*	Intelligent	Accepting†
Kind and Understanding†	Warm†	Affectionate†	Responsive and Supportive†
Socially Skilled	Loving†	Loyal†	

Note. Items marked * formed the Social Commodities subscale and those marked † formed the Communal Qualities subscale

Instructions for Self-perceptions:

Slide the indicator along the bar to indicate the extent to which you possess each of the following characteristics, relative to other people.

Instructions for Desired Partner Characteristics:

Imagine the kind of partner you would be very happy to date. Using the sliding scales below, indicate the extent to which **your ideal relationship partner** would possess each of the following characteristics.

Instructions for Attainable Partner Characteristics:

Now we want you to think about the kind of person you think you're capable of attracting. In other words, what kind of person would want to date you? Using the sliding scales below, indicate the extent to which **the kind of person who would be interested in dating you** would possess each of the following characteristics.

Instructions for Target Evaluation:

*Based on your interaction partner's profile, what kind of person do you think he is? Using the sliding scales below, indicate the extent to which **your interaction partner** probably possesses each of the following characteristics. Your interaction partner **will not** see your responses to these questions.*

Where "0" means you are **lower than the rest of the population** on that characteristic.
And "50" means you are **average for that characteristic.**
And "100" means you are **higher than the rest of the population** on that characteristic.

You may choose any number between 0 and 100 when indicating your self-rating.

Appendix C

Bogus Personality Test

Instructions*: For the questions that will follow, indicate which of the options presented best describes you and your perspective. Do not think too hard about the answers, just go with your gut feelings. There will be 41 questions, presented one at a time. Click 'next' when you are ready to begin.*

1. In doing ordinary things are your more likely to:
    a. do it the usual way, *or*
    b. do it your own way?
2. Would you say you are more:
    a. serious and determined, *or*
    b. easy-going?
3. Do you prize more in yourself:
    a. a vivid imagination, *or*
    b. a strong sense of reality?
4. Are you more attracted to:
    a. imaginative people, *or*
    b. sensible people?
5. At a party, do you:
    a. interact with many, including strangers, *or*
    b. interact with a few, known to you?
6. Are you more likely to trust your:
    a. experience, *or*
    b. hunch?
7. Which seems the greater error:
    a. to be too passionate, *or*
    b. to be too objective?
8. In your social groups do you:
    a. keep abreast of other's happenings, *or*
    b. get behind on the news?
9. Do you feel better about:
    a. having purchased, *or*
    b. having the option to buy?
10. Children often do not:
    a. make themselves useful enough, *or*
    b. exercise their fantasy enough?
11. Are you more often:
    a. a cool-headed person, *or*
    b. a warm-hearted person?
12. Is it harder for you to:
    a. utilize others, *or*
    b. identify with others?
13. In making decisions do you feel more comfortable with:

a. standards, *or*
b. feelings?

14. Which rules you more:
    a. your head, *or*
    b. your heart?
15. Do you prefer to work:
    a. just 'whatever', *or*
    b. to deadlines?
16. Should one usually let events occur:
    a. randomly and by chance, *or*
    b. by careful selection and choice?
17. In approaching others is your inclination to be:
    a. personal, *or*
    b. objective?
18. Do you tend to choose:
    a. rather carefully, *or*
    b. somewhat impulsively?
19. Do you go more by:
    a. facts, *or*
    b. principles?
20. Are you inclined to be:
    a. somewhat reserved, *or*
    b. easy to approach?
21. Does it bother you more having things:
    a. incomplete, *or*
    b. completed?
22. Are you more:
    a. leisurely, *or*
    b. punctual?
23. Do you prefer the:
    a. unplanned event, *or*
    b. planned event?
24. Do you:
    a. speak easily and at length with strangers, *or*
    b. find little to say to strangers?
25. Do you see yourself as basically:
    a. the unstructured and unscheduled, *or*
    b. the structured and scheduled?
26. Are you more comfortable:
    a. before a decision, *or*
    b. after a decision?
27. In company do you:
    a. initiate conversation, *or*
    b. wait to be approached?
28. When the phone rings do you:
    a. hope someone else will answer, *or*

b. hasten to get to it first?

29. In phoning do you:
    a. rehearse what you'll say, *or*
    b. rarely question that it will all be said?
30. Do you prefer:
    a. many friends with brief contact, *or*
    b. a few friends with more lengthy contact?
31. Which is more admirable:
    a. the ability to organize and be methodical, *or*
    b. the ability to adapt and make do?
32. Facts:
    a. illustrate principles, *or*
    b. speak for themselves?
33. Are you more:
    a. firm than gentle, *or*
    b. gentle than firm?
34. Is it preferable mostly to:
    a. just let things happen, *or*
    b. make sure things are arranged?
35. Which is more of a compliment:
    a. 'That is a very sentimental person', *or*
    b. 'That is a very logical person'?
36. At parties, do you:
    a. stay late, with increasing energy, *or*
    b. leave early, with decreased energy?
37. Are you more impressed by:
    a. emotions, *or*
    b. principles?
38. Are you more likely to:
    a. see how others see, *or*
    b. see how others are useful?
39. Which do you wish more for yourself:
    a. clarity of reason, *or*
    b. strength of compassion?
40. Are you more frequently:
    a. a fanciful sort of person, *or*
    b. a practical sort of person?
41. Does new and non routine interaction with others:
    a. stimulate and energize you, *or*
    b. tax your reserves?

Appendix D

Target Personality Profiles

Desirable Target

Harvard-Ashby Personality Inventory
Relationship Personality Profile Type: Caladium™

Caladiums™ are smart, funny, and independent. Research conducted in both naturalistic and experimental settings has shown that Caladiums™ are quite content as individuals, which often enriches the quality of their close relationships. While others generally find Caladiums™ fun to be around, they also find them easy to rely on in times of need. Their easy-going personalities make it easy for them to connect with most people, and when they do, they are loyal to their bonds. Caladiums™ care about their relationships with others and always act with good intentions.

Undesirable Target

Harvard-Ashby Personality Inventory
Relationship Personality Profile Type: Caladium™

Caladiums™ are smart, funny, and independent. Research conducted in both naturalistic and experimental settings has shown that Caladiums™ are quite content as individuals, which sometimes hampers the quality of their close relationships. While others generally find Caladiums™ fun to be around, they sometimes find them difficult to rely on in times of need. Their stubborn personalities make it difficult for them to connect with some people, but when they do, they are loyal to their bonds. Caladiums™ care about their relationships with others and usually act with good intentions.

Appendix E

Overture from Target

The other participant has read your profile and indicated his interest in meeting you

Not at all Very Much

He has included the following message

i know this is just a psych study but i read your profile and I think we'd get along. let's tell the experimenter we want to meet after the study... what do u think?

You will have the opportunity to respond to the other participant once you have read his profile and responded to a series of questions.

Your responses to the questions that follow **WILL NOT** be shared with the other participant

Appendix F

Self-Concept Clarity Scale (Adapted from Campbell et al., 1996)

Instructions: *The following questions ask about your thoughts and feelings right now. Please use the following scale to indicate your agreement with the following statements:*

1. My beliefs about myself conflict with one another right now.
2. Right now I have one opinion of myself and tomorrow I might have a different opinion.
3. I am wondering about what kind of person I really am.
4. Right now I feel that I am not really the person that I appear to be.
5. Thinking about the kind of person I was in the past, I'm not sure what I was really like.
6. I am not currently experiencing any conflict between the different aspects of my personality.*
7. Right now I think I know other people better than I know myself.
8. My beliefs about myself seem to change very frequently.
9. If I were asked to describe my personality right now, my description might end up being different from what it was a few days ago.
10. Even if I wanted to, I don't think I could tell someone what I'm really like right now.
11. Right now I have a clear sense of who I am and what I am.*
12. It is hard for me to make up my mind about things right now because I don't know what I really want.

Note. Reverse code items marked with *

Appendix G

Items to Assess Emotional State

Using the scale below, please indicate how you feel right now.

1. Conflicted [1]
2. Confused [1]
3. Uncertain [1]
4. anxious [2]
5. indecisive [1]
6. certain (R) [2]
7. guilty [5]
8. relaxed (R) [2]
9. At peace
10. nervous [2]
11. embarrassed [5]
12. excited [3]
13. flattered [3]
14. Disgusted [4]
15. relieved
16. regretful [5]
17. sad [4]
18. unhappy [4]
19. Happy [3]
20. Desperate
21. Lonely
22. Friendly [3]
23. Resentful [5]
24. Annoyed [4]
25. Hostile [4]
26. Upset [4]
27. indifferent
28. apathetic [4]
29. tense [2]
30. frustrated [4]
31. shy
32. surprised [3]
33. proud [3]
34. Ashamed [5]
35. At ease (R) [2]
36. Scared [2]
37. Enthusiastic [3]
38. Distressed [4]
39. confident [3]

Note. Items comprising each subscale are marked with identical superscripts. Unmarked items did not load consistently onto a subscale and were dropped from analyses.
1=uncertainty, *2*=anxiety, *3*=positive affect, *4*=negative affect, *5*=regret.

Appendix H

Baseline/Ceiling Adaptation of SASI Measure

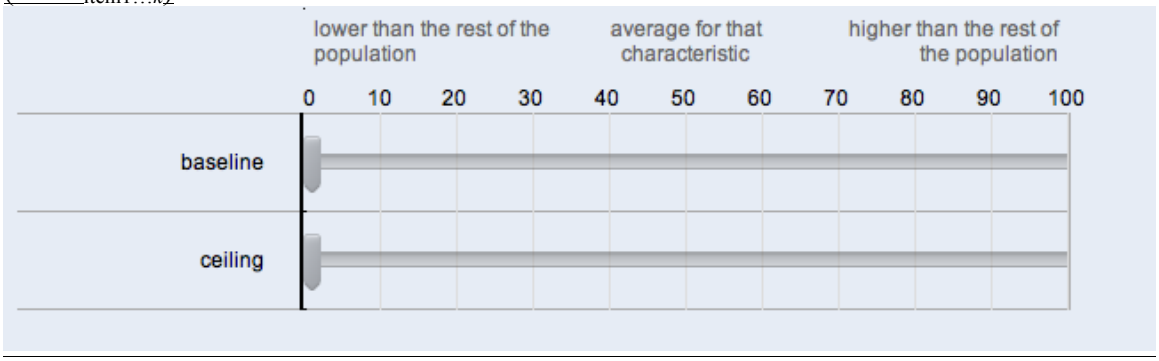
Instructions:
Recall earlier that you were asked to identify the kind of person that you think you are capable of attracting, i.e., the kind of person who would want to date you. We suspect this is a difficult question to answer with complete certainty, so this time, we'd like you to identify a range of certainty around your initial estimate.

For each characteristic you will make two ratings.
1) Use the first sliding scale to indicate the extent to which ***the kind of person who would definitely be interested in dating you*** *would possess each of the following characteristics.* ***(baseline)***

2) Use the second sliding scale to identify the extent to which ***the kind of person who you think might be interested in dating you*** *would possess each of the following characteristics.* ***(ceiling)***

Your first rating shows the kinds of qualities that you are confident you can attract. The second rating shows the kinds of qualities you think you might be able to attract, but are unsure about. Anything beyond the range of your second rating are the qualities that you are certain you could not attract.

($SASI_{item1\ldots k}$)



Appendix I

Interaction Rewards and Threats Scale (MacDonald & Tackett, 2012)

As you consider whether you will choose to meet the other participant, answer the following questions using the scale below.

1. I will probably like my interaction partner a lot. *
2. It will be interesting to learn about my interaction partner. *
3. I look forward to sharing things about myself in the interaction. *
4. I think I could develop a meaningful connection with my interaction partner. *
5. I don't expect to get much out of this interaction (R)*
6. I feel a little anxious about the interaction. †
7. I am a bit worried about feeling embarrassed during this interaction. †
8. I'm concerned my interaction partner won't like me very much. †
9. If I say something dumb during the interaction, it will bother me all day. †
10. I'm not worried about anything going wrong during the interaction. (R) †

Note. Items marked * formed the *Rewards* subscale and those marked † formed the *Threats* subscale; (R) indicates reverse-coded item

Appendix J

Items to Assess Predicted Outcomes if Invitation were Accepted or Rejected

If I accept the other person's invitation to meet…

1. I would enjoy the interaction [2]
2. I would like him/her more after the interaction. [3]
3. S/he would like me more after the interaction.
4. I would be interested in spending time with him/her again after the interaction. [3]
5. I would have a bad time during the interaction (R) [2]
6. I would like him/her less after the interaction.
7. S/he would like me less after the interaction. [1]
8. I would be unhappy spending more time with him/her after the interaction
9. We would end up dating [3]
10. I would regret it (R) [2]
11. The interaction would be awkward (R) [2]
12. I would try to think of ways to end the interaction quickly (R) [2]
13. I would worry about how the interaction was going [1]
14. I would wonder whether I made a mistake and should have rejected the offer (R) [2]
15. This person would lose interest in me. [1]
16. I would feel like I was settling.

If I reject the other person's invitation to meet

1. I would regret it [4]
2. I would find another opposite-sex person to get to know
3. Leaving the experiment would be awkward
4. I would be single for a long time
5. I'd "get over it" easily and not think about it too much
6. I would think about it often. [4]
7. I would wonder whether I made a mistake and should have accepted the offer. [4]
8. I would get obsessed with whether or not this person hated me for rejecting him/her. [4]
9. This person would hate me. [5]
10. This person would have a crush on me. [5]
11. This person would feel really hurt by my rejection. [5]
12. I would feel good about my decision. (R)[4]

Note. Items comprising each subscale are marked with identical superscripts. Unmarked items did not load consistently onto a subscale and were dropped from analyses. 1=evaluative concerns, *2*=positive meeting, *3*=positive post-meeting outcomes, *4*=concern for other, *5*=rumination; (R) indicates reverse-coded item.

Appendix K

Items to Assess Decision to Accept or Reject Invitation

Desire to Meet Other

The questions below are asking about your current feelings. They will not be shared with the other participant and they will have no impact on whether you choose to meet the other participant at the end of the study.

1. *I am interested in meeting the other participant*
2. *I would like the other participant to get to know me*
3. *I'd like to get to know him*
4. *I'm afraid that if I meet him, he won't like me (R)*
5. *I have no interest in meeting the other participant (R)*

Decision to Meet Other

The experimenter will return in a few moments when you have completed the study and you will have the opportunity to inform her of your decision to meet the other participant. Will you agree to the other participant's request to meet?

1. Yes, I will accept the other participant's request to meet
2. No, I will ask the experimenter to decline the other participant's request to meet

Decision Satisfaction

1. I am happy with my decision to meet/not to meet the other participant
2. I'm worried I'll regret my decision to meet/not to meet the other participant (R)
3. I feel at peace with my decision to meet/not to meet the other participant
4. I wish I could go back in time and make a different decision (R)
5. Even though the decision is made, I feel uncertain (R)
6. I know I made the right choice

Note. Item 4 on the "desire to meet other" scale was dropped from analyses

Appendix L

Summary of Study 1 Post-decision Analyses Including Decision as a Factor

Supplementary Regression Analyses on Post-Decision Outcomes with Decision as a Factor (Study 1)

Decision	β	*t(df)*	*p*
Satisfaction			
1 Decision	-.13	-1.14(76)	.258
SE	.23	2.03(76)	.046
Target	.03	.29(76)	.771
2 SE x Tar	.35	3.25(73)	.002
SE x Dec	-.10	-.69(73)	.491
Tar x Dec	.01	.07(73)	.932
3 SE x Tar x Dec	.15	.99(72)	.325
Uncertainty			
1 Decision	-.05	-.43(76)	.665
SE	-.23	-2.04(76)	.045
Target	.03	.25(76)	.802
2 SE x Tar	-.17	-1.63(73)	.108
SE x Dec	.39	2.63(73)	.010
Tar x Dec	-.15	-1.07(73)	.288
3 SE x Tar x Dec	.18	1.24(72)	.220
Anxiety			
1 Decision	.31	2.98(76)	.004
SE	-.30	-2.85(76)	.006
Target	.04	.39(76)	.700
2 SE x Tar	-.01	-.10(73)	.925
SE x Dec	-.06	-.42(73)	.676
Tar x Dec	-.11	-.79(73)	.431
3 SE x Tar x Dec	-.03	-.18(72)	.861
Positive Affect			
1 Decision	.09	.76(76)	.448
SE	.16	1.40(76)	.164
Target	.10	.91(76)	.364
2 SE x Tar	.12	1.08(73)	.283
SE x Dec	-.05	-.29(73)	.774
Tar x Dec	-.19	-1.23(73)	.222
3 SE x Tar x Dec	-.22	-1.43(72)	.156
Negative Affect			
1 Decision	-.18	-1.62(76)	.109
SE	-.30	-2.71(76)	.008
Target	-.07	-.67(76)	.507
2 SE x Tar	.14	1.34(73)	.184
SE x Dec	.33	2.27(73)	.026
Tar x Dec	.03	.20(73)	.845
3 SE x Tar x Dec	-.12	-.84(72)	.403
Regret			
1 Decision	-.16	-1.41(76)	.162
SE	-.27	-2.41(73)	.019
Target	-.02	-.19(73)	.853
2 SE x Tar	.05	.44(73)	.663
SE x Dec	.09	.59(73)	.559
Tar x Dec	.08	.50(73)	.618
3 SE x Tar x Dec	-.32	-2.10(72)	.039

Note. SE = Self-esteem; Dec = Decision; Tar = Target; effects are presented from the step at which they were entered

Appendix M

Summary of Study 2 Post-decision Analyses Including Decision as a Factor

Supplementary Regression Analyses on Post-Decision Outcomes with Decision as a Factor (Study 2)

Decision	β	*t(df)*	*p*
Satisfaction			
1 Decision	-.39	-3.03(45)	.002
SE	.30	2.43(45)	.019
Target	-.23	-1.77(45)	.064
2 SE x Tar	.00	.03(42)	.462
SE x Dec	.32	2.59(42)	.079
Tar x Dec	.13	1.10(42)	.273
3 SE x Tar x Dec	.23	1.97(41)	.055
Uncertainty			
1 Decision	.03	.21(45)	.837
SE	-.19	-1.26(45)	.214
Target	.22	1.45(45)	.155
2 SE x Tar	-.27	-1.81(42)	.078
SE x Dec	.08	.53(42)	.598
Tar x Dec	-.23	-1.59(42)	.119
3 SE x Tar x Dec	.075	.49(41)	.627
Anxiety			
1 Decision	.34	2.57(45)	.014
SE	-.36	-2.74(45)	.009
Target	.06	.42(45)	.674
2 SE x Tar	.14	1.11(42)	.276
SE x Dec	-.25	-1.94(42)	.059
Tar x Dec	.17	-1.31(42)	.198
3 SE x Tar x Dec	-.02	-.17(41)	.863
Positive Affect			
1 Decision	.40	2.96(45)	.005
SE	.30	2.23(45)	.031
Target	-.06	-.46(45)	.647
2 SE x Tar	.30	2.29(42)	.027
SE x Dec	.09	.68(42)	.502
Tar x Dec	-.04	-.29(42)	.777
3 SE x Tar x Dec	-.23	-1.77(41)	.084
Negative Affect			
1 Decision	-.25	-2.07(45)	.045
SE	-.60	-5.04(45)	< .001
Target	.04	.28(45)	.780
2 SE x Tar	.10	.86(42)	.394
SE x Dec	.20	1.68(42)	.101
Tar x Dec	.04	.34(42)	.739
3 SE x Tar x Dec	-.87	-.70(41)	.489
Regret			
1 Decision	-.36	-2.77(45)	.008
SE	-.50	-4.02(45)	< .001
Target	.17	1.32(45)	.193
2 SE x Tar	.04	.34(42)	.738
SE x Dec	.17	1.31(42)	.199
Tar x Dec	-.19	-1.53(42)	.134
3 SE x Tar x Dec	-.06	-.42(41)	.679

Note. SE = Self-esteem; Dec = Decision; Tar = Target; effects are presented from the step at which they were entered

Appendix N

Summary of Study 3 Post-decision Analyses Including Decision as a Factor

Supplementary Regression Analyses on Post-Decision Outcomes with Decision as a Factor (Study 3)

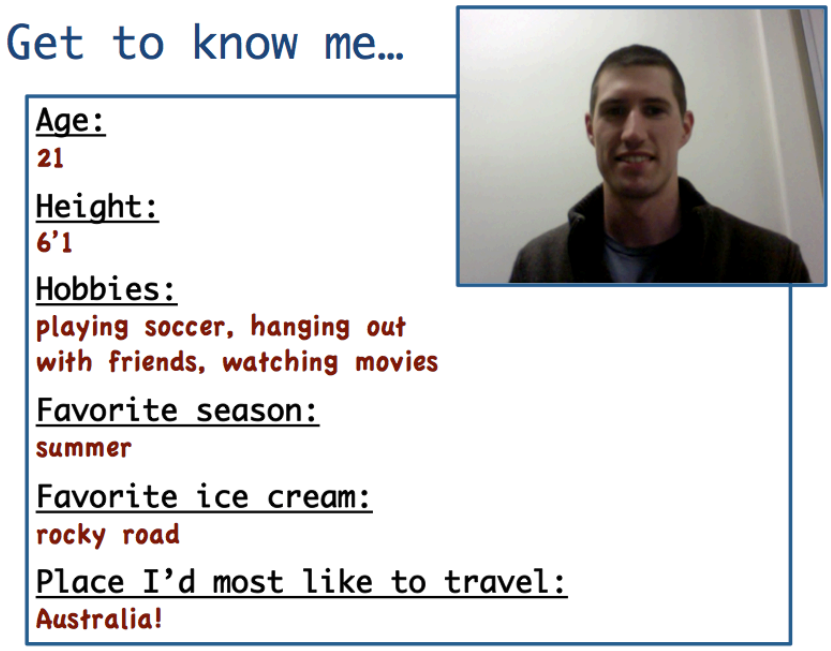
	LoAlt			*HiAlt*		
Decision	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*
Satisfaction						
1 Decision	-.46	-3.63(49)	.001	-.29	-2.46(56)	.017
SE	.15	1.21(49)	.233	.27	2.31(56)	.025
Target	.02	.14(49)	.887	-.23	-1.90(56)	.063
2 SE x Tar	-.11	-.88(46)	.382	.21	1.76(53)	.084
SE x Dec	-.04	-.27(46)	.790	-.09	-.66(53)	.512
Tar x Dec	.08	.60(46)	.553	.10	.83(53)	.411
3 SE x Tar x Dec	-.13	-.98(45)	.331	.05	.38(52)	.708
Uncertainty						
1 Decision	.26	2.04(49)	.047	.46	3.84(56)	< .001
SE	-.35	-2.73(49)	.009	-.18	-1.52(56)	.133
Target	.01	.10(49)	.921	.08	.63(56)	.534
2 SE x Tar	.05	.34(46)	.734	-.21	-1.79(53)	.080
SE x Dec	-.10	-.76(46)	.451	.19	1.44(53)	.156
Tar x Dec	-.07	-.49(46)	.626	.00	-.01(53)	.989
3 SE x Tar x Dec	.32	2.51(45)	.016	-.16	-1.18(52)	.245
Anxiety						
1 Decision	.47	4.10(49)	< .001	.48	4.80(56)	< .001
SE	-.32	2.80(49)	.007	-.46	-4.66(56)	< .001
Target	.05	.44(49)	.666	.14	1.41(56)	.165
2 SE x Tar	.09	.80(46)	.430	-.06	-.62(53)	.539
SE x Dec	-.18	-1.54(46)	.132	.01	.08(53)	.936
Tar x Dec	-.07	-.61(46)	.547	-.03	-.29(53)	.771
3 SE x Tar x Dec	.27	2.41(45)	.020	.04	.34(52)	.736
Positive Affect						
1 Decision	.29	2.20(49)	.033	.18	1.43(56)	.158
SE	.30	2.26(49)	.029	.21	1.70(56)	.096
Target	-.07	-.55(49)	.583	.24	1.90(56)	.064
2 SE x Tar	-.09	-.65(46)	.519	.01	.10(53)	.917
SE x Dec	.05	.39(46)	.697	-.10	-.70(53)	.486
Tar x Dec	.27	2.04(46)	.047	.11	.79(53)	.433
3 SE x Tar x Dec	-.25	-1.90(45)	.064	.03	.18(52)	.858
Negative Affect						
1 Decision	.11	.82(49)	.416	.05	.36(56)	.718
SE	-.36	-2.77(49)	.008	-.26	-2.05(56)	.045
Target	-.11	-.85(49)	.397	.14	1.03(56)	.309
2 SE x Tar	.11	.83(46)	.409	-.14	-1.07(53)	.290
SE x Dec	-.15	-1.12(46)	.271	.34	2.43(53)	.019
Tar x Dec	-.12	-.93(46)	.359	.06	.48(53)	.632
3 SE x Tar x Dec	.34	2.68(45)	.010	.02	.10(52)	.918
Regret						
1 Decision	-.01	-.08(49)	.941	-.09	-.68(56)	.501
SE	-.37	-2.81(49)	.007	-.37	-2.96(56)	.005
Target	-.14	-1.05(49)	.299	.14	1.14(56)	.261
2 SE x Tar	.10	.73(46)	.470	-.13	-1.01(53)	.318
SE x Dec	-.06	-.44(46)	.665	.20	1.40(53)	.168
Tar x Dec	-.08	-.60(46)	.555	.12	.88(53)	.383
3 SE x Tar x Dec	.35	2.69(45)	.010	.13	.86(53)	.393

Note. SE = Self-esteem; Dec = Decision; Tar = Target; LoAlt = Low Alternatives; HiAlt = High Alternatives; effects are presented from the step at which they were entered

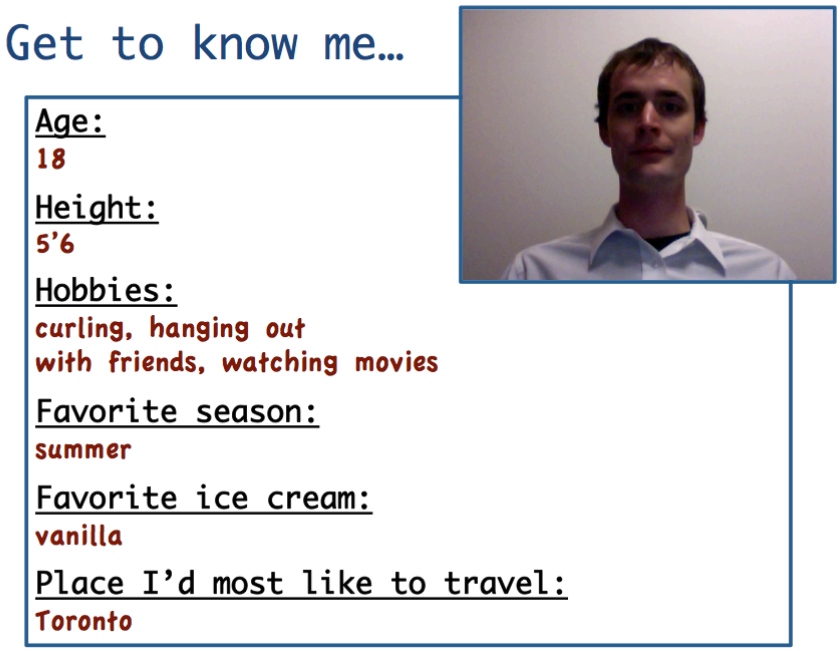
Appendix O

Target Profiles for Social Commodities Manipulation

Desirable Target



Undesirable Target



Appendix P

Bogus Articles for Alternatives Manipulation

Low Quality Alternatives

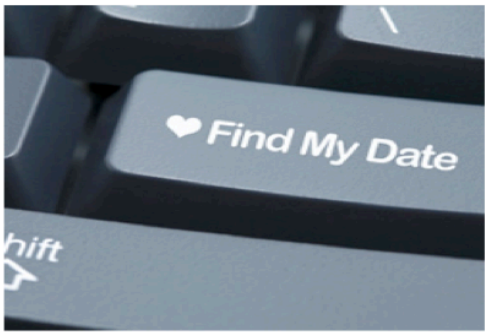
Relationships

Dating in the 21st Century

Flash Report from Jack Stebeleski, PhD

Research over the past decade has shown that North Americans are staying single much longer than they once did. Average age of marriage for both men and women has increased 6.3 years since 2001 and coupling trends for those who choose not to get married are following the same pattern. More than anytime in history, the dating market is overflowing with interested singles, but what does this mean for you?

New research from McGill University suggests that the abundance of options might be of little value. Though the quantity of available dating partners has increased over the past decade, the quality of the people in the dating pool has deteriorated. Now more than ever, young singles are having difficulty when it comes to striking a balance between their



independent, professional, and social lives, and their romantic pursuits are suffering as a result. It seems then, that even though there plenty of fish in the sea, there are few great catches to be made.

Jack Stebeleski, PhD, is a professor of Psychology in the Interdisciplinary Institute for the Social Sciences at New York University, and author of *Those Were the Days: Love, Lust, and Romance Across 10 Decades*

Psychology Today Jan/Feb 2011

High Quality Alternatives

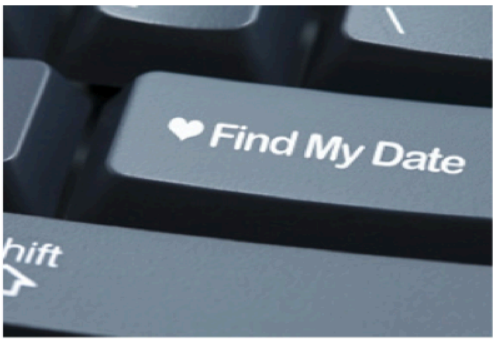
Relationships

Dating in the 21st Century

Flash Report from Jack Stebeleski, PhD

Research over the past decade has shown that North Americans are staying single much longer than they once did. Average age of marriage for both men and women has increased 6.3 years since 2001 and coupling trends for those who choose not to get married are following the same pattern. More than anytime in history, the dating market is overflowing with interested singles, but what does this mean for you?

New research from McGill University suggests that the abundance of options might be especially encouraging. Not only has the quantity of available dating partners increased over the past decade, but the quality of the people in the dating pool has improved. Now more than ever, young singles are experiencing success when it comes to striking a



balance between their independent, professional, and social lives, and their romantic pursuits are benefitting as a result. It seems then, that not only are there plenty of fish in the sea, there are a lot of great catches to be made.

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Table 1

Reliability Statistics for all Scales Across all Studies (α)

	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
Self-esteem	.78	.86	.90
Self Perceptions			
Social Commodities	.88	.87	.92
Communal Qualities	.91	.88	.91
Desired Partner Qualities			
Social Commodities	.85	.89	.90
Communal Qualities	.92	.93	.90
Attainable Partner Qualities			
Social Commodities	.85	.89	.93
Communal Qualities	.94	.95	.93
Target Evaluations			
Social Commodities	.87	.94	.91
Communal Qualities	.93	.95	.97
Self-concept Clarity	.88	.92	.91
Pre-decision Emotions			
Uncertainty	.88	.87	.87
Anxiety	.82	.87	.83
Positive Affect	.84	.81	.78
Negative Affect	.74	.81	.83
Regret	.69	.73	.75
Interaction Rewards	.84	.87	.80
Interaction Threats	.83	.88	.84
Predictions if Accept			
Evaluative concerns	.65	.86	.67
Positive meeting	.75	.90	.79
Positive post-meeting	.71	.87	.78
Predictions if Reject			
Concern for other	.74	.67	.66
Ruminate	.77	.80	.79
Desire to Meet the other	.94	.92	.91
Decision Satisfaction	.83	.85	.86
Post-decision Emotions			
Uncertainty	.90	.89	.91
Anxiety	.88	.90	.89
Positive Affect	.83	.78	.77
Negative Affect	.65	.82	.83
Regret	.65	.74	.70

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for all Scales Across all Studies

	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
	M (SD)	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
Self-esteem	5.86 (.61)	5.66 (.79)	5.52(1.00)
Self Perceptions			
Social Commodities	64.59 (10.95)	65.20(11.16)	63.47(13.11)
Communal Qualities	80.90 (11.55)	81.02(10.77)	78.77(11.77)
Desired Partner Qualities			
Social Commodities	70.08 (8.45)	76.43(9.77)	72.61(9.97)
Communal Qualities	83.86 (11.10)	87.09(7.99)	84.31(9.92)
Attainable Partner Qualities			
Social Commodities	64.53 (8.86)	69.71(9.72)	65.67(12.69)
Communal Qualities	74.82 (13.49)	74.21(14.76)	72.21(12.82)
Target Evaluations			
Social Commodities	64.50 (8.07)	65.20(13.89)	61.17(10.95)
Communal Qualities	71.29 (11.85)	73.03(11.53)	68.35(13.70)
Self-concept Clarity	2.01 (.68)	2.27(.85)	2.31(.82)
Pre-decision Emotions			
Uncertainty	1.91 (.88)	2.09(.91)	2.13(.93)
Anxiety	2.43 (.67)	2.41(.73)	2.60(.71)
Positive Affect	2.79 (.71)	2.66(.68)	2.69(.66)
Negative Affect	1.17 (.30)	1.25(.40)	1.28(.42)
Regret	1.22 (.37)	1.33(.49)	1.45(.57)
Interaction Rewards	3.18 (.57)	2.87(.62)	2.73(.61)
Interaction Threats	3.03 (.84)	2.84(.94)	3.01(.88)
Predictions if Accept			
Evaluative concerns	3.87 (.95)	3.67(1.15)	3.95(.89)
Positive meeting	4.47 (.85)	4.32(1.20)	3.88(.95)
Positive post-meeting	3.63 (.90)	3.22(1.20)	3.10(.95)
Predictions if Reject			
Concern for other	2.81 (1.07)	2.96(.99)	3.01(1.09)
Ruminate	3.72 (1.08)	3.02(1.08)	3.14(1.11)
Desire to Meet the other	4.01 (1.19)	3.16(1.32)	2.99(1.25)
Decision Satisfaction	3.64 (.73)	4.00(.73)	3.79(.78)
Post-decision Emotions			
Uncertainty	1.84 (.91)	1.47(.77)	1.76(.86)
Anxiety	2.81 (.83)	2.43(.84)	2.52(.88)
Positive Affect	2.49 (.69)	2.52(.68)	2.35(.65)
Negative Affect	1.11 (.21)	1.17(.34)	1.21(.40)
Regret	1.30 (.46)	1.31(.50)	1.47(.57)

Table 3

Regression Analyses for Self-Esteem Predicting SASI Ratings

	Study 1			Study 2			Study 3		
	β	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*
Self-perceptions SC									
1 SE	.20	1.80(78)	.075	.45	3.43(47)	.001	.55	6.89(111)	.000
Alt							-.10	-1.27(111)	.206
2 SE x Alt							-.04	-.43(110)	.665
Self-perceptions CQ									
1 SE	.12	1.08(78)	.280	.23	1.59(47)	.119	.32	3.59(111)	.000
Alt							-.13	-1.51(111)	.135
2 SE x Alt							.11	1.18(110)	.242
Desired Partner Qualities SC									
1 SE	.17	1.50(78)	.139	.00	.02(47)	.982	.40	4.48(111)	.000
Alt							-.12	-1.41(111)	.161
2 SE x Alt							-.02	-.27(110)	.788
Desired Partner Qualities CQ									
1 SE	.12	1.10(78)	.275	-.16	-1.14(47)	.261	.24	2.64(111)	.010
Alt							-.11	-1.21(111)	.228
2 SE x Alt							.01	.14(110)	.887
Attainable Partner Qualities SC									
1 SE	.13	1.13(78)	.262	.23	1.60(47)	.116	.43	5.09(111)	.000
Alt							-.07	-.87(111)	.390
2 SE x Alt							-.03	-.32(110)	.753
Attainable Partner Qualities CQ									
1 SE	.20	1.77(78)	.081	.08	.58(47)	.565	.35	3.95(111)	.000
Alt							-.05	-.58(111)	.565
2 SE x Alt							.04	.41(110)	.685

Note. SC = Social Commodities; CQ = Communal Qualities; SE = Self-esteem; Alt = Alternatives; effects are presented from the step at which they were entered

Table 4

Regression Analyses on Target Evaluations

	Study 1			Study 2			Study 3		
Target SC	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*
1 SE	.08	.72(77)	.470	.04	.35(46)	.728	.19	2.49(110)	.014
Alt							-.03	-.42(110)	.677
Tar	.21	1.83(77)	.071	.63	5.41(46)	< .001	.57	7.32(110)	.000
2 SE x Alt							.01	.068(107)	.946
SE x Tar	-.05	-.43(76)	.667	.07	.59(45)	.559	.09	1.16(107)	.250
Alt x Tar							-.06	-.79(107)	.429
3 3-way							.08	1.06(106)	.292
Target CQ									
1 SE	.09	.88(77)	.382	.24	1.62(46)	.112	.19	2.09(110)	.039
Alt							-.11	-1.20(110)	.231
Tar	.48	4.77(77)	.000	-.01	-.05(46)	.957	-.21	-2.35(110)	.021
2 SE x Alt							.10	1.04(107)	.301
SE x Tar	-.06	-.61(76)	.541	.03	.18(45)	.857	-.04	-.42(107)	.676
Alt x Tar							.14	1.50(107)	.136
3 3-way							.04	.41(106)	.681

Note. SC = Social Commodities; CQ = Communal Qualities; SE = Self-esteem; Alt = Alternatives; Tar = Target; effects are presented from the step at which they were entered

Table 5

Regression Analyses on Self-Concept Clarity

		Study 1			Study 2			Study 3		
		β	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*
1	SE	-.40	-3.82(77)	< .001	-.58	-5.41(46)	< .001	-.50	-6.13(110)	< .001
	Alt							-.11	-1.31(110)	.193
	Tar	.02	.18(77)	.860	-.03	-.31(46)	.830	-.03	-.41(110)	.683
2	SE x Alt							-.05	-.62(107)	.538
	SE x Tar	-.11	-1.05(76)	.299	.13	.28(45)	.289	-.08	-1.00(107)	.321
	Alt x Tar							.00	.01(107)	.989
3	3-way							.06	.70(106)	.485

Note. SE = Self-esteem; Alt = Alternatives; Tar = Target; effects are presented from the step at which they were entered

Table 6

Regression Analyses on Pre-Decision Emotional State

	Study 1			Study 2			Study 3		
Uncertainty	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*
1 SE	-.28	-2.49(77)	.015	-.36	-2.69(46)	.011	-.34	-3.74(110)	.000
Alt							-.03	-.32(110)	.746
Tar	.05	.43(77)	.667	.31	2.29(46)	.027	.04	.47(110)	.640
2 SE x Alt							-.03	-.31(107)	.757
SE x Tar	-.05	-.41(76)	.686	.01	.61(45)	.547	-.07	-.77(107)	.445
Alt x Tar							-.07	-.78(107)	.438
3 3-way							-.13	-1.36(107)	.177
Anxiety									
1 SE	-.35	-3.29(77)	.002	-.51	-3.98(46)	< .001	-.31	-3.42(110)	.001
Alt							.06	.61(110)	.541
Tar	.09	.89(77)	.378	.23	1.76(46)	.086	.11	1.18(110)	.239
2 SE x Alt							-.21	-2.29(107)	.024
SE x Tar	-.10	-.89(76)	.376	.08	.64(45)	.524	-.12	-1.31(107)	.195
Alt x Tar							-.07	-.80(107)	.426
3 3-way							.03	.30(107)	.762
Positive Affect									
1 SE	.21	1.88(77)	.063	.26	1.90 (46)	.064	.17	1.81(110)	.074
Alt							-.11	-1.21(110)	.230
Tar	.16	1.39(77)	.169	.24	1.73 (46)	.091	.10	1.08(110)	.284
2 SE x Alt							.04	.51(107)	.609
SE x Tar	.13	1.19(76)	.240	.24	2.05(45)	.046	-.03	-.28(107)	.779
Alt x Tar							.12	1.31(107)	.192
3 3-way							.03	.28(106)	.783
Negative Affect									
1 SE	-.23	-2.02(77)	.047	-.51	-3.93(46)	< .001	-.30	-3.30(110)	.001
Alt							.00	.02(110)	.983
Tar	-.03	-.27(77)	.786	-.03	-.24(46)	.810	-.10	-1.09(110)	.277
2 SE x Alt							-.18	-1.91(107)	.059
SE x Tar	.18	1.62(76)	.109	-.02	-.13(45)	.901	.07	.74(107)	.463
Alt x Tar							.01	.09(107)	.931
3 3-way							.08	.86(106)	.391
Regret									
1 SE	-.15	-1.35(77)	.180	-.35	-2.46 (46)	.018	-.23	-2.47(110)	.015
Alt							.06	.64(110)	.522
Tar	.13	1.17(77)	.246	.116	.82 (46)	.415	-.00	-.04(110)	.967
2 SE x Alt							-.11	-1.12(107)	.267
SE x Tar	.12	1.05(76)	.298	-.01	-.07 (45)	.943	-.07	-.71(107)	.481
Alt x Tar							.12	1.26(107)	.211
3 3-way							-.03	-.35(106)	.729

Note. SE = Self-esteem; Alt = Alternatives; Tar = Target; effects are presented from the step at which they were entered

Table 7

Regression Analyses on Interaction Rewards and Threats

	Study 1			Study 2			Study 3		
Rewards	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*(df)*	*p*
1 SE	.02	.19(77)	.845	.15	1.14(46)	.260	-.02	-.17(110)	.865
Alt							-.05	-.49(110)	.629
Tar	-.01	-.11(77)	.911	.43	3.23(46)	.002	.25	2.75(110)	.007
2 SE x Alt							.09	.92(107)	.358
SE x Tar	.13	1.17(76)	.246	.08	.58(45)	.566	.03	.31(107)	.755
Alt x Tar							-.02	-.21(107)	.833
3 3-way							.07	.73(106)	.464
Threats									
1 SE	-.20	-1.82(77)	.073	-.30	-2.25(46)	.030	-.53	-6.76(110)	.000
Alt							-.05	-.58(110)	.564
Tar	.24	2.17(77)	.033	.39	2.89(46)	.006	.20	2.55(110)	.012
2 SE x Alt							.04	.47(107)	.643
SE x Tar	.02	.21(76)	.835	.12	.90(45)	.376	.04	.54(107)	.591
Alt x Tar							.01	.12(107)	.906
3 3-way							-.04	-.51(106)	.612

Note. SE = Self-esteem; Alt = Alternatives; Tar = Target; effects are presented from the step at which they were entered

Table 8

Regression Analyses on Predictions if Accept

	Study 1			Study 2			Study 3		
Evaluative Concerns	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*(df)*	*p*
1 SE	-.26	-2.37(77)	.020	-.34	-2.44(46)	.019	-.44	-5.22(110)	.000
Alt							-.02	-.25(110)	.800
Tar	.13	1.20(77)	.235	.22	1.60(46)	.115	.18	2.19(110)	.031
2 SE x Alt							-.06	-.72(107)	.472
SE x Tar	-.01	-.12(76)	.904	-.06	-.46(45)	.649	.21	2.54(107)	.012
Alt x Tar							-.08	-.99(107)	.324
3 3-way							.07	.79(107)	.429
Positive Meeting									
1 SE	.05	.46(77)	.644	.33	2.43(46)	.019	.14	1.50(110)	.137
Alt							.03	.30(110)	.762
Tar	-.15	-1.34(77)	.183	.26	1.93(46)	.060	.06	.62(110)	.534
2 SE x Alt							.09	.95(107)	.345
SE x Tar	.11	.95(76)	.343	.09	.66(45)	.510	.02	.22(107)	.825
Alt x Tar							-.04	-.44(107)	.661
3 3-way							.13	1.39(106)	.169
Positive Post-meeting									
1 SE	-.02	-.15(77)	.882	.07	.49(46)	.624	-.07	-.75(110)	.454
Alt							-.07	-.76(110)	.451
Tar	-.02	-.21(77)	.838	.41	3.01(46)	.004	.35	3.97(110)	.000
2 SE x Alt							.09	1.00(107)	.319
SE x Tar	.11	.95(76)	.345	.18	1.38(45)	.174	.06	.62(107)	.538
Alt x Tar							-.05	-.56(107)	.577
3 3-way							.03	.37(106)	.715

Note. SE = Self-esteem; Alt = Alternatives; Tar = Target; effects are presented from the step at which they were entered

Table 9

Regression Analyses on Predictions if Reject

	Study 1			Study 2			Study 3		
Concern for other	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*
1 SE	-.10	-.84(76)	.406	.01	.08(46)	.934	-.23	-2.50(110)	.014
Alt							-.02	-.25(110)	.804
Tar	.03	.23(76)	.816	-.18	-1.26(46)	.215	.04	.40(110)	.690
2 SE x Alt							-.00	-.03(107)	.974
SE x Tar	-.21	-1.87(75)	.065	.08	.57(45)	.572	-.05	-.46(107)	.644
Alt x Tar							.02	.23(107)	.817
3 3-way							.07	.75(106)	.455
Ruminate									
1 SE	-.07	-.61(76)	.545	-.18	-1.28(46)	.209	-.32	-3.70(110)	.000
Alt							-.09	-1.00(110)	.321
Tar	-.03	-.26(76)	.793	.19	1.33(46)	.191	.25	2.93(110)	.004
2 SE x Alt							.09	.99(107)	.323
SE x Tar	-.05	-.44(75)	.662	.20	1.43(45)	.161	.00	.04(107)	.966
Alt x Tar							.08	.08(107)	.356
3 3-way							.06	.61(106)	.541

Note. SE = Self-esteem; Alt = Alternatives; Tar = Target; effects are presented from the step at which they were entered

Table 10

Regression Analyses on Desire to Meet Other

		Study 1			Study 2			Study 3		
		β	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*
1	SE	.00	.01(77)	.996	.06	.46(46)	.649	-.12	-1.37(110)	.175
	Alt							-.06	-.66(110)	.513
	Tar	.03	.23(77)	.819	.37	2.67(46)	.011	.27	2.95(110)	.004
2	SE x Alt							.04	.44(107)	.661
	SE x Tar	.15	1.28(76)	.203	.13	.980(45)	.333	.15	1.65(107)	.103
	Alt x Tar							-.02	-.19(107)	.848
3	3-way							.05	.58(106)	.563

Note. SE = Self-esteem; Alt = Alternatives; Tar = Target; effects are presented from the step at which they were entered

Table 11

Logistic Regression Analyses on Decision to Meet Other

	B	*S.E.*	*Wald*	*df*	*p*	*Odds Ratio*	*95% C.I. for Odds Ratio*	
							Lower	Upper
Study 1								
1. SE	-.20	.50	.16	1	.693	.820	.31	2.20
Tar	-.39	.60	.41	1	.521	.68	.21	2.21
2. SE x Tar	.35	1.03	.12	1	.733	1.420	.19	10.66
Study 2								
1. SE	-.32	.39	.67	1	.413	.73	.34	1.56
Tar	1.19	.62	3.76	1	.053	3.29	.987	10.98
2. SE x Tar	-.17	.79	.05	1	.830	.844	.17	3.98
Study 3								
1. SE	-.03	.19	.02	1	.898	.98	.69	1.42
Alt	-.55	.39	1.99	1	.158	.58	.27	1.24
Tar	.67	.39	2.94	1	.086	1.96	.91	4.22
2. SE x Alt	.29	.41	.53	1	.468	1.34	.61	2.97
SE x Tar	.47	.41	1.30	1	.26	1.59	.72	3.55
Alt x Tar	.57	.80	.51	1	.48	1.77	.37	8.47
3. SE x Alt x Tar	.03	.82	.00	1	.969	1.03	.21	5.12

Note. SE = Self-esteem; Alt = Alternatives; Tar = Target; effects are presented from the block at which they were entered

Table 12

Regression Analyses on Time to Make Decision

		Study 1			Study 2			Study 3		
		β	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*
1	SE	.10	.90 (77)	.372	.06	.41 (46)	.682	-.09	-.92 (110)	.360
	Alt							-.07	-.71 (110)	.478
	Tar	-.04	-.33(77)	.740	.14	.94 (46)	.352	.08	.88 (110)	.381
2	SE x Alt							.08	.83 (107)	.410
	SE x Tar	-.15	-1.31(76)	.193	.09	.64 (45)	.525	-.11	-1.07 (107)	.286
	Alt x Tar							.01	.08 (107)	.937
3	3-way							.06	.59 (106)	.557

Note. SE = Self-esteem; Tar = Target; Alt = Alternatives; effects are presented from the step at which they were entered

Table 13

Regression Analyses on Decision Satisfaction

		Study 1			Study 2			Study 3		
		β	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*
1	SE	.23	2.08 (77)	.041	.35	2.58(46)	.013	.23	2.55 (110)	.012
	Alt							.11	1.25 (110)	.214
	Tar	.04	.04 (77)	.709	-.34	-2.52(46)	.015	-.16	-1.71 (110)	.089
2	SE x Alt							-.00	-.01 (107)	.989
	SE x Tar	.34	3.22(76)	.002	.08	.57(45)	.569	-.01	-.11 (107)	.910
	Alt x Tar							-.12	-1.26 (107)	.210
3	3-way							.17	1.85 (106)	.068

Note. SE = Self-esteem; Tar = Target; Alt = Alternatives; effects are presented from the step at which they were entered

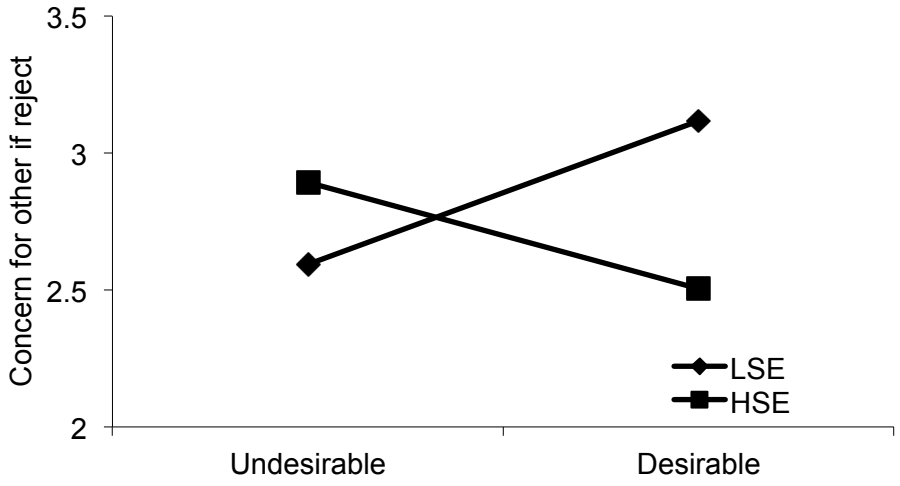
Table 14

Regression Analyses on Post-decision Emotional State

	Study 1			Study 2			Study 3		
Uncertainty	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*	*β*	*t(df)*	*p*
1 SE	-.23	-2.03(77)	.045	-.19	-1.31 (46)	.198	-.27	-2.90 (110)	.005
Alt							-.01	-.12 (110)	.903
Tar	.03	.29(77)	.776	.23	1.58 (46)	.120	.10	1.05 (110)	.298
2 SE x Alt							.15	1.62 (107)	.109
SE x Tar	-.17	-1.50(76)	.138	-.22	-1.57 (45)	.124	-.03	-.34 (107)	.734
Alt x Tar							.06	.67 (107)	.504
3 3-way							-.10	-1.07 (107)	.288
Anxiety									
1 SE	-.43	-2.84(77)	.006	-.40	-2.90 (46)	.006	-.40	-4.74(110)	< .001
Alt							-.04	-.46(110)	.649
Tar	.02	.17(77)	.870	.16	1.13 (46)	.265	.18	2.07(110)	.041
2 SE x Alt							-.03	-.29(107)	.769
SE x Tar	.01	.04(76)	.970	.09	.65 (45)	.518	.06	.65(107)	.516
Alt x Tar							.08	.96(107)	.338
3 3-way							-.07	-.80(107)	.428
Positive Affect									
1 SE	.16	1.38 (77)	.173	.25	1.75 (46)	.086	.21	2.28 (110)	.025
Alt							.06	.67 (110)	.503
Tar	.10	.86(77)	.391	.05	.36 (46)	.721	.15	1.64 (110)	.105
2 SE x Alt							.04	.41 (107)	.680
SE x Tar	.13	1.18(76)	.243	.32	2.34 (45)	.024	-.01	-.06 (107)	.951
Alt x Tar							.20	2.14 (107)	.035
3 3-way							.04	.44 (106)	.662
Negative Affect									
1 SE	-.29	-2.61 (77)	.011	-.57	-4.67 (46)	< .001	-.32	-3.50 (110)	.001
Alt							.03	.03 (110)	.974
Tar	-.06	-.55 (77)	.587	-.04	-.30 (46)	.763	.23	.23 (110)	.821
2 SE x Alt							.03	.30 (107)	.761
SE x Tar	.14	1.25 (76)	.214	.16	1.30 (45)	.200	-.00	-.04 (107)	.966
Alt x Tar							.14	1.55 (107)	.124
3 3-way							-.10	-1.12 (106)	.267
Regret									
1 SE	-.26	-2.33(77)	.022	-.46	-3.47 (46)	.001	-.37	-4.19 (110)	< .001
Alt							.05	.54 (110)	.592
Tar	-.01	-.08(77)	.934	.07	.53 (46)	.600	-.03	-.29 (110)	.775
2 SE x Alt							.00	.00 (107)	1.000
SE x Tar	.04	.37(76)	.711	-.01	-.12 (45)	.376	-.01	-.13 (107)	.898
Alt x Tar							.15	1.72 (107)	.088
3 3-way							-.10	-1.15 (106)	.254

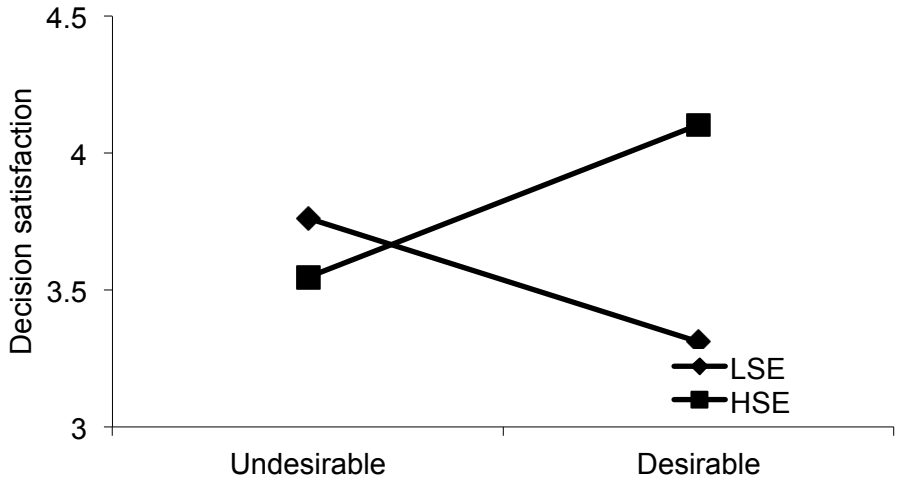
Note. SE = Self-esteem; Tar = Target; Alt = Alternatives; effects are presented from the step at which they were entered

Figure 1. Concern for Other if Reject as a Function of Self-Esteem and Target Desirability (Study 1)



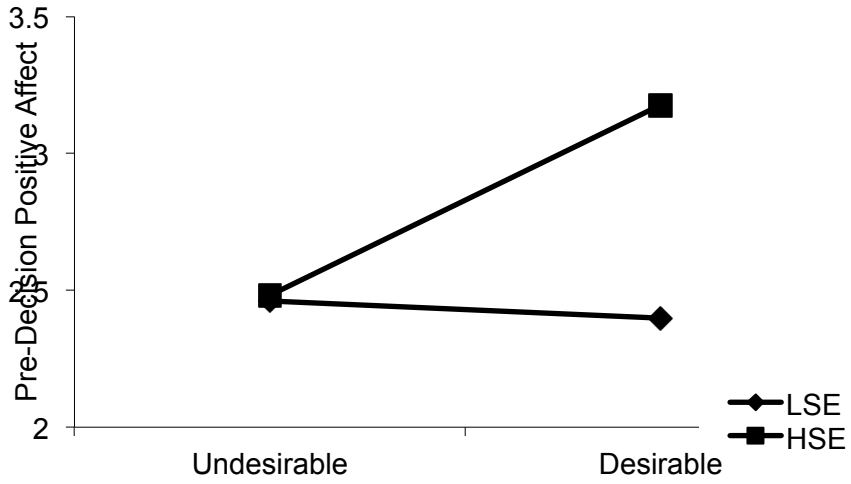
Note. LSE graphed at 1 *SD* below the mean and HSE graphed at one *SD* above the mean ($M = 5.86$; $SD = .61$).

Figure 2. Decision Satisfaction as a Function of Self-Esteem and Target Desirability (Study 1)



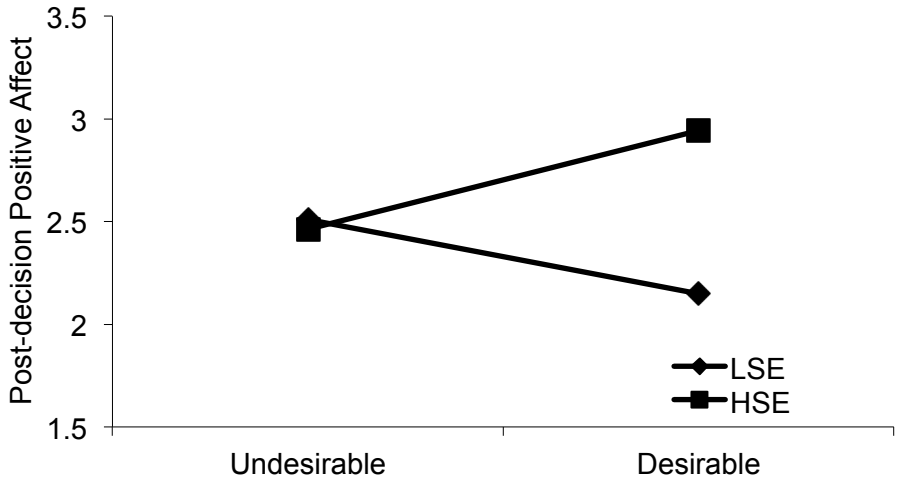
Note. LSE graphed at 1 *SD* below the mean and HSE graphed at one *SD* above the mean (*M* = 5.86; *SD* = .61)

Figure 3. Pre-Decision Positive Affect as a Function of Self-Esteem and Target Desirability (Study 2)



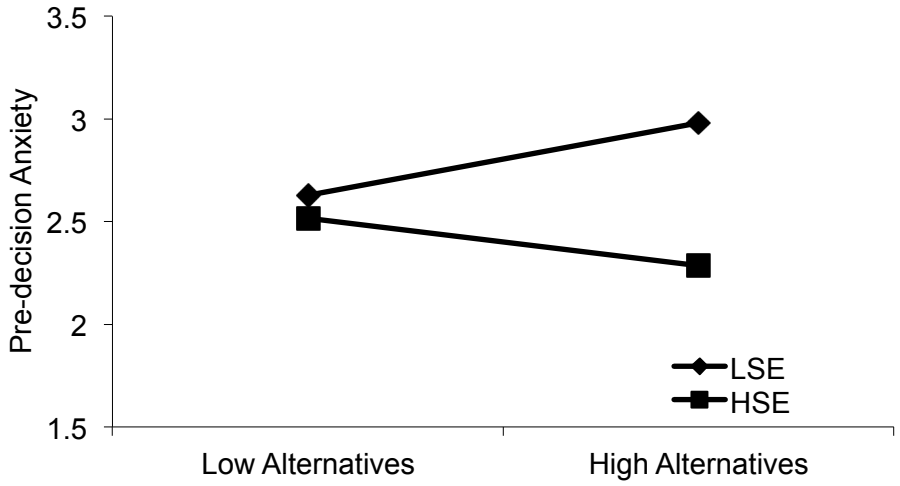
Note. LSE graphed at 1 *SD* below the mean and HSE graphed at one *SD* above the mean (*M* = 5.59; *SD* = .79)

Figure 4. Post-Decision Positive Affect as a Function of Self-Esteem and Target Desirability (Study 2)



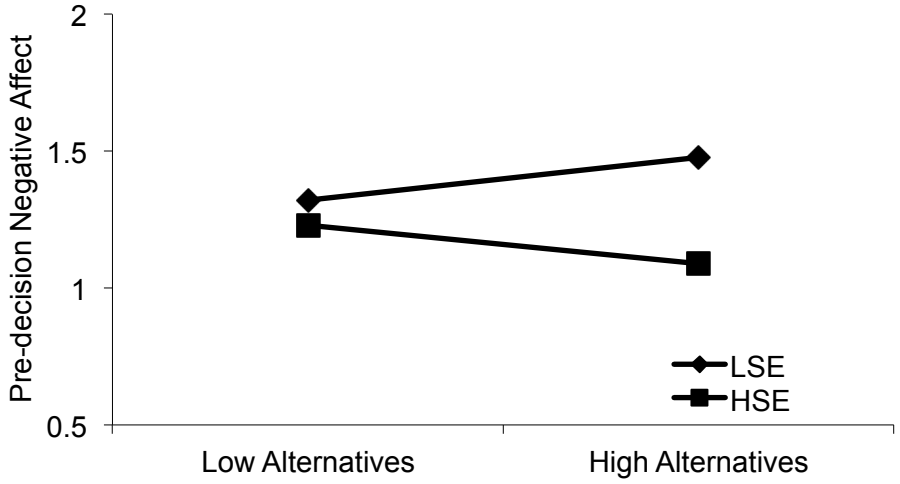
Note. LSE graphed at 1 *SD* below the mean and HSE graphed at one *SD* above the mean ($M = 5.59$; $SD = .79$)

Figure 5. Pre-Decision Anxiety as a Function of Self-Esteem and Alternatives, Controlling for Target Desirability (Study 3)



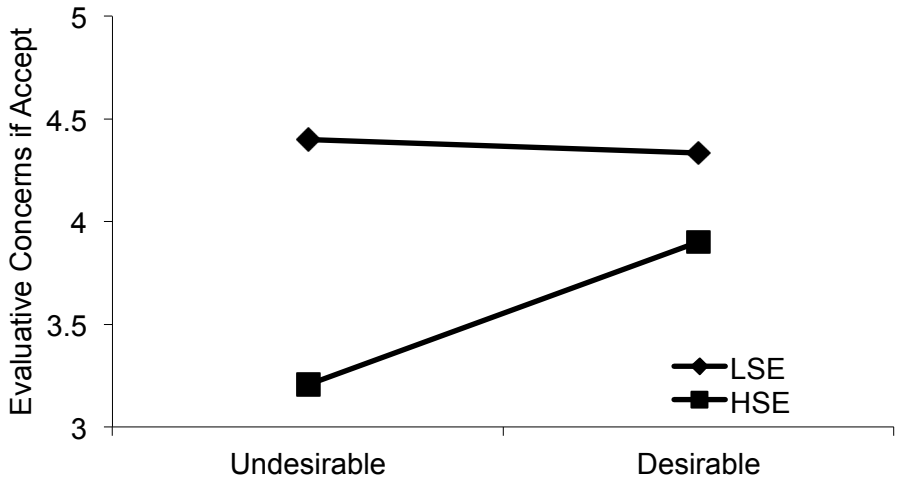
Note. LSE graphed at 1 *SD* below the mean and HSE graphed at one *SD* above the mean ($M = 5.52$; $SD = 1.00$)

Figure 6. Pre-Decision Negative Affect as a Function of Self-esteem and Alternatives, Controlling for Target Desirability (Study 3)



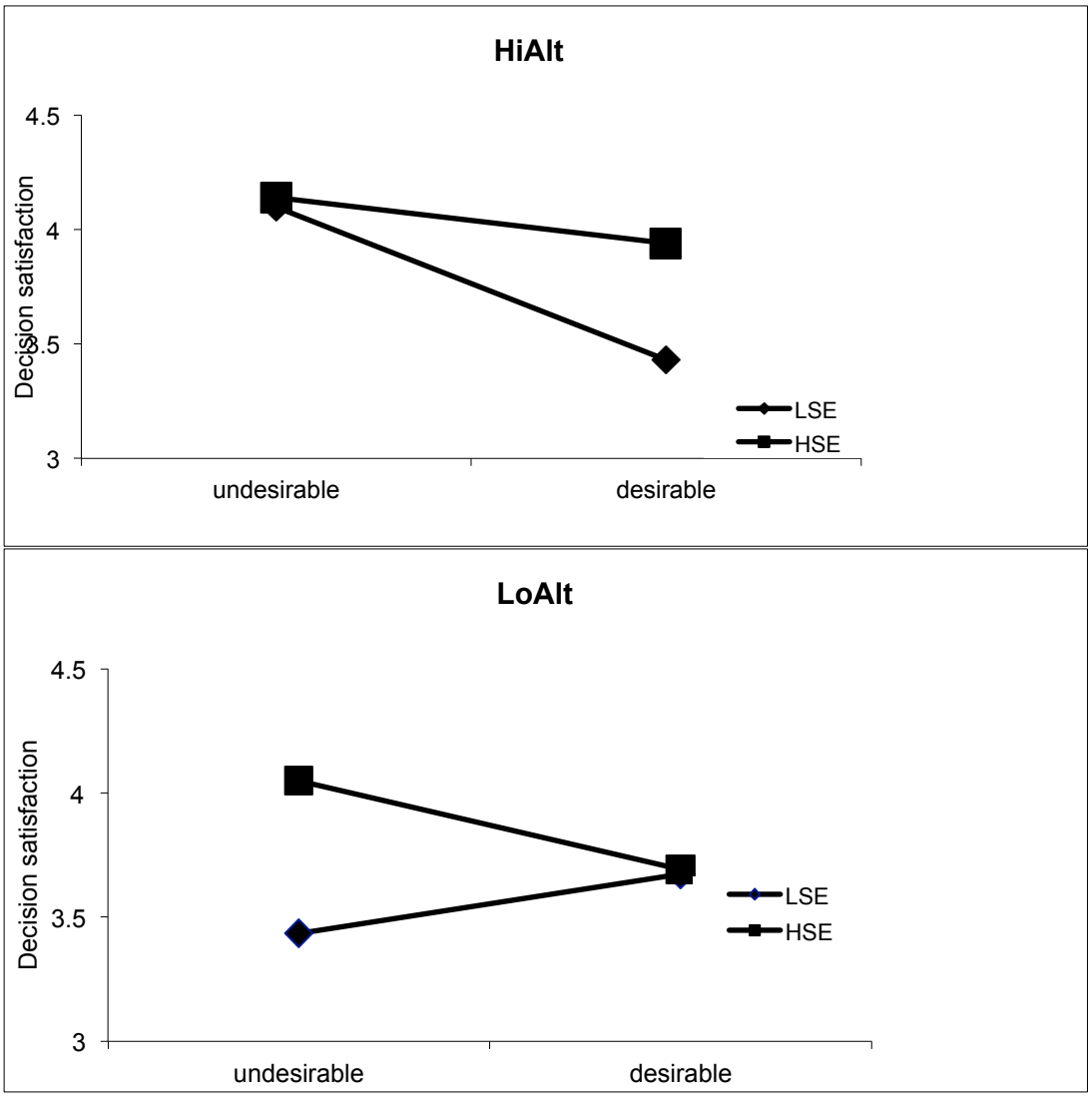
Note. LSE graphed at 1 *SD* below the mean and HSE graphed at one *SD* above the mean ($M = 5.52$; $SD = 1.00$)

Figure 7. Evaluative Concerns if Accept as a Function of Self-esteem and Target Desirability, Controlling for Alternatives (Study 3)



Note. LSE graphed at 1 *SD* below the mean and HSE graphed at one *SD* above the mean (*M* = 5.52; *SD* = 1.00)

Figure 8. Decision Satisfaction as a Function of Self-Esteem, Target Desirability, and Alternatives (Study 3)



Note. LSE graphed at 1 *SD* below the mean and HSE graphed at one *SD* above the mean ($M = 5.52$; $SD = 1.00$), HiAlt = High alternatives condition, LoAlt= Low alternatives condition

Figure 9. Post-Decision Positive Affect as a Function of Alternatives and Target Desirability, Controlling for Self-Esteem (Study 3)

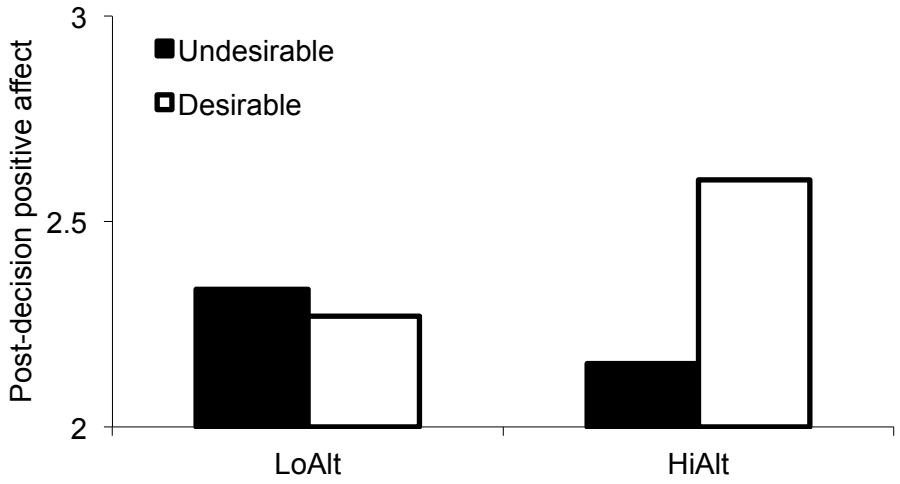


Figure 10. Post-Decision Regret a Function of Alternatives and Target Desirability, Controlling for Self-Esteem (Study 3)