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# Predicting Spouse Preferences

Christie Marie Fitzgerald Boxer  
*University of Iowa*

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PREDICTING SPOUSE PREFERENCES

by

Christie Marie Fitzgerald Boxer

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Sociology in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

July 2012

Thesis Supervisor: Associate Professor Mary C. Noonan

## ABSTRACT

I test canonical theories in the preference literature – evolutionary psychology, social role theory, and social exchange theory – using group mean comparisons to replicate basic sex differences in spouse preferences. I find that, consistent with past studies, males prefer attractiveness and females prefer resources in potential partners, and in general, we prefer partners who are similar, rather than different, to us. I also find that males who anticipate enacting the “traditional” male role of “provider” within their marriage tend to prefer spouses who would fulfill the caregiver role, compared to males who do not anticipate such “traditional” gender divisions within the family. Interestingly, females who anticipate the “traditional” caregiving role do not in turn prefer spouses who fulfill the “provider” role; they instead prefer a spouse who is family-oriented, as they themselves are. I further test four new theoretical derivations and methodological assessment techniques. First, I expand the test of social exchange theory to include a wide array of personality characteristics and find similarity between how respondents see themselves and the types of characteristics they prefer in a spouse. Second, I include an assessment of gender endorsement – how respondents see themselves in terms of characteristics we commonly associate with masculinity and femininity. Interestingly, I don’t find the predicted complementarity – that highly masculine individuals prefer highly feminine spouses and vice versa. I find instead strong homogamy effects, such that respondents with masculine self-perceptions prefer spouses who also embody those masculine traits, and respondents with feminine self-perceptions prefer spouses who also identify with feminine traits. Third, my data includes a wider age range of unmarried respondents than nearly all other preference studies, so I am able to test preference

differences by age. I find that older unmarried adults are generally less “particular” in their preferences, compared to those unmarried adults still in college. Despite my predictions that age would be positively related to the desire for spouse characteristics associated with “growing up,” essentially, age appears to be negatively related or unrelated to most spouse preferences. Fourth, I include factor analysis techniques that both replicate a past research study (which was pioneering for the field), and broach the possibility for latent variable assessment using a wider array of preference dimensions than have been previously considered. I find evidence of several underlying preference constructs which could, and should, be taken into account when conducting future preference studies.

Abstract Approved:

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Thesis Supervisor

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Date

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Sociology in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

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Graduate College  
The University of Iowa  
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D THESIS

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This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of  
Christie Marie Fitzgerald Boxer

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the Doctor  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW.....	1
Marriage Trends and Statistics.....	1
Some Explanations for the Decline of Marriage.....	3
Determinants of Romantic Partnerships .....	5
2. THE NATURE AND ORIGINS OF SPOUSE PREFERENCES.....	9
Ideal Preferences for Romantic Partnerships.....	9
Top Preferences and Sex Differences.....	10
Ideal Standards Model.....	12
Origins of Preferences.....	14
Biological Origins .....	14
Social Role Origins .....	18
Social Exchange Origins .....	22
Basic Theoretical Predictions .....	26
3. NEW DIRECTIONS .....	31
New Theoretical Derivations .....	31
Hegemonic Gender Beliefs .....	32
Life Course Transitions .....	37
Social Contexts .....	42
A Note about Preference Assessment .....	48
4. RESEARCH AGENDA.....	50
Population and Samples.....	50
Sampling Procedures.....	53
Survey Instrument.....	56
Survey Implementation.....	58
5. ANALYSIS PROCEDURES AND RESULTS.....	60
Analysis Procedures Overview.....	60
Demographic and Summary Data.....	60
Analysis Part One.....	63



Analysis Part Two.....	67
Analysis Part Three.....	70
Analysis Part Four.....	79
Analysis Part Five.....	84
 6. DISCUSSION.....	 89
Self Rating and Spouse Preference Rank Orders.....	89
Evolutionary Psychology and Social Role Results.....	90
Social Exchange Results.....	93
Gender Results.....	94
Age Results.....	96
Factor Analysis and Comparison Results.....	98
 7. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS.....	 100
Limitations of This Research.....	101
Directions for Future Research.....	105
 APPENDIX.....	 108
 REFERENCES .....	 140

## LIST OF TABLES

Table		
A1.	Sample Statistics	108
A2.	Sample Demographics	109
A3.	Top 15 Self Ratings and Rank Orders for Total Sample and by Sex	110
A4.	Top 15 Spouse Preferences and Rank Orders for Total Sample and by Sex	111
A5.	Tests of Sex Differences in Spouse Preferences	112
A6.	Average Importance of Characteristics in a Future Spouse by Anticipated Marriage Role: Males Only	113
A7.	Average Importance of Characteristics in a Future Spouse by Anticipated Marriage Role: Females Only	114
A8.	Self Rating and Spouse Preferences Correlations, Gender Characteristics (BEM Sex Role Inventory)	115
A9.	Self Rating and Spouse Preference Correlations, Select Characteristics	116
A10.	Self Rating Correlations: Gender Items	117
A11.	Spouse Preference Correlations: Gender Items	120
A12.	Factor Loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, and Average Inter-Item Correlations (AIC) for Self Rating Gender Dimensions	123
A13.	Factor Loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, and Average Inter-Item Correlations (AIC) for Spouse Preference Gender Dimensions	124
A14.	Factor Correlations for Self Rating and Spouse Preference Dimensions	125
A15.	Means and Standard Deviations of Self Rating and Spouse Preference Gender Dimensions	126
A16.	Regression Coefficients (and Standard Errors) for the Importance of Gender Dimensions in a Spouse by Self Rating Gender Dimensions and Sex Category	127
A17.	With-In Sex Mean Differences In Spouse Preference Gender Dimensions by High and Low Expressivity and Instrumentality Self Ratings: Females Only	129

A18.	With-In Sex Mean Differences In Spouse Preference Gender Dimensions by High and Low Expressivity and Instrumentality Self Ratings: Males Only	130
A19.	Regression Coefficients (and Standard Errors) for the Importance of Select Characteristics in a Spouse by Self Ratings, Sex Category, and Age	131
A20.	Regression Coefficients (and Standard Errors) for the Importance of Relative Age of a Spouse by Respondent Age, by Sex Category	134
A21.	Top Rated Spouse Preference Values by Source of Data: Undergraduates vs. Alumni	135
A22.	Age Category Frequencies and Percentages	136
A23.	Top Rated Spouse Preference Values by Age Group	137
A24.	Spouse Preference Characteristic Factor Loadings: Exploratory Factor Analysis	138

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure

- A1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model of Spouse Preference Dimensions: Replicating Fletcher et al.'s (1999) Preference Dimensions 139

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Marriage is a defining “capstone achievement” of adult life in the United States (Cherlin 2009). Recent data suggest that, as of 2009, 67 percent of men and 73 percent of women over the age of 15 have ever married (Kreider and Ellis 2011). However, marriage rates are dropping for all demographic groups; in 2010, only 51 percent of the United States population was currently married, down from 72 percent in 1960 (Cohn, Passel, Wang, and Livingston 2010). This has drawn the attention of social science research to the factors that underscore the dynamic and complex nature of marriage decisions and family formation processes.

This dissertation focuses on one factor that influences marriage decisions – ideal spouse preferences. I begin by describing the current marriage landscape and recent trends, followed by an overview of several important determinants of romantic partnerships, including our preferences for future spouses. I then discuss the theoretical perspectives on the nature and origin of humans’ preferences for spouses (or mates, as is the common nomenclature in this area), and lay out a series of hypotheses testing these theories. Next, I suggest theoretical factors that have not been adequately assessed in this literature and derive new hypotheses from these perspectives. I then describe my methods for testing these hypotheses and the results that follow. I conclude with a discussion of my findings and their implications for the study of preferences and marriage, limitations of this research and directions for future studies in this area.

#### *Marriage Trends and Statistics*

Marriage rates have steadily declined throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and now 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. In 1960, 72 percent of the U.S. adult population was married; now that figure is just over

half (51 percent). In conjunction with this decline is the rising number of never married adults, from 15 percent in 1960 to nearly double that (27 percent) in 2008. The drop in marriage can be seen across all races, but is most pronounced among African Americans (Banks 2011). The percent of Black adults who are currently married fell from 61 percent in 1960 to around 40 percent in the 1990s, and is now just 32 percent. The trend among Hispanics is more comparable to Whites, with the percentage of currently married adults of both races declining over time, from 74 percent in 1960 to 56 percent in 2008 for Whites, and from 72 percent to 50 percent for Hispanics (Taylor, Parker, Kochhar, Lopez, Passel, Fry, Morin, Cohn, Livingston, Wang, Dockertman, Velasco, and Seaborn 2010).

We have also seen changes in marriage rates by education. In the 1950s, those with college educations were less likely to marry than their non-college educated counterparts – 80 percent of college graduates had ever married by the time they reached ages 55-59, compared to 92 percent of those the same age without college degrees (Fry 2010). While college-educated men have not seen drastic changes in their marriages rates over time, college-educated women have experienced a significant increase in marriage rates. By 2008, the rates of ever-married women ages 55-59 with college degrees matched those without college education – 91 percent of women with college degrees and without degrees in this age group had ever married. For all U.S. adults over 18 years old, the percent of those currently married with college degrees is higher (64 percent) than the percent currently married with high school education or less (48 percent). Adults with less than a high school education are now the least likely to marry (Fry 2010).

Marriage has also become increasingly tied to socioeconomic status. Research suggests that women's increased labor market prosperity can significantly increase their odds of marriage (Sweeney 2002; Sweeney and Cancian 2004). Furthermore, Gibson-Davis (2009) finds that among low income couples with children, the chances of entering formal marriage are tied to the family's financial status. Specifically, marriage likelihood was predicted by increases in father's income over time (but not mother's income). For this group, marriage decisions are independent of the decision to have and raise children. The decision to marry is driven by financial stability, whereas the decision to have children outside of marriage is not. Smock and Manning (2010) corroborate this finding with interviews from cohabiting couples. They find that 70 percent of cohabitators in their study report holding out for a solid financial base before committing to marriage.

#### *Some Explanations for the Decline of Marriage*

The decrease in marriage rates is due, in part, to increased options for romantic partnerships outside of formal legal unions (Finchman and Beach 2010). The frequency of cohabitation, for instance, has nearly doubled since 1990 – today, 44 percent of adults say they have cohabited (Taylor et al. 2010) – and couples are increasingly viewing cohabitation as an alternative to marriage (Brown 2005). The increased social acceptance of alternative family forms, including cohabiting couples with children, same-sex unions, and step-families, has made marriage just one among many options for family formation.

There is also a postponement effect that accounts for some of the decline in marriage rates – adults are waiting longer to marry for the first time. The average age at first marriage has steadily increased over the past few decades, from 24 for men and 22 for women at the start of the 1980s, up to 28 for men and 26 for women in 2010 (U.S.

Census Bureau 2010). Women today are likely to pursue education and careers prior to getting married. More women are college educated now than in the past - 28 percent of women between the ages of 25 and 29 held college degrees 2007 (compared to only 8 percent in 1970) and women were awarded 57 percent of new bachelor's degrees across the nation in 2001 (compared to 43 percent in 1970) (Freeman 2004; Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2008).

Alongside these demographic trends is a shift in the meaning of marriage throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Before WWII, marriage was a highly-structured proprietary relationship focused on obligation to one's family and lineage. Unions between families were driven more by economics than by romance. In the baby-boom era, marriage transitioned from a proprietary relationship focused on preserving family lineage to a companionship-based model with sharp gender divisions between domestic and workplace responsibilities. Wives by and large aspired to be mothers and to care for their homes, husbands, and children, while men were expected to be financial providers and heads of households. Today, many couples have shifted toward shared economic and household labor divisions (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, and Robinson, 2000) and embody an individualistic model of partnering based on personal fulfillment (Cherlin 2004). Adults now place a greater responsibility for their own emotional health, growth, and satisfaction on their actual (or anticipated) spouses. This shift toward "individualized" marriages is evidenced in the reasons adults give for getting married (Taylor et al. 2010): an overwhelming percent of unmarried (84 percent) and married (93 percent) adults state that "love" is the number one reason for marriage.



These changing trends imply that marriage has become an idealized institution, realized primarily by the White, educated, middle-class. Though couples may desire marriage, the shrinking numbers of those who achieve it suggests that entry into formal marriage is now more selective than in the past. This selectivity may be enlightened by studying the ways in which people think about marriage and spouses. We can learn something about the nature of marriage by examining the types of characteristics that are most highly desired in long-term romantic partnerships. Our preferences are one among several determinants of such partnerships, and by studying the preferences of the group that is most likely to get married – college-educated Whites – we can begin to understand how our romantic partner ideals are related to marriage behaviors.

#### *Determinants of Romantic Partnerships*

Who we meet and choose to partner with is influenced by several important factors. The first determinant of any social encounter is propinquity, or proximity to potential others. This factor not only determines who partners romantically, but who one meets and interacts with in general. In past decades, this concept was a bit more straightforward than it appears today. Early theories of propinquity suggested that marriages were more likely among people who share a physical nearness in terms of locations of residence, work, and recreational pursuits (Kernodle 1959). It is not simply sharing a physical or geographic space that accounts for the increased likelihood of meeting and subsequent partnering; those who share physical proximity tend to also share cultural norms, behaviors, and attitudes. This creates an “in-group” effect – people who regularly share physical proximity also tend toward similarity in beliefs, attitudes,

behaviors, and demographic characteristics, such as education, race, and socioeconomic status (Tajfel 1982).

With the advent and proliferation of sophisticated communication devices, such as the internet and cellular phones, the influence of *physical* proximity on who one meets and marries may wane. Some theorists have expanded the concept of propinquity to include those in one's communication network; that is, the number of others with whom a person already has contact that she would need to go through to reach a potential other (Berscheid and Reis 1998). We can further expand this concept of communicative distance to include social networking sites, such as Facebook, Myspace, and Friendster, the goals of which are to facilitate interaction between people regardless of physical nearness. Similarly, propinquity may be less of a defining feature of romantic relationships today than in the past, given the increased availability and popularity of online dating sites (Sprecher, Schwartz, Harvey, and Hatfield, 2008) that connect people within geographic radiuses specified by the users (Sautter, Tippett, and Morgan 2010).

There are also existent social and cultural norms about the appropriateness of various romantic pairings. For instance, while marriages between members of different races are on the rise in recent decades, they still only comprise approximately 5 percent of all marriages as of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century (Kennedy 2002). As recently as the year 2000, 12 percent of whites surveyed opposed interracial marriages. Likewise, in many cultures, including the United States, it is more acceptable for an older man to marry a younger woman than for an older woman to marry a younger man. There is evidence that these cultural expectations have shifted in recent decades, with the emergence of new cultural trends such as "cougars" – older women who explicitly seek out romantic or sexual

companionship with younger men. These cultural norms can strongly influence who we meet and who we perceive as “acceptable” potential romantic partners, and they are enforced by a large number of socializing agents, including parents and family, friends, and peers, and even strangers. Socially “inappropriate” pairings may receive sanctions such as overt looks or comments about the individuals and their relationship, or in more extreme cases, may be shunned by family members or close friends. For these reasons, individuals select partners against the backdrop of expectations from their family, friends, and society.

There are also stark homogeneity effects, or the propensity for partners to be similar in terms of other demographic characteristics, including education, religion, age, and even labor market factors, such as annual earnings and hours worked per week (Blackwell and Lichter 2004; Cheal and Kampen 1997; Jepsen and Jepsen 2002). The exception to these “birds of a feather” findings is personality similarity between partners; to date, there is little evidence that married or dating couples are similar in their personalities (Gonzaga et al. 2007; Montoya, Horton, Kirchner 2008; Murstein 1967; Trost 1967; Watson, Klohnen, Casillas, Simms, Haig, and Berry 2004) (For evidence of similarity between individuals’ preferences and personalities, see Zenter 2005).

In addition to proximity, similarity, and the perceived appropriateness of potential partners, there are also a host of physical and biological determinants of attraction, including facial symmetry (e.g. Little, Jones, and DeBruine in press; Schmid, Marx, and Samal 2008), body features, shape and movement (e.g. Johnson, Gill, Reichman, and Tassinari 2007; Montoya 2007), voice pitch (e.g. Feinberg 2008), and odor (e.g. Grammer, Fink, and Neave 2005). Thus, others who are close to us (either by physical

proximity or communicative distance), meet social and personal norms regarding romantic suitability, and who we find attractive determine the “field of eligibles” within which we choose marriage partners (Kerckhoff 1974; Winch 1958).

Finally, we also carry with us our own personal preferences for the type of person with whom we might want a romantic partnership. Our preferences act as cognitive blueprints of the constellation of characteristics that we desire in others and help us select partners from the field of available others. What our ideals contain depends on the type of relationship in question (Brase 2006; Sprecher and Regan 2002). This research focuses on our ideal *spouse* preferences, or those characteristics we most highly desire in a marriage partner. Spouse preferences are defined as cognitions, or mental representations, about the characteristics people desire in marriage partners (Shackelford, Schmitt, and Buss 2005). These cognitions act as “chronically accessible knowledge structures” that we draw upon to guide interpersonal interactions (Tran, Simpson, and Fletcher 2008). Assessing ideal spouse preferences can help us understand the symbolic meanings of marriage by identifying key traits specific to the most desirable marriage partners and set the stage for determining whether these preferences are associated with actual marriage decisions.

It is these preferences for spouses that are the focus of the following chapter. I first review the existing literature on mate preferences – the common nomenclature in this area – including a discussion the top-rated preferences for spouses and how preferences differ between men and women. Second, I describe the role of preferences in romantic relationships. Third, I discuss three perspectives on the origin of spouse preferences, and derive testable hypotheses from these orienting theories.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE NATURE AND ORIGINS OF SPOUSE PREFERENCES

This chapter first outlines the current themes in the mate preference literature, including the most desired characteristics and common sex differences in preferences. I then discuss the role of preferences in relationship formation and maintenance, and three prevailing theoretical perspectives on the origins of mate preferences and preference differences by sex category. I end this chapter by proposing hypotheses derived from these perspectives.

#### *Ideal Preferences for Romantic Partnerships*

Decades of social science research have assessed individuals' preferences using survey data (e.g. Sprecher, Sullivan, and Hatfield 1994) and experiments (e.g. Eastwick and Finkel 2008a), both within the United States and across the globe (e.g. Buss 1989). Preference data often come from young adults' responses on pre-determined characteristic lists. One such list, the mate selection survey, is a questionnaire dating back to 1939 that asks respondents to rank 18 characteristics in terms of how desired each is in a potential mate. Researchers have continued to document men's and women's mate preferences using this survey every decade since the 1940s (see Buss et al. 2001, Feingold 1990, and Powers 1971 for reviews). Other methods for studying mate preferences involve content analyses of online dating profiles or personal "want-ads" in newspapers (Cunningham and Barbee 2008), and contrived speed-dating events during and after which participants state their preferences for "ideal dates" and any current dating partners within (and outside of) the study (Eastwick and Finkel 2008a, 2008c).

### *Top Preferences and Sex Differences*

Studies of the importance of mate characteristics over time suggests that both men and women value “mutual love and attraction,” “dependable character,” “emotional stability and maturity,” “pleasing disposition,” and in recent decades, “education and intelligence” as the top five mate preferences (Buss et al. 2001; Powers 1971). Recent studies find that intelligence and creativity are significant predictors of women’s interest in potential long-term partners (e.g, Prokosch, Coss, Scheib, and Blozis 2009). There are few studies of spouse preferences by race, but findings by King and Allen (2009) suggest that, like the findings described above, African American men and women prefer education and reliability in marriage partners, but it is financial stability and income that feature most prominently in African American men’s *and* women’s spouse preferences.

Much of the research on mate preferences has focused on sex category (male, female) differences in stated preferences. Studies consistently find that males place higher value on good looks, relative to females, and females place high value on resource potential, relative to males, when ranking items in survey formats. Interestingly, good looks and good financial prospects typically don’t rank in the top five most highly desired characteristics for either sex. Other characteristics, such as age and employment status, suggest interesting sex-differentiated patterns. Using nationally representative survey data from the 1980s (the National Survey of Families and Households), South (1991) finds that males report willingness to marry younger mates with less income than themselves or who are not employed. Females, however, report willingness to marry older mates with high earning potential, but are much less willing than males to consider mates without steady employment. Another interesting, but not often studied, factor that

impacts a potential spouse's desirability is their level of sexual experience before marriage. Sprecher and colleagues (1997) found that, overall, males and females preferred partners with little to no previous sexual experience, but for females, this preference was tempered by their own attitudes toward sexual behavior. Females with more permissive sexual attitudes preferred partners with moderate to extensive sexual experience, compared to females with less permissive attitudes. This finding poses an interesting comparison to characteristic ranking studies which show that "chastity" has drastically declined in importance for both males and females since the 1960s (Buss et al. 2001).

Mate preferences are constrained by how "free" people are to choose a mate that meets their minimum standards on essential characteristics. For instance, in Li and colleagues' (2002, 2006) budget allocation paradigm for assessing mate preferences, participants are asked to "design your ideal marriage partner" using one of three (low, medium, high) constrained "budgets" to purchase desired characteristics. When preference choices are constrained (low budget), males will prioritize good looks and females will prioritize status and resources over other desirable characteristics. Once the constraints are lifted, these preferences are still valued differently by sex category, but rank below other "luxury" qualities, such as dependability and creativity (Li et al. 2002). South (1991) suggests that individuals who may be less desirable as spouses themselves will lower their preference standards due to the constraints they face in finding a high quality partner. He finds that older unmarried respondents report greater willingness to marry mates with children from previous relationships – a potentially undesirable quality – than do younger unmarried respondents.

### *Ideal Standards Model*

The ideal standards model is particularly useful for understanding how preferences impact individuals' relationship decisions. This model was developed by Fletcher and his colleagues (1999, 2000) to describe the structure and functions of preferences in relationships. They collected volunteered mate preference characteristics from a sample of undergraduates and then subjected those data to a factor analysis to determine which preferences "hang together" (i.e. correlate most highly with some underlying dimension that categorizes them all relatively well). They found that the structure of ideal spouse preferences conforms to three broad categories of traits. These categories are construed as factors around which individuals' ideals cluster; specifically, these factors are warmth-trustworthiness; attractiveness-vitality; and status-resources. Included in the first category are individuals' stated preferences for someone who is warm, compassionate, honest, and sensitive. The attractiveness-vitality category includes preferences for spouses who are physically attractive, outgoing, good lovers, and confident. Finally, the status-resources category includes preferences for spouses who are successful, financially secure, and who have nice homes and wardrobes (Fletcher, Simpson, Thomas, and Giles 1999).

This model further suggests that preferences serve three important functions in interpersonal relationships: evaluation, explanation, and regulation (Fletcher and Simpson 2000). First, preferences act as evaluative measures of a person or a relationship in terms of quality and appropriateness. This function is especially useful in early stages of relationship formation, when people consider whether their current or prospective partner meets the standards they have for that particular type of relationship. For instance, if



one's ideal spouse is someone who has a good sense of humor, then this characteristic may act as a litmus test for eligible partners.

The second function of ideal preferences is to explain the current relationship and the experienced outcomes. Preferences act as "scripts" for describing one's partner and relationship to one's self and to the social world. For instance, a wife who is satisfied with her husband's involvement with their children might describe "good parenting skills" as an important characteristic that led to their marriage or marital satisfaction when discussing him or their relationship with others. Third, ideal preferences serve to regulate relationships and partners. Preferences may allow partners to predict, control, or even change the outcomes they experience or the partner themselves. For instance, if a husband's ideal wife is "attractive" and "fit," he might encourage her to be physically active and dress well so that she continues to meet his ideal preference for attractiveness. Conversely, he may use these preferences to voice his dissatisfaction if they are not met.

*My focus here is on the evaluative function of ideal preferences in relationship formation. Specifically, preferences should act as cognitive templates when considering the characteristics of potential eligibles for marriage.* As noted by Tran, Simpson, and Fletcher (2008), this model assumes that preferences are relatively stable structures that guide dating and marriage decisions by acting as evaluative criteria at pivotal points in relationship development, such as the initiation of dating or the transition from dating to marriage. They posit that people automatically access their preferences when making important judgments about a person's suitability. These judgments are likely to occur when decisions about the relationship trajectory (e.g. whether to continue or dissolve the

relationship) are salient to both partners. In this way, preferences play a key role in marriage and dating decisions and are important factors in family formation processes.

### *Origins of Preferences*

Three major perspectives, or orienting strategies (Wagner and Berger 1985), inform our understanding of where our spouse preferences come from and help explain the observed sex differences in stated preferences. These explanations include biological origins based on reproductive divisions of labor between males and females; social-structural origins based on the division of domestic and market labor between men and women; and exchange opportunities and goals between people with various levels of exchangeable resources. In this section, I outline each perspective and emphasize the principle axioms that lead to testable hypotheses about differential valuations of spouse preferences.

*Biological Origins.* The evolutionary psychology perspective – closely tied to evolutionary biology – suggests that early humans' brains evolved in response to the reproductive realities faced by each sex (Barkow, Cosmides, and Tooby 1992). Different environmental pressures and conditions led males and females to eventually evolve different cognitive mechanisms through which they process incoming signals from others and different ideas about desirable mate qualities. The realities of mating – producing, gestating, delivering, and sustaining offspring – meant that males and females had to attune to different cues of the opposite sex in order to perpetuate the species. Females, relative to males, have a necessarily greater physical investment in offspring before and after they are born, and can have only a limited number of offspring during a steeply age-graded timeframe. Males, relative to females, can produce an unlimited number of

offspring over a far greater timeframe, and physically invest less in those offspring. Males need to mate with females who are capable of conceiving and delivering full-term offspring: this potential is communicated through cues such as waist-to-hip ratio and outward signs of good health (clear skin, a slender, erect form, etc). For females, the chances of their own and their offspring's survival are increased by stable provisions of food and protection, and males who exhibit ability to provide such things are highly sought after. Therefore, females are thought to have developed an attention to cues of males' resources and resource potential, whereas males attend more to females' reproductive fitness (Brase 2006).

This orientation suggests that people seek out qualities in others that indicate "good" genes and resource potential, while simultaneously promoting their own assets as a mate. These mate preferences may be conscious or unconscious; that is, individuals may know their preferences, but may not be aware of their evolutionary origins (Buss 1992). Fletcher and colleagues' (1999) three-factor model of spouse preference ideals is based, in part, on the evolutionary psychology paradigm. Specifically, each of the three factors (warmth-trustworthiness, attractiveness-vitality, and status-resources) represents a path toward achieving the ultimate reproductive goal: to pass on viable genes to the next generation of humans.

The application of evolutionary biology principles to human mate selection gained traction with Trivers' parental investment model (1972), which suggests that humans choose between investments in literal mating activities (which are short-term in nature) or in child rearing activities (which are long-term commitments); both require time and energy and are difficult to engage in simultaneously. The biological realities of

human reproduction led to the evolution of short-term and long-term mating strategies. Mating strategies (or sexual strategies) are described as “integrated sets of adaptations that organize and guide an individual’s reproductive effort” (Gangestad and Simpson 2000, pg. 575). These strategies influence the preferences for mates and how much effort is put into obtaining desired outcomes with that mate. Short-term strategies are more costly for females, and research suggests they have tended to engage in such strategies less so than males (though most of these studies are based on non-human mammalian mating behavior) (Gangestad and Simpson 2000).

As noted previously, women bear a large cost with each pregnancy; not only through the physical burden of gestation, birth, and lactation, but also through their disproportionate share of the childrearing that typically follows. It is not in females’ best reproductive interest, then, to engage in short-term mating without anticipated resource commitment from their mates, should offspring result. Males, however, have less risk with short-term mating; indeed, this perspective suggests that males may be cognitively “wired” to desire short-term mating. Males might pursue short-term mates consistently, or sacrifice some of the effort they expend on obtaining new mates in order to gain sexual access to a particular mate, or to provide for the one(s) with whom reproductive efforts were successful.

The trade-off between males and females reproductive goals predicts that females should have more selective preferences for mates than males. Research evidence supports this claim (Eastwick and Finkel 2008a; Kenrick, Groth, Trost, and Sadalla 1993; Li and Kenrick 2006). Studies find that females maintain higher criteria than do males at every level of relationship involvement; from short-term options (one-night stands, casual

dating) up through long-term options (steady dating, marriage). The minimum quality of a potential mate that females are willing to accept is significantly higher than the minimum quality males are willing to accept at low levels of relationship commitment, though the sexes converge in their preferences for higher quality mates as relationship commitment increases (from casual sex to marriage).

The specific characteristics males and females prefer in a mate differ depending on the type of relationship (Li, Bailey, Kenrick, and Linsenmeier 2002; Li and Kenrick 2006). Both males and females value kindness and intelligence in a long-term mate, but males place higher value on physical attractiveness, and females place higher value on status and resource potential. Interestingly, preferences for short-term mates mirror these same patterns, but the sex differences are even more pronounced – females prefer higher overall minimum criteria for all assessed characteristics than do males at low involvement relationships.

From these evolutionary origins, we can see that it is important to specify the focal relationship context (short-term vs. long-term) to eliciting the proper preference cognitions. *This research focuses on the highly selective preferences that characterize ideal marriage (i.e. long-term) partners for men and women.* While much of the evolutionary perspective is difficult to test empirically, given its emphasis on non-conscious processing and the historical data needed which to gauge the evolution of human cognitive development, *the emphasis on sex differences is an important, empirically testable feature.*

It is not clear, however, whether these sex category differences appear because of differential cognitive processing forged by eons-old reproductive pressures, or from

differently valued roles men and women hold in a given society. Compelling evidence supporting evolutionary explanations was provided by Buss's (1989) cross-cultural study of 33 countries spanning six continents. The data yielded cultural uniformity in sex-differentiated preferences; males in all cultures preferred younger, more attractive mates, and females preferred older mates with more resources. These results are interpreted to support the evolutionary psychology perspective; specifically, Buss and colleagues argue that these preferences represent males' desire for more fertile females with healthy genes, and females' desire for the greater status and resource access that accompanies age and in turn enhance future offspring's survival.

*Social Role Origins.* An examination of the various social positions held by males and females suggests structural origins of sex differences in spouse preferences (House 1981). That is, men and women are placed into different roles in societies, roles based on providing resources, caring for family members, and tending to domestic duties, among others. This societal division of labor is "the engine of sex-differentiated behavior," since these roles are bound by social and situational constraints (Eagly and Wood 1999, pg. 409).

Social roles are governed by formal and informal rules for performance when in that role. For instance, the role of "teacher" is bound by cultural expectations for a teacher's relationship to "students," expectations for physical appearance and behavior, and assumptions of power and responsibility connected to that position (relative to other related positions, such as student or principal). Different roles have different cultural values, creating a power and status hierarchy for the persons holding these roles (Eagly, Wood, and Diekmann 2000). Positions within a network of related roles also determine

access to certain resources (Lovaglia 1999). This perspective suggests that males and females are funneled into different roles at different rates, such that females tend to concentrate in devalued social roles (those associated with submission, lack of authority, and caregiving/domestic labor), and males tend to concentrate in more highly valued roles (those connected with resource acquisition, provision, protection, and leadership) (Eagly 1987). Low status roles tend to have fewer resources and lower access to resources, compared with higher status roles.

Socialization is a key mechanism through which people learn and then reproduce the appropriate cultural schemas, or scripts, for their current (and anticipated) social roles (Sewell 1992). Social role theorists acknowledge that some genetic differences between males and females account for some role differentiation (males' greater size and strength relative to females', females' roles in reproduction relative to males'). Specifically, these manifestations of maleness and femaleness interact with social and cultural expectations for those characteristics, which lead to stereotypic expectations for role performances (Eagly and Wood 1999). Roles and role expectations that are frequently embodied by males in a given society become associated with "manliness" and masculinity in our culture, and likewise for females' roles and expectations becoming associated with "womanliness" and femininity. This process of associating the "typical" behaviors of one sex with particular social roles leads stereotypic expectations that become applied to the occupants of each role. These stereotypes become internalized and govern how individuals perform their role assignments, and how they see themselves in relation to others (e.g. Thoits and Virshup 1997). This perspective suggests that males and females

seek to accommodate the typical expectations associated with their roles by acquiring the skills and resources that lead to “successful” role performance (Eagly and Wood 1999).

*Social role perspective identifies this differential placement of males and females into social roles as the origins of sex-differences in behaviors and preferences.*

The findings that females value older age and earning potential in mates more so than do males, and that males value youth and physical attractiveness in mates more so than do females can be recast in terms of the social structural positions held by men and women. Eagly and Wood (1999) reanalyzed Buss’s (1989) cross-cultural data using measures of the various countries’ macro-level gender equality compiled by the United Nations (Gender Empowerment Measure, Gender-Related Development Index). These measures capture the extent to which females and males participate equally in political, economic, and decision-making roles, as well as indices of health, education, and wealth access available to males and females. Their results show that as the gender equality of countries increase, females’ tendency to emphasize earning potential decreases, as does males’ tendency to emphasize good looks. This analysis suggests that as males’ and females’ role distributions within the social structure become more similar, the differences between males’ and females’ preference tendencies decrease. Thus, it is females’ relative lack of access to resources and males’ positions of privilege relative to females that drive preferences for good looks and deep pockets.

Other key findings supportive of the evolutionary perspective can be understood using a social structural lens. For instance, consistent with females’ greater domestic responsibility relative to males, males value “good cook and housekeeper” in potential mates more so than do females. As a country’s gender equality increases, males show less



of a tendency to value this indicator of domestic skill, while females' preference for "good cook and housekeeper" does not change (Eagly and Wood 1999). That females value older mates with resources and males value younger mates with domestic proclivity is not surprising, given the social roles typically expected of each sex category. Older, compared with younger, males are likely to have higher earnings and occupational achievement, and males in general, relative to females, have higher earning potential in 99 percent of all fields (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010). Younger, compared with older, females are in their peak fertility years, plus they have had less time to invest in the workforce. This makes them particularly attractive candidates for fulfilling the domestic caregiver role. Essentially, males trade their provisionary assets for females' domestic skills.

Indeed, Becker (1991) suggested that specialization between partners is perhaps the most efficient family form, if the family's primary goal is to have and rear children. If one partner can expect greater returns from paid labor than the other, then that partner should specialize in the paid labor force, while the other partner specializes in the home. Men have traditionally had greater returns on their labor force investments compared to women, who are paid approximately 77 percent of what men earn in the United States (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010). This perspective suggests that women have been socialized to invest more in their domestic skills and less in labor market skills, whereas men are encouraged to do the opposite. When considering a marriage partner, then, men and women should try to exchange their relative role-related skills for their partner's complementary or supplementary skills. This role-based exchange is one way to understand the "trade-off" of sex differentiated mate preferences.

*Social Exchange Origins.* Just as evolutionary psychologists and social structuralists propose elements of trade-offs between partners' reproductive, domestic, and resource potentials, other perspectives on dyad formations incorporate exchange principles as well; namely, social exchange theory. Shaped by economists, sociologists, and psychologists in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, the social exchange perspective assumes that humans are rational actors who seek to maximize their rewards and minimize their costs in interpersonal interactions. This perspective further suggests that people base the quality of interactions on perceptions of rewards and costs associated with engaging in or maintaining those interactions (Blau 1964; Homans 1974). That is, interactions that yield high returns to an individual while requiring little costs from that individual are more desirable than interactions which are very costly and produce little reward.

The social exchange perspective differs from evolutionary psychology and social role perspectives in that it explains how a variety of interpersonal interactions are formed and maintained through both structural and personal characteristics of the actors involved. Evolutionary psychology boils sex-differentiated behavior down to reproductively-driven cognitive processes, and social role theory suggests that differences in the socialization of boys and girls leads to differences in the future social positions of men and women. Social exchange suggests that, in addition to those resources tied to socialized roles and reproductive potential, there are a host of other characteristics individuals possess that determine how, when, why, and with whom relationships are formed and maintained.

Exchange theories assume that actors are aware of their own "market value" upon entering and participating in an exchange market. That is, people have a general sense of

their own potential costs and rewards, and seek to get the “best deal” they can with an exchange partner. What constitute “costs” and “rewards” depend, in part, on the nature of the exchange relationship. The resources being exchanged have relative value within the relationship, but may have no absolute value beyond that (Emerson 1987). For instance, in a business partnership, one person may exchange time working on a project (cost) for approval and praise from the other (reward). This principle can be easily applied to interpersonal romantic relationships. Partners may define rewards in terms of getting love, support, and companionship from a partner, and costs in terms of giving those things to the partner in return.

The principle of the cost-benefit ratio in terms of interpersonal exchange can help explain homogamy among married couples. Research evidence suggests that “like marries like” on many demographic characteristics, including education level, income and wages, race, and religion (Blackwell and Lichter 2004; Jepsen and Jepsen 2002); all of which can be considered resources available to a person or within a partnership. In exchange terms, people with high resource values essentially “trade” those characteristics in order to get a partner with similarly high levels. Potential exchange partners with resources lower than one’s own are less attractive partners, unless they offer a compensating valued resource. Research by Carmalt and colleagues (2008) found that people with high body mass indices (BMIs), arguably a less culturally valued resource than a low BMI (in the U.S.), tended to have less physically attractive partners than those with low BMIs. However, when those with high BMIs had other highly valued characteristics, such as a good personality or high education levels, they were able to exchange those highly valued resources for a more physically attractive partner.

Social exchange theory further suggests that people use evaluations of their current relationship outcome levels to gauge the quality of the exchange interaction. Relationship outcomes can include satisfaction/dissatisfaction, happiness/unhappiness, and desirable/undesirable ratios of costs to rewards for one or both partners involved. If the outcomes experienced with a current partner are higher (or more satisfactory) than the person either experienced in past interactions with other partners or anticipates in future interactions with prospective partners, the current relationship is likely to be stable and satisfying (Thibaut and Kelly 1959). Conversely, if the current outcomes are lower than past or anticipated outcomes with prospective alternative partners, the relationship is likely to become unstable and alternatives for exchange are likely to be pursued. How people judge their current exchange interactions depends in part on the availability and perceived quality of alternative exchange partners.

Exchange opportunities are also influenced by the social structural roles people inhabit. As discussed in detail above, men and women tend to hold different, and differentially valued, social roles. Individual roles are part of a network of interrelated positions that define and constrain those who we interact with and in what ways we interact with them while occupying that role (Lawler, Ridgeway, Markovsky 1993). The type of resources one has available for exchange and the opportunities they have to exchange and pursue resources are also constrained by their social roles. A woman with few opportunities to obtain financial resources might desire a partner who can provide those resources for her, in exchange for the resources she can provide in the home. Similarly, highly educated individuals should desire a partner who is similar to themselves in terms of education, since they might trade the benefits of higher education

for similar benefits in a partner. The structure of our educational system is such that educated persons are more likely to meet others who are similar to themselves in education than those who are dissimilar. In this way, social exchange and social role perspectives interact to influence people's desired (and achievable) spouse preferences.

Exchange theories also focus on the imbalance of resources between exchange partners (Emerson 1962). Resource imbalance creates power differentials in relationships, such that the partner with more highly valued resources has greater control over relationship outcomes. The partner with more resources or greater valued resources has more power than does the partner who offers fewer and less valued resources. Power differences lead to patterns of interdependency between exchange partners, particularly if the more dependent partner has few (or no) alternative exchange partners. The locus of power has little to do with the people themselves – resource acquisition is often defined structurally; that is, by the number and type of others with whom one can and wants to exchange, and the type and value of resources linked to various social positions (e.g. race, socioeconomic status, age) (Emerson 1962).

Whereas power and dependence in exchange relationships are more appropriate for studies of ongoing relationships more so than for preferences, *the exchange principles of value, costs, rewards, and the perception of alternatives are directly related to what we desire in potential spouses*. Spouse preferences can be defined as cognitive representations of the exchangeable resources and characteristics perceived in ideal marriage partner, and these ideals are linked to anticipated future outcomes with that partner. Furthermore, one's own perceived "market value" is linked to our

preferences for a future spouse. *The perception of one's own exchange value should be an important determinant of spouse preferences.*

Despite the key role of self-perceptions, or one's market value, few preference studies include self ratings on the same characteristics they ask respondents to evaluate in potential mates. Kenrick and colleagues (1993) found that men's and women's self ratings on the same characteristics they rated in potential mates were moderately to strongly correlated with their stated mate preferences. For instance, men's and women's self ratings of attractiveness were positively correlated with the minimum attractiveness level of a potential partner for a one-night stand, steady dating, and marriage – the more attractive men and women perceive themselves, the higher the minimum level of attractiveness they are willing to accept in a partner across relationship levels. For men, the correlation between self-rated looks and minimum criteria for a partner's looks becomes stronger at higher levels of relationship investment (i.e. higher for marriage partners than one-night stands). Campbell and Wilbur (2009) took a slightly different approach and found that the characteristics rated as highly integral to men's and women's self-concepts are also the characteristics rated as most desirable by members of the opposite sex category. Specifically, men valued social status and women valued physical attractiveness as integral to their respective self-concepts, while men valued attractiveness in women and women valued status in men as potential mates.

#### *Basic Theoretical Predictions*

Thus far, I have explained the central role of preferences in evaluating relationship processes and progression, and demonstrated their importance in studies of marriage. I have also elucidated three orienting perspectives - evolutionary psychology,

social role, and social exchange - that help frame the nature and origin of spouse preferences, and the manifest sex differences observed in this body of research. The key mechanisms that influence spouse preferences from each perspective lead to testable predictions in the following ways.

First, evolutionary psychology proposes that reproduction-based cognitive processes drive sex-differentiated preferences for spouses. That is, individuals' spouse preferences are based on the age, physical attractiveness, and resource potential of prospective partners. Consistent with previous studies, I operationalize physical attractiveness using indicators such as care about appearance, attractive, stylish, and sexy. I operationalize resource potential as perceived earning potential, ambition, social status, and education. Education impacts earnings through occupational placement, such that high educational attainment allows for access to high status occupations, and high status occupations have higher earning potential than low status jobs. Further, based on the long-term and short-term strategy trade-off specified by evolutionary psychology, I predict that males will place greater value on a spouse who is interested in sex than will females, since males may be more willing to engage in a long-term mating strategy if their partners are interested in providing the benefit he might lose from foregoing short-term mating (namely, frequent sexual activity).

*H1<sub>Evol</sub>: Males will rate the importance of youth, physical attractiveness, and sexual interest in potential mates more highly than females.*

*H2<sub>Evol</sub>: Females will rate the importance of older age, maturity, education, financial prospects, good job, and social status in potential mates more highly than males.*

Second, the social role perspective suggests that the current (or anticipated) roles and role expectations held by males and females in a given society influence their

preferences for future mates. To the extent that females expect to be primarily responsible for domestic labor and caregiving, they will value potential mates who are providers. Likewise, for males who anticipate being the primary provider, they will place greater value on a mate's domestic skills. The predictions for females' resource-based preferences are not different from the evolutionary hypotheses above; however, the inclusion of males' valuation of domestic proclivity is unique to this perspective. I operationalize domestic proclivity using indicators connected to having and dealing with children and other specific domestic skills assessed in previous preference studies, such as good cook.

*H3<sub>Role</sub>: Males will rate the importance of good cook, loves children, and deals well with children in potential mates more highly than females.*

Using measures of respondents' anticipated family roles in terms of breadwinning and caretaking, I further predict an interaction between respondents' sex category and anticipated future family roles in terms of spouse preferences.

*H4<sub>Role</sub>: Males who anticipate being the sole financial provider in their marriage will rate the importance of good cooks, love children, and deal well with children, more highly than males who do not anticipate being the sole financial provider.*

*H5<sub>Role</sub>: Females who anticipate being the sole caregiver in their marriage will rate the importance of education, financial prospects, good job, and high social status, more highly than females who do not anticipate being the sole caregiver.*

Third, in accordance with social exchange theory, I predict strong positive correlations between respondents' self ratings and their stated spouse preferences. I will test this "similarity effect" by estimating correlations between respondents' self ratings on all assessed characteristics (76 self rating characteristics, see Methods section below) and the importance of those same characteristics in potential spouses.



*H6<sub>Exch</sub>: Respondents' self ratings will be positively correlated with their ratings on spouse preferences.*

Aspects of H1 and H2 have been tested in the empirical literature and will therefore constitute replication hypotheses in this investigation. Evolutionary psychology-based studies tend to focus on sex differences in ratings of “good financial prospect” and “good looks” as sole indicators of evolved reproductively-oriented cognitions (e.g. Buss 1989; Feingold 1990). My hypotheses, then, are part replication and part theoretical extension, since I include other relevant indicators of reproductive and resource viability predicted to be important to each sex (i.e. additional indicators of earning potential and sexual interest).

My other hypotheses thus far (H3, H4, H5, H6) are theoretical derivations that have not yet received adequate research attention. Few studies link spouse preferences to anticipated marital roles, but is a burgeoning area of research interest for social role theorists (e.g. Johannesen-Schmidt and Eagly 2002). Likewise, social role explanations are usually just that – post-hoc interpretations of existing data rather than purposeful examination of specific role-related preferences. Eagly and colleagues have begun to explore social-role related preferences within the last decade, and this research constitutes a new addition to this approach. The social exchange prediction has also received limited research attention, as described above (e.g. Campbell and Wilbur 2009; Kenrick et al. 1993). This research examines a wider array of correlations between characteristics than previous exchange studies.

In this section, I have developed testable hypotheses from the three main orienting perspectives on the origins and nature of spouse preferences. In the next chapter, I draw on additional theoretical perspectives that have not been considered in spouse preference

research to date. Using these perspectives, in conjunction with those outlined in this chapter, I derive novel hypotheses about the valuation of spouse preferences by a person's gender role endorsement and age, and explore the importance of the social context for understanding the nature of spouse preferences.

## CHAPTER 3

### NEW DIRECTIONS

In this chapter, I highlight additional theoretical perspectives to those described in Chapter Two that can help us understand how spouse preferences differ among groups, and derive novel hypotheses to test how preferences change depending on individuals' age and gender endorsement, two previously unconsidered determinants of one's desires for a spouse. I also discuss the importance of understanding the social context in which preferences are stated and explore the impact of social change on the structure of spouse preferences.

#### *New Theoretical Derivations*

There are several factors that can inform our understanding of the nature and structure of spouse preferences which have not been explicitly addressed in the mate preferences literature. I examine the influence of these factors on spouse preferences and derive new testable hypotheses in the sections that follow. First, I discuss the potential for an individual's gender role endorsement to impact their spouse preferences. This extends social role theory to gender-based roles that are tied to societal stereotypes about "men" and "women" and the differences between them, and incorporates theories of hegemonic gender beliefs in the study of spouse preferences – an avenue that has not yet been explored. It may be the case that gender endorsement, and not sex category, is responsible for previously identified sex-differentiated preferences. Second, I incorporate principles from life course theory – namely, aging – in the study of spouse preferences. Much of mate preference research relies on convenience samples of college undergraduates, with no mention of the ways in which the preferences of young adults

currently in college might differ from older adults who are no longer in a densely populated pool of eligibles. Third, I discuss social changes over the last several decades which suggest the need for an exploratory study of whether and how spouse preferences change over time and in changing social contexts.

### *Hegemonic Gender Beliefs*

The emphasis on sex category differences throughout the mate preference literature is evident; however, this ignores the distinction between sex category and gender. Sex variations form a continuum from fully formed male to fully formed female, with combinations of formations in between (Money and Tucker 1975). The manifestation of maleness or femaleness is signaled by various pre- and post-natal developmental stages, including the triggering of sex hormones that impact internal and external sex organ development and brain formation (Fausto-Sterling 2001). Instead of assigning labels to this range of potential variation, sex instead is represented by two distinct categories – male and female.

Gender may also be thought of as a continuum, but rather than biological manifestations, gender represents the socially constructed manifestations that become associated with one's sex-categorization (Coltrane 1998). Biological males are associated with social expectations for masculinity, biological females with femininity. What particular characteristics constitute "masculinity" and "femininity" is a question that social scientists have tried to tackle since the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Research in the 1970s added a third gender label, androgyny, to represent the blending of masculine and feminine social and personality characteristics present in both males and females (Bem 1974). Gender is perhaps best described as something males and females *do*, or perform,

daily throughout a variety of social interactions. This “doing gender” perspective (West and Zimmerman 1987) sees gender as highly monitored self-presentations of the social, cultural, and behavioral characteristics associated with maleness and femaleness. By cultivating a culturally appropriate display of their sex-category, individuals perform their gender assignment guided by hegemonic notions of what each gender “is” and “does.”

Early versions of social role theory (e.g. Eagly 1987) conceptualized gender as distinct from other social roles. However, work by Ridgeway and Correll (2004) propose that gender itself is a system of social roles, or a social structure, and therefore mediates our enactment and understanding of other roles. Prevailing social and cultural beliefs about what men and women are like, and should be like, influence social relations on multiple levels – from micro-interactional contexts through macro-level patterning of social roles (Lawler, Ridgeway, Markovsky 1993). Gender acts as a schema of expectations for socially condoned displays of one’s sex category. The expectations created by stereotypic social roles extend to personal attributes as well as behavior, and the same is true of gender roles. For instance, if caregiving is associated with females, then women are expected to be nurturing, caring, and attentive to the needs of others. If the role of caregiver is not associated with males to the same extent, then men are not expected to possess these characteristics.

Ridgeway and Correll suggest that hegemonic gender beliefs - the “widely held cultural beliefs that define the distinguishing characteristics of men and women” (pg. 511) – form the basis on which our social organizations are structured. Social institutions serve to magnify the (supposed and actual) biological and behavioral differences of males

and females. Consistent with the social role perspective, these differences become associated with stereotypic gender characteristics and role assignments. In fact, social roles are interdependent with these gender stereotypes; our understanding of social roles is necessarily colored by hegemonic gender beliefs. This makes gender a “background identity” for nearly all social interactions (Ridgeway and Correll 2004, pg. 516).

What constitutes hegemonic masculinity and femininity has inspired a swell of descriptive research since the 1980s. Existing stereotypic beliefs about genders and gender differences contrast men and women on several dimensions. Masculinity is commonly associated with dominance, whereas femininity is associated with subordination (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Men are viewed as higher-status, more status-worthy, and more competent than women, and as having greater agency and instrumental leadership (Spence and Buckner 2000). Women are seen as less competent and generally “worth less” than men, but also nicer, emotionally expressive, and communal (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, and Xu 2002; Ridgeway and Correll 2004). In general, masculinity is associated with thinking and doing, and femininity is associated with feeling (Rubin 2001).

This concept of hegemonic gender beliefs does not imply that these are “normal;” indeed, few people may actually enact such specifically defined roles. But they are normative, in that the associated stereotypes are ubiquitous and well-known, even if not personally endorsed in the gender displays of all men and women (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). In fact, it is the subordination of the other expressions of masculinity and femininity that gives the hegemonic beliefs their “honored” status (pg. 832). And there is evidence that for masculinity, the hegemony may be less applicable to

men who fall outside of the white, middle-class stereotypes that define it (Marable 2001; Zinn 2001).

Few studies have examined the role of gender in sex-differentiated mate preferences. Eastwick and colleagues (2006) used measures of gender *attitudes* – not one's self-described gender - to predict sex-typed differences in stated mate preferences. They found that women who held traditional gender role attitudes placed more value on a mate who was older and a good financial prospect, compared to women with less traditional gender attitudes. Similarly, men who held traditional gender role attitudes valued a younger mate who is a good cook and housekeeper more highly than men with less traditional attitudes. These findings were interpreted from a social role perspective – to the extent individuals favored traditional gender roles in relationships, they valued the characteristics associated with those roles in potential partners.

Green and Kenrick (1994) assessed the role of the prospective mate's gender by exposing subjects to potential mates that were masculine, feminine, or androgynous and asking them to evaluate their desirability as a date, a one-night stand, or a spouse. They manipulated gender perceptions using profiles of expressiveness (high, low) and instrumentality (high, low). The masculine target was depicted as having high instrumentality and low expressivity; the feminine target was depicted as having high expressivity and low instrumentality; and the androgynous target was depicted as high in both expressivity and instrumentality. Their results show that men's and women's preferences at each level of relationship (date, one-night stand, spouse) rated the androgynous target as more highly desirable than the masculine or feminine targets.

*These studies, however, have yet to link one's evaluation of their own expressivity and instrumentality (or masculinity and femininity) to their desired preferences for a spouse.* Without attention to gender role endorsement, we cannot specify whether sex-differentiated preferences are indeed due to biological and physiological distinctions between males and females in general, or if these differences are due of the social embodiment of gendered characteristics, or if both sex and gender influence preferences simultaneously. This is essentially the “nature versus nurture” question applied to our preferences for marriage partners. It is important to determine the impact of gender on preferences because it could provide empirical evidence that contradicts leading biological-based theories, such as evolutionary psychology. Also, incorporating gender allows for new theoretical perspectives to enter the mate preference literature, which could lead to a variety of novel predictions and research studies that move away from the traditional paradigms in this field. Since much of this literature emphasizes sex category differences, it essentially ignores individuals who do not fall neatly into our sex category dichotomy. Measuring gender endorsement is a more comprehensive way to gauge individuals' preferences since preferences are not necessarily bound to sex category distinctions, but instead to individuals' personalities and self-perceptions.

The lack of attention to gender thus far in mate preference studies provides an opportunity to examine differences in stated preferences in terms of endorsement of hegemonic gender beliefs. Specifically, *I use the hegemonic gender perspective to examine the influence of personal endorsement of stereotypic gender attributes on stated spouse preferences.* I assess personal endorsement of hegemonic gender beliefs



using individuals' self ratings on characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity and femininity. Given the social and gender role perspectives discussed above, I predict that people who self-evaluate as conforming to a given gender role should prefer spouses who conform to the complementary gender role. These expectations lead to hypotheses seven and eight:

*H7<sub>Gender</sub>: Individuals' instrumentality (masculinity) will be positively related to the importance of expressivity (femininity) in a spouse, and individuals' expressivity will be negatively related to the importance of expressivity in a spouse.*

*H8<sub>Gender</sub>: Individuals' expressivity (femininity) will be positively related to the importance of instrumentality (masculinity) in a spouse, and individuals' instrumentality will be negatively related to the importance of instrumentality in a spouse.*

I also expect to find with-in sex differences in gender endorsement, such that:

*H9<sub>Gender</sub>: Females with high expressivity (femininity) will rate the importance of instrumentality (masculinity) in a spouse more highly than females with low expressivity.*

*H10<sub>Gender</sub>: Males with high instrumentality (masculinity) will rate the importance of expressivity (femininity) in a spouse more highly than males with low instrumentality.*

### *Life Course Transitions*

The influence of life course transitions on spouse preferences has also been overlooked in much of this literature. Indeed, most preference studies rely on convenience samples of undergraduates with an average age of 19 or 20 years old. This sampling method yields large amounts of data relatively quickly and affordably, but most of these respondents fall into the narrow age range of 18 to 22 (the mean is typically 20 years).

The life course perspective suggests that the aging process, age-graded milestones (e.g. graduating college, marriage/divorce, birth of a child), and social-historical contexts play a pivotal role in individuals' life trajectories, behaviors, and attitudes. Drawing on

this perspective, I examine whether spouse preferences change as a function of age, since aging is presumably accompanied by important life transitions, such as college graduation, entry into the labor force, and potential geographic relocation. The life course perspective tries to bridge individual level cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors with aging and other macro-level social influences and historical eras (Elder 1994). As defined by Elder (1985), the life course refers to the range of age-based trajectories individuals experience over a life span and how those trajectories are influenced by changing social conditions and human agency. Much like social role and gender perspectives, scholars in this area stress the social meanings that are associated with life events; meanings that are often based on the age at which we experience the events (Bengtson and Allen 1993). For instance, becoming a parent has profound social meaning in our culture, and the parenthood experience is, in part, shaped by the age of the parents. The social expectations for teenage mothers are different than for mothers in their late 20s, and different still for mothers in their 40s.

One central theme in this perspective is the timing of lives, or the “incidence, duration, and sequence” of age-based social milestones, such as marriage, the birth of a child, and career entry, promotion, and retirement (Elder 1994). The focus here is on the transition points, or rites of passage, at which individuals experience change, and these change points are tied to social structural and biological processes (Bengtson and Allen 1993). Age is an important factor for determining social role positioning and resource distribution. Social structures, such as the family, allocate roles and resources differently depending on the age of the members – parents have more power and status than children when the children are young, but these roles may switch as the parents grow old and the

children become parents themselves. Similarly, age dictates women's fertility window, and birthrates are associated with other life course events such as education and career pursuits.

The life course perspective provides a context in which to understand both the age-based pressures to marry and the delay in age at first marriages. Men and women are pursuing education in greater numbers today than in the past, and many delay marriage until after they graduate (Qian 1998; Sassler 2010). Although there is a growing population of single adults over 30, social expectations for appropriate age at first marriage are still widely-held, particularly for women (Whelan 2006). The median age at first marriage in 2010 was 28 for men and 26 for women, which is several years later than the 1980s (25 for men, 23 for women) and the uncharacteristic post-WWII era (23 for men, 20 for women) (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Marrying later in life may be more acceptable today than in the past, but older single adults have likely experienced subtle questioning, surprise, or disapproval over their single status, since as of 2001, the majority of men (85 percent) and women (89 percent) had married (at least once) by age 40 (U.S. Census Bureau 2001). This means that as people near their late 20s, they are often met with social expectations for marriage and subsequent family formation stages.

Taking life course factors into account suggests that ideal spouse preferences should vary by the structural changes associated with age, education, and occupational transitions (Shanahan 2000). For example, as people age, they move away from their childhood homes to begin their education and/or working lives, and as a result, they adopt new social roles and expectations for performing within these roles. According to social role and identity theories, these expectations become important determinants of behavior

and internalized aspects of the self. Exchange theory predicts that these role-attributes associated with the self should then become important determinants of spouse preferences.

This is one reason that it is important to study the spouse preferences of older adults. For instance, starting one's career after graduating from college brings a level of status and prestige the person did not have before experiencing these transitions. Adopting the role of a "professional" and being seen as "adult" by one's colleagues, family, and friends changes one's self-concept. New self-meanings should, according to exchange theory, change the characteristics one desires in a potential spouse. Experiencing age-graded life course events such as graduating from college and moving into new states, careers, and marriage markets should change individuals' spouse preferences. Whereas younger people might value "excitement" or "extroversion" in a spouse, older people might place more importance on "maturity" or "adaptability," since those are characteristics expected of adults in professional roles. Another reason is that the preferences of older unmarried individuals might differ from younger adults in ways that are more predictive of actual marriage behaviors, since older adults are temporarily closer to the median age at first marriage, have left the saturated dating environment of college, and are more likely to have the factors associated with marriage likelihood in place (financial stability, completed education, etc.), relative to younger adults.

To that end, I predict that preferences for a high-investment relationship such as marriage should vary among those who are temporally closer to the event of marriage than those for whom marriage may, on average, be years away (younger adults). I hypothesize a *main effect of age*, such that as individuals age, they will place higher value

on characteristics associated with age-graded life transitions (indicated by characteristics such as good provider, mature, high social status).

*H11<sub>Age</sub>: As age increases, the importance of financial prospects, education level, maturity, successful, cultured, knowledgeable, mature, self-reliant, and social status in potential mates will increase.*

Likewise, older adults should also value characteristics associated with major transition points expected at or near their age (e.g. starting their own families, indicated by desire for characteristics such as deals well with children, good cook).

*H12<sub>Age</sub>: As age increases, the importance of loves children, deals well with children, and good cook, and good provider in potential mates will increase.*

I also predict that age will interact with sex-based preference predictions from evolutionary psychology; namely, older males should value younger females more highly than should males who are younger, due to the fertility concerns associated with waiting until later adulthood to marry and start a family. Younger females should be more likely to prefer a spouse older than themselves, since age-related fertility concerns are less relevant when considering older males (for whom fertility does not decline until much later in life).

*H13<sub>Age</sub>: Older males will place more importance on youth in a potential spouse, relative to younger males.*

*H14<sub>Age</sub>: Older females will place more importance on the older age of a potential spouse, relative to younger females.*

Furthermore, given market constraints associated with transitory life events, I hypothesize that older adults' preferences overall will be less idealistic (fewer characteristics rated as extremely important) compared to younger adults' preferences, reflecting the interaction of the age-based expectations and market challenges older unmarried adults face. It may be the case that older adults adjust their preferences to

match their market realities more so than do younger adults who are immersed in easily accessible markets and further away from the age-based expectations for marriage timing (Mare 1991; Raley and Bratter 2004). For this prediction, I will treat age as a categorical, rather than continuous variable, and group respondents into three age categories: 18-22, 23-30, and 31-50 years old.

*H15<sub>Age</sub>: Older adults will value fewer characteristics very highly, compared to younger adults, who will value more characteristics very highly.*

### *Social Contexts*

Another main theme from the life course perspective is the historical context of lives; that is, the influence of changing social trends on individuals' life trajectories and meanings (Elder 1994). There are many important social changes that have impacted the "millennial" generation of young adults, and the life course perspective suggests that these changes impact the way young people view marriage and potential spouses. I discuss these historic changes below, and propose an exploratory investigation of how spouse preferences have changed over time, using two landmark preference studies from the 1990s to guide my comparisons.

Early work in this perspective defined its emphasis on the changing nature of individuals' lives and family timing within ever-changing social and historical contexts (Bengtson and Allen 1993). There are several key social changes that have occurred throughout the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the 21<sup>st</sup> that should impact individuals' preferences for marriage partners, including the expectations of the marriage institution (Cherlin 2004), gender roles within marriages (Eagly, Eastwick, and Johannesen-Schmidt 2009), education and workforce demographics (Bureau of Labor

Statistics 2010), and economic factors such as the recent recession and high unemployment rates (Shanahan 2000).

The change in the institution of marriage over the last 100 years follows the timing of key socio-historic events. Industrialization, the Second World War and the subsequent baby boom and urbanization, and the civil rights and women's rights movements have impacted many aspects of marriage, including who should marry, when, and what to expect from a spouse. Marriages are now commonly seen as unions based on mutual friendship, personal fulfillment, and emotional, mental, and spiritual growth throughout adulthood (Cherlin 2009). This puts increased pressure on spouses to ensure these ideals are met within themselves and their partnership. This perceived burden is quite different from marriage forms of the past, where men and women could expect more straightforward role fulfillment based on the normative gender and social roles of the time. Companionate marriages of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century were based more on wives' fulfilling the role of homemaker, mother, and social companion to husbands who worked out of the home and provided a roof, food, and protection for his family, than on the emotional and personal satisfaction expectations that characterize marriages today. This change in what we expect out of marriages and spouses should impact our preferences for spouses.

Not only have our cultural expectations for marriage changed, but our definition of social roles appropriate for men and women have changed over the past 60 years. There is currently a noted "weakened societal consensus" regarding the formerly strict sex-based role division within marriages (Eagly, Eastwick, and Johannesen-Schmidt 2009, pg. 403). Individuals' preferences for spouses, then, should be influenced by the

marriage models available within their culture. There is still a sex-based division of labor among many married couples in the United States. For instance, compared to their husbands, wives are more likely to work part-time and in service-sector jobs, typically earn less than their husbands, and have more domestic and caregiving responsibilities (Bianchi et al., 2000). However, research suggests these trends are changing. Men are beginning to take up the mantle of domestic responsibility in greater numbers and ways than in the past (Anderson 2004; Belkin 2008; Twiggs, Quillian, and Ferree 1999), and wives' earnings are beginning to outpace their husbands' (Cohn and Fry 2010; Stevenson, Coontz, Whitehead, and Fisher 2010). Supporting this apparent change in domestic and work arrangements, Eagly and colleagues (2009) suggest that men and women value domestic skills equally, though women still value financial provision in a spouse more so than men. This change may reflect both sexes' desires for more equitable arrangements in the home. Therefore, we might expect convergence between men's and women's preferences for financial provision and domestic skills over time (Johannesen-Schmidt and Eagly 2002).

Finally, the economic hardships of recent years should help drive this expected convergence in spouse preferences. Those in college may have less opportunity to achieve their desired adult transitions today than before the 2008 recession. Typical sex differences in mate preferences show that men do not value financial provision potential in women as much as women value it in men. However, as individuals' access to financial stability and other age-graded adult life course events is threatened by the country's economic instability, their desire for a partner who is financially stable and a good provider should increase, regardless of sex category. Individuals, particularly those



in college, may expect a high earning potential by themselves, but in the current economic climate, a future spouse's ability to contribute financially should be more important.

Cultural norms and expectations about social institutions are important framing variables for preference studies. As suggested previously, cultural notions about marriage and the appropriateness of certain partners or marital arrangements likely have important influences on individuals' dating and marriage decisions. Humans have an inherent motivation to avoid social sanctions, particularly from important people in their lives, which encourages conformity with prevailing social trends. As times change, new social realities emerge and individuals become exposed to and accustomed to different ideas about foundational social institutions such as marriage. For instance, support for same-sex marriage has increased substantially over the past decade (Kohut, Taylor, Keeter, Doherty, Dimock, and Parker 2011), in addition to the trends described earlier regarding wider acceptance of diverse family forms and working mothers.

One notable mate preference study has examined change in the importance of preferences over time. Buss and colleagues (2001) examined approximately 70 years worth of mate preference rankings from throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and noted several historical changes. Tellingly, the importance of "mutual attraction and love" rose to the most highly desired mate preference for men and women by the 1980s, up from 4<sup>th</sup> for men and 5<sup>th</sup> (of 18) for women in 1939. Also, the importance of "chastity" in a mate fell from a 10<sup>th</sup> place ranking of importance for both men and women in 1939 to nearly last (16<sup>th</sup> for men, 17<sup>th</sup> for women) by 1996. The importance of "education and intelligence"

in a mate also rose steadily throughout this period, coinciding with the increasing educational attainment for men and women during the same time.

While Buss et al.'s (2001) study makes an important contribution to our understanding of preferences over time, their methodology is limited in a number of ways. They, like the preferences studies before them to which they compare their ranked data, rely on the mate selection survey – an 18 item list of characteristics to which respondents assign discrete values from “essential” to “not at all important” in prospective mates. This list of 18 characteristics contains several double-barreled items, such as “ambition, industriousness,” which could be better used as items in subscales instead of a single characteristic. Similarly, many of the characteristics reflect outdated language and gender role assumptions, such as “favorable social status” and “good cook and housekeeper.” Finally, this 18 item list is incomplete – many key preference items are missing, such as “sense of humor” (McGee and Shevlin 2009), “loyalty,” and “communication” (Fletcher et al. 1999).

Using volunteered responses from college student samples in New Zealand, Fletcher and colleagues (1999) conducted a more comprehensive preference assessment, which formed the basis for their three-factor model of mate preferences (see Ideal Standards Model section). Respondents generated a list of 49 preference characteristics, which were then subjected to exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. The structure that emerged as the best fit for the data suggested three primary dimensions around which preferences for mates cluster (warmth-trust, attractiveness-vitality, status-resources).

Fletcher and colleagues' wide array of volunteered responses might in itself speak to the changing nature of marriage and the impact of social trends. Their model provides

a way to examine whether the structure of preferences, using a more comprehensive preference battery, has changed in the 13 years since their data were collected. I assessed changes in preferences by comparing my data with Fletcher et al.'s (1999) data. I collected importance ratings using items similar to the 49 characteristics used by Fletcher's group and subject those data to exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. I expect to find the same general pattern of results when the included preferences are limited to these pre-set characteristics.

While many of Fletcher et al.'s (1999) factor loadings make reasonable sense and load sufficiently highly (.40 and above) on their designated factor, there are several characteristics that do not seem to load clearly on any one factor. For example, "creative" and "intelligent" seem to be "splitters" (characteristics that load on two or more factors), and their loadings are generally low on the factors they split (.29 and .20 on warmth-trustworthy; .35 and .34 on vitality-attractiveness). This suggests that there are more than three primary factors underlying spouse preferences. I use my comprehensive battery of preference characteristics to examine this potential.

My analysis of spouse preference factors is *exploratory* in nature, though there are some specific predictions I expect based on the theoretical and empirical reviews. First, when hegemonic gender stereotypes are included as preference items in an exploratory factor analysis, I expect dimensions of instrumentality and expressivity to emerge. These factors are predicted by the hegemonic gender perspective, social role and social exchange theories, but have not previously been considered as dimensions around which spouse preference might cluster. Further, I expect the emergence of new factors to decouple several of the characteristics which load on warmth-trust, attractiveness-vitality,

and status-resource dimensions, creating new emergent factors, since my data include many more characteristics than Fletcher et al.'s original 1999 study. While this would not necessarily imply change over time, it would suggest the need for different assessment methods in preference research.

#### *A Note about Preference Assessment*

In addition to the theoretical arguments made above which suggest the need for attention to age, life course transitions, hegemonic gender beliefs, and changing social contexts as important determinants of spouse preferences, there is also a need for more comprehensive assessment of spouse preferences in general. Much of the research described above examined just a handful of characteristics at a time, while ignoring many other traits people evaluate in potential spouses. Preference research also did not escape the reductionist trend of psychological studies in the 1980s and 1990s which sought to explain complex cognitive structures with as few encompassing constructs as possible. By including a wider variety of preference characteristics, we can generate more sensitive assessments of which individual preferences and larger preference domains are most connected to our marriage ideals.

In order for preference studies to be linked to actual dating and marriage decisions, we need to know which characteristics and underlying constructs are important to include as predictors. For this area to be relevant to literatures on marriage timing and market constraints, marriage likelihood, and marital outcomes, we need to assess the impact of previously over-looked factors that might influence spouse preferences (such as one's age and gender role endorsement) to know which dimensions to include in future assessments. This proposed research will gauge the impact of these factors on spouse

preferences and in doing so broaden the scope of preference assessment by identifying potentially important explanatory variables to include in future studies.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH AGENDA

#### *Populations and Samples*

The scope of this research encompasses unmarried adults aged 18-50. I make a distinction here between unmarried and never-married. I did not limit my study to only those adults who have never married. It may be the case that alumni have previously married and are currently unmarried due to separation, divorce, or death of a spouse. Unfortunately, my sample did not yield sufficient numbers of separated, divorced, or widowed respondents for analyses by marital status.

I chose not to limit my analyses to adults with heterosexual orientations, though I did not collect data on respondents' sexual orientations. Same-sex individuals do not have legal rights to marriage in all U.S. states at this time, but I expect ideals for a marriage partner should not differ by sexual orientation, if indeed preferences act as cognitive blueprints driven by societal and individual level factors. I would expect my predictions to hold regardless of sexual orientation – for instance, individuals who endorse stereotypically masculine traits should prefer more feminine partners regardless of their sexual orientation. While the biological-based, reproduction-driven preference predictions may indeed differ by sexual orientation, I would expect that preferences based on self-perceptions, age, and gender endorsement would not significantly differ based on sexual orientation.

My focus here is on variations in preferences among currently enrolled undergraduate students and post-college graduates (alumni). In order to limit the impact of unobserved variables, I surveyed individuals from the same university – the University

of Iowa. These two populations vary in terms of several important life course processes and social role attributes; namely, college alumni are older, more likely to have experienced geographic relocation, more likely to have full-time employment (instead of part time or no employment while in school), and are closer to the expected age at first marriage than current undergrads.

My data combine samples from two populations (University of Iowa undergrads and University of Iowa alumni). My first population is unmarried University of Iowa undergraduates ages 18 to 22 years. Undergraduates between 18 and 22 years comprise 85 percent of the undergraduate students at Iowa. I expect the proportion of unmarried undergraduates age 18-22 to be very high, given that the median age at first marriage is 26 for women and 28 for men. I was unable to find data on the marital status distribution among University of Iowa undergraduates. However, data suggest that approximately seven percent of college undergraduates under the age of 25 are married across the United States (CampusExplorer.com, 2012). I estimate that approximately 19,000 (of the approximately 21,000) undergraduates at the University of Iowa were eligible to take my survey.

My second population is unmarried University of Iowa alumni between the ages of 23 and 50. I chose 50 as my cut-off age because the majority of first marriages occur prior to this age, and so unmarried respondents over the age of 50 may not want or intend to marry. There are 243,000 living alumni on record at the Alumni Records Office at UIowa, with approximately 100,000 active residency emails on file. I do not know the proportion of UIowa alumni age 23-50 who are currently unmarried (these data are unavailable from the Alumni Records Office), but I expect it to be similar to the percent

of unmarried college-educated individuals in the United States in 2010. Recent Census data suggest that 43 percent of adults with a Bachelors degree or higher are currently unmarried in 2010 (Mather and Lavery 2010). I estimate that approximately 43,000 alumni were eligible to participate in my survey, though this is largely speculative. The alumni emails are based on self reports to the ARO; part of the ARO research solicitation policy is to send research emails only to home email addresses (instead of work email addresses). I have no way to determine how many of the email address supplied by the ARO were valid (invalid email notices were received by ITS and ARO, not my email account).

I use a sample of college-educated men and women for several reasons. First, there is established precedent in this literature for using convenience samples of current college undergraduates. My theoretical arguments suggest that this limits the potential age range of respondents and focuses exclusively on the preferences of young adults who are, on average, several years away from the median age at first marriage. Blending current undergraduates with older college-graduates provides more variability on age, and allows me to test age-specific hypotheses.

Second, a random sample of the general public would be more costly than using the University's online survey program and email solicitations. All current UI undergrads are issued a school-based email account, and alumni are contacted annually by the Alumni Records Office to provide or update personal email accounts. This allowed me to contact the entire population of interest with minimal cost (approximately \$120 for record pulls, creating email lists, and an Information Technology Services fee for sending the solicitation email).



Third, though this population may not be representative of all college students and college-educated adults in the United States, I have little reason to believe that preferences vary widely by region or state. Past research exploring regional differences (e.g. Buss et al. 2001) suggests minimal preference variation by region.

Fourth, as described elsewhere in this work, college graduates are now the group most likely to marry (compared to those without a high school degree or high school degree only), therefore spouse preferences among the highly educated should be particularly informative. I would expect spouse preferences to differ between college-educated and non-college educated groups, given their different rates of marriage and reasons for delaying or avoiding marriage (outlined in Chapter One).

#### *Sampling Procedures*

I contacted University of Iowa undergraduates and alumni using email solicitations for research participation. For the undergraduate population, I emailed the university email accounts of the approximately 21,000 currently enrolled undergraduates between the ages of 18-22. All UIowa students receive a university email account (uiowa.edu email address), but students may not regularly check their university email account, or may have opted out of receiving research solicitation emails (data are not available on the proportion of students who opt out of receiving research solicitation emails).

I contacted the alumni population using email solicitations for research sent to their residency email address on file with the Alumni Records Office (ARO). I sent an approved email to the personal email accounts provided by alumni to the ARO. As

instructed by the ARO, I requested that a listserv be compiled for the alumni who fit my specified criteria. The ARO then used this list to contact participants.

I decided not to use a random sampling procedure because I wanted the largest possible sample size from each population. For instance, selecting every  $i^{\text{th}}$  email address from the sampling frame of the undergraduate university email listserv is achievable, but would limit the number of responses, since those chosen at random may include those students who have blocked research solicitation or do not use their university email accounts. A power analysis, using Russell Lenth's java applet (<http://www.stat.uiowa.edu/~rlenth/Power/>), suggests a minimum sample size of 200 per population. This was calculated using an estimate of 12 predictor variables (a high estimate of the general main effects terms to be included in any of my models), an estimate of standard deviation for any given independent variable at 0.3, an anticipated correlation between some predictors (minimal, but not assumed to be 0), a model standard error term estimated at 0.5 (since regression models are not typically conducted in this literature, standard error estimates are not generally available), and an estimated detectable beta of 0.5. This gives me a power of 0.85 using a minimum sample size of 200 per population. I did not specify an upper bound on my sample size for both populations, but I was advised by IRB to place an upper bound at approximately 50 percent of the available population, (for application purposes, IRB requires a sample range). For undergraduates, my target sample size range was 200-10,000 respondents, and for the alumni sample, my target range was 200-21,000.

To deal with the non-random selection inherent in my purposive sampling (i.e., non-probability sampling based on particular judgments about a population, not

necessarily designed to be generalizable (Babbie 2004)), I conducted a wave analysis (Creswell 2003) in which responses submitted near the time of the initial solicitation are compared to those submitted temporally further from the initial solicitation. The rationale is that late respondents are nearly non-respondents, and so if differences exist between non-respondents and respondents, these late responders should suggest such differences.

Given the constraints placed on my use of Websurveyor (detailed below), I emailed my initial research solicitation to both the undergraduate and alumni populations on April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011. The frequency of responses remained high until approximately five days after this initial solicitation, at which point the number of submitted surveys slowed markedly. My second email solicitation was sent on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011. The responses were steadily frequent for four days after the second solicitation, with a drop off thereafter. My Websurveyor account remained open to receive survey submissions until May 31<sup>st</sup>, at which time the University of Iowa ITS department revoked utilization privileges due to concerns about data loss and fidelity (as agreed upon before the start of my data collection, described below).

I compared the early respondents in the first wave (4/18-4/23, N=1209) with the later respondents in the first wave (4/24-5/3, N=76) in terms of my key dependent variables: spouse preferences. I found no significant mean spouse preference differences between early and late respondents in the first round of solicitation. I repeated this comparison for early respondents in the second wave (5/4-5/8, N=1161) with later respondents in the second wave (5/8-5/31, N=110). Again I found no significant mean spouse preference differences between these two groups of respondents. This increases

my confidence that the mean differences reported in the sections below are due to my key independent variables, and not due to survey submission timing.

### *Survey Instrument*

My survey battery took approximately 30 minutes to complete, and included the following components. First, respondents completed a set of demographic questions, including sex category (male, female), race (White/Caucasian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino/a, Pacific Islander, Asian/Asian Indian, American Indian/Native American, Multi-racial, Other), age (in years), education level (for undergrads, year in school; for alumni, highest degree obtained – BA, MS, PhD/JD/MD), anticipated graduation date (undergrads) and date of graduation from UI (alumni), estimated GPA (for undergrads only), major (undergrads) and undergraduate major (alumni), mother's and father's education (less than high school, high school degree, some college, Associates, Bachelors, Masters, Phd/JD/MD), current employment status (not employed, employed part-time, employed full-time), personal annual income (for undergrads, categories ranged from less than 2,000 to 20,001+; for alumni, categories ranged from less than 20,000 to 200,001+), and relationship status (single and not looking, single and looking, dating casually, dating steadily, dating and living with partner, divorced/separated, and widowed).

Next, respondents rated how well each in a set of 76 characteristics describes them, using a seven-point scale ranging from 0-6, with end points anchored at not at all well (0) and extremely well (6). They then rated how important each in a set of 83 characteristics (including the 76 self-rated characteristics) is in a future spouse using the same seven-point scale, anchored at not at all important (0) and extremely important (6). I

used the language of “importance” as anchor points for spouse preferences because I wanted my results to speak to the value respondents place on these items in a future spouse. To value something is to place importance on it, and if something is important we say it has value to us. This also allows me to treat respondent ratings as a continuum of importance, rather than discrete categories (e.g. Buss et al. 2001).

Characteristics were not randomly ordered within respondents (i.e. every respondent completed self-ratings and spouse preference items in the same order). I distributed the self rating and spouse preference items throughout the blocks of 15 characteristics within the survey, such that a selection of items used to test each hypothesis appeared in each block of items. This should reduce the possibility of respondent fatigue biasing my conclusions, since key items appeared in all characteristic blocks. Responses supplied later in the survey (which may be subject to fatigue) are balanced by responses supplied earlier in the survey.

My dependent variables of interest are these individual-level importance ratings of preference characteristics. Respondents rated themselves on a variety of characteristics first. My assumption here is that rating a spouse based on one’s ideals may positively bias perceptions of one’s self, whereas rating one’s self first makes such characteristics salient in memory, which should generate more thoughtful perceptions of one’s spouse preferences.

The spouse preferences contain the same self-rated characteristics, with 7 unique items pertaining to spouses only (well-educated, older than me, younger than me, similar political views, similar religious beliefs, similar education level, and similar race). These 83 spouse characteristics were chosen to replicate both the Fletcher et al. (1999) list of 49

characteristics, the mate selection survey list of 18 characteristics (with the double-barreled items separated), 17 hegemonic masculinity characteristics, and 17 hegemonic femininity characteristics. Several of the same items appeared across multiple lists (for instance, ambition appears in the mate selection survey, the Fletcher list, and the hegemonic masculinity list). Accounting for this overlap yielded 76 self-relevant characteristics, and 83 spouse preference characteristics. I also included items regarding anticipated gender roles within their marriage, based in part on Deutsch, Kokot, and Binder's (2007) classifications.

### *Survey Implementation*

The invitation to participate in this research explicitly stated that only unmarried respondents are eligible to take part. Participants were directed to my survey instrument, available online via the University of Iowa's free online survey program, Websurveyor. The IRB does not consider online surveys as anonymous, since they do not have purview over the responses once they are entered into the web program. Instead, my survey was confidential; names and email addresses collected are not linked to a person's responses. Participants were eligible to enter into four \$25 cash prize drawings. Respondents who entered this drawing submitted email addresses via Websurveyor, and I then exported that list and chose four email addresses at random for the winners (using random number assignment).

I encountered unexpected issues executing my survey with Websurveyor. I was granted IRB approval for this project the day before the Instrumental Technology Services department (ITS) had decided to ban new data collection using the Websurveyor server due to several reports of data loss and infidelity from users. Since I had created an

account and completed my survey – but had not yet published it online – before this decision was made, ITS agreed to allow me short-term Websurveyor use. My initial plan was to make my survey available for three to four months; ITS agreed to give me six weeks, after which they would discontinue use of Websurveyor. After assistance from staff at ITS, IRB, and ARO, I was able to administer my survey in Websurveyor for six weeks, soliciting participants via two email invitations to each population. The first of these to the undergraduates took place between 10:13-10:43am, and to the alumni at 3:31-3:56pm on Monday, April 18th, 2011; the second solicitation was sent to both populations simultaneously and occurred at 5:16-5:43pm on Wednesday, May 4th, 2011.

Part of my long-term aims with this research is to establish a sample of unmarried respondents who provided preferences before partnering with a spouse, and then track those unmarried respondents' preferences as they move through relationship formation stages. To that end, I asked respondents to indicate whether they would be willing to be contacted for a follow-up survey at a later date. Approximately eighty six percent of my sample (85.8%) indicated that they would like to be contacted for future studies. This follow-up research will be conducted during and after my tenure at the University of Iowa as part of my long-term research agenda.

## CHAPTER 5

### ANALYSIS PROCEDURES AND RESULTS

#### *Analysis Procedures - Overview*

In part one of my analysis, I assess mean differences in the importance of spouse preference characteristics by sex category and anticipated marital roles. I test derivations from evolutionary psychology and social role theories predicting differential values of individual characteristics by males and females. In part two, I examine the correlation matrices of self ratings and spouse preferences on individual items to test the social exchange prediction of homogamy between self and spouse preferences.

I next create preference “dimensions” using an iterative factor analytic approach, and then use these dimensions to test hegemonic gender predictions (analysis part three). In part four, I test hypotheses derived from life course theory predicting spouse preferences as a function of age. I treat the importance of spouse preference characteristics as a continuous dependent variable and use OLS regression, since my assumption is that a continuum of importance underlies spouse preferences (this is reflected in my measurement design). I also use means difference tests to examine differences in preferences by age groups (18-22, 23-30, 31-50). In part five of my analysis, I use factor analysis to compare the structure of spouse preference dimensions found in my data with Fletcher et al.’s (1999) data to determine whether the same underlying constructs describe individuals’ preferences.

#### *Demographic and Summary Data*

I first cleaned each file of undergraduate and alumni data separately. I used only respondents who agreed to participate (gave informed consent via entering my survey), were within the specified age range (18-22 for undergraduates, 23-50 for alumni), and



were not missing data on age and sex variables. I also excluded respondents who were missing data on all self rating and spouse preference characteristics. This resulted in a final analytic sample of 2,522 respondents (61% alumni, 39% undergraduates) (see Table 1). I cannot determine the approximate response rate for my survey because I do not know the proportion of each population that received my survey. Undergraduate email accounts are issued to all students, but many opt out of receiving research email solicitations and ITS could not provide me with an approximate number of those students who have made this choice.

Roughly 28 percent of this sample are males, 72 percent are females. Eighty-eight percent of the sample is Caucasian/white. The representation of racial diversity among my respondents was minimal, so I grouped the various non-Caucasian racial categories into a single group. This non-white group is approximately 12 percent of my total analytic sample. The average age of the sample is 26 years old (20 years for undergraduates, 30 years for alumni). Most people reported that they were “single, and looking” (33%), followed by “dating, steadily” (29%), and nearly one fifth of alumni were cohabiting, compared to only six percent of undergraduates. My sample is disproportionately female compared the University of Iowa undergraduate population as a whole (51% female, 49% male), but closely approximates the racial makeup of the undergraduate population (11% non-White, 89% White).

This sample consists of volunteer respondents, which introduces the possibility that my sample could differ from samples gained through other measures, such as in-class recruitment. Social science methodology relies on volunteered samples in many cases, *including* those drawn from in-class recruitment. Respondents are always given the

option to not respond – in whole or in part – to the survey instrument. Additionally, psychological and sociological experiments rely on volunteered samples exclusively – subjects sign up to participate in a study session and the researchers rely on them voluntarily showing up and participating in the entire experiment. While I am not concerned about differences between my volunteered sample and some other hypothetical sample recruited with more coercive incentive (such as appearing in person in their classroom asking for their participation), the possibility exists that those who submitted completed surveys have perhaps put more thought into their spouse preferences, care more about marriage, or take participation in social science research more seriously than those who chose not to respond.

Average self ratings on the top fifteen characteristics for the total sample and by sex category appear in Table 3. In general, respondents report themselves as loyal and trustworthy, and this is consistent across sex category. Males and females differed in how they reportedly see themselves in a few notable ways. First, males identified themselves as more rational and analytical than did females, coming in at the third and fifteenth ranked self-characteristics, respectively. Females rated themselves as more caring and thoughtful than did males, ranked as eighth and ninth, respectively. Females generally rated themselves more highly on their top self-characteristics than did males.

Respondents' average importance ratings of spouse preference characteristics (Table 4) show a pattern similar to their self ratings on the same characteristic battery, suggesting that individuals prefer spouses who are similar to themselves in terms of many characteristics, including loyal, trustworthy, honest, and dependable. There are some notable differences between respondents' self ratings and spouse preferences. For

instance, respondents rate themselves as hard working, friendly, and self-reliant among their top characteristics (6, 10, and 11, respectively); these characteristics are rated lower when they apply to future ideal spouses (17, 19, and 33, respectively, among spouse preference ratings). Furthermore, some characteristics not used by respondents to describe themselves are rated as very important in a spouse, including supportive, communicative, and understanding (7, 12, and 15, respectively among spouse preferences; 16, 26, and 22 among self ratings).

The same pattern holds for males' and females' top rated spouse preferences (Table 4). The notable difference here is that males rate friendliness among their top spouse preferences, whereas females do not, and females rate hard working among their top spouse preferences, whereas males do not. Otherwise, the most important spouse preference characteristics are generally the same among males and females, although females tend to rate characteristics more highly across the board than do males<sup>1</sup>. For instance, dependability in a spouse ranks as the fourth most important preference, but females' average value is 5.48, whereas males' average value is 5.05 ( $t = -13.71$ ,  $p < .000$ ).

### *Analysis Part One*

My first set of hypotheses concern differences between males and females in terms of the importance they place on individual spouse preference characteristics. First, based on the evolutionary psychology paradigm, I predicted that males will rate the importance of characteristics associated with a spouse's reproductive viability, including indicators of youth and physical attractiveness, more highly than females. I also predicted

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<sup>1</sup> Between-sex means tests show significant differences for the first fifty spouse characteristics, but few between the latter thirty three. Females' means are consistently higher whenever differences were found, with the exception of shy and submissive. The full table will be furnished upon request.

that males, relative to females, would place more importance on a spouse's interest in sex, since males have more easily pursued short-term mating strategies (casual sex with a variety of partners) than females (due to the risk of long-term consequences, such as pregnancy). Males who marry trade this short-term mating potential for a long-term mating commitment, and they should therefore value a sexually interested long-term partner more so than should females.

Second, both evolutionary psychology and social role theory predict that females should rate the importance of characteristics associated with resource provision potential more highly than males. Characteristics associated with resource potential include spouse's age (older, compared to younger), education, job status, and success. From the evolutionary psychology perspective, resource provision is males expected contribution to both offspring and female mates, since females bear the physical consequences of mating. From the social role perspective, males have historically had greater access to resources, relative to females, and females have historically traded domestic work for males' resources. Third, the social role perspective predicts that males will place more importance on females' domestic proclivity, including ability to cook and deal with children, since these duties have historically been allocated to females.

To recap, my first set of hypotheses is as follows:

*H1: Males will rate the importance of youthful, younger, physically attractive, sexual interest, sexy, stylish, and cares about appearance in potential mates more highly than females.*

*H2: Females will rate the importance of older, successful, ambitious, well educated, financially stable, provider, and high social status in potential mates more highly than males.*

*H3: Males will rate the importance of good cook, loves children, and deals well with children in potential mates more highly than females.*

I conducted t-tests to determine whether males' and females' average values of these sets of characteristics significantly differed from one another. These group means and t-test values appear in Table 5. I also include the rank-ordered position to illustrate the relative importance of each characteristic to males and females, respectively.

It is evident from these results that males and females differ in terms of the importance they place on particular characteristics of future ideal spouses. As predicted, a spouse's physical attractiveness is significantly more important to males than to females. This difference is not surprising – studies have consistently shown that men place more value on a mate's looks than do women. Youth and attractiveness are linked to women's fertility (Buss 1994) but not to men's, so it is reasonable to expect men to attune more to those characteristics in potential spouses than women. Unique to this analysis is the inclusion of a spouse's interest in sex, which I predicted would be more important to males than to females. My hypothesis was supported – males place significantly more value on this characteristic than do females – but what is surprising is how highly *females* value a spouse's interest in sex. Males and females rank interest in sex quite different (18 compared to 39, out of 83 spouse preference characteristics); however their mean values are minimally substantively different (0.2 units on a 7-point scale). Both groups place a relatively high value on sexual interest in future spouses, though statistically significantly different (4.69 for males, 4.50 for females;  $t = 3.60, p < .01$ ).

My predictions regarding females' valuation of resource-relevant characteristics were largely support. Females placed significantly more value on a spouse's success, education, financial stability, and ambition, compared to males. The exception to these findings is the importance of high social status in a spouse. This could be the case due to

two related reasons. First, the term “high social status” is not commonly used in our daily language, nor is its meaning well-defined, except by referencing indicators of privilege and prestige in our society. Second, those status indicators are listed along with “high social status” in the survey battery; namely, well-educated, financially stable, successful, and older. The single item indicator of status may be less useful in characterizing spouse preferences than the related indicators. Further, males’ and females’ valuation of an older spouse relatively to a younger spouse provides an interesting juxtaposition. The magnitude of difference between males’ and females’ valuation of a younger spouse (1.69 vs 0.91,  $t = 10.03$ ) is greater than the magnitude of difference between males’ and females’ valuation of an older spouse (0.92 vs 2.30,  $t = -19.10$ ). This suggests that though both preferences exist, women prefer an older spouse somewhat more than men prefer a younger one.

Interestingly, my social role predictions regarding the importance of domestic proclivity to males were not fully supported. Males placed significantly more value on a spouse who is a good cook, but did not statistically differ from females in terms of the importance of a spouse’s love of children and ability to deal with them. In fact, it was females who placed more importance (but not significantly so) on these characteristics. Furthermore, males and females ranked these items very near each other and solidly in the middle of the list of 83 spouse preferences, suggesting that family considerations are roughly equally important to both groups.

Another way of explaining the above findings is that males and females differ *within* their sex category based on what type of roles they anticipate for themselves in their future marriage. Notably, roughly 81 percent of the males in my sample anticipate

being the primary financial provider, while the remaining 19 percent plan on some alternative role arrangement. Approximately 64 percent of females anticipate being in the primary caregiver role, and 36 percent anticipate some alternative role arrangement.

Males who anticipate being the primary financial provider for their family might indeed place more value on a spouse's domestic potential relative to males who do not plan on being the primary "breadwinner." The same might hold for females; females who anticipate being the primary domestic partner should place more value on a spouse's resource potential, compared to females who do not intend to make domestic duties their primary responsibility. To this end, I predicted that:

*H4: Males who anticipate being the sole financial provider in their marriage will rate the importance of good cooks, love children, and deal well with children, more highly than males who do not anticipate being the sole financial provider.*

*H5: Females who anticipate being the sole caregiver in their marriage will rate the importance of education, financial prospects, good job, and high social status, more highly than females who do not anticipate being the sole caregiver.*

The tables below describe the differences in importance by anticipated marriage role for males (Table 6) and females (Table 7) by primary provider (vs. all other roles) and primary (domestic) caregiver (vs. all other roles).

My first role hypothesis was supported; men who anticipate being the primary financial provider place significantly more value on a spouse's domestic ability, compared to men who do not. Though not specifically predicted, we might expect men who do *not* plan on being the primary provider to place *more* value on a spouse's resource potential, since they anticipate at least some level of shared provision in their marriages. These results are shown in Table 6.

These data suggest that regardless of whether males plan to be the primary caregiver or not, they tend to value a spouse's resource potential the same. Men who plan on having a primarily non-domestic role inflate the value of domestic characteristics in a future ideal spouse.

I next examined the differences between females who anticipate being the primary (domestic) caregiver and females who anticipate some other arrangement with their spouse (Table 7).

My second role hypothesis was also supported; females who plan to make domestic duties their primary responsibility place significantly more value on a spouse's resource potential, compared to females who do not plan on this role. Though not specifically predicted, we might also expect that females who plan to share domestic duties with their spouse would place higher value on the domestic ability of their future partners. These results are in Table 7. Here I find significant differences between the roles females anticipate and the value they place on domestic characteristics in a spouse, but *not* in the expected direction. It is females who anticipate being the primary domestic partner who place higher value on a spouse's domestic inclination, compared to females who do not plan on this role.

### *Analysis Part Two*

I next examine the correlation matrices of self- and spouse-ratings on individual items to test the social exchange prediction of homogamy in preferences for spouses. I predicted strong positive correlations between respondents' self ratings and their stated spouse preferences. I test this "similarity effect" by estimating correlations between



respondents' self ratings and the importance of those same characteristics in potential spouses.

*H6<sub>Exch</sub>: Respondents' self ratings will be positively correlated with their ratings on spouse preferences.*

The full correlation matrix of the 76 self-items and 83 spouse-items is unwieldy, so I present subsets of self and spouse characteristic matrices in the results that follow. Table 8 shows the correlations between self ratings and spouse preferences on theoretical *gender* items. Masculine and feminine characteristics were drawn from the Bem Sex Role Inventory and from my exploratory factor analysis (described in detail in Analysis Part 3, below). Table 9 shows correlations for other selected characteristics, including provider and caregiving related variables.

The social exchange hypothesis was supported across almost all characteristics. The diagonal correlations (in bold) reveal that to the extent respondents rate themselves highly on gendered characteristics, they place more importance on those same characteristics in potential spouses. For instance, respondents who consider themselves very affectionate tend to place more importance on a spouse who is also affectionate ( $R = 0.56, p < .000$ ). For nearly all of these items, the self-spouse correlations on the same characteristics are higher than correlations between self-spouse correlations on different items (e.g. the correlation between self ratings of "affectionate" and spouse preferences for "youthful" is 0.17).

There is a notable exception to this similarity or "homogamy" social exchange hypothesis. A striking example appears in the correlations between self ratings on the specific "masculinity" and "femininity" items. High scores on self-rated femininity were strongly negatively related to importance ratings of femininity in a spouse ( $R = -0.61, p <$

.000), and the same is true of masculinity ( $R = -0.60$ ,  $p < .000$ ). Conversely, the correlations between self-rated femininity and spouse preference for masculinity, and self-rated masculinity and spouse preference for femininity are strongly positive ( $R = 0.69$  and  $R = 0.73$ , respectively,  $p < .000$ ). This relationship is not surprising – cultural notions of gender cast the terms “masculine” and “feminine” as diametric opposites, much like our binary classification of sex category (“male” and “female”).

There are other exceptions to this homogamy hypothesis, as seen in the correlation patterns of “decisive” and “dominant.” The self-spouse correlation for “decisive” is only 0.13, and it not the strongest correlation among self and spouse characteristics. Likewise, the “dominant” characteristic is 0.21, suggesting that there is a relatively weak correlation between self ratings of dominance and desires for a dominant spouse.

Examination of the correlations between self and spouse characteristics suggests that, in general, individuals prefer spouses who are like themselves across a host of characteristics. To the extent one identifies as a person who is dependable, reliable, respectful, loyal, honest, caring, etc., they also tend to value those characteristics in a future spouse. There are some other interesting correlation patterns that emerge from these data which suggest the need to examine these items not as individual characteristics, but as groups of characteristics that correlate with some underlying variable. This is the focus of the third part of my analysis, discussed in detail below.

### *Analysis Part Three*

I theorized that individuals’ gender role endorsement should impact their spouse preferences. I assessed endorsement of hegemonic gender beliefs using individuals’ self

ratings on characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity and femininity. Based on the social and gender role perspectives, I predicted that people who self-evaluate as conforming to a given gender role should prefer spouses who conform to the complementary gender role. These expectations lead to the following hypotheses:

*H7<sub>Gen</sub>: Individuals' instrumentality (masculinity) will be positively related to the importance of expressivity (femininity) in a spouse, and individuals' expressivity will be negatively related to the importance of expressivity in a spouse.*

*H8<sub>Gen</sub>: Individuals' expressivity (femininity) will be positively related to the importance of instrumentality (masculinity) in a spouse, and individuals' instrumentality will be negatively related to the importance of instrumentality in a spouse.*

I assess instrumentality/masculinity and expressivity/femininity using both confirmatory and exploratory factor analyses, and reliability statistics for combined scale items (Cronbach's alpha, average inter-item correlations). I first looked to existent theories and measures of gender for masculine and feminine characteristics, in particular the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). Nine of the twenty feminine characteristics and ten of the twenty masculine items of the BSRI characteristics appeared in my survey. Some items from the BSRI can be approximated using proxy characteristics from my survey. For instance, the BSRI traits of "yielding" and "soft-spoken" are approximated by my characteristics "submissive" and "shy," respectively.

I then ran a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with my set of thirteen feminine and ten masculine characteristics to determine how well my data fit this theoretical model of gender. I estimated a two factor CFA (instrumentality and expressivity) for all respondents' self ratings and spouse preferences using maximum likelihood estimation with missing values (mlmv). This BSRI model of gender characteristics does not appear to be a good fit for respondents' self ratings (RMSEA=0.10, CFI=0.68, TLI=0.64) or

spouse preferences (RMSEA=0.10, CFI=0.67, TLI=-.63). These statistics assess the degree to which data “fit” a specified model. Fit cut-off values are recommended to be .90 and above for baseline fit indices (CFI, TLI – measures that assess the fit of the specified model compared against a restricted model) (Bentler, 1990), and at or below .06 for the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

One reason for a poor fitting model could be that the constraints I imposed in this model (e.g. forcing covariances between measurement errors to be 0) are not consistent with the data. A poor model fit could also indicate multidimensionality (that the indicators capture more than one factor), since CFAs are designed to test the unidimensionality of specified factors. I ran an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using all 76 self characteristics to allow the data to dictate which characteristics share variance around the underlying theoretical constructs, and compared this model with the two factor CFA model described above. Along with identifying several of the BSRI characteristics, the EFA results suggested additional expressive and instrumentality characteristics for self and spouse factors. I also examined the correlation matrices of the BSRI characteristics and those suggested by the EFA. See Table 10 for self rating correlations and Table 11 for spouse preference correlations. I evaluated these correlations by looking for convergent and discriminant patterns. Feminine characteristics suggested by the BSRI should correlate highly with themselves and with the EFA-suggested femininity items than with the masculine items. Likewise, masculine items should correlate more highly with each other than with feminine items. These convergent and discriminant correlation “blocks” are separated by a space between characteristics

within the correlation matrix (Tables 10 and 11). Here I noted problematic items, such as submissive and shy, which do not correlate well with any other characteristics.

I followed this process in an iterative fashion for self ratings and spouse preferences concurrently. I estimated a second CFA after removing lowly correlated items and including highly correlated items suggested by the EFA. These models' fit statistics improved from the previous models (self ratings: RMSEA=0.09, CFI=0.75, TLI=0.73; spouse preferences: RMSEA=0.09, CFI=0.74, TLI=0.72), but still indicates a poor fit to the data. It became clear through multiple rounds of CFA and EFA models that expressivity and instrumentality are multidimensional constructs. That is, masculine and feminine characteristics do not load cleanly (strong correlations on only one factor) onto the two opposing factors; there appear to be smaller dimensions underlying each construct. The same dimensions appear in both self ratings and spouse preferences and are indicated by the same characteristics<sup>2</sup>.

This factor analysis process guided me to the sets of items that can and should be grouped together to represent dimensions of instrumentality and expressivity. I combined items that underlie each construct to form scales (sum of items divided by total number of items) of each dimension. For instance, expressivity (femininity) appears to have two distinct, yet related, facets: affection and caring. Affection (for self and spouse) is represented by the items affection, romantic, and sweet. Caring (for self and spouse) is represented by the items caring, considerate, respectful, generous, thoughtful, understanding, compassionate, and supportive. Similarly, instrumentality also has two

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<sup>2</sup> While item loadings and correlations differ somewhat between self rating dimensions and spouse preference dimensions, I decided to use the same indicators for both self and spouse dimensions to create a parsimonious, logically consistent model.

distinct, yet related, facets: leadership and dominance. Leadership is represented by the items leader, decisive, confident, and self-assured. Dominance is represented by the items dominant, assertive, and aggressive. The factor loadings and reliability statistics (Cronbach's alpha, average inter-item correlations) for self rating dimensions appear in Table 12, and for spouse preference dimensions in Table 13<sup>3</sup>. Factor correlations for self and spouse dimensions appear in Table 14. Means and standard deviations on these dimensions for the total sample and by sex category appear in Table 15.

I then used these gender construct scales in ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models to examine the impact of one's own expressivity and instrumentality on the valuation of expressivity and instrumentality in a spouse, using the following:

$$Y_{\text{spouse}_i} = \alpha + \beta_1 X_{\text{selfaff}} + \beta_2 X_{\text{selfcare}} + \beta_3 X_{\text{selfdom}} + \beta_4 X_{\text{selfleader}} + \varepsilon$$

Where  $Y_{\text{spouse}_i}$  is spouse preferences on a given expressive/instrumental dimension (affectionate, caring, dominant, leader),  $X_{\text{selfaff}}$  is self ratings on affectionate,  $X_{\text{selfcare}}$  is self ratings on caring,  $X_{\text{selfdom}}$  is self ratings on dominance,  $X_{\text{selfleader}}$  is self ratings on leadership, and  $\varepsilon$  is the residual error term. When  $Y_{\text{spouse}_i}$  is spouse affection and spouse caring,  $\beta_1$  and  $\beta_2$  are expected to be negative, and  $\beta_3$  and  $\beta_4$  are expected to be positive. When  $Y_{\text{spouse}_i}$  is spouse dominance and spouse leadership,  $\beta_1$  and  $\beta_2$  are expected to be positive, and  $\beta_3$  and  $\beta_4$  are expected to be negative.

Table 16 shows the regression coefficients for the effects of self rated gender dimensions on valuation of a spouse's gender dimensions (Model 1). In line with my complementarity hypotheses, individuals' expressivity was positively related to valuation of instrumentality in a spouse. Self rated affection and caring did lead to higher valuation

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<sup>3</sup> I also estimated these same factors using within respondent mean-deviated data to correct for potential acquiescence bias and found no substantial differences in factor loadings, average inter-item correlations, or alpha values.

of a spouse who exhibits leadership and dominance. As self rated affection increased by one unit, the value of a spouse's dominance and leadership increased by 0.08 and 0.05 units (respectively). As self rated caring increased by one unit, the value of a spouse's dominance and leadership increased by 0.18 and 0.34 units (respectively).

Self rated dominance was significantly positively related to the valuation of expressivity in a spouse (spouse affection = 0.06, spouse caring = 0.04), but this effect was not found for self rated leadership; in fact, leadership was only significantly positively related to valuing leadership in a spouse (0.20), and was significantly negatively related to valuing a spouse who is dominant (-0.10). Identifying as a leader is apparently unrelated to respondents' preferences for expressivity in a spouse.

Contrary to my predictions, I did not find the hypothesized negative relationship between self affection and caring and spouse affection and caring. Self ratings of affectionate and caring were strongly positively associated with valuation of affection and caring in a spouse. In fact, the homogamy effects in my models overwhelmed the complementarity in gendered preferences that I predicted. The strongest predictors of each spouse dimension were respondents' *self ratings on that same dimension*, not their self rated complementary dimensions.

To investigate the role of sex category above and beyond the role of respondents gender endorsement, I included the dummy variable indicating respondents' sex category (1=female, 0=male) to the previous set of models (Table 16, Model 2). Results suggest that females placed more value on a spouse's caring, dominance, and leadership, and less value on a spouse's affection, relative to males. Adding the sex variable to the model did not diminish the homogamy findings, but it was significantly associated with

spouse preferences across all four gender dimensions. Removing the female variable from the model produced significant F ratio changes across all four gender models. Though not part of a formal hypothesis, I also ran models with a sex by self rating interaction term to determine if the relationship between self ratings and spouse preferences differ by sex. I found no significant interaction effects; the positive relationship between self ratings and spouse preferences on the same dimension is statistically the same for males and females.

I predicted within sex differences, such that females who are high (relative to low) on self rated expressivity should place more value on a spouse's instrumentality, and males who are high (relative to low) on instrumentality should place more value on a spouse's expressivity.

*H9<sub>Gen</sub>: Females with high expressivity will rate the importance of instrumentality in a spouse more highly than females with low expressivity.*

*H10<sub>Gen</sub>: Males with high instrumentality will rate the importance of expressivity in a spouse more highly than males with low instrumentality.*

To test these hypotheses, I separated females and males into high and low expressivity and instrumentality groups using their median self ratings on these dimensions (for females, the median value of self affection is 4.33, self caring is 4.87, self dominance is 3.33, and self leadership is 4.00; for males, the median value of self affection is 4.00, self caring is 4.63, self dominance is 3.33, and self leadership is 4.25). I then conducted mean difference tests to determine if within sex self ratings impact the average value of gendered spouse preferences. Table 17 shows the mean differences in gendered spouse preferences by females' self ratings (low vs. high), and Table 18 shows the mean differences in gendered spouse preferences by males' self ratings (low vs.



high). While I only predicted complementarity effects (e.g. high expressivity groups should place more value on instrumentality dimensions), I also show mean differences within the *same* dimension to examine differences in homogamy effects (e.g. high expressivity groups' value of expressivity in a spouse, relative to low expressivity groups).

My first within sex hypothesis was supported. For females, identifying as highly expressive was significantly related to placing a higher value on a spouse's instrumentality, relative to the low expressivity group. Females who rate themselves as highly affectionate (N = 969) and highly caring (N = 1,046) placed significantly more value on a spouse who is dominant ( $t = -4.75$ ,  $t = -4.23$ , respectively,  $p < .001$ ) and a spouse who is a leader ( $t = -8.30$ ,  $t = -10.68$ , respectively,  $p < .001$ ), compared to females who rate themselves lower in affection (N = 842) and caring (N = 765). In addition to this hypothesis, I examined the potential for complementarity between females' self ratings on instrumentality and their valuation of a spouse's expressivity. I found that females who are highly dominant (N = 938) place significantly more value on a spouse's affection ( $t = 2.04$ ,  $p < .05$ ), but there is no statistical difference in the value of a spouse's caring ( $t = -1.36$ , n.s.) between high and low (N = 873) dominance groups. Furthermore, females who are high in leadership (N = 1,028) place more value on a spouse's affection ( $t = -4.56$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and caring ( $t = -6.22$ ,  $p < .001$ ) than females who are not high in leadership (N = 765).

I also examined potential differences in homogamy by females' self ratings. My previous models describe the positive relationships between respondents' self ratings on gender dimensions and their valuation of those same dimensions in a spouse. I can

further dissect those effects by looking at with-in sex self ratings to determine if it is those who identify more highly on a particular gender dimension that drive the positive homogamy effects more so than those who identify less highly on that dimension. Within females, there are significant mean differences in the valuation of gender dimensions in a spouse between high and low self rating groups across all gender dimensions. For instance, females who identify as highly affectionate (N = 969) and highly caring (N = 1,046) rate the importance of affection ( $t = -26.99$ ,  $t = -17.35$ , respectively,  $p < .001$ ) and caring ( $t = -18.32$ ,  $t = -25.46$ , respectively,  $p < .001$ ) in a spouse significantly more highly than do females in the low affection (N = 842) and low caring (N = 765) groups. The same is true for females' self rated instrumentality. Females who are high in dominance (N = 938) and leadership (N = 1, 028) place significantly more value on a spouse's dominance ( $t = -14.46$ ,  $t = -7.23$ , respectively,  $p < .001$ ) and leadership ( $t = -9.38$ ,  $t = -14.54$ , respectively,  $p < .001$ ), relative to females low in dominance (N = 873) and leadership (N = 783).

Turning now to males' spouse preference differences between high and low instrumentality/expressivity groups, I found my second hypothesis was also supported. Males who are high in dominance (N = 386) and leadership (N = 392) placed significantly more value on a spouse's affection ( $t = -4.43$ ,  $t = -3.88$ , respectively,  $p < .001$ ) and caring ( $t = -4.34$ ,  $t = -4.82$ , respectively,  $p < .001$ ), compared to men who are low in dominance (N = 325) and leadership (N = 319). Again I examined the potential for the reverse complementarity - that males high in expressivity might value a spouse's instrumentality more than males who are low in expressivity – and found this to be the case. Males who are high affection (N = 392) and caring (N = 329) place significantly

more value on a spouse's dominance ( $t = -2.54, p < .01$ , and  $t = -2.19, p < .05$ , respectively) than men who are low in affection ( $N = 319$ ) and caring ( $N = 382$ ).

I also examined potential homogamy effect differences by high vs. low instrumental and expressive groups within males. I found significant mean differences across all gender dimensions. Males who are high in dominance ( $N = 386$ ) and leadership ( $N = 392$ ) preferred a spouse who is also dominant ( $t = -8.27, t = -4.43$ , respectively,  $p < .001$ ) and a leader ( $t = -8.40, t = -9.65$ , respectively,  $p < .001$ ), compared to men who are low in dominance ( $N = 325$ ) and leadership ( $N = 319$ ). The same is true for men who identify as highly expressive. In fact, it is this dimension that shows the most striking mean differences in spouse preferences between high and low expressivity groups. Males who are highly affectionate ( $N = 392$ ) and caring ( $N = 329$ ) place significantly more value on a spouse's affection ( $t = -15.69, t = -13.52$ , respectively,  $p < .001$ ) and caring ( $t = -10.59, t = -19.29$ , respectively,  $p < .001$ ), compared to men who are low in affection ( $N = 319$ ) and caring ( $N = 382$ ).

#### *Analysis Part Four*

In part four of my analysis, I test hypotheses derived from life course theory predicting changes in spouse preferences by age. Much of mate preference research relies on samples of college undergraduates, with no mention of the ways in which the preferences of unmarried young adults currently in college might differ from unmarried older adults who are no longer in a densely populated pool of eligible mates. I draw on life course theory to frame predictions of spouse preference differences based on age. The average of my combined undergraduate and alumni samples is 26 years, with a standard

deviation of approximately 7 years. The median age is 24 years. The minimum age is 18 years, and the maximum is 50 years.

I predicted that as individuals age, the importance of characteristics associated with transitory life events, such as becoming an independent adult with a full time job or career (and the loss of an “undergraduate” identity), will increase as well. Likewise, older adults should also value characteristics associated with major transition points expected at or near their age (e.g. starting their own families, indicated by desire for characteristics such as deals well with children, good cook, provider).

*H11<sub>Age</sub>: As age increases, the importance of the items hardworking, ambitious, financially stable, mature, cultured, and self-reliant in potential mates will increase.*

*H12<sub>Age</sub>: As age increases, the importance of loves children, deals well with children, and good cook, and good provider in potential mates will increase.*

To test these hypotheses, I estimate the following model:

$$Y_{char_1} = \alpha + \beta_1 X_{self} + \beta_2 X_{age} + \beta_3 X_{sex} + \varepsilon$$

where  $Y_{char_1}$  is a given spouse preference characteristic,  $X_{self}$  is self rating on preference characteristic<sub>1</sub> ( $\beta_1$  is expected to be positive),  $X_{age}$  is a continuous variable for age, and  $X_{sex}$  is a dichotomous variable for sex category (and  $\varepsilon$  is the model residual or error term). Spouse preferences were measured as ordinal variables – ratings of importance on a 7-point scale ranging from 0 to 6 – but I assume that a continuum of importance underlies individuals’ preferences, from 0 representing not at all important to 6 representing extremely important. Respondents were presented with these textual anchor points in my survey, and no other textual cues were given so as to represent this scale as a continuum.

The regression coefficients for the association between respondent's age and the value of these characteristics in a future spouse ( $\beta_2$ ) appear in Table 19<sup>4</sup>. Contrary to my predictions, age is *negatively* related to the value of these characteristics in a spouse, controlling for self ratings and sex category<sup>5</sup>. For each year increase in age, the importance of hardworking, ambitious, loves children, and deals well with children decreases by 0.02 units ( $p < .001$ ). The average value of a hardworking spouse for a male who is 20 years old and has the average self rated value on hardworking (4.90) is 4.45, whereas the value of a hardworking spouse for a male who is 50 years old and has the average self rated value on hardworking is 3.85. Age is not significantly related to how much respondents value financial stability, maturity, or self-reliance in a spouse.

I further predicted that age will interact with sex-based preference predictions from evolutionary psychology; namely, older men (relative to younger men) should value younger women more highly than should men who are younger, due to the fertility concerns associated with waiting until later adulthood to marry and start a family. Older women (relative to younger women) should be less likely to prefer a spouse older than themselves, since age-related fertility concerns are less relevant when considering older men (for whom fertility does not decline until much later in life).

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<sup>4</sup> I also estimated these models using within respondent mean-deviated data to correct for potential acquiescence bias – the potential for respondents to systematically respond positively/highly to survey items. Within person mean centering adjusts individuals' responses by subtracting item scores from their average response tendency, thus mitigating the influence of their positively biased response pattern. The pattern of results did not change using these data, so only these models are presented for parsimony. For more information on acquiescence bias and standardization correction techniques, see Weijters, Geuens, and Schillewaert (2009) and Fischer (2004).

<sup>5</sup> I estimated models controlling for relationship status and found that being in a relationship (with the exception of cohabiting) is positively associated with respondents' valuation of self reliance in a spouse (relative to single, not looking, as the reference category). I also found that dating casually is negatively associated with respondents' valuation of a spouse who deals well with kids. I found no other significant effects for relationship status in any other age models.

*H13<sub>Age</sub>: As age increases for men, the importance of youth in a potential spouse increases.*

*H14<sub>Age</sub>: As age increases for women, the importance of age in a potential spouse decreases.*

To test these hypotheses, I estimated separate OLS regression models for males and females, with only two predictor variables in these models: age and respondents' self rating. These coefficients appear in Table 20. As predicted, for each year increase in age for men, valuation of a spouse who is younger than themselves increases by 0.06 units ( $p < .001$ ). There was also a significant positive effect of age for females; for every year increase in age, females' value of a spouse who is younger than themselves increases by 0.01 units ( $p < .01$ ). Also as predicted, there is a significant negative relationship between age and the value of a spouse who is older. As women's age increases by one year, the importance they place in a spouse who is older than themselves decreases by 0.05 units ( $p < .001$ ). For men, there is a similar negative relationship between age and the value of an older spouse; for every year increase in age, the value they place on having an older spouse decreases by 0.02 units ( $p < .01$ ).

Finally, I hypothesized that older adults' preferences will be less idealistic overall (fewer characteristics valued very highly) compared to younger adults' preferences, given the marriage market constraints associated with aging. I test this prediction by first comparing the average spouse preference values of undergraduates and alumni using t-tests. I then examine differences in spouse preferences further by comparing three age groups: 18-22 years, 23-30 years, and 31-50 years.

*H15<sub>Age</sub>: Older adults will value fewer characteristics very highly, compared to younger adults, who will value more characteristics very highly.*

Table 21 shows the top twelve most highly valued spouse preferences between data sources (undergrads vs. alumni). It is clear that the alumni's top preferences are valued less highly than the undergraduates top preferences. Though the twelve most highly rated spouse preferences do not differ substantively (the characteristics are the same, but the ordering is slightly different between groups), the average importance placed on each differs statistically. This same pattern continues throughout the rank-ordered list of spouse preferences; alumni consistently rate the importance of nearly all<sup>6</sup> spouse characteristics less highly than do undergraduates.

I further examined the differences in the importance of age as a determinant of spouse preferences by separating the alumni into two age groups – younger alumni (23-30 years) and older alumni (31-50) – and compared them with the undergraduates (18-22 years). Table 22 shows the frequencies and percent of the total sample represented by each age group, and Table 23 shows the means and t-values for comparisons between groups. The story becomes more nuanced here; it is the older alumni who consistently value spouse characteristics lower than the undergraduates. Younger alumni also significantly differ from the undergraduates, but the mean differences are smaller and less consistent than comparisons between the older alumni and the undergraduates. Interestingly, the older alumni do not significantly differ from the younger alumni. This pattern of differences continues for most of the characteristics; the majority of younger and older alumni means differ significantly from the undergraduate means, but not from each other, throughout the list of 83 spouse preference characteristics. This suggests that,

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<sup>6</sup> The last one third of spouse preferences (ranks 54-83) have fewer statistical differences between characteristics of the same rank than the first two thirds (ranks 1-53), most of which are statistically different.

in general, the alumni place less importance on most of their preferences for future spouses compared to the undergraduates.

#### *Analysis Part Five*

In part five of my analysis, I first compare Fletcher et al.'s (1999) data-driven factors with factors from my own data using a limited set of characteristics (those generated by Fletcher et al.'s respondents). The respondents from Fletcher et al.'s study generated a list of 49 preference characteristics, which were then subjected to exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. The structure that emerged as the best fit for the data suggested three primary dimensions around which preferences for mates cluster (warmth-trust, attractiveness-vitality, status-resources). Second, I use my full spouse preference characteristic battery to explore the potential that spouse preferences are better described by several smaller latent constructs, rather than the "big three" found by Fletcher et al. (1999).

My analysis of spouse preference factors is largely exploratory, but I expected to replicate the warmth-trustworthiness, vitality-attractiveness, and status-resource factors found in Fletcher et al.'s data. To test my factor structure against theirs, I followed the procedure described by Fletcher and colleagues; namely, I first ran a principle components exploratory factor analysis with oblique (promax) rotations, using only those characteristics from my survey that also appeared in Fletcher et al.'s respondent-generated list (1999). I requested only three factors, since my a priori goals were to replicate the three factor structure found in previous research. Factor loadings for these three factors appear in Table 24.



As predicted, the factors that emerged in my data closely approximate those from Fletcher and colleagues' research. Factor 1 largely replicates Fletcher et al.'s warmth-trustworthiness factor, including such items as understanding, warm, friendly, and trustworthy, with a few notable exceptions. Three characteristics that loaded highly in previous research (romantic, easy going, and self aware) do not load on this warmth-trustworthiness factor in my data. The characteristics "romantic" and "mature" are splitters – meaning they load highly on more than one factor - and therefore should not be included in any factor. The characteristics "easy going" and "self aware" do not hit the conventional factor loading minimum of .40 (for a loading to be considered adequately strong), and are therefore not included as indicators of warmth-trustworthiness, though they were in past research. Also, "generous" loads highly as a warmth-trustworthiness indicator in my data, but did not in Fletcher et al.'s.

Factor 2 largely replicates Fletcher et al.'s vitality-attractiveness factor, and includes such items as adventurous, sexy, athletic, and spontaneous. Whereas "creative" did not load strongly (or cleanly) on one factor in Fletcher et al.'s data, this characteristic loads well on my vitality-attractiveness factor. Furthermore, "confident," "ambitious," and "assertive" loaded on this factor in previous research, but not do in my data. The same is true of funny, which was an indicator of vitality-attractiveness for Fletcher et al., but has a moderately low loading on all three factors in my data.

Factor 3 largely replicates Fletcher et al.'s status-resources factor, including items such as financially stable and successful. Fletcher et al.'s original items in this factor included characteristics that I did not have adequate proxies for in my data, such as "appropriate race," "dresses well," and nice house," so there are fewer of these original

characteristics to load on this factor. There are, however, several other characteristics that load on this factor in my data, but did *not* in Fletcher et al.'s. The characteristics “confident,” “ambitious,” and “assertive,” as described above, did not load as indicators of vitality-attractiveness in my data, but instead loaded as indicators of status-resources. Consistent with past research, religious beliefs did not load strongly on any of these three factors.

Overall, the factor structure of my data seems to reproduce Fletcher et al.'s factor structure relatively well. I tested this fit with a confirmatory factor analysis, which follows Fletcher et al.'s methodology<sup>7</sup>. Rather than use many indicators of each factor, Fletcher et al. created combined indicators by taking the averaged sum of the highest loading items and the lowest loading items in each factor. I followed the same procedure with my data. For instance, within the warmth-trustworthiness factor (factor 1), “understanding” and “considerate” loaded most highly, while “open minded” and “sensitive” loaded least highly (the items “mature,” “romantic” were dropped because they were splitters). I combined and averaged these four items into one indicator, then repeated pairing high and low loading indicators within all three factors. The final model had four indicators of warmth-trustworthiness, three indicators of vitality-attractiveness, and three indicators of status-resources (see Figure 1). This model fit the data reasonably well; all of the loadings were adequately high (ranging from .53 to .89), positive, and statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ), and the model fit statistics were within desirable ranges (RMSEA = .06, CFI = .98, TLI = .97,  $\chi^2_{(32)} = 310.12$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

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<sup>7</sup> Fletcher et al. tested a hierarchical structure using “partner ideals” (spouse preferences) and “relationship ideals,” which I do not measure in this study. I am therefore unable to test their hierarchical structure, but can test the three factor model fit with my data.

As previously noted, some items from my data (and Fletcher et al.'s data) did not load on these three factors, but were indicated as important spouse preferences by respondents in both studies. To examine the possibility that there are multiple factors (rather than the three overarching factors tested above), I conducted an exploratory factor analysis using all 83 spouse preference characteristics (principle components with oblique (varimax) rotation). The results suggested as many as 13 underlying factors that describe these 83 spouse preferences.

I predicted dimensions of instrumentality and expressivity to emerge, and indeed, found evidence of these factors and use them in analysis part three. These factors are predicted by the hegemonic gender perspective, social role and social exchange theories, but have not previously been considered as dimensions around which spouse preference might cluster. Further, I expected the emergence of new factors to decouple the characteristics which load on warmth-trust, attractiveness-vitality, and status-resource dimensions described above, creating new emergent factors. This expectation proved well-founded; rather than three dimensions representing the combination of two constructs (e.g. warmth *and* trustworthiness), the characteristics within these factors tended to load on their own unique factor.

In addition to the gender factors discussed in analysis part three, several other emergent factors deserve mention. I found evidence of a "resources" factor, with items such as provider, successful, financially stable, and hardworking loading between .50 and .73; an "attractiveness" factor, with the items cares about appearance, stylish, and attractive loading between .63 and .71; a "vitality" factor, with athletic, youthful, active, spontaneous, and adventurous loading between .50 and .76; a "sexuality" factor, with the

items sexy, good lover, sexually experienced, and interested in sex loading between .56 and .76; a “creativity” factor with creative and artistic loading at .77 and .78, respectively; a “children” factor with deals well with kids and loves kids loading at .88 and .89, respectively; a “sociability” factor with extroverted and sociable loading at .61 and .64, respectively; an “intelligence” factor with intelligent, well educated, and similar education loading between .56 and .73; and an “attitudes” factor with religious, similar religious beliefs, and similar political orientation loading between .61 and .84.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION

In this chapter I discuss my results presented in Chapter Five. I review the main findings and draw on theoretical and social contexts to frame the importance of these findings for the study of spouse preferences.

#### *Self Rating and Spouse Preference Rank Orders*

The differences in how males and females rate themselves in terms of self-relevant characteristics provide an interesting point of discussion. Males and females differed in how they reportedly see themselves in a few notable ways. First, males identified themselves as more self-aware, rational, analytical, and intelligent than did females. Males also self-identified as more funny and healthy than females. Also, honesty makes the top 15 self rated characteristics for males, but not for females. Females rated themselves as more caring, thoughtful, and supportive than did males. Females also rate themselves as more self-reliant, open-minded, and hardworking than males.

Not only do males and females differ substantively in terms of how they define themselves, they also differ statistically. Females generally rated themselves more highly on their top self-characteristics than did males. Comparing the average value assigned to females' top rated self characteristics with males' value on the same-ranked characteristic, females' average values are higher for every characteristic.

In terms of males' and females' preferences for a future spouse, there is surprisingly little substantive variation in their top rated preferences. Of the 15 spouse preferences rated most highly, 14 of these characteristics overlap between males' and females' lists. The main departures here are that the importance of a friendly spouse

makes the top 15 for males, but not for females, and the importance of a hardworking spouse ranks in the top 15 spouse preferences for females, but not for males.

Again we see that females value spouse preferences more highly than males. Further analysis revealed that this value-inflation occurs most among female undergraduates compared to other groups (female alumni, male undergrads, male alumni). This suggests young unmarried females are highly idealistic in their spouse preferences, compared to older unmarried females and unmarried males. Unmarried female undergrads may find themselves in high-demand in the college marriage market, and may therefore maintain more stringent preferences for a future spouse because they can afford to do so without losing partnership opportunities. Marriage prospects may diminish as people grow older, graduate college, and move on to new careers and new locations, which may leave older unmarried individuals with less leeway to be particular in their spouse preferences.

#### *Evolutionary Psychology and Social Role Results*

My first set of results in Analysis Part One shows that males place significantly more value on a spouse's youth and physical attractiveness than do females, and females place more value on resource provision potential than do males. Studies usually attribute these differences to reproductive concerns (fertility, resource provision for mother and offspring) since evolutionary psychology theorizes that men attune to fertility cues and women attune to resource cues in potential spouses.

The expectation states theoretical framework offers an alternative perspective from which to interpret these findings. This perspective suggests that our actions are the result of our own and others' expectations for our behavior (e.g. Berger and Fisek, 1974;

Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch, 1966). These expectations are based in part on the characteristics that we have as individuals (e.g. male, white, lower class, college educated, etc.), and from social interactions within a set of patterned behavioral “scripts” that dictate the appropriate behaviors for people with those characteristics (Lawler et al., 1993). In this way, our characteristics as individuals come to shape others’ expectations for us as individuals and for “people like us” more generally. These characteristics are called “status characteristics” because they are associated with specific expectations that accord some people who have them more or less status, depending on the value of the characteristic they hold. For instance, in our society, males are generally afforded more power, prestige, privilege, and esteem than are females. Males, therefore, have the more highly valued state of the sex characteristic, and therefore have higher status compared to females (Pugh and Wahrman, 1983).

We know from this research that physical attractiveness operates as a status characteristic (Webster and Driskell, 1983), as does wealth and resource access (Ridgeway, Boyle, Kuipers, and Robinson, 1998). It could be the case that females place more value on a spouse’s resource potential as a way to increase their own status (by acquiring a partner with valued states on resource-relevant characteristics, such as financially stable and successful). Likewise, males may value a spouse’s attractiveness more highly than females as a way to obtain a high status spouse. Since males are generally associated with higher resource status expectations in our society (relative to females), and females are generally associated with higher attractiveness status expectations (relative to males), it makes sense from this perspective to interpret these

results as females and males seeking to elevate their own status by identifying and valuing highly-valued status characteristics in potential spouses.

My second set of findings in Analysis Part One received only partial support. Males placed significantly more value on a spouse who is a good cook, compared to females, but not on a spouse's love of children and ability to deal with them. In fact, it was females who placed more importance (but not statistically significantly so) on these characteristics. This may be evidence of men's growing involvement in family and domestic life. Men's increased domestic involvement has been slow to respond to women's increased labor force participation since 1960s, but these findings corroborate other studies that suggest fewer and fewer couples expect to uphold the "traditional" role divisions that characterized marriages in the baby boom era (Deutsch, Kokot, Binder, 2007; Sayer, 2005).

I also examined *within* sex differences in the value of role-based spouse preferences by the type of role respondents anticipate for themselves in their future marriage. Roughly 81 percent of the males in my sample anticipate being the primary financial provider, while the remaining 19 percent plan on some alternative role arrangement. It is not surprising that the majority of males expect to be the primary breadwinner despite showing an increased tendency to help out with domestic duties, given the gendered expectations for resource provision and the structural advantages afforded to males (relative to females) in the workplace. Interestingly, 64 percent of females anticipate being in the primary caregiver role, and 36 percent anticipate some alternative role arrangement. Whereas a small minority of male respondents did not plan



on being the primary financial provider, over one third of female respondents plan to share caregiving with their spouse in some form.

The relationship between respondents' role expectations for themselves and the importance of role-based characteristics in a spouse suggests a complementarity effect for males, but a homogamy for females. Men who plan on having a primarily non-domestic role place more value on the domestic characteristics in a future ideal spouse than men who do not; yet it is females who anticipate being the primary caregiving partner who place higher value on a spouse's domestic inclination, compared to females who do not plan to take this role. Taken together, the different proportions of males and females who anticipate "traditional" gender-based marital roles and the association between these role expectations and spouse preferences suggests a shift in female's expectations for marriages - from strict role division to equity in household labor - but this shift may be slower to occur among males' marital expectations.

### *Social Exchange Results*

In Analysis Part Two, I examine the correlations between self ratings and spouse preferences and find a strong homogamy effect in terms of our desires for marriage partners. In other words, we prefer spouses who are like ourselves. This similarity, or "birds of a feather," effect holds for nearly all characteristics. The more highly people rate themselves on a particular characteristic, the more highly they value that same characteristic in a potential spouse.

Past research has established the tendency for assortative mating (like marrying like) among macro-level traits, such as age, race, class status, and education (e.g. Blackwell and Lichter 2004; Mare 1991). The exception to these homogamy patterns

seemed to be personality similarity between partners; there has been little evidence that married or dating couples are similar in their personalities (e.g. Zenter 2005). These findings elucidate the tendency for personality similarity in our preferences for spouses, though they cannot speak to actual mating behaviors. It may be the case that people desire a spouse who matches how they see themselves, but in reality, such a spouse may be unavailable. These findings support the exchange perspective generally, and suggest a broader pattern of similarity between individuals' perceptions of self and their desires for future spouses.

### *Gender Results*

In Analysis Part Three, I predicted that the way individuals' self-identified in terms gendered characteristics would impact their spouse preferences, such that respondents with high self ratings on feminine characteristics would rate the masculine characteristics of a future spouse more highly than respondents with low self ratings on feminine characteristics, and vice versa. My results suggest the opposite – respondents with high feminine self ratings rated those same *feminine* characteristics in a spouse more highly than the masculine characteristics<sup>8</sup>.

Here again we can see evidence for a strong trend toward homogamy (or similarity) between self ratings and spouse preferences; much more so than complementarity. Our highly gendered society suggests a false dichotomy between masculine and feminine, which can be seen in many aspects of our social and interactional organization. Social roles for generations have been divided by gender: within the family (providing is masculine, caregiving is feminine), within the workplace

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<sup>8</sup> Though both are statistically significant relationships, the magnitude of the similarity relationships are much higher than the complementarity relationships.

(high-powered and physical labor jobs are masculine, support and service jobs are feminine), and within interpersonal interactions (men and women are rewarded for displaying expected masculinity and femininity, and sanctioned for lack of such displays). To predict that our preferences for spouse follow this same dichotomized and complimentary pattern makes sense, and makes the finding that spouse preferences are not patterned based on gender complementarity an interesting and important one.

I did find complementarity (as predicted) when I examined differences between males and females *within* their sex category, based on how they self-identified their gender (high vs. low femininity, high vs. low masculinity). My findings suggest that gender identification may be an important predictor of gender complementarity. Males who rated themselves as highly masculine preferred a spouse who is feminine (compared to males with low self rated masculinity), and females who rated themselves as highly feminine preferred a spouse who is masculine (compared to females with low self rated femininity). It was also the case that males who rated themselves as highly feminine preferred a spouse who is masculine, and females who rated themselves as highly masculine preferred a spouse who is feminine.

These results suggest that gender identification matters for our spouse preferences. It is not the case that all males value femininity and all females value masculinity – it is more the case that how you self-identify in terms of these gendered dimensions influences what you want in a spouse beyond your sex category.

I also found that, above and beyond gender, the sex of the respondent matters. Being female is a strong predictor of the value respondents' placed on gendered characteristics. Females placed significantly more value on both aspects of masculinity

(dominance and leadership) and on one aspect of femininity (caring). Females actually placed significantly less value on the affectionate aspect of femininity. This relationship between sex and spouse preferences could be due in part to the differences in males' and females' spouse preferences described above – namely, female undergraduates tended to inflate the value of their spouse preferences more so than other groups (female alumni, male undergrads, male alumni).

### *Age Results*

My data affords me the unique ability to compare the spouse preferences of younger unmarried adults (18-22 years) with those of older unmarried adults (23-50 years). In Analysis Part Four, I predicted this distinction in age would be important in a few ways, the first of which was that particular characteristics associated with aging and major life transitions (graduating college, moving for work, having children, etc.) should be more highly valued by older unmarried adults, compared to younger unmarried adults. Contrary to my predictions, older unmarried adults did not place more value on characteristics associated with transitory life events and aging in general; in fact, the opposite was true. Age was negatively related to spouse preferences for hardworking, ambitious, loves children, and deals well with children, and was not at all related to how much respondents value financial stability, maturity, or self-reliance in a spouse.

I did find support for the evolutionary psychology idea that older males (relative to younger males) place more value on a younger spouse, and younger women (relative to older women) place more value on an older spouse. The theoretical rationale that fertility is age-graded for females, but not for males, means that younger spouses are more desirable for males, but not for females. Age-related fertility concerns are less

relevant for females considering older males, since male fertility does not decline until much later in life. Furthermore, evolutionary psychology suggests that women are primarily concerned with the resource provision status of potential partners, and our society is structured such that older (relative to younger) people typically have more access to resources, since they've had more years in which to accumulate them. It makes theoretical sense, then, for younger females to place more value on an older spouse (who presumably comes with higher earning potential than a younger spouse), and for older females to value an older spouse less (since older females presumably have their own resource accumulation history, compared to younger females who may not).

In addition to differences in the valuation of specific age-related characteristics by age of respondent, I also found that older adults' preferences are less idealistic overall (fewer characteristics valued very highly) compared to younger adults' preferences. I compared the undergraduates (18-20 years) with the alumni (23-50 years), and then broke the alumni into two distinct age groups (23-30 years and 31-50 years) and compared average spouse preferences across the three groups. In both comparisons, it is clear that the alumni's preferences are valued less highly than the undergraduates preferences. That is, the average value undergraduates place on their spouse preferences is higher across the board for nearly all 83 spouse preference characteristics when compared to the average value the alumni place on their spouse preferences.

Separating the alumni into two age groups – younger alumni (23-30 years) and older alumni (31-50) – suggests a more nuanced story. It is the older alumni who consistently value spouse characteristics lower than the undergraduates. Younger alumni also significantly differ from the undergraduates, but the mean differences are smaller

and less consistent than comparisons between the older alumni and the undergraduates. Interestingly, the older alumni rarely differ from the younger alumni. The pattern of differences is clear: younger and older alumni spouse preferences significantly differ from the undergraduates' spouse preferences. This suggests that, in general, the alumni place less importance on most of their preferences for future spouses compared to the undergraduates.

It may be the case that older adults adjust their preferences to match their market realities more so than do younger adults who are immersed in easily accessible markets and further away from the age-based expectations for marriage timing (Mare 1991; Raley and Bratter 2004). The realities of finding a spouse after college may be such that maintaining stringent ideal preferences limits the already narrowed pool of eligible mates from which they may choose. It could also be the case that older unmarried adults have less idealistic spouse preferences because they have more lived experience; few things disabuse idealism more effectively than aging. Younger unmarried adults may “want it all” in a future spouse, while older unmarried adults may simply “want enough” to satisfy only the most important of their preferences.

#### *Factor Analysis and Comparison Results*

In Analysis Part Five, I successfully replicated the three-factor structure found by New Zealand researchers Garth Fletcher, Jeffrey Simpson, Geoff Thomas, and Louise Giles (1999). Using a select set of spouse preferences that reproduced Fletcher et al.'s items, I found that the factor structure of my data paralleled the warmth-trustworthiness, vitality-attractiveness, and status-resources factors in their 1999 paper relatively well. This suggests that, despite social changes over the past two decades, the three factor

model to describe spouse preference characteristics is a valid and relatively reliable way to conceptualize spouse preferences.

Given the tendency for mate preference literature to measure preferences using single items, Fletcher and colleagues' research represents a move toward a more comprehensive approach. Their work, however, follows the reductionist trend among much of psychology that attempts to describe complex cognitive structures with as few constructs as possible. I advocate for a latent construct approach to preference assessment, but suggest that three overarching factors do not adequately represent people's multi-faceted desires for a spouse. The names Fletcher and colleagues assigned to their three factors suggests that even these latent constructs are not unidimensional, as each factor represents two dimensions (warmth *and* trustworthiness, vitality *and* attractiveness, status *and* resources).

I explored the possibility that there are several smaller constructs underlying spouse preferences. My results suggest as many as 13 latent variables around which spouse preferences cluster, including: affection, caring, leadership, dominance, resources, attractiveness, vitality, sexuality, creativity, children/family, sociability, intelligence, and attitudes. These findings highlight the appropriateness of a latent variable approach to measuring spouse preferences and justify the inclusion of additional constructs. Spouse preferences may be best assessed using individual characteristics not as stand-alone items, but as indicators in scales designed to measure these important preference dimensions.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This research tests predictions drawn from canonical spouse preference theories, such as evolutionary psychology, social role theory, and social exchange theory, and tests new predictions derived from hegemonic gender theory and life course theory. There are several key findings readers should take away from this research. First, there are fundamental differences in how males and females rate the importance of a host of qualities in a potential spouse. Males place more value on cues suggesting a spouse's physical beauty and youth, whereas females place more value on cues associated with a spouse's potential resources. Second, the type of marital role anticipated by males and females impacts their preferences for a future spouse. Males and females who plan to assume the "traditional" gendered roles within their marriage (financial provision for males, caregiving and domestic duties for females) place more value on a spouse who could fulfill the complimentary role. Interestingly, females who plan to assume the "traditional" female role within their marriage (caregiving and domestic duties) place more value on a spouse who values family involvement than do females who plan to share caregiving responsibilities.

Third, we tend to prefer spouses who are like us rather than different from us. Respondents consistently placed more value on the spouse characteristics that they themselves had. This homogamy (or assortative mating) finding applies to demographic characteristics as well as individual personality characteristics, which adds an original finding to the existent preference literature. Fourth, self-identified gender is associated with homogamous spouse preferences. Overall, those who identify as highly expressive



(feminine) tend to place higher value on a spouse's expressivity (femininity), and those who identify as highly instrumental (masculine) tend to place higher value on a spouse's instrumentality (masculinity), regardless of sex category. Within sex category, I found evidence for both complementarity and homogamy; females who are highly expressive place more value on a spouse's instrumentality and a spouse's expressivity, compared to females who are low in expressivity. The same is true among males; males who are highly instrumental place more value on a spouse's expressivity and place more value on a spouse's instrumentality, compared to males who are low in instrumentality.

Fifth, younger unmarried adults differ from older unmarried adults in terms of what they value most highly, and how much importance they place on it. Unmarried undergraduates place a higher value on more characteristics than do unmarried alumni. These differences become even more striking when comparing unmarried undergraduates with older unmarried alumni, who consistently place lower value on nearly all spouse preferences. Sixth, there is evidence that spouse preferences can and should be measured as multi-factor structures, rather than as individual items in isolation. Spouse preferences tend to cluster around several important underlying dimensions that categorize characteristics with similar themes.

#### *Limitations of This Research*

There are several limitations to this research. It is important to remember that these results cannot be applied to all men and women, all Iowans, or even all University of Iowa undergraduates and alumni. These results apply to the groups from which they were drawn: unmarried UI undergrads and alumni. We must be careful to not over-state the applicability of these findings; there may be something unique about this sample that

may not “match” the general unmarried population in the United States. I have little reason to suspect that spouse preferences vary widely across regions (Buss et al., 2001), but it is reasonable to expect that significant preference differences would emerge between college educated respondents and non-college educated respondents. College educated individuals are now the group most likely to ever marry (compared to those with less than high school or high school only). While it may be particularly useful to gauge the preferences of those who are indeed likely to marry, it is also important to not overlook potential differences in the spouse preferences of those who are less likely to do so by generalizing these conclusions to all unmarried individuals. Furthermore, I can only estimate the approximate response rate for my survey since I can only approximately determine the proportion of my populations that received my research solicitation. I also cannot compare alumni who did respond with those who did not from the same populations, since I lack descriptive data for the alumni population.

My findings rely on self-report data, which can be problematic in a variety of ways. First, I ask respondents to evaluate themselves in terms of 76 characteristics and I use their self ratings as key predictors of spouse preferences. There is evidence that self reports are often discrepant from others’ reports (e.g. Watson et al., 2004), and can be inconsistent over time (e.g. Watson, 2004). Second, respondents were not asked to prioritize their preferences relative to each other (each characteristics was assigned a discrete importance value from 0 to 6), so respondents may have inflated the value of some characteristics that would otherwise be less important in a constrained-choice situation (e.g. Li et al., 2002). Third, undergraduates comprise about forty percent of my sample; it may be the case that undergraduates are less likely to have given serious

thought to their future spouse preferences, compared to older adults, since many undergraduates will not marry until several years after college. Nearly all of the past literature in this field has employed samples of college undergraduates to examine sex differences in spouse preferences. My results suggest that there are significant differences in the ways older, relative to younger, unmarried adults value characteristics in a future spouse. These differences could be driven less by actual differences than by undergraduates' potential idealism or lack of serious consideration of their spouse preferences. Fourth, as with any self report data, there is the possibility that some respondents were dishonest or did not take my survey seriously.

I am also limited by the data I collected. After much discussion with colleagues, I decided to omit a sexual orientation question. I did not predict that spouse preferences would differ by sexual orientation, so it was not deemed a necessary variable for the results presented here. I also chose to present sex categories as dichotomous, rather than categorical. There were competing concerns for both of these decisions. On the one hand, including a sexual orientation question in my survey would be more inclusive and would acknowledge the hetero-normative, binary categorization biases of our society. On the other hand, there were concerns that such inclusions would raise questions or concerns with respondents, reviewers, and audiences. Since the inclusion of this item would not substantively add to my study objectives, I ultimately chose to omit it. Future surveys will include a sexual orientation question so that I can test group differences based on this distinction.

I am also limited by the set of response options to the relationship status question. Respondents could choose single and looking, single and not looking, dating casually,

dating steadily, cohabiting, engaged, divorced/widowed/separated, or other. I assumed that divorced respondents who are now single, dating, cohabiting or engaged would choose the “other” option and indicate this to me, but my data suggest that, if there are divorced respondents in my sample, they chose to identify their most current status rather than describing their relationship history using “other.” Future surveys will correct this by allowing respondents to select “all that apply,” rather than only one response option.

Furthermore, all respondents completed self ratings first and spouse preferences second. My assumption was that describing themselves using the same characteristic battery that appears for spouse preferences would prime respondents to be more aware of their spouse preferences. While this may have indeed made spouse preferences more salient in their memories, I now lack data to test whether and how this self-priming may have impacted spouse preference ratings, since all respondents received the same survey set up in this manner. Future research should counter-balance the order in which respondents evaluate themselves and their spouse preferences.

The final, and perhaps most important limitation of this and any preference or cognition-based study, is that reported preferences may not match actual behavior. This study, and past work in this area, assumes that preferences act as cognitive schemas that guide individuals’ actions. Social psychological research has long noted the apparently mismatch between individuals’ attitudes and their behavioral choices (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Research has demonstrated that spouse preferences are important within established romantic relationships (Fletcher and Simpson, 2000; Murray, Holmes, and Griffin, 1996), but attempts to link spouse preferences to actual dating behavior (using a speed dating paradigm) have found little impact of preferences on dating choices

(Eastwick and Finkel, 2008). There are currently no existent data that track individuals' preferences as they move through relationship stages; no data that tracks changes in preferences or attitude-behavior congruency. Even proprietary online dating websites that gather preference information from users do not have long-term data from users who successfully (or unsuccessfully) partner once they leave the website. To that end, and to address several of the other limitations mentioned here, future research in this area is needed.

#### *Directions for Future Research*

To address some of the limitations described above, I plan to conduct annual follow-up surveys with those survey respondents who agreed to be contacted for future study opportunities. Approximately eighty six percent of my sample indicated interest in participating in future surveys. The first wave will be conducted this summer (June 2012) using online survey software available through the University of Iowa. Future waves (2013 and beyond) will be conducted using online survey software available to me through my employer or through purchase (e.g. Survey Monkey).

This longitudinal emphasis is new and very important for the study of spouse preferences. First, longitudinal data of both self ratings and spouse preferences will allow me to determine whether the homogamy findings hold for actual dating and marriage behaviors. It will allow us to answer whether we really pair with people like us, and if not, what impact that has on stated spouse preferences. Longitudinal data will further elucidate the role of preferences in guiding dating and marriage behaviors. It could be the case that preferences act as a litmus test for potential dating partners, as a mental checklist when considering moving from dating to marriage, both, or neither. Only by

tracking people's preferences and behaviors over time can we determine the role of preferences with regards to marriage entry.

Longitudinal data could go even further than dating and marriage entry – long-term preference data can be paired with spouses' ratings of themselves and each other to determine what impact the match (or mismatch) between preferences and reality has on existing relationships. It is possible that preferences function as static structures, and the mismatch between preferences and reality would therefore create cognitive dissonance that could impact the current relationship. It is also possible that preferences are dynamic and may change depending on the current partner's characteristics. Some attributes may become more or less important as relationships progress over time, which could also impact the quality of the relationship.

In addition to a longitudinal emphasis, future research should include a wider variety of self ratings and spouse preference characteristics. My results suggest that this generates more sensitive assessments of the self and spouse preferences, and reveals several important preference dimensions. Future research should treat individual characteristics as indicators within scales representing these latent constructs. For instance, "provider," "good job," "financially stable," "ambitious," and "hardworking" could be treated as a scale assessing the importance of "resource potential" in a future spouse. This approach could determine the relative importance of various preference dimensions, as well as assess the relationship between these dimensions. Also, preference studies – and these data in particular – could benefit from more sophisticated analysis of the relationships between self rating and spouse preference factors. This could be

accomplished with structural equation models which use the self rating dimensions as latent variables predicting spouse preference dimensions as latent variables.

My results suggest that both sex *and* gender are important determinants of spouse preferences, and future assessments should attend to both. Much of this field emphasizes sex differences, but pays little attention to gender, least of all treating gender as a multi-dimensional construct. Gender can be assessed by way of a latent variable/factor approach, which is my recommended direction. Furthermore, age is an important variable that should not continue to be omitted from studies in this area. Using data from young college students – either from surveys or speed dating – is convenient and informative, but as I have shown here, there are important age differences that we cannot continue to overlook if we are to more fully understand spouse preferences.

In order for preference studies to be linked to actual dating and marriage decisions, and to be relevant to literatures on marriage timing and market constraints, marriage likelihood, and marital outcomes, we need to know which characteristics and underlying constructs are important to include as predictors. My future research will continue to gauge the impact of sex, gender, aging, and the life course on spouse preferences, and will methodologically broaden preference assessment by incorporating a latent variable approach.

## APPENDIX

**Table A1: Sample Statistics**

Initial Undergraduate Sample	1,090
Initial Alumni Sample	1,594
Total Initial Sample	2,684
Non-missing on age	2,575
Non-missing on sex	2,556
Non-missing on self-ratings	2,534
Non-missing on spouse-preferences	2,522
<b>Final Undergraduate Analytic Sample</b>	<b>998</b>
<b>Final Alumni Analytic Sample</b>	<b>1,524</b>
<b>Total Analytic Sample</b>	<b>2,522</b>



**Table A2: Sample Demographics**

Variable	Percent/Mean (SD)		
	Total	Undergrads	Alumni
Sex			
Males	28.36	23.51	31.43
Females	71.64	76.49	68.56
Race			
White	88.18	88.19	88.18
Non-White	11.82	11.81	11.82
Age	26.08	20.19	29.68
	(0.14)	(0.04)	(0.17)
Relationship Status			
Single, looking	33.10	35.02	31.88
Single, not looking	11.23	13.12	10.03
Dating, casually	8.45	7.57	9.01
Dating, steadily	28.79	37.84	23.07
Cohabiting	14.44	5.75	19.94
Engaged	2.15	0.50	3.19
Divorced	1.49	0.00	2.43
N	2,522	998	1,524

**Table A3: Top 15 Self Ratings and Rank Orders for Total Sample and by Sex**

Self Characteristic	Overall Mean	Overall Rank	Self Characteristic	Male Mean	Male Rank	Self Characteristic	Female Mean	Female Rank
Loyal	5.19	1	Loyal	5.11	1	Loyal	5.22	1
Trustworthy	5.10	2	Trustworthy	5.04	2	Trustworthy	5.13	2
Respectful	5.03	3	Rational	4.98	3	Dependable	5.06	3
Dependable	5.00	4	Intelligent	4.98	4	Respectful	5.06	4
Reliable	4.93	5	Respectful	4.96	5	Considerate	4.98	5
Hard Working	4.91	6	Funny	4.92	6	Reliable	4.98	6
Considerate	4.90	7	Dependable	4.87	7	Hard working	4.97	7
Intelligent	4.89	8	Self-reliant	4.86	8	Caring	4.97	8
Funny	4.87	9	Reliable	4.82	9	Friendly	4.91	9
Friendly	4.86	10	Honest	4.81	10	Thoughtful	4.90	10
Self-Reliant	4.86	11	In good health	4.78	11	Self-reliant	4.86	11
Caring	4.85	12	Self-aware	4.74	12	Supportive	4.86	12
Honest	4.83	13	Friendly	4.74	13	Intelligent	4.85	13
Thoughtful	4.82	14	Hard working	4.73	14	Funny	4.85	14
Open-Minded	4.80	15	Analytical	4.73	15	Open-minded	4.84	15

Rating scales range from 0 (Not at All Important) to 6 (Extremely Important)

**Table A4: Top 15 Spouse Preferences and Rank Orders for Total Sample and by Sex**

Spouse Preference	Overall Mean	Overall Rank	Spouse Preference	Male Mean	Male Rank	Spouse Preference	Female Mean	Female Rank
Loyal	5.56	1	Honest	5.40	1	Loyal	5.63	1
Trustworthy	5.55	2	Loyal	5.38	2	Trustworthy	5.62	2
Honest	5.54	3	Trustworthy	5.36	3	Honest	5.59	3
Dependable	5.36	4	Dependable	5.05	4	Dependable	5.48	4
Respectful	5.31	5	Reliable	4.96	5	Respectful	5.48	5
Reliable	5.28	6	Intelligent	4.95	6	Reliable	5.41	6
Supportive	5.19	7	Supportive	4.91	7	Supportive	5.30	7
Considerate	5.10	8	Respectful	4.88	8	Considerate	5.21	8
Funny	5.08	9	Friendly	4.86	9	Funny	5.20	9
Intelligent	5.05	10	Caring	4.86	10	Communicative	5.11	10
Caring	5.04	11	Considerate	4.83	11	Caring	5.10	11
Communicative	5.01	12	Open-minded	4.79	12	Intelligent	5.09	12
Open-minded	4.97	13	Funny	4.79	13	Hardworking	5.07	13
Thoughtful	4.97	14	Communicative	4.76	14	Thoughtful	5.06	14
Understanding	4.92	15	Thoughtful	4.74	15	Open-minded	5.04	15

Rating scales range from 0 (Not at All Important) to 6 (Extremely Important)

**Table A5: Tests of Sex Differences in Spouse Preferences**

Characteristic	Group		T-Value	Rank	
	Males	Females		Males	Females
<u>Evolutionary Psychology</u>					
Physically Attractive	4.60	3.93	14.30***	22	53
Sexy	4.37	3.57	14.37***	35	60
Youthful	4.07	3.65	7.52***	50	57
Younger	1.69	0.91	10.03***	81	82
Interested in Sex	4.69	4.50	3.60**	18	39
Stylish	3.74	3.10	10.19***	56	68
Cares about appearance	4.14	3.58	10.04***	48	59
Successful	3.90	4.56	-12.08***	52	34
Ambitious	4.05	4.59	-9.92***	51	33
Financially Stable	3.81	4.85	-18.08***	54	22
Provider	3.20	4.60	-21.51***	66	32
High Social Status	2.10	2.16	-0.83	77	77
Well Educated	4.51	4.81	-5.97***	28	24
Older	0.92	2.30	-19.10***	83	75
<u>Social Role</u>					
Good Cook	3.53	3.04	7.35***	60	70
Deals Well with Children	4.31	4.40	-1.44	42	43
Loves Children	4.18	4.30	-1.54	46	48

\*\*\*p<.001, \*\*p<.01, \*p<.05

Rating scale ranges from 0 (not at all important) to 6 (extremely important)

Rank order ranges from 1 (highest) to 83 (lowest)

**Table A6: Average Importance of Characteristics in a Future Spouse by Anticipated Marriage Role: Males Only**

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Anticipated Marriage Role</u>		<u>T-Value</u>
	<u>Primary Provider</u>	<u>Not Primary Provider</u>	
Good Cook	3.64	3.07	3.79***
Deals Well with Children	4.40	3.92	3.00**
Loves Children	4.27	3.79	2.89**
Ambitious	4.06	4.07	-0.06
Financially Stable	3.78	3.95	-1.32
High Social Status	2.14	1.97	1.05
Older	0.87	1.14	-1.78*
Provider	3.16	3.38	-1.54
Successful	3.91	3.81	0.83
Well Educated	4.51	4.50	0.15
N	576	135	

\*\*\*p<.001, \*\*p<.01, \*p<.05

Rating scale ranges from 0 (not at all important) to 6 (extremely important)

**Table A7: Average Importance of Characteristics in a Future Spouse by Anticipated Marriage Role: Females Only**

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Anticipated Marriage Role</u>		<u>T-Value</u>
	<u>Primary Domestic</u>	<u>Not Primary Domestic</u>	
Ambitious	4.71	4.36	6.23***
Financially Stable	4.99	4.61	6.97***
High Social Status	2.28	1.94	4.35***
Older	2.44	2.05	3.79***
Provider	4.86	4.14	11.03***
Successful	4.72	4.29	7.71***
Well Educated	4.92	4.62	5.08***
Good Cook	2.97	3.14	-2.24*
Deals Well with Children	4.70	3.87	10.18***
Loves Children	4.63	3.69	11.07***
N	1,153	658	

\*\*\*p<.001, \*\*p<.01, \*p<.05

Rating scale ranges from 0 (not at all important) to 6 (extremely important)

Table A8: Self Rating and Spouse Preference Correlations, Gender Characteristics (BEM Sex Role Inventory)

Self	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.	18.	19.	20.	21.	22.	23.
<u>Spouse</u>																							
<u>Feminine</u>																							
1. Affectionate	<b>.56</b>	.42	.36	.26	.25	.22	.40	-.02	.06	.43	.41	.32	.32	.03	.20	.14	.06	.05	.04	.11	.12	-.05	.00
2. Compassionate	.38	<b>.55</b>	.30	.21	.27	.26	.41	.03	.07	.41	.44	.38	.19	-.03	.19	.09	.04	.04	.03	.07	.11	-.09	.04
3. Emotional	.35	.33	<b>.41</b>	.13	.17	.13	.39	.01	.09	.33	.31	.26	.21	.09	.13	.14	.06	.03	.11	.11	.11	.04	.02
4. Feminine	-.07	-.15	-.17	<b>-.61</b>	-.06	-.03	-.11	.11	.01	-.09	-.11	-.09	-.01	.12	-.10	.06	.17	.20	.14	.05	.04	<b>.73</b>	-.01
5. Loves Kids	.25	.29	.14	.13	<b>.75</b>	.18	.21	-.03	.03	.27	.29	.19	.15	.03	.17	.10	.16	.12	.04	.16	.17	-.02	.03
6. Loyal	.20	.29	.14	.16	.17	<b>.42</b>	.19	-.01	-.04	.23	.22	.22	.11	.03	.25	.11	.06	.10	.07	.10	.15	-.12	.14
7. Sensitive	.29	.34	.27	.05	.19	.16	<b>.44</b>	.04	.08	.31	.31	.24	.13	.03	.13	.12	.04	.03	.12	.08	.13	.06	.05
8. Shy	-.03	-.03	-.02	-.09	.03	-.02	.04	<b>.24</b>	.17	.03	.01	.00	-.02	.07	-.04	-.01	.05	.03	.05	.04	-.03	.18	-.02
9. Submissive	.03	-.04	-.01	-.08	.04	-.02	.01	.07	<b>.24</b>	.05	.02	-.03	.08	.19	.02	.12	.13	.12	.06	.20	.06	.24	-.03
10. Sweet	.33	.35	.25	.11	.24	.20	.32	.07	.12	<b>.49</b>	.40	.31	.24	-.03	.14	.06	.09	.05	.02	.04	.08	.04	-.01
11. Warm	.36	.41	.23	.15	.24	.20	.34	.08	.07	.41	<b>.49</b>	.32	.20	-.02	.14	.04	.06	.05	.05	.05	.08	-.01	.03
12. Understanding	.30	.41	.25	.23	.20	.26	.35	.01	.05	.33	.36	<b>.43</b>	.18	-.04	.19	.09	-.01	-.01	.03	.03	.09	-.13	.07
13. Youthful	.17	.15	.07	.01	.14	.10	.11	-.03	.02	.21	.20	.15	<b>.49</b>	.14	.18	.15	.28	.18	.08	.19	.13	.15	.09
<u>Masculine</u>																							
14. Aggressive	.01	.01	.03	.04	.03	.02	.03	-.05	.08	.01	.03	.03	.08	<b>.47</b>	.09	.24	.15	.18	.15	.27	.13	.13	.04
15. Ambitious	.16	.25	.14	.28	.15	.18	.15	-.11	-.01	.23	.23	.17	.18	.15	<b>.54</b>	.26	.13	.18	.11	.23	.26	-.14	.15
16. Assertive	.10	.19	.11	.21	.09	.11	.13	-.08	.08	.11	.15	.13	.11	.19	.17	<b>.34</b>	.04	.06	.15	.20	.15	-.06	.07
17. Athletic	.03	.03	-.03	.22	.16	.07	.00	-.07	-.03	.09	.08	.04	.24	.23	.19	.21	<b>.63</b>	.33	.11	.25	.19	.14	.12
18. Competitive	.07	.08	.03	.15	.15	.09	.02	-.06	.04	.09	.15	.03	.15	.28	.22	.22	.29	<b>.43</b>	.15	.28	.24	.43	.06
19. Decisive	.14	.21	.13	.26	.18	.18	.18	-.05	.08	.19	.24	.17	.12	.14	.20	.19	.04	.07	<b>.13</b>	.18	.16	-.15	.11
20. Dominant	.11	.12	.12	.29	.08	.05	.10	-.02	<b>.22</b>	.15	.12	.09	.12	.18	.11	.14	.01	.05	.05	<b>.21</b>	.07	-.13	-.01
21. Leader	.16	.22	.12	.33	.19	.17	.17	-.08	.07	.22	.24	.16	.17	.15	.26	.23	.09	.12	.18	.21	<b>.32</b>	-.20	.13
22. Masculine	.14	.21	.21	<b>.69</b>	.14	.09	.17	-.08	.06	.21	.19	.14	.11	.04	.16	.08	-.06	-.11	-.05	.11	.05	<b>-.60</b>	.05
23. Self-Reliant	.09	.19	.10	.22	.05	.15	.13	-.09	-.05	.13	.15	.20	.12	.11	.25	.21	.02	.02	.17	.12	.17	-.13	<b>.28</b>

All correlations above .08 are statistically significant at  $p \leq .0001$ ; Main diagonal and correlations of interest are bolded

**Table A9: Self Rating and Spouse Preference Correlations, Select Characteristics**

<u>Self</u>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.	18.
<u>Spouse</u>																		
1. Dependable	<b>.37</b>	<b>.38</b>	.29	.31	.25	.35	.05	.07	.04	.13	.12	.07	.18	.21	.28	.19	.24	.16
2. Reliable	<b>.33</b>	<b>.43</b>	.32	.32	.30	<b>.40</b>	.07	.10	.03	.12	.11	.05	.20	.25	.30	.21	.31	.17
3. Respectful	.30	.33	<b>.46</b>	.33	.25	.35	.04	.08	.04	.14	.12	.08	.19	.21	.27	.23	.35	.22
4. Loyal	.28	.32	.30	<b>.42</b>	.24	.36	.02	.07	.06	.11	.10	.05	.15	.17	.26	.18	.29	.18
5. Honest	.25	.30	.29	.31	<b>.38</b>	.38	.03	.07	.06	.10	.11	.07	.11	.13	.21	.13	.26	.13
6. Trustworthy	.29	.35	.31	.35	.33	<b>.43</b>	.06	.09	.04	.11	.10	.04	.16	.19	.28	.19	.36	.18
7. Artistic	-.07	-.04	.03	-.01	.03	.02	<b>.47</b>	<b>.37</b>	-.04	.06	.01	.11	.02	-.02	.02	.03	.12	-.04
8. Creative	-.04	.00	.07	.02	.07	.06	<b>.42</b>	<b>.47</b>	.02	.12	.08	.17	.03	.03	.07	.09	.17	.05
9. Athletic	.09	.09	.10	.06	.08	.07	-.09	-.02	<b>.63</b>	.24	<b>.50</b>	.32	.04	.11	.06	.14	.03	.17
10. Youthful	.09	.12	.19	.10	.16	.16	.05	.13	.28	<b>.50</b>	.28	.27	.13	.15	.07	.18	.20	.14
11. Active	.18	.20	.22	.16	.18	.20	-.01	.09	<b>.52</b>	.29	<b>.61</b>	.39	.09	.18	.15	.22	.11	.18
12. Adventurous	.02	.04	.13	.10	.12	.11	.15	.21	.25	.28	.33	<b>.64</b>	.04	.11	.09	.17	.09	.11
13. Provider	.18	.20	.19	.15	.11	.16	.02	.03	.04	.13	.09	.04	<b>.15</b>	.18	.18	.22	.25	.20
14. Successful	.21	.25	.21	.17	.13	.19	-.02	.03	.11	.15	.18	.11	.22	<b>.33</b>	.24	.40	.19	.15
15. Hardworking	.28	.30	.27	.26	.21	.28	.02	.07	.06	.15	.09	.06	.18	.24	<b>.44</b>	.35	.28	.19
16. Ambitious	.19	.21	.23	.18	.13	.19	.03	.09	.14	.18	.22	.17	.19	.29	.26	<b>.54</b>	.22	.19
17. Caring	.24	.31	.35	.29	.26	.36	.12	.17	.03	.20	.11	.09	.16	.18	.20	.20	<b>.51</b>	.23
18. Deals Well with Kids	.16	.17	.22	.18	.13	.18	-.04	.05	.17	.14	.18	.11	.26	.15	.18	.18	.32	<b>.62</b>

*All correlations above .08 are statistically significant at  $p \leq .0001$ ; Main diagonal and correlations of interest are bolded*



**Table A10: Self Rating Correlations: Gender Items**

Self-Characteristics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
<i>BSRI</i>																				
(1) •Affectionate	1.0																			
(2) •Compassionate	<b>.50</b>	1.0																		
(3) Emotional	<b>.50</b>	.35	1.0																	
(4) Feminine	.27	.27	.35	1.0																
(5) Loves Kids	.31	.34	.19	.19	1.0															
(6) Loyal	.19	.33	.08	.08	.18	1.0														
(7) •Sensitive	<b>.48</b>	<b>.51</b>	<b>.59</b>	.31	.30	.22	1.0													
(8) Shy	-.07	-.01	.02	-.05	-.01	.05	.09	1.0												
(9) Submissive	.09	.10	.13	.10	.06	-.01	.18	.34	1.0											
(10) •Sweet	<b>.55</b>	<b>.54</b>	<b>.45</b>	.32	.31	.27	<b>.51</b>	.06	.19	1.0										
(11) •Warm	<b>.54</b>	<b>.65</b>	.33	.27	.35	.25	<b>.45</b>	-.04	.09	<b>.59</b>	1.0									
(12) •Understanding	.34	<b>.54</b>	.22	.19	.25	.29	.36	.02	.12	<b>.44</b>	<b>.47</b>	1.0								
(13) Youthful	<b>.41</b>	.27	.20	.16	.18	.12	.19	-.10	.02	.33	.31	.23	1.0							
(14) •Aggressive	.01	-.07	.02	-.05	-.01	.01	-.06	-.21	-.16	-.12	-.04	-.11	.10	1.0						
(15) Ambitious	.17	.20	.08	.21	.16	.22	.11	-.18	-.16	.16	.20	.14	.18	.20	1.0					
(16) •Assertive	.10	.08	.03	.03	.08	.12	.00	-.33	-.26	-.01	.11	.08	.14	<b>.47</b>	.35	1.0				
(17) Athletic	.05	.00	-.10	-.15	.13	.20	-.07	-.06	-.04	.04	.06	-.01	.25	.21	.16	.19	1.0			
(18) Competitive	.01	-.02	-.10	-.17	.08	.06	-.10	-.10	-.12	-.05	.09	-.06	.13	.37	.28	.31	<b>.44</b>	1.0		
(19) •Decisive	.01	.01	-.09	-.06	.03	.14	-.05	-.17	-.23	-.04	.04	.01	.03	.29	.24	<b>.42</b>	.10	.17	1.0	
(20) •Dominant	.05	-.01	.02	.04	.11	.05	-.03	-.27	-.27	-.06	.04	-.05	.13	<b>.56</b>	.31	<b>.56</b>	.19	.36	.35	1.0
(21) •Leader	.10	.14	-.04	.03	.16	.18	.02	-.32	-.24	.06	.16	.07	.15	.32	<b>.41</b>	<b>.48</b>	.22	.34	<b>.52</b>	<b>.48</b>
(22) Masculine	-.10	-.18	-.19	<b>-.66</b>	-.06	-.05	-.16	.06	-.02	-.14	-.12	-.11	.01	.21	-.07	.12	.28	.30	.15	.14
(23) Self-Reliant	-.07	.05	-.11	-.01	.02	.19	-.06	-.08	-.19	-.02	.03	.10	.04	.13	.31	.21	.14	.12	.31	.19

Note: All correlations above .08 are significant at .0001; Correlations above .40 are bolded

• denotes characteristics appearing in both the BSRI and EFA models

Table A10, continued

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
<i>EFA</i>																				
(24) Caring	<b>.48</b>	<b>.66</b>	.33	.30	<b>.40</b>	.39	<b>.50</b>	.00	.08	<b>.56</b>	<b>.59</b>	<b>.53</b>	.30	-.08	.23	.07	.04	.01	.02	.01
(25) Considerate	.33	<b>.51</b>	.20	.23	.26	<b>.40</b>	<b>.41</b>	.03	.07	<b>.45</b>	<b>.46</b>	<b>.48</b>	.22	-.10	.30	.08	.04	-.01	.08	-.03
(26) Friendly	.35	<b>.47</b>	.17	.20	.29	.27	.29	-.17	-.01	<b>.46</b>	<b>.53</b>	<b>.44</b>	.32	-.02	.27	.14	.11	.09	.07	.08
(27) Generous	.31	<b>.50</b>	.20	.20	.33	.36	<b>.41</b>	-.03	.05	<b>.40</b>	<b>.41</b>	<b>.42</b>	.23	.02	.27	.15	.08	.03	.12	.08
(28) Good Listener	.25	<b>.41</b>	.16	.16	.19	.32	.30	.10	.09	.34	.36	<b>.46</b>	.16	-.09	.12	.03	.01	-.05	.00	-.06
(29) Supportive	<b>.43</b>	<b>.72</b>	.27	.23	.33	.37	<b>.40</b>	-.04	.07	<b>.48</b>	<b>.64</b>	<b>.52</b>	.27	-.03	.25	.14	<b>.43</b>	.07	.06	.04
(30) Thoughtful	.32	<b>.48</b>	.23	.20	.21	.34	<b>.40</b>	.03	.06	<b>.42</b>	<b>.41</b>	<b>.46</b>	.20	-.06	.20	.09	.02	-.02	.04	-.02
(31) Confident	.20	.10	-.06	.04	.09	.15	-.08	-.37	.27	.05	.14	.08	.19	.27	.34	<b>.43</b>	.20	.20	.38	.36
(32) Extroverted	.27	.21	.13	.19	.19	.07	.09	<b>-.54</b>	-.17	.20	.28	.13	.34	.31	.34	<b>.42</b>	.23	.23	.21	.38
(33) Self-Assured	.12	.15	-.06	.05	.13	.19	-.03	-.27	-.22	.08	.20	.15	.22	.25	.35	<b>.44</b>	.21	.20	<b>.42</b>	.36
(34) Sociable	.28	.26	.10	.21	.23	.16	.12	<b>-.45</b>	-.12	.27	.34	.23	.35	.22	.33	.33	.24	.22	.19	.27

Note: All correlations above .08 are significant at .0001; Correlations above .40 are bolded

• denotes characteristics appearing in both the BSRI and EFA models

Table A10, continued

	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35
(21) •Leader	1.0														
(22) •Masculine	.09	1.0													
(23) Self-Reliant	.32	.03	1.0												
<i>EFA</i>															
(24) Caring	.15	-.19	.09	1.0											
(25) Considerate	.18	-.14	.14	<b>.56</b>	1.0										
(26) Friendly	.26	-.09	.10	<b>.53</b>	<b>.47</b>	1.0									
(27) Generous	.23	-.08	.17	<b>.50</b>	<b>.57</b>	<b>.43</b>	1.0								
(28) Good Listener	.04	-.11	.09	<b>.43</b>	<b>.41</b>	.34	.34	1.0							
(29) Supportive	.18	-.12	.10	<b>.58</b>	<b>.49</b>	<b>.48</b>	<b>.44</b>	<b>.42</b>	1.0						
(30) Thoughtful	.13	-.10	.09	<b>.52</b>	<b>.54</b>	<b>.45</b>	<b>.56</b>	.30	.29	1.0					
(31) Confident	<b>.48</b>	.06	.31	.09	.13	.21	.16	.05	.16	.10	1.0				
(32) Extroverted	<b>.42</b>	.01	.09	.20	.13	.37	.21	.00	.24	.09	<b>.40</b>	1.0			
(33) Self-Assured	<b>.47</b>	.07	.37	.13	.17	.26	.20	.10	.22	.15	<b>.65</b>	.39	1.0		
(34) Sociable	.39	-.05	.11	.29	.24	<b>.50</b>	.27	.11	.28	.17	.37	<b>.67</b>	.34	1.0	

Note: All correlations above .08 are significant at .0001; Correlations above .40 are bolded

• denotes characteristics appearing in both the BSRI and EFA models

**Table A11: Spouse Preference Correlations: Gender Items**

Spouse Preferences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
<i>BSRI</i>																				
(1) •Affectionate	1.00																			
(2) •Compassionate	<b>.46</b>	1.00																		
(3) Emotional	.38	.34	1.00																	
(4) Feminine	-.02	-.06	.09	1.00																
(5) Loves Kids	.28	.32	.18	.02	1.00															
(6) Loyal	.30	.35	.14	-.13	.23	1.00														
(7) •Sensitive	.36	<b>.42</b>	<b>.49</b>	.13	.24	.16	1.00													
(8) Shy	-.01	.00	.15	.27	.07	-.11	.12	1.00												
(9) Submissive	.04	.05	.14	.30	.13	-.07	.14	<b>.40</b>	1.00											
(10) •Sweet	<b>.48</b>	<b>.47</b>	.38	.09	.31	.23	.39	.09	.13	1.00										
(11) •Warm	<b>.43</b>	<b>.43</b>	.29	.03	.28	.31	<b>.40</b>	.07	.09	<b>.50</b>	1.00									
(12) •Understanding	<b>.40</b>	<b>.55</b>	.26	-.11	.25	<b>.45</b>	.38	-.02	.02	.38	<b>.44</b>	1.00								
(13) Youthful	.29	.21	.23	.18	.22	.12	.20	.13	.21	.30	.25	.18	1.00							
(14) •Aggressive	.02	.01	.15	.10	.05	.01	.05	.18	.23	.02	.00	-.04	.15	1.00						
(15) Ambitious	.22	.25	.18	-.15	.19	.29	.16	.00	.05	.19	.17	.27	.22	.20	1.00					
(16) •Assertive	.13	.01	.17	-.10	.11	.10	.13	.08	.14	.10	.14	.17	.16	.34	.28	1.00				
(17) Athletic	.15	.08	.10	.07	.22	.09	.05	.09	.15	.14	.10	.04	<b>.40</b>	.27	.26	.20	1.00			
(18) Competitive	.08	.10	.13	-.04	.20	.09	.08	.17	.23	.10	.18	.06	.22	.39	.35	.35	<b>.45</b>	1.00		
(19) •Decisive	.16	.21	.14	-.18	.24	.20	.17	.05	.07	.17	.20	.23	.10	.23	.36	<b>.42</b>	.20	.34	1.00	
(20) •Dominant	.10	.08	.12	-.17	.09	.07	.06	.16	.19	.07	.07	.06	.10	.43	.26	<b>.43</b>	.18	.38	.37	1.00
(21) •Leader	.16	.22	.20	-.23	.25	.16	.18	.04	.10	.15	.19	.21	.20	.27	<b>.44</b>	<b>.44</b>	.26	<b>.46</b>	<b>.59</b>	<b>.44</b>
(22) Masculine	.13	.17	.06	<b>-.72</b>	.10	.18	.00	-.07	-.07	.04	.13	.19	.00	.15	.31	.32	.13	.30	.36	<b>.42</b>
(23) Self-Reliant	.14	.18	.14	-.17	.08	.18	.14	-.02	.02	.13	.16	.23	.17	.16	.32	.33	.15	.22	.36	.20

Note: All correlations above .08 are significant at .0001; Correlations above .40 are bolded

• denotes characteristics appearing in both the BSRI and EFA models

Table A11, continued

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
<i>EFA</i>																				
(24) Caring	<b>.46</b>	<b>.57</b>	.27	-.07	.30	<b>.40</b>	.34	-.04	.00	<b>.48</b>	<b>.52</b>	<b>.54</b>	.19	-.04	.24	.11	.06	.06	.21	.03
(25) Considerate	<b>.40</b>	<b>.53</b>	.23	-.15	.28	<b>.45</b>	.34	-.07	-.02	<b>.42</b>	<b>.44</b>	<b>.53</b>	.18	-.04	.37	.15	.04	.06	.24	.06
(26) Friendly	.33	<b>.42</b>	.19	-.02	.26	.33	.25	-.03	.01	.36	<b>.41</b>	<b>.44</b>	.27	.01	.33	.08	.16	.13	.18	.05
(27) Generous	.35	<b>.49</b>	.27	-.14	.30	.32	<b>.41</b>	.00	.05	.37	<b>.43</b>	<b>.45</b>	.20	.02	.29	.17	.13	.16	.31	.11
(28) Good Listener	.39	<b>.46</b>	.27	-.17	.25	.37	.32	-.01	.02	.33	<b>.40</b>	<b>.57</b>	.14	.01	.28	.19	.05	.13	.28	.12
(29) Supportive	<b>.42</b>	<b>.66</b>	.23	-.17	.26	<b>.44</b>	.27	-.07	-.03	.38	<b>.51</b>	<b>.56</b>	.17	-.03	.30	.13	.08	.10	.22	.08
(30) Thoughtful	.38	<b>.54</b>	.26	-.12	.24	.35	.36	-.02	-.01	<b>.40</b>	<b>.46</b>	<b>.56</b>	.16	-.04	.28	.16	.04	.09	.26	.07
(31) Confident	.23	.23	.19	-.16	.20	.21	.18	-.06	.02	.19	.18	.24	.22	.22	<b>.42</b>	.34	.25	.30	<b>.41</b>	.29
(32) Extroverted	.18	.16	.19	.04	.19	.28	.14	.07	.22	.05	.21	.13	.29	.26	.27	.30	.30	.37	.28	.31
(33) Self-Assured	.17	.25	.15	-.04	.15	.18	.19	.00	.06	.15	.23	.27	.22	.20	.35	<b>.40</b>	.22	.27	.38	.22
(34) Sociable	.25	.25	.15	-.01	.26	.35	.16	-.05	.08	.24	.26	.23	.33	.16	.36	.20	.31	.27	.27	.18

Note: All correlations above .08 are significant at .0001; Correlations above .40 are bolded

• denotes characteristics appearing in both the BSRI and EFA models

**Table A11, continued**

	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34
(21) •Leader	1.00													
(22) •Masculine	<b>.43</b>	1.00												
(23) Self-Reliant	.39	.30	1.00											
<i>EFA</i>														
(24) Caring	.20	.16	.18	1.00										
(25) Considerate	.24	.23	.27	<b>.60</b>	1.00									
(26) Friendly	.22	.12	.20	<b>.47</b>	<b>.44</b>	1.00								
(27) Generous	.33	.23	.26	<b>.48</b>	<b>.55</b>	.36	1.00							
(28) Good Listener	.29	.27	.23	<b>.48</b>	.39	<b>.40</b>	<b>.41</b>	1.00						
(29) Supportive	.20	.24	.22	<b>.56</b>	<b>.56</b>	<b>.45</b>	<b>.42</b>	<b>.50</b>	1.00					
(30) Thoughtful	.24	.20	.26	<b>.55</b>	<b>.56</b>	<b>.43</b>	<b>.47</b>	<b>.67</b>	<b>.54</b>	1.00				
(31) Confident	<b>.48</b>	.32	<b>.48</b>	.23	.27	.25	.29	.28	.25	.29	1.00			
(32) Extroverted	.36	.20	.22	.14	.15	.27	.20	.17	.14	.13	.28	1.00		
(33) Self-Assured	<b>.41</b>	.23	<b>.44</b>	.19	.27	.23	.27	.26	.26	.27	<b>.49</b>	.29	1.00	
(34) Sociable	.33	.18	.22	.27	.29	<b>.45</b>	.29	.27	.27	.23	.35	<b>.48</b>	.30	1.00

*Note: All correlations above .08 are significant at .0001; Correlations above .40 are bolded*

• denotes characteristics appearing in both the BSRI and EFA models

**Table A12: Factor Loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, and Average Inter-Item Correlations (AIC) for Self Rating Gender Dimensions**

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Items</u>	<u>Factor Loadings*</u>	<u>Alpha</u>	<u>AIC</u>
Affection			0.76	0.51
	Affectionate	0.78		
	Romantic	0.66		
	Sweet	0.71		
Caring			0.89	0.50
	Caring	0.78		
	Considerate	0.72		
	Respectful	0.57		
	Generous	0.66		
	Thoughtful	0.66		
	Understanding	0.67		
	Compassionate	0.80		
	Supportive	0.77		
Leadership			0.79	0.49
	Leader	0.64		
	Decisive	0.56		
	Confident	0.78		
	Self-Assured	0.79		
Dominance			0.77	0.53
	Dominant	0.81		
	Assertive	0.69		
	Aggressive	0.68		

\*Factor loadings are standardized

**Table A13: Factor Loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, and Average Inter-Item Correlations (AIC) for Spouse Preference Gender Dimensions**

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Items</u>	<u>Factor Loadings*</u>	<u>Alpha</u>	<u>AIC</u>
Affection			0.73	0.47
	Affectionate	0.72		
	Romantic	0.68		
	Sweet	0.67		
Caring				
	Caring	0.75	0.89	0.51
	Considerate	0.77		
	Respectful	0.62		
	Generous	0.64		
	Thoughtful	0.73		
	Understanding	0.73		
	Compassionate	0.75		
	Supportive	0.76		
Leadership			0.77	0.61
	Leader	0.78		
	Decisive	0.71		
	Confident	0.64		
	Self-Assured	0.58		
Dominance			0.67	0.40
	Dominant	0.74		
	Assertive	0.59		
	Aggressive	0.58		

\*Factor loadings are standardized



**Table A14: Factor Correlations for Self Rating and Spouse Preference Dimensions**

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. Self Affection	1.0							
2. Self Caring	.62	1.0						
3. Self Dominance	.06	.01	1.0					
4. Self Leadership	.13	.20	.57	1.0				
5. Spouse Affection	.68	.50	.10	.12	1.0			
6. Spouse Caring	.51	.69	.07	.16	.62	1.0		
7. Spouse Dominance	.15	.14	.38	.19	.16	.11	1.0	
8. Spouse Leadership	.26	.35	.30	.38	.31	.42	.54	1.0

**Table A15: Means\* and Standard Deviations of Self Rating and Spouse Preference Gender Dimensions**

<u>Dimension</u>	<u>Total</u>		<u>Males</u>		<u>Females</u>	
	<u>Self</u>	<u>Spouse</u>	<u>Self</u>	<u>Spouse</u>	<u>Self</u>	<u>Spouse</u>
Affection	4.10 (1.05)	4.49 (0.88)	3.91 (1.04)	4.47 (0.86)	4.18 (1.05)	4.50 (0.89)
Caring	4.79 (0.72)	5.01 (0.66)	4.57 (0.74)	4.74 (0.67)	4.88 (0.69)	5.11 (0.62)
Leadership	4.00 (0.98)	4.27 (0.89)	4.12 (0.99)	3.89 (0.92)	3.96 (0.98)	4.41 (0.83)
Dominance	3.19 (1.13)	2.70 (1.14)	3.23 (1.10)	2.43 (1.13)	3.17 (1.15)	2.80 (1.13)

\*For self-ratings: value refers to how well that dimension describes respondents, on average, from 0 (not at all) to 6 (extremely well).

\*For spouse-preferences: value refers to how important that dimension is in a future spouse, from 0 (not at all) to 6 (extremely).

**Table A16: Regression Coefficients (and Standard Errors) for the Importance of Gender Dimensions in a Spouse by Self Rating Gender Dimensions and Sex Category**

<u>Dependent Variable</u>	<u>Independent Variables</u>	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>
Spouse Affection	Self Affection	0.51*** (0.02)	0.51*** (0.02)
	Self Caring	0.16*** (0.02)	0.18*** (0.02)
	Self Dominance	0.06*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)
	Self Leadership	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.04** (0.02)
	Female	-	-0.17*** (0.03)
	(Constant)	(1.58***) (0.09)	(1.63***) (0.09)
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.48	0.49
Spouse Caring	Self Affection	0.07*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)
	Self Caring	0.57*** (0.02)	0.54*** (0.02)
	Self Dominance	0.04*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)
	Self Leadership	-0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
	Female	-	0.18*** (0.02)
	(Constant)	(1.89***) (0.07)	(1.85***) (0.07)
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.50	0.51
Spouse Dominance	Self Affection	0.08** (0.03)	0.08** (0.02)
	Self Caring	0.18*** (0.04)	0.13** (0.04)
	Self Dominance	0.43*** (0.02)	0.42*** (0.02)
	Self Leadership	-0.10*** (0.03)	-0.07** (0.03)
	Female	-	0.34*** (0.05)
	(Constant)	(0.50**) (0.16)	(0.41*) (0.16)
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.18	0.20

**Table A16, continued**

Spouse Leadership	Self Affection	0.05** (0.02)	0.06** (0.02)
	Self Caring	0.34*** (0.03)	0.27*** (0.03)
	Self Dominance	0.13*** (0.02)	0.12 (0.02)
	Self Leadership	0.20*** (0.02)	0.23*** (0.02)
	Female	-	0.48*** (0.03)
	(Constant)	(1.22***) (0.12)	(1.08***) (0.11)
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.25	0.30

**Table A17: With-In Sex Average Spouse Preferences on Gender Dimensions by High and Low Expressivity and Instrumentality Self Ratings: Females Only**

Spouse Preference	Self Rating			
<u>Complimentarity</u>		<u>Females</u>		<u>T-Value</u>
<u>Instrumentality</u>	<u>Expressivity</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>	
Spouse Dominance	Self Affection	2.66	2.92	-4.75***
	Self Caring	2.67	2.90	-4.23***
Spouse Leadership	Self Affection	4.24	4.56	-8.30***
	Self Caring	4.18	4.59	-10.68***
<u>Expressivity</u>	<u>Instrumentality</u>			
Spouse Affection	Self Dominance	4.45	4.54	-2.04*
	Self Leadership	4.39	4.58	-4.56***
Spouse Caring	Self Dominance	5.09	5.13	-1.36
	Self Leadership	5.01	5.19	-6.22***
<u>Homogamy</u>		<u>Females</u>		
<u>Instrumentality</u>	<u>Instrumentality</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>	
Spouse Dominance	Self Dominance	2.42	3.16	-14.46***
	Self Leadership	2.59	2.97	-7.23***
Spouse Leadership	Self Dominance	4.23	4.59	-9.38***
	Self Leadership	4.08	4.67	-15.54***
<u>Expressivity</u>	<u>Expressivity</u>			
Spouse Affection	Self Affection	3.98	4.95	-26.99***
	Self Caring	4.10	4.79	-17.35***
Spouse Caring	Self Affection	4.85	5.35	-18.32***
	Self Caring	4.73	5.40	-25.46***

\*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001, one-tailed

Bonferroni-corrected p value = 0.025, t-critical = 1.96 (one-tailed)

**Table A18: With-In Sex Average Spouse Preferences on Gender Dimensions by High and Low Expressivity and Instrumentality Self Ratings: Males Only**

Spouse Preference	Self Rating			
<u>Complimentarity</u>		<u>Males</u>		<u>T-Value</u>
<u>Instrumentality</u>	<u>Expressivity</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>	
Spouse Dominance	Self Affection	2.32	2.53	-2.54**
	Self Caring	2.35	2.53	-2.19*
Spouse Leadership	Self Affection	3.74	4.01	-4.00***
	Self Caring	3.64	4.17	-7.88***
<u>Expressivity</u>	<u>Instrumentality</u>			
Spouse Affection	Self Dominance	4.31	4.60	-4.43***
	Self Leadership	4.33	4.58	-3.88***
Spouse Caring	Self Dominance	4.63	4.85	-4.34***
	Self Leadership	4.61	4.85	-4.82***
<u>Homogamy</u>		<u>Males</u>		
<u>Instrumentality</u>	<u>Instrumentality</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>	
Spouse Dominance	Self Dominance	2.07	2.74	-8.27***
	Self Leadership	2.23	2.60	-4.43***
Spouse Leadership	Self Dominance	3.59	4.14	-8.40***
	Self Leadership	3.54	4.17	-9.65***
<u>Expressivity</u>	<u>Expressivity</u>			
Spouse Affection	Self Affection	3.97	4.87	-15.69***
	Self Caring	4.11	4.89	-13.52***
Spouse Caring	Self Affection	4.47	4.97	-10.59***
	Self Caring	4.38	5.17	-19.29***

\*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001, one-tailed  
Bonferroni-corrected p value = 0.025, t-critical = 1.96 (one-tailed)

**Table A19: Regression Coefficients (and Standard Errors) for the Importance of Select Characteristics in a Spouse by Self Ratings, Sex Category, and Age**

<u>Dependent Variable</u>	<u>Independent Variables</u>	Coefficient
Spouse Hardworking	Self Hardworking	0.40*** (0.02)
	Female	0.61*** (0.04)
	Age	-0.02*** (0.00)
	(Constant)	(2.89***) (0.11)
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.29
Spouse Ambitious	Self Ambitious	0.51*** (0.02)
	Female	0.32*** (0.04)
	Age	-0.02*** (0.00)
	(Constant)	(2.47***) (0.12)
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.33
Spouse Financially Stable	Self Financially Stable	0.16*** (0.02)
	Female	1.05*** (0.05)
	Age	-0.00 (0.00)
	(Constant)	(3.28***) (0.11)
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.17
Spouse Mature	Self Mature	0.51*** (0.02)
	Female	0.37*** (0.04)
	Age	-0.00 (0.00)
	(Constant)	(2.20***) (0.11)
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.30

\*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001

**Table A19, continued**

Spouse Cultured	Self Cultured	0.75*** (0.02)
	Female	-0.08 (0.05)
	Age	-0.01* (0.00)
	(Constant)	(0.83***) (0.12)
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.38
Spouse Self-Reliant	Self Self-Reliant	0.28*** (0.02)
	Female	0.50*** (0.04)
	Age	0.01 (0.00)
	(Constant)	(2.69***) (0.12)
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.12
Spouse High Social Status	Self High Social Status	0.59*** (0.02)
	Female	0.12 (0.06)
	Age	0.00 (0.00)
	(Constant)	(0.14) (0.14)
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.26
Spouse Loves Children	Self Loves Children	0.74*** (0.01)
	Female	-0.21*** (0.05)
	Age	-0.03*** (0.00)
	(Constant)	(2.08***) (0.11)
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.58

\*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001



**Table A19, continued**

Spouse Deals Well With Children	Self Deals Well With Children	0.64*** (0.02)
	Female	-0.12* (0.05)
	Age	-0.02*** (0.00)
	(Constant)	(2.38***) (0.13)
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.40
Spouse Good Cook	Self Good Cook	0.07*** (0.02)
	Female	-0.54*** (0.07)
	Age	-0.02*** (0.00)
	(Constant)	(3.79***) (0.15)
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.03
Spouse Good Provider	Self Good Provider	0.25*** (0.02)
	Female	1.41*** (0.06)
	Age	-0.03*** (0.00)
	(Constant)	(2.94***) (0.15)
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.23

\*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001

**Table A20: Regression Coefficients (and Standard Errors) for the Importance of Relative Age of a Spouse by Respondent Age, by Sex Category**

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Males	Females
Spouse who is Younger	Age	0.06*** (0.01)	0.01** (0.00)
	(Constant)	(0.04) (0.27)	(0.54***) (0.12)
Spouse who is Older	Age	-0.02** (0.01)	-0.05*** (0.01)
	(Constant)	(1.51***) (0.20)	(3.55***) (0.19)

\*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001

**Table A21: Top Rated Spouse Preference Values by Source of Data: Undergraduates vs. Alumni**

Rank of Characteristic	Undergraduates	Alumni	T-Value
1	5.65	5.51	5.24***
2	5.61	5.50	4.26***
3	5.59	5.50	3.12***
4	5.42	5.33	3.05***
5	5.41	5.24	5.35***
6	5.37	5.23	4.37***
7	5.29	5.12	5.38***
8	5.21	5.04	4.78***
9	5.19	5.03	4.79***
10	5.16	5.01	4.35***
11	5.12	4.95	4.61***
12	5.08	4.94	3.88***

\*\*\*p < .001, one-tailed

Bonferroni-corrected p value = 0.025, t-critical = 1.96 (one-tailed)

**Table A22: Age Category Frequencies and Percentages**

Age Category	Frequency	Percent
18-22 years	998	39.57
23-30 years	1,028	40.76
31-50 years	496	19.67
Total:	2522	100

**Table A23: Average Spouse Preferences for Top Rated Characteristics by Age Group**

Rank of Characteristic	18-22 yrs (1)	23-30 yrs (2)	31-50 yrs (3)	T-Value (1 vs 2)	T-Value (2 vs 3)	T-Value (1 vs 3)
1	5.66	5.55	5.48	2.44***	1.43	3.31***
2	5.61	5.53	5.44	2.51***	2.21	4.09***
3	5.58	5.52	5.37	1.00	1.78	2.48***
4	5.42	5.36	5.25	1.40	2.23	3.32***
5	5.42	5.28	5.16	2.29	1.64	3.43***
6	5.36	5.26	5.13	1.92	1.95	3.32***
7	5.30	5.16	5.04	2.36***	1.83	3.46***
8	5.21	5.06	5.04	3.08***	0.46	2.92***
9	5.19	5.04	5.00	2.78***	0.66	2.87***
10	5.16	5.03	4.95	2.86***	1.28	3.55***
11	5.11	5.01	4.94	1.79	1.26	2.69***
12	5.08	4.95	4.91	2.36***	0.57	2.50***

\*\*\*p < .001, one-tailed

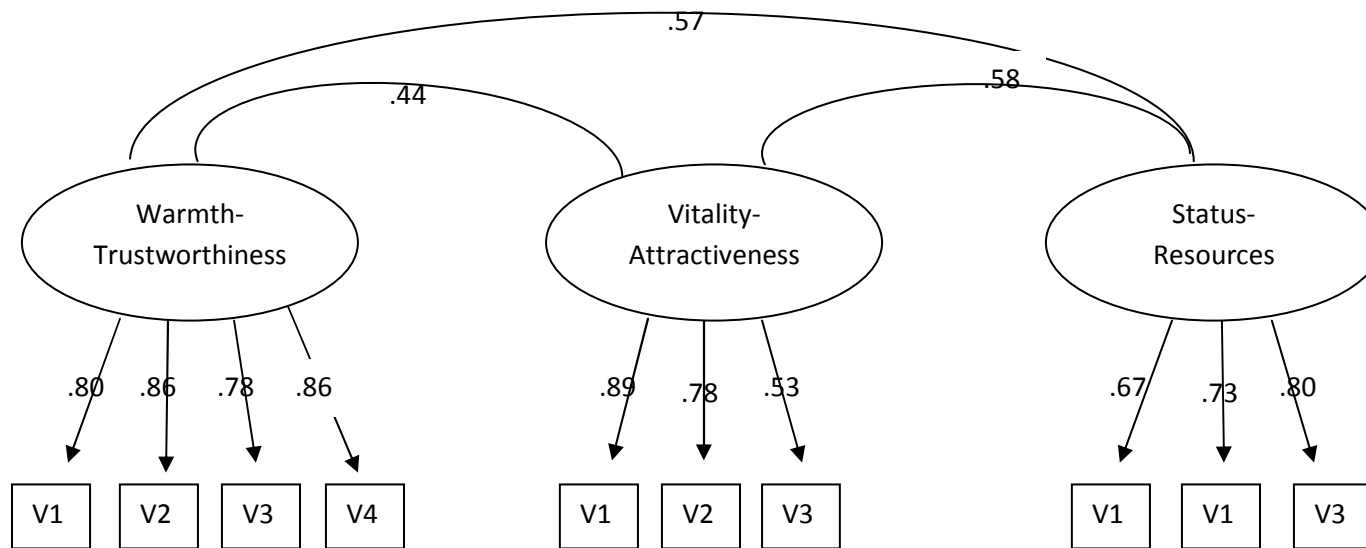
Bonferroni-corrected p value = 0.016, t-critical = 2.33 (one-tailed)

**Table A24: Spouse Preference Characteristics Factor Loadings: Exploratory Factor Analysis**

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Factor 1</u> <u>(Warmth- Trustworthiness)</u>	<u>Factor 2</u> <u>(Vitality- Attractiveness)</u>	<u>Factor 3</u> <u>(Status- Resources)</u>
Understanding	<b>.78</b>	-.06	-.01
Supportive	<b>.76</b>	-.05	.04
Considerate	<b>.77</b>	-.10	.09
Good Listener	<b>.70</b>	-.02	.05
Sensitive	<b>.53</b>	.20	-.27
Trustworthy	<b>.70</b>	-.24	.23
Warm	<b>.65</b>	.21	-.26
Affectionate	<b>.55</b>	.24	-.15
Reliable	<b>.64</b>	-.20	.35
Friendly	<b>.56</b>	.15	.00
Communicative	<b>.63</b>	.02	.10
Honest	<b>.63</b>	-.20	.15
Mature	<b>.42</b>	-.17	<b>.40</b>
Romantic	<b>.40</b>	<b>.40</b>	-.12
Open Minded	<b>.43</b>	.09	.06
Easy Going	.30	.33	.06
Self Aware	.30	.16	.15
Generous	<b>.61</b>	.11	.03
Loves Kids	.31	.26	-.08
Adventurous	-.04	<b>.66</b>	.03
Extroverted	-.04	<b>.55</b>	.16
Sexy	-.13	<b>.65</b>	.02
Attractive	-.19	<b>.61</b>	.16
Good Lover	.10	<b>.51</b>	.12
Active	-.06	<b>.60</b>	.24
Athletic	-.28	<b>.66</b>	.26
Confident	.09	.30	<b>.49</b>
Ambitious	.12	.22	<b>.57</b>
Spontaneous	.04	<b>.67</b>	-.01
Funny	.23	.22	.20
Assertive	-.04	.28	<b>.40</b>
Creative	.10	<b>.42</b>	-.23
Intelligent	.20	.02	.37
Financially Stable	.07	.03	<b>.70</b>
Successful	-.01	.20	<b>.72</b>
Religious	.11	.16	-.06

N = 2390; Factor loadings of .40 and above are in bold

**Figure A1: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model of Spouse Preference Dimensions:  
Replicating Fletcher et al.'s (1999) Preference Dimensions**




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Factor loadings and covariances are standardized and are significant at  $p < .001$ .  $N = 2522$ . V = Variable (combined item indicators).

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