

The Desirability of Sexually Experienced Friends

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of one's sexual history on his or her desirability as a same-sex friend. Participants (N = 790) completed an online survey, in which they evaluated one of 6 hypothetical targets. Descriptions differed in the information they provided on the target's sexual history. It was predicted that permissive targets (i.e., those with 20 partners) would be rated as less desirable friends than less permissive targets (i.e., those with 2 partners). This effect was expected to be moderated in three ways: 1) women would rate permissive targets more harshly than would men, 2) targets whose partners had been romantic would be evaluated more favorably than those whose partners had been casual, and 3) participants with higher numbers of partners would evaluate permissive targets less harshly than would those with fewer partners. Results suggested that permissive targets were evaluated as less desirable friends than were less permissive targets. Hypotheses on the moderating variables were generally upheld, though the strength of their effects varied across measures.

Keywords: friendship, sexual experience, sexual double standard, gender

The Desirability of Sexually Experienced Friends

The need to belong (i.e., the need to form lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships) is a fundamental human motivation. A body of research suggests that failure to satisfy this need leads to decrements in physical health, happiness, and psychological adjustment (reviewed in Baumeister & Leary, 1995, see also Cacioppo, Hawkley, & Berntson, 2003; Ryff & Singer, 2004). Long-term romantic relationships are one important avenue for satisfying this universal need; close friendships (with same- or other-sex individuals) are another. Thus, friendships are an important contributor to human needs. The present study focused on how certain factors, specifically personality factors, influence the formation of these friendships.

Understanding what personal factors may promote or hinder friendship formation and maintenance is crucial in order to identify individuals who might be at particular risk for social rejection, isolation, or loneliness. Ellis et al. (2008) have shown that peer rejection can further lead to relational aggression victimization; individuals may not only be outcast, but they may also fall victim to behaviors such as rumor spreading and other forms of social manipulation. One factor that may have important implications for friendship formation is one's level of past sexual experience, which is typically indicated by an individual's number of previous sexual partners and by the context (i.e., long-term and romantic vs. short-term and casual) in which these partners were acquired (Kreager & Staff, 2009; Mark & Miller, 1986; O'Sullivan, 1995; Sprecher, McKinney, & Orbuch, 1991; Sprecher, Regan, McKinney, Maxwell, & Wazienski, 1997). The following section reviews a body of literature that has investigated the influence of sexual experience on friendship formation.

Are More Sexually Experienced Individuals Less Desirable as Friends?

Numerous studies have demonstrated a negative relationship between high levels

of sexual experience and desirability as a sexual or romantic partner (Gentry, 1998; O'Sullivan, 1995; Oliver & Sedikides, 1992; Sprecher et al., 1997; Williams & Jacoby, 1989), and a smaller body of research has shown a similar negative relationship for friendship desirability (Billy, Rodgers, & Udry, 1984; Kreager & Staff, 2009; Sprecher et al., 1991). Two explanations, social and evolutionary, can account for this negative correlation. From a socio-cultural perspective, America (similar to other Judeo-Christian, as well as Muslim societies), places great value on sexual restraint, and treats it as an ideal and a norm (Abbott, 2001; Collins, 1971). Those who violate this will consequently be viewed as less desirable by others, due to either condemnation or a desire to preserve one's own reputation by distancing oneself from the outcast (DeLamater, 1989; Howard et al., 1987; Mischel, 1966).

Evolutionary theories supply additional explanations for the link between sexual experience and desirability as a friend or mate. According to sexual strategies theory (Buss & Schmitt, 1993), most men and women seek mates who are perceived to be faithful companions: men for the purpose of assuring paternity, and women for the purpose of assuring resources in order to help raise offspring. In the case of friendships, associating with sexually experienced same-sex friends could therefore be seen as posing potential threats to the fidelity of one's own mate. Distancing oneself from such threats, then, can be viewed as an effective mate guarding strategy. Thus, both socio-cultural and evolutionary perspectives indicate that men and women can be expected to prefer friends who are less, rather than more, sexually experienced.

The foundation for the suggested relationship between level of previous sexual experience and one's appeal as a potential friend lies primarily in the larger body of empirical research on mate desirability. When asked to rank the importance of characteristics in selecting a long-term mate (the type of partner more similar to a friend, in comparison to short-term mates),

both men and women rate promiscuity as an undesirable trait, and chastity is ranked above sexual experience (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Regan & Berscheid, 1997; Sprecher et al., 1997). Additionally, in a study conducted by Sprecher et al. (1991), participants were presented with descriptions of one of three opposite-sex targets, all of which had different levels of sexual experience. Sprecher et al. found that both men and women rated the target with the lowest level of experience as the most desirable long-term mate. In a subsequent study, Oliver and Sedikides (1992) found that male and female participants rated sexually inexperienced targets as more desirable than experienced targets for both short- and long-term relationship scenarios.

Higher levels of previous sexual experience have also been shown to affect overall evaluations of one's character. In 1986, Mark and Miller presented male and female participants with descriptions of both sexually experienced and inexperienced hypothetical targets. When asked to rank both same- and opposite-sex targets on a variety of personality traits, participants rated the more sexually experienced targets as less moral than their less experienced counterparts. Additionally, Gentry (1998) found that when college-age men and women were presented with hypothetical targets that engaged in various levels of sexual activity, both male and female targets that exhibited above average levels of sexual activity were evaluated more negatively on a variety of attributes.

Research on the suggested link for mate desirability and overall target perceptions, however, is less conclusive when applied to same-sex friendship desirability. The present study sought to investigate not only whether this trend existed in the case of same-sex friendships, but also to further examine three moderating factors that might contribute to this correlation: 1) the influence of gender (i.e., whether this relationship was stronger in judgments of women than in those of men), 2) the influence of context (i.e., whether individuals whose

previous sexual encounters had occurred in romantic, rather than casual contexts, would be evaluated as more desirable friends), and 3) the influence of one's own sexual history (i.e., whether a sexually experienced individual would be more likely than a less experienced individual to befriend a person with a high number of previous partners). These three factors had been previously shown to affect both mate and friendship desirability (Billy et al., 1984; Gentry, 1998; Kreager & Staff, 2009; O'Sullivan, 1995; Sheeran, Spears, Abraham, & Abrams, 1996; Sprecher et al., 1987; Sprecher et al., 1991; Sprecher et al., 1997), but had not yet been tested together in one study. In the following sections each moderating factor is reviewed in more detail.

Are Women Harder on Other Women Than Men Are on Other Men?

In virtually all societies women's sexuality is more restricted than men's: women are allowed less sexual freedom, and the value that is placed on chaste women makes them not only more respected, but also regarded as better suited wives. In contrast, men often have explicit or implicit license to engage in a wider range of sexual behaviors, with a greater number of partners, and in more diverse contexts (Abbott, 2001; Hyde & Oliver, 2000; Okami & Shackelford, 2001). Furthermore, in their extensive review of the cultural suppression of female sexuality, Baumeister and Twenge (2002) found that it is predominantly women, not men, who suppress and regulate women's sexuality (i.e., both their own and that of other women). Therefore, it was hypothesized that extensive sexual experience would be punished more by women choosing female friends than by men choosing male friends.

Studies investigating sex differences in peer perception have repeatedly demonstrated that sexually experienced women are often judged more harshly than are sexually experienced men – a trend that researchers have labeled as the “sexual double standard.” In

1996, Sheeran et al. found that female targets who had changed sexual partners frequently throughout the course of a year were judged by both men and women to be more irresponsible and lacking in self-respect than were those who had engaged in less sexual activity. These results were obtained for female targets but not for male targets; it is therefore possible that the sexual double standard not only exists, but that both men and women also support it.

Compared to research on potential mates, there is less research exploring sex differences in the importance placed on sexual experience in the formation of friendships. Evidence of the sexual double standard exists to some degree, however, in the study of friendship. In 2009, Kreager and Staff asked a sample of middle school boys and girls to rate the likability of their classmates. The researchers found that greater numbers of sexual partners correlated positively with boys' peer acceptance, while the opposite held true for girls. In this case, not only was the sexual double standard upheld, but high levels of sexual experience also did not negatively impact perceptions of both sexes. This conflicted with previous studies on mate desirability, in which sexually experienced men had been evaluated either comparably to or more negatively than their less experienced counterparts; evidence of the double standard in the latter case was based on the harsher evaluations of sexually experienced women in comparison to those of experienced men.

Results by Kreager and Staff (2009) not only offer a different type of evidence of the double standard, but their findings have also not yet been investigated in older age groups, such as the college-age population from which the present study drew participants (and in which previous sexual experience is more prevalent). Additionally, Kreager and Staff used a different research design than the one employed in the present study; their results were based on correlational surveys in which causality cannot be inferred. The present study, however, used a

controlled experimental design that allowed for more probable causal conclusions. The present study also examined the context of friendship formation, rather than looking solely at the popularity of the study's participants.

Additionally, not all studies of friendship desirability have yielded results in favor of the sexual double standard. The previously discussed study conducted by Gentry (1998) not only asked participants to evaluate targets on a variety of character traits, but it further used these evaluations as a measure of friendship desirability. Results did not differ across sexes; both men and women were evaluated more harshly if they were more sexually experienced. Therefore, evidence of the double standard is conflicting when it comes to friendship desirability, as it has been shown to differ based on methodology. It also may differ based on age; Kreager and Staff's (2009) participants were middle school students, while Gentry recruited from a college-age population. It is also noteworthy that friendship desirability was not measured explicitly in Gentry's study; the measure used in the present study incorporated the importance that participants placed on various attributes when looking for a friend, rather than relying solely on how the target was rated on these specific traits.

Are Individuals Judged on the Context in Which Previous Encounters Occurred?

The social scripts associated with the negative correlation between sexual experience and desirability as a friend or mate may also take into account the context in which previous sexual encounters took place. Men are often given license to engage in a greater variety of sexual activities (Abbott, 2001; Baumeister & Twenge, 2002), while women are expected to restrict sexual encounters to those that take place within committed relationships (Muehlenhard, 1988; Tetreault & Barnett, 1987). An investigation into the presence of the sexual double standard could therefore benefit not only from consideration of an individual's number of partners, but

also from clarification of whether previous encounters took place in primarily short-term or long-term contexts.

Empirical evidence demonstrates that context plays a role in creating judgments of others. Sprecher et al. (1987) found that men and women rated female targets that had engaged in sexual intercourse for the first time in a casual relationship more harshly than male targets that had exhibited the same behavior. It is once again noteworthy that, as seen in the study conducted by Sheeran et al. (1996), both men and women judged female targets more harshly than their male counterparts. The influence of context has also been shown to operate regardless of sex; in a study conducted by O'Sullivan (1995), undergraduate students ranked targets more favorably not only if they had fewer previous partners than other targets, but also if these encounters had occurred in committed (as opposed to casual) relationships.

Are More Sexually Experienced People Less Judgmental of Potential Friends' Sexuality?

Previous research in the area of mate selection has suggested that people often select mates who are similar to them in a number of characteristics, such as education or religion. This phenomenon is known as social homogamy (Buston & Emlen, 2003). Assortative mating has also been suggested in regard to past sexual experience. Specifically, people with more sexual experience have been shown to rank others with higher numbers of sexual partners more favorably than those with less sexual experience (although the less promiscuous choice was still ranked as more desirable overall), and members of romantic couples often possess similar beliefs regarding sexual behavior to those of their mates (Cupach & Metts, 1995; Istvan & Griffit, 1980; Jacoby & Williams, 1985; Sprecher et al., 1997).

Given that both friendships and mates can be long-term relationships, similar interpersonal processes regarding the sexual histories of both the evaluator and the evaluated

may be at play in both friendship and mate selection. At the time of this study, this question had not yet been addressed among college-age young adults. Although Billy et al. (1984) found that junior-high school girls tended to become friends with other girls who exhibited similar sexual behaviors to their own, this research was correlational and was conducted on a young population (similarly to Kreager and Staff, 2009). Investigation of the potential replication of these results with an older age group through use of an experimental design is therefore warranted.

Overview of the Present Study

The present study explored the category of same-sex friendships. Previous studies (e.g., Gentry 1998; Kreager & Staff 2009; Sprecher et al., 1991) focused on either opposite-sex friendships or on a combination of both same- and opposite-sex friendships, and often found conflicting results, potentially due to differences in methodology and the age groups studied. Investigation of same-sex friendships was therefore lacking in comparison to that of opposite-sex friendships, and an examination of the former type of relationship had never been conducted independently of the latter. By controlling for sexuality and focusing only on same-sex friendships, the present study explored strictly platonic friendships.

Given reviewed theory and past research on mate and other-sex friendship desirability, it was hypothesized that both men and women would judge same-sex peers with higher numbers of sexual partners more harshly (i.e., as less desirable friends) than those with fewer partners. Although Kreager and Staff (2009) found that high levels of sexual experience correlated positively with the popularity of males, it was nonetheless hypothesized that both sexes would be evaluated more negatively if they had higher levels of sexual experience, as a greater number of studies (which were consequently conducted on older populations) had demonstrated this finding.

Furthermore, it was hypothesized that this effect would be influenced by the three previously listed moderating variables: 1) this effect, though present for both sexes, would be stronger for women than it would be for men (i.e., evidence of the sexual double standard), 2) targets whose previous sexual experiences had occurred in primarily casual contexts would be rated more harshly than those whose experiences had occurred in primarily romantic relationships, and 3) participants with higher numbers of previous partners would be more likely to rate sexually experienced targets as desirable friends than would participants with fewer partners. Finally, it was also predicted that participants with greater numbers of previous partners would report higher scores on a within-subjects measure of relational aggression, in keeping with previous hypotheses that these individuals are more commonly targets of stigmatization.

This study addressed these hypotheses in the context of a young adult environment, drawing on responses of students at two- or four-year institutions and men and women from the ages of 18 to 23 who were not enrolled at an academic institution. Studying how sexual experience affects same-sex friendships among members of this age group is particularly relevant given that this is a time when prolonged separation from parents and families often increases, and friendships are therefore crucial for mental health and the reduction of problem behaviors (Bradburn, 1969; Buote et al., 2007; Pahl, 2000; Phillips & Fisher, 1981; Pittman & Richmond, 2008). Furthermore, with respect to those attending college, sexual experience as a factor in friendship formation may become particularly important during this time because campuses are often highly sexualized environments where sexual experiences are not only extremely common, but where information about one's sexual history is also often sought by and shared among friends (Siegel, Klein, & Roughman, 1999).

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 790 participants (25 % male, 75 % female) between the ages of 18 and 27 ($M = 19.71$, $SD = 1.24$). While the survey called for participants between the ages of 18 and 23, three participants exceeding this age range were included due to the consistency of their results with the rest of the participant pool. The sample was primarily White (63 %); the remaining participants identified as East Asian (9 %), Southeast Asian (4 %), Hispanic (6 %), Black (1 %), Middle Eastern (1 %), multi-ethnic (14 %), or “other” (2 %). A majority of participants identified as members of the upper-middle (44 %) and middle (33 %) socioeconomic classes, and were mostly Catholic (30 %), Jewish (18 %), or Protestant (15 %). Most participants resided in New York State (79 %).

Participants were recruited in two ways: through in-class announcements in college classes or through use of a Facebook advertisement. Both strategies invited participants to take part in a 30-minute, online survey on friendship. Compensation included either extra credit for a qualifying college course or a chance to win a lottery prize of \$10 or \$25. Overall, 99 % of the sample was comprised of current undergraduate students; 8 participants were not currently enrolled at an educational institution. Demographic statistics of the sample, such as race and socioeconomic status, were consistent with those of the college student body. Distribution across graduation years was fairly consistent; 22 % of participants identified as current freshmen, 28 % as sophomores, 32 % as juniors, 18 % as seniors, and the remaining .64 % had recently graduated or intended to in more than four years. Analyses indicated that student status did not significantly impact the results reported below.

A total of 868 participants completed the survey. However, responses from 78 participants were excluded: 37 did not identify as “heterosexual” or “mostly heterosexual,” and

41 did not complete any substantial portion of the survey or spent no more than a few seconds on each page before submitting their responses.

Measures

Sexual history. Participants were provided with a measure of sexual history, which was used to quantify each participant's number of sexual partners for a variety of sexual activities. Participants provided their numbers of previous male and female partners, listed separately, for two general categories (romantic and casual), which corresponded with the terminology for sexual context used in the study's experimental conditions. Romantic partners were defined as those participants considered a "boyfriend" or "girlfriend" in a serious, long-term relationship. Casual partners were those with which participants had engaged in a one-night stand, short fling, or had considered a "sex buddy" or "friend-with-benefits." Participants were further asked to discriminate between two categories of sexual behaviors: 1) "intercourse," defined as vaginal or anal intercourse that occurred at least once, regardless of what additional sexual acts took place, and 2) "non-intercourse genital," defined as other genital acts, such as oral sex or mutual masturbation, that did not include vaginal or anal intercourse.

For analysis, the participant's number of partners was quantified from his or her reported number for sexual intercourse. Although the range of responses for partners that fit the "non-intercourse-genital" category was wider, adding in these partners did not significantly affect results; therefore, intercourse partners were used to be consistent with the type of sexual behavior described for each of the targets. The distribution of responses for intercourse partner number was highly skewed towards 0, and thus a violation of assumptions for parametric analyses (54 % of participants reported having either one or no previous partners). Analysis for

this variable was therefore conducted for three separate categories: zero partners, one partner, and two or more partners.

Relational aggression. Participants completed Ellis, Crooks, and Wolfe's (2008) Peer Relational Aggression – Victimization and Perpetration Items, a measure of each participant's likelihood to be both a victim and a perpetrator of peer relational aggression. Items fall into two categories of statements: five statements measure the participant's experiences as a victim of relational aggression (e.g., "I have been the target of rumors or gossip"), and sixteen questions measure the participant's experiences as a perpetrator of relational aggression (e.g., "I have spread rumors about a person just to be mean"). Participants rated the validity of each statement using a 5-point scale, which ranged from "not at all true" to "very true." The measure yielded two composite scores: an overall victimization score (5 to 25) and an overall perpetration score (16 to 80). A higher score in each category indicated a greater presence of victimization or perpetration in the participant's past. Inter-item reliability (Cronbach's alpha) was high for both the victimization ($\alpha = .84$) and perpetration ($\alpha = .86$) categories of this measure.

Procedure

The online questionnaire employed experimental methods, modifying the paradigm used in previous mate selection studies (e.g., Jacoby & Williams, 1995; Sprecher et al., 1991; Sprecher et al., 1997). The questionnaire consisted of three parts: 1) basic biographical information, 2) an experimental portion, consisting of a description of a hypothetical same-sex target, followed by a series of questions regarding participants' perceptions of the target, and 3) measures of sexual history and friendship experiences (sexual history and the Peer Relational Aggression – Victimization and Perpetration Items). All measures of predictor or moderating variables (the third part of the survey), excluding basic biographical information such as sex, age, and

ethnicity, were presented after participants completed the experimental portion of the survey so as to decrease the likelihood of priming effects.

Stimulus material. Each participant was presented with a paragraph-long description of a hypothetical same-sex target, described as a peer close in age to the participant. The description included a variety of demographic information, including the target's age (20), race (White), and hometown (described as a "small town on the West coast"). The target was further described as a student at a Northeastern university who participated in two extracurricular activities (volunteering at a daycare center and participating on an intramural lacrosse team). The target's social life was described briefly, as were his or her plans for the future (to become a lawyer or a social worker, but to also find time to travel).

Participants were randomly assigned to one of six experimental conditions, which differed only in the information they provided regarding the target's sexual history. This information was included immediately preceding the target's plans for the future, and ran one sentence in length. In correspondence with the study's experimental conditions, the target was described as having either a low (2) or high (20) number of sexual partners, and previous sexual encounters that were all casual, all romantic, or a mixture of both. Participant demographics did not vary significantly across experimental conditions.

Friendship desirability. Before reading the description of the target, participants were asked to rate the importance of 32 personality traits in regard to what they might look for in a friend. These 32 traits were chosen due to their prevalence in previous studies on this topic, and were taken specifically from Janda, O'Grady, and Barnhart's (1981) Person Perception Scale and from O'Sullivan's (1995) Person Perception Task. The importance of each trait was assessed using a 7-item scale, ranging from -3 to +3; the former represented a strong preference that a

potential friend would not possess the trait, and the latter represented a strong preference that a potential friend would possess the trait. After reading the target description, participants were asked to rate the extent to which they believed the target possessed these same 32 traits. A 7-item scale ranging from -3 to +3 was used; the former value indicated that the participant strongly believed the target did not possess the trait, and the latter value indicated that the participant strongly believed the target did possess the trait.

Ratings of the 32 personality traits were analyzed by multiplying the target's rating for each trait by the rating the participant had given the same trait with respect to its importance in looking for a potential friend. Scores for each trait therefore took into account both how much the participant valued the trait in a potential friend as well as how much the participant felt the target possessed it. Possible scores for each trait therefore ranged from -9 to +9, and were indicative of two key factors: first, a negative score indicated that the target was not desirable to the participant as a potential friend with respect to this trait (and vice-versa for a positive score, with a score of 0 representing a neutral opinion). Second, the magnitude of the score in either direction indicated how strongly the participant felt the target did or did not possess the trait; a score of -9 or +9 indicated that the participant felt more strongly that the target did or did not possess the trait than did a score of -1 or +1. A high, positive score for a trait, such as +9, would therefore indicate that the participant either valued the trait strongly (original rating of +3) and thought the target strongly possessed the trait (original rating of +3), or that the participant was highly opposed to a potential friend possessing the trait (original rating of -3) and thought the target strongly did not possess the trait (original rating of -3). A score of -9, on the other hand, was indicative of a mismatch between the rating the participant had given the trait and the rating he or she had given the target; the participant either strongly valued the trait (original rating of

+3) but felt the target strongly did not possess it (original rating of -3), or strongly disliked the trait (original rating of -3) but felt the target possessed it greatly (original rating of +3).

Inter-item reliability (Cronbach's alpha) was high for the set of multiplied scores for the 32 traits ($\alpha = .87$). However, examination of the correlations between the 32 product scores suggested that the strength of the correlations was stronger between some variables than others. A Principal Components Analysis suggested that for these correlations there was a first component (22 % of the variance explained) followed by a second component (7 % of the variance explained). Subsequently, a Varimax Factor Rotation was conducted on the 32 items with two factors (Table 1). Given the loadings of the original items in these factors, the first and second factors were titled as "Positive Desired Factor" and "Negative Desired Factor," respectively (i.e., the two factors appeared to divide the positive traits, such as the "Responsible" trait, from the negative traits, such as the "Jealous" trait). It is important to note, however, that higher scores for the "Negative Desired Factor" measure indicated high target ratings in the same way that the "Positive Desired Factor" measure did; while these traits were commonly seen as negative, high scores indicated that participants thought the target also did not possess these negative traits. Although the "Sexually Experienced" and "Wealthy" traits did not load highly on either the first or second factor, additional analysis did not suggest that they formed a third factor. They were therefore best represented by the second factor, in which they had negative loadings.

Overall target evaluation questions. Each of these questions used a 7-point scale, ranging from -3 to +3: 1) participants rated their overall impressions of the target, ranging from "I strongly dislike him/her" to "I like him/her very much," 2) participants rated their willingness ("very unwilling" to "very willing") to consider the target a close friend, 3) participants rated the

amount of contact they would like to have with the target, ranging from “I wouldn’t want any kind of contact with him/her” to “I could see him/her as a best friend,” 4) participants rated their willingness (“very unwilling” to “very willing”) to recommend the target as a potential significant other to the participant’s best, opposite-sex friend, and 5) participants rated their willingness (“very unwilling” to “very willing”) to let the target maintain a close, non-sexual relationship with their significant other.

Inter-item reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) was high for the five evaluation questions ($\alpha = .86$). Similarly to the previous desirability measures, however, examination of the correlations between the questions and use of a Principal Components Analysis suggested that there was a first component (68 % of the variance explained) followed by a second component (15 % of the variance explained). Loadings from a Varimax Factor Rotation on the five questions (Table 2) indicated that the first three questions loaded on the first factor, while the latter two loaded on the second. Because the first three concerned overall impressions and friendship potential, whereas the latter two concerned recommendations to a significant other, the two factors were titled “Friendship Likability” and “Mate Likability,” respectively. Division of these two factors also highlighted an intuitive separation of the questions; previous research on mate and platonic friendship desirability examined these types of relationships separately, and performing separate analyses therefore allowed for a more direct comparison of the two types of relationships.

Explicit endorsement of target’s sexual history as influencing one’s perception. The questionnaire concluded with two qualitative questions, which assessed the degree to which participants considered the target’s sexual history when answering the questions in the second part of the survey. Participants were asked to list the three traits they liked most and least about the target. A value of “0” was assigned to responses that did not list sexual history as one of the

three traits, and a value of “1” was given to those that did. Participants who listed the target’s sexual history were determined to be consciously aware of the importance they had placed on this trait. Correlations between results for the two questions (three favorite traits vs. three least favorite traits) were negative but modest ($r = -.19, p < .01$), and thus the two were kept separate for analysis.

Results

To investigate the study’s main hypotheses, Multiple Linear Regression Analyses were conducted, one for each of the following dependent variables: Positive Desired Factor, Negative Desired Factor, Friendship Likability, and Mate Likability. Because Pearson’s correlations between the dependent measures were generally low (Table 3), results for each measure were examined separately. The following independent variables were included in each of these analyses: the target’s number of previous partners, gender, the context of the target’s previous sexual encounters (romantic vs. casual vs. both romantic and casual), and the participant’s number of previous partners. In addition to these main effects, analyses of interactions between these variables were also included. All results are reported in Table 4, but for comprehensiveness the relevant statistics for significant effects are also reported in text.

Two additional analyses were also conducted: 1) an analysis using the Explicit Endorsement measure (qualitative responses were coded for whether or not participants listed sexual history as one of the target’s three most desirable or undesirable traits), and 2) an analysis of Ellis et al.’s (2008) Peer Relational Aggression – Victimization and Perpetration Items, using participant partner number as the predictor variable.

Positive Desired Factor

Results for the Positive Desired Factor (Table 4) suggested a significant main effect, such that targets with 2 partners were rated significantly higher ($M = .09$, $SD = 1.02$) than those with 20 partners ($M = -.09$, $SD = .98$), $F(1, 758) = 6.91$, $p = .01$, $\beta = -.09$ (the β value used in all analyses represents the standardized regression coefficient, and thus can be interpreted similarly to a correlation coefficient). Men, regardless of the target description they read, rated all male targets significantly lower ($M = -.22$, $SD = .92$) than did women rating female targets ($M = .07$, $SD = 1.02$), $F(1, 758) = 14.60$, $p < .01$, $\beta = .14$. However, results also suggested a significant interaction between the target's number of partners and sex (Figure 1), such that female targets with 20 partners were rated as significantly less desirable ($M = -.07$, $SD = .97$) than those with 2 partners ($M = .22$, $SD = 1.04$), whereas male targets with 20 partners ($M = -.16$, $SD = 1.00$) were not rated significantly differently than those with 2 partners ($M = -.28$, $SD = .84$), $F(1, 758) = 4.33$, $p = .04$, $\beta = -.07$. Women therefore rated targets with 20 partners significantly more harshly than targets with 2 partners, whereas men rated both targets lower than did females, regardless of partner number.

Context on its own also had a significant effect on the Positive Desired Factor, such that all targets whose previous partners had been romantic were rated as significantly more desirable ($M = .15$, $SD = 1.04$) than those whose partners had been both romantic and casual ($M = -.04$, $SD = 1.01$) and those whose partners had been all casual ($M = -.11$, $SD = .93$), $F(1, 758) = 8.12$, $p < .01$, $\beta = -.10$. Subsequent analyses suggested that this was mostly driven by the "all romantic" condition, as compared to the "all casual" and the "some romantic and some casual" conditions. This effect was not moderated by sex or the target's previous number of partners, indicating that both men and women preferred targets whose prior sexual encounters had been with romantic partners, regardless of how many previous partners there had been.

A significant effect was also shown for participant partner number, such that participants with no previous partners rated the target more harshly ($M = -.10$, $SD = 1.02$) than did participants with one partner ($M = -.03$, $SD = .98$), and even more harshly than did participants with two or more partners ($M = .12$, $SD = .99$), $F(1, 758) = 6.68$, $p = .01$, $\beta = .09$. This effect was not significantly moderated by any of the other variables, suggesting that all targets were rated more harshly by participants who themselves had lower numbers of partners, regardless of the target's number of partners, sex, or the context in which encounters took place.

Negative Desired Factor

Results for the Negative Desired Factor (Table 1) were in keeping with those for the Positive Desired Factor: a main effect was suggested, such that targets with 2 previous partners were rated significantly higher ($M = .07$, $SD = 1.04$) than targets with 20 previous partners ($M = -.07$, $SD = .96$), $F(1, 758) = 4.33$, $p = .04$, $\beta = -.07$. High scores on this measure favored the target in the same way as those for the Positive Desired Factor measure; a high score indicated that the participant felt the target did not possess the negative trait. In contrast to results for the Positive Desired Factor, however, no significant effect was suggested here for sex; male targets on the whole were not evaluated significantly more harshly than female targets, as had been suggested in the previous analysis.

Consistent with results for the Positive Desired Factor, a significant interaction was suggested between sex and the target's number of previous partners. This interaction, however, was slightly different in nature than it had been for the Positive Desired Factor (Figure 1): here, women again evaluated the target with 20 partners as significantly less desirable ($M = -.13$, $SD = .94$) than the target with 2 partners ($M = .14$, $SD = 1.09$), while men evaluated the target with 20 partners as significantly more desirable ($M = .12$, $SD = .98$) than the target with 2 partners ($M = -$

.15, $SD = .84$), $F(1, 758) = 11.40$, $p < .01$, $\beta = -.12$. Therefore, women exhibited the same trend here as they had for the Positive Desired Factor, but men exhibited the opposite trend in that they rated the target with 20 partners as more desirable than the target with 2 partners, rather than giving both targets similar ratings.

Context had a marginally significant effect on results for the Negative Desired Factor, but in a different direction than what had been suggested by the Positive Desired Factor. Here, targets whose previous partners had been romantic were rated as significantly less desirable ($M = -.08$, $SD = .90$) than those whose partners had been both romantic and casual ($M = .01$, $SD = 1.05$) and those whose partners had been all casual ($M = .07$, $SD = 1.04$), $F(1, 758) = 3.89$, $p = .05$, $\beta = .07$. In a similar fashion to results for the Positive Desired Factor, this effect was again not moderated by sex or the target's previous number of partners, demonstrating that both men and women preferred targets whose prior sexual encounters had not been with romantic partners, regardless of how many previous partners there had been.

Although a significant effect was not shown for participants' number of previous partners on its own, as had been suggested for the Positive Desired Factor, a significant interaction was suggested between this variable and the target's number of partners (Figure 2). Targets with 2 partners were rated more favorably by participants with no previous partners ($M = .15$, $SD = 1.02$) or one partner ($M = .17$, $SD = .98$) than they were by participants with two or more partners ($M = -.02$, $SD = 1.08$), whereas targets with 20 partners were rated more harshly by participants with no partners ($M = -.16$, $SD = .92$) than they were by participants with either one partner ($M = -.02$, $SD = 1.05$) or two or more partners ($M = -.02$, $SD = .96$), $F(1, 758) = 4.22$, $p = .04$, $\beta = .07$. This interaction was not further moderated by any other variable.

Friendship Likability

Results for the Friendship Likability measure (the first three overall target evaluation questions, Table 4), unlike those of the previous two measures, did not suggest a significant main effect. It was, however, marginally significant ($p = .06$) and in the same direction as results for the other measures ($\beta = .04$). In contrast to the previous two measures, no significant effects were suggested for sex, or any interactions including sex. A significant effect was suggested for participant partner number, however, such that participants with no previous partners rated all targets more harshly ($M = -.10$, $SD = 1.03$) than did participants with one partner ($M = .05$, $SD = .90$) or two or more partners ($M = .07$, $SD = 1.00$), $F(1, 747) = 4.26$, $p = .04$, $\beta = .07$.

Context did not affect target ratings in the same fashion that it had for the two previous measures: it did not suggest a significant effect on its own, but a significant interaction (Figure 3) was suggested between context and participant partner number. Targets whose partners had been all romantic were rated more favorably by participants with no previous partners ($M = .09$, $SD = .97$) than they were by participants with one partner ($M = .08$, $SD = .93$) or two or more partners ($M = -.06$, $SD = 1.08$), whereas targets whose partners had been both casual and romantic were rated more harshly by participants with no previous partners ($M = -.16$, $SD = 1.12$) than they were by participants with one partner ($M = .07$, $SD = .93$) or two or more partners ($M = .16$, $SD = 1.01$). The latter trend was also observed for targets whose partners had been all casual, such that participants with no previous partners rated these targets more harshly ($M = -.24$, $SD = 1.00$) than did participants with one partner ($M = .00$, $SD = .87$) or two or more partners ($M = .13$, $SD = .88$), $F(1, 747) = 6.69$, $p = .01$, $\beta = .09$.

Mate Likability

Results for the Mate Likability measure (Table 4) suggested a significant main effect: in keeping with the Positive and Negative Factor measures, targets with 2 partners were rated

significantly higher ($M = .43$, $SD = .81$) than targets with 20 partners ($M = -.44$, $SD = .97$), $F(1, 747) = 188.08$, $p < .0001$, $\beta = -.44$. A Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) suggested that the difference in effect between this result and the main effect for the Positive Desired Factor was highly significant, $F(1, 746) = 65.56$, $p < .0001$. A similarly significant difference was also found between the strength of the effects for the Mate Likability and Negative Desired Factor measures, $F(1, 746) = 58.18$, $p < .0001$, as well as for the difference between the Mate and Friendship Likability measures, $F(1, 747) = 66.50$, $p < .0001$. This effect therefore appeared to be most pronounced for Mate Likability overall. Additionally, in keeping with the Friendship Likability measure, but not with the Positive or Negative Desired Factors, no significant effects were suggested for sex.

As with the Positive and Negative Desired Factor measures, context appeared to have a significant effect on target ratings, such that targets whose partners had been all romantic were rated more favorably ($M = .08$, $SD = 1.06$) than targets whose partners had been both casual and romantic ($M = .06$, $SD = .92$), and even more than targets whose partners had been all casual ($M = -.13$, $SD = 1.00$), $F(1, 747) = 6.10$, $p = .01$, $\beta = -.08$. The trend exhibited was therefore more in keeping with results for the Positive Desired Factor than for the Negative Desired Factor; that is, targets with only romantic partners were rated most favorably, as opposed to most harshly. Participant partner number also appeared to influence target ratings (effect was marginally significant), such that participants with no previous partners rated all targets more harshly ($M = -.05$, $SD = .96$) than did participants with one partner ($M = -.02$, $SD = 1.04$), and even more than did participants with two or more partners ($M = .07$, $SD = 1.01$), $F(1, 747) = 3.58$, $p = .05$, $\beta = .06$.

Explicit Endorsement Measure

Multiple Linear Regression Analyses were conducted using the four original predictor variables (the target's number of partners, gender, context, and the participant's number of partners) for two additional dependent measures: whether the participant listed sexual history as one of the target's most desirable traits, and whether the participant listed it as one of the target's least desirable traits. Reported below are significant effects for each of the predictor variables, as well as significant interactions between the main effect variable (the target's number of partners) and one of the other three.

In keeping with previous results on the influence of the target's number of partners, participants listed sexual history as one of the target's most desirable traits significantly less frequently for targets with 20 partners ($M = .03$, $SD = .16$) than they did for targets with 2 partners ($M = .11$, $SD = .32$), $F(1, 745) = 25.15$, $p < .0001$, $\beta = -.17$. Consequently, all participants listed it as one of the target's least desirable traits significantly more frequently for targets with 20 partners ($M = .79$, $SD = .41$) than they did for targets with 2 partners ($M = .31$, $SD = .46$), $F(1, 687) = 224.97$, $p < .0001$, $\beta = .47$.

A significant effect was also suggested for sex, such that women listed sexual history as a desirable trait significantly less frequently ($M = .05$, $SD = .23$) for all targets than did men ($M = .12$, $SD = .32$), $F(1, 745) = 6.90$, $p = .01$, $\beta = -.09$. In turn, women listed this as an undesirable trait significantly more frequently for all targets ($M = .57$, $SD = .50$) than did men ($M = .47$, $SD = .50$), $F(1, 687) = 9.97$, $p < .01$, $\beta = .10$. Although the first effect was not moderated by the target's number of partners, target partner number influenced the latter effect (Figure 4): while men listed sexual history as an undesirable trait more frequently for targets with 20 partners ($M = .62$, $SD = .49$) than they did for targets with 2 partners ($M = .34$, $SD = .48$), this trend was significantly more pronounced in women, who listed this trait even more frequently for targets

with 20 partners ($M = .85$, $SD = .36$) than they did for targets with 2 partners ($M = .30$, $SD = .46$), $F(1, 687) = 13.22$, $p < .01$, $\beta = .11$.

Context also exhibited a significant effect on this measure, such that sexual history was listed significantly less frequently as a desirable trait for targets with all casual partners ($M = .02$, $SD = .13$) than it was for targets with both casual and romantic partners ($M = .05$, $SD = .21$), and even less frequently than it was for targets with all romantic partners ($M = .14$, $SD = .35$), $F(1, 745) = 34.50$, $p < .0001$, $\beta = -.20$. In turn, it was listed significantly more frequently as an undesirable trait for targets with all casual partners ($M = .62$, $SD = .49$) than it was for targets with both casual and romantic partners ($M = .51$, $SD = .50$) or all romantic partners ($M = .52$, $SD = .50$), $F(1, 687) = 4.72$, $p = .03$, $\beta = .07$. This effect was further moderated by the target's number of partners (Figure 5), such that context had a significantly greater effect on listings for targets with 2 partners than it did for those with 20 partners. This held for listings of sexual history as both a desirable, $F(1, 745) = 18.93$, $p < .0001$, $\beta = .15$, and undesirable trait, $F(1, 687) = 20.82$, $p < .0001$, $\beta = -.14$.

Participant partner number did not exhibit any significant influence on the frequency with which this trait was listed as one of the target's three most desirable characteristics. It did, however, have an effect on the frequency with which sexual history was listed as an undesirable trait: participants with no previous partners listed the trait as undesirable significantly more frequently ($M = .66$, $SD = .48$) than did participants with one partner ($M = .60$, $SD = .49$), and even more frequently than did participants with two or more partners ($M = .44$, $SD = .50$), $F(1, 687) = 41.19$, $p < .0001$, $\beta = -.20$. This effect was suggested for all targets; it was not modified by any other variable.

Relational Aggression Measure

A final Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether participant partner number had a significant influence on participant scores on the Peer Relational Aggression – Victimization and Perpetration Items. Participant partner number did not appear to significantly influence scores on the Perpetration items of this measure. However, a significant effect was suggested for Victimization scores, such that participants with two or more previous partners reported significantly higher scores ($M = 12.64$, $SD = 5.36$) than did participants with one ($M = 11.09$, $SD = 4.78$) or no previous partners ($M = 10.60$, $SD = 4.85$), $F(1, 771) = 25.43$, $p < .0001$, $\beta = .18$.

Discussion

Summary of Results

The present study examined the relationship between level of previous sexual experience and desirability as a potential same-sex friend. In accordance with the study's predictions, more sexually experienced targets (those with 20 partners) were evaluated more harshly than their less experienced counterparts (those with 2 partners). This effect was significant for all but one of the four dependent measures. Although the Friendship Likability measure did not yield significant results, it suggested a marginally significant effect in the same direction as results for the other measures. Additionally, Explicit Endorsement and Peer Relational Aggression – Victimization and Perpetration Items results were in keeping with the study's hypotheses, such that sexual history was listed as a significantly more undesirable trait for targets with 20 partners than it was for targets with 2 partners, and participants with higher numbers of partners reported significantly higher rates of relational aggression victimization than did those with fewer partners.

Hypotheses regarding the three moderating variables (gender, context, and participant partner number) were also generally upheld, though the nature of their effects sometimes differed based on measure. Predictions regarding sex were upheld for the Positive and Negative Desired Factor measures, such that female targets with 20 partners were evaluated more harshly than their equally experienced male counterparts. Context appeared to significantly affect target ratings in the manner expected for the Positive Desired Factor and Mate Likability measures: as seen in the research conducted by Sprecher et al. (1987) and O'Sullivan (1995), targets whose partners had been romantic were rated significantly less harshly than those whose partners had been casual, or both romantic and casual. Although the opposite trend was suggested for the Negative Desired Factor, effects for this measure were only marginally significant, and were somewhat smaller in magnitude than were the effects suggested for the Positive Desired Factor and Mate Likability measures.

Finally, results for participant partner number were also in keeping with the study's hypotheses, such that participants with fewer previous partners evaluated all targets more harshly than did those with higher numbers of partners. This effect was in keeping with the findings of the study conducted by Billy et al. (1984), which suggests that the tendency for individuals to befriend peers with similar levels of sexual experience extends beyond the middle school age group that Billy et al. examined.

Implications

Findings suggested that one's gender, number of previous partners, and the context in which these partners were acquired play a role in how one is evaluated as a potential friend. Differences across measures, however, also provide a foundation for further interpretations. The Mate Likability measure, for example, suggested a significantly stronger effect for the target's

number of partners in comparison to the other three. This high level of significance was in keeping with the previous research on mate desirability (e.g. Gentry, 1998; O'Sullivan, 1995; Oliver & Sedikides, 1992; Sprecher et al., 1997; Williams & Jacoby, 1989), which suggested that findings on same-sex friendships (results from the other three measures) could be reasonably compared to these studies.

Furthermore, the stronger effect for the Mate Likability measure suggests that higher levels of sexual experience more profoundly impact one's desirability as a mate than they do one's desirability as a platonic friend. A plausible interpretation of this finding could be that individuals are more focused on fidelity when searching for a mate; in a platonic friendship, however, a different type of relationship is formed – one in which individuals may be less likely to evaluate the friendship's sustainability based on sexual encounters, as these occurred in a different relational context. Nonetheless, the impact of sexual experience was evident for measures of both friendship and mate desirability. This similarity could be attributed to previous research that indicated a negative correlation between sexual experience and overall judgments of character (Mark & Miller, 1986; Sheeran et al., 1996).

Results did not support the sexual double standard for the Mate Likability measure; that is, women did not rate more experienced targets significantly more harshly than did men. Previous mate desirability studies, however, were not always in agreement about whether the double standard operated in the formation of these relationships; Sheeran et al. (1996) found that differences existed in evaluations of sexually experienced men and women, but a number of other studies did not find this effect (Oliver & Sedikides, 1992; Sprecher et al., 1991). It is therefore understandable that such an effect was not suggested for the Mate Likability measure in the present study.

In turn, results for the Positive and Negative Desired Factor measures (friendship rather than mate desirability) suggested that the sexual double standard operates in the formation of same-sex friendships. In particular, the trend observed for the Negative Desired Factor (women favored targets with 2 partners, while men favored those with 20 partners) was consistent with the findings of Kreager and Staff (2009), which had shown a positive correlation between sexual experience and peer acceptance for middle school boys, but a negative correlation for girls.

This difference in mate and friendship desirability could be attributed to differences in the way sexual experience is evaluated in these two types of relationships. Although the sexual double standard suggests that permissive women are evaluated more harshly than permissive men, it may nonetheless be the case that members of both sexes value fidelity or chastity so highly in sexual relationships (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Regan & Berscheid, 1997; Sprecher et al., 1997) that they evaluate permissive targets as much less desirable mates. In turn, platonic friendships may be more susceptible to the effects of stigmatization and overall judgments of character. In comparison to women, men may simply worry less about the impact this trait could have on a platonic friendship, or they may even commend more permissive peers for their higher levels of experience.

It is also noteworthy that results for Friendship Likability tended to differ from those of the two Desired Factor measures. Gender did not appear to influence target ratings on this measure, and although context and participant partner number suggested significant effects for it, these effects were found in interactions between variables: a significant effect was suggested for context when participant partner number was taken into account (targets with romantic partners were favored most by those with no previous partners, whereas targets with both romantic and casual or all casual partners were favored least by participants with no partners), and a significant

effect was suggested for participant partner number when the target's number of partners was taken into account (participants with no previous partners rated targets with 2 partners more favorably, and targets with 20 partners least favorably, in comparison to their more sexually experienced peers).

These interactions may be attributed to not only the fact that individuals tend to choose friends with whom they share more characteristics (Buston & Emlen, 2003), but also that more experienced individuals may have a better understanding of why one would acquire a higher number of sex partners. Participants with higher numbers of partners did not necessarily favor more experienced targets, but they were less harsh in their evaluations of them. With respect to context, it is also possible that participants with higher numbers of partners are similarly less judgmental of casual encounters, whereas participants with fewer partners place greater value on limiting sexual encounters to those that occur in well-established, long-term relationships.

The Friendship Likability measure was therefore more sensitive to interactions between variables in comparison to the other three measures. There are several possible explanations for this. First, the questions used for this measure explicitly asked participants about their willingness to befriend the target. The Desired Factor measures, however, created composite scores based on a series of traits. Because participants evaluated the importance they placed on each trait in forming friendships before they read their respective target descriptions, it could be that the Desired Factor measures differed from the Friendship Likability measure in their lower levels of face validity (i.e., participants answered half of the questions for the Desired Factor measures before they knew they would be evaluating a hypothetical target). Results for the Friendship Likability measure may therefore be more indicative of the variables that come into

play when participants are making explicit decisions about friendship formation, rather than evaluating potential friends on a specific set of qualifications.

Limitations

Although the above results are generally in keeping with the study's hypotheses, they should also be interpreted within the constraints of the study's limitations. First, distribution analysis showed that the majority of participants reported having either one or no previous sex partners. This suggests that using a target with two previous partners as the less permissive target may have been based on an overestimation of the average participant's definition of what constituted a low level of sexual experience. Future research could work to modify this limitation, potentially through use of a third condition for the target's number of partners (a target that possesses only one or no previous partners). Nonetheless, the differences found in ratings for targets with 2 vs. 20 partners suggest that although this component of the study's methodology could be perfected, results are still meaningful.

Additionally, although target evaluations used an experimental paradigm, the Peer Relational Aggression – Victimization and Perpetration Items only measured correlations. While sexually experienced individuals may be victimized as the result of their higher numbers of sexual encounters, it is also possible that victims of relational aggression may seek more partners as a means of coping or acting out. It is also plausible that the observed correlation may result from a more cyclical interaction between the two previously listed possibilities.

It is also necessary to consider the study's sample in applying findings to various populations. The majority of participants were enrolled at four-year undergraduate institutions. Future work should investigate the present methodology in non-university settings or in older populations. Studying older age groups in particular could provide a stronger basis to compare

results across different age groups, in a similar way to which the present study built on the results of Kreager and Staff (2009) by investigating an older population than the one they examined. It is plausible that participants in an older age group would have acquired higher numbers of sex partners than college-age students, and might therefore consider a target with two partners to be less experienced than did those in the present study. This could potentially increase the strength of the effects observed here, as a comparison between 2 vs. 20 partners might then be more representative of a “low” and a “high” set of conditions.

Finally, the present study looked only at same-sex friendship desirability within a population of individuals that defined themselves as heterosexual or mostly heterosexual. Controlling for this variable was necessary given the study’s parameters; 37 participants defined themselves as bisexual, lesbian, or gay – an insufficient number to separate across 12 experimental conditions. Additionally, because all participants were matched with same-sex targets as a means of investigating platonic relationships, it would be difficult to account for this variable using the same methodology. Future research that examines the study’s findings within non-heterosexual populations would be an extremely beneficial addition to the present investigation.

Conclusions

The present findings, and their limitations, open the door for a breadth of future research on the topic of same-sex friendship desirability. For example, if sexually experienced individuals are less likely to be considered as potential friends (and are thereby more likely to lack the sense of belonging that is commonly associated with emotional well-being), this provides implications for future considerations in counseling, parenting, and evaluation of the way in which peers are treated. Results from the Explicit Endorsement measure and the Peer Relational Aggression –

Victimization and Perpetration Items also support previous theories on the stigmatization of sexual permissiveness (Mark & Miller, 1986), and arguably suggest that sexually experienced individuals may not only be less likely to form supportive friendships with their peers, but that they may also more commonly be victims of acts of social aggression.

These findings therefore have considerable implications for considering the well-being of sexually experienced individuals. Although previous studies on mate desirability demonstrated a negative correlation between sexual experience and attractiveness as a potential significant other, it could be that sexually experienced individuals at least seek social belonging in other forms than those of long-term, romantic relationships. However, if these individuals are further isolated from their same-sex peers, this trait should be given strong consideration in working to help those suffering from depression, feelings of stigmatization, or impacts of the problem behaviors associated with lack of peer acceptance (Bradburn, 1969; Buote et al., 2007; Pahl, 2000; Phillips & Fisher, 1981; Pittman & Richmond, 2008). Future research could investigate potential sources of support for at-risk individuals, as well as the role that platonic, opposite-sex friendships play in peer acceptance.

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Table 1

Varimax Factor Rotation for the 32 Trait Product Scores

Trait	Rotated Factor Loadings	
	Positive Desired Factor	Negative Desired Factor
Responsible	.608	.045
Hard Working	.615	-.082
Honest	.531	.222
Jealous	.231	.618
Caring	.604	.233
Considerate	.610	.220
Fearful	.178	.680
Fragile	.121	.720
Spoiled	.260	.560
Trustworthy	.553	.194
Moral	.476	.060
Confident	.515	.273
Dominant	-.005	.299
Faithful	.381	-.034
Feminine	.130	.073
Masculine	.051	.147
Passionate	.525	.032
Mature	.651	.205
Wealthy	.097	-.203
Intelligent	.670	.013
Sociable	.640	.147
Independent	.619	.200
Sexually Experienced	.059	-.120
Sophisticated	.515	-.022
Ambitious	.628	-.021
Popular	.226	-.027
Shy	.150	.364
Aggressive	.075	.528
Fun	.470	.227
Insecure	.260	.634
Selfish	.329	.615
Traditional	-.033	.187
Eigenvalues	7.121	2.372
% of Variance	22.251	7.413
α	.868	.723

A Principal Components Analysis suggested that there was a first component (Positive Desired Factor) followed by a second component (Negative Desired Factor).

Table 2

Varimax Factor Rotation for the Overall Target Evaluation Questions

Item	Rotated Factor Loadings	
	Friendship Likability	Mate Likability
What is your overall impression of [Jim/Joan] as a person?	.872	.281
How willing would you be to consider [Jim/Joan] as your close friend?	.888	.279
If it were up to you, how much contact would you ideally have with [Jim/Joan]?	.857	.283
How willing would you be to recommend [Jim/Joan] as a potential [girlfriend/boyfriend] for your best, heterosexual, opposite-sex friend?	.439	.736
How willing would you be to let [Jim/Joan] maintain a close, non-sexual friendship with your own boyfriend or girlfriend?	.192	.913
Eigenvalues	3.377	.750
% of Variance	67.542	14.990
α	.904	.728

A Principal Components Analysis suggested that there was a first component (Friendship Likability) followed by a second component (Mate Likability).

Table 3

Correlations for Positive and Negative Desired Factors and Friendship and Mate Likability

	Positive Desired Factor	Negative Desired Factor	Friendship Likability	Mate Likability
Positive Desired Factor	1.000	.000	.437	.246
Negative Desired Factor	.000	1.000	.218	.074
Friendship Likability	.437	.28	1.000	.005
Mate Likability	.246	.074	.005	1.000

Pearson's correlations for these four dependent measures were generally low; the measures were therefore analyzed separately.

Table 4

Effect Tests for Positive and Negative Desired Factors and Friendship and Mate Likability

Variable	Positive Desired Factor			Negative Desired Factor			Friendship Likability			Mate Likability		
	SE B	B	β	SE B	B	β	SE B	B	β	SE B	B	β
Target's Partners	.004	-.010**	-.093	.004	-.008*	-.074	.004	-.005	-.043	.093	-.049***	-.444
Gender	.082	.312***	.135	.083	.044	.019	.083	.159	.069	.075	-.123	-.054
Participant's Partners	.040	.102**	.091	.040	-.017	-.015	.040	.083*	.075	.036	.069*	.061
Context	.043	-.123**	-.101	.044	.087*	.071	.044	-.015	-.013	.040	-.098**	-.080
Target's Partners * Gender	.009	-.019*	-.074	.009	-.031**	-.121	.009	-.007	-.027	.008	-.013	-.051
Target's Partners * Participant's Partners	.004	.000	-.001	.004	.009*	.074	.004	.009	.070	.004	-.005	-.043
Target's Partners * Context	.005	-.001	-.007	.005	-.007	-.050	.005	-.002	-.018	.004	.003	.023
Participant's Partners * Context	.048	.050	.037	.049	-.059	-.043	.049	.127**	.093	.044	.032	.023

***. Correlation is significant at the <.0001 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Significant effects were suggested for the above variables, though results often varied by measure. No significant effects were found for any other interactions than those listed here.

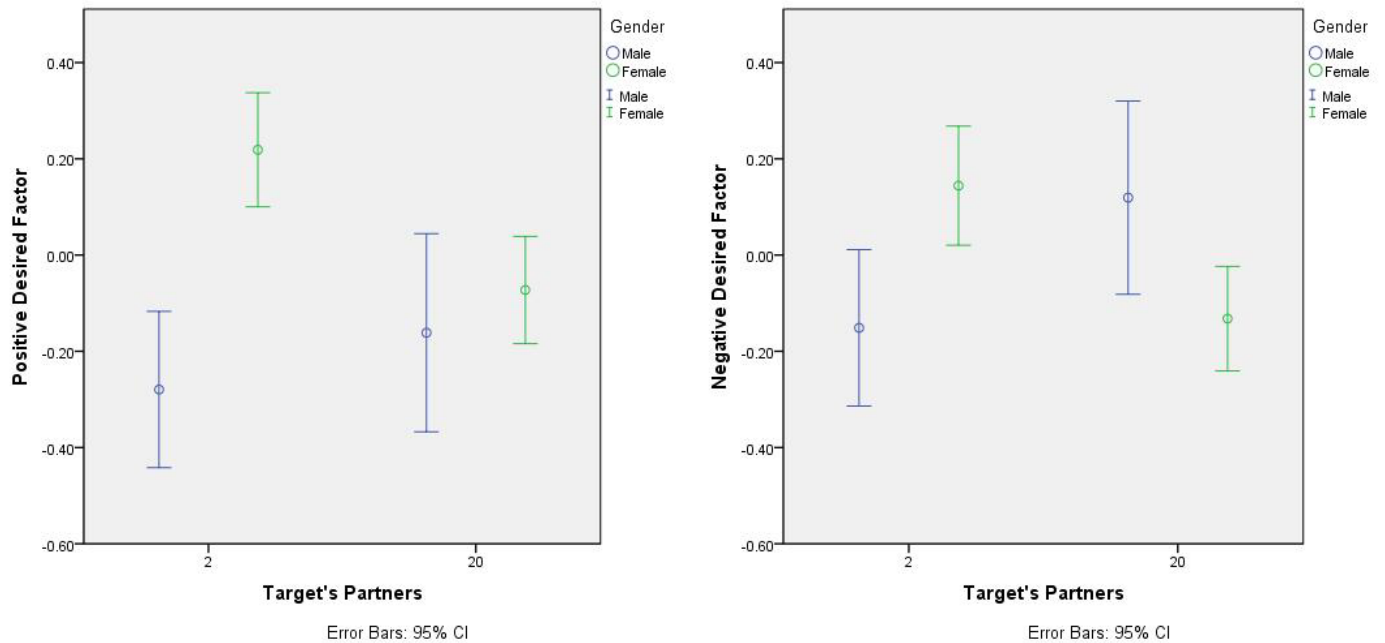


Figure 1. Differing interaction effects for the Positive and Negative Desired Factors are shown here. Dots and bars represent means and confidence intervals, respectively. For the former measure, males did not rate targets with 2 partners significantly differently than they did those with 20, whereas females rated targets with 2 partners significantly more favorably than they did those with 20. For the latter measure, males rated targets with 20 partners significantly more favorably than they did targets with 2 partners, whereas females rated those with 20 partners significantly more harshly than they did those with 2.

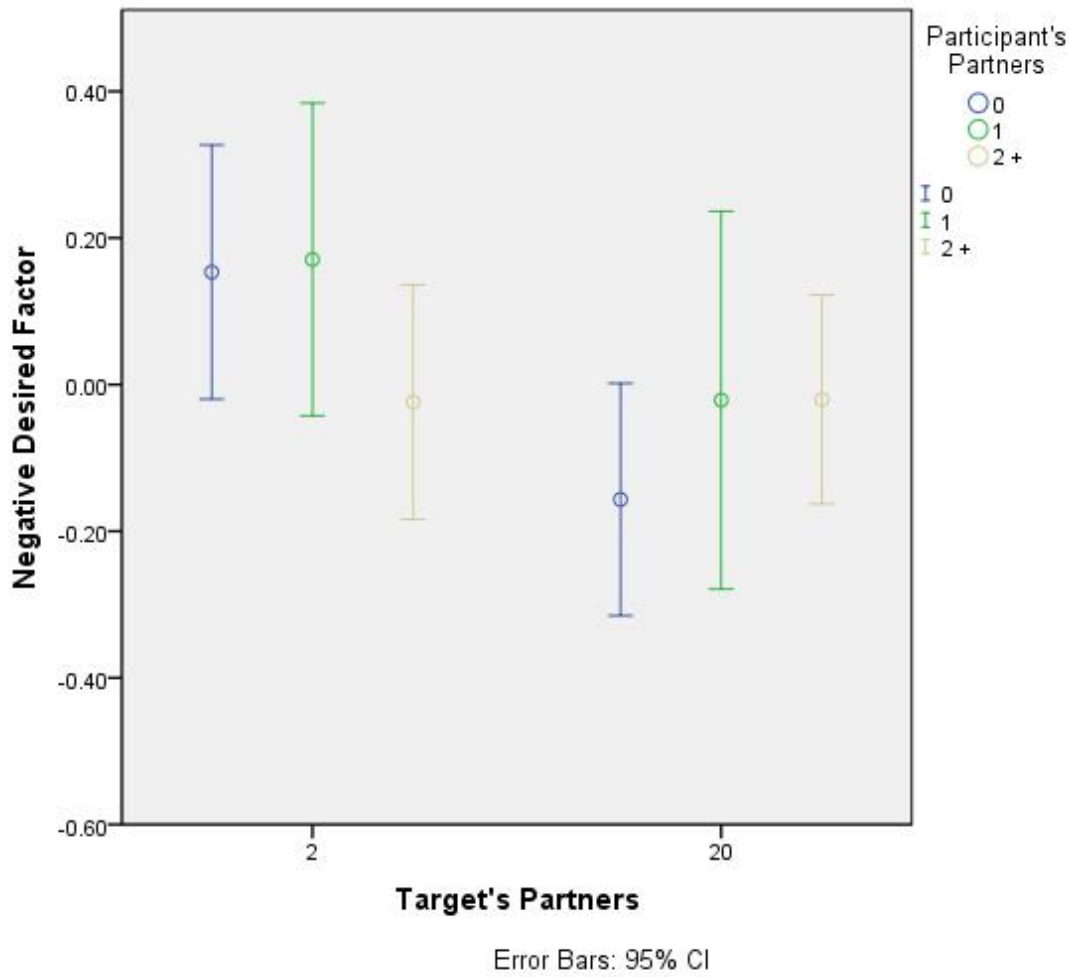


Figure 2. An interaction between the target's and participant's numbers of partners was suggested for the Negative Desired Factor, such that targets with 2 partners were rated more favorably by participants with either no or 1 previous partner than they were by participants with 2 or more partners, whereas targets with 20 partners were rated more harshly by participants with no previous partners than they were by participants with 1 or more partners. Again, dots and bars represent means and confidence intervals, respectively.

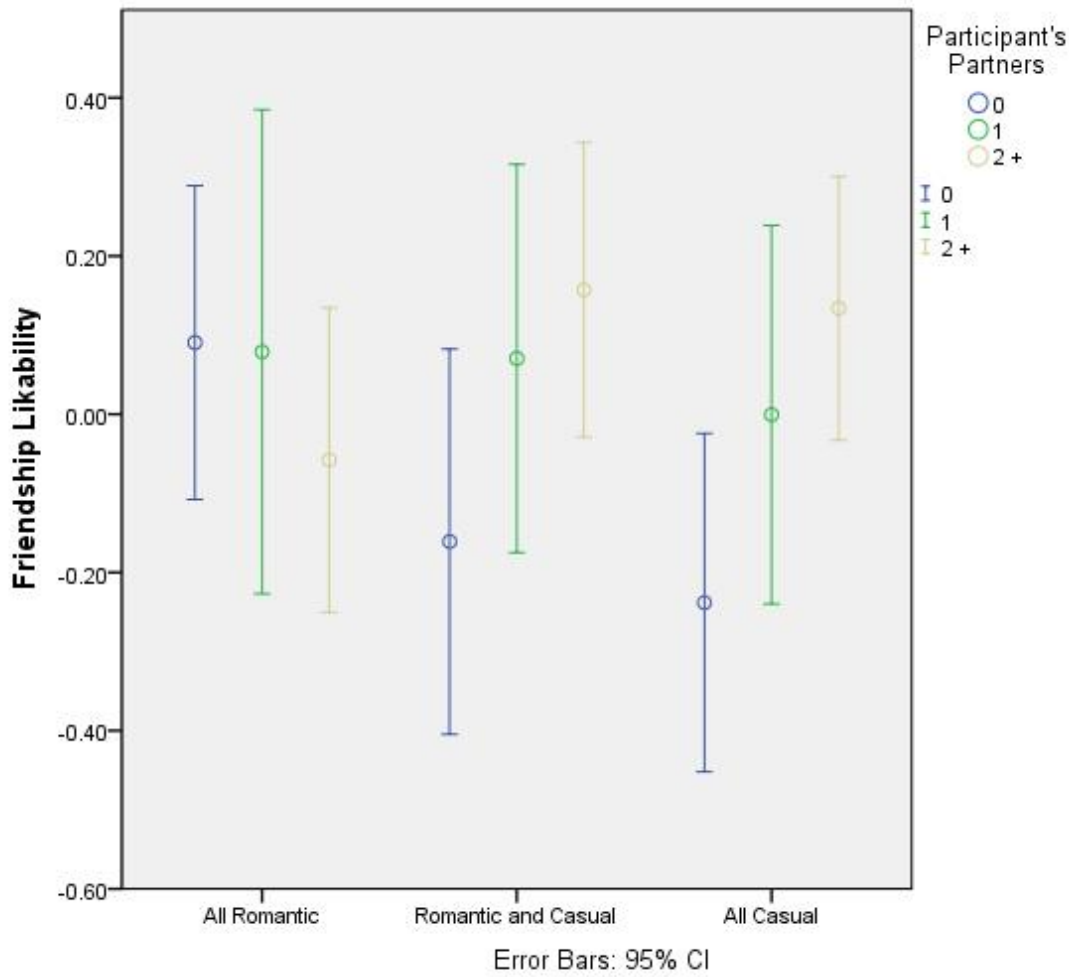


Figure 3. An interaction between context and participant partner number was suggested for the Friendship Likability measure, such that participants with no previous partners rated targets with all romantic partners significantly more favorably than did participants with 1 or more partners, while participants with no previous partners rated targets with some or all casual partners significantly more harshly than did participants with 1 or more partners. Again, dots and bars represent means and confidence intervals, respectively.

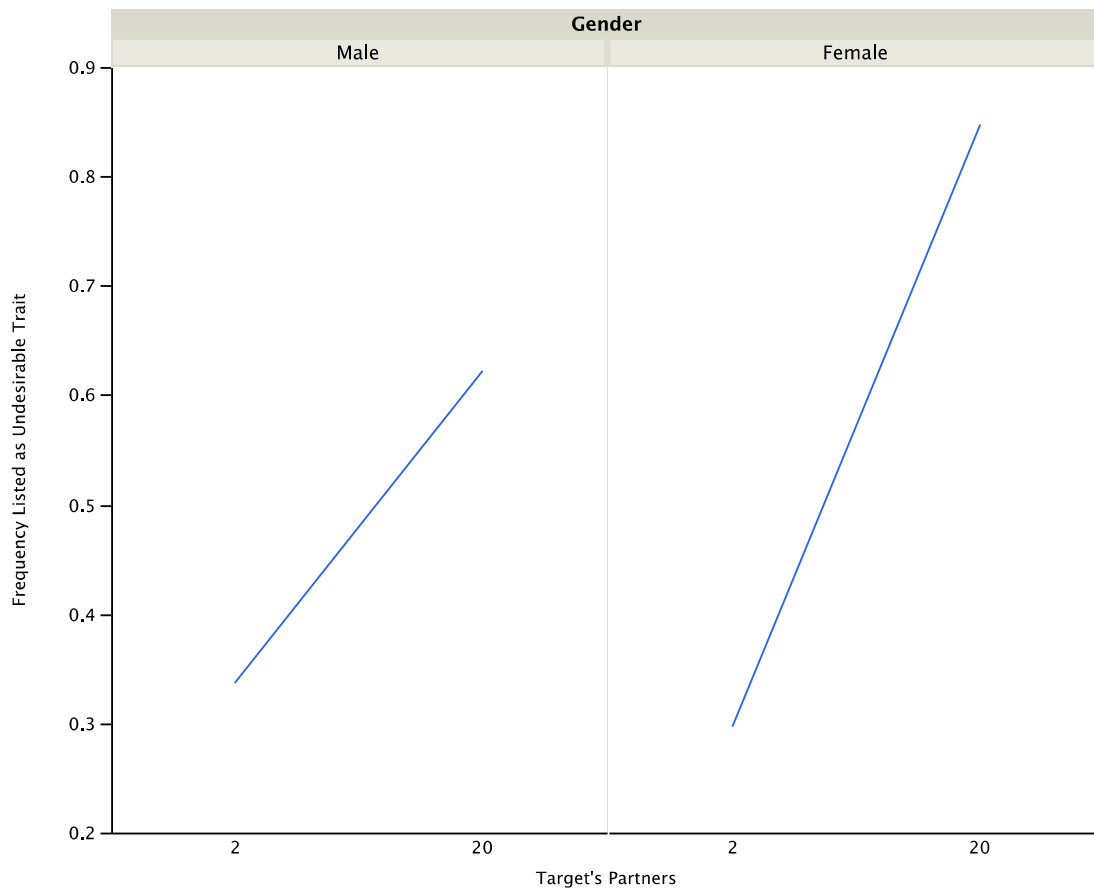


Figure 4. A significant interaction was suggested for the target's number of partners and gender for the Explicit Endorsement measure, such that while both men and women listed sexual history as an undesirable quality significantly more frequently for targets with 20 partners than they did for those with 2 partners, this trend was much more pronounced in women. Lines depict differences in mean frequencies from 2 partners to 20 partners.

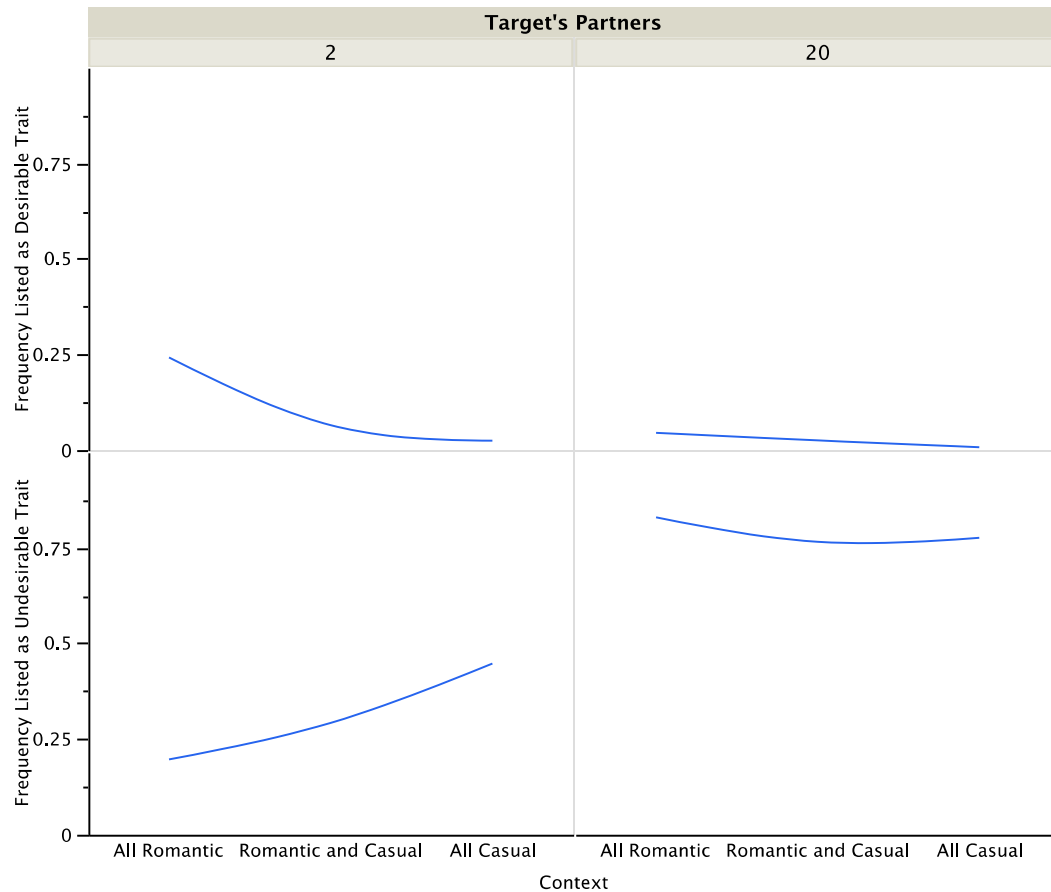


Figure 5. A significant interaction was suggested for the target's number of partners and context for the Explicit Endorsement measure: sexual history was listed significantly less frequently as a desirable trait, and significantly more frequently as an undesirable trait, for targets whose partners had been casual. These differences in means across contexts, however, were significantly more pronounced for targets with 2 partners than they were for those with 20 partners. Lines depict differences in mean frequencies across the three types of contexts.