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A worldwide test of the predictive validity of ideal partner preference-matching

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RUNNING HEAD: PREFERENCE-MATCHING WORLDWIDE

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A Worldwide Test of the Predictive Validity of Ideal Partner Preference-Matching

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Abstract

Ideal partner preferences (i.e., ratings of the desirability of attributes like attractiveness or intelligence) are the source of numerous foundational findings in the interdisciplinary literature on human mating. Recently, research on the predictive validity of ideal partner preference-matching (i.e., do people positively evaluate partners who match versus mismatch their ideals?) has become mired in several problems. First, articles exhibit discrepant analytic and reporting practices. Second, different findings emerge across laboratories worldwide, perhaps because they sample different relationship contexts and/or populations. This registered report—partnered with the Psychological Science Accelerator—uses a highly powered design (N=10,358) across 43 countries and 22 languages to estimate preference-matching effect sizes. The most rigorous tests revealed significant preference-matching effects in the whole sample and for partnered and single participants separately. The "corrected pattern metric" that collapses across 35 traits revealed a zero-order effect of β=.19 and an effect of β=.11 when included alongside a normative preference-matching metric. Specific traits in the "level metric" (interaction) tests revealed very small (average β=.04) effects. Effect sizes were similar for partnered participants who reported ideals before entering a relationship, and there was no consistent evidence that individual differences moderated any effects. Comparisons between stated and revealed preferences shed light on gender differences and similarities: For attractiveness, men's and (especially) women's stated preferences underestimated revealed preferences (i.e., they thought attractiveness was less important than it actually was). For earning potential, men's stated preferences underestimated—and women's stated preferences overestimated—revealed preferences. Implications for the literature on human mating are discussed.

Keywords: attraction, close relationships, human mating, ideals, matching hypothesis

A Worldwide Test of the Predictive Validity of Ideal Partner Preference-Matching

The study of human mating is vast and interdisciplinary, spanning fields as diverse as economics (Hitsch et al., 2010), evolutionary psychology (Buss & Schmitt, 2019), family studies (Boxer et al., 2015), sociology (Lewis, 2016), and social/personality psychology (Fletcher et al., 2019). Despite the considerable depth and breadth of these fields, they share in common a key construct: *ideal partner preferences*. Ideal partner preferences are the attributes (e.g., attractiveness, intelligence, sense of humor) that people say they desire in a romantic partner and, for 80 years, scholars have been using this construct as the foundation for a variety of theories and models that explain how humans pursue and maintain mating relationships (Buss, 1989; Eagly & Wood, 1999; Fletcher, et al., 1999; Hill, 1945; see Eastwick et al., 2014, for a review).

For many decades, scholars made the straightforward assumption that ideal partner preferences affected how positively people feel about their romantic partners—which is itself a key predictor of health and mortality (Robles et al., 2014). But only in the last 25 years have researchers begun to empirically examine the preference-matching question: That is, does a person positively evaluate a given romantic partner to the extent that the partner's attributes match the person's ideals? This matching hypothesis is the core novel prediction offered by the Ideal Standards Model—an influential model in the close-relationships tradition (Fletcher, et al., 2000; Fletcher et al., 1999; Simpson, et al., 2001)—and this hypothesis emerges in evolutionary psychological models as well (Buss, 1989; Conroy-Beam & Buss, 2016; Li & Meltzer, 2015; Shackelford & Buss, 1997; Sugiyama, 2005). Indeed, it is challenging to articulate what the ancestral, functional consequences of ideal partner preferences would be unless the match

between preferences and a partner's attributes had some meaningful association with romantic evaluations.

Does the empirical evidence support this matching hypothesis? In brief, the evidence is murky, and it has actually become murkier rather than clearer over time. Today, researchers can cite empirical papers supporting or refuting any point they wish to make about this matching hypothesis. This state of affairs is unfortunate, because precise effect size estimates for the matching hypothesis will have generative and theory-building implications no matter what they turn out to be. If the match between ideals and a partner's traits predicts romantic evaluations with (at least) modest effect sizes, then scholars should be able to assess participants' ideals and match them with new, compatible partners or determine whether their current relationships are likely to encounter difficulties. But if these effect sizes are small or near-zero, then explanations for the role of compatibility in human mating will need to become grounded in alternative theories that do not rely on attribute matching (e.g., the way two people co-construct their expectations, shared reality, or relationship narrative; Berscheid & Ammazzalorso, 2001, Eastwick, et al., 2023; Rossignac-Milon & Higgins, 2018). Inspired by other large collaborative replication efforts (Coles et al., 2020; Vohs et al., 2021), the current project aims to gather the *strongest possible evaluation* of the predictive validity of ideal partner preferences—perhaps the most interdisciplinary and theoretically central construct in research on human mating.

Ongoing Challenge #1: Lack of Standard Analytic Practices

One reason that the predictive-validity evidence to date remains murky is differing analytic and reporting practices. There are many ways that the matching hypothesis has been operationalized—some more rigorous than others. Specifically, researchers have tested the predictive validity of ideal partner preferences in four primary ways: ideal-trait correlations, the

raw pattern metric, the corrected pattern metric, and the level metric. Our own systematic review yielded 35 published studies (Table S1) that have reported data that (a) examine participants' evaluations of a person they have met face-to-face (i.e., from speed-dating partners to established romantic partners), and (b) bear on at least one of these four approaches. The four approaches are illustrated with a mock dataset in Table S2.

First, scholars sometimes report *ideal-trait correlations*: for a particular trait, the researcher calculates the association between participants' ideals and the partners' traits (Example 1a in Table S2) in a sample that presumably involved some prior selection event (e.g., the partners are people whom the participants selected as a romantic partner). In other words, do people with a stronger preference for a trait end up with partners who are higher on the trait? However, the selection event is not used as a measured variable (i.e., there are no "unselected" partners)—so it cannot serve as a dependent measure—and no evaluative outcomes, such as attraction or relationship satisfaction, are collected (Conroy-Beam & Buss, 2016; Gerlach et al., 2019). Thus, these correlations are not rigorous tests of the matching hypothesis, as there are many alternative explanations for any such correlation (Eastwick et al., 2019; Fletcher et al., 2020). Indeed, the canonical papers using this approach (e.g., Fletcher et al., 1999; Murray et al., 1996) generally presumed that these correlations reflected a motivated reasoning process (e.g., people are motivated to believe that their current partner possesses the traits that they ideally want) rather than ideal partner preference-matching. These correlations are included in the analysis plan because they are available as a matter of course when conducting the more rigorous tests described next.

A second *pattern metric (raw)* approach uses the within-person correlation between (a) each participant's ideals and (b) a target partner's traits (usually rated by participants themselves)

across *all* available traits. Researchers subject this correlation to a Fisher *z*-transformation and then use it to predict an evaluative outcome (e.g., relationship satisfaction; Example 1b in Table S2). This approach typically reveals moderately sized associations (r = .20-.40) with relationship satisfaction, which is consistent with the ideal partner preference-matching hypothesis. However, as methodologists have compellingly described (Wood & Furr, 2016; Rogers et al., 2018), this approach has a major shortcoming: The predictive power of the raw pattern metric is confounded with the normative desirability of the ideal traits and target partner traits that are used to calculate the within-person correlation. In other words, the raw pattern metric approach may have garnered support for the ideal partner preference-matching hypothesis because people tend to report positive evaluative outcomes when they think their partner has positive traits; thus, this approach does not uniquely test whether the *match* between ideals and partner traits has predictive effects. Approaches using Euclidean distance metrics share this shortcoming (e.g., Conroy-Beam et al., 2016; see Rogers et al., 2018).

A third *pattern metric (corrected)* approach follows Wood and Furr's (2016) recommendation to mean-center each ideal rating and partner trait rating (a and b in the paragraph above) prior to the calculation of the within-person correlation; just as with the raw pattern metric, this correlation can then be *z*-scored and used to predict an evaluative outcome (Example 1c in Table S2). This procedure removes the normative desirability confound and permits a clean test of the ideal partner preference-matching hypothesis, and published effect sizes range from near zero to $r \sim .25$ (Eastwick et al., 2019; Fletcher et al., 2020; Lam et al., 2016).

A fourth *level metric* approach refers to the statistical interaction between the participant's ideal and the partner's trait (i.e., the ideal × trait term) when predicting an

evaluative outcome (controlling for the main effects of the ideal and trait; example 1d in Table S2). For example, assume there is a positive association of (a) perceiving a partner to be funny with (b) attraction to that partner. The level metric tests whether this association is stronger (i.e., more positive) among participants who have high (rather than low) ideals for a funny partner—as if participants with high ideals are "weighting" the trait more positively in their evaluative judgments. This approach is designed to be implemented one-trait-at-a-time, which is critical when testing theories positing that ideals for specific attributes have functional outcomes (e.g., the hypothesis that heterosexual women have a stronger preference for *financial success* in a partner because they have historically needed to differentiate strong from weak providers more so than heterosexual men; Buss, 1989; Eastwick & Finkel, 2008; Eastwick et al., 2014; Li et al., 2013; Perusse, 1993). Significant effects emerge sporadically using this approach (e.g., Fletcher et al., 2020; Valentine et al., 2020), but high-powered level metric tests across multiple attributes are uncommon.

Critically, few papers report more than one of the four approaches (see Table S1), and researchers who draw conclusions from the weaker approaches (i.e., ideal-trait correlations, the raw pattern metric) are more likely to conclude support for the matching hypothesis than are researchers who use the stronger approaches (i.e., the corrected pattern metric, the level metric). The current registered report addressed the challenge of discrepant reporting practices by bringing together a diverse team of researchers who all committed to a preregistered analysis plan with all four analytic strategies described above.

Ongoing Challenge #2: Differences between Established Relationships and Initial Attraction

A second reason that the state of the matching hypothesis is uncertain is that ideal partner preference-matching effects may depend on relationship context. The matching hypothesis has historically received support when participants evaluated a current romantic partner, as suggested by studies of established relationships (e.g., Fletcher et al., 1999, 2000, 2020; Zentner, 2005). But the hypothesis has not commonly been supported when participants evaluated a partner with whom they were not romantically involved, as suggested by studies of initial attraction (e.g., Eastwick & Finkel, 2008; Selterman & Gideon, 2022; Wu et al., 2018). However, direct comparisons of effect sizes for established relationship versus initial attraction partners remain elusive, as studies conducted in these two contexts typically differ from each other in innumerable ways.

To address context as a potentially critical moderator, the current project collected data on both established relationship and initial attraction partners using a method (adapted from Eastwick et al., 2011, and Sparks et al., 2020) that enables a clean comparison between these two contexts. Specifically, participants who were in an established relationship completed scales about their current romantic partner, and participants who were single completed the *identical scales* about the partner with whom they would most desire to have a romantic relationship. By using the same items and procedure in both relationship contexts, the two effect sizes can be compared to each other more straightforwardly than in prior studies.

Researchers have speculated that a difference between initial attraction and established relationship contexts could emerge because the ideal standards model primarily applies to long-term partnerships, and/or because participants only draw from their (abstract) ideal partner preferences once the relationship itself becomes an abstract entity with a hypothetical future (Eastwick et al., 2014; Meltzer et al., 2014). Nevertheless, there are two reasons for such a

difference that would be grounded in motivated perceptional processes rather than the ideal standards model *per se*. First, people may adjust their *perceptions of their partner's traits* to match their ideals (Murray et al., 1996), perhaps especially if they are happy in their current relationship. This interpretation is always plausible whenever participants provide their own ratings of a partner's traits—the most common method in this literature by far.[1] To examine this possibility, we also assessed each partner's level of formal education (e.g., high school, college degree)—a more objective measure that should be less subject to motivated re-interpretation than typical trait ratings of the partner. To the extent that preference-matching effects are a function of motivated perception of the partner's traits, the effect size for the level metric should be smaller for level of education.

Second, people may adjust their *ideals* to match their perceptions of their partner's traits (Gerlach et al., 2019; Neff & Karney, 2003), perhaps especially if they are happy in their current relationship. One way to address this alternative explanation is to collect participants' ideals before the relationship forms in the first place (Eastwick et al., 2011). To examine the possibility that people use their pre-relationship ideals when evaluating an ongoing relationship, we also recruited an additional sample through Cloud Research. These participants reported their ideals when single and then, after they started a new romantic relationship (several months later), they completed measures about their current romantic partner. To the extent that preference-matching

[1] To illustrate, 30 of the 35 studies in Table S1, or 86%, used this approach, whereas 23% asked partners to self-report their own traits, and 20% used some "objective" measure of the trait. (These numbers add to more than 100% because some studies employed multiple approaches.) The current study is primarily designed to establish robust effect size estimates for the (most common) participant-perception approach, which could then inform power analyses for future investigations of the other two (considerably more intensive, but usually less well-powered) approaches.

effects are a function of the motivated shifting of one's own ideals, the effect sizes in this "newly partnered" sample should be smaller.

The Current Research

This collaborative effort produced the largest cross-national dataset of participants' evaluations and judgments about preferred-gender targets they know personally (e.g., romantic partners, friends, acquaintances). The specific research questions in the Primary Planned Analyses are outlined in Table 1. Research Questions (RQs) 1-4 rely on traditional null hypothesis significance testing; nevertheless, interpretations will focus primarily on effect size estimates vis-à-vis Cohen's (1992) small, medium, and large conventions. Effect sizes for the level metric (i.e., statistical interactions) will be interpreted as fractions of the attribute main effects. In tutorials of interaction statistical power (Baranger et al., 2023; Giner-Sorolla, 2018), a "knock out" interaction (i.e., interaction effect size beta = main effect size beta) is akin to a medium sized effect, and a "50% attention" interaction (i.e., interaction effect size beta = 50% of main effect size beta) is akin to a small effect. All four research questions were evaluated with all four analytic approaches described above.

Table 1 – Design Table: Primary Planned Analyses (Research Questions and Hypotheses)

	Research Question	Hypothesis	*N*
1	What is the (overall) effect size of ideal partner-preference matching?	a. Ideal-trait correlations (*rs*) are greater than zero. b. The raw pattern metric (r) is greater than zero. c. The corrected pattern metric (r) is greater than zero. d. Level metric tests (interaction βs) are greater than zero.	10,358 full sample
2	What is the effect size of ideal partner-preference matching in initial attraction contexts?	a. Ideal-trait correlations (*rs*) are greater than zero. b. The raw pattern metric (*r*) is greater than zero. c. The corrected pattern metric (*r*) is greater than zero. d. Level metric tests (interaction βs) are greater than zero.	4,152 subsample
3	What is the effect size of ideal partner-preference matching in established relationship contexts?	a. Ideal-trait correlations (*rs*) are greater than zero. b. The raw pattern metric (*r*) is greater than zero. c. The corrected pattern metric (*r*) is greater than zero. d. Level metric tests (interaction βs) are greater than zero.	5,544 subsample
4	Does the effect size of ideal partner-preference matching depend on initial attraction vs. established relationship context?	a. Ideal-trait correlations (*rs*) are larger when reporting on current partners than desired partners. b. The raw pattern metric (*r*) is larger when reporting on current partners than desired partners. c. The corrected pattern metric (*r*) is larger when reporting on current partners than desired partners. d. Level metric tests (interaction βs) are larger when reporting on current partners than desired partners.	4,152 vs. 5,544 subsamples

Note: All (a) ideal-trait correlations and (d) level metric tests involve 35 separate tests, one for each attribute in Tables 2 and 3. In these cases, we used a Holm-Bonferroni correction (Holm, 1979) to control the family-wise Type-I error rate, and we discuss possible power implications in the A Priori Power Analysis Plan section in the Supplemental Materials.

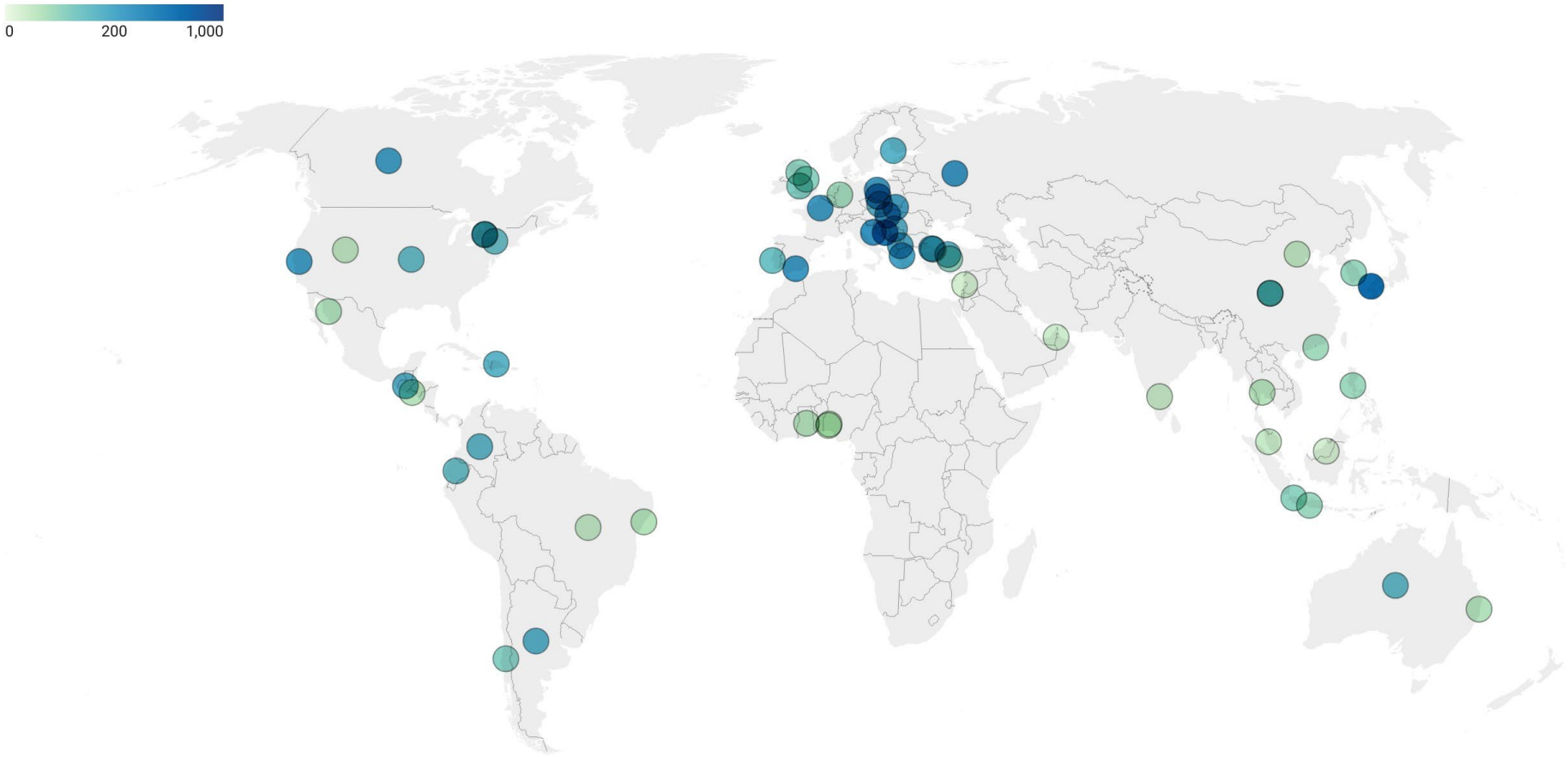
Method

This study mimics the design of an influential, initial test of the predictive validity of ideal partner preference-matching (Fletcher et al., 1999, Study 6). Specifically, participants (a) provided their ideals on a variety of traits, (b) rated their current romantic partner on those same traits, and finally (c) reported an evaluation of their current partner as the outcome dependent measure. This procedure remains the gold-standard in this research space, but it was updated in three ways: (a) participants who were single were not excluded from participating, but were instead given the chance to evaluate the person with whom they most desire to have a romantic relationship (as in Eastwick et al., 2011, Study 3); (b) participants also evaluated three additional targets—peers of their preferred gender (as in Sparks et al., 2020)—to enable additional analytic tests (elaborated below); and (c) participants rated a larger set of traits (not just the traits highlighted in Fletcher et al., 1999, but also the Big Five personality traits; Goldberg, 1993).

Ethics

Each research group ensured that they had approval from their institution's Ethics Committee or IRB to conduct the study, that the study was covered by the approved UC Davis IRB (exempt protocol 1898056-1 "The Preference Matching Project"), or that the study was exempt (see the Supplemental Materials for details).

Figure 1 – 60 Samples Included in the Preference-Matching Project



Note: Locations indicate the university where the data were collected or—in the cases of online community samples—the center of the relevant country. Map created with Datawrapper (Lorenz et al., 2012).

Participants

Our final sample consisted of N = 10,358 participants (after planned exclusions; see "Data Processing" for details) from 60 samples and 43 different countries (Table S3 and Figure 1). Some of the 60 samples assessed only student (undergraduate and graduate) participants (k = 22 samples), some assessed only community participants (k = 8), and some assessed a blend of student and community participants (k = 30). Students typically received course credit, and community members were compensated in a manner determined appropriate for their local context (e.g., cash, electronic payments, gift cards, raffles, and some were not directly compensated).

Participants were M = 28.5 years old (SD = 11.7; we assumed that values less than 10 or greater than 100 were typos). In terms of gender, N = 6,833 (66.0%) were women, N = 3,394 (32.8%) were men, N = 127 (1.2%) preferred to self-describe their gender, and N = 4 provided no response. In terms of sexual orientation, N = 8,366 (80.7%) were straight/heterosexual, N = 1,217 (11.7%) were bisexual, N = 361 (3.5%) preferred to self-describe, N = 202 (2.0%) were gay, N = 162 (1.6%) were lesbian, and N = 50 (0.5%) either skipped this question or this question was intentionally omitted because queer identities were punishable in that context. In terms of education, N = 89 (0.9%) reported "less than high school," N = 3,601 (34.8%) "high school," N = 2,559 (24.7%) "some college," N = 2,556 (24.7%) "four-year degree," N = 1,370 (13.2%) "Master's degree," N = 182 (1.7%) "Doctorate or professional degree," and N = 1 provided no response.

Procedure

The entire study consisted of a survey that could be completed on an electronic device. Data collection began on February 1, 2023 (after the stage 1 registered report was approved) and closed on November 10, 2023.

After providing consent and clicking a ReCAPTCHA button (to prevent bots from accessing the survey), participants completed two blocks of measures (in counterbalanced order). In the first block, they rated the desirability of 35 ideal partner preference attributes (as well as their ideal for a "high level of education," to be used in a separate analysis), and they completed a brief set of demographic items and individual-difference measures.

The second block consisted of a set of items about specific partners. Using a procedure implemented successfully by Sparks et al. (2020, Study 2), participants were asked to provide the first name and last initial of four individuals whom they know personally.[2] They were instructed to choose individuals of their romantically preferred gender who are not related to them, who are around the same age as them (i.e., peers), and whom they have met in person. Participants who were in a romantic relationship were instructed to list their current romantic partner as the first of the four individuals; participants who were single were asked to list "the person with whom you would most desire to have a romantic relationship" (Eastwick et al., 2011, Study 3) as the first of the four individuals. Third, they rated the first of the four targets (i.e., the current partner or most desired partner) on the same set of 35 attributes. Fourth, they rated the first of the four targets on the romantic evaluation dependent measure. The third and fourth steps were counterbalanced. Fifth, they repeated the third and fourth steps (randomly counterbalanced for each target) for each of the remaining three targets (presented in a random order). The first target was completed

[2] This potentially identifying information was removed and replaced with numerical codes prior to the public posting of the dataset.

prior to the remaining three peer targets because the preregistered analysis plan focused on these targets in particular.

Data, analysis code, codebook, and preregistration (i.e., the Stage 1 manuscript) are available at https://osf.io/b29vu/?view_only=35a15592f8b04cdfb9ab32f45c73f3c6.

Materials

Translation. For surveys in languages other than English, participating laboratories translated the original English materials into the target language (see Table S3). All laboratories first used the translate feature in Qualtrics (which uses Google translate) to generate the initial translation, edited as necessary, and then had an independent researcher who was fluent in the target language read it over for comprehensibility. Then, consistent with translation best-practices (Benet-Martinez, 2007), one or more (different) researchers who were fluent in English and the target language back-translated, compared the back-translation against the original, and resolved discrepancies. Researchers at different universities who were administering surveys in the same language collaborated to ensure that their surveys were as similar as possible. In total, the surveys were administered in 22 different languages (see Table S3 for details).

Ideal partner preferences. Participants rated 35 attributes (Table S4) in an ideal romantic partner on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all desirable*) to 11 (*highly desirable*). Scale derivation work by Fletcher et al. (1999) produced a popular measure of three factors: warmth/trustworthiness, vitality/attractiveness, and status/resources. We included five items assessing warmth/trustworthiness, five items assessing vitality/attractiveness, and four items assessing status/resources from this measure. We also included ten moderately-to-highly desirable traits that emerged in a more recent article using a similar scale-derivation procedure (Sparks et al., 2020), the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (i.e., a measure of the Big Five

personality traits; Gosling et al., 2003), and one trait with potentially crucial cross-cultural relevance (*smells good*; Roberts et al., 2020). The full collection of 35 attributes contained a mix of attributes that typically range from low to high levels of (self-reported) desirability in an ideal partner.

In addition, participants rated the extent to which "a high level of education is desirable" in their ideal romantic partner on a 1 (*not at all desirable*) to 11 (*highly desirable*) scale.

Partner attributes. Participants rated how the 35 attributes characterized each target on a scale from 1 (*not at all characteristic*) to 11 (*highly characteristic*). They also indicated the highest level of education that the partner had completed from a set of six options ranging from low to high (e.g., less than high school, high school, some college, four-year degree, Master's degree, Doctorate or Professional degree). The wording of these categories was adapted to each countries' educational context where needed; all adaptations contained six categories in ascending order. We decided a priori to treat this item separately from the other 35 attributes because it is distinct on both a conceptual (i.e., it is not really a psychological trait but rather an objective fact about a person) and measurement level.

Romantic evaluation (dependent measure). Participants reported their *romantic evaluation* of each of their four nominated targets on six items ("I am romantically interested in _____," "_____ is the only person I want to be romantically involved with," "_____ is very much my ideal romantic partner," "It is important to me to see or talk with _____ regularly," "_____ is the first person that I would turn to if I had a problem," and "If I achieved something good, _____ is the person that I would tell first") on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 11 (*strongly agree*) scale (see Table S5). Importantly, this measure was designed to be equally applicable to relationships with peers and with romantic partners (see Supplemental Material

below for scale-derivation details). Reliabilities were $\alpha = .92$, $\omega = .92$ on the full sample, $\alpha = .91$, $\omega = .91$ on the partnered sample, and $\alpha = .85$, $\omega = .85$ on the single sample.

Individual-difference measures and demographic information. Participants completed additional items including a 16-item measure of individualism/collectivism (e.g., "I'd rather depend on myself than others," "Parents and children must stay together as much as possible," Triandis & Gelfand, 1998), a 12-item measure of relational mobility (e.g., "They [the people around you] have many chances to get to know other people," "It is easy for them to meet new people," Thomson et al., 2018), and an item assessing relationship status (i.e., *yes* vs. *no* to "I am currently in a committed, romantic relationship").

Participants also indicated the nature of their relationship with each of the four targets using the following (mutually exclusive) categories: spouse or fiancé, boyfriend/girlfriend/committed romantic partner, casual romantic/sexual partner, friend, colleague or co-worker, acquaintance, stranger. Additional individual differences and demographic information (beyond those referenced in the manuscript) are described in the Supplemental Materials.

Attention checks. In addition to the ReCAPTCHA button, there were two additional "directed query" attention checks (Abbey & Meloy, 2017). First, after the consent form, participants saw an item that lists the names of the seven continents and instructions that read: "If you are reading this query, please select 'Other' and type the word 'nonsense' in the blank to assure the researchers that you are reading the instructions." Because some participants typed in a nonsense word into the blank space, we decided (before running any analyses) to use all participants who selected 'Other' and typed something in the space. Second, for the first target

only, the romantic evaluation items contained an additional item that stated: “Please select ‘3’ for this item to show that you are paying attention.”

Relationship formation hypothesis. As described above, one possible explanation for the stronger support for ideal partner preference-matching in established close relationship (vs. initial attraction) contexts is that people may be motivated to change their ideals to match their current partner’s attributes (Gerlach et al., 2019; Neff & Karney, 2003). To test this possibility, we collected a separate sample of N = 1,585 participants (i.e., online workers from the “Cloud Research Approved List” on MTurk; Hauser et al., 2023) who completed two surveys at two points in time, about 3.5 months apart (M = 104 days, SD = 12, range = 77-124). The sample consists of (a) participants who were in a relationship with the same partner at both time points (N = 709), (b) participants who were single at both time points (N = 687), and (c) participants who were single at the first time point and in a relationship with a new partner at the second time point (N = 189).

The recruitment plan and demographics for this sample is described in detail in the Relationship Formation Hypothesis section of the Supplemental Materials; we preregistered that these participants would be analyzed separately from the main analyses that correspond to the Table S3 worldwide sample, given the procedural differences and the fact that these participants were all from the U.S.

These participants completed a subset of the measures reported above. Specifically, at time 1, they reported their ideal partner preferences and demographics in a 3-minute survey (for US$1), and then at time 2, they completed the partner attribute and dependent measure items in a 10-minute survey (for US$5). They completed the relationship status item on both surveys, but

the surveys did not include the additional individual differences and the three additional targets (i.e., these participants only completed items about the current partner or most desired partner).

Data Processing

Once again, our final international sample consisted of $N = 10{,}358$ participants. Not included in this value are the participants who were excluded from analyses because they (a) "straightlined" (i.e., give the same numerical response to) either the 35 ideal partner preference items or the 35 attribute ratings ($N = 194$), (b) failed to pass both attention checks ($N = 2{,}600$), or (c) failed to reach the debriefing screen ($N = 6{,}932$; most of these participants stopped responding a short way into the survey).

Participants were included in the $N = 10{,}358$ total and the overall analysis (i.e., research question 1) but excluded from the relationship status subgroup analyses if they (a) indicated that they were "single" but then categorized the first target they nominated as "spouse or fiancé" or "boyfriend/girlfriend/committed romantic partner," or (b) indicated that they were "in a relationship" but then categorized the first target they nominated as anything other than "spouse or fiancé" or "boyfriend/girlfriend/committed romantic partner." $N = 662$ were included in the overall sample but excluded from the relationship status subgroup analyses for these reasons, which yielded $N = 5{,}544$ participants in the "partnered" category (with an average relationship length of $M = 6.3$ years and $SD = 8.8$ years, assuming the $N = 12$ values above 1,000 months were typos), and $N = 4{,}152$ participants in the "single" category for analyses.

We did not anticipate, nor did we have, a high proportion of missing/incomplete data (less than 1% for all variables). Nevertheless, we also used predictive means matching using the mice package for R (van Buuren & Groothuis-Oudshoorn, 2011) to investigate the possible

consequences of missingness in a separate set of sensitivity analyses for Tables 2 and 3 (see Supplemental Materials).

Results

Primary Planned Analyses

As preregistered, these analyses pertained only to the first target that participants evaluated. All analyses were conducted as multilevel models that accounted for the nesting of participant within the k = 60 samples (see Table 2 and 3 notes). Specifically, we included random intercept (u_0) and slope (u_1) terms in each analysis, and the random slope (u_1) for sample was omitted when a given analysis did not converge. Overall, these random terms were fairly modest in magnitude: For the overall sample analyses reported in Table 2, random intercept (u_0) terms accounted for 2.3% of the variance on average (i.e., 2.3% of the residual variance in the trait dependent measure was attributable to the sample) and random slope (u_1) terms accounted for 0.3% of the variance. For the overall sample analyses reported in Table 3, random intercept (u_0) terms accounted for 3.4% of the variance on average, and random slope (u_1) terms accounted for 0.6% of the variance. In other words, the trait means (i.e., the DV in Table 2) and romantic evaluation DV (i.e., the DV in Table 3) showed some minor differences (about 3%) across samples. However, the association of ideals with traits (i.e., the associations in Table 2) and the association of traits with romantic evaluations (i.e., the associations in Table 3) differed very little (less than 1%) across samples.[3] All variables were standardized ($M = 0$, $SD = 1$) for each analysis.

As described above (and in Table S2), *ideal-trait correlations* refer to the between-persons association of the ideal rating and the partner attribute rating for a given attribute. One

[3] We calculated these % variance values using the r2mlm package in R (Shaw et al., 2020).

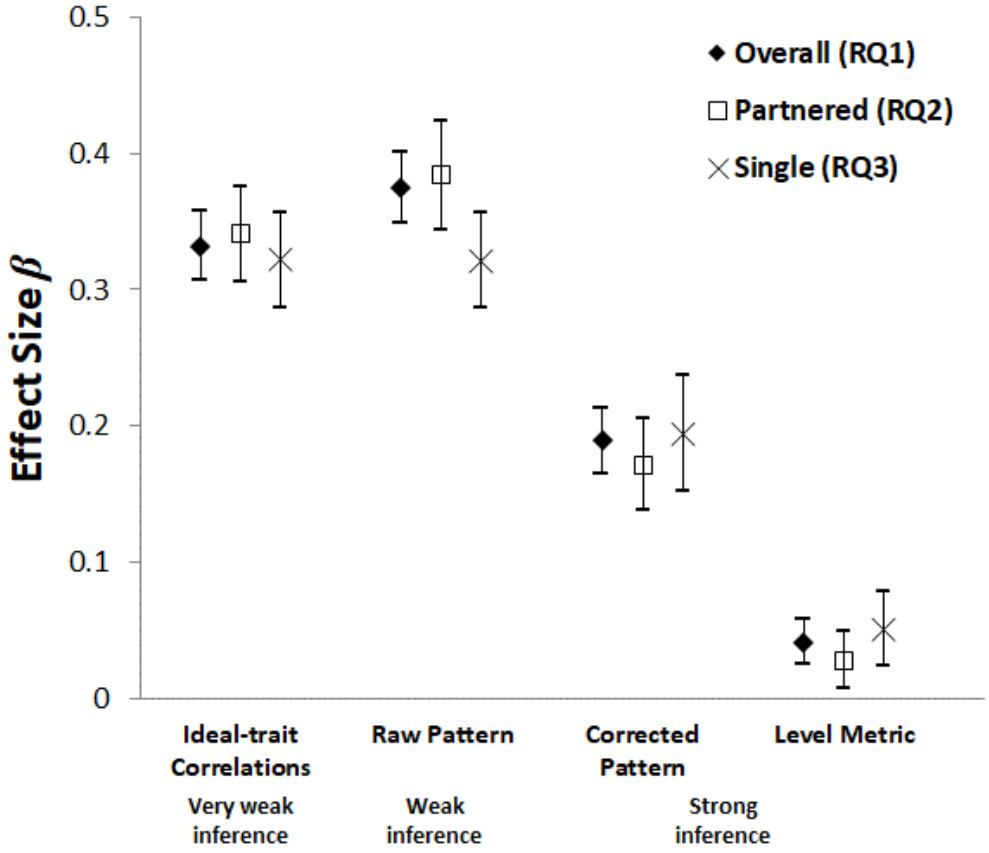
association is calculated for each attribute, and the dependent measure is not used in this calculation (Table 2). The *pattern metric (raw)* is the association between (a) a *Fisher-z* scored version of the within-person correlation between the 35 ideal ratings and the 35 partner-attribute ratings, and (b) the romantic evaluation measure. The *pattern metric (corrected)* is the association between (a) a *Fisher-z* scored version of the within-person correlation between the 35 ideal ratings and the 35 partner-attribute ratings after sample-mean centering all 70 items, and (b) the romantic evaluation measure. The *level metric* is the ideal × attribute interaction predicting the romantic evaluation measure, controlling for the main effect of ideal and attribute (Table 3).

Given that we are assessing three constructs from Fletcher et al. (1999) and all five of the Big Five constructs (see Table 2), the ideal-trait correlations and level metric tests were conducted not only at the item level, but also at the construct level for the three Fletcher et al. (1999) constructs (i.e., warmth/trustworthiness, vitality/attractiveness, and status/resources) and the Big Five (i.e., Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Openness to Experience). The pattern metric analyses were calculated on the full set of 35 attributes, because such profile correlations require many items to assess reliably (Wood & Furr, 2016).

Given that the corrected pattern metric and the level metric provide the strongest tests of the ideal-partner preference matching hypothesis, our interpretations of the findings rely primarily on these effect sizes. We provide the ideal-trait correlations and raw pattern metric effect sizes for completeness and transparency. Importantly, the ideal-trait correlations and level metric analyses in Tables 2 and 3 require 35 statistical tests, one for each attribute. Therefore, we implemented a Holm-Bonferroni correction (Holm, 1979) for all instances where we conducted 35 statistical tests, and we only conclude support for attributes that pass this significance

threshold (i.e., .05/35 = .0014 = alpha for the lowest p-value of the 35; .05/34 = .0015 = alpha for the second lowest p-value of the 35; .05/33 = .0015 = alpha for the third lowest p-value, and so on). In all tables, the attributes are listed in the order that participants spontaneously nominated them in the classic Fletcher et al. (1999) paper (see Table S4). A summary of the central findings is depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2 – Results for Research Questions (RQs) 1-3



Note: Values for ideal-trait correlations and level metric are averaged across the 35 traits. Bars depict upper and lower 95% CIs.

Weak inference tests. As anticipated, ideal-trait correlations (Table 2) were positive and significant across the board (β_1 = .33 across the 35 traits on average): Participants who had high

ideals for a trait tended to report that the target possessed higher amounts of that trait. These correlations trended higher for partnered (β_1 = .34 on average) than single (β_1 = .32 on average) participants, and 16 out of 35 of the partnered vs. single comparisons passed the Bonferroni-Holm correction. Nevertheless, these partnered vs. single differences tended to be very small.

Also as expected, the raw pattern metric (i.e., the within-person correlation between the 35 ideals and traits) predicted romantic interest strongly, with effect sizes in the medium-to-large range (β_1 = .37 in the full sample, see Table 3). As with the ideal-trait correlations, this association was slightly stronger for partnered (β_1 = .38) than single (β_1 = .32) participants.

In a non-preregistered analysis, we additionally examined whether a measure of Euclidean distance (i.e., the square root of the sum of the squared differences between ideals and traits; Rogers et al., 2018) predicted the romantic evaluation DV when used in place of the raw pattern metric. Results showed that this measure performed similarly: Larger Euclidean distances negatively predicted positive evaluations in the full sample (β_1 = -.31, p < .001), and for both partnered (β_1 = -.31, p < .001) and single (β_1 = -.29, p < .001) participants.

Table 2 –Ideal-Trait Correlations (Analysis Plan 1a through 4a)

	Attribute		Ideal-Trait Correlations			
			Overall	Partnered	Single	*t* for comparison
1	Attractive	(V/A)	.29***	.28***	.31***	2.44
2	Intelligent		.35***	.38***	.31***	-4.69***
3	Humorous		.39***	.40***	.37***	-3.96***
4	Considerate	(W/T)	.31***	.30***	.30***	-1.04
5	Honest		.30***	.33***	.25***	-5.19***
6	Understanding	(W/T)	.31***	.31***	.29***	-1.19
7	Ambitious		.41***	.45***	.38***	-6.19***
8	Sporty and Athletic		.39***	.41***	.36***	-3.24**
9	Fun		.37***	.35***	.39***	-0.63
10	Sensitive	(W/T)	.36***	.36***	.36***	-1.79
11	A good lover	(V/A)	.34***	.33***	.32***	-4.24***
12	Nice body	(V/A)	.29***	.27***	.32***	2.69
13	Confident		.34***	.34***	.32***	-2.85

14	Sexy	(V/A)	.36***	.34***	.41***	1.91
15	Financially secure	(S/R)	.24***	.25***	.25***	-0.62
16	Supportive	(W/T)	.31***	.31***	.28***	-2.22
17	Dresses well	(S/R)	.33***	.34***	.31***	-2.78
18	A good listener	(W/T)	.28***	.26***	.29***	-2.50
19	Loyal		.27***	.33***	.20***	-8.43***
20	Successful	(S/R)	.29***	.30***	.28***	-3.61***
21	Adventurous	(V/A)	.38***	.39***	.38***	-4.09***
22	Good job	(S/R)	.28***	.30***	.27***	-2.22
23	Religious		.57***	.63***	.53***	-8.97***
24	Patient		.26***	.28***	.26***	-1.94
25	Extraverted, enthusiastic	(Ext)	.37***	.41***	.34***	-4.52***
26	Critical, quarrelsome	(Agr)	.39***	.39***	.42***	-0.10
27	Dependable, self-disciplined	(Con)	.31***	.33***	.29***	-3.61***
28	Anxious, easily upset	(Emo)	.27***	.28***	.27***	-0.83
29	Open to new experiences, complex	(Opn)	.36***	.37***	.34***	-3.15**
30	Reserved, quiet	(Ext)	.35***	.39***	.31***	-4.31***
31	Sympathetic, warm	(Agr)	.32***	.32***	.32***	-1.51
32	Disorganized, careless	(Con)	.25***	.24***	.26***	-0.29
33	Calm, emotionally stable	(Emo)	.27***	.29***	.25***	-3.82***
34	Conventional, uncreative	(Opn)	.34***	.35***	.32***	-3.09**
35	Smells good		.38***	.34***	.42***	-0.32
	W/T average		.41***	.40***	.39***	-2.95**
	V/A average		.40***	.37***	.43***	-0.74
	S/R average		.34***	.34***	.34***	-1.95
	Ext average		.36***	.42***	.31***	-5.76***
	Agr average		.37***	.36***	.38***	0.68
	Con average		.29***	.29***	.29***	-1.94
	Emo average		.27***	.27***	.26***	-1.79
	Opn average		.36***	.37***	.36***	-3.53***

Note: W/T: warmth/trustworthiness; V/A: vitality/attractiveness; S/R: status/resources; Ext: Extraversion; Agr: Agreeableness; Con: Conscientiousness; Emo: Emotional Stability; Opn: Openness to Experience. In the Big Five averages, Items 26, 28, 30, 32, and 34 were reverse scored. Values are the regression estimated betas (β_1's) from the following equation: Partner attribute = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$Ideal + u_0 + u_1Ideal + ε . The random slope (u_1) for sample is omitted when models do not converge. *t* for comparison refers to the β_3 estimate in the following model, which tests the difference between the partnered and single columns: Partner attribute = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$Ideal + β_2RelStatus + β_3Ideal×RelStatus + u_0 + u_1Ideal + ε ** p < .01, *** p < .001. Asterisks are omitted for estimates that fail a Holm-Bonferroni test (Holm, 1979) within each column of 35 traits.

Table 3 – Effect Sizes for Tests of Ideal Partner Preference-Matching (Analysis Plan 2b-4b, 2c-4c, 2d-4d)

Analysis			Overall	Partnered	Single	*t* for comparison
Pattern metric						
	Raw		.37***	.38***	.32***	3.06**
	Corrected		.19***	.17***	.19***	3.27**
Level Metric						
1	Attractive	(V/A)	.02**	.00	.05***	3.14**
2	Intelligent		.03***	.00	.03	3.46***
3	Humorous		.04***	.01	.06***	4.30***
4	Considerate	(W/T)	.00	-.04***	.04***	5.79***
5	Honest		.02	-.01	.02	2.72
6	Understanding	(W/T)	.02	-.01	.04***	4.72***
7	Ambitious		.07***	.05***	.08***	3.69***
8	Sporty and Athletic		.07***	.06***	.08***	2.41
9	Fun		.02	-.03**	.05***	6.45***
10	Sensitive	(W/T)	.06***	.07***	.06***	0.80
11	A good lover	(V/A)	.04***	.02	.06***	1.72
12	Nice body	(V/A)	.02	.01	.06***	3.66***
13	Confident		.04***	.01	.04***	3.70***
14	Sexy	(V/A)	.02**	.02	.04***	2.74
15	Financially secure	(S/R)	.04***	.04***	.06***	2.51
16	Supportive	(W/T)	.01	-.01	.02	3.59***
17	Dresses well	(S/R)	.03***	.03	.04***	2.14
18	A good listener	(W/T)	.01	-.02	.05***	5.62***
19	Loyal		.03***	.03**	.02	0.46
20	Successful	(S/R)	.05***	.03	.06***	3.97***
21	Adventurous	(V/A)	.05***	.07***	.07***	3.36***
22	Good job	(S/R)	.05***	.05***	.06***	2.16
23	Religious		.13***	.10***	.07***	-0.21
24	Patient		.01	-.02	.04	4.01***
25	Extraverted, enthusiastic	(Ext)	.07***	.09***	.03	-1.63
26	Critical, quarrelsome	(Agr)	.08***	.10***	.08***	1.36
27	Dependable, self-disciplined	(Con)	.03***	-.01	.06***	5.27***
28	Anxious, easily upset	(Emo)	.07***	.05***	.08***	3.25**
29	Open to new experiences, complex	(Opn)	.05***	.05***	.06***	3.78***
30	Reserved, quiet	(Ext)	.09***	.09***	.07***	0.28
31	Sympathetic, warm	(Agr)	.02	-.01	.04	4.38***
32	Disorganized, careless	(Con)	.04***	.05***	.05***	1.73
33	Calm, emotionally stable	(Emo)	.03***	.02	.04***	2.10
34	Conventional, uncreative	(Opn)	.07***	.09***	.05***	-0.04
35	Smells good		.01	.03	.02	1.06
	W/T average		.00	-.03***	.02	4.50***
	V/A average		.01	-.02*	.05***	5.30***
	S/R average		.03***	.03**	.07***	4.30***
	Ext average		.07***	.08***	.04**	-1.43

Agr average	.03**	.04***	.05***	1.22
Con average	.03**	.01	.06***	4.73***
Emo average	.05***	.01	.07***	3.82***
Opn average	.05***	.05***	.05**	2.41*

Note: W/T: warmth/trustworthiness; V/A: vitality/attractiveness; S/R: status/resources. Ext: Extraversion; Agr: Agreeableness; Con: Conscientiousness; Emo: Emotional Stability; Opn: Openness to Experience. In the Big Five averages, Items 26, 28, 30, 32, and 34 were reverse scored. Values for pattern metric (raw) and pattern metric (corrected) are the regression estimated beta (β_1) from the following equation: Romantic evaluation = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$PatternMetric + $u_0 + u_1$PatternMetric + ε. Values for the level metric are the ideal × trait interaction estimated beta's (β_3's) from the following equation: Romantic evaluation = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$Ideal + β_2PartnerAttribute + β_3Ideal×PartnerAttribute + $u_0 + u_1$PartnerAttribute + ε. In all cases, the random slope (u_1) for sample is omitted when models do not converge. "*t* for comparison" for the pattern metric tests refers to the β_3 estimate in the following model: Romantic evaluation = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$PatternMetric + β_2RelStatus + β_3PatternMetric×RelStatus + $u_0 + u_1$PatternMetric + ε. "*t* for comparison" for the level metric tests refers to the β_7 estimate in the following model: Romantic evaluation = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$Ideal + β_2PartnerAttribute + β_3Ideal×PartnerAttribute + β_4RelStatus + β_5Ideal×RelStatus + β_6PartnerAttribute×RelStatus + β_7Ideal×PartnerAttribute×RelStatus + $u_0 + u_1$PartnerAttribute + ε . * $p <$ .05, ** $p <$ .01, *** $p <$ .001. Asterisks are omitted for estimates that fail a Holm-Bonferroni test (Holm, 1979) within each column of 35 traits.

Strong inference tests. The corrected pattern metric successfully predicted the romantic evaluation (β_1 = .19 in the full sample, see Table 3). In other words, a pure measure of preference-matching across 35 different traits predicted the evaluative dependent measure with a small-to-medium effect size. The association was actually larger in the single (β_1 = .19) than the partnered (β_1 = .17) subsample, but the difference was quite small.[4]

The level metric results were more modest, although many were significantly different from zero (Table 3). As with the corrected pattern metric, these effects tended to be larger for single than partnered participants, although again, such differences were very small. Intriguingly, level metric interaction effects tended to be larger for traits that are not as commonly assessed in this research space, like religiosity and extraversion. The level metric interaction effects were

[4] Some perspectives (e.g., Biesanz, 2010; Fletcher et al., 2020; Wood et al., 2019) add a measure of normative matching alongside "distinctiveness" metrics like these. Using this approach, effect sizes are about half as large as those reported here, but still significant; see the "Normative Preference-Matching" section below.

quite small for traits that are normatively very desirable and commonly studied, like warmth/trustworthiness and vitality/attractiveness traits.

Overall, the level metric effect sizes illustrate why such interactions have been hard to detect in prior studies: The average interaction $\beta_3 = .04$ is a 15% attenuation interaction given the average $\beta_2 = .27$. To put the effect size challenges in context, we used the Shiny App InteractionPoweR (Baranger et al., 2023; Finsaas et al., 2021) and the average values across all the 35 level metric tests: $\beta_1 = .02$, $\beta_2 = .27$, $\beta_3 = .04$ (see equation in note of Table 3), and the average ideal-trait correlation $\beta = .33$ from Table 2. Using these values, achieving 80% power to detect an interaction effect of $\beta_3 = .04$ would require $N = 4{,}475$ participants.[5] (The largest level metric effect—religiosity—would still require $N = 470$ to achieve 80% power.) In summary, the current data suggest that level metric effects do exist, but such interactions will require substantial, if not enormous, resources to detect.

Level of education level metric analysis. It was also possible to test the level metric interaction for level of education using the same multilevel analyses described in the Table 3 note (Romantic evaluation = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$Ideal + β_2PartnerAttribute + β_3Ideal×PartnerAttribute + u_0 + u_1PartnerAttribute + ε) using the ideal "level of education" item and the partner's actual level of education (coded on a 6-point continuous scale). We calculated this estimate for the overall sample, single participants, and partnered participants, and we also tested the difference between single and partnered participants. For the overall sample, this interaction was $\beta_3 = .06$, $t(1991.84)$

[5] The power to detect a standardized interaction effect β is very close to the power to detect a correlation of size β, with two caveats: (a) larger main effects of the two interacting variables (in this case, ideals and attribute perceptions) increase power, and (b) a larger correlation between the two main effects can increase or decrease power, depending on the size of the main effects (Baranger et al., 2023). These mitigating forces are not especially large in these analyses, and so the N required to achieve 80% power to detect $\beta_3 = .04$ (4,475) is only slightly smaller than the N required to achieve 80% power to detect $r = .04$ (4,900).

= 6.33, $p < .001$. For single participants, this interaction was $\beta_3 = .03$, $t(1421.33) = 1.95$, $p = .051$; for partnered participants, this interaction was $\beta_3 = .03$, $t(5522.28) = 2.70$, $p = .007$; and the difference between single and partnered participants was not significant, $t(9020.83) = 0.50$, $p = .618$.

Relationship formation hypothesis. This hypothesis pertains to the separate sample of CloudResearch participants who completed the surveys at two time points, about 3.5 months apart. We conducted the raw pattern metric, corrected pattern metric, and level metric analyses on these three samples (see Table 4). Some of the findings echoed the Table 3 results for the full international sample. For example, for both the steadily partnered and the newly partnered sample, the raw pattern metric was considerably larger than the corrected pattern metric (especially in the steadily partnered sample), but the corrected pattern metric was still significant and of a meaningful effect size ($\beta = .24$). Estimates for the steadily partnered and newly partnered sample were similar, suggesting that both sets of participants maintained their ideals over the intervening months and drew from them when evaluating their partners, regardless of whether or not they were dating that partner when they reported their ideals at time 1. Intriguingly, for the single participants, the corrected pattern metric was essentially zero: Unlike the participants in the international single sample in Table 3, ideal partner preference-matching seemed to have no bearing on the evaluations of these single participants—a finding we revisit in the Discussion. Once again, level metric findings were erratic and small on average (the smaller sample size here yielded a larger range of negative and positive values, relative to Table 3); preferences for religiosity and extraversion perhaps deserve additional study going forward nonetheless.

With respect to level of education: For the steadily partnered sample, the level metric interaction was $\beta_3 = .05$, $t(705) = 1.46$, $p = .144$; for steadily single participants, this interaction was $\beta_3 = .03$, $t(683) = 0.77$, $p = .444$; for newly partnered participants, this interaction was $\beta_3 = .05$, $t(185) = 0.71$, $p = .480$. The difference between these three samples was not significant, $F(2,1573) = 0.12$, $p = .890$.

Table 4 – Relationship Formation Hypothesis

Analysis			Steadily Partnered	Steadily Single	Newly Partnered	*F* for comparison
Pattern Metric						
	Raw		.50***	.18***	.39***	20.86***
	Corrected		.24***	.01	.24***	10.78***
Level Metric						
1	Attractive	(V/A)	.00	.02	.07	0.56
2	Intelligent		-.05	-.03	.08	1.93
3	Humorous		.03	.02	.14***	3.44
4	Considerate	(W/T)	.02	-.03	-.09	1.28
5	Honest		-.06	-.02	.08	1.75
6	Understanding	(W/T)	.00	-.02	-.07	0.43
7	Ambitious		.12***	.02	.16	3.68
8	Sporty and Athletic		.06	.05	.10	0.28
9	Fun		-.03	-.01	.08	0.95
10	Sensitive	(W/T)	.03	-.01	.06	0.53
11	A good lover	(V/A)	-.07	-.03	.07	2.43
12	Nice body	(V/A)	-.04	.01	.06	1.12
13	Confident		.03	.07	.15	1.16
14	Sexy	(V/A)	.04	-.01	.01	0.67
15	Financially secure	(S/R)	.10	-.02	.19	5.33
16	Supportive	(W/T)	.06	-.04	.04	2.80
17	Dresses well	(S/R)	.03	.02	.26***	6.54
18	A good listener	(W/T)	-.01	-.08	.02	1.77
19	Loyal		-.01	-.05	.01	0.72
20	Successful	(S/R)	.03	-.03	.18	3.62
21	Adventurous	(V/A)	.10	.02	.21**	3.87
22	Good job	(S/R)	.14***	.02	.15	4.03
23	Religious		.24***	-.01	.37***	13.51***
24	Patient		.09	.01	-.07	2.96
25	Extraverted, enthusiastic	(Ext)	.09	-.01	.08	2.14
26	Critical, quarrelsome	(Agr)	.15***	.05	.10	2.25
27	Dependable, self-disciplined	(Con)	.05	-.03	.19**	4.94
28	Anxious, easily upset	(Emo)	.06	.02	.05	0.36
29	Open to new experiences, complex	(Opn)	.01	.09	.13	2.18

30	Reserved, quiet	(Ext)	.14***	.02	.16	4.12
31	Sympathetic, warm	(Agr)	.07	.04	-.06	1.69
32	Disorganized, careless	(Con)	.01	-.01	.02	0.16
33	Calm, emotionally stable	(Emo)	.10	.02	.07	1.34
34	Conventional, uncreative	(Opn)	.03	.04	-.04	0.66
35	Smells good		.03	-.04	.10	2.50
	W/T average		-.04	-.05	-.05	0.06
	V/A average		-.06	.00	.04	1.55
	S/R average		.07*	.00	.23***	4.54*
	Ext average		.13***	.03	.07	2.42
	Agr average		.10**	.08*	-.03	1.41
	Con average		.05	-.04	.11	2.58
	Emo average		.08*	.00	.07	1.36
	Opn average		-.03	.07	.00	2.24

Note: W/T: warmth/trustworthiness; V/A: vitality/attractiveness; S/R: status/resources. Ext: Extraversion; Agr: Agreeableness; Con: Conscientiousness; Emo: Emotional Stability; Opn: Openness to Experience. In the Big Five averages, Items 26, 28, 30, 32, and 34 were reverse scored. Note that in these analyses, there is no within-sample dependency. Values for pattern metric (raw) and pattern metric (corrected) are the regression estimated betas (β_1) from the following equation: Romantic evaluation = β_0 + β_1PatternMetric + ε. Values for the level metric are the ideal × trait interaction estimated beta's (β_3's) from the following equation: Romantic evaluation = β_0 + β_1Ideal + β_2PartnerAttribute + β_3Ideal×PartnerAttribute + ε. RelStatus is a 3-level categorical variable, so "*F* for comparison" for the pattern metric tests refers to the omnibus test of the two β_3 estimates in the following model: Romantic evaluation = β_0 + β_1PatternMetric + β_2RelStatus + β_3PatternMetric×RelStatus + ε. "*F* for comparison" for the level metric tests refers to the omnibus test of the two β_7 estimates in the following model: Romantic evaluation = β_0 + β_1Ideal + β_2PartnerAttribute + β_3Ideal×PartnerAttribute + β_4RelStatus + β_5Ideal×RelStatus + β_6PartnerAttribute×RelStatus + β_7Ideal×PartnerAttribute×RelStatus + ε . * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Asterisks are omitted for estimates that fail a Holm-Bonferroni test (Holm, 1979) within each column of 35 traits.

Exploratory Descriptive Analyses

Table 5 presents descriptive analyses of the average preferences of participants in the dataset, both stated (i.e., rated ideals) and revealed (i.e., the association between the attribute and the evaluative dependent measure; Wood & Brumbaugh, 2009). Colloquially speaking, the ideal partner preference ratings (i.e., the means for each attribute) capture the extent to which people generally *say* that each attribute is important in an ideal partner, whereas the revealed preferences (i.e., the slopes for each attribute predicting the dependent variable) capture the

extent to which each attribute *actually predicts* people's romantic evaluations of partners.[6] This table also includes the rank ordering of both sets of 35 preferences.

On the whole, stated and revealed preferences aligned in terms of ranking, although some intriguing differences did emerge. For example, the attributes "confident," "a good listener," "patient," and "calm, emotionally stable" ranked considerably more highly as stated preferences than as revealed preferences. In contrast, the attributes "attractive," "a good lover," "nice body," "sexy," and "smells good" ranked considerably more highly as revealed preferences than as stated preferences. In fact, "a good lover" was the #1 largest revealed preference but actually ranked 12th in terms of stated preferences. (We also conducted separate analyses on the partnered and single subsamples, revealing identical conclusions; see Tables S10 and S11 in the Supplemental Materials.)

Table 5 also calculates gender differences in the preference for attractiveness (i.e., the average of the items "attractive," "nice body," and "sexy") and earning potential (i.e., the average of the items "ambitious," "financially secure," and "good job"). Some theoretical perspectives anticipate that men will place greater weight on attractiveness, and women will place greater weight on earning potential (Buss, 1989). These gender differences indeed emerged when participants reported their stated preferences. Nevertheless, consistent with past meta-analytic work (Eastwick et al., 2014) and the very small level metric analyses documented in Table 3, these gender differences did not emerge in participants' revealed preferences.

We can also use the Table 5 ranking approach to illuminate *why* a gender difference incongruity emerges between stated and revealed preferences. Men's stated preferences tended to

[6] This analysis applies at the level of the entire dataset on the primary target only; we calculate a related form of revealed preference (which we call a "functional preference"; Ledgerwood et al., 2018) that makes use of all four targets in a later section.

underestimate the value they actually placed on “attractive,” “nice body,” and “sexy” by about 6 ranks (out of 35; 1 = highest ranked, 35 = lowest ranked) on average (see Table S12 in the Supplemental Materials for details). That is, their stated preferences for these three traits ranked 9, 18, and 17 (respectively) but their revealed preferences for these three traits ranked 7, 13, and 6. However, women underestimated the value they placed on these three traits by a full 13 ranks (out of 35): Their stated preferences for these three traits ranked 18, 28, and 23 (respectively) but their revealed preferences for these three traits ranked 8, 17, and 5 (i.e., about the same as men). As for “ambitious,” “financially secure,” and “good job,” men’s stated preferences underestimated their value by about 4 ranks: Their stated preferences for these three traits ranked 25, 25 (tied), and 27 (respectively) but their revealed preferences for these three traits ranked 22, 24, and 20. In contrast, women’s stated preferences *over*estimated their value by about 4 ranks: Their stated preferences for these three traits ranked 22, 17, and 18 (respectively) but their revealed preferences for these three traits ranked 24, 25, and 21 (i.e., again, about the same as men). In summary, both men’s and women’s stated preferences appeared to underestimate the weight they place on attractiveness, but this underestimation effect was more pronounced for women than for men. In contrast, men’s stated preferences slightly underestimated the weight they placed on earning potential, and women’s stated preferences slightly overestimated the weight they placed on earning potential.

Table 5 – Descriptive Statistics for Stated and Revealed Preferences

Attribute		Stated Preferences			Revealed Preferences	
	N	*M*	*SD*	Rank	β	Rank
Attractive	10343	8.86	1.89	16	.42***	8
Intelligent	10348	9.39	1.65	9	.38***	12
Humorous	10345	9.34	1.78	11	.36***	13
Considerate	10343	9.59	1.60	7	.40***	10
Honest	10347	10.08	1.38	2	.43***	5
Understanding	10346	9.84	1.46	4	.42***	7
Ambitious	10344	8.13	2.34	24	.22***	24
Sporty and Athletic	10347	7.16	2.43	29	.10***	29
Fun	10351	9.43	1.66	8	.38***	11
Sensitive	10340	8.10	2.35	25	.28***	19
A good lover	10338	9.26	1.99	12	.56***	1
Nice body	10348	8.02	2.15	26	.32***	16
Confident	10347	8.77	1.87	17	.18***	26
Sexy	10342	8.39	2.20	19	.42***	6
Financially secure	10342	8.38	2.19	20	.20***	25
Supportive	10346	9.92	1.52	3	.49***	3
Dresses well	10344	8.19	2.18	23	.24***	22
A good listener	10346	9.69	1.60	5	.35***	14
Loyal	10345	10.10	1.53	1	.51***	2
Successful	10344	8.22	2.22	22	.29***	17
Adventurous	10338	7.89	2.36	27	.16***	27
Good job	10342	8.30	2.17	21	.24***	21
Religious	10340	4.83	3.33	31	.04**	31
Patient	10342	9.35	1.70	10	.29***	18
Extraverted, enthusiastic	10343	7.70	2.19	28	.13***	28
Critical, quarrelsome	10339	3.41	2.65	33	-.04**	33
Dependable, self-disciplined	10348	9.26	1.81	12	.33***	15
Anxious, easily upset	10341	3.10	2.24	34	.02	32
Open to new experiences, complex	10346	8.64	2.10	18	.23***	23
Reserved, quiet	10338	5.53	2.66	30	.07***	30
Sympathetic, warm	10345	9.61	1.59	6	.40***	9
Disorganized, careless	10340	2.80	2.17	35	-.05***	34
Calm, emotionally stable	10344	9.26	1.75	12	.26***	20
Conventional, uncreative	10343	4.02	2.56	32	-.07***	35
Smells good	10346	9.10	1.98	15	.45***	4
W/T average	10356	9.43	1.29		.48***	
V/A average	10353	8.48	1.56		.50***	
S/R average	10353	8.27	1.81		.31***	
Ext average	10344	7.08	1.78		.04**	
Agr average	10348	9.10	1.61		.25***	
Con average	10348	9.23	1.56		.21***	
Emo average	10347	9.08	1.56		.14***	
Opn average	10350	8.31	1.75		.19***	

Attribute	*N*	Stated Preferences				Revealed Preferences		
		M	*SD*			*β*		
				Gender Diff.			Gender Diff.	
Attractiveness Composite				*t*	*d*		*t*	*q*
Heterosexual Men	2935	8.73	1.70	13.10***	0.22	.46***	0.19	0.02
Heterosexual Women	5408	8.35	1.80			.45***		
Earning Potential Composite								
Heterosexual Men	2933	7.50	1.85	27.51***	0.71	.27***	0.78	0.00
Heterosexual Women	5410	8.74	1.63			.28***		

Note: Effect sizes *d* and *q* are coded such that positive effect sizes are in the predicted direction. Gender differences were only calculated for participants who identified as a man or a woman and who selected the option "straight/heterosexual" for their sexuality. Stated preferences are means. Revealed preferences are β_1 terms in the equation: Romantic evaluation = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$PartnerAttribute + $u_0 + u_1$PartnerAttribute + ε. In all cases, the random slope (u_1) for sample is omitted when models do not converge.

Secondary Planned Analyses

Normative preference-matching. A difference between the effect sizes associated with the raw pattern metric and the corrected pattern metric implies—but does not directly test—the idea that participants positively evaluate partners to the extent that they perceive those partners to have consensually desirable traits (Fletcher et al., 2020). The direct test of this idea entails calculating a normative pattern metric: the association between (a) a Fisher *z*-scored version of the within-person correlation between the *sample average of* the 35 ideal ratings (not the participant's own rating) and (the participants' own ratings of) the 35 partner-attribute ratings, and (b) the romantic evaluation measure.

Using the multilevel analyses described in the Table 3 note, we calculated this estimate for the overall sample, single participants, and partnered participants, and we also tested the difference between single and partnered participants. For the overall sample, this effect was $\beta_1 = .37$, $t(39.35) = 29.38$, $p < .001$. For single participants, this effect was $\beta_1 = .32$, $t(33.68) = 18.14$, $p < .001$; for partnered participants, this effect was $\beta_1 = .39$, $t(56.99) = 19.84$, $p < .001$; and the difference between single and partnered participants was significant, $t(6765.48) = 2.17$, $p = .030$.

These effect sizes suggest that, when participants perceived that partners had normatively "ideal" traits, they evaluated those partners very positively, regardless of their own idiosyncratic ideal partner preferences.

In some research areas that examine analogous forms of multivariate matching (e.g., Biesanz, 2010; Fletcher et al., 2020; Wood et al., 2019), it is common practice to predict a dependent measure from both the normative and distinctive metrics simultaneously. Similarly, we can predict the romantic evaluation DV using the following equation:

$$\text{Romantic evaluation} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{NormativePatternMetric} + \beta_2\text{CorrectedPatternMetric} + u_0 + u_1\text{NormativePatternMetric} + u_2\text{CorrectedPatternMetric} + \varepsilon \quad \text{(Eq. 1)}$$

Using this approach, the normative preference-matching effects closely approximate the effect sizes when included in the equation alone: in the full sample, $\beta_1 = .34$, $t(37.85) = 26.59$, $p < .001$; in the single subsample, $\beta_1 = .29$, $t(32.15) = 15.76$, $p < .001$; in the partnered subsample $\beta_1 = .37$, $t(59.33) = 20.21$, $p < .001$. However, the corrected pattern metric effect sizes were approximately half the size of what they were when included in the equation alone: in the full sample, $\beta_2 = .11$, $t(31.42) = 10.71$, $p < .001$; in the single subsample, $\beta_2 = .13$, $t(41.70) = 6.69$, $p < .001$; in the partnered subsample, $\beta_2 = .09$, $t(47.09) = 5.66$, $p < .001$. In other words, idiosyncratic preference-matching offers a small ($\beta = .09$-$.13$), yet significant, boost above and beyond normative preference-matching, and normative preference-matching is approximately 3 times as large.

Individual difference moderation. It is plausible that ideal partner preference-matching effects vary across studies in the existing literature due to individual differences across participant populations. A study by Lam et al. (2016) points to the intriguing possibility that there are important cross-cultural factors at play. In this reasonably large ($N = 472$) study, these scholars found that the corrected pattern metric had a significant predictive association with relationship evaluations in Taiwan ($r = .22$) but not in the U.S. ($r = .05$), and the difference

between these two correlations was significant. Reasons for a Taiwan-U.S. difference remain somewhat speculative, but one relevant distinction between these two cultures is relational mobility—that is, the ability to meet new people and select into (and out of) relationships on the basis of personal desires (Kito et al., 2017; Thomson et al., 2018; Yuki & Schug, 2012). Americans, by virtue of their higher relational mobility, might be more likely than Taiwanese to "try out" relationships that mismatch their ideals, perhaps especially if they presume that they could later end the relationship with minimal consequences. Then, if people are motivated on average to feel positively about their partners after investing time and energy into the relationship (Joel & MacDonald, 2021), high relational mobility populations may include a larger proportion of people with ideal-mismatching partners who nevertheless report high satisfaction. A second potentially relevant distinction is individualism-collectivism (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998), as individuals in collectivistic cultures may be especially likely to adopt the ideal partner preferences of their parents (Locke et al., 2020). If the attributes of one's romantic partner implicate family members in collectivistic societies, this fact may motivate collectivistic (but not individualistic) individuals to remain attuned to the extent to which the partner mismatches their ideals.

To test whether relational mobility (i.e., the average of the 12 items; Thomson et al., 2018), individualism (i.e., either the 4-item horizontal individualism or 4-item vertical individualism subscales; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998), or collectivism (i.e., either the 4-item horizontal collectivism or 4-item vertical collectivism subscales; Triandis & Gelfand, 1988) affect ideal partner preference-matching, we examined whether these five individual difference measures moderated all the analyses reported in Table 3 that pertained to research questions 1-3 (i.e., effect sizes associated with the overall sample, single participants and partnered

participants). Again, we used Bonferroni-Holm correlations for each set of 35 tests. Table 6 uses "+" signs to indicate positive, significant interaction terms (i.e., ideal preference-matching is stronger among participants who are *higher* in relational mobility/individualism/collectivism), and "–" signs to indicate negative significant interaction terms (i.e., ideal preference-matching is stronger among participants who are *lower* in relational mobility/individualism/collectivism). The predicted direction of moderation is depicted in a row at the top of Table 6. Reliabilities for relational mobility were $\alpha = .82$ ($\omega = .81$) on the full sample, $\alpha = .82$ ($\omega = .81$) on the partnered sample, and $\alpha = .82$ ($\omega = .80$) on the single sample; reliabilities for horizontal individualism were $\alpha = .71$ ($\omega = .72$) on the full sample, $\alpha = .69$ ($\omega = .70$) on the partnered sample, and $\alpha = .73$ ($\omega = .74$) on the single sample; reliabilities for vertical individualism were $\alpha = .67$ ($\omega = .68$) on the full sample, $\alpha = .67$ ($\omega = .67$) on the partnered sample, and $\alpha = .69$ ($\omega = .69$) on the single sample; reliabilities for horizontal collectivism were $\alpha = .74$ ($\omega = .74$) on the full sample, $\alpha = .74$ ($\omega = .74$) on the partnered sample, and $\alpha = .73$ ($\omega = .73$) on the single sample; reliabilities for vertical collectivism were $\alpha = .69$ ($\omega = .72$) on the full sample, $\alpha = .68$ ($\omega = .71$) on the partnered sample, and $\alpha = .69$ ($\omega = .72$) on the single sample.

Very few of these interactions were statistically significant. And, crucially, in the full table, 21 interactions were in the predicted direction of moderation (i.e., no shading in Table 6), and 23 interactions were in the opposite of the predicted direction (i.e., grey shading). For example, when interactions emerged for the corrected pattern metric, they tended to be positive interactions (8 out of 9 times), regardless of whether the prior literature anticipated that these interactions would be negative (relational mobility, individualism) or positive (collectivism). Given the ambiguity of these results and related concerns about moderation with measured variables (Rohrer et al., 2022), we hesitate before interpreting them any more deeply.

Table 6 – Secondary Planned Analyses

	Analysis		Overall					Partnered					Single					Functional Prefs
			R	Ind		Col		R	Ind		Col		R	Ind		Col		
				H	V	H	V		H	V	H	V		H	V	H	V	
Predicted Direction of Moderation			–	–	–	+	+	–	–	–	+	+	–	–	–	+	+	
Pattern Metric																		
	Raw				–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–		+		+		2.61%
	Corrected		+	+		+			+		+	–	+	+		+		6.87%
Level Metric																		
1	Attractive	(V/A)									+							1.21%
2	Intelligent																	0.53%
3	Humorous																	2.02%
4	Considerate	(W/T)							+									1.47%
5	Honest								+									0.98%
6	Understanding	(W/T)																2.04%
7	Ambitious																	4.87%
8	Sporty and Athletic																	4.53%
9	Fun								+									1.68%
10	Sensitive	(W/T)																4.15%
11	A good lover	(V/A)																4.12%
12	Nice body	(V/A)						+										3.82%
13	Confident								+									3.51%
14	Sexy	(V/A)				+					+							3.68%
15	Financially secure	(S/R)																4.11%
16	Supportive	(W/T)																1.34%
17	Dresses well	(S/R)																3.32%
18	A good listener	(W/T)																2.29%
19	Loyal																	1.49%
20	Successful	(S/R)																2.71%
21	Adventurous	(V/A)																4.75%
22	Good job	(S/R)																4.13%
23	Religious							–	–		–							4.77%
24	Patient																	4.59%
25	Extraverted, enthusiastic	(Ext)						–										4.98%
26	Critical, quarrelsome	(Agr)																3.60%
27	Dependable, self-disciplined	(Con)																1.67%
28	Anxious, easily upset	(Emo)																4.94%
29	Open to new experiences, complex	(Opn)																3.96%
30	Reserved, quiet	(Ext)																3.51%
31	Sympathetic, warm	(Agr)																2.36%
32	Disorganized, careless	(Con)																3.75%
33	Calm, emotionally stable	(Emo)																3.11%
34	Conventional, uncreative	(Opn)																2.97%
35	Smells good																	3.02%
	W/T average		–					–										2.13%

V/A average	+		+	+ +	+	+	2.01%
S/R average							3.36%
Ext average							2.91%
Agr average						+	2.10%
Con average		+					2.61%
Emo average	+			+			4.01%
Opn average				−			2.75%

Note: W/T: warmth/trustworthiness; V/A: vitality/attractiveness; S/R: status/resources. Ext: Extraversion; Agr: Agreeableness; Con: Conscientiousness; Emo: Emotional Stability; Opn: Openness to Experience; R: Relational mobility moderation; Ind: Individualism moderation (H = Horizontal, V = Vertical); Col: Collectivism moderation (H = Horizontal, V = Vertical). In the Big Five averages, Items 26, 28, 30, 32, and 34 were reverse scored. Individual-difference moderation values for pattern metric (raw) and pattern metric (corrected) derive from the interaction beta (β_3) from the following equation: Romantic evaluation = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$PatternMetric + β_2IndividualDifference + β_3 PatternMetric × IndividualDifference + u_0 + u_1PatternMetric + ε. Values for the level metric derive from the interaction beta's (β_7's) from the following equation: Romantic evaluation = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$Ideal + β_2PartnerAttribute + β_3Ideal× PartnerAttribute + β_4IndividualDifference + β_5Ideal×IndividualDifference + β_6PartnerAttribute×IndividualDifference + β_7Ideal×PartnerAttribute×IndividualDifference + u_0 + u_1PartnerAttribute + ε. In all cases, the random slope (u_1) for sample is omitted when models do not converge. The "+" indicates significant positive moderation; the "−" indicates significant negative moderation; the predicted pattern of moderation is depicted in the first five rows. The "+" and "−" signs were omitted for estimates that failed a Holm-Bonferroni test (Holm, 1979) within each column of 35 traits. Shaded "+" and "−" signs are in the opposite of the predicted direction. Functional preferences refer to the $R^2_{t\,(v)}$ variance estimate from Rights & Sterba (2019) that captures the percentage of variance (out of 100%) accounted for by individual differences in the association of the attribute/pattern metric with the romantic evaluation dependent measure.

Functional preferences. Given that participants rated four total targets in the primary sample, it was possible to calculate each participant's *functional preference* for each attribute (Ledgerwood et al., 2018). A functional preference (also called a "driver of liking," Lawless & Heymann, 2010) is the strength with which an attribute (e.g., attractiveness) predicts *a given person's romantic evaluations* across a series of targets—how much the attribute "matters" for a given participant. In this case, each participant's functional preference can be measured as the association of an attribute with the dependent measure across the four targets. Functional preferences in this context are very similar to the revealed preferences described above. The distinction is that a functional preference (typically) refers to a preference that has been

measured separately for each participant, and this requires that the participant rates multiple targets. The descriptive analyses in Table 5 only used the first (primary) target that participants evaluated.

A new approach by Rights and Sterba (2019) permits the calculation of the extent to which these functional preferences exhibit stable individual differences across targets. Specifically, the *R* package *r2mlm* (Shaw et al., 2020) provides the percentage of variance accounted for by the random effects component (i.e., "slope variation" or $R^2_{t\,(v)}$) for a particular attribute as a fraction of the total variance.[7]

We calculated these values for all 35 attributes, the 3 Fletcher et al. (1999) constructs (both jointly and separately), the 5 Big Five traits, and the 2 pattern metric analyses (Table 6). The $R^2_{t\,(v)}$ variance estimates for the 35 attributes, the 3 Fletcher et al. (1999) constructs, and the 5 Big Five constructs essentially denote the extent to which there are stable individual differences in the tendency for some people to exhibit stronger functional preferences than other people for a given attribute (Eastwick, Finkel, et al., 2023).

These values tended to be larger than zero, but they were fairly modest: The average of the 35 traits was $R^2_{t\,(v)} = 3.1\%$, and no trait exceeded 5%. In other words, individual differences in the way that participants weigh a given trait accounts for about 3% of the variance in romantic evaluations. We also calculated the $R^2_{t\,(v)}$ variance estimates for the two pattern metric analyses; these values denote the extent to which there are stable individual differences in the tendency to desire a partner who matches (vs. mismatches) one's ideals across all attributes. For example, the results for the corrected pattern metric indicated that individual differences in the way that

[7] Unlike the analyses above, this analysis ignores nesting within sample, and we conduct the analysis on a dataset that contains four rows per participant (one for each target). Now, the random slope effect captures variability a*cross participants* (not samples) in the extent to which the attribute predicts the dependent measure.

people weigh the match between ideals and traits across all traits accounts for about 7% of the variance in romantic evaluations.

Discussion

Central Takeaways

This is the first report from the Preference-Matching Project: the largest examination of ideal partner preference-matching to date (N = 10,358 participants). In brief, ideal partner preference-matching predicted romantic evaluations—when collapsing across a large array of traits. That is, the effect size for the corrected pattern metric was modest but meaningful (β = .19), and it did not differ appreciably between the partnered (β = .17) vs. single (β = .19) subsamples. Normative desirability proved to be an important consideration, too: Participants who perceived that partners matched the normative (i.e., sample-wide) ideal partner strongly desired those partners (β = .37). When included together (as recommended by Beisanz, 2010; Fletcher et al., 2020), normative preference-matching remained strong (β = .34), while the corrected pattern metric was cut to a small (but still significant) effect size (β = .11). Approaches like the raw pattern metric and Euclidean distance revealed medium-to-large effects, likely because they blend normative and distinctive matching together into a single measurement mixture (Rogers et al., 2018; Wood & Furr, 2016).

The level metric (i.e., ideal × trait interaction) tests were also highly informative. These effects were quite small on average (β = .04), which may be why they have rarely been significant in prior studies (β = .04 would require a sample size of N = 4,475 to detect with 80% power; no prior study was even close to achieving such a large sample size, see Table S1). Also notable is that the level metric tests for the commonly studied, highly desirable attributes in this literature (e.g., traits in the warmth/trustworthiness and vitality/attractiveness categories) did not

even differ from zero in the full sample (β = .00-01). Alternatively, traits that are rarely studied in this literature and that received moderate ideal ratings on average showed much larger level metric effects, like extraversion (β = .07) and religious (β = .13). It appears that the predictive validity of specific traits is more likely to be detectable for traits that land in a middling range of desirability (i.e., what could be called "horizontal" attributes; Hitsch et al., 2010), rather than traits that are highly normatively desirable (i.e., "vertical" attributes).

In two cases, expected moderation effects failed to emerge. First, we did not find much evidence that certain people or certain populations were especially likely to rely on their ideals. Our preregistered tests of potentially relevant individual differences (Table 6) revealed no interpretable pattern. Indeed, the multi-level modeling approach of Rights and Sterba (2019) suggested that the slope random effects corresponding to the sample (u_1) in Table 3 explained less than 1% of the variance. In other words, the average association between an attribute and the romantic evaluation dependent measure tended not to vary reliably depending on which of the 60 samples generated it. Slightly larger (but still modest) amounts of variability emerged for (a) the tendency for some people to desire particular traits more than others across four different partners (3.1%; Table 6), (b) the tendency for mean levels of the traits to vary across samples (2.3%; cultures vary in the extent to which participants view partners as "humorous" or "ambitious"), and (c) the tendency for mean levels of the dependent measure to vary across samples (3.4%; cultures vary in the extent to which participants are happy in their relationships). These latter three types of effects might be more promising candidates for tests of moderation.

Second, for the most part, effect sizes in the partnered and single samples were similar. Many scholars (including several in the project coordinator group of the current project) once believed that ideal partner preference-matching was more likely to predict outcomes in

established relationships rather than initial attraction contexts (Eastwick et al., 2014). It is possible that the earlier literature suggested this pattern because studies of ongoing relationships classically gravitated toward the uncorrected pattern metric (which reveals medium-to-large effects; Fletcher et al., 1999, 2000), whereas initial attraction studies were inspired by perspectives on gender differences for specific traits in isolation (e.g., attractiveness, earning potential) and therefore tended to rely on level metric tests (which reveal very small effects; Eastwick & Finkel, 2008).

Nevertheless, one curious data point remains: Why did the single participants in the relationship formation subsample show no effects whatsoever? These participants first reported their ideals in isolation while they were single. Then, about 3.5 months later, these (still single) participants completed the rest of the procedure. The corrected pattern and level metric tests suggested that these participants were not drawing from their previously reported ideals at all (Table 4). And yet, this separation of 3.5 months seemed to matter very little for participants who were partnered at both time points, or participants who were single at time 1 and partnered at time 2. There are perhaps two ways of explaining these data. First, perhaps the people who were single at both time points had several rejection experiences in the interim, and their ideals changed more than the single participants who had the acceptance experience of becoming partnered during this time frame (Charlot et al., 2019). Second, perhaps single people who are very attracted to a particular partner are motivated to interpret the partner's traits in line with their ideals, but only if they have recently been reminded of their ideals. Researchers in this area should keep a keen eye on whether single participants are reporting their ideals and measures about a potential partner at the same or a different moment in time. (Most speed-dating studies, for example, ask participants to report their ideals on an intake form, and then participants

evaluate potential partners several days later.) This seemingly incidental methodological feature may matter a great deal for reasons that are not yet clear.

Finally, we presented a new approach that allows researchers to explore the distinction between stated preferences (i.e., preferences for traits as rated on scales) and revealed preferences (i.e., preferences as captured by the strength of the association between the trait and the DV). When the 35 attributes were ranked in the whole sample, it was possible to document cases where stated preference judgments (relatively) overestimated revealed preference judgments: Participants actually liked attributes like "confident," "a good listener," "patient," and "calm, emotionally stable" less than they thought they did. In other cases, participants' stated preferences were underestimates, as in the case of "attractive," "a good lover," "nice body," "sexy," and "smells good." This approach was also able to illuminate why gender differences emerge for stated (but not revealed) preferences for attractiveness and earning potential attributes (Table 5). Specifically, for attractiveness, both men's and women's stated preferences underestimated their revealed preferences, but women's tendency to underestimate proved far stronger than men's. For earning potential, a "mirror image" pattern emerged such that men's stated preferences underestimated their revealed preferences but women's stated preferences overestimated their revealed preferences. Moving forward, this approach could be used to examine other research questions on accuracy and bias using various measures of preferences.

Strengths and Limitations

This study has a number of strengths. Our partnership with the Psychological Science Accelerator (Moshontz et al., 2018) meant that the data were collected across 43 countries using a questionnaire that had been translated (and back-translated) into 22 different languages. Critically, our highly powered design meant that the estimates of effect sizes throughout this

paper are far more precise than is typical in most studies in this research area. Also, this paper was approved as a registered report, which meant that the design and analytic approach were reviewed before the data were collected.

This study also makes several important theoretical contributions. The pattern of effect sizes suggests that studies are far more likely to find empirical support to the extent that they focus on matching across many variables simultaneously rather than single attributes in isolation (e.g., gender differences in specific attributes; Eastwick & Finkel, 2008; a "top-3 most important" attributes approach, Sparks et al., 2020). Furthermore, the fact that effect sizes tended to be about three times larger for normative matching rather than the corrected pattern metric sheds new light on the intuitive idea that "people know what they want in a partner." Yes, people's stated preferences capture the attributes that are *generally* desirable in partners, but a given person's *distinctive* preferences only modestly (but still significantly) capture the attributes that they find especially desirable. These estimates also help clarify theories about the origin and nature of relationship variance (i.e., compatibility), as they represent one of the strongest attempts to use attribute-matching to explain why people are more likely to experience attraction and romantic contentment with some partners rather than others. The current data suggest that the corrected pattern metric across 35 traits may be able to explain 2-4% of relationship variance. But of course, SRM approaches suggest that romantic evaluative measures are mostly (i.e., > 50%) comprised of relationship variance (Kenny, 2019). The lion's share of human romantic compatibility remains unaccounted for, and we may have to stretch beyond attribute-matching concepts like similarity and preference-matching to explain it (Eastwick et al., 2023).

This study also has some limitations. This study only used measured variables, and experimental approaches will be required to understand the causal consequences of ideals

(Eastwick, Smith, et al., 2019; Rohrer et al., 2022). Furthermore, the participants' partners did not actually take part in this study, and effect sizes will likely decline across the board if the partner's (rather than the participant's) reports of the partner's traits are used instead (Hromatko et al., 2015). If one conservatively estimated that the zero-order corrected pattern metric would decline to (say) $r = .10$, a sample size of $N = 779$ participants would be necessary to achieve 80% power—a challenging but not impossible task. Also, the 35 attributes that we assessed here are certainly not exhaustive, and our results suggest the wisdom of testing the predictive validity of other traits that (a) receive middling (i.e., not especially high) normative desirability ratings, or (b) are prioritized in some cultures more than others. Finally, even though we sampled participants from all over the world, most of them had at least a high school level of education, and many of them likely live in situations where they have substantial freedom of choice over who they could select as a romantic partner. Future research would need to examine how mate evaluations take place in contexts where people themselves have limited input over whom they are expected to court or marry.

Conclusion

The current study partnered with the Psychological Science Accelerator to test the predictive validity of ideal partner preferences across 43 different countries. Results revealed that ideals did indeed have predictive power, although results were highly dependent on whether preference-matching was conceptualized as a normative match (βs ranging from .30-.40), an idiosyncratic or distinctive match (βs .10-.20), or as the level of specific traits (average β = .04). These data—especially given the size and breadth of the dataset—should be able to provide effect size benchmarks for future studies of human mate preferences, regardless of whether

researchers are interested in stated preferences, revealed preferences, or preference-matching effects.

Data and Code Availability

Data, codebook, and analysis scripts, are openly available through the Open Science Framework: https://osf.io/b29vu/?view_only=35a15592f8b04cdfb9ab32f45c73f3c6.

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Supplemental Materials

Table S1 –Published Tests of the Predictive Validity of Ideal-Partner Preference Matching

Article	Very weak inference	Weak inference	Strong inference		*N*
	Ideal-trait correlations	Pattern (raw)	Pattern (corrected)	Level	
Murray et al. (1996)	✓	✓			242
Botwin et al. (1997)	✓			✓[a]	216
Fletcher et al. (1999, Study 5)	✓			✓	83
Fletcher et al. (1999, Study 6)		✓			89
Fletcher et al. (2000)		✓			100
Zentner (2005, Study 2)		✓			98
Todd et al. (2007)	✓				47
Eastwick & Finkel (2008)				✓	163
Eastwick (2009, Study 2)				✓	146
Eastwick, Eagly, et al. (2011, Study 4)				✓	187
Eastwick, Eagly, et al. (2011, Study 5)				✓	71
Eastwick, Finkel, et al. (2011, Study 1)				✓	100
Eastwick, Finkel, et al. (2011, Study 3)		✓	✓[b]	✓	502
Murray et al. (2011)		✓			386
Eastwick & Neff (2012)		✓		✓	338
Li et al. (2013, Study 3)				✓	142
Li et al. (2013, Study 4)				✓	93
Lam et al. (2016, Study 4)			✓	✓	472
Campbell et al. (2016)	✓				76
Conroy-Beam & Buss (2016, Study 1)	✓				214
Conroy-Beam & Buss (2016, Study 2)	✓				259
Conroy-Beam & Buss (2016, Study 3)	✓				294
Conroy-Beam et al. (2016, Study 1)		✓[c]			259
Conroy-Beam et al. (2016, Study 2)		✓[c]			300
Conroy-Beam et al. (2016, Study 3)		✓[c]			301
Buyukcan-Tetik et al. (2017)	✓	✓			390
Wu et al. (2018)				✓	198
Gerlach et al. (2019)	✓				763
Valentine et al. (2020, Study 1)				✓	216
Valentine et al. (2020, Study 2)				✓	270
Fletcher et al. (2020)	✓	✓	✓	✓	394
Mafra et al. (2021)	✓				436
Selterman & Gideon (2022)				✓	793
Eastwick, Joel et al. (2023)	✓	✓	✓	✓	208
Driebe et al. (in press)	✓	✓	✓	✓	178

Note: ✓ indicates that the analytic strategy was reported. This table includes only studies that examined participants' evaluations of targets whom they had at least met face-to-face. The current study will report all four analytic strategies in full.

[a] This study used a difference score with additional controls that is conceptually analogous to the level metric.
[b] This version of this test was reported in a subsequent article (Eastwick et al., 2019).
[c] This study used a "Euclidean distance" metric, which has the same flaws as the raw pattern metric (Rogers et al., 2018).

Table S2 – Creating the Raw and Corrected Pattern Metric and Conducting Analyses 1a-1d

		Ideal (raw)				Partner trait (raw)						Ideal (centered)				Partner trait (centered)					
ID	Rom Eval. (DV)	Trait1	Trait2	Trait3	Trait4	Trait1	Trait2	Trait3	Trait4	Pattern Metric (raw)	z-Pattern Metric (raw)	Trait1	Trait2	Trait3	Trait4	Trait1	Trait2	Trait3	Trait4	Pattern Metric (corr.)	z-Pattern Metric (corr.)
1	8.50	8	8	6	7	6	5	5	5	.52	.58	0.47	0.61	-1.40	-0.36	0.36	-0.49	-0.43	-0.58	.41	.44
2	9.50	7	7	7	6	5	7	7	7	-.33	-.35	-0.53	-0.39	-0.40	-1.36	-0.64	1.51	1.57	1.42	-.14	-.14
3	8.33	9	7	6	6	4	5	7	6	-.91	-1.54	1.47	-0.39	-1.40	-1.36	-1.64	-0.49	1.57	0.42	-.92	-1.61
4	7.83	6	7	7	5	6	5	6	6	-.52	-.58	-1.53	-0.39	-0.40	-2.36	0.36	-0.49	0.57	0.42	-.42	-.45
5	8.50	8	6	7	7	6	5	5	4	.50	.55	0.47	-1.39	-0.40	-0.36	0.36	-0.49	-0.43	-1.58	.36	.38
6	9.00	8	9	7	8	6	5	4	5	.50	.55	0.47	1.61	-0.40	0.64	0.36	-0.49	-1.43	-0.58	.46	.50
7	8.17	7	6	6	5	5	5	5	7	-.82	-1.15	-0.53	-1.39	-1.40	-2.36	-0.64	-0.49	-0.43	1.42	-.88	-1.40
8	8.50	7	9	9	9	6	6	5	6	-.33	-.35	-0.53	1.61	1.60	1.64	0.36	0.51	-0.43	0.42	-.20	-.20
9	8.00	6	7	8	6	6	7	4	3	.00	.00	-1.53	-0.39	0.60	-1.36	0.36	1.51	-1.43	-2.58	.01	.01
10	8.67	8	7	6	7	7	6	5	5	.85	1.27	0.47	-0.39	-1.40	-0.36	1.36	0.51	-0.43	-0.58	.77	1.03
11	8.50	8	7	7	7	6	6	7	5	.00	.00	0.47	-0.39	-0.40	-0.36	0.36	0.51	1.57	-0.58	-.13	-.13
12	8.00	7	9	8	8	4	7	4	7	.71	.88	-0.53	1.61	0.60	0.64	-1.64	1.51	-1.43	1.42	.76	.99
13	8.17	8	9	10	8	4	6	6	5	.82	1.15	0.47	1.61	2.60	0.64	-1.64	0.51	0.57	-0.58	.87	1.31
14	8.83	6	8	7	6	5	6	6	4	.82	1.15	-1.53	0.61	-0.40	-1.36	-0.64	0.51	0.57	-1.58	.81	1.11
15	9.17	8	8	6	8	7	5	6	5	-.17	-.18	0.47	0.61	-1.40	0.64	1.36	-0.49	0.57	-0.58	-.33	-.34
16	8.83	9	8	7	6	7	5	7	3	.67	.82	1.47	0.61	-0.40	-1.36	1.36	-0.49	1.57	-2.58	.65	.77
17	8.33	7	7	7	10	7	4	5	7	.56	.63	-0.53	-0.39	-0.40	2.64	1.36	-1.49	-0.43	1.42	.53	.59
18	8.67	6	8	8	7	4	7	6	6	.90	1.47	-1.53	0.61	0.60	-0.36	-1.64	1.51	0.57	0.42	.93	1.68
19	8.33	8	7	6	8	5	6	6	6	-.52	-.58	0.47	-0.39	-1.40	0.64	-0.64	0.51	0.57	0.42	-.53	-.60
20	8.33	8	8	9	7	7	4	5	5	.00	.00	0.47	0.61	1.60	-0.36	1.36	-1.49	-0.43	-0.58	-.04	-.04

Equation	# of Analyses
1a. $\text{PartnerTrait} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{Ideal} + u_0 + u_1\text{Ideal} + \varepsilon$	1 for each ideal-trait pair
1b. $\text{Romantic evaluation} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{PatternMetric(raw)} + u_0 + u_1\text{PatternMetric(raw)} + \varepsilon$	1
1c. $\text{Romantic evaluation} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{PatternMetric(corrected)} + u_0 + u_1\text{PatternMetric(corrected)} + \varepsilon$	1
1d. $\text{Romantic evaluation} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{Ideal} + \beta_2\text{PartnerTrait} + \beta_3\text{Ideal} \times \text{PartnerTrait} + u_0 + u_1\text{PartnerTrait} + \varepsilon$	1 for each ideal- trait pair

Note: Pattern Metric (raw) is the correlation between the two matrices outlined in blue. Pattern Metric (corrected) is the correlation between the two matrices outlined in red. Both Pattern Metric variables are then Fisher *z* transformed for analysis 1b and 1c. Colors in equations correspond to dotted-line colors around the relevant column of data. u_0 = random intercept (across samples); u_1 = random slope (across samples); ε = residual error. If models do not converge, u_1 terms were dropped first, followed by u_0 terms.

Supplemental Materials

Table S3 – Participating Labs and Sample Sizes

Institution	Country	Language	N
Adam Mickiewicz University	Poland	Polish	293
Beijing Normal University	China	Chinese	57
Bilkent University	Turkey	Turkish	174
Christ University	India	English	49
Chulalongkorn University	Thailand	Thai	67
Duke University	Chile	Spanish	116
Eotvos Lorand University	Hungary	Hungarian	403
Franklin & Marshall College	El Salvador	Spanish	67
HSE University	Russia	Russian	353
HSE University	Ghana	English	68
Instituto Universitario de Lisboa	Portugal	Portuguese	144
Ithaca College	United States	English	153
Kyushu University	Japan	Japanese	721
Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts	North Macedonia	Macedonian	198
Macquarie University	Australia	English	168
MIT Sloan School of Management	China	Chinese	60
Palacky University Olomouc	Czech Republic	Czech	178
Redeemer's University	Nigeria	English	55
Sabanci University	Turkey	Turkish	102
Sabanci University	Turkey	Turkish	120
Singapore Institute of Technology	Malaysia	Malay	32
SWPS University	Greece	Greek	234
Teesside University	England	English	112
The University of Queensland	Australia	English	71
Toronto Metropolitan University	Canada	English	81
Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology	Malaysia	English	47
UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta	Indonesia	Indonesian	96
United Arab Emirates University	United Arab Emirates	English	39
Universidad de Sonora	Mexico	Spanish	72
Universidade Federal de Sergipe	Brazil	Portuguese	69
Universitas Indonesia	Indonesia	Indonesian	107
Université de Paris	France	French	308
University of Belgrade	Serbia	Serbian	180
University of California, Davis	United States	English	287
University of Chester	England	English	123

University of Colorado - Colorado Springs	Lebanon	English	34
University of Edinburgh	Scotland	English	106
University of Granada	Spain	Spanish	326
University of Hong Kong	Hong Kong SAR, China	English	88
University of Ibadan	Nigeria	English	45
University of Kansas	Brazil	Portuguese	55
University of Kansas	China	Chinese	202
University of Kansas	United States	English	162
University of Presov	Slovenia	Slovak	240
University of the Philippines at Diliman	The Philippines	English	93
University of Turku	Finland	Finnish	175
University of Utah	United States	English	57
University of Wroclaw	Poland	Polish	416
University of Wroclaw	Argentina	Spanish	184
University of Wroclaw	Colombia	Spanish	172
University of Wroclaw	Dominican Republic	Spanish	172
University of Wroclaw	Ecuador	Spanish	153
University of Wroclaw	Guatemala	Spanish	187
University of Zadar	Croatia	Croatian	382
University of Zadar	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Croatian	609
Uskudar University	Turkey	Turkish	267
Witten/Herdecke University	Germany	German	87
Yonsei University	South Korea	Korean	98
York University	Canada	English	356
York University	Canada	English	288
Totals: k = 60 samples	N = 43	N = 22	10,358

Note: Institutions are listed on multiple rows if researchers at that institution administered the survey in more than one language or to more than one population (e.g., students vs. community). Note that the university is not always located in the associated country because the researcher at the university had the contacts and resources to conduct data collection in a different country.

Supplemental Materials

Table S4 – Ideal Partner Preference Attributes Assessed

	Attribute	Source	Importance Ranking	
			Fletcher (out of 79)	Sparks (out of 93)
1	Attractive	Fletcher (V/A scale)	1	4
2	Intelligent	Sparks (top 30)	2	2
3	Humorous	Sparks (top 30)	3	1
4	Considerate	Fletcher (W/T scale)	4	12
5	Honest	Sparks (top 30)	8	3
6	Understanding	Fletcher (W/T scale)	9	6
7	Ambitious	Sparks (top 30)	12	7
8	Sporty and Athletic	Sparks (top 30)	15	30
9	Fun	Sparks (top 30)	24	13
10	Sensitive	Fletcher (W/T scale)	25	32
11	A good lover	Fletcher (V/A scale)	35	51
12	Nice body	Fletcher (V/A scale)	36	20
13	Confident	Sparks (top 30)	43	19
14	Sexy	Fletcher (V/A scale)	47	38
15	Financially secure	Fletcher (S/R scale)	54	41
16	Supportive	Fletcher (W/T scale)	58	35
17	Dresses well	Fletcher (S/R scale)	60	65
18	A good listener	Fletcher (W/T scale)	65	55
19	Loyal	Sparks (top 30)	66	8
20	Successful	Fletcher (S/R scale)	69	58
21	Adventurous	Fletcher (V/A scale)	72	21
22	Good job	Fletcher (S/R scale)	76	73
23	Religious	Sparks (top 30)	78	25
24	Patient	Sparks (top 30)		15
25	Extraverted, enthusiastic	Big Five (Extraversion)		
26	Critical, quarrelsome	Big Five (Agreeableness)		
27	Dependable, self-disciplined	Big Five (Conscientiousness)		
28	Anxious, easily upset	Big Five (Emotional Stability)		
29	Open to new experiences, complex	Big Five (Openness)		
30	Reserved, quiet	Big Five (Extraversion)		
31	Sympathetic, warm	Big Five (Agreeableness)		
32	Disorganized, careless	Big Five (Conscientiousness)		
33	Calm, emotionally stable	Big Five (Emotional Stability)		
34	Conventional, uncreative	Big Five (Openness)		
35	Smells good	Roberts		

Note: Source column indicates whether the item was selected because it is (a) included in the popular Fletcher et al. (1999) warmth/trustworthiness (W/T), vitality/attractiveness (V/A), or status/resources (S/R) scales, (b) among the top 30 most important traits in Sparks et al. (2020), (c) the Big Five (Gosling et al., 2003), or (d) highlighted by Roberts et al. (2020) as potentially crucial for cross-cultural investigations. Importance ranking refers to the popularity of the trait according to the "rate of mention" by participants in Fletcher et al. (1999, Tables 1 and 2) or in Sparks et al. (2020, Table S1); the importance ranking columns correlate highly (r = .69).

Dependent Measure Scale-Derivation

RQ2 tests whether the ideal-partner preference matching hypothesis receives more support for participants who are reporting on a current relationship partner (i.e., partnered) vs. a desired relationship partner (i.e., single). This comparison requires that we use a romantic evaluation dependent measure that is applicable to both single and partnered participants. Not all romantic evaluation measures are appropriate to both types of participants. For example, relationship satisfaction is one of the most commonly assessed romantic evaluation measures (Le, Dove, Agnew, Korn, & Mutso, 2010), but these items (e.g., "My relationship with _____ is close to ideal," "My relationship with _____makes me very happy") are ambiguous for single people reporting on a peer who may not (yet) reciprocate their affections. Here, we describe the process we used to select a set of dependent measure items that should have similar construct validity for participants reporting on either a current or desired relationship partner.

Only two published studies have compared romantic evaluation measures across single and partnered participants to the best of our knowledge: Eastwick et al. (2011, Study 3) and Sparks et al. (2020). The ten items used collectively across these studies are included in Table S5; all of these items have reasonable face validity for single participants reporting on a desired romantic partner. But, among participants reporting on a current romantic partner, it is unknown which of these items come closest to assessing relationship satisfaction—the "gold-standard" dependent measure used by most prior ideal partner-preference matching studies examining established relationships.

To determine which of these items best capture relationship satisfaction among partnered participants, we asked a sample of Mechanical Turk workers to complete the 10 *context independent* items in Table S5 plus the following 5 *relationship satisfaction* items from the Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew (1998) scale: "I feel satisfied with my relationship with _____," "My

relationship with _____ is much better than others' relationships," "My relationship with _____ is close to ideal," "My relationship with _____makes me very happy," and "My relationship with _____does a good job of fulfilling my needs for intimacy, companionship, etc." These $N = 418$ participants were all currently involved in a romantic relationship and passed the attention check described in the main text; data and code are available here. The five satisfaction items correlated with each other highly as expected, average $r = .76$, $\alpha = .94$.

To create a measure that approximates relationship satisfaction among partnered participants, we wanted to select items from the 10 context independent items that *correlated as highly as possible with the satisfaction items*. The average of the five correlations between the satisfaction items and each of the 10 context independent items are presented in Table S5. The top 6 items (bolded)[8] correlate at an average of $r = .67$ with the satisfaction items. They correlate at $r = .66$ with each other ($\alpha = .92$), and eliminating any of the six items reduced reliability (to $\alpha = .91$ or lower). Thus, we retained these 6 items for the dependent measure described in the main text. In summary, we believe that these items collectively tap the same construct as relationship satisfaction in this sample of partnered participants—while retaining face validity for single participants—and they form a dependent measure with strong reliability.[9]

We also addressed this issue with confirmatory factor analysis. Using *R*'s *lavaan* package (Rosseel, 2012), we fitted four different models: (a) a model with a single 6-item DV factor (i.e., the 6 items we retained), (b) a model with the same 6-item DV factor as well as a second

[8] We could have selected item #7 instead of item #6 as the sixth item, as that they exhibited identical correlations with relationship satisfaction. We opted to go with the latter given that it comes from the established *attachment features and functions scale* (Tancredy & Fraley, 2006). Given that two of the other selected items also come from this scale (i.e., items #3 and #4), in principle, an interested scholar could look at those three items (i.e., items 3, 4, and 6) as a separate subscale from the other three more romantic evaluative items (i.e., items, 1, 2, and 5).

[9] In addition, exploratory factor analyses (principle axis factoring) on all conceivable combinations of these 15 items consistently return a one-factor solution.

correlated 5-item satisfaction factor, (c) a model with a single 5-item DV factor (i.e., dropping Item #6 in Table S5), and (d) a model with the same 5-item DV factor as well as a second correlated 5-item satisfaction factor. A small number of missing data values (< 1.7% for any DV item) were replaced using the *mice* package (van Buuren & Groothuis-Oudshoorn, 2011). The results of these models are presented in Table S6. Generally speaking, these models performed modestly well (especially given that methodological artifacts alone frequently cause unidimensional models to misfit; Hopwood & Donnellan, 2010), although the 5-item DV models tended to perform a bit better (e.g., on the BIC) than the 6-item DV models. Importantly, for both models (b) and (d), the correlation between the DV factor and the satisfaction factor was exceptionally high (r = .98 in both cases), suggesting that we achieved our goal of creating a dependent measure that (a) mimics relationship satisfaction in established relationships yet (b) still applies to other non-partner targets.

Supplemental Materials

Table S5 – Quantifying the Extent to Which Ten Romantic Evaluation Items Assess Relationship Satisfaction

	Item	*r* with relationship satisfaction
1	**_____ is very much my ideal romantic partner**	.79
2	**I am romantically interested in _____**	.68
3	**_____ is the first person that I would turn to if I had a problem.**	.67
4	**It is important to me to see or talk with _____ regularly.**	.64
5	**_____ is the only person I want to be romantically involved with**	.63
6	**If I achieved something good, _____ is the person that I would tell first.**	.62
7	_____ always seems to be on my mind	.62
8	_____ and I have a lot in common	.60
9	I feel a great deal of sexual desire for _____	.58
10	When I am away from _____, I feel down.	.36

Note: These 10 items were used in comparisons involving single and partnered participants in Eastwick et al. (2011, Study 3) and Sparks et al. (2020). Bolded items (1-6) are selected for inclusion in the current study.

Table S6– Fit Indices for Confirmatory Factor Analytic Models of the Possible Dependent Measures

	Model	χ^2	df	*p*	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	RMSEA lower	RMSEA upper	RMSEA *p*	SRMR	BIC
a.	6-item DV	212.74	9	< .001	0.81	0.89	0.23	0.21	0.26	< .001	0.06	9093.07
b.	6-item DV + satisfaction	453.10	43	< .001	0.88	0.91	0.15	0.14	0.16	< .001	0.05	15770.10
c.	5-item DV	47.70	5	< .001	0.94	0.97	0.14	0.11	0.18	< .001	0.03	7638.57
d.	5-item DV + satisfaction	257.99	34	< .001	0.93	0.94	0.13	0.11	0.14	< .001	0.03	14301.62

Note. TLI = Tucker Lewis index; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation; SRMR = (standardized) root mean square residual; BIC = Bayesian information criterion. Models b and d included satisfaction as a (5-item) factor that correlated with the DV.

Additional Methodological Details

These methodological components are not referenced in the current analysis plan but were collected as part of this project.

Direct-estimation items. Some studies ask participants to compare a target's attributes to their ideals directly, essentially merging the trait and ideal assessment into a single "direct-estimation" item (e.g., "Does _____ exceed your standards for attractiveness?" Fletcher, et al., 2014). Studies using this approach are included in Table S7, and they all document significant (moderate-to-large) associations between this construct and romantic evaluation outcomes. There are no generalizability or replicability concerns with this approach, and so we do not propose to examine them in this registered report. Nevertheless, we collected these data for future construct validity efforts: For the first target only, participants rated each target on the 35 attributes on a scale from 1 (*does not match my ideal at all*) to 11 (*completely matches my ideal*; Overall et al., 2006).

Individual-difference measures. Participants completed a set of 43 items assessing psychological constructs that are central in the cross-cultural literature, not just individualism/collectivism (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998) and relational mobility (Thomson et al., 2018), but also: residential mobility (Oishi & Schimmack, 2010), tightness/looseness (Gelfand et al., 2011), machismo (Arceniega et al., 2008), and attitudes towards sex roles (Larsen & Long, 1988). Only individualism/collectivism and relational mobility were included in the current analysis plan, but the remaining individual differences will likely inform future projects by enabling high-powered tests of the possibility that ideal partner preference-matching effects are (for example) stronger when people perceive that their culture is tight, they cannot move easily, or they have traditional attitudes.

Supplemental Materials

Demographic and other information. The two relationship status variables are included in the analysis plan; the remaining variables were collected for exploratory purposes and to ensure that we can comprehensively describe the composition of our samples. Participants provided information about their age, gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, native language, country of residence, and relationship status. They also indicated the nature of their relationship with each of the four targets using the following (mutually exclusive) categories: spouse or fiancé, boyfriend/girlfriend/committed romantic partner, casual romantic/sexual partner, friend, colleague or co-worker, acquaintance, stranger. They also rated each target on two items "I am interested in a short-term romantic relationship (e.g., a one-night stand, fling, brief affair) with _____" and "I am interested in a long-term, committed romantic relationship with _____," and they indicated how long they have known each of the four targets. At the end of the study, participants were asked "In this survey, were all your responses sincere and true, to your knowledge? (Note: your response to this question will have no influence on payment or course credit.)"

Supplemental Materials

Table S7 – Other Studies of Ideal Partner Preference-Matching

Article	Direct-estimation Items	Rare Ideals Measure	Rare Measure Description
Ruvolo & Veroff (1997)		x	Ideals tailored to the partner
Campbell et al. (2001, Study 1)	x		
Campbell et al. (2001, Study 2)	x		
Knee et al. (2001, Study 1)	x		
Overall et al. (2006, Study 1)	x		
Overall et al. (2006, Study 2)	x		
Kurzban & Weeden (2007)		x	Advertised ideals
Burriss et al. (2011)		x	Choice-based measure of ideals
Eastwick, Eagly et al. (2011, Study 4)		x	Go/No-Go measure of ideals
Eastwick, Eagly et al. (2011, Study 5)		x	Go/No-Go measure of ideals
Lackenbauer & Campbell (2012, Study 1)	x		
Lackenbauer & Campbell (2012, Study 1)	x		
Strauss et al. (2012, Study 1)		x	Attachment ideals
Strauss et al. (2012, Study 1)		x	Attachment ideals
Campbell et al. (2013, Study 1)	x		
Campbell et al. (2013, Study 2)	x		
Hammond & Overall (2014)	x		
Fletcher et al. (2014)	x		
Rodriguez et al. (2015)	x		
Sparks et al. (2020)		x	Nominated ideals (yoked design)
Balzarini et al. (2021)	x	x	Sexual ideals

Note: These studies differ from the studies in Table S1 in that (a) they assessed ideals and traits as a "direct-estimation" item, or (b) they used a rare conceptualization of ideal partner preferences. All studies examined participants' evaluations of targets whom they had at least met face-to-face.

A Priori Power Analysis Plan

(This section was unchanged from the original Stage I registered report submission.)

Calculating Effective Sample Size

If every laboratory reaches their minimum target *N*, we will recruit 5720 participants, if every laboratory reaches their maximum target *N*, we will recruit 11580 participants, and if every laboratory recruits the average of their minimum and maximum target *N*, we will recruit 8650 participants. Thus, $N = 8650$ is a reasonable estimate for what we will be able to recruit. However, there will likely be some cost to statistical power due to nesting of participants within sample. Therefore, the power analysis reported in Table 1 was calculated using the following approach that accounts for the nesting of participant within the 52 samples.

1. We first calculated the average of the minimum and maximum anticipated *N* for each sample in Table S3 ($M = 166$ participants per sample).
2. We then calculated the effective sample size using the formula from Snijders and Bosker (2012):

$$\text{Effective sample size} = Nk/(1 + (k - 1)*ICC) \quad (1)$$

In this formula, *N* is the number of higher-level units (in this case, the **52** samples), and *k* is the average number of observations within each unit (in this case, **166** participants). The intraclass correlation (ICC) refers to the extent to which effect sizes exhibit random variability across the *N* unit (sample); this value is also reflected in the u_1 terms in the equations described in Tables 2, 3, and S2.

The ICC is difficult to estimate precisely, but our best guess comes from the Cheung et al. (2016) registered replication report (RRR) of Finkel et al. (2002), which is the only RRR to use measures similar to those that we use here (i.e., participants reporting evaluative measures

about a romantic partner). This RRR collected data on the association of four target-specific variables (i.e., exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect) with participants' subjective ratings of commitment. Across the 16 samples in Cheung et al. (2016), three of the four associations revealed ICCs of 0.0 (i.e., the correlation of commitment with exit, voice, and loyalty exhibited no random variability across samples). One (the commitment-neglect association) exhibited an ICC of .0013, so we conservatively use this value in our calculation here.[10]

Thus, equation 1 provides an effective sample size estimate of (52 × 166)/(1 + (166 – 1)*.0013) = 7107. This estimate (rather than 8650) is used in the power calculations reported below.

Calculating Power for Table 1 with *N* = 7107

1. **Power for hypothesis 1.**
    a. In G*Power, a sensitivity power analysis for a correlation with sample size $N = 7107$, power = 95%, two-tailed, and alpha = .05 yields an effect size estimate $r = .043$. This $r = .043$ value appears in rows 1a-1c in Table 1.
    b. To calculate power for the level metric interaction tests, we used the InteractionPoweR package in R (Baranger et al., 2023). The statistical power of the interaction in the romantic evaluation = ideal × attribute tests depends on (a) the size of the main effect of ideal, (b) the size of the main effect of the attribute, and (c) the correlation between the ideal and the attribute. Averaging across 14 level metric tests reported by Eastwick, Joel et al. (2023), our best estimate of these three values is (a) $\beta_{ideals} = -.012$, (b) $\beta_{attributes} = .152$, and (c) $\beta_{ideal\text{-}attribute} = .198$. With these estimates, according to InteractionPoweR, $N =$

[10] Note, also, that this relatively modest amount of heterogeneity across samples is highly consistent with the results of Klein et al. (2018; i.e., "Many Labs 2"). These scholars found that, when implementing the identical study design across different sites (as we do here), heterogeneity in effect sizes tended to be quite small.

7107 provides 95% power to detect level metric β = .042, which is a "28% attenuation" interaction (i.e., the interaction β is approximately 1/4 as large as the main effect β). This value appears in row 1d in Table 1.

2. **Power for hypotheses 2 and 3**. For the singles and partnered subsample analyses, we assume that we acquire a sample that is half single (N = 7107 ÷ 2 = 3554) and half partnered (N = 3554); this assumption follows from our informal prior observations that undergraduate samples tend to have (slightly) more single than partnered individuals, and community/online samples tend to have (many) more partnered than single individuals. In G*Power, a sensitivity power analysis for a correlation with sample size N = 3554, power = 95%, two-tailed, and alpha = .05 yields an effect size estimate r = .060. This r = .060 value appears in rows 2a-2c and 3a-3c in Table 1. According to InteractionPoweR, N = 3554 provides 95% power to detect level metric β = .061, which is a "40% attenuation" interaction (i.e., the interaction β is approximately 2/5 as large as the main effect β). This value appears in rows 2d and 3d in Table 1.
3. **Power for hypothesis 4.** When attempting to test the difference between the single and partnered subsample, we again assume that we acquire a sample that is half single (N = 7107 ÷ 2 = 3554) and half partnered (N = 3554). In G*Power, a sensitivity power analysis for a difference between two independent Pearson rs with sample size N = 3554 in each group, power = 95%, two-tailed, and alpha = .05 yields an effect size estimate q = .086. This q = .086 value appears in rows 4a-4d in Table 1.

A note about power when using Holm-Bonferroni

One could argue that our use of the Holm-Bonferroni (Holm, 1979) correction provides 95% power to detect the *smallest* estimate out of 35 (which will be deemed significant if $p \leq$

.05), but power should be calculated using α = .0014 (given that the largest estimate out of 35 will be deemed significant only if $p \leq .0014$). This shift to α = .0014 would have the following implications for hypotheses 1-4: (1a) we have 95% power to detect *r* of .053 instead of .043; (1b) we have 95% power to detect level metric β of .053 instead of .042; (2) we have 95% power to detect *r* of .081 instead of .060, and we have 95% power to detect level metric β of .076 instead of .061; (3) we have 95% power to detect *q* of .115 instead of .086. In short, the loss of power due to our use of the Holm (1979) procedure for some hypotheses is not especially severe (see also Olejnik et al., 1997).

Supplemental Materials

Missing Data Analysis

Even though our percentage of missing data was low (less than 1% for all variables), we tested the possible impact of missing data on our conclusions using the mice package for R (van Buuren & Groothuis-Oudshoorn, 2011). Specifically, we used predictive mean matching (30 iterations) to create a new dataset that "filled in" the missing data for the ideals, partner perception, uncorrected pattern metric, and corrected pattern metric variables. We then reran the analyses for that produced Tables 2 and 3 on this complete dataset. Results are presented in Table S8 and S9 below. Generally speaking, the findings were extremely similar. Of the 129 effect size estimates in Table 2, 111 (86%) were identical, and 18 (14%) differed by only .01 between Table 2 and Table S8. Of the 135 effect sizes estimates in Table 3, 110 (81%) were identical, and 25 (19%) differed by only .01 or .02 between Table 3 and Table S9. In short, this missing data analysis produced identical conclusions, which is consistent with the fact that our overall level of missingness was extremely low. (To clarify, this missing data analysis applies to the participants who made it to the final screen of the survey; it is unclear how the participants who closed the survey part-way through would have responded.)

Table S8 –Ideal-Trait Correlations (Analysis Plan 1a through 4a) with imputed Missing Data

	Attribute		Ideal-Trait Correlations			
			Overall	Partnered	Single	*t* for comparison
1	Attractive	(V/A)	.29***	.28***	.31***	2.41
2	Intelligent		.35***	.38***	.31***	-4.45***
3	Humorous		.38***	.40***	.36***	-3.92***
4	Considerate	(W/T)	.31***	.30***	.30***	-1.08
5	Honest		.29***	.33***	.25***	-5.15***
6	Understanding	(W/T)	.31***	.31***	.30***	-0.86
7	Ambitious		.41***	.45***	.38***	-6.37***
8	Sporty and Athletic		.38***	.41***	.36***	-3.17**
9	Fun		.37***	.35***	.39***	-0.48
10	Sensitive	(W/T)	.36***	.36***	.36***	-1.77
11	A good lover	(V/A)	.34***	.33***	.32***	-4.01***

12	Nice body	(V/A)	.29***	.27***	.31***	2.62
13	Confident		.33***	.34***	.31***	-2.85
14	Sexy	(V/A)	.36***	.34***	.41***	2.05
15	Financially secure	(S/R)	.24***	.25***	.24***	-0.68
16	Supportive	(W/T)	.32***	.31***	.29***	-1.91
17	Dresses well	(S/R)	.33***	.34***	.31***	-2.90
18	A good listener	(W/T)	.28***	.26***	.29***	-2.43
19	Loyal		.27***	.33***	.21***	-8.29***
20	Successful	(S/R)	.29***	.30***	.28***	-3.60***
21	Adventurous	(V/A)	.38***	.39***	.38***	-4.00***
22	Good job	(S/R)	.28***	.30***	.27***	-1.94
23	Religious		.57***	.63***	.52***	-9.12***
24	Patient		.26***	.28***	.26***	-1.90
25	Extraverted, enthusiastic	(Ext)	.37***	.40***	.34***	-4.05***
26	Critical, quarrelsome	(Agr)	.39***	.38***	.42***	-0.11
27	Dependable, self-disciplined	(Con)	.31***	.33***	.29***	-3.55***
28	Anxious, easily upset	(Emo)	.27***	.28***	.27***	-0.87
29	Open to new experiences, complex	(Opn)	.35***	.37***	.34***	-3.50***
30	Reserved, quiet	(Ext)	.35***	.39***	.31***	-4.34***
31	Sympathetic, warm	(Agr)	.32***	.32***	.31***	-1.76
32	Disorganized, careless	(Con)	.24***	.24***	.26***	-0.25
33	Calm, emotionally stable	(Emo)	.27***	.29***	.25***	-3.80***
34	Conventional, uncreative	(Opn)	.34***	.35***	.32***	-3.10**
35	Smells good		.38***	.34***	.42***	-0.29
	W/T average		.41***	.40***	.39***	-2.92**
	V/A average		.40***	.37***	.43***	-0.71
	S/R average		.34***	.34***	.34***	-2.01*
	Ext average		.36***	.42***	.31***	-5.82***
	Agr average		.37***	.36***	.38***	0.45
	Con average		.29***	.29***	.29***	-1.93
	Emo average		.27***	.27***	.26***	-1.81
	Opn average		.36***	.37***	.36***	-3.74***

Note: W/T: warmth/trustworthiness; V/A: vitality/attractiveness; S/R: status/resources; Ext: Extraversion; Agr: Agreeableness; Con: Conscientiousness; Emo: Emotional Stability; Opn: Openness to Experience. In the Big Five averages, Items 26, 28, 30, 32, and 24 were reverse scored. Values are the regression estimated betas (β_1's) from the following equation: Partner attribute = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$Ideal + u_0 + u_1Ideal + ε . The random slope (u_1) for sample is omitted when models do not converge. *t* for comparison refers to the β_3 estimate in the following model, which tests the difference between the partnered and single columns: Partner attribute = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$Ideal + β_2RelStatus + β_3Ideal×RelStatus + u_0 + u_1Ideal + ε ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Asterisks are omitted for estimates that fail a Holm-Bonferroni test (Holm, 1979) within each column of 35 traits.

Supplemental Materials

Table S9 – Effect Sizes for Tests of Ideal Partner Preference-Matching (Analysis Plan 2b-4b, 2c-4c, 2d-4d) with imputed Missing Data

Analysis			Overall	Partnered	Single	*t* for comparison
Pattern metric						
	Raw		.37***	.38***	.32***	2.91**
	Corrected		.19***	.19***	.19***	3.27**
Level Metric						
1	Attractive	(V/A)	.02	.00	.04***	2.68
2	Intelligent		.03***	.00	.03	3.42***
3	Humorous		.04***	.01	.05***	4.12***
4	Considerate	(W/T)	.00	-.04***	.04**	5.62***
5	Honest		.02	-.01	.02	2.73
6	Understanding	(W/T)	.02	-.01	.04**	4.44***
7	Ambitious		.07***	.05***	.08***	3.69***
8	Sporty and Athletic		.07***	.06***	.07***	2.30
9	Fun		.01	-.03**	.05***	6.13***
10	Sensitive	(W/T)	.06***	.06***	.06***	0.57
11	A good lover	(V/A)	.04***	.02	.05***	1.35
12	Nice body	(V/A)	.02	.01	.06***	3.84***
13	Confident		.03***	.01	.04	3.48***
14	Sexy	(V/A)	.02**	.02	.04**	2.55
15	Financially secure	(S/R)	.04***	.04***	.06***	2.57
16	Supportive	(W/T)	.00	-.01	.02	3.25**
17	Dresses well	(S/R)	.03***	.03	.04**	1.99
18	A good listener	(W/T)	.01	-.02	.04**	5.28***
19	Loyal		.03***	.03**	.02	0.14
20	Successful	(S/R)	.04***	.03	.06***	3.98***
21	Adventurous	(V/A)	.05***	.07***	.07***	3.28**
22	Good job	(S/R)	.04***	.05***	.06***	2.11
23	Religious		.14***	.10***	.07***	0.00
24	Patient		.01	-.02	.03	3.54***
25	Extraverted, enthusiastic	(Ext)	.06***	.09***	.03	-1.73
26	Critical, quarrelsome	(Agr)	.08***	.10***	.08***	1.30
27	Dependable, self-disciplined	(Con)	.03***	-.01	.05***	5.05***
28	Anxious, easily upset	(Emo)	.07***	.05***	.08***	3.15**
29	Open to new experiences, complex	(Opn)	.06***	.05***	.07***	3.97***
30	Reserved, quiet	(Ext)	.09***	.09***	.07***	0.37
31	Sympathetic, warm	(Agr)	.02**	-.01	.05***	4.67***
32	Disorganized, careless	(Con)	.04***	.05***	.05***	1.88
33	Calm, emotionally stable	(Emo)	.03***	.01	.03	2.07
34	Conventional, uncreative	(Opn)	.07***	.09***	.05***	-0.06
35	Smells good		.01	.02	.02	0.99
	W/T average		.00	-.03***	.02	4.53***
	V/A average		.00	-.02*	.05***	5.13***
	S/R average		.03***	.03*	.07***	4.18***
	Ext average		.07***	.08***	.04**	-1.39

Agr average	.03***	.04***	.05***	1.30
Con average	.03**	.01	.06***	4.60***
Emo average	.05***	.01	.06***	3.66***
Opn average	.05***	.05***	.04**	2.03*

Note: W/T: warmth/trustworthiness; V/A: vitality/attractiveness; S/R: status/resources. Ext: Extraversion; Agr: Agreeableness; Con: Conscientiousness; Emo: Emotional Stability; Opn: Openness to Experience. In the Big Five averages, Items 26, 28, 30, 32, and 24 were reverse scored. Values for pattern metric (raw) and pattern metric (corrected) are the regression estimated beta (β_1) from the following equation: Romantic evaluation = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$PatternMetric + $u_0 + u_1$PatternMetric + ε. Values for the level metric are the ideal × trait interaction estimated beta's (β_3's) from the following equation: Romantic evaluation = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$Ideal + β_2PartnerAttribute + β_3Ideal×PartnerAttribute + $u_0 + u_1$PartnerAttribute + ε. In all cases, the random slope (u_1) for sample is omitted when models do not converge. "*t* for comparison" for the pattern metric tests refers to the β_3 estimate in the following model: Romantic evaluation = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$PatternMetric + β_2RelStatus + β_3PatternMetric×RelStatus + $u_0 + u_1$PatternMetric + ε. "*t* for comparison" for the level metric tests refers to the β_7 estimate in the following model: Romantic evaluation = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$Ideal + β_2PartnerAttribute + β_3Ideal×PartnerAttribute + β_4RelStatus + β_5Ideal×RelStatus + β_6PartnerAttribute×RelStatus + β_7Ideal×PartnerAttribute×RelStatus + $u_0 + u_1$PartnerAttribute + ε . * $p <$ .05, ** $p <$ .01, *** $p <$ .001. Asterisks are omitted for estimates that fail a Holm-Bonferroni test (Holm, 1979) within each column of 35 traits.

Relationship Formation Hypothesis Recruitment Details

We recruited this sample with the assistance of the Cloud Research Managed Research team, see Figure S1 for a recruitment flow chart.

At Time 1, 7,987 participants (N = 5,554 single participants and N = 2,433 partnered participants) completed a short survey about their ideal partner preferences as well as demographic information. These participants were all paid US$1. We deliberately oversampled single participants with the help of the Cloud Research Managed Research team, who maintain a database of demographics on the "Cloud Research Approved List" MTurk workers; Cloud Research made the study available to many more single than partnered participants because we knew that "Single at Time 1, Partnered at Time 2" (i.e., newly partnered) participants would be uncommon.

Time 2 recruitment invites were sent out by Cloud Research 11-17 weeks after Time 1 to participants who had given "sincere and true" responses to the Time 1 survey. Participants were paid US$5 to complete the full Time 2 survey. To save funds and recruit as many newly partnered participants as possible, we implemented two cost-saving measures:

1. Once a sufficient number of participants who were partnered at Time 1 completed the Time 2 survey, we stopped inviting participants who were partnered at Time 1. In contrast, all participants who were single at Time 1 were invited to begin the Time 2 survey.

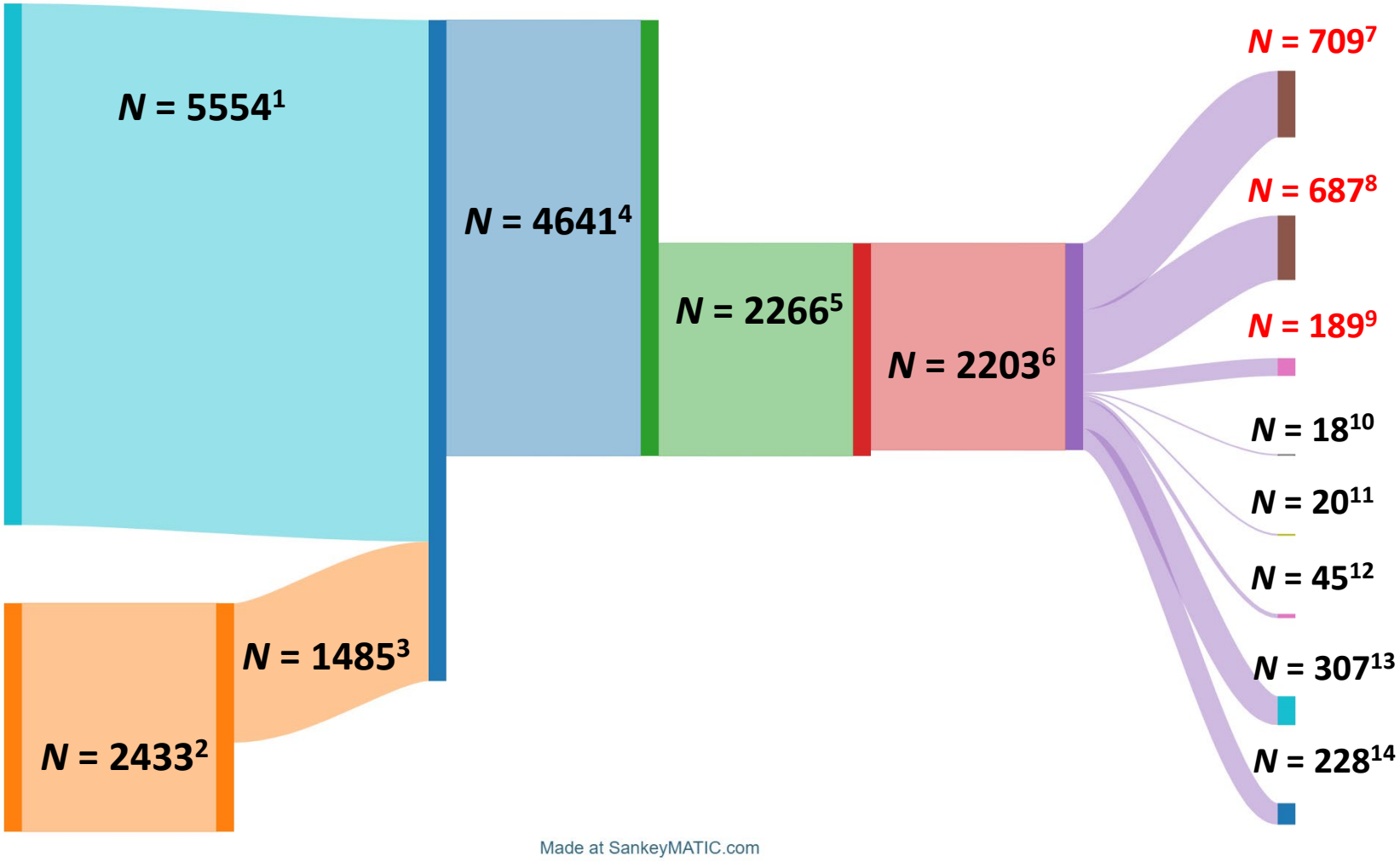
2. Once a sufficient number of participants who were single at Time 1 and single at Time 2 completed the Time 2 survey, we implemented a branching logic that sent participants who were single at Time 2 directly to the end of the survey and paid them only US$1.

This entire recruitment process took place in two separate segments: Segment 1 took place between February 2023 and June 2023, and Segment 2 took place between June 2023 and September 2023. The February to June recruitment netted only about half of the Time 2 participants that we had been hoping for, so we started the Time 1 recruitment process again in June with the goal of recruiting 1,500 total participants by September. Other than the attention check and relationship status questions, no data were analyzed on the Segment 1 participants until the full sample had been collected.

The N = 1,585 participants who comprised the final usable sample (N = 709 steadily partnered, N = 687 steadily single, N = 189 newly partnered) were M = 39.6 years old (SD = 12.4). In terms of gender, N = 761 (48.0%) were women, N = 812 (51.2%) were men, and N = 12 (0.8%) preferred to self-describe their gender. In terms of sexual orientation, N = 1,326 (83.6%) were straight/heterosexual, N = 157 (9.9%) were bisexual, N = 42 (2.6%) were gay, N = 36 (2.3%) were lesbian, N = 23 (1.5%) preferred to self-describe, and N = 1 (0.1%) provided no response. In terms of education, N = 11 (0.7%) reported "less than high school," N = 172 (10.9%) "high school," N = 460 (29.0%) "some college," N = 682 (43.0%) "four-year degree," N = 219 (13.8%) "Master's degree," and N = 41 (2.6%) "Doctorate or professional degree."

Supplemental Materials

Figure S1 – Relationship Formation Hypothesis Recruitment Flow Chart



Supplemental Materials

Note: Superscript 1 = Single participants who completed Time 1 survey. Superscript 2 = Partnered participants who completed Time 1 survey. Superscript 3 = Partnered participants who were invited to complete the Time 2 survey (a random subset of participants who were partnered at Time 1 were not invited to conserve funds). Superscript 4 = All participants who actually began the Time 2 survey. Superscript 5 = All participants who were permitted to complete the entire Time 2 survey (some participants who were single at Time 2 were sent directly to the end of the survey to conserve funds). Superscript 6 = All participants who completed the Time 2 survey and passed the attention checks. Superscript 7 = Final usable sample of steadily partnered participants (i.e., partnered at Time 1 and Time 2). Superscript 8 = Final usable sample of steadily single participants (i.e., single at Time 1 and Time 2). Superscript 9 = Final usable sample of newly partnered participants (i.e., single at Time 1 and partnered in a relationship of less than 5 months in duration at Time 2). Superscript 10 = Duplicate worker ID records that were excluded (in these cases, the latest report was the one retained for inclusion). Superscript 11 = Participants who straightlined responses to the ideals or the partner attributes. Superscript 12 = Participants who were partnered at Time 1 but single at Time 2. Superscript 13 = Participants who were single at Time 1, partnered at Time 2, but their relationship at time 2 was 5 months or longer in duration. Such a relationship length is not plausible given the time that had passed between Time 1 and Time 2. Superscript 14 = (a) Participants who were partnered at Time 2 but said their partner was anything other than a “spouse or fiancé” or “boyfriend/girlfriend/committed romantic partner” AND (b) participants who were single at Time 2 but said their most desired partner was “spouse or fiancé” or “boyfriend/girlfriend/committed romantic partner.”

Supplemental Materials

Table S10 – Descriptive Statistics for Stated and Revealed Preferences (Partnered)

Attribute		Stated Preferences			Revealed Preferences	
	N	*M*	*SD*	Rank	β	Rank
Attractive	5540	8.90	1.86	16	.44***	3
Intelligent	5543	9.46	1.60	9	.37***	14
Humorous	5541	9.42	1.72	10	.38***	13
Considerate	5540	9.63	1.56	7	.39***	9
Honest	5543	10.15	1.32	2	.38***	11
Understanding	5542	9.90	1.43	4	.39***	10
Ambitious	5539	8.18	2.34	24	.25***	23
Sporty and Athletic	5541	7.16	2.46	29	.18***	29
Fun	5544	9.47	1.63	8	.42***	5
Sensitive	5537	8.25	2.31	22	.23***	26
A good lover	5539	9.38	1.89	12	.50***	1
Nice body	5542	7.99	2.18	26	.34***	15
Confident	5541	8.82	1.84	17	.25***	21
Sexy	5540	8.50	2.16	19	.42***	6
Financially secure	5541	8.37	2.20	20	.24***	24
Supportive	5542	9.99	1.47	3	.46***	2
Dresses well	5541	8.18	2.17	24	.28***	20
A good listener	5541	9.73	1.56	5	.38***	12
Loyal	5540	10.17	1.46	1	.43***	4
Successful	5540	8.22	2.22	23	.32***	17
Adventurous	5539	7.90	2.35	27	.21***	27
Good job	5541	8.29	2.18	21	.24***	25
Religious	5539	4.67	3.33	31	.05**	31
Patient	5541	9.40	1.68	11	.29***	19
Extraverted, enthusiastic	5540	7.75	2.21	28	.18***	28
Critical, quarrelsome	5540	3.29	2.62	33	-.14***	35
Dependable, self-disciplined	5542	9.28	1.80	14	.33***	16
Anxious, easily upset	5540	3.07	2.28	34	-.11***	32
Open to new experiences, complex	5541	8.65	2.10	18	.25***	22
Reserved, quiet	5538	5.41	2.71	30	.07**	30
Sympathetic, warm	5542	9.66	1.55	6	.39***	8
Disorganized, careless	5538	2.73	2.17	35	-.13***	34
Calm, emotionally stable	5539	9.29	1.72	13	.30***	18
Conventional, uncreative	5540	4.05	2.61	32	-.12***	33
Smells good	5541	9.17	1.95	15	.39***	7
W/T average	5544	9.50	1.27		.46***	
V/A average	5543	8.54	1.54		.49***	
S/R average	5544	8.27	1.81		.34***	
Ext average	5541	7.17	1.78		.07***	
Agr average	5543	9.19	1.58		.29***	
Con average	5542	9.28	1.54		.25***	
Emo average	5541	9.11	1.57		.24***	

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Opn average	5541	8.30	1.76			.23***		
Attribute	*N*	Stated Preferences				Revealed Preferences		
		M	*SD*			β		
				Gender Diff.			Gender Diff.	
Attractiveness Composite				*t*	*d*		*t*	*q*
Heterosexual Men	1542	8.85	1.61	11.58***	0.29	.52***	1.56	-0.02
Heterosexual Women	3019	8.36	1.80			.53***		
Earning Potential Composite								
Heterosexual Men	1542	7.59	1.85	18.36***	0.61	.34***	0.02	-0.02
Heterosexual Women	3020	8.67	1.66			.32***		

Note: Effect sizes *d* and *q* are coded such that positive effect sizes are in the predicted direction.

Supplemental Materials

Table S11 – Descriptive Statistics for Stated and Revealed Preferences (Singles)

Attribute		Stated Preferences			Revealed Preferences	
	N	*M*	*SD*	Rank	β	Rank
Attractive	4144	8.78	1.89	16	.34***	5
Intelligent	4146	9.31	1.68	9	.31***	9
Humorous	4145	9.28	1.79	11	.30***	13
Considerate	4145	9.57	1.59	6	.31***	10
Honest	4147	10.03	1.40	2	.30***	14
Understanding	4146	9.80	1.46	4	.35***	4
Ambitious	4147	8.07	2.32	24	.25***	21
Sporty and Athletic	4147	7.11	2.38	29	.14***	29
Fun	4149	9.39	1.67	8	.30***	11
Sensitive	4146	7.87	2.38	26	.21***	24
A good lover	4141	9.11	2.10	14	.36***	1
Nice body	4147	8.02	2.11	25	.28***	16
Confident	4148	8.69	1.86	17	.19***	27
Sexy	4144	8.20	2.24	21	.32***	8
Financially secure	4143	8.36	2.17	19	.19***	26
Supportive	4145	9.88	1.53	3	.36***	2
Dresses well	4146	8.16	2.19	23	.26***	18
A good listener	4146	9.68	1.60	5	.33***	7
Loyal	4147	10.08	1.53	1	.30***	12
Successful	4146	8.17	2.21	22	.27***	17
Adventurous	4142	7.87	2.36	26	.19***	25
Good job	4145	8.27	2.15	20	.25***	19
Religious	4143	4.91	3.32	31	.07***	30
Patient	4145	9.30	1.68	10	.25***	20
Extraverted, enthusiastic	4144	7.58	2.15	28	.14***	28
Critical, quarrelsome	4141	3.52	2.63	33	-.03	33
Dependable, self-disciplined	4147	9.23	1.79	13	.28***	15
Anxious, easily upset	4143	3.07	2.09	34	-.01	32
Open to new experiences, complex	4147	8.64	2.07	18	.24***	22
Reserved, quiet	4142	5.61	2.56	30	.07**	31
Sympathetic, warm	4145	9.57	1.59	6	.33***	6
Disorganized, careless	4144	2.82	2.09	35	-.08***	34
Calm, emotionally stable	4146	9.24	1.76	12	.22***	23
Conventional, uncreative	4145	3.88	2.40	32	-.08***	35
Smells good	4147	8.99	2.02	15	.35***	3
W/T average	4152	9.36	1.29		.39***	
V/A average	4149	8.40	1.58		.40***	
S/R average	4150	8.24	1.80		.31***	
Ext average	4144	6.98	1.78		.05**	
Agr average	4146	9.02	1.61		.21***	
Con average	4147	9.20	1.54		.22***	
Emo average	4147	9.09	1.50		.14***	

Supplemental Materials

Opn average	4150	8.38	1.70			.20***		
Attribute	*N*	Stated Preferences				Revealed Preferences		
		M	*SD*			β		
				Gender Diff.			Gender Diff.	
Attractiveness Composite				*t*	*d*		*t*	*q*
Heterosexual Men	1153	8.58	1.79	6.39***	0.15	.33***	1.64	-0.06
Heterosexual Women	2092	8.31	1.80			.38***		
Earning Potential Composite								
Heterosexual Men	1153	7.31	1.85	20.17***	0.87	.26***	1.94	0.07
Heterosexual Women	2093	8.81	1.57			.32***		

Note: Effect sizes *d* and *q* are coded such that positive effect sizes are in the predicted direction.

Supplemental Materials

Table S12 – Descriptive Statistics for Stated and Revealed Preferences for Men and Women Separately

	Stated Preferences						Revealed Preferences			
	Men			Women			Men		Women	
Attribute	*M*	*SD*	Rank	*M*	*SD*	Rank	β	Rank	β	Rank
Attractive	9.00	1.78	9	8.85	1.90	18	.43***	7	.43***	8
Intelligent	8.97	1.78	11	9.61	1.52	10	.41***	10	.38***	11
Humorous	8.83	1.89	13	9.56	1.67	11	.37***	15	.36***	15
Considerate	9.16	1.70	6	9.82	1.46	6	.41***	9	.40***	10
Honest	9.75	1.54	1	10.25	1.24	2	.46***	4	.44***	6
Understanding	9.35	1.64	3	10.06	1.30	4	.40***	11	.43***	7
Ambitious	7.50	2.46	25	8.46	2.23	22	.22***	22	.23***	24
Sporty and Athletic	7.16	2.29	29	7.38	2.44	29	.07**	32	.13***	28
Fun	9.03	1.75	8	9.63	1.57	8	.39***	12	.38***	12
Sensitive	7.90	2.25	22	8.18	2.41	25	.37***	14	.26***	20
A good lover	8.99	2.02	10	9.41	1.92	14	.51***	2	.57***	1
Nice body	8.52	1.96	18	7.88	2.18	28	.38***	13	.31***	17
Confident	8.38	1.98	19	9.01	1.78	16	.18***	27	.19***	26
Sexy	8.67	2.03	17	8.33	2.25	23	.43***	6	.45***	5
Financially secure	7.50	2.25	25	8.92	1.98	17	.20***	24	.21***	25
Supportive	9.34	1.81	4	10.19	1.28	3	.46***	3	.50***	3
Dresses well	8.09	2.15	21	8.32	2.15	24	.33***	19	.23***	22
A good listener	9.08	1.79	7	9.95	1.43	5	.36***	16	.36***	13
Loyal	9.70	1.77	2	10.32	1.32	1	.52***	1	.52***	2
Successful	7.53	2.28	24	8.68	2.06	21	.35***	17	.26***	19
Adventurous	7.55	2.37	23	8.04	2.36	26	.18***	26	.15***	27
Good job	7.49	2.22	27	8.85	1.95	18	.24***	20	.24***	21
Religious	4.99	3.18	31	5.16	3.42	30	.09***	30	.03	31
Patient	8.82	1.81	14	9.62	1.57	9	.20***	23	.32***	16
Extraverted, enthusiastic	7.46	2.19	28	7.89	2.16	27	.17***	28	.12***	29
Critical, quarrelsome	3.67	2.71	33	3.23	2.60	33	-.02	33	-.07***	35
Dependable, self-disciplined	8.78	1.92	15	9.55	1.67	12	.35***	18	.36***	14
Anxious, easily upset	3.64	2.45	34	2.73	2.06	34	.08**	31	-.01	32

Open to new experiences, complex	8.11	2.24	20	8.82	2.03	20	.24***	21	.23***	23
Reserved, quiet	6.14	2.53	30	5.15	2.70	31	.09***	29	.05*	30
Sympathetic, warm	9.26	1.68	5	9.78	1.49	7	.42***	8	.40***	9
Disorganized, careless	3.24	2.31	35	2.47	2.01	35	-.09***	34	-.04**	33
Calm, emotionally stable	8.90	1.82	12	9.54	1.62	13	.19***	25	.31***	18
Conventional, uncreative	4.56	2.58	32	3.89	2.52	32	-.09***	35	-.06***	34
Smells good	8.72	2.04	16	9.29	1.93	15	.45***	5	.46***	4
W/T average	8.96	1.42		9.64	1.18		.51***		.49***	
V/A average	8.55	1.55		8.50	1.56		.51***		.51***	
S/R average	7.65	1.83		8.69	1.67		.35***		.30***	
Ext average	6.66	1.63		7.37	1.81		.06**		.05**	
Agr average	8.79	1.67		9.27	1.55		.23***		.26***	
Con average	8.77	1.64		9.54	1.44		.24***		.23***	
Emo average	8.63	1.66		9.40	1.42		.06*		.19***	
Opn average	7.78	1.78		8.46	1.70		.20***		.18***	

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Research Ethics Committee/ Institutional Review Board Information

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