

# **UNIVERSITY OF PADOVA**

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## **Final dissertation**

# How situational perceptions relate to mate preferences?

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# Tables of content

UNIVERSITY OF PADOVA1
1. INTRODUCTION
2. SITUATIONAL AFFORDANCES
3. MATE PREFERENCES10
<b>3.1 D</b> EALMAKERS11
<b>3.2</b> Long-term and short-term mating context
4. METHOD14
<b>4.1 PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE</b> 14
<b>4.2 MEASURES</b> 14
5. RESULTS
6. DISCUSSION
6.1 LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION
7. REFERENCES
8. TABLES
9. APPENDIX

### 1. Introduction

The existing debate between personality psychology emphasizing that the behavior of one is determined by the personality characteristics of an individual, and social psychology arguing about the influence of the situation on our behavior, is arguably false. With much research on the topic, we now know that one does not gain power at the expense of the other. Those effects can coexist, and as expressed by a classic formula, a behavior is a function of an interaction between an individual and a situation (Wagerman & Funder, 2009).

Over the past decade of social psychology research, it has been noted the lack of technology for characterizing, defining, or measuring the explanatory power of situational forces (Sherman et al., 2010; Rauthmann et al., 2014; Brown et al., 2015; Parrigon et al., 2017). Our knowledge of situations is not advanced compared to our knowledge of individual differences. In fact, little is empirically proven or even theorized about how situations influence behavior, or how properties of situations might reasonably be described (Wagerman & Funder, 2009). The issue with scientific research on situations is the lack of a universally acceptable scheme of what is the definition of the situation. This does not mean that researchers ignored the issue. Many researchers attempted to theorize the concept and create a common tool that would capture and describe different situations that later could be used to measure situational perception (Horstmann et al., 2016; Horstmann et al., 2018; Horstmann et al., 2020; Topolewska et al., 2014). A technology for situational assessment provides the possibility to predict the specific situation in which people, of certain characteristics, are likely to behave in a specific manner (Wagerman & Funder, 2009) and this was one of the assumptions of our study.

Nearly all research trying to understand individual differences in mate preferences has focused on either personality or the sex of the participants, but no one has examined whether the way people see the world is related to what they look for in a potential partner- Some research shows that people depend, to an important extent, on the situation they are in. In psychology, the important question is what causes people to behave the way they do (Wagerman & Funder, 2009). Research shows that for example, the Dark Triad traits (i.e., narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism) are linked with individual differences in perception. It means that people high in those traits see the situation as affording them mating and deception opportunities (Jonason & Sherman, 2020).

The central tenet of social psychology claims that situations powerfully influence behavior. Many researchers demonstrate the manipulations of situational variables, even seemingly minor, can have major effects (Sherman et al., 2010). We wanted to expand the research on the relationship between situational affordances and mate preferences.

The definition of a situation is a tricky question avoided by many researchers. Subjective situations, by the definition of the situation, are confounded with personality traits and so situational effects on behavior can be confounded with personality traits. One of the ways in which traits can correlate with situations is active selection such as approaching or avoiding situations according to one's personality. A physically attractive woman entering a room full of strangers will create a different situation than the situation with a less attractive woman (Asendorpf 2009). Each day, people face situations or contexts that provide opportunities or obstacles or affordances to achieve one's goals. An example would be, spending an evening at the bar can give the possibility to relax or find a romantic partner. On the other hand, can provide obstacles in achieving it in the form of other suiters flirting with your potential partner (Brown et al., 2015).

With the assumption that the way a situation is perceived will determine which behaviors are taken (Rauthmann et al., 2014) we wanted to see how the way one perceives a situation influences the behaviors. In our study, we wanted to check whether the way we see the world and by this, the way we view situations we are facing, influence our choices in a potential mate. Here, we tested whether situational affordances (i.e., opportunities or obstacles to fulfilling one's goal) related to one of the fundamental social motives- mate-seeking. To do so, we examined how situational affordances (i.e., duty, intellect, adversity, mating, positivity, negativity, deception, sociality) can change what we value when looking for short-term or long-term partner. This study shows that different situational perception is correlated with different traits that we will be interested in. To understand the mechanisms underlying our preferences, it is worth first explaining what those situational affordances are.

#### 2. Situational affordances

Throughout life, people come across a wide range of situations- they find themselves in different environments, meeting different people and those situations that people are experiencing can vary in psychologically meaningful ways (De Vries et al., 2016). Each situation can provide opportunities and obstacles (i.e., affordances) that may be relevant to one's fundamental social motives like looking for a partner. This implies that they can vary in how they are perceived as of function of the challenges or adaptive opportunities they afford (Xie & Hehman, 2023). What is important to keep in mind, is that situational affordances are intuitive. Humans reflexively and efficiently process the psychological properties of situations (Rauthmann et al., 2015; Rauthmann & Sherman, 2019; Xie & Hehman, 2023). To better understand the issue of situational affordances, which has not been studied as much as research on other topics (ie., personality), it's worth starting with the definition of a situation.

Defining a situation is a tricky question avoided by many researchers. Subjective situations, by the definition of the situation, are confounded with personality traits, and so situational effects on behavior can be confounded with personality traits. The person-situation debate searches for the answer to how internal personal factors influence human behavior in any situation (Horstmann & Ziegler, 2019). This debate ended with a consensus that both internal factors (i.e., personality) and external factors (i.e., situations) can influence behavior (Parrigon, 2017). As a result of this debate, the attention of the researchers has been brought to study situations which has been a challenge in previous years.

One of the main reasons why this particular topic has been avoided by researchers for many years is that it was considered nearly impossible to measure situations. Without a descriptive system and a following measure, we could not consider a situation as a predictor for human behavior (Horstmann & Ziegler, 2019). Despite decades of research identifying the psychological properties of situations, there is no consensus on a common set of characteristics that we could use to measure many different situations people are experiencing (Brown et al., 2015). There is no broad and widely accepted taxonomy of relevant situational characteristics from a psychological point of view, nor as a tool to assess them (Sherman et al., 2010). This does not mean, that researchers all over the world neglected the issue. Different research programs have turned to behavioral signature approaches, part of the cognitive-affective processing system (CAPS) to understand how people and situations jointly predict behavior. Behavioral signatures are known as patterns of behavior produced by the interaction of characteristics of the person and his or her situation (Sherman et al., 2010).

The well-known measure considering what situational features allow the expression of personality traits is the Riverside Situational Q-sort (RSQ: Brown et al., 2015). RSQ instrument is an instrument for assessing psychological properties of situations in which item content was inspired by the long-used and wide-ranging California Adult Q-sort (CAQ). For every description of the personality in the CAQ, there was written a description of an aspect of situational context that might evoke some relevant behavioral tendency (Sherman et al., 2010). This measure was a starting point for Rauthmann and colleagues (2014) who factor analyzed the RSQ across diverse samples and as a result uncovered the "Situational Eight" DIAMONDS (Brown et al., 2015). Identified dimensions of situations are: Duty (Does something need to be done?), Intellect (Is deep cognitive processing required?), Adversity (Is someone threatened by external forces?), Mating (Is there an opportunity to attract potential mates?), pOsitivity (Is the situation pleasant?), Negativity (Can the situation arouse negative feelings?), Deception (Can others be trusted?), and Sociality (Is social interaction possible or expected?: Rauthmann & Sherman, 2015).

According to Rauthmann and colleagues (Rauthmann, Sherman, & Funder, 2015), psychological situations can be organized into three levels: situational cues, situational characteristics, and situational classes. The first level refers to the physically present elements present in a situation. A person perceiving a situational cue has to interpret it and the result of this interpretation is the psychologically meaningful characteristic of a situation, also known as the "processing principle" (Horstmann & Ziegler, 2019). From our knowledge of animals, we know that for example, a large snake can be interpreted as beautiful or dangerous. Different people will have various perceptions of the same situation. It happens because each person has a unique perception of this situation (Horstmann & Ziegler, 2019).

Research on situational affordances covers various topics. Starting from studies on individual differences in the perception of situations (De Vries et al., 2016), through situational perception as a predictor of various outcomes, such as behavior, affect, well-being, and goalrelated behaviors (Horstmann & Ziegler, 2019) or even the relation of situational perception and happiness (Sherman et al., 2015). Much research has focused on studying situational affordances and their behavioral links (Columbus et al., 2019; Roche & Chainay, 2017). Ultimately, there has been growing interest in situational perception connected to personality and the consequences of those individual differences (Jonason & Sherman, 2020). Research findings suggest that individual differences in personality influence which situations people encounter and select, how they react to situations, and what outcomes they obtain (De Vries et al., 2016). A study on the role of personality traits and individual differences in the perception of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions is a good example of how individual differences and perceptions of situations influence people and their compliance with governmental restrictions. For instance, agreeableness as a trait expressed in caring about others and being prosocial was associated with greater compliance with restrictions to reduce the spread of the virus (Zajenkowski et al., 2020)

Another approach concerning the topic is trait activation theory (TAT) which tells us that situations are characterized by cues to affordances, which influences the likelihood that one trait is expressed rather than the other. Trait-relevant situational cues can either restrict or allow for the expression of that trait. For instance, features of work (e.g., the presence of other people working) can allow people to express the extent to which they are conscientious more than the extent to which they are extraverted (De Vries et al., 2016). A study conducted by Asendorpf (2009) shows us that for example, one of the ways in which traits can correlate with situations is active selection such as approaching or avoiding situations according to one's personality. A physically attractive woman entering a room full of strangers will create a different situation that situation than a less attractive woman. On the other hand, the domain-specific situational affordances perspective implies that the same traits can have positive outcomes in one situation and negative outcomes in another (De Vries et al., 2016).

In our study, we attempt to move further and apply the DIAMONDS framework to the social context of mate preferences, to assess how the way we perceive a situation may influence what traits we desire in our potential partner. Other research focused on the DIAMONDS framework confined to personality assessment as how one kind of underlying system-perceptions of the social world- relate to pathological analogs of the Big Five traits (Jonason et al., 2021). In our study, we wanted to apply it to social context- mate preferences.

#### 3. Mate preferences

In sexually reproducing species, there is no decision that would be more important than the choice of a mate. The right mate choices may provide many reproductive benefits, such as good genes for the offspring, physical protection, and provision of resources for oneself and the offspring. Poor mate choices can carry costs, such as poor genetic material with a high mutation load, sexually transmitted diseases, reputational damage, and abandonment (Buss & Schmitt, 2019).

Research on mate preferences often focuses on differences between men and women. According to evolutionary theory, ancestral men and women had to face different adaptive problems when choosing a partner. Those challenges may have evolved in both sexes to direct them to prioritize different qualities in mates. Consistently, studies on long-term mate preferences conducted over decades have shown differences in what women value (e.g., social status, resources) in comparison to what men find important in a mate (e.g., physical attractiveness). Many qualities may be important, but some are prioritized more highly than others depending on a person's sex and the mating context (Li, 2007).

The first theory attempting to correct the deficiencies of prior mating theories and provide some of the key complexities of human mating psychology is sexual strategies theory (SST: Buss & Schmitt, 2019). Sexual strategies theory is an evolutionary theory that males and females adopt under different circumstances. The difference from previous theories is that it includes multiple motives each person can have, such as long-term versus short-term (Buss & Schmitt, 2016). One of the key premises of SST is that the deployment of different sexual strategies, such as long-term or short-term is highly context-dependent. Following this theory, we could suspect different situations could make individuals desire particular characteristics in a mate (Buss & Schmitt, 2019). It is not the only theory explaining mate choices, on the other hand, there is the oldest one focused on the different mechanisms humans use.

The evolutionary perspective, focused on the causal mechanisms that could influence mate preferences evolved psychological heuristics selected after overcoming reproduction obstacles in the human ancestral past. This framework suggests that the more likely it is for an individual to have the opportunity to reproduce with a particular partner, the more understandable it is for this individual to demand traits signaling reproductive value (Sprecher & Regan, 2002). That is why it is interesting whether peoples' perception of the world influences which trait they will value in a potential mate.

#### 3.1 Dealmakers

It seems like it has since forever that poets, songwriters, psychologists, and philosophers have been trying to understand why people choose one person as a romantic or sexual partner over another. We can see mate choice as composed of two complementary strategies- one focusing on acquiring desirable traits, and the other, on avoiding those we do not desire (Jonason et al., 2015). Studies investigating the degree to which various characteristics are desired in different contextual relationships (long-term vs. short-term and friendships) show that participants preferred warmth, kindness, expressivity, openness, good sense of humor independently of the relationship context. When it comes to a romantic/ sexual partner rather than a friend, people favor desirable characteristics like physical attractiveness, personality traits like intelligence, warmth, and attributes of social status (Sprecher & Regan, 2002). For decades, researchers studying mate preferences found the preference for intelligence and kindness. Not only there is a preference for some qualities, but studies find differences in preferences between sexes, for example, men's tendency to give more importance to physical attractiveness, and women's greater preferences for social status and dominance (Jonason et al., 2015).

#### 3.2 Long-term and short-term mating context

Research concerning mate selection highlights the importance of distinction in relationship duration and commitment level (Jonason et al., 2015; Buss & Schmitt, 1993). Numerous studies have investigated sexual strategies for men and women, as well as their preferences while looking for long-term or short-term mates (Edlund & Sagarin, 2014). Individuals' motivations to engage in long-term, committed relationships, and short-term, uncommitted ones may differ (Jonason et al., 2015). Not all potential relationships provide an equal possibility for reproduction and because of that, preferences for traits may differ across types of relationships as a function of their reproductive potential (Sprecher & Regan, 2002). When looking for a serious romantic partner, we expect to get socio-emotional support as well as economic and reproductive reasons. On the other hand, engaging in casual relationships can arise from the need for sexual gratification (Jonason et al., 2015). Considering greater mutual investment and interdependence in long-term relationships, there is of bigger importance to make quality choices for one's long-term mate, thus we expect people to be more selective in long-term versus short-term (uncommitted) relationship context (Jonason et al., 2015).

Following the evolutionary perspective, the degree to which traits like status and ambition- seen as important for male reproductive value, and physical attractivenessconsidered an important feature of female reproductive value, are important in a relationship partner should be evaluated based on the degree of the reproduction possibility within a particular type of relationship. In a long-term, committed relationship, there is the highest likelihood context for procreation. According to this perspective, physical attractiveness, status, ambition, and other characteristics connected to reproductive value, should be desired mostly in a spouse/ long-term partner. Although pregnancy, even if less likely, can also occur in a short-term, causal relationship which would suggest that traits suggesting high reproductive value would be desired to the different degree of importance (Sprecher & Regan, 2002).

Following the biological perspective, we know that sex differences play an important role in choosing traits we desire or avoid in a potential mate. Because of minimal reproductive investment, men are likely to be less selective about their short-term, uncommitted partners (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). Because of biological sex differences, even in short-term relationship contexts, women will be more sensitive to dealbreakers than men (Jonason et al., 2015).

#### 4. Method

#### **4.1 Participants and Procedure**

On the initial pool of 319 volunteers from Poland who participated in the study we conducted major cleaning of the data and excluded 31 people who did not complete all parts of the study, or we recognized the tendency in their responses. This gave us the final pool on which we carried out our analysis of 288 participants (242 women, 46 men) aged between 19 and 60 years of age (M = 24.70, SD = 7.01) who volunteered to take the part in the study shared on various online social media platforms. The necessary sample size was determined based on power analysis for the average effect size in social and personality psychology ( $r \approx 0.20$ ; Richard, Bond Jr., & Stokes-Zoota, 2003) and guidelines ( $N \approx 250$ ) set for reducing estimation error in personality psychology (Schönbrodt & Perugini, 2013). Participants were informed of the nature of the study, provided consent via tick box, completed the series of self-report measures, and upon completion, were thanked and debriefed. All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards approved by the ethics committee of psychological research at the University of Padua (Protocol: 4097).

#### 4.2 Measures

To measure mate preferences, we created a list of 72 characteristics that could be desired in a potential long-term or short-term partner. Participants were asked to rate how important (1 = Not Important; 5= Very Important) each of the traits, such as realistic, determined, hardworking, and seductive, is to them in a long-term partner and accordingly in a short-term partner. Most research on mate preferences uses a short list of potentially desirable traits in a partner (Botwin et al., 2006; Boxer et al., 2015; Buss, 1989). While the most commonly used 18-item Mate Preferences Questionnaire focuses on more general characteristics, we aimed at creating a list consisting not only of personality traits but also of more detailed physical characteristics that can be important to us like white teeth or being muscular.

To measure mate preferences in short-term and long-term contexts, we created a list of 71 traits (Appendix 1) that we could possibly look for in a potential mating partner. Then we ran the Principal Axis Factoring which revealed two strong dimensions that to us looked like agency and communion. Based on the elbow test (see Table 1 and Table 2) we found two clear factors and then a lot of noise for each mating context.



Table 1. Principal Axis Factoring for long-term mate preferences.



Table 2. Principal Axis Factoring for short-term mate preferences.

Table 5. Thirdple Axis Factoring on tarts I		STM	ing term	LTM	
	F	actor	Factor		
	1	2	1	2	
Adaptable	.413		.435		
Admirable		.302	.580		
Adventurous		.442	.403	310	
Ambitious	.662		.435		
Athletic		.620	.441		
Both feet on the ground	.425		.360	353	
Calm	.306				
Charming					
Clear skin	329	.569			
Clever	.424		.478		
Compassionate	.623		.485	306	
Confident		.514	.459	.465	
Convivial		.365			
Cooperative	.365		.532		
Courageous	.433	.419	.614	380	
Creative	.427		.330		
Curious	.510		.430		
Determined	.571		.568	418	
Devoted	.644		.452		
Educated	.430		.320		
Empathetic	.586		.447		
Encouraging		.543	.463	.350	
Enthusiastic		.367	.600		
Extraverted		.488	.328		
Faithful	.707	334	.379	431	
Fashionable		.519	.303		
Fearless		.407	.477	371	
Flirtatious		.578	.303		
Fun	.399	.400	.469		
Hardworking	.614		.541	375	
High		.383	.318	414	
Honest	.630		.453	341	
Humorous	.396	.334	.561	412	
Independent	.426		.447		
Integrity	.475		.476		
Intelligent	.507		.468		
Interesting	.371		.390		

Table 3. Principle Axis Factoring on traits for short-term and long-term context.

Introvert				
Kind	.398		.506	
Loyal	.699		.461	
Muscular		.609	.386	.345
Open	.444		.630	
Optimistic	.372	.313	.433	
Organized	.657		.487	
Outgoing		.510	.485	.350
Patient	.632		.466	.305
Physically attractive		.485	.312	.554
Pragmatic	.425		.383	.545
Proactive	.370		.482	.522
Protective	.716		.489	.507
Rational	.536		.477	482
Realistic	.467		.523	476
Reasonable	.612		.515	463
Relaxed		.479	.564	447
Reliable	.559		.595	.436
Resourceful	.701		.399	385
Seductive		.633	.330	.351
Sensitive	.449			.344
Sexy		.536	.541	.328
Sociable	.506	.325	.343	
Status		.441	.523	.326
Strong		.581	.364	.313
Supporting	.727	353	.469	
Sweet	.328		.320	
Trustworthy	.626		.528	
Understanding	.648		.436	
Wanderlust	.472		.449	
Warm	.480		.354	.337
Wealthy		.337	.436	
Well-built		.676	.313	
White teeth		.553		

 $\overline{Note. \text{ STM} = \text{short-term mating; LTM} = \text{long-term mating.}}$ 

From the long list of traits on which we conducted Principle Axis Factoring (Table 3), we chose 20 most loaded items in each dimension and ran Principal Component Analysis (PCAs) for both long-term and short-term preferences and found four dimensions in long-term and three in short-term (Table 4).

		L	LTM	STM			
		Con	nponent	Component			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
Athletic	.823				.807		
Muscular	.843				.816		
Well-built	.846				.820		
Reliable		.352	.602			.577	.329
Supporting			.757		478	.361	.584
Trustworthy			.873		379	.518	.399
Admirable	.367	.594			.338		.591
Determined		.681					.663
Hardworking		.622					.795
Enthusiastic	.309			.556	.316	.488	
Open				.757		.827	
Sociable				.766		.647	
Clear skin	.581						
Courageous	.553	.354					
Humorous		.616		.341			
Loyal		.572	.561				
Resourceful		.584	.341				
Sensitive			.342	.427			
Strong	.787						
White teeth	.608						

Table 4. Principal Component Analyses (varimax rotation) describing desired traits in a long-term and short-term context.

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.<sup>a</sup>

*Note.* STM = short-term mating; LTM = long-term mating.

For comparison purposes, for both mating contexts, we created four components: Formidable, Diligent, Fun, and Integrity with three highest loading items per trait for both (see Table 5). What we can see is that despite a mating context there is a general tendency to value some trait over others. We found that when looking for a long-term partner or a short-term partner we generally value integrity over fun, fun over diligent, and diligent over formidable (Figure 1).

		STI	M	LTN	Ν
	Traits	M	SD	М	SD
Formidable	Athletic	2.92	1.11	2.78	1.10
	Muscular	2.45	1.10	2.75	1.07
	Well-built	2.99	1.12	2.78	1.10
Diligent	Admirable	3.34	1.03	3.58	1.09
	Determined	3.56	0.98	3.92	0.88
	Hardworking	3.68	1.03	4.28	0.73
Fun	Sociable	3.55	1.09	3.75	1.02
	Open	4.23	0.76	4.27	0.76
	Enthusiastic	3.82	0.88	3.91	0.88
Integrity	Trustworthy	4.50	0.74	4.79	0.53
	Reliable	4.25	0.86	4.57	0.69
	Supportive	4.21	0.98	4.76	0.46

Table 5. Item statistics for short-term and long-term components





Lastly, to measure individual differences in the perception of situations, we used a unique, picture-based method to assess perceptions of situations—a bar, a classroom, and an office—based on the S8\* (Rauthmann & Sherman, 2016), a 24-item measure of the situational

eight DIAMONDS (i.e., Duty, Intellect, Adversity, Mating, pOsitivity, Negativity, Deception, Sociality; see Rauthmann et al., 2014). For each of the eight dimensions there were three statements and to reduce the fatigue of an already long test, we combined those three descriptions of each dimension into one. Participants were asked to assess in the reference to the picture of a situation, to what extend (1 = *totally disagree*; 5 = *totally agree*) do you associate each statement: "A job needs to be done" (Duty), "Situation includes intellectual or cognitive stimuli" (Intellect), "I am being blamed for something" (Adversity), "Potential sexual or romantic partners are present" (Mating), "The situation is pleasant" (pOsitivity), "The situation could elicit stress" (Negativity), "It is possible to deceive someone" (Deception), and "Social interaction is possible" (Sociality), with this place (Perry et al., 2020). We averaged people's responses to each characteristic across situations.

#### 5. Results

In Table A1 we reported the correlations between four mate preferences and perceptions of situations for each situation and aggregated across situations overall, in men and women, and by mating context. We have found that a preference for formidability is correlated with perceptions of intellect, positivity, and negativity in a long-term context. In the short-term context, a preference for formidability is correlated only with the perception of mating but what is interesting, this preference does not differ between sexes which suggests that when we perceive the situation in terms of intellect, positivity, and negativity we value formidability, but in short-term context we prefer someone who is formidable only when perceiving the mating opportunity in a situation. We have also found the preference for a diligent partner correlated with the perception of duty and mating in the short term but correlated with the perception of intellect in a long-term mate. When it comes to fun, the preference for this trait is correlated with the perception of duty in short-term mating but also positivity and sociality regardless of the dating context. Lastly, we have found that a preference for integrity is visible no matter of the context when people see duty and intellect but also is correlated with the perception of negativity in the long-term and sociality in the short-term mating. In Table A1 we can also find sex differences in mate preferences. When considering sex differences, we can see significant difference towards more traits in a preference for a long-term mate compared to a preference for short-term which suggest that when looking for a long-term partner men and women differ in how important some traits are to them. When perceiving a situation through an intellect dimension we can see that a preference for diligent and fun partner in a long-term context significantly differ between sexes. When perceiving a situation as adverse, there is a difference in preferences for a formidable partner in the short term and for integrity in the long-term mate. Perception of mating opportunities shows the difference between sexes in a preference for fun in short-term mates and integrity for a long-term partner.

When we see the situation as negative, we differ in how much we value formidable long-term mate and diligent partner despite of the mating context. When perceiving deception in a situation, men and women also differ when it comes to the preference for a formidable longterm partner. When we see the situation from a sociality dimension, we differ between sexes when it comes to the preference for diligent and fun in a long-term partner, but a formidable mate despite the context.

In Table A2 we report the results of a mixed model ANOVA and descriptive statistics which shows all differences in mate preferences between sexes and across mating contexts. Here we can see that individual differences in preferences when looking for a short-term and long-term context show significant differences overall, in men, and women for all traits except men's preference for fun. This means that we generally value desirable traits significantly different across different contexts but there is no difference in how important fun partner is in men's preference for this trait across mating context. This means that men value fun as much in the short term as they do in a long-term mate. Not only men's preference for fun does not differ between contexts, but it is the only trait that men and women do not significantly differ in their preference for this trait. Generally, we value diligent, fun, and integrity more in the long-term mates, but formidable in a short-term context. When it comes to sex differences across contexts, there are slightly different preferences for desirable traits. Men value more formidable and fun partner in the short term, but diligent and integrity trait when it comes to the long term. Women on the other hand value formidable and integrity more in the short-term but diligent and fun in the long-term mate. On the other hand, when looking at sex differences in preferences across mating contexts, we found that women value more formidable, diligent, and fun partner despite the mating context than men do. When it comes to integrity, women value this trait more in the short-term than men do, but men value this trait more than women in the long-term context.

Table A3 shows us that despite sex or context people value integrity more than fun, fun more than diligent, and diligent more than formidability. We can see that women generally value all traits more than men do. We can also see that overall diligent, fun, and integrity are more valued in the long-term than in the short term. Formidability on the other hand is more valued in a short-term context. According to the results presented in this table, we see that overall integrity is more valued than fun, which is more valued than diligent, which is more valued than formidability.

We also examined sex differences among the DIAMONDS scale and presented the results (Table A4), according to which women are more negative in their perception and men are more interested in mating.

To summarize, generally, people rate all traits higher in the long-term (M = 3.7, SD = .04) context than in the short-term (M = 3.51, SD = .04) women generally give more value to desirable traits in a potential partner than men do. The only trait men value more than women is integrity in a long-term partner. The preferences for those traits differed significantly across long-term and short-term contexts, with an exception for men's preference for fun which does not differ significantly across context but also it is the only trait that the preference for it does not differ between men and women.

### 6. Discussion

Lots of research on mate preferences often relies on a small list of traits chosen by researchers (Buss & Schmitt, 2019), and we aimed to take a broader perspective so we created an expanded list of 71 characteristics that can be important while looking for a long-term or a short-term mate. The goal of this study was to understand how our mate preferences can be influenced by the way we see the world and are those preferences differ between sexes. Given the newness of situational affordances research in mate preference, we attempted an exploratory study of all of the relationships between situational affordances and mate preferences. It seems intuitive that how people see the world may influence their mate preferences. If we see the world as dangerous, we may prioritize physical attractiveness because we are prioritizing short-term enjoyment or a fast-mating strategy. From research on situation perceptions, we know that situational affordances lead to different behaviors (Rauthmann et al., 2014; Sherman et al., 2010).

In our study, we showed a cross-over interaction in sex by context effects like integrity being valued more in a long-term context by men and in a short-term context being valued more by women. We have also found the preference for a diligent partner correlated with the perception of duty and mating in the short-term but correlated with the perception of intellect in a long-term mate. It seems to be intuitive that when perceiving a situation as intellectually stimulating while choosing a long-term partner would value traits like admirable, determined, and hardworking.

We also found, the reference for formidability being correlated with perceptions of intellect, positivity, and negativity in the long-term but with mating in the short-term. What is interesting, the preference for fun is correlated with the perception of duty in the short-term but also correlated with positivity and sociality regardless of a mating context. When it comes to integrity, this trait is valued regardless of the mating context when people perceive duty and

24

intellect but is correlated with the perception of negativity in a long-term context and sociality in a short-term context. According to that outcome, we can see that situation affordances predict some but not all mate preferences.

#### **6.1 Limitations and Conclusion**

Most research on mate preferences focuses on personality, and many specifically on how maladaptive personality traits influence what individuals look for in a partner, but no one has ever done a study on situational affordances and their potential influence on mating choices. Moreover, most research studying preferences in looking for the one and only, utilize the shorter list of traits, while we tried to minimize the experiential bias by creating a broader list of traits not studied yet in this context. While this study provides a new perspective into how situational perceptions may relate to what people desire in a potential short-term and long-term partner using a longer list of potential dealmakers, it has its limitations.

First, we relied on a W.E.I.R.D. sample (i.e., Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic; Henrich et al., 2010) including mostly women (85%) which makes the generalization of our results limited.

Second, our results are leveraged on hypothetical situations. While the locations are real places that people are likely to be familiar with, in the study they were engaged in hypothetical responses instead of physically being in the location. This means our method may lack ecological validity. Future research could embed people in situations.

Third, the originally published version of The Riverside Situational Q-Sort (RSQ) consisting of 81 items has been introduced as the first situational tool for assessing behaviors. This tool was based on 100 items of The California Adult Q-Sort (CAQ) which comprehensively assesses personality traits that go beyond the usual Big Five (Rauthmann et al., 2014). The tool we used- Situational 8\* DIAMONDS consists of 24 items. Given the total

length of our study, to minimize the fatigue effect, for each situation, we combined all 3 descriptions of the dimension into one which may have influenced the results of the study.

Fourth, to measure mate preferences created a unique list of traits that could be important while looking for the one-and-only. Considering other research using a shorter list of traits, we wanted to expand the possible list of dealmakers. While the most commonly used 18item Mate Preferences Questionnaire consisting of a carefully selected list of traits, has the reason to select those 18, we wanted to show that there can be other traits significantly important in a potential mate. On the other hand, our expanded list was not tested and verified and may not include all the characteristics that matter when looking for a real-life partner. Additionally, while the primary list was long, after conducting analysis, we had to reduce most of the items to select those significantly important.

Fifth, while assessing the importance of a particular trait in a potential partner, we asked for a hypothetical evaluation of the preference and not does your actual partner has those traits. Because of that, we can make assumptions about the hypothetical choices and not what those people are choosing.

Lastly, no definition of what is meant by long-term or short-term relationships was provided which implies that people were free to evaluate what long-term and short-term relationships mean to them, which could have influenced the importance they gave to provided traits.

Despite some shortcomings, we provided novel experimental evidence that situation perceptions explain some mate preferences when looking for a long-term or a short-term partner. Instead of relying on a commonly used mate preference scale, we created a broad list of traits that we consider when looking for the one and only and we revealed four dimensions of mate preference resembling agentic and communion traits. We found that regardless of the context, the preference for fun is correlated with the perception of positivity and sociality but

26

integrity is valued more when correlated with the perception of duty and intellect. Not only we measured mate preference, but we also compared men and women and their preferences for different mating contexts with the assumption that we may value traits differently depending on the mating context and depending on our sex. We found that compared to men, women generally put more value when choosing a mate, but also prefer fun in a long-term partner. Men on the other hand value fun as much in a long-term as in a short-term context. Finally, we found that women are generally more negative in their perception and men are more interested in mating.

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# 8. Tables

Table ALCO	rrelations o		mate prefere	ences and sn		ordances ove	ran, in men		and by mat	ing context.		
		Formidable	e	Diligent			Fun				Integrity	
-	LTM	STM	Z	LTM	STM	Z	LTM	STM	Z	LTM	STM	Z
Duty												
Overall	.05	.10	-0.6	.11	.17**	-0.73	.08	.14*	-0.72	.20**	.18**	0.25
Men	.10	.27	-0.81	09	.32*	-1.97**	.05	.13	-0.37	.17	.17	0.00
Women	.05	.09	-0.44	.17**	.17**	0.00	.11	.16*	-0.55	.23**	.20**	0.34
Z	0.30	1.13		-1.58	0.97		-0.37	-0.19		-0.38	-0.19	
Intellect												
Overall	12*	03	-1.08	.14*	.07	0.84	.03	.11	-0.96	.21**	.19**	0.25
Men	27	10	-0.81	13	.02	-0.70	23	.15	-1.80*	.01	.09	-0.37
Women	10	01	-0.99	.19**	.01	1.99**	.07	.10	-0.33	.25**	.21**	0.46
Z	-1.10	-0.55		-1.95*	0.06		-1.84*	0.31		-1.48	-0.74	
Adversity												
Overall	.06	.00	0.72	.08	.02	0.72	05	04	-0.12	01	.09	-1.20
Men	.11	.25	-0.67	.18	.02	0.75	02	.05	-0.33	38**	.23	-3.01**
Women	.04	04	0.88	.05	.00	0.55	06	06	0.00	.04	.06	-0.22
Z	0.43	1,78*		0.80	0.12		0.24	0.67		-2.66**	1.05	
Mating												
Overall	.10	.13*	-0.36	.00	.12*	-1.44	.02	02	0.48	08	04	-0.48
Men	05	.16*	-0.98	.10	12	1.03	12	23	0.52	30*	.01	-1.48
Women	00	.18*	-1.99**	.03	.01	0.22	.10	.04	0.66	00	01	0.11
Z	30	0.12		0.43	-0.79		-1.33	-1.66*		-1.87*	0.12	
pOsitivity												
Overall	.13*	.07	0.72	.08	02	1.20	.18**	.12*	0.73	06	.02	-0.96
Men	.27	.02	1.19	.15	.09	0.28	.11	.00	0.51	.12	06	0.84
Women	.13*	.09	0.44	.09	.16*	-0.78	.22**	.15*	0.79	07	.05	-1.32

Table A1. Correlations between four mate preferences and situational affordances overall, in men and women, and by mating context.

Z	0.88	-0.42		0.37	-0.43		-0.68	-0.91		1.15	-0.67	
Negativity												
Overall	16**	10	-0.73	.01	08	1.08	03	04	0.12	.16**	.11	0.61
Men	52**	.02	-2.77**	24	34*	0.50	00	05	0.23	.02	.05	-0.14
Women	12	.09	-2.31**	.03	.00	0.33	06	06	< 0.01	.17**	.10	0.78
Z	-2.75**	-0.42		-1.66*	2.14**		0.36	0.06		-0.92	-0.30	
Deception												
Overall	.07	.00	0.84	03	.07	-1.20	08	04	-0.48	02	03	0.12
Men	17	.03	-0.94	06	13	0.33	15	06	-0.42	04	.06	-0.46
Women	.11	.00	1.21	02	06	0.44	06	03	-0.33	00	04	0.44
Z	-1.70*	0.18		-0.24	-0.43		-0.55	-0.18		-0.24	0.60	
Sociality												
Overall	.01	.02	-0.12	02	.07	-1.08	.15*	.27**	-1.49	.08	.14*	-0.72
Men	27	37	0.51	54**	08	-2.40**	19	.15	-1.60	.12	.29	-0.82
Women	.04	.07	-0.33	.06	.08	-0.22	.21**	.28**	-0.80	.06	.11	-0.55
	1.91*	-2.77**		-3.29**	-0.97		-2.45**	-0.82		0.37	1.14	

*Note.* Comparisons by sex were Fisher's z-test, comparisons by traits were Steiger's z-test; STM = short-term, LTM = long-term mating. \* p < .05, \*\* p < .01

•	_	Mea	t	g	
		Long-term	Short-term		
Formidable					
	Overall	2.62 (1)	2.78 (0.95)	4.15**	0.24
	Men	2.30 (0.83)	2.51 (0.81)	2.40*	0.35
	Women	2.68 (1.02)	2.84 (0.97)	3.52**	0.23
	t	-2.39*	-2.12*		
	g	-0.38	-0.34		
Diligent					
	Overall	3.93 (0.70)	3.53 (0.76)	-9.68**	-0.57
	Men	3.62 (0.67)	3.04 (0.74)	-4.07**	-0.59
	Women	3.99 (0.70)	3.62 (0.72)	-8.93**	-0.57
	t	-3.34**	-4.92**		
	g	-0.54	-0.79		
Fun					
	Overall	3.97 (0.69)	3.87 (0.67)	-3.39**	-0.20
	Men	3.67 (0.72)	3.71 (0.65)	0.36	0.05
	Women	4.03 (0.67)	3.90 (0.67)	-4.17**	-0.27
	t	-3.26*	-1.72		
	g	-052	-0.28		
Integrity					
	Overall	4.71 (0.45)	4.32 (0.71)	-9.19**	-0.54
	Men	4.56 (0.43)	4.07 (0.68)	-4.33**	-0.63
	Women	4.07 (0.68)	4.37 (0.80)	-8.12**	-0.52
	t	-2.48*	-2.72*		
	g	-0.40	-0.44		

 Table A2. Descriptive statistics and pairwise tests for sex differences and context effects for mate preferences

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

			Mean (SD)					
	Overall	Men	Women	Long-term	Short-term			
Formidability	2.70 (0.91)	2.41 (0.76)	2.76 (0.93)	2.62 (1.00)	2.78 (0.95)			
Diligent	3.73 (0.64)	3.33 (0.52)	3.80 (0.63)	3.92 (0.70)	3.53 (0.76)			
Fun	3.92 (0.63)	3.69 (0.60)	3.96 (0.62)	3.97 (0.69)	3.87 (0.67)			
Integrity	4.51 (0.47)	4.31 (0.42)	4.55 (0.47)	4.71 (0.45)	4.32 (0.71)			
F	466.69**	100.92**	372.77**	547.39**	239.14**			
$\eta_p^2$	.62	.69	.61	.66	.46			
* <i>p</i> < .05, ** <i>p</i> < .01								

Table A3. Relative preferences for traits overall, in each sex, and each context

Table A4. Descriptive statistics and pairwise tests for sex differences for mate situational affordances.

		Mean (SD)		t	g
	Overall	Men	Women		
D	3.62 (0.43)	3.70 (0.46)	3.60 (0.42)	1.42	0.23
Ι	3.87 (0.53)	3.87 (0.49)	3.87 (0.54)	0.04	0.01
А	2.35 (0.90)	2.25 (0.81)	2.37 (0.91)	-0.85	-0.14
М	2.79 (0.83)	3.17 (0.87)	2.72 (0.80)	3.40**	0.55
0	3.00 (0.65)	3.11 (0.57)	2.98 (0.67)	1.24	0.20
Ν	3.70 (0.78)	3.49 (0.82)	3.74 (0.76)	-2.07*	-0.33
D	2.93 (0.93)	3.00 (0.98)	2.92 (0.93)	0.56	0.09
S	3.68 (0.70)	3.59 (0.68)	3.69 (0.71)	-0.88	-0.14

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

### 9. Appendix

Appendix 1. List of potentially desirable traits in a mate.

- 1. Supporting
- 2. Protective
- 3. Faithful
- 4. Resourceful
- 5. Loyal
- 6. Ambitious
- 7. Organized
- 8. Understanding
- 9. Devoted
- 10. Patient
- 11. Honest
- 12. Trustworthy
- 13. Compassionate
- 14. Hardworking
- 15. Reasonable
- 16. Empathetic
- 17. Determined
- 18. Reliable
- 19. Rational
- 20. Curious
- 21. Intelligent
- 22. Sociable
- 23. Warm
- 24. Integrity
- 25. Wanderlust
- 26. Realistic
- 27. Sensitive
- 28. Open
- 29. Courageous
- 30. Educated
- 31. Creative
- 32. Independent
- 33. Pragmatic
- 34. Clever
- 35. Adaptable
- 36. Kind

- 37. Humorous
- 38. Optimistic
- 39. Interesting
- 40. Proactive
- 41. Cooperative
- 42. Calm
- 43. Well-built
- 44. Seductive
- 45. Athletic
- 46. Muscular
- 47. Strong
- 48. Flirtatious
- 49. Clear skin
- 50. White teeth
- 51. Encouraging
- 52. Sexy
- 53. Fashionable
- 54. Confident
- 55. Outgoing
- 56. Extraverted
- 57. Physically attractive
- 58. Relaxed
- 59. Adventurous
- 60. Status
- 61. Fearless
- 62. Fun
- 63. High
- 64. Enthusiastic
- 65. Convivial
- 66. Wealthy
- 67. Admirable
- 68. Charming
- 69. Sweet
- 70. Both feet on the ground
- 71. Introvert