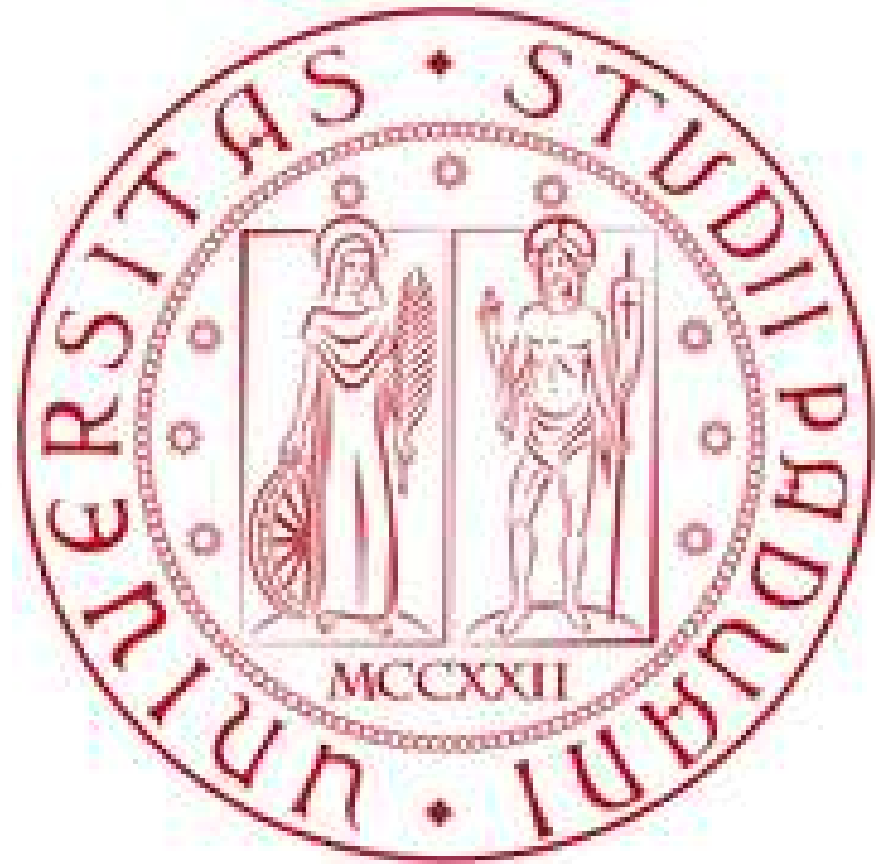# Should I stay or should I go?

PK Jonason, Ph.D.

Mate preferences

- Men prioritize physical attractiveness in the face and the body (Li & Kenrick, 2006; Singh, 1993)

- Women prioritize earning potential (Jonason, Li, & Madson, 2012), social status (Li et al., 2002) across mating duration.

- Both sexes want mates who are funny, kind, and caring (Buss, 1989).

Mate "not" preferences?

- Minimum criteria (Kenrick et al., 1990)
- Thresholds (Townsend & Levy, 1990)
- Priorities (Li et al., 2002)
- People have evolved to seek sufficiency in key characteristics (Jonason et al., 2019).
- Suggesting there may be two systems at work
 - Mate preferences
  - Mate aversions

Dealbreakers & Dealmakers

- *Dealmakers* may reflect characteristics that improve reproductive fitness

- *Dealbreakers* may represent reproductive fitness costs.

- Because of this cost–benefit asymmetry, people may be primarily sensitive to mating cost information and secondarily sensitive to mating benefit information.
    - Prospect Theory
    - Error Management Theory

Relationship Dealbreakers: Traits People Avoid in Potential Mates

Peter K. Jonason[1], Justin R. Garcia[2], Gregory D. Webster[3], Norman P. Li[4], and Helen E. Fisher[5]

⑤SAGE
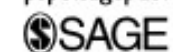
Study 1: Method

- 92 undergraduate students (24 men) aged 18 to 53 years (M = 23.97, SD = 8.36) from a community college in southwestern United States.

- "What would make you reject someone as a potential short-term, casual sex partner?"

- "What would make you reject someone as a potential long-term, committed partner?"

- Two research assistants compiled and counted the dealbreakers into a single list and eliminated redundant items (e.g., "the person smokes cigarettes" and "the person smokes"). The final list contained 49 dealbreakers.

Study 1: Results
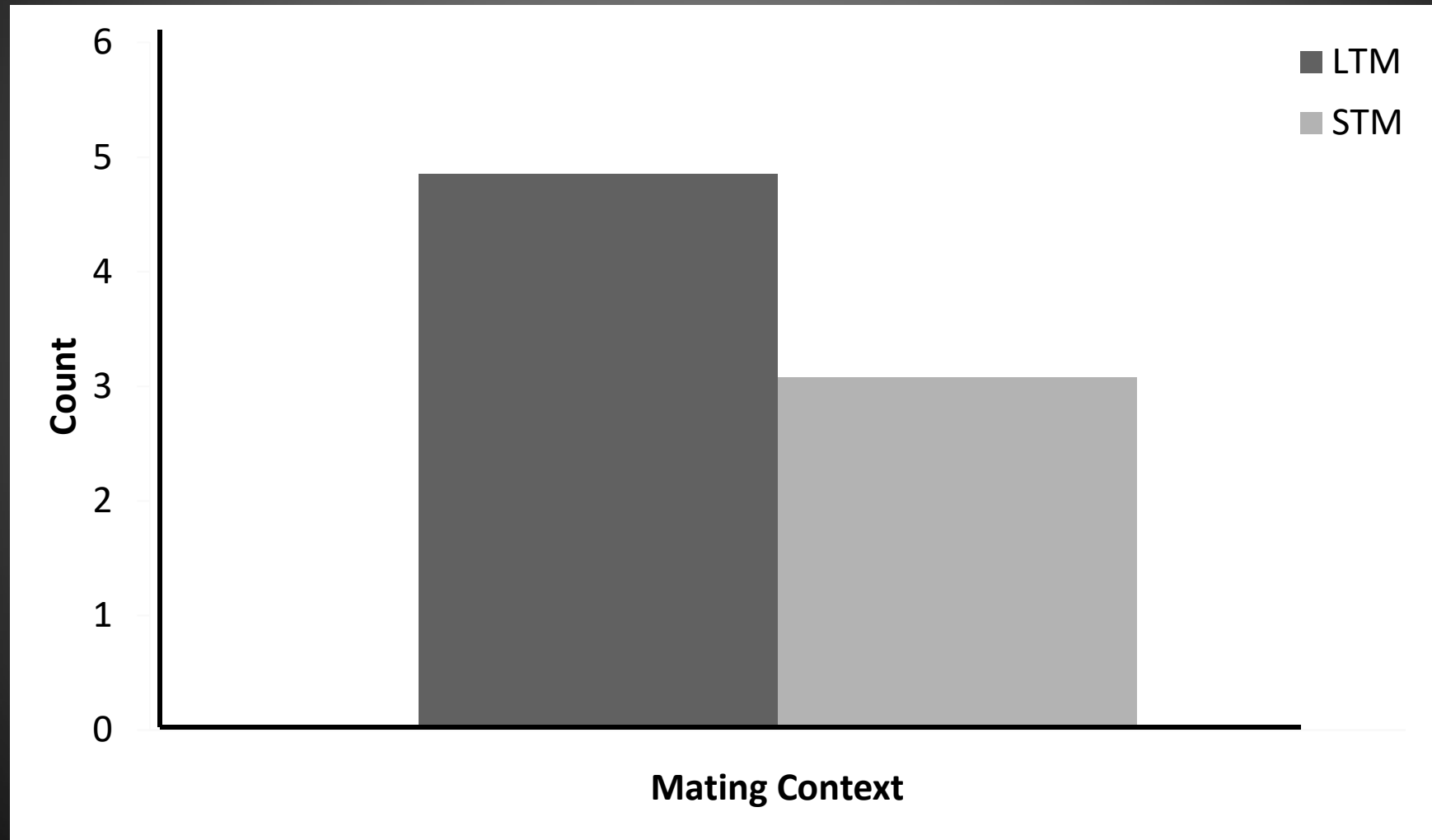
$F(1, 87) = 33.19, p < .01$

Study 2: Method

- 285 undergraduate students (115 men) aged 18 to 55 years (M = 22.35, SD = 6.27) from a university in southwestern United States.

- Mate Value Inventory (Kirsner, Figueredo, & Jacobs, 2003) α = .81

- Sociosexuality Orientation Index (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991) α = .75.

- Participants were shown the 49 dealbreakers from Study 1 and were asked to rate the likelihood (1 = *not at all*; 5 = *very much*) that each item would be a dealbreaker in STM/LTM contexts.
  - Averaged within each context (α's = .96).
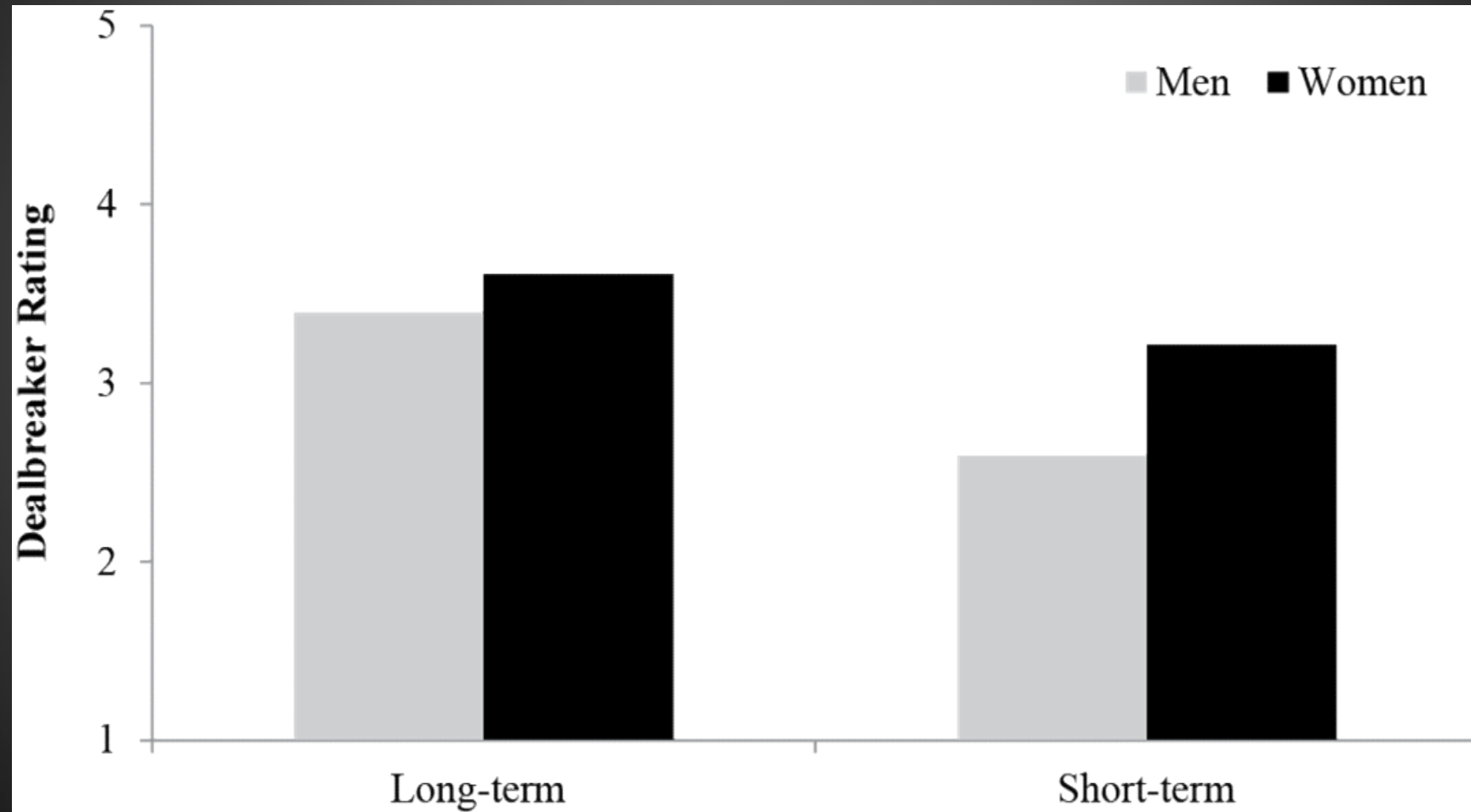 - Thematically divided into 7 groups.

Study 2: Results

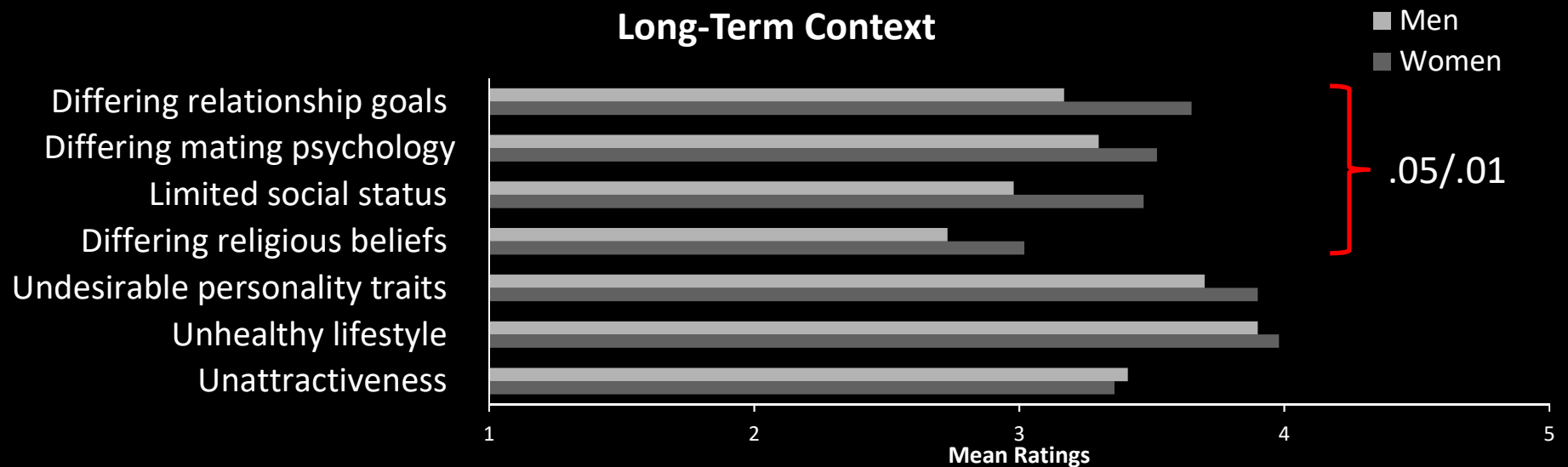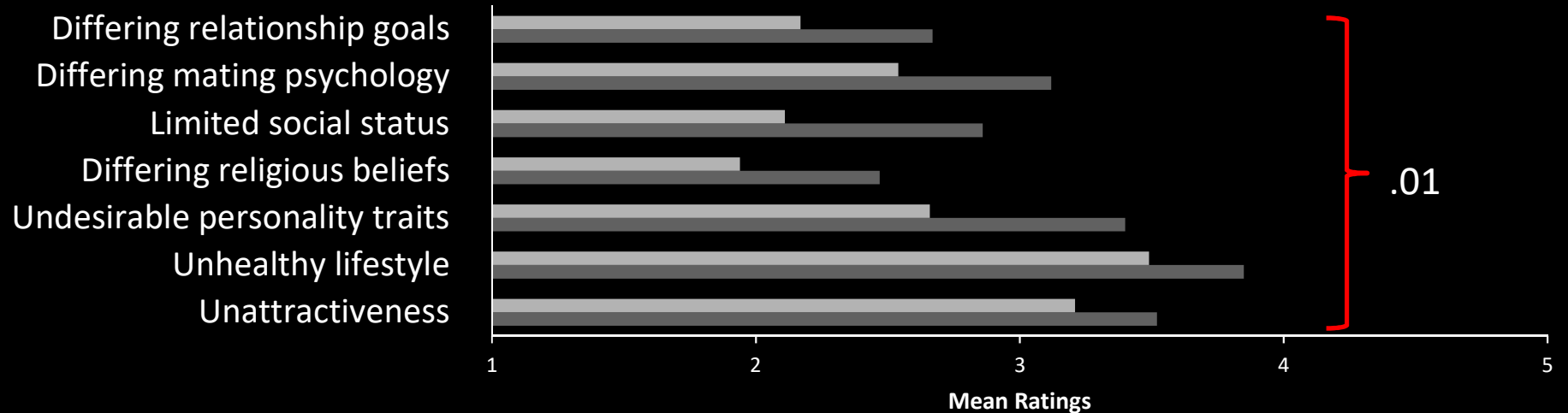|	Long-term relationships	Short-term relationships
Table 1. Top 10 dealbreakers for long-term and short-term relationships.		
	The person…	*The person…*
1.	Has anger issues or is abusive	Has health issues like STDs
2.	Is currently dating multiple partners now	Smells bad
3.	Is untrustworthy	Has poor hygiene
4.	Is already in a relationship/married	Is already in a relationship/married
5.	Has health issues like STDs	Has anger issues or is abusive
6.	Has alcohol or drug problem	Is bad in bed
7.	Is inattentive/uncaring	Is unattractive
8.	Is dismissive of my interests	Is currently dating multiple partners now
9.	Has poor hygiene	Does not take care of themselves
10.	Smells bad	Is racist/bigoted

Study 2: Results

$F(1, 282) = 21.16, p < .01$

Study 2: Results

Long-Term Context

Men
Women

- Differing relationship goals
- Differing mating psychology
- Limited social status
- Differing religious beliefs
- Undesirable personality traits
- Unhealthy lifestyle
- Unattractiveness

.05/.01

Mean Ratings

Short-Term Context

- Differing relationship goals
- Differing mating psychology
- Limited social status
- Differing religious beliefs
- Undesirable personality traits
- Unhealthy lifestyle
- Unattractiveness

.01

Mean Ratings

Study 2: Results

Long-term	SOI	MVI
Unattractiveness	.13*	.29**
Unhealthy lifestyle	-.04	.21**
Undesirable personality traits	-.02	.21**
Differing religious beliefs	-.22**	.16*
Limited social status	-.07	.29**
Differing mating psychology	-.23**	.20**
Differing relationship goals	-.09	.21**
Short-term		
Unattractiveness	-.09	.26**
Unhealthy lifestyle	-.20**	.16*
Undesirable personality traits	-.29**	.21**
Differing religious beliefs	-.34**	.15*
Limited social status	-.28**	.21**
Differing mating psychology	-.40**	.17**
Differing relationship goals	-.32**	.18**

Table 3. Correlations between dealbreakers for each mating duration and sociosexuality (SOI) and mate value (MVI).

*p < .05. **p <.01.

"Real People"?

Study 3: Method

- 5,541 participants (2,744 men) aged 21 to 76+ years (M = 46.72, SD = 15.57) from a nationally representative sample from the Singles in America project through Match.com.

- When considering a committed relationship with someone, which of the following would be dealbreakers to you? (select all that apply)."

  – The questionnaire provided participants with 17 (randomized) potential dealbreakers.

    - Count only (yes/no)

Study 3: Results
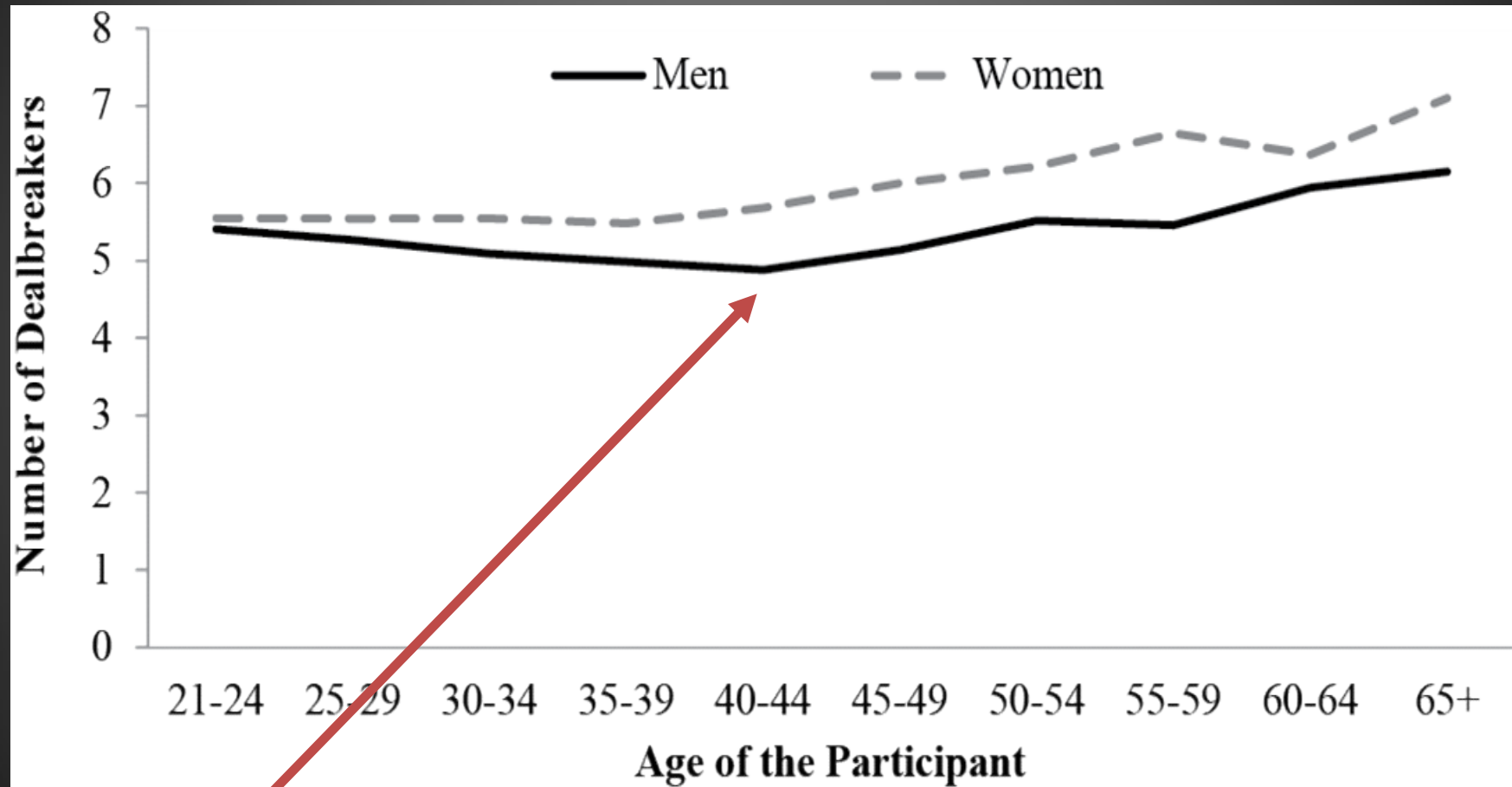
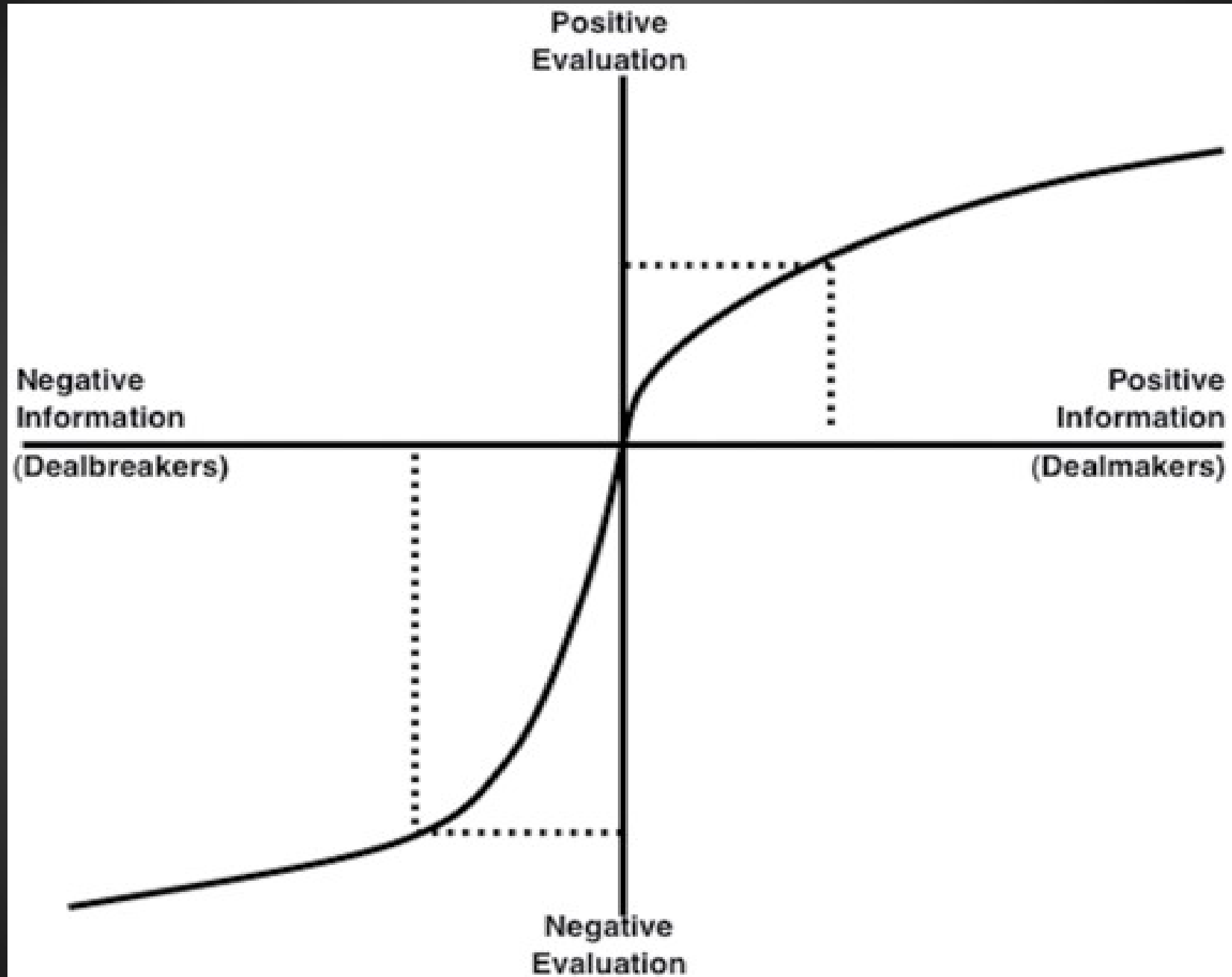SEX: $b = -0.67$, $t(5,537) = -8.49$, $p < .01$, $d = -0.23$
(mean-centered) AGE: $b = 0.08$, $t(5,537) = 10.88$, $p < .01$, $r_p = .14$
SEX x AGE: $b = -0.01$, $t(5,537) = -2.70$, $p < .01$, $r_p = -.04$, $d = 0.07$

Study 4: Method

- 262 participants (142 men) aged 18 to 75 years ($M = 31.94$, $SD = 10.80$) through MTurk.

- We randomly assigned participants to one of seven conditions with varying dealmaker-to-dealbreaker ratios: 0:5, 1:5, 2:4, 3:3, 4:2, 5:1, 5:0.

- "Your potential romantic partner has x DEALMAKERS and y DEALBREAKERS. How likely (-5 = not at all likely; 5 = extremely likely) are you to:
  - be just friends with
  - casually date
  - seriously date
  - have a sexual relationship with
  - have a committed relationship with

$\alpha = .75$

Study 4: Results

- Likelihood to form a relationship (z) as a function of proportion of dealmakers: Scatterplot with cubic function (left), predicted scores from cubic function (right).
  - Linear $b = 1.64$, $p < .01$; cubic $b = -3.07$, $p < .05$.
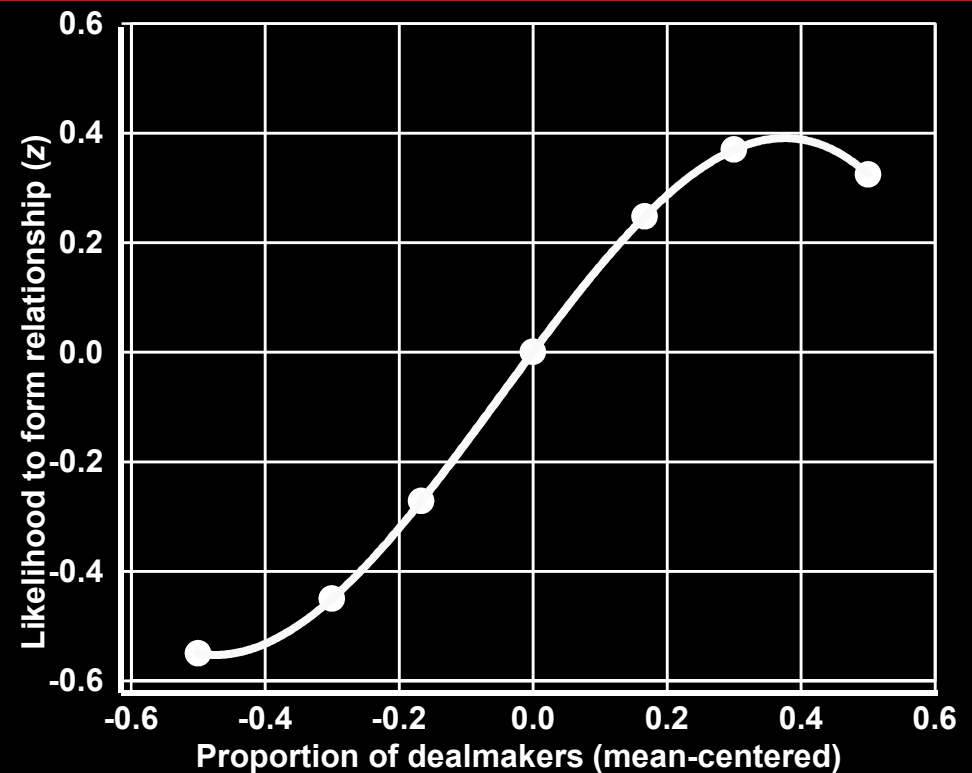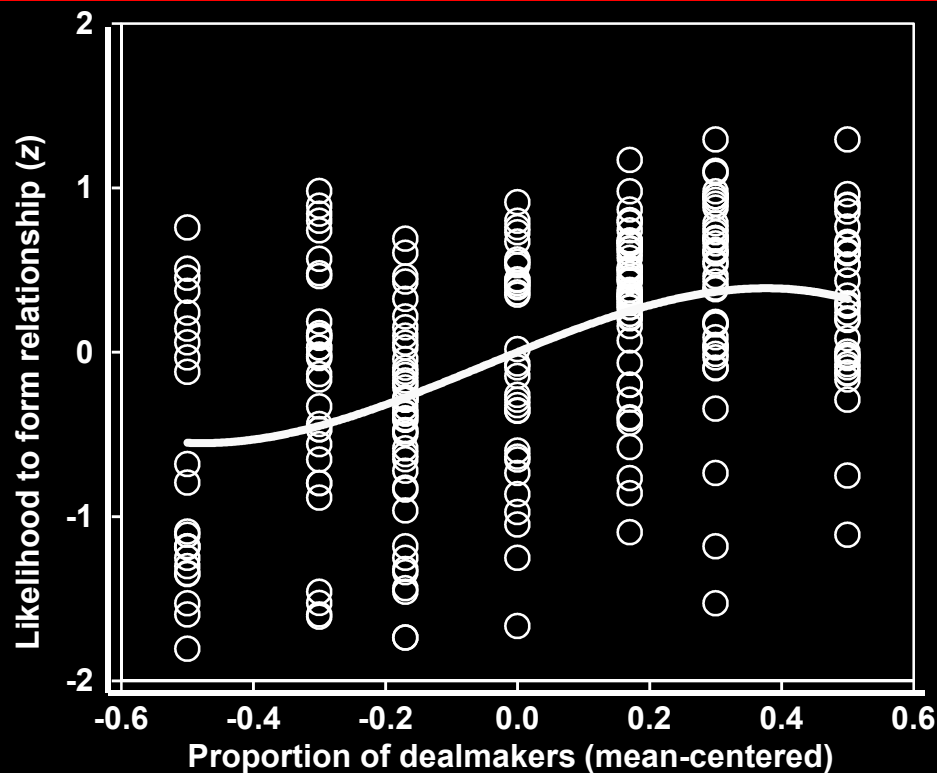
Study 4: Results

- Likelihood to form a relationship (*z*) as functions of proportion of dealmakers and sex (left) or commitment (right): red women or committed; white: men or uncommitted.
  - Steeper slope in women and in those in committed relationships
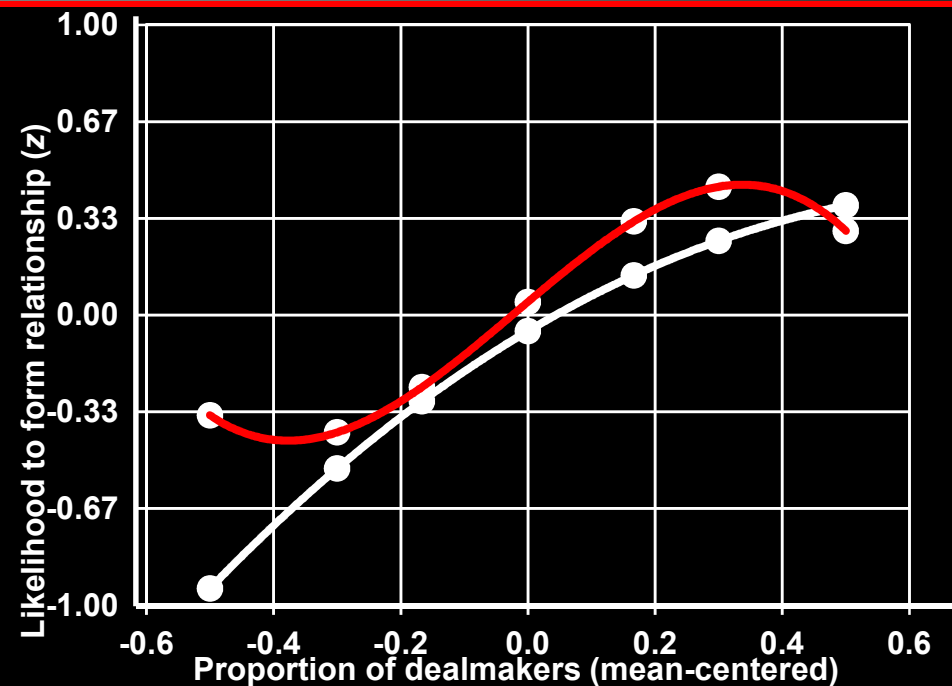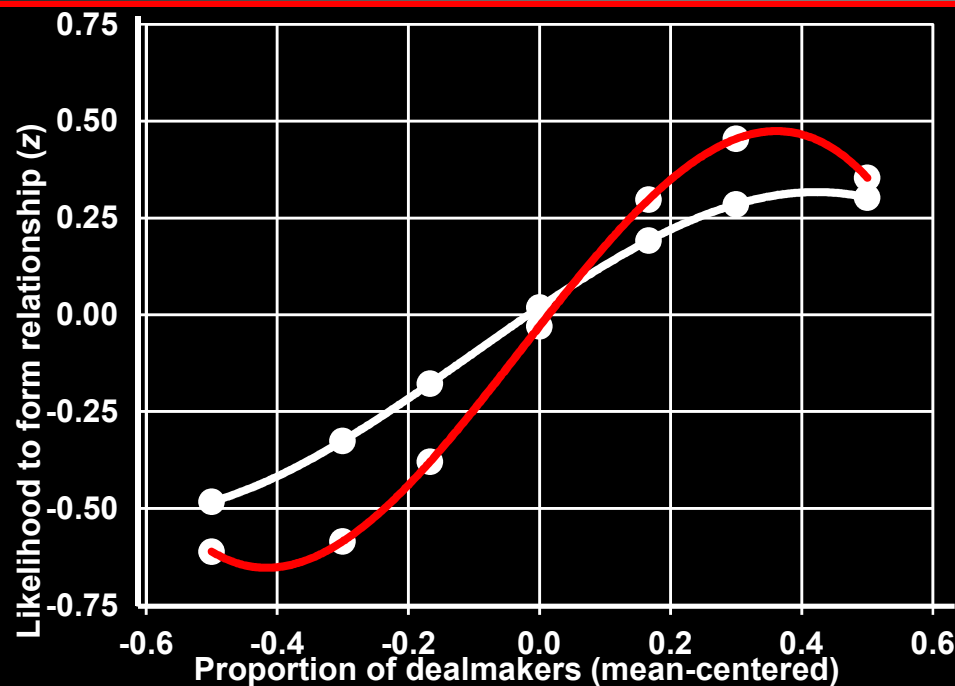
Change in interest?

Should I stay or should I go: Individual differences in response to romantic dealmakers and dealbreakers☆

Peter K. Jonason[a,b,*], Kaitlyn P. White[c], Laith Al-Shawaf[c]

Study 5: Method

- 261 undergrads (M = 21.97) from Colorado, 18-45, 93% heterosexual, and 44% single.

- Self-Perceived Mating Success (Landolt et al., 1995) α = .90.

- Revised Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008) α = .88.

- International Personality Item Pool (Donnellan et al., 2006)
  - Openness (α = .71), conscientiousness (α = .62), extraversion (α = .81), agreeableness (α = .74), and neuroticism (α = .76).

Study 5: Method

- Short Dark Triad questionnaire (Jones & Paulhus, 2014)
  - Machiavellianism (α = .79), narcissism (α = .70), and psychopathy (α = .72).

- Three Domain Disgust Scale to assess three different kinds of disgust: pathogen, sexual, and moral disgust (Tybur et al., 2009)
  - Pathogen disgust (α = .79), sexual disgust (α = .77), and moral disgust (α = .87).

Study 5: Method

Imagine you met someone who they liked and found attractive and then asked how much learning different kinds of information would change their minds about dating this person

| Appendix A. Items to measures change in interest in dealmakers and dealmakers					
Dealmakers			Dealbreakers		
Item	M	SD	Item	M	SD
1. is kind to strangers	4.46	0.65	1. gets angry easily	4.19	0.89
2. is well educated	4.34	0.81	2. is dating other people now	3.81	1.27
3. tells great jokes	4.24	0.84	3. is untrustworthy	4.62	0.66
4. is generous	4.44	0.70	4. has a child	2.97	1.33
5. owns a puppy	3.59	1.35	5. is married	4.42	1.06
6. exercises regularly	3.90	1.01	6. has a sexually transmitted infection	4.45	0.90
7. is successful at work	4.23	0.81	7. smells bad	4.33	0.89
8. can cook well	3.94	1.00	8. drinks quite a bit	3.69	1.11
9. dresses well	3.93	0.89	9. is inattentive	4.01	0.90
10. is popular with same sex others	2.88	1.11	10. is dismissive of your interests	4.35	0.80

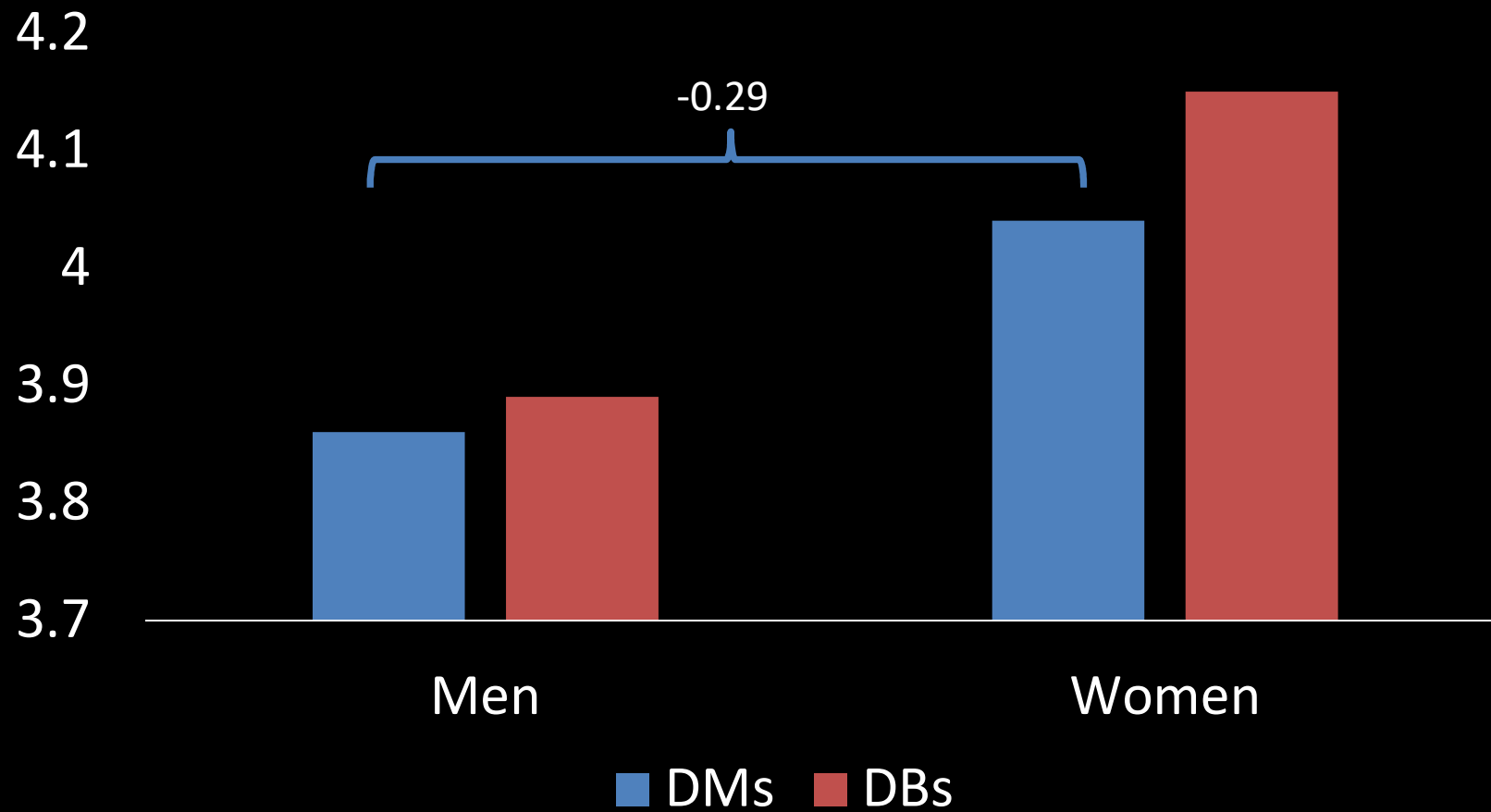dealmakers (α = .79); dealbreakers (α = .85)

Study 5: Results

- In response to learning dealbreakers ($t = 95.79$, $p < .01$) and dealmakers ($t = 88.24$, $p < .01$) there was a change in interest in targets; and the change associated with the former was stronger than the latter ($t = 2.12$, $p < .04$).
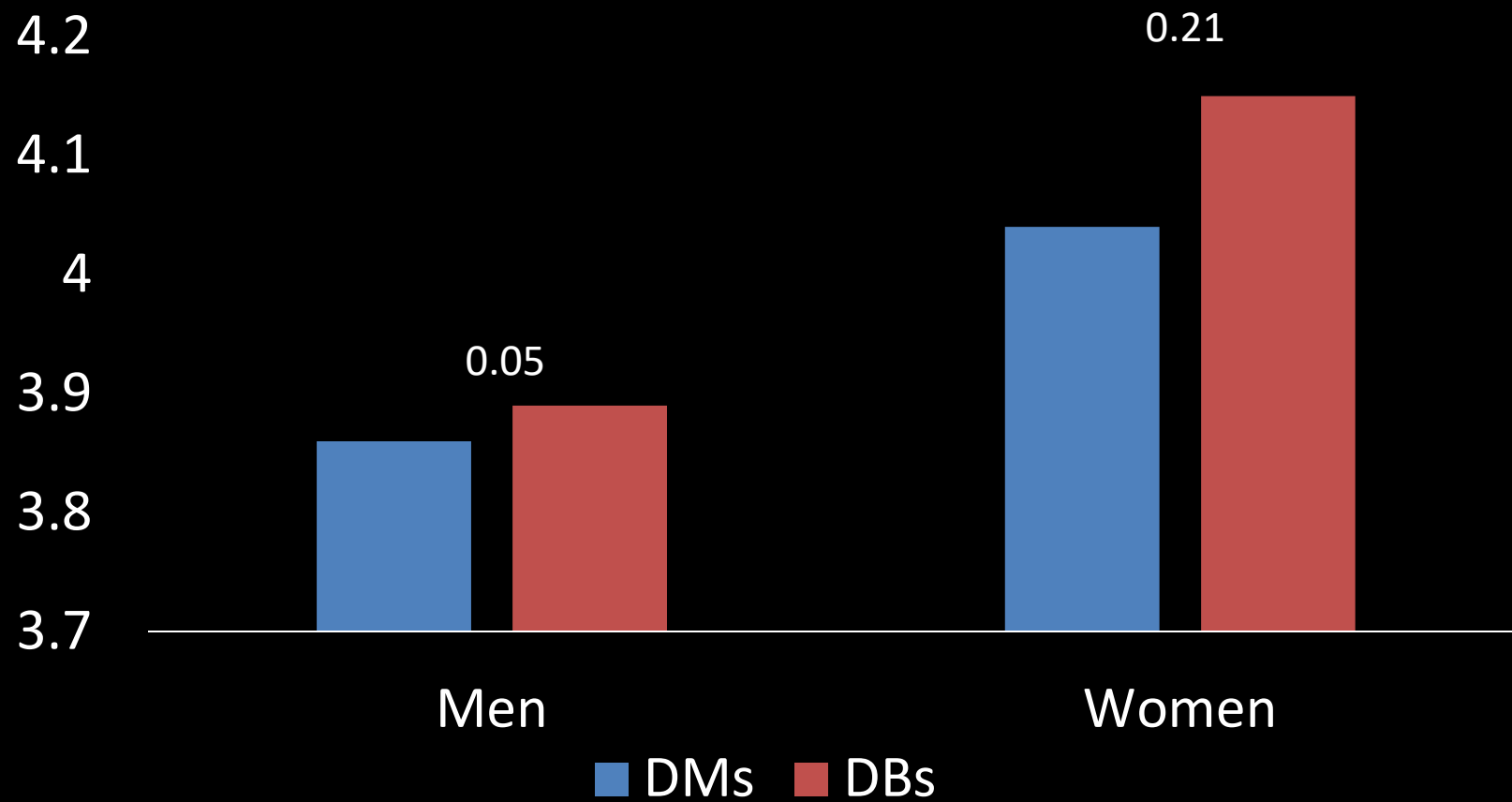
Study 5: Results

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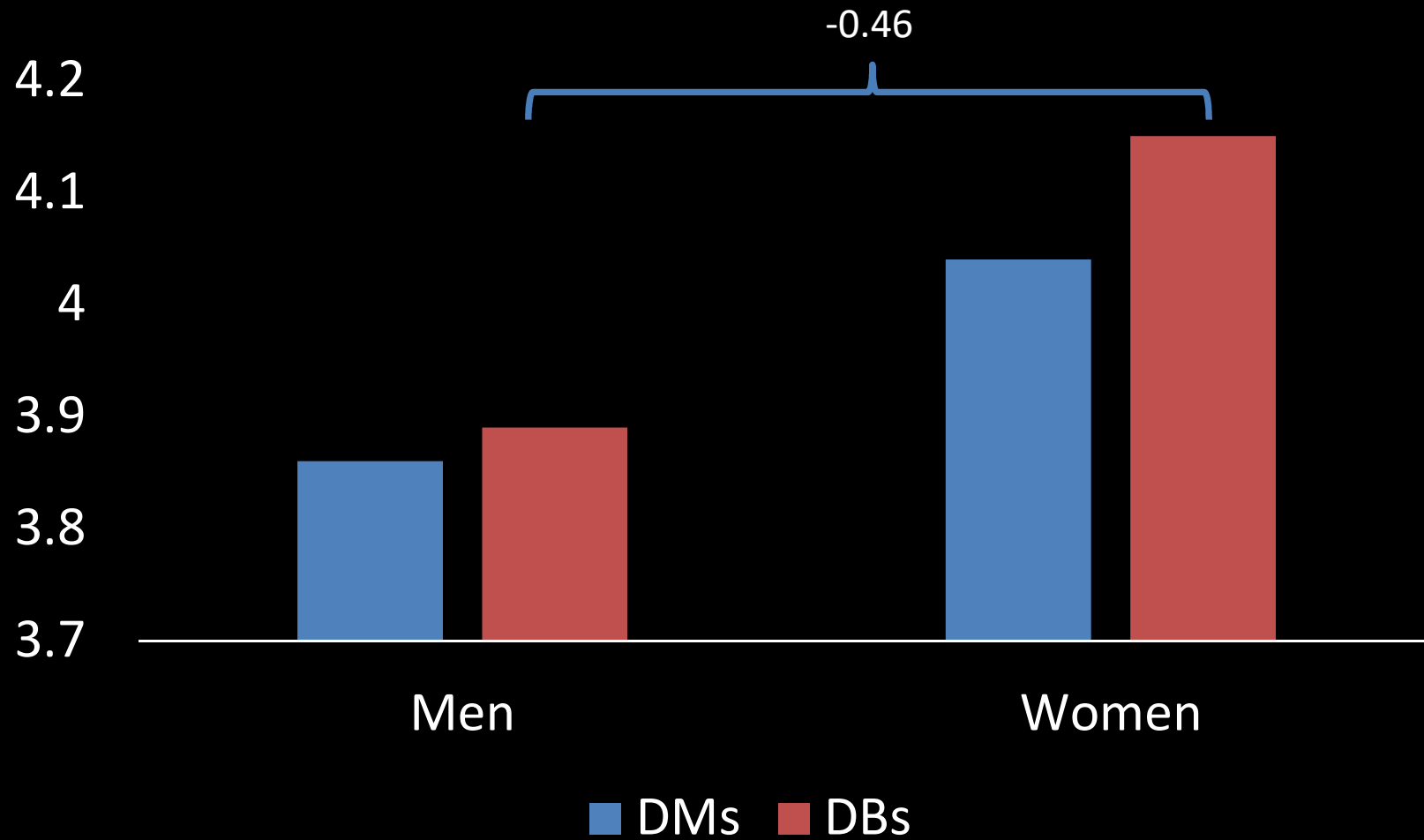
Response to dealmakers

- Extraversion (.25)

- Narcissism (.26)

- Pathogen disgust (.21)

- Sexual disgust (.13)

Response to dealbreakers

- Sociosexuality (-.23)

- Agreeableness (.14)

- Psychopathy (-.24)

- Conscientiousness (.16)

- Moral disgust (.18)

- Pathogen disgust (.33)

- Sexual disgust (.31)

Psychopathy, sociosexuality, agreeableness, and pathogen and sexual disgust fully mediated (ΔR^2 = .07; $F[6, 253]$ = 3.16, $p < .01$)

Mating success, narcissism, and pathogen and sexual disgust fully mediated (ΔR^2 = .11; $F[4, 255]$ = 8.48, $p < .01$)

Study 5: Results

Response to dealmakers

- **Extraversion (.25)**
- **Narcissism (.26)**
- Pathogen disgust (.21)
- Sexual disgust (.13)

Say YES

Psychopathy, sociosexuality, agreeableness, and pathogen, moral, and sexual disgust fully mediated (ΔR^2 = .07; $F[6, 253]$ = 3.16, $p < .01$)

Response to dealbreakers

- **Sociosexuality (-.23)**
- Agreeableness (.14)
- **Psychopathy (-.24)**
- Conscientiousness (.16)
- Moral disgust (.18)
- Sexual disgust (.31)

Not saying NO

Mating success, narcissism, and pathogen and sexual disgust fully mediated (ΔR^2 = .11; $F[4, 255]$ = 8.48, $p < .01$)

STM/LTM Desirability?
"Ecologically valid vignettes"?

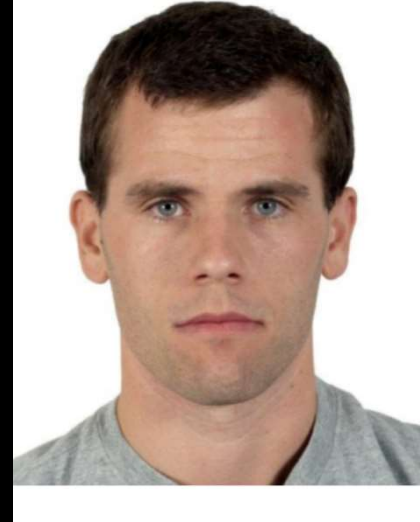# Study 6: Method

186 (*N** = 150) Australian undergrads, 48 men, 18-59 years (*M* = 22.57), 85% heterosexual, and 50% single.

Chicago Face Database

(Ma, Correll, & Wittenbrink, 2015)

8 images	Average in attractiveness (between 3-4) White Not smiling No overly unique features	LTM desirability	STM desirability	Physical attractiveness

Study 6: Method

Study 6: Results

Table 1. Between- and within-subjects effects of participant's sex and the presentation of dealbreakers or dealmakers on short-term and long-term desirability.

	Mean (SD)			*t*-test	Hedges' *g*
	Overall	Men	Women		
Short-term desirability	1.39 (0.48)	1.57 (0.53)	1.33 (0.45)	2.88**	0.48
Types of information					
Dealbreakers	1.20 (0.26)	1.34 (0.32)	1.15 (0.21)	2.83**	0.65
Dealmakers	1.59 (0.58)	1.85 (0.61)	1.50 (0.55)	2.53**	0.62
t-test	-5.91**	-3.60**	-5.08**		
Hedges' *g*	-0.87	-1.04	-0.87		
Long-term desirability	1.38 (0.50)	1.49 (0.53)	1.34 (0.48)	1.75	0.29
Types of information					
Dealbreakers	1.16 (0.24)	1.20 (0.28)	1.14 (0.23)	1.06	0.24
Dealmakers	1.62 (0.58)	1.83 (0.55)	1.55 (0.58)	2.02*	0.50
t-test	-6.90**	-4.84**	-5.37**		
Hedges' *g*	-1.01	-1.40	-0.91		

Hedges' *g* is for effect size to correct for unequal sample sizes in the sexes, the interpretation of which is the same as Cohen's *d*. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

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Hedges' *g* is for effect size to correct for unequal sample sizes in the sexes, the interpretation of which is the same as Cohen's *d*. * *p* < .05, ** *p* < .01

General Discussion

1. Content of DB's is similar to DM's.
2. Women have more DB's than women do.
   a. An effect that is stable and even slightly increases with age.
3. DB's are "stronger" in the LTM context.
4. More mate-value = more DB's
5. Higher SOI = fewer DB's; especially in the STM context.
6. DB's > DM's in decision-making
   a. Especially in women and those in committed relationships

General Discussion

- Dealbreakers cause more change in interest than dealmakers
  - Equivalent in men; DM < DB in women
  - Sensitive to personality traits to enable "yes" (e.g., narcissism) and to disable "no" (e.g., SOI).
- Desirability of "ugly" sexual partners influenced by the presence of DMs only in men.
  - No one wants to settle down with someone they find unattractive regardless of other positive qualities they might have.

Limitations

- Study 1 & 2 too reliant on qualitative responses.
    - Exploratory
- Study 3 failed to examine the STM context.
    - Measure created by committee
- Study 4 did not specify actual DB's/DM's.
- Study 5 did not measure direction of change
- WEIRD
- Limited range of individual difference measures
    - Self-esteem, loneliness, and more

Conclusions

- Mate preference research has focused on what individuals want.

- Individuals calibrate mate preferences in two directions to achieve two tasks.
  - Seeking benefit—men more
  - Avoiding cost—women more

- We showed, consistent with Prospect Theory and Error Management Theory that "losses loom larger than gains" in the domain of mate preferences especially in women.
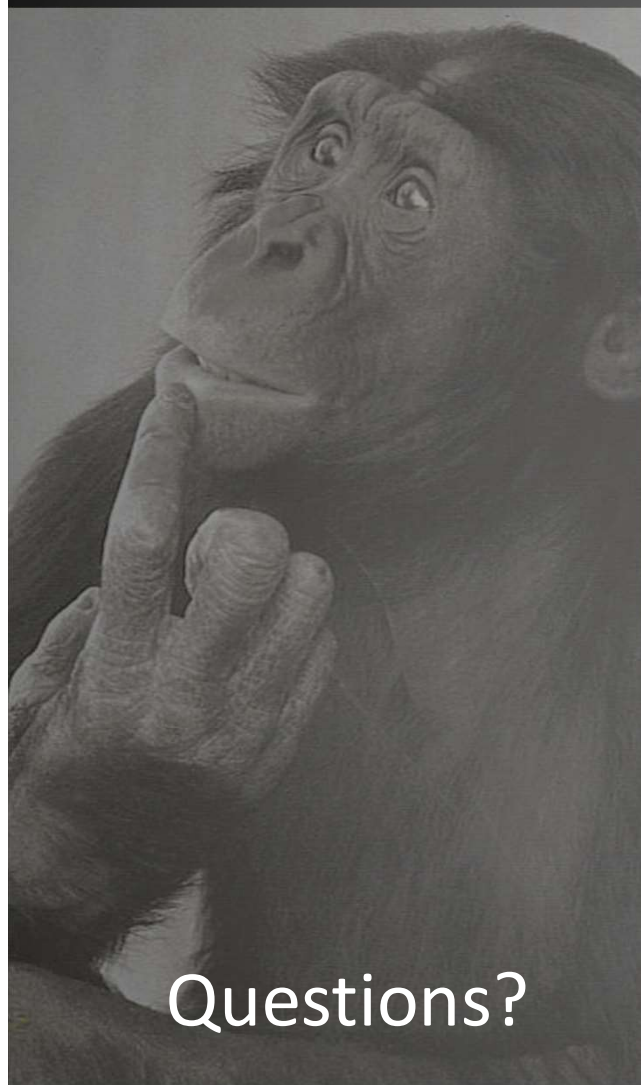
Questions?

www.peterjonason.com

Pedro_el_monstruo